This is a pre-publication form of an article that appeared as Tim Armstrong, 'Social Credit Modernism', *Critical Quarterly* 55:2 (July 2013): 50-65.

Social Credit modernism

This essay examines a version of modernism which gathers itself under the banner of Social Credit in the 1930s: the economic and political movement which derived from the writings of C. H. Douglas and the work of his proselytiser A. R. Orage.[1] The wider issue implicit in what is explored here is the way modernism might be considered in terms of small groupings which, after a peak in 1926, struggle to maintain the avant-garde under various banners, both conscious of a modernist legacy and contesting it.

The writers I examine are a group defined by allegiance to a discourse external to literature. But one of the notable aspects of Social Credit was its striving towards an aesthetic arm. The leader of the Green Shirt Movement for Social Credit, John Hargrave, printed endorsements from artists and authors on his pamphlets: Augustus John, Compton Mackenzie, Gorham Munson, and Irene Rathbone (of whom more below). Ezra Pound wrote to Hargrave in 1935, with just a little exaggeration, that 'the FOUR chief American poets of my generation … are solidly aligned to Douglas. T. S. Eliot, W. C. Williams, [John Gould] Fletcher and myself'.[2] Gorham Munson, publishing *New Democracy* across the Atlantic, published 'A check-list of notable contributors' including these and less well known writers (Muriel Draper, Ruth Pitter, Eimar O'Duffy). Indeed, one could compile a much longer list of writers interested in the movement.[3]

For that reason, one can legitimately ask whether there was a Social Credit style. We are used to seeing an aesthetic associated with the left in the 1930s – the rhetoric of Audenesque anxiety; of the Popular Front with its abstract, collective pronouns ('We who … look … you men') and its present-tense invocations of action ('But to-day the Struggle').[4] Can Social Credit be said to have a comparable aesthetic? To answer that question I will look at some little-known writings of the 1930s.

The Social Credit 'moment'

Despite the origins of the movement in Douglas's writings just after World War I, the Social Credit 'moment' can be identified as 1932–36. This is the period of monetary crisis in the wake of the slump; of governmental turmoil and coalition; it is the period of the official organisation of a Green Shirt Party in the UK and the election of a Social Credit state government in Alberta. It ends with re-armament and the taking up of some Social Credit ideas by Keynes, the Labour party, and the New Deal in the USA. The British Library

catalogue – to take a rough indicator – lists nothing under Social Credit for 1931, a sudden flow of publications from 1932, peaking 1934–35. Those are also the publication years of *Attack!*, which began as the mimeographed sheet of the Battersea Green Shirts but quickly became the organ of Hargrave's London Green Shirt Command.

The central ideas of Social Credit can be summarised rapidly. C. H. Douglas, working as an engineer, noticed that aggregate payments to employees in factories and to shareholders in dividends were always less than the total prices of goods (the difference between the two being explained by capital costs, payments on loans etc.). This produces, Douglas suggests in *Economic Democracy* (1920) and other writings, a lack of purchasing power in the economy, exacerbated by the replacement of many workers by machines; another outcome is a drive for export markets and imperial competition leading to war (a theory Pound expounds in Canto 38). Douglas proposed a variety of cures for this situation: firstly, a National Dividend, which would both place purchasing power in the hands of workers and distribute the shared inheritance of past knowledge (an idea that became important for writers like Pound). Secondly, a government office which would set prices and pay manufacturers a fee representing the difference between production costs and available purchasing power. The result would be to increase economic turnover and wrest the control of credit from the banks. Social Credit proposes an *engineered* system, abandoning the homeostasis of classical economics (Say's law – David Ricardo) for rational intervention.

As an economic doctrine its central mantra – the famous A+B theorem – is easily discredited. But Social Credit was properly directed against what came to be seen, in retrospect, as the disastrously tight fiscal and monetary policies of British administrations prioritising debt repayment and the Gold Standard over jobs and industry. In this respect it joins a range of other underconsumptionist theories, with affiliations to Guild Socialism, the ILP, and the Chandos Group in the UK; to economists like Simon Patten and the Technocracy movement in the USA; and eventually to Keynesianism – despite Keynes's unpicking of Douglas before the Macmillan Committee, he came to see Douglas as a progenitor.[5]

A final point is important here. Social Credit proposed a solution outside the fixities (or alleged fixities) of Left and Right, founded ostensibly on a bourgeois conservatism. As Orage put it,

> these results are brought about with the minimum disturbance of existing social arrangements, yet with immediate social relief. No attack is made upon property as such, or upon the rights of property. No confiscation is implied, nor any violent supercession of existing industrial control, no sudden or difficult transformation on the part of the State is presupposed. Nor are men expected, as a condition of the practicability of the scheme, to be better than they are. The scheme, in short, presupposes only what is.[6]

Douglas mocked the party system, saying we are all 'shareholders' in the country – and should a company be run by a party system?[7] His aim was to influence policy rather than enter government; Social Credit was never, before 1930, a formal organisation. Instead it tended to be characterised by different groupings, in Coventry and London; Canada,

Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. Few Social Credit supporters 'belonged' in the sense that CP members did; they were, as it were, fellow-travellers.

But Social Credit often takes on a more progressive, utopian tone than Orage suggests, precisely because of its outsider status, as a text secreted from the multitude. Its 'distinctly "Illuminated" quality' (as Josef Craven calls it) creates a charged vocabulary and tendency to frustrated iteration.[8] That sense of its status as an avant-garde was heightened by the work of the charismatic John Hargrave, who in the 1930s founded the Green Shirt Movement for Social Credit and a political party, issued a blizzard of magazines, broadsheets, pamphlets, designs and cartoons, and generally energised the movement from a position different from (and treated gingerly within) the staid columns of Orage's *New English Weekly*.[9]

Hargrave, aka 'White Fox', was a Quaker who served as a medical orderly at Gallipoli and entered the scouting movement after the war; for a while, as author of *Lonecraft*, he seemed to be Baden-Powell's natural successor. But he broke with the Scouts in 1920, partly because of their militarisation, and founded his own woodcraft movement, the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift.[10] The Kindred developed an eclectic mix of rituals, designs and craft based eclectically on Anglo-Saxon, Native American and other sources (Hargrave was an illustrator and designer by profession).[11] It organised hikes and annual camps, but it remained a small organisation. In the late 1920s, however, Hargrave began to turn the Kindred towards Social Credit. *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift* (1927) is a meditation written as he began to cast off the Kindred's woodcraft origins and campaign for economic reform:

> This is the day of small closed groups swaying the emotions of the Great Masses; this is the day of *Sinn Fein*, *Bolsheviki*, *Fascsismo*, *Young Turks*, *Awakening Magyars*, the *Koomintang*, *Ku Klux Klan*, and a thousand others.[12]

The startling appearance of the other KKK aside, it is clear that Hargrave means to place the Kibbo Kift within the political avant-garde; he sees it as breaking with the inertia of society. The Kibbo Kift have two functions: to be an 'incubator' of a fuller sense of the human; and to be the 'instrument' of social regeneration.[13] The group is 'An Implement, Not a Container', meaning it is directed to action and the future rather than being an achieved community, a little world apart from the larger world: 'The Instrument is Not the Projection'.[14] Elsewhere, Hargrave describes the movement in terms that might have interested Pound: the Kin are 'a Positive Upright Fertility Principle [whose] creative climax of Lingam in Yoni is reached when it has penetrated inertia and given form to formlessness'.[15]

Renaming his organisation the Green Shirts in 1932, Hargrave sought to broaden membership. He had already put his talents to work for the *Age of Plenty*, commenting that 'The whole of the Social Credit movement is very weak in its psycho-sensory faculties'.[16] The cartoons he published (using the new reproductive media favoured by Pound, the photostat and mimeograph) often resemble the style of Wyndham Lewis.[17] Green Shirt activities literalised the notion of projection and penetration: marches were held, fights took place with fascist groupings; deputations were dispatched to the Bank of England and 10

Downing Street; and when that produced no results a green brick went through the window of Number 11. In 1940, a figure dressed in the now illegal green shirt shot a green arrow through the window of Downing Street when a cabinet meeting was in progress.

Hargrave's actual politics were simple – a call, repeated in *Attack!*, and elsewhere, for a national dividend and just prices; a radical doubt about the waste involved in economic retrenchment. In his earliest articles for the *Age of Plenty* he locates Social Credit in a British 'folk tradition' linked to the 'three essentials of life': food, warmth and shelter. This involves autarchy and the avoidance of both 'cosmopolitanism' and 'internationalism', opposed to what is 'deeply bedded in flesh and blood': 'I call to you by the key-words of our tongue, by:– *stoke, fold, pen, garth, barrow, hay, Thorpe, ford, wick*'.[18] Indeed, one mystical core of his belief was sun-worship, a heliocentrism linked to an economy of plenty. 'They Can't Kill the Sun', his unpublished exposition of Social Credit, parallels Bataille in stressing the free energy of the sun as offering a plenitude which overcomes all restricted economies: 'all logical social-economic reasoning is forced to deal with the facts of solar energy – Real Wealth.'[19] The Social Credit mandala he designed is accompanied by a mantra:

> I float in helioptic flight above the City of the Sun
> I see below me the Foundations of the Social Credit State
> The Vision of the New Solar Civilization …[20]

While the style of the Green Shirts is sometimes described as Fascist, Hargrave was firm in his opposition to anti-Semitism and the insistence on Social Credit as the 'third resolvent force'. He was, in the period 1935–36, Ezra Pound's most active English correspondent, and Pound seems to have seen in him an energiser of the masses akin to Mussolini, but they were to split in 1939 over Pound's politics.[21] In the UK the Social Credit movement failed to gain a great deal of political ground, though Hargrave spent several months in Canada in 1935–36 advising the Social Credit government of Alberta. It was disbanded after the war.[22]

Social Credit modernism: *Summer Time Ends* (1935)

As noted earlier, a surprising number of modernists were attracted to aspects of Social Credit, including its promotion of the arts in a coming age of leisure, and its stress on inherited cultural capital as collective property. Storm Jameson in her pamphlet for Orage, *The Soul of Man under Leisure* (1935), described 'the Common Heritage' as 'an attempt to show that *everybody* contributed to it, and always has. For example, – language, morals, – not to say needs,– are conditions of inventions, productions, etc.'[23] Or as Pound put it in *Social Credit: An Impact* (1935), 'The cultural heritage, in Douglas's sense of the term, is an extension of the increase of association, a hookup with the accumulation of all past inventiveness'.[24]

There is no scope here for a survey of writings relating to Social Credit. What I propose to do is look at the largely forgotten literary writings of Hargrave himself, and of his Green Shirt collaborator Irene Rathbone, in order to point tentatively towards a 'Social Credit style' in the period 1932–36.[25] That style is characterised by a number of features. Most generally, these texts claim a modernist inheritance that is experimental but non-

formalist in basis, preoccupied with communication rather than the word as such. Secondly, they aim for a historical range which takes in the Great War and other capitalised events: the General Strike, the Crash, the Slump, the 1931 Crisis; the May Report, the Macmillan Report; Rearmament. Thirdly, they investigate distributed points of view, with a range of experience and communication across classes which is, I think, unusual in 1930s literature. One basis for this is the shared experience of the trenches. The texts I look at all mock the 'we're all in the same boat' rhetoric of MacDonald's National Government, seeking to explore more tangible moments of connection, while nevertheless preserving the shape of class distinction. Finally, these texts share topics related to Social Credit thinking: a fascination with ideas of solar productivity and natural increase; with husbandry, stewardship, soil and manure (the history of Social Credit is entwined with organic farming. One correspondent complained of the *New English Weekly*'s 'manure-complex'[26]).

Hargrave wrote a number of novels; his bestseller, *Harbottle* (1924), described the picaresque intellectual piligrimage of an ex-serviceman. His Social Credit affiliations first become evident, obliquely, in *The Imitation Man* (1931). But it is only with *Summer Time Ends* (1935) that Hargrave's work fully develops what I have called a non-formalist modernism. The novel was crafted as Hargrave's magnum opus, 877 pages in length and epic in intention, published first by Bobs-Merrill in the USA and then by Constable in London, to generally positive reviews – John Steinbeck was particularly enthusiastic. It was carefully promoted in the USA, where the publisher issued a twelve-page promotional booklet, authored by Hargrave, including a dynamic portrait of the author with a clock superimposed on his head, a justification of the novel, an interview explaining its form and aims, and even a note on the typeface.[27] Both Dickens and modernist predecessors are invoked ('an innovation in the novel form … the most notable since James Joyce's *Ulysses*'), and it is described in terms of simultaneous streams of time ('The flow of all that varied life is constantly, not successively, before us'[28]). It was, he adds, written as simultaneous expression, chapters advancing together rather than being composed successively. The note on the typeface insists that the lack of capitals and full stops in many sections contributes to this simultaneity, creating 'an impression of spatially separated events happening together at one and the same time'.[29] The interview climaxes in a description of the 'Symphonic Technique of the Book', again every character 'together in time'[30] – a metaphor, which now carries a collective, musical weight.

The novel is thus akin to Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* or Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in aiming for a multimedia experience. The pamphlet compares the novelists's technique to cinema. Hargrave was active in negotiating proposed film treatments of his books, and in the mid-1930s worked on a stop-motion *Beowulf-Flick*: he prepared scripts, mock-ups, backgrounds and puppets, as well as an essay on cinema referencing Vertov and others.[31] Most strikingly – perhaps without parallel in the period – he supplemented the publication of *Summer Time Ends* with a gramophone record, recorded at the HMV studios, presenting the voices of the novel.[32]

Again, this is a modernism conceived in political rather than formal terms (in 1971 Hargrave insisted that it was only *later* that he read Dos Passos, Stein, or Joyce).[33] It is the desire to encompass an economic reality which informs its style. In *Men Without Art* Wyndham Lewis, as Douglas Mao notes, had contested modernist obscurity as a kind of

scarcity economics; as a reservation of the fruits of culture to the elite.[34] *Summer Time Ends* may be tedious to some readers in its copiousness – it was for some early reviewers – but its difficulty lies in its distributed point of view rather than obscurity; this is a difficulty in which things are not hidden. The 'interview' notes its plan for over 100 characters ('39 were scheduled to be "developed"';[35] its 'vertical section' through English society; its antiphonal threads. The form is, Hargrave insists, political: 'It is a collective novel which does not sacrifice the reader's interest in the individual to his interest in the social group'.[36]

One way in which Hargrave's novel registers politics is thus its imagination of a distributed collectivity. The texture of the novel is hard to describe: comprised of narrative sections – never more than a few pages – interleaved with a torrent of 'sampled' snatches of popular song, received opinion, news, data, obsessive thoughts, advertising for SOLTEX, UM-POLO, SUDSO, and occasional authorial commentary. The discursive elements, according to his plans, are:

> The B.B.C.
> Micky Nolan's Honolulu Blues
> The Machine
> The Unemployed
> The War Dead[37]

In fact, the reach is broader. The impression ultimately conveyed is of humans as language-machines, creatures of habit rather than creation: 'people don't know the minute mannerisms that embed themselves and become fixed as each day passes', as one authorial comment notes.[38]

Summer Time Ends begins a year after the Crash, in October 1930; it finishes thirteen months later on the eve of the General Election held on 27 October. The novel's texture, like that of *Ulysses*, is designed to defeat anyone reading for plot. That is not so say that it does not have a plot: the major movement involves the life of a town, Carton (loosely based on Hemel Hempstead), and the unemployed courting couple Jenny and George, Jenny's pregnancy after a new-year's eve tryst, and her delivery during a flood. But this is just one of a large number of threads, sometimes flashbacks, from a few pages to a few lines in length: the stories of the financier Sir John, who lectures his children on the state of the nation and drives his combine towards disaster; the aged Lord Swingletree and his young wife Angela; the disillusioned journalist Ditmold; the writer Ismay and his weasely politician brother; an inventor; a tenant farmer and a gamekeeper; the milliner Notley and his pushy wife; Jenny's mother; a doctor, a clergyman, an advertising executive, and many more. Hargrave's handlist of characters – part of an elaborate s plan classifying them according to 'social-economic structure' – runs to 113 persons.[39] Throughout, events reflect and sometimes seem loosely to emblematise the crisis of 1930–31: MacDonald's betrayal of the Labour party in August finds a rough correlative in Lady Swingletree's eugenic affair; the emergency budget of September 1931 is accompanied by the failure and suicide of Notley; and the naval mutiny the same month paralleled by farmers throwing a repossession-agent into the duckpond.

The novel's two political climaxes centre on the beautiful Lady Swingletree and the collectivity that assembles at Swingletree Park at the end of the novel, flooded out of the village below. Angela, living in genteel poverty with her two maiden aunts, has married the almost senile Swingletree, who endlessly repeats stories about India and neglects his estate. Frustrated, she has an affair with George, who comes to cut trees (and who has already impregnated Jenny). She is described in terms of a fundamental ambivalence:

> one half of her face said: life *is* so interesting! I do so want to know all about everything and everyone
>
> the other side said: how surprising it all is! D'you think any of it really can be true?[40]

It is this mixture of curiosity and scepticism that informs the climactic discussion of the economic situation. She pushes the informal meeting of villagers and visitors at her house – from the unemployed and failed shopkeepers to politicians and financiers – to question the state of the nation. But the real political weight is, I think, on the discussion itself; on the sheer fact of communication across classes, enabled by crisis.

Hargrave's efforts to promote reflect that concern with communication. In a letter to an Ohio book dealer he responded effusively to a clipping of a positive review in the *Ohio State Journal*, explaining that a failure in sales would 'retard my progress towards the justification of what I hope may be a real contribution to the use of the written word'.[41] But he stressed that it was not enough that it was read and positively reviewed: 'Probably it needs a controversy about it, in order to make people begin to talk – and go on talking'. More nefariously stimulating that debate, he wrote to the general secretary of the Green Shirts enclosing a series of letters to be sent in under various names designed to keep the novel in the columns of the *New English Weekly*.[42]

Finally, I would relate Hargrave's desire to test a reality (rather than render it formal play) to the way that the novel consistently foregrounds its own procedures, producing a modernism-with-commentary which aims to manage difficulty. The Huxleyesque and priggish writer Ismay meditates on the breakdown of the novel, 'due to the fact that we are trying to express some sort of conscious poise in chaos … no writer today who is worth serious attention can be confined within the framework of what used to be considered essential: an objective plot, or "story"; now, indeed, is any sort of conscious theme necessary'.[43] The Chatterleyeque story element of Lady Swingletree's affair with a young working class man who comes to prune the trees is accompanied by the 'advanced' (Huxleyesque) novelist's complaints about the Lawrentian cliché of 'the Fine Lady who either falls for, or deliberately snares, the gardener, or the gamekeeper, or the chauffeur'.[44] Or this: 'Have you ever noticed that a banker (especially in a work of fiction) is usually no more than a cipher? And if he is an international financial expert he isn't even that. Call him anything you like – Sir Otto, Doctor Krantz, make up any old name – he still remains no one / won't materialize'.[45] At such moments, his work achieves a formal self-consciousness driven by its communicative imperatives.

They Call It Peace (1936)

Irene Rathbone was a notch up the social ladder from Hargrave – the daughter of a brigadier, she served as a nurse in the war. She moved in literary circles in London (friends included Storm Jameson and Nancy Cunard), publishing novels and poetry. *They Call It Peace*, her fifth and longest novel at 617 pages, incorporates various autobiographical elements: nursing; her acting career (she was related to Basil Rathbone) and office work; the death of her fiancé; her brief affair with the novel's dedicatee, Richard Aldington; and her membership of the Green Shirts.[46] She seems to have encountered the movement in1934, formally joining in October 1935.[47] She quickly became a friend of Hargrave. In November 1934 he proposed she lecture on '"Problems of a Social Credit Novelist" or some such theme'.[48] His diary – which records almost no social engagements of this kind – records lunches with her in December 1934; a sherry party and another meeting the following February; another lunch in October 1935.[49] That he felt warmly towards her – perhaps as an unusually cultured convert – is suggested by two other letters he carefully annotated and kept; one from 1950 remained on his desk at his death, thirty years later.[50]

In October 1936 he commented privately that *They Call It Peace* 'was so full of G/S propaganda that it wd. hardly be fair for me to review it for *New Age*'.[51] Instead, the two novels appeared alongside each other in his broadsheet. *Attack!* regularly carried half-page advertisements for *Summer Time Ends*, with approving quotes from Pound, MacNeice, Williams, Frank Swinnerton, Ralph Bates and others. Issue 40 also includes an unsigned notice of Rathbone's novel, clearly written by Hargrave. He considers it in terms of the non-formalist experimentalism advocated in his own pamphlet: '*They Call It Peace* is a bold experiment. The writing-technique itself shows a break with tradition. Again and again we find it breaking into a new mode, not for the sake of "showing off" but because the theme of the novel demands it.'[52] Rathbone wrote a piece which appeared on the first page of the first issue of the *National Voice*, the successor to *Attack!*, headlined 'Is there No Way out of this Bloodstained "Peace"?': 'They call it Peace, this fear-ridden existence between one world slaughter and another. They call it life, this poverty-bound span of days which is most people's portion.'[53] The classical source of the novel's title and epigraph is the bitter complaint against Empire voiced in Tacitus.[54] But the title also resonates with Pound's *Social Credit: An Impact*, where 'They make a wilderness and call it peace' is one of a number of slogans.[55]

They Call It Peace deals with the fate of the Berrington family and their employees and associates: from those who work for *Color & Design*, their magazine, or on their estate, to those who fight in the trenches with the son-in-law Geoffrey Spencer. It some ways the novel is relatively traditional in method, describing the end of a Georgian order; in other ways it is I think unusual – and akin to Hargrave's novel – in its collage of storylines within a dispersed community – not simply two or three, but over a dozen, across class barriers – again, it is a radically distributed story. After an opening romance, it moves to the Somme and a newsreel-like collage of responses across the ranks as soldiers die. The oldest daughter Lorna's loss of her new husband Geoffrey in the war foreshadows slower losses: the family fortunes; rural content at their country house; above all, the hope for a better

world. The children become poorer; they work; they become charity workers or communists. The family estate is sold as new tenant farmers deplete the soil. Others in the firm – which eventually goes under – become destitute. The novel moves towards more explicit economic statement as it reaches 1929; and then to an engagement with Social Credit in the crisis of 1931–32: 'England is Mortgaged. And the auctioneer is finance'.[56]

The Social Credit pilgrim is David Berrington, the youngest son of the family. His conversion is focused more through a notion of identity and fulfilment than an explicit politics: the number-crunching of the communist worker is contrasted implicitly with an understanding of the individual and the economy of pain and desire. It is the wartime generation who have the sharpest sense of that economy: Lorna and her brother Paul, a writer modelled on Aldington. Paul leaves his dull wife for the actress Joan, finds happiness, but then is forced to return to his wife after their families fail and he cannot run two households. Economics and love coalesce under the shadow of modernism's understanding of lack: the split of Paul and Joan is accompanied by a gift of violets and a citation from *The Waste Land*. In contrast the self-sacrificing Lorna, who for much of the novel runs a night shelter, regains some of her happiness with a late marriage to a businessman.

Even as a communist, David realises that Britain suffers from under-consumption. But to that is added the need for a leisure state, and the relaxation of the person under that heading, and as a Social Credit organiser he eschews the facts and figures of class analysis for a confession of love without return – issued to Joan, his brother's abandoned mistress – and a confession to Lorna that his real dream is farming.[57] Social coherence, however, only works in relation to the memory of the war. Despite gestures of connection, the divisions between classes in the novel are not easily mended by any collective effort. Ultimately it is the working-class characters who bear the costs of the depression: Bill Burley is stripped of jobs, his favourite child die, then his wife and baby son; the more upwardly mobile working-class journalist Edward Kendall kills himself after he loses his job, falls ill and discovers his wife's affair; an unemployed alcoholic nurse gasses herself. The upper-middle-class characters, on the other hand, lose prosperity but variously endure the slump or (in the case of Lorna's second marriage) regain fortune and a leisured life in the country.

What this suggests is the location of the Social Credit imagination within a particular bourgeois configuration. In both Hargrave's novel and Rathbone's, an unusually wide range of social actors are described. But nevertheless it is the figure of the upper-middle-class woman – Lady Swingletree and Lorna, neither of them aristocrats and both tempered by an understanding of deprivation – who opens up the novel's future, principally by an act of hospitality which creates dialogue; or just by a leisured understanding of the pleasures of existence. One problem for Social Credit was its inattention to the psychology of consumption: if a dividend was paid to the working classes (and perhaps particularly the petite bourgeoisie), would they spend and free up the economy, or would they simply put it under the mattress? The leisured woman, characterised in terms of an understanding of land, culture and ultimately desire itself, and as a nodal point for the accumulation and spending of funds, provides a palliative for that anxiety, enabling the novel to retain the trace of an older order beneath its politicised experiment with points of view.

The 'distributed' vs. the 'collective' novel

One potential point of comparison with the novels I have examined is *Between the Acts* (1941), though Woolf's collective novel ultimately is much more focused on the mediating artistic vision offered by its pageant. A closer point of comparison, chronologically, is the communist city-symphony of John Sommerfield's *May Day* (1936), with its cast of workers, journalists, kept women and bosses.[58] But noticeably, the mode of collective narration in *May Day* is more integrated than that of either Hargrave or Rathbone – the cast is smaller and less socially dispersed (the bourgeoisie barely appear; characters are working or ruling class, 'two races'); the action is organised around one industrial conglomerate, AIE; all the transitions are connected by shared treads, glimpses, phrases or thoughts; and above all, a drive towards collective action underpins the narrative, conveying a sense of historical coherence created by the 'invisible spider's web lines in time and space that mesh with material objects'.[59]

The Social Credit view of history is in contrast unintegrated, only intermittently political, and radically fragmented into individual struggles which can only produce collective discourse as a tentative negotiation; as an opening in a situation of confusion rather than a summative vision. Despite some specific statistics, *May Day* comes with a prefatory note stating that 'It would be better to view the situations depicted as belonging to an average year between 1930 and 1940 rather than to any definite date'.[60] The Social Credit novel refuses that collective averaging and the long view of dialectical materialism; it focuses on the series of crisis moments of 1932–35 as an atomised lived experience, in which 'solutions' can only be imagined in fugitive moments of dialogue.

The Social Credit novel is also distinctive in terms of its relation to the body. Sommerfield's novel is energised by two unifying ideas: one, the logic of class conflict; the other, a shared, vitalistically conceived human nature conveyed in the night-pieces:

> From this [economic] record one half of contemporary life can be deduced and a material history and philosophy of the organization of society.
>
> And behind the nerves and dancing fingers that blindly and intently spell out this record … function the lonely and incommunicable private lives that make the other half of the record of society. Inwardly, under the taut sheet-lightening membrane of nervous discharge, each dreams desires, each hates and wants.[61]

The sexual drives, with their timeless rhythms of charge and discharge, are in tension with the progressivism of intellectual and political life; they simply guarantee that these are human beings. But in the work of Hargrave and Rathbone bodily and sexual life is the *vehicle* for a new order, implicitly linked to a politics of consumption which binds together different classes (as in David's desire for his brother's abandoned mistress in *They Call It Peace*; or Hargrave's working-class lover waiting in the dark for Lady Swingletree). The motor-car rides of Lady Swingletree and her lover, and of Lorna and her suitor Hilary, articulate a dream of sensuous pleasure and mobility which is one of the traces of the modern. Both writers found their understanding of flesh and its possibilities in war experience; in a

catastrophic historical waste which is being re-enacted in the depression (a feature also of Graham Seton's 1934 Social Credit novel *Blood Money*, which borrows verbatim from Pound's *A.B.C. of Economics*).[62] The climax of *They Call It Peace* is a passage which returns to the trenches and interweaves Lorna's imagination of the last moments of Geoffrey Spencer and the 'INEXORABLE LAWS OF SOUND FINANCE'.[63] (614). This in turn gives way to a scene of the Green Shirts laying a wreath on the Cenotaph in Whitehall with the message: 'In memory of those who died in vain'. With that bitter memory, and with their fragmented and distributed forms, the novels I have examined tell us a great deal both about the persistence of the traditions of modernism and the difficulty of bourgeois politics in the 1930s.

Notes

I am grateful to the Leverhulme Foundation for a fellowship aiding this work. For permission to quote from an unpublished letter of Ezra Pound my thanks to New Directions on behalf of Pound's estate. My thanks also to Judge Smith, John Hargrave's literary executor, and the LSE for permission to quote from materials in the Hargrave and Kibbo Kift Archives.

[1] The best general account is John L. Finlay, *Social Credit: The English Origins* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).

[2] Pound to Hargrave, 4 April 1935; photocopies in Kibbo Kift Archive, London School of Economics, YMA KK 217.

[3] It would include D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Storm Jameson ,Wyndham Lewis, Aldous Huxley, Herbert Read, Hugh MacDiarmid, Bonamy Dobrée, Compton Mackenzie; in the USA Gorham Munson, Lewis Mumford, William Carlos Williams and others, as well as artists like the photographer Angus McBean. The New Zealand writer A. R. D. Fairburn met Douglas in London in 1932 and wrote for Orage's *New English Weekly*; his long poem *Dominion* (1938) is a Social Credit epic akin to Pound's Canto 38.

[4] See e.g. the examples in Cary Nelson, *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory 1910–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[5] John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936), ch. 23.

[6] A. R. Orage, cited in C. H. Douglas, *These Present Discontents and the Labour Party and Social Credit* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1922), 15–16; originally in the *New Age*, 27:3 (May 1920), 37.

[7] C. H. Douglas, 'The Tragedy of Human Effort', notes for an address at the Central Hall, Liverpool, 30 October 1936; accessed at: douglassocialcredit.com/resources/resources/the_tragedy_of_human Effort.pdf.

[8] Josef Francis Charles Craven, 'Redskins in Epping Forest: John Hargrave, the Kibbo Kift, and the Woodcraft Experience' (PhD thesis, University College London, 1998), 186.

[9] The *New English Weekly* devoted the occasional paragraph to Hargrave; he was a constant presence in the *Age of Plenty* and (later) the *New Age*.

[10] On Hargrave's movements, see Mark Drakeford, *Social Movements and their Supporters: The Green Shirts in England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Craven, 'Redskins in Epping Forest'; Joel S. Kahn, *Modernity and Exclusion* (London: Sage, 2001), ch. 2; and Matthew De Abaitua, 'The Merry Campers: A History of the Kibbo Kift', *The Idler*, no. 43: *Back to the Land*, ed. Tom Hodgkinson (Barnstaple: Idler Books, 2010), 208–29.

[11] Representative images are discussed in Cathy Ross, *Twenties London: A City in the Jazz Age* (London: Philip Wilson, 2003).

[12] John Hargrave, *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift* (London: Duckworth, 1927), 133.

[13] Ibid., 62–3.

[14] Ibid., 131.

[15] Finlay, *Social Credit*, 151; citing Hargrave's *Broadsheet*, 8:26.

[16] Finlay, *Social Credit*, 154.

[17] *Kibbo Kift Cartoons*, 2 vols, July 1927 – 13 July 1928, British Library. Similar cartoons were published in Hargrave's one-page sheet *The Wickiup* in the same period.

[18] 'Up the Britons', *Age of Plenty*, 3:4 (December 1928), 3; 'Rude Mechanicals', *Age of Plenty*, 3:7 (March 1929), 3.

[19] 'They Can't Kill the Sun' (typescript), ch. 5, Hargrave Papers, London School of Economics, Box 62.

[20] *The Great Mandala of the Social Credit State, Designed by John Hargrave for Those Who Know* (Social Credit Party, n.d.).

[21] The Hargrave–Pound correspondence, comprising over ninety letters (some to Dorothy and Homer Pound) is at the Beinecke library (photocopies in the Hargrave Papers, LSE). A few letters appear in Roxana Preda's *Ezra Pound's Economic Correspondence, 1933-1940* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

[22] Social Credit remained an important presence in Canada and New Zealand to the 1970s.

[23] Cited in Jennifer Birkitt, *Margaret Storm Jameson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 127.

[24] Ezra Pound, *Social Credit: An Impact* (London: Stanley Nott, 1935), 9.

[25] The principal texts here, Hargrave's *Summer Time Ends* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935) and Rathbone's *They Call it Peace* (London: J. M. Dent, 1936), have never been reprinted, though Rathbone's war novel *We That Were Young* (1932) has been reprinted twice. Hargrave's original MS title was 'Year In, Year Out'.

[26] Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2001), ch.10.

[27] *An Interview with the Author of 'Summer Time Ends'* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935). A draft exists in the Hargrave Papers, Box 46, file 5.

[28] Ibid., 3.

[29] Ibid., 10.

[30] Ibid., 8–9.

[31] Hargrave Papers, Box 8.

[32] Hargrave Papers, Box 42, 1935 diary, entries 7 August to 20 September.

[33] TS draft on Steinbeck, Hargrave Papers, Box 40, 16. The article appeared, shortened and without the section cited, as 'Steinbeck and *Summer Time Ends*', *Steinbeck Quarterly* 6:3 (1973): 67-73.

[34] Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 128.

[35] *An Interview with the Author of 'Summer Time Ends'*, 6.

[36] Ibid., 4.
[37] Hargrave Papers, Box 1, part 1.
[38] Hargrave, *Summer Time Ends*, 316.
[39] Hargrave Papers, Box 1, part 1.
[40] Hargrave, *Summer Time Ends*, 317.
[41] Hargrave to Porter S. Welch , 5 Dec. 1935, author's collection.
[42] Hargrave to General Secretary, 5 Dec. 1935, Kibbo Kift Papers, YMA/KK/44.
[43] Hargrave, *Summer Time Ends*, 541.
[44] Ibid., 551.
[45] Ibid., 719.
[46] See Caroline Zilboorg, 'Irene Rathbone: The Great War and Its Aftermath', in *Recharting the Thirties*, ed. Patrick J. Quinn (Cranbury, NJ; Associated Universities Presses, 1996), 64-81. This is one of the few articles on Rathbone; most surveys – for example Catherine Clay's *British Women Writers 1914-1945: Professional Work and Friendship* (2006) – omit her.
[47] Membership form, Kibbo Kift Papers, YMA/KK/40. Rathbone remained a member at the party's dissolution in 1951.
[48] Hargrave to General Secretary, 27 Oct. and 2 and 19 Nov. 1934, Kibbo Kift Papers, YA/KK/44.
[49] Diaries, Hargrave Papers, Box 42/2 (no diary for 1936 is present).
[50] Rathbone to Hargrave, 7 July 1950, Hargrave Papers Box 48. A letter from 1952 is included among letters from his first and second wives, Box 69.
[51] Hargrave to General Secretary, 5 Oct. 1936, Kibbo Kift Papers, YMA/KK/44.
[52] *Attack!*, 40, p.7 (n.d., mid-1936). *Attack!* was retitled *The Voice of the People* after issue 41and later became *The National Voice*.
[53] *The National Voice*, 1/1 [n.d.]. 1-2.
[54] 'Solitudenem faciunt; pacem appelant', Tacitus, *Agricola*, sect. 30.
[55] Pound, *Social Credit*, p.25.
[56] Rathbone, *They Call It Peace*, 546.
[57] Ibid., 504–5.
[58] John Sommerfield, *May Day* (1936; London: London Books, 2010).
[59] Ibid., 160.
[60] Ibid., 21.
[61] Ibid., 135.
[62] Graham Seton, *Blood Money* (London: Hutchison, 1934), 131ff.
[63] Rathbone, *They Call It Peace*, 614.