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The Sunwise Turn and the Social Space of the Bookstore

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In 1916 in New York City, two women, Madge Jenison and Mary Mowbray-Clarke opened "The Sunwise Turn, The Modern Bookshop" on East 31st Street in New York City. The owners saw themselves as cultural missionaries in the capitalist jungle of Manhattan, clearing a space for culture, creating a place of inspiration and enlightenment. Within seven years they were at each other's throats, suing over the assets of the shop, finally selling out to Doubleday. John Tebbel in his authoritative *History of Book Publishing in the United States* notes that the Sunwise Turn was "probably the prototype of the small 'personal' bookshop" and states that Madge Jenison's memoir, *The Sunwise Turn* was "an influential guide to 'personal' bookstore operation.[1] This sounds straightforward but the archives tell a darker story. The boxes of material at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas include manuscripts of talks by the partners, ledgers, correspondence, and the formal minutes of the Board of Directors' meetings. It is a tale of fascinating characters: Mary Mowbray-Clarke, who argued for a return to medieval

[1] John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States, Volume II: The Expansion of an Industry 1865 – 1919* (New York and & London: R.R. Bowker, A Xerox Education Company, 1975), 277.

systems of finance and then hired a clever lawyer to try to swindle her partners out of their back wages; Madge Jenison, who leapt from the sinking Sunwise Turn and then wrote a chatty book advising all young women to start bookstores; Harold Loeb, the model for Robert Cohn in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, who adventured in western Canada, founded a little magazine in Italy, and wound up as a bureaucrat for the Food and Drug Administration; his cousin Peggy Guggenheim, who was too incompetent to work the till but who claimed her interest in art collecting came from her experience at the Sunwise Turn. The narrative arc of the Sunwise Turn is one of idealism and missionary zeal turning to bitterness and capitulation to the market, with the accompanying trajectory of a proudly liminal space – private and public, domestic and commercial – devolving into a space that was completely commodified, that of a chain store.

Felicitous Space

One of the first bookstores in America to be owned and operated by women, the Sunwise Turn sponsored lectures and readings by Robert Frost, Theodore Dreiser, Amy Lowell, and others; they sold paintings and sculpture; they published a few of their own books, and even briefly considered publishing *Ulysses*.[2] And in 1917, they hosted a meeting of women in the publishing trade who subsequently organised the Women's National Association of Booksellers and Publishers. The name of the store, deliberately chosen, was not "sunrise" (though correspondents often made that mistake) but "sunwise," which meant to follow the course of the sun, to be in harmony, in other words, with the rhythms

[2] Mowbray-Clarke wrote to Beach: "I think we know you and you know us. I hear you have a nice little book-shop in Paris and I am giving the address to friends living there. Meanwhile I enclose an order for copies of Ulysses. I hope you will allow us a discount on the books. We thought of publishing it here but didn't have the money. Should you be undersubscribed let us know. Hoping for your best success." Box 133, Beach papers, Princeton.

of nature, and, implicitly, to provide relief from the mechanical rhythms of the city. The most striking document in the archive is a bill for draperies and furniture coverings when they decorated the new store:

$211.75 for 25 yds linen, 19 yds Tudor, 2 yds Damask, 2 yds Agra, 6 yds Gauze

and then:

$302.40 for 38 sq ft of tapestry, purple, for sofa;

39 sq ft plain tapestry, orange-red for two arm chairs;

36 ft of plain tapestry, blue, for 3 side chairs;

47 sq ft of plain tapestry for outside covering.[3]

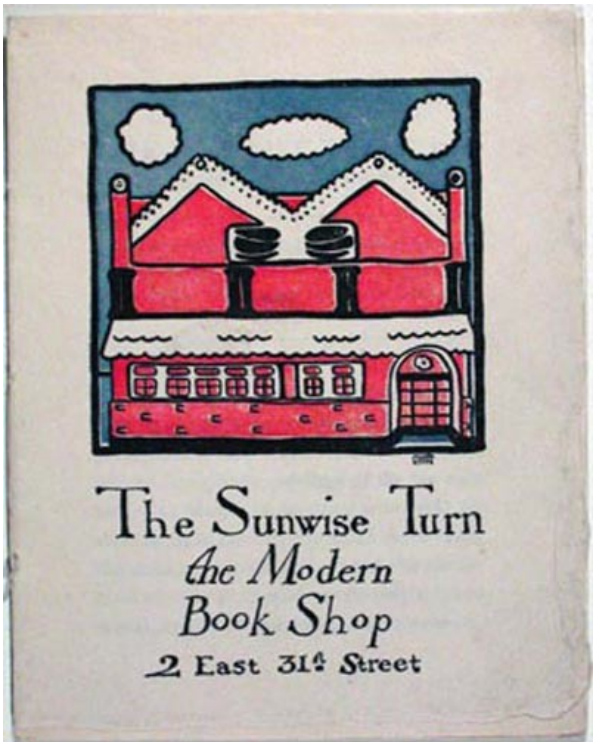
A purple sofa, orange-red armchairs, blue sidechairs — the shop must have looked like a Matisse painting. To spend over $500 for fabric in 1919, when a fireman might have been paid $100 a month, might seem outrageous, but the purchases were deliberate, part of the owners' ideal of creating a space that was designed to do more than simply maximize sales. In "The Small Bookshop," a speech to a class for booksellers at the New York Public Library on 27 January 1922, Mowbray-Clarke insisted on the importance of physical space:

> Our physical setting has meant a great deal to us. Both at the old 31st street shop where we restored a delightful old Jacobean installation that had been an early collector's picture-gallery, and in the shop built to our own design for us by the Yale club we have kept the aspect of a modern art expression. Our

[3] Box 2, Sunwise Turn Papers, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX, hereafter HRC.

> color scheme was worked out for us with the Taylor system of harmonized [color] having on its realistic basis books in their colored wrappers.[4]

A glance at the pamphlet (Figure 1) makes it clear that they were creating a space for *reading*, not just *buying* books. It is a blending of public and private space, and there is a consciousness of the body: the image looks simultaneously like a gingerbread cottage and like a featherbed, with the chimneys doubling as bedposts and clouds – unlikely in midtown Manhattan – for pillows. At the center of the roofline is a device suggestive of two hands holding a book. It is all meant to evoke refuge, repose, and reading.[5]



Gaston Bachelard in the *Poetics of Space* speaks of 'felicitous space', and the recurrent dream of a cottage, a hut, that is a place of refuge. Bachelard contends that "The house, even more that the landscape, is a 'psychic state,' and when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy," and he notes psychologists' work with children:

[4] Mary Mowbray-Clarke, manuscript of "The Small Bookshop, The substance of a speech made at the class for Booksellers in the Public Library, Jan. 27, 1922" Box 1, HRC.

[5] It was also freezing cold in winter. Jenison, probably inspired by Harold Loeb's Alberta adventure says, "We called it 'Medicine Hat,' Medicine Hat being a station somewhere on the Canadian Pacific which is the real site of the North Pole." Madge Jenison, *Sunwise Turn, A Human Comedy of Bookselling* (New York: EP Dutton & Co., 1923), 16.

when the house is happy, soft smoke rises in gay rings above the roof.[6] We do not have smoke rings in this drawing of the Sunwise Turn, but we have those puffy clouds, and the drawing itself is meant to look as if it were drawn for a child. Bachelard argues for the universality of the "hut dream": "the dreamer of refuges dreams of a hut, of a nest, or of nooks and corners in which he would like to hide away, like an animal in its hole."[7] The "hermit's hut" becomes a centralized solitude; in the land of legend there exists no adjoining hut.[8] Within the dwelling, "every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination" (132). And Judith Fryer (taking the title of her book *Felicitous Space* from Bachelard) discusses how in the early decades of the century the American sky-scraper became identified with male aggressive enterprise, the house

Figure 1: Brochure cover of the Sunwise Turn

with the realm of the imagination. She quotes George Santayana: "The American Will inhabits the sky-scraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion," the one "all aggressive enterprise" is "the sphere of the American man; the other, at least predominantly, of the American woman."[9] The Sunwise Turn was not a colonial mansion, but it was designed to be a place where the intellect could abide.

Louis Sullivan "had begun in the late 1880s to build the sky-scrapers which, rooted in the ground and ornamented along their shafts with an elegance that emphasized their verticality and grew more elaborate at their skyward tips, were raw celebrations of phallic energy." For Sullivan *masculine* meant "'that which is virile, forceful, direct,

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[6] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas, intro. John R. Stilgoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 72.
[7] Ibid., 30.
[8] Ibid., 32.
[9] Judith Fryer, *Felicitous Space: the Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986),10.

clear and straightforward, that which grasps and retains in thought" *feminine* meant "intuitive sympathy, tact, suavity and grace – the qualities that soothe, elevate, ennoble and refine."[10] What Jenison and Mowbray-Clarke hoped to do was ennoble and refine, and they defined themselves against the buildings that surrounded them, and all they represented:

> Even our mullioned windows and our great tiled wall sign are a protest against the mediocrity of the eternal plate-glass. Every hide-bound advertiser would tell us that we cannot sell books as well from small windows as from large ones, but we think we do a few things to people besides sell them books, and architecture with personality is not often enough a consideration in America in spite of our sky scrapers.[11]

In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger explores the distinction between *building* and *dwelling*, arguing that the root word of 'building' means to 'cultivate' as well as to 'raise up edifices.' Further, he suggests that the nature of dwelling is to create a space, to make room for something to appear. The real plight of dwelling, he says, lies not in the lack of houses but that mortals must ever learn to dwell. The distinction is useful in talking about bookstores, in distinguishing between bookstores that *dwell*, that cultivate and allow a culture to appear, and bookstores that are merely *built* – like airport bookstores, that fire out bestsellers like Big Macs, or university bookstores that have become warehouses rather than sites of culture. These new bookstore owners with their cottage amongst the sky-scrapers were less concerned with reaping profits than with creating a space where culture could flourish.

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[10] Ibid., 14.
[11] Mary Mowbray-Clarke, "The Small Bookshop, Box 1, HRC.

The place struck a chord with professionals – in April of 1916, *Publishers' Weekly* ecstatically announced a vision on Fifth Avenue, a bookstore with "bravely original" architecture, with a "touch of absurdity" but the feel of a "cloister":

> The publisher who has reached the dark hour when he believes that paper will never come down, and binding and printing will rise beyond his reach, and no more books will ever be sold again, should go forth to Fifth Avenue and 31st Street, New York City, and there, next to the corner, see the thing he has dreamed about when his dreams were most visionary. 'The Sunwise Turn, the Modern Bookshop' is the sort of place you might find in a booklover's essay; yet there it stands, quaint and bewitching, yet apparently made of real substance. It is built of red brick , cunningly contrived to suggest something old-worldly, yet startlingly new. Its architecture is bravely original, with the 'new art' touch of absurdity; yet the long, low-leaded windows and round archway entrance have the 'booky' look of a cloister.[12]

The reference to the medieval element, the cloister, was both prescient and prophetic because Mowbray-Clarke's fondness for the medieval would prove to be part of her downfall. The writer goes on to describe the space and to give credit to the designers of the fireplace, the batiks, and even the signs:

> It has one large room, about 20 x 30, with a window seat half-way along one side, furnished with library tables, sufficiently strewn with books, easy-chairs, bookshelves, and art objects (some of which are for sale). In the decoration of the room itself the co-operation of several artists has been secured, and an interesting chord of colors has been carried out. The signs were painted by Henry Fitch

[12] Anonymous, *Publishers' Weekly*, April 22 1916, 1361.

Taylor and John Wolcott Adams. The mosaic fireplace and the seal were designed by John Mowbray-Clarke, the batiks in the shop by Miss Martha Ryder.[13] It all sounds wonderful, especially since the article following the Sunwise Turn piece - "Will Book Prices Have to be Increased?" - details problems in the book trade and laments that excessive advance payments to authors, the reduction of the working day from nine to eight hours, and the fact that "Other forms of amusement, such as automobiles and motion pictures, are taking the place of books to a great extent," has caused the standard price of a novel to rise from $1.35 to $1.50.[14] The story on the Sunwise Turn announced that, "not fiction but non-fiction–especially in art lines–will be the specialty of the shop," but in fact work of all sorts, as long as it was non-commercial, found favour with the shop.

The Sunwise Turn was conceived as much as a cultural centre as a bookstore. One of their first author-events was Theodore Dreiser, who in April 1916 read from his new book, "Plays, Natural and Supernatural,"[15] and early in 1917 "some two-score invited guests" convened to hear Amy Lowell read and then to take part in "an informal discussion of the place of *vers libre* in the world of art." **[source?]** Jenison and Mowbray-Clarke were soon offering two series of lectures, one on modern poetry every Tuesday night, to be conducted by Padraic Colum (the Irish poet and founder of the Abbey Theatre, who had come to New York in 1914), and the other on libertarian education on Friday nights. The cost for the six lectures was $5 or $1 per single lecture. *Publishers' Weekly* provides a sample:

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Anonymous, "Will Book Prices Have to be Increased?" *Publishers' Weekly*, April 22 1916, 1362-63.
[15] Ibid.

Tuesday, January 22nd: "The Successors of Tennyson," including Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, Oscar Wilde, and the poetry of Robert Bridges and Thomas Hardy

January 29th: "Two Contrasting Poets," discussing the poetry of the Catholic, Francis

Thompson, and the materialist John Davidson

February 5th: Yeats, George Russel (A.E.) and Synge

February 12th: "The Rise of Nationalism Amongst the Younger English Poets"

February 19th: "Some American Poets," including Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, Edwin A. Robinson and the imagists

February 26th: "An Interpretation of the Spirit of Irish Poetry"[16]

These are established authors to us now, but in 1919 they were still emerging figures. Yeats, for instance, was well known and *The Wild Swans at Coole* had come out in 1917, but *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* would not appear until 1921; and Frost had published *North of Boston* (1914) and *Mountain Interval* (1916), but *New Hampshire*, which would win him the Pulitzer Prize, was four years away.

After the bookstore moved uptown to 51 E 44th st. in 1919, *Publishers' Weekly* noted happily that the Sunwise Turn planned to continue its "series of delightful poetry evenings."[17] The week before Christmas 1919, Alfred Kreymborg – who had published Ezra Pound's *Des Imagistes* in *The Glebe* 1914, and who had produced *Others* with Skipwith Cannell, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams from 1915 until June of

[16] Anonymous, "Lectures at the Sunwise Turn," *Publishers' Weekly*, March 20, 1920, 945.
[17] Anonymous, "Poetry Evenings at the Sunwise Turn," *Publishers' Weekly*, December 20, 1919, 1620.

1919 – presented "his poem-mimes with mandolute accompaniments as a sort of housewarming and introduction to the course, to be followed later by weekly recitals by such artists as Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Witter Bynner and others."[18] The course was to include fifteen lectures, for which season tickets could be purchased for $12.00. Single tickets were $1.00 – so not cheap: two-thirds the cost of a hardcover book.[19] In the event, Robert Frost's lecture of March 16th 1920, "had to be postponed until April 20 because Mr. Frost is suffering from influenza," but we are promised more, and the lectures are wide-ranging:

> March 23: Helena de Day will lecture on "Romain Rolland and the War"
>
> March 30: Ridgeley Torrance will read some of his Negro Plays
>
> April 6: Amy Murray, Gaelic harpist (author of "Father Allan's Island" soon to be published by Harcourt, Brace & Howe) will give her Hebrides songs and folk tales
>
> April 7: Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy will lecture on Indian Poetry
>
> April 13: Lola Ridge will lecture on "Woman and the Creative Will"

The shop was a place where connections could be formed, ideas germinate. Anarchist-feminist Lola Ridge had published her first book of poetry, *The Ghetto* in 1918, and fostering "Woman and the Creative Will" was very much part of the Sunwise Turn mandate from the start: the initial shareholders were all women.[20] Allan Antliff in

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] The Sunwise Turn Stock Certificate Books list thirty shares for $100 each, signed by Madge Jenison, Treasurer, and Mary Mowbray-Clarke, President. The shareholders were Sophia A. Walker, Georgianna B. Ballard, Alice Einstein, Beatrice Wood, Lewis, Alice Bennett, Mrs. Emanuel Einstein, Alice Lewisham, Irene Lewisham, August Rucker, Lillie Bliss, Amy Sprinarm, Alice Lewisham, Irene Lewisham. Box 1, HRC.

Anarchist Modernism notes that for the newly arrived philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy the Sunwise Turn was the centre of his life. It was also one of the favourite haunts of Carl Zigrosser, editor of the radical Ferrer Center's journal *The Modern School*, from 1917to 1920 (Zigrosser was involved in the discussions for the naming of the shop – his suggestion was "Here Are Ladies"), and Eugene O'Neill, unpublished but working with the Provincetown Players, would come by. There was much going on besides the selling of books.[21]

Yet in selling, too, the Sunwise Turn was innovative. In addition to floor sales they developed a three-pronged technique for getting books into the hands of readers: they provided an expert consultation service, installed special libraries tailored to particular businesses and groups, and created a subscription service. In an address to the 1917 Annual Convention of the American Booksellers' Association, Mowbray-Clarke explains that "Efficiency" was a current issue and so they "gathered all the efficiency engineers that we knew or could possibly meet," got their advice on the best books and put their comments in a card catalogue. "Now when a young man studying Efficiency at Columbia comes to us we can tell him the ten most important books for him to read."[22] Unfortunately, the technique proved not very efficient. They would spend hours talking to experts for very few books sold.

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[21] Zigrosser heard Coomaraswamy deliver a lecture at the Sunwise Turn in December of 1917 and asked if he could publish it in *The Modern School*. Coomaraswamy agreed, but told Zigrosser that he needed to get permission from Mary Mowbray-Clarke because the essay was coming out in a collection published by the Sunwise Turn (*The Dance of Siva,* still in print). The essay, "Young India," appeared in the February and March 1918 issues of *The Modern School*. See Alan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 127. This was precisely the kind of cultural cross-fertilization Mowbray-Clarke hoped to foster.

[22] Mary Mowbray-Clarke, "The Sunwise Turn Bookshop – New York," *Publishers' Weekly*, May 26, 1917, 1704 – 1707.

After one year, they had on their list a subscriber in New Zealand, a club in Tientsin, China, a missionary in India, workers in lumber camps, and a man in the Klondike who wanted "the very best English poetry." This is so exciting that "we have almost gotten to scorn our regular customers who come in every week for books; they are so docile, and "we abominate docile people" (the writer records "[Laughter]" from the audience).[23] In these early years, *Publishers' Weekly* is as enthusiastic as Madge Jenison, who in her memoir *Sunwise Turn: A Human Comedy of Bookselling* contends that "thought… is the world's soul" and that bookstores are the way of "passing the current, more important than universities, than schools, than public libraries, because they … are in the thick of affairs and work.[24] They did their best "to make the shop a cult, something unlike other things, and offering one a breath of experience even to buy a book there."[25] If we stick to the contemporary accounts by Madge Jenison and *Publishers' Weekly*, we would certainly conclude that the bookstore was a success, a model of its kind, groundbreaking in politics, culture, and marketing.

Dissent

Harold Loeb provides another perspective: carried away by Mary Mowbray-Clarke's enthusiasm, he poured money and time into the shop, but before long he began to view the enterprise as self-indulgent and commercially suspect. Loeb is the character pilloried by Hemingway as Robert Cohn in his 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*. In *The Way It Was*, Loeb's attempt to correct that characterization, he proves much more interesting than Hemingway allows him to be: in 1913, having just finished his degree at

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[23] Ibid, 1705.

[24] Jenison, 39.

[25] Ibid., 43. See also Margaret Stetz's excellent article on, among other things, the bookstore as a site of fashion, a place to be seen: "Sex, Lies, and Printed Cloth: Bookselling at the Bodley Head in the Eighteen-Nineties," *Victorian Studies* 35. 1 (1991): 71-86.

Princeton and entranced by an actress singing "On the Banks of the Saskatchewan" in a musical, he had travelled out to Calgary (because it was on the banks of the Saskatchewan) and spent half his patrimony setting up a cement factory in Empress, Alberta, something he would write about later in *Tumbling Mustard* (which he published unfortunately in 1929: the combination of the stock market crash and the uninspired title caused the book to sink without a trace). He served during the First World War, and after his discharge he and his wife wanted to develop their "potentialities." A friend advised them to talk to Mowbray-Clarke. "Small, spare, and schoolmarmish, Mary was possessed by a driving force," Loeb writes. "She could listen, but once she started to talk she went on and on, twisting and turning through art, politics, economics, literature, town-planning, guild socialism, Freud. I was fascinated, though a little breathless."[26] Nonetheless, in 1919, he sunk half of his remaining patrimony, $5,000, into the Sunwise Turn.

Like everyone else, Loeb loved the intimacy of the little shop on 38th street, but, in the summer of 1919, the block that housed the Sunwise Turn was to be sold, and Loeb found an empty store in the Yale Club building opposite Grand Central Station at 51 East 44 street. Again, the décor was crucial: "Mary fretted: the high ceilings and straight lines would make it difficult to recapture the intimate warmth of the old shop. But after the ceilings and walls were painted a rich orange and the light bulbs swathed in fluff, everyone was satisfied."[27] And as a cultural centre the bookstore flourished, with Mowbray-Clarke still the driving force:

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26 Harold Loeb, *The Way It Was* (New York: Criterion Books, 1959), 27.

27 Ibid., 34.

> Literary sessions, feasible in the larger quarters, paid for themselves and helped publicize the shop and the authors. Usually autographed copies were sold to everyone present. Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Mekerji, Lola Ridge, Alfred Kreymborg, and others read their work or discussed the American literary renaissance and whatever else came into their heads. Mary's energy seemed boundless. Among a score of other projects she managed to find space for what was probably Charles Burchfield's first exhibition.[28]

From this new location, the Sunwise Turn moved into publishing, "issuing a book of parodies by Witter Bynner, an essay on Rodin by Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Dance of Siva* by Ananda Coomaraswamy, a book of caricatures by Ivan Opfer, *The Gods of the Mountains* by Lord Dunsany, and a perfectly dreadful miracle play called *Guibour* that was presented at the Grand Street Theatre." Loeb stood well back: "Publishing was Mary's department, and I did not interfere with it."[29]

In fact, relations with his partners had begun to fray: "Despite the pleasure of associating with people who wrote books, painted pictures, and upheld causes, and the satisfaction of working at a task I believed in, I began to have doubts about the bookshop."[30] He was charmed that F. Scott Fitzgerald dropped in, and one evening Wallace Stevens, Scofield Thayer, and William Carlos Williams came to the shop and talked. He enjoyed jousting with the publishers' representatives, including Blanche Knopf, who would come in with her little suitcase, promoting their latest title, which in some way or other was always "superlative" and deserving of a large order. Despite her

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Loeb, 35.
[30] Ibid.

charm, Loeb says, he learned to say "no" to her,[31] but this was not enough to keep him in the business. He was organized and his partners were not:

> I was especially troubled by Madge Jenison, who sold books like a tornado, swooping around, picking up a volume here, dropping one there, scribbling the wrong title, name, or address on her sales slip or forgetting it altogether, leaving a trail of debris and confusion behind her. It was particularly hard on Marjorie [Loeb's wife], who kept the books. And it hindered my efforts to make ends meet.[32]

And of the other partner, the more philosophical Mowbray-Clarke:

> It wasn't long before my initial enthusiasm for Mary Clarke and her theories began to wear thin in spots. The postwar period was marked by a swing of the younger generation toward social experimentation and ideological revision and Mary Clarke and her kind played an essential role in this movement by providing it with an intellectual or pseudo-intellectual basis. Although she herself was as inhibited as a puritan, she liberated her disciples in certain areas and tied them up in others.[33] (35-36)

It was a dinner with photographer Alfred Stieglitz that crystallized his doubts:

> One evening Alfred and Georgia O'Keefe, an intense young painter from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, came to dinner. . . . The conversation veered to The Sunwise Turn. Alfred tried to hold back his opinion – a hard feat for an unrestrained talker whose mind refueled itself in flight.

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[31] Ibid., 51.
[32] Ibid., 35.
[33] Loeb, 35-36.

> Tactlessly I praised Mary Clarke for her success in promoting the careers of young and unknown artists, a task into which Stieglitz also put much effort and in which he took great pride. Alfred exploded: 'Stuff and fiddlesticks! Bloodless females who suffocate the slightest suspicion of beauty beneath torrents of gush.'
>
> I was impelled to defend my partners: 'Before dismissing them, you might come to one of our poetry evenings, or look at Burchfield's water-colors, or at the books that go out . . .'
>
> He retorted by ridiculing the shop's Christmas packages. Each volume sold during the previous holiday season had been swathed in multicolored Japanese paper. Then he made fun of our orange decorations and Mary's aesthetic pronouncements.[34]

Torrents of gush, lightbulbs and books alike swathed in bright paper – these were enough for Stieglitz to dismiss the real cultural work that the Sunwise Turn was doing. Madge Jenison did gush. In her memoir, we hear the voice that made Stieglitz grump: "How we worked!... We worked as a Beethoven sonata should be played, with the same abandon, the same joy, the same sense of connection with the beat of one's own heart and the rhythm of the world."[35] And later, "I believe everyone likes to keep a shop. Keeping a shop is one of the thirteen rivers of fairy land."[36]

One of those who succumbed to Mowbray-Clarke's charisma was Loeb's cousin, Peggy Guggenheim. She had turned twenty-one in 1919 and inherited $450,000; she started to get a nose job, but called it off, and she approached Harold Loeb "desperate for

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[34] Ibid., 36-37.
[35] Jenison, 32.
[36] Ibid., 49.

something to do."[37] Loeb remembers how "Peggy came to work in the bookshop as a volunteer. Awkward as a young magpie in her furs and jewelry, she captivated us all by her willingness to go through with the dullest clerical work, and by her joy in being around."[38] Guggenheim herself acknowledges, "Though I was only a clerk, I swept into the bookshop daily, highly perfumed, and wearing little pearls and a magnificent taupe coat."[39] There, as Loeb says, she came "under Mary Clarke's spell." Guggenheim says, "I loved Mary Mowbray-Clarke. She became a sort of goddess to me…. She was so serious and so good and so wonderful about her work, idealistic, absolutely devoted to what she thought she was doing";[40] but even Guggenheim's adoration admits an ambiguous note: "She was a very superior person. I suppose she thought she was educating the world."[41] In any case, the six months at the Sunwise Turn changed Guggenheim's life, initiating the devotion to art that would define her philanthropic career; as her sister Hazel said, "If it hadn't been for the bookshop and Laurence [Vail], she'd be playing golf at the Westchester Country Club."[42]

Loeb mocks Guggenheim's motives and her guilt over her inherited wealth: "In compensation she collected the latest in experimental painting and gave money and meals to poor artists and writers,"[43] but in the passage in which he speaks of himself and his wife developing their potentialities, he sketches a portrait of a rich young couple flailing about in an effort to justify their position: "We studied painting with Billy and Marguerite Zorach, read *The Bookman* for its literary criticism, Parsons on interior decorating,

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37 Jacqueline Bograd Weld, *The Wayward Guggenheim* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), 39.
38 Ibid., 36.
39 Ibid., 39.
40 Peggy Guggenheim [Bibliographic information?], 23.
41 Weld, 40.
42 Ibid., 69.
43 Loeb, 36.

bought Swedish peasant chairs, listened to Yvette Guilbert, and applauded Little Theatre productions even when it hurt. Thinking of ourselves as *not* innately superior to the general populace, we felt we had to justify our privileges by training our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our minds to understand."[44] We can see in Loeb and Guggenheim (as in Sylvia Beach) a kind of cultural money-laundering at work, and though the older Loeb scoffs (he was 67 when writing this), the younger Loeb, who on his twenty-first birthday had inherited $50,000 from his father – roughly the equivalent of $1,250,000 today, was no doubt just as seduced as Peggy Guggenheim by Mowbray-Clarke's fervent anti-capitalism.

But while Guggenheim was so inept as a shop assistant that she was only allowed to sell at noon ("a slight which she never forgot," says Loeb), Loeb was a man who had already worked as a supply purchaser with the American Smelting and Lead company and who, after the Crash and the failure of his novel, would spend from 1929 to 1954 as an economist and administrator in the Office of Price Administration and War Production Board, Washington, D.C. What really rankled was not the quality of Mowbray-Clarke's ideas but the way they interfered with business: "Mary and Madge were more intent on getting their ideas across than on selling books. Many a time I had walked into the shop to discover Mary or Madge, and sometimes the two of them, declaiming for the benefit of a confirmed browser while a would-be customer stood by impatiently."[45]

Women of Breeding

[44] Ibid., 26.
[45] Ibid., 30.

The 1916 *Publishers' Weekly* article has Madge Jenison stating that the inspiration for the bookstore came from Earl Barnes's article "A New Profession for Women" in the August 1915 *Atlantic Monthly.* It makes for squeamish reading today, as Barnes addresses the "problem" of the "large number of young women who have been to college or university." He notes that "the callings of teacher, librarian, and social worker are already over-supplied. What are educated young women going to do?" These women "have a "bookish habit of mind" and "beyond this… a desire for social service. Brought up on abstract ideals, separated, in most cases, from the grind of daily work, at the marriageable age they instinctively desire to lose themselves in service."[46] So, given that "the old-time bookstore, managed by a man who knew books and loved them, is now little more than a tradition," replaced by piles of books in department stores (this is 1915; we remember the injunction that there never was a Golden Age), why not have these women open bookshops? Barnes admits that the "universal criticism raised is that young college women have no financial skill and no interest in commercial life. Their whole tendency is to spend…" But, he points out, women manage restaurants, candy and pastry shops, flower stores or toy shops. And, he concedes, "the same criticism holds, though possibly in a less degree, with regard to many men who leave college."[47] Thus opening a bookstore would "help in every way to settle the vexed question of such women's relation to the economic life of the community."[48]

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[46] Earl Barnes, "A New Profession for Women," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1915, 229.

[47] Ibid., 233.

[48] Ibid., 234; The questions was indeed vexing. The Woman's Book-Shop, the first bookstore planned exclusively for women had opened at Lexington Avenue and Fifty-second Street in late 1916. In the Woman Suffrage Parade on 27 October 1917, there was a special section in the parade "for women from the bookstores and publishing houses, who carried banners and copies of feminist books, which they waved at the spectators"; it was in part this demonstration, JohnTebbel argues, that led to a meeting two weeks later at the Sunwise Turn, in which twenty-one women in the book trade organised the Women's National Association of the Booksellers and Publishers. Tebbel, II, 176. *Publishers' Weekly* was of two minds about this new organization: "We give the new Association cordial welcome. The question will naturally arise

In her memoir, Jenison credits not Barnes but Clive Bell for her inspiration, even dedicating the book "TO / Mr. Clive Bell / WHO, THOUGH I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM / AND HE HAS NEVER HEARD MY NAME, / FOUNDED THIS BOOKSHOP /BECAUSE HE WROTE A BOOK." It was reading Bell's essay "Art" that compelled her to call Mary Mowbray-Clarke, and though "she cried a little, being of Irish parents, and said that she did not see how she could possibly take anything else on,"[49] Jenison convinced her. This is very touching (we do not have Mowbray-Clarke's version of the generation story), but, later in the book, Jenison gives us a sense of the particular class position of the bookstore in terms that seem to corroborate Barnes: "The leisure-class woman wants to sell books. She will do it when she would not teach or work in any other business or profession. Women of breeding, with a background of reading, perception, distinction, and brains …. We had from one to ten a week coming in to ask how they could open bookshops or volunteering as our assistants."[50] So Peggy Guggenheim was not an anomaly.

One of the delights of the bookstore, however, is all the interesting people one comes in contact with, says Jenison, in a passage that delineates current fashion and her demographic:

> Most of the people we know are just like ourselves. They wear the same woollen embroidered blouses with no shoulder seams, or midnight *pea de soie* silk with muslin ruches. They keep the same number of maids or have a

whether women should not rather put their energies behind trade organizations already existing." Nevertheless, the writer conceded that the Association was necessary: "As yet, however, they are excluded from the regular trade gatherings in New York and Philadelphia – tho [sic] not in Boston – and it is no doubt largely due to this fact that the new Association, with headquarters in New York, has been formed." Anonymous, *Publishers' Weekly*, Nov. 24 1917, 1822.

[49] Jenison, 4.

[50] Ibid., 152.

> charwoman polish off the studio twice a week. They have gone to college if we have, and to Europe the same number of times. If they have done Greece, we have done it. But in a bookshop you drink democracy. People not selected by your own personality come into a shop – all sorts, the great, and cold, young ex-convicts, shoplifters.[51] (113)

She tells an amusing story of trying to sell *The Theory of the Leisure Class* to a man with long hair who looked Scandinavian and who, she has decided, must be a Swedenborgian minister. He resists her urging and only later does she find out he is Thorstein Veblen. Though she admits, "We never really reached working people" (121), she seems unaware of just how leisured her class was.

In *Reluctant Capitalists* Laura J. Miller draws on Gregory Stone's 1954 study, "City Shoppers and Urban Identification" in which he identifies four types of consumers: the *economic consumer*, concerned with price, quality and assortment, who regarded clerks as "merely the instruments of … purchase"; the *personalizing consumer*,who valued the formation of relationships with sales staff; the *ethical consumer*, who perceived "a moral obligation to patronize specific types of stores"; and the *apathetic consumer*, who made little differentiation between stores and staff. To this typology, Miller adds a fifth category, the *citizen consumer*, "who acts on behalf of a perceived common good and who consciously turns consumption into a political act."[52] Unlike Stone, she does not see these types as separate individuals, but as "cultural orientations" that the same person may draw on at different times, and she argues that independent

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[51] Ibid., 114.

[52] Laura J. Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption*. (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2006), 17.

booksellers have "contributed to pushing this last vision of consumption somewhat more into public consciousness."[53] Certainly that was the aim of Jenison and Mowbray-Clarke.

They were not unique. Books have always occupied a special place in retailing, regarded as "sacred products." Indeed, booksellers are often reluctant to call them products at all; books have moral worth, and selling books is regarded as a moral endeavour; a small bookstore is different from a small grocery store, says one of the independent booksellers Miller interviewed, because it is a place for the exchange of ideas.[54] Department stores carried them to enhance their image; in 1938, the manager of the book section of a department store told his staff they should think of book salesmen as "Mind Doctors" for the community.[55] As Miller says, people who chose to run independent bookstores are generally very committed to their enterprise; they could certainly make more money doing something else, and they "see themselves as bettering society by making books available" and customers are seen as "neighbors" not merely as sources of profit. But then Miller makes a crucial point: "whether or not many customers experience the independent retailer this was is a different question."[56]

Miller cites George Ritzier on "The Macdonaldization of Society" with its attendant "homogenization of experience, dehumanization of employees and customers alike, as interactions between them are minimized and those that remain are governed by uniform scripts."[57] The interactions between Mary Mowbray-Clarke and her customers was not governed by a script – at least not one that had sales as its object – but the comments by Harold Loeb suggest that her enthusiastic advocacy crossed the line into

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53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 19, 219-220.
55 Ibid., 58.
56 Ibid., 14.
57 Ibid. 13.

hectoring, as she tried to impose her own script upon the shopping experience. We can see the seeds of this as early as 1917 in Mowbray-Clarke's enthusiastic speech to the Booksellers' Association: "it is almost impossible for any one to come into the Bookshop and not buy a book because if he didn't know anything about a subject before he came in, he is talked into it while there." And while she claims they will order any book, "good, bad or indifferent, moral or immoral," when a women's club decided to install a library, and put together a committee who came up with a long purchase list, Mowbray-Clarke told them, "No, that isn't the kind of books anyone will read. What you want to put in their hands are perfectly up to date books, the best books on the war and on the present situation in America." She says triumphantly, "We finally brought them around to our way of thinking."[58] Maybe so, but she seems to have no sense that she might have been alienating more customers than she engaged.

A Modernist Performance

Mowbray-Clarke's 1922 speech "The Small Bookshop" captures not only Mowbray-Clarke's voice but also the excitement in that first month of the *annus mirabilus* of Modernism (six days before *Ulysses* was published). These are the ideas that inspired, and then tired, Harold Loeb. Mowbray-Clarke's sense of mission is paramount:

> I like that term --book-shop-keeper. It sounds like light-house-keeper in my mind and that brings in connotations of courage and steadfastness and other virtues common and necessary to both.

[58] Mary Mowbray-Clarke, 17th Annual Convention of the American Booksellers' Association, *Publishers' Weekly,* May 26 1917, 1706. Clarke states her belief that books are "a kind of spiritual food," and demands that "they be not treated as luxuries but as necessities of life. We don't allow any one to think that because times are bad, salaries low, or because there may be a little flurry because of the war, that this is the time *not* to buy and read books."

> The movement is still too young for any of us to know exactly what we are contributing to the service of the Book. Something, each of us, I am sure – something of a new form of Humanism, vaguer as yet than that of the small traditional old-book shop with its classics and monumental books, and just possibly something more concentrated than is possible in the large merchandising Book-shops where books are -- may I say it? perhaps sold as ordinary commodities rather than as what they seem to us to be -- food for the soul of man -- tools for the pursuits of life.[59]

As the pamphlet indicates, the Sunwise Turn described itself as a "Modern" book shop.[i] Mary Mowbray-Clarke saw the Sunwise Turn as part of the modernist movement, and a movement of "Little" bookshops, like Little theatre or Little magazines. In 1917 she established a connection with the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit, who set up a bookstore in their box office.[60] She talks about rhythm, not about retail strategies:

> To imitate is to kill at once the soul of your own idea, yet you can -- and do, when you've done any real work -- refresh and admire the traditional and learn from it every day until you genuinely find out for yourself and reaffirm in your own work the truth that there are no laws in art or life, only law -- the inner rhythm taking form whenever the right elements are brought together.
>
> Does this seem too far from the every-day business of running a book-shop and making it pay? My talk to you will be a waste of your time unless I can

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[59] Mobray-Clarke, "The Small Bookshop," Box 1, HRC.

[60] See ALS 13 October 1917, from Sam Hume, dictated, on Arts and Crafts Theatre stationary, 4 pp.; box 2, Detroit Theatre file; in September 1918 they closed the bookshop because Sam Hume took up a professorship at the university of California, although in December Maud Hume wrote to "Mrs. Clarke and Miss Jettison" [sic] that she was thinking of opening a bookshop near the university. She succeeds, and they have etchings and exhibitions and it's "tremendous fun" – but Madge was about to jettison the Sunwise Turn.

> succeed in making known to you the very definite kind of a performance the Sunwise Turn experiment is.[61]

The Sunwise Turn is at once a performance, a work of decorative art, and a political act: in her earlier talk, just one year after the shop had opened, she said "I am a cubist, a futurist, an impressionist, all rolled into one.[62] Critics regard the little magazines of the Modernist period as an extension of the manifesto, and certainly the banner of Margaret Anderson's *Little Review* – MAKING NO COMPROMISE WITH THE PUBLIC TASTE – could be taken as the motto of the Sunwise Turn.

> Now, specifically, what do we do at the Sunwise Turn that is not done everywhere? We glean and sort and distribute, when invited to do so, what we can of the materials for an intelligent modern thought life. We try constantly to descry the structure of civilization in the new lights that illumine it yearly and to keep on watching for the important tendencies in philosophy, psychology, education, science …[63]

And when you are "ready" she will tell you what to read:

> When we have found you ready to read "Tertium Organnum" we can tell you where to find related ideas in our mathematical philosophers. When you read "Dangerous Ages" we can point to the master from whom the author learned the trick. We may even help to get a serious person still afflicted with war hysteria to a point where he can read Bertrand Russell's "Analysis of Mind"

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[61] Mobray-Clarke, "The Small Bookshop," Box 1, HRC.

[62] Mowbray-Clarke, "The Sunwise Turn Bookshop – New York." 1704.

[63] Ibid.

> or Gilbert Cannan's "Release of the Soul" without worrying about the author's war views. . .

She is determined to bring in "English books of value" even if they are not great writers – figures such as Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, who had published *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* and whose radical experiment in *Jacob's Room* would not appear until October of this year:

> I think I can claim the honor of introducing Mr. Clive Bell to a wider public in America a year or two earlier than he would inevitably have reached us, and over 2/3 of the Am. ed. of Roger Fry's Vision and Design was sold in [ ], and A. E. has been a true best seller at the Sunwise Turn. The many who have read through [us?] his "National Being" were not so worried about a free Ireland as they might have been without it. Many a man or woman in America has read John Dewey or Thorstein Veblen or Robinson [?Leggart] or Salsuntala [?] or Lao Tsu who might not without our suggestion have done so. If English books of value are not brought out here or come out here and fail to take well and so are dropped, we try to keep them for their chance. We did this notably for "South Wind" and Virginia Wolff [sic] {for "Privilege" - strikeout} and "The Pilgrim of a Smile" not great authors these, but contributors.[64]

But it is not just a matter of importing culture. Mowbray-Clarke takes it as part of her mission to promulgate American values abroad:

> Then we take a special pride in finding the values in our own new poetry and fiction and painting and making them known in Europe. During the war we

[64] Ibid.

> were especially well able to do this through the interesting visits of the various High Commissions from European countries and the intellectual caliber of the men in them who could come to us again and again to discuss our America and get us to make up for them little libraries of the work we would select as showing our truest records of American experience.

And this is to take place not just in Europe:

> Here & there, In India, In China, In Japan, In Australia and In New Zealand, we have introduced American poets, educators and psychologists. Naturally our very broad contacts have showed us the [weaknesses?] of propaganda for any issue, but no freedom can be achieved without experience of all issues, so we collect data on all controverted [sic -- controversial?] subjects, and so hope to contribute to clarification. National Guilds ideas, Sinn Fein, Bolshevism, Bhai, Ghandi's non-cooperation -- all are represented as fast as we can get the material and if we sell Mrs. Sanger we also can show you the scholarly little [anti? - in margin] "Birth Control" pamphlet so beautifully printed at St. Dominic's Press.[65]

Today Mary Mowbray-Clarke would be urging Martha Nussbaum's *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* on customers, for she declares, an intelligent bookshop must be a "University Militant." These things, from Sinn Fein to Birth Control "are factors in world growth to-day. The intelligent person must take notice of them. Snap-shot judgments on them are the curse of our public life."[66]

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

Robert Darnton draws attention to the bookseller as "a cultural agent, the middleman who mediated between supply and demand at the key point of contact."[67] The bookseller is the interface between the production side and the reception side of the communications circuit, and there are two basic kinds of booksellers: those who are just order fillers, responding to public demand, and those striving to shape public demand. What they offered at the Sunwise Turn was not just commodities, but counsel, and though a note of resentment creeps in Mowbray-Clarke is proud of their abilities: "Our professional service in selecting for the special work of individuals books to help with facts or inspiration often leads to comical results. A man or woman will ask us for such a list. Hours will be spent in thought about the needs, a whole Saturday Post Review will be written especially for him or her."[68] Self-selection applies to the staff, which Mowbray-Clarke generously compares to the process of art:

> We seem nowadays to have almost achieved an alumni of those who have been with us and gone on to more lucrative jobs, from which they come back to give us often excellent "business ideas." People that prove unrelated seem naturally to fall away while those who belong become more truly integrated. This is the inevitable art process again.[69]

Little magazines and the little theatre movement existed to promote new ideas or new forms of art, rather than sales; small presses and little bookstores by definition did not make money. "Business ideas" seem to be the opposite of "modernism"; Mowbray-Clarke is unrepentant, even defiant, on this issue:

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67 Robert Darnton, The Kiss of L'Amourette: Reflections in Cultural History, (New York: Norton, 1990), 130.
68 Mobray-Clarke, "The Small Bookshop," Box 1, HRC.
69 Ibid.

> We are a "Modern" Book-Shop because we conceive the term "modern" to apply to the 20th century consciousness of all the factors in the life itself--even those sub-conscious ones the psychanalyst [sic] is unearthing for us -- and we believe that our way of selling books is our way of searching for those factors. We find them every where. We take them "off of" the Tammany politician who often surprisingly enough reads widely and intelligently, the jejune young anarchist just out of jail, the morose Scandinavian editor, the most sensitive of Italian diplomats, the burly English novelist, or the American writer of Middle Western movies. We follow every lead that connects with our work. We promote discussion of all the arts and sciences. We are less interested in hearing What is the matter with America than in discovering what American has that <u>is</u> fine and noble and beautiful, and we often feel proud of our little piles of great ones.[70]

Then she comes to the point:

> "But do you make any money?" ask all the business friends, who think everything we do a little foolish, yet continue to come to us nevertheless.
>
> "No, we do not," we have to answer. We do everything but make money. We've sold some hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of books, we've almost doubled each year the number of our steady customers, we've made good friends we hope, but we do not make money. With our [?methods] our selling costs are necessarily high, we've done many things that were foolish and unnecessarily expensive perhaps and which we will never do again, but we have not compromised our original idea. That entity that very

[70] Ibid.

> soon became bigger than any one of us who worked for it -- the Sunwise Turn -- seems destined to go on trying to prove its right to exist. . . . .[71]

What she didn't tell the booksellers was that the Sunrise Turn was at that moment not trying to prove its "right" to exist but to exist at all. The issue of money had been the fundamental one for Harold Loeb: "For me, the 'profit system' existed whether I liked it or not; and since it did I accepted the first rule of business: to operate without loss, " but "Mary, however, was against capitalism itself. To her the word 'profit' had an evil connotation."[72]

Alan Antliff argues that Arthur Penty's 'guild socialism' and Coomaraswamy's 'traditions' were "variants of an anarchism which Mary Mowbray-Clarke also endorsed."[73] Coomaraswamy (who was born in Ceylon, grew up in England, received his BA from the University of London) was deeply influenced by the ideas of William Morris and argued that industrial capitalism was "destroying both the religious ideal in Indian art and the modes of production that tied this art to the spiritual life of the people," and called for a renewed "medievalism" that integrated spiritualism with day-to-day activities, an integration that could only be achieved through art.[74] Whether or not we label her views "anarchist" we can see why she published Coomaraswamy's essays. In her speech to the booksellers in 1922 Mowbray-Clarke had said, "the Sunwise Turn experiment … tries to show what the whole trend of socialism works toward – the lessening of the separation between a business and a philosophy of life of the creators of it."[75]

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Loeb, *The Way It Was*, 52.
[73] Antliff, 127.
[74] Antliff, 129-130.
[75] Mobray-Clarke, "The Small Bookshop," Box 1, HRC.

Two years later we find her, all idealism lost, almost spitting in her scorn. "Booksellers" she says: "a group of rather timid, ineffectual, inarticulate people Babbitting about the splendid conditions in the trade, & the growth in numbers … wary of being caught on the side of the censored book, vague about most other problems confronting them." Not only are they " rarely able to describe their methods scientifically," they are "nearly always badly dressed in the imitative way." The so-called romance of the bookshop is bogus: "Those who write for the magazines on bookshops are generally people like Mr. Morley and Mr Newton who write delectable moonshine about dream shops into which the shadow of the credit man never enters." Either that or "they are the naïve and self-deluded people who 'bring books to Bohouk' in a 'true missionary spirit'." Wasn't Mowbray-Clarke herself one who lauded bookselling as a vocation? What happened in the interim?

Figure 2: Mary Mowbray-Clarke (standing) and Madge Jenison in the Sunwise Turn

Infelicitous Space

Mary Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* gives us the concept of the "contact zone," a space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact. The relations established usually involve "coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" – but she wants to emphasize "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power."[76] In a sense, a bookstore is a contact zone; this is what Jenison was getting at when she

[76] Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 4.

talked about the range of people who came into the store, and Mowbray-Clarke when she says, "We get all kinds of people. We have colored people. We have all sorts of people who are not ordinarily readers at all. Little cooks…" as well as "young doctors."[77] But the Sunwise Turn was less like a colonizing military or commercial venture and more like a missionary venture: Cultural Missionaries in the Capitalist Jungle. Perhaps one in which the missionaries get swallowed up or go bad. When the bookstore moved from 31st Street up to 42nd, right next to Grand Central Station, it was, as it were, moving up river. Mary Mowbray-Clarke is finally a little like Kurtz, wanting to bring light into the heart of darkness and ending by railing at the natives – she stops short of "exterminate the brutes," but the sentiment is there.

She sneers at booksellers and snarls at the customers: "Fancy though, serving a public ninety-nine per cent of whom were afraid to buy on our heartiest recommendation …. Yet they will swallow volume after volume of Michael Arlen." So all those long discussions in the shop yielded little – customers still bought bestsellers. That is when they bought at all:

> These amazing people who make the new domestic budgets – yet I have yet to find a budget that includes a sum for books. . . . The same people who exclaim at the price of a book go from our shop to tea at the Biltmore and exclaim not at the cost of a cup, or they go next door and buy a bathing suit for one or two dips or a silk shirt that fades away in a month without a feeling of extravagance. As for candy! I can't be calm when I think of the waste on that expensive injury and the number of profitable distribution centers for it.

[77] Mowbray-Clarke, "The Sunwise-Turn Bookshop – New York," 1706.

Thorstein Veblen could have explained to her about the shirts. He had coined the term "conspicuous consumption" more than fifteen years earlier in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) where he declares, "Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure"[78] and insists, "No class of society, not even the most abjectly poor, foregoes all customary conspicuous consumption.…Very much of squalor and discomfort will be endured before the last trinket or the last pretence of pecuniary decency is put away."[79] Tea… bathing suits… silk shirts …candy. What about philosophy?

> We had a set of Plato with us for four years. Finally it sold before we had quite decided to put it in the inventory of "furniture and fixtures." A young assistant said "don't replace <u>that</u>!" But Plato had to be in our shop with Lao-Tzu and the Mahabarata and Whitman and St. Francis. How do people appear so intelligent and read so few books? And does not everyone who does read a good book at once <u>feel</u> enlarged and made more of a civilized creature?

Apparently people do not feel enlarged by reading – at least not enough to buy books:

> The smallness of the sums relative to income spent on books by Americans is appalling. . . . .When we opened the shop we ardently believed that a large number of people would agree to buy at least six books a month. In five years we have found that only a pitiful number have been that rash – as it now appears they think it, and the average annual sum spent with us is only about $18 a year -- perhaps less than is spent by each on candy. . . .

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[78]Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, (New York: Macmillan, 1899; rpt. Dover Publications, 1994), 47.
[79] Ibid., 53.

Candy again. Obviously a sore point. Almost worse is the slighting of the fine advice they give in the shop. She tells of a man who consulted her about a project; she worked hard and made up a list of seventy-five books related to it; two weeks later he called and ordered two. "Astonished, I said, 'What about the rest of the list?' He answered quite calmly, 'Oh they had all the others at Brentano's.'" You can almost hear Mowbray-Clarke gnashing her teeth. Customers should value consultation as they would with a doctor or a lawyer, she writes. And they do not. Publishers too are a problem. Mowbray-Clarke saved an article called "Few And Better Books," and though she affixed a note at the top, that says "Loose thinking – vague generalities" she took the trouble to save it and to score certain passages.

What strikes the twenty-first century reader is how familiar the complaints are. Publishers, we are told, have created "that class of retail customers who now consider a book that is three or four weeks old behind the times." The bookseller must "sell books like Fords" because "the great requisite for book-reading is leisure, and leisure to-day is an elusive will-o'-the-wisp. With automobiles, movies, radio, weekly magazines, and hourly newspapers, we are living in a hectic age, an age that appeals in many ways to the senses rather than to the mind." (Curiously the writer believes "these so-called obstacles will redound to our advantage, for surely automobiles and radios and movies, yea, even sex magazines, stimulate the mind, and eventually, when the mind is sufficiently stimulated and in the right direction, we have a new book-reader." Mowbray-Clarke, unconvinced, writes in the margin, "Why does he go back on his own data?".) Even as Mowbray-Clarke was giving her idealistic talk to the booksellers' class at the New York Public Library in January of 1922 the best days of the Sunwise Turn were past. Madge

Jenison had resigned in November of 1920 and was writing her memoir. Loeb had officially resigned in January of 1921 and was already in Europe, founding the little magazine *Broom*. Officially, the Sunwise Turn lasted a full decade, from 1916 to early 1927, but it really peaked after four years. By 1922 the former friends were communicating only through lawyers.

Henri Lefebvre's insights in *The Production of Space* are helpful here. He argues that space is "produced"; not in the sense that a kilogram of sugar is produced, of course, but space is not simply "empty…prior to what ends up filling it."[80] Space is in part a "social relationship," but one that is "inherent to property relationships… and also closely bound up with the forces of production." Thus social space is polyvalent: "its 'reality' at once formal and material. Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it."[81] Social spaces are always "intertwined," overlaid, implicated in various markets – the capital market, the labour market, the market in works, symbols and signs, and, not least, the market in signs themselves. We can see that the Sunwise Turn, conceived as a space that would somehow be within but immune to these forces, was being buffeted and shaped in spite of itself. Social space, says Lefebvre, searching for a metaphor, has a structure more "reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry" than Euclidean space.[82] But then he rejects that metaphor as insufficiently dynamic and settles on an analogy drawn from hydrodynamics. "Great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves – these all collide and 'interfere' with one

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[80] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 85, 15.
[81] Ibid., 85.
[82] Ibid., 86.

another; lesser movements on the other hand interpenetrate."[83] So, "If we were to follow this model, we would say that any social locus could only be properly understood by taking two kinds of determinations into account: on the one hand, that locus would be mobilized, carried forward and sometimes smashed apart by major tendencies…on the other hand, it would be penetrated by, and shot through with, the weaker tendencies characteristic of networks and pathways."[84] He warns that if taken too far the analogy will lead us into error, but applied at its most simplistic we can see modernism as a determination that, from Mowbray-Clarke and Jenison's point of view, mobilizes and carries forward, but which proved not to be the major tendency the authors of the store thought it was; it was rather a weaker tendency, and the major tendency was capitalism. We can also see the crosscurrents of personal relations (Loeb, Guggenheim and other women of breeding, lecturers, such as Theodore Dreiser, customers, such as Thorstein Veblen, inspirational presences, such as Clive Bell) creating, defining, undermining the space of the store. As Lefebvre says, social spaces "are traversed by myriad currents," are characterized always by "hypercomplexity"[85] (indeed, class and gender produce and are produced by social spaces). Lefebvre goes on to speak of the "arrogant verticality of skyscrapers" which, he says, putting it more explicitly than Sullivan, introduce "a phallic or more precisely a phallocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent

[83] Ibid., 87.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 88.

power."[86] The towers surrounding Grand Central Station were an apt spatial expression of the powers that would fracture the Sunwise Turn.

A tedious-looking binder in the Ransom Center archives marked "Board of Directors Minutes" charts the dramatic disintegration of the Sunwise ideal. On June 30 of 1920, there were notes about a Special Meeting at which Madge Jenison resigned as Treasurer. The meeting was held at 8:00 p.m. – this was unusual; the others were usually during working hours. Hastily called? Then seven months later (January 31, 1921), another Special Meeting was called. Here Harold Loeb and Marjorie resign, their resignations to take effect immediately. Back salaries are owed:

Mowbray-Clarke	$2295.75
H. Loeb	$1127.79
M. Loeb	$1296.94
Miss Jenison	$1346.29

Attention is drawn to the fact that Harold Loeb had paid $1900 to underwrite the publication of *Plays for Merry Andrews*; the Corporation hopes to sell these and refund Mr. Loeb; it acknowledges its indebtedness. The immediate resignations suggest strife.

Jumping ahead to 12 January 1922, just two weeks before Mowbray-Clarke's address to the booksellers at the New York Public Library, the minutes of another Board of Directors meeting show the situation becoming worse: "Various ways and means of economizing were discussed and a reduction of the personnel of the staff and a lowering of salaries and wages was suggested." Nothing firm at this point. That will come. Then, "A proposal from the Encyclopaedia Britannica for rental of desk room was considered and approved," and "The question of meeting the debts of the corporation through a loan

[86] Ibid., 98.

from the bank was proposed and left for further investigation." So they are looking at cutting staff, renting space, and refinancing. At the Annual Meeting on 27 April 1922, two positions are dispensed with, a part-time basis established for another, and a reduction made in the salaries of the officers. On May 15, the belts were tightened further with "Miss Robinson having successfully completed the installation of the card catalogue system, then resigning; and the substitution of a part time book-keeper for the faithful, local services of Miss Pinsky." Things did not look good: the Britannica proposal was rejected (insufficient re-imbursement and too binding a contract – they wanted a seven-year lease), and the Harriman Bank refused to consider a loan. A proposal was made that claimants to back salary relinquish their claim.

Three weeks later, the minutes of 7 June 1922 record that they have transferred their affairs from the Harriman Bank to the Fifth Avenue Bank who will give them a loan of $5,000 at 6% interest. That is promising. But the corporation is imploding. On 22 May a letter had been sent to Marjorie Loeb asking her to relinquish her back salary. On June 12th she replied through her brother, lawyer Harold Content of Griffiths, Sarfaty & Content, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 120 Broadway. He writes:

> She informs me that her position is exactly this: she has not pressed the Company for the payment of this salary and quite understood that the sum would not be paid until the finances of the Corporation warranted it. The only effect of such cancellation would be to relieve the Company of a debt which was really owed to Mrs. Loeb for services which were performed earnestly and diligently.

Harold goes on to say, "It is not surprising that Mrs. Clarke should have acquiesced in the suggestion, because she is still active in the Company and doubtless hopes to derive future benefits from her connection with the Company." And he concludes, "While my sister has no desire to be mean or unreasonable, she can see no reason why she should make a present to The Sunwise Turn of the sums actually due her for hard work. Very truly yours …" We can hear the tart tones of Marjorie mixed with the more lofty legal manner, and neither would have sat well with Mowbray-Clarke.

Ten days later (22 June 1922), Madge Jenison writes from Dobbs Ferry, north of Manhattan, not to Mowbray-Clarke but to Ruth McCall, one of the other board members, saying that she will sign off her salary claim "at the time and in the event that a loan is completed, and if the Loebs do. Otherwise, I would rather hold it over for the time. I am glad that you have weathered another note. I know so well the weariness of spirit that goes along with that element of that very dearly beloved life." The saccharine note of the letter would have brought no consolation – especially since Jenison's *Women's Home Companion* article "Bookselling as a Profession for Women" had just appeared on the newsstands. Mowbray-Clarke must have been grinding her teeth. And creditors were becoming restive. A letter of December 1922 from The Diamond Press complains that they have been carrying an account for two years, and "we have been very lenient with you, but we cannot see our way clear to carry the balance due us indefinitely." A month later Mowbray-Clarke is replying to Mr. Diamond's lawyers; they work out a deal, it seems, but a month after that the lawyer is writing testily, "I cannot however agree to your request that the balance will be paid when funds are available." Clearly Mowbray-

Clarke remained resolutely innocent, thinking that earnestness and high ideals would conquer all.

The issue of back salaries dragged on into the new year, when, on January 23 at noon, the Board issued a rebuttal that seems aimed at Marjorie Loeb's claim that Mowbray-Clarke stood to benefit from the proposal:

> The Board of Directors had felt that this request was not unjustified in view of the fact that all the claimants, save Mrs. Mowbray-Clarke, the only one to express readiness and even eagerness to give up the back salary, had retired from the Sunwise Turn with monetary recompense far in advance of their investments. The answers, which are incorporated in the records, took no cognizance of this point of view.

So far this was just sabre rattling; no one was making any aggressive moves. Then buried four pages into a report, it emerges that on 16 February 1923, board member and lawyer Charles Alling had discovered "certain irregularities, certain illegal and invalid acts and improper procedure." Was the whole corporation invalid?

> It appeared that the directors had voted on their own salaries; that salaries had not been approved by stockholders; had not been voted by the board; that it was possible that they might have been voted irrespective of the rights of creditors and that such action might subject the corporation to suit by creditors and stockholders, and that it was possible that an exact inspection of the old books would show that the salaries might be in some cases at variance with the actual facts.

Though couched in the careful language of lawyers ("appeared...possible... might...possible...might be in some cases"), it looked as though Mowbray-Clarke was in deep trouble. After discussion, the Board had

> RESOLVED that the question of back salaries should be referred to the directors to investigate the old books of the corporation further to see the exact status of such alleged salaries and that the stockholders suggest that all back salaries should be voided and invalidated by reason of the facts stated…

"Alleged salaries": Mowbray-Clarke and Alling were bringing to bear all possible legal ingenuity to do the Loebs and Jenison out of their salaries. That was not all:

> The question of the accounts of the Mr. and Mrs. Loeb, two former officers, was brought up by the President who stated that there had been transferred on the books by Harold Loeb who was then Treasurer and had charge of the books, certain accounts owing to the corporation but which accounts were transferred against the amounts alleged to be owing to Mr. and Mrs. Loeb.

Mowbray-Clarke is going to accuse Loeb of misuse of funds. And the $5000 that Loeb had put in, the half of his remaining patrimony? A Special Meeting of Board 1 March 1923 concluded that Harold Loeb never paid in the $5,000 loan, that he used the money "for his own purposes for a year and that only when it had been ascertained that this money had not been paid over to the corporation did he advise his broker Lauer & Co. to open an account in the name of the corporation for $2000 of this money, crediting that amount with back interest, but stating that checks should be signed by either himself or Mrs. Loeb."

So it was RESOLVED not only that the back salaries to 1 Feb. 1921 were void, but that "Loeb in taking payments totalling $1,700 before leaving the company (unknown to the President) defrauded the company, and these payments will now be entered as a contingent asset"; this will be used to compensate for the money owed to Loeb for the publication of "Merry Andrews." Further, Marjorie Loeb's book purchases of $276.46, charged against her back salary, will be considered a contingent asset. However, Mowbray-Clarke's salary is deemed valid: she is entitled to $2421.27 for her services, and will consider taking preferred stock. Deftly done. If not illegal this was at least what used to be called "sharp practice." Ironically, the most reluctant capitalist had now become the most aggressive.

Bourdieu's famous opening to his essay "The Production of Belief" speaks precisely to the situation of the Sunwise Turn, and Mary Mowbray-Clarke in particular: "The art business, a trade in things that have no price, belongs to the class of practices in which the logic of the pre-capitalist economy lives on."[87] A pre-capitalist economy which Mowbray-Clarke with her dream of guilds longed for. However, says Bourdieu, the logic is more complicated than at first appears: these practices "can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing."[88] In other words, the challenge for "economies based on disavowal of the 'economic'" is that they can function "only by virtue of a constant, collective repression of the narrowly 'economic' interest" only by a constant "disavowal." This makes sense in the art business, an "economic universe, whose very functioning is defined by a 'refusal' of the 'commercial' which is in fact a collective

[87] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited and introduced by Randal Johnson, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 74.
[88] Ibid.

disavowal of commercial interests and profits."[89] The practices "which in an 'economic' universe would be those most ruthlessly condemned, contain a form of economic rationality" in the art business because they lead to the "*accumulation of symbolic capital"* which ultimately guarantees economic profits.[90] Mary Mowbray-Clarke may have been extreme in her zeal, and certainly Harold Loeb felt she was deluded, but she was operating in a space – an "economic universe" Bourdieu calls it – in which disavowal was the prevailing, indeed necessary, *modus operandi*. However, to be successful the artist-entrepreneur must exercise a kind of doublethink, or what Tom Wolfe in *The Painted Word* calls "double-tracking" – a delicate psychological state in which the right hand does not acknowledge what the left hand is doing (taking money).

What Mowbray-Clarke did understand, instinctively, was the importance of symbolic capital; what she did not appreciate was that ultimately, in order to survive, you need to cash in your symbolic capital. Bourdieu goes on to make a distinction that neatly encapsulates the difference between Harold Loeb and Mary Mowbray-Clarke:

> The disavowed economic enterprise of art dealers or publishers, 'cultural bankers' in whom art and business meet in practice… cannot succeed, even in 'economic' terms, unless it is guided by a practical mastery of the laws of the functioning of the field in which cultural goods are produced and circulate, i.e. by an entirely improbable, and in any case rarely achieved, combination of the realism implying minor concessions to 'economic' necessities that are disavowed but not denied and the conviction which excludes them.[91]

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[89] Ibid., 75.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 75-76.

Disavowed but not denied. "Disavowal of the 'economy' is placed at the very heart of the field, as the principle governing its functioning and transformation," Bourdieu insists, and "denunciation of the mercenary compromises or calculating manoeuvres of the adversary" are part of the game.[92] John B. Thompson in *Merchants of Culture* opens with his own concept of the cultural field (borrowed from Bourdieu) which he sees as a "structured space of social positions … occupied by agents and organizations… linked together in relations of cooperation, competition, and interdependency"; in fact, he insists, the field is not just one field but a "plurality of fields," a notion which is useful because it "forces us to think in relational terms."[93] Harold Loeb, with one foot in business and one in bohemia, understood the dynamics of the cultural field.

Filed with the Corporation Reports for 1923-4 is a thirty-four-page typescript for a lecture Mowbray-Clarke had given to the Mediaeval Society, at Oxford, back on 21 October 1919, entitled "Law and Currency in the Middle Ages." Loeb had said Mowbray Clarke would talk your ear off about guilds, and here she argues "the Guilds may be said to symbolize the Mediaeval promise that was never fulfilled." She contends that currency leads to the breakdown of community, and that guilds brought about the institution of the Just Price. After attacking the amorality of Roman law, she ends, "If therefore I may presume to offer you any advice in your efforts to restore Mediaeval Society it is to make law rather than economics the centre of your enquiries. In so far as you do this you may be assured that you will before long find yourself able to control forces that will lead to a future where the promise of the Middle Ages will be fulfilled." Ironic then that Mowbray-Clarke would wind up trying to manipulate the law to mitigate her economic

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[92] Ibid., 79.

[93] John B. Thompson, Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 4.

disaster. Her idealized Middle Ages was not to be fulfilled. The mullioned windows of the Sunwise Turn were a brave symbol, but the skyscrapers defined the space, and the forces of capitalism defined the terms.[94] At a noon Directors' meeting on March 9, 1927, they reported that "arrangements had been made with Doubleday Page & Co. to sell the physical assets of the corporation at the store and books at warehouse, except plates and including good-will of the business conducted at its address and the list of customers, for the sum of $5000.00 . . ." The Sunwise Turn was finished, sold to Doubleday, who added it to their chain of stores.

In the same box is a letter from John Macramé Vice-President of E.P. Dutton, 9 May 1923, with a comment on Jenison's book: "I am pleased that you are satisfied with THE SUNWISE TURN. I think that Miss Madge Jenison has done a good piece of work here, not at all perfect, quite defective, but human withal and carrying certain amount of the attractive personality and impressive enthusiasm of the authoress." Enthusiastic, but quite defective, a sounder judgment after all than John Tebbel's *History*. The book may indeed have been "an influential guide to 'personal' bookstore operation," but it was one that would lead devotees into a swamp of financial disorder. *The Sunwise Turn: A Human Comedy of Bookselling* ends with this fine exhortation: "When earnest girls asked us if they should open bookshops, we always advised them to do it – find the capital if they did not have it, take the shivering plunge, meet the crises, and take the returns

[94] One way to approach the contradictions of the Sunwise Turn, separate from yet inextricably bound up with the networks of commerce, is to take the splendid opening paragraph of Stallybrass and White's *Politics & Poetics of Transgression* and replace "marketplace" with "bookstore":

> How does one 'think' a bookstore? At once a bounded enclosure and a site of open commerce… A bookstore is the epitome of local identity… and the unsettling of that identity by the trade and traffic of goods from elsewhere…. [Here] we discover a commingling of categories usually kept separate and opposed: … stranger and local, commerce and festivity, high and low. In the bookstore pure and simple categories of thought find themselves perplexed and one-sided. Only hybrid notions are appropriate to such a hybrid place. (27)

themselves if there were any. I advise every woman in the world to sell books. . . "[95] She took the shivering plunge, and then got out of the water. Cheery and unrepentant to the last, in the preface to the new edition, written in 1930 at the Yaddo artists' retreat, Jenison says, "It is a happy lot to write a book" – but says nothing about the failure of the shop. Ironically, the site today is occupied by a custom shirt shop.

The Sunwise Turn was indeed "the prototype of the small 'personal' bookshop, " but not in the sense Tebbel intended. Mowbray-Clarke couldn't know it, but she was enacting a pattern that would become almost a cliché of Modernism: the idealistic rise of an organization and its descent into bitterness and bankruptcy – or capitulation to the market (the prime exemplar is Sylvia Beach, but one thinks of Margaret Anderson and the *Little Review*, and Pound and Eliot who went different ways). The space of the Sunwise Turn was folded into another spatial construct, the chain of Doubleday. Lefebvre points out that in urban space we ignore what is obvious in natural space: the aspect of time, a perceptual shift he relates to the modern: "with the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space….recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks…this most essential part of lived experience, this greatest good of all goods, is no longer visible to us."[96] We see this most clearly with bohemias, that are always in process, from their initial stage ("low rent" in all senses of the word), through middle-class discovery and gentrification, to a space for the bourgeois rich; a space completely commodified, perhaps even a simulacrum of what it once was, as the space moves from subculture to cultural mainstream to cultural parody.

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[95] Jenison, 153.
[96] Lefebvre, 95.

Mary Mowbray-Clarke was all for the natural and the organic, wanted her store to follow the rhythms of the sun, but did not want to acknowledge that the sun also sets. The artists move on, following the (lack of) money, and the space becomes a fictive construct, preserved in art and memoir. Madge Jenison instinctively found the right approach: get out early and write a book about it. If you read carefully the cautionary note is sounded early: when the shop is still just a gleam in their eyes, Alfred Harcourt sends her to speak to a supplier who tells her, "But of course you know that you cannot possibly make bookselling pay. The only way any bookshop survives is through stationary."[97]

A Sense of Mission

The end of the Sunwise Turn marked the end of an era – but it is always the end of an era. John B. Thompson provides a succinct overview of the rise of the chains in the second half of the twentieth century: in 1958 independent booksellers were selling 72% of trade books, by 1980 this had dropped to 40%; in 1993 the number had been cut nearly in half again, to 23%, by 2000 it was 16%, and by 2006 booksellers accounted for only about 13% of sales.[98] When Doubleday absorbed her small bookshop, Mowbray-Clarke must have felt that chaos had come again, yet even as I was reading of the demise of the Sunwise Turn another idealistic young woman was opening a bookshop on Spring Street in Soho, a twenty-minute walk south of where the first Sunwise had opened.

I interviewed Sarah McNally (daughter of Canadian booksellers Holly and Paul McNally) at a café near the McNally-Jackson bookshop. Tall, slender, with the carriage of a ballet dancer, she's fiercely articulate and passionate about the store, though she laughs easily. She said, "I feel that I'm creating something. … I care about what's in my

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[97] Jenison, 6.
[98] Thompson, 31.

window, in fact I feel like what's in my window right now is a little bland and it's like wearing a hideous shirt, it's a reflection of me." A former editor, now she reads, "everything…. I have to read for my customers, and it's great. I read things I've never read before, like thrillers, because I have to know what the good ones are. People want advice, they want to be told what to read, and they rely on me as a bookseller."

She told me how they have events every night of the week. This was sounding more and more like the spirit of Sunwise so I asked her if she had a sense of "mission."

> Oh yes. Absolutely. My mission is to sell more international literature in translation. I got the idea of shelving books by country, and then afterward someone told me they do it in France.
>
> My mission is to have a New York bookstore that is events-driven, where authors can read and that is a place for the community.
>
> My mission is to have a New York bookstore that is open and welcoming to all who may walk in. If an African-American person walks in, if a Latino person walks in, I want them to see something on the table that will appeal to them.

She paused:

> My mission is also to survive.

[i] One of the best essays/cautionary tales on the subject is Susan Stanford Friedman's "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism,*" in which she insists that **"**definitional excursions are fictionalizing processes, however much they sound like rational categorization" and draws our attention to the unresolved complexities with modernism itself, as well as to the continuing evolution of the term.