

1922

LITERATURE, CULTURE, POLITICS

EDITED BY

**JEAN-MICHEL
RABATÉ**

1922: Literature, Culture, Politics examines key aspects of culture and history in 1922, a year made famous by the publication of several modernist masterpieces, such as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Individual chapters written by leading scholars offer new contexts for the year's significant works of art, philosophy, politics, and literature. *1922* also analyzes both the political and intellectual forces that shaped the cultural interactions of that privileged moment. Although this volume takes post-World War I Europe as its chief focus, American artists and authors also receive thoughtful consideration. In its multiplicity of views, *1922* challenges misconceptions about the "Lost Generation" of cultural pilgrims who flocked to Paris and Berlin in the 1920s, thus stressing the wider influence of that momentous year.

JEAN-MICHEL RABATÉ, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania since 1992, is a curator of Slought Foundation, a Philadelphia gallery that he co-founded. He is also an editor of the *Journal of Modern Literature* and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has authored or edited more than thirty books on modernism, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. Recent books include *Crimes of the Future* and *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Psychoanalysis*. Forthcoming is *The Pathos of Distance*.

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Chronology for 1922

- January 1st André Breton moves to 42, rue Fontaine in Paris, near Place Blanche and Pigalle. His apartment was to receive his collection of more than 5,000 objects, paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, books, art catalogs, journals, manuscripts, and works of popular and Oceanic art.
- January 13th The conference of Cannes concerning German retribution payments ends.
- January 15th The Irish Free State is formed, and Michael Collins becomes its first premier.
- January 19th Erich von Stroheim releases his Hollywood film, *Foolish Wives*, in which he plays the main part. It is the most expensive film to date, with a budget of one million dollars.
- January 20th Premiere of Arthur Honegger's ballet for skaters, *Skating-Rink, symphonie chorégraphique*, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The Cubistic costumes and stage settings are designed and painted by Fernand Léger.
- January 27th Kafka begins writing *The Castle*, using notes and plans dating from 1914.
- February Rilke's patron Werner Reinhart, having renovated the Château de Muzot, a thirteenth-century fortified manor house in Switzerland's Rhone Valley, invites Rilke to live here for free. It is there that Rilke finishes *the Duino Elegies* and writes the *Sonnets to Orpheus*.

For a comprehensive and detailed chronology of the year 1922, see Kevin Jackson's *Constellation of Genius: 1922, Modernism, Year One*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012.

- February 2nd James Joyce's *Ulysses* is published in Paris (1,000 copies printed). He liked the numerological coincidence of 2/2/22.
- February 4th In the *Journal du Peuple*, for the first time André Breton publicly attacks Tristan Tzara, whom he calls an "impostor."
- February 5th The first *Reader's Digest* magazine is published in New York City.
- February 6th The Cardinal Achille Ratti is elected as Pope Pius XI.
- February 15th Marconi begins regular broadcasting transmissions from Essex, UK.
- February 20th Vilnius, Lithuania, agrees to separate from Poland.
- February 27th George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methusaleh* premieres in New York City.
- February 27th The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upholds the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote.
- February 28th Egypt regains independence from Britain, but British troops remain on the territory.
- March Alfred Hitchcock obtains his first contract as a director with Gainsborough Pictures with a two-reel comedy, set in the Rotherhite docks of South London, entitled *Number 13*. In the film, Clare Greet and Ernest Thesiger are husband and wife. Hitchcock abandons the film after its budget falls apart; it is soon pulled from production and only a handful of scenes are shot.
- March 3rd Italian Fascists occupy Fiume and Rijeka.
- March 5th Murnau's famous vampire film, *Nosferatu*, premieres in Berlin.
- March 13th Charles Francis Jenkins files U.S. patent No. 1,544,156 (*Transmitting Pictures over Wireless*), which is finally granted on June 30, 1925.
- March 18th British magistrates in India sentence Mahatma Gandhi to six years of imprisonment for disobedience.
- March 22nd André Breton organizes the Congress for the Determination and Defense of the Modern Spirit, which he sees as a declaration of war against Tzara and Dadaism.

- March 24th Central Lithuania, with Vilnius as its capital, holds a controversial election that is boycotted by the Jews, Lithuanians, and Belarusians, and is annexed by Poland.
- April 2nd Charlie Chaplin releases his last two-reel film, *Pay Day*, in Hollywood.
- April 3rd Stalin is appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party in Russia.
- April 6th Henri Bergson, who has just published *Duration and Simultaneity (About Einstein's Theory)* with Alcan, meets Albert Einstein at a session of the Société française de Philosophie in Paris.
- April 16th The Treaty of Rapallo is signed in Italy. By this agreement, Germany and Russia renounce all territorial and financial claims against each other following World War I.
- April 27th Fritz Lang's *Doktor Mabuse, der Spieler*, Lang's most lavish production, premieres in Berlin. The whole film runs for four and a half hours and is shown in two parts.
- May 21st The Pulitzer Prize is awarded to Eugene O'Neill for his play *Anna Christie*.
- May 22nd During the Festival of the Bauhaus School in Weimar, Tristan Tzara stages the funeral of Dada.
- May 23rd Walt Disney incorporates his first film company Laugh-O-Gram Films in Kansas City, Missouri. There, Disney produces his first real cartoon.
- May 26th Lenin suffers his first stroke.
- June 14th President Warren G. Harding is the first American president to use the radio, when he dedicates a memorial in Baltimore.
- June 16th Henry Berliner demonstrates his helicopter at College Park, Maryland, to the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics. This is the debut of the helicopter.
- June 22nd D. H. Lawrence publishes his novel *Aaron's Rod* in London with Martin Secker.
- June 22nd Walther Rathenau, a German industrialist, politician, and Foreign Minister of Germany, is assassinated by right-wing extremists.
- June 22nd Ludwig Wittgenstein transfers the rights for the publication of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to Kegan Paul in London. The book, translated by Frank P.

- Ramsey and C. K. Ogden, is published in London with Bertrand Russell's introduction.
- July 5th For the first time, women are allowed to vote in Dutch elections.
- July 14th The two German socialist parties, the SPD and USPD, form a common working group.
- July 28th Adolf Hitler gives rabble-rousing speeches in which he develops his anti-Semitic rhetoric that brings Munich crowds to frenzy: "Just as the Jew could once incite the mob of Jerusalem against Christ, so today he must succeed in inciting folk who have been duped into madness to attack those who, God's truth! Seek to deal with this people in utter honesty and sincerity" (from Adolf Hitler's speeches, Munich).
- July 31st Italy's general strike against fascist violence takes place.
- August 8th The Italian general strike is broken by fascist terror.
- August 22nd Michael Collins is shot and killed in an ambush during the Irish Civil War.
- September Willa Cather publishes her "war" novel *One of Ours* with Alfred Knopf in New York. It will be awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1923.
- September 9th Turkish troops conquer Smyrna and murder scores of Greek citizens.
- September 9th William T. Cosgrave replaces Irish premier Collins.
- September 11th The British mandate of Palestine begins.
- September 16th Turkish troops chase Greeks out of Asia.
- September 21st President Warren G. Harding signs a joint resolution of approval to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- September 23rd Bertold Brecht's "Drums in the Night" (*Trommeln in der Nacht*) premieres in Germany.
- September 24th At Nuremberg, the two Socialist parties of Germany unite, and the reformist Karl Kautsky is elected as the head of the new party.
- September 25th In Paris, spurred by René Crevel, André Breton starts the series of hypnotic and trancelike "sleeps" that will become popular with the Surrealists.

- September 26th Dada-Constructivist Congress is held in Weimar, with Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, and Hans Arp among the attendees.
- September 28th Benito Mussolini marches on Rome.
- October 1st Kafka's "A Hunger Artist" is first published in *Die neue Rundschau*.
- October 4th The protocol of Geneva is signed, by which Austria is granted independence.
- October 6th The Allies of World War I withdraw from Istanbul.
- October 11th Turkey and Greece sign a ceasefire.
- October 15th The first issue of T. S. Eliot's *Criterion* is published in the United Kingdom (600 copies). In it, one finds the first publication of *The Waste Land*, an essay by Valéry Larbaud on Joyce's *Ulysses*, Hermann Hesse on German poets, and a short story by May Sinclair.
- October 17th Scottish workers begin hunger march from Glasgow to London.
- October 18th The British Broadcasting Company is incorporated. The British Broadcasting Company Ltd, a British commercial company, is formed by British and American electrical companies doing business in the United Kingdom and is licensed by the British General Post Office.
- October 24th Irish Parliament adopts a constitution for an Irish Free State.
- October 26th Italian government resigns due to pressure from the Fascists and Benito Mussolini.
- October 26th *Jacob's Room* is published by the Hogarth Press. It is Virginia Woolf's third novel.
- October 31st Benito Mussolini (Il Duce) becomes premier of Italy.
- November 1st First U.S. publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in *The Dial*.
- November 13th Black Renaissance begins in Harlem, New York.
- November 14th The BBC begins its domestic radio service at Marconi House in the Strand, London.
- November 18th Marcel Proust dies in Paris.

- November 20th The third issue of the Dadaist review, *Mécano Red*, edited in Amsterdam by Theo van Doesburg with the help of Tristan Tzara, is ready for publication, but will only be distributed in the last week of December.
- November 25th The archaeologist Howard Carter enters King Tutankhamun's tomb.
- November 30th Hitler speaks to six thousand national-socialists in Munich.
- December Le Corbusier exhibits his notorious plans and sketches for a "Contemporary City of Three Million People" at the Salon d'Automne in Paris.
- December 3rd The first successful technicolor movie, *The Toll of the Sea*, is shown in New York City. It is directed by Chester M. Franklin, produced by the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, and released by Metro Pictures.
- December 6th The first constitution of the Irish Free State comes into operation.
- December 10th Nobel Prizes are awarded to Fridtjof Nansen, Niels Bohr, and Albert Einstein. The Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded to the Spanish playwright Jacinto Benavente "for the happy manner in which he has continued the illustrious traditions of the Spanish drama."
- December 15th The Hague International Peace Congress convenes.
- December 17th The last British troops leave the Irish Free State.
- December 20th The dress rehearsal of Jean Cocteau's play *Antigone* takes place. The performance, directed by Dullin and with music by Honegger, is marked by demonstrations from the Dadaists.
- December 26th Having suffered a second stroke that paralyzes his left side, Lenin dictates his "Political Testament" and retires from active involvement in Soviet politics.
- December 30th The Soviet Union is organized as a federation comprised of Russia, Ukraine, Belorussian, and Transcaucasian Soviet Republics.

Editor's Introduction

Jean-Michel Rabaté

1922: The Enormous Rooms of Modernism

Why was that single year the birth date of so many masterpieces? A simple look at the dates can give a first clue: compare 1914–18 to 1918–22. The year 1922 comes four years after the dire four of the first globalized war known to humanity. Indeed, four years was a period of time needed to take stock of the universal catastrophe, to assess what had changed in Europe and the world, and to see whether the promise of the new that was so prevalent in 1913 would lead to a new order or to a new chaos. This major shift entailed a certain time lag in the other continents, which is why this Collection will look primarily at Europe and how it saw its place in a newly globalized world. Our focus will be a post–Versailles treaty Europe, a battered Europe attempting to recapture itself while discovering a suddenly and definitively globalized world. Those four years from 1918 to 1922 were a moment of intense maturation. Four years more were granted to the masterpieces that had been dormant and delayed by the war, as was the case of *In Search of Lost Time*, *Ulysses*, *The Castle*, *The Duino Elegies*, *Wozzeck*, and *The Waste Land*. This development led to a repetition of the clash between the old and the new already perceptible in 1913, albeit with more optimism then, because the new was really new, and the old more notably old.

What most observers point out is that the *annus mirabilis* of high modernism was also a moment of return to prewar classicism, because the previous enthusiasm for experimentation was tempered by irony. A worthy witness to this mixture is a contemporary, who launched a long and productive literary career with his second novel, Beverley Nichols. When he

I want to thank [Rivky Mondal](#) who has helped me edit the contributions to this collection.

published the witty and naughty *Self* in 1922, he was only twenty-four, and his relaxed but abrasive social comedy announced the flippant and cynical tone of Evelyn Waugh. *Self's* amoral heroine is a modernist Becky Sharp, and at one point of her strenuous social ascension, she decides to imitate Futurist paintings, but opts for a fake Russian futurist. Her non-plussed husband asks her what their friends will think when they know that she painted her “aggressive triangles.” She replies:

“I shan’t tell them I have painted. I shall say it is by – let me see – by a celebrated Italian. No, that’s too obvious. By a Russian. Nobody knows anything about Russia now, and the picture shall be by Vrodskia. Vrodskia sounds a very Russian name, doesn’t it? And Vrodskia’s work is going to be the *chef-d’oeuvre* of Bolshevik art” (Nichols 1937, 187).

This slight novel makes fun of everything, including politics. Nancy honeymooned in Paris and made new friends in an international crowd in which she would “discuss the regeneration of Poland with the Polish minister of foreign affairs, waxing eloquent over the Ruhr coal-fields with French ministers of finance, and pouring out her pro-Italian sentiments on the question of Italia Irridenta with all the fervor of a D’Annunzio” (Nichols 1937, 181).

No wonder most characters realize that even though the war is over, peace is far ahead. The rich, sinister, and well-named Kraft with whom Nancy will have an affair just to make ends meet, which will bring about her downfall, says at one point: “I do not think that in our lifetime we shall see peace” (Nichols 1937, 164). In 1922, though the world of diplomacy was busy with peace plans that materialized into the creation of a League of Nations – one of the butts of Waugh’s satire in *Decline and Fall* – there was already an awareness that the twenties were merely a pause in the course to worse hostilities, as most countries were rearming and preparing for a second world war.

In 1922, it had become clear that Italian Futurism would ally itself with Fascism (after the march on Rome, Mussolini was made prime minister in 1922). Gramsci could write to Trotsky in 1922 that Italian Futurism had merged with Fascism. Meanwhile, the Russian Futurists and Formalists were becoming increasingly suspect in Soviet Russia, in which Lenin suffered two strokes in 1922 and from which Viktor Shlovsky had to flee. Dadaism was slowly petering out and giving a difficult birth to surrealism. The tension between avant-gardes that had partly succeeded but were left without clear targets or sense of direction, and a general wish to return to calm, if not to order, was widespread in Europe. One may say that the lure of the new was not sufficient to underpin a movement or an ideology.

We see a Marxist philosopher like Georg Lukács¹ criticize Tagore, who received the Nobel Prize in 1913, mostly thanks to Yeats's translations and efforts at promotion, as a reactionary writer. Tagore is taken to task for his recent novel, *The Home and the World*, from 1916, in which Lukács recognizes a weak caricature of Gandhi. The novel is presented as emblematic of a pseudouniversalist philosophy of nonviolence that nevertheless enlists the help of the British police when necessary; this fake globalization of "eternal" belief avidly endorsed by the European intelligentsia is rejected as pure bourgeois delusion.

Similarly, we see Antonio Gramsci assess the evolution of Futurism in 1922, a movement that he presents as having waned, branching off into straight Fascism or in Catholic offshoots represented by the most gifted writer, Giovanni Papini.² Gramsci honestly recognizes a certain prewar sympathy among the Futurists, the Communists, and the working classes, but states that the war has put an end to this alliance or convergence.

What was looming was less the perception of the new as a break with the past, and more so the wish to reconsider and reconfigure the entire system, a system of values to which one would often give the name of "culture." It was a more foundational mutation that brought about a wish to reexamine the bases of European culture: In 1922, Malinowski had discovered the kula rings in his *Argonauts*; Carl Schmitt was launching a new *Political Theology* that would allow him to understand the phenomenon of a state deciding to abolish its own legal foundation; Wittgenstein looked differently at the truth, language, and the task of describing the world in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* whose bilingual edition was published in 1922. The concepts undergirding the new paradigms move from simple binary oppositions (order/chaos, old/new, same/other) to include more complex hierarchies in which a new sense of the exception confirms the rules while pushing their foundations elsewhere.

Let us be clear about our aim: the concept of the collection is not just a study of all the cultural objects and formations that came into being in 1922, but an assessment of the dynamism of a highly productive *Zeitgeist*. This will lead us to provide a rationale for what has been called "high modernism," a phrase that rings accurate if one looks at it from the angle of history – 1922 is indeed a "peak" – but can be misleading if by "high" one assumes a position of superiority, which evokes distinction, elitism, or a sublime revulsion from "popular culture." This reproach has been leveled regularly at the main modernist authors whose masterpieces were produced in 1922, but it is based on an erroneous extrapolation. What distinguishes those masterpieces from the works that came before the war

is a sense of a new mission: because of the massive destruction, there was a general sense of added responsibility. The thinkers, writers, and artists had to give birth to something that would approach a totality of experience. Indeed, one might be tempted to replace “high modernism” with “total modernism.” One might even say that the main object of high modernism is totality just before it turns into totalitarianism.

“Totality” was the term used by Lukács when he pointed out the difference between bourgeois thinking and a materialist theory beginning with economic production and class struggle, in a historical dialectic framed by Hegel first, followed by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For Lukács, history has to be seen from the point of view of the proletariat; class consciousness cannot be given or taken as a stable point of departure but will be the result of an effort to understand the “concrete totality” of a whole historical process, which entails a deeper critique of the mechanism of capitalistic exploitation. In a very different sense, “totality” was the term used by Wittgenstein when he asserted that “the totality of facts determines what is the case” in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Hence the famous sentence: “2. 2. 04. The totality of existent atomic facts is the world.” But, as always, the concept of totality includes the exception to the totality: “2. 05. The totality of existent atomic facts also determines which atomic facts do not exist” (Wittgenstein 1988, 37).

A similar concept of totality was used to describe *Ulysses* by a very perceptive critic, Hermann Broch. In his 1936 essay on Joyce, Broch sketches the main features defining a generation. There is the “style of the time,” an “expression of an epoch” fulfilling a “historic reality.” If this specific style is to survive its own moment, it will have to overcome its temporal determinations by looking beyond the past and the present and envisaging the future. Such a historic reality will lead to a “total reality” made up of the concrete lives of multitudes. The writer who engages with the idea of reproducing the “universal quotidian of the epoch” (*Welt-Alltag der Epoche*),³ as Joyce did with *Ulysses*, reshapes the *Zeitgeist* by giving it its artistic form, a crowning achievement made up of all its values. When an artist is able to produce a “universal work of art,” then a “universalized everyday” coheres into a cultural “world” that remains with us forever. Thus Leopold Bloom becomes the hero of a “universal quotidian” that takes Dublin as its site yet explores urban reality and everyday life in such a way that it can be shared by all. What critics have called a “novel to end all novels” also reflects the division of a world caught up between organic muteness and the excessive loquacity of universal culture. As Broch sees it, the most intractable problem faced by the Irish writer was that he felt

compelled to create a totality without believing fully in it. He gave us a total form without being a true Platonician: "... the more fundamentally the work of art undertakes the task of totality (*Totalität*) without believing in it, the more threatening the peril of the infinite becomes" (Broch 2002, 94).

Broch's essays from the twenties to the thirties combine philosophical sophistication with the stylish flair of a gifted novelist. This also defines the work of May Sinclair, novelist and philosopher. For her, too, the term of "total configuration of the universe" was to replace the old Hegelian "absolute." Sinclair named her 1922 philosophical synthesis of the new trends, *New Idealism*. For Sinclair, who had read Kant and Hegel closely and used this specific knowledge in a creative manner when writing a disguised intellectual autobiography in *Mary Oliver*, by 1922, the Hegelian "Absolute" was no longer credible: "Now if it fails to establish an Absolute consciousness carrying and covering the totality of things, Idealism is done for" (1922, 5). Sinclair assumed that the "new realism" ushered in by Bertrand Russell had not fully won yet, but could be relayed by a "reconstructed" idealism. In this idealism, critical pragmatism and a new concept of nature as sketched by Alfred North Whitehead would be reconciled. In the end, this idealism would also take Freud's unconscious into account: God is defined as the sum of what we do not know and what He can know through us. Such a mystical point of view, asserted in novelistic form at the end of *Mary Oliver* and *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen*, is congruent with Wittgenstein's final perspective on "the mystical element" that cannot be erased from life.

If such a concept of "totality" can connect highly different viewpoints, it is because it gestures in the direction of a nondialectical synthesis of the opposites. As Broch would repeat in his novels and essays, the rational and the irrational do fuse and blend in the totality, but because science cannot provide this synthesis immediately, the task of literature is to assuage our impatience by giving birth to the new synthesis. This is why the modernist totality will not necessarily lead to the huge symphonic form deployed with such craft by Proust and Joyce. It can underpin a more minimalist sense of the absent center, as one finds in the rendering of war desolation by Woolf in *Jacob's Room*, or in Sinclair's *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen*, a slim sketch rewriting in the negative the previous long autobiographical novel. This proves that the new totality is not just formal or mythical; it goes beyond a belated Wagnerism of the symbolists who were harking after the mirage of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For the 1922 modernists, "totality" was too serious to be subsumed by

myth. Even if Proust, Joyce, Eliot, and even Woolf still betray a certain reverence for Wagner's operatic synthesis, they aim at a different sort of "whole": the "whole" will have to reconcile the everyday and the distantly mythical, to encompass the body in its most obscure organic functions and the mind in its dizzying leaps, leading readers to flashes, epiphanies, and all sorts of neoplatonic heights.

An example of the deployment of this concept of totality can be found in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Salzburger grosses Welttheater*, which will be discussed here by Matt Wilson Smith. Hugo von Hofmannsthal wanted to provide a counterweight to Wagner's Bayreuth when he launched the Salzburg festival in 1919. David Roberts has explained the poet's motivations:

Thus against Bayreuth, dedicated to no one great artist, and against a Germany in the image of Weimar, Hofmannsthal sets the whole classical heritage of the nation, which extends from the Middle Ages up to Mozart and Goethe in an unbroken theatrical tradition, whose organic development is rooted in the popular culture of the South, that is, the Austrian-Bavarian lands.... Salzburg thus stands for the romantic redefinition of society as community, as "aesthetic totality." (2011, 169)

It is no paradox that his "Catholic" totality should have come as a response to the recent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The "neoclassicism" deployed here has remained modernist in its desire to unite all aesthetic forms in a new whole. It went back to the Middle Ages, as evinced by the successful staging of *Everyman* at Salzburg in 1920. This was followed in 1922 by an adaptation of Calderón's *The Great Theatre of the World*. This time, the metaphor of microcosm capable of reproducing the macrocosm managed to connect religious and popular features pertaining to a long tradition going back to medieval rituals. In that sense, von Hofmannsthal is as much a modernist as are Joyce, Proust, Pound, Woolf, and Eliot when they blend archaic rituals with modern cityscapes.

Another superb exemplification of modernist neo-Wagnerism is Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, the most successful avant-garde opera coming from the Viennese school so far. In this intense, compressed, and atonal musical drama, Berg hews to the precepts of his master Arnold Schönberg, that is he remains atonal in the composition of the score but uses devices like leitmotifs to announce the duets between Marie and Wozzeck or Marie and her child, or incorporates recognizable structures like the fugue or the passacaglia. The intensity of his vision makes him come very close to the expressionist masterpieces in German cinema, and it is no accident that his next opera, *Lulu*, would echo a famous expressionist film, *Pandora's*

Box. The free and “hysterical” expressionism of the first works of the master Viennese composer, Arnold Schönberg, were transformed after the war into a rational method of composition, while the formal innovations of the *Blaue Reiter* group found a way into popular culture through the cinema. This is why the full title of Murnau’s 1922 masterpiece, the free adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, was given a musical title: *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*. The original score by Hans Erdmann, which was performed by a whole orchestra during the projections, was lost soon after, but it has been recreated countless times by various composers and bands. If London was lagging behind Berlin then, it would not be for long; in 1922, a very young Alfred Hitchcock was beginning a dazzling (if at first thwarted) career as a filmmaker.

In 1922, one sees a metamorphosis of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* into an artistic totality that combines all media (music, poetry, painting, staging, dancing, and film) and, moreover, superimposes the most experimental and the most popular; this found an equivalent in literature, most blatantly in poetry, because *The Waste Land* can be called a thoroughly Wagnerian poem. This is true of prose as well, because the invention of the interior monologue as a literary genre was first a Wagnerian device. This was visible in the early career of Edouard Dujardin, later credited by Joyce for the idea of pure interior monologue. Dujardin, a symbolist, launched the *Revue Wagnérienne* in 1885. In 1888, he published the first novel written in interior monologue throughout, *Les Lauriers sont coupés*. In this highly musical recreation of stream of consciousness, we hear popular refrains (as the title betrays) along with the most intimate thoughts of the main character. Dujardin was active in 1922, and remained so for a long time, because he outlived Joyce. Joyce dedicated *Ulysses* to him with a flattering acknowledgment of his invention. In 1931, Dujardin published a book on *Le Monologue Intérieur*, in which he analyzed its function in Joyce’s work. Of course, the modernity of *Ulysses* is not limited to this particular device, but one can follow its transformation from a symbolist and Wagnerian mode to its broader use in a more complex and more “totalizing” symphonic form, which includes a whole encyclopedia of styles and language.

Even a movement as opposed to the idea of aesthetic totalization as surrealism was born in 1922, with its rejection of the systematic, hence empty, negativism of Dadaism. Dadaism used nonsense art and poetry to debunk the lofty ideals of a culture judged to be beyond any hope of salvation. Destruction was the aim – but could one make a literary career of it? Combining his neo-Freudian trust in the unconscious roots of creativity with a neoromantic belief that the artist can still be a prophet announcing

a better life to come, André Breton broke with Tristan Tzara in 1922 with the explicit aim of ushering in a less nihilist artistic practice and abolishing the divide between art and life. The surrealist totality had to bridge the gap between dreams and waking life, between art and everyday concerns. In the same way, *The Waste Land* provides a jagged summation of a European culture in ruins. Eliot's diagnosis aims at analyzing the roots of a sexual neurosis that has spread because a dangerous "dissociation of sensibility" found its linguistic equivalent in the poetry of the later seventeenth century.

If we can agree that the specificity of modernism in 1922 is that it postulates a totality before advancing to the next stage, which would be true totalitarianism, we have to consider its drift toward a more dangerous concept of the "totalitarian." In 1922, it was not a given fact that Eliot would become a reactionary Anglo-Catholic six years later, or that Pound would embrace Mussolini, preferring him to Lenin, or that George Sorel's meditations on violence would inspire the Right rather than the Left (Sorel had just then published his last book, *Matériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat*).

Thus, if one studies European modernism as a continuum founded upon the concept of totality, a different picture of the *Zeitgeist* in 1922 emerges. One will verify, for instance, that the modernist "whole" includes and never excludes popular culture or technology – both very present in *The Waste Land* and in *Ulysses*. In this sense, 1922 offers altogether an apex and a new departure. This can be verified if one looks at the periodization invoked by excellent critics whose work has shaped the field; for Michael Levenson, whose highly influential *A Genealogy of Modernism 1908–1922* was published in 1986, the aesthetics of modernism had developed over a period going from 1908 to 1922, and this view is not questioned today. Similarly, a critic who insists more on conflict than the commonalities of various programs, Ann Ardis, has called her 2002 book *Modernism and Cultural Conflict 1880–1922*. This time, the line of development passes from the late Victorian era to the modern times. Wishing to eschew the self-appointed myth of the "men of 1914," Ardis pays attention to historical fault lines and points of tension, and takes Oscar Wilde's taunting paradoxes, Lewis's aggressive strategies, and Orage's politically committed *New Age* as more indicative of change than Pound, Joyce, and Eliot. But if we look at influential trends documenting what has been forgotten even by revisionist accounts, like technology and the "subaltern" colonial masses, we may reach different conclusions based on another historical vector. Thus, Todd Avery's influential *Radio-Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922–1938* chooses the segment of 1922–38, while Partha Mitter

opts for a larger scale in *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922–1947*.⁴ These two books highlight the relative specificity of the history of technology and its cultural appropriations, as opposed to the longer chronicle of decolonization. By deciding to focus just on one year, we stay in the eye of the storm and capture its dynamism.

It is with such a dynamic view in mind that the writers of these specially commissioned essays provide a rationale and not just a historical context in their effort to describe the emergence of the new in 1922. They grapple with the interrelations of the principal actors, including the numerous American “pilgrims” then moving to Paris or Berlin. It is this cosmopolitan diaspora that made 1922 the “*annus mirabilis*” acknowledged by all observers.

Why Focus on Europe?

The earlier forms of radical experimentation that had been launched in the prewar years and the war years like Futurism, Dadaism, and Suprematism, all tended either to migrate elsewhere (Dada was installing itself in New York) or to reshape themselves (Suprematism turned into Constructivism and Dadaism into surrealism at the same time, i.e., in 1922). As Paul Valéry famously stated in 1919, the war and its chaos made him discover that “civilizations are mortal” and that Europe was just a tiny cape perched at the top of the Asian continent. In 1922, Eliot was quoting Hesse about the wild hordes coming from Soviet Russia, and the political polarization that would mark the post-1929 years was already underway.

However, in most European capitals, the mood was rather upbeat. It seemed that *joie de vivre* was triumphing, which was not exactly the case in the United States, with a return to isolationism and the puritanism of the prohibition. Hence one can argue that if, ideally, the synchronicity of the modern should be global and take the whole world into account, there was a more localized chronotope limited to Europe. Thus, with respect to the pedagogical use of these essays that want to hew to pedagogical considerations, Europe will provide a safer format. Nevertheless, it is a broad Europe that is not limited to England, Germany, or France and encompasses Russia, the Scandinavian countries, Portugal, the dismembered Austria-Hungarian Empire, and the emerging New Italy. In that time of heightened polarization, freedom seemed to be the privilege of Europe: the freedom to party, experiment, and flaunt transgressive behavior. Such a festive mood was not restricted to cities like London, Paris, or Berlin. In 1922, in a very conservative Lisbon, Fernando Pessoa praised the

second publication of António Botto's explicitly gay poems. But of course it was in Paris that Proust was publishing his *Sodom and Gomorrah*, while Victor Margueritte scandalized his readers with tales of bisexual excess in *La Garçonne*. Gertrude Stein's dazzling *Geography and Plays* (1922) could not have been published had she not lived in Paris, as was the case with *Ulysses*. Here, one can verify that the European exceptionalism of 1922 included distinguished artists and authors coming from many other countries, but only insofar as they agreed to move to the new hubs represented by the artistic centers of Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna.

Even E. E. Cummings, who embodied the spirit of Greenwich Village at the time and had published his poetic masterpiece "Buffalo Bill" in 1920, later reprinted in *Tulips & Chimneys* in 1923, published his famous war novel, *The Enormous Room* in 1922. If it is about the war, it evokes a very particular experience. Having volunteered to serve in the American ambulance corps, Cummings had sent letters that expressed antiwar views. He was arrested by the French military on suspicion of espionage. He only spent a few months in a military detention camp, but used his experience as material for a novel that doubles as a memoir. *The Enormous Room* was praised by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who saw in it a defining portrayal of their "lost" generation. Thus the quintessentially American poem of "Buffalo Bill" was buttressed by a poetic recreation of a European nightmare: Cummings had been accused of having derided the French war effort and of having sympathized with the German side. His "pilgrim's progress" in the maze of delirious bureaucracy – none of the detainees knew exactly what crime they had been accused of – and the jostling of other nationalities – there were Dutch, Polish, Belgian, Austrian, Danish inmates, and even an African man, all suspected of being traitors or spies, in the triage camp of La Ferté Macé – eerily resembles Robert Antelme's memoirs of the German death camps, his famous *The Human Race*. Cummings's own title evokes the strange locale in which the men are detained: a huge hall of eighty feet by forty feet with rows of wooden pillars, ten windows on one side, and a high vaulted ceiling. The detention camp, in which arbitrary rules reign, is not as dire as Auschwitz, nor is it even a very severe jail, but Cummings presents the modern age as the myriad stories of displaced men and women all accused of unknown crimes by an invisible bureaucracy, all waiting for punishment or a sudden and unmotivated liberation. Their absurd predicament can be explained away by a "normal" war situation in which foreigners can be found out and exposed as spies, and the usual rules of politeness and respect for the other are suddenly canceled.

When Cummings's last paragraph describes his return home after the horrors of collective confinement and the sleazy seductions of Paris, it contrasts starkly the perversity and meanness of an unaccountable French bureaucracy with a free and "vertical" New York, which calls up for him an "immensity" mixing up aesthetic awe and ethical relief:

The tall, impossibly tall, incomparably tall, city shoulderingly upward into hard sunlight leaned a little through the octaves of its parallel edges, leaningly strode upward into firm hard snowy sunlight; the noises of America nearingly throbbed with smokes and hurrying dots which are men and which are women and which are things new and curious and hard and strange and vibrant and immense.... (Cummings 1934, 242)

Because New York is repeatedly described as "immense," this transcendental (hence supremely American) immensity figures an exact reversal of the "enormous" space of the army camp. "Enormous" derives from a Latin adjective denoting the negation of the norm; its first meaning was "out of rule," "exorbitant," "irregular," "shapeless," and "extraordinary." The sense of an outrageous power being conferred to any type of bureaucracy pervades Cummings's honestly impressionistic chronicle. This became the question for many modernists after the Great War: how to measure the enormity of the catastrophe, when the catastrophe has shaken all our beliefs in norms and standards?

This was the question that led Le Corbusier to offer his own sense of a new norm – and he scandalized the French public when he presented in November 1922 at the Salon d'Automne of Paris his radical plans for a "contemporary city." Typically, Le Corbusier did not explain, but simply showed revolutionary plans for a three-million people city. These consisted in a series of identical high-rise buildings in the shape of a cross, separated by green spaces. Flaunting a rigidly symmetrical grid pattern, lining up rows of geometrical sixty-story skyscrapers, the Swiss architect ushered in a new concept of the city. In 1922, he presented his scheme for a "Contemporary City" (*Ville Contemporaine*) for three million inhabitants. The centerpiece of this plan was the group of sixty-story, cruciform skyscrapers including steel-framed office buildings encased in huge curtain walls of glass. These skyscrapers were set within large, rectangular parklike green spaces. At the center, one found a transportation hub including depots for buses and trains, highway intersections, and even an airport on top of it all! Le Corbusier glorified the use of cars and airplanes as means of transportation. According to Norma Evenson's apt summary, this bold proposal for Paris appeared either as "an audacious and compelling vision of a brave new world," or as "a frigid megalomaniacally scaled

negation of the familiar urban ambient” (1969, 7). This stark vision could not but take the Parisians by surprise, even more so when Le Corbusier added that this proposal was not a distant utopia but a rational plan calculated for the present age. Today, we see that a similar grid has been built in most emerging capitals of the world, from Brasilia to Kuala Lumpur. If Le Corbusier developed further the ideas underpinning such a bold plan in the years to follow, in 1922, he had launched the blueprint for the “modern” urban mapping to which we have been accustomed: huge high-rise towers, straight roads, functional green spaces, a beautiful but terrifying symmetry reigning over a rationalized and abstract landscape. The aim was less to control the unruly masses (such had been the aim of late-nineteenth-century modernist urbanization, as with the new Paris of Baron Hausmann, e.g.) as to make a new and radiant machine for living a better life. Indeed, Le Corbusier’s *Contemporary City* is total modernism with a vengeance, because a universalizing concept aims at curing the ills and diseases left over from previous periods. Social harmony, urban functionality, and moral well-being should be conceived and produced together; this can be made possible by a complex urban utopia combining the ethical and the aesthetic, the practical and the spiritual. Was Joyce so far from this dream when he claimed that he had written *Ulysses* so that the city could be rebuilt from his pages if it happened to be destroyed during the Irish Civil War?

Le Corbusier’s high modernism derives from the issue that Carl Schmitt also faced in 1922: how to structure the exorbitant new spaces generated by a war that had transformed the world into enormous, excessive, and amorphous “rooms”? There was a formalist answer in a neocubist minimalism, whose staple vocabulary is a crisscrossing pattern of rigid geometrical grids, or a conceptual answer that added an exception to the norm. This was the origin of Schmitt’s thinking at the time: encompassing both the norm of democratic regimes and their exceptions, the sovereign power could decide to suspend all laws. Uniform spaces peopled by displaced minorities or by “normal” citizens who need functional machines to dwell and work in, in other words, offices, factories, and bedrooms, would all fall under the pervasive logic of a modernism that knows itself to be just another name for the “contemporary,” meaning a radical adequation of technological progress to the needs of growing and sprawling human multitudes. This is why the third section of this collection deals with the new epistemology of 1922, comparing the early works of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, and Karl Barth, with the new teachings of comparative anthropology based on the works of

Frazer, Malinowski, and Freud, in the context of a new understanding of relativity that pitted Einstein against Bergson in the syntheses provided by Bertrand Russell and Whitehead. Meanwhile Ludwig Wittgenstein was once more transforming the field of language philosophy. The year 1922 also saw a rethinking of the foundations of Marxism after the success of the Russian revolution, as one sees with Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch.

The second section focuses more on art and movements, because it treats the constant hesitation one witnesses in 1922 between the avant-gardist wish to keep on experimenting and a need to return to some sort of order. Russian formalism finds its final expression before the Stalinist repression; Picasso chooses a new classicism while the Futurists and the surrealists still fight over the true path to a revolution linking art and life. Jorge Luis Borges has returned to Buenos Aires and is ready to distill what he has learned from the experimental writings of Ultraism and the Spanish avant-garde, while Vicente Huidobro and César Vallejo continue to invent new forms and idioms. Hofmannsthal and Cocteau agree that a rethought and refounded classicism should undergird their verbal explorations.

The first section begins where one should begin, that is by situating in the enormous room the main monuments of 1922 modernism, from *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* to *The Castle*, *Geography and Plays*, *Jacob's Room*, *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, and *Life and Death of Harriett Frean*. There was of course the productive month of February when Rilke penned the last *Duino Elegies* and most of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. We cannot omit Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and also the surprising emergence of Albert Cohen's first texts. Willa Cather was right when she observed in her prefatory note to *Not under Forty* (1936) that "the world broke in two in 1922, or thereabouts" (1988, i). Unhappily, she felt that the watershed moment did not apply to her own work, believing as she did that she belonged to the camp of the "backward" – along with luminaries like Thomas Mann, who, she sensed, tried to remain on both sides of the divide. A world broken in two evokes the traditional trope of the Greek *symbolon*: two pieces of a pottery that can be reunited to claim an identity. It is to such a work of critical discrimination and synthetic reunion that the following essays welcome you.

Notes

- 1 See Georg Lukács, *Essays and Reviews* (1922; reprint, London: Merlin Press, 1983).

- 2 Letter to Trotsky sent by Gramsci from Moscow, dated September 8, 1922, added by Trotsky at the end of chapter 4 of the French version of *Littérature et Révolution*.
- 3 Hermann Broch, *Schriften zur Literature 1, Kritik*. Edited by P. M. Lützeler, 64. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975. Hermann Broch, "Joyce and the Present Age." Translated by Maria Jolas, in *Geist and Zeitgeist*. Edited by John Hargraves, 67. New York, Counterpoint, 2002.
- 4 See Todd Avery's *Radio-Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922–1938* (London: Ashgate, 2006) and Partha Mitter's *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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*Uncanny Semblables and Serendipitous
Publications: T.S. Eliot's the Criterion, and
The Waste Land and James Joyce's Ulysses*

Gabrielle McIntire

Stationed in the intimacy of their minds, and sometimes in the minds of the other characters, we see through their eyes and hear through their ears what happens and what is said around them. In this way, in this book, all the elements are constantly melting into each other, and the illusion of life, of the thing in the act, is complete: the whole is movement.

Valéry Larbaud, "Ulysses' of James Joyce," translated by T.S. Eliot, the *Criterion* (1967, 96).

In October 1922, just a few days before launching his new journal, the *Criterion*, T.S. Eliot wrote to his brother Henry explaining that "[t]he *Criterion* is to appear next Monday, and you will doubtless receive your copy almost as soon as this letter. It has been a heavier undertaking than I anticipated, but I think that the result, so far as the first number is concerned, is satisfactory" (1988, 580). Eliot would remain quite self-critical of his editing efforts through the full seventeen-year run of the journal, insisting from the start, "I don't want *anyone* to write of me as the editor" (1988, 600; emphasis in the original), as if hoping to establish only a ghostly presence there and to function as mere "impersonality." Yet during the course of the magazine's existence, Eliot proved to have an uncanny ability for finding and publishing an extraordinarily wide range of contemporary British and international writers who remain important today, while he strove to make the magazine a forum for both literary and cultural critique by publishing short fiction, poems, literary criticism, and reviews, alongside political and cultural commentary. The *Criterion* would become the first English-language journal to publish segments of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, while the inaugural issue contained some remarkable and historically significant juxtapositions: within its roughly one hundred pages, Eliot included essays by Fyodor Dostoevsky, George Saintsbury, Thomas Sturge Moore,

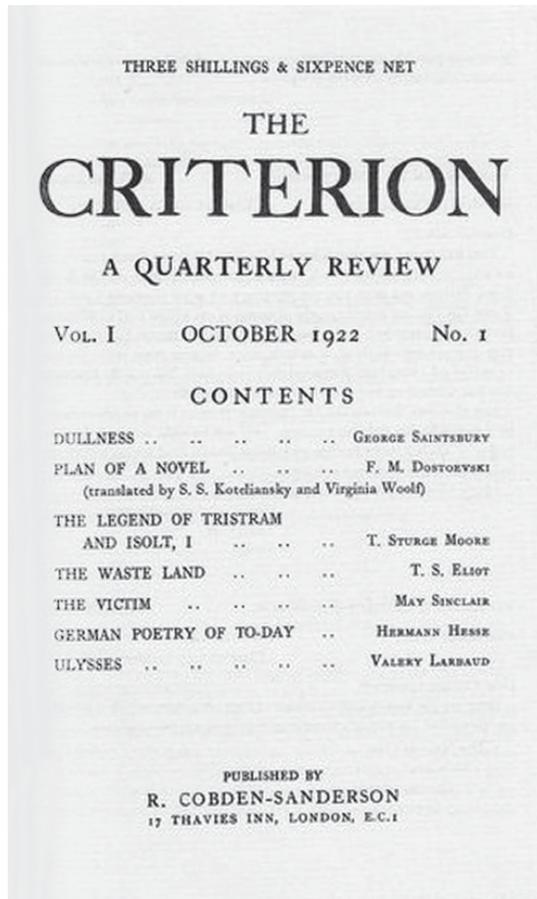


Figure 1.1. First issue of the *Criterion*, I.1, October 1922. Illustration by the author of the article.

and Hermann Hesse, together with a short story by May Sinclair, and the very first publication of his poem, *The Waste Land*,² as well as a lecture by Valéry Larbaud, which Eliot translated from the French, about James Joyce's recently published novel, *Ulysses* (see [Figure 1.1](#)).

The Waste Land and *Ulysses* would become two of the most groundbreaking and influential texts ever written, with *The Waste Land* often considered *the* paradigmatic poem of modernism, and *Ulysses* often considered *the* paradigmatic novel of the period. Both were revolutionary, and the two works met in the earliest pages of Eliot's *Criterion*. This

confluence of literary events testifies both to the dialogic engagement at the core of modernist literature, as well as to the sheer happenstance of historical and textual *jouissance* during that wonder-year of 1922, when cultural, political, and aesthetic outlooks were irrevocably changing. Indeed, many readers have remarked on the pairing of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, and on the extraordinary simultaneity of their publication, including Michael North, who opens his book, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern*, by noting the influence of Eliot and Joyce's friend, Ezra Pound, on publishing both texts: "By helping to bring both *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* into print, Pound had introduced to the public the two works that would constitute, in the words of Gilbert Seldes, 'a complete expression of the spirit which will be "modern" for the next generation.' Ever since, the coincidental publication of these two works in 1922 has been taken as signifying a definitive break in literary history" (1999, 3).

The Waste Land and *Ulysses* have also come to be read as uncanny "semblables," or likenesses – to borrow a term from *The Waste Land*, which Eliot in turn "steal[s]" from Baudelaire³ – insofar as these poetic and fictional counterparts enacted complementary transformations of literary horizons at nearly exactly the same time. Both are fairly "difficult" works, and have been criticized as being inaccessible or overly demanding of their readers, or for needing – but lacking – a definitive interpretive key. Both break with rules of traditional form and narrative to extend the previous limits of their genre; both set up comparisons between contemporary and ancient human history and myth while provoking contemplations of temporal dislocation by suggesting that the past is vibrantly alive in the present; both invite European and global history into their local frames of vision (predominantly London and Dublin, respectively); both play with shifting narrators and points of view; both employ stream-of-consciousness technique; both "steal" textual fragments from a range of other literatures and traditions; both break with former ideas about plot and characterological constructs; and both challenge early-twentieth-century ideas and biases about the representation and hermeneutics of sexuality and gender. Each writer would literally change what was possible for literary subject matter, language, and form. When Eliot started the *Criterion*, he had already been for several years a major fan of Joyce's still relatively uncelebrated work, and he was ready to promote *Ulysses* in his new journal. In this way the *Criterion* began as a micrometonymic stage for the larger spectacle of the many unprecedented literary and cultural shifts occurring in 1922.

The Criterion and Pan-European Pollination

That fabled and heady year of 1922 was just long enough past the horrors of World War I to allow for the recrudescence of optimism about a fertile trans-European and even global cultural and literary cross-pollination, and T.S. Eliot was eager to cultivate such exchanges as much as he could. The 1920s and 1930s, though, turned out to be incredibly turbulent years, marked by ongoing emotional, political, and social recovery after the individual and collective traumas of the Great War; the rise of fascism on the continent, especially after Mussolini's election in 1922; the Crash of 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression; Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany in 1933; and increasingly tense European and global relations leading up to World War II. Eliot was sensitive to all of these changes, and as editor he strove to stimulate discussion and debate among diverse camps that would reach beyond the confines of an insular English outlook to multiple European and global perspectives. He even included pieces early on from both communist and fascist angles, before the fates of such movements were known. In his search for a broad base of writers, Eliot wrote to Pound in July 1922, emphasizing his intentions for making the *Criterion* pan-European in scope: "Do you recommend anybody in France for the *Criterion*? Also, have you come across anyone who is all informed about Scandinavia? I am *not* anxious to get many French people for the *first two* numbers, more anxious to get other (foreign) nationalities.... But later, yes, any French stuff that is really *good*" (1988, 539; emphasis in original). Later in the same year Eliot wrote to Scofield Thayer, urging him to help find "a few good writers in various parts of Europe for *The Criterion* [*sic*]" (1988, 602). Herbert Howarth, who had a personal correspondence with Eliot, proposes that such attempts stand as a kind of literary diplomacy, suggesting that "[w]ith the first issue of *The Criterion* [*sic*] Eliot showed that he desired to restore the intellectual communications between England and Germany that had been severed by the war. He invited Herman Hesse to describe recent German poetry. The article was brief and too general to make interesting reading today, but we see the editor's point in commissioning it" (1959, 102). The *Criterion* went on to offer an international array of contributors in most issues, while it listed a number of "periodicals" as suggested further reading from countries ranging from the United States to Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Brazil, Russia, Switzerland, Holland, and more.

Eliot's pluralist journalistic strivings echo many of the impulses of both *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, where Eliot and Joyce each render the outlooks of their Anglophone early twentieth-century cultures as always global as well as local, and always traversed with multiple linguistic traditions. Eliot's figures in *The Waste Land* converse in Cockney accents at the pub in "A Game of Chess" – "Oh is there, she said. Something 'o that, I said" (line 150) – while his narrative voice(s) speak in a number of tongues, ranging from French to Latin, Italian, Greek, and Sanskrit. His figures and voices are also constantly changing geographical and historical settings, from Renaissance London to ancient Mylae, India, Phoenicia, and Carthage, and back to early-twentieth-century London.

Joyce's *Ulysses* seeks a similar trans-European and transhistorical dialogic exchange, with his Irish everyman heroes, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, wandering through a single day – June 16, 1904 – of their fairly ordinary lives (Bloom is an advertising agent and Stephen is a young aspiring writer) in bathetic juxtaposition with the epic wanderings of Homer's Ulysses in *The Odyssey* from nearly three thousand years earlier. Bloom and Stephen are bound by what Stephen describes at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as the "nets" of Ireland, though they know no Irish, and Stephen carries the name of the Greek "ancient artificer," Dedalus, who constructed the labyrinth for King Theseus that housed the minotaur and later imprisoned both him and his son, Icarus. Bloom and Stephen also participate in or overhear various languages through the day – from Italian to Latin, Irish, and French – as if they are immersed in an oceanic experience of linguistic play. Stephen ruminates while walking on Sandymount Strand, "These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" (3.288–9). Our relations to language, both writers suggest, are always mutable, vulnerable, and in flux: ready to participate in multiple thresholds of semantic and semiotic meaning. And although he did not officially name his chapters after Homer's *The Odyssey*, Joyce explained to his friends that each section of his novel corresponds to an episode of Homer's epic, beginning with "Telemachus" and moving through such chapters as "Proteus," "Scylla and Charybdis," and "Nausicaa," to end with the long monologue by Bloom's wife, Molly, entitled "Penelope." Eliot similarly pairs mythic antecedents with contemporary figures, ranging from Philomel, who is violated "by the barbarous king / So rudely forced" (lines 99–100), juxtaposed with the "typist," who is sexually violated by "the young man carbuncular" (line 231), to "Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead" whom the reader is invoked

to “Consider” as a “*semblable*” – “once handsome and tall as you” (lines 312 and 321), to Tiresias, whom Eliot calls in his own footnote “the most important personage in the poem” (footnote 218), who guided destinies millennia ago and remains as the primary witness to violent acts occurring in the present.

Despite establishing itself in the 1920s and 1930s as one of the most influential English-language periodicals, the *Criterion* today is significantly underrated in the modernist canon of journals and little magazines. This relative neglect has occurred in part because it frustrated some readers for its idiosyncratic and sometimes socially and politically conservative angles, particularly after Eliot’s conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927. Jason Harding points to several strong critiques of the journal, beginning with Lady Lilian Rothermere, who funded the magazine until 1927 when she withdrew her support after becoming “dissatisfied with the character of the journal” (2009, 390). Harding also cites Desmond MacCarthy’s complaint about the “‘Frenchified’ neo-Thomism he found on display in Eliot’s magazine,” and notes that even Eliot’s close friend and housemate for many years, Bonamy Dobrée, objected that “the *Criterion* had turned into a ‘Religio-Political Organ’” (2009, 393). Eliot’s close friend and collaborator, Ezra Pound – who is the single most published writer in the *Criterion* – also publicly complained in the fall of 1930 that Eliot was offering his readers a “diet of dead crow” (2009, 114). To our ears today, which are accustomed to ostensibly neutral journalistic positions, Eliot’s leanings do seem occasionally tendentious after the late 1920s, and much as Eliot tried to remain open to multiple perspectives he gradually came to believe that he had failed in his effort to bridge European literatures. When he decided to close the journal in 1939, he did so with at least some sense of failure: when “war became imminent,” he writes, “the prospect for a quarterly of very limited appeal was so unpromising, that we decided to bring the magazine to an end” (1967, “Preface”). As Herbert Howarth points out: “He wrote in the last number that he had seen the breakdown of the thesis” of a genuine pan-European exchange, “and had then changed from the Europeanizing policy to an insular policy of encouraging new British writers” (1959, 109). The sanguine hopes of 1922 did not always manage to thrive in the decades that followed.

Still, it is important to remember that the *Criterion* provides a nuanced engagement with the very international and plural *modernisms* that any serious student of modernist literature would do well to read from cover to cover. The magazine offered Eliot a venue that allowed him to cultivate and showcase an astonishing assortment of emerging and established

writers who remain important today. Indeed, much as one may detest lists, it is irresistible to offer a sampling of the novelists, critics, and poets whom Eliot published in order to offer, in shorthand, a taste of the journal's character. Among British and American contributors, we find James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, W. B. Yeats, E. M. Forster, May Sinclair, D. H. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, H. D., Conrad Aiken, I. A. Richards, Marianne Moore, Robert Graves, William Empson, Hart Crane, Roger Fry, Hugh Walpole, Edith Sitwell, Osbert Sitwell, Aldous Huxley, Clive Bell, Arnold Bennett, Bonamy Dobrée, John Middleton Murry, Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, Henry Miller, Ford Madox Ford, Louis Zukofsky, W. H. Auden, Walter de la Mare, Stephen Spender, Dylan Thomas, and Wyndham Lewis, to name only a few. Among international contributors we find Marcel Proust, Jean Cocteau, F. M. Dostoevsky, Hermann Hesse, Mario Praz, Luigi Pirandello, Julien Benda, Paul Valéry, André Malraux, Charles Mauron, Hermann Broch, Charles Maurras, Saint Jean Perse, Eugenio Montale, Ramon Fernandez, and Thomas Mann. There are many others who have remained less well-known whom Eliot sought to foster and support. The list is dizzying and dazzling, and one would do well simply to take Eliot's tables of contents and begin reading through the journal to understand some of the breadth of what even our most twenty-first-century renditions of literary modernisms encompass. The exciting range of names shows Eliot engaging with not only some of the preeminent writers of his day, but also with some of the earliest critics of modernism who would help to initiate the school of New Criticism, including I. A. Richards and William Empson. He was thus also encouraging cross-currents of exchange between the creative engines of literary modernism and its critical interpreters.⁴

No matter how critical one is of Eliot, one must admit that the compendium the *Criterion* offers reveals a remarkable perspicacity about what was and would remain important literature. As such, the journal stands as a unique literary nexus: a site, in time and in place, where we can find the makings and consolidations of so much of what we have come to consider "canonical" for modernist literature. Further, Eliot's journal does what it took decades of criticism for modernist scholars to grasp: it assumes that a transnational pastiche of writers was writing under shared aesthetic aspirations to reinvent previous beliefs about literary form, style, aesthetics, and content. Eliot was therefore insisting that modernist writing did not occur in a vacuum, but in a rich and ongoing international dialogue. The magazine, then, shows the extent to which Eliot was not only exposed to, but also reading deeply, a tremendously broad range of contemporaries.

The Waste Land and Ulysses

Now that we have a sense of the character and purposes of the *Criterion*, let us turn again to that remarkable fact that in the very first issue of Eliot's journal, *The Waste Land* appeared in print for the first time alongside one of the first major critical assessments of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Eliot took Valéry Larbaud's essay, "The 'Ulysses' of James Joyce" – listed simply as "ULYSSES" in the magazine's Table of Contents (see [Figure 1.1](#)) – from "part of the text of a lecture given in Paris on December 7 last," which Eliot claims in his sole editorial footnote to Larbaud's essay is "still the best introduction that has been offered to Mr. Joyce's book" (1967, 94). As Jean-Michel Rabaté tells us, the lecture had been delivered in Paris "to more than two hundred people by Larbaud in Adrienne Monnier's bookshop on 7 December 1921, [and] this event launched the reputation of the book in France" (2004, 56). And, not only did Eliot choose to include a critique of Joyce's *Ulysses* in the inaugural issue of the *Criterion*, but he took the time to translate the piece from the French. He wrote to Valéry Larbaud that "[t]he translator who was to have taken charge of your lecture, who is an eminently competent person, disappointed me at the last moment, so that I had no alternative but to set to work under great pressure and translate it myself" (1988, 578). Despite Eliot's excellent French, he makes substantial apology for the piece directly to Larbaud, fearing that Larbaud – who was quickly becoming the preeminent early interpreter of *Ulysses* – might find "that the translation hardly does justice to the original" (1988, 578). The fact of Eliot's translation, though, makes the piece even more of a treasure-trove, and demonstrates Eliot's serious commitment to supporting Joyce's work even when Joyce's reception in English-speaking countries remained uncertain. As Rabaté suggests, Eliot's publication of Larbaud's piece had nearly immediate positive consequences for Joyce, since it "triggered a series of translations and articles," helping Joyce's reputation so greatly that "the year 1922 can be called a 'Joyce year' in Paris" (2004, 57).

Eliot had already been a great admirer of the slightly older James Joyce by the time he published Larbaud's piece, and he had been acquainted with *Ulysses* ever since its first chapter appeared in the American journal, *The Little Review*, in March 1918. By June 1918, Eliot was already encouraging others to read Joyce's new work, writing to Scofield Thayer about "the superb new novel of Joyce, which I do commend to your attention. You no doubt have read the *Portrait of the Artist* by him" (1988, 236). In the

same letter he calls Joyce “The best living prose writer” (1988, 236). Eliot would go on to praise and promote *Ulysses* many times, in many milieus, and he particularly made sure to share his good impressions with John Quinn, the American lawyer who gave financial support to both writers. In July 1919, after copies of *Ulysses* had been seized by the U.S. Postal Service because of its ostensibly obscene content, Eliot writes to Quinn that “[t]he part of *Ulysses* in question struck me as almost the finest I have read: I have lived on it ever since I read it”; he also laments that Joyce “is far from being accepted, yet. I only know two or three people, besides my wife and myself, who are really carried away by him” (1988, 314). Nearly two years later, in May 1921, Eliot writes again to Quinn that “the latter part of *Ulysses*, which I have been reading in manuscript, is truly magnificent,” while he confesses that “meanwhile have [*sic*] a long poem in mind and partly on paper which I am wishful to finish” (1988, 451–2). That poem would become *The Waste Land* within a matter of months.

We can thus say for certain that Eliot was reading *Ulysses* while he was composing *The Waste Land*, and it is likely that the novel had significant influence on the thematics and stylistics of the evolving poem – so much so that some have made the argument that *The Waste Land* is so heavily indebted to Joyce’s writing that we are in error to think of the two pieces as emerging truly at the same time. A. Walton Litz points out that

It is part of the mythology of modernism that we habitually discuss *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* as if they were simultaneous artistic performances, twin children of the Zeitgeist. In our desire to make those *anni mirabiles* of the early 1920’s even more miraculous, we suppress the obvious fact that *The Waste Land* and its attendant masterpieces, such as Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, were written with Joyce’s great novel firmly in view (1922, 5).⁵

Indeed, Eliot paid homage to Joyce by sending him an inscribed copy of the poem as soon as it was published, while he encouraged a proximity between the two texts by printing them together in the pages of the *Criterion* – extending their echoic symmetries and parallels while publicly celebrating a master he revered.⁶

Larbaud’s essay applauds the merits of *Ulysses* in aesthetic, structural, and thematic terms, and defends it from the charges laid by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, which would soon provoke an obscenity trial that would keep the book from being published in the English-speaking world until 1934. Larbaud insists that the term the society was stressing – “licentious” – “is inappropriate; it is both vague and weak: it should be *obscene*” (1922, 103; emphasis in the original). He then

commends Joyce's frank approach to human sexuality by arguing that "[h]is intention is neither salacious nor lewd; he simply describes and represents.... The English language has a very great store of obscene words and expressions, and the author of *Ulysses* has enriched his book generously and boldly from this vocabulary" (1922, 103). Larbaud had "seen the drafts" of the novel, so he is also able to comment on some of Joyce's compositional methods, which he calls "a genuine example of the art of mosaic," with the reader left to "decipher" Joyce's "minutely detailed scheme ... this close web" (1922, 102). Larbaud further stresses that to grasp the whole meaning of the book the reader would ideally have some knowledge of Homer's *The Odyssey*, perhaps from reading the original Greek during one's schooling (1922, 98). Of course, such a hope for Joyce's readers has not been possible for the better part of half a century, so Larbaud's essay also gives us a taste of what was possible in terms of readerly reception in 1922 that has long ago been lost.

While Eliot was publishing Larbaud's assessment of *Ulysses*, he was also preparing his own essay on the book. He writes to Richard Aldington in November 1922, "I do not think that Larbaud's article can be taken as criticism at all. It is merely an introduction to the subject, and I think it is useful to anyone who is going to read the book. I am struggling with a notice of *Ulysses* myself which I have promised long since to the *Dial* [*sic*]" (1988, 594). That "notice" became his important essay, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," which appeared in *The Dial* in 1923, and in which Eliot is at pains to emphasize the ineluctability of Joyce's startling new masterpiece for future writing. At the outset of this essay, Eliot emphatically pronounces, "I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we are all indebted, and *from which none of us can escape*" (1975, 175; my emphasis). He also defends *Ulysses* from Richard Aldington's criticisms that "fail" to understand the book, directing the reader instead to Larbaud's piece: "Among all the criticisms I have seen of the book, I have seen nothing – unless we except, in its way, m. Valéry Larbaud's valuable paper which is rather an Introduction than a criticism – which seemed to me to appreciate the significance of the method employed" (1975, 175). For his part, Eliot writes that "[i]n using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method *which others must pursue after him*.... It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (1975, 177; my emphasis). In these statements we find confirmation of Eliot's own

approaches to history and myth in *The Waste Land*, which paints a bleak scene of the postwar historical moment in Britain as a “waste land” of failed relationships (especially between the sexes), failed ideals, and failed attempts to make sense of the present historical “panorama,” while also offering, as I have suggested, nearly “continuous parallel[s]” between the present and the ancient past (1975, 177). Without explicitly stating that he borrows – or “steal[s]” – from Joyce, Eliot repeatedly claims that Joyce’s work and method *must* be imitated – as if by a new and inescapable necessity – by those who come after him. That is, *Ulysses* represents a “really new” literary artifact of the kind Eliot had described a few years earlier, in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1917), insofar as it alters how we are able to read and interpret literature and literary history at all: “The existing monuments [of art] form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them” (1999, 15). *Ulysses* had changed the entire map of literary possibility for Eliot and many others, stimulating and demanding a new kind of brazen experiment from a whole generation of writers.

Teaching Reading

Leo Bersani proposes that *Ulysses*, like Gustave Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (published posthumously in 1881, the year before Joyce’s birth), “impl[ies] that its own performance can redemptively replace all the culture which it seeks to incorporate” (2004, 211). We might borrow Bersani’s words to speak of *The Waste Land*, too, since Eliot’s poem also involves attempts not only to critique but also to redeem and, in a sense, to remake culture – to break down culture and then reassemble it in such a way that discloses and even revels in the fracturedness of human consciousness and our ways of organizing and generating culture. Both writers implicitly suggest that prior history and culture have failed to provide adequate meaning and sustenance, and that part of their writerly task will be to redress that failure by mourning its limits and losses and then offering a newly charged avant-garde vision of what art and culture might potentially mean in a postwar world. Both writers insist that they can cannibalize cultural fragments in order to reshape them to the needs of their own works of art, which will, in turn, fill an emptiness in their contemporary culture while inspiring future literary experiments. In the process of generating such new forms of literary art, each writer also proposes – with some hubris, but much accuracy – that they can change the long-standing formal expectations of their genre. Each were also borrowing from past

literary history with what Bersani calls an “encyclopedic intertextuality” (2004, 211) that is sometimes overwhelming and sometimes alienating, creating orders of “inside” and “outside” readers – readers who “get” the references, and readers who are excluded from them, either through lacking a shared erudition or through lacking an inclination to go source hunting.

Joyce’s novel is ultimately more comedic in its content and resolution than Eliot’s tragic poem, but the final repetitious line of *The Waste Land* – “Shantih shantih shantih” (line 433) that invokes a chanted peace uncannily echoes the positivity of the rhapsodically building repetitious “yes... yes... Yes” of Molly Bloom’s long soliloquy that closes *Ulysses*. Eliot does not eroticize the sensuality of female pleasure as does Joyce, but he cannot resist offering a closure that suddenly promises a release from chaos and suffering, as if in a “flash of lightning... Bringing rain” that his speakers have waited for in amid the barren waste of the dry land (lines 392–3). Bersani suggests that “*Ulysses* is often hard to read, but, more than any other work of literature, it is also a guidebook to how it should be read” (2004, 211). Again, we might say something very similar about Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: each text is bracingly difficult, yet rewards the reader by training him or her in the very act of reading by staging a metacritical spectacle of what it means to read. It teaches us to confront literature in a new (modernist) register of fragmentation, alienation, and pastiche. In the *Criterion*, Eliot also hoped to publish what other venues might consider too “difficult,” writing to John Middleton Murry when the first issue was about to appear: “*The [sic] Criterion* will fail of its purpose unless it can get what the stomachs of coarser periodicals fail to digest” (1988, 577). Eliot as editor thus also struggled for nearly two decades to instruct his reader in the act of “difficult” reading, sharing his own breadth of exposure with anyone who was open to the collage.

Notes

- 1 “Impersonality” is a complex term that is central to Eliot’s poetics: he famously argues in his 1917 essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” that “[t]he emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done” (1967, 22).
- 2 *The Waste Land* would also appear a few weeks later in the American journal, *The Dial*.
- 3 Eliot insists that “steal” is the correct verb for successful literary intertextual borrowing, arguing in his 1920 essay, “Philip Massinger,” “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal” (1967, 125).

- 4 The journal also reviewed or brought to the reader's attention American texts such as Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1926), Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1926), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1926), Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1927), John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1927), and, much later, Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Conversation at Midnight* (1938). Eliot was thus already demonstrating an engagement with transatlantic modernisms as well.
- 5 For an excellent discussion of the question of the "complex feedback process" (1972, 4) between Eliot and Joyce whereby each seems to have influenced the other at different stages of their careers, see Alison Boulanger, "Influence or Confluence: Joyce, Eliot, Cohen and the Case for Comparative Studies," *Comparative Literature Studies* 39, no. 1 (2002): 18–47.
- 6 Critics have paired the *great novel* and the *great poem* for many decades, starting with Giorgio Melchiori's "The Waste Land and *Ulysses*," *English Studies* 35, nos. 1–6 (1954): 56–68 and including such relatively early but significant treatments as Thomas Morch's "The Relationship between *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1964): 123–33. While it is now almost a commonplace that *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* are complementary experiments, surprisingly little has been written on this topic in the last two decades or so.

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*Rilke's Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus**Judith Ryan*

I would like to begin this essay on Rilke and 1922 with a thought experiment. Let us suppose that at the end of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, we were to find a statement something like the following:

Although the title indicates one debt of gratitude underlying this sequence of elegies, the plan and a good deal of the symbolism were suggested by Rudolf Kassner's book, *Von den Elementen der menschlichen Größe* (recently reissued by the Insel Verlag along with his earlier book *Der indische Gedanke*). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Mr. Kassner's books will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than notes of mine could do; and I recommend them (apart from the great interest of the books themselves) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another author I am also indebted in general, one who has influenced many generations of readers profoundly; I mean Goethe, especially his elegy "Euphrosyne." Anyone familiar with this great poem will recognize in the elegies certain references to the task of mourning.¹

Of course, Rilke did not write such a note. I've proposed that we imagine it, however, in order to suggest that the *Duino Elegies* are not quite as distant from *The Waste Land* as one might think at first glance. Like Eliot's long poem, Rilke's elegies are a learned work, one that relies on numerous poetic and philosophical sources. In this essay, I will focus primarily on the two authors whose names I have used in my fictitious note. Along the way, I will consider Rilke's long-standing interest in the sonnet form and his prolific translations of sonnets from several different languages in the period leading up to what I will call "the Duino project."

Given that Rilke wrote most of the *Duino Elegies* and the entire sequence of *Sonnets to Orpheus* during periods of intense solitude when his only other occupations were extensive reading and letter writing (in which he tends to comment on his reading), the intertextual character of the works is not surprising. Rilke felt very strongly that isolation from the world would be the best way to nourish the ambitious project he had set

himself in the *Elegies*, and we repeatedly see him on the lookout for places where he could retreat from social obligations. Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis's castle in Duino in 1912, Hertha Koenig's apartment in Munich in 1913, Schloss Berg am Irchel 1920–1, and his rented stone house, the Château de Muzot in 1922, were places where he found such solitude. Yet only in the first and the last of them did he make real progress on the long poem he had assigned himself to write. Ten years separated the two bursts of writing. Still, a painting by Cézanne that he studied every day in the Munich apartment did eventually make its way into the text. The title of the whole, *Duino Elegies*, was a product of the very last phase in the gestation of his multipart poem.

In the final days of January and the early days of February 1922, a complex process kept the completion of the *Elegies* intertwined with the beginning of the *Sonnets*. Of course, we have always known that the two works belong together. Nonetheless, I will be arguing here that the connection is tighter than has sometimes been acknowledged.² An essay of this length can hardly do justice to such challenging works. For this reason, I will focus on two fundamental issues: the extent to which World War I is entangled with the two poems and the influence of Goethe and Kassner on both sequences of poems. Goethe's elegy "Euphrosyne" is sometimes mentioned in connection with Rilke's Duino project, but it is scarcely known how thoroughly the poem not only permeates his *Elegies*, but also sets the stage for his *Sonnets*.³ As for Rudolf Kassner, the *Eighth Elegy* is explicitly dedicated to him; but again, his pervasive presence in Rilke's poetry from 1912 to 1922 has not been adequately traced.⁴ Like Goethe's "Euphrosyne," Kassner's social philosophy functions both as a scaffold for the *Elegies* and a hinge connecting that ambitious work with the serendipitous *Sonnets to Orpheus*.

To understand the gestation of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, we need first to focus on the effects of World War I. Although Rilke's health allowed him to escape service at the front, his experience of the war years was psychologically devastating. When he finally returned to the *Elegies* in the first months of 1922, the war was still not far from his mind. It makes sense, then, to review Rilke's responses to the Great War from the beginning. In the opening days of the conflict, he felt – as many people did at the time – that war might shake them into positive action. A few months later, he saw things differently: "In the first days of August the manifestation of the war, the war god, gripped me," but now he is aware only of "a spirit of affliction" (letter of November 6, 1914; Altheim 1950b, 15).⁵ By mid-February 1916, he had been conscripted and assigned to the Austrian

War Archive, where he rapidly became distressed by the need to create encouraging accounts of military engagements, even when the war was not going well. The worst aspect of work at the archive was that it interrupted his creative writing, which had been pouring forth just before his conscription in "a preliminary storm of work" (letter of November 6, 1914; Altheim 1950b, 62), that included both individual poems and a substantial number of translations from Michelangelo's sonnets.

Fortunately, his health soon released him from the war work, and Rilke moved to Munich. While there, he received a letter from one of his former teachers at the military academy he had attended as an adolescent. At first Rilke did not respond to General-Major von Sedlakowitz, but after some hesitation, he wrote him a long letter in December 1920 spelling out in detail the torments he had experienced at school.⁶ Excruciating to read, this account shows how much Rilke still bore the mark of those agonies. At the end of the war, Rilke experienced a series of displacements. In September 1919, his Austrian passport became invalid: he was now a stateless person. Because he was born in Prague, he applied for a Czech passport.⁷ Bureaucratic processes were complicated and lengthy, however, and even with a temporary visa for Switzerland, he still had no settled domicile. Financial problems exacerbated his distress, because the allowance from his publisher was paid in German marks, a currency increasingly threatened by inflation. For Rilke, the war seemed to persist into January 1922, when he wrote to a friend: "The war, the war is still everywhere, everywhere everything is still interrupted, separated, blown apart, and lies there as one piece among others ..." (letter of January 13, 1922; Luck 1990, 197). Yet he does make a crucial distinction between the destruction and fragmentation of the present day and ancient fractures such as the temple walls at Karnak, Sappho's poetic fragments, and the bridge of Avignon. We catch glimpses of this view in the *Elegies* (especially the *Tenth*) and certain of the *Sonnets*.

Looking back just a few weeks after he had finished the Duino project, Rilke realized that his choice of genre had been even more appropriate than he had known at its beginning in 1912. The poems are elegies, he explained, "the more so in that the course of the war has destroyed the protective walls of that wonderful Adriatic castle ... almost to the last piece of timber" (letter of March 17, 1922; Altheim 1950b, 336–67).

His attempt at the elegiac form in 1912 had been in large measure the result of a special initiative on the part of his publisher. Horrified by his inadequate acquaintance with canonical German literature, Anton Kippenberg and his wife Katharina set about initiating Rilke into their

favorite texts. It was mainly Katharina who conducted the reading course. Among the poems to which she introduced him, Goethe's elegy "Euphrosyne" was the most successful in bringing about Rilke's "conversion" to his illustrious predecessor.⁸ On a visit to Weimar in 1911, Rilke made a special pilgrimage to Goethe's garden house, where a memorial to the young actress "Euphrosyne" could still be seen.⁹ Following his visit he wrote: "This time I really saw Weimar, the Goethe archive, the 'garden house,' the Widow's Palace and Tiefurt House; ... Goethe was gracious to me for the first time – you know that I kept no altar for him" (letter of September 28, 1911; Althelm 1950a, 314).

Goethe's "Euphrosyne" (1799) is a mourning poem in memory of a young actress, Christiane Becker, whose last acting role had been that of the grace "Euphrosyne" (meaning mirth or merriment), daughter of the muse of memory, Mnemosyne. Appropriately for a memorial text, the piece is cast in German elegiac verse, an adaptation of the meters used by the elegists of classical antiquity. News of the actress's death reached Goethe while he was traveling in the Swiss Alps, and the mountainous landscape plays a prominent role in the poem. Goethe looks back to the beginning of her acting career, when, still a child, she had played the part of the boy Arthur in Shakespeare's *King John*. Frustrated by her hesitant acting, Goethe took over the role of Hubert as he threatens to blind the boy with a red-hot poker and rendered it in all its terror. In response, Christiane fell to the ground so convincingly that Goethe thought she had actually lost consciousness and might have been seriously hurt. He finally realized that she was only acting when she lifted up her head and asked for water. In the elegy, he imagines an even more striking event when she seems to return from the dead and speak to him. Sensing her presence during his mountain journey, the speaker asks: "What goddess approaches me? And which of the muses / seeks the true friend even in these awful abysses?" (Goethe 1981, 190). A number of similar questions punctuate the poem.

I believe that a dim recollection of such questions from Goethe's "Euphrosyne" was the trigger for Rilke's *First Elegy*. Clambering on the cliff below Castle Duino one January day, Rilke seemed to hear a voice uttering a line of verse: "Who, if I cried out, would hear me from among the orders of angels?" (Rilke 1996, 201). Later that month, he told Marie von Thurn und Taxis that he had received the opening line of the poem "by dictation."¹⁰ Distinct traces of Goethe's elegiac meters (distichs consisting of mainly dactylic hexameters and "pentameters" composed of two sets of two and a half feet, the second set of which is distinctively dactylic)

can be heard in the *Duino Elegies*, though Rilke's handling of the form is a free adaptation that does not strictly observe the meter and curtails occasional lines. The effect Rilke achieves suggests that the modern period has access only to a broken form of the original meters. Only the fourth and the eighth elegies, cast in Shakespearean iambic pentameters,¹¹ diverge from the general pattern. In contrast to Goethe's "Euphrosyne," where the dead woman responds to the poet's question in the same fluent verse as the famous poet,¹² Rilke's *First Elegy* makes abundantly clear that no answer is possible to the poet's summoning cry.

Verse forms alone are not the only trace of Goethe's poem in the *Duino Elegies*. In terms of theme, the notion of premature death figures throughout the sequence. The *First Elegy* conjures up strange sounds: "Voices, voices" (Rilke 1996, 202). Indeterminate and difficult to locate, these voices may just be part of a flow of wind that reaches us somehow like a message from the prematurely dead. The verb Rilke uses here is "rauschen": to rustle, ripple, or make a rushing sound; it is drawn from the vocabulary of German Romanticism, where such ambiguous noises figure as the voice of nature, interpretable only by poets. Here in Rilke's *First Elegy*, the speaker tries to imagine the sensory impressions of the early dead, torn away from the familiar world and introduced into a strange new environment. The elegy ends by reminding us that this is precisely how music originated, in the song of Linos, a Greek demigod sometimes regarded as a predecessor of Orpheus. The idea that music arises from the act of mourning is a leading theme throughout the entire sequence of *Duino Elegies*. Like Goethe's "Euphrosyne," these poems are also meditations on the role of art as a form of memorial.

The *Second Elegy*, written in February 1912, picks up additional elements from Goethe's "Euphrosyne." One of these is the mountainous landscape in which Goethe first heard of Christiane's death. The alpine trip establishes a natural setting that allows him to contrast "unformed" nature with the aesthetic forms of theater, the genre in which the young actress had excelled. Craggy, asymmetrical landscape was connected with the concept of the sublime, which both Burke and Kant associated with fear. "Secret crevasses and gorges," "terrifying crags" or "awful abysses" in Goethe's elegy (Goethe 1981, 190–1) are elements that seem to find a poetic transformation in Rilke's bold description of the angels as "mountain ridges, morning-red crests / of all of creation" (Rilke 1996, 205). In other parts of *Duino Elegies*, mountainous nature reappears, as in the metaphor of the wanderer in the *Ninth Elegy* who brings back a handful of earth or a blue gentian flower from the mountain slope. Perilous landscape is present,

finally, in the *Tenth Elegy*, when the newly deceased youth arrives at a valley in the foothills of mountains. He has been led there by a quasimythical being called a Lament, from whom he must now part ways. Alone, he climbs upward, into “the mountains of primal suffering” (Rilke 1996, 234). That suffering should take the form of mountains may be another recollection of Goethe’s “Euphrosyne.” Certainly we find here once again the conjunction of unformed nature and the aesthetic shape of poetry.

The loss of a loved one is another link between “Euphrosyne” and *Duino Elegies*. Goethe’s love for Christiane is palpable. In Rilke’s long poem the theme of love is everywhere, yet there is never a moment when the text settles on a specific object of affection. Instead, the elegies draw on a motif that Rilke had adopted from other poetic precursors, notably Friedrich Klopstock: the “future beloved.” Appearing in a number of texts that Rilke composed between 1910 and 1914 but did not publish during his lifetime, the motif takes a more complex form in an untitled poem that begins “Beloved, lost from the outset” (1913–14; Rilke 1996, 89). A related rendering of the motif occurs in one of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*: “Be ahead of all parting, as if it were behind you, / like a winter just passing away” (Rilke 1996, 263). In the 1913–14 text, the speaker asks “what tones you care for” – as if some special melody or words could bring forth the elusive loved one. Perhaps for Rilke the one who never appears is a poem rather than a person.

In the *Elegies*, human life is presented as transient and fragile. Even the ecstatic consummation of lovers is tenuous, as the *Second Elegy* suggests. “For we, when we feel emotions, vanish away” (Rilke 1996, 205): our emotions evaporate even as we experience them. An emblem of this fragility is encapsulated in the delicate depiction of human figures on Attic monuments, whose very gestures seem so ethereal that a touch of the hands appears to leave no trace. Lovers figure in different guises in the *Elegies*, among them a boy in early puberty who has not yet experienced an actual sexual relationship (*Third Elegy*), lovers who court danger by constantly coming too close to boundaries (*Fourth*), the blissful couple on the acrobats’ mat (*Fifth*), and the lovers who wear out the threshold (*Ninth*). In the final elegy, lovers hold one another, “aside, earnestly, in the sparse grass” (Rilke 1996, 231). In the “wide landscape of the Laments” (Rilke 1996, 232) that occupies a substantial part of that elegy, however, the lovers are replaced by a different couple: the Lament and the boy who died young. Like the figures on Attic monuments, the two interact with restraint: “He is moved by the way she bears herself. Her shoulders, her neck –, perhaps / she is of noble origin” (Rilke 1996, 231).

The landscape through which the Lament leads the youth is a reconfiguration of the Nile landscape that Rilke had seen during his trip to Egypt in 1911. As night falls, the boy and his companion tread more softly until they see a large monument rising up, “the grave monument that watches / over everything, a brother to the one on the Nile, / the noble Sphinx – : the visage / of the secret chamber” (Rilke 1996, 232). The designation of the Egyptian sphinx as a grave monument is significant, as it is precisely this term, “Grab-Mal,” that Rilke uses in the subtitle of his *Sonnets to Orpheus*, written in memory of a young dancer, Wera Ouckama Knoop, whose mother had sent Rilke sixteen pages of her diary after her death. Yet at the same time, the Sonnets are also a monument to Orpheus, the ancient poet, originator of the art of song. In this context, Wera becomes a kind of Eurydice figure.¹³ In a similar fashion, we might also say that the youth's climb into the mountains at the end of the *Tenth Elegy* is a mirror image of Orpheus's descent into the underworld in his attempt to rescue his beloved Eurydice.

The *Sonnets to Orpheus*, in other words, are not poems that simply arose at random during the final phase of Rilke's work on the *Elegies*. They are an intimately related work. Although he considered including his poems and fragments from 1910–14 in the same volume as the *Elegies*, he also contemplated the possibility of including the *Sonnets* instead.¹⁴ In the end, the two works were published separately.

If the *Elegies* are a “monument” to the war-ravaged castle of Duino and the *Sonnets* a monument to the young Wera, the two works are connected by the overarching theme of poetry as a monument. In the remarkable *Fifth Elegy*, street performers create a temporary, repeatedly renewed monument in the form of a human pyramid. Their balancing feat is described as “laid on like a plaster, as if the suburban heaven had wounded the earth there” (Rilke 1996, 214). This elegy, written on February 14, 1922 and dedicated to Hertha Koenig, was inspired by Picasso's painting, “Saltimbanques,” which hung on the wall of her apartment where Rilke lived in the summer of 1915. The painting shows a family of acrobats standing together in a triangular arrangement, with a young girl off to the right side. In contrast, the *Fifth Elegy* depicts acrobats in motion, forming a rose shape that repeatedly “blossoms and fades” as the participants leap up onto the human pyramid and then back down onto the mat in what is described as a “tree of collectively constructed movement” (Rilke 1996, 214–15). If we read the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* in the order of their composition, a different “tree” had already been created in the first of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, written between the second and fifth of February 1922. This

is the metaphorical tree of Orpheus's song: "There rose a tree. O purest of transcending / O Orpheus sings! O tall tree in the ear!" (Rilke 1996, 241). Unlike the impermanent tree of the transient acrobats, the tree of Orpheus's singing is a potent spell that inhabits every part of nature. This conception of Orpheus's song as ever latent in the world is the reason that, just a few poems later, we are exhorted not to erect a monument to the primal singer ("Erect no monument. Just let the rose / bloom every year to celebrate him. For it is Orpheus. His metamorphosis / in one thing and another" [Rilke 1996, 243]). Not unlike the imagined grave monument of the *Tenth Elegy*, the song of Orpheus is nonetheless an imagined place of worship:¹⁵ a "temple in the ear" (Rilke 1996, 241).

The *Elegies* and *Sonnets* have much else in common as well. Both had begun in an unexpected storm of creativity: Rilke uses the word *hurricane* to describe the overwhelming nature of the two experiences.¹⁶ Large issues in the *Elegies* reappear in the *Sonnets*: the nature of transcendence, the limitations of human consciousness, our relation to nature, how death figures in our understanding of life, and the relation of the divine to human suffering. Secularization underlies the attempt to recreate a new conception of angels in the *Elegies* as well as the revival of Orpheus in the *Sonnets*. Modernity is addressed in the *Elegies* through a metaphor that presents electric power stations as an expression of the age (Rilke 1996, 222) and in the *Sonnets* by a poem deploring the machine (Rilke 1996, 261–2); the inflationary economy is even mentioned in *Sonnets* II, xix (Rilke 1996, 267). A group of motifs, some of them seemingly familiar from poetic tradition – night, wind, landscape, lovers – appear in highly idiosyncratic forms in both works.¹⁷

Throughout the elegies, human beings are set within another space that remains only partially perceptible, mainly through the action of wind and the overwhelming manifestation of night. The term *Weltraum* (outer space) acquires an unusual inflection in the elegies, signifying not only the space in which we live – the air that surrounds us – but also a larger composite into which our own inner selves are enfolded, making a single entity out of the earth's atmosphere, outer space, and the human psyche. Rilke calls this new entity "Weltinnenraum." In the *Sonnets*, wind not only signifies inspiration, but more specifically the voice of Orpheus as it has been absorbed by nature: the breath of Orpheus augments natural space. Breath is an "invisible poem" (Rilke 1996, 257). Wind is connected with the demigod Linos in the *First Elegy*, and with Orpheus, the god of original song in the *Sonnets*.

We have seen that the idea of elegy and the echoes of classical elegiac meters is a driving force in most of the *Elegies*. What motivated the sudden upsurge of sonnets at a point when the *Elegies* were almost complete? Rilke had long been interested in the sonnet form, and many of his *New Poems* were sonnets or variations of sonnets. With help from friends who knew English, he transposed Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* into German (1908); in 1912–13, he worked on translations of Louise Labé's sonnets (published in 1918); and just before his assignment to the Austrian War Archive in 1916, he had been in the midst of an ambitious translation project involving the entirety of Michelangelo's sonnets. Only a few of the Michelangelo translations, which he had hoped to render as authentically as possible into German, were published during his lifetime. Rilke's extensive experience with sonnets, especially with the way they sound in French and Italian, accounts at least in part for Rilke's extraordinarily light handling of language and form in the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. It is no wonder that these poems seemed to spring forth unbidden.

Another feature of the sonnet form is also relevant: its dependence on a turn of thought that – at least in French and Italian – tends to occur after the first two quatrains. Rilke had long been interested in writing poems that turned on an internal pivot. During the gestation of the *Elegies*, however, he came to believe that his own life was in need of such a turning point. He understood his poem “Turning Point” of 1915 as pointing to a turning he hoped might happen in his own life.¹⁸ For the structure of the *Elegies*, Rilke's recollection of a statement by Rudolf Kassner: “The path from intimacy to greatness passes through sacrifice” forms an important expression of a turning process in human development in general.

Although only the *Eighth Elegy* is specifically dedicated to Kassner, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of the social philosopher for the entire project. Indeed, Kassner was present among a select group of friends whom Marie von Thurn und Taxis had invited to Castle Duino in December 1911, just before Rilke began his work on the *Elegies*. At first intimidated by Kassner, Rilke came to know him well, notably during a period of three years (1916–19) when both were living in Munich. Following Rilke's departure from Germany, they remained in correspondence. Kassner's *On the Elements of Human Greatness* (1911) made an overwhelming impression on Rilke. What he saw in it, above all, was an “incredible Coming-to-its-Senses of certain concepts which had been drunk with sleep, so to speak, for centuries” (letter of June 2, 1911; Altheim 1950a, 307).

Kassner's discussion of the "hero" left a strong mark on Rilke's poetry, notably in the *Third* and *Sixth Elegies*. In another way as well, Kassner's thought informs the *Elegies* and *Sonnets*. Rilke had also read Kassner's *The Indian Idea* (1913); it was republished with the 1911 essay in a single slim volume in 1921. In the 1913 essay, Kassner comments on divergent approaches to numbers in Indian and European culture: "The secret of Indian mathematics and logic is that it operates without zero, or rather places this not at the midpoint between hot and cold, but nowhere at all" (1921, 16). This may explain such mystical phrases as "Nirgends ohne Nicht" (Nowhere without Not) in the *Eighth Elegy* (Rilke 1996, 224) or "Ein Hauch um nichts" (A breath about nothing) in the *Sonnets* (Rilke 1996, 242).

Structurally, the *Elegies* work through a somewhat loose train of argument that depends substantially on Kassner's thought.¹⁹ Whereas the speaker of the *First Elegy* had tried to summon an angel, the *Seventh Elegy* takes a striking turn with its opening exclamation, "Wooing no more!" (Rilke 1996, 220). Now the speaker bends his attention to earth; in so doing, he revises his thoughts about the purpose of poetry. What poetry does, he claims, is to transform the earth as we know it into images: in order to "build it *inwardly*, with pillars and statues, yet greater!" (Rilke 1996, 222). Our imaginative capacity, he recognizes, is grander than anything we could learn from the angel. The *Eight Elegy* (dedicated to Kassner) continues this idea of a new turning toward earth. Throughout the elegies, human beings are set within another space that remains only partially perceptible, mainly through the action of wind and the overwhelming manifestation of night. Unlike animals, who see into "the open" (Rilke 1996, 224), human consciousness has narrower access to the outside world.

Echoing the injunction "Wooing no more!" of the *Seventh Elegy*, the third of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* sets forth a similar mandate: "not desire, not wooing." Images of turning recur in many of the sonnets, for example in the image of balls in flight: "Only the balls. Their splendid arcs" (Rilke 1996, 261). The creative mind, one sonnet suggests, "loves nothing so much as the turning point in the swing of the figure" (Rilke 1996, 263), where the term *figure* refers to a pattern created by movement. As a dancer, young Wera provides a model for the connections our eyes and minds make as a dance unfolds. She is apostrophized as "Dancer, o you displacement of everything transient in motion" (Rilke 1996, 266). The notion of transformation by the mind's eye is introduced in the *Seventh Elegy* as part of a developing thought process, but in the *Sonnets*, transformation is everywhere: it is the very essence of this poetry. Just as praise marks the

turning point of an unfolding process in the *Seventh* and *Ninth Elegies* ("Praise the world to the angel" [Rilke 1996, 228]), the entire posture of the *Sonnets* is one of "praising." The increased airiness of the *Sonnets* is part of the work's emphasis on imagination, a process aided by the many gaps that seem to open up in the poems.

The entire *Duino* project (the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* together) undertakes a complex exploration of death and memorialization in both ancient traditions and modern understanding. Monuments, tombs, sarcophagi, and small objects sometimes placed with the bodies of the dead – the "finger ring, brooch, and jug" of the *Sonnets* (Rilke 1996, 243) for example – can be found in each of the two poem sequences. Karnak is mentioned in both the *Seventh Elegy* and the *Sonnets*. The mythology of human transformation into constellations is alluded to in the new stellar configurations of the *Tenth Elegy* and in the *Sonnets* "Isn't one constellation called 'rider'?" (Rilke 1996, 246). Just as these constellations form a cosmic counterpart to the figures they have metamorphosed, so poetry is understood as a "dual realm" (Rilke 1996, 245). The dual realm is doubly present: in the bipartite structure of the Orpheus poems and in the augmentation of the *Elegies* by the postlude of the *Sonnets*. In these ambitious works, the poet's personal experiences – unhappiness about years he saw as unfruitful, sorrow over the destruction of *Duino Castle* during the war, and mourning for the young dancer *Wera* – come together to mourn the passing of an era.

At the same time, both works contribute in remarkable ways to experimental modernism. *Duino Elegies* pushes language to its outermost borders in its use of innovative imagery and daring intellectual concepts; the *Sonnets* explore a range of formal and metaphorical freedom previously unheard of in that genre. In certain respects, this is not surprising, because Rilke was closely familiar with the French predecessors of twentieth-century modernism (Baudelaire and Mallarmé), and was following with interest the work of Paul Valéry, whom he came to know personally and some of whose texts he translated into German. In other ways, however, Rilke was not deeply embedded in the modernist movements of the early twentieth century, and although he read Proust with great admiration,²⁰ he seems to have been unaware of Joyce and Eliot, whose experimental masterpieces *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* were published in February 1922 and October/December 1922, respectively. Rilke's self-imposed isolation over long periods may account for these gaps. All the same, Rilke was in his own way a learned poet. Ranging across a vast spectrum of literature in several languages, Rilke was "enormously widely-read, probably with greater range ... than his famously learned contemporary Hugo

von Hofmannsthal” (Vilain 2010, 143). What accounts for our sense that he differs in some crucial way from T. S. Eliot in his mastery of poetic tradition? To be sure, his self-presentation as an inspired poet during the period beginning in 1912 is an important factor in this perception. Yet he did not hesitate to write about the books he was reading and to recommend to others those that excited him the most. Most significantly, however, his reading was thoroughly idiosyncratic. Unlike Eliot, who could speak to a group of readers who had shared the literary values and interests of his student days (and who still speaks to those who have, as it were, acquired those texts by proxy through their reading of *The Waste Land*), Rilke could not count on a readership that was familiar with his entire personal repertoire, assembled from such various sources as the library at Castle Duino, boxes of books sent to him by Anton Kippenberg, and frequent deliveries from a Zurich bookseller. Rilke gives a telling response to a friend who asked whether it might not be helpful for him to write explanations of the *Elegies*: while admitting that one might be able to attempt such an exercise, he asks “Where to begin? And am I the one, who can give the *Elegies* the right interpretation?” (Rilke 1996, 600). Rilke’s comment is perceptive; but of course, Eliot’s notes to *The Waste Land* were written partly tongue in cheek, and the explanations they provide elaborate a network of citation and allusion that is already patent in his poem. Rilke’s *Elegies* and *Sonnets* lack the grittiness of *The Waste Land*, largely because they transform impulses drawn from earlier texts into a complicated set of abstractions. Yet, like Eliot’s long poem of 1922, Rilke’s Duino project looks simultaneously back at earlier traditions and forward in the direction of modernist innovations. In this respect, Rilke’s *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus* are very much of their time: the turbulent transition from late-nineteenth-century aestheticism to experimental modernism.

Notes

- 1 This note is adapted from T. S. Eliot’s prefatory note to his annotations of *The Waste Land* (1963, 70).
- 2 The 1996 edition of Rilke’s works positions the *Elegies* at the end of “poems 1910–1922” and begins a new section with the “*Sonnets to Orpheus* and the latest poems” (1996, 235).
- 3 Two of Rilke’s biographers say more about the poem than we find in most readings of the *Elegies*, but they hesitate to follow up in detail. See Donald Prater’s *A Ringing Glass: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 206; and Freedman 1996, 328–9.

- 4 A notable exception is Bishop's observation that "echoes of Kassner's ideas can be heard throughout the [*Elegies*]" (2010, 161).
- 5 All translations of Rilke's letters and poetry are my own.
- 6 Letter of December 9, 1920 (Altheim 1950b, 200–6).
- 7 Czechoslovakia asserted its independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire on October 28, 1918; it became a republic on November 14, 1918.
- 8 Eudo C. Mason notes that "early in 1910 the Kippenbergs and Princess Marie Taxis ... set out to convert Rilke to their own passionate faith in Goethe" (1963, 72).
- 9 It has now been moved to the old cemetery in Weimar. See Roger Paulin's "Art and Immortality: Goethe's Elegy 'Euphrosyne,'" *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 68 (1999): 61–99.
- 10 Cf. the "C. W." poems written in Schloß Berg in Switzerland.
- 11 Katharina Kippenberg not only introduced Rilke to *King John* but also to *The Tempest* (see Rilke's brilliant pastiche "The Spirit Ariel").
- 12 Rilke regarded his own poem as a heightened version of Goethe's "Euphrosyne," particularly with regard to its "conflation of youth and death" (Freedman 1996, 329).
- 13 See Alan Keele's "Poesis and the Great Tree of Being: A Holistic Reading of Rilke's Sonette an Orpheus." *A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Edited by Erika A. Metzger and Michael M. Metzger, 220 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001).
- 14 See Rilke's letter to Kippenberg of February 23, 1922 (Altheim 1950b, 320–1).
- 15 Rilke's reading of Valéry's "Paradoxe sur l'architecte" in 1921 may have contributed to this idea; he translated Valéry's essay in 1922.
- 16 Altheim 1950b, 311 and 313.
- 17 Two fragmentary poems composed in Duino during the spring of 1912 show Rilke experimenting with this motif. He worked with it more explicitly when he was reading Friedrich Klopstock's odes in late 1913. See my *Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138–42.
- 18 See his letter to Lou Andreas-Salome, June 20, 1914 (Altheim 1950a, 506).
- 19 This claim should not be taken to mean that Kassner's thought is the only influence on the *Elegies*: among many other sources we should also note the poet Alfred Schuler and through him, the thought of Johann Jakob Bachofen. See Bishop 2010, 164–5.
- 20 He wrote to Anton Kippenberg that if Insel should be offered a translation of *Du côte de chez Swann*, he should grasp it immediately (letter of February 3, 1914; Altheim 1950a, 480).

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*Odd Encounters: From Marcel Proust's
Sodome et Gomorrhe to Albert Cohen's
"Projections ou Après-Minuit à Genève"*

André Benhaim

The anecdote has been told so many times that it has become a myth of sorts. On May 18, 1922, the British art patron and novelist Sydney Schiff and his wife, Violet, hosted one of the most infamous dinner parties in the history of modernism, gathering at the Hôtel Majestic in Paris many influential and innovative artists of the time, such as Sergei Diaghilev, Erik Satie, and Pablo Picasso. The occasion was the world premiere of Igor Stravinsky's *Renard*, performed that evening at the Opéra by the Ballets Russes. Another less obvious motive of Schiff, but arguably more important to him, can be deciphered in the names of two other guests, the two writers he most cherished: Marcel Proust and James Joyce. Schiff, the recipient of one of the very first copies of *Ulysses*, was also an admirer of Proust, with whom he had developed a close relationship. The miraculous friendship between the two writers Schiff had hoped for did not happen, however. As the story goes, the encounter was unsympathetic, the conversation laconic, almost inimical. Both authors had next to nothing to say to each other. Worse, perhaps, neither seemed to have read anything written by the other.¹

One might call this an *acte manqué*; I will see it as an odd encounter. For, even more ironic than this failure of the two tenors of the modernist novel to enter in a meaningful exchange of some sort is the fact that they both were about to meet in a different way. The year 1922 was when Joyce was published in France, and Proust in Great Britain.² It was also the year in which both writers reached their apex. In Paris, Joyce published *Ulysses*, and Proust, a few weeks later, what is widely seen as the most crafted volume of *A la recherche du temps perdu: Sodome et Gomorrhe*. In an uncanny coincidence, the two greatest writers of the twentieth century crossed paths at the most crucial time of their artistic lives. Joyce had just finished his masterpiece (published on his very birthday).³ As for Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe* would be the last installment of *La Recherche* published before his death on November 18, 1922. Though, more importantly perhaps, 1922

was the year Proust had finally reached “the end” of his momentous novel, adding the word “*Fin*” after the last line of *Le Temps retrouvé*.⁴

As it has been noted, *Sodome et Gomorrhe* plays a very particular role in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, both in the history of its publication and in the novel. It is the most “romanesque” episode in Proust’s work.⁵ On the surface, this volume is the most rigorously constructed: divided in two parts, with very distinct chapters and even summaries, as well as a genuine sense of narrative equilibrium. The obvious theme of homosexuality, or what Proust calls “inversion,” gives the novel its cohesion and frames it with two surprising revelations: one pertaining to male homosexuality (Charlus), and the other, closing the novel, to Albertine’s lesbianism. But, although *Sodome et Gomorrhe* thus accomplishes Proust’s early project of writing a study of homosexuality,⁶ one must also take into account the profound paradoxes at its core. And the main paradox is, precisely, that the most unified volume of *La Recherche* – the supposed transition between the first expository part and the “roman d’Albertine,” – at the same time relies on asymmetry, explosiveness, and fragmentation.

This paradox in many ways underscores the originality of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, an innovativeness that carries on Proust’s modernist project, which an insistence on its more conventional, romanesque dimension could overshadow. And to a great extent, the evidence of this continuity in the *Recherche*’s modernism rises from the timeline of its publication. A sign of its inherent disruptiveness, the most cohesive novel of the *Recherche* appeared in two phases, split between two years. The first part of the novel was released in May 1921 in the same volume as *Le Côté de Guermantes II*, under the title *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*. It was only about twenty-eight pages long, and consisted in what has now become the most infamous portion of the novel, the narrator’s secret discovery of M. de Charlus’s homosexuality. Readers had to wait almost a year to read what followed this overture when the bookstores received in April 1922 *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, the largest segment of the novel, divided in three volumes.

This repartition has momentous significance. On the one hand, the 1922 edition of *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* may look like the most substantial, structured, and unified section of the novel (the only one, in fact, organized in chapters). On the other hand, its full meaning remains elusive without the 1921 overture. In other words, the novel Proust publishes in 1922 is his most achieved yet the most obviously fragmented. The 1922 *Sodome* acts both as a decoy and a showcase for its critical, prefatory piece. This dislocation, however, is not due to Proust’s arbitrariness, as Gallimard will claim after the author’s death, trying to convince his brother to

publish *Sodome I* and *II* in a single volume. It relates, as Nathalie Mauriac Dyer has shown, to an editorial, and, I argue, profoundly *esthetic* strategy. Pinning *Sodome I* at the end of a volume mostly occupied by another novel, as if to say that it did not deserve to be published as an independent book, enacts an obvious deception. In fact, it ensures the continuity with the rest of the whole project, which comprises an extensive *Sodome et Gomorrhe* “serial” (as Proust called it) that *Sodome II* consecrates in 1922, not only with the publication of a full book but also through the announcement of the future volumes.⁷

Never had Proust been more anxious before the release of one of his volumes. Since the earliest inceptions of a project dealing, in one way or another, with homosexuality, he had warned his potential publishers his book was, in some parts, very “indecent.” However, as he specified to Gallimard during the war, after he had finally settled on the title *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, his intention with this particular volume was not to shock the public but to present the most complete and daring truth in painting.⁸ The scandal Proust was anticipating never really materialized. Reactions to Part I were not overwhelmingly condemning. To be sure, many took offense to Proust’s caricature of homosexuality and certainly, his depiction of male homosexuality seems negative, equating homosexual men to “hommes-femmes,” a “[r]ace upon which a curse weighs and which must live amid falsehood and perjury, because it knows the world to regard as a punishable and a scandalous, as an inadmissible thing, its desire” (Proust 1981a, 637).⁹ Indignation would be justified; but clarifications are also needed. For instance, although this passage often bears the title “La Race des tantes”¹⁰ in the most common editions, a title that Proust had envisaged very early, one should note, instead of taking this expression for granted, that Proust made a point of *not* using it in the end, and even that the word *tante* (in the sense of “queen”) does not appear in *La Recherche*. In *Sodome I*, Proust uses the term *homosexual* or *invert* (and inversion).¹¹ All that being said, the question remains of the scandal – this scandal that never really was. Nothing comparable, for instance, to the reception of Victor Margueritte’s *La Garçonne* the same year. An instant bestseller (probably the biggest of the *Années Folles*), translated and published in English the following year (as *The Bachelor Girl*), the novel presents (as the author states in the foreword of the second edition, only three months after the original edition), “a station in the march of Feminism,” a “glimpse of the great road of equality where both sexes will eventually walk side by side, in harmony.”¹² The novel is often read as a radical feminist manifesto, denouncing the hypocrisy of bourgeois society

with a female protagonist claiming her full emancipation by means of an open sexuality (with both sexes) and drug use. Margueritte was tried for pornography and lost his Légion d'Honneur.¹³

The reception of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* was tame in comparison. Of course, there were objections, some going as far as castigating the author's depravation and arguing that his "vilain livre" did not translate the French soul. Others, like the prominent literary critic Paul Souday, commented on *Guermantes II* while saying nothing of *Sodome I*. Unsurprisingly, some homosexuals took issue with Proust's harsh exposition. André Gide famously accused Proust of having presented homosexuality under its most revolting aspect, asserting that no pederast (in the Greek sense of the word) would ever consent to identify with Proust's depiction of inversion.¹⁴

The questionable dimension of Proust's views does not apply to homosexuality alone. In underscoring the "curse" weighing on the race of inverts, "which must live amid falsehood and perjury . . . , which must deny its God," these "sons without a mother, to whom they are obliged to lie all her life long and even in the hour when they close her dying eyes," these "friends without friendships" (Proust 1981a, 637)¹⁵ are very quickly linked and likened to Jews. And these views are just as ambivalent. Inverts are victims of "a persecution similar to that of Israel,"¹⁶ ostracized, even by their own "kind," shunning one another: inverts and Jews form "a freemasonry far more extensive, more powerful and less suspected than that of the Lodges" (Proust 1981a, 639).¹⁷ This analogy of Jews and homosexuals originates in a vision at once sympathetic and offensive, a discourse that borrows from the most common reactionary clichés while offering the intimate sense of sharing a plight (as suggests the reference to the "sons without mothers").

Of course, great is the temptation to attribute these contradictions to the author's own "identity" as the repressed homosexual son of a Jewish mother.¹⁸ I would note instead that these outlandish observations on the cursed races emerge in the most outrageous style, even by Proust's standards, in a sentence that is notoriously the longest in the whole *Recherche*. A two-and-half page, 858-word sequence, where syntax nearly collapses and relative pronouns lose their antecedents, this sentence is a vertiginous maelstrom that hints at the potentially delirious nature of what it claims. In a sentence that challenges comprehension, Proust conveys the arduous meandering of his own thought, almost impossible to voice (try reading it aloud), his own struggle, pushing the limits of logic to the threshold of fantasy, taking reason to the brink of disintegration. It is as if the author required his reader to break down the sentence into more manageable

pieces, a fragmentation that would, in turn, alter the very argument he makes.

As the title of the book ostentatiously suggests, this part of the *Recherche* relates a cataclysm of sorts. But the Narrator's discovery (through happenstance and spying) of Charlus's "inversion" is not a catastrophe. It is an apocalypse – properly, an uncovering (*apokalupsis*). Charlus's revolution corresponds to his revelation.¹⁹ It is an apocalypse of comparable magnitude to Madeleine's of the beginning and even to the discovery of the Narrator's artistic destiny at the end. An apocalypse, again, among all those punctuating and informing the *Recherche*, such as, early in *Sodome II*, the discovery that the Prince de Guermantes secretly believes in the innocence of Dreyfus. That revelation, however, seems hardly as shocking as the one regarding its mediator, Charles Swann. Swann, who entrusts the Narrator with the Prince's surprising confession, had just appeared in a different, dreadful light, in one of the most disturbing portraits of *La Recherche*. Mortally ill, Swann makes his last public appearance. His face is devastated, marred by his deformed nose: "enormous, tumid, crimson, the nose of an old Hebrew rather than of a dilettante Valois," a nose emerging now after being "absorbed for long years in an attractive face" (Proust 1981a, 715). In a grotesque apocalypse, the "revelation" (a literal uncovering) of Swann's "punchinello nose" signals his failed assimilation as a Jew, and, to a larger extent, an example of the "lois générales" that Proust claims to be seeking throughout his book:

Perhaps too in him, in these last days, the race was making appear more pronounced the physical type that characterises it, at the same time as the sentiment of a moral solidarity with the rest of the Jews, a solidarity which Swann seemed to have forgotten throughout his life, and which, one after another, his mortal illness, the Dreyfus case and the anti-Semitic propaganda had revived. There are certain Israelites, superior people for all that and refined men of the world, in whom there remain in reserve and in the wings, ready to enter at a given moment in their lives, as in a play, a boulder and a prophet. Swann had arrived at the age of the prophet. Certainly, with his face from which, by the action of his disease, whole segments had vanished, as when a block of ice melts and slabs of it fall off bodily, he had greatly altered. But I could not help being struck by the discovery how far more he had altered in relation to myself. (Proust 1981a, 715)

What alienates the Narrator from Swann is that the latter now has a *face* – a figure, rather, like a mask, an obvious caricature. Swann leaves the haven of darkness veiling his appearance in the novel starting with his first nocturnal visit in Combray. The Narrator, by contrast, remains

anonymous and faceless – unrecognizable, impossible to identify – like his author, who also dreaded to be labeled, for instance, as his Jewish uncle's nephew. Readers have been as much divided by Proust's ambiguous treatment of Jewishness as they have been by his visions (more than views) of homosexuality.²⁰ And while discussions of those two "races" are not confined to *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, it is remarkable that it is there that they reach the apex of their pungency.

Strikingly, for instance, the 1922 novel (*Sodome II*) shows Charlus's own anti-Semitism at its climax. In *Guermantes*, the Narrator had reported the baron's "mots affreux et presque fous" about his friend Bloch. Charlus, very much "interested" in Bloch, suggested to the Narrator that he introduce them to each other in a spectacular encounter, such as having him invited to attend "some great festival in the Temple, at a circumcision, with Jewish chants" (Proust 1981a, 298).²¹ Charlus, getting carried away, goes on to imagine that the Narrator could "arrange parties to give [them] a good laugh," like a battle where Bloch would smite his father like David smote Goliath. Awkwardly, the Narrator can only object that Bloch senior would probably not enjoy a sport where he could be blinded. When Charlus then replies that, "surely the Synagogue is blind" (Proust 1981a, 298), incapable of perceiving the truth of the Gospel, he divulges the depth of his age-old anti-Semitism, originating in the medieval anti-Judaic tradition that used such allegories (the Blind Synagogue), based on Saint Paul's precepts that Jews had ignored the truth announced in their own texts, making Christians *versus Israel*, the true Israel (who "has seen God"),²² therefore making Jews strangers to themselves, absolute foreigners.

It is the same absolute anti-Semitic logic (absolute in the sense it virtually denies the very possibility of Jewishness) that in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* feeds the third and last occurrence of the word *synagogue* in *La Recherche*. It is again in a diatribe of Charlus against Bloch, because the latter's occupation of a street bearing profound Christian origins is a sacrilege to the former, a diabolical profanation that could have been avoided had he resided in the adjacent street, whose name escapes Charlus, at the heart of the neighborhood he calls "the Judengasse of Paris" (Proust 1981a, 1143).²³ In a novel move, however, Charlus now claims his diatribe only has aesthetic motivations, which, therefore, exempt him from any accusation of anti-Semitism. His examples, however, tell quite a story. "I cannot condemn wholesale, because Bloch belongs to it, a nation that numbers Spinoza among its illustrious sons. And I admire Rembrandt too much not to realise the beauty that can be derived from frequenting the synagogue. But after all a ghetto is all the finer, the more homogeneous and

complete it is.”²⁴ The last appearance of the “synagogue” in Proust thus occurs through a philosopher banned from his synagogue (Spinoza was excommunicated), and a painter who, despite having lived in Amsterdam’s Jewish district, wasn’t Jewish. Proust’s last synagogue thus remains foreign to Jews.

This kind of *estrangement* that was precisely Charlus’s point: Bloch and all Jews are foreigners. And because the whole conversation began when he accused the Narrator of including among his friends “an occasional foreigner” – to which the latter replied that Bloch was French, and that in case of a war, all Jews would be mobilized like other citizens – the Baron’s argument, which ends in “terrible, almost insane language” (Proust 1981a, 298), seems just as much to aim at the Narrator. As if he were a protector, a host as it were, of what others around him would consider unwelcome strangers. The leitmotiv of (ambiguous) hospitality, at play since the novel’s overture, reaches thus an unprecedented level of acuteness in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Asylum and exile, I would claim, are the main keys on which the novel creates its variations.

To be sure, the biblical story from which Proust borrows his title addresses foremost that very question. If God destroys the cities, it isn’t so much, as we are too quick to claim, to punish their inhabitants’ deviant sexual habits. It is foremost because in attempting to abuse Lot’s guests (the three angels), they violated the sacred rules of hospitality inaugurated by Abraham.²⁵

And in that development, in a perpetual motion oscillating between host and guest, spy (or voyeur) and mediator (or matchmaker), going from the *Soirée chez la princesse de Guermantes*, where he fears he has not been invited, to his second trip to Balbec, the Narrator looks more than ever like Ulysses, the wandering king of Ithaca, who in Joyce isn’t unfamiliar with Israel either.

That thought, of course, could be going too far in this journey through 1922. And yet, perhaps not far enough. Because beyond the failed *rencontre* between Proust and Joyce, one could have evoked another meeting of sorts, far less discussed though just as peculiar. I refer to when Marcel Proust crossed paths with Albert Cohen, in 1920, when Cohen, after leaving Geneva with a law degree, many years after having emigrated there from his native Corfu via Marseille, arrived in Alexandria in search of a better professional future, and discovered, by chance, in a bookstore, *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. It was an epiphany. The reading of Proust confirmed (if not initiated) Cohen’s desire to become a writer. Upon his return to Switzerland after the failure of his Egyptian venture, he published

a couple of texts, one of which would land him a career both as an author and as a diplomat.

This anecdote, to be sure, does not amount to a formal meeting. The story of the publication of Cohen's second text, however, comes closer. In 1921, Cohen published his first book, *Paroles juives*, a collection of free-verse poems written "for [his] Jewish brothers," and "for these Christian brothers who will see Love in [his] words" (Cohen 1993, 1),²⁶ designed, as he had claimed, to explain to the Protestant family of his wife "the beauty of the Jewish religion." In the vein of André Spire's *Poèmes juifs* (1908), the book seemed to place Cohen among Jewish writers such as Edmond Fleg, who began publishing his main work, *Écoute Israël*, in 1913, and who, like Cohen (at least in the beginning), was a fervent Zionist.²⁷

Along with its project of paying a tribute to Cohen's cultural and religious origins (despite being an atheist), *Paroles juives* expressed a poetics of discontinuity and constituted a laboratory of stylistic inventions (Schaffner 1997, 74). Yet, it was only after having discovered Proust that, in 1922, Cohen took his innovations in an apparently radically different direction – a direction that would bring him to (almost) meet Proust "publicly." This happened in the leading literary journal, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. In the October issue, Cohen published a long prose poem in the most modernist vein, "Projections ou Après-Minuit à Genève." In the following issue, Proust would publish "La Regarder dormir," an excerpt of *Sodome et Gomorrhe's* sequel, *La Prisonnière*. There is no evidence Proust read Cohen's text. No proof either that Cohen, on his end, read that particular excerpt by Proust. What is known and of interest however, is that "Projections" projected Cohen into his novel-writing future. After reading it, the director of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (NRF), Jacques Rivière, convinced Gallimard to offer Cohen a contract for his next five novels (none of which had even been started). To be sure, Cohen never wrote *Rapides internationaux* (*International Express*), the novel for which he gave a hypothetical title when signing the contract. But, from *Solal* (1932) to his masterpiece, *Belle du Seigneur* (1968), the novels he did write in a grand ensemble he called *La Geste des Juifs* (*The Jews' Epic*) tell of refuge and exile, hospitality and persecution, fleeing one's origins and returning to a foreign home.

All of Cohen's work, which has been praised as a centerpiece of modern French literature, owes tremendously to Proust. More than the mere chronological coincidence, however, what makes this encounter so peculiar is that the place of Proust in Cohen's work is more than ambiguous.²⁸

This ambivalence partly stems from the fascination and repulsion Cohen felt apparently equally for Proust, oscillating between the admiration he shared during a summer seminar he taught on Proust's fiction at the University of Geneva in 1923, and a disappointment he began feeling for the man he took for a lionizing snob after reading his correspondence. But for all the ambivalence, Cohen's 1922 "Projections" highlight what would become the main elements of accord with Proust. The text, which offers in a series of seventy-five heteroclitc fragments over forty-six pages the rendition of the poet/narrator's experience at a Geneva club where he witnessed people of the entire world indulging in festivities of various decadent tones, conveys a quasiapocalyptic vision of cosmopolitanism. Irony of fate, it is this very poem that, in addition to granting him a literary future, would also land Cohen a position at the League of Nations.²⁹ It was there that Cohen, as a diplomat, would write in 1946 what he called his "most beautiful book," a passport designed for stateless refugees, which would improve and replace the Nansen passport, created in 1922.³⁰

In one last anecdote, that might not be one, let it be told how 1922 was an odd year for the cosmopolitan ideal. While the League of Nations instated the Nansen passport and the Permanent Court of International Justice, it rejected Esperanto as a working language. The French delegate, fearing Esperanto would eclipse his native tongue as an official diplomatic language, posed his veto. No matter, the international auxiliary vernacular would begin, the same year, to be broadcast out of Newark and London to reach radio listeners all over the world.

Meanwhile, a mean André Breton announced the end of Dada, asking to let go of the young, unsettling avant-garde movement because it had proved to be, for some, a way of "sitting down" (Breton 1922, 8). Breton ordered to let go of the bourgeois way of life and get on the road. But some were already there, like Blaise Cendrars, whose first novel, *Moganni Nameh*, appeared at the same time. Written in 1911–12, it fused Cendrars's experiences in Saint Petersburg and New York into a highly eclectic and dynamic work that sends the reader on a disorienting journey. Cohen's unsettling "Projections" echoes these efforts to fragment the status quo of literature, and of cosmopolitanism. A stranger to strangers, the poet, sitting amid the chaos of a closed world caught in its own absurd, vertiginous revolution, evokes an uncanny yet familiar brother, almost a dop-pelgänger of Proust's Narrator, the peculiar witness of the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. In that brotherhood, hospitality is never a given. Ulysses travels in bed.

Notes

- 1 Or so they claimed. There are many versions of the encounter, most of them based on oral testimonies or memories. See Richard Davenport-Hines, *Proust at the Majestic: The Last Days of the Author Whose Book Changed Paris* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 40.
- 2 C. K. Scott Moncrieff published *Swann's Way* in September 1922 in London. Schiff would translate the last volume, *Time Regained*, after Moncrieff's death, in 1931.
- 3 *Ulysses* was published in Paris on February 2, 1922, Joyce's fortieth birthday, by Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company. On more literary grounds for this crossing of paths, see, e.g., Jean-Michel Rabaté's comparison of *Ulysses's* coda and the *Recherche's* overture as venues used by both authors to "make their reader(s) become a part of their book" (2002, 121).
- 4 According to his housekeeper and invaluable assistant, Céleste Albaret, Proust announced this "great news" in the spring: "J'ai mis le mot fin.... Maintenant, je peux mourir" (1973, 403).
- 5 Antoine Compagnon even calls it its most Balzacian episode. See his "Notice" of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* in Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Edited by J.-Y. Tadié, 1185 (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).
- 6 As early as 1908, Proust mentions in a letter to L. d'Albufera, he is working on multiple topics, among which "un essai sur la Pédérastie (pas facile à publier)" (1981b, 113).
- 7 The *Nouvelle Revue Française* November issue (n° 110) announces as in press *Sodome et Gomorrhe III*, in two parts ("La Prisonnière" and "Albertine disparue"), and as forthcoming *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, in several volumes (continued). In December (n° 111), it announces *Le Temps retrouvé*, which the journal will publish in its twelve issues of 1927. See Nathalie Mauriac Dyer, "Éditions et lectures de *Sodome et Gomorrhe*," *Bulletin Marcel Proust* 51 (2001): 67–78; and "Le cycle de *Sodome et Gomorrhe*: remarques sur la tomaisson d'*À la recherche du temps perdu*," *Littérature* 88 (1992): 62–71.
- 8 In a letter from May 1916 to Gallimard, Proust writes: "*Sodome et Gomorrhe* est de la plus complète et plus audacieuse vérité de peinture" (1987, 131).
- 9 "Race sur qui pèse une malédiction et qui doit vivre dans le mensonge et le parjure, puisqu'elle sait tenu pour punissable et honteux, pour inavouable, son désir" (Proust 1988b, 16).
- 10 Literally, "The Race of Queens." The Scott Moncrieff edition stays closer to the original by using the Proustian terminology of "The Race of men-women."
- 11 Proust used the term *tante* in his notes and sometimes in his letters. He borrowed it from Balzac, but says he doesn't feel he could use it because he is not as "audacious." As for the difference between homosexual and invert, Proust preferred the latter because, to him, homosexuals do not exist in the proper sense of men being attracted to their own gender because they are actually inverted women. As Elisabeth Ladenson puts it, "Homosexuality, in this view, is nothing but a chimerical rationalization on the part of the invert,

- a self-invention designed to preserve the illusion of masculinity.” This belief does not apply to women, and the treatment of lesbians differs greatly in the novel, where the motif is much more diffused (Ladenson 1999, 38).
- 12 “Une étape de cette marche inévitable du Féminisme” (Margueritte 1922, 8).
 - 13 In the *NRF* n° 110, November 1922, where Proust published (for the last time before his death) an excerpt of *La Prisonnière*, Paul Rival published a negative review of *La Garçonne*. He criticizes the “naïve framework” of the book where the author walks an “unreal young woman through forbidden pleasures,” and goes on to suggest the book should have been entitled “*A Brief Abstract of Contemporary Distractions*,” and calls Margueritte a dry collector of debaucheries (*égarements*). Rival mocks, however, those who have been “revolted” by the subject matter (Rival 1922, 634–5).
 - 14 See Proust, *Correspondance*, XX, 240–1. According to Gide, Proust defended himself, arguing that, yet in another occurrence of his esthetics of fragmentation, he had transposed in *Les Jeunes filles* “all the attractive, affectionate, and charming elements contained in his homosexual recollections, so that for *Sodome* he is left nothing but the grotesque and the abject” (1948, 267).
 - 15 “Race sur qui pèse une malédiction et qui doit vivre dans le mensonge et le parjure, ... qui doit renier son Dieu, ... fils sans mère, à laquelle ils sont obligés de mentir toute la vie et même à l’heure de lui fermer les yeux, ... amis sans amitiés” (Proust 1988b, 16).
 - 16 “persécution semblable à celle d’Israël” (Proust 1988b, 16–18).
 - 17 “formant une franc-maçonnerie bien plus étendue, plus efficace et moins soupçonnée que celle des loges” (Proust 1988b, 18)
 - 18 Paul Claudel, e.g., among others, would not hesitate to draw his own conclusions when he called Proust a “Sodomite Jew” in a letter to Jacques Rivière in 1923. See his *Correspondance Paul Claudel-Jacques Rivière, 1907–1924* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 268.
 - 19 “une révolution, pour mes yeux dessillés, s’était opérée en M. de Charlus, aussi complète, aussi immédiate que s’il avait été touché par une baguette magique” (Proust 1988b, 15). “A revolution, in my unsealed eyes, had occurred in M. de Charlus, as complete, as immediate as if he had been touched by a magician’s wand” (Proust 1981a, 635).
 - 20 E.g., J. E. Rivers in *Proust and the Art of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and Leo Bersani in *Homos* tend to condemn Proust. Although Bersani shows more nuance: he acknowledges that such a discourse could initiate “a skeptical reflection among gays” (1995, 130). In *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990/2008) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers a reading that highlights the internal contradictions at play in *Sodome I*. As for the discussion of anti-Semitism, see Elaine Marks, in *Marrano as Metaphor: The Jewish Presence in French Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Proust’s relationship to (his “own”) Jewishness was quite ambivalent, as shows, in particular, his treatment of Swann’s face who ends up like a “juif altéré, abîmé, méconnaissable” (Benhaïm 2006, 226).
 - 21 *Le Côté de Guermantes* (1988a, 584–5).

- 22 This allegory had appeared in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, where Estir explains to the Narrator what he failed to notice on the porch of the church of Balbec, among which: "the Synagogue, whose kingdom is at an end, has its eyes bandaged, holds a half-broken sceptre and lets fall, with the crown that is slipping from its head, the tables of the old law" (1981a, 899).
- 23 And "le ghetto parisien" (omitted from the translation) (1988b, 491).
- 24 "Je ne m'occupe de tout cela que du point de vue de l'art. La politique n'est pas de mon ressort et je ne peux pas condamner en bloc, puisque Bloch il y a, une nation qui compte Spinoza parmi ses enfants illustres. Et j'admire trop Rembrandt pour ne pas savoir la beauté qu'on peut tirer de la fréquentation de la synagogue" (Proust 1988b, 491–2).
- 25 In the previous chapter (Genesis 18), Abraham becomes the father of a nation, and his first act is to offer hospitality to the same angels.
- 26 The epigraph of Albert Cohen's *Paroles juives* is a dedication that reads: "À mes frères juifs et mes frères chrétiens qui verront l'amour dans mes paroles."
- 27 Albert Cohen would become very close to Chaïm Weizmann who would ask him to lead the newly founded *Revue juive*, in 1925, with an editorial board including Albert Einstein and Edmund Freud. La *Revue juive* was published under the auspices of Gallimard's NRF.
- 28 Anne Simon has brilliantly exposed this ambivalence: "Proust s'insère dans l'œuvre de Cohen comme une figure protéiforme, tantôt soumise à la bêtise et au snobisme de personnages qui doivent eux-mêmes souvent au personnel de la Recherche, tantôt fondatrice de la construction du monde social cohénien" (Simon 2010, 43).
- 29 Jacques Rivière facilitated Cohen's interview with Albert Thomas, the director of the Bureau International du Travail (headquarter of the International Labor Organization). See Jean Blot, *Albert Cohen* (Paris: Balland, 1986), 91.
- 30 Albert Cohen's entire work, for that matter, can be read as "Un livre qui délivre passeport. Un livre écrit sur l'air de l'errance," a passport, a book of journeys, and asylum, hospitality given or refused (Benhaïm 2002, 425).

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CHAPTER 4

Castle Logic: Hints in Kafka's Novel

Paul North

Kafka's 1922 had bits of 1920 and even 1918 mixed up in it. The year 1922 is significant because Kafka started writing furiously in January, despite being gravely ill, and did not stop until August or early September, when he gave up on the project or the project gave up on him. Still, 1922 is significant not because he was writing, or ill, or gave up, but because of what he wrote: a long novel fragment of his most expressive thoughts formulated in 1920 and, as I say, in 1918. The thoughts from 1918 and 1920 came to life again in 1922, but this time, they coalesced into an argument. *The Castle* is a full and unabashed theory of politics, on par with those of Plato, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. And so Kafka's 1922, with bits of 1920 and 1918, stands in another series that can be counted like this: 380 BCE, 1513, 1651, 1922. He was not thinking directly of *The Republic*, *The Prince*, and *Leviathan* when he wrote the bulk of *The Castle* between January and August or September. And yet, as an intricate and thorough image of the modern state and its ways of power, the novel stands adjacent to these other books, as though it were in a special temporality with them. It is not exactly like them; the novel addresses the most contemporary, bureaucratic form of the state, which these texts could not have foreseen. Nevertheless, it carries on their fascination with the appearance and function of the state.

By the winter of 1918, Franz Kafka had already become one of the most precise and penetrating analysts of European institutions, although by and large he was not recognized as such at the time.¹ In his short fiction and novels, most of which he chose not to publish during his lifetime, he dissected human and animal social systems with the coldest of eyes. Under his scalpel fell all sorts of organizational structures: the family, the steamship, the law court, the penal colony, colonial empires and small towns, state agencies, an ape assimilated into human customs, and even the institution of language. Later, after 1918, this project continued,

though in a different spirit, with analyses of dog, jackal, mole, and mouse communities, among others.²

His interest in the way social and political institutions governed life flowed from two streams of personal experience. The first stream had its source in the special alienation of Jews living in a marginal European capital, Prague. In fact, the alienation from social orders that Kafka experienced was not limited to his being nominally Jewish.³ His alienation was multidimensional. On different occasions in diaries and letters, Kafka explained his situation like this: he was not a Jew but a bad Jew among Jews, a Jew among Germans in a non-German land, a German among Czechs, a writer among businessmen, a boy among men, a son among fathers, and soon, after he was diagnosed in 1917, a consumptive among the healthy.⁴ In every group Kafka was classed or classed himself as the alien, the interloper, or the pariah. It would be wrong to say that he grew to like this multiple alienation. It is true, however, that he assiduously avoided assimilating himself to one dominant group or another. This was not out of principle; he simply did not feel like a member.

The other stream of experience that flows into his fiction originated in his second serious job. After jumping between majors, almost by default Kafka finally took a university degree in law, and within a few years ended up as a lawyer for the state. From 1908 until his retirement due to illness in 1922, Kafka was an attorney for an agency that insured workers against accidents, arbitrated their claims with corporations, and promoted their safety on industrial worksites. Perhaps most importantly, the agency advised the government on the writing and revision of worker-protection laws.⁵ Time after time, this lawyer with a special attitude observed with great sympathy how a worker was dwarfed by the cumbersome apparatus of corporation and state and almost smothered by the huge complexity of the law.

By 1918, these experiences had motivated two long novel fragments and many stories. Much happened in 1917 that led to a change of direction. It has become classic to mention the eruption of blood from his lungs in August and the final breakup from his long-time fiancé, Felice, in September. One could also mention a seemingly minor event, his learning Hebrew, coupled with a new interest in the book of Genesis, which he had read carefully the previous year.

The bit of 1918 that helps make up Kafka's 1922 is a fragment he wrote right around the turn of the new year. It is obvious that he is still thinking of Genesis when he writes:

If that which is supposed to have been destroyed in paradise was destroyable, then it was not decisive, if it was however not destroyable, then we live in a false belief. (Kafka 1992–3, 129; my translation)⁶

The sense of this fragment is paradoxical, but we ought to understand how. You could say that every clarity is clear in the same way, but each paradox is paradoxical in its own way. This particular paradox consists of two premises, both derived from the description of the Garden of Eden in the Bible, each in the form of a conditional statement: “if . . . , then” Moreover, the two conditional statements are mutually exclusive. Either paradise was destroyable or it was not. We could imagine that the two premises fall under the power of a third implied premise, a larger condition: to wit, if one is true, the other is not, and vice versa. One further note: the fragment does not say outright which premise is true.

In many ways this set of conditional sentences and the ambiguity about their ultimate truth epitomizes Kafka’s serious playful logic in his later writing. Still, we cannot understand the fragment only formally, as some sort of logic game. The content, paradise, makes all the difference: the paradox is paradoxical because of the image of paradise from Genesis. Paradise means perfection on earth, and as such confirms God’s power to create it. Paradise is exactly equal in the magnitude of its perfection to the magnitude of God’s power. That is to say, a violation of paradise is ipso facto a diminishment of God’s omnipotence, which is, or should be, impossible. This reasoning also entails an absurdity. Eden is the proof stone of God; God is lost without paradise.

Now, we know that the garden walls do not hold up; human history begins with its destruction. In the passage from 1918, Kafka captures a logical dilemma contained within the Genesis story that would make it seem impossible, in one premise, that human history could have ever begun, and impossible, in the other premise, that paradise ever existed. Either there is no history or there was no paradise. If either is true, each term becomes meaningless, because history means the end of paradise, and paradise means the end of history. And so the second premise and the first premise are in one sense the same. According to the second, we still live in paradise, and according to the first, history never was a fall from paradise. In both cases we are still there, wherever there is. If the garden had been liable to destruction, it was not perfect; it was never the expression of God’s perfect power, and so it was never paradise to begin with. This means that we cannot conceive of human history and political associations as a fall, nor even as imperfect, for we cannot compare

them to their perfect expression. And, if paradise was not destroyable, the false belief is about our having been expelled from it. If this belief is false, human history and politics are not "fallen." With his reading of Genesis, then, Kafka found a way to go straight to the lie within all human institutions, which come into existence, he argues, as "help-constructions,"⁷ to raise humanity up momentarily out of its fallen state and give it a temporary rest from toil and suffering.

In this fragment, we get a glimpse of a procedure that Kafka will extend and deepen in *The Castle*. By exposing contradictions in the legends about the origin, he will show how deep a fantasy the perfection, and the existence, of the most fundamental modern human system, the state, is. Whereas up to 1918 he analyzed European institutions and exposed their weaknesses, sometimes in the form of paradoxes, in 1918 he began to show the origins of the most fundamental institution in a strange, liminal mode reminiscent of fantasy or fiction. Just as in 1918 paradise was shown to be either there and not perfect or not there and so not a viable paradigm for life, in 1922 the state is shown to be either there and impossible or not there and thus not authoritative. And despite the illusoriness of the state's existence, all the while its subjects act as though it had perfect dominion over their lives. The townspeople live in a false belief. The novel, we could say, is an extension and elaboration of the fragment. In 1918, it is enough to show that paradise is paradoxical to the point of fiction, in order to diminish its effectiveness as a foundational myth. In 1922, Kafka changes tactics and shows that the political myth of a perfect origin functions all the more strongly because it is paradoxical. Not being "there" or true or real does not hamper the state at all in its exercise of power; quite the contrary, its disappearance is a condition for the more perfect dominion over its subjects.

The bit from 1920 I am thinking of is the following:

He had the feeling that merely through living he obscured the way for himself. From this impediment in turn he took proof that he was living. (Kafka 1990, 849; my translation)

This thought moves on a crooked path. "He," spoken of in the third person, confirms his own assumption in a roundabout manner.⁸ He is living. About this he has no doubt, and he proceeds to argue on the basis of this postulate. Yet he is not thinking of death as the opposite of life, as most people do; rather, he is thinking of a shape that living is rumored to take. Life is supposed to be a movement from an origin to a destination. This is the concept of life that "he" lives under and that shapes his crooked

argument. For he is so convinced of this idea of life, that when he looks around and he sees no evidence of a path or a movement, he begins to argue negatively, so that he does not have to give up his primary conviction. The conviction that there is a path is strengthened by not being able to find one. All that is required is an adjustment in reasoning from positive thesis to argument *ex negativo*. In this way, the experience of no path becomes the best proof that there is a path, and it is hidden. The one who walks around with this conviction and this argument has every evidence he needs that he is on the path but cannot point it out. The more he wanders around, farther from his goal, reading ever more obscure signs, frustrated and despairing, the more certain he becomes of his original conviction.

You will notice that, in addition to making arguments about paradise and about life, the two fragments, or “thoughts” as they probably should be called,⁹ also make their arguments in a particular way. They do not communicate directly, but rather obliquely, communicating as much in their style as in their statements.

And so, extending and magnifying a paradoxical location he had first invented in 1918 and sending in a crooked figure he had first invented in 1920, Kafka wrote his *Republic*, his *Prince*, his *Leviathan* in about eight months in 1922. In *The Castle*, “he” wanders into “paradise,” in the form of an early modern state with a peculiarly contemporary bureaucratic organization. A land surveyor called “K.” arrives at a town to demonstrate that the castle is there and has perfect dominion over its domain, but his attempt to do so displaces it from view. This parallax effect proves to him much more strongly that the castle is present and powerful.

So far, we can formulate the conceptual content of 1922 for Kafka in this way: states are ersatz paradises, and people who live in them search continually for evidence of their perfection. Furthermore, because they continually fail to find it, people judge that they are living within it. Behind this judgment stands the conviction that the source of political power is inviolable. The logic goes something like this: if we cannot find the castle, it must be our limitation, not its. Following this logic very closely, Land Surveyor K. believes all the more intensely in the castle the more he is not allowed into it. And his conviction grows the more the castle recedes. The double name of the count who administers there, Count Westwest, alludes to the constant retreat of the source of power, identified with the “West.” On a round earth, the west is always farther than where you stand, and you pursue it until, exhausted, you return to where you were standing.

Despite the rather desperate situation in which he finds himself, little happens to K. in the novel beyond wandering around, talking to townspeople, and complaining that the castle has invited him but does not make him feel welcome. Townspeople refer to the castle in a manner that hints – to the reader and not to K. – that they have given up struggling to find it and now accept its claim to govern their lives. Within this apparent general resignation, desire shoots around uninhibited. Because the castle, already a metonymy for the source of power, only appears in its disappearance, alternatives run wild. If you cannot get what you desire, you take substitutes. The more tenuous its connection with the castle, the more it stimulates your desire to find a better substitute.

Although the setting is not directly religious, the town has a form similar to an ecclesiastical religion in which members receive a “call” from God but have to make do, in his absence, with grubby and venal representatives, kitschy adornments, and inconsistent promises¹⁰ – not unlike the European bureaucratic state in Kafka’s day.¹¹ The Land Surveyor receives a summons in the form of a letter, but the castle, or rather, an official in the massive bureaucracy, who is perhaps not authorized to speak for any other section but his own, confirms that there is doubt about K.’s “call,” although he does not dismiss him outright. Thus K. is retained but without explicit authorization to carry out his work. What his work is has a direct bearing on his equivocal status in the town. Were he as Land Surveyor to begin mapping the limits of the castle’s domain, he would likely threaten the castle’s power as well as the fragile equilibrium maintained by the townspeople who live in its shadow. He is either the holiest, most authoritative figure in the state, or else he is the most heretical, the biggest menace.¹²

When K. first arrives at the town line he sees the castle. The passage in the text that describes this vision contains, in a tiny space, the basic logic of what K. will experience repeatedly over the next several hundred pages. The logic is a logic of appearances. This passage gives the rules for how the castle comes to appear, or as the case may be, not appear. Let us quote the passage in English and German:

Of the castle mount nothing was to be seen, fog and murkiness surrounded it, not even the weakest glimmer of light hinted at the great castle. For a long time K. stood on the wooden bridge that led from the country road to the town and looked up into the apparent emptiness.

Vom Schloßberg war nichts zu sehn, Nebel und Finsternis umgaben ihn, auch nicht der schwächste Lichtschein deutete das große Schloß an. Lange

stand K. auf der Holzbrücke die von der Landstraße zum Dorf führt und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor. (Kafka 2002, 7; my translation)¹³

K. looks upward and sees, the narrator announces, nothing. We can learn, if we linger in this moment and observe K. observing, that beyond the nothing that he seems to see, another nothing hovers, one that he does not see, a different nothing than the nothing where the castle is supposed to be. There are two nothings here. Let us say that the nothing where the castle mount should be is the nothing proper to the castle, its very own absence. There is something where the castle is, onlookers can say, even though they have not been given permission to see it. The other nothing, in contrast, is the nothing on whose basis we take this as the absence of the castle. For there is little reason to take it this way – no reason, barely a clue, maybe nothing at all. The place is dark: what can be said about that? Yet we are given to believe by the dramaturgy of the scene, by the arrival staged to coincide with the novel's opening, by the dramatic upward tilt of the head, by the stance of a tourist on a bridge between the town and its outside, by the suggestion of fog and murkiness, by the talk of a nothing that one can see here and only here that this is a privileged place and moment, the one and perhaps only locus in time and space for an appearance of the state, or in this case for its nonappearance.

That is to say, “nothing” indicates, like a sign, the source or the whole that we otherwise do not experience. It is to be taken as the most meaningful, full, and saturated nothing. This nothing is filled up with meaning. It means “castle.” If there were just a little something to be seen, the darkness could not operate in this way. The completeness of this nothing is what indicates its opposite. But let us not forget the other nothing that shadows it, that nothing on whose basis we take it as complete, whole, and full, and thus a stand-in for the castle. We could ask what it might mean that K. is already looking for the castle in the first moments of his arrival. We could try to imagine, for a moment at least, what it would mean if there were no reason to look for it here, now.

Hints in the first paragraph of *The Castle* seduce us into taking the nothing encountered there as this kind of nothing, a nothing that is not only not nothing, but an enormously important something: an indicator and place for the center and foundation of the state. Let us quickly catalogue the hints to this effect that we find there. It is a nothing “to be seen,” the narrator says. It lies above the town; it is *the* nothing that belongs to or even emanates from the castle mount; it has a sort of materiality that is like fog or murkiness (*Nebel und Finsternis*); it surrounds something,

encircling it as if it were a physical thing; it is so dense that no glimmer of light escapes it. Opacity is a word that indicates a purpose: to block light. If light were not being blocked, a positive term would suffice, such as black. Finally, it is called an emptiness, but the emptiness is only apparent – *die scheinbare Leere* – and thus it can immediately and with little reflection be taken in a contrary way, suggesting, to wit, that it appears empty but is really full. We seem predetermined by our own presuppositions and by the words and turns of phrase employed to take *scheinbar* to mean “semblant,” “deceptive,” or “false.” And so, in short, by means of these seductive descriptors, the nothing in this passage turns into its opposite. A void can only be the inverse of a saturation; a closed circle can only have been constructed to contain something; the density of a barrier can only stand in proportion to the huge power that it obstructs; the word *semblant* indicates the nearness of truth, just on the other side of semblance.

K.'s raised head and the rhetoric of the passage suggest that the castle is there but obscured, visible only to a special eye that can see “higher.” This is how K. and the reader relate to the castle until the novel's final page; they look for a higher sight with which to view it.

In what situation is a single gesture more ample, telling, or compelling than a direct communication? K. “sees” the castle only on the first or second day after his arrival, then never again. In what context is one instance greater than a million instances? A small thing bigger than a huge one? We should add a corollary: in what way is nothing as big as or bigger than the entirety of everything? This is the inverted logic of state power formulated by Kafka's novel. Power functions best on the basis of the smallest indication. The smallness of the hint, its triviality, and its casualness – these conspire to form a negative proof of the greatness, importance, and universality of the castle's power, which is not verifiable in any other way. The hint thus not only indicates the existence of the castle, as well as, inversely, its greatness; it also confirms, by its tiny size and trivial appearance that the castle's power is of a different order than the sensual world.

Another attitude, a potential alternative to maintaining your convictions at all costs, is evidenced as well. K. betrays another possible response to the nothing. He looks upward into the apparent emptiness for a while and then goes to find a warm place to sleep. He seems to take the nothing he has seen as no reason to judge one way or the other. This equanimity or lack of judgment repeats itself a few lines later when, as often happens to K., in a sort of half-sleep, he forgets everything. He forgets his encounter with the nothing, if it was one, forgets his summons to the town, forgets

the structures of power that seem to surround and enclose him – what he later calls “the force of scarcely perceptible influences at every moment” (Kafka 1998, 24).¹⁴ And it is for this reason that, when the Castle Steward’s son wakes him to request his entry visa, announcing, “This village is castle property, anybody residing or spending the night here is effectively residing or spending the night in the castle. Nobody may do so without permission from the count” (Kafka 1998, 2; translation modified), K. looks up from the pile of straw on which he has been sleeping – another kind of looking upward that does not spring from a desire to see, but rather from a momentary thoughtlessness – and asks (a child’s question really), “into what town have I gone astray? Is there a castle here?”

In the son of the Castle Steward’s utterance, the little word *in* carries a big burden, insofar as, through its ability to shift between a metaphysical and a geographical register, it keeps the whereabouts of the castle indeterminate. This “in” carries the whole state. Indeed, when “in” is invoked to say that the town belongs to the castle, when “in” is called upon to say that a relation of a higher order than space pertains here, when “in” says that which cannot be said in another way, for fear of specifying it too much and erasing the castle effect, when “in” enacts the conversion from proximity to power, the entire weight of the higher order inheres in the rhetorical operation of the little word. That “in” means more than a physical relation allows the castle to shimmer into appearance, or nearly. At this moment, “in” becomes a hint instead of a word. It gives up referring to something or meaning something and indicates the mere existence of what cannot be discussed.

It could be that to hint, the sign has to go so far as to contradict that at which it hints. “In” does not mean physically inside; it must mean the opposite, because in spatial terms quite the reverse is true. Everyone knows the castle is geographically in the town. Using a word as a hint, it seems, cancels the word’s significance. And yet it cancels the significance without replacing it by some other meaning. “In” is not a metaphor. It does not transfer the spatial meaning to a nonspatial relation, such that we are supposed to think of the castle as metaphysically containing the town. In this respect, the Castle Steward may reveal too much. He tells us that the town is in the castle “in some sense.” But that sense has yet to be specified. His own attempt to specify the sense is weak, almost illogical. He says the town is the “property” of the castle. Here the word *property* is a metaphor, or a version of one. Property stands for power. And yet, it is not the right, the legally sanctioned ability to store or use or sell the town that the castle has, but rather the right to rule it, or perhaps this is not a right at all, but

only a custom or practice of ruling, and this in absentia, and this inconsistently, and this without manifesting itself, and so on....

A hint is also not a clue. A clue is the ragged end of a thread one can gather up and follow to the truth. In contrast, a hint is a communication of shared knowledge without stating it, a form of dark speech. It is a communication without a message that points toward an assumption, in order to strengthen or reestablish it. Another illuminating contrast is with the process of induction. Clues are gathered by induction. A hint is empirical too, to be sure; it happens in the open, the senses receive it. In induction, however, a multiplicity of sensible instances allows us to infer a not readily apprehensible single truth about them all. From the many one reconstructs a hidden whole. Natural science, when it proceeds by induction, repeats an experiment enough times that the preponderance of instances indicates the single truth of the hypothesis. Hints step in where induction fails. Where there is not enough evidence for induction to take place – an abductive truth happens. The very paucity of experience and the incompleteness of the picture allow a tiny thing to abduct the most complete truth within its tiny body. This is the logic that Kafka tries to expose across the novel, abducted truth. Kafkaan hints, all hints maybe, say little – or nothing – about the content of that at which they hint. Hinting is prior to representation, it dares not give an approximation of its object; it only indicates that it should be taken as there.

In 1917, Kafka articulates an account of hints, four years before he goes on to demonstrate their operation in *The Castle*:

For everything outside the sensual world, language can only be used in the manner of a hint (*andeutungsweise*) and never even approximatingly in the manner of a comparison (*annähernd vergleichsweise*), given that language corresponding to the sensual world only deals in possession and its relations. (1992–3, 59; my translation)¹⁵

In the fragment, Kafka's aim is to say that any attempt to present the non-sensible analogically or allegorically is erroneous. The nature of human language does not allow it. At the same time, he lays out the logic of the hint as a conduit for power.

Hinting is language's mode every time it is used for something outside the sensual world, but it only works on the condition that it will not bring that second world any closer to us. Instead of bringing near, it marks an unbridgeable distance.¹⁶ We cannot reconstruct the full thought around this passage here; we can only reiterate what Kafka writes: hinting is the negation of comparison. Hint is the manner in which language

is used when one wants to indicate that the thing in question is not in any way comparable to sensual things. For Kafka in 1918, this is a truth about language; in 1922, it becomes an indispensable tool of the state. You can see here how a thought chiefly about theology becomes incorporated into a political-theoretical novel. The state needs to give the nonappearing an appearance in language, without diminishing its grandeur, distance, or loftiness. And so, this becomes the way in which the castle routinely appears, without sullying itself with appearance. What's more, the specific modality of this political hint legitimizes the continued disappearance of the state. We only have to recall how in the first passage of the novel, the narrator announces: "Not the weakest shimmer of light hinted at the great castle" (Kafka 2002, 7; my translation). Here the logic of the hint is strengthened by denial. The narrator insists that there is no hint, and this is precisely what allows the whole negative contraption to indicate what it cannot possibly show. "Not the weakest shimmer of light hinted..." A weak light would indicate a power that could become sensual, a weak power. The greatest power is carried by not carrying over in the least. This is different from other modes that claim to bring over the transcendent. And still, some of them also depend on the hint. Prophecy might be said to derive its force from hinting. Otherwise its contents would sound like common wisdom or resentful threats. Revelation, in contrast, has to constantly problematize its ability to speak the word of God in earthly language. It speaks too directly, even when it speaks in parables. Theophany obviously fails, at least in Abrahamic monotheisms, because it shows only the earthly form of the deity. In politics, all the appearances of the state – the constitution, the capital, the presidential seal, the body of the king, and so forth – fail to the extent that they represent the state and succeed only where they hint at a greater imageless entity.

Let us examine another, similar operation in the novel. K.'s first and only encounter with the mysterious "Klamm," the higher underofficial whom everyone seems to fear and many desire, happens in this mode. The barmaid Frieda speaks to K.:

"Do you want to see Mr. Klamm?" K. said yes. She pointed to a door right beside her on the left. "Here's a little peephole, you can look through here."
 "And what about these people?" asked K. She pouted out her lower lip, and with an uncommonly soft hand pulled K. to the door. Through the small hole, which evidently had been drilled for the purpose of observation, he could see almost the entire room next door. (Kafka 1998, 36)

"Wollen Sie Herrn Klamm sehn?" K. bat darum. Sie zeigte auf eine Tür, gleich links neben sich. "Hier ist ein kleines Guckloch, hier können Sie

durchsehn." "Und die Leute hier?" fragte K. Sie warf die Unterlippe auf und zog K. mit einer ungemein weichen Hand zur Tür. Durch das kleine Loch, das offenbar zu Beobachtungszwecken gebohrt war, übersah er fast das ganze Nebenzimmer. (Kafka 2002, 60)

Klamm, it seems, has forbidden everyone except his lover Frieda to enter, and in response, those who fear and those who desire him have bored a hole to satisfy themselves while keeping their distance. This is how you look at power, without letting on you are looking and without making yourself identifiable. And, too, the hole can be looked at in reverse. Peeping through it puts the powerful where they can be viewed but not addressed. The small opening then enlarges what is viewed through it. These are all parts of the peephole effect. By means of it, shame is positioned on one side, propriety on the other. Through this effect the phantasm of power – unaddressable, greater, legitimate – is produced. The order of production is peculiar. Hole precedes Klamm, small precedes big, shame precedes propriety, obedience precedes domination, a slight bend of the knee or tilt of the head precedes height. More than this: the hole gives the impression of a wall. A wall is not just a vertical thing. Prohibiting entrance, the wall exists only around the hole that permits knowledge of something prohibitable behind it. Further confirmation of the peephole principle comes in the description of Klamm. Nothing in this "medium-sized, fat, ponderous gentleman" (Kafka 1998, 36) indicates his high position. Everything about him is middling. That Klamm smokes a "Virginia" and reclines in an arm chair with a beer but no official papers around him only reinforces the conclusion that the hole is the only medium of his greatness. Where K. peeps at Klamm and gets a momentary view of the structured inversions – hole ... wall, low ... high, blockage ... access, shame ... righteousness – there we overhear a truth about the political order. The bearer of power is shabby, unworthy of the fear and desire projected onto him. A truly powerful individual cannot rule or be powerful; a dirty, weak, mediocre being is the only being we can believe to be powerful. This is because the latter neither represents power nor participates in power. In fact, Klamm has no evident relation to power, and the refusal of all relation produces belief, a belief – the subjective disposition that responds to a hint – that makes him powerful.

Soon we begin to notice that step by step, encounter by encounter, almost everything becomes a hint in this great novel, and almost every hint confirms everyone's prior convictions.

The blackness at which K. tilts his head in the opening scene "hinted" – this is Kafka's word: *es deutete an*, "it hinted" – that the castle was there

and was the source for all that happened in the town. But, and we must be very precise in spelling out the order of events, first it hints, and then K. tilts his head. At what would he tilt if there had been no hint? “Not the weakest shimmer of light hinted at the great castle.” A complex test is being run here, on K. and on us. For the sentence says that there is no hint. “Not the weakest shimmer of light hinted at the great castle.” And yet, a hint is operating nonetheless. As it turns out, you cannot diminish a hint by exposing it. If you expose a hint, the exposé becomes a hint toward the opposite state of affairs. This is a principle that might be called *hyPOSEmia*. We know that a hint functions by saying less. It reveals by concealing. So, the less it signifies the more it hints. This logic reaches an extreme at a point at which a hint says so little it barely signifies at all, when it is almost not a hint of anything, whereupon it becomes the biggest hint. This raises a difficulty for anyone who wants to resist a hint. A hint denied can become the strongest hint of all.

Much more can be said about this. Other genres related to hinting crisscross Kafka’s writing. The much talked about “gesture”¹⁷ is an interpersonal, social form of hinting; rumor is its most narrative and solidly political form. In whatever shape, hinting is seen by Kafka as the operative element in postfoundational politics. It is what maintains a solid link with a missing, concealed, or otherwise negated ground. Not toward the ground itself, but toward its disappearance, the hint *hints*. When we disavow the hint entirely, the full and incontrovertible but never directly accessible state makes itself known in the strongest possible terms. The state protects and preserves itself by retreating, ever west and further west, with the hint as its aide-de-camp.

Let us try to bring our hazy speculations into focus, without inadvertently reifying the murkiness and fog where the castle should have been. Without taking the hints. We turn to one particular hint in the first passage that we have not yet addressed, the German word and name *Schloss*, meaning castle, but also “lock.” *Das Schloss* is the novel’s central phantasm and the intimate name by which Kafka referred to the text.¹⁸ What follows is a commentary, numbered 1 to 9, on the use of this double and somewhat duplicitous word.

1. At some point, positive images of the state – the royal flesh, the border fence, intimate communal living, public opinion, our laws – gave way to negative ones, though probably they were all always negative in spirit. Eventually, darkness or nothing became the best image of the state, because it indicated its disappearance.

2. To follow Kafka on his path, we would have to be willing to embrace a nothing other than the absence that indicates the state. Kafka saw this other nothing – a nothing against the state – in the loopholes in institutions, in the interpretive confusions within legal texts and in their execution, in the mythical wellspring of the law, which Derrida has analyzed,¹⁹ in the ticks of the bureau and the personalities of its workers, in crumbling, half-constructed national boundaries, in burrows that nauseatingly loop back on themselves, in depthless consciousnesses, as well as in the blackness of the state, which conceals only its own lack of significance.
3. "... had one not known that this was a castle, one could have taken it for a small city" (Kafka 1998, 8) the narrator says.²⁰
4. If we accept the story that the nothing indicates the castle, we also accept that the castle is restricted, and in particular it is restricted from K., the Land Surveyor. This point cannot be stressed enough. K. worries aloud that the castle will be "closed to him forever, and not only closed but invisible" (*für immer nicht nur versperrt sondern unsichtbar* [Kafka 2002, 42; my translation]).²¹ This is the primal and in a sense fatal hint: the state *could* appear as itself, under the right conditions, given the right privileges, given the right to an appearance, a right that is apparently also being withheld, withheld from K., who does not deserve it. The castle is not only invisible, it is *also locked away*.
5. The hint of a lock, a restriction, causes the nothing to appear to K. in the first place. The restriction is the source for the disappearance of the state. That is, the hint of a lock, the intimation that the castle is there-but-not-permitted, makes the nothing into proof of what is denied me. It is a short step from there to taking my exclusion from the castle as a just reward for my own failings.
6. According to legend, it was creation that locked us into paradise and sin that locked us out. But what if the double legend is what keeps us from living in the garden? And what if it is the garden idea that keeps us from living as if there were no such thing as a wall? What we need, then, are new stories that teach us how not to take hints. These types of stories are what Kafka tries to provide us in 1922.
7. So let us not try to penetrate the darkness. Let us scrutinize its surface. The most obvious detail on the surface of the text is that *Schloss* says "lock" as well as "castle"; the hint is written so as to be unmissable in German. The castle is not just absent, according to this word, it is *versperrt* ("locked away"): K. cannot have it, it is not for him, and moreover, its not-ness is indeed for him and only him; the lock is destined

for him alone and so the prohibition must spring somehow from his own limitations; whereupon he concludes that everything he longs for awaits him inside. Why else would he alone be excluded? In meaning “castle,” “padlock,” and its medieval meanings, “chain,” “vulva,” Schloss says: there is a reason you cannot have this and the reason lies inside. It has been purposively *verschlossen*, *versperrt*, in order to forbid me some pleasure, freedom, or justice.

8. Hints of an originary locking up move through the novel, causing many of K.’s problems, but also causing them to appear to him as problems, as injustices, spurring him on to overcome them.
9. It is not so much a castle or a withdrawal of a castle that we encounter on the first page, but the name and title, the hint, “castle,” *Schloss* – lock – that seduces us into searching for a key that only we can find.²²

In the scene at the beginning of *The Castle*, we see K., or the narrator, busily locking up the lock, reading a restriction into the night he quite understandably encounters (it is nighttime), expelling himself from paradise, reifying a perfect place he will never have seen, and reserving for himself a sad sort of freedom. K. projects, through his dealings with hints, a truth he can never possess, and he spends his time in pursuit of it. I hope to have shown that Kafka sees this logic – the logic of the hint, the hint of a lock, the lock on paradise, the myth of power, the necessity of the myth of power for the operation of power – as a pernicious seduction. “Lock” is the seduction by which power comes to seem a legitimate or even a possible response.

A hint, as we know, is in the taking. If K. had only missed the hint, as he almost did, if the hint had not then reverberated everywhere, if he had learned to let go of this one illusion, the illusion of a lock, castle, *Schloss*, perhaps he could have been happy with the multiplicitous, hazy, contradictory, and shifting phenomena of the town. He would not have taken them as nothing but as less than nothing.

Notes

- 1 Biographies of Franz Kafka tend to focus on psychological aspects of his life, rather than his commitments to intellectual projects. A complex view of the person, his social and intellectual milieu, and some of the forces that shaped his thinking can be gotten if one reads at least these four works: the problematic but indispensable biography by his friend Max Brod, *Kafka: A Biography* (New York: Schocken, 1960); Klaus Wagenbach’s *Kafka* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), a biography that depicts the rich environment

- of Prague in Kafka's youth; Arnold Heidsieck's book on three intellectual contexts for Kafka's fiction, the law, descriptive psychology, and various religious and theological encounters; and, although it is overly psychoanalytical, Reiner Stach's recent biographical trilogy, only two volumes of which have appeared so far in English: *The Decisive Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); *The Years of Insight* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- 2 A quick overview of Kafkan motifs and problems can be found in Ritchie Robertson's *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 - 3 Kafka's relationship to Jewish things is treated in many of its important aspects by Ritchie Robertson in *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). For a complex account of how languages associated with Jews galvanized Kafka's writing style, see David Suchoff, *Kafka's Jewish Languages: The Hidden Openness of Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
 - 4 For a first investigation of these multiple alienations and a further bibliography about them, read Scott Spector's *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
 - 5 You can now read the briefs and reports written by Kafka about worker-protection laws in the volume edited by Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg, and Benno Wagner, *The Office Writings* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
 - 6 For a slightly different translation, see Geoffrey Brock's in *The Zürau Aphorisms* (New York: Schocken, 2006), 73.
 - 7 "Help-constructions" is a phrase Kafka adapts from a novel by his friend Max Brod, *Das große Wagnis* (1919) and uses in the draft of a thought from the end of January 1918 (Kafka 1992–3, 75).
 - 8 The thinker of Kafka's pronoun "he" is still Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). See ch. 14, "The Narrative Voice (the 'he,' the neutral)."
 - 9 In the summer of 1917, Kafka was reading Pascal, as shown by a note in his diary from August (Kafka 1976, 376; Kafka 1990, 816).
 - 10 An alternative to the figure who receives a call but must make due with a substitute is the figure who is not called, the one who does not enter a community of the call, the ecclesia. See Werner Hamacher, "Uncalled: A Commentary on Kafka's 'The Test.'" Translated by Catharine Diehl. *Reading Ronell*. Edited by Diane Davis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
 - 11 To his friend Oskar Baum in June 1922, Kafka writes that "the bureaucracy is closer than any social institution" to "the necessary, inevitable complexities springing straight out of the origins of human nature." Before bureaucracy, Kafka feels "fear," but even in that, "profound respect."
 - 12 The political philosopher, Hannah Arendt, took Kafka's K. as a powerful example of a certain kind of social outcast, a "pariah." See the section of her

article on Kafka: “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition.” *The Jewish Writings*. Edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, 288–97 (New York: Schocken, 2007). For Arendt, K. was “plainly a Jew” (2007, 290) and the drama of the novel follows his attempt to assimilate perfectly into a society that considers him an aberration and a pest. The novel is thus a lesson about the violence of a social unit that demands that a being become “indistinguishable” from the group and then doesn’t allow it to enter because it is fundamentally different. First published in 1944 toward the end of the Third Reich’s reign, a reading like this is understandable. It treats K. as an everyman, an any-Jew, in an allegory of the plight of Jews in middle Europe. To do this it has to ignore that the pariah is a land surveyor, while it treats the castle as a real power center, not as a mirage. The distance between 1922 and 1944 is much larger than twenty-two years.

- 13 Mark Harman’s translation emphasizes other things, and covers over the “hint” with the verb “to suggest”: “There was no sign of the Castle hill, fog and darkness surrounded it, not even the faintest gleam of light suggested the large Castle” (Kafka 1998, 1).
- 14 “... die Gewalt der unmerklichen Einflüsse jedes Augenblicks ...” (Kafka 2002, 43).
- 15 Written down on December 8, 1917.
- 16 On the constitutive role distance plays in the European state, read Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 17 Walter Benjamin is the source for the interest in gesture. For his great essay on Kafka, he adapted some thoughts of Bertolt Brecht’s about the epic theater and the actor’s movements to describe the minimally signifying bodily movements throughout Kafka’s fictions. See “Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death.” *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 120–2.
- 18 The customary title was given to the novel by Kafka’s first posthumous editor, his friend Max Brod. Yet in a letter to Brod on September 11, 1922, Kafka does refer to the text as “die Schlossgeschichte.”
- 19 As thorough an analysis of the origin of the law as one could hope for can be found in French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s essay on Kafka’s famous parable, “Before the Law,” also called in English “Before the Law.” See “Before the Law.” *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 181–220.
- 20 “... hätte man nicht gewußt daß es ein Schloß ist, hätte man es für ein Städtchen halten können” (Kafka 2002, 17; translation modified).
- 21 Harman’s version is less literal (Kafka 1998, 24).
- 22 Theodor Adorno, in his famous essay on Kafka, claims that Kafka’s writing is “a parabolic system the key to which has been stolen” (1997, 246). Adorno says this as though it were self-evident, which means that he at least holds a master key to all of the works. Yet in this sentence Adorno falls under K.’s illusion, or the narrator’s, the illusion that the truth is in Kafka’s texts just beyond our reach but locked away from us.

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*“In or about 1922”: Virginia Woolf, Katherine
Mansfield, and Modern Fiction*

Angeliki Spiropoulou

“In or about 1922” alludes to Virginia Woolf’s much-cited proposition that “on or about December 1910 human character changed” (1988, 422), first found in her 1923 essay “Character in Fiction,” republished a year later under the title “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.”¹ In the essay, Woolf attempts to define modern fiction by signposting the onset of modernism with an earlier date to measure its effects retrospectively. As Jean-Michel Rabaté aptly observes, before the first decade of the twentieth century, when a new language of rupture began to be articulated, a culturally and politically hegemonic Europe of the *ancien régime* was in reality still in effect (2007, 16). Between the landmark date of 1910 and the year of publication of Woolf’s essay, British fiction had changed radically through the modern experience of disruption, contradiction and fluidity, a circumambient experimentalism in the arts, and, tragically, the intervention of the Great War. Such transformations in 1922 coincided with the publishing of emblematic texts of modernism, including Virginia Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room*, and the short fiction collection, *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, by Katherine Mansfield. *Jacob’s Room* was acknowledged as Woolf’s first truly modernist novel, where she “found how to begin (at 40) to say something in [her] own voice” (1978, 186), after publishing two apparently conventional novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), as well as some experimental short fiction, collected in the volume, *Monday or Tuesday* (1921). For Woolf, then, 1922, the *annus mirabilis* of modernism, was not the culmination but the originary moment of her modernist trajectory. Inversely, that same year saw the last and posthumously most acclaimed story collection by Mansfield, who died from tuberculosis the subsequent year.

On a pragmatic level, Woolf’s 1923 essay was initially meant as a response to Arnold Bennett’s critical review of *Jacob’s Room*, which dismissed it precisely for its modernity, its refutation of the prescription of *verisimilitude* in plot and character composition.² Even though Mr. Bennett admitted

that *Jacob's Room* was clever and original, he found the characters "unconvincing," a failure in his view, because "the foundation of good fiction is character creating" (Bennett 1997, 113). In her reply, Woolf turns the tables on Bennett's terms for criticizing her novel, by implying that it was not her novel that lacked convincing characterization, but conventional writing, which failed to capture the real change in human character. Moreover, by asserting in the same essay that "[w]hen human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature" (1988, 422) she points at once to art's historicity and to the question of technique, of the relation between content and form, lying at the heart of modernist aesthetics.

The debate surrounding Woolf's 1922 novel paradigmatically indicates modernism's reconfigurations of fictional practice, posing the question of not only how to best represent modern "character" but also whether "the proper stuff" of modern fiction is character. Woolf's adumbration of what is new in modern writing is built around a dipole she constructs between Edwardian realists, with H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennett, on the one hand, and, on the other, modern Georgians, notably James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, with whom she aligns herself. Three years before the publication of *Jacob's Room*, in her "programmatic" essay "Modern Novels" (1919), an earlier version of "Modern Fiction" (1925), Woolf had already attempted to outline contemporary literary production in terms of a "quarrel" between realist and modern camps. In that essay, commonly read as a kind of manifesto of modernist fiction, Woolf accused her realist contemporaries for their "materialism," for their attention to external facts and plot structure in creating an "air or probability," which though "impeccable" is obsolete and empty of vision. That "essential thing" called "life," the subject of fiction in Woolf's view, can be "contained no longer" in those "ill-fitting vestments" provided by the conventional novel (1988, 32–3).

Interestingly, the charge of historical and technical obsolescence Woolf levels at the Edwardians had been directed at Woolf by her literary rival, Katherine Mansfield, that same year. In her review of Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day*, Mansfield criticized it for being too outmoded and traditional, "so far away, so shut and sealed from us to-day," in its total unawareness "of what has been happening" (1997a, 81–2). Inversely, Mansfield's previous praise for Woolf's "Kew Gardens" (1919) precisely for its innovativeness, seemed to point the direction Woolf ought to take in the future (1930, 36–8). Mansfield had also parodied Bennett's conventionality,³ and her critiques exhibit a concern similar to Woolf's essay

over renegotiating contemporary fiction methods, calling for an adequate representation of modern times. In this “*age of experiment*,” Mansfield writes, “[i]f the novel dies it will be to give way to some new form of expression; if it lives it must accept the fact of a new world” (1997a, 79). Echoing Baudelaire’s original call for artistic portrayal of the present in his 1863 essay, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1964, 13), Mansfield acknowledges the need for artists “to find their true expression and to make it adequate to the new fields of experience” (1997a, 262) or, as Woolf comparably phrased it elsewhere, the need to invent “new forms for our new sensations” (1958, 30). Form, then, is tied to history, despite the reputed formalism of both women writers.

Mansfield pointed out that after the Great War “nothing can be the same any longer,” emphatically asserting that “as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise: we have to take it into account and find new *expressions, new moulds for our new thoughts and feelings*” (1928, 279). Although Mansfield had already established a reputation as a short story writer with the 1911 collection, *In a German Pension*, in 1916, she ventured to invent “a kind of special prose” (1927, 42) in tribute to her younger brother killed at war with the composition of *Prelude*. This story was eventually printed in 1918 by the Hogarth Press, the publishing house Virginia and Leonard Woolf had founded the previous year. Mansfield’s story was the second publication of the amateur press, which would be the home to more monuments of modern(ist) literature and culture. The press would publish Woolf’s own books, typically illustrated in postimpressionist style by her sister Vanessa Bell, the first British edition of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (in 1924), and the translated *Standard Edition* of Sigmund Freud’s works, among others, thus “facilitating the entry of modernism into the more general literary marketplace” (Willison et al. 1996, xv). In turn, Mansfield’s active involvement with modernist “little magazines,” for example, A. R. Orange’s progressive *New Age* (1907–22), the explicitly “Bergsonian” *Rhythm* (1911–13; renamed as *Blue Review*), which she coedited with her husband John Middleton Murry since 1912, the short-lived *Signature*, launched by Murry and D. H. Lawrence in 1915, and her reviews in the *Athenaeum* during the years of Murry’s editorship (1919–21), testify to her own investment in a new aesthetics of the age.⁴ However, what Mansfield conceived in 1919 as the timely task of finding a “new word” by further exploring the “hidden country of prose” (1929, 236–7), remained linked to the short story genre, often considered as the modernist form *par excellence* due to its constitutional fragmentariness and elasticity.⁵ By contrast, from *Jacob’s Room* on, Woolf set out to reinvent the tradition of

the English novel through her generically hybrid alternatives that would be capable of "tak[ing] the mould of that queer conglomeration of incongruous things – the modern mind" (1994, 429, 436).

Apart from the influence Mansfield's criticism may have had on the new form of *Jacob's Room*, interestingly, the fictional innovations of the two women writers around that time exhibit many similarities. Mansfield wrote to Woolf the year they first met how "curious & thrilling" it was that they should be "after so very nearly the same thing" in literature (1928, 327). A more restrained Woolf confessed in her diary that Mansfield's was "the only writing [she had] ever been jealous of" (1978, 227). A number of illuminating comparisons between the two writers have revealed their many affinities, ranging from the biographical to the literary, despite their equally striking differences.⁶ Mansfield descended from a bourgeois New Zealand family and was a colonial, self-fashioned exile in London. By contrast, Woolf originated from English intellectual aristocracy, and together with family members and eminent friends formed the nucleus of the Bloomsbury Group, an influential center of intellectual and artistic activity in early-twentieth-century London. Mansfield moved between Bloomsbury and Ottoline Morrell's Garsington, among other coteries. Like Woolf, she participated in intersecting publishing networks of the time, and engaged in criticism, in parallel to both their husbands' prominent editorial occupations. More personal areas of convergence include their ambiguous sexuality, childlessness, and illness, often associated with the impression of liminality in their work.⁷ The literary course of these iconic female writers, however, also demonstrates modernism's creative potential for women, despite its predominantly masculine inflection. The modernist break with literary tradition was also imbricated with the increasing freedoms and opportunities modernity afforded women, largely consequent of the demands of suffragettes and other social movements of the time.⁸ Nevertheless, the work of both inscribes an emergent feminist consciousness with more skepticism than celebratory New Woman discourses do; Woolf and Mansfield underscore the complications and impediments to female emancipation caused by residual gender ideology and concomitant power structures, which Woolf in particular would polemically address in her subsequent work. Their modernism was thus entwined with wider feminist and social critique.

The fictional style Mansfield and Woolf developed around 1922 was comparably fluid, impersonal and lyrical, multiperspectival and inconclusive in its focus on instances and scenes of everyday life. They shared with esteemed contemporaries, such as Dorothy Richardson and James

Joyce, a modernist rendering of life's *trivia*, of the incessant flow of sensory experience and mental activity through the technique of stream of consciousness. Woolf recognized Richardson in particular as the pioneer of the "feminine sentence" (1988, 367–8), the fiction of the future that breaks narrative rules to express repressed aspects of (female) experience (1992, 106). However, the common predilection of Woolf and Mansfield for poetic prose and narrative impersonality significantly differentiated them from the aforementioned authors, whose work, though admirably original, seemed too dry and narrowed by that "damned, egotistical self," (Woolf 1978, 13–14). Instead, Woolf and Mansfield sought to render life in terms that closely approximated the idea Bloomsbury frequenter, T. S. Eliot, expressed in 1919, that the artist's "progress" is "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (1921, 47). In a journal entry of 1920, Mansfield explicitly defined her "philosophy" as "the defeat of the personal" (1927, 144) and a year later, she similarly asserts, that the true artist must "submit— give himself so utterly to Life that no personal ... self remains" (1929, 365). For Woolf, however, the rejection of the "I" would come to mean more than a literary ideal. It would acquire a feminist inflection in her subsequent fiction and, more famously, in her diachronically influential critiques of patriarchy and imperialism, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), where "I" is associated with a self-centered, arid masculinity dominating public life and culture.

This primacy of a philosophy of "impersonality" also evokes a strand of romantic idealism in the thought of the two authors, for, "[r]eflection without the 'I' is a reflection in the absolute of art," as Walter Benjamin highlights in his 1920 study, "The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism" (1996, 134). Romanticism was a formative tradition for Woolf and Bloomsbury as well as Mansfield and her husband, who founded in 1922 the liberal romantic journal *The Adelphi* against Eliot's classicist *Criterion* or the earlier Vorticist aesthetic, which spun into existence from Wyndham Lewis's split with Bloomsbury-based "Omega Workshops." Postromantic French literature and British aestheticism were equally influential on the supreme value the two women authors placed on art.⁹ But beyond Walter Pater's influential valorization of the aesthetic as offering life-enhancing moments of intense sensation (1980, 190), "beauty in art" and "personal affection" were more daringly defined as "the ultimate and fundamental truth of Moral Philosophy" by Cambridge Apostle and early Bloomsbury inspiration, G.E. Moore in his *Principia Ethica* (1903, 188–9). Economist and eminent Bloomsbury member, John Maynard Keynes, reported in 1938 that the secularity of Moore's philosophy had a

tremendously liberating effect on Bloomsbury ethics and aesthetics. And in her 1922 memoir paper "Old Bloomsbury," Woolf likewise confirmed a new air of artistic, sexual, and democratic freedom, alongside endless discussions on the nature of truth, beauty, and knowledge, as distinctive of this Bohemian circle.

Interestingly, admiration for the Russians comprised yet another strand of Bloomsbury aesthetics that Mansfield also shared, thus complicating the typical opposition between realism and modernism. In "Modern Novels," Woolf cites the Russian realists, especially Anton Chekhov, as a source of inspiration for the moderns because of their spirituality, their interrogative exploration of the "dark region of psychology" in contrast to the Edwardian recitation of material details (1988, 35). Interestingly, their evocation points to Woolf's difference with the Edwardians over the content of the term *life*, the proper subject of fiction, which determines in turn the representational mode. Compare her famous definition of "life's" meaning in this essay, which reappeared slightly modified in "Modern Fiction":

The mind, exposed to the ordinary course of life, receives upon its surface a myriad impressions ... an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, composing in their sum what we might venture to call life itself; ... the semi-transparent envelope, or luminous halo, surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. (1988, 33)

"Life," then, refers to "internal" life, the life of the mind or the "spirit," which receives "myriad impressions" from outside. The "chief task of the novelist" is "to convey this incessantly varying spirit," and to "trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness," reversing existing hierarchies of value, as life may exist "more in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small" (1988, 33–4).

This emphasis on consciousness is reminiscent of the contemporary language of continental phenomenology and psychology that equally rejected factual positivism dominating modern culture. Furthermore, that "life" is revealed through the flow of everyday sensory perceptions reaching the mind also evokes a tradition of philosophical pragmatism, evidenced in the work of William James and Henri Bergson, whose influence on modernism is well noted. But, more pertinently, the translation of the term *life* as perceived impressions by ordinary minds in Woolf's definition alludes to the aesthetic of impressionism with which both she and Mansfield were associated.¹⁰ Significantly, this "turn of vision inwards" (Fry 1920, 9), marked by impressionism, at the same time reveals this aesthetic trend as

the missing link in the apparently paradoxical connection Woolf makes between nineteenth-century and modernist fiction, commonly perceived as antithetical.

Impressionism was the dominant aesthetic in Bloomsbury writing and art, at least since the first “postimpressionist” exhibition at Grafton Galleries in 1910, the same year “human character changed” in Woolf’s account. Organized by Woolf’s close friend and central Bloomsbury figure, the artist and critic Roger Fry, the exhibition created a “sensation” in the London scene, first introducing modern painters since Manet. *Postimpressionism*, a term coined by Fry, invited correlations between contemporary visual and literary quests for novelty. Eleven years later, Mansfield still recalled Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” picture, “brimming with sun in a pot,” as teaching her “a kind of freedom” about writing” (1929, 423). Her own detailed recording of visual impressions similarly achieved an atmospheric vividness, while Woolf’s work was equally noted for its “painterlike vision,” especially in the evocation of light and landscape in *Jacob’s Room*, and in her later monumentalization of the contingent everyday, peculiar to the postimpressionists, especially Cézanne.¹¹

Impressionism’s subjection of *mimesis* to *aesthesis* was concomitant with Bloomsbury prevalent formalism, condensed in Clive Bell’s notion of “significant form” as the diachronically distinctive feature of all art (1931, 8). However, the intended indefiniteness of impressionist representation is, paradoxically, deemed to resemble life’s inchoate nature more closely than figural art in Fry’s formulation: “What art owes to impressionism,” he writes, is that some of these artists “reduced the artistic vision to a continuous patchwork or mosaic of coloured patches without architectural framework or structural coherence” (1920, 8). Impressionism, thus, marks “the climax” of “the tendency to approximate the forms of art more and more exactly to the representation of the totality of appearance” (1920, 7). This assertion sounds strikingly similar to Woolf’s claim in “Modern Novels” that nonrealist fiction captures reality more fully, precisely because it turns inward to the irregular mental flow of thoughts and sensory impressions. Nevertheless, receiving life’s impressions the way that “a fish in mid-ocean” lets the water “rush through its gills” is not enough; the writer should “subject his trophy to those mysterious processes by which life becomes ... able to stand by itself – a sort of impersonal miracle,” Woolf writes in her 1926 review essay, “Life and the Novelist” (1994, 400, 404). Here, she resonates Baudelaire’s apt remark that the artist is like “a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness that reproduces the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life ... at every instant

rendering it and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive" (1964, 9–10). Mansfield expressed art's transformative process more succinctly when she wrote that "technique" is what makes "the thing into a *whole*" (1929, 364).

This introspection of modern fiction, however, also raised epistemological issues that equally occupied Woolf and her Bloomsbury *milieu*. While the latter's intellectual derivation largely remained Platonic, the trend of neorealism introduced by Bloomsbury associates, G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, revolutionized British philosophy, posing afresh the questions of whether and how knowledge is possible. In particular, Russell's interest in how sense-data are turned into objects of knowledge as well as his register of "logical atomism" are echoed in Woolf's aforementioned description of life's *sensibilia* as "atoms" showering the ordinary mind, also alluding to the emerging science of atomic physics (2009, 191–8). Additionally, the realism of Russell has been convincingly argued by Ann Banfield in *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (2000), to provide the philosophical context of Woolf's objective descriptions of the world when there is no one there to observe it. This is, interestingly, also a feature of the work of Mansfield, who was a friend of Russell, too. However, Woolf's epistemological perspective can equally, or rather, antithetically, be argued to be neoplatonic or phenomenological, evoking Edmund Husserl's intentional acts of consciousness as constructing the latter's object irrespective of its material existence.¹² In Woolf's reflections on the poetics of narration, paradigmatically encapsulated in the essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and the story, "An Unwritten Novel" (1920), a blueprint of *Jacob's Room*, the creative act is presented as an intentional act *par excellence*. These texts demonstrate Woolf's approach to fictional representation by means of a metaphoric scene of a narrator in a train compartment making up stories about a character sitting opposite. In both cases, the subject to decipher is an ordinary old lady, named Minnie Marsh or Mrs. Brown, who represents "life," a life—also personified as woman—that the novel ought to "catch." The narrator's invented stories about the old lady are eventually falsified, proving the elusiveness of "life." However, this does not cancel the intentional act of bringing "the old lady" into conscious view, which is the task of art for Woolf. Mr. Bennett's failure as an artist, then, results from his failure to even "look once at Mrs Brown in her corner" on the train (1988, 430).

Jacob's Room also addresses epistemological issues emerging in the process of (aesthetic) representation. It too features an old Mrs. Norman, sitting

on the train opposite Jacob who, while observing him, self-reflexively concludes that “it’s no use trying to sum people up” (1986, 28, 91). This random character *qua* narrator thus poses the question of the possibility of knowing “life” lying at the heart of the novel. In an impersonal and discontinuous narrative, made up of shifting, simultaneous perspectives, pauses, jumps, details of sensory perceptions and intertwined thought fragments, the supposed hero of the novel remains silent and unknown. He is drawn up through what others make of him and also through his environment, his “room,” evoking the postimpressionist privileging of “still life” representations. However, Woolf’s questioning of conventional character portrayal is further imbricated with her critical and political concerns. Her impressionist aesthetics has been insightfully shown by Jane Goldman in *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (1998) to be tied to her feminism in the form of “feminist prismatic.” In addition, the “ghostly” quality of the hero in *Jacob’s Room*, noted by Leonard Woolf (1978, 186), makes a mockery of the model of heroic masculinity evoked in received biographical and historiographical representations, which converge in the *Bildungsroman* genre and are condensed in Jacob’s telling essay title “Does History Consist of the Biographies of Great Men?” Yet, the novel goes even further to question the ideology of the unique and definable individual that founds the typical male ego.¹³

Set in the days before the Great War, *Jacob’s Room* marks the end of a Western tradition of privilege and false certainties, sustained by patriarchy and Victorian imperialism. Significantly, while Woolf was working on this novel, Leonard, then a Secretary of the Labour Party International Relations Committee, drafted the pamphlet *Mandates and Empires* (1920) for the League of Nations Union supporting colonial self-governance, and in the same year he published his tellingly entitled critique, *Economic Imperialism*. Previously, Woolf’s friend and founding Bloomsbury member, Lytton Strachey, had written his scandalous anti-Victorian biography of *Eminent Victorians* (1918), renovating the genre. Woolf’s novel can thus be viewed to be aligned with the antiimperialist, pacifist, and democratic spirit of the Bloomsbury set whose writings effectually “transmuted Victorian beliefs into modern ones” (Rosenbaum 1983, 15) also adding feminist critique to the circle’s *avant-garde* and anticonventional agenda.¹⁴

Jacob’s Room follows in jolts and jumps the hero’s life from a provincial British childhood to his Cambridge elite education, clerical work in London, and, finally, his stay in fashionably artistic Paris *en route* to his traditional Grand Tour to Greece until his premature death in

the Great War that also marks the "death" of traditional masculinity. Its impressionist narrative reveals "these chasms in the continuity of our ways" (Woolf 1986, 93) typically seamed up by the causal linearity of the realist mode. However, the notable exteriority of the narrative perspective to the male hero also ironizes, albeit in an elegiac tone, the great expectations of the young men who are eventually sent to their death by the very structures of power they have been trained to serve.¹⁵ For, while in Greece, Jacob had, "insensibly ... got into the way of thinking about politics. And then looking up and seeing the sharp outline [of the Parthenon], his meditations were given an extraordinary edge; Greece was over; the Parthenon in ruins; yet there he was" (Woolf 1986, 146). Jacob's Oedipal claim to Greek heritage, prompted by his share of the "cake of learning" (Woolf 1986, 37) back at Cambridge, will be prevented by his eventual death at war. However, his ambition is also exposed as arrogant inanity by the narrative voice, which suspects the hero of being a "mere bumpkin" (Woolf 1986, 150). The subject's ontological truth is thrown into question as Jacob's identity is shown to be constructed from self-illusions of classical prestige and public authority, from which women are typically excluded. The "feminist Miss Julia Hedge" enviously notes that they did not leave room for women in the British Museum, which stored the "great minds" (Woolf 1986, 102-3). Dissociating it from its conventional appropriations, Woolf will seek to redeem Greek, not to mention modern fiction, for outsiders, that is, women and "common readers." Significantly, however, the novel's Greek motif also alludes to the dialectics of antiquity and modernity, the problematics between the new and the old underlying modernism. Modernity's contradictory definition of antiquity as at once obsolete and diachronic reveals itself to be an "age of fragments" (Woolf 1994, 355) doomed to ephemerality and ruin.¹⁶

The stories in Mansfield's *The Garden Party* volume are also set in pre-war times, yet they bring into relief the strangeness and ruptures of modern life and selfhood and focus on the mind of ordinary people in need of representation. These stories, too, are haunted by death and reveal modernity's putatively progressive force as fraught with transience and destruction. Similarly to Woolf's novel, Mansfield here engages in social critique, albeit in an inconclusive way, endorsing Chekov's idea that the artist's task is to "put the question" (1928, 228) not answer it. She presents gender ideology imbricated with wider class and colonial issues,¹⁷ and dramatizes moments in (bourgeois) domestic life, when its reputed harmony and charm are transformed into oppression, threat, or alienation.

The first story of the volume, “At the Bay,” is a sequel to “Prelude,” and most closely resembles *Jacob’s Room* in its multiperspectival and plotless style, while the rest of the stories tend to be centered around a character or what Mansfield called “points of significance” (1930, 29). This near novelette best represents Mansfield’s poetic prose, consisting of snapshots of everyday life of a New Zealand family and small community, teeming with colonial and domestic conflict and frustration, against a setting of a menacing, engulfing sea and surrounding vegetation. An equally impressionist focus on consciousness combined with the effect of simultaneity is also paradigmatically present in the “vitalist” representation of the flux of life in the story, “The Singing Lesson,” where class singing is synchronized with a teacher’s moods, fluctuating according to the external stimuli of her *fiancé’s* contradictory messages.

However, the theme of stifled or falsified desires in a world ruled by strict social and gender conventions underlying “At the Bay” is also at the heart of one of Mansfield’s most masterful stories, “The Daughters of the Late Colonel.” In this piece, the authority of a dead patriarch lingers on things and penetrates the atmosphere, his absence saturated with meaning. Through an elliptic language specific to the oppressed, two middle-aged sisters communicate their fear that they are being watched by their omnipresent father, “ready to spring” (Mansfield 1997b, 59) at them out of a chest of drawers and accuse them for his burial. Much like “At the Bay,” fulfilment or escape can only be enacted on the plane of fantasy:

There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, ... arranging father’s trays and trying not to annoy father.... But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn’t real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. (Mansfield 1997b, 70)

A humdrum reality of social conventions is psychologically compensated for by the imaginary independence experienced in individual solitude.

Gender oppression is further emphasized in its entwinement with class and colonial hierarchies in the story, “The Life of Ma Parker,” which focuses on a day in an old charwoman’s bleak life, when she has lost her young grandson and is not even granted the right to grieve. Interestingly, Mrs. Parker can be seen as yet one more impersonation of Woolf’s Mrs. Brown. That Mrs. Parker is cruelly ignored by the “literary gentleman” whose house she cleans strikingly evokes Mr. Bennett’s insensitiveness toward old Mrs. Brown. Another version of suffering Mrs. Brown, categorically

standing for "life," also appears in the story, "The Lady's Maid," a dramatic monologue of a devoted old woman servant of a deceased mistress, similarly thematizing, ironically, the sacrifice of personal life demanded of women and the working class. The two previous stories, together with "Miss Brill" poignantly shift the narrative lens to the oppressed and wasted lives of obscure old women, redeeming them for modern fiction. The latter story concentrates on the epiphanic moment when Miss Brill is defeated by youth, being called a "stupid old thing" (Mansfield 1997b, 113) on one of her ritual Sunday visits to *Jardins Publics*, wrapped with her withered ermine toque on a fine day. Orchestrated around the antithesis between subjective illusions and external perceptions of the self, the story additionally complicates notions of essential, self-founding subjectivity and objective knowledge, questioned in *Jacob's Room*.

A related thematic strand of Mansfield's volume is the transient and consumer culture of modernity and its effects on family, generational, and wider social relationships. In the story, "Her First Ball," a young *débutante* forgetfully immerses herself in the pleasures of life and the present moment, despite an old man's reminder of her future withering, which temporarily distresses her. Life's vital force wins her over the contemplation of evanescence, evoking modernity's repression of the old. The allusion to fashion in the title of the story, "Marriage à la Mode" better illustrates the theme of modernity running through the collection, because fashion best epitomizes modernity's "cult of the new."¹⁸ In a plot that recalls Molière's acerbic play *Les Femmes savantes* (1672), a husband's desire for intimacy with his wife is forever deflected by her passionate commitment to the pretentious role of fashionable hostess to a group of predatory would-be artists. Modernity liquidates traditional identities and bonds. While her rejection of the accepted roles of caring wife and mother could be read as possible emancipation, the shallow and utilitarian protagonist problematizes any simple notion of "New Woman," invoking a dystopia instead of liberation.

Interestingly, Mansfield's critique of patriarchal ideology is complicated by her depicting men's disappointments as an offshoot of received gender conduct. "Mr. and Mrs. Dove," "The Stranger," or "The Ideal Family," for example, are exclusively narrated from a male point of view, revealing the frustrations of traditional masculinity, central to *Jacob's Room*. Similar to "Marriage à la Mode," in the euphemistically entitled story, "The Ideal Family," an old provider feels alienated from his own family, whose "modernity" is again translated in fashion and consumer terms, effacing the older family "ideal" and ethics of production. And in "The

Young Girl,” a gambling mother’s neglect of her children, further points to modern fetishistic drives replacing traditional models of affective relations. Moreover, conjugal alienation is presented in “The Stranger,” resonating Joyce’s story, “The Dead” (1914). Here, the death of a “stranger” in the arms of a man’s wife on her voyage home generates an irredeemable fissure in their relationship: “They would never be alone together again” (Mansfield 1997b, 138), concludes the narrative revealing the stamp of absence, of the invisible ideal over the empirical real.

Death, which permeates Mansfield’s last fiction, is, interestingly, also viewed from a child’s perspective, in consonance with the collected stories’ inner explorations of home and self. In “The Voyage,” a child voyages across a sea to her grandparents’ surrogate care, after her mother’s death. The narrative standpoint of the unknowing girl emphasizes what seems to be one of Mansfield’s main definitions of “life” in this collection: transience, as suggested by the verses quoted at the end of the story “*One Golden Hour ... GONE FOR EVER!*” (Mansfield 1997b, 109) And, finally, the volume’s title piece and probably Mansfield’s most famous story, “The Garden Party,” dramatizes Laura’s awakening to death, sexuality, and class boundaries, also in terms of a physical crossing of the road at once separating and uniting her bourgeois, paradisiacal home and a working-class ghetto, evoking Lawrencean themes. This crossing represents a transition between two worlds, setting up an antithesis between the frivolous motion of “life” at the party and the noble stillness of death Laura encounters upon her visit to a deceased worker’s home. Significantly, at the sight of the beauty and tranquility of the man’s corpse, the girl remains inarticulate. “Isn’t life, ... ‘isn’t life—,’” she stammers at the end of the story, leaving her question hanging, as “what life was she couldn’t explain” (Mansfield 1997b, 51). Laura’s inability to represent the experience of death is tantamount to the ending of *Jacob’s Room* with a question. “What I am to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?” Jacob’s mother asks holding out his old pair of shoes, signifying his death thus (Woolf 1986, 173). In both cases, life’s experience of death cannot be contained in words; death stands for the expressionless. These half-uttered, oblique questions point to the surplus of experience that modern fiction strives to capture but always necessarily fails to do. “Every moment is the centre and the meeting place of an extraordinary number of perceptions which have not yet been expressed. Life is always and inevitably much richer than we who try to express it,” Woolf admits (1994, 439). At the moment of its failure at full representation, modern artwork is constituted in its finiteness and incompleteness, at once pointing to modernity’s destruction of the transcendental that would endow art

with representational legitimacy. "Only the expressionless," writes Walter Benjamin, "completes the work, by shattering it . . . into a fragment of the true world" (1996, 340). The modern aesthetic object emerges no longer as an expression of an ideal or material truth, but rather at the moment of collision between representation and materiality, foregrounding their ultimate irreconcilability. Woolf's inquiry into representational ends and means in the debate on modern fiction as well as the experimental fiction of Woolf and Mansfield convey this conflict. The problematics of modern fiction "in or around 1922," then, can be defined as the impossible quest of representing life whose expressionless aspects prevent semblance from collapsing into essence.

Notes

- 1 "Character in Fiction" was published in the *Criterion* in 1923, and was republished in 1924 by the Hogarth Press as "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," the title under which a first, much shorter version had appeared in the *New York Evening Post* on November 17, 1923.
- 2 In fact, Woolf's "quarrel" with Mr. Bennett had started much earlier, with her responses to his dismissal of the possible application of impressionist techniques in literature in his 1910 article, "Neo-Impressionism in Literature," included in *Books and Persons* (New York: George Doran and Company, 1917), 285. But more significantly, his views of women's inferiority, expressed in *Our Women* (1920), induced a series of fierce letters by Woolf, published in the *New Statesman*, under the heading, "The Intellectual Status of Women."
- 3 For the satires she coauthored in *New Age*, in May 2011, see Jenny McDonnell, *Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Marketplace: At the Mercy of the Public* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), 35, 38–9.
- 4 On publishing networks and coteries, see, e.g., Laura Marcus, "Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press." *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*. Edited by Ian Willison, Warwick Gould, and Warren Chernaik, 124–50 (London: Macmillan, 1996); Jeanne Dubino, *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* (London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010); Jenny McDonnell 2010; and Nathan Waddell, "Modernist Coteries and Communities." *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*. Edited by Peter Brooker et al., 740–61 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 5 See, e.g., Ann Banfield, "Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time," *Poetics Today* 24, no. 3 (2003): 472–3. For Mansfield's contribution to the genre, see Jerry Kimber, *A Literary Modernist: Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (London: Kapako, 2008).
- 6 Recent comparative studies include Nora Sellei, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Personal and Professional Bond* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996); Patricia Moran, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Angela

- Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).
- 7 See in particular, Moran 1996; Smith 1999; and Drewery 2011.
 - 8 On recent reevaluations of women's relation to modernism, see, e.g., *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Edited by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Jane Garrity, "Modernist Women's Writing: Beyond the Threshold of Obsolescence," *Literature Compass* 10, no.1 (2013):15–29.
 - 9 On their debt to aestheticism, see S. J. Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 19–35; and Perry Meisel, *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).
 - 10 See, e.g., Julia van Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 73–5; and Diane F. Gillespie, *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991).
 - 11 E.g., Clive Bell's 1924 review essay of Woolf's work, reprinted in Majumdar and McLaurin 1923, 144; Fry 1920, 23; and Banfield 2003, 496.
 - 12 Compare Jesse Matz's brilliant discussion of "Woolf's Phenomenological Impression," in *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 174–206.
 - 13 On subjectivity, masculinity, and satire, see Judith Little, "Jacob's Room as Comedy: Woolf's Parodic Bildungsroman." *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edited by Jane Marcus, 105–24 (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1981); Edward Bishop, "The Subject in *Jacob's Room*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1992), 147–75; and Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 101.
 - 14 On Woolf and Bloomsbury, also see, e.g., Stanford P. Rosenbaum, *Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies in Modern English Literary and Intellectual History* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1998); and Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
 - 15 On *Jacob's Room* as elegy, also alluding to the death of Woolf's brother, Thoby, see Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 62–83; and Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), 82–113.
 - 16 On the connection between epistemology and the Greek heritage, and the modernity/antiquity motif in this novel, see Angeliki Spiropoulou, "On Not Knowing Greek: Virginia Woolf's Spatial Critique of Authority," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 4, no. 1 (2002): 1–19; and *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), 60–74. On modernist significations of Hellenism, also see Vassiliki Kolocotroni's

- insightful essay, "Still Life: Modernism's Turn to Greece," *Journal of Modern Literature* 35, no. 2 (2012): 1–24.
- 17 See Elleke Boehmer, "Mansfield as Colonial Modernist: Difference Within." *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*. Edited by Gerry Kimber and Janet Wilson, 57–71 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- 18 See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann and translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Convolute B, 62–81 (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

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*Anglophones in Paris: Gertrude Stein and the
Aesthetics of Collaboration*

Genevieve Abravanel

Paris, 1922: the time and place conjures up cafés and jazz dancing and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in their roadster, though they would not settle in France for a few more years. James Joyce was in Paris in 1922 overseeing the publication of *Ulysses*; Ezra Pound met his mistress, the violinist Olga Rudge, at Natalie Barney's salon that same year. Gertrude Stein announced that "Paris was where the twentieth century was" and scholars have followed her lead (1922, 11).¹ Yet it is not enough solely to consider that Pound, Stein, Joyce, and Hemingway were all in Paris in 1922, or even that they met and drank with one another. The expatriate scene in 1920s Paris was in fact dominated by the American women, including Stein, who rejected the conventions of American family life in favor of new networks of social association, often with female romantic partnerships at their centers. While works such as Hugh Kenner's *Pound Era* have characterized modernism as belonging to a few great men, the displaced women of this moment helped to produce an aesthetics that was collaborative, interdependent, and like modernist form, transgressive.

Literary modernism was more than just literary; as Shari Benstock has noted, it was also a "social, political, and publishing event" (1986, 21). As such, it could not have happened without Sylvia Beach, who published *Ulysses* in defiance of Anglo-American censorship; Natalie Barney, whose salons brought together a range of artists; and Gertrude Stein, who mentored Ernest Hemingway among others in her apartment at 26 Rue de Fleurus. Yet, although Barney encouraged Pound and Stein charmed Picasso, these women were more than hostesses, more than adjunct to the development of literary modernism – however much some of them may have viewed themselves that way.² Sylvia Beach, for instance, described herself as midwife but not mother to Joyce's *Ulysses* in justifying that Joyce could breach their contract and publish elsewhere, though it drove her business to the brink of financial ruin. In contrast, Gertrude Stein viewed herself as central

to literary modernism and railed against Joyce's celebrity, noting that her experiments had arrived first. Amidst all this tumult – the friendships, jealousies, and enmities – these expatriate American women, many of whom lived in domestic partnership with other women, both produced and mediated anglophone modernism. Thus the question we might ask of 1922 Paris pushes us past the common observation that expatriates created modernism, and past the iconic image of expatriate American men smoking cigarettes in French cafés. The Parisian scene of 1922 urges us to look deeper, and to ask what it means that American lesbians in Paris, in one fashion or another, mediated much of anglophone modernism.

In considering this question, every term counts: anglophone, modernism, American, lesbian, and Paris. This inquiry suggests that these terms are not just related but overlaid in a pattern that maps the intersections of language and sexuality, of nationalisms and antinationalisms, and the tensions of the anglophone through and against the francophone. In this way, such an inquiry can bring together a number of key critical discourses, including sexuality and gender studies, considerations of nationalism, and work on modernist language and aesthetics. As Jodie Medd has argued, the figure of the lesbian is central to modernity, especially in the way that this figure presses against the possibilities of what can and cannot be imagined to exist, legally and phenomenologically.³ Such centrality – and centrality by means of marginality – emerges in a distinct way when we also consider modernist aesthetics, which too was operating at the margins of the imagination.

In order to approach this question in its fullness, one needs a broader picture of the expatriate 1920s in Paris. In this interwar moment, Americans flocked to Paris, in part for economic reasons: with the dollar strong and the franc weak, Paris offered luxury and freedom. Whereas the Right Bank tended to draw Americans who largely closed themselves off from French society, the Left Bank attracted artists and iconoclasts, many of whom embraced Paris as a means to live an unconventional life. These artists, some women, found in Paris an escape from American mores. Some lived together as couples, including Stein with Toklas, Barnes with Thelma Wood, and Beach with Adrienne Monnier. In this way, many of these women were deliberate minorities – nationally, linguistically, and sexually – in a place that allowed them to be so. Such minor status resonates with aesthetic and ideological dimensions of literary modernism. If language is a bearer of ideology, and if aesthetic forms reflect the mores of their makers, then the modernist imperative – making both form and

language feel new – reflects the experience of those who helped to usher anglophone modernism into existence.

Aside from *Ulysses*, the most notable work of anglophone modernism to emerge from the Paris scene that year was Gertrude Stein's collection, *Geography and Plays* (1922). This collection, which brought together many of Stein's shorter pieces from the past two decades, had a mixed reception: one critic calls it a "dismally-received book" (Behling 1997, 152) while another notes that it received "high praise from Edith Sitwell, Ben Hecht, and Van Vechten" (Wagner-Martin 1995, 172). Among the pieces in the collection was a short story that received an unusual amount of attention: it was republished the following year in *Vanity Fair*, parodied in that same journal, and later parodied – in an early stage of their feud – by Ernest Hemingway. This story, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," comes in the context of others, such as "France" and "Americans," which more obviously map the place where Stein wrote and the people with whom she associated. While a single text cannot fully sum up the energies of interwar Paris, or their translation into an aesthetic, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" can, within context, serve as a case study of how Stein and others were translating sexual transgression – and the normalization of sexual transgression – into literary form. In other words, this story can serve as a prism for Stein's attempt to remake sexual norms and to refashion literary conventions. And in turn, her attempt can offer one approach to the question of what it means that so much of anglophone modernism was helped into the world by cohabiting American women in the Paris of 1922.

Sherwood Anderson and the Parisian Cowboy

In his preface to *Geography and Plays*, Sherwood Anderson undertakes a tremendous task. He aims to defend Stein from multiple accusations, including those that impugn her femininity and undermine her literary experiments. To mount his defense, Anderson brings together a number of the discourses – sexuality, nationality, writing, and Paris – that characterize both the collection as a whole and the story, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene." At the same time, he uses these differing strands of thought to construct a vision of literary modernism to which Stein, through her role as an outsider, can become central.

From the outset, Anderson rewrites Stein's sexuality as a study in American masculinity. After framing the Steinian aesthetic as elite and noting that "the loud guffaws of the general" (Anderson 1922, 6) do not keep him from his praise, he blends this characterization with a

rewriting of Stein's sexuality in masculine, and nationalist, terms. Stein is not, Anderson explains, "a languid woman lying on a couch, smoking cigarettes, sipping absinthes," but a figure of "striking vigor," a "powerful mind," with an understanding of the arts that he has "found in no other American born man or woman" (1922, 6). Anderson takes pains to construct Stein in terms that are at once American and masculine, from her "important pioneer work" to his hope that she may prove "the most lasting and important of the all the word slingers of our generation" (1922, 8). It is a quick slide from "slinger" to "gunslinger," and here Anderson produces a cowboy Stein who is not just vigorous but nearly a stereotype of American masculinity.

Yet at the same time that Anderson constructs Stein as a manly American pioneer, he frames her literary endeavor in relation to Paris. After noting that he meets her "in the rue de Fleurus" (1922, 6) Anderson goes on to describe Stein's aesthetics as though it were an act of urban planning: "There is a city of English and American words and it has been a neglected city" (1922, 7). He frames Stein's writing as a "sacred and half forgotten city," a romantic vision that could, in the context of "the rue de Fleurus," resonate with the little enclaves of the Left Bank (1922, 8). Anderson describes here the construction of a new American modernism – a modernism that operates unconventionally in both gendered and linguistic terms – by situating it elsewhere. Throughout, Anderson's metaphors point toward the unusual literary production taking place in 1920s Paris, happening through "English and American words," and through the dismantling of conventional gender roles. Unlike Samuel Beckett, Stein did not write first in French and translate into English; her work nevertheless offers an estrangement of language that reflects her expatriation. After all, for Anderson, Stein is not just an American cowboy. She is, to follow his metaphors, a Parisian cowboy, one whose reckless pioneering with words leads both to the "rue de Fleurus" and to the sacred city of linguistic experiment. While Anderson may go to great lengths to protect Stein from all types of insults, he can only do so by connecting discourses of nation, sexuality, and writing in a fashion that interprets and anticipates Stein's own self-production.

Stein's *histoire à clef*: "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene"

Of the many pieces in *Geography and Plays*, one story extends and deepens the entangled discourses of Anderson's preface. This story, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," conducts its treatment of sexuality and aesthetics through

what we might call an *histoire à clef*. The story's title characters refer most obviously to the American visual artists, Ethel Mars and Maud Hunt Squire, who were most likely a romantic couple when they visited Stein's salon in Paris. Art critic Catherine Ryan calls the story, "a confounding ... 'word portrait' about Mars and Squire" (2000, 5). Stein perpetuated this view, when she identified them among the "habitues" (1961, 13) of her salon in her 1933 *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, calling them "Miss Mars and Miss Squires whom Gertrude Stein afterwards immortalised in her story of Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (1961, 14). While Stein's reference to these two artists in her story seems beyond dispute, it is worth recalling Stein's experiments with voice and persona, as exemplified in her virtuoso attempt to pretend to write someone else's autobiography. Here, the story seems to operate on two levels, one in which she refers to Mars and Squires, and another in which she invokes Toklas and herself. Indeed, the character of Georgine Skeene seems to be a writer, at least insofar as she works to cultivate her voice. Moreover, the character name Georgine Skeene shares initials and parallel syllabics with the name of Gertrude Stein. At the same time, these names encode something bodily – fur and skin – foreshadowing the story's erotic and gendered dimension. While Stein was clearly attracted to the relationship between Mars and Squire, the story presents an amalgam that brings the idea of female partnership together with Stein's vision for literature.

From its opening, Stein establishes that the story's departure from literary conventions will also entail a departure from gendered ones. The story begins with Stein's trademark repetition: "Helen Furr had quite a pleasant home. Mrs. Furr was quite a pleasant woman. Mr. Furr was quite a pleasant man" (Stein 1961, 17). What matters here is the way in which sameness underscores the passage's key differences: "Mrs." and "Mr.," "woman," and "man." The story thus establishes the importance of gender – and the way in which language encodes gender identity – from its outset. Helen Furr, however, is not directly included in this gendered binary, except by the convention of her name. Indeed, she goes on to leave this place for the company of another woman. Helen may come from a home in which her parents represent and embody the gender binary, but despite the pleasantness of the home, she will depart from this system. By using linguistic markers to map the normative aspects of gender, Stein reveals the extent to which she views the heterosexual family romance as that which her aesthetic can subtly expose.

Much as Stein uses repetition to underscore difference, she also practices generality to highlight specificity. After Helen has left the family home,

the story describes her relocation thus: “[S]he went to a place where some were cultivating something, voices and other things needing cultivating” (Stein 1961, 17). The story obscures the key tropes of fiction – character, setting, and action – through its supremely vague references to “some,” “a place,” and “cultivating something.” At the same time, given the double set of real-world associations, this characterization could refer to Stein’s famous salon, where she met Mars and Squire, and where many, Stein included, were working to cultivate their voices. Indeed, the cultivation of the voice stands out among the vague terms that otherwise shroud Helen Furr’s movements in secrecy. This new element suggests that this story not only establishes the embeddedness of gender in language, but also maps questions of presenting aesthetics, becoming a writer, and cultivating the voice that enables this story to be possible. In this way, the story comments on its own conditions of possibility even as it situates those conditions within a gendered scenario.

In tandem with her uses of repetition and generality, Stein introduces a quasiautobiographical narrative that prefigures *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. The narrative becomes more detailed as it introduces its other principal: “She met Georgine Skeene there who was cultivating her voice which some thought was quite a pleasant one. Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene lived together then ... stayed there and were gay there” (Stein 1961, 17). In this passage, the wording of the opening, “quite ... pleasant,” returns in the depiction of Skeene’s voice. What does it mean to replace the heterosexual family with a voice? Such was the project of Stein and Toklas, and Squire and Mars, as well as other pairs of women who abandoned American domestic narratives to pursue their creative vocations.⁴ Moreover, the story’s praise of Skeene’s voice further identifies Stein, an author notorious for the art of the self-compliment, as partial inspiration for the character. The rhyme that closes this passage, “stayed there and were gay there” (Stein 1961, 17), offers this place of writerly development, as an affective alternative to the parental “home” of gender difference. At the same time, by rendering this moment in rhyme, Stein brings the image of female domesticity into an aesthetic that announces itself as a voice. To build rhyme out of no rhyme is the creation of a voice, a voice that only happens when the story moves from the gendered norms of Helen’s family home to the “place” where they happened to be together.

Stein’s repetition of the phrase, “they stayed there and were gay there,” in the next paragraph begs the question of usage: what was the meaning of “gay” at the time when Stein was writing? As Stein began this story in 1908, before it was published in *Geography and Plays* in 1922 and again

in *Vanity Fair* in 1923, it predates what most scholars consider the use of “gay” to mean homosexual. In a reading of the context for the story, Marjorie Perloff struggles with this issue, writing that “gay” in this sense was “first used in the 1920s in the private discourse of male homosexuals” but noting that she finds it “hard to believe that Stein, using the word ‘gay’ as her leitmotif in a story about a homosexual love affair, didn’t have the underground meaning in mind” (1990, 676). More blatantly, Wagner-Martin suggests that Stein uses the word *gay* “with sexual intent for one of the first times in linguistic history” (1995, 96). Nonetheless, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene” as an example of an early text that has likely been “interpreted anachronistically” based on context or the author’s sexuality (OED.com). Given that the *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies the use of “gay” to mean “homosexual” as growing out of U.S. slang and appearing in its first clear instance in 1941, its findings argue against what seems to be encoded in the story’s diction.

Whether or not Stein knew the underground meaning of “gay,” she uses the word to sustain her inquiry into sexuality and representation. In this way, she draws on established meanings of “gay,” including “light-hearted, carefree,” and the more pointed meaning of the time, “dedicated to social pleasures; dissolute, promiscuous; frivolous, hedonistic” (OED.com). Counterpointing these ebullient meanings, Stein introduces the terms *regular* and *regularly*, each repeated almost as frequently as “gay” in the story: “They were regularly gay there, Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene, they were regularly gay there where they were gay. They were very regularly gay” (1961, 18). Being “regularly gay” establishes the normality of this kind of domesticity, even by drawing on Stein’s new methods of representation. Stein defines it thus: “[T]o be regularly gay was to do every day the gay thing that they did every day” (1961, 18). Such dailiness serves as a counterpoint to the family from which Helen Furr comes. Mr. and Mrs. Furr may be heterosexual, but the two women living together are as “regular” as daily life. Here, Stein’s tribute to the ordinary is more revolutionary than any picture of lesbian excess. She shows that the two falling into a rhythm, much like the rhythm of Stein’s own repetitive prose, produces more happiness, makes them more “gay,” than any home run by a father and mother. Gayness here may not be homosexuality *per se*, but rather that happiness that is possible when homosexuality becomes ordinary, becomes lived, and becomes an aid in cultivating a voice.

Much of the story offers variations on its key themes: the manner in which the two women are gay, their time together and apart, and their projects of fostering their voices. Near the end, however, a single paragraph

introduces the subject of men. A curious aspect of these men emerges at the outset: “There were some dark and heavy men there then. There were some who were not so heavy and some who were not so dark. Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene sat regularly with them” (Stein 1961, 19). While these descriptions might seem to cancel each other out – some “dark and heavy,” others not – they offer a picture of a range of men sitting with the women: not one or two family members, but a veritable flood. Such a depiction departs further from the narrow family romance that opens the story. It also resonates with Stein’s accounts of her salon in the *Autobiography*: not only does Alice attest that she sat with the wives of genius men, but Stein also enumerates the different men in attendance, “all sizes and shapes, all degrees of wealth and poverty, some very charming, some simply rough” (1961, 13). In “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” these men do not earn the adjective *gay*; rather, Miss Furr and Miss Skeene are *gay* in their presence. Although it is partially obscured, and perhaps even disguised, by the story’s rhetoric, the story thus maps an alternative way of being in the world in which the salon, with its many connections and collaborations, replaces the family home.

In the end, Stein demonstrates the extent to which the story has been about the aesthetic that it exemplifies and performs, as well as the ways in which the regularization of homosexuality – and of the partnership of two women – participates in this aesthetic. At the story’s close, the collaborative aspect becomes a pedagogy: “She told many then the way of being gay, she taught very many then little ways they could use in being gay . . . and was telling about little ways one could be learning to use in being gay, and later was telling them quite often, telling them again and again” (Stein 1961, 22). “Telling them quite often, telling them again and again,” is what this line and the overall story are doing. The story perpetuates its new aesthetic by framing art as speech, or the cultivation of the voice that happens in company. In contrast to the mythos of the individual writer struggling alone in his attic room, Stein presents the vibrant exchange of ideas that characterized her salon as well as many other gatherings led by women in interwar Paris. The story thus offers a vision of literary modernism as a collaborative venture, one that depends on sitting with others. At the same time, Stein’s story reveals how this communal lifestyle, this alternative to the heterosexual family, suited two women living together. Through her vision of the ordinary practices of living and writing, Stein demonstrates in her story how those who wished to step out of the enclosure of the heterosexual family also managed to create new venues and possibilities for artistic collaboration and exchange. In this way, Stein brings

sexuality and writing together – not by suggesting that lesbians were radical, but by showing that their ordinariness opened up new opportunities for early-twentieth-century aesthetics.

Hemingway, Stein, and the Cultivation of a Voice

Among the many visitors to Stein's salon in 1922 was one who initially presented himself as a student, Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway and his wife, Hadley, had sailed for Paris in December 1921, carrying with them letters of introduction from Sherwood Anderson to Sylvia Beach, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein. Hemingway, who had thus far published little more than freelance journalism, saw Stein as a gatekeeper who might help to inaugurate his life as a writer. She did so first by endorsing one of his first literary publications, a review of her own *Geography and Plays*. Hemingway was not content to remain a student for long, and would go on to announce his independence in part by writing a parody of what may have struck him as the heart of Stein's volume: "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene." Taken together, the review and the parody reveal much of Hemingway's entry into the literary world, and how Stein helped forge his path, despite their later enmity. They also help to reveal how Hemingway's self-production as a writer relied on the communal atmosphere and opportunities of Paris in 1922. As Michael Reynolds notes, Hemingway had been reading Rudyard Kipling and Sinclair Lewis prior to his arrival; after a year in Paris, he had read and met Stein, Joyce, and Pound (1983, 433). Because Hemingway was among the anglophone writers most fully transformed in 1922 Paris, his commentary can serve as a useful test case for what it means to develop a voice through and against Stein's example.

Hemingway's review lauds Stein, but it also reveals much about his project of entering into modernism. In the oedipal fashion that would come to characterize his later feud with Stein, Hemingway constructs his praise out of the repudiation of other writers: D. H. Lawrence, H. G. Wells, and his former pastime, Sinclair Lewis. In rendering the contrast, Hemingway explains that while these other writers are hardly literary, "Gertrude Stein is a sort of gauge of civilization" (Reynolds 1983, 432). While Stein, who probably edited the review before it saw print, could have appended this adulation – one certainly cannot put it past her – it is also the case that at this moment, Hemingway believed that Stein could bring him into the world of letters. Indeed, Hemingway insists that after reading *Geography and Plays*, "you will be very happy" and "you will also learn something, if you happen to be a writer" (Reynolds 1983, 432). Whereas Sherwood

Anderson describes Stein as a cowboy, Hemingway views her as a civilized teacher. In this sense, Hemingway's view is consonant with "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" and its pedagogical project. Before their rift, Hemingway was an apt pupil: throughout the review, the banal repetition of "if" and "you" exhibits a touch of the Steinian style he would later mock. In the context of the young Hemingway's desire to enter the world of letters that Stein seems to represent, the words *if* and *you* locate him at the precipice of possibility. If you can manage to write like Stein, Hemingway's subsequent works seem to posit, perhaps you too can become part of the literary world she seemed to represent in 1922.

Hemingway was not done writing like Stein after his review. While critics have amply traced the effects of Stein's style in his work, it is striking that not long after his favorable review, he would go on to parody *Geography and Plays*, and especially to skewer the short story, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene."⁵ In *The Torrents of Spring* (1926), a work whose satire primarily targeted Sherwood Anderson, from whom Hemingway wished to differentiate himself, Hemingway offers a brief riff on Stein:

There was a street in Paris ... Right around the corner from where Gertrude Stein lived. Ah, there was a woman! Where were her experiments in words leading her? What was at the bottom of it? All that in Paris. Ah, Paris. How far it was to Paris now. Paris in the morning. Paris in the evening. Paris at night. Paris in the morning again. Paris at noon, perhaps. Why not?
(1972, 74-5)

Although not quite a geography, this passage mocks Steinian repetition through its attention to place: "where," "street," "corner," and "Paris ... Paris ... Paris." If there is a "there" there, in Hemingway's satirical take, it exists in Paris. At the same time, Hemingway embeds within this mapping a reference to Stein's femininity: "Ah, there was a woman!" In this way, Hemingway's mockery contains a worthwhile insight. If Paris is the key enabling the experiment in words, then it is the gesture to Stein's gender that suggests how Paris makes her experiment possible. As Hemingway's subsequent parody makes clearer, Stein's gender transgression offered a model for aesthetic transgression and reinvention. It was an experiment, in other words, both in writing and in happy, or gay, homosexual living.

The year before he satirized Stein in *The Torrents of Spring*, Hemingway penned a parody that struck several targets at once. His story, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," mocks "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," at the same time that it caricatures T. S. Eliot as effete and sends up a married couple of Hemingway's acquaintance, who broke with him after reading the piece.⁶

Like “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” the story opens with what appears to be a self-contained heterosexual pairing. After the Boston poet, Hubert Elliot, meets Cornelia, his future wife, he kisses her with the following explanation:

Hubert explained to her that he had learned that way of kissing from hearing a fellow tell a story once. He was delighted with his experiment and they developed it as far as possible. Sometimes when they had been kissing together a long time, Cornelia would ask him to tell her again that he had kept himself really straight for her. (Hemingway 1958, 86)

Insofar as the terms *gay* and *straight* inhabit the Stein-Hemingway oeuvre *avant la lettre*, one can see the extent to which their conventional use prefigures their later meanings. Here “straight” means something close to chaste, an attribute appropriate for a poet skewered for learning to kiss from a story. The key moment, however, comes in Hemingway’s ambiguous use of the word *experiment*. On the surface, it appears that the experiment refers to the kissing, to the sexual experimentation of two chaste lovers. At the same time, this experiment has the flavor of narrative: it is learned from a story and practiced or “developed,” much as Miss Skeene cultivates her voice. If Hemingway’s chief concern in his “Paris” parody rests with Stein’s “experiment in words,” here it seems that Hemingway combines narrative experimentation with sexual. In so doing, he proves himself an astute reader of the Parisian moment, a decoder of the kinds of transgressive thought experiments this moment made possible.

Hemingway makes his meaning even clearer near the end of the story. Mrs. Elliot has invited a girl friend from America to live with them and “Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend now slept together in the big mediaeval bed” (Hemingway 1958, 88). Despite the exclusion of Mr. Elliot from the bed, and from what has now been plainly framed as a homosexual romance, the three share an easy domesticity: “In the evening they all sat at dinner together ... and Elliot drank white wine and Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend made conversation and they were all quite happy” (Hemingway 1958, 88). This threesome, with the two women intimate and the man adjacent and drinking, might recall Hemingway in the Paris apartment with Stein and Toklas. In any case, it is worth noting that the trio in the end is “happy,” Hemingway’s echo of the “gay” motif that pervades “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene.” Here Hemingway’s tale of American expatriates depicts the extent of sexual and aesthetic experimentation in a piece, not in an extravagant or prurient way, but after a fashion that even here becomes regular and domestic.

Hemingway does in fact borrow Stein's voice on his way to becoming a writer, even if such a story as "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" reveals his discomfort with this association. Yet he was a beneficiary of the collaborative energies of the female-centered coterie of 1920s Paris, however much his career, and perhaps even his Nobel Prize in Literature, depended on the myth of his masculine individuality. The masculine heroes of the age, including Pound, Hemingway, and Joyce, each variously depended on the collaborative networks of expatriate women for connections, pedagogies, and even publication. This is not to call these women the midwives – or worse, the muses – of men of genius. Rather, it is to note that those who abandoned what they saw as the constraints and banality of the American family were also the ones who made space for the sitting and talking, the thinking and telling, through which so much of anglophone modernism came into being.

Notes

- 1 For a scholarly account of the modernist condition as one of exile, see Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés: Studies in Modern Literature* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).
- 2 Of course, Stein and Picasso only charmed each other until their rift.
- 3 See especially Jodie Medd's introduction in *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–23.
- 4 While Stein and Toklas lived in Paris for many years, Mars and Squire returned to the United States to pursue their art.
- 5 There is a vast scholarship on Stein's impact on Hemingway. Notable accounts include Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193–204; Marjorie Perloff, "'Ninety Percent Rotarian': Gertrude Stein's Hemingway," *American Literature* 62, no. 4 (1990): 678–83; and Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, "Swiping Stein: The Ambivalence of Hemingway Parodies," *The Hemingway Review* 30, no. 1 (2010): 69–82.
- 6 This story first appeared in *The Little Review* 10 (Autumn–Winter 1924–5) before it was reprinted in *In Our Time* (1925). Citations refer to the latter.

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*Circa 1922: Art, Technology, and the
Activated Beholder*

Christine Poggi

In the history of visual arts in Europe, the year 1922 marks a threshold whose decisive character would only come into focus retrospectively.¹ It was a year of turmoil and transition that witnessed efforts to reaffirm both historical and avant-garde artistic traditions after the destruction caused by World War I and two October revolutions (Moscow and Rome), as well as efforts to declare the wholesale bankruptcy of bourgeois culture. Utopian desires to fuse art and life were countered by equally utopian affirmations of their ineluctable difference. The development of diverse modes of geometric abstraction (Dutch De Stijl, Russian Constructivism), accompanied by claims to purity, aesthetic autonomy, and universality, emerged simultaneously with the politicized embrace of photomontage, mass media, performance, and theater (Dada, postwar Futurism, the Bauhaus, international Constructivism). Frequently linking these tendencies, even those with opposing political agendas, was the cult of the machine and of technological processes. Enthusiasm for the machine as an antihistorical, desubjectifying model for artistic production, however, often entailed a certain irony or revealed a strong sense of ambivalence. If for some artists the machine represented the very paragon of efficiency, precision, and objectivity (the Purists, certain Russian Constructivists, certain members of the Bauhaus), or of dynamism and power (Fernand Léger, the Futurists), for others it served as an emblem of the contingently constructed, malfunctioning assemblage whose autonomous, irrational productivity could only lead to collapse or a violent release of destructive energies (Dada). Even those artists whose work exemplifies an antitechnological approach, or who affirmed the nonmimetic essence of art (Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian), often shared in the general tendency to simplify their technique, distill or abstract forms, and reduce the display of virtuoso painterly gestures.

As several critics have noted, definitions of art that emphasize its autonomy from nature and the specific, material characteristics of the

medium, often do so in response to the perceived objectivity and transparency of mechanical recording devices (photography, film). On this view, the formal essence of art could only be articulated belatedly, as a historical aftereffect of the nineteenth-century invention of technical modes of production and reproduction. It then bears witness to these technical modes, and to a general social trend toward the deskilling of labor, in the form of both proscriptions against photographic mimesis and the internalization of its norms.² Paul Klee's famous statement of 1920, "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible" (1920, 182) exemplifies the attitude of those who refused to think of the artist as "an improved camera" (Klee 1923, 24) or to define art as a matter of reproduction, in favor of more imaginative forms of production. It is interesting to note that Klee's colleague at the Bauhaus, László Moholy-Nagy shared this ideal, despite his fascination with photography, film, and factory-based norms.

At the center of these competing artistic ideologies on the relation of art and the machine were debates on the role of the artist and of art within a still turbulent postwar, postrevolutionary Europe. Should the artist participate in social revolution (as many sought to do in Soviet Russia), announcing its advent and giving visual and material form to its collective, technologically motivated ethos? In a less overtly political vein, could art instantiate universal principles of order, harmony, and design, leading to a creative refashioning of both public and domestic environments (Constructivism, De Stijl, the Bauhaus, postwar Futurism)? Or had the war destroyed the final remnants of utopian thinking, unleashing a period of turmoil and anomie, whose outcome was becoming manifest in the rise of fascism and totalitarianism, to which artists could only react with nihilistic, antiart tactics (Dada)? Each of these possibilities loomed on the horizon in 1922.

Paul Klee's oil transfer drawing with watercolor and chalk titled *Angelus Novus*, executed in 1920 and purchased by Walter Benjamin in 1921, captures the ambivalence of this fraught period in European history (Figure 7.1). Writing in 1940, not long before his suicide at Port Bou in the Pyrenees when he failed to cross the border of Nazi-occupied France into Spain, Benjamin offered a highly charged interpretation of Klee's figure as the "angel of history,"

looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single



Figure 7.1. Paul Klee. *Angelus Novus*. Oil transfer drawing, watercolor, and chalk on paper. 1920. 31.8 × 24.2 cm. (12.5 × 9.5 in.) The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Gift of Fania and Gershom Scholem, Jerusalem; John Herring, Marlene and Paul Herring, Jo Carole and Ronald Lauder, New York. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (1969, 257–8)

For Benjamin, Klee's angel of history sees only the wreckage of the past as he is propelled into the future by a storm from "Paradise," the eternal garden from which humanity (and, paradoxically, its guardian angel) has been cast out into historical time. It is this originary event that determines the singularity of the catastrophe witnessed by the angel. His staring eyes, open mouth, and unfurled wings can only bring news of further impending destruction, thereby foreclosing utopian illusions of historical "progress."

Despite its brilliance, Benjamin's interpretation leaves much unsaid, for as many commentators have observed, Klee's *Angelus Novus* is most likely a self-portrait.³ The artist appears in the guise of a warrior angel with large eyes, bared teeth, and clawed feet. If his wings can be read as flung open by the violence of the wind, they also assume, with evident pathos and perhaps irony, the ancient pose of an orant (common to Archaic and Early Christian rhetorical codes), a praying figure with arms extended to either side, hands raised in supplication. From these outstretched arms/wings, the angel holds forth what appears to be a tattered parchment suspended from a thread looped around his fingers/talons. At its center, in a radiant zone of pale orange, a slender arrow points upward. Does this parchment bear the imprint of Divine Law that has been shattered, or a prophecy that is no longer legible?

Klee created this image by transferring a pencil drawing onto a sheet of tracing paper whose verso he had covered with a viscous oil medium and then laid down onto a third sheet; the recto of the underlying paper, somewhat like Freud's wax tablet, received the lines and attendant smudges impressed onto its surface as if it were a repository for stratified memory traces that could still become visible in the present. The pressure of Klee's stylus produced an irregular line whose fragility enhances the work's flickering quality, evoking a nearly intangible or evanescent coming into being. Because the oil medium repels water, Klee was able to add delicate washes of tan, yellow, and pale orange without blurring the drawing's linear scaffolding. Moreover, each layer of glazing was applied separately, allowing time for the watercolor to dry. In this way, the artist controlled effects of transparency and opacity and made the temporal process of the image's genesis integral to the work.

Although the colors are rather muted, they evoke an otherworldly atmosphere, with the angel emerging out of a central halo of light. His calm, hieratic appearance, gesture of prayer, and scroll-like curls of hair, along with the golden tonality of the parchment, stand in ironic contrast to the threatening presence of his talons and jagged teeth, as well as to the torn message whose very form bears witness to violence. As Benjamin intuited, this angel reveals the historical crises of the period; he calls attention not only to the failure of historical progress, already evident in the strife of the early 1920s, but also to the shattering of law and tradition that survive only as fragile memory traces. Insofar as the *Angelus Novus* (*angelus*, from the Greek *angelos*, means messenger, one who announces, but here given in its Latin, nonbiblical form) is also a portrait of the artist, Klee renders himself as a *new* kind of spiritual messenger, in exile,

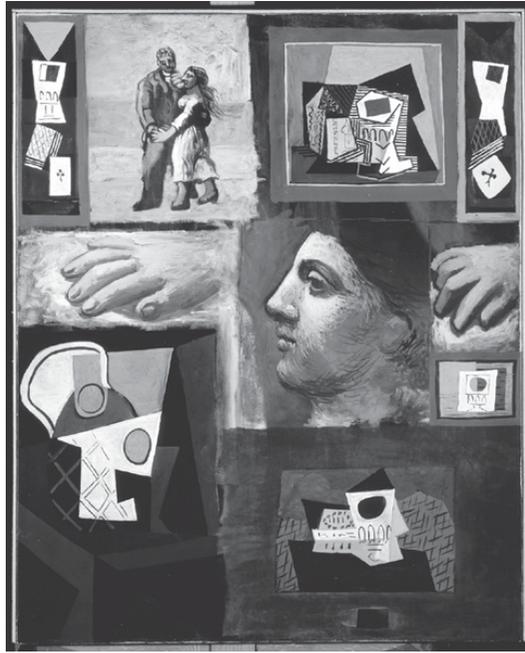


Figure 7.2. Pablo Picasso. *Studies*. Oil on canvas. 1920–1922. 100 × 81 cm. (39 3/8 × 31 5/8 in.) Musée Picasso, Paris. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New York.

hovering between earthly and transcendent worlds, and between destructive and creative roles. The tattered, semitransparent paper he holds up to our gaze, a paper that seems nearly fused to his body, can be read as a fractured work of art; the figure it bears, a pointing arrow, rises to meet a descending arrow originating just beyond the paper's border. In this tension and exchange of forces from above and below, the desire for wholeness, awakening, and revelation is registered in the mode of aspiration, persisting as a memory trace and goal.⁴

A response to the destruction of the past, insofar as it denies the coherence and transmissibility of traditional forms and values, can also be discerned in Picasso's *Studies*, circa 1920–22 (Figure 7.2). This unusual oil painting offers a disquieting juxtaposition of disparate images, a cultural world in pieces whose contiguity seems to have led to cross-contamination. Cubist and pseudo-classical works appear side by side in a gridlike pattern that establishes echoes of repeated forms across the dark surface without creating a sense of unity.⁵ Picasso framed most of the Cubist images,



Figure 7.3. Auguste Renoir. *A Country Dance*. Oil on canvas. 1883. 180 × 90 cm. (70 7/8 × 35 3/8 in.) Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

whereas the classicizing sketches have no real borders. The limits of the classicizing works remain ambiguous through irregular contours and gestural brushstrokes that efface the distinction between image and support. This play of highly structured and dissolute edges and frames generates spatial ambiguities throughout *Studies*, blurring figure and ground, and calling attention to the pictorial field as a material surface opens to multiple, heterogeneous images.

The Cubist still lifes on view comprise citations from the past and present, their forms drawn from a rich, still generative reserve of images and strategies. The sketch of a dancing couple at the upper left is also a kind of citation; here Picasso has reworked Auguste Renoir's *A Country Dance* of 1883 in a classicizing parody of the artist's impressionist subject and style (Figure 7.3). (He created a pastel on canvas version of this sketch titled *La Danse Villegeoise* in 1922 or 1923.) Renoir's painting presents a vertical image of an elegantly dressed couple on an elevated, stagelike dance terrace, separated from the ground and spectator below by a curved railing. In

the sketch depicted in *Studies*, Picasso sets Renoir's whirling figures before a flattened image of the sea, represented as a now overtly theatrical backdrop whose lower edge runs across the work as a kind of internal horizon. Dressed in simple clothing and deprived of their fashionable hats, gloves, and fan, Picasso's dancers become heavy, their gestures slow and awkward. If Renoir was known for his colorful brushwork, applied as a decorative flourish to conventionally conceived forms (especially during his turn to a more classical mode of figuration in the early 1880s), Picasso employed a thick, layered impasto with strong contrasts of light and dark (and an infusion of brilliant red hatching on the woman's visage at center). Hands that seemed to lack bones in Renoir become even more crudely drawn and inflated, although not inexpressive in the very *gaucherie* of their gestures. The studies that accompany the image of the dancing couple reinforce allusions to classical art, both in the profile and modeling of the woman's head and in the practice of making sketches of body parts, particularly the head and hands.

Picasso asks us to see the Cubist and classicizing studies as related, even equivalent; both render visible, through displacement, fragmentation, and parodic reversal, the codes they put into operation. Classicism emerges not as an existing, fixed lexicon to be revered or emulated, but as a loose collection of norms and references subject to disfiguration and reinvention. The artist probably intended to suggest a similar equivalence when, in 1921, he executed two versions of the Cubist *Three Musicians* as well as two versions of the classicizing *Three Women at a Spring* (rendered in fresco-like, terracotta tones in a humorous style that inflates the women's bodies and turns their chemises into fluted columns). Assuming the monumental scale of nineteenth-century history painting, these works signify the artist's ambition to elevate both idioms to museum status, although it made them impossible to sell at the time. A statement of 1923 captures Picasso's postwar attitude toward style, or at least one version of it: "Repeatedly I am asked to explain how my painting evolved. To me there is no past or future in art. If a work cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was" (1966, 166). Comments like this, which seem to deny any rupture between classicism and Cubism, as well as notions of avant-garde progress, drew the ire and sarcasm of some artists and critics, while others hailed what they viewed as a welcome return to the values of order, clarity, precision, and harmony.⁶ It was this collapse of style as an indicator of cultural or political intransigence that was (and

continues to be) perceived as one of the most troubling developments of the immediate postwar period.

The coexistence of Cubist still lifes and classicizing studies within a single pictorial field raises a further question that has not yet been asked. Despite its re-presentation of a series of diverse, overtly nonmimetic sketches, does *Studies* reintroduce a mimetic (or photographic) approach to painting? Can one distinguish between the studies in the painting and those they picture (especially given their resemblance to contemporaneous works, which in some sense they both represent and instantiate)? Even the heterogeneity of the images suggests the kind of juxtaposition made possible by photographic reproduction. Picasso, in a gesture typical of his work from 1917 to 1923, seems both to emulate and to ward off certain possibilities inherent to photography, especially its claim to objective documentation and its capacity to reduce all images to equivalents in an instantaneous synchronic grid whose smooth surface usually bears no traces of creative labor. Although *Studies* raises the specter of this equivalence, it also insists that what we see is an arrangement of sketches (rather than completed paintings), thereby calling attention to the artist's generative work within and across two divergent series. The play of framing devices and of occasionally blurred borders, one sketch overflowing into its neighbor, reminds spectators that this is ultimately a *painting* about painting (and photography). Here the question of perceived scale and context is crucial: if we take the painting as a whole to represent a set of works hanging on the artist's studio wall, which the inclusion of works with and without frames suggests, then the artist has preserved the relative scale of the diverse studies.⁷ Picasso thereby refuses the isolation and unknowable size of works reproduced in the pages of illustrated journals and books, instead grounding them in the determining space of the studio. Yet the dark background of the painting remains mysterious and the illusion of a flat, continuous wall is interrupted by an ambiguous, unframed still life on a table at the lower left that seems to open onto an indeterminate depth – perhaps that of a room, although it simultaneously can be seen as a two-dimensional image of a Cubist still life painting. *Etudes* thus cannot be taken as a document in the photographic sense; rather it reminds us that we are looking at an imaginary or fictive world. This sense of reflexivity also marks the disparate studies with the signs of material facture, stamping them with its author's signature in mock defiance of the empty nameplate at the lower center/right.

Despite efforts to align Picasso's neoclassical (and parodically classicizing) works with political retrenchment or the embourgeoisement of the



Figure 7.4. Pablo Picasso. *The Race*. Gouache on plywood. Summer 1922. 32.5 × 41.1 cm. (12 3/4 × 16 1/8 in.) Musée Picasso, Paris. Photo: J. G. Berizzi. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New York.

artist, the diversity of his many classicizing styles belies any single reading.⁸ In Picasso's works, classicism appears unbound, ranging from lyrical paintings and drawings, to family scenes with too much charm, from those that reinvent classicism in a parodic or grotesque vein, to those that explore Dionysian excess and sexual revelry with proto-Surrealist distortions of anatomy.⁹

The Race, a small work of 1922 painted in gouache on plywood, exemplifies the latter modality (Figure 7.4). In this painting, two rosy-colored maenads with volatile bodies run ecstatically along a beach, each of their simple white chemises falling so as to reveal a single breast. The woman in the lead throws her left arm and leg forward, an action that causes her arm to reach horizontally across nearly the entire expanse of the painting parallel to the water line. Her companion, arms stretched out to either side in a rigid diagonal, casts her head back in a Dionysian gesture that exposes her eyes to the sun's blinding light as her hair streams freely behind her head. Picasso would later adopt the upturned head with open, unseeing eyes to

signify death. Here the pose suggests erotic frenzy, a release of libidinal energies that surge through and reconfigure the maenad's body.

An astonishingly complex play of flung arms and legs, which grow or diminish in response to movement, structures *The Race*. Like many of the artist's classicizing paintings, *The Race* emphasizes the palpability and weight of the fantasized body, as well as the material execution of the scene, thereby denying any relation to the mechanical objectivity or the automatism of photography. Not surprisingly, Picasso was delighted to see *The Race* reproduced, not photographically but by an artist (Prince Shervashidze) who significantly enlarged it in 1924 as a drop curtain for Sergei Diaghilev's ballet *Le Train bleu*.¹⁰ As Lisa Florman has observed, the painting thereby underwent an internal division, from expressing a sense of the Dionysian within the classical in 1922, to becoming an element of decor for a ballet on the theme of a luxury express train carrying wealthy vacationers from Paris to the Côte d'Azur in 1924. The ease of this transposition from avant-garde painting to fashionable spectacle no doubt contributed to Picasso's turn toward more disturbingly violent, and hence less easily spectacle-prone works, in 1924 (Florman 2008, 53).

Henri Matisse, for his part, had already moved to Nice at the end of 1917, choosing to live in this resort town for much of the remaining years of his life. The paintings executed during his so-called Nice period of the 1920s return to the decorative schemes he had explored in the prewar years, but with a renewed emphasis on artifice and fantasy. Seductively posed nudes or models in "oriental" costumes inhabit many of these paintings. It was during his fifth season in Nice, during the winter of 1921–2, that Matisse took a new apartment on the third floor of No. 1, place Charles-Félix, transforming it with patterned fabrics and hangings, decorative screens, carpets, cushions, mirrors, flowers, and works of art. The artist's previous Nice paintings of hotel interiors with open windows, or of women sitting in chairs (nude or dressed), now give way to more overtly erotic, staged scenes, such as the *Odalisque with Red Culottes* of late 1921 (Figure 7.5).

In this painting, Matisse situates his model so that she faces the viewer while lying languorously on a diagonally recessed divan, her legs provocatively opened, her arms raised behind her partly veiled head in the traditional pose of an odalisque. The brilliant red of her culottes and their highly suggestive folds intimate sexual availability, as do the woman's exposed breasts; yet her gaze seems melancholy and withdrawn, suggesting that perhaps she is not fully invested in this performance of seduction. Although there are no windows or doors within this enclosed, eroticized space, Matisse alludes to the natural world outside through the play of

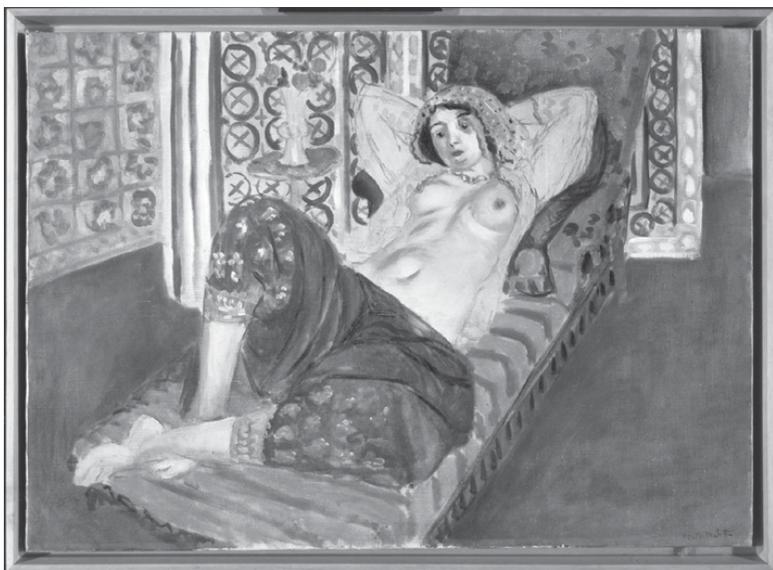


Figure 7.5. Henri Matisse. *Odalisque with Red Culottes*. Fall 1921. 67 × 84 cm. (26 3/8 × 33 1/8 in.) Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. © 2014 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Art Resource, New York.

patterns, the “real” flowers in a vase, as well as the flowers on the model’s harem pants and elsewhere. The odalisque is both integrated into this decorative space and yet remains distinct from it, in large measure because her body is modeled, its curves given sensuous volume. The use of chiaroscuro to render the odalisque, the evocation of her subjective state of mind, and the textural differentiation between flesh, clothing, and décor, mark a break from the general trajectory of Matisse’s prewar development, which had flattened and abstracted the body, treating it as one element within a larger, all-over pictorial field. In *Odalisque with Red Culottes*, Matisse seeks to unify his own previous decorative style with a more traditional, even realist, approach to representation. This effort is infused with nostalgia for his avant-garde past and with lingering fantasies, mobilized by French colonialism in Morocco and the nineteenth-century tradition of French Orientalism, to which Matisse’s Nice odalisques serve as late entries.

Although *Odalisque with Red Culottes* seems to ignore the presence of photography altogether, Matisse acknowledged his resistance to the objective norms of this medium in some of his recorded remarks. As early as 1909, the artist told an interviewer that whereas the Realists and

Impressionists aspired to create “the copy of nature,” he wanted “something else,” which he described as “serenity through the simplification of ideas and of plastic form. The ensemble is my ideal” (Matisse 1972a, 60–1). He explained further: “As for details, the painter no longer has to worry about them, photography is there to render a hundred times better and more quickly a multitude of details.... We have a more elevated conception. By this, the artist expresses his interior visions” (1972a, 60–1). Paradoxically, however, Matisse asserted the authenticity of his Nice odalisques, not by virtue of their emergence from his “interior visions,” but by the fact that he “had seen them in Morocco, and [he] was therefore in a position to put them in [his] paintings without false appearances on [his] return to France” (1972b, 123). The truth claims he makes for his paintings of odalisques resemble the claims made on behalf of photography due to its indexical recording of the visible. The greater realism of the Nice period works allows the aporias of this position to surface: the “odalisques” (prostitutes) he had seen in Morocco in 1912 lend veracity to the French models he hires and depicts in the theatrical, haremlike space of his studio in 1921–2, their poses, costumes, and even the particularity of their facial expressions registering both their “reality” and their status as performers. Much like the photographer, Matisse continued to rely on an encounter with a model (sometimes in the form of a photograph); and he encouraged photographers, including Edward Steichen, George Bresson, Malcolm Arbuthnot, and Rogi-André (Rosa Klein), to capture him in the act of painting or drawing from the model.¹¹ In 1921 and 1922, he sat for photographic portraits by Man Ray. Despite his use of photography both as a source for painting and as a document of his working process, his studio environment, and even his own respectably attired persona, Matisse remained committed to an antiphotographic form of painting that called attention to the artist’s hand and synthetic vision. Unlike Picasso, Matisse did not overtly address, absorb, or parody the rise of photographic or industrial norms during the early 1920s.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find artists including the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy and the Russian El Lissitzky, who engaged photography and mechanical techniques of reproduction directly and with surprising results. In May 1922, Moholy-Nagy declared his allegiance to reality, the machine, and technology in the journal *MA* [Today]: “Reality is the measure of human thinking. It is the means by which we orient ourselves in the Universe.... And this reality of our century is *technology*: the invention, construction, and maintenance of machines. To be a user of machines is to be of the spirit of this century. It has replaced the transcendental spiritualism of past eras.... Before the machine, everyone is

equal.... There is no tradition in technology, no consciousness of class or standing. Everyone can be the machine's master or its slave" (1970a, 185). This enthusiasm for the machine and its lack of class-bound tradition, however, did not lead Moholy-Nagy to pure utilitarianism, although he extolled the expansion of art into industrial design, books, architecture, theater, and filmmaking. The artist always affirmed the nonfunctional, creative drive of humanity, and made the immaterial effects of light – its movement, color, and dynamism – central to his work.

The intensity of Moholy-Nagy's fascination with light is evident in his rediscovery and imaginative deployment of the technique of the photogram (camera-less photography) in 1922. For Moholy-Nagy, the photogram was not a vehicle of reproduction (as in the documentary uses of photography) so much as one of production, a means of making the dynamism of light both the subject and the medium of a new form of sensory experience. Beginning in the fall of 1922, he worked with gelatin-silver coated printing-out paper, often with the participation of his wife Lucia Moholy, an accomplished photographer. After arranging objects, prefabricated templates, texture-forming fabrics and even liquids, gels, and crystals on (or above) the small format, weakly light-sensitive paper in the shade, he and Lucia would expose the composition to direct sunlight or introduce multiple light sources with lamps and mirrors. During the process, they could move the objects and control the effects of light and shadow as they emerged into visibility. The resulting images were then fixed, toned, and washed, without the need of a darkroom.¹²

Untitled, a photogram created in Berlin in 1922, demonstrates the formal rigor and subtle tonal gradations that Moholy-Nagy achieved beginning with his earliest experiments (Figure 7.6). Just above the work's center, a luminous spiral hovers within several overlapping, tilted, semi-transparent rectangles in differing densities of gray. The brightest of these framing rectangles directs the viewer's attention to an illuminated, sans serif "M" interlaced with its inverted image, followed by a smaller "O," a reference to the artist's name seen as if in a doubled mirror (backward and upside down, so that we have to read from lower right to upper left). Set on a rising diagonal, these letters appear within a pale gray zone (along a faintly suggested border) that floats mysteriously within a dark matrix. As in most of Moholy-Nagy's photograms, the identities of the objects placed on the printing-out paper remain largely unknown or estranged from their everyday uses. Although this photogram is a unicum, the artist was not opposed to reproducing it with conventional photographic means (with Lucia taking the new photographs). *Untitled* was one of four photograms

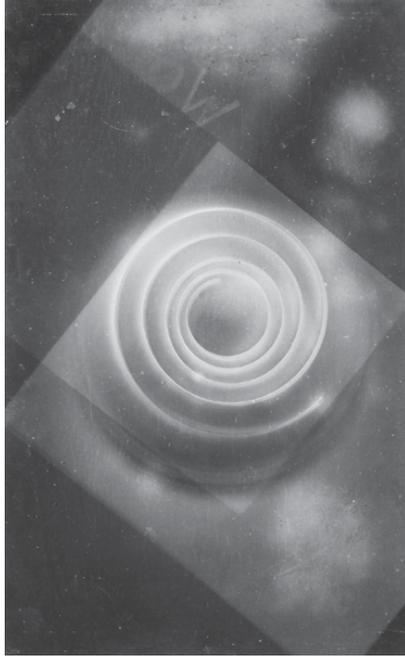


Figure 7.6. László Moholy-Nagy. *Untitled*. Photogram on daylight printing-out paper. Fall 1922. 13.7 × 8.7 cm. (5 ½ × 3 ½ in.) Private collection, Photo: Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery.

to be published in the fourth issue of the American magazine *Broom* in 1923, accompanied by Moholy-Nagy's essay "Light – A Medium of Plastic Expression." Here, the artist celebrates the ability of the light-sensitive surface to capture effects imperceptible to the naked eye. By eliminating the camera, it was further possible to dispense with perspective, and thus to discover "new optical laws" leading to the possibility of "light-composition" (Moholy-Nagy 1970b, 117).

For Moholy-Nagy, the photogram revealed that the imaginative and conceptual capacities of the artist do not lie in the mastery of traditional technique or in the expressive movements of the hand. In his essay "From Pigment to Light," written in 1923–6, the artist asserts, "The invention of photography destroyed the canons of representational imitative art.... The elements of the new imagery existed in embryo in this very act of destruction..." (Moholy-Nagy 1970b, 30–1). One result of this reduction in the importance of representation, which led to experiments with purely optical means (especially photograms and film), was "the clear recognition that apart from all individual emotion, apart from the purely subjective

attitude of the spectator, objective factors determine the effectiveness of an optical work of art: factors conditioned by the material qualities of the optical work of art” (1970b, 31). These material qualities included tools and machines. According to a developing industrial logic, the work of art must adapt to the technical and aesthetic demands of mechanical production.

In response to this imperative, around the time Moholy-Nagy assumed a position as teacher of the Preliminary Course and Master of the Metal Workshop at the Bauhaus in 1923, he ordered five abstract paintings in porcelain enamel on steel from Stark & Riese, a sign factory near Weimar. Three of these were versions of the same composition in different sizes, beginning with the largest, *EMI*, then diminishing by one half for *EMII*, and one-half again for *EMIII* (Figures 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9).¹³ According to an account written by the artist in 1944, he placed the order by telephone, working with the factory’s color chart and a sketch on graph paper; he thereby implied that he had used numerical codes rather than a mimetic schema to transfer the information.¹⁴ In a note of 1924, however, published at the time of the enamel works’ first exhibition at the Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin, he described transmitting the designs to the factory with sketches. Lucia Moholy further recalled that when the paintings were delivered, Moholy-Nagy was thrilled with the results and exclaimed that he might just as well have ordered them by telephone (Moholy 1972, 75–6).¹⁵ Although it seems likely that Moholy-Nagy incorporated his enthusiastic response to the pictures into the later story of their commission, the fact of ordering three differently sized versions of a composition from a factory remains startling for its engagement with the materials and standardized norms of industrial production, including the use of commercial enamel on steel, the planimetric design, and the reference to Wilhelm Ostwald’s 1914 chart. The latter schematized the color spectrum into twenty-four tones according to brightness, hue, and saturation to arrive at 680 colors, each of which received a numerically descriptive code. This factory commission, even if conveyed without a telephone, also signals an embrace of the topographical distribution of the functions of conception and execution already operative in modern industry, which Manfredo Tafuri calls the technical universe’s imperviousness to “the *here* and the *there*,” a unity premised on an artisanal practice that Picasso’s *Studies* sought to preserve (1976, 128).

On the occasion of their exhibition at the Der Sturm Gallery, Moholy-Nagy gave his enamel pictures abstract titles that called attention to their technical medium and mode of production: *Konstruktion in Emaille I, II, and III* (Construction in Enamel I, II, and III), later shortening the titles

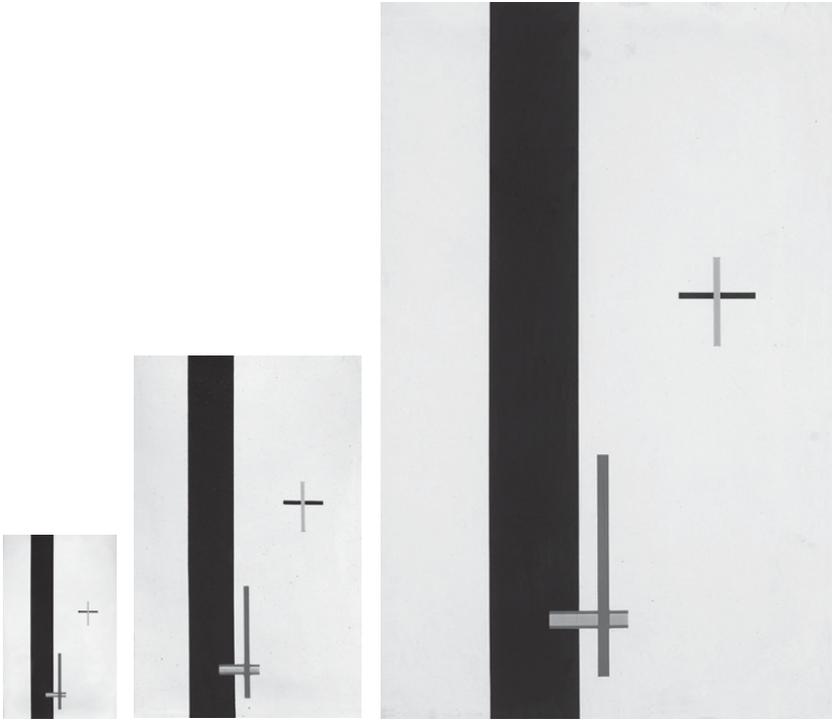


Figure 7.7. László Moholy-Nagy. *Construction in Enamel III*. (Also called *EMIII*.) Porcelain enamel on steel. 1923. 24 × 15 cm. (9 ½ × 6 in.) The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson in memory of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy. © The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Art Resource, New York.

Figure 7.8. László Moholy-Nagy. *Construction in Enamel II*. (Also called *EMII*.) Porcelain enamel on steel. 1923. 47.5 × 30.1 cm. (18 ¾ × 11 7/8 in.) The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Philip Johnson in memory of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Art Resource, New York.

Figure 7.9. László Moholy-Nagy. *Construction in Enamel I*. (Also called *EMI*.) Porcelain enamel on steel. 1923. 94 × 60 cm. (37 × 23 5/8 in.) Collection Viktor and Marianne Langen.

to EMI, EMII, and EMIII. With their flat, precisely rendered, geometrical elements arranged in a gridlike formation, these paintings synthesize the visual idioms of De Stijl and international Constructivism: a vertical black bar traverses the entire length of the work, thereby establishing the boundaries and material surface of the field; two cross formations also appear, the difference in their sizes raising the question of their spatial

relation. The larger cross at the left, composed of a red band that intersects a yellow bar with red edges, initially seems anchored to the black band, overlapping it, although it may also be hovering before it from an indeterminate distance; the other cross, a yellow vertical that bisects a black horizontal (or two separated black horizontals), floats freely against the white ground, its relative scale and depth impossible to determine in the absence of other cues. As such, the *here* (the materiality of the bonded enamel surface) and the *there* (depicted shapes hovering in virtual space) are both asserted and destabilized. By ordering this impersonal but conceptually precise work in three sizes, Moholy-Nagy appears to accept the principle of mass production, including the manufacture of otherwise identical commodities in various sizes, scaled up or down according to a modular logic. At the Der Sturm Gallery, he revealed the simple law governing the progression from one size to the next (a reduction of one/half) by hanging the works in a row, with their lower edges equidistant from the floor. Yet Moholy-Nagy claimed that he had asked for the paintings to be delivered in three sizes so that he could study “the subtle differences in the color relations caused by the enlargement and reduction” (2005, 224). According to this view, the paintings were to yield their differences to the discerning viewer, whose optical and mental capacities would be enhanced by this encounter. Situated at the intersection of abstract painting, visual sign, and factory-made commodity, these works strive to resolve the competing claims of art and industry, of the unique and the mass-produced object, and of the material surface and its dematerialized optics.

El Lissitzky similarly created his Prouns (acronym for Project for the Affirmation of the New) at the threshold between abstract, Constructivist painting and protoindustrial production, between a flat surface and its activation in three-dimensional space. The very name *Proun* signifies Lissitzky’s reluctance to identify these multimedia works as paintings (something Moholy-Nagy had not hesitated to do with his enamel pictures, calling them *Emaillbildern*). Lissitzky wrote his 1920 essay, “PROUN: Not World Visions, BUT – World Reality,” in the context of the Moscow Constructivists’ growing attacks on “easelism” that would lead Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and others by the end of 1921 to affirm Productivism – the total identification of art with functional production and of the artist with the engineer. Resisting proclamations of the “death of painting” issued by Rodchenko and the critic Nikolai Tarabukin, Lissitzky insisted on the postpictorial, “constructed” character of his Prouns, while refusing to align the work of art with pure utilitarianism or engineering: “The artist is turning from an imitator into

a constructor of the new world of objects.... We saw that the surface of the Proun ceases to be a picture and turns into a structure round which we must circle, looking at it from all sides, peering down from above, investigating from below" (Lissitzky 1968a, 343).¹⁶ By destroying the vertical axis that rises up against the painting's implied horizon, an axis traditionally assumed by the viewer and one that Moholy-Nagy's EM pictures continue to affirm with their long black bar and cross formations, Lissitzky sought to release the Proun from a single, earthbound perspective. Instead, the Proun implies a diversity of projection axes and viewpoints as if it were already a three-dimensional object in motion to be apprehended by a spectator freed from the forces of gravity. The formal elements (understood as markers of material) were to charge the potentially limitless space with tension through their scale and relationships.

The artist executed *Proun 19D* of 1920–1 in gesso, oil, varnish, colored papers, sandpaper, crayon, cardboard, graph paper, and metal foil on plywood c. 1920–21 (Figure 7.10). As in Moholy-Nagy's enamel series, here color, conceived as a pure state of matter, is desubjectified, generating contrasts and tensions comparable to those between technical materials such as granite and aluminum (Lissitzky 1968a, 343–4). Ultimately, *Proun 19D* renders visible and palpable the sensory differences in color and texture of its constituent materials, as the formations they generate seem to tilt, soar, balance, hover, and rotate in an open, energized field. Such a work fulfills no precise aim, but points toward movement from the two-dimensional plane of Suprematism (and most painting) toward real-world construction: "Proun begins as a level surface, turns into a model of three-dimensional space, and goes on to construct all the objects of everyday life" (Lissitzky 1968a, 344). In a letter from 1923, the artist denied to a collector that a Proun could be hung as decorative work in a bourgeois apartment. Instead, Lissitzky advised him "to order a cupboard for these documents of my work. Subsequently, labels will be attached to them, indicating to what sphere of human activity these documents belong ..." (1968b, 344).

Such an approach to the display of Lissitzky's Prouns, however, remained private, temporally deferred, and, hence, inadequate. The artist found another solution with his *Proun Demonstration Room*, built for the Great Berlin Art Exhibition in summer 1923 (Figure 7.11). With this exhibition space, the artist sought to overcome the traditional distinction between works of art and the walls they hang on, between painting, decoration, and architecture. Constructivist elements animate the space and propel viewers to move through it by traversing walls, ceilings,

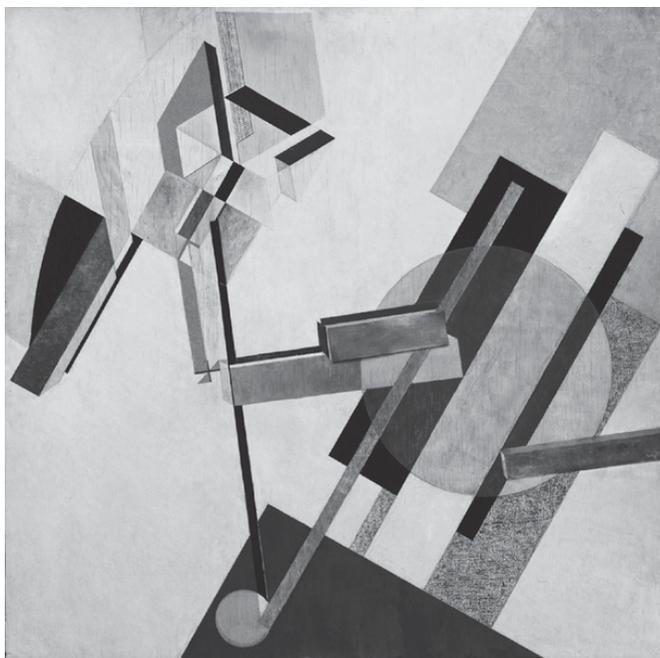


Figure 7.10. El Lissitzky. *Proun 19D*. Gesso, oil, varnish, crayon, colored papers, sandpaper, graph paper, cardboard, metallic paint, and metal foil on plywood. 97.5 × 97.2 cm. (38 3/8 × 38 1/4 in.) The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Katherine S. Dreier Bequest. Digital image: © The Museum of Modern Art/Art Resource, New York.

and floors; turning corners; and emerging into three dimensions through superimposed, projecting planes and bars (some placed perpendicular to the wall) in black, white, grey, and wood. The plastic elements operate as vectors that surge forth from the two-dimensional plane of the wall into the three-dimensional space of the room, thereby encouraging viewers to abandon mere contemplation for more active forms of response. As Lissitzky explained, “room-space is not there for the eyes alone, is not a picture; it must be lived in” (1968c, 361). *Proun Demonstration Room* thus fulfills the utopian aspiration of the Proun to become an “interchange station between painting and architecture,” a living environment rather than an object addressed only to vision (Lissitzky 1968d, 325). Yet, the life of this room-space must remain open to transformation and free of utility; hence, Lissitzky forbids the intrusion of a telephone or office furniture that would destroy its unity and capacity for change (Lissitzky 1968c, 361). (One imagines that Moholy-Nagy, with his greater embrace of industrial

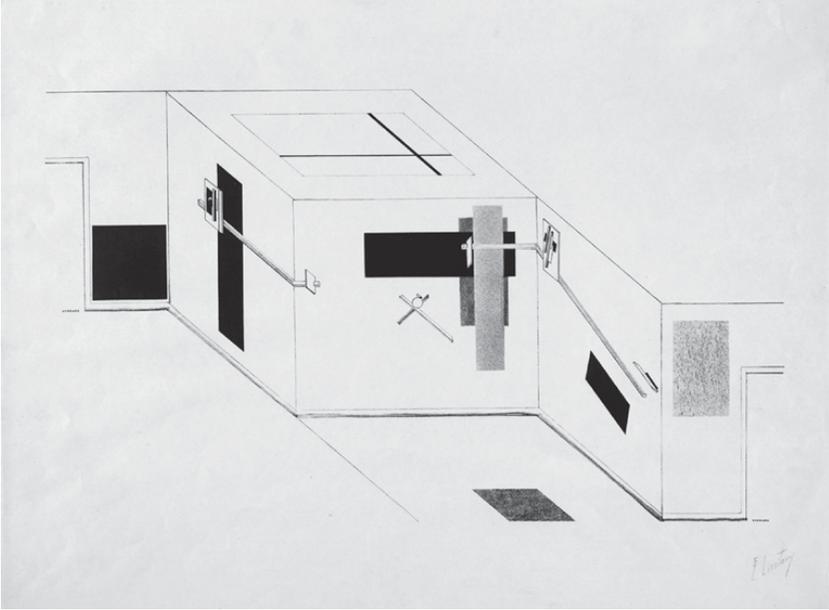


Figure 7.11. El Lissitzky. Design for *Prounenraum* (Prouns space) from the portfolio *Proun*. 1923. 1 of 6 lithographs. 44.1 × 60.3 cm. (17 3/8 × 23 3/4 in.) Publisher: Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover. Edition: 50. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

norms, would have been enthusiastic about the presence of a telephone in such a room.)

The political crises and debates of 1922 impelled artists to articulate their positions vis-à-vis the relation of art and reproductive technologies, art and functionalism. It also encouraged them to find ways of activating the experience of the beholder through the construction of new spatial environments, and ultimately the infusion of art into life. As a cult of the machine swept much of Europe, many artists, including Moholy-Nagy and Lissitzky, sought to emulate or absorb technological structures and norms, even as they continued to place a premium on the intensification of the senses, freedom of imagination, and nonutilitarian invention. Working at the threshold between art and its expansion into reproducible and environmental media, they explored typography, book design, photography, exhibition design, and imagined filmic and theatrical productions of their works. Even artists who resisted the pressure of technological modes of (re-)production, such as Picasso and Matisse, inevitably acknowledged their presence; they too participated in creating an expanded pictorial

medium through their work in theater and costume design. Modernist purity of medium, only belatedly discovered and theorized, was soon swept aside or rearticulated as a matter of a shared vocabulary of elementary formal structures. Although enthusiasm for the machine began to wane by the mid-twenties, the true legacy of the period circa 1922 lies in this explosion of new media and intermedia, including the production of works whose forms were indebted to painting's many others: photography, film, architecture, books, environmental design, and theater.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank those who attended a presentation of this paper at the School of Design, University of Pennsylvania on January 31, 2014 for many excellent observations and suggestions that have helped me to clarify several points and rethink others. Unless otherwise attributed, translations are by the author.
- 2 See Sven Olov Wallenstein's chapter, "Modernism and Technology," in *Essays, Lectures* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007), 172–212. On the processes of deskilling and reskilling as effects of the social organization of modern labor and technology, see John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (London: Verso, 2007).
- 3 Mark Luprecht observes that the angel in *Angelus Novus* can be read in an autobiographical light; see his *Of Angels, Things, and Death: Paul Klee's Last Painting in Context* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 61–2. See also Franco Rella, "Fragilità dell'immagine: Benjamin e Klee." *Paul Klee: Figure e metamorfosi*. Edited by Marilena Pasquali, 68 (Bologna: Museo Morandi, 2000). Other significant readings of this work include Gershom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin und sein Engle." *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamins*. Edited by Siegfried Unseld, 87–138 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972); and O. K. Werckmeister, "Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee, and the Angel of History," *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 102–25.
- 4 Several of Klee watercolors of 1922, including *Meeting* and *Separation in the Evening*, employ a similar conjuncture of arrows pointing in opposing directions. Like a Janus-face – but one whose divergent aspects have paradoxically been turned toward one another – these arrows strive both to link and separate opposing tendencies that for Klee are immanent to the human condition. Rather than relying on "optical" foundations, Klee believed the artist could transform outward impressions "more or less elaborately, according to their direction," thereby achieving a "synthesis of outward sight and inward vision" (1923, 24). I would like to thank Ariel Genadt for bringing Klee's use of the double, Janus-faced arrows in several watercolors of 1922, and Klee's essay "Ways of Studying Nature," to my attention.
- 5 For an analysis of this painting that emphasizes the difference of the styles on view, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Picasso the Trickster." *Picasso Harlequin, 1917–1937*. Edited by Yve-Alain Bois, 28 (Milan: Skira, 2008).

- 6 On these debates, see Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 63; Christopher Green, *Cubism and Its Enemies* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1987), esp. 52–62; and Lisa Florman, *Picasso's Classical Prints: Myth and Metamorphosis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), particularly ch. 1.
- 7 Yve-Alain Bois notes that the works in *Studies* “appeared as if pinned to the wall of the artist’s studio (except for one of the still-lifes resting on an easel.” “Picasso the Trickster,” 28.
- 8 See the discussion in Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, 28–56. See also Rosalind E. Krauss’s overview of what she calls “externalist” (social/political) and “endogenous” (psychic/ stylistic) interpretations of Picasso’s wartime and postwar work, especially accusations that the artist fell into the mode of empty pastiche. Krauss argues that Picasso’s turn to pastiche was driven by a “reaction-formation” in which he absorbed elements of what he most abhorred in the contemporary turn to photography and the readymade: mechanicity, automatism, deskilling, and the industrial norms of serial production. Krauss, “Chapter Three: Picasso/Pastiche,” in *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 87–210. Although she reproduces *Studies* (p. 106), presumably as an example of pastiche, Krauss does not discuss it. Bois agrees with Krauss that Picasso had a phobic attitude toward photography, but believes that the artist’s adoption of multiple styles was conceived as a means of saving the tradition of art for the present. Bois, “Picasso the Trickster,” 19–35. My views are indebted to these analyses, and like Bois, I believe that Picasso’s response to photography and to the rise of industrial conditions of serial production is conscious and often parodic.
- 9 See Carsten-Peter Warncke, *Pablo Picasso, 1881–1973*, Part I (London: Taschen, 2002), 274–96; and Rosalind Krauss, “Picasso/Pastiche,” esp. pages 114–28 and 152–4.
- 10 See Lisa Florman’s discussion of *The Race* and its reproduction in “Picasso circa 1925: Décor, the Decorative, and Difference.” *Picasso Harlequin, 1917–1937*. Edited by Yve-Alain Bois, 46–57 (Milan: Skira, 2008).
- 11 For a discussion of these photographic portraits, see Catherine Bock-Weiss, *Henri Matisse: Modernist against the Grain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 17–42.
- 12 For an account of Moholy-Nagy’s “discovery” of the photogram in July–August 1922, see Herbert Molderings, “Light Years of a Life: The Photogram in the Aesthetic of László Moholy-Nagy.” *Moholy-Nagy: The Photograms*. Edited by Renata Heyne and Floris M. Seuss, with Hattula Moholy-Nagy, 17–19 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009).
- 13 In the publication that accompanied the first exhibition of Moholy-Nagy’s five enamel pictures at the Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin, a notice under the list of five works titled “Konstruktion in Emaille” advises the reader that these “Emaillebildern” were fabricated by the Weimar enamel factory Stark & Riese (Tannroda Thürigen). *Der Sturm* (February 1924), n.p. I am grateful

- to Brigid Doherty for sharing her research on these pictures with me. See her analysis of these works in "László Moholy-Nagy: Constructions in Enamel. 1923." *Bauhaus, 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity*. Edited by Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman, 130–3 (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009).
- 14 For this account, see László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision with Abstract of an Artist* (1947; reprint, New York: Dover, 2005), 223–4.
- 15 Lucia Moholy cites her husband's comments on the occasion of the exhibition of these works at the Der Sturm Gallery: "Work of this kind can be carried out with the help of Ostwald's colour chart and exact instructions transmitted to a factory by means of graph paper. This might even be done over the telephone" (1972, 76).
- 16 An expanded version of this essay, delivered as a lecture titled "Prounen: Überwindung der Kunst" at the Moscow Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) on September 23, 1921, was published as "Die Überwindung der Kunst," *Ringeln*, no. 10. *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*. Edited by Timothy O. Benson and Eva Forgács and translated by Steven Lindberg, 184–6 (1922; reprint, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

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*Dada, Futurism, and Raymond Roussel**Jonathan P. Eburne*

From the vantage point of Paris, 1922 began and ended with two spectacular failures that both characterized and, at least in part, determined the fate of avant-garde poetry, art, and politics during the interwar period. In January, efforts to organize an international Congress on the “modern spirit” in art and literature ended in a hail of invective and hostility among its organizers. In December, the theatrical adaptation of Raymond Roussel’s 1914 novel *Locus Solus* incited a public backlash against its outlandish spectacle of living machines, an outburst sustained and exacerbated by the polemical antics of the play’s supporters. At a distant remove from the triumphalism postwar national memory, these failures were at once provocative and generative. Not only did these events signal the emergence of new experimental movements (such as Surrealism, which would later cite 1922 as its inaugural *annus mirabilis*), but they also testified to the rhetorical and artistic power of avant-garde “failure” as a form of intellectual production. Much like the solipsistic mechanical curiosities depicted in *Locus Solus* – or, for that matter, the mecanomorphic hybrids featured in Dada collage art – such “celibate machines” could function without successfully making anything. In turn, the sensational excesses of a disrupted event, a polemical outburst, or a public scandal demonstrated the very persistence of avant-garde aesthetics into the domain of their public reception. The avant-garde had been doing this all along.

The year began with a dispute about the meaning and consequences of any effort to generalize the avant-garde as a shared aesthetic category. In early January, the young French poet André Breton began circulating letters and press releases about an “International Congress for the Determination and Defense of the Modern Spirit” (*Congrès international pour la détermination des directives et la défense de l’Esprit Moderne*), which was to take place in late March. Gathering intellectuals from all over Europe, the conference aimed to unite contemporary writers and artists from various schools and traditions in order to determine a collective

new direction for modern art. The grounding questions for the “Congress of Paris,” as it became known, were thus comprehensive, even synoptic; though the organizers insisted that the point of the consortium was not to form “a league or a party,” but instead “to confront new values” and “to give, for the first time, an exact account of the forces at work” in the modern spirit (Breton 1988a, 434).¹ “Has the so-called ‘modern’ spirit always existed?” Breton asked in an open letter, posing the question of whether the “modern” presumed a vanguard exception to any historical period or a historical period in itself (1988b, 1282).² Even measured against the limited time line of industrial modernity and contemporary art movements, Breton wondered aloud how vast the differences were among modernist forms: “among those objects said to be modern, is a top hat more or less modern than a locomotive?” (1988b, 1282). That is, the Congress sought to assess how the locomotive, a metonym for the Futurist movement’s obsession with speed and industrialization, could be assimilated with the top hats and monocles of modern French dandyism, from the nineteenth-century Symbolists to the contemporary Parisian Dadaists.³ (Indeed, the relaunched Parisian Dada journal *Littérature*, edited by Breton, would sport a top hat on its cover when the journal’s new series appeared in early March.) For Breton, the major experimental movements of the World War I era – namely Cubism, Futurism, and Dada – were no longer to be considered as distinct movements working in isolation. Rather, as he explains in a lecture later that year, “all three are part of a more general movement whose memory and scope are not yet fully known to us. To consider Cubism, Futurism, and Dada in succession is to follow the flight of an idea that has now reached a certain height, and is only awaiting a new impetus to continue describing the arc assigned to it” (Breton 1996a, 113). With major figures from these movements slated to attend the 1922 Congress, including the Futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the event proposed to arbitrate the future of experimental art and literature without presuming the autonomy or singularity of any individual avant-garde movement.

Though helmed by an organizing committee that featured several of the more prominent French artists of the postwar era, including the writers Jean Paulhan and Roger Vitrac; the painters Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, and Amédée Ozenfant; and the composer Georges Auric, the “International Congress for the Determination and Defense of the Modern Spirit” never convened. The event was derailed, in effect, by the outbreak of a vicious public argument between Breton and the acting leader of Parisian Dada, the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, who clashed

over Dada's anarchistic noninvolvement in the Congress. Refusing an invitation to serve on the organizing committee, Tzara rejected the proposed event's "jumble of tendencies, the confusion of styles, and the substitution of groups for personalities" as constituting an action "more dangerous than reaction" insofar as it would be "injurious to the search for the new" (1981b, 188). For Tzara, in other words, the corporate attention to the "modern spirit," as well as the ambition to unite – not to mention supersede – the "trajectories" of politically and aesthetically incomparable avant-garde movements, was a travesty of his own claims about the singularity of Dada activity as a manifestation of disgust with the very premises of continuity and involvement. As Tzara explains in a 1922 lecture, one "characteristic of Dada is the continuous breaking off of our friends. They are always breaking off and resigning. The first to tender his resignation from the Dada movement *was myself*" (1981a, 246).

Breton's counterattack in response to Tzara's refusal was both hostile and personal; referring to Tzara only as "a person known for being the promoter of a 'movement' hailing from Zurich," Breton slandered the Dada leader as an imposter and self-aggrandizing saboteur who refused to take the collective seriously, or at least as a constitutive project of modern artists and intellectuals (Breton 1988c, 1282–3).⁴ As the conflict escalated, the organizing committee split into competing factions; as a consequence, the nonevent of the 1922 "Congress of Paris" has been memorialized as both the death knell of Dada – at least in its Parisian incarnation – and as the early marker of André Breton's alleged authoritarianism, which he would subsequently exercise as the leader of the surrealist movement.⁵ Marking the transition between Dada and Surrealism – and thus implicitly heeding the terms of Breton's augury of "a new impetus" that would "continue describing the arc" of modernism's flight – the Congress might seem to confirm the standard terms of exhaustion and supersession by which twentieth-century critics and scholars have characterized the history of avant-garde art. Dada was dead, and Surrealism would emerge as the next modernist heir to the avant-garde throne.

Though nourished by Breton in contemporary writings such as "After Dada" and "Leave Everything," such narratives about the succession of avant-garde movements become unsettled when we consider the means through which any such supersession might have taken place. In place of a dialectic of avant-garde death and birth, or exhaustion and emergence, the failure of the 1922 Congress highlights instead a more explicit dialectic of polemic and coalition that characterizes the way European avant-garde movements conducted themselves between the wars. For even as

the Parisian Congress failed to materialize, the affiliations, invectives, and ruptures it inaugurated played a constitutive role in the charged atmosphere of experimental groups in the years between World War I and II. Even so, in spite of the failure of the Parisian Congress, a similar effort did successfully take place a few months later in Düsseldorf: in May 1922, the “First International Congress of Progressive Artists” (*Kongress der fortschrittlichen Künstler*) organized by Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, and Hans Richter, brought together the German Dadaists Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, and Hans Richter with members of the Bauhaus, De Stijl, Futurist, Constructivist, and other movements to propose an analogous unification of modern art as a bulwark against the dividing tendencies of nationalism and subjectivism. Published in the journal *De Stijl* in November 1922, the “Founding Proclamation of the Union of Progressive International Artists” suggested that the syndicalizing imperative of the Parisian Congress was far from isolated, nor were its organizing tendencies (or internecine debates) unique to Breton.⁶ Though certainly subject to criticism and discontent, other such affiliations continued to form during the interwar years, their constitution bolstered by innumerable geopolitical counterparts, from the League of Nations to the unification of Soviets.⁷

As the Dusseldorf Congress indicated, moreover, such alternative forms of affiliation between international avant-garde movements demonstrated that the Dada movement did not so much “die” in 1922 as pursue a set of alternate trajectories and affiliations. Even as Breton urged readers of *Littérature* to “Leave Dada Behind” (*Lâchez Dada*) (1996b, 78), the Dada movement was moving in other directions: in 1922 new Dada periodicals appeared in Zagreb and Leiden; Kurt Schwitters began building his *Merzbau* in Hanover, launching the journal *Merz* early the next year; and Marcel Duchamp, returning to New York from Paris, would declare his *Large Glass* “definitively unfinished,” terms that could just as readily apply to the Dada movement as a whole. As Hans Richter described Dada in 1919, “our solidarity (unlike the solidarity of those groups which hold themselves in such high regard), is steeped in an acid bath of slightly pathetic or cruel desperation ...” (2006, 48). Well before 1922, the very consistency of Dada as an avant-garde movement had already presumed corrosion and contingency.

Steeped in an acid bath of their own, the publicly mediated polemics and ruptures to which Breton and Tzara resorted in early 1922 were likewise far from unfamiliar to postwar participants and onlookers. Not only had public scandal constituted a principal device of the European

avant-garde since at least the days of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, but the deliberate provocation of audiences and the scandalizing rhetoric of *ad hominem* attack were consistent with the tactics of the Dada and Futurist movements alike as well. Celebrating "the slap and the punching fist," Marinetti's 1909 *Manifesto of Futurism* had articulated a "violent assault on the forces of the unknown" that extended to the very medium of its "assault" (2006a, 13–14). Published in *Le Figaro* as well as throughout Europe, Marinetti's manifesto had at once given a public name to Futurism and charged other European vanguards with the affective current of its incendiary rhetoric. Futurism's energies, in other words, were transitive. As the manifesto of "A Futurist Theater of Essential Brevity" claimed a decade later, futurism proposed to "[o]rchestrate the audience's sensibilities like a symphony, probing and reanimating the most sluggish depths of their being, by every possible means. Abolish the barrier of the footlights by launching networks of sensation, back and forth, between stage and audience; the action on stage will spill out into the auditorium to involve the spectators" (Marinetti, Settimelli, and Cobra 2006, 205–6). Such sensations gleefully incorporated the boos and hisses of outraged audiences as part of this interactive medium.⁸

Its own energies fed by Futurism, the fledgling Dada group had opened the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in 1916, a project inaugurated by Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings, itinerant performers who kept up a correspondence with Marinetti. Here, too, the performance of participatory artistic experimentation involved the explicit provocation of its audiences as part of its experiments with sound and noise. As Richard Huelsenbeck put it in 1920,

we did not neglect from time to time to tell the fat and utterly incompetent Zurich philistines that we regarded them as pigs and the German Kaiser as the initiator of the war. Then there was always a big fuss, and the students, who in Switzerland as elsewhere are the stupidest and most reactionary rabble ... gave a preview of the public resistance which Dada was later to encounter on its triumphant march through the world. (Huelsenbeck 1981, 23–4)⁹

The imperialism of Huelsenbeck's account of Dada is as ironic here as the militarism of Marinetti's Futurism was utterly sincere; the "triumphant march" of Dada throughout Europe could be considered, if anything, more an infiltration than an act of conquest. Even so, it was through the language of conquest and reaction that the Dada movement tended to articulate and perform its cultural work, whether such conquests were invoked negatively, in breaking radically with the ideology of German

nationalism and imperialism, or ironically, in satirizing it. No less ironic was the movement's polemical absorption of the language of capitalism: a 1919 issue of the Berlin journal *Der Dada*, edited by Raoul Hausmann, voices an appeal on behalf of the specious Central Office of Dadaism to "Put your money in Dada!" As the article's mock-agitprop rhetoric insists, "dada is the war loan of eternal life . . . dada is as effective in the small and the large brains of apes as it is in the backsides of statesmen" (Central Office of Dadaism 1919, 86). Slander and polemic were ingrained within the very medium of Futurism and Dada alike, part of the basic currency of either movement.

The year closed in characteristically scandalous fashion. The avant-garde dialectic of slander and affiliation found full public exercise in December 1922, when a group of former Parisian Dadaists rallied in support of a play by Raymond Roussel, the reclusive French author whose prewar novel *Locus Solus* had just been staged, at great expense and to disastrous effect, at the Théâtre Antoine in Paris. Adapted by the successful author Pierre Frodaie, whom the ever-extravagant Roussel had hired to write the script, Roussel's 1914 novel was reframed as a mystery, *Le Mystère de "Locus Solus,"* as a way to make dramatic sense of the novel's virtually plotless assortment of fantastic mechanisms. Like the original novel, the play unfolds as a series of tableaux in which the wealthy, eccentric inventor Cantarel displays his marvelous creations in his eponymous "solitary place." Such marvels are narrated or performed as spectacular displays of science-fictional ingenuity, from "aqua micans," oxygenated water that enables underwater living to "resurrectine," a drug that partially reanimates corpses, allowing them to act out their final moments *ad infinitum*. The centerpiece of the play is the partially mummified, decomposing head of Danton, preserved since his decapitation in the *Terreur*; when hooked up to an electrical charge, the head spasmodically moves its facial muscles in patterns that silently mouth fragments of Danton's major speeches (Roussel and Frodaie 2012, 245–50). Such biomechanical marvels, as steeped in eighteenth-century galvanism as in nineteenth-century science fiction, hardly represented the cutting edge of contemporary scientific discovery in 1922. Rather, in their intricacy and melancholic solipsism, Roussel's machines introduced a kind of countertechnology radically at odds with the instrumental logic and technological onslaught of industrial modernity in the era of mechanized warfare. Roussel's earlier work *Impressions of Africa* (1912) had long garnered the admiration of avant-garde figures such as Guillaume Apollinaire and Marcel Duchamp for precisely this reason; Duchamp later credited Roussel as the inspiration for his own *Large Glass*,

with its “machines célibataires” (bachelor machines) recalling the solipsistic automata that populate Roussel’s works.

All the same, Roussel’s writings, with their obsessional fixation on the intricacies of exotic objects and mechanisms, were never met with popular approval. Unsurprisingly, the stage adaptation of *Locus Solus* was a fiasco. Frodaie, skeptical of the work Roussel had contracted him to adapt, rewrote the novel as an absurdist spectacle; the stage set, rendered in mildly cubist abstractions, likewise situated the work on the terrain of the burlesque and the Grand Guignol. The play previewed on December 7 and premiered the following evening to hissing, boos, and a shower of coins: the “interactive” gestures of an angry audience.¹⁰ Cut short on the third night of performance due to “technical difficulties,” the *Le Mystère de “Locus Solus,”* played only ten times before being shut down definitively on December 21, 1922. Critics almost universally panned the show, and the public was scandalized. As Roussel recalls in his posthumous work *How I Wrote Certain of My Books (Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres)*,

The first night was an indescribable tumult. Scuffling broke out, but this time, although the majority of the audience was hostile, I had in their midst a group of very lively supporters.

The affair created an immense stir, and I awoke next morning to find myself a celebrity.

But far from being a success it turned into a scandal. For apart from the small group of supporters whom I have mentioned, everyone else closed ranks against me.... I was once again cast as a lunatic and hoaxer; the critics let fly a barrage of abuse. (1995, 24)

The small group of supporters to whom Roussel alludes were none other than the group of young former Dadaist poets, André Breton among them, who would shortly after form the Surrealist movement. Their enthusiasm for Roussel, both during and after the performance, was fueled by the degree to which the pyrotechnics of the play’s reception resembled their own Dada activities, which had likewise embraced public scandal as an art form. Throughout the brief theatrical run of *Le Mystère de “Locus Solus,”* the group cheered the performance, while directing their own gibes and insults toward fellow audience members. Indeed, the play’s reception demonstrates the persistence of a scandal-based art of public provocation that had hitherto been instrumental to earlier European avant-gardes, not only in Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* and Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, but in the more explicitly choreographed and theorized performances of the Futurism and Dada movements. The play spawned numerous parodies throughout the nightclubs and revues of Paris, yielding a farcical revue called *Cocus Solus*

(Cuckolds Alone) put on by Jean Rieux and Paul Coline at the Grillon, and a show called *Blocus Solus* (Solo Blockade) staged by Jean Bastin at the Noctambules (Caradec 1972, 223).¹¹

One of the great ironies of the reception as an object of avant-garde admiration, however, was that the incendiary effects of the work were utterly unintentional on Roussel's part. As his biographers attest, a *succès de scandale* was hardly the kind of publicity Roussel craved; rather, he sought the public adulation warranted by true literary greatness. The young avant-garde's enthusiasm for his work, which might be said to have capitalized on his accidental capacity for confrontation, could thus be considered a mild form of exploitation. This was certainly the opinion of Michel Foucault, who wrote his own book on Roussel in the early 1960s. According to Foucault, Roussel, who had no intention of ruffling public feathers, became a kind of naïf for the protosurrealist group around Breton, a kind of literary Douanier Rousseau.¹² Yet while its author was perhaps unconscious of the reasons for his work's disorderly reception, *Locus Solus* – even in its less-than-faithful theatrical adaptation – was recognizable to the avant-garde for the careful construction of its internal logic. Roussel's appeal to the former Dadaists was far from accidental. The French avant-garde's reception of Roussel, though certainly galvanized by the *Locus Solus* debacle, drew its strength from an identification with the technical and technological involutions of Roussel's imaginative universe. The 1922 performance of *Le Mystère de "Locus Solus"* disclosed his earlier work's continuity with the formal and figural interests of both Futurism and Dada alike, though it did so belatedly, from the retrospective vantage point of 1922. In spite of his virtual ignorance of these movements, Roussel produced a contemporaneous body of work that revealed its contiguity with their own technophilic imagination, and thus – at least for André Breton – its constitution of a “modern spirit.”

A second set of continuities thus opens up among the European avant-garde movements that crossed paths in 1922. In addition to the charged dialectic of invective and affiliation, we find a similarly interactive attention to the technological shocks and displacements of the modern era. The art historian and curator Alfred Barr, in a 1935 effort to chart a genealogy of modern art movements, refers to the “machine esthetic” shared by Dada and Futurism, as well as by the De Stijl, Suprematist, and Constructivist movements.¹³ The scandal of Roussel's 1922 play demonstrated, however, that any such machine esthetic referred not only to the formal appreciation of the design and function of modern machines, but to the invention of new and often dysfunctional, absurdist contraptions as well. In his

landmark study of modernism, *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen refers to this second set of preoccupations as a “Hidden Dialectic” animating the twentieth-century avant-garde: namely, the dialectical tension between a tendency to aestheticize technics that dated from the nineteenth century, and a horror of technics that intensified during World War I.¹⁴ *Machines*, in this sense, refers as much to the technologies of communication and perception as to the apparatuses of industrial production, incorporating the innumerable systems and networks that comprise the technological horizon of modern experience. Considered broadly, such systems of sensation, communicability, and control form at once the common interest and, at the same time, the point of violent disparity between Futurism, Dada, and the related movements such as Surrealism and Constructivism that self-consciously address the stakes of this technophilic imagination.

Traditionally, Barr’s “machine esthetic” applies most readily to the Italian Futurists, whose embrace of vehicular speed, mechanized warfare, and the breakdown of traditional pieties characterizes the movement’s aesthetic and political ambitions alike. Bolstered by the prominent role of railways and automobiles in the unification and modernization of Italy, the futurist movement in its first years found Marinetti waxing triumphantly about “Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine” and “The New Ethical Religion of Speed,” to cite only the titles of two futurist manifestos from 1915 and 1916, respectively. As the dates suggest, Marinetti’s fervor persisted throughout the war, in spite of heavy casualties even among the movement’s ranks: Umberto Boccioni and Antonio Sant’Elia, two of the movement’s most notable visual artists, were killed in 1916, and both Marinetti and the painter Luigi Russolo were severely wounded.¹⁵ Unlike, however, the melancholy automata of Rousset’s *Locus Solus*, mindlessly living out their final moments as a private spectacle, Futurism’s technophilia was aggressively self-assured, comprising an “art and politics of artificial optimism,” as Christine Poggi describes it.¹⁶ Marinetti’s machine-kingdom offered both a model and a medium for transforming existence, in other words, rather than acceding to material demands. As Marinetti writes in 1913,

Futurism is based on the complete renewal of human sensibility brought about by the great discoveries made by science. Anyone who today uses the telegraph, the telephone, and the gramophone, the train, the bicycle, the motorcycle, the automobile, the ocean liner, the airship, the airplane, the film theater, the great daily newspaper (which synthesizes the daily events of the whole world), fails to recognize that these different forms of

communication, of transfer and information, have a far-reaching effect on the psyche. (2006b, 120)

Far from simply mimicking the effects of Italy's rapid modernization, Futurism sought simultaneously to participate in and propel this historical trajectory by contriving a "complete renewal of human sensibility." This meant literally incorporating the technological possibilities of modern science, introducing "the imperceptible, the invisible, the whiz of atoms, Brownian motion, all the enthusiastic hypotheses and all the domains explored by the dark-field microscope" into the "total synthesis of life itself" (2006b, 126). Yet as scholars note, the triumphant self-transcendence Marinetti celebrates often amounted to the prosthetic extension of all-too-human male body, a rhetorical armature for a deeply traditional national subject, rather than a total reimagination of the human.¹⁷

Though bound up most notoriously in the ultra-modernity of Mussolini's fascism, Futurism was hardly synonymous with "fascist modernism," however. For all of Marinetti's militant praise for Mussolini as the "New Man" for Italy's mechanized present, by the early 1920s other futurist artists had come to resist the rhetorical and ideological tendency toward chauvinism and mechanized warfare in their own embrace of futurism's technophilic imagination. In June 1922, for instance, the left-leaning artists Ivo Pannaggi and Vinicio Paladini published their *Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art* (*Manifesta dell'arte meccanica futurista*) in the first (and only) issue of the journal *La Nuova Lacerba*, seeking to articulate a specifically postwar, and postfascist, version of futurist aesthetics. The manifesto shared Marinetti's affective synthesis of human and machines: "[W]e feel mechanically, and we sense that we ourselves are also made of steel, we too are machines, we too have been mechanized by our surroundings" (Pannaggi and Paladini 2009, 272). Yet whereas Marinetti had celebrated the vehicular speed and mechanical bodily experience as an exceptional state of being (proper to "the proletariat of talented people," as he put it elsewhere), Pannaggi and Paladini stress its commonness: machinic life is a proletarian condition. The Italian Communist philosopher Antonio Gramsci shared this opinion, writing in *L'Ordine nuovo* in 1921 about the possibility that even Marinetti's version of Futurism bore revolutionary leftist possibilities, insofar as its technophilia at once offered tools for dismantling the social forms of bourgeois ideology, while also formalizing an aesthetic system proper to proletarian existence.¹⁸

Though Pannaggi and Paladini did not attend the May 1922 "First International Congress of Progressive Artists" in Düsseldorf, their position

was represented by the Futurist writer, Ruggero Vasari, and the painter, Enrico Prampolini; moreover, revised versions of Pannaggi's and Paladini's manifesto appeared in *De Stijl* and, later that year, in the anglophone journal *Broom*. The manifest continuities forged between a leftist Futurism and the international Constructivist movement later prompted Alfred Barr's depoliticized canonization of the "machine esthetic." Yet even as the international dissemination of the *Manifesta dell'arte meccanica futurista* marked a disengagement from the fascist politics of Marinetti's Futurism, Mussolini's march on Rome in late October 1922 – a definitive statement of Il Duce's rightward shift – further enforced the rift between leftist and fascist participants in the Futurist movement. Whereas Marinetti continued to support the fascist regime, recalibrating the terms of his affiliation in light of Mussolini's rise to power, other futurist-affiliated artists and architects resisted the ideological framework of the movement, pursuing their work under alternative sets of associations.¹⁹ Neither a pure aesthetic nor an ideologically fixed political stance, Futurism's technophilia was a contested terrain.

The Futurist interactions with Dada and Constructivist artists at the Düsseldorf Congress coincided, moreover, with Raoul Hausmann's own technologically minded response to Marinetti's theories. Beginning in 1921, the Dada artist and writer began working on the "Optophone," a synaesthetic device for transferring light into sound – and thus for enabling auditors to "hear" visual phenomena. Hausmann invokes the apparatus in a 1921 essay on "PREsentism," which he sent to both Marinetti and *De Stijl*. Elaborating on the device more fully in "Optophonetics," an essay published in the first issue of Ilya Ehrenburg's and El Lissitzky's trilingual journal *Vesch/Gegenstand/Objet*, Hausmann conceived of the optophone as the technical means for developing new forms of sensation. Like Raymond Roussel, in other words, Hausmann proposed a device that would not simply imitate the aesthetic and sensory properties of extant technology, but also would introduce a new technological device of its own. Hausmann's mechanical interventions into human perception and communication were theoretically and procedurally specific, however, rather than fabular or rhetorical. By 1922, the Dada movement had already generated its fair share of mecanomorphic images and collages, from the diagrammatic machine-portraits of Francis Picabia to the cybernetic collages and photomontages of Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, and Hausmann.²⁰ Yet with the Optophone, Hausmann demonstrated an interest not only in the affective and conceptual function of technological images but in the empirical workings of technological devices. (Indeed, he

applied for and received an English patent for his device, although, as he later explained, he did not have the funds to build it.)²¹

Hausmann's invention responded directly, moreover, to Marinetti's contemporaneous notion of tactilism, which the futurist leader introduced in 1921 "by subjecting my own sense of touch to an intensive education," a process that would formalize and perfect the registers of haptic sensation in order to "intensify communication and association among human beings" (Marinetti 2006c, 371). In his essay on "PREsentism," Hausmann criticized Marinetti's thinking for its reliance on pure chance – or trial and error – whereas his own research sought to "expand the haptic sense and give it a scientific basis beyond random chance" (Lista 2005, 86). That same year, the methodological clash between Hausmann and Marinetti found its counterpart in the public clash between Dadaists and Futurists in Paris; in early 1921, the Parisian Dadaists had "declared war" on Marinetti and his group, in disrupting a lecture by Marinetti at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre and a concert by Russolo at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. According to an article in the *New York Times*, the Dadaists "have take the offensive in the war and, apparently jealous of their place in the very newest of all new movements, they have banded together to declare as utter foolishness 'tactilism,' the latest form of art discovered by the Futurist leader, Marinetti" (1921, 12).²² It is perhaps instructive that the claim to novelty depicted sarcastically by the *New York Times* may have referred less to the artistic "modern spirit" than to a technophilia undergirded by an intense political division between the anarcho-leftist Parisian Dadaists and the pro-Mussolini futurist leader. Such divisions, too, fueled even Hausmann's Optophone, which might be considered a methodical and methodological disavowal not only of Marinetti's "wild" pseudoscientism, but its equally unbridled political ambitions as well.

From the vantage-point of 1922, the oft-discussed "machine esthetic" of the historical avant-garde thus presents a fraught ideological, artistic, and epistemological terrain. The question of whether mechanical life was regulatory or deregulatory – and of whether modern technology imposed a restrictive, harrowing militarism or enabled new freedoms – constituted a "hidden dialectic," even among the technophiles of the Dada and Futurist movements. As Roussel's work revealed to the young former Dadaists who rallied in Roussel's support, the technological imagination that seemed to define the "modern spirit" constituted a mediated form of communication subject to the disruptions and transformations it made possible, whether this technology took material or hypothetical form. One of the shared insistences among the avant-garde groups that converged in 1922

was that their technophilia was a contested terrain, rather than merely a by-product or index of modernity's lurching "progress" from nineteenth-century industrialization through the mechanized warfare of World War I. In its technological imagination, the avant-garde instead devised its own historical circuitry, its own logical apparatus. As Richard Huelsenbeck explained in his 1957 *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* (Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze), "the Dadaist destruction of art is not just a clownish imitation of terrible events, but also an analytical anticipation of the process one has to go through to reach the premise of all future artistic activity: the total, human personality" (1974, 139).

The paradoxical presentism and anachronism of Raymond Roussel's 1922 play might thus be said to epitomize the reflexive attention to the technologies of "analytical anticipation" Huelsenbeck describes: that is, the avant-garde's "machine esthetic" simultaneously offered a discourse about the contemporary stakes of its own implementation. In place of a history featuring either the death of prewar avant-garde movements or the heroic birth of new ones, 1922 found experimental writers and artists both engaged in and thinking through modes of mechanical persistence that curiously resembled Martial Cantarel's invention of "resurrectine"; it is a history of neither death nor birth, but of staggered, partial repetitions.

Indeed, in the decades following the abbreviated theatrical run of *The Mystery of "Locus Solus,"* the French avant-garde virtually canonized Roussel's poetic techniques as comprising a historical logic in their own right. By "technique" here I mean at once the figural technological imaginary of Roussel's text, which elaborates the remarkable series of mechanical inventions presented by the reclusive Cantarel; but Roussel's "technique" also extends to the logical structure of his works, as well as to the obsessive formalism of his expository language. The full extent of this intricate hyperformalism was revealed, moreover, in Roussel's posthumously published *How I Wrote Certain of My Books* (*Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*), which outlines his remarkable compositional procedure of puns, homonyms, and wordplay as the purely formal means for inventing the figural situations and machines of his early work. The hypostatic technique of Raymond Roussel's work stakes out the epistemological terrain for modern French thought and writing, from Marcel Duchamp and Michel Leiris to Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, from the surrealists to the Oulipeans and the New York School. Mediated and under negotiation throughout their history, the European avant-garde movements that coexisted in 1922 each likewise spawned reprises, from the *secondo Futurismo* and neo-Dada groups of the 1960s, to other such campaigns

of the so-called neo-avant-garde. Yet from the vantage point of 1922, such revivals appear to have been already predicated on the corrosive and self-resurrecting continuities we find in Dada, Futurism, and the work of Raymond Roussel.

Notes

- 1 On the Congress on Paris and Parisian Dada polemics in general, see Michel Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*. Translated by Sharmila Ganguly. 1965. (Reprint, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), chs. 17 and 20, 209–16 and 233–54.
- 2 For an excellent sustained discussion of the “Congress of Paris” and its interrogation of “modernism,” see Marius Hentea, “Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris,” *PMLA* (forthcoming).
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Also in Hentea.
- 5 See, e.g., James M. Harding, *The Ghosts of the Avant-Garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 28–58.
- 6 A “Weimar Constructivist Congress” followed in September 1922. For an overview of the period, see John V. Maciuika, “The Politics of Art and Architecture at the Bauhaus, 1919–1933.” *Weimar Culture: A Contested Legacy*. Edited by Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, 291–315 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- 7 See also *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bann (New York: Viking, 1974). As Hentea notes in “Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris,” moreover, efforts to federate intellectuals were taking place on a broadly international level in 1922, with a surge of membership in the Confédération des Travailleurs Intellectuels and the formation of a Commission on International Cooperation for intellectuals by the League of Nations.
- 8 See Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “Manifesto on the Pleasures of Being Booed” (2006, 181–4).
- 9 On the continuities between the way Futurist and Dada performances incorporated audience reaction, see Arndt Niebisch, *Media Parasites of the Early Avant-Garde: On the Abuse of Technology and Communication* (London: Palgrave, 2012), 109–42.
- 10 For a detailed account of reactions to Roussel’s and Froidae’s adaptation, see Caradec 1972, 199–226. Mark Ford offers a brief account in his more recent *Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 151–5.
- 11 Roussel remarked upon the punning possibilities of his title, as if laying claim to the parodies as subsidiary extractions of his own work: “*Locus Solus*,” he writes in *Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres*, “lent itself to numerous word games: *Loufocus Solus*, *Cocus solus*, *Blocus Solus* ou *les bâtons dans*

- les Rubrs, Lacus Salus* (apropos Pierre Benoit's *Lac Salé*), *Locus Coolus, Coolus Solus* (apropos a play by Roman Coolus), *Gugus Solus, Locus Saoulus*, etc. One which was left out, and yet, it seems to me, merits inclusion, is *Logicus Solus*" (1995, 17).
- 12 See Michel Foucault, "Postscript: An Interview with Charles Ruas." *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. Translated by Charles Ruas, 182 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
 - 13 The image was published as the book jacket for Alfred H. Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936). For an overview of "technophilia" in artistic modernism, see R. L. Rutsky, *High Technē: Art and Technology from the Machine Aesthetic to the Posthuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
 - 14 See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
 - 15 For a complete list of Futurists wounded and killed in the war, see Marinetti's 1919 tract "An Artistic Movement Creates a Political Party" (Marinetti 2006, 277–82; 279).
 - 16 See Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
 - 17 See Christine Poggi's *Inventing Futurism* (2008) and Günter Berghaus's *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909–1944* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 1996), 172–217.
 - 18 For a sustained discussion of Pannaggi's and Paladini's manifesto and the left, see Maria Elena Versari, "Futurist Machine Art, Constructivism and the Modernity of Mechanization." *Futurism and the Technological Imagination*. Edited by Günter Berghaus, 149–75 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009). See also Poggi's *Inventing Futurism*, esp. pages 240–4.
 - 19 See Walter J. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 227–63.
 - 20 See Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
 - 21 On Hausmann's Optophone, see Marcella Lista, "Raoul Hausmann's Optophone: 'Universal Language' and the Intermedia." *The Dada Seminars*. Edited by Leah Dickerman and Matthew Witkovsky, 83–101 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005). See also Arndt Niebisch, *Media Parasites in the Early Avant-Garde: On the Abuse of Technology and Communication* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 143–74. A portion of Hausmann's patent application is reprinted in Jacques Donguy, "Machine Head: Raoul Hausmann and the Optophone," *Leonardo* 34, no. 3 (2001): 217–20.
 - 22 See also Sanouillet's *Dada in Paris*, 170–2.

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CHAPTER 9

*The Beginning and the End: The Formalist
Paradigm in Literary Study*

Alastair Renfrew

In my beginning is my end ...
In my end is my beginning.

– T. S. Eliot

In my End is my Beginning.

– Mary, Queen of Scots

On May 27, 1922, five years after the revolutions of 1917 but still some months from the formal establishment of the USSR, Lenin suffered the first of four strokes that would frame the final period of his life. His health had been in a state of progressive disrepair since late 1920, when the events that would signal the “end” of the revolution combined in the most ambivalent of conjunctures: on one hand, the civil war fought in defense of the revolution had all but ended in March 1921 in military and political victory; on the other hand, this “victory” was preceded by the acceptance that the revolution would not, as Lenin’s original projection had it, be a “world revolution.” This realization, and the economic devastation accompanying the civil war, led to Lenin’s last significant political *volte-face*, the abandonment of a policy of class-war in the countryside in favor of what would become known as the “New Economic Policy,” most vividly symbolized by the decriminalization of private trade in agricultural produce and the exposure of state industries to a “capitalist” economy.

Lenin suffered a second stroke on December 15, 1922, which left him unable to work and to write. This marked the end of Lenin’s direct involvement in political life, with the exception of his so-called Testament and a number of other letters, dictated by a greatly diminished Lenin between December 1922 and March 1923 in full knowledge and acceptance of his imminent demise, and fated never to be sent (Lenin 1966b, 593–611).¹ His third stroke on March 16, 1923 left him severely debilitated and unable to communicate for an agonizing ten-month period of death-in-life, until his final, fatal stroke on January 21, 1924.

Lenin had devoted his life to a project that was to culminate in the establishment of a transitional socialist state as a bridge to the condition of full communism, when the state would “wither away”; this project died with him in Russia. The actual state that feigned the realization of Lenin’s project, the USSR, not only persisted for almost seventy years after his death, but also quite explicitly founded its ideological legitimacy on something that went by the name of “Marxism-Leninism.” The Leninist component of this ideology, far from representing a distillation of the dialectical unity of theory and practice that had marked Lenin’s own writings, was largely derived from the *ex post facto*, abstract, and *monological* statement in Joseph Stalin’s *Foundations of Leninism*, written in 1924 as the postsuccession power struggle entered its decisive phase. *Foundations of Leninism* would help establish Stalin’s authority on the basis of the (unquestionable) authority of the deceased Lenin. Any form of what might properly be called Leninism had ceased to exist, at least in the USSR, before it had come into being.

On the evening of March 4, 1922, less than three months before the beginning of Lenin’s end, Viktor Shklovsky returned home to the House of Arts in what was then Petrograd, his little sledge loaded with precious firewood, only to notice that the lights in his and a neighboring room were already switched on. Intuition told him not to mount the stairs to his room, but to spend the night with friends (Shklovsky 2004, 242). The next morning at the offices of the State Publishing House he received informal confirmation that the *Cheka* had indeed come to his room the previous evening with the intention of arresting him. In an eloquent confirmation of the chaotic and sometimes comical circumstances that often accompanied the very real threat to personal freedom in Soviet Russia, Shklovsky reports that he did not leave Petrograd for another two weeks, but merely “changed his coat,” on the correct assumption that this would be sufficient to evade capture. An early and thankfully short-lived thaw meant that the most secure passage out of the country, across the ice of the Gulf of Finland, was temporarily blocked. Shklovsky tells us to our astonishment that he chooses not to write about the journey on he which embarked two weeks later (2004, 271).

Shklovsky’s departure was more than tenuously connected to the travails of Lenin and the fate of the revolution. Shklovsky had been active in public political life, which was unique among his collaborators in *Opoiiaz* (The Society for the Study of Poetic Language), though by no means distinctive among the literary and cultural figures of the revolutionary period in general. He was a member of the Social Revolutionary Party (SR),

which had inherited the populist programme of the old *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will) movement, with the question of land reform at its heart. The SRs shared the Bolshevik commitment to revolution and contended for leadership in the revolutionary project in the chaotic months following the February revolution; they did not, however, support Bolshevik opposition to the ongoing World War, which turned out to be a decisive factor in the Bolshevik seizure of power in October. Shklovsky's personal commitment to what he saw as the inevitability and necessity of combat cannot be doubted: he was awarded a George Cross for valor after leading his unit into battle against Austrian forces in 1917, sustaining a near-fatal stomach wound in the process.²

The SRs, before the revolution and after, had also maintained the legitimacy of political violence. The SRs openly rebelled against the Brest-Litovsk peace settlement in July 1918 by assassinating the German ambassador in Moscow. Their argument – on the face of it, entirely logical – was that the Bolshevik commitment to world revolution required the defeat of “imperialist” Germany and the initiation of a German socialist revolution. More dramatically, it was an SR and former anarchist, Fanny Kaplan, who shot and wounded Lenin in Moscow on August 30, 1918. On the same day, the head of the Petrograd Cheka, Moisei Uritskii, was murdered by Leonid Kannegiser, a member of another anti-Bolshevik group closely associated with the SRs. These events coincided with a renewed external threat from White counterrevolutionary forces;³ in that context, what appeared to have been a concerted attempt to initiate an internal revolt against the Bolsheviks only served to intensify the violent response of the government against the SRs and other opposition political elements into what became known as the “Red Terror.”⁴

Shklovsky's brother, Nikolai, was an early victim of the “Red Terror,” arrested and shot in late summer 1918 in connection with the Uritskii affair. Yet Shklovsky, even according to his own remarkably frank testimony, was not only potentially guilty by association: the expertise and connections he had acquired in the area of armored cars during the war made him indispensable to the SRs, and his activities even stretched to the theft of a cannon, which he proposed to deploy in an attack on the prison in which other SRs were held.⁵ Instead of committing counterrevolutionary – or “terrorist” – actions, Shklovsky was advised by his comrades to leave for the provincial city of Saratov, a staging post to Samara, where an alternative White government had been established. Shklovsky, having perhaps hesitated over taking the final plunge into violent opposition, now hesitated in the face of the similarly irrevocable step of joining

the Whites (or at least seeking sanctuary in Samara, which would have amounted to the same thing). This decision, notwithstanding the many later threats to his personal safety, ultimately saved his life. Instead, he settled to continue work on what would become *Theory of Prose* (1925) in a former insane asylum outside Saratov, on occasion sleeping in a haystack under an open sky.

Shklovsky's journey back to a tenuous respectability, which would continue until the evening in March 1922 from which we began, is almost as unlikely as the story of his traverse of war and revolution. Dressed in "a poncho, a sailor's shirt and a Red Army soldier's hat" (Shklovsky 2004, 153), which covered a head that had to be shaved to repair a disastrous dye-job that had left his hair violet, Shklovsky somehow managed to evade the *Cheka* agents and made it back to Moscow, where Maksim Gorky appealed to Iakov Sverdlov, at that time effectively head of the Russian government apparatus, that "the Shklovsky case be closed" (2004, 173). Shklovsky appears to have convinced Sverdlov by agreeing to play no further role in politics and by the simple, but nonetheless truthful declaration that "I wasn't a White" (2004, 173).

This delicate compromise with political authority lasted, as we have seen, until spring 1922, when the process of settling accounts with the SRs for the events of 1918 approached its conclusion. A number of right-wing SRs were duly tried in June 1922 and sentenced to death, although the sentences were later commuted.⁶ Shklovsky might not have found himself in the ranks of the convicted, but he understood very well that the price of freedom on this occasion would be more taxing than a friendly chat with Sverdlov: he would almost certainly have been required to testify at the very public trial, and honest testimony, he knew, would just as certainly strengthen the case for the prosecution, and not the defense. Shklovsky's own later assessment of his life in the Soviet Union emphasizes not just his ability to adapt and survive, but above all his ability to do so without sacrificing or endangering others. He may have written in almost every genre and for every medium, but there are two things he had "never written: poetry and denunciations" (Vitale 2012, 167).

His return to Petrograd and to critical and theoretical work required Shklovsky to sacrifice active involvement in politics, a sacrifice all too willingly made. The focus for that work, in terms of publication and research, was *Opoiiaz*, while the Translators' Studio at Gorky's "World Literature" publishing house and, later, the State Institute for the History of the Arts (GIII) provided opportunities to lecture and teach – and thus to make some kind of supportable living. His (second) enforced departure, this time

with apparently no prospect of return, entailed a sacrifice that Shklovsky felt to be as irrevocable as it was unavoidable. It must also, as we will see, be regarded as the effective demise of *Opoiiaz* and the beginning of the end of Formalism in Russia. In line with the seeming paradox of the Soviet project as a whole – the sense in which it was effectively over before it had begun – we will argue that Formalism, as such, had also already reached the limits of its own problematic initial precepts before Shklovsky's departure in 1922, and had begun to evolve into something altogether different – and altogether more productive. Formalism remained current in the later part of the 1920s and into the 1930s only as a convenient, automatized rhetorical dismissal of various strands of critical and theoretical thought that were fundamentally related only by their incommensurability with an increasingly reified “official” doctrine of literary production. More than that, in a blackly ironic parallel to the influence of Soviet (Stalinist) ideology on Western politics, the “Russian Formalism” that was later exported to play a foundational role in the development of Western literary theory constituted a kind of fiction: it had not only existed in the sense implied by its naming for an extremely brief period (and extremely tenuously, at that);⁷ but it also, and more damagingly, did not represent the mature theoretical positions of any of its main proponents, Shklovsky included. “Russian Formalism,” like the Soviet project, was effectively “over” before it had “begun.”

Shklovsky would later date the de facto inauguration of *Opoiiaz* to 1914 and the appearance of his manifesto, “The Resurrection of the Word,” although its operational existence might be more justifiably dated to 1916, when the first collection [*sbornik*] was published. Even then, the individual and collective output of *Opoiiaz* remained as sporadic as might be expected in circumstances of war, revolution, and, on occasion, famine. A second collection of groundbreaking work was published in 1917. In addition to a number of significant contributions on the nature of poetic language and the role of linguistics in literary study, the 1917 collection also included Shklovsky's programmatic statement, “Art as Device” (1990b), which, along with “The Resurrection of the Word,” represents the fundamentals of a particular strand in Formalist thinking and, perhaps more importantly, its fundamental *spirit*. Yet, without in any way diminishing the almost heroic dimension of early Formalism, which forcibly emerged from the cracks of historical events, *Opoiiaz* acquired the structure and, more importantly, the profile of a significant cultural organization only in 1919. Shklovsky's reconciliation with Bolshevik power was a significant factor in this process, but it was far from being the only one: the group's

linguistically inflected material on poetic language (most notably Osip Brik's "Sound Repetitions" and the somewhat neglected contributions of Iakubinskii) became the basis for the establishment of personal and professional relations with the Moscow Linguistic Circle, bringing Roman Jakobson, in particular, into the orbit of *Opoiiaz*; in addition, the more sober, scholarly (in comparison to Shklovsky) and historically orientated Boris Eikhenbaum would now play a more significant and coordinating role in *Opoiiaz*; and finally, the slightly younger Iurii Tynianov would gradually emerge (in a manner that was therefore quite contradictory to the aggressive iconoclasm of the early years) as a significant theoretical force in the group. From 1919 until Shklovsky's departure in March 1922, the phenomenon that has been bequeathed to literary and critical history as "Russian Formalism" not only enjoyed a very real existence, but subjected the various precepts on which it had been constructed to a process of evolving critique that ultimately led to its own sublation.

The platform of *Opoiiaz*, from the outset, had both a theoretical and an overtly polemical character; in fact, most notably in the case of Shklovsky, an important element of what we have referred to as its spirit resides in the difficulty of identifying where polemic ends and theory begins. It is nonetheless important, however schematically, to attempt to do so, while surveying the key planks of the theoretical program of *Opoiiaz*. These can be identified, without implying any absolute separation between them, as follows: (1) the idea of an autonomous poetic language; (2) the concept of the device (*priem*); (3) the concept of estrangement (*ostranenie*); (4) and, finally, the problem of literary change or evolution. All of these, notwithstanding the particularities of each, are motivated by and derive from a desire to demonstrate the limitations of literary scholarship to date – or, in fact, the ways in which such scholarship has consistently displaced what is properly "literary"; all emerge from a desire "to secure autonomy and concreteness for the discipline of literary studies" (Eikhenbaum 1970, 3); all are directed toward identification of what Jakobson will formulate in 1921 as "literariness," (Jakobson 1979), in contra-distinction to properties that might equally be observed in philosophical, political, or historical discourse.

What more effective way to approach the question of "literariness" than by opposing "poetic" to "practical" language in order to isolate the rhythmic and lexical specificity of the former? Shklovsky is only indirectly instrumental in this process, identifying Lev Iakubinskii's article "The Accumulation of Identical Liquids in Practical and Poetic language" (1919) as "one of the first scientifically sound, factual indications of the

opposition ... between the laws of poetic language and the laws of practical language" (Shklovsky 1990b, 4).⁸ Shklovsky's own language here (e.g., "scientifically sound," "factual indications," "laws") is illustrative of how positivism and polemic combined in early Formalism, but this approach cannot disguise the fact that Shklovsky's enthusiasm has its roots more firmly in the polemical segment of the equation: specifically, in the insistence on an autonomous and self-generating poetic language pioneered by the Futurist poets in the company of whom Shklovsky made his proclamation of "The Resurrection of the Word" in late 1913.⁹ This is also the immediate context for his contribution to the first *Opoiiaz* collection, an article "On Poetry and Transrational Language." Aleksei Kruchenykh had coined the expression "transrational language" (*zaumnyi iazyk*) in 1913 in a handprinted sheet under the title "Declaration of the Word as Such," which was developed with the help of Velimir Khlebnikov into the statement "The Word as Such" in the same year. Shklovsky identifies with this new focus on the word's foundation in sound as opposed to meaning, the faith that language can be rescued from the "violence" that has been done to it and restored to its "primordial purity" (Shklovsky 1919, 13). Iakubinskii, Brik, and Shklovsky, as we have briefly noted, laid the foundation for commerce between *Opoiiaz* and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, chiefly through Jakobson.¹⁰ And it is Jakobson who provides this strand of theoretical work, devoted to the viability of an autonomous poetic language, with its crowning formulation in his programmatic 1921 definition of poetry as "language in its aesthetic function" (Jakobson 1979, 305).

Shklovsky, however, did not pursue his early enthusiasm for the apparently decisive "specificity" of poetic language, instead becoming increasingly concerned with the emergence and development of prose narrative.¹¹ Neither did Brik, who, by the time of Shklovsky's departure in 1922, was already advanced in the project of forming the radical alliance of (former) Futurists and latter-day Constructivists that would become the Left Front in Art (LEF).¹² Eikhenbaum contends that the problem of poetic language simply "assumed its place within the general system of the problems of poetics" (1970, 11). It would be more accurate to say that the "general system" evolved to the point where it could not support – or no longer had any pressing need for – such an extreme and inherently weak index of literary specificity. It is notable, however, that it is Jakobson, in confronting the negative implications of his own concept of "literariness," who explicitly signals the retreat on the question of an autonomous poetic language. Although he had departed for Prague in 1920 and was therefore, despite intermittent contact with individuals such as Tynianov and Boris

Tomashevskii throughout the 1920s, isolated to some extent from the developing programme of *Opoiiaz*, Jakobson felt increasing discontent with the category of literariness, which parallels that of both Eikhenbaum and Tynianov. Returning to Iakubinskii's "identical liquids" in 1923, Jakobson acknowledges that their dissimilation (and, by implication, their accumulation) is possible "in both practical and poetic language" (1969, 17).¹³ Such linguistic phenomena are, in Jakobson's term, "indifferent": their specificity derives from the particular *function* they perform, which will vary from one "location" to another. The substitution of the earlier identification of presence/absence with a more complex, differential analysis of function thus brings this particular episode in the story of Formalism to a conclusion of sorts.¹⁴ Whatever our assessment of the contribution to the study of prosody made by *Opoiiaz*, or indeed of the developments in the relationship between linguistic and literary study pursued by Jakobson throughout his long subsequent career,¹⁵ the idea of an autonomous and uniquely poetic language played only a relatively brief – if characteristically dramatic – role in the emergence of Formalism in Russia.

Brief as its currency may have been, the idea of an autonomous poetic language is closely related to the second key plank of the early Formalist program, the concept of the device. Here Shklovsky's influence is both direct and entirely decisive. Shklovsky's innovation, which is consistent with the functional position we have attributed to Jakobson, has two dimensions: first, the device is the phenomenon that will facilitate the observation of the total, constructional nature of form in relation to its material. The device, be it parody or rhythmic parallelism, is thus not intended as an isolated element, as a mere component of the work's overall formal profile, but rather as a definitive factor, which actively organizes form. The construction of the work, prose or verse, is determined by the manner in which its devices act on the variegated material from which the work is made. From theme and motif to any impression of "sound" – rhythmical, metrical or phonological – form becomes, in a sense, all of the work. At the very least, no aspect of the work is separable from its totalizing form.

Second, a dynamic parallel exists between the devices of poetry (if not of "poetic language") and the devices of prose narrative. At the level of what the device is fundamentally designed to supersede, the "image,"¹⁶ Shklovsky maintains a necessary distinction between the "poetic image" and the "prose image": the latter is designed as a "distraction" from the (realistic) nature of its object, while the former is designed, precisely, to arrest and concentrate attention on the nature of its object (Shklovsky 1990b, 3). At the level of the device, however, while different devices may

be more or less characteristic of poetry as opposed to prose (i.e., more commonly encountered in one or the other), Shklovsky's key point is that all of these devices, whether they occur in poetry or prose, are nonetheless functionally cognate. They are *all* designed to arrest and concentrate attention, not just on the nature of their object but on the "literariness" of the text in which they appear: "artistic" perception is a perception that entails awareness of form (not only form, but invariably form)" (Shklovsky 1990a, 36–7). Thus the differences between, for example, a deliberately misplaced stress accent, completing or disrupting a metrical pattern (Kruchenykh), and a plot device, perhaps involving digression or the repetition of elements of the story, are not the primary consideration, because the device in itself cannot "create" form, and the particularity of a given form is not determined by the particularity of the device *in isolation*. Rather, these devices are similar, both species of what Shklovsky calls "retardation," both designed, in their "literariness," "to construct a sensuously experienced work" (Shklovsky 1990c, 51).

We will return to this material in the section on estrangement, but, for the moment, it is necessary to elaborate on how, particularly in prose, those aspects of the material of the work associated with *fabula* – the events of the novel, "story-stuff"; Shklovsky never calls it "content" – are related to the device. The material related to *fabula* – conventionally dealt with in terms of theme, motif, or, indeed, content – acts primarily not to signify, but rather as *motivation of the device*. Shklovsky's key exemplar in this respect is the liminal case of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which Shklovsky characterizes as the point of transition from fragmentary or episodic narrative collections such as Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but in which the motivation of the device remains more immediately visible than in the fully integrated "realist" novel that will supersede it. *Don Quixote*, as Eikhbaum summarizes with disarming simplicity, "is structured on the device of stringing together [*nanizyvanie*], with a journey serving as motivation" (1970, 19).¹⁷ Put another way, what serves as motivation (the stuff of *fabula*) has no significance in itself, but only in the form in which it appears – that is, in its relationship to the device(s) it motivates, a relationship that is structurally integral to the work as a whole.

This does not mean, as Shklovsky was often accused and at times seemed gleefully to concede, that art (literature) has no meaningful connection to life;¹⁸ rather, the meaning of that connection, and the meaning of the work, is dependent on its mediation in the formally specific work, which emerges, therefore, not as somehow magically autonomous, but as sovereign – itself the locus or unique, once-occurrent embodiment of

its own formal and semantic profile.¹⁹ This notion, as we have suggested, is a nascent narratological parallel to what Jakobson, in the act of conceding the functional and not somehow immanent distinction between poetic and practical language, describes in terms of the “organized coercion of language by poetic form” (Eikhenbaum 1970, 26). Language, too, is an important element of the material and, like theme or any kind of “story-stuff” (*fabula*) in the prose narrative, is subjected to the “organized coercion” of the formal construction of the work, determined in many cases by the nature and interrelationships of its devices. Shklovsky insists on the separation of *fabula* from *siuzhet* – simply, how the material of *fabula* is actually organized in the work – and therefore on the significance of the device in fashioning the latter from the material of the former. Tynianov will later define this process of “organized coercion” in terms of the “constructive factor” or “constructive principle” (Tynianov 1963; Tynianov 1977b), the contextual determinant of function that will form an important part of his later theory of how the intraliterary context relates to extraliterary material.

It is not entirely incidental that Tynianov begins from the premise that that “the concept of ‘poetic language,’ which was advanced not so long ago, is currently undergoing a crisis” (1981, 29). The theory of the device implies further the obviation of the poetic/practical language divide from which we began; “poetry,” in retrospect, and specifically in the context of Formalist theory, emerges merely, and quite counterintuitively, as little more than a nonspecific word for “art” or “literature.”

If the two areas we have examined – poetic language, and the device and its motivation – have begun to suggest how the rebarbatively “Formalist” positions that have dominated perceptions of *Opoiiaz* in the west are superseded by 1922 by positions that must, at the very least, be described as “beyond Formalist,” the third area – estrangement or, as it is sometimes given, defamiliarization – casts our paradigm of beginnings and ends in yet greater relief.

The roots of Formalist theories of poetic language and the device are present from the very outset in the text of Shklovsky’s “The Resurrection of the Word,” which opens with the declaration that “words are dead, and language is like a cemetery” (1990a, 36). Words have “become familiar, their inner (imagistic) and exterior (sound) forms are no longer experienced. We don’t experience the familiar, we don’t see it, but merely recognise it” (1990a, 36). Literary forms, too, cease to be fully experienced, “they reify and finally die,” just as “the sound of the sea disappears for those who live by the shore” (1990a, 38): “Only the creation of new forms

can return the experience of the world to mankind, resurrect things and destroy pessimism” (1990a, 40).

Only art can lift “the glass armour of habituation” (1990a, 38). The loss of perceptibility, of words, things and forms alike, is named in “Art and Device” as “automatization” (sometimes in translation “habitualization”), which, famously, “eats things, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war” (Shklovsky 1990b, 5).²⁰ The primary function of art, indeed, for Shklovsky, the fundamental explanation for its existence, is to resist this process by effectuating a “de-automatization,” a global renewal of perception: “And so in order to return a sense of life, the feeling of things, in order to make the stone stony, there exists something called art. The aim of art is to give a sense of things through *seeing*, and not mere recognition” (1990b, 6). And art accomplishes this restoration of “the sense of things” through estrangement: “The device of art is the device of “estrangement” (*ostranenie*) of things and the device of form made difficult (*zatrudnennaiia forma*), which increases the difficulty and duration of perception, because the process of reception in art is an end in itself (*samotselen*) and must be prolonged; art is a means of experiencing the making of a thing, but what is made in art is not important” (1990b, 6). Although art has various means by which to “remove things from the automatization of perception” (1990b, 6) – the various devices to which we have referred, be they devices of plot/narrative or of poetic style – it is estrangement, elucidated here on the material of Tolstoy, that is privileged. We might say that retardation or broken rhyme, for example, are secondary or technical devices, while estrangement is the primary or master device (or category). Estrangement is thus more than a device: it is the global effect, required for the renewal of perception, that is achieved by means of other devices, which might be regarded as instances of a generalized category, or as specific and technical variations on a core idea; it is both the goal and function of the device, and hence of form. Thus, although Shklovsky continues in “Art as Device” to associate de-automatization with poetry and a tendency toward surreptitious automatization with (non-Tolstoyan) prose, this distinction is secondary to the estrangement that is common to and definitive of both. As we have seen, it is also a distinction that does not survive the initial, declarative, polemical stage of Formalist theory.

The limitations – and, from a certain perspective, the inherent conservatism of Shklovsky’s position – can be inferred from an example Shklovsky gives that is neither “poetry” nor narrative “prose,” and which provides an interesting counterpoint to automatization and the “fear of war” (and particularly in relation to Shklovsky’s own overcoming of it). The rhythm of a

work song, Shklovsky argues, is designed, precisely, *in order to automatize*, and thus ease, the process (1990b, 14). Its rhythmic devices, in this particular context, are *not* intended to arrest and concentrate attention on the nature of the object; they are not the “devices of art,” designed to renew perception of the artistic “thing” in itself.²¹

We will deal with one specific and important implication of this functional variation in the following section. For the moment, it is important to emphasize that estrangement, while it requires form, is in another sense indifferent to it (in the same sense that Jakobson identifies the “indifferent” nature of particular linguistic elements). As Shklovsky writes, rhetorically departing from any positivist pretensions, “I personally think that there is estrangement almost everywhere there is the image” (1919, 9). The devices of “poetic language” have become simply the devices that effectuate estrangement in the context of the poetic text. Like the devices of narrative prose, they are technical, context- and function-specific variations of a common phenomenon: art is estrangement.

The commitment to estrangement as such insulates Shklovsky from “Formalism” in two ways, which are perhaps “paradoxical”: first, as we have seen, estrangement, in its transgression, can be argued to be indifferent to form – not “Formalist” enough, perhaps, in the context of the earlier period, when the authentically specifying analyses of Iakubinskii, Jakobson, and Brik predominate. Second, as we will see, it distinguishes Shklovsky from his colleagues and friends in what remained of *Opoiiaz* after 1922, most notably Eikhenbaum and Tynianov, whose work develops in ways that are neither dependent on estrangement, nor, indeed, on any absolute conception of form. Shklovskian estrangement will later prove, despite his own efforts to the contrary, insufficiently *historical*.²² In both these aspects, in fact, the commitment to estrangement as a master category would appear to align Shklovsky more securely with the broad sweep of European Modernism, whether manifest in the Imagist concern for the “thing” in itself and the transparency/self-sufficiency of language through to Pound’s *Make it New* (1934); or, at the other extreme, and perhaps more conducive to Shklovsky’s view of himself, in Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*.²³ It is tempting here to borrow Edwin Morgan’s characterization of Hugh MacDiarmid, caught between affection and exasperation, and define Shklovsky as a “homespun modernist.”²⁴ This he was, and remained, more securely than any kind of Formalist.

The final key strand in early Formalist theory, the process of literary change, is not only closely related to the theory of the device and its motivation, but is also clearly implied in Shklovsky’s theory of estrangement. In

“The Connection of Devices of Plot Formation with General Devices of Style,” polemicizing with an aspect of the “historical poetics” of Aleksandr Veselovsky,²⁵ Shklovsky makes an explicit attempt to construct a theory of the historical change of forms on the basis of estrangement. In Shklovsky’s reading, Veselovsky, bound as he is by a regressive conception of the severability of form and content, has assumed that “new form comes about in order to express new content” (Eikhenbaum 1970, 17). For Veselovsky, form, at some level, responds to change “outside” literature: it is somehow determined by social, economic or moral factors as they change and evolve. It should be emphasized that Shklovsky categorizes Veselovsky as representative of an “ethnographic” school, as opposed to “sociological” (a challenge that has not yet quite materialized). Shklovsky responds by insisting that: “A work of art is perceived against the background of, and by way of association with, other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other forms existing prior to it... *A new form appears not in order to express new content, but in order to replace an old form that has already lost its artisticness [khudozhestvennost’]*” (1919c, 120). This “artisticness,” the generic corollary of the particular “literariness,” is therefore not only a relative phenomenon, but even that relativity is itself a definitively literary property. The language of Pushkin, for example, has a transformative effect precisely because it is perceived against the background of the canonical, reified “poetic” language of Derzhavin (Shklovsky 1919c, 113). Similarly, themes, motifs, and situations can become clichés just as much as language – and so can devices. In fact, in Shklovsky’s projection, *every* aspect of the material of the work is inseparable from the range of devices it motivates. Taking examples from each end of the spectrum (i.e., examples of both “stylistic” and “plot” devices), the use of archaisms in poetry that has canonically insulated itself from them draws attention to what has been canonized; but so too would the use of dialect in a canonically “classical” poetic language. Similarly, Dostoevsky’s introduction of “adventure time” and other elements of the “popular” novel into the “philosophical” novel (i.e., *Crime and Punishment*) lay bare the norms of the phenomenon it thereby renews and transforms. Yet the introduction of philosophical themes would also lay bare, disrupt, and renew the conventions of the genre of the psychological thriller.

Shklovsky’s literary universe is one in which a number of schools, tendencies, genres, or works coexist, albeit in varying proximity to a “canon.” The fact that one or more is canonized at any particular moment, however, does not imply the destruction of the minor, peripheral, or noncanonized

schools, tendencies, or genres. The change of literary forms is therefore not linear, but progresses indirectly, “not from father to son, but from uncle to nephew” (Shklovsky 2000, 318). A minor element in one epoch may be reintegrated into a different type of literary work in a later period, precisely in order to disrupt and renew perceptions of the formal context in which it reemerges – to renew perceptions of its “artisticness.” Shklovsky summarizes in a typically circular formulation: “What we will call ‘artistic things,’ in the narrow sense, are those things that have been created by particular devices, with the aim that these things will most likely be perceived as being artistic” (1919, 2). Literature, in other words, renews itself in a complex process of succession that is driven by differential perceptions of what is or is intended to be literary. For Shklovsky, consistent with Formalism’s initial focus on securing “autonomy and concreteness for the discipline of literary studies” (Eikhenbaum 1970, 3), this is an essentially closed system; or, at least, in the absence of a suitably scientific method that will facilitate an alternative, it is necessary or desirable to proceed initially *as if* it were a closed system.

At the level of the individual work, this general theory of literary change supports and justifies the contention – unrepentantly repeated by Shklovsky as late as 1921 – that the literary work is “pure form,” so long as “form” is understood as the totality of the “orientation of materials” organized in it by its devices (2000, 317). More than the ostensibly compelling case of “poetic language,” more than the theory of the device in isolation, it is, perhaps paradoxically, the reconfiguration of these elements in the context of an attempt to construct a theory of literary change – we cannot yet say “history” – that emerges as the most unrepentantly Formalist of all these projections. Yet this, too, although it plays a crucial formative role in the mature theory of literary evolution that will displace it, does not survive in anything like its originary form after Shklovsky’s departure in 1922.

In fact, this process of evolution toward a theory of evolution was substantially underway before Shklovsky’s departure, dating from the direct involvement in *Opoiiaz* – both theoretical and organizational – of Iurii Tynianov from 1919. Tynianov’s first published work, “Dostoevsky and Gogol (Towards a Theory of Parody),” closes with the tantalizing and otherwise unprepared declaration that “[a]ll of parody is in the dialectical play of the device” (1977a, 226), but it is in 1922, in an article that does not see the light of day until 1927, that he makes the decisive breakthrough. “The Ode as an Oratorical Genre” not only establishes the functional principle around which Shklovsky and Jakobson have been circling as the

central orthodoxy of what later Formalism would become,²⁶ sketching in the process a model that will be confirmed and developed in “On Literary Evolution,” and which can be understood as a “system of systems,” or a system of concentric contexts in which the function of any given element can be understood. Tynianov also extends his concentric model to take account, beyond a “literary system of any given period,” of the functional significance of what he terms the “extra-literary series,” the “closest” of which to literature is speech, specifically “the material of the closest verbal art forms and . . . everyday speech” (2003, 566). In the case in point, the “dominant” of the ode in eighteenth-century Russian verse, its “constructive principle,” is its orientation toward a real, extraliterary speech situation: it is “constructed as if it were an act of oratory” (2003, 567). The “struggle” for literary succession to which Tynianov refers in “Dostoevsky and Gogol” (1977a, 198) is “essentially the struggle for the function of the poetic word, for its orientation, its correlation with literature, with speech and with the extra-literary series” (2003, 592). New form does not arise merely to express new content (the crudely deterministic view Shklovsky rejects); the process by which genres (and forms) “wear out” (Tynianov 1970, 74), by which an “old form” loses its “artisticness,” is driven by the force of extraliterary phenomena, by a force that, if it cannot be crudely associated with “content,” must nonetheless act upon literature from the extraliterary domain (the domain from which any kind of preliterary material must be drawn). Thus various forms of personal correspondence that in the eighteenth century were “exclusively phenomena of everyday life,” become, in the later part of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century, “literary facts” (Tynianov 1977b, 264): “the forms of everyday life acquired a literary function” (Tynianov 1970, 74). As Tynianov writes:

There are no ready-made literary genres. Their place is occupied by *extra-literary verbal phenomena*. The verbal function or orientation seeks form, and finds it in the romance, the joke, the play on rhyme, *bouts rimés*, charades, etc. And here the aspect of *genesis, of the presence of certain kinds of extra-literary speech forms*, acquires its evolutionary significance. (1970, 74)

Tynianov has fashioned from the materials of early Formalism a theoretical platform that does not require the explicit refutation of those materials, but rather their retention and reinflection – in other words, their intrinsic *historicization*, as opposed to some crude, extrinsic variant of their historicization, which would have amounted to no less than refutation. In so doing, he performs the literary-critical equivalent of Kant’s transcendental synthesis, establishing the interrelationship – dynamic,

functional – between literature and “not literature,” while preserving the “literary fact” (the work in itself) from any kind of reductive causal determination.²⁷ He achieves, in other words, the primary objective of Formalism – “to secure autonomy and concreteness for the discipline of literary studies” (Eikhenbaum 1970, 3) predicated on the establishment of “literariness” as its necessarily privileged object – by sublating the “base concepts” from which it embarks, in what we might term an open, evolutionary synthesis.

In “The Literary Fact,” Tynianov repeatedly characterizes literary evolution as “dialectical” (1977b, 261–5).²⁸ In his own practice he implies that “Formalism,” too, is – or, more accurately, has become – a dialectical method. It may or may not be surprising that it is Shklovsky who belatedly confirms dialectics as the binding category that encompasses – or motivates – each “element” of the Formalist program, as the primary force that lies beneath the surface of “estrangement.”²⁹ Writing in 1928 about the “incredibly complex” problem of documentary cinema in relation to “played” film in an article entitled “Documentary Tolstoy,” Shklovsky concludes that the problem cannot be resolved without taking into account the dialectics of artistic form. A given device, introduced as nonaesthetic, may become aestheticized, that is, it may change its function (1928, 35).

Speaking fifty years later, and confronted with his own earlier bravura contention that “[art’s] flag has never reflected the color of the flag that flies over the city fortress” (Shklovsky 2005, 22), he replies: “I’ll just say that there’s no need to stand around staring at flags. Because sometimes something turns out be revolutionary that we knew to be anti-revolutionary, and then it turns out be anti-revolutionary ... and so on. But, of course, that theory of mine was incorrect” (Vitale 2012, 100). It is as if the device of parallelism has been mobilized across the decades in order to emphasize the (dialectical) continuity of art and life, of the aesthetic and the political. Formalism, Shklovsky acknowledges, has disinvented itself, but not, as we can see from our privileged perspective “after,” through metamorphosis into the cognate phenomenon of Structuralism; it has sought and found, in its own beyond, the redeeming force of history, dialectically conceived.

Some months after Lenin’s death, Shklovsky, in the company of Tynianov, Eikhenbaum, Iakubinskii, Boris Kazanskii, and Boris Tomashevskii, contributed to an issue of the journal *Lef* that was partly devoted to Lenin. The editorial reproduced an advertisement for busts of Lenin – “in clay, lacquered, bronze, marble, granite” and either “life-size or twice life-size” (*Lef* 1924, 4) – and demanded prophetically that

Lenin must not be “canonized”: “do not create a cult in the name of a person who spent his whole life battling against cults” (1924, 4). Shklovsky’s contribution, “Lenin as Decanonizer,” muses on the process of renaming organizations and institutions that was initiated in a flood by Lenin’s death (indeed, the city in which Shklovsky was writing had been renamed “Leningrad” within a week of Lenin’s passing). Renaming is presented as a process close in spirit to Lenin’s political (and rhetorical) practice, in that it is “partitive/separative,” a means of “disconnecting a concept from an old word that no longer corresponds to it” – the relevant lexical series here being social democracy-bolshevism-communism (Shklovsky 1924, 53). Yet renaming something that has not in itself undergone change – a building or a street, for example – though unexceptionable in general, becomes problematic when it is done indiscriminately.³⁰ If every factory or museum becomes the “October” or “Lenin” factory/museum, the name loses its meaning – and so too does the object to which it is applied. In other words, although Shklovsky does not say it in quite such explicit terms, our perception of the (indiscriminately) renamed object becomes automatized.

Lenin, in his political practice, in his very speech, was and remains for Shklovsky an antidote to such automatization. The dominant of his verbal style is the “absence of incantation” typical of so much revolutionary rhetoric, a resistance to the blurring of the relations between word and thing: “Every speech, every article seems to begin again from the beginning. There are no terms; they appear only in the midst of the given thing, as a direct result of [Lenin’s] work of separation” (Shklovsky 1924, 55). When Lenin coins the neologism *komchvanstvo* – a conjoining of *kommunisticheskii* (Communist) and *chvanstvo* (conceit, false pride) it is because “The word is created in front of our very eyes and at the same time emphasizes its own contradictory relationship to the linguistic base, which in fact exists only for the purpose of being contradicted” (1924, 55).

In case his reader has not sensed the intended parallel between this formulation and the artistic “thing” being perceived in its “artisticness” against the background of other artistic (and nonartistic) things, Shklovsky obliges by continuing that: “In this connection the fundamental device of Lenin’s style is very close to that of Lev Tolstoy. Lenin is against the name, he creates each time a new relationship between word and object” (1924, 56). The “device of art,” of which Tolstoy is Shklovsky’s favored exemplar, is estrangement, which works to de-automatize perception; decanonization is also de-automatization. Art is estrangement, but estrangement is more than art. Shklovsky has learned what he perhaps always understood,

but was reluctant to acknowledge, in the name of art, literature and (the discipline of) literary studies: that the renewal of the world beyond literature [to “resurrect things and destroy pessimism” (Shklovsky 1990a, 40)] is more important than the renewal of literature, even if literature is the privileged renewer of both. Perhaps more significantly for a representative of the “formal method,” Shklovsky’s understanding of these processes – like Lenin’s and Tynianov’s – is as profoundly dialectical as the processes.³¹

Notes

- 1 See also Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 33 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1966), 462–502.
- 2 The Cross was personally presented by General Lavr Kornilov, who would soon lead the disastrous assault on the Petrograd Soviet in August 1917 which fatally damaged any remaining vestige of the authority of the Provisional Government. See Shklovsky 2004, 45–56.
- 3 This renewed threat was, in a sense, predicted by Shklovsky in explaining his rationale for continuing war against Germany: “at the front, the enemy is a reality: it’s clear that if you go home, he’ll come right behind you” (2004, 59).
- 4 The background to this, at the level of legitimate politics, was the elections to the Constituent Assembly that took place in November 1917 and that effectively destroyed the provisional alliance between the Bolsheviks and the left-wing SRs. Shklovsky is an unreliable witness in this respect, first telling us that he could not “remember the exact tallies” of votes cast in his own regiment (2004, 103), later that “the SR slate received two-thirds of the votes; the Bolsheviks, one-third” (2004, 113). The latter figure accurately represents the overall result: the SRs received almost twice the number of votes than did the Bolsheviks and therefore emerged clearly as the largest party in the assembly. The assembly sat on January 5, 1918; it was dissolved the following day. For an account of the elections and subsequent dissolution of the assembly, see Edward H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*. Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1950), 109–23; and Christopher Read, *Lenin: A Revolutionary Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 191–3.
- 5 As Shklovsky writes with admirable frankness, “We wanted to shoot. To break glass. We wanted to fight” (2004, 139).
- 6 The trials have been immortalized in episodes 2 and 3 of Dziga Vertov’s *Kino-Pravda* series (both 1922). An excerpt from episode 2, showing the arrival of accused, witnesses, and counsel for the defence and the prosecution (including Anatolii Lunacharsky) can be viewed online: “Большая Дмитровка, Театральная площадь в начале 20 века. Процесс правых эсеров. Кинохроника,” YouTube.com, last modified September 3, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lajjo-9Fzz4>.
- 7 It is not incidental to record that “Formalist” and “formal method” were terms applied to *Opoiaz* and related tendencies by their *opponents*, and

- were consistently rejected by those to which they were applied. See Osip M. Brik, "The So-called Formal Method." *Formalist Theory: Russian Poetics in Translation*. Vol. 4. Edited by L. M. O'Toole and Ann Shukman, 90–1 (Oxford: RTP Publications, 1977); Boris M. Eikhenbaum, "Vokrug voprosa o formalistakh" [Concerning the Question of the Formalists], *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 5 (1924): 1–12; Eikhenbaum 1970, 3–37.
- 8 In certain cases in which reference is given to an English translation of primary texts by the Formalists, the translation has been modified.
 - 9 A version of the published article of 1914 was first delivered in 1913 at an evening of Futurist poetry at the "Stray Dog" cabaret in St. Petersburg.
 - 10 Jakobson had experimented in his youth with translational verse. See "From Alyagrov's Letters." *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance*. Edited by Robert Louis Jackson and Stephen Rudy, 1–5 (New Haven, CT: Yale Russian and East European Publications, 1985).
 - 11 "Art as Device" closes with the promise that "I will say no more about questions of [poetic] rhythm, because a separate book will be devoted to them" (Shklovsky 1990b, 14). No such book was ever written.
 - 12 Brik ceased to play a direct role in *Opoiiaz* in 1919, when he relocated to Moscow with his wife Lily and Vladimir Maiakovskii following the transfer of Soviet power from Petrograd to Moscow in the previous year. LEF's orientation as a form of Futurist-Bolshevik alliance is clear from the first issue of its journal, in which Brik announces himself as a "Constructivist-Productionist" (Brik 1923) and bids farewell to Formalism with the epithet "so-called" (*tak nazhyvaemyi*) (Brik 1977). Shklovsky on his eventual return after his second enforced departure, would also prefer Moscow to (now) Leningrad, and LEF to any possible resurrection of *Opoiiaz*. A heavily didacticized "sequel" to "Sound Repetitions" would appear only in 1927, under the title "Rhythm and Syntax," with the clear purpose of instructing the proletarian writer in the techniques of poetry. See "Ritm i sintaksis (Materialy k izucheniiu stikhotvornoii rechi)" (Rhythm and Syntax [Materials for the Study of Verse Language]). *Lef*, no. 3 (1927): 15–20; *Lef*, no. 4, 23–29; *Lef*, no. 5, 32–37; *Lef*, no. 6, 33–39.
 - 13 Jakobson is careful to emphasize that he is representing a position (Iakubinskii's) that was held "in 1916" (1969, 17).
 - 14 This has been read, with some justification, as a staging post on the journey toward what would, in the later part of the decade, be called "Structuralism," in implied rejection of the "Formalism" that had preceded it. In fact, the development of Formalism has been consistently figured in terms of its evolution toward Structuralism, and just as consistently in terms of a theoretical "schism" between Shklovsky and Tynianov. For an overview of these arguments, see Steiner 1984.
 - 15 Jakobson acts as the main "carrier" of the theoretical ideas of the period through Prague and eventually to the United States, inaugurating a new upsurge in literary linguistic research with "Linguistics and Poetics" and cementing the relationship between Formalism and Structuralism in his

contribution to Tzvetan Todorov's *Théorie de la littérature: textes des formalistes Russes*. It is not entirely idle to speculate on how the course of literary theory in the twentieth century might have been altered if Shklovsky or Tynianov had chosen exile in the place of, or along with, Jakobson.

- 16 "Art as Device" opens with a rejection of the adage, attributed to Aleksandr Potebnia, that "art [poetry] is thinking in images" (Shklovsky 1990b, 1), emphasizing the fact that Shklovsky intends his "poetics of the device" to supersede Potebnia's "poetics of the image." See also Shklovsky, "Potebnia." *Poetika. Sborniki po poeticheskomy iazyku* (Petrograd: Opoiay, 1919), 3–6.
- 17 The term has been translated as "concatenation" in Eikhnenbaum (1970) and "threading" in Shklovsky (1990d).
- 18 "Art has always been free of life. Its flag has never reflected the color of the flag that flies over the city fortress" (Shklovsky 2005, 22).
- 19 Neither does it mean, as Pavel Medvedev would later charge, that the work (or the genre to which it belongs) is merely "a certain grouping of ... mechanically assembled ... devices," merely the sum of its devices (1978, 129).
- 20 Shklovsky's location of the female person among the inanimate or abstract might attract legitimate concern, although, in the context of our earlier discussion, "the fear of war" takes on particular interest as an object of automatization, which emerges by implication as a welcome and even necessary phenomenon in certain situations. The clear inference is that Shklovsky could not have led his company into combat and suffered a wound no less serious for the seemingly casual manner of its infliction had his perception of the realities of the situation not been dulled – automatized – by the daily grind of life at the front. For Shklovsky's account of the "charge," particularly his recollection that, at the decisive moment, "everything around me seemed remote, sparse, strange and still," see Shklovsky 2004, 45–53.
- 21 Shklovsky confuses the issue by associating "the rhythm of prose" with the "rhythm of a work song" as factors equally liable to "automatize" (1990b, 14), thereby exposing the relatively undeveloped nature of his thinking, precisely, on the technique (devices) of automatization/de-automatization in 1917.
- 22 For varying contrary positions on this question, see Michael Holquist and Ilya Kliger, "Minding the Gap: Toward a Historical Poetics of Estrangement," *Poetics Today* 26, no. 4 (2005): 613–36; Meir Sternberg, "Telling in Time (III): Chronology, Estrangement, and Stories of Literary History," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 1 (2006): 125–235; and Svetlana Boym, "The Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt." *Critical Theory in Russia and the West*. Edited by Alastair Renfrew and Galin Tihanov, 186–235 (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 23 See, e.g., Douglas Robinson, *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
- 24 Morgan calls MacDiarmid "an eccentric homespun avant-gardist," but the comparison is valid (2004, 99). The question of influence in this connection is an unprepossessing one: Shklovsky, in line with the Formalists' general

- iconoclasm, “generally rel[ies] on no-one and cite[s] no-one other than [himself]” (Medvedev 1978, 41).
- 25 In many ways, Veselovsky is, for the Formalists, a partner to Potebnia, the other predecessor on which their own poetics is built through apparent polemical rejection. Very little of Veselovsky’s work is available in English translation, exceptions being Aleksandr Veselovsky, “On the Methods and Aims of Literary History as a Science,” *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 16 (1967): 33–42; and the forthcoming collection edited by Ilya Kliger and Boris Maslov, “Persistent Forms: Explorations in Historical Poetics” (Fordham University Press). See also “Historical Poetics Working Group,” *Historical Poetics: An Online Resource*, last modified September 6, 2010. <http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/historicalpoetics/>.
 - 26 “A work is a system of interrelated factors. The correlation of each given factor with the other factors is its function in relation to the whole system ... the individual work forms part of the system of literature, correlates with the system by genre and by style (though differentiating itself within the system), and that in the literary system of any given period we can speak of the function of the work” (Tynianov 2003, 565).
 - 27 In so doing, he also – as Peter Steiner comes very close to saying (1984, 53–7) – restores late Formalism to the trajectory from which Shklovsky has sought to divert it, namely the fulfilment of Veselovsky’s original projection of a “historical poetics.”
 - 28 The explicit term *dialectical* disappears from Tynianov’s “On Literary Evolution” without in any way undermining its dialectical force.
 - 29 Steiner is one of the very few commentators to take the dialectical nature of Tynianov’s thought entirely seriously (1984, 104–8), and Boris Paramonov is an even rarer example of serious consideration of the broader Hegelian influence on both Tynianov and Shklovsky (Paramonov 1996). See also Douglas Robinson, *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); and Alastair Renfrew, “The Dialectics of Parody,” *Poetics Today* 33, nos. 3–4 (2012): 301–28.
 - 30 The streets of Petrograd-Leningrad were renamed at various points from 1919, and particularly in 1923, often with the names of key figures from the “revolutionary” past – Belinsky, Pestel, etc. – but always with some degree of particularized differentiation. These new names were, Shklovsky suggests, initially a general sign of change (despite their particularity); they would only later become more precise “means of signification” (1924, 54).
 - 31 In the epigraph to his own contribution to the same issue of *Lef*, Tynianov cites Lenin from the summer of 1917: “One must know how to adapt schemes to life, instead of just repeating words that have lost their meaning” (1924, 81). This is preceded in the original “Letter on Tactics” by Lenin’s own insistence that it is necessary, when “[the] fact does not fit into old schemes,” to “take cognisance of real life, of the precise facts of *reality*, and not cling to a theory of yesterday, which, like all theories, at best only outlines the main and the general, only *comes near* to embracing life in all its complexity” (Lenin

1966a, 44). Lenin was not, of course, writing about *literary* “facts”; he emerges nonetheless as a critical source for Tynianov’s reinlection of Formalism in the direction of privileging form only insofar as it constitutes a fact of literary experience.

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Hispanic Watershed: 1922 in Latin America

Michelle Clayton

In 1926, the young Argentinean poet Jorge Luis Borges announced that 1922 had marked a sea change in Latin American writing (Borges 1926, 14).¹ It likely seemed a surprising choice of date for Spanish-language arts.² True, Spain found itself momentarily in the cultural limelight with a Nobel Prize for literature awarded to the (now forgotten) playwright Jacinto Benavente, but in terms of ongoing production on the peninsula, there was more evidence of ventures failing – five Spanish avant-garde magazines folded (*Cosmópolis*, *Ultra*, *Índice*, *Tableros*, and *Prisma*) – or failing to find their moment (the young Federico García Lorca finished his *Poema del cante jondo* in 1921, but it would not see production until 1931). Latin America saw the publication of two radically different collections of poetry, *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía* by the Argentinean Oliverio Girondo and *Trilce* by the Peruvian César Vallejo; although both would eventually prove to be of great importance at home and abroad, they aroused little interest in their moment of publication, which tells us a good deal about the horizon for poetry at that time. Spanish-language poetry on both sides of the Atlantic had been revitalized by the previous generation, most notably Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, but in their wake those *modernistas* left a legion of hackneyed imitators.³ Latin America's most visible and vital lyric provocateur, Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro, had left the continent for Europe in 1916; 1922 found him in Paris, having his own failed experiment with an exhibition of painting-poems, *Salle XIV*, which survived just three days of public scandal before vaporizing into cultural history.⁴ Back home, amidst the overheated centennial celebrations of the 1910s and 1920s, facile tellurism often carried the day, best seen in the consecration of the bombastic José Santos Chocano as “the poet of América” in Lima in 1922.

But Borges was likely referring to two specific things when he declared this watershed. First, the early 1920s saw the gradual return to Latin

America of many artists and writers who had spent the postwar years in Europe in formal or informal apprenticeship. Borges had spent seven years in Switzerland and Spain, from 1914 to 1921, familiarizing himself with German, Russian, and French aesthetics, while also taking part in Spanish literary life in the cafés, salons, and magazines of Madrid and Seville. When he returned to Buenos Aires in early 1921, he brought with him the seeds of new experiment, which would bear fruit over the course of 1922 and beyond. Implicit in his claim, then, is the notion of a *translatio imperii*, beginning in the early 1920s, from European and particularly Spanish to Latin American soil.⁵

Second, 1922 also saw the gestation of aesthetic movements aiming to represent a newly modernizing Latin America, reacting to improved technological infrastructure, rapid urbanization, and massive immigration (from the provinces to the cities in some cases, from abroad in others). Political reforms were underway throughout the continent, inflected by a galvanizing university reform movement, radical politics of an international flavor, revisionary nationalisms in the context of centennial celebrations, and new attention to present-day indigenous and marginalized populations. Postrevolutionary Mexico provides a clear example of this, emblemized in the mural projects begun in various public buildings in 1922, which employed, among others, artist Diego Rivera, fresh from his own European tour.

The general sense of excitement at the emergence of an autochthonous aesthetic is found in the lively exhortations of Puerto Rico's 1922 "Manifiesto euforista," whose movement's name, *euforismo*, marks the moment as one of joy and anticipation.⁶ Across the literary panorama of Latin America, we find an explicit sense of simultaneity of experience and purpose with the rest of the Western hemisphere, an exhilaration – occasionally an anxiety – over the build-up of modern stimuli in the (real or imagined) technologically rebooted landscapes which authors aimed to teach readers to inhabit. There is also, inevitably, a sense of sameness to much of the production, filtered through readings of the same authors: F. T. Marinetti, Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, and Joan Salvat-Pappaseit. Yet certain writers managed to give visual and emotional form to the new sensibility with striking success, and one in particular would sound out a radically new, discordant voice for poetry. In what follows, I map out the two main literary movements which swelled and held ground in 1922, turning then to the two most important poetry collections to appear that year, which would ultimately mark lyric production for years thereafter.

Argentine *Ultraísmo*: Poetry, *Prisma*, *Proa*

The Spanish version of *ultraísmo*, centered in Madrid, effectively began with a Chilean arrival (Huidobro, in 1918) and ended with an Argentinean departure (Borges, in 1921). The movement's name suggested a pushing of limits, yet its modes were relatively moderate, combining Marinetti's futurism (telegraphic style, machine imagery) and Apollinaire's cubism (simultaneous voices and viewpoints, calligrammatic play). *Ultraísmo* placed a particular accent on the production of new images and metaphors, condensed in Borges's 1920 exclamation "queremos ver con ojos nuevos" (we want to see with new eyes).⁷ When Borges left for Buenos Aires in mid-1921, he took the movement with him, and in December of that year, he contributed an essay explaining the new aesthetic to the Argentinean journal *Nosotros*, boiling it down to four essential points: foregrounding metaphor; eliminating mediating phrases; abolishing confessionality; and combining images in novel ways.⁸ This even-tempered presentation of a somewhat conservative new aesthetic was an advertisement for a more radical event that had taken place the previous month but garnered little attention. In November 1921, Borges and two collaborators had quite literally taken the new movement to the streets, pasting the first issue of the broadsheet *Prisma* onto the walls of downtown Buenos Aires.⁹ Instead of simply incorporating the city into poetry, the gesture aimed to insert poetry into the city – in its editors' words, reclaiming poetry for the populace, in the space of the people:

Hemos abanderado de poemas las calles, hemos iluminado con lámparas verbales vuestro camino, hemos ceñido vuestros muros con enredaderas de versos: que ellos, izados como gritos, vivan la momentánea eternidad de todas las cosas, i sea comparable su belleza dadivosa i transitoria, a la de un jardín vislumbreado a la música desparramada por una abierta ventana i que colma todo el paisaje. (Verani 1995, 263)

(We have festooned the streets with poems, we have lit your way with verbal lamps, we have garlanded your walls with climbing verses; may they, held up like shouts, live the momentous eternity of all things, and may their bountiful, transitory beauty be like that of a garden glimpsed to the music pouring out from an open window across the entire landscape.)

We note here the charged gesture of replacing the Castilian "y" with a phonetic "i," asserting a homegrown orthography; but we also hear an echo of Baudelaire in the proximity of *eternidad* and *transitoria*, hinting at the movement's disavowal of a radical break. And although the manifesto attacks the wordiness and preciousness of contemporary poetry, this

“Proclama” is strikingly long-winded, with none of the visual or verbal punchiness of its European counterparts. Attention might initially have been drawn by Norah Borges’s woodcut, or by the nine *ultraísta* poems carved into the broadsheet’s spaces, but it is hard to imagine the casual reader, coming upon this faux advertisement pasted on a wall, hanging around for the punch line.

A second issue of the mural magazine appeared in March 1922, adding the signature of Spanish vanguardist Guillermo de Torre.¹⁰ Taking a swipe at museums as graveyards of culture – a gesture borrowed from the European avant-gardes – *Prisma* #2 casts its poems into the urban marketplace. The emphasis again falls on the democratization of culture, on the free exchange of ideas, still in a distinctly top-down model: where others sell or rent out their poetry, “nosotros, millonarios de vida y de ideas, salimos a regalarlas en las esquinas” (we, immensely rich in life and in ideas, give them away freely on street-corners) (Schwartz 1991, 112).

Responses to both issues seem to have been lukewarm, and no more issues appeared. *Prisma* was replaced halfway through the year by the broadsheet *Proa* (*Prow*), “Revista de renovación literaria” (*A Magazine for Literary Renovation*), a collaboration with Ricardo Güiraldes and Macedonio Fernández – representatives of localist and philosophical avant-gardes respectively – which was printed in Borges’s home, featuring a front cover designed by his sister Norah, and circulated freely among friends and in bookstores. True to its name, *Proa* would offer a more guided tour of contemporary literary experimentation than had the somewhat diffuse *Prisma*. The magazine’s first incarnation saw just three issues (August and December 1922 and July 1923), containing writings by authors from various points in the Spanish-speaking world; from 1924 to 1926, it produced an enormously influential second series, whose fifteen issues would carry, among other gems, Borges’s translation of the last page of Molly Bloom’s monologue, along with an essay on *Ulysses*, which he claimed to have encountered shortly after its publication in 1922, making him the novel’s first “aventurero hispánico” (Waisman 2005, 158). This reading would have taken place while Borges was writing his own poetry of the modern city, *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, several of whose poems were scattered throughout avant-garde journals in Spain and Argentina that year, including an *ultraísta* anthology in *Nosotros* in September – the apex and also the closure of the movement.

That closure may have been due in part to *ultraísmo*’s openness. In a significant little text published in *Proa*’s first issue in July 1922, “Al oportuno lector” (*To the Right Reader*) Borges emphasized the eclecticism

of the movement, its hospitality to diverse ideas, and its propensity to change and hence to fade away.¹¹ Borges was already moving away from group pronouncements toward the solo publication of his own poetry and essays on aesthetic themes. And in *Proa's* second issue, in December 1922, Borges reviewed a book of poetry recently published at the far end of the continent by a man who, like Borges, had headed out into the streets of a city at the end of 1921 to plaster his aesthetic manifesto onto its walls, and who would spend 1922 gathering adherents to translate its theory into poetic practice.

Making Noise in Mexico: *Estridentismo*

In late December 1921, the poet Manuel Maples Arce pasted on the walls of downtown Mexico City an unexpected manifesto, featuring eye-catching typography, a Dada-like portrait of the artist as young dandy, and riotous aesthetic proclamations.¹² *Actual No. 1: hoja de vanguardia* (*Current #1: Vanguard Sheet*) contained fourteen points, formally modeled, with eye-popping irreverence, on Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points statement of 1918.¹³ The manifesto's subtitle gave it a further metaphorical twist, advertising it as a "comprimido estridentista," a Stridentist pill for aesthetic indigestion brought on by stale cultural practices. Maples Arce's wit is apparent everywhere in the manifesto, which builds in excitement as it coins its own catchphrases ("Chopin a la silla eléctrica!" [*Chopin to the electric chair!*] appears in point V, and within four lines has turned into a trademark), reveling in the generation of hyperbolic phrases and pseudo-scientific neologisms, placing its author at the center of a new universe of aesthetic creation built on chaos, emerging from the swirling together of names, notions, and artistic possibilities.

The manifesto opens and closes with a virtually identical proclamation: in a time out of joint, its author self-confidently shimmers in the darkness: "yo, gloriosamente aislado, me ilumino en la maravillosa incandescencia de mis nervios eléctricos" (I, in glorious isolation, illuminate myself in the marvelous incandescence of my electric nerves) (Schwartz 1991, 168). What holds him up is an extraordinary faith: in the present as radiant site of human experiment ("asistimos al espectáculo de nosotros mismos" [we attend the spectacle of ourselves] [Schwartz 1991, 163]), in the productiveness of error and the disordering of expression (allowing himself to be interrupted by the sounds and billboards of the modern city), and most importantly, in the simultaneity of aesthetic events and innovation across the globe, leading to a clarion-call for Mexican literature to cosmopolitanize

itself. The manifesto ends with an international “Directorio de vanguardia” listing some two hundred figures from the Iberian, Latin American, North American, French, Italian, German, and Soviet avant-gardes (writers, painters, filmmakers, dramatists, theorists). An intimate familiarity with the works and postulates of these figures gives a confident texture to the manifesto; its author puts virtuoso spins on Marinetti’s machine idolatry, touts Verhaeren’s tentacular urban aesthetic, and riffs off Cendrars’s 1917 prose poem “Profond aujourd’hui” (*Profound Today*), with its constant upheaval of position, pronouns, setting, and scale.

Thus was born the noisy movement of *estridentismo*, whose determination to disturb the peace was inscribed in its name. It took only a year, precisely the span of 1922, for the movement to establish itself, publish more statements (*Actual* would see two more issues, in February and July), and gather acolytes to produce a first group manifesto from its new headquarters in Puebla on January 1, 1923, marked by dada aggression (“afirmemos” [let us affirm] is balanced by the scurrilous “caguémonos” [let us shit on]), and adding a touch of local flavor with the nonsense closing exhortation, “Viva el mole de guajolote!” (Long Live Turkey Mole!) (Schwartz 1991, 170–1).

Halfway through the year, the movement began to produce artworks. The first, Maples Arce’s poetry collection *Andamios interiores* (*Interior Scaffolding*), appeared in July, and was reviewed in *Proa* in December of that year by none other than Borges, who hailed it as a “vivísima muestra del nuevo modo de escribir” (very lively example of the new mode of writing) (1981, 148). Aware of the coincidence in procedure and interests, Borges was careful to criticize what he saw as perishable in the Mexican movement (riotous vocabulary featuring too many modern gadgets) while praising the poetry’s drive toward creating rejuvenated metaphors, witty adjectives, and synesthesia to capture the sensory feel of the modern city. That feel was light-years from the vision that Borges would cement the following year in his own (free-verse) poetry collection *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, depicting a city whose streets remember their prior existence as “campo” (countryside), peopled by speakers whose “palabras / no logran arraigarse en el paisaje” (words / don’t manage to take root in the landscape) and who nostalgically “nos vestimos de previos paisajes” (dress ourselves in previous landscapes).¹⁴ Yet Maples Arce’s collection, for all its modern machinery, its playful pseudoscientific language (“sintaxicidio”: syntaxicide), and its title’s suggestion that the lyric subject is being rebuilt from the inside-out (all reminiscent of Italian Futurist manifestoes) is residually romantic in its tracking of the lyric subject’s amorous (mis-)encounters in the city.

And if the poet's mode of reading that city presents itself as deliberately prosaic and technical ("mis ojos deletrean la ciudad algebraica": my eyes spell out the algebraic city), the poetry cleaves to remarkably fixed forms, nine of its ten poems distributing themselves identically over three-page spreads composed largely of carefully plotted alexandrines.

The concern with prosody and with subject-coherence alike is thrown overboard in the second major *estridentista* work to appear that year, Arqueles Vela's *La Señorita Etcétera (Miss Etc.)*, one of the first avant-garde prose narratives in Latin America. It was published in December in a supplement to the mainstream newspaper *El Universal Ilustrado* – one of the prime venues for *estridentista* writings and criticism – and its various sections chart a protagonist's romantic pursuit of a female figure in his passage from the provinces to office life in the city while trying to solidify an artistic career. Both the subject and the female object of his desire, (un)named in the title, morph through a variety of forms and identities through the narrative, eventually finding a mode of interconnection when each assumes a hypermodern mechanical form. A *deus in machina* comes to solve the disconnections of a delirious modernity, experienced intermittently and as ambivalent desire.

Modes of Transport: Girondo's *Twenty Poems* to be Read on the Streetcar

One of the major events of the year, at least in retrospect, was the publication of Oliverio Girondo's *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía (Twenty Poems to Be Read on the Streetcar)*.⁴⁵ The text would in fact appear twice. In 1922, a luxury edition of one thousand copies (eight hundred and fifty numbered, one hundred and fifty signed) was produced in Paris, with paper-type, fonts, and typography selected by Girondo; three years later, a cheaper, smaller, more portable "edición tranviaria" (tram edition) was produced in Argentina. The 1922 edition included ten pastel sketches by the author's own hand, scattered between and sometimes within the twenty poems that make up the collection; the 1925 edition maintained the distribution, while reproducing those sketches in black and white.

The collection takes the form of a travel diary, and its twenty poems cover immense ground: from Europe's major tourist destinations (Brittany, Paris, Biarritz, Venice, Verona, Pallanza, Seville), through Brazilian and Argentinean beach resorts closer to home, to local neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, their squares and cafés; the poetry also makes an unexpected stop in Dakar, an incongruous inclusion until we recognize it as

a port-of-call on the route between Europe and Latin America. Girondo was well acquainted with the European cultural scene, having spent numerous summers of his youth there, and the verve of *Veinte poemas* clearly owes much to its author's ease of movement between Old World and New. (Although most of the poems are dated, they do not follow a chronological sequence, and their darting back and forth underlines this sense of unrestricted mobility.)

The contents of the collection involve local and international tourism, but the title focuses on the place where this avowedly modern poetry is to be consumed: the streetcar. If the poetry sings of travel and leisure, the streetcar reminds the reader of the demands of work and a grinding routine with gaps that need to be filled, the empty time of the commute. With an ironic or perhaps a sarcastic wink, Girondo offers his poems as a stopgap for this empty time, replacing the newspaper or awkward stabs at stranger intimacy with refuge in a lyric that is sketched quickly to be consumed quickly, between the beginning and end of a journey by streetcar. The central argument for the lyric here is that it is bite-sized.

Bite-sized, perhaps, but not for that reason easily digestible. Girondo's twenty poems – particularly in the 1922 edition, with its pastel sketches – are presented as eye candy, and they imagine sweeping travels for their reader at home and abroad; the collection nonetheless subtly traces the ways in which modernity rots the modern subject. Instead of reaching toward the heightened experience of a privileged lyric subject, *Veinte poemas* remains resolutely at the level of habitual experiences of indistinct mass subjects in their places of leisure. Its poems consciously mimic the structure of the promotional tourist ad: interpellating their reader with the promise of the *kinds* of things to which any modern subject is entitled and which he or she has implicitly earned through work. The experiences these poems offer are available for the price of a transatlantic passage, or of a postcard, for those who cannot afford to travel; indeed we might view the illustrations that accompany the poems as postcards. The poems cover over the emptiness of experience with promises of new forms of leisure and desire, to be realized only through constant movement. Thus the collection rushes from point to point in its world tour, stopping only briefly for respite at the port town of Dakar in Senegal, historically an important trading post, whose history contains both foodstuffs and the slave trade: traffic in desires and bodies. But this is implied rather than stated: the poems present a string of destinations whose history has been erased, and whose function is in turn to erase, however momentarily, the memory of the tourists who visit them.

On the rare occasions when lyric subjectivity does flare up in these poems, it is only to underline its inadequate storage capacity, as in “Apunte callejero” (Street Note): “Pienso en dónde guardaré los quioscos, los faroles, los transeúntes, que se me entran por las pupilas. Me siento tan lleno que tengo miedo de estallar... Necesitaría dejar algún lastre sobre la vereda” (I wonder where I will keep the kiosks, the streetlamps, the pedestrians, who come in through my eyes. I’m so stuffed I’m afraid I may explode... I may have to drop some ballast on the sidewalk) (Girondo 1999, 12). The collection is linked by the logic of a roving eye, mapping out the physical movements of mass tourism and the accompanying inner movements of desire, in a series of poems that fix on public places only to tear the most intimate relations out into the open. In these poems everything, even internal organs, is on the verge of spilling out of its container, subjected to the “mirada corrosiva” (corrosive gaze) of the public (“Café-concierto,” *Café-Concert*) (Girondo 1999, 8) which “ensucia las cosas que se exhiben en los escaparates” (dirties the goods on display in shop windows) (“Pedestre,” *Pedestrian*) (Girondo 1999, 21). The viewpoint of these poems entangles itself with the massed subjects of modernity, all of whom, while consuming one another’s body parts, teeter on the brink of falling to pieces. Barely held together by the onrush of momentary desires, they entangle themselves with the objects –human and inhuman – in their surroundings, turning into mechanized versions of themselves as they imitate those surroundings, in images earned less from poetry than from slapstick movies – as in “Plaza” (*Square*), in which a pregnant woman “hace gestos de semáforo a un vigilante” (makes traffic signals to a guard) (Girondo 1999, 23).

These subjects lose parts of themselves in the rush of the modern city [in “Apunte callejero,” “al llegar a una esquina, mi sombra se separa de mí, y de pronto, se arroja entre las ruedas de un tranvía”: on arriving at a corner, my shadow splits off from me and, all of a sudden, throws itself under the wheels of a streetcar (Girondo 1999, 12)], or are torn to pieces in the casual visual violence of modernity’s leisure spaces. The beach scene of “Croquis en la arena” (*Sketch in the Sand*), for example, consists of:

Brazos.
 Piernas amputadas.
 Cuerpos que se reintegran.
 Cabezas flotantes de caucho. (Girondo 1999, 9)

Arms.
Amputated legs.
Bodies putting themselves back together.
Floating rubber heads.

In moments of *mise-en-abyme* in individual poems, images of what is being viewed are offered for sale, through the lens of a degraded eroticism that suggests that everything is for purchase; “Croquis en la arena,” for instance, alludes to photographs that sneak close-up shots of female bathers, then reproduces such an image as a sketch within the poem, producing a packaged and eroticized version of a fleeting sensation (underlined in the poem’s title). There is no outside to this media-shaped world, but also, effectively, no inside.

And yet, there is a lightness and verve to this poetry that allows its lyricism to coast along on wheels oiled by irony. The result is a verbal-visual sketch that excoriates the flattening of Western mass culture, while paradoxically, with tongue in cheek, making a claim for the Latin American capacity to participate in this kind of consumptive cosmopolitanism, as stated in the dedication to Gironde’s elite companions at the eating club “La Púa,” which emphasizes the digestive capacities of local stomachs. But the poetry’s main target is lyric poetry, as suggested in its pointed epigraph: “ningún prejuicio más ridículo que el prejuicio de lo sublime” (there is no prejudice so ridiculous as that of the sublime) (Gironde 1999, 4). This is the shared goal of Gironde’s collection, of *ultraísmo*, of *estridentismo*, of 1922 poetics: to demythicize the lyric sublime, bringing it down to ground level, to the unsettling urban street.

“Who’s Making All That Racket?”: César Vallejo’s *Trilce*

Among the seventy-seven poems that make up César Vallejo’s 1922 collection *Trilce*, there is one, XXXII, that connects directly to an urban aesthetic.¹⁶ A poet sits in a room trying to write, but his attempt at composition keeps getting interrupted by heat, hunger, and the sounds of the street outside. The poem bears all the hallmarks of avant-garde poetry: typographical play, fragmented lines, the jolting mimesis of disconnected street sounds, including the famously distorted “serpentínica u del bizcochero / enjirafada al tímpano” (serpentine e of the sweet-roll vendor / grafted to the eardrum) (Vallejo 2007, 231). But where his contemporaries tend to place their accent on the sights of modernity, Vallejo is interested in its sounds: he substitutes orality for billboards, hearing for seeing, in an overheated context in which his pen and voice give out at the same time. The voice in this poem falls silent in part because it has no one to speak to, floundering amid the city’s competing voices. Conversely, but involving the same dynamic, the collection’s very first poem presents a testy voice grumbling to itself about a voice outside the poem that interrupts its

own work. The friction of voices throughout the collection motivates the poetry's movement. Overthrowing a *modernista* commitment to harmony, *Trilce* instead offers, as its first poem puts it, "bulla" (racket), "los más soberbios bemoles" (the most grandiose B-flats) (Vallejo 2007, 166–7), a disharmony of monotonous notes and cacophonous cries that more accurately capture the sounds and senses of modern experience.

Hostile early criticism was quite content to write this poetry off as sheer cacophony. Although it was received rapturously by a small group of adherents, who hailed it as the voice of a new continent articulating itself into existence (conjuncting avant-garde and postcolonial poetics), the collection shocked the conservative literary establishment of Lima on its appearance in 1922. It is still easy to see why. Mutilating *modernismo*, ripping rhetoric to pieces, *Trilce* presented the emergence of a disconcertingly human, poetically incorrect lyric voice, belonging to a speaker who complains, stutters, and fails to keep hold of his own discourse, who makes spelling mistakes and invents words, who refuses to separate scientific and literary language, who sometimes eschews language altogether in favor of numbers, who reveals himself in moments of the basest physicality – yet who also, paradoxically, soars lyrically.

In his first collection, *Los heraldos negros* (*The Black Heralds*; 1919), Vallejo had worked his way back to a zero degree of language, grinding down previous discourses in order to start over in *Trilce*. His experiments show coincidences with some contemporary avant-gardes with which he was nonetheless unfamiliar – the quest for a primal language in Russian Cubo-Futurism, for instance, or the Dada sound poetry of Hugo Ball or Kurt Schwitters. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Vallejo provided few indicators of his own procedure, forcing his readers to approach *Trilce's* language from the inside, experiencing it as a radically new lyric language being forged in the present tense. Indeed an early reviewer's conclusion that "Vallejo ha escrito uno de aquellos libros frente al cual la crítica fracasa" (Vallejo has written the kind of book before which criticism fails)¹⁷ may still resonate with readers today; this notoriously difficult collection both resists reading and demands it, playing an irresistible game of push and pull with its reader. Its subjects and objects alike are mobile, shape shifting, and surprisingly moody, throwing the reader into constant semantic, sensorial, intellectual, and emotional realignment.

Trilce XLIV, for instance, presents a piano on the move, chasing both sounds and the listener's emotions down tunnels of pleasure and pain like an unpredictable, shape-shifting animal (Vallejo 2007, 254–5). In *Trilce* V, the speaker attempts to describe the organic phenomenon of a "grupo

dicotiledón” or “dicotyledonous group”); invoking the arts of music, painting, dance, his formulations reject these arts as parallels in the very moment or act of invocation:

y piense en son de no ser escuchado,
y crome y no sea visto.
Y no glise en el gran colapso.

*it should think as though it's not being listened to,
it should chrome and not be seen.*

And not glissé into the grand collapse. [trans. modified] (Vallejo 2007, 174–5)

By the end, all the poem’s interpretive feints – further involving numbers, biology, costume jewelry, marriage – collapse into the ambiguously affective exhalation, “Ah grupo bicardiaco” (Oh bicardiac group), leaving the reader with what may be a rest, a pause, an admiration, or a withdrawal. The notorious IX, “Vusco volvvver de golpe el golpe” (*I sdrive to returrrrn at a blow the blow*) (Vallejo 2007, 182–3), attempts to put into language the attempt to have a full bodily experience, referring in turn to books, animals, arithmetic procedures, mathematical formulae, farming, and mining, in its rendition of a sexual encounter that seems to fail, not so much because the body prevails over language, or because the body cannot do without language, but because a feeling of plenitude or of a perfect fit adds up to a betrayal of experience. Indeed the collection repeatedly declares its investment in imperfection, emblemized in the figure of the Venus de Milo, whose appearance in XXXVI (Vallejo 2007, 238–9) leaves the speaker feeling excessively symmetrical (characteristically, he feels this excess in a decidedly minor spot, his little left finger). *Trilce* closes on a note of imperfection, imperfection understood as incompleteness, the speaker protesting that he has not yet brought all his “cuerdas vocales” (vocal chords) into play (Vallejo 2007, 322–3).

While trying on all these voices for poetry through this demanding collection, the speaker’s attention – his ability to keep his mind on the lyric – repeatedly gets interrupted by hunger, mood swings, pain, and pleasure, which sometimes suspend the ability to produce poetry, and sometimes radically expand its scope. The poetry of *Trilce* never lets us forget that someone is making it, that it is the product of labor and strain, not just poetic or cerebral but also physical; the poems insistently reveal the body behind the poetry’s production, engaged in carousing, playing, conducting experiments, eating, drinking, defecating, making love, but not explicitly starting to sing until the final poem. And if it serves as the material base for the poetry, the body is also, literally, the matter of these poems,

which catalog hair, temples, eyelids, eyes, ears, noses, cheeks, dimples, lips, teeth, jaws, necks, napes, breasts, sexual organs, flanks, hips, thighs, knees, shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, fists, hands, feet, nails, fingers, and toes – not stopping at the visible anatomy but tunneling under its skin to reach skeletons, bones, vertebrae, ribs, hearts, arteries, ovaries, tear ducts, alveoli, glands, membranes, tympanums, and vocal chords.

These proliferating parts hint at *Trilce's* investment in metonymy: an emphasis on bits of the material world and its history, a rejection of the similes and metaphors that imprint the work of so many of his contemporaries. They also point to ongoing calculations within the poetry: a covert procedure whereby the poet aims to extract value from the typically nonproductive labor of the lyric. Almost anything that *can* be calculated in the collection (times, coins, temperature, body parts, poems) *is* calculated; the poems keep adding things up, and when they find nothing to add – no coins to rub together (XLVIII) – they start extracting meaning from dispossession and loss. This lyric subject in XXXVI constantly strives to accord himself and his activities a new value, pronouncing himself a “nuevo impar / potente de orfandad!” (new odd number / potent with orphanhood!) (Vallejo 2007, 238–9), like the autonomous object of XXXVIII that “márchase ahora a formar las izquierdas, / los nuevos Menos” (now goes off to form lefts, / the new Minuses) (Vallejo 2007, 242–3). Dispossession and absence are frequently turned, through a syntactical sleight of hand, into presence and possession: capitalization in the middle of XLIX’s “no Hay nadie” (there Is nobody) (Vallejo 2007, 264–5), breaks up the syntax to suggest that nobody in fact *is there*; LVII’s “nada alcanzó a ser libre” (nothing managed to be free) allows “nada” its realization (Vallejo 2007, 280–1).¹⁸

This attempt to generate new value takes us back to the collection’s title, a notorious neologism. The most plausible account, drawn from the reminiscences of a contemporary, presents Vallejo mulling over the “tres libras” (three pounds) it would cost him to reprint the cover for a book that had gone to press with the excessively *modernista* title *Cráneos de bronce* (*Bronze Crania*) (not to mention the self-aggrandizing pseudonym César Perú). According to this account, as Vallejo ruminated aloud on the literal cost to him of declaring a new aesthetic, the tongue-twisting “tressss ... trissss ... triesssse” took him to the word “trilce” (Hart 2013, 95). This biographico-materialist explanation is enormously compelling, and in tune with the poetry’s own convolution of body and language. But perhaps just as compelling – or compelling in conjunction with it – is the idea that in this title we hear the mingling of two affects: “triste” and “dulce,” sad and

sweet.¹⁹ This affective crossing of matter, language, and emotion encapsulates the complicated ways in which *Trilce* resists, appeals, and endures.

Notes

- 1 The announcement included a note of caution: “la fecha es tanteadora: se trata de una situación de conciencia que ha ido definiéndose poco a poco” (*the date is approximate; it involves a state of mind which has been defining itself little by little*). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Brazil falls outside the scope of this essay, but 1922 was a banner year for avant-garde aesthetics, seeing not only the *Week of Modern Art* in Sao Paulo, featuring a remarkable lineup of poets, artists, and theorists, but also the publication of Mario de Andrade’s poetry collection *Pauliceia desvairada* (*Hallucinated City*), containing an outsized oratorio to be performed by the entire city, and introduced by a key text on poetic polyphony, the brazenly titled “Extremely Interesting Preface.” Vicky Unruh presents a multi-regional exploration of the themes and events of the period in her *Latin American Vanguard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
- 3 For a reading of *modernismo*’s transatlanticism, see Alejandro Mejías-López, *The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010).
- 4 The exhibition was effectively forgotten over the next eighty years until a 2001 exhibition, accompanied by a lustrous and well-documented catalog with essays by René de Costa, Rosa Sarabia, and others. See *Salle XIV: Vicente Huidobro y las artes plásticas* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2001).
- 5 A jostling for cultural supremacy would take place in various forms over the subsequent decade, concretized in a late 1920s debate over the proper “meridian” of Spanish-language writing: Madrid, Buenos Aires, or Mexico City.
- 6 The manifesto is reprinted in Schwartz 1991, 188–9.
- 7 The text from which this quote is taken, “Al margen de la moderna lírica,” is reprinted in Verani 1995, 250. On *ultraísmo* in general, see Gloria Videla’s *El ultraísmo: estudios sobre movimientos poéticos de vanguardia en España* (Madrid: Gredos, 1963). On the trope of “newness” in Argentinean *ultraísmo* and beyond, see Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988), 95–120.
- 8 A reprint of the article, “Ultraísmo,” is found in Verani 1995, 264–9.
- 9 The text of the mural magazine’s first issue is reprinted in Verani 1995, 261–3.
- 10 A reprint of the second issue’s text is found in Schwartz 1991, 111–12.
- 11 Reprinted in Schwartz 1991, 222.
- 12 Tatiana Flores unpacks the manifesto in her *Mexico’s Revolutionary Avant-Gardes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Elissa J. Rashkin’s *The Stridentist Movement in Mexico* (Plymouth: Lexington, 2009) maps the movement’s facets.
- 13 Reprinted in Schwartz 1991, 162–9.

- 14 These lines are taken from poems published in various magazines in 1922: from “Noche de San Juan” (Midsummer’s Eve), in *Proa* 1, no. 1 (August); “Tarde lacia” (Slow Afternoon), in *Tableros* 2, no. 4 (February); and “Siesta,” in *Ultra* 2, no. 24 (March), reprinted in *Textos recobrados 1919–29* (Barcelona: Emecé, 1997).
- 15 Raúl Antelo’s edition of Girondo’s *Obra completa* includes contemporary responses and an excellent selection of recent critical texts.
- 16 Julio Ortega’s edition of *Trilce* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991) contains an invaluable introductory essay and a digest of critical responses to each poem. Translations from Vallejo’s poetry are taken from *The Complete Poetry: A Bilingual Edition*. Edited and translated by Clayton Eshleman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- 17 See C. González Posada, “Trilce – nuevo libro de Vallejo,” *El Tiempo*, November 12, 1922. Reprinted in *César Vallejo: Poesía completa*. Edited by Ricardo Silva-Santisteban, 183 (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1997).
- 18 This generative play of language resonates with works by two of Vallejo’s poetic contemporaries: Rainer Maria Rilke, who in 1922 was completing his *Duino Elegies* and composing the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and Wallace Stevens, whose poem “The Snow Man” was published in late 1921.
- 19 This notion has been attributed to various critics, but as it occurs to more than one reader without exposure to the critical history, it seems to belong in the public domain.

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*Restoration Dramas: Hofmannsthal's
The Great World Theater of Salzburg and
Cocteau's Antigone*

Matt Wilson Smith

Never say about anything, I have lost it, but say I have restored it.

– *The Enchiridion* of Epictetus

From the creation of the Soviet Union to Mussolini's March on Rome, 1922 would seem to be the year of triumph for European radicals both left and right. Yet it was also, for many, a year of return: to antiquity, to classicism, to order. This basically conservative retrenchment combined a deep suspicion of democracy with a desire to renew social customs rather than to overthrow them; *tradition* was the watchword even when *revolution* was sometimes the rhetoric. An international phenomenon, interwar conservatism has been too frequently dismissed as quasifascist or "collaborationist," a dismissal that misses its distinctiveness and significance. As a result, affinities between movements such as "Conservative Revolution" in Germany and *Le rappel-à-l'ordre* in France, or journals such as *Valori plastici* in Italy and the *Criterion* in England, or philosophers such as Miguel de Unamuno, George Santayana, and Ivan Ilyin have received relatively little scholarly attention, and two of the most prominent dramatists of the period – Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929) and Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) – have rarely if ever been considered together, much less as part and parcel of a broader cultural attitude.

There are, to be sure, significant differences between the two. Though Hofmannsthal was barely fifteen years older than Cocteau, those fifteen years were crucial, giving him at times the air of a nineteenth-century visitor to the twentieth, a world-of-yesterday sensibility exacerbated by the sudden collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following World War I. It was a catastrophe that Hofmannsthal felt deeply – there is nothing comparable to it in Cocteau's life, except perhaps the death of his lover Raymond Radiguet – and it gives Hofmannsthal's work a yearning that contrasts with Cocteau's exuberant *au courant*-ishness. But such differences can obscure deeper commonalities. These can be found in certain

interwar essays as well as two plays that premiered in 1922: Hofmannsthal's *The Great World Theater of Salzburg* (*Das Salzburger große Welttheater*) and Cocteau's *Antigone*. Both were revisions of antique classics, with the former based on the sacramental play *The Great Theater of the World* (*El gran teatro del mundo*) by the Spanish Golden Age playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca and the latter on the *Antigone* of Sophocles. Taken as a whole, these essays and dramas embody a certain cultural position that can be found across the European intellectual landscape of the twenties.

The position had two complementary aspects. The first we may call *nationalist cosmopolitanism*: the idea that one's particular nation is cosmopolitan "by nature," and that it is precisely by being most truly a citizen of one's homeland that one becomes most truly a citizen of the world. The second we may call *conservative modernism*: the idea that "making it new" can and must be harmonized with tradition, that premodern ways of being (whether classical, medieval, renaissance, or baroque) can and must be reawakened to revivify modern art. There is something apparently paradoxical about each of these aspects, a surface contradictoriness that speaks to the deep divides this line of interwar conservatism sought to bridge.

A prolific and influential essayist, Hofmannsthal crystalized the attitude in prose writings from the late teens through the twenties. Building on Novalis's remark that "Germanness is cosmopolitanism" ("*Deutschheit ist Kosmopolitanismus*"), Hofmannsthal found that Austria's history in particular marks it as a symbol for a larger, pan-European tradition: "Whoever says 'Austria' says indeed: a thousand-year struggle for Europe, a thousand-year mission for Europe, a thousand-year belief in Europe" ("*Wer sagt Oesterreich der sagt ja: tausendjähriges Ringen um Europa, tausendjährige Sendung durch Europa, tausendjähriger Glaube an Europa*") (Hofmannsthal 2011, 91, 97; 1975, 34.329, 34.334–5). It is the essence of the Austrian Idea

to be at once border march, border wall, and settlement between the European empire and an always chaotically moving mixture of peoples camped before its gates, half Europe and half Asia, and at the same time a flowing border, a point of departure for colonization, for penetration, with cultural waves propagating toward the East, but also receiving and ready to receive the counter-wave striving westward.

zugleich Grenzmark, Grenzwall, Abschluß zu sein zwischen dem europäischen Imperium und einem dessen Toren vorlagernden stets chaotisch bewegten Völkergemeinschaft Halb-Europa, Halb-Asien und zugleich fließende Grenze zu sein, Ausgangspunkt der Kolonisation, der Penetration, der sich nach Osten

fortgeplanzenden Kulturwellen, ja empfangend auch wieder und bereit zu empfangen die westwärts strebende Gegenwelle. (Hofmannsthal 2011, 100; 1975, 34.205)

If Austria stands at the center of Eurasia, then Salzburg, the site of the festival Hofmannsthal would help found, is the navel's navel, "the heart of the heart of Europe. It lies halfway between Switzerland and the Slavic nations, halfway between northern Germany and Lombardy; it lies in the middle between south and north, between mountain and plain, between the heroic and the idyllic" ("*das Herz von Herzen Europas. Es liegt halbwegs zwischen der Schweiz und den slawischen Ländern, halbwegs dem nördlichen Deutschland und dem lombardischen Italien; es liegt in der Mitte zwischen Süd und Nord, zwischen Berg und Ebene, zwischen dem Heroischen und dem Idyllischen*") (Hofmannsthal 1975, 34.233–4).¹

Nationalistic and cosmopolitan aspects of this vision are impossible to separate. The Hapsburg Empire had essentially been dissolved just two years earlier, leaving a widespread sense of cultural loss in its wake. The festival aimed to fill that void by reconstructing Austrian identity. Crucial to that identity was a vision of a distinct *Lebenswelt* shared by south-German and Austrian peoples, a way of living, feeling, and thinking deeply rooted in theatrical tradition. As Hofmannsthal writes in "The Salzburg Festivals," "Since time immemorial the Austro-Bavarian stock, among all German stocks, was the bearer of the theatrical ability. Everything that lived on the German stage, the poetic element as well as the performative, originated here" ("*Der bayrisch-österreichische Stamm war von je der Träger des theatralischen Vermögens unter allen deutschen Stämmen. Alles, was auf der deutschen Bühne lebt, wurzelt hier, so das dichterische Element, so das schauspielerische*") (Hofmannsthal 1975, 34.233).² Hofmannsthal imagined the Salzburg Festival, then, as no mere theatrical program, but a world-historical event situated at the center of Eurasia with nothing less than the redemption of the idea of Europe at stake. In 1927, he would famously call for "a conservative revolution of a scope that is unknown to European history" ("*eine konservative Revolution von einem Umfange, wie die europäische Geschichte ihn nicht kennt*"), a project that the Salzburg Festival did more to further than any other creation of Hofmannsthal's (Hofmannsthal 2011, 168; 1955a, 413).

In Hofmannsthal's vision, great historical ages rest upon one another at Salzburg like layers of a cake. First and foremost, the festival aimed to reawaken a certain time of Catholic dominance and social wholeness primarily associated, for Hofmannsthal as for many Austrians, with the baroque. The baroque image of the world as a hierarchically ordered and

divinely ordained *realm*, in which each person has a proper role to play for the benefit of a heavenly spectator, epitomized Hofmannsthal's post-war conservatism. This peculiar combination of totality and theatricality lays at the heart of what Michael Steinberg, in his study of the festival, has called the "Austrian historicist-conservative phenomenon par excellence" (1990, 2), the ideology of the baroque. At the same time, with his plan to return the *Volk* to its roots and to reweave the frayed social fabric through a totalizing theatrical spectacle at once ancient and modern, Hofmannsthal strove to be for Salzburg what Richard Wagner was for his own festival theater at Bayreuth, with the plays he wrote for the Salzburg Festival functioning (like the Oberammergau Passion Play or Wagner's *Parsifal*) as sacral works rooted in a particular sacral site. The similarities between the two festivals are by no means accidental, though Hofmannsthal argued that, while Bayreuth is dedicated to a great artist, the Salzburg Festival wants to serve the whole classical heritage of a people.³ This quasi-Wagnerian *folk-ideology*, which differed from Nazi views in its embrace of a certain cosmopolitanism and its relative rejection of anti-Semitism, was central of Hofmannsthal's conservative modernism.⁴

In 1918, a year after the publication of "The Austrian Idea," Cocteau issued his own back-to-roots manifesto. Titled "Cock and Harlequin" ("*Le coq et l'arlequin*"), the text was taken up by the group of young composers dubbed "Les Six" (Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre), a group widely associated with a return to simplicity, classical structure, tonality, popular taste, and a certain "Gallic spirit." The work, well-known in Parisian art circles by the early twenties, received yet wider circulation as part of Cocteau's influential essay collection *The Call to Order* (*Le rappel à l'ordre*, 1926). Against some motley modernism that sought to crossbreed too many foreign elements – a modernism symbolized by *l'harlequin* – Cocteau argued for the homegrown rootedness of *le coq*: "Russian music is admirable because it is Russian music. Russian-French music or German-French music is necessarily bastard, even if it be inspired by a Moussorgsky, a Stravinsky, a Wagner, or a Schoenberg. The music I want must be French, of France" ("*La musique russe est admirable parce qu'elle est la musique russe. La musique française russe ou la musique française allemande est forcément bâtarde, même si elle s'inspire d'un Moussorgsky, d'un Strawinsky [sic], d'un Wagner, d'un Schoenberg. Je demande une musique française de France*") (1926a, 17; 1926b, 26).

Here Cocteau is, perhaps surprisingly, even more exuberantly nationalistic than Hofmannsthal. Anti-Germanism in particular is a leitmotif

of the “Cock and Harlequin,” which opens with an homage to Roland Garros, the French fighter pilot who escaped from a German POW camp in 1918. Extending the homage to the composer Georges Auric, Cocteau writes that “you are the second friend of mine who has *escaped from Germany*” (“*vous êtes mon second ami évadé d’Allemagne*”) (1926a, 3; 1926b, 13). Where Hofmannsthal’s idea of the Salzburg Festival is deeply indebted to Wagner’s Bayreuth, Cocteau establishes Wagner and his festival as his foils. Explicitly following the argument of Nietzsche’s *The Case of Wagner*, Cocteau describes Wagner’s effect on modern art as decadent and enervating. “Enough of music in which one lies and soaks,” Cocteau writes, by which he has in mind not only Wagner but also the musical “impressionism” he supposedly inspired: “The thick lightning-pierced fog of Bayreuth becomes a thin snowy mist flecked with impressionist sunshine” (“*La grosse brume trouée d’éclairs de Bayreuth devient le léger brouillard neigeux taché de soleil impressionniste*”) (1926a, 17; 1926b, 26). Debussy is condemned as overly indebted to Germanic and Russian sources, and not even Stravinsky, about whom Cocteau had once raved was safe: “I consider the ‘Sacre du Printemps’ a masterpiece, but I discern in the atmosphere created by its production a religious complicity existing among the initiated, like the hypnotism of Bayreuth” (“*Je considère le ‘Sacre du Printemps’ comme un chef-d’oeuvre, mais je découvre dans l’atmosphère créée par son exécution une complicité religieuse entre adeptes, cet hypnotisme de Bayreuth*”) (1926a, 34; 1926b, 41).⁵

That such a fiercely Francophilic attitude should prevail in Paris between the late teens and early twenties is hardly surprising, but there was more to the new aesthetic than a cultural response to the war. The enemy ultimately was not Germany nor Germans per se (Bach, Nietzsche, and Schoenberg are all praised) but a peculiar set of persons and moods: Wagner, Debussy, Ravel, Saint-Saëns; misty crags, fire rings, dappled dews; the faded, formless, grandiose, and *gesamt*. In order to beat back this fog, Cocteau and his circle seized at Sophocles for order, Satie for simplicity, Henry Ford for efficiency, and the circus, music hall, and jazz band for sheer playfulness. Amid such cultural hopscotching – no less audacious in its way than Wagner’s own use and abuse of history – skyscrapers recovered Doric columns and Bach out-moderned Beethoven. The modern world produces strange assemblages of past, present, and future: “Machinery and American buildings resemble Greek art in so far as their utility endows them with an aridity and a grandeur devoid of superfluity” (“*Les machines et les bâtisses américaines ressemblent à l’art grec, en ce sens*”).

que l'utilité leur confère une sécheresse et une grandeur dépouillées de superflu") (1926a, 21; 1926b, 30–1).

And yet Cocteau envisioned his France, like Hofmannsthal his Austria, as an essentially international nation, one uniquely capable of synthesizing the multiplicities of the modern world. Cocteau finds in the café concert, that symbol of urban diversion, the essence of all things French; “[i]t preserves a certain tradition which, however crapulous, is none the less racial. It is here, no doubt, that a young musician might pick up the lost thread” (“*On y conserve une certaine tradition qui, pour être crapuleuse, n'en est pas moins de race. C'est sans doute là qu'un jeune musicien pourrait reprendre le fil perdu*”) (1926a, 20; 1926b, 29). He finds this essence also in the “Bourgeoisie,” which he dubs “the bead-rock of France from which all our artists emerge” (“*La bourgeoisie est la grande souche de France; tous nos artistes en sortent*”): the most cosmopolitan of classes as foundation of a state uniquely open to assimilation (1926a, 7; 1926b, 2). In an essay included in *Call to Order*, Cocteau writes that “Picasso is one of us. He put all the strength and cleverness of his race to school in France, and has employed them in the service of France” (“*Picasso est de chez nous. Il a mis toutes les forces, toutes les ruses de sa race à l'école et au service de la France*”) (1926a, 245; 1926b, 292). Stravinsky, too, Cocteau regarded as a “compatriot” (1926a, 60), and Cocteau describes a time when the composer translated Russian into French as a case of “oriental romanticism (with its uneasiness and savage upheavals) submitting to the discipline of Latin order” (“*Le romantisme oriental [malaises, secousses sauvages] se met au service de l'ordre latin*”) (1926a, 60; 1926b, 60). The internationalism of Cocteau’s artistic collaborators – Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Picasso, Honegger, Stein, and so forth – was by no means at odds with Cocteau’s Francophilia, a doubleness that says as much about the universalizing ethnocentrism of Paris as it does about Cocteau.⁶

Hofmannsthal’s *The Great World Theater of Salzburg* and Cocteau’s *Antigone* dramatize much of the spirit of these essays. *The Great World Theater* was the second play performed at the Salzburg Festival, which Hofmannsthal (together with the director Max Reinhardt, the composer Richard Strauss, the conductor Franz Schalk, and the designer Alfred Roller) helped establish in 1920. That summer, the festival’s first production, Reinhardt’s premiere of Hofmannsthal’s *Jedermann* (based on the English medieval play *Everyman*), was staged on the steps of the Salzburg Cathedral. Like *Jedermann*, *The Great World Theater*, which premiered on August 12, 1922, was written specifically for the festival, and it too was based on a morality play: Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El gran*

teatro del mundo (1655). While the choice of a Spanish *auto sacramental* may seem an odd one for a revival of Austro-Bavarian spirit, the work, with its vision of a traditionalist state and unabashed theatricality of the Counterreformation, had acquired an “impeccable Catholic pedigree” (Beniston 2002, 172) among Austrian conservatives since the 1890s.

Hofmannsthal’s play opens with God calling for a drama to be performed. Death is proclaimed the stage manager, the Adversary a prompter, and roles are apportioned to waiting souls: Rich Man, King, Peasant, Beauty, Wisdom, Beggar. Protesting against his assigned role, the Beggar is told by an Angel to “play the part” and he “will see” the reward that awaits him (“*Spiele die Rolle, und dir wird sich enthüllen, was sie gehalten*”) (Hofmannsthal 1975, 10.22). A play-within-the-play follows. The Beggar enters later than the other characters, broken down by hardship; one by one the characters cajole him with sophistries while inflicting on him new pains, until at last the Beggar takes the Peasant’s axe and, urged on by the Adversary, threatens to destroy the whole order of the world. Now Wisdom, the only character who has not abused the Beggar, cries out to God with an appeal for the Beggar’s condition. Hearing this, the Beggar drops his axe, concluding that, were he to topple this world order, he would only replace the King with himself and the same cycle would go on as before. Renouncing power and riches, he leaves for the forest to live as a hermit. A denouement shows each of the worldly characters taken off the stage by Death, followed by divine judgment, with a heavenly reward for Wisdom and the Beggar.

The character of the Beggar – by Hofmannsthal’s own account, his most significant addition to Calderón – apparently challenges but ultimately deepens the conservatism of the work. In the original, the character is a relatively minor one whose brief protests are quickly assuaged by the commandment that he must “Do good, for God is God” (“*Obrar bien, que dios es dios*” [Calderón 1997, 28]). In the revision, the Beggar takes center stage as the most active and the most sympathetic character of the drama, and his protests reverberate through key points of the play. Where the threat he makes to cut down the world at the root might well have turned him into a villain, the world is presented here as so profoundly cruel and corrupt that the Beggar’s rage for destruction, even if urged on by the Adversary, would be impossible to condemn as vice, and it is telling that Wisdom herself does not judge him for it. But if this play sympathizes with the Beggar, and makes him very nearly its protagonist, it does so in order ultimately to incorporate him and the threat he represents into the divinely ordered state. Hofmannsthal described the

character in general terms, as a figure that “could perhaps be perceived with such clarity only at the present time – the threat of chaos to an ordered world” (“mit solcher Deutlichkeit vielleicht nur im gegenwärtigen Augenblick gesehen werden konnte: die Drohung des Chaos an die geordnete Welt”) (1995c, 296), but many commentators, beginning with some of the reviewers of the original production, have seen in the Beggar a personification of Bolshevism in particular – an interpretation encouraged by the fact that the actor playing the Beggar (Alexander Moissi) gave the character “Russian” mannerisms.⁷ Reinhardt regarded the Beggar as “deeply affected by communistic ideas, which are carried ad absurdum” (1924, 191–2). It is not too great a critical leap to find in Hofmannsthal’s drama an allegorical response to the present threat of mass proletarian uprising; the idea or the hope that the revolutionary would be somehow converted at the very moment of his decisive strike, would discover the futility of all political change, would renounce revolution and retreat to the woods.

The salvific conservatism of *The Great World Theater* went far beyond textual allegory, however; it was embedded in the Salzburg Festival. Reinhardt’s staging emphasized what Hofmannsthal dubbed the “popular” (“volksmäßig”) aspects of the play (1955b, 266). Reinhardt in particular insisted that the play be performed around the altar of the town’s grand Kollegienkirche, with its rich evocation of baroque spirituality; profits from the performance would go toward a church renovation fund and specially priced tickets were available for locals. Constructing his stage set right around the Kollegienkirche altar, Reinhardt made use of stylized costumes and oratorio-like staging to emphasize the mystery-theater aspects of the production. While Reinhardt’s staging, like the text, was largely an exercise in creative anachronism, the production also exemplified the enthusiasm for nonrealist performance styles that swept European theater in the twenties. Returning to antiquity, the director was also able to remain à la mode.

Fashionable antiquation was also a favorite formula of Cocteau. Cocteau may have selected *Antigone* in particular because a recent production of the play (with music by Saint-Saëns) was, in his estimation, an embarrassment, exemplifying precisely the sort of impressionistic mishmash against which *Le coq et l’arlequin* had railed.⁸ In place of this failure, Cocteau proposed a new adaptation of *Antigone* with sets by Picasso, incidental music by Honegger, and costumes by Coco Chanel. It would open on December 20, 1922 at Charles Dullin’s Théâtre de l’Atelier, where it would be paired with Luigi Pirandello’s *La Volupté de l’Honneur*.

For his adaptation, Cocteau sharply streamlined the original text, ruthlessly paring back the choral sections, stripping the monologues, and generally rendering Sophocles's poetry into more colloquial prose. Honegger's score was a spare and incidental setting for oboe and harp and Picasso's set was equally unpretentious, consisting of a blue backdrop decorated with masks representing the Chorus; Cocteau spoke the choral lines through an opening in the backdrop. The production was generally a success, with Ezra Pound praising it in *The Dial*, traditionalists lambasting it, André Breton predictably interrupting it (to be shouted down by Cocteau), and the show running for about a hundred nights.⁹

Cocteau frequently wrote of tragic fate as a kind of infernal machine, a metaphor that takes on a peculiarly industrial quality with his *Antigone*. "The drama is like an express train moving toward its final derailment" ("*La drame passe comme un express qui se hâte vers le déraillement final*"), he writes of the play in the *Gazette des Sept Arts*, and compares the play elsewhere to a photograph of Greece taken from an airplane.¹⁰ He intends the Chorus to be "concentrated into a single voice which speaks very loudly and quickly as if reading a newspaper article" ("*se résumant en une voix qui parle très haut et très vite comme si elle lisait un article de journal*") (Cocteau 1961, 49; 1997, 12). Its lines have a telegraphic quality that speaks more of modern mass media than of neoclassical necessity:

SOPHOCLES'S CHORUS

Many are the wonders, none
is more wonderful than what is man.
This is it that crosses the sea
with the south winds storming and the waves swelling,
breaking around him in roaring surf.
He it is again who wears away
the Earth, oldest of gods, immortal, unwearied,
as the ploughs wind across her from year to year
when he works her with the breed that comes from horses.

(Sophocles 1992, 2.174)

COCTEAU'S CHORUS

Man is amazing. Man navigates, man plows, man hunts, man fishes.

(1961, 53–4)

*L'homme est inouï. L'homme navigue, l'homme laboure, l'homme chasse,
l'homme pêche.* (1997, 18)

In his opening stage directions, Cocteau further notes that "[t]he extreme rapidity of the action does not prevent the actors from speaking very distinctly and moving very little" ("*L'extrême vitesse de l'action n'empêche pas*

les acteurs d'articuler beaucoup et de remuer peu") (1961, 49; 1997, 12). This sharp juxtaposition between express-train propulsion and neoclassical stasis expresses the work's basic tone of contrapuntal harmony between antiquity and modernity. It is a vision far from the dynamite-the-museums rhetoric of Futurists, Dadaists, and other shock-troops of the interwar avant-garde.

Also separating him from that cohort was Cocteau's exuberance for the world of bourgeois fashion, an enthusiasm nowhere more in evidence than in his collaboration with Chanel, whose No. 5 perfume launched in 1921. "To costume my princesses," Cocteau remarked unapologetically, "I wanted Mlle Chanel, because she is our leading dressmaker, and I cannot imagine Oedipus's daughters patronizing a 'little dressmaker.' I chose some heavy Scotch woolens, and Mlle Chanel's designs were so masterly, so instinctively right" (Steegmuller 1970, 279). Her involvement made this *Antigone* not only a particularly fashionable event, it meant too that the work would be viewed, in at least some quarters, as more or less a runway show. *Vogue* featured it for the clothes, commenting that Chanel's creations resembled "antique garments discovered after centuries" (Chaney 2011, 206), and the production, which required a crown for Creon, may well have provided Chanel with her first opportunity to design the jewelry for which she subsequently became famous.¹¹ Beyond these attractions, Chanel's designs, and indeed her overall idea of fashion, reflect something of the contrapuntal relationship Cocteau strove to achieve. Her emphasis on simplicity and athleticism found its counterpart in Cocteau's new-found neoclassicism and emphasis on health, just as her streamlined modern forms harmonized with Cocteau's nimble, slimmed-down *Antigone*.

While Cocteau sharply pruned the original text, he largely preserves Creon's attacks on the corruptive power of money, with the effect that these attacks are foregrounded. In both Sophocles's and Cocteau's text, Creon gives a lengthy speech to the Chorus in which he fumes against "vile money" ("*l'argent ignoble*") (Cocteau 1961, 53; 1997, 17), after which he repeatedly accuses Tiresias and the priesthood of bribe taking. In another context, these passages – even sharper in Cocteau's version than in the original – might look like a typical modernist fusillade against the marketplace. But Cocteau's enthusiastic embrace of the commercial world, marked on this occasion by the fashion parade on stage and the society parade in the stalls, brings out other connotations. It reminds us that, even in Sophocles's text, Creon's accusations are actually false and even grotesque; the roots of the tragedy lie not in money but in his own bullheadedness. One gets the sense that Creon's tragic flaw, in the end, involves a lack of justice, of sympathy, and of that certain quality – as characteristically

Viennese as Parisian – we may call charm. “Charm demands perfect tact,” Cocteau writes in “Cock and Harlequin” and “[i]t means standing on the brink of an abyss. Nearly all the ‘graceful’ artists fall into it. Rossini, Tchaikovsky, Weber, Gounod, Chabrier, and, to-day, Francis Poulenc, lean over but do not fall. A very deep root enables them to lean a very long way” (*Le charme exige un tact parfait. Il faut se tenir au bord du vide. Presque tous les artistes gracieux y tombent. Rossini, Tchaikovsky, Weber, Gounod, Chabrier, penchent mais ne tombent pas. Une racine profonde leur permet de pencher très loin*) (1926a, 61; 1926b, 61). Courage over the abyss, perfect tact, and deep roots: it is a picture as expressive of Hofmannsthal’s aesthetic ideal as of Cocteau’s.

By 1922 it was a fragile ideal, almost a desperate one. During the same year, Vsevolod Meyerhold would stage his artistically revolutionary production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold*, in which Constructivist sets and “biomechanical” acting (equally inspired by Pavlovian psychology, Fordist production methods, and *commedia dell’arte*) announced a radically new Bolshevik performance style. Another future of leftist art was meanwhile taking shape in Germany, where the Kleist Foundation awarded its 1922 prize to a young Bertolt Brecht. And Milan saw the premiere of Luigi Pirandello’s *Enrico IV*, the protoabsurdist play of a nobleman who feigns insanity in order to live as the eleventh-century Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV. Meyerhold would soon find himself the favored dramatist of the Soviet state, much like Pirandello would of the Fascist, and four years later Brecht would begin his study of Marx’s *Capital*. Conservative modernism, a death-defying balancing act in the early twenties, would increasingly become a sideshow to more radical historical forces. The center would not hold.

Notes

- 1 Except where noted, all translations are my own.
- 2 Hofmannsthal’s belief in the essentially theatrical nature of Austro-Hungarian “stock” was largely inspired by Josef Nadler’s *Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften*, three volumes of which were published by 1918.
- 3 See Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke*, 34.233. For further discussion of connections between the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals, see esp. Steinberg 1990, 25–34; and David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 168–72.
- 4 On Hofmannsthal’s ideology of the *Volk*, see Steinberg 1990, 113–15. Hofmannsthal’s relation to anti-Semitism is a somewhat complicated affair. On one hand, as the grandson of a Jew who converted to Catholicism, Hofmannsthal suffered anti-Semitic attacks, though he was not targeted as

- directly as was Max Reinhardt, and the festival was subjected to occasional anti-Semitic taunts from its inception onward. On the other hand, as Jens Rieckmann has noted, Hofmannsthal's quasi-*völkisch* conservatism cannot be separated from his own occasional anti-Semitism; see Jens Rieckmann, "Zwischen Bewußtsein und Verdrängung: Hofmannsthals jüdisches Erbe," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 67 (1993): 466–83. Steinberg also gives an excellent overview of anti-Semitism and the Salzburg Festival (1990, 164–95).
- 5 Soon after "Cock and Harlequin," Cocteau would reverse himself on Stravinsky, and when the essay was republished in *A Call to Order*, Cocteau added a footnote praising the composer's own turn to neoclassicism.
 - 6 Jacques Maritain – another example of the sort of modernist conservatism discussed here – would put the matter similarly in the first (1920) edition of *Art and Scholasticism*, a work strongly influenced by his dialogues with Cocteau: "Speaking of the Athenian people, Charles Maurras wrote: 'The philosophical spirit, quickness to conceive the Universal, permeated all their arts.... Once it yielded to this tendency, it put itself in perpetual communion with the human race.... The classical, the Attic, is the more universal in proportion as it is more austere Athenian – Athenian of an epoch and a taste better purged of all foreign influence. In the high moment when it was itself alone, Attica was the human race.' French genius has, in modern times, analogous characteristics." Jacques Maritain, *The Philosophy of Art*. Translated by John O'Connor (Ditschling, UK: St. Dominic's Press, 1923), 112–13.
 - 7 For a survey of this interpretation of the Beggar, see Steinberg 1990, 207–8 and W. E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theater* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 214. A more recent critic who holds this interpretation is Cynthia Walk, *Hofmannsthals Grosses Welttheater: Drama und Theater* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), 129. The point about Moissi's "Russian air" appears in Yates, page 213.
 - 8 As he wrote to Jacques Maritain of the production, "It was incredibly boring, the age of the actress playing Antigone made her walk to her tomb all too natural, and consequently anything but touching. Old men – quite obviously chorus boys with white beards – sang unintelligible words to music by Saint-Saëns. That was the true *scandale*" (Davis 2006, 194).
 - 9 See Steegmuller 1970, 297–9.
 - 10 The quote appears in Jean Cocteau, "A propos d'Antigone," *Gazette des Sept Arts* (December 10, 1923): 9. The comparison to an aerial photograph of Greece ("*C'est tentant de photographier la Grèce en aéroplane*") appears in a preface to the play.
 - 11 See Davis 2006, 196.

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*Postwar New Feminisms: May Sinclair
and Colette*

Elizabeth A. Mosimann

Come, Man, my friend, let us simply exist side by side!

(Colette 1961, 18)

As World War I was forming on the horizon, the writers commonly referred to as “the men of 1914” were working toward energizing literary production by breaking away from the rigidity of tradition and moral absolutism. The subjectivity of object-perception infuses artistic production, along with the concept of a dynamic force popularized by the writings of Henri Bergson, whose *élan vital* was derived from Schopenhauer’s concept of the will. Bergson writes in *Creative Evolution*: “This change, this movement and becoming, this self-creation, call it what you will, as the very stuff and reality of our being” (Hinkle 1916, xxvii). For Schopenhauer, the world is a representation of the will, which is the life force driving for perfection of the human race. For T. H. Green, it is the self-realizing power of the individual that puts one in touch with the universal and makes knowing possible. By following this route of finding the source of life within oneself and experiencing moments of intuition that allow a brief image of the fullness of being, modernist writers evade the limitations of the traditional moral structures.

These momentary experiences of the universe’s fullness, of which one is a part and that arise out of the self, begin to structure feminist thought and, through *écriture féminine*, to quote Hélène Cixous’s phrase defining a new way of writing *and* being woman. I am going to look at two writers of 1922 whose work seems diametrically opposed. May Sinclair took part in the suffragette movement, most actively through her writings; Colette decried such politics. Sinclair read and wrote philosophy, psychology, fiction, literary criticism; Colette, in addition to her fiction and other semi-autobiographical work, wrote film scripts, the libretto for an opera by Ravel, music and drama criticism, and regular columns for various newspapers. Sinclair often appeared prim and proper; Colette was powerfully seductive.

In 1922, May Sinclair published two monographs: one, *The New Idealism*, is a philosophical treatise that opens idealism to the acceptance of a pragmatic realism; the other, *Life and Death of Harriett Freat*, is a novel of sexual repression and failed development. While fiction provided an income, philosophy for Sinclair provided a fundamental guidance that was practical as well as ethical. In her autobiographical novel *Mary Olivier* (1919), she describes how, as a young girl, she stumbled upon the entry for Spinoza in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and read there that self-fulfillment could be a form of loving God and that self-enrichment could only increase one's capacity for such worship. She felt as if she were "coming out of a small dark room into an immense open space filled with happy light" (Sinclair 1980, 100). That "open space filled with happy light" provided her a place of possibility and achievement. Whether Sinclair can be considered a key player or a follower in promoting the basic concepts of modernism, this space is characteristically modernist in itself.

Ezra Pound, whose literary circle included Sinclair, had first described imagism in the March 1913 issue of *Poetry* as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time ... instantaneously [it] ... gives that sense of sudden liberation" (1918, 96). Pound's description comes close to Eliot's account of finite centers in the dissertation he was finishing on F. H. Bradley: a "felt hole in which there are moments of knowledge" (Eliot 1964, 155). A neo-Hegelian, Bradley treated finite centers as moments of experience, which provide a small window to the fullness of knowledge. Alfred North Whitehead would later conclude that the divine is always in the process of becoming and can only be known through an experienced feeling of immediacy. For Sinclair that "open space with happy light" is a space of liberation on a very practical level, and access to this place opens a way for the feminine after the war.

The process of her own development, as Sinclair shows us in *Mary Olivier*, is a product of reading philosophers and poets, psychologists and psychiatrists, through which she is able to comprehend the relation between the universal spirit and the individual self. When Sinclair turns to writing *Life and Death of Harriett Freat*, she creates a heroine, Harriett Freat, who never leaves that "small dark room"; the character of Harriett Freat, however, is enabled by the richness of the philosophical and psychological concepts that structure the text. It is an imagist text that both confirms and defies Harold Monro's description of imagism: "petty poetry ... minutely small ... denotes ... poverty of imagination" (Levenson 1984, 162).

Apparently Pound had compared *Mary Olivier* unfavorably to Joyce's *Portrait*, finding it too subjective, for Sinclair wrote to him in protest,

“I deny that the method is more ‘subjective’ than Joyce. Mary’s mind is a sufficiently clear mirror of ‘objects’” (Raitt 2000, 240). Determined to succeed on the new modern level, by focusing on an economy of words, finding the *mot juste*, and removing the author from the text, Sinclair later declared in an interview with American author Willis Steel that her novel studied “a wizened soul” (Raitt 2000, 242), a direct reference to Hegel’s “beautiful soul,” who in fear of marring her perfection, “flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence” (Hegel 1977, 400). Harriett Frean unquestionably follows the bildungsroman pattern of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, yet at the same time, Joyce is turned upside down. While Stephen connects and takes nourishment from his encounters, Harriett fails to comprehend much of what she experiences. In fear of not acting beautifully, like the characters of Samuel Beckett’s future texts, Harriett has difficulty engaging in the world exterior to herself. The developmental process for Stephen is a result of an alienation and separation akin to what Lacan will later call the formation of the subject, and at the time something that Jung insisted was painful but necessary for the hero. The very things Stephen breaks away from – parents, faith, and nation – are the things that allow him to experience reality in all its fullness. Harriett, however, regresses after a certain point in the text and ends up less able than she was in the beginning when she at least had the capacity to question, to interrogate the words of the nursery rhyme. At the end of *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus goes forth “to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience” (Joyce 1992, 275–6), while at the end of Sinclair’s text, Harriett, in a fetal position, recites a nursery rhyme that her parents read to her in infancy, and calls out to her Mother.

Undoubtedly, Harriett Frean does repudiate the priority given to external social behavior as a marker of morality and the Victorian practice of confining offspring, particularly female, within the family circle. This reaction also seems to be an observation on the role of others in the development of the individual and of the individual’s own responsibility in self-awareness, while making room for Jaques Lacan’s concept of the Unconscious as the “big Other” represented first by the parents (mostly the mother) and then by the whole system of culture. *Harriett Frean*, like *A Portrait*, begins with a nursery rhyme, but unlike Joyce’s rhyme, which is invented by his father and characterized by word association, Harriett’s mother recites a classic Mother Goose rhyme and repeats it thrice. Harriett laughs each time, which puzzles her parents: “She sees something in it we don’t see” (Sinclair 1986, 2). Every night Harriett’s mother recites the

nursery rhyme, and every night Harriett asks, “did the Pussycat see the Queen?” (Sinclair 1986, 2). Her mother’s response is a vacant repetition of the obvious: the cat saw a mouse run under a chair.

This instance foreshadows what will occur again and again in the Frea household. In choosing to accept the familiar, the Freans often deceive themselves by thinking that they are knowing. Whereas, according to Hegel, in order to come to an understanding of something, it is necessary to first rid “it of the form in which it had become familiar” (1977, 18). It is necessary to travel down the road of associations further out into the world, like Stephen Dedalus, who writes on the flyleaf of his geography book and uses words to travel into the universe of thought. Harriett, by contrast, reads the words in books but is unable to extract any meaning from them. In a sense, Harriett goes forth to new worlds, but she cannot access the experience. She visits Rome, but reading Gibbon later she does not make any connection between the thing seen and the thing read. There is not just a pause in the process of associative thinking; there is stoppage.

Sometime in 1913, Sinclair became involved with the founding of the Medico-Psychological Clinic, the earliest psychoanalytic clinic in Britain. She gave financial support, was an active presence, and as she began to study psychoanalysis, she followed closely the work of one of the original consultants, William McDougall. At a time when the theories of both Jung and Freud were still in process, Sinclair was in the center of the fluidity of new thinking. In 1916, she wrote a review of Jung’s *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912), which was published in English that year. Jung’s text manifests the divergence between his theories and Freud’s, notably his focus on a collective unconscious containing the history of the human race rather than an unconscious full of repressed memories, on a libido characterized by psychic energy rather than sexual instincts, and on a matriarchal basis for civilization. Jung also places a heavy value on religion, which Freud believed was based on cultural practices rather than a divine truth. Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which revises his topography, did not appear in English until 1922. With the introduction of life and death instincts, the position of the libido loses some of its clarity. These points of conflict between Freud and Jung drew Sinclair to Jung.

Sinclair’s review of Jung was published in *The Medical Press* as a two-part article entitled “Clinical Lectures on Symbols and Sublimation.” *Life and Death of Harriett Frea* is usually described as a narrative of failed sublimation: there is no displacement and substitution that is transforming. Jung’s text in many ways dictates Sinclair’s narrative. Harriett’s failure

to find, or even to look for, that “open space with happy light,” masks Sinclair’s use of that space to celebrate the fullness of the maternal, which Jung focuses on in *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Because Sinclair’s philosophical and psychological knowledge is so imbedded in her sense of self-realization, it is key to decoding her writing. Read in this way, *Harriett Freaan* is not only a feminist tract, but is also an indictment of restrictive thought, whether it be social or religious, involving man or woman. Remember in Joyce’s *Portrait* the dean cautions Stephen – “in pursuing these speculations ... there is, however, the danger of perishing of inanition” (1992, 205), another version of Harriett’s parents’ interdictions. Questioning leads to dangerous places.

Particularly attractive to Sinclair is Jung’s understanding of the symbol, which he describes as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious of Jung is universally collective, embodying the history of the human race. In the bridge-building process, one symbol negates another in a Hegelian *Aufhebung* that “retains and preserves” (Kainz 1994, xiii); like the operation of sublimation, nothing is erased in the process of transformation. Sinclair skillfully in *Harriett Freaan* builds bridges to the collective unconscious in a text that appears anorexic, especially when compared to Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which Gordon Bowker calls “a wheeling maelstrom of unconsciousness with the square confines of a book” (2012, 363). The fluidity of Joyce’s words and their associations uncover connections in the external world that pass beneath the surface of perception. Sinclair, however, structures a surface text that, like the conscious mind, sublimates associations, which in turn, following Jung’s route, can be decoded by extension into the field of the o/Other. By this method of constructing a narrative that resembles Beckett’s *mystiques rates* like Murphy, the character falls short of transcendence, but the words connect the reader through the image/symbol to the richness that is suppressed.

There are two images that repeat in *Harriett Freaan* which particularly exhibit this process: the blue egg and the red campion: one illustrating fertility, the other sexuality. The blue egg is a sewing box set in a structure of gold hoops and legs; inside are scissors and stiletto set within holes of white velvet. The young Harriet yearns for its possession. Within the egg, Jung observes is the world: “it is the cosmic woman with child” (1916, 388). His reference to the egg and its maternal value comes from J. J. Bachofen, whose writings on ancient matriarchal societies, as Madelon Sprengnether observes in *The Spectral Mother*, were a major source for Jung, especially in his belief in the dominance of the mother. The blue color of the egg connects to Novalis’s unfinished novel about education, *Henry von*

Offerdingen, in which the hero is driven by a “yearn[ing] to get a glimpse of the blue flower” (1990, 15). The blue flower subsequently becomes an important Romantic figure; the flower, and sometimes just the color blue, signals the place where a sublime or mystical experience is possible.

The egg is a working out of Jung’s concept of the symbol, which Sinclair notes in her “Clinical Lectures,” is “the root of all language” (1916, 121). Frean’s blue egg, however, cannot produce language that connects because it contains the instruments of cutting. Although the egg is a sewing box, the sewing materials are described as instruments of shearing rather than weaving. Since *The New Idealism* takes note of work of Alfred North Whitehead, it is not unlikely that she references his concept of concrescence, which is the process of weaving together inheritances of the past into a new synthesis, such that an individual subject is always in the process of becoming something new. When Harriett makes her big sacrifice, giving up the man she loves in order to behave beautifully, she looks at the blue egg and “wondered how she ever loved it” (Sinclair 1986, 66–7).

Another repeated and loaded image in *Harriett Frean* is the red campion. Harriett’s one act of disobedience occurs when she walks down the forbidden Black’s Lane. The sexual imagery is heavy here, as Harriett picks the rose campion with the red tops that are growing amidst frothy white cow parsley. Its “female flowers produce a froth that helps catch pollen from visiting insects” (Plantlife.org.uk). The Latin name for the red campion is *Silene dioica*, evoking the Greek god Silenus who was companion and tutor to Dionysius. Wise Silenus, when drunk, was able to release secrets of the world. Schopenhauer records his answer to Midas’s question: What would be the best thing to happen to humanity? Silenus answers: not to be born. Silenus is often used in art and literature to represent the dionysiac will. In the lane with the red campion, Harriett is frightened by a man she encounters and runs back to her mother. Her father’s admonishment is comforting: “We want you to forget ... ugly things.... We don’t forbid, because we trust you to do what we wish. To behave beautifully” (Sinclair 1986, 23).

The parental home is a place of womblike atmosphere because of the mother, who is both the place of nourishment necessary for growth and the place of return to the fullness of being. We are all inflicted, according to Jung, with “an unquenchable longing for all the deepest sources of our own being; for the body of the mother, and through it for communion with infinite life in the countless forms of existence” (Jung 1916, 231). The negative effect of this, as Sinclair notes in her review, is that a desire for rebirth in the mother blocks the libido from “ways of progress”

(Sinclair 1916, 120) and instead turns backward, turning the adult into an infant. What is necessary is self-sacrifice by the child of the longing for the mother; Harriett's sacrifice is the man she loves. The Freans are frozen in their rigid moral formulas and that is the only place of peace for her. By not marrying the man who loves her, Harriett returns him to his fiancée, whom he marries. The life of the married couple is haunted and destroyed by the memory of Harriett and her beautiful action. Harriett as a beautiful object remains present in the family circle, but there is no fullness there in which to take part. When Harriett's mother dies, "All her memories of her mother were joined to the memory of this now irrecoverable self"; the self Harriett speaks of is her own self: "Through her absorption in her mother, some large, essential part of herself had gone" (Sinclair 1986, 108). When the narrative finally closes, Harriett lies ill in a fetal position, dreaming of a dead baby, and calling out "Mamma" (Sinclair 1986, 184).

Put in context with Sinclair's direct involvement with the Medico-Psychological Clinic, the numerous people there who were influenced by Jung, and the rumblings of dissatisfaction with Freud's focus on patriarchy to the neglect of the role of the mother in child development, *Harriett Frean* can be seen as an anti-Freudian text. It calls attention to the place that will later become essential to analysts' evolving awareness of the mother. Suzanne Raitt's article on "Early British Psychoanalysis and the Medico-Psychological Clinic," published subsequent to her biography of May Sinclair, points out that it was this clinic that trained many of the early practitioners in British psychoanalysis – thus the high number of women in the field and the "special interest in the problems of childhood" (2004, 82). One of the founding directors, Dr. Jessie Murray, was a suffragist whom Sinclair had met when she was active in the movement.

Jung was a strong presence in the clinic, although the directors of the clinic did not follow one specific method, but rather attempted to fit its therapy to the needs of the individual patient. Jung analyzed McDougall after the war. Hugh Crichton-Miller, Vice-President of the Carl Jung Institute in Zurich, was an expert associated with the clinic. Sinclair exposes her preference for Jung in her "Clinical Lectures." Suzanne Raitt suggests that Ernest Jones, in his desire to place himself at the center of the psychoanalytic movement in England, suppresses the role of the clinic in the development of psychoanalysis there.

The split between Freud and Jung prefigures the split between Freud and Ernest Jones and the Freud-Jones debate in the late 1920s, which focused on the nature of feminine sexuality. One could say that in 1922, Freud was in the position of follower rather than pioneer. Karen Horney in her 1922

paper, "On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women," questions Freud's understanding of women's thought processes: "an assertion that one-half of the human race is discontented with the sex assigned to it and can overcome this discontent only in favourable circumstances – is decidedly unsatisfying, not only to feminine narcissism but also to biological science" (Horney 1924, 51). As Janet Sayers points out in *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, this paper was the first in a series of papers written through the 1930s in which Horney gives particular attention to the psychology of women and emphasizes the importance of identification with the mother. Horney is just one of four notable women working during the 1920s and beyond who privilege the role of mother in psychoanalysis, the others being Helene Deutsch, Melanie Klein, and Anna Freud.

The war also raised the status of the mother. The mother became the idealized home and the motherland a safe paradise, a place of possible renewal but also threatening in her power. Propaganda played on the son's strong attachment to the mother, especially in posters that urged: "Go! It's Your Duty Lad" (Gilbert and Gubar 1989, 284). Patriotic poems glorified the mother's sacrifice: "She has heard her country call and has risen to the test, / And has placed upon the altar of the nation's need, her best" (Guest 1917, 46). In *Women's Fiction between the Wars*, Heather Ingman makes note of several anthropological books that were published in the first quarter of the twentieth century and that, influenced by Bachofen, recognized early matriarchal cultures.

Motherhood became a critical issue in postwar Europe because of the number of men killed in the war, especially in France. This and the rising interest in birth control lead to a worryingly reduced birth rate. Woman as body increasingly gains presence. We see both men and women writers begin to incorporate methods in their writing that will later be called *écriture féminine*. Notably, Molly's soliloquy at the end of *Ulysses* involves access to the fluidity or excess of the libido, which Jung describes as emanating the mother, from "the wisdom of the mother: ... [where] insight is obtained into the meaning of deeper things," (Jung 1916, 452). Joyce writes and Molly speaks: "I saw he understood or felt what a woman is" (1946, 767). Hélène Cixous makes the point in describing *écriture féminine* in "Laugh of the Medusa," that women are not "obliged to deposit [their] lives in [men's] banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a drama manglingly restaged." As Molly in *Ulysses* "affirms ... 'I said yes, I will Yes'" (Cixous 1976, 884). Joyce's Molly, Cixous notes, is one of several English examples, while she also points to Colette as one of the few practitioners in French.

Colette, born Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette, is said to have “had a powerfully seductive aura” (Thurman 2000, 297), which was transmitted in her writings. She was sexually daring, frequently appearing in pantomime scantily dressed. She had lovers of both sexes. Her novels describe the entanglements of love and lust; however, the voluptuousness of the writing comes not from intimate descriptions of erotic scenes, but in the foreplay of conversation against a background of gardens, the heavy scent of flowers, and overheated rooms. Julia Kristeva considers that her sensual and tactile writing gives the overall effect of “thought become flesh” (2004, 4, 22).

While Jung maintains that thought arises from the libido as a result of the incest barrier, Colette manages to write on the near side of prohibitions, drawing the body into her texts. The moments of fullness of being are experienced in places of the maternal – the garden, flowers, little beasts, and the *jouissance* of sexuality. She writes a novel, *Chéri* (1920), about the love between a middle-aged woman and a young man, a relationship with incestuous overtones. Not long after, now in her late forties with a young daughter and a failing second marriage, she began an affair with her husband’s eldest son, thirty years her junior. Colette then began to write *La Maison de Claudine* (1922), published in English as *My Mother’s House*, the first in a trilogy of books honoring her mother, Sido, as muse.

The narrative of *My Mother’s House* differs from other Colette texts in that it avoids titillating sexual episodes found in the Claudine novels, the wildly popular and somewhat autobiographical works of fiction written under her first husband’s name and direction. Like most of Colette’s texts, *My Mother’s House* is a series of vignettes in an elusive chronological arrangement. Image piles on image – house, garden, mother, sunlit space, beasts, garlic, heather, fir trees, village, books, not, as Kristeva points out, to open up an “ocean of infinite associations, but [to] capture and fix the instant of pleasure” (2004, 98). The pleasure comes individually in each vignette, but each story floats in an ocean of her memories and associations with the house, the garden, the village. Like Proust, Colette transmutes “memory into a directly experienced reality” (Kristeva 2004, 35).

In the opening vignette, “Where Are the Children,” the mother, “like an over-solicitous mother-bitch breathlessly pursuing her constant quest” (Colette 2002, 8), never sees her children in the garden, yet the writer notes the trace of their presence. The imagery is never sharp and clean; rather, each object bleeds into its surroundings. The mother’s clothes always bear traces of her busyness; the children are silent in their industry. Who is asking where the children are? Not just Sido, but “the silence, the

muted breeze of the enclosed garden, the pages of the book stirred only by invisible fingers” (Colette 2002, 7). The moment of pleasure in the garden is not erased by time, for the narrating “I” confidently reassures the reader that her mother is an uncanny presence, still looking for, still wanting to protect her still living children. This book of memories validates that presence.

Colette is aware of the power of individual perspective in remembering, not only in relation to sensory data, but also to the conscious and unconscious emotions of the perceiver. Sinclair takes this up herself in *The New Idealism* in a complicated critique of Whitehead and others, while Ann Banfield in *The Phantom Table* explores the influence of Russell and Whithead’s ideas on perception on the writing of Virginia Woolf. By seeing the table, we do not bring it into existence, yet our way of seeing the table is unique to the way in which we perceive it. While there is one table, there are multiple versions of that table being seen. A patriarchal world dictates what is to be comprehended, while the world Sinclair and her fellow philosophers promote is shaped by the individual perceiver.

Through the recollections of the peculiar habits of her mother, the narrator recalls a young girl’s growing awareness of the sexual world, the world of women and births and abductors. Seemingly forthright and straightforward stories, the shape of this text is indirect. Colette plays with the power of the mind in perception, the play between the perceiving subject and the object perceived. “The Priest on the Wall” tells the story of the misapprehension of the word *presbytery*. The story begins with a hidden master-slave dialect between the narrator and her daughter Bel-Gazou, who staves off the power of her parents by denying access to her thinking, unlike Harriett Freat who only thinks within her parents’ parameters. A mirror, now cracked because of the denial, reflects an image that the narrator is never able to see, because it is what the child’s father sees in her, a reflection of himself – an image to which she does not have access. Emphasizing the multiplicity of perspectives, the narrator enumerates the various ways Bel-Gazou might be viewed by her nurse: “a consummate masterpiece, a possessed monster ... a dear little one” (Colette 2002, 30). Returning to a remembrance of her own childhood, the narrating I recalls hearing the word *presbytery* and how she took it away like an object, exploring its sensory data, its “harsh and spikey beginning,” and developing her own use for it. When corrected by its universal meaning, the remembered child, fighting this intrusion, plays with the word and tries to reconcile the universal with her own particularity.

Some call Colette's mother texts a reparative act or an act of mourning. Others remember her declaring that "this is merely my model" (Colette 1961, 35). Given that the title refers to Claudine, another way of looking at *My Mother's House* is to see it as a rewriting of the bildungsroman of Claudine in a way that provides a model for Colette in the raising of her own daughter. The space/place written about is the maternal, but it is not always about her mother in the house at Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye. Sometimes, although the reader is not aware of it, her mother is no longer living in Saint-Sauveur; sometimes the conversation is between the mother Colette and her own daughter, Bel-Gazou. In the Jungian sense, Colette, full of nostalgic longing for her mother, returns to her for her wisdom as she chronicles the sexual awakening of a young girl alongside a watchful and caring mother. Colette models a relationship with her daughter for her own guidance. One vignette concerns an abduction scene that blends the young girls' romantic ideas of love with the mother's fear of loss; another recalls a fainting spell brought on by reading a graphic description of childbirth written by Zola; then an attendance at servant's wedding becomes unsettling when she is "frightened by [looking up at] the room, of the bed that I had never thought of ... [for] my mother's outspoken simplicity and the lives of the beasts around me have taught me too much and too little" (Colette 2002, 68).

At the end of the story of the house of Claudine, the narrator confesses that she has taught her daughter to sew and it frightens her. When the daughter sews, "She is silent, and she – why not write down the word that frightens me – she is thinking" (Colette 2002, 136). The two sit by the seaside in mother/daughter communion, although most biographers portray Colette as an unmothering mother. Here in this text, however, Colette reweaves the tear in the fabric; she is the mother who watches her daughter mature and lets nature unfold: "all nature," the narrator muses, "hesitates before that most majestic and most disturbing of instincts ... it is wise to tremble, to be silent and to lie when one draws near to it" (Colette 2002, 138).

Colette's writing is always about sexual relationships and how the "most majestic and most disturbing of instincts" complicates yet contributes to our sense of self. This life force, the virile power so admired by the male modernists, Jung, along with others of his time, sources in rebirth through the mother. There is a "willed introversion of the creative mind, which, ... dips at least a moment into the source of life in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother" (Jung 1916, 336). Throughout her life, Colette returns in memory to her mother's house in

Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye, for remembering is a means of retrieving a lost object. The garden, in symbol and reality, is a place of nourishment that fertilizes her being simply by thinking of the flowers and trees that grow there, holding within their greenery the uncanny presence of her mother. Sinclair's creative forces come from "every creation of new beauty; every ... flash of spiritual insight and thrill of spiritual passion" (Sinclair 1922, 314), another version of the fullness of being. It is with this self-awareness of the power from within that postwar feminists advance on their own terms.

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Durée et simultanéité *and* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: *Time and Logic in 1922*

Gregg Lambert

In his annual report on philosophy in France, 1922–3, written for the *Philosophical Review*, André Lalande recounts that

the year 1922 was marked by the visit to Paris of M. Einstein, welcomed with a warmth of admiration by the general public, which by the way was little capable of understanding his theories and often confused them with the relativism of the skeptics or of the critics of science. Wherever he lectured, at the Sorbonne; at the College de France, the halls were too small for the crowds seeking admission, and the organizers of meetings were besieged with demands which they could not satisfy. (Lalande 1924, 542–3)¹

This was the fateful occasion of what has been referred to in the history of the twentieth century as the Einstein-Bergson debate that would be published that year in *Durée et simultanéité*. Yet, at the time of their first meeting at the College de France in April, the script of Bergson's famous "confrontation" with the physicist's theory of relativity was still in press, and Bergson announced that he came to "listen" to Einstein's remarks, and lavished praise on the physicist in his introduction. Nevertheless, tensions soon became apparent as Einstein responded to Bergson's remark that after the theory of relativity is accepted as a reality, "all is not finished" (Bergson 1929, xx) and philosophy also had something to contribute to the theory of time.² In response, Einstein insisted that "the time of the philosophers does not exist" (Bergson 1972, 1345), because he recognized only the difference between psychological time and physical time, the former being reduced to mental constructs and logical entities that are the basis for philosophical conceptions, with a further implication that these were essentially fictive or imaginary. In short, for Einstein, there was no commonality between psychological and physical conceptions of time, and thus no possible basis for any division of labor.

In an appendix added in the following year, "*Les temps fictifs et les temps réel*," Bergson responded to this narrow view of psychology as well as the role assigned to philosophy in addressing the "difference of the difference"

(Bergson 1929, xx) between a physical theory of time and a philosophical one. The reception of the argument hinged on the theory of relativity famously exemplified in the “twins paradox”: two twins, one who left the earth at a speed close to that of the speed of light while the other remained, would meet each other and notice that their clocks and calendars would show disagreeing times and dates. The twin who had stayed on earth would have aged more rapidly, while time would have slowed down for the traveler. It appeared to many critics that in questioning the validity of this proof in the pages of *Durée et simultanéité*, Bergson was arguing against the slowing of calendar or clock time for the twin who returns to earth, when in fact his argument was more subtle; he argued that once this disagreement was resolved in terms of measurement, more essential differences would remain that were the result of memory and degree of effort experienced by each twin (i.e., duration). Therefore, according to Bergson, “whose time would prevail back on earth would depend on how their disagreement was negotiated – not only scientifically, but psychologically, socially, politically, and philosophically” (Canales 2005, 1172).

Clearly, the thrust of Bergson’s argument is drawn from his earlier work on memory and duration from *Matiere et mémoire* (1896), and the nature of the disagreement between the two twins could be ironically figured in the disagreement between the physicist and the philosopher. Even though Bergson was basically expressing an intuition that would later be taken up by Heisenberg, it is important to keep in mind that Einstein never gave up his commitment to determinism, that is, to the idea of science as an art of objective measurement.³ Nevertheless, Einstein and the critics who rallied around his cause would simply view this as Bergson’s “profound misunderstanding” (Canales 2005, 1176) a popular view that would later on result in Bergson’s decision not to republish *Durée et simultanéité* after 1931, which is often assumed to express his admission of defeat.⁴

However, two more serious consequences would follow from the crescendo of personal and written exchanges between Bergson and Einstein, as well as their followers, in the immediate aftermath. First, Einstein appears to have taken the disagreement more personally than one might have expected, given the relative fame of both figures, and later refuses to participate in the International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (CIC) of the League of Nations, an association to which Bergson was elected president in 1920. In part, Einstein cites Bergson’s reception of the theory of relativity as a reason for his decision. As he wrote in a letter to Maurice Solovine:

I resigned from a commission of the League of Nations, for I no longer have any confidence in this institution. That provoked some animosity, but I am glad that I did it. One must shy away from deceptive undertakings, even when they bear a high-sounding name. Bergson, in his book on the Theory of Relativity, made some serious blunders; may God forgive him. (Canales 2005, 1175)

Second, and more critically perhaps, partly as a result of the controversy around the affair, the influence of “*le bergsonisme*” would quickly wane and then disappear almost entirely from the French academy by the 1930s, until the resurrection of the term by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in the early 1960s.

Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1921, a year before his encounter with Bergson, for his “service to Theoretical Physics and especially for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect” (Nobelprize.org); in 1927, Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize “in literature.”⁵ A possible rapprochement between the two great figures would occur shortly before Bergson’s death, when the poet Paul Valéry brought Einstein to visit the philosopher in his home while he was recovering from a recent operation. A few years later, after receiving a copy of Bergson’s last book, *La Pensée et le mouvant* (1934), Valéry observed the long footnote that appears on “the grand affaire of relativity” (Canales 2005, 1182) and writes Bergson asking whether the recent studies in microphysics (i.e., quantum mechanics) might be brought to bear on the philosopher’s theories of indeterminacy and duration? Regarding the entire episode, one might also recall the seventeenth-century quarrel over the relationship of philosophy and science between Leibniz and Sir Isaac Newton, which another famous philosopher of the twentieth century later remarked was the fault of individual egotism. “Just what would Newton have lost if he had acknowledged Leibniz’s originality?” Wittgenstein asks. “Absolutely nothing! He would have gained a lot. And yet how hard it is to acknowledge something of this sort: someone who tries it feels as though he were confessing his own incapacity... It’s a question of envy, of course. And anyone who experiences it ought to keep on telling himself: ‘It’s a mistake! It’s a mistake!’” (1958, 61–2).

Earlier in 1908, the American pragmatist William James wrote that he appreciated Bergson’s unique ability to “break away from old categories, deny old worn-out beliefs, and re-state things *ab initio*, making the lines of division fall into entirely new places” (1909, 59). Of course, this same sentiment could be employed to encapsulate another work of philosophy that also appeared in the year 1922, Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*

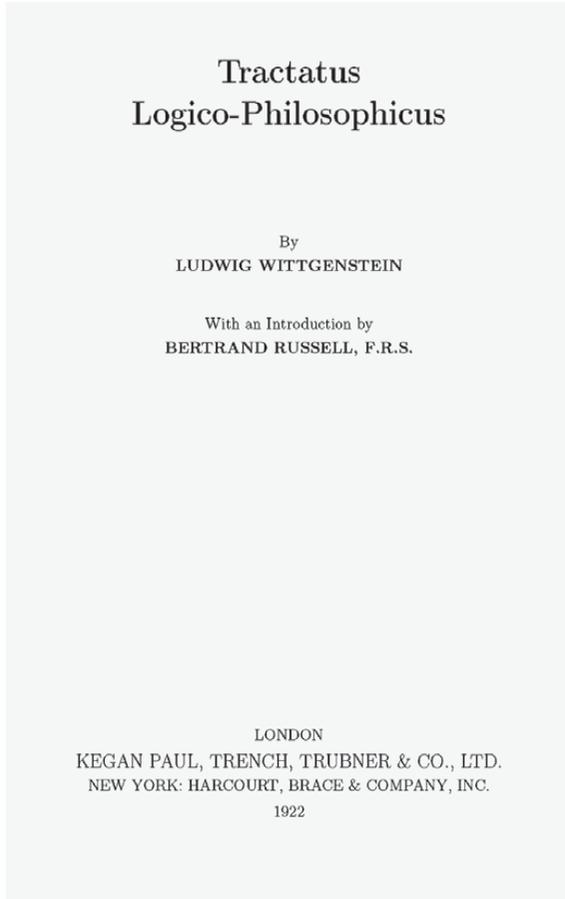


Figure 13.1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.
Title page of first English-language edition, 1922.

Logico-Philosophicus, which is generally regarded as a major turning point in philosophy (Figure 13.1), particular in the study of the logical foundations of both the sciences and natural language. In fact, the radical assertion of this work is in the explicit identification of modern philosophy with the problem of logic: moreover, logic was not the science that designated a special class of objects, but rather “what was presupposed by saying anything whatsoever” (McGuinness 1988, 144). While the reduction of philosophy to questions of language and logic was not new, and can also be found in other philosophers like Russell and Frege at this moment, what is uniquely modern is Wittgenstein’s conclusion

that “philosophy gives no pictures of reality,” and thus its language is limited to the totality of those propositions that represent the existence or nonexistence of what Wittgenstein will later define in the *Tractatus* as “states of affairs” (*Sacherverhalt*).

The *Tractatus* was assembled from notes that extend back to Wittgenstein’s early years in Cambridge, and especially to his conversations with Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and John Maynard Keynes on philosophy and the foundations of logic. On November 15, 1912, at a meeting of the Moral Science Club, Wittgenstein delivered a paper called “What Is Philosophy?” which lasted exactly four minutes, thus beating the previous record by two minutes. The thesis of the paper was remarkably close to the main argument of the *Tractatus*: Philosophy was defined as all those primitive propositions that could not be proven true by the various sciences. In 1913, Wittgenstein retreated to isolation in Norway, for months at a time, to reflect on these philosophical problems and to work out their solutions. In 1914, he returned to Austria at the start of World War I and joined the Austrian army. He was then taken captive in 1917 and spent the remaining months of the war at a prison camp in Cassino, Italy, and even refused attempts by Keynes and others to have him released for “medical reasons” (McGuinness 1988, 275) saying that he would accept any exceptional status and would return only when his comrades could. Wittgenstein once wrote: “At heart I am a communist!” Though his political views were on the left end of the spectrum and he was sympathetic to the working class, his philosophical approach was very far from Marxism, which is made evident later on in the *Philosophical Investigations* with the statement that “philosophy leaves everything as it is” (Shapira 2011).

It was also in the prison camp that Wittgenstein’s conversion to mysticism purportedly occurred, even though the source of this religious sensibility was drawn mostly from his reading of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he discussed frequently with the other inmates. As Brian McGuinness explains, “Tolstoy’s religion had taken hold of him in the war and the circle of young disciples of Kraus and Loos whom he met in Olmütz acted as midwives to the utterance of what he had previously and, as he thought, necessarily left unsaid” (McGuinness 2008, 96). While Russell was initially shocked by the mysticism, he later explains the conversion in a letter that is written after their final brief encounter in The Hague immediately following Wittgenstein’s release:

I had felt in his book a flavour of mysticism, but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic. He reads people like

Kierkegaard and Angelus Silesius, and he seriously contemplates becoming a monk. It all started from William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and grew (not unnaturally) during the winter he spent alone in Norway before the war, when he was nearly mad. Then during the war a curious thing happened. He went on duty to the town of Turnoff in Galicia, and happened to come upon a bookshop which however seemed to contain nothing but picture postcards. However, he went inside and found that it contained just one book: Tolstoy on The Gospels. He bought it merely because there was no other. He read it and re-read it, and thenceforth had it always been with him, under fire and at all times. But on the whole he likes Tolstoy less than Dostoyevsky (especially Karamazov). He has penetrated deep into mystical ways of thought and feeling, but I think (though he wouldn't agree) that what he likes best in mysticism is its power to make him stop thinking. I don't much think he will really become a monk – it is an idea, not an intention. His intention is to be a teacher. He gave all his money to his brothers and sisters, because he found earthly possessions a burden. I wish you had seen him. (McGuinness 2008, 112)

Toward the end of his internment that Wittgenstein composed the majority of the additions that would be incorporated into the last two manuscripts of the *Tractatus*, which he then sent to Russell and Frege, who confessed that he did not understand a word of it. A month before his official release in August 1919, Wittgenstein sent a letter to Russell through his sister Hermine in which he attempts to distill the main argument of an early script of the book he sent to Russell, because he had little hope that Russell would understand his arguments concerning logic. The letter reads:

The main point is the theory of what can be expressed (*gesagt*) by propositions – i.e., by language – (and, which comes to the same, what can be *thought*) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown (*gezeigt*); which I believe is the cardinal problem of philosophy. (McGuinness 2008, 103)

Following their meeting in The Hague, Russell returns to England and composes the introduction, which Wittgenstein did not approve of, but accepted that Russell's involvement was instrumental in ensuring its publication. At first, however, his efforts were not successful and Cambridge University rejected the book, even with Russell's imprimatur. It was not until 1921, when the German version appeared in the *Annalen der Naturphilosophie* that Wittgenstein and Kegan Paul agreed to publish a bilingual edition with Russell's introduction establishing its importance for a philosophical readership. The first paragraph of Russell's introduction reads:

Mr Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, whether or not it proves to give the ultimate truth on the matters with which it deals, certainly deserves, by its breadth and scope and profundity, to be considered an important event in the philosophical world. Starting from the principles of Symbolism and the relations which are necessary between words and things in any language, it applies the result of this inquiry to various departments of traditional philosophy, showing in each case how traditional philosophy and traditional solutions arise out of ignorance of the principles of Symbolism and out of misuse of language. (Wittgenstein 1922, 7)

The structure of the *Tractatus* is constructed around seven basic propositions, numbered by the natural numbers 1–7, with all other paragraphs in the text numbered by decimal expansions that further develop the main proposition. Here, the logical construction of a philosophical system has a specific goal: to find the limits of world, thought, and language, and to distinguish between sense and nonsense. As Wittgenstein explains in the preface to the English version,

[t]he book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather – not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought). (Wittgenstein 1922, 23)

According to this new image of the philosopher's role, especially vis-à-vis the natural sciences, philosophy is neither a theory, nor a doctrine, but rather an activity: it is an activity of clarification (of thoughts), and more so, of critique (of language). Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of the ladder to express the overall function of the *Tractatus*: it is to be used in order to climb on it, in order to “see the world rightly”; but thereafter it must be recognized as nonsense and be thrown away. Hence: “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (Biletzki and Matar 2011).

Wittgenstein may have gained a reputation as a solitary, tormented, and alienated philosopher; a bit like Proust, the feeling of “being a member of an accursed race” shaped his personality, and both his Jewish identity and his homosexuality were sources of deep conflict and ambivalence throughout his life. Nevertheless, he also maintained strong social ties in England and Austria, and formed strong ties with prominent figures such as the philosophers of the “Vienna Circle” (whose school of logical positivism was deeply influenced by his thinking): architect Adolf Loos, writer and satirist Karl Kraus, and economists Piero Sraffa and John Maynard Keynes. Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge University in 1929, Keynes

wrote to Lydia: “Well, God has arrived. I met him on the 05:15 train” (Biletzki and Matar 2011).⁶

Finally, it has often been said that if a Greek philosopher appeared in the streets of Paris, London, or Cambridge in 1922, that he would regard the figure of the modern philosopher as nothing but a bizarre walking encyclopedia, a little like the writer of *The Waste Land* in the same year. It is perhaps according to this sentiment of being burdened by too much language, too many words, that Wittgenstein’s scalpel could be appreciated as saving the patient lying etherized on the table. In this regard, perhaps a better comparison to Wittgenstein in poetry would not be Pound nor Elliot, who were both burdened by too much erudition (i.e., “too many pictures”), but rather the American poet, William Carlos Williams, who just a year later published *Spring and All*, and whose sparse brand of imagism is summed up later on in the line “Say it, no ideas, but in things” (1986, 264), a sentiment that could also be used to summarize the main proposal of Wittgenstein’s philosophy as well, that is, if we substitute the term *Sacherverhalt* for “things.”

In some sense, however, the year 1922 also marked the separation of modern philosophy into two camps that continues up to the present moment in the division between “Continental” and “Analytic” philosophy; the former still bearing a modernist impulse of a creative evolution in its relation to the sciences and to the arts, the latter choosing instead to focus on the foundations of logic, the problems of natural language, and the purification of all metaphysical categories. In Wittgenstein’s words, “the word ‘philosophy’ must mean something which stands above or below, but not beside the natural sciences” (1922, 4.III, 41). Of course, it is not by accident that Bergson’s translator and greatest early follower in the English-speaking world was the critic and imagist-poet T. E. Hulme, even though he later recanted his advocacy in view of the popularity of Bergsonism among the masses. Similarly, Russell went on public record as early as 1908 in condemning Bergson as a false prophet and “transcendental mystic,” and as Mary Ann Gillies and Ann Banfield have both argued, his suspicions around Bergson’s popularity could be understood as a motive for his role in promoting the *Tractatus*, and Wittgenstein’s precise vision of logical philosophy, as a new gospel.⁷

Nevertheless, although their choice of methods were different, the one trait that both Bergson and Wittgenstein shared is the hatred of a traditional language of metaphysics, and a tendency to either radically limit this language by submitting it to destruction through the revelation of contradiction – as Wittgenstein wrote “I destroy, I destroy, I destroy!”

(1984, 21) – or, in the case of Bergson, to replace the relative viewpoint and the dependency on the symbol with an urge for creativity and an intuition of the Absolute.⁸ As Bergson wrote twenty years earlier in the “Introduction to Metaphysics” (1903):

A comparison of the definitions of metaphysics and the various conceptions of the absolute leads to the discovery that philosophers, in spite of their apparent divergences, agree in distinguishing two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing. The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it. The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol. The first kind of knowledge may be said to stop at the relative; the second, in those cases where it is possible, to attain the absolute. (1910, 1)

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Dr. Iris van der Tuin, Utrecht University, for providing much of the background research for this chapter, especially for the superbly documented article by Jimena Canales, “Einstein, Bergson, and the Experiment that Failed: Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations,” which explores all the various ramifications of the Einstein-Bergson encounter.
- 2 In the preface to the first edition of *Durée et simultanéité*, written after the meeting, Bergson states that “the idea that science and philosophy are different disciplines meant to complement each other [and thus] arouses the desire and also imposes on us the duty to proceed to a confrontation” (1929, 48).
- 3 In fact, five years later Einstein argued that Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle was merely a provisional conclusion that would probably be solved at some point in the future. See Susan Guerlac, *Thinking in Time* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 40.
- 4 This viewpoint was espoused again in the pages of Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont’s *Impostures Intellectuelles* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1997).
- 5 See Canales’s discussion of the impact of Einstein debate on the jury’s decision to award for this category (2005, 1177).
- 6 See also McGuinness’s *Wittgenstein in Cambridge*, page 11.
- 7 For Russell this is owed to a strong suspicion concerning the emphasis of imagination and the sense of sight in Bergson’s concept of intuition and creative imagination, which would make it more disposed to a popular taste. Interestingly enough, it is this suspicion of the image (or the “picture”) that also leads him to disagree with some aspects of Wittgenstein’s theory of description in the *Tractatus*, as well as in later works such as *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). See Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 253–7; Mary Ann Gillies, *Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1996), 25–7.

- 8 See Henri Bergson's *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1934/2007). See also Iris van der Tuin, "A Different Starting Point, a Different Metaphysics: Reading Bergson and Barad Diffractively," *Hypatia* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 24.

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*Marxism in Revolution: Georg Lukács's History
and Class Consciousness and Karl Korsch's
Marxism and Philosophy*

Adam Takács

It is often emphasized that the label “Marxism” can cover a wide range of and even contradicting forms of political and social practices and ways of thinking. As Leszek Kołakowski remarks in his seminal work, *Main Currents of Marxism*, “there is no reason, in fact, why we should not acknowledge that different movements and ideologies, however antagonistic to one another, are equally entitled to invoke the name of Marx” (1978, 3). Even if one is tempted to define Marxism generally as a materialist theory and practice that takes as its primary aim the analysis and eventual transformation of the political, social, and cultural structure of human society with regard to its economically determined historical condition, the elements of this definition would be far from sufficient in helping us to understand all of the different characteristics that might reflect the underlying basic principles, let alone their historical evolution. Strictly speaking, it is the precise relationship that remains obscure between these elements, generating options that require further interpretation. Indeed, the field of interpretative options pertaining to the relationship between the “analysis” and “transformation” of society, between “social structure” and “economic determination,” and between “materialist theory” and “materialist practice” is precisely the one that can accommodate radically different visions of Marxism.

Even if it is plausible to argue that there is no point in asking who the “true” Marxist is, reducing the theories and practices of Marxism to an undifferentiated whole or, on the contrary, giving equal importance to a plethora of different versions would be just as misleading. One could even say that the history of Marxism is in effect nothing but the history of the importance accorded to Marxist ideas in a given time period in a given society. Understanding this importance, which in itself is a historical variable, means learning to recognize qualitative differences within the Marxist tradition. These differences are shaped by the various philosophical, political, social, and cultural motifs and tendencies operating within

a given context. But, if historical importance appears to be a genuine selective principle, making it possible to perceive the zeniths and nadirs of Marxist thinking throughout its history, then it is precisely because what is at stake here is far from being a mere theoretical issue. The importance accorded to Marxism in a given sociohistorical context is seldom simply the outcome of an academic debate. Even if it is manifested in a theoretical form, the presence of Marxism in a society, historically speaking, is more often than not an indicator of concrete political and social struggles: the struggle to change or maintain a certain form of societal development; the struggle for social emancipation, which may well include the oppression of those considered to be its enemies; and the struggle for social reform or the seizure of political power, reaching its fullest possible expression as a political revolution.

Seen from this perspective, the widespread presence of Marxism in the post-World War I European intellectual and political scene undoubtedly makes it one of the most important and virulent periods in the development of Marxist thought. This importance manifested in both theoretical attractiveness and political effectiveness can perhaps be best explained by pointing out the concomitance of four decisive factors that rendered Marxism a viable option for many who were trying to rethink or remake the social and political conditions they had inherited following the Great War. First, working-class movements, in their social democrat, communist, or syndicalist formats, were a dominant political factor in most European countries, which afforded decisive social legitimacy to Marxist thought and action. Second, the revolutionary situations in Russia, as well as in other European countries like Germany and Hungary, concretely and historically corroborated the belief in the viability of the Marxist alternative for achieving radical social change. Third, the emergence of Bolshevism and Leninism in the midst of the success of the Russian revolution represented new forms of Marxist theory and political practice that focused on organizational questions. Finally, there was an ever more devoted turn toward the in-depth study of the writings of Marx and Engels, and eventually those of Lenin, which tended to gradually redesign the image of Marxism and its potential as a theoretical and political tool – a process that was not without its conflicts.

This particular constellation of political and intellectual tendencies created favorable conditions for the complete renewal of the type of Marxist thinking that had been inherited from the prewar period and shared by most of the theoreticians of the Second International – a mechanical materialism that emphasized the historical necessity of the socialist

revolution and the collapse of industrial capitalism.¹ These tendencies also instigated a qualitative shift in the status of Marxism in the postwar European scene. Besides its recognized status as a school of thought and political movement, Marxism was on its way to becoming a genuine cultural phenomenon and medium in itself. Marxism provided various social groups with a more or less compact vocabulary and ideology for cultural self-identification and expression within the context of the broad postwar crisis and the struggle to build a vision of a better future; it created new forms of educational, artistic, and discursive arenas through which the working class could enjoy an enduring and particular presence on the European cultural map.² Furthermore, Marxism offered many intellectuals of this epoch an effective strategy with which to come to terms with their anticapitalist attitudes and belief in radical social change.³

With this context in mind, one can understand that most of the theoretical efforts for the renewal of Marxist thinking in this period were destined to be, in their essence, more than a mere philosophical or political-sectarian enterprise. Indeed, some of the most important elements of the political and cultural imaginary of the epoch were brought into play under the label “problems of Marxism.” The works of Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, Ernst Bloch, and Antonio Gramsci – to name only a few of the most prominent figures of this renewal – demonstrated an unambiguous ambition to extend the scope of Marxist analysis as much as possible with their evaluation of what they perceived to be the ongoing crisis of bourgeois society and the elaboration of what they believed to be the next tasks of the Marxist revolutionary movement. As a result, not only the ambitions and conclusions of their works, but also the intense debates they generated produced long-lasting effects on the subsequent development of the Marxist tradition. In effect, seeking to reframe some of the fundamental theses of Marxism within such a highly charged atmosphere that was saturated by an uneasy amalgam of grandiose revolutionary expectations and severe political fiascos could hardly produce anything but the seismic shift of the movement. In this respect, two works completed in 1922 and published in Germany a year later deserve particular attention: Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* and Karl Korsch’s *Marxism and Philosophy*.

If one follows Eric D. Weitz in characterizing the German Weimar culture as the “restless questioning of what it means to live in modern times, the search for new forms of expression suitable to the cacophony of modern life, and the belief in the possibilities of the future” (2007, 253), one could say that the works of Lukács and Korsch fit into this context in a

very particular way. Having both converted to Marxism directly following World War I, the two authors shared the conviction that what it meant to live, in Weitz's words, "in the cacophony of modernity in view of future possibilities" could be found in the form of revolutionary Marxism. But while many in this epoch shared their convictions, what granted theirs with particular importance was precisely the new doctrinal content and forms of expression with which they sought to redefine Marxism with regard to its historical development and contemporary dilemmas. In short, by applying the principles of Marxism in analyzing the historical trajectory and existing conditions of Marxism, both Lukács and Korsch provided a unique, and hitherto unseen, understanding of the historical and social forces, thus determining Marxism as a cataclysmic social phenomenon and focus of radical intellectual insight within bourgeois society. In doing so, they succeeded in reanimating the spirit of revolutionary Marxism and, to a certain extent, revolutionizing Marxism in the midst of an environment that was becoming increasingly more postrevolutionary, socially and politically.

Crossing and Distancing Parallels: Lukács and Korsch in the 1920s

Within the Marxist tradition, Lukács's and Korsch's names are often closely associated with one another, yet one could argue that this association is the result of a subsequent ideological construction rather than the sign of a real theoretical or political alliance between the two. As one of Korsch's biographers Patrick Goode notes, "Ever since Zinoviev bracketed Korsch and Lukács together at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, this amalgam technique has been uncritically repeated by most subsequent writers, friendly or hostile" (1979, 93–4). Indeed, the fact that the works Lukács and Korsch wrote in the early 1920s were both harshly criticized for their idealistic and subjectivist tendencies by the mainstream Bolshevik theoreticians of the Third International (Comintern) does not necessarily make them a team, even though this criticism did leave the same indelible mark on their Marxist pedigree. It is also true that there is little evidence to suggest that the two philosophers were in correspondence, let alone harmonizing their ideas. The only occasion when Lukács and Korsch were reported to have briefly met was during the "First Marxist Working Week," an event organized for leading German and Hungarian left-wing intellectuals by Felix Weil in the summer of 1922 in Thuringia,

where a discussion was devoted mostly to the yet unpublished manuscript of Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy*.⁴

While one can find no references to Karl Korsch in Lukács's writings of the 1920s, remarks in Korsch's published texts can help to shed some light on the nature of their intellectual relationship. In a 1923 postscript attached to *Marxism and Philosophy*, Korsch affirms his "fundamental agreement" with the themes of *History and Class Consciousness*, though he adds, "In so far as there are still differences of opinion between us on particular issues of substance and method, I reserve a more comprehensive position for a later discussion" (Korsch 1970a, 15). Unfortunately, this "later discussion" never took place. Part of the reason for this default might be due to the fact that, unlike Lukács, Korsch responded rather dismissively to the Comintern's criticism of his views and gradually moved in an opposite political direction. Between 1923 and 1926 a series of political confrontations within the German left led to the loss of popularity and dispersion of the German Communist Party, and Korsch found himself becoming immersed in a political struggle that pushed him toward advocating for an anti-Bolshevik political and anti-Leninist theoretical position.⁵ Meanwhile, Lukács published his book on Lenin in 1924 and was ostensibly on his way to acknowledging the authority of the Soviet-led, Bolshevized Comintern.

Despite this apparent divergence, between 1919 and 1924 Lukács and Korsch both lived through the most intense theoretical and political period of their lives along fairly parallel lines. Lukács was living in Vienna, where he had emigrated after the ephemeral success and subsequent failure of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, in which he had played a leading role as one of the deputy people's commissars of educational and cultural affairs. In Vienna, Lukács was deeply involved in the debates and the faction struggles within the Hungarian Communist Party over the precedents and prospects of communist revolution in Europe. But he was also convinced that, in order to avoid the earlier mistakes of his party and develop an accurate position on these questions, an in-depth Marxist theoretical understanding of the contemporary historical situation was needed. Looking back on his involvement in the Hungarian revolution of 1919 and the mistakes that they made, Lukács remarks, "Intellectually we were unprepared to come to grips with the tasks that confronted us" (1971, xi).

Similarly, the intellectual preparation for potential revolutionary action also played an important role in Korsch's Marxist development during this period. He was very politically active in the German Communist

Party, and in 1922 he published two short works in which he presented the “quintessence” and “central issues” of Marxism to a larger readership.⁶ It was during this time that Korsch started to prepare a larger theoretical work, part of which became his *Marxism and Philosophy*, with the manifest conviction that “the practical politics of a real Marxist is only the continuation by other means of his theoretical work of science and propaganda” (1970c, 160).

Later, in 1930, Korsch returned to his earlier affirmation of his fundamental agreement with Lukács, while also reinforcing the political and theoretical discrepancies between them. In a text aimed at defending the conception of *Marxism and Philosophy*, Korsch attests:

In a Postscript to my work I stated I was fundamentally in agreement with Lukács and postponed any discussion of the specific differences of method and content that remained between us. This was then quite incorrectly taken – especially by Communist critics – as an avowal of complete accord between us. In fact, I myself was not sufficiently aware at the time of the extent to which Lukács and I, despite our many theoretical similarities did in fact diverge in more than just a few “detailed” points.... Today, in this second unaltered edition, I cannot again state that I am in basic agreement with Lukács’s view, as I once did.... Nevertheless, I still believe to this day that Lukács and I are objectively on the same side in our critical attitude towards the old Social Democratic Marxist orthodoxy and the new Communist orthodoxy. This is, after all, the central issue. (1970b, 101–2)

Here, Korsch rightly points out that both of their theoretical efforts throughout the 1920s had been directed against virtually the same ideological adversaries. Even though they might have disagreed on what “communist orthodoxy” really meant, during this time Korsch was undoubtedly very close to Lukács in strongly criticizing the social democratic platform, as well as what Lukács labeled the distorted Marxist belief in “fatalistic expectations” or the “spontaneous actions of masses” in the making of socialist revolution. Accordingly, the palette of ideological positions to which they opposed themselves was wide and historically construed; it included the “revisionist” or “vulgar Marxist” theoreticians of the Second International, such as Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, or Franz Mehring, as well as those communist leaders for whom the question of revolutionary activity was merely a tactical-political issue precoded in the course of the class struggle of the working class.

What Korsch never refers to in his comments on Lukács, however, was what they had in common in terms of their respective efforts to retheorize Marxism. Specifically, they both share some fundamental insights

into how to free Marxism from a range of its own historically reified misapprehensions and more recent misunderstandings. In brief, they both claim that the socialist revolution should be understood as an ongoing social process led by the proletariat and its organizations, rather than as a spontaneous or voluntary rupture made once and for all within the social fabric of industrial capitalism. Furthermore, they believe in the necessity of the renewal of the theoretical and ideological apparatus of Marxism through the reappropriation of the genuine sense of the dialectical method and of the dialectical relationship between consciousness and practice. Finally, both Lukács and Korsch share the conviction that, in order to put Marxism back on track toward its historical destiny, there needed to be not only a return to Marx, but also a revitalization of Marxism's theoretical framework through the integration of the Hegelian legacy, as well as Lenin's teachings on social dynamics, organization, and revolution. In light of these similarities, it would seem that the invention of a tradition in which both Lukács and Korsch are charted as joint inaugurators of the renewal of twentieth-century Marxist theory and practice is by no means a delusory construct.⁷

Marxism as Revolutionary Historicism

In one of his shorter writings published in 1922, Karl Korsch argues that, for the working class, "this is at once the most difficult and finest period of its historical development" (1970c, 167). This statement is based evidently on the conviction – shared by most Marxist intellectuals of this epoch, including Lukács – that with the 1917 October Russian Revolution the working-class movement and Marxist thought entered into a new era of theoretical and political development. As Korsch explains, "the great transition from the capitalist to communist socio-economic order is no longer to be accomplished merely in imagination, but in hard reality of life" (1970c, 167). However, Marxists' positions varied greatly on the question of in precisely what sense this transition could be considered to be a "historical development" of the working class as such. The Russian Revolution had occurred under specific circumstances and developed in ways that Marx and Engels had not predicted; thus, the question of its historical necessity, and especially whether it could be seen as an exemplary revolutionary movement, remained issues of vital debate.

Within this context, one of the shared objectives of the authors of *History and Class Consciousness* and *Marxism and Philosophy* was to demonstrate that the genuine sense of the October Revolution, and any socialist

revolution in general, could not be apprehended solely from the point of view of its factual or practical significance. In other words, the revolution could not be understood either as a specific factual moment in a predetermined course of historical development or as the result of a mere voluntary activity seeking to unshackle proletarian discontent in a given society. Rather, Lukács argues for a radical historical understanding of the revolution, drawing upon how Marx “transformed radically all the phenomena both of society and of socialized man into historical problems” (1971, 17). In order to demonstrate the historical significance of the revolution, Lukács needed to explore the economic, social, and cultural traditions, the objective and subjective elements of which had gradually made themselves available in dialectical fashion for radical social transformation. He also needed to weigh the theoretical and practical possibilities and dilemmas through which the revolution manifested itself as a social phenomenon under present circumstances. The implication was that, for Lukács, the significance of the revolution was by no means given as such, but had to be elaborated through a dialectical evaluation of historical motifs and contemporary dilemmas in a way that sought to make that elaboration part of the revolutionary process.

This approach may also explain why Lukács believed he was justified in restricting the sense of “orthodoxy” in Marxism to its methodological component in his infamous and much debated opening essay of *History and Class Consciousness*, “What Is Orthodox Marxism?”⁸ In fact, with a revolutionary process in the making, it would have been quite incongruous for him to impose a doctrinal denotation on what was yet to be understood through the prism of the dialectical relationship between past determinations and present possibilities. Moreover, throughout *History and Class Consciousness* Lukács emphasizes that a critical history of the revolutionary present was being written under the label, “historical materialism.” In this respect, Lukács not only points out that the “pre-eminent aim” of Marxist methodology is the “knowledge of the present” (1971, xliii), but also argues that “Marxist orthodoxy is no guardian of traditions, it is the eternally vigilant proclaiming (*immer wache Verkünderin*) the relation between the tasks of the immediate present and the totality of the historical process” (1971, 24; translation modified). This attitude also allows him to define “historical materialism” as a methodology that permits us “to view the present historically and hence scientifically so that we can penetrate beneath the surface and perceive the profounder historical forces which in reality control events” (1971, 224), for, “every piece of historical knowledge is an act of self-knowledge. The past only becomes

transparent when the present can practice self-criticism in an appropriate manner” (1971, 236). Even if Lukács states unequivocally in the introduction of his book that “the experiences of the years of revolution have provided a magnificent confirmation of all the essential aspects of orthodox (i.e. Communist) Marxism” (1971, xliii), this statement concerns solely the questions of methodology and in reality provides not the premise, but the final outcome of his analysis.

If, according to Lukács, the true Marxist methodology is one that is “historical through and through,” then it also compels those practicing it to recognize that “it must be constantly applied to itself” (1971, xliii). In one of his earlier essays that he reworked for *History and Class Consciousness*, “The Changing Function of Historical Materialism,” Lukács highlights the fact that applying historical materialism to itself means above all that “we must investigate the social premises of the validity of contents (*Geltung der Inhalte*) of historical materialism” (1971, 228–9; translation modified), and denounces the “vulgar Marxism” of Kautsky and Mehring for its mechanical and unhistorical approach. In short, historical materialism requires Marxist thought to critically seize its own historically determined theoretical possibilities if it wants to intervene effectively in the vortex of the given state of class struggle. Seen from a historical perspective, this problem constitutes the precise starting point of Korsch’s *Marxism and Philosophy*.

Korsch’s book has three basic claims. The first one is that despite the fact that the relationship between Marxism and philosophy is manifestly a question of capital significance, “until very recently” (Korsch 1970a, 29) this topic had been fundamentally neglected both by bourgeois and Marxist thinkers. The second is that, in order to properly assess this relationship, one has to understand what Marx and Engels really meant when they advocated for the “abolition of philosophy” (Korsch 1970a, 49) as such. Finally, the third one is that the importance of answering this question lies in the conviction that the adequate Marxist treatment of “ideological realities” and their relationship to revolutionary practice can prove to be of critical importance in the new period of class struggle by the working class. In his diagnostic, Korsch relies deliberately on a historical approach arguing, like Lukács, that one must “apply Marx’s principle of dialectical materialism to the whole history of Marxism” (Korsch 1970a, 56). In doing so, he foregrounds the notion that even though the achievements of Marx and Engels were directed against the philosophy of German Idealism they relied to some extent on Hegel’s logic. As such, he attempts to demonstrate the social and theoretical reasons accounting for

the emergence of vulgar Marxism and its decisive neglect of philosophy, which he sees as the “greatest crisis that has yet occurred in the history of Marxist theory” (Korsch 1970a, 53). Nevertheless, Korsch’s motives are far from being merely historical. His aim is also to demonstrate that the problem of the relationship of Marxism to philosophy is “especially crucial in the present stage of the proletarian class struggle” (1970a, 52). In this sense, he incisively points out that the doctrine of the abolition of philosophy, approved by Marx and Engels, showed a “peculiar parallelism” (1970a, 52) with Lenin’s Marxist doctrine of the abolition of the state. In other words, in the name of authentic Marxism, Korsch argues for regarding it as a “very long and arduous revolutionary process that unfolds through the most diverse phases” (1970a, 51–2), rather than understanding the abolition of philosophy as an act “accomplished so to speak once for all by a single intellectual deed” (1970a, 51). By highlighting the processual nature of revolution, Korsch succeeds in reestablishing the positive role of Marxism as a philosophy and calls for the reassessment of the question “how is philosophy related to the social revolution of the proletariat and how is the social revolution of the proletariat related to philosophy?” (1970a, 71) According to Korsch, this problem proved to be all the more crucial because it brought into play the question of “ideological reality,” the consideration of which was necessary for the correct resolution of the political and practical problems of the revolutionary movement of the working class. Thus, by seeking to “restore a genuine dialectically materialist conception of intellectual reality” (1970a, 83), Korsch accompanies Lukács in according an essential role to consciousness in revolution.

Consciousness in Revolution

One of the major threads through which Lukács’s and Korsch’s ideas of the early 1920s resonate with one another both conceptually and ideologically is their insistence on the utmost importance of the problems of theory, ideology, and consciousness in revolutionary practice and in Marxist thought, in general. Like Korsch, Lukács puts a strong emphasis on the presence of historically conflicting tendencies within the Marxist movement as far as the importance attributed to these problems is concerned. Relying on his own historical approach, he also argues that in the ultimate phase of its development capitalist society became the very field within which social struggle, along with its economical and political aspects, took the primary form of an “ideological struggle for consciousness” (Lukács 1971, 68). In this struggle, the more the proletariat is

equipped with the ideas of historical materialism and Marxist ideology, the greater the possibility for victory, because, as Lukács explains, for the proletariat “the insight into the essence of society (*Einsicht in das Wesen der Gesellschaft*)” indicates “a power-factor of decisive importance, if not the weapon of decision (*ein Machtfaktor allerersten Ranges, ja vielleicht die Waffe der Entscheidung*)” (1971, 68; translation modified). Lukács even goes as far as to argue that, “when the final economic crisis of capitalism develops, the fate of the revolution (and with it the fate of mankind) will depend on the ideological maturity of the proletariat, i.e. on its class consciousness” (1971, 70). At the same time, Lukács also affirms that in reality, in many spheres of contemporary social life, the class consciousness of the working class falls noticeably short of an adequate understanding of the total situation, even if given the objective possibility for this understanding. This shortfall is particularly visible “in ideological questions, in questions of culture”; therefore, as he points out, “we must never overlook the distance that separates the consciousness of even the most revolutionary worker from the authentic class consciousness of the proletariat” (Lukács 1971, 79–80). Accordingly, Lukács’s major objective in elaborating his theory of class consciousness in the early 1920s is to demonstrate that the distance between the “objective possibility” and the “effective reality” of the working class can be adequately bridged by having recourse to a theory and practice of revolutionary consciousness.

Two essays in *History and Class Consciousness* are directly devoted to the problem of class consciousness: “Class Consciousness” (1920) and “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat” (1922). These essays are designed to outline some of the most essential theoretical components of Lukács’s radical Marxist social theory. They also exceptionally demonstrate Lukács’s remarkable radicalism and his talent for embedding powerful, fine-tuned social analyses in more ambitious historical overviews, while carrying out subtle conceptual interpretations with an ultimate faith in the socially transformative power of philosophy. His essay on reification intends to provide a series of in-depth analyses focusing, on the one hand, on the concrete aspects of the economic structure of capitalist society along with its devastating reifying effects on social relations and, on the other hand, on the development of bourgeois philosophy since Kant up to the present, revealing it to be creatively impotent in coming to terms with its own historically and socially determined status and intelligibility. His essay on class consciousness highlights the conceptual architecture through which the cognitive status of the proletariat in bourgeois society can be defined and studied. Despite the different foci of the two essays,

they nevertheless share the same basic tendency in pointing out the conditions that make it possible to transcend bourgeois society historically, socially, and, above all, cognitively in the form of the proletariat. In his earlier essay, Lukács refers to “totality” as the adequate Marxist category for society and defines the revolutionary task of the proletariat as that of cognitively establishing a “real connection with the totality” (1971, 52). In his essay on reification he refers to the proletariat as the “identical subject-object of the historical process,” meaning it is “the first subject in history that is (objectively) capable of an adequate social consciousness” (1971, 199). These two determinations unmistakably reveal the same intention – to endow proletarian consciousness with an ultimate constitutive role in history, without which no genuine social revolution could take place or be considered to have taken place.

Lukács’s concept of revolutionary consciousness can best be understood in relation to his theories of history and of revolution as a social process. In fact, as long as the socialist revolution is perceived to be a social process that depends heavily on the reciprocation between the long-term effects of objectively given historical circumstances and the actual dilemmas of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the inertia of its own movement, the form of consciousness one can attribute to this social conjuncture cannot be defined other than as a dynamic entity, in itself. In seeking to clarify the meaning of class consciousness, Lukács distinguishes it sharply from the psychological consciousness of either the individual members of the proletariat or the proletariat as a whole, and defines it as “the sense, become conscious, of the historical situation (*geschichtliche Lage*) of the class” (1971, 73; translation modified). But this definition also permits him to consider the revolution as a dynamic historical situation in which the consciousness of the proletariat is not given, but is rather constantly in a process of becoming conscious of its changing situation. Moreover, Lukács firmly believes that the revolution can by no means be considered to be the ultimate goal of the struggle of the proletariat, if by ultimate goal we mean a “state of the future” or a “‘duty’ or ‘idea’ designed to regulate the ‘real’ process” (1971, 22). Rather, as he explains, the ultimate goal for the proletariat should be “that relation to the totality (to the whole society seen as a process), through which every aspects of the struggle acquires its revolutionary significance,” but which proves to be real only if the “consciousness makes it real” (Lukács 1971, 22). However, in describing the revolutionary process as the proletariat becoming conscious of its own social and historical destiny, Lukács warns us not to fall prey to two misunderstandings: the first being to believe that revolutionary class

consciousness is something other than revolutionary practice, and the second being to claim that the revolutionary proletariat can be the spontaneous producer of its own adequate class consciousness.

Proclaiming the intimate dialectical relation between revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary practice also constitutes an integral part of Korsch's theory in *Marxism and Philosophy*. Korsch strongly emphasizes that no matter how powerful Marxist ideology proves to be at a given moment, it is not enough to abolish bourgeois forms of consciousness in thought and in consciousness: "These forms can only be abolished in thought and consciousness by a simultaneous practico-objective overthrow of the material relations of production themselves" (1970a, 93). Thus, in order to be effective, in other words revolutionary, Marxist ideology and its consciousness should always be embedded in the course of revolutionary practice, because "theoretical criticism and practical overthrow are here inseparable activities, not in any abstract sense but as concrete and real alteration of the concrete and real world of bourgeois society" (1970a, 95).

Despite the similarity of their positions, Lukács moves beyond Korsch insofar as he not only emphasizes that in the transformation of bourgeois society "only the practical class consciousness possesses this ability to transform things" (Lukács 1971, 205), but also points out that there is a concrete dialectical interconnectivity of consciousness and practice at the peak of the revolutionary process of the proletariat. Lukács characterizes the emergence of something "radically new" within the revolutionary transformation of the social-economic structure of capitalist society as a "leap" (*Sprung*), and argues that this cannot be understood as either the product of "one unique act," or as a consequence of a "slow and gradual quantitative development" (1971, 249–50). Rather, the revolutionary "leap" should be understood as "a lengthy, arduous process," for the "character of a leap (*Sprungcharakter*) is expressed in the fact that on every occasion it denotes a turning in the direction toward something qualitatively new; that in it (*daß in ihm*) conscious action directed towards the comprehended totality of society comes to the surface" (1971, 250; translation modified). In short, for Lukács, revolutionary consciousness is an inextricable part of revolutionary practice insofar as the latter does not simply consist of the acts of the momentous transformation of the given, but tends also to apprehend itself as a progressive phase within the process of the total transformation of the social fabric.

Lukács moves far beyond Korsch's position on another level too, namely by claiming that revolutionary class consciousness is something significantly more than just an elevated form of the proletariat's conscious

relationship to its own ideas and acts. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács uses the notion of “imputed class consciousness” to highlight the fact that, from a historical and dialectical perspective, the state of class consciousness of the proletariat at a given moment cannot be derived from or reduced to its psychological consciousness related to its own situation. In other words, class consciousness as a dialectical category refers not to a subjective mind-set, but to an objective condition that is reflected in the proletariat’s thoughts and conscious acts. As Lukács explains, if consciousness is studied dialectically within the context of the whole of society, then class consciousness refers to the “thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interest arising from it,” and thus this consciousness “consists in the fact of the appropriate and rational reactions ‘imputed’ [*zugerechnet*] to a particular typical position in the process of production” (1971, 51). Nevertheless, the notion of “imputed consciousness” is significantly more than a synthetic category designed for descriptive use by Marxist philosophers, because Lukács also manifestly believes that the function of “imputing consciousness” to the class can be rightly attributed to a real social force within the historically determined field of class struggle, namely the Communist Party. In one of his essays on Rosa Luxemburg in *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács strongly affirms that the “dialectical unity of theory and practice,” by which Marx described the proletariat’s struggle for freedom, cannot be given for a consciousness either as “pure theory,” or as an “imperative or norm of action” (1971, 41). Rather, “this form taken by the class consciousness of the proletariat is the party” (1971, 41). In this sense, declares Lukács, the Communist Party is nothing less than the “bearer of the class consciousness of the proletariat and the conscience of its historical vocation” (1971, 41).

It would perhaps be too hasty, however, to conclude that Lukács simply, and rather dogmatically, conceives of the Communist Party as the supreme organ of the working class, ascribing its superior historical and ideological knowledge to the masses. Even if Lukács by no means denies the importance of organizational questions within the revolutionary movement and fully subscribes himself to the Leninist image of the party, the notion of “imputed consciousness” clearly serves more philosophical, rather than ideological, purposes. In other words, according to Lukács, in imputing consciousness, the role of the party is not one of “imposing” its doctrines on the proletariat, but of providing the necessary dialectical mediation between practice and theory, between the proletariat and its sense of the most appropriate tasks within the process of revolutionary class struggle.

Thus, Lukács declares the function of the party with respect to class consciousness to be not simply organizational, but also “moral” (1971, 42). But insofar as Lukács’s Marxist social theory attempts to conduct its analysis for and in view of the party, the function of “imputed consciousness” can also be seen as assuring the methodological and moral position of the whole endeavor of *History and Class Consciousness*.

The unprecedented merit of Lukács’s and Korsch’s Marxist philosophical endeavors in the early 1920s lay in their ability to provide penetrating insight into the reasons for the successes, and failures, of the communist revolutions in the post–World War I period. The historically and ideologically tempered Marxist critique of Marxism offered a diagnostic in which the present was judged from the point of view of both the past and the future. In doing so, they undoubtedly offered at once too much and too little in the eyes of most of their revolutionary Marxist contemporaries – too much because by bringing the questions of ideology and consciousness to the foreground of Marxist debates they set up a requirement and an ideal designed to regulate the Marxist revolutionary movement from within, but one that appeared to be effectively unattainable and unnecessary for many; too little because in the light of the course taken in the consolidation of the Russian Revolution under Bolshevik rule and the organizational turn within the “Sovietized” Comintern, Lukács’s and Korsch’s ideological assessments and prognoses proved to be obsolete. Paradoxically, however, the fact that their explorations turned out to be at once premature and anachronistic did precisely encourage the view that *History and Class Consciousness* and *Marxism and Philosophy* could be seen within the Marxist tradition as endowed with an idea of a “historical alternative” capable of coming into view whenever one poses questions about alienation and emancipation with regard to capitalist society.

Notes

- 1 On the Marxism of the Second International, see Kołakowski 1978, Vol. 2, 1–30.
- 2 See, e.g., Helmut Gruber’s *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture 1919–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Richard Bodek’s *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997).
- 3 On this topic, see Michael Löwy’s sociological analysis of anticapitalist intellectuals in Germany and Hungary in *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*. Translated by P. Camiller (London: NFL, 1979), 15–90.

- 4 See Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination: The History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973). On these developments, see Goode 1979, 97–113.
- 5 See Karl Korsch, *Quintessenz des Marxismus: Eine gemeinverständliche Darlegung* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1922); and *Kernpunkte der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung: Eine quellenmässige Darstellung* (Berlin, 1922).
- 6 See Goode 1979 and Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (London: Pluto, 1979), which were both published in 1979 and use the label “Western Marxism” in their titles, indicating a tradition within which they situate their subjects. The term *Western Marxism* was first used in relation to Lukács and Korsch by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in 1955. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Translated by J. Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 30–59.
- 7 “Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx’s investigation. It is not the ‘belief’ in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a ‘sacred’ book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to *method*” (Lukács 1971, 1).
- 8 See his essay written exclusively for the volume of *History and Class Consciousness*, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization” (Lukács 1971, 295–342).

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Principles of Relativity: *Whitehead* *versus Russell*

Steven Meyer

I begin with three quotations. First, Evelyn Whitehead, wife of Alfred North Whitehead, observes in a letter to Bertrand Russell on February 9, 1918, in response to the prison sentence Russell had received earlier that day for “making statements ‘likely to prejudice His Majesty’s relations with the United States of America’” (Monk 1996, 520): “However passionately we may disagree with your present views[,] to us, you are you, the friend we value, whose affections we count on, the friend whom our boys love, & in many ways still our Infant Prodigy” (Lowe 1990, 40).¹ Second, from a June 1930 letter Russell wrote to an acquaintance: “I lectured on this subject [solipsism] at Harvard, with Whitehead in the Chair, and I said it seemed to me improbable that I had composed the parts of his books which I could not understand, as I should be compelled to believe if I were a solipsist. Nevertheless I have never succeeded in finding any real evidence that I did not do so” (Russell 2000, 433–4).² And the third is from a letter Whitehead wrote a decade later, dated April 26, 1940, after Russell’s appointment at the City College of New York was rescinded: “Evelyn and I cannot let this occasion pass without telling you how greatly we sympathise with you in the matter of the New York appointment. You know, of course, that our opinions are directly opposed in many ways. This note is just to give you our love and deep sympathy in the personal troubles which have been aroused” (Russell 2000, 478–9). The present essay addresses just one of the myriad ways the opinions of the two close friends and collaborators sharply differed. Yet this particular divergence demonstrates with special clarity the significance that the entire set of concerns possessed in the early decades of the twentieth century – and continues to possess a century later.

In Many Ways Still Our Infant Prodigy

In his *Autobiography*, Russell recounts “the incident which first brought me into contact with my friend Whitehead” (2000, 24). Russell had just

turned five. His grandparents, who were raising him, had rented a summer house from the Archbishop of Canterbury. "I had been told that the earth was round, and had refused to believe it," he explains. "My people thereupon called the vicar of the parish to persuade me, and it happened that he was Whitehead's father. Under clerical guidance, I adopted the orthodox view and began to dig a hole to the Antipodes." "This incident," Russell adds, "I know only from hearsay" (2000, 24). Whitehead would have been sixteen, and there is no knowing whether he was actually in East Kent that summer (having departed for school in 1875 two years earlier) or whether he would have paid any particular attention to the intellectual trials of the grandson of the former prime minister.

Nevertheless, Whitehead played a decisive role in Russell's introduction into the distinctive culture of Cambridge University a dozen years later. As a member of Trinity College's mathematics faculty, which for many decades functioned as the academic core of the university, and "one of the readers of the examination papers for scholarships written by prospective freshmen," Whitehead persuaded his fellow examiners to award Russell "a £75 minor scholarship instead of the £50 one which his marks earned." "What was at stake," Victor Lowe explains, "was not financial aid, of which Russell had no need, but prestige, and the extra impetus that the larger scholarship provided at the beginning of undergraduate studies" (1985, 222). This was not all Whitehead did for the new Cantabrigian. Every one of "the people then in residence who subsequently became my intimate friends called on me during the first week of term," Russell recollected in his *Autobiography*. "At the time I did not know why they did so, but I discovered afterwards that Whitehead, who had examined for scholarships, had told people to look out for [Charles Percy] Sanger and me. Sanger was a freshman like myself, also doing mathematics, and also a minor scholar" (Russell 2000, 53).

I take it, however, that when Evelyn Whitehead addressed Russell as "our Infant Prodigy" several decades later, she did not have in mind the exclusive and exclusively male intellectual hothouse aspects of the university so much as the coincidence that she and Whitehead married at the end of the same term Russell came up to Cambridge. As a result, although Russell and Whitehead were not personally close during Russell's undergraduate years, Evelyn and Alfred Whitehead watched over the development of Whitehead's most brilliant student together from 1890. One anecdote will suffice to establish their dual mentorship. Whitehead was asked to evaluate the mathematical argument of the dissertation on the foundations of geometry that Russell prepared in 1895 for admission as

one of “the sixty Fellows who (with the Master) were Trinity College” (Lowe 1985, 106). The day Russell “was elected a Fellow of Trinity, ... Mrs. Whitehead sent him this note: ‘Dear Mr. Russell / Please accept our warmest congratulations on your election. Were you doubtful yesterday? / Sincerely yours, / Evelyn Whitehead.’” On the note Russell added that he “learned afterward that Mrs. Whitehead had scolded Whitehead for giving me a bad time” (Lowe 1985, 228). Shortly following Whitehead’s death, Russell recalled that Whitehead “defended himself vigorously. He said it was the last occasion on which he would be able to speak to me as to a pupil, and that, after the praise that he knew I was to get, I might have paid too little attention to his entirely justifiable criticisms” (Russell 1948, 146).

During the decade that Russell and Whitehead collaborated closely on the material that resulted in the three-volume *Principia Mathematica*, their epoch-defining investigation of the logical foundations of mathematics, the involvement of the Whiteheads in Russell’s intellectual and personal life became increasingly complicated. Perhaps most notably, unhappy in his own marriage, Russell fell in love with Evelyn Whitehead in 1901. There is no reason to suppose his passion was reciprocated – indeed, there is good reason to believe it was not – still, it undoubtedly made for even more intense relations. Across the decade, Russell and Whitehead traded innovations back and forth, and Russell came to rely on Whitehead for motivation, both in the form of endless emendations and approval. This dynamic worked well over the course of the collaboration, although it ended up causing a deep rift, as Whitehead continued in the second decade of the century to assemble a fourth volume for which he had assumed sole responsibility.³

Between 1906 and 1922, Whitehead published a series of studies investigating aspects of both pure and applied geometry, testifying to his long-standing interest in the subject and also enabling him to refine his sense of just what a logical account of geometry, pursued along the lines he and Russell had developed in *Principia*, might entail. In works such as the 1906 memoir, “On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World,” and the 1914 “La Théorie Relationniste de L’Espace” (“The Relational Theory of Space”), he analyzed pre-Einsteinian relational and absolute theories of space through the application of “the logical apparatus of *Principia Mathematica*” to spatial concepts (Hurley 1978, 743). Following the war, he published three volumes in quick succession – *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (1919), *The Concept of Nature* (1920), and *The Principle of Relativity with Applications to Physical Science*

(1922) – extending his study of physical relativity to Einstein’s special theory (in the first two volumes) and the general theory (in the third). They also established Whitehead as the preeminent philosopher of science in England.

Already by 1913, Russell was exhibiting a strong interest in Whitehead’s research in the philosophy of physics. Some forty years later he would explain the motivation for what was for him a new course of study. The reminiscence starts with his contributions at the turn of the century to the development of “a new logic which enabled” him to believe that “number, space, time and matter ... were as real as any mathematician could wish” (Russell 1956, 39). On this basis, “I read a paper to a philosophical congress in Paris in 1900 in which I argued that there really are points and instants”; yet there was a “serpent in this paradise of Mediterranean clarity.” Whitehead “said to me once: ‘You think the world is what it looks like in fine weather at noon day; I think it is what it seems like in the early morning when one first wakes from deep sleep.’ I thought his remark horrid, but could not see how to prove that my bias was any better than his. At last” – this brings us to 1913 – “he showed me how to apply the technique of mathematical logic to his vague and higgledy-piggledy world.” Russell alludes here to what later in the decade Whitehead would call his “method of extensive abstraction.” Now Russell saw how he might “dress up” Whitehead’s unpleasantly disordered world “in Sunday clothes that the mathematician could view without being shocked” (Russell 1956, 39). “This technique which I learned from him delighted me,” Russell enthused, “and I no longer demanded that the naked truth should be as good as the truth in its mathematical Sunday best” (1956, 39–40).

Despite the care Russell took in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, his 1914 Lowell Lectures, to indicate the extent of his reliance on Whitehead’s ongoing investigations – no different than what he had become accustomed to doing in their previous collaborative work – the renewed appropriation posed several novel problems.⁴ For Russell and Whitehead were no longer producing jointly authored volumes. In the first place, Russell did not present Whitehead’s material as Whitehead wished to have it presented; second, from Whitehead’s own perspective, much of Russell’s argument was either misleading or wrong; and last, as Whitehead would not publish his own version in book form for another half dozen years or so, Russell’s variant might appear to have precedence. Ultimately, then, the issue was not the threat of solipsism Russell liked to joke about (however real it may sometimes have felt to him) but came down to matters of exactness of thought and proper credit for intellectual innovation.

More generally, there is the strange-but-true quality already present in Russell's and Whitehead's works of 1914, *Our Knowledge of the External World* and "The Relational Theory of Space," indicating the different paths they had already set out on, despite seeming outwardly to be doing much of the same thing – bringing the most advanced logical analysis to bear on the philosophy of physics. After the experience with *Our Knowledge of the External World*, however, Whitehead refused to share his research with Russell. So even when Russell produced his 1921 *Analysis of Mind* (consistent, he hoped, with a proper understanding of matter), he was still relying on Whitehead to make sense of Einsteinian relativity, first special, then general, in terms of the logical technique they had developed together in *Principia*. What this meant, practically speaking, was that like everyone else he had to wait for the publication of *The Principle of Relativity* the following year, to see what Whitehead had devised. Only after that would he be able to make sense of the new physics in his own terms, as occurred in the 1927 *Analysis of Matter*.

The important thing to recognize regarding Russell's undiminished enthusiasm for Whitehead's logical technique, with its capacity for deriving exact concepts from the imprecise, shadowy world Whitehead inhabited, is that Russell did not "at all" feel he was therefore obliged to "buy ... the vague and higgledy-piggledy world of sensations or feelings" that Whitehead insisted upon (Desmet and Weber 2010, 178). Whitehead's world of feelings failed to conform to Russell's preferred world of discrete sense-data, despite the fact that both worlds might be characterized in terms of events. It is this divergence, then, that we must understand if we are fully to grasp the significance of Russell's and Whitehead's very different analyses of general relativity (as well as, I will suggest shortly, related differences between Whitehead and Einstein). To do so I am now going to propose a framework within which both philosophers of science may be classed as "total modernists," yet of vastly different sorts.

Opinions Directly Opposed

In the classic study, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman characterized "the experience of modernity" as "paradoxical, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air'" (Berman 1988, 15). In the present remarks, I will focus on "maelstrom," a preferred term of Berman's, in order to stress its equal if opposite

applicability to Russell and Whitehead. As thinkers who variously crossed science and philosophy in their extremely wide-ranging work, Whitehead and Russell did so in the context of a war that served for each of them as perhaps *the* exemplary maelstrom, however differently they may have responded to it. Whitehead – in his philosophy no less than in his life and logic – accepted the centrality of the maelstrom concept as he understood it, and used it or its equivalent as the basis for his constructions. Russell, fearing the maelstrom above all else, wished to remove any trace of it from his conceptualization. Yet in their diametrically opposed responses, Whitehead and Russell present equally characteristic faces of modernity.

Another way of putting this is that, for Russell, philosophy and science, including mathematics, offered complementary modes of protection against the ever-present threat posed by the maelstrom and with it the impression that all that was solid was melting into air. Whitehead, by contrast, embraced the maelstrom (or “turmoil,” as he preferred to call it), yet it did not follow that for him all that is solid *simply* melts into air. Solidity remains, reinterpreted as *solidarity*, of a sort that coexists with atoms of activity that are not material but energetic or emotional and constituted by what Whitehead proposed were best understood as feelings and prehensions – in fact, generalizations of ordinary feeling.⁵ (He thus spoke in *Process and Reality* of “the flux of a solid world” [Whitehead 1979, 15].) Russell could not imagine how such a perspective amounted to anything other than a mystical embrace of the flow like that he associated with Henri Bergson. In a 1924 article on “Philosophy in the Twentieth Century,” he might thus propose that “Dr. Whitehead’s recent books” – by then Russell would have read *The Principle of Relativity*, the most recent of these, to bone up for his forthcoming popular study, *The ABC of Relativity* – “employ the methods of realists [like Russell himself] in defense of a more or less Bergsonian metaphysic” (Russell 1924, 272).

Whitehead entertained very different propositions than Russell (and than Bergson too, although they shared an appreciation and respect for the maelstrom that Russell could not muster) precisely because of the key feature that distinguished the alternate account of general relativity – alternate, that is, to Einstein’s own – proposed in *The Principle of Relativity*. The difference lay not in the results but in how Whitehead and Einstein arrived at them. Indeed, the challenge posed by Whitehead to what quickly became the accepted interpretation of gravitation (or at least what hitherto had been regarded as a gravitational *force* and now was recognized to be a gravitational *field*) lay in his arrival at comparable results not just through a different mathematical formalization but also on the

basis of a different set of assumptions. Most controversial among these was his decision to posit uniform rather than variable curvature of space.

Whitehead's work in the philosophy of physics, and its subsequent extension to metaphysics and cosmology, differed from Russell's in two major respects. First, Whitehead was prepared to challenge the accepted science; he could do this because, unlike Russell, he was thoroughly trained in the relevant physics. Russell, by contrast, was only prepared to interpret the Einsteinian world-picture in terms of his "logical atomism" and at most to adjudicate among extant controversies. The second difference is much more important. As I have already suggested, in their serious technical work – Whitehead in *The Principle of Relativity*, Russell in *The Analysis of Matter* – they both brought their experience and understanding of the logical analysis developed in *Principia* to bear on the most advanced thinking in contemporary physics. Yet here the difference in their starting points becomes crucial. Its importance is somewhat obscured, however, by the fact that Russell no longer set out in his variant of the method of extensive abstraction from a basis in sense-data but instead began with what he proposed were more concrete *events*, just as the new physics and Whitehead did – or so it seemed. Yet there are events ... and then there are *events*. Russell's, for instance, were atomistic in the sense that he understood them to be entirely discrete. Whitehead's, by contrast, were both discrete and continuous, so that any event was necessarily related to all events, not monistically, as one huge thing, but pluralistically, as different overlapping parts of different overlapping wholes. This approach is why he would end up conceptualizing both *positive* and *negative* prehensions, and ultimately would refine the notion of event down to what he called an actual occasion. The relatedness (another term he utilized) of one event involved all others selectively. Some were positively prehended; many were dismissed and so negatively prehended.

If the method of extensive *abstraction* enabled Whitehead to derive concepts that possess the exactness required by science (like those of points or instants), he also *generalized* other concepts (e.g., that of feeling), which thereby permitted him to analyze the *concreteness* of his starting point for the abstract analysis of scientific concepts, namely, the vague "higgledy-piggledy world" that so disturbed Russell. Generalization in one direction, abstraction in the other; it is this dual aspect of Whiteheadian analysis that Russell neglected – and some such combination of abstraction and generalization is indispensable for what I referred to earlier as Whitehead's embrace of the maelstrom. Russell noted of his old acquaintance that he "was impressed by the aspect of unity in the universe, and considered that

it is only through this aspect that scientific inferences can be justified... My temperament led me in the opposite direction" (Russell 1956, 101). Whitehead's "philosophy was very obscure, and there was much in it that I never succeeded in understanding" (1956, 100). And when, in a 1944 essay, Einstein criticized Russell for "the fateful conception ... according to which concepts originate from experience by way of abstraction" rather than being, as Einstein insisted, "the free creations of thought which cannot inductively be gained from sense-experiences," he was getting at a definite limitation in Russell's approach, especially by contrast with Whitehead's (Schilpp 1944, 287).

Yet it is doubtful that Einstein's own alternative ("the free creations of thought"), and his insistence on the "gulf – logically unbridgeable – which separates the world of sensory experience from the world of concepts and propositions" (Schilpp 1944, 287), would have satisfied Whitehead. Certainly, like Russell although for very different reasons, Einstein never adequately grasped Whitehead's criticism of him, let alone the proposed correction, and readily said so when asked. As early as 1921 they met in London to discuss the concerns Whitehead had already set out in various forums, starting with "A Revolution in Science." This was an article, never reprinted, that appeared in the newspaper *The Nation* in November 1919, just days after the celebrated meeting of the Royal Society where empirical verification of one of the key predictions derived by Einstein from the theory of general relativity was first announced. As a long-standing member of the society, Whitehead was in attendance. At the time he was Dean of the Faculty of Science in the University of London (a position he held between 1918 and 1922) and author of the recently published *Principles of Natural Knowledge*.

If I Were a Solipsist

Of course Russell was not a solipsist, but he was – famously even – concerned with the possibility of being one, a possibility he could not deny. Whitehead, by contrast, thought the very concern probably indicated an error in one's reasoning. He also wondered whether the apparently paradoxical result of Einstein's formulation of general relativity – that it called for variable curvature and hence for the "casual heterogeneity" of space – might also indicate faulty reasoning. "The shocking character of ... affronts" like these "to the common-sense," he observed in the notice in *The Nation*, "arises ... from the failure of the revolutionaries to be radical enough" (Whitehead 1919, 233). What was required instead was "on

the one hand an admission of the new outlook and on the other hand an interpretation which preserves a meaning for those well-attested concepts which have proved their value for the expression of the facts of nature.” “A materialistic ether – that eminent Victorian – must go,” and with it “matter as ordinarily understood” (1919, 233). The uniformity of nature was another matter entirely.

Throughout *The Principle of Relativity* Whitehead elaborated on the significance of such uniformity.⁶ Consider, for instance, his argument in the chapter where he introduced the phrase “casual heterogeneity.” “The Relatedness of Nature” was initially presented in June 1922 as a lecture before the Royal Society of Edinburgh upon Whitehead’s receipt of the inaugural James Scott Prize (awarded “for a lecture or essay on the fundamental concepts of natural philosophy” – or as Whitehead characterized it, “for the encouragement of the philosophy of science” [Whitehead 2011, vii–viii]). Of the “complex ... significance of events,” he proposed that “[i]n the first place they are mutually significant of each other. *The uniform significance of events thus becomes the uniform spatio-temporal structure of events.* In this respect *we have to dissent from Einstein who assumes for this structure casual heterogeneity arising from contingent relations.* Our consciousness also discloses to us this structure as *uniformly stratified into durations which are complete nature during our specious presents.* These stratifications exhibit the patience of fact for finite consciousness, but then *they are in truth characters of nature and not illusions of consciousness*” (Whitehead 2011, 25; my emphases).

The phrasing I have emphasized exhibits features of Whitehead’s account that not only differ from Einstein’s but were also correctly identified by Russell as stemming from a deep appreciation of “the aspect of unity in the universe” – yet Russell misidentified them as idealistic and monistic when for Whitehead the unification in question was actually pluralistic and empirical. Russell’s confusion arose because Whitehead’s empiricism of the concrete, as it were, shared few features with the more rigid and abstract varieties of Russell and Einstein. Despite Russell’s atomistic pluralism, traces of the strict monism of his own early idealist phase continued (in lockstep, one might add, with the specter of solipsism) to haunt the “neutral monism” he claimed, misleadingly, to have derived from William James – and which he hoped would enable him to account, in *The Analysis of Matter*, for what he termed the “logically complex structures” of the otherwise unknowable “extra-psychical causes” of our perceptions with which physical science was concerned (Russell 2007, 9–10). The idea was to do so without having to introduce the sort of vague, general

awareness Whitehead's account required (as did James's "radical empiricism"). Unfortunately for Russell, within a year of the book's publication the Cambridge mathematician M. H. A. Newman – who later made major contributions to the development of the computer – conclusively demonstrated that Russell's analysis was, in Russell's own words, "either false or trivial" (Russell 2000, 413).

Whitehead's insistence on uniformity did not imply *conformity*. He was not Russell, nor did he wish to be – perhaps most especially when Russell toyed with the idea of being Whitehead. Certainly, it is tempting to regard Russell and Whitehead as opposites, who came together to produce a masterpiece in mathematical logic, and then went their separate ways. Yet to put things in this manner is to see the world through Russell's eyes, to favor his preference for the clarity and sharp edges of high noon as against the dull what-cannot-even-be-called-edges of waking from deep sleep.

Rather than portraying Whitehead and Russell as opposites, I have tried in this essay to replace a strictly oppositional logic with one involving what Whitehead sometimes spoke of as multifolds. Admittedly, this is to exchange Russell's viewpoint for Whitehead's, and especially to aspire to see out of the corners of Whitehead's eyes – as when in *Process and Reality* he labeled "creativity" as a matter of transforming opposites into *multiple contrasts*. "Whitehead versus Russell" is not just an abstraction; it practically guarantees that one's analysis will exclusively take the form of abstractions. For conveying the concreteness of the matter, something else is needed aside from the accumulation of large numbers of facts. Therefore, to convey an adequate sense of the richness, hence the significance, of Whitehead's and Russell's differences regarding early developments in relativity theory, calls for are multiple *triangulations* – of the sort I have sketched in the relation between the Whiteheads, husband and wife, and Russell, as well as between Whitehead, Russell, and Einstein. (I have only hinted at how things appeared from Einstein's perspective.)

Other key triangulations I have not mentioned at all. These would include, for instance, the relations between Whitehead, Einstein, and each of the other two key expositors of relativity theory in England in the early 1920s, the astronomer Arthur Eddington and the once and future Lord Chancellor, Richard Haldane – not to mention the significance Eddington and Haldane possessed for Russell vis-à-vis Whitehead.⁷ For now, I will put this lively set of interconnections to one side, and just indicate, within the larger context of the complex role the Great War played in the reception of general relativity in England (unavoidable given its clear identification with a German thinker), Eddington's and Haldane's

distinctive positions in this regard. Quaker and conscientious objector, Eddington thus barely avoided imprisonment in 1918; as for Haldane, he was removed from office in 1915 following politically motivated objections to his perceived sympathies for Germany – although he is now credited, as secretary of state for war between 1905 and 1912, as having built up the British armed forces so they were better prepared than they had previously been for continental wars.⁸

Undoubtedly, for Whitehead and Russell the war amplified their differences – and not just their differences regarding the war. Hence the question arose how best to manage the differences, whether to exaggerate them to the point of contradiction and paradox (Russell) or find a way of combining them creatively without thereby suppressing the fact that “we live in a world of turmoil” (Whitehead 1968, 80). How one interpreted *the principle of relativity* proved to be the essence of the matter, as it would continue to be, whether in the particular form of physical science or in the general metaphysical form Whitehead subsequently utilized in *Process and Reality*.⁹

Notes

- 1 Russell, probably the most prominent antimilitarism agitator in England at the time, was sentenced to six months in jail. The Whiteheads’ sons were both enlisted in the British armed forces, and in early March the youngest would be killed in action.
- 2 Letter from Russell to Maurice Amos, dated June 16, 1930, and referring to a lecture delivered some months earlier. Articles in the *Harvard Crimson* of December 7 and 9, 1929 indicate Russell spoke at Boston’s Symphony Hall on December 8th and the next day lectured on “The Philosophy of Physics” to the Harvard Philosophical Club.
- 3 Whitehead never completed the volume, on the logical basis of geometry, although he was still working on it in the 1930s.
- 4 As Russell put it in the preface, he “owe[d]” Whitehead “the suggestion for the treatment of instants and ‘things,’ and the whole conception of the world of physics as a construction rather than an inference” (Russell 2006, 11).
- 5 Lowe reports that when Whitehead described the “six main principles” of his metaphysics to a class at Harvard in 1926–7, the first was “the principle of solidarity”: “every actual entity requires all other entities in order to exist” (Lowe 1969, 332–3).
- 6 See also the remarkable address he delivered in late 1922, entitled “Uniformity and Contingency,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 23 (1923): 1–18.
- 7 Eddington, like Russell a student of Whitehead’s at Cambridge, was the author of *Space, Time and Gravitation* and *The Mathematical Theory of Relativity*, of 1920 and 1923 respectively. In 1921 Haldane published *The Reign of Relativity* – with

- a chapter on Whitehead's philosophy of physics, "Relativity in an English Form," preceding and so framing the corresponding chapter on Einstein. A supplementary volume of 1922, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, included three chapters on mathematical physics corrected by Whitehead in proof.
- 8 The neo-Hegelian Haldane's writing especially bore witness to the integration of physical relativity theory with the "doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge" (John Stuart Mill), which had played a central role in British discourse since the 1860s, as Christopher Herbert conclusively demonstrates (Herbert 2001, 2). Haldane also bore witness to such relativity in his political career: Lord Chancellor in the final all-Liberal government, he regained the position in 1923 in the first all-Labor government.
- 9 There he holds "that the potentiality for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual; and that every item in its universe is involved in each concrescence. In other words, it belongs to the nature of 'being' that it is a potentiality for every 'becoming.'" "This," Whitehead adds, "is the 'principle of relativity'" (Whitehead 1979, 22).

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*Modernist Political Theologies: Carl Schmitt's
Political Theology (1922) and Walter Benjamin's
"Critique of Violence" (1921)*

Tracy McNulty

In *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922), the German jurist Carl Schmitt famously declares that sovereignty, even in a constitutional government, ultimately resides with “he who decides on the exception” (1985, 5) determining when the constitution must be entirely suspended to address an extreme threat to the state that falls outside the bounds of standard legal prescriptions. With this claim, Schmitt not only anticipates the permanent suspension of the constitution of Weimar Germany in 1933, but also articulates the legal rationale and ideological foundation for the absolute dictatorship of Adolf Hitler (whom Schmitt would later hail as the epitome of the sovereign).

The book's title restores the former prominence of the political-theological paradigm of sovereignty that dominated European political life from the medieval period through the age of absolutism, before being eclipsed by the great political revolutions of the late eighteenth century. While broadly inspired by Catholic political philosophy, Schmitt's understanding of political theology nonetheless differs in several important respects from its most recognizable manifestations: the medieval political concept of the “king's two bodies,” which holds the monarch to be at once a mortal human being and the living embodiment of an immortal office (*The King is dead; long live the King!*), and the doctrine of the divine right of kings that defines the sovereign as God's representative on earth. In Schmitt's account, the sovereign is not the mouthpiece of God (a higher authority that would be the ultimate seat of sovereignty), but the decision maker of the exception that is “miraculous,” because it “intervenes directly” into a normative state of affairs in a way that “transgresses its laws” just as a miracle transgresses the laws of nature (Schmitt 1985, 36).

Schmitt's approach to political theology is thus formal, or structural, rather than religious. Raphael Gross argues that it should be understood not as a “Roman Catholic theology given a political turn,” but as “an atheistic political-theological tradition” carried to an extreme (2007, 7). As

such, it may fruitfully be examined alongside two important works that came out within a year of its publication: Walter Benjamin's 1921 essay "Critique of Violence," a defense of revolutionary class struggle as a law-destroying "divine violence" that would serve as a foil for Schmitt's own account of political theology, and the thoroughly rewritten second edition of Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* (1922), an in-depth commentary of the apostle Paul's most important letter that argues against its political theological appropriation and anticipates Barth's later criticisms both of the Nazi state apparatus and of the complicity of German Christians in its rise to power.

The Decision on the Exception

In the opening chapter of *Political Theology*, Schmitt asserts that the concept "legal order" is made out of two independent and autonomous elements, "norm" and "decision," which together constitute the juristic sphere. In a normal situation, "the autonomous moment of the decision recedes to a minimum" (Schmitt 1985, 12); the existing law is perfunctorily instituted. But the law cannot deal with a true exception, because an ordinary legal prescription is merely the *representation* of a general norm, an existing state of affairs; by definition, an exceptional situation is one that falls outside the norm. Because "the exception . . . is not codified in the existing legal order," it "can at best be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state" (Schmitt 1985, 6). In such an extreme case, the sovereign is defined as "he who decides on the exception" (1985, 5), intervening in the absence of any legal precedent.

For Schmitt, however, the exception is not just an anomaly in the life of a state, but belongs to the core concept of sovereignty. Because decisions on the exception actually define and encompass the juridical order, the exception "refer[s] to a general concept in the theory of the state, and not merely to a construct applied to any emergency decree or state of siege" (Schmitt 1985, 5). This claim complicates Schmitt's definition of norm and decision as two autonomous elements of the legal order. Decision never entirely disappears, even when norms prevail; but in an exceptional situation, Schmitt now specifies that "the norm is destroyed" (1985, 12) altogether. Decision alone comes to encompass the entirety of the juridical order, displacing the supposedly "autonomous" sphere of norm. In practical terms, the sovereign suspends the constitution to preserve the state. Nevertheless, Schmitt insists that the legal order does not disappear with the suspension of the constitution; instead, it is temporarily

transferred to the *person* of the sovereign so that it may endure. The “legal order” is therefore distinct from law; indeed, the primary function of the exceptional decision is to uphold the *order* of law by suspending its application. Once the exceptional situation is brought under his power, and order is restored, the sovereign alone determines when (or whether) a new constitution is put in place. In Schmitt’s words, “there exists no norm that is applicable to chaos. For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitely decides whether this normal situation actually exists” (1985, 13).

Because the law does not create new situations, but merely “describes” a situation that is already in place, it is always secondary to the legal order. Citing Gerhard Anschütz, Schmitt writes: “There is not only a gap in the law, that is, in the text of the constitution, but moreover in law as a whole, which can in no way be filled by juristic conceptual operations. Here is where public law stops” (1985, 15). The decision on the exception fills this gap by substituting the embodied power of the sovereign for the suspension or gap internal to the law:

What characterizes an exception is principally *unlimited authority*, which means *the suspension of the entire existing order*. In such a situation it is clear that *the state remains, whereas law recedes*. Because the exception is different from anarchy and chaos, order in the juristic sense still prevails, even if it is not of the ordinary kind. The existence of the state is undoubted proof of its superiority over the validity of the legal norm. The decision frees itself from all normative ties and becomes in the true sense absolute. *The state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right of self-preservation, as one would say*. (Schmitt 1985, 12; my emphases)

When Schmitt writes that “the state remains, whereas law recedes,” he makes clear that the “order of law” is really an order *without* law, which differs from law in that it excludes the “gap.” The basic tension is between law as the mediation of an authority – an authority it simultaneously represents and limits – and the unmediated character of the sovereign decision that “embodies” law, allowing the legal order to coincide with authority or power. According to Schmitt, “the exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state’s authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to *produce* law it need not be *based* on law” (1985, 13).

Schmitt aptly terms this exception as the “miracle” of political theology, in his famous claim that “the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology” (1985, 36). When Schmitt affirms that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological

concepts" (1985, 36), he reveals his debt not only to the counterrevolutionary Catholic political philosophers he discusses at some length (Joseph de Maistre, Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald, Donoso Cortés), but also more profoundly to the political theology of the apostle Paul. Most immediately, Schmitt's conception of the state whose existence is secured by the act of decision recalls Paul's famous distinction between the "two Jerusalems" symbolized by the two sons of Abraham – Ishmael and Isaac: the "Jerusalem of the flesh" who lives in slavery to the law (the historic Israel and the Jewish religion), and the "new Jerusalem" or "Jerusalem above," born free through a miraculous suspension of the laws of nature (Galatians 4:22–31). More specifically, Schmitt's argument reproduces almost exactly Paul's interpretation of the "fulfillment of the law" introduced by Jesus Christ. This fulfillment takes a paradoxical, dual form, which anticipates the fraught topology of the exception. Christ realizes, or completes, the law, bringing it to fruition by making good on its promises and animating its living spirit; but he also voids the law, renders it obsolete, in the same way that the fulfillment of a legal contract renders it null and void. As the ultimate example of the sovereign exception, Christ models the paradoxical place of the sovereign with respect to the juridical order: because he embodies the law, he can suspend it.

Schmitt inherits from Paul not only a theory of sovereign action, however, but a critique of the written law as a mediating representation. Paul's polemic against the Jewish law in the Epistle to the Romans is structured by a distinction between two orders of law: the "law of God" and the "law of sin." The first is associated with the intelligible "spirit" of the law, which is "written in the heart," the second with the prescriptive "letter" of the Jewish law, which compromises or corrupts the first by binding it to a particular representation and consigning it to written form. Paul calls for the prescriptive "letter" of the Jewish law to be sublated by the law of the spirit, such that "we serve not under the old written law but in the new life of the Spirit" (Romans 7:4–6). Christ, as the living embodiment of the law of God, upholds the spirit of the law by "fulfilling" – and so rendering obsolete – its written form. In the same way, the result of the sovereign exception theorized by Schmitt is that we no longer obey the law, but the sovereign who introduces a new order through its suspension.

Schmitt's critique of constitutionalism shares with Paul's polemic a repudiation not merely of the letter of the law in its rote normativity, but of what might be characterized as a *spatial* understanding of law as erecting a boundary or limit between different spheres. Both authors challenge spatial notions of law that establish a boundary between an "inside" and an

“outside” by topologizing “inside” and “outside” as continuous: through the “fulfillment of the law” in Paul, and through the strategy of sovereign exception in Schmitt. In his mission to the Gentiles, Paul argues that the covenant with the Israelites does not define the borders of the kingdom of God; the “new covenant” universalizes the promise by “including what was excluded,” inscribing or integrating what was once “outside.” In the same way, the sovereign breaches the limits of law to bring the exception under the authority of the state, such that there is no longer anything outside its purview. Schmitt specifies that sovereignty relates to “borderline cases,” those at the edge of the law’s jurisdiction or “outermost sphere” of the state. At the same time, however, sovereignty is a “borderline concept” (*Grenzbegriff*) in the theory of the state (Schmitt 1985, 5), because the sovereign is neither internal nor external to the legal order. To describe his place, Schmitt deploys an oxymoronic formulation: “Although the sovereign stands outside [*steht außerhalb*] of the normally valid juridical order, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety” (1985, 7; translation modified).

Ironically, for Schmitt the ideal of this “new covenant” was the Nazi Reich inaugurated by Adolf Hitler, consolidated through an emergency degree (the Reichstag Fire Degree of 1933) that suspended the Weimar constitution and the legal protections and civil liberties it enshrined. Schmitt both anticipated and advocated for this legal maneuver in *Political Theology*, observing that Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution (which allowed the president to declare a state of emergency) granted “unlimited power” to the executive, and therefore allowed for its own suspension (1985, 11–14). This argument grew out of Schmitt’s *On Dictatorship* (1921), which opposed what he called “commissarial dictatorship” (the declaration of a temporary state of emergency on grounds of legal right, which was limited by law and always ended with the constitution intact) to “sovereign dictatorship,” in which law was suspended not to save the Constitution, but to create a new legal order (Schmitt 2013). On the strength of this work, Schmitt was ultimately appointed State Councillor for Prussia by Hermann Göring, after joining the Nazi Party in May 1933.

The Protestant theologian Karl Barth drew from Paul a very different understanding of Christ’s “fulfillment of the law,” which precludes any analogy between divine and human authority. In *The Epistle to the Romans* (1922), Barth argues that the God revealed from the crucifixion of Jesus challenges any attempt to align God with specific human cultures or achievements (1933, 243). The grace made possible by Christ’s

death on the cross allows for the transcendence not merely of religious institutions and laws, but of the world. Hence it is the gift of grace that is exceptional, and no human being is capable of dictating it. Not surprisingly, then, Barth was a prominent and vocal critic of Hitler and the Nazi Regime. Along with other members of the Confessing Church in Germany, he attempted to prevent the Nazis from establishing a state church controlled by the regime (ChristianHistory.net). This endeavor culminated in 1934, when Barth authored and personally mailed to Hitler the “Barmen Declaration”; the document castigated Christians who supported the Nazis and argued that the Church’s fidelity to the God of Christ required an immunity to other lords. “The various offices in the Church do not provide a basis for some to exercise authority over others,” he wrote, “but for the ministry with which the whole community has been entrusted and charged to be carried out. We reject the false doctrine that, apart from this ministry, the Church could, and could have permission to, give itself or allow itself to be given special leaders [*Führer*] vested with ruling authority” (UCC.org).

Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence”

While Barth’s reading of Paul’s epistle would preclude its political-theological appropriation, Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence” allows for an even more pointed contrast with Schmitt’s work: not only because *Political Theology* was written partly in response to it, but because it deals with the relationship between law and violence in a way that completely reinterprets and revalues the political-theological opposition of the law’s “spirit” to its “letter.”

Giorgio Agamben argues that Schmitt’s conception of the “state of exception” as belonging to the core-concept of sovereignty should be understood as a response to Benjamin’s concept of “divine violence,” which he defines as a “pure” or “revolutionary” violence that destroys the legal order in the name of justice. Whereas divine violence does not enter into any relationship with right, Schmitt’s account of the state of exception attempts to contain all types of violence under right and thus to exclude the possibility of an extralegal violence (Agamben 2005, 52–5). Although Benjamin and Schmitt are both fierce critics of the failings of law, Benjamin’s analysis differs from Schmitt’s in not repudiating the law’s letter or written form. Instead Benjamin opposes the “law-making” function of violence, whose best exemplar might be Schmitt’s theorization of the sovereign exception.

Benjamin's essay introduces his influential account of the distinction between "mythic" and "divine" violence, or, in other words, between the founding violence that makes the law and the destructive violence that annihilates law. Mythic and divine violence both invite comparisons with the core concepts of political theology, because they are aligned with the power of the gods (Greek and Jewish, respectively) to intervene decisively in the world. Ultimately, however, it is mythic violence that is most closely related to the stakes of political theology as Schmitt understands it, while "divine violence" turns out to have affinities not only with revolutionary class struggle, but also with the Jewish law traditions that are the object of Paul's polemic.

Benjamin's essay mounts an exhaustive critique of the mythic order of law, understood as the site of a "tyrannical" violence whose only function is to guarantee the perpetuation of its own power. Benjamin cites as an example the legend of the Theban queen, Niobe, who is stripped of the power of speech and frozen in a block of stone for refusing to show deference to the gods. The legend reveals mythic violence to be a *lawmaking violence*, which "establishes a law far more than it punishes the infringement of a law that already exists" (Benjamin 1996, 248). The violence at stake in mythic manifestations in turn elucidates all lawmaking violence, revealing that lawmaking is power making, and that the object of retribution is always "mere life" (1996, 248).

In the modern state, the spirit of mythic violence tends toward dictatorship as its logical limit, with the police function as its most ubiquitous and ambivalent manifestation. In both cases, "spirit" expresses not the ultimate end of law, its highest aim, nor underlying principle, but rather the unbounded character of mythic power. In the name of "security," the police make use of such invasive tactics as surveillance and wiretapping to extend the reach of state power: the "spirit" of law therefore becomes synonymous with the perpetuation of the legal order. Importantly, this "spiritual" character is also linked to a refusal of language, in particular of written laws, in its limiting function. Benjamin specifies that mythic violence is promulgated by "unwritten laws," orders that take the form of fated decrees or dictatorial pronouncements that do not have to justify their sovereignty before preexisting laws. Conversely, he claims that "the struggle over written law in the early period of the ancient Greek communities should be understood as a rebellion against the spirit of mythic states" (Benjamin 1996, 249), suggesting that men appeal to the concreteness of the written law as a defense against the tyrannical "spirit" of the unwritten law.

This appeal to the protective character of the written law is not intended as a general endorsement of legislation, however. While he identifies unlimited authority as the most troubling manifestation of mythic violence, Benjamin is equally pessimistic about the capacity of “preexisting laws” – or even constitutional protections – to contain or control it. The legal rights of individuals cannot be opposed to the pervasive power of the state, because the legal order grants those rights with the sole aim of preserving its own existence: “[T]he law’s interest in a monopoly of violence vis-à-vis individuals is explained not by the intention of preserving legal ends but, rather, by the intention of preserving the law itself” (Benjamin 1996, 239). What state power fears most is not the legal rights of individuals, but their potential for exercising extralegal violence. This is because “violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not only by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law” (1996, 239).

The only solution, then, is to counter violence with violence. The remedy is not a lawmaking violence or a legal violence of means, however, but a “different kind of violence” than that imagined by legal theory. Benjamin calls it “divine violence,” and asserts that it alone is capable of securing just ends (1996, 248). While mythic violence involves the breaching of the boundaries between individuals and the state, divine violence “call[s] a halt to mythic violence” (1996, 249–50) by erecting a different kind of boundary, making the barrier against the “spirit of mythic states” the condition of justice:

Far from inaugurating a purer sphere, the mythic manifestation of immediate violence shows itself fundamentally identical with all legal violence, and turns suspicion concerning the latter into certainty of the perniciousness of its historical function, the destruction of which thus becomes obligatory. This very task of destruction poses again, ultimately, the question of a *pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythic violence*. Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; ... if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.... *Mythic violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake; divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of the living*. (Benjamin 1996, 249–50; my emphases)

Whereas the mythic power of the gods of antiquity is aligned with dictatorship and the police function, Benjamin identifies the expiatory violence of the Hebrew God with the transformative violence of revolutionary class struggle. He describes revolutionary violence as the “highest

manifestation of pure violence by man” (1996, 252), and illustrates its “law-destroying” character with George Sorel’s distinction between the political strike and the proletarian general strike. According to Sorel, the political strike, which addresses a set of demands to authority, ultimately involves the strengthening of state power because it functions merely to modify (and so maintain) the existing order (1996, 246). It illustrates the law-preserving function of violence as means. Conversely, the proletarian (or “revolutionary”) general strike demonstrates that under certain conditions – for example in the context of class struggle – strikes can be seen as “pure means” (1996, 245). This is because the revolutionary, general strike makes no demands, but sets for itself the sole task of destroying state power instead. It reveals its indifference to material gain by declaring its intention to abolish the state as such, the basis for the existence of the ruling group that exploits the public. It is no longer a matter of modifying the legal order, or even of founding a new law, but of “calling a halt” to the order of law and so inaugurating a new epoch.

Although the revolutionary strike is inimical to the state, Sorel argues that such a rigorous conception of the general strike may diminish the incidence of actual violence in revolutions. The paradoxical conclusion Benjamin draws from his argument is that a method of solution beyond all legal systems is therefore also beyond violence:

Whereas the first form of interruption of work is violent, since it causes only an external modification of labor conditions, the second, as a pure means, is nonviolent. For it takes place not in readiness to resume work following external concessions and this or that modification of working conditions, but in the *determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state, an upheaval that this kind of strike not so much causes as consummates*. For this reason, the first of these undertakings is lawmaking but the second anarchistic. Taking up occasional statements by Marx, Sorel rejects every kind of program, of utopia – in a word, of lawmaking – for the revolutionary movement: “*With the general strike, all these fine things disappear*; the revolution appears as a clear, simple revolt, and no place is reserved either for the sociologists or for the elegant amateurs of social reforms or for the intellectuals who have made it their profession to think for the proletariat.” (Benjamin 1996, 246; my emphases)

In the “consummating” quality of the general strike, we find the expiatory violence characteristic of the divine. While it causes the legal order to “disappear,” anarchistic or revolutionary violence does not necessarily require the spilling of blood; it is lethal to the legal order, not to life.

While this violence may be *extralegal*, however, its capacity to “call a halt” to the violence of the mythic order is closely related to the function of writing, and more broadly to language as a sphere “inaccessible to violence.” Benjamin is careful to distinguish law in its representational or “mediate” function as a *sign of power* from what he calls “language as pure means,” the structural function of language as a limit to violence and power that he identifies with the historic innovation implied in the advent of written law. In essence, Benjamin inverts the usual Pauline logic by associating the pernicious lawmaking function of mythic violence with what he calls the “tyranny of spirit,” linked to an absence of writing. At the same time, he recovers the function of language as something distinct from – or even opposed to – the function of law as a representation or mediation of a higher authority.

This problematic goes to the heart of a distinction between “language as mediation” and “language as pure means” that structures much of the essay. Benjamin associates language as mediation with mythic violence, and language as “pure means” with the nonviolent elimination of conflicts. He gives several examples of “language as pure means,” including the *lie* and the *commandment form*.

Benjamin claims that, historically, “no legislation on earth” (1996, 244) originally stipulated a sanction for lying. He interprets the absence of such a sanction as an exclusion of violence. It demonstrates that “there is a sphere of human agreement that is nonviolent to the extent that it is wholly inaccessible to violence: the proper sphere of ‘understanding,’ language” (1996, 245). This possibility of language is concerned not with communication or representation, but with the creation of a space that is immune to the tyranny of the mythic order. Lying is a use of language whose function is to limit the intrusion of the other. To lie is, among other things, to erect a barrier, to stave off the other’s knowledge of – and power over – one’s interiority. The relatively late preoccupation of legal systems with truth and lies is thus the hallmark of mythic violence for Benjamin. He identifies it with the penalty placed on fraud, but also with such abuses of legal power as surveillance and the use of force to extract testimony. In these practices, the subject’s ability to lie comes under attack, with the result that a barrier against state power is eroded.

The example of the commandment form takes this argument further by suggesting that the capacity to “call a halt” to mythic violence is aligned with the structural function of writing, or of language as limit.

Benjamin is careful to specify that the commandment is not a “representation” of divine justice; the commandment is *related* to justice, but not as its representation. In this respect, the commandment is not a law at all, at least under the terms in which Benjamin defined law in the first part of the essay: a mediate representation of a force or violence. Most obviously, the commandment is not identified with a state or power. Though more importantly, it is not even identified with God, to the extent that God would be understood as the sovereign authority “behind” the law. Commenting upon the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” Benjamin notes that the “commandment precedes the deed, just as God was ‘preventing’ the deed” (1996, 250). However, he stresses that “no *judgment* of the deed can be derived from the commandment” (1996, 250; my emphasis). In his words,

Those who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it. Thus it was understood by Judaism, which expressly rejected the condemnation of killing in self-defense. (Benjamin 1996, 250)

The commandment does not “prescribe” or tell us what to do; it has nothing to do with “representation,” even the representation of actions or conduct. Benjamin distinguishes the commandment form from the precepts and norms of positive law, conceiving it neither as a positive prescription nor as an empty “principle,” but as a *limit* with which one must struggle, that is conditioned by its articulation in language without functioning to mediate the “spirit” of the law.

The Benjamin-Schmitt exchange effectively resurrects the old tension between Jewish and Canon law, but also gives it new resonance in the age of martial law and technological state surveillance. Legal theorist Pierre Legendre argues that the Romano-Canonical legal traditions that have founded Western jurisprudence are predicated upon a “banalization of writing” (1997, III), a disregard for its material inscription that holds the letter to be nothing more than a placeholder: a flawed or incomplete representation of a meaning or truth that is itself beyond words. At the same time, it makes possible the legal and political fantasy of a “living writing,” located in a single body understood as the site of interpretive authority. In Legendre’s words, “we belong to a culture in which a mystically alienated human body stands in the place of the absolute book. The state has emerged from this structure” (1997, 109).

While Schmitt's work might be the best modern example of this tendency, Benjamin's analysis draws upon an important strain of Jewish legal commentary that disjoins the written commandment from decisionist authority. Jewish legalism considers law neither as a description of an existing order nor as a representation of a law-giving authority, but as a text whose meaning is uncertain. In the diaspora context in which the Talmud originates, there is no privileged mediator or interpreter of the law, no court of last recourse. The object of rabbinic commentary, however, is not to fill this vacuum with an authoritative interpretation that would determine or decide the meaning of the law, but to model an approach to religious practice based on the need to wrestle with the letter of the text. In the paratactic style typical of Talmudic exegesis, many different glosses are presented side by side without any subordination or synthesis. In its non-decisionist character, this interpretation of law foregrounds the absence of a final arbiter – including God. It is this conception of writing that is arguably displaced by Paul's distinction between the "old written law" and the "new law of the spirit."

In ancient Judaism, the commandment not only does not function as a representation of God's power, but also, in many cases, is opposed to it. In the Hebrew Bible, the introduction of the written commandments of the Mosaic Law can be read as marking the transition from one understanding of the deity to another: from God as the embodiment of mythic violence to a divine justice that is not necessarily – or even at all – associated with God's power or will. In the early books of the Bible, God's violence has many "mythic" features: the "episodes of demonic attack," where Yahweh suddenly and without provocation attempts to kill his own people, including Moses; the ban on entering sacred spaces on pain of death; the significance of blood and blood sacrifice, and so forth. Indeed, one might argue that the first "mythic violence" opposed by the written law is the mythic violence of God. In his commentary of the Hebrew Decalogue, which is introduced by the verse "and God spoke all of these words [all together]" (Exodus 20:1), the medieval rabbi Rashi suggests that the voice of God took the form of a single, terrifying utterance, so unbearable that the people of Israel begged Moses to shield them from the voice by reading the commandments for them, deflecting its awesome force.¹ This gloss counters Paul's assessment of Judaism as afflicted by the tragedy of God's absence, his withdrawal from the "dead" letter that signs his retreat from the human community. It suggests that the Israelites' relation to God is marked by a dread of the unmediated divine presence, which casts in a different light the stakes of the written law. While Schmitt's

account of sovereignty as a “border concept” offers a topological interpretation of the border as integrating “inside” and “outside” into a new whole, the Hebraic law aligns the border function with writing, understood as a structural boundary or limit to power.

Notes

- 1 “Rashi explains that first all the commandments were uttered by God in a single instant. Then, God repeated the first two commandments word for word. Following that, the people were afraid that they could no longer endure the awesome holiness of God’s voice and they asked that Moses repeat the remaining eight commandments to them” (1981, 23).

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*Frazer's The Golden Bough and Malinowski's
Argonauts of the Western Pacific:
Anthropology in 1922*
Marc Manganaro

In 1922, A. R. Radcliffe Brown's first monograph, *The Andaman Islanders*, was published. The year also saw the publication of the collection, *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, edited by the prominent British anthropologist W. H. R. Rivers, which, incidentally, T. S. Eliot cited in a brief essay the following year, "Marie Lloyd"; Eliot elegizes the death of the British music hall singer, Lloyd, as the loss of live entertainment, quoting Rivers on how "the 'Civilization' forced upon [the Melanesian natives] has deprived them of all interest in life" (1950, 407–8). The year also saw the death of Rivers, which brought to a close a chapter in British social anthropology and opened the door for the expatriate, Pole Bronislaw Malinowski, to become the leading light in British anthropology. The year 1922 was also when Alexander Goldenweiser's book *Early Civilization* was published, which caused Margaret Mead, once Goldenweiser's student, to call it "the first book by an American anthropologist to present cultures briefly as wholes" (1959, 8). It was in the same year that Mead and Ruth Benedict first met, in a graduate course at Columbia taught by Franz Boas. And it was in 1922, according to Mead, that Boas became known to his graduate students, a number of whom went on to shape the future of American anthropology, as "Papa Franz" (1959, 9).

These milestones point to the significance of 1922 in the history of Anglo-American anthropology, though, admittedly, to the nonspecialist, some of them might not leap from the page as manifesting much cultural significance. However, 1922 also saw the publication of the fourth edition of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*: the former brought anthropology to an unprecedented level of public recognition and interest; the latter more than any other single anthropological work transformed the landscape of twentieth-century Anglo-American anthropology.

Frazer, the dean of evolutionary anthropology, had been a luminary figure both within and outside of anthropology since 1890, when the first

edition of *The Golden Bough* appeared. Published in two volumes as *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, the first edition dazzled readers with its array of accounts of religious and magical practices from peoples ancient and modern, practices tied together through theories of sacrifice and regeneration that intimated a parallel between savage and Christian beliefs and rites. The second edition, appearing in 1900, expanded the reputation of Frazer's magnum opus, but it was the twelve-volume edition, published between 1907 and 1915, that had the seminal impact on the writers and artists of the modernist period, most notably Eliot, Pound, Lawrence, and Joyce. The third edition is the edition cited by Eliot in 1922 in the most celebrated literary legacy to anthropology, *The Waste Land* (the impact of the third edition is manifest as well in that other modernist masterwork of 1922, Joyce's *Ulysses*).

Frazer described the one-volume fourth edition appearing in 1922, subtitled *A Study in Magic and Religion*, in the preface as *The Golden Bough* "in a more compendious form," as an "abridgement" aiming "to bring the work within the range of a wider circle of readers" (1922, v). Frazer's attempt to popularize the work paid off, for the fourth edition has had the broadest readership of all of the editions, described by Frazer's biographer Robert Ackerman as Frazer's "best seller" (1987, 289) and as a "runaway success" (1987, 292) in terms of copies sold. *The Golden Bough* had already exerted its prime literary and artistic influence prior to the publication of the fourth edition manifesting most famously, and for that matter infamously, in Eliot's "Notes" to *The Waste Land*. This mention only served to further *The Golden Bough's* reputation and motivation to read, or at least skim, it.

While the transdiscursive effect of *The Golden Bough*, at least as registered in its impact upon modernist high art, was evident before the appearance of the fourth edition in 1922, developments in anthropology suggest that by 1922, Frazer's masterwork had effectively become defunct within the discipline. Frazer's reliance upon an evolutionary paradigm and corresponding use of a comparative method – in which "primitives" from across the globe, past and present, were mainly organized by the principle of evolutionary similitude or sameness – had been challenged within anthropology as early as the late 1880s. By 1922, however, the conceptual and organizational assumptions of Frazer's work, and that of other evolutionary comparative anthropologists, had largely been called into question and unseated by other paradigms: anthropologists, unlike Frazer's removed, armchair variety, narrated their own experiences in the field and focused on different kinds of questions having mainly to do with

particular peoples. In fact, Malinowski's *Argonauts* more than any other single anthropological text sounded the death knell for Frazer's brand of anthropology (and that despite the fact that Malinowski in the foreword to *Argonauts* explicitly pays homage to Frazer's influence). While this backdrop may shed some light on the historical placement of Frazer's significance, and to a limited degree Malinowski's, it does not centrally address what excited readers about *The Golden Bough*, and what, in a modernist Poundian turn of phrase, Frazer "made new" in and beyond anthropology.

Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough? The scene, suffused with the golden glow of the imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest landscape, is a dream-like vision of the little wood-land lake of Nemi – "Diana's mirror," as it was called by the ancients. No one who has ever seen that calm water, lapped in a green hollow of the Alban Hills, can ever forget it. The two characteristic Italian villages which slumber on its banks, and the equally Italian palace whose terraced gardens descend steeply to the lake, hardly break the stillness and even the solitariness of the scene. Diana herself might still linger by this lonely shore, still haunt these woodlands wild. (Frazer 1922, 1)

Thus begins the fourth edition of *The Golden Bough*, the opening of chapter 1, "The King of the Wood," which matches verbatim the opening of the first edition published thirty-two years prior. The book opens with several presumptions. Its opening rhetorical question presumes that we, the readers, are familiar with the picture by the nineteenth-century painter, Joseph Turner, perhaps a safe assumption in 1890 and 1922; though, as Jonathan Jones points out in his treatment of Turner's painting as it appears in *The Golden Bough*, the critical view of Turner's oeuvre had changed between *The Golden Bough*'s first appearance in 1890 and 1922: in the late nineteenth century, Turner was regarded as an idiosyncratic "painter of myth and history"; by 1922, "it suddenly looked as if Turner had secretly invented impressionism" (Jones 2005, 2). Nonetheless, Frazer's words describing Turner's painting are the same in 1922 as they were in 1890, and those words, redolent of the genre of elegy itself as John B. Vickery asserts,¹ support a view of Frazer as more a figure of the nineteenth century, a Victorian with a longing heart.

In a session on reassessing Frazer at the MLA convention in 1990, the cultural historian James Clifford opened his presentation with a pointed restatement of Frazer's rhetorical question: How many of us in this room really know Turner's picture of The Golden Bough? The painting, shown in 1834, was entitled "Lake Avernus – the Fates and the Golden Bouygh."

A fairly packed room produced a few hands only, Clifford's rhetorical expectation reversing Frazer's. While that response may not signal a waning of interest in or estimation of Turner's art in the late twentieth century, it does signal the distance of Frazer's readership, of 1890 and 1922, from roughly contemporary readership, and points toward a more substantive waning of interest and knowledge in contemporary readership – that is, a knowledge of and interest in the classical world that Frazer presumed in his reading audience.

Before turning to anthropology proper, the young Frazer began his scholarly career with philosophical aspirations, and then turned to what the late eminent historian of anthropology George W. Stocking refers to as “a parallel (and intertwining) strand of his scholarly life: the edition of scholarly texts” (1995, 130). Given the loose confederation of scholarly interests that comprised anthropology in the latter half of the nineteenth century – mythology, folklore, ethnology, evolutionary theory, and the classics – and given especially Frazer's own distinctive blend of these interests, I would put the emphasis on “intertwining” over “parallel,” especially once *The Golden Bough* was launched. Of course it is not just that Frazer brought all of these materials into his work, but on the thematic level what the book is essentially *about* is the survival or reemergence of the “savage” in the mythology and art in the classical world as well as in the civilized, contemporary world. Indeed, what especially excited Eliot and others about *The Golden Bough* was not only the collocation and juxtaposition of tales from classical mythology and tribal practices both ancient and modern, but a thesis maintaining a vital connection among all these practices.

The opening paragraph of *The Golden Bough* also reveals another presumption less often seen or recognized in Frazer's work: that Frazer was present at the scene; that, in anthropological terms, he was the man on the spot, in this case at the edge of the little wood-land lake of Nemi: “no one who has ever seen that calm water ... can ever forget it” (1922, 1). We will not as often see in the remainder of this baggy monster of a book the presence of the narrative author at the scene described. To the contrary, Frazer as armchair anthropologist *par excellence* draws from and relies upon the accounts of others in the field – fieldworkers, missionaries, ancient scribes – to provide the scene and make his case. It is important for him, in Clifford Geertz's words, to have “been there” (1988, 5), to set the scene and make the case for the survival of the primitive and ancient in the modern, as he does at the opening and at the resounding conclusion of *The Golden Bough* here:

Our long voyage of discovery is over and our bark has drooped her weary sails in port at last. Once more we take the road to Nemi. It is evening, and as we climb the long slope of the Appian Way up to the Alban Hills, we look back and see the sky aflame with sunset, its golden glory resting like an aureole of a dying saint over Rome and touching with a crest of fire the dome of St. Peter's. (Frazer 1922, 827)

The Golden Bough closes at the scene of the convergence of the classical and the Christian worlds, where Nemi and St. Peter's as loci of both epochs are juxtaposed to illustrate their likeness. This nexus is the inspiration for Eliot's famous words describing the "mythical method" at work in Joyce's *Ulysses*, which, Eliot tell us, owes so much to Frazer; "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" is maintained and represents, in Eliot's words, "a step toward making the modern world possible for art" (1950, 177–8). Eliot's diction in describing the "mythical method" in Joyce's 1922 masterwork is tantamount to Eliot's own 1922 masterwork, *The Waste Land*, and the collocation of quotations from different epochs, cultural mythologies, and tongues that closes *The Waste Land* – "Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe. / Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. / Shantih shantih shantih" (1970, ll. 432–434) – bear strong resemblance to the closing lines of Frazer's 1922 edition:

But Nemi's woods are still green, and as the sunset fades above them in the west, there comes to us, borne on the swell of the wind, the sound of the church bells of Aricia ringing the Angelus. *Ave Maria!* Sweet and solemn they chime out from the distant town and die lingeringly away across the wide Campagnan marshes. *Le Roi est mort, vive le roi! Ave Maria!* (827)

The death of the king as agent of kingly rebirth, and thus of the land and people, is of course at the heart of both *The Golden Bough* and *The Waste Land*. In the case of *The Golden Bough*, the scene of the convergence of epochs that opens and closes the volume is also the scene of a crime. The king is dead, after all – who killed the king, and why? Indeed, the dreamy scene that opens the volume, "suffused with the golden glow of imagination," turns to something else in the second paragraph, where the "sylvan landscape" is revealed as "the scene of a strange and recurring tragedy" (Frazer 1922, 1). The setting shifts from the beautiful to the sublime, as the sylvan focus shifts to "right under the precipitous cliffs on which the modern village of Nemi is perched," where in the "sacred grove" near a "certain tree ... a grim figure might be seen to prow," sword in hand, who "kept peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy" (Frazer 1922, 1). In cliff-hanger fashion, Frazer answers the implicit question of the identity of this mysterious figure:

He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead. Such was the rule of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him, he retained office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier. (1922, 1)

Stocking holds that upon its publication “there was little in *The Golden Bough* that was by itself strikingly original” (1995, 139). Frazer, according to Stocking, owed Edward Tylor for the “fundamental conceptual and methodological debts”; the comparison of the content of classical scholarship to “savage custom and belief” had been done previously by Andrew Lang and others; and even Frazer’s controlling idea, “the conception of the slain god,” Frazer admitted to borrowing from his anthropological mentor, Robertson Smith (Stocking 1995, 139). What was original in *The Golden Bough*, Stocking asserts, was the “adoption of a plot-type echoing a genre very much in fashion at the *fin-de-siecle*: that of the mystery story” (1995, 139).

What Frazer holds is the mystery at the heart of his massive opus is where to find an “explanation” for the “strange rule of this priesthood,” for, he claims, it “has no parallel in classical antiquity, and cannot be explained from it” (Stocking 1995, 2). Rationalizing his use of the comparative method, Frazer asserts that “to find an explanation we must go further afield,” to “a barbarous age” that “surviving into imperial times, stands out in striking isolation from the polished Italian society of the day, like a primaeval rock rising out of a smooth-shaven lawn” (Stocking 1995, 2). Mysteries are solved, in the unlikeliest of barbaric, ancient places.

Frazer’s entire project, then, that spans the globe and millennia with a heretofore unprecedented sweep that fairly astonished the readership of his day, and, arguably, a significant body of readers for a century to follow, essentially funnels to a preposterous focus, to the solving of the most minor of mysteries, a modest proposal, as it were, “to offer a fairly probable explanation of the priesthood of Nemi” (Stocking 1995, 3), which itself prompts yet another rhetorical question: Who *does* know the mystery of the priesthood of Nemi? Or, put another way, who really cares about the acquisition of a “fairly probable explanation” of that priestly order? The answer, today and most likely in 1922, underscores that Nemi is after all a slim reed to hang a vast and complex network of epochs and civilizations upon, but Frazer did manage to hang it there: in all its magnificent sacrificial similitudes, and despite its outmoded and at times outrageous comparative organization and set of evolutionary assumptions, it manages for us to hang there still.

Why 1922? Why that year, and not another, for Frazer and Malinowski's masterworks to appear? A standard answer, one applicable perhaps to all of the notable works appearing that year, from the arts, the sciences, as well as anthropology, is that simply enough years had elapsed since the end of the Great War in 1918: in practical terms, enough time to complete research, put a manuscript in finished form, and in broader institutional terms enough time for the machinery of press and publication to get in full gear. The time all of this took after 1918 suggests why Michael North refers to 1922 as the first "post-War year."

That span of time, from 1918 to 1922, can also represent enough time to put personal and professional selves in order. Though neither Frazer nor Malinowski, nor for that matter Eliot and Pound, fought in the war, there were disruptions and dislocations. On the whole, Frazer's personal life was minimally impacted by the Great War, but the war years (1913–18) saw some real changes for Frazer: in October of 1913 he completed the last volume of the third edition of *The Golden Bough*; and in 1914 he and his wife moved from their longtime residence at Cambridge to London, and in that year he was also knighted. In 1915, the final volume of the third edition was published, which marked a crowning achievement. During the war years, Frazer was mainly occupied with researching and writing his follow-up to *The Golden Bough*, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, which was published in November 12, 1918, the day after the Armistice was signed.

Malinowski spent almost all the war years in Melanesia and Australia immersed in the fieldwork that resulted in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. For him, the war was a determining and disruptive event, as the presence of German naval ships in the Pacific prevented Malinowski from returning to Europe. As a Pole, Malinowski was officially considered an ally of Austria and thus an enemy alien in the Commonwealth, despite the fact that Malinowski had moved to London in 1910, where he became associated with the London School of Economics; also, the research he was doing in Melanesia was sponsored by the British. Malinowski and Frazer corresponded with each other throughout the war, and in early 1918 Frazer wrote to Gilbert Murray on Malinowski's behalf, urging Murray to persuade Murray's brother, the Governor of New Guinea, to permit Malinowski as an "enemy" (Ackerman 1987, 266) to continue with his work, which Malinowski did.

The war years for Malinowski were formative, doubtless representing the most important period of sustained work for him. In those years he not only carried out the fieldwork that became the core of *Argonauts*, but also he conceived of the functionalist theory and method, in which, as

he adumbrates in the conclusion to *Argonauts*, focuses on how various “aspects of culture functionally depend on one another” and thus work to shape “the one inseparable whole” that is a culture (Malinowski 1984, 515). The positing of functionalism as theory, combined with the empirically laden yet vivid, descriptive style, as well as the imaginative capacity to put the readership in the field with the ethnographer, all chiefly contributed to the revolutionary impact of *Argonauts* when it appeared in 1922.

To move away from evolutionary theory and to abandon the focus on multiple “primitive” cultures from the perspective of the armchair all might seem to mark Malinowski as the lurking figure in the shadows who comes to light and kills the king to become king. In fact, Malinowski’s break from Frazerian anthropology has sometimes been read as just such a “chief priest (or father)” killing (Jarvie 1967, 43). However, careful readings of Malinowski’s ethnographies and correspondence reveal that Malinowski’s debts and affiliations to Frazer were many. For one, for all of the breaks from Frazer’s work contained in *Argonauts*, the title of Malinowski’s masterwork, like that of Frazer’s, alludes to and presumes a reader’s knowledge of classical mythology. Indeed, Malinowski’s title *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in itself invites, in Frazerian fashion, the comparing of the ancient classical and the tribal modern.

By Malinowski’s own account, Frazer brought anthropology to life for him, most vividly in 1910 when, Malinowski, in convalescence, had his mother read aloud to him the second edition of *The Golden Bough*, an experience, Malinowski would later note, that compelled him to be immediately “bound to the service of Frazerian anthropology” (Stocking 1992, 40). Frazer in fact wrote the preface to *Argonauts*, where he praises Malinowski for taking “full account of the complexity of human nature” (Malinowski 1984, ix). Malinowski, Frazer notes, “sees man, so to say, in the round and not in the flat,” and in literary terms compares Malinowski to “the greater artists, such as Cervantes and Shakespeare,” whose “characters are solid, being drawn not from one side only but from many” (Malinowski 1984, ix). And in the foreword to *Argonauts* Malinowski expresses his gratitude to Frazer for writing the preface, noting Frazer’s introducing him as “a special pleasure, for my first love for ethnology is associated with the reading of ‘The Golden Bough,’ then in its second edition” (Malinowski 1984, xviii).

Anthropologists often praise in others what they see and value in themselves, so it is not surprising that Frazer likens Malinowski to a literary artist, framing Malinowski’s anthropological accomplishments in aesthetic terms. And yet, Frazer also praises Malinowski for doing

what Frazer never did, that is having “lived among the natives for many months together, watching them daily at work and at play, conversing with them in their own tongue, and deriving all his information from the surest sources” (Malinowski 1984, vii). By living among the “natives,” Frazer notes, Malinowski has “accumulated a large mass of material, of high scientific value,” concerning the life of the Trobriand Islanders, but the central significance of Malinowski’s volume, Frazer asserts, is the understanding of “economic forces” that Malinowski achieves through his focus on “the remarkable system of exchange, only in part economic or commercial, which the islanders maintain among themselves and with the inhabitants of neighboring island” (Malinowski 1984, viii) – that is, the Kula. According to Frazer, Malinowski “has set himself to penetrate the motives” behind the Kula exchange, and finds in those motives “no utilitarian purpose whatever” but, rather, a “combination” of purposes pertaining to “commercial enterprise, social organization, mythical background, and magical ritual” (Malinowski 1984, xi).

Thus the Kula becomes for Malinowski, as read by Frazer, a key to all mythologies in the understanding of the Trobriand peoples. The functionalist method that Malinowski derives from this enterprise, which he lays out in his final chapter, “The Meaning of the Kula,” is his own distinctive approach to reading the key that is the Kula. The tribute that Frazer pays to Malinowski, however, at the end (of his preface) attempts to cast Malinowski’s accomplishment within the evolutionary framework that Malinowski is fairly resoundingly rejecting. Citing the “predominance of magic over religion” that Malinowski observes in the Trobriand worship of the dead, Frazer concludes that “this very notable feature in the culture of a people” in effect locates the Trobriand Islanders “comparatively high in the scale of savagery” (Malinowski 1984, xiv).

Malinowski’s own purposes, as laid out in *Argonauts* and underscored in his final chapter, have no interest in placing the Trobriand Islanders on any kind of evolutionary “scale,” and in fact are centered on what an intracultural institution can tell us about that culture’s motivations and purposes. In the concluding chapter, Malinowski indeed makes explicit that the “institution” that is the Kula exchange is comprised of “several aspects closely intertwined and influencing one another” that through the Kula “form one inseparable whole” (1984, 515). What perhaps most fundamentally distinguishes Malinowski and Frazer is the holism that is sought after and valued within their respective anthropological enterprises: for Malinowski it is the holism of a given culture (which, as in the case of Trobriand culture as explicated by Malinowski, he posits can be valuable

in the understanding of other cultures); for Frazer it is the holism that comprises and characterizes savage or primitive culture (of which the Trobriand Islanders are an illustrative, upper-scale example).

The success of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* lies in Malinowski's ability to render a culture, that of the Trobriand Islanders, whole. As Malinowski propounds in the foreword, to achieve such holism, the "ethnographic work" undertaken by the anthropologist "should deal with the totality of all social, cultural and psychological aspects of the community, for they are so interwoven that not one can be understood without taking into consideration all the others" (1984, xvi). But how does the ethnographer in his work in the field grasp that "totality" and thus attain that holism? What is, in Malinowski's words, "the secret of effective fieldwork" (1984, 6) that can make for an understanding of cultural cohesion? In the introduction to *Argonauts*, Malinowski frames this "secret" in nativist terms: "What is then this ethnographer's magic, by which he is able to evoke the real spirit of the natives, the true picture of tribal life?" (1984, 6)

Subtitled "Subject, Method and Scope of This Inquiry," the introduction essentially serves as a primer on how to conduct responsible modern ethnographic work, enumerating three "proper conditions for ethnographic work" which Malinowski summarizes in a directive fashion to the "student" of anthropology:

First of all, naturally, the student must possess real scientific aims, and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography. Secondly, he ought to put himself in good conditions of work, that is, in the main, to live without other white men, right among the natives. Finally, he has to apply a number of special methods of collecting, manipulating and fixing his evidence. (1984, 6)

The first and the third of these "proper conditions" essentially are efforts toward making anthropology a science, with emphases upon thoughtful methodologies and objective, comprehensive, and systematic collection and analysis of "evidence" in the field. Malinowski decidedly articulates a goal of professionalism over the amateurism and dilettantism that has characterized the main of prior anthropological enterprises. After enumerating a "series of phenomena" that "have to be observed in their full actuality" (1984, 18) by the anthropologist (such as "the routine of a man's working day, the details of the care of his body, or the manner of taking food and preparing it" [1984, 18]), Malinowski declares:

All these facts can and ought to be scientifically formulated and recorded, but it is necessary that this be done, not by a superficial registration of

details, as is usually done by untrained observers, but with an effort at penetrating the mental attitude expressed in them. And that is the reason why the work of scientifically trained observers, once seriously applied to the study of this aspect, will, I believe, yield results of surpassing value. So far, it has been done only by amateurs and therefore done, on the whole, indifferently. (1984, 18–19)

While this indictment of prior amateurism in the field might not apply directly to Malinowski's mentor Frazer, it certainly applies to the "men on the spot" fieldworkers whose observations or "facts" Frazer and other armchair anthropologists depended upon as their "evidence" for their theories.

Whereas the first and third "proper conditions" emphasize sound scientific practice, the future science that Malinowski articulates is of necessity an empathic and expressive one, whose result is "penetrating the mental attitude" that is "expressed" in the details thus registered. And that "series of phenomena of great importance" earlier invoked by Malinowski, those "must be observed in their full actuality" precisely because they "cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents": Malinowski memorably remarks of them: "Let us call them *the inponderabilia of actual life*" (1984, 18). Thus this is a science whose goal of getting at a "mental attitude" is achieved through a disciplined and systematic lived experience aimed at human understanding. As such, the second "proper condition" follows – that is, "to live without other white men, right among the natives" (1984, 6).

While Malinowski acknowledges that "the native is not the natural companion for a white man," he insists that in order to achieve proper fieldwork results, the ethnographer must "remain ... in as close contact with the native as possible, which really can only be achieved by camping right in their villages" (1984, 6). A good part of the purpose of living among the natives, according to Malinowski, is to put the natives at ease as much as possible, to habituate them to the presence of the inquiring ethnographer, for, he admits, "as they knew that I would thrust my nose into everything ... they finished by regarding me as part and parcel of their life, a necessary evil or nuisance, mitigated by donations of tobacco" (1984, 8). Still, rapport with the natives is also achieved, Malinowski notes, by leaving aside the "work" of ethnography and immersing oneself in the day-to-day activities of the natives:

... it is good for the Ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, note book and pencil, and to join in himself in what is going on. He can take part in the natives' games, he can follow them on their visits and walks, sit

down and listen and share in their conversations. I am not certain if this is equally easy for everyone – perhaps the Slavonic nature is more plastic and more naturally savage than that of Western Europeans – but though the degree of success varies, the attempt is possible for everyone. (1984, 21)

The degree to which Malinowski was serious in his averring that his “Slavonic” nature is “more naturally savage than that of Western Europeans” is difficult if not impossible to discern, but doubtless there is at least a trace of evolutionary assumption in the passage: some of us are more or less “savage” than others. The thrust of the passage, however, especially considering the time in which Malinowski was writing, is that the ethnographer ought to empathically participate in native life in order to understand the culture, and Malinowski as ethnographer puts himself forward as an example, or exemplar, of such behavior and intent.

In 1967, twenty-five years after Malinowski’s death, his widow Valetta Malinowski published the private diary Malinowski kept while doing the fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands that resulted in *Argonauts*. The diary, written in Polish, was translated into English and given the title *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. The publication of the *Diary* forty-five years after the publication of *Argonauts* had an impact in the anthropological community tantamount to the impact of his masterwork of 1922, but in the case of the *Diary*, the initial response was one of shock. The *Diary* revealed a figure, the ethnographer Malinowski, who had a less than a “plastic” rapport with the natives. The man who had served for decades as the model ethnographer was suddenly revealed in the *Diary* to be less than an anthropological exemplar in his private thoughts and public actions. On a number of occasions Malinowski reports being impatient with and even enraged at the natives, and at one point in the *Diary*, alluding to fellow Pole, Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, Malinowski asserts that “on the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to ‘Exterminate the brutes’” (1989, 69). Sexual fantasies recur in the *Diary*, of both native and Western women, and at several points in the *Diary* he confesses to having “pawed” the local women (Malinowski 1989, 256, 282).

In general, the self-portrait that emerges from the *Diary* is that of a man who, while striving for personal and professional coherence, is deeply divided between commitments to work and retreats into fantasy, who is resolved to stick to disciplinary routine and yet is plagued by self-doubt and filled with guilt over sexual temptation and laziness, as exhibited in his reading of novels and overeating. Malinowski’s estimation of himself

in the *Diary* is relentlessly self-critical, as exemplified in the abrupt last line: "Truly I lack real character" (1989, 298).

Perhaps it is unfair to judge the ethnographer by the revelations expressed in a private diary, given the different purposes and audiences of a diary and an ethnography: Clifford Geertz is mindful of this distinction in reference to Malinowski's diary when he notes that a diary is "a genre addressed to one" (1988, 78). Nonetheless, the shock waves that went through the anthropological community upon the publication of the *Diary* resulted over time in a more complex, and ambivalent, view of the motives and methods of the professional ethnographer. The anthropologist Raymond Firth in his introduction to the 1989 edition of the *Diary* noted that with the text's first publication, the "stereotype" of the "Olympian detachment" ascribed to the ethnographer, especially as evinced by Malinowski, was "destroyed," as "fieldworkers too turned out to be human – all too human" (Malinowski 1989, xxviii–xxix).

Doubts about the ability of the anthropologist to be purely objective were always present in early-twentieth-century ethnography, and one could argue that the "proper conditions for ethnographic work" that Malinowski lays out in his introduction to *Argonauts* were really meant as ways to safeguard against the inevitable subjectivity and guesswork involved in the ethnographic experience. The *Diary* can nevertheless be read, and as the end of the twentieth century neared increasingly came to be read, as an indictment of the entire anthropological enterprise, and as such it has served as a counter-text to *Argonauts*, which more than any other modern ethnography provided a charter for anthropology as an objective and systematic discipline.

However, in the decades since the *Diary* was first published, *Argonauts* and the *Diary* have come to be viewed as vitally related to one another. Firth in his 1989 introduction asserts that with the passing of years the *Diary* "can be accepted as part of the history of anthropology" (Malinowski 1989, xxvii), and certainly it is the case that readers of anthropology have tended to view the two texts, diary and ethnography, alongside each other, as partner texts, though Firth disagrees with James Clifford's contention that the *Diary* and *Argonauts* ought to be read as "a single expanded text" (Malinowski 1989, xxx). Clifford's assertion, though, is tied to an important argument concerning the relation of Malinowski's personal and professional aspirations. According to Clifford, in between the years in which Malinowski wrote the *Diary* (1914–18) and when *Argonauts* was published in 1922, an important transition occurred, in which Malinowski achieved the "unified personality" he wished for in his diary. In essence,

Malinowski crafts *Argonauts* out of the welter of personal experience and field notes, making himself and a culture all of a piece. "One of the ways that Malinowski pulled himself together was to write ethnography," Clifford claims, so that the completed *Argonauts* represents the creation of "the fashioned wholes of a self and of a culture" (1988, 104). In this regard, the gap between the end of the war and the first "post-War year," 1922, was essentially involved in making self, culture, and profession, whole.

Clifford's observation returns us to what constituted the entirety of culture for Frazer and Malinowski, and how this cultural holism was articulated in their signature texts of 1922. In *The Golden Bough* what was rendered whole, out of the numerous fragments of field accounts, was not only "primitive" culture but as well the evolutionary continuum from the "savage" to the "civilized." And yet what was revolutionary in Frazer's text, as recognized by modernists in 1922 and after, was what the continuum implied about the survival of the "savage" in "civilized" rite and behavior. *Argonauts* treated the tribal culture of the Trobriand Islanders as whole. Yet, what was revolutionary in Malinowski's text was the presentation, carved out of fragmentary personal and professional experiences, of a carefully plotted set of methods and practices that constituted the new science and profession of anthropology.

Notes

- 1 See John B. Vickery's "Frazer and the Elegiac: The Modernist Connection." *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text*. Edited by Marc Manganaro, 51–68 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- 2 See Marc Manganaro, *Culture, 1922: The Emergence of a Concept* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 39.

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