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EDITED BY DAVID BRADSHAW AND KEVIN J. H. DETTMAR

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A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture

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A COMPANION TO

*M*ODERNIST
*L*ITERATURE AND
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EDITED BY DAVID BRADSHAW AND KEVIN J. H. DETTMAR

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Introduction

Kevin J. H. Dettmar

Modernism. The Modern Movement. Modernisms. The New Modernisms. For a phenomenon supposed to be safely in the past, modernism has been experiencing a good bit of change, even growth, of late. Generalizing about the reasons for such change is a risky business; but then it's in the nature of an introduction like this one to take such risks.

Modernism: from the Latin *modo*, the critical literature frequently reminds us, “just now,” the present: “life; London; this moment of June,” as Virginia Woolf famously writes in the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway*. For the loosely affiliated group of writers and artists who first described themselves by the term *modern*, and who were later labeled *modernists* by others, the evanescence of the now, the present, “this moment,” would prove a recurrent challenge. The philosophy of Henri Bergson, hugely influential among many modernist thinkers and writers (and held up for ridicule in Wyndham Lewis's infamous 1927 treatise *Time and Western Man*), suggested that time was not merely a fluid succession of presents:

Our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present – no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation. (*Creative Evolution*, 1907)

French novelist Marcel Proust's 2,000-page modernist masterpiece, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27; *Remembrance of Things Past*, or more literally *In Search of Lost Time*), is the great literary fantasia on this theme. T. S. Eliot brought Bergson's insight (or something like it) into the realm of literary criticism in his early essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), where he gives the name “tradition” to this present-ness of the past:

{Tradition} involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to any one who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

Indeed, the more emphasis and weight the modernists sought to place on “contemporaneity” (to resurrect one of their favorite words), the more rapidly it seemed to recede into the past. To American expatriate poet and modernist entrepreneur Ezra Pound belongs the distinction of having coined modernism’s most enduring rallying cry, “Make it new”; Pound wasn’t shy about pointing out, however, that he’d stolen it from a Chinese emperor, who’d had inscribed it on his bathtub. “Make it new,” it would seem, was hardly a new idea. But this insight, according to Eliot, was at the very heart of modernism: “The perpetual task of poetry is to make all things new. Not necessarily to make new things.” If the Romantics had sometimes seemed (especially to a neo-Classicist like Eliot) to have fetishized originality, innovation, then modernism would once again pay attention to the important role to be played by renovation.

Bergson’s emphasis on the *durée*, the persistence of the moment from the past into the present, and bridging the present into the future, is in part a revisiting and revision of Walter Pater’s famous, rhapsodic celebration of the moment, expressed most memorably in the conclusion to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873):

Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. . . . Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening.

In modernism, that fleeting and delicate moment was termed an “epiphany” by James Joyce in the abortive draft version of his first novel, published posthumously as *Stephen Hero*. While the small differences of perception and emphasis are interesting to note, there is an important group similarity between Joyce’s epiphany (“a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself,” his protagonist describes it; “the most delicate and evanescent of moments”) and a tradition of “natural supernaturalism” (Thomas Carlyle’s phrase) going back to William Wordsworth’s “spots of time” (as evoked in

Book XI of *The Prelude*), and including most notably W. B. Yeats's "heaven blazing into the head," moments when one "was blessed and could bless," and Woolf's "moments of being."

At the same time as they exalted these moments of artistic transcendence, however, no group of writers before or since has been as devoted to the precise description and evocation of the daily, the diurnal, the stubbornly ordinary – even the sordid: Mr. Leopold Bloom in the outhouse (*Ulysses*), cigarette ends and sandwich wrappers on the banks of the Thames (*The Waste Land*): "a rose is a rose is a rose" (Gertrude Stein). Part of the challenge for readers of modernism is precisely the unwillingness of its most accomplished practitioners to abandon either the real for the ideal, or the ideal for the real. And again, via the mechanism of the epiphany – whose access to the transcendent can only be courted, never commanded – the ordinary becomes precisely the royal road to the extraordinary. The crumbs of a *petite madeleine*, as Proust taught us, suspended in a spoonful of warm tea, can encompass and recreate the world, "heaven blazing into the head." "Le paradis n'est pas artificiel," Pound put it in the midst of his *Cantos*, but broken, jagged,

. . . spezzato apparently
it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage,
the smell of mint, for example,
Ladro the night cat.

What is it that unifies a volume as large and diverse as this one, with sixty-four essays by nearly as many scholars, from across the United States and Great Britain? What is the essence of this modernism that makes of it one thing, one idea, one movement? These are, it turns out, quintessentially modernist questions. For the central impulse of modernism has often been represented as a centralizing one: "Hammer your thoughts into unity," Yeats's spirit masters are on record as having instructed him; Eliot, in his review of the seemingly chaotic *Ulysses*, suggested that Joyce had succeeded in finding the hidden order that undergirded the illusory chaos of contemporary urban life (as, of course, he hoped that his multiple layers of mythological scaffolding served to suggest more than fragments shored against his ruin in *The Waste Land*). Early, hostile criticism of modernist fiction and poetry, on the other hand, consistently charged the new work with formlessness.

The truth of modernism was always more complex, various, messy than was maintained in the official (and reactive) version. Pound, in his ill-considered tract *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, suggested that genius consists in the ability to see a dozen different things where the ordinary man sees just one; Eliot, in "*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*," had more or less said just the opposite: that Joyce's genius, and by implication his own, lay in finding the hidden unity that lay beneath the apparent incoherence of modern life. And both these positions are modernist.

In the past two decades and more, modernism has come in for quite various treatment at the hands of both scholars and what Woolf called the "common reader."

The texts of modernism have been queered; racialized, their whitewash stripped away; gendered, regendered, and cross-gendered; classed; globalized; postcolonialized; popularized. On the big screen they've been Merchant-and-Ivoried, or perhaps Ivory-Merchandised; modernist masterpieces like *Howards End*, *A Passage to India*, *The Bostonians*, *A Room with a View*, *Remains of the Day* (all modernist novels, in spite of the late birthdate of the last-named) have been turned into lush eye-candy, along with films like Sally Potter's *Orlando*, Iain Softley's *The Wings of the Dove*, many versions of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and so on. Indeed, modernism threatens to become so popular *après la lettre* in contemporary British and American culture that young readers might well wonder what all the fuss was about. T. S. Eliot a "drunken helot"? But he's the guy who wrote *Cats*, right?

If modernism flirted with its own extinction early on by enthusiastically embracing an ideology of artistic "difficulty," a process ably documented by Leonard Diepeveen (in *The Difficulties of Modernism*), modernism has now become a safe (all-too-safe) area for artistic (and economic) investment, and powerful moneyed interests are now at work taking a newly popular modernism back off the open market. Whatever quarrels we might entertain about modernism, there is a pretty good consensus that 1922 represents its high-water mark, with the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. By a strange twist of legal fate, that same year currently marks the bright line between copyrighted work and the public domain in the United States, with *Ulysses*, for instance, having reverted to the public domain in the United Kingdom for a few brief years between 1992 and 1996, when it was retroactively pulled back under copyright protection. In the United States today, under the auspices of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998, enacted in part through the lobbying muscle of the Walt Disney Corporation (who appear to be hell-bent on keeping Mickey Mouse[®] under copyright protection forever), it seems that all but the earliest of modernism's most important texts will be kept from the public domain and, to some extent, from the public for which they were intended. While modernism was, to some extent, born elitist, it now suffers the indignity of having its elitism forced upon it.

As time has moved on – as modernism has ceased to be the "just now," if ever it had been – so too modernism has grown to be many different things, different certainly than what we'd been taught about it in school. For those to whom this seems an unfortunate turn of events, the fault is thought to lie with modernism's scholars and readers, intent to "find fault," to drive a stake, or better a "post-," into modernism: postmodernism, in this version, has created a generation of readers cynical about modernism's grand designs.

For those to whom this seems an altogether healthy development, on the other hand – well, to them, modernism was never really just one thing, never really unified. To these readers, the past quarter-century hasn't complicated the reading of modernist texts, but instead has at last allowed them to speak honestly to us in all their confusion: Their brave, even heroic, confusion. That confusion, more now than

ever, we recognize as our very own: we labor still today under the shadow cast on futurity by their searching meditations on the present moment. "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation." Life; Carbondale, Illinois; this night in August.

Part I
Origins, Beginnings,
and the New

Philosophy

Jean-Michel Rabaté

A problem students face when dealing with the complex links between what is called modernism and philosophy is that most of the thinking that has underpinned modernist advances in art and literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sends us back to seemingly anti-modernist ideas. Joyce can be taken as one example among many. If on the one hand, as Leo Bersani has warned, the dominance of nineteenth-century concerns in Joyce's works should enlist him among "pre-modernists," on the other hand, critics like Weldon Thornton have contended that Joyce's work, in so far as it puts Cartesian dualism and eighteenth-century Enlightenment concepts into question, is "anti-modernist" (Bersani 1990; Thornton 1994). And what then to think of Joyce's reliance on philosophers like Aquinas and Aristotle, not to speak of Vico, a philosopher of history and language to be sure, but one who certainly fits the anti-modern bill (it was his rejection of Cartesianism and modern science that allowed him to make sense of the world of myth and metaphor that dominates collective imagination)? Is Vico to be dubbed an "anti-modern," as Mark Lilla has shown, or is he one of the key thinkers that helped overcome the residue of gnosticism that lurked in post-medieval philosophies and thus created the conditions for a new understanding of the "legitimacy of the modern age," as Hans Blumenberg has argued (Lilla 1993; Blumenberg 1983)? These questions and their attendant critical reassessments remind us that we cannot take the category of modernism for granted, that it took divergent meanings in the fields of philosophy and literary history, let alone those of various national literatures, since we know that the Spanish *modernismo* is a rough equivalent of what would be called "Symbolism" in French or English literature. Blumenberg is useful in the way he pays attention to the religious origins of modernism, which could also direct us to the religious "modernism" at the end of the nineteenth century, a dispute about reconciling modern science and traditional theology.

Most historians of philosophy use "modernity" to refer to a direct route from Descartes to the Enlightenment in a movement of thought that rejected religious authority and ended up stressing the political freedom allied with scientific knowledge.

Sapere aude! was for Kant the motto of the Enlightenment (Foucault 1984: 32–50). The new “daring to know” extols the autonomy of reason, even when limited by several Critiques. In his inspirational *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (1999), Robert Pippin has shown that the Enlightenment, because it trusted the power of knowledge, constructed a disenchantedly scientific account of man and nature, finally bringing about the backlash associated with Romanticism. On Pippin’s view, Romanticism is not a regression to sentimentality defined by the return of hitherto repressed feelings and religiosity, but a more rigorously revisionary version of the Enlightenment’s defiance of tradition. The thinkers we associate with “modernity,” from Baudelaire to Nietzsche and beyond, blend the measured heritage of the Enlightenment with the lessons in excess drawn from Romanticism. “Modernity’s great problem . . . was that it had not been modern enough, that the restless, perpetually self-transforming, anomic, transient spirit of modernism had to be affirmed much more honestly and consistently” (Pippin 1999: 6) It is in that sense that the ethical and aesthetic re-evaluation of modernism appears as the reflexive and contested culmination of the unfinished program of the Enlightenment, to paraphrase Habermas (Habermas 1987).

What increased the terminological confusion was that the movement leading to self-modernization was translated by various thinkers as being either “anti-modern” when it explored contradictions left by Enlightenment views or just “modernist,” an adjective usually reserved for aesthetic trends and describing how the apostles of the new attacked modernity while keeping an experimental edge in literary or artistic practices. As to the term “postmodern,” now almost completely discarded, its historical relevance was compromised when Lyotard, who had been instrumental in disseminating it, claimed that it anticipated or antedated the “modern.” Lyotard argues that postmodernism implies an anterior future, as *modo* signifies “just a while ago” and *post* “after.” Following this paradox, postmodernity preceded modernity, as one could show from a study of Mallarmé’s early years (Lyotard 1984: 79–81). Thus in philosophy as well as literature or the arts, “modernism” keeps its ambiguous designation while remaining a concept one cannot do without. In Pippin’s summary, modernism “denotes both a heightened and affirmative modern self-consciousness (a final attempt to be truly modern, to create in a radical and unprecedented way a form of life, indeed a sensibility, finally consistent with the full implications of the modern revolution), as well as an intense dissatisfaction with the sterile, exploitative, commercialized, or simply ugly forms of life apparently characteristic of social modernization (or ‘bourgeois’ forms of modernization)” (Pippin 1999: 29).

It is no surprise to see some of the greatest figures in this modern lineage act like reactionaries because of their dissatisfaction with what they perceive as a flawed modernity. This is the case with Baudelaire, Flaubert, Mallarmé, and Nietzsche, whose concept of the “modern” involves not only an anti-authoritarian stance opposing classical conventions but also revulsion in front of bourgeois society on the rise. Their critical energies are directed as much at the abuses of the old regime as at modernity’s smug optimism; they deride its blind faith in the progress of science,

a bourgeois meliorism which barely veils a starker reality defined by the steady progress of international capitalism. Philistinism in art leads to the obstruction of creativity and the prevention of social justice. Monsieur Homais's dull stupidity is just the other face of Bouvard's and Pécuchet's touchingly misguided efforts to take stock of an ever-expanding contemporary science. In accordance with this two-pronged criticism, Flaubert defines himself as an "artist" and a "thinker," but this in isolation from collective movements of opinion, as he stated in a famous letter of April 26–7, 1853: "In our day I believe that a thinker (and what is an artist if not a triple thinker?) should have neither religion, country, nor even any social conviction" (Stegmuller 1957: 148). This critical aloofness was shared, with some variations, by Nietzsche and Joyce; consequently, no modernist could be dispensed from "thinking" through a personal "philosophy" that would be both critical and clinical, reflexive and creative.

Like Flaubert, Nietzsche (one of the three "masters of suspicion," as Ricoeur famously called Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) railed against the antiquarian mentality fostered by German universities. Here is what he denounces: "for we moderns have nothing whatever of our own; only by replenishing and cramming ourselves with the ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, discoveries of others do we become anything worthy of notice, that is to say, walking encyclopedias, which is what an ancient Greek transported in our world would perhaps take us for" (Nietzsche 1983: 79). Facing the inheritance of an overburdening culture, modernity sifts through dead knowledge in order to retrieve the present of life in all its intensity. However, as we will see, Nietzsche's modernism cannot be equated with a complete rejection of tradition. What he argues for is that there is a need to "evaluate" life differently; that is, from the point of view not of eternity but of the present: "*If you are to venture to interpret the past you can do so only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour of the present*" (Nietzsche 1983: 94). Joyce understood the need to conflate the two maxims as he transformed Odysseus into Leopold Bloom wandering in a modern Dublin, a late-Victorian world into which whole encyclopedias were then downloaded, thus exploding the confines of both the Victorian novel and the classical epic spirit.

A good place to survey nineteenth-century philosophies leading to modernism is Max Nordau's diatribe against the "moderns" thought of as "symptoms" of degeneration. In *Degeneration* (1892, English translation 1895), Nordau delivered a sweeping denunciation of the "modern" in all its shapes, thus presenting a sharp *a contrario* perspective on the conceptual origins of modernism. *Degeneration* was a spectacular success at the turn of the century until critics like Wells and Shaw pointed out its misreadings and philosophical inadequacies (Greenslade 1994: 120–33). Nordau took to task Ibsen, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, the pre-Raphaelites, Tolstoy, Wagner, and Zola, among others, relentlessly submitting them all to a sort of medical examination that concludes in a diagnosis of madness and perversion. Their symptoms testify to a Darwinian regression heralding a complete degeneracy among artists and intellectuals. The root of the disorder is "egomania," which shifts between the megalomania traditionally associated with genius and the hypertrophy of the self deriving from

mental imbalance. Nordau relies extensively on the experimental psychology of abnormality elaborated by Lombroso, Janet, Taine, Ribot, Binet, and Krafft-Ebing. This exhaustive survey culminates with Nietzsche, who is selected for a systematic denunciation. If Nordau grants a measure of talent to Nietzsche, he is “obviously insane from birth, and his books bear on every page the imprint of insanity” (Nordau 1895: 453).

Curiously, the term “degeneration” harped on by Nordau evokes similar concepts used by Nietzsche, especially when he analyzes himself. In an uncanny duplication of what Nordau does in his brutal condemnation, Nietzsche makes his own critical revision a sign of his being “modern.” This recurs in the 1885–6 notebooks (“If I once wrote the word ‘untimely’ on my books, how much youth, inexperience, peculiarity that word expressed! Today I realize it was precisely the kind of complaint, enthusiasm and dissatisfaction that made one of the most modern of the moderns”) (Nietzsche 2003: 98). It is also perceptible in the “Attempt at Self-Criticism” (1886), an essay accompanying the republication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which was first published in 1872. Nietzsche used this opportunity to condemn the “excess” of a book too marked by Schopenhauer’s *passé* pessimism: “Is pessimism necessarily the sign of decline, decay, of the failure of the exhausted and weakened instincts? – as it was for the Indians, as it is to all appearances for us ‘modern’ men and Europeans?” (Nietzsche 2000: 3). This rereading launches a parallel between the enervation of Indian Buddhism (Schopenhauer’s ultimate utopia, according to Nietzsche) and European modernity fascinated by science as the last refuge against life. Sarcasm facing juvenile excesses marked by the pathos of *Sturm und Drang* (Nietzsche 2000: 5) leads its author to a remarkable series of displacements reconnecting philosophy with science, and science with life: “What I began to grapple with at that time was something fearful and dangerous, a problem with horns, not necessarily a bull exactly, but in any case a *new* problem: today I would call it the *problem of science* itself, – science grasped for the first time as problematic, as questionable” (Nietzsche 2000: 4). Nietzsche treats the problem not like a matador who kills the bull and cuts the horns but like antique Cretan bull dancers executing somersaults over the animal. Sixteen years later, Nietzsche discovers that the solution lies in an interplay of perspectives, a parallax vision leading to calculated strabism; only thus can he “*view science through the optic of the artist, and art through the optic of life*” (Nietzsche 2000: 5).

Fundamentally, for Nietzsche as for Rimbaud, it is not only philosophy that must be radically transformed but the whole of life. In this radical critique, philosophy must begin by reflecting upon its most basic assumptions, beginning with truth (Nehemas 1985: 42–73). By attacking the universal principles on which philosophy relies, Nietzsche consequently demystifies science understood as our times’ way of being modern. It is no accident that Nietzsche insists that his book was badly written: the critique of the modern in the name of the modern demands less a logical effort than a literary one. This goes beyond a renunciation of the philosophy of Schopenhauer or a rejection of Wagner – after *The Birth of Tragedy*, the imperative to

write differently conditions this constant self-modernization. This entails an imperative to reread oneself so as to eliminate all the remnants of Romanticism; one can observe such an impulse in Flaubert, who was aware that he had to rewrite *The Sentimental Education* from the point of view of the “modern” he turned into once he could analyze and satirize the Romantic he, like his protagonist Frédéric Moreau, had been.

What Nietzsche asserts as the ultimate value, namely, life, has an ontological as well as a biological foundation. Nietzsche paves the way to Bergson’s vitalist monism and the *Lebensphilosophie* that marked the turn of the century. Any “evaluation” of life will send one to issues of style and personality and in the end betray a deeper “physiology.” Philosophy, religion, and science will be considered physiologically in order to measure the vitality of the modern age. A modernity tainted by nihilism completes the course of a Christianized morality. By claiming that “God is dead,” Nietzsche means that the power to create should remain a purely human faculty: humans either create god or create like a god. But this god must be understood as a “completely thoughtless and amoral artist-god, who wishes to experience the same pleasure and self-satisfaction in building as in destroying, in good as in bad” (Nietzsche 2000: 8). The insights gained in a confrontation with tragedy, the supreme art form because it embodies suffering and cruelty, were to be generalized sixteen years later and encompass all creative gestures. The capability to face these darker forces is a sign of strength and health; health is enhanced when one affirms the tragic excess of life, an insight that a later writer like Georges Bataille developed in his critique of an all too well-meaning (whether incurably idealistic or belatedly Romantic) Surrealism.

Nietzsche’s problem, these “horns without a bull” that lead him to jump constantly between life, science and art, appears similar to the linguistic genre of the “Irish bull” – which should draw attention to the issue of parody in and of Nietzsche, as Pierre Klossowski (1997) has pointed out. In fact, it is the category of the “present” that has the structure of an Irish bull – famously exemplified by “When you see twelve cows lying in a field, the one standing up is an Irish bull” or “Thank God I’m an atheist”; hence it may turn out to be easier to make God vanish than to make a cow or a bull speak. The bulls or cows met with in Nietzsche’s second untimely consideration embody both a full present and an ability to forget everything. Here is the pastoral vignette elaborated by Nietzsche: “Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today”; so begins the first section of “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” The allegory of passive and pacific animals that are never bored because they live in perfect plenitude generates a curious dialogue. A man wants the animal to express something of its happiness, but it cannot: “The animal would like to answer, and say: ‘The reason is I always forget what I was going to say –’ but then he forgot his answer too, and stayed silent: so that the human being was left wondering” (Nietzsche 1983: 60–1).

When, in a powerful commentary, Paul de Man concluded that Nietzsche’s attitude was typical of modernism, that “Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier” (de Man 1983: 148), he might have generalized too quickly or at least missed the humor of this passage. True, for Nietzsche, animals

live “unhistorically” (Nietzsche 1983: 61), but man cannot transform himself into an animal without turning into the ghostly bull that can only be seized by the horns. These horns are made up of memories, of histories, and finally of the whole of History. The main reason why Nietzsche could not catch the whole bull in the “Attempt at Self-Criticism” was precisely that he would have had to be that animal! In other words, a man can only learn to forget himself by attempting to reread himself endlessly, hence to “modernize himself *on his own*” (as Pound wrote admiringly to Marianne Moore about Eliot in 1914), which can have dire consequences, if we think of Nietzsche’s nervous collapse as he saw a horse fall in the streets of Turin . . .

This allegorical and parodic zoology evokes another philosophical Irish bull, this time penned by Kant. Typically, Freud identifies a rare moment of humor in Kant (who is quoted in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*). In a discussion of Schreber’s paranoia, Freud remarks that Kant had paved the way for scientific and philosophical investigation at a foundational level. Stating that one needs a “genealogy” of symptoms to understand Schreber’s desire to become a woman who will be sexually abused by God and then give birth to a new human race, Freud concludes his summary of the case by quoting Kant. If we cannot proceed genetically, hence scientifically, “our attempts at elucidating Schreber’s delusions will leave us in the absurd position described in Kant’s famous simile in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: – we shall be like a man holding a sieve under a he-goat while someone else milks it” (Freud 1963: 132). Freud is quoting the *Critique of Pure Reason*’s “On the Division of General Logic into Analytic and Dialectic,” a section that deals with the question “What is truth?” Kant demonstrates that such abstract questions are absurd since they presuppose the universality of criteria by which one could answer them.

If Freud has “succeed[ed] where the paranoiac had failed” (as he wrote famously to Ferenczi) when he rewrote Schreber’s system coherently (for Schreber’s divine rays translate well into Freud’s libido), he may have failed where philosophy succeeded – at least with Nietzsche – when it created a system capable of enlisting or recoding the irrational. For the strenuously scientific exploration of a newly discovered territory endowed with its laws and its dynamism, the Unconscious, allows for a momentary destruction and rebirth of values. This is why Nietzsche haunts Freud. Introducing the phenomenon of “overdetermination” in dreams, Freud notes that the intensity of dream-images cannot be compared with impressions left from the day or the “material” elaborated on by dreams: “The intensity of the elements in the one has no relation to the intensity of the elements in the other: the fact is that a complete “transvaluation of all psychical values” takes place between the material of the dream-thoughts and the dream” (Freud 1965: 365). The Nietzschean motif recurs in the section devoted to the “Forgetting of Dreams”: “a complete reversal of all psychical values takes place between the dream-thoughts and the dream” (Freud 1965: 554).

Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, subtitled “Attempts at a Reevaluation of All Values,” was published in 1901. Nietzsche died in 1900, which is the date of publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1899 but postdated. Freud was wary of his proximity to Nietzsche (Gasser 1997), especially when engaging with ethics; when

broaching the topic of the ethical function of dreams, Freud shows that ethical considerations are relevant not in the explicit moral or immoral contents of dreams, but in the metamorphic process of their formation. Fundamentally, dreams produce their images “beyond good and evil.” The chapter on “the moral sense in dreams” insists that no agreement exists about the links between dreams and morality: Freud notices “remarkable inconsistencies” in most writers. From the unpalatable content of some dreams, one may conclude that we are all ineluctably wicked – and as to those who believe that the “categorical imperative” extends into dreams, Freud hopes that these Kantian dreamers do not have dreams that would force them to renounce their belief in morals (Freud 1965: 100)! The solution to the aporia of the dialectics of dream morality is given when Freud shows that there is a thinking involved in dreams (hence that there is an “unconscious thought”) and that the “dream-work” is a complex machinery tapping the libidinal energy of desire.

Among the few modernists who were competent philosophers, none has stressed the importance of Freud as much as May Sinclair. The main text to explore in depth is *A Defence of Idealism* (1917), a philosophical treatise published as she was preparing her most important novel, *Mary Olivier: A Life*. Her *Defence of Idealism* starts with a vigorous account of Freudian and Jungian philosophies. For Sinclair, a few principles stand out as she tries to negotiate between the two schools (as a founder of two London psychoanalytic schools, Sinclair was painfully aware of the division in two camps): the Unconscious, which she connects with Schopenhauer’s Will-to-live; Sublimation, seen as the right way to progress and not regress via neurosis; the sense of human agency or responsibility mediating between instincts and the higher goals set by culture. At least, this was her point of departure as she tried to account for the philosophical revolution brought about by Bertrand Russell’s 1903 publication of *Principia Mathematica*, a book that heralded a new scientific age by conflating logic and mathematics and also discarded late Hegelian philosophers like Bradley. By blending psychoanalysis and Hegelianism, Sinclair concluded that if logical atomism did not solve all philosophical problems, her version of mystical idealism might, at least as long it remained attuned to an aesthetic apprehension of life. Her hope was that the scientific approach to mysticism (here Jung was more relevant to her concerns than Freud) and her own experience of it would blend in a synthesis leading to an authentic sublimation.

Russell himself saluted the publication of Sinclair’s second philosophical book, *The New Idealism* (1922), in which she discusses Whitehead more than Russell and other Cambridge philosophers like Moore, as a competent vindication of idealism. In 1922, the *annus mirabilis* of high modernism, Russell recognized that Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* had advanced farther than his own atomic “new Realism.” In the same year, May Sinclair also published her last novel, the moving *Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, in which she rewrote her long modernist autobiographical novel, *Mary Olivier*, as a dense, sparse and bleak novella stressing repression instead of sublimation. True, *Mary Olivier* alienates her first suitor by delving too energetically in Kant, but after a few fruitless affairs she ends up finding a solace in philosophy (in

a neat progression from Spinoza to Kant's Critiques and finally Hegel's triple dialectic) and a brand of sexless mysticism. This is a sublime consolation denied to Harriett Freen, who moreover hates reading difficult books. Sterile and lonely, her suffering just alleviated by a softening of the brain, she dies as a "withered soul" who regresses to a childish stage and has never outgrown her mother's demands. She has sacrificed all those she could have loved to the imperative of Victorian gentility. Without philosophy, sublimation reveals that it was a mere mask for repression.

May Sinclair is a key writer for many reasons: a late Victorian who emerged as a modernist, she was that rare thing, a woman who was a serious philosopher. She also coined terms like "stream of consciousness technique" for Dorothy Richardson, and was the first to acclaim H. D.'s Imagist poems and Pound's *Cantos*. Philosophically, she inhabits exactly the same site as T. S. Eliot: both tried to mediate between Bradley's absolute idealism and Russell's logical philosophy. Her writings add up to a more coherent whole than Eliot's agonized and abortive discussion of Bradley in his undefended Ph.D., *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. (Many modernist thinkers were refused official recognition by academic institutions for which they had written theses: Pound with the University of Pennsylvania, Benjamin with Frankfurt University and Eliot with Harvard.) More important perhaps than Eliot's doubts about the possibility of reconciling Bradley's "finite centers" with the Absolute was the way in which his decision to stay in London and to become a poet would have to be accompanied by an original philosophy of time and history.

What stands out in high modernism is the new role taken by women thinkers, since not only May Sinclair's logical mysticism but also Dora Marsden's post-suffragist resistance to authority colored Eliot's approach to poetry in the 1920s. One cannot understand the dialectic of personality and impersonality developed in the famous essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent" without seeing it in the context of the magazine where it was first published, *The Egoist*. It is via a dialogue with Dora Marsden's theory of signs and of the impersonality of anarchist "egoism" that one can grasp how the erasure of personality leads to its enhancement. Marsden and the London group of *The Egoist* launched a far-reaching critique of metaphysics via language which radically upped Nietzsche's stakes.

As David Kadlec (2000) has shown, this global critique also had American roots and went back to Emerson's individualism, to William James and Dewey. William James had read Proudhon and Renouvier with great attention in the late 1890s and borrowed from them the idea of a "radical pluralism." He would often refer to "Anarchy in the good sense," that is, in the sense of philosophical anti-foundationalism and of political anti-absolutism. As with May Sinclair's philosophy, William James's post-Darwinian sense of evolution coupled with a respect for cultural pluralism provided a basis for a coherent modernist position. And like Sinclair or Russell, Dewey never totally forget his Hegelian beginning but reached a pluralistic conception of society that saw in a "social mosaic" an ideal of tolerant cohabitation. Meanwhile, of course, Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, working either from Maurras or Confucius, were flirting with a more authoritarian version of the collective spirit.

What then, in conclusion of this too rapid survey, can we make of the sense of a modernist rupture, exemplified by Virginia Woolf's famous assertion that "on or about December 1910, human character changed"? Should we dismiss Woolf's remark as trivial or recontextualize in a changing intellectual climate determined by the new epistemology of Russell and Fry, as Ann Banfield (2000) has done? Truth is half-way, as suggested by the cautionary lesson of Woolf's parody of analytic philosophy in *To the Lighthouse* with Mr. Ramsay's futile attempts to reach the letter R, whether it be Reality or his own initial. What Woolf testifies to, like most thinkers and writers discussed, is that modernism always kept a vivid sense of the present without forgetting its roots in a consistent intellectual tradition. The "beautiful and vivacious today" of Mallarmé's poem cannot be divorced from a reading list that includes its own critical hermeneutics. A confirmation could be found in this passage of Eliot's essay on "Euripides and Professor Murray": "This day began, in a sense, with Tylor and a few German anthropologists; since then we have acquired sociology and social psychology, we have watched the clinics of Ribot and Janet, we have read books from Vienna and heard a discourse of Bergson; a philosophy arose at Cambridge; social emancipation crawled abroad; our historical knowledge has of course increased; and we have a curious Freudian-social-mystical-rationalistic-higher-critical interpretation of the Classics and what used to be called the Scriptures" (Eliot 1920: 75). This day may not have ended yet.

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2

Religion

Pericles Lewis

In T. S. Eliot's pageant-play *The Rock* (1934), the Chorus retells the biblical story of the creation of the world and the incarnation of Christ, and then pauses:

But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.

Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god; and this has never happened before

That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first Reason,

And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic.

(Eliot 1952: 108)

Eliot bemoaned the rise of atheism, but also the replacement of the Christian God with new “gods,” the abstract intellectual forces like Dialectic and the earthly values like Money that seemed to him to have replaced religion for the modern age. Eliot's conversion to Christianity and baptism in the Church of England in 1927 offer the most famous example of the modernists' quest for religious alternatives to what Eliot himself had called “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy that is contemporary history” (Eliot 1975: 177). Many modernists, like Eliot, adhered to traditional religious beliefs; among those who did not, the problem of what would replace revealed religion remained a pressing concern. Wallace Stevens, a Lutheran who is said to have converted to Roman Catholicism on his deathbed, wrote in 1940, “It is a habit of mind with me to be thinking of some substitute for religion. . . . My trouble, and the trouble of a great many people, is the loss of belief in the sort of God in Whom we were all brought up to believe” (Stevens 1997: 966). Modernists like Eliot and Stevens were participating in a crisis of institutional religion and a search for new forms of religious experience typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Accounts of the period often emphasize the influence of the forces of secularization and the diminished significance of organized religion for

many modern writers. It is equally important, however, to recognize the modernists' continued search for answers to traditional religious questions about the human condition, the nature of historical experience, sexuality, death, and ultimate realities. The search for "substitute[s] for religion" played a crucial role in the development of literary modernism because the most important substitute for religion that the modernists found was literature itself.

Poets and critics who worried about the effects of secularization often turned to poetry as an alternative to religion. On *Dover Beach* in the middle of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold thought he could hear the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the "Sea of Faith" (Arnold 1979: 256). Later in his life, Arnold celebrated poetry as an alternative source of religious inspiration: "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. . . . Most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry" (Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in Buckler 1958: 501–2). Although the high moral and moralizing tone of Arnold's prose marks him indelibly as the kind of "eminent Victorian" that modernists like Lytton Strachey would love to debunk, his near-equation of poetry and religion prefigures much in Eliot, Stevens, and other moderns. Arnold was responding to a series of scientific discoveries that had begun to undermine belief in the literal truth of the Bible. As early as the 1830s, Sir Charles Lyell found geological and fossil evidence that contradicted the time-span of the biblical creation narrative. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) proposed a theory of evolution through natural selection. Darwin's emphasis on the role of chance in evolution contradicted Christian beliefs that the universe had been designed by an intelligent, benevolent creator, while his emphasis on what his contemporary Herbert Spencer called "survival of the fittest" heightened Victorian anxieties about the violence of "nature, red in tooth and claw" (Tennyson). Perhaps the most significant blow to biblical literalism, however, came from the work of scholars who sought to explain biblical events through the techniques of modern historical scholarship and employed textual criticism to show the multiple authorship, over a long period of time, of the Bible itself. David Friedrich Strauss's *The Life of Jesus* (1835), Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863), Benjamin Jowett's contribution to *Essays and Reviews* (1860), and *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862–3) by John Colenso, the Anglican bishop of Natal, all contributed to doubts as to the literal truth and divine authorship of the Bible.

In the face of these scientific and historical discoveries, such Victorians as John Ruskin, George Eliot, Leslie Stephen (the father of Virginia Woolf), and Thomas Hardy underwent crises of faith that led them to agnosticism or outright atheism. Matthew Arnold tried to rescue the Bible as a sacred text by avoiding biblical literalism, interpreting the Bible like other (fictional) literature, and redefining religion as "morality touched by emotion" (Arnold 1960–77: 6.176). Although many clergymen defended literal belief in the Bible, the mainstream Protestant churches of Britain and the United States increasingly adopted views like Arnold's, which were associated

with theological liberalism. Theological liberals optimistically embraced the Victorian faith in progress and downplayed or denied traditional doctrines like original sin and predestination. In place of such dogmas, they emphasized the ethical teachings of Christ, whose divinity they sometimes doubted. Critics saw liberalism as valuing private religious experience and morality at the expense of communal participation in rituals and sacraments and the recognition of God's supernatural status.

Against the optimism of such mainstream beliefs, the prophetic blasts of Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoyevsky heralded the arrival of modernism. Nietzsche announced the "death of God" not in his own voice but in that of his fictional madman in *The Gay Science* (1882). The madman proclaims: "After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too" (Nietzsche 1974: 167). Similarly, Dostoyevsky does not directly state that God is dead, but has the characters in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) consider the possibility. Dmitry Karamazov asks, "But what's to become of man then? Without God and without a future life? Why, in that case everything is allowed. You can do anything you like!" (Dostoyevsky 1982: 691). These quotations illustrate two central issues for twentieth-century attitudes to religion: on the one hand, the death of God leaves humanity facing an abyss of moral relativism; on the other hand, God's "gruesome shadow" continues to haunt even those who proclaim their atheism. Both Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche articulated the sense that there could be no successful liberal compromise between God and the forces of modernity. Along with Søren Kierkegaard, they would come to be seen as the first representatives of existentialism, a philosophy that would achieve more formal systematization in the works of Martin Heidegger in the modernist period and Jean-Paul Sartre after the Second World War.

Far from being an age of irony or indifference toward religious experience, the early twentieth century witnessed a number of social, political, and intellectual conflicts over the status of religion in modern life. These conflicts often concerned the increasing privatization of religious life that had been a prime feature of nineteenth-century liberal theology. Within religious communities themselves, theologians began to criticize many of the premises of nineteenth-century liberal religious thought. In 1910, a distinguished group of theologians began publishing *The Fundamentals*, a series of booklets stating the conservative case for traditional Protestant theology. American fundamentalists attacked the teaching of evolution in the schools and liberal scholarship in the churches. Adventist and millenarian groups split off from the major Protestant denominations. Although conservative in theological outlook, such movements were radical in their rejection of mainstream theology, and they set the tone for the most successful American religious movements of the twentieth century, Protestant evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

In Europe, the term "modernism" itself, before being applied to literary or artistic experiments, referred to a liberal movement in the Catholic Church, modeled to some extent on nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism. The "modernist" crisis

exposed a deep rift in the Church between the Church hierarchy and those priests and theologians who embraced modern science and biblical criticism. The Church excommunicated a number of modernists, notably Father Alfred Loisy, who had applied textual criticism to the Bible, and Father George Tyrrell, who questioned the permanence of Church dogma and the doctrine of papal infallibility. Pope Pius X labeled these views heretical in the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* of 1907; vigilance committees were formed to root out the heresy; and priests and theologians were required to swear an oath against “modernism.”

An entirely different sort of reaction against theological liberalism seemed more intellectually in tune with literary modernism. In Protestantism, a new “theology of crisis” arose after the First World War (Ahlstrom 1972: 934). Karl Barth’s *The Epistle to the Romans* ([1918] 1933) emphasized God’s transcendence and the principle, drawn from Kierkegaard, of the “infinite distinction” between God and man. The theologian H. Richard Niebuhr criticized what he took to be the liberals’ naive belief that “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross” (quoted in Ahlstrom 1972: 784). His brother Reinhold Niebuhr, the leading figure in Neo-orthodoxy, argued that “The ethic of Jesus does not deal at all with the immediate moral problem of every human life. . . . It transcends the possibilities of human life . . . as God transcends the world” (*Introduction to Christian Ethics* (1935), quoted in Ahlstrom 1972: 942). Such theologians provided a much more conflictual, and even tragic, account of religious life than that proposed by nineteenth-century liberals, one notably in tune with the vision of culture in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922).

Written several years before Eliot’s conversion to Christianity, *The Waste Land* offers a good example of the role of religious crisis in modernism. The first section of the poem is titled “The Burial of the Dead,” after a central office of the Anglican Church. The poem establishes its air of crisis partly through the invocation of imagery from the prophetic books of the Old Testament:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock. . . .

(Eliot 1952: 38)

Although the biblical references here (to Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) may appear to the contemporary reader as no more than “a heap of broken images” (itself an image of destroyed idols from Ezekiel 6 : 4), the power of the passage derives directly from its biblical echoes. Despite Eliot’s rhetoric of modernity, the theme of civilization’s falling away from religious ideals is an old one, found already in Isaiah.

Eliot goes on to invoke the New Testament, the sermons of the Buddha, and the Hindu Upanishads, exemplifying the syncretic tendencies of modernist religious exploration (see below).

Eliot's reliance on biblical language is striking and somewhat unusual, but it is notable that many modernists write poems in the form of prayers. Despite his lack of interest in traditional Christianity, W. B. Yeats published four poems explicitly called "prayers" between 1917 and 1935. W. H. Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (1939) invokes the older artist, while his "At the Grave of Henry James" (1941) ends with another prayerful invocation: "Master of nuance and scruple, / Pray for me and all writers, living or dead . . ." (Auden 1991: 310–12). The lines echo the Ave Maria or Hail Mary, the most famous prayer to the Virgin Mary, which Eliot had quoted directly in *Ash Wednesday* (1930): "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." In its most solemn moods, modernist poetry attempts to recapture the power of prayer. The relationship of modernist literature to traditional prayer is, however, conflictual. If the modernists write prayers, they are not for the most part appropriate for recitation in traditional Christian services. Rather, the modernists invoke the tone and imagery of Christian prayer in order to make their own poems serve the existential and aesthetic functions that prayer can no longer fulfill for many of their readers. If Matthew Arnold imagined poetry as an "ever surer and surer stay," a sort of consolation for the loss of religious faith, the modernists generally seek out the disturbing power of prophecy and do not attempt to comfort their readers. In "A Prayer for my Daughter," Yeats craves protection for his newborn daughter from a "haystack- and roof-levelling wind," bred out of "the murderous innocence of the sea" (Yeats 1989: 188). If the poem offers anything resembling religious consolation, it is only through the conservative power of social tradition ("custom" and "ceremony") and through the assertion of the self-sufficiency of the individual soul in a world unvisited by a redeeming god.

Modernist novelists sometimes aspire to a similar invocation of religious power in their representation of sermons. James Joyce, William Faulkner, James Baldwin, and Djuna Barnes all devote significant portions of their works to reproducing church services. In Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), the adolescent Stephen Dedalus, having slept with a prostitute, experiences the fear of hell-fire as he listens to the sermon of the Catholic Father Arnall: "Every word of it was for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed" (Joyce 1992: 123). For several pages, Joyce reproduces the sermon, drawn sometimes word for word from a tract by a seventeenth-century Italian Jesuit, with its vivid description of the darkness, stench, and heat of hell and the various pains of the damned. That night, Stephen dreams of hell, "stinking, bestial, malignant, a hell of lecherous goatish fiends," then wakes up and vomits (149). In Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the servant Dilsey and her mentally retarded charge Benjy listen to an Easter sermon by the Reverend Shegog on "the recollection and the Blood of the Lamb." Faulkner records Reverend Shegog's African-American dialect as he shouts: "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!" (Faulkner 1987: 341). Baldwin's *Go Tell it on*

the Mountain (1953), a text steeped in modernism, portrays African-American religious experience in Depression-era Harlem. The fourteen-year-old John Grimes, stepson of a preacher, undergoes a conversion at his stepfather's Pentecostal church, the Temple of the Fire Baptized. While listening to spirituals sung by "the saints" (the already converted members of the church) during a service, John falls down on the "threshing-floor" of the church, "astonished beneath the power of the Lord" (Baldwin 1998: 183). In the long fifth chapter of Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), titled (after Isaiah 25 : 11) "Watchman, What of the Night?," the transvestite, homosexual gynaecologist Dr. Matthew O'Connor delivers an extended mock sermon on the night and claims: "Sleep demands of us a guilty immunity. There is not one of us who, given an eternal incognito, a thumbprint nowhere set against our souls, would not commit rape, murder, and all abominations" (Barnes 1961: 88).

Each of these sermons insists on the inherent sinfulness of humanity (in contrast with nineteenth-century liberal theology). In each case, although great parodic energy goes into the mimicking of the preacher's voice, the sermons are not quite parodies. The authors of these novels seem to stand in awe of the pure power of the preacher's words, and they incorporate the sermons as a way of channeling that power into their own works. To some extent, the modernists share a related fascination with political rhetoric, yet the sermons in these works also stand out as moments in which a clear normative message is articulated in contrast to the predominantly neutral representation of multiple perspectives in the remainder of the works. Although it is certainly not the case that the authors of these novels straightforwardly affirm the messages of their fictional preachers, they do tend to highlight the normative character of the preachers' utterances by positioning them in critical positions within their novels. The sermon in Joyce's *Portrait* takes up most of the middle chapter of the book; it marks the point of Stephen Dedalus's most complete immersion in religion and at least the potential for his spiritual rebirth from the slothfulness of the episode with the prostitute, although Stephen will turn away from Catholicism in the remainder of the book. In both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, church services appear in the final chapters of novels in which each chapter is told from a different perspective. The switch to a third-person narrator in *The Sound and the Fury* and to the protagonist John's perspective in *Go Tell it on the Mountain* lends these church services a certain air of authority as the ultimate statements of the reality the novelists are trying to describe. In a rather paradoxical way, Matthew's sermon in *Nightwood*, by virtue of its invective, its biblical cadences, and its extreme satirical content, similarly provides a normative moment in that novel.

The interest in representing religious experience is shared by modernists with widely differing religious affiliations. Eliot converted to Anglo-Catholicism. Auden, after losing his faith and discovering his vocation as a poet at age 15, returned to the Anglican church in his early thirties. Joyce was a lapsed Catholic. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a period of Catholic renewal, a number of artists and intellectuals converted to Roman Catholicism, notably two young novelists influenced by modernism, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Even the most agnostic of modern-

ists, like Virginia Woolf and Samuel Beckett, made the problem of religion central to some of their works. Woolf saw modern fiction as a return to the “spiritual” in response to the “materialism” of her Edwardian precursors (Woolf 1966–7: 2.107). Beckett, whose later works are often read in terms of existentialist philosophy and the absence of God, when asked in court whether he was Christian, Jewish, or atheist, replied “none of the three” (Bryden 1998: 1).

An interest in folktales, mythology, and “primitive” cultures in the modernist period was often linked to religious exploration. Major figures of the Harlem Renaissance, like Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston, tended to associate African-American religion with the south and with the “primitive” side of black culture, to which they had an ambivalent relationship, wanting to preserve it as a source of common myths, but also to distance themselves from its superstition. Hurston used African-American religion as a theme in her novels and collected information about African-American magical practices and voodoo in her anthropological work. W. B. Yeats and the poets and playwrights of the Celtic Twilight drew on Irish folklore and even collected tales of fairies. Joyce drew on Homer’s *Odyssey* to create parallels between his Dubliners and mythical Greek heroes in *Ulysses*. The method inspired such authors as Mary Butts and David Jones, who made use of the grail myth in their accounts of modern England and Wales.

Westernized versions of Buddhism and Hinduism appealed to the more mystical modernists. Yeats, a lifelong practitioner of magic, developed an interest in Theosophy, a syncretic movement led by the Russian-American medium Madame Blavatsky that sought to combine occult spiritualism with various Eastern religions and that enjoyed a vogue in the 1890s. Later, Yeats and his young friend Ezra Pound devoted themselves to promoting the reputation of the Bengali poet Rabindrinath Tagore, an Indian nationalist who wrote poems about mystical unity with God. Yeats assisted Tagore in translating his works into English, and took pride in Tagore’s winning the Nobel Prize in 1913. Signs of a backlash were apparent, however, when Pound and Wyndham Lewis published the first issue of the short-lived Vorticist literary journal *Blast* in 1914. Among the figures on their list of infamous people to blast were Rabindranath Tagore and Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society. Still, Eastern religion appealed to Eliot as a source of mythology for *The Waste Land*, and E. M. Forster’s novel *A Passage to India* links India to the unknowable through an echo in the Marabar caves, which is heard by the English Miss Adela Quested and causes her such confusion that the innocent Muslim Dr. Aziz winds up being arrested for assaulting her. Forster wrote of the echo: “In the cave it is *either* a man, *or* the supernatural, *or* an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book. And even if I know! . . . *It’s a particular trick I felt justified in trying because my theme was India*” (Forster 1979: 26). Here, India becomes the source for an ineffable impression that may or may not have supernatural origins.

If the East represents the unknowable, often associated with a distant past, Jews often figure as deracinated agents of modernity. Several important modernists came from (often assimilated) Jewish families, notably Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Italo

Svevo, Gertrude Stein, Nathanael West, and Virginia Woolf's husband Leonard. During the early twentieth century, Eastern European Judaism was experiencing a turn against the liberal, reform movement within Judaism somewhat similar to the Christian turn against liberalism. The tradition of Jewish existentialism, exemplified in the works of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, had an influence on modernism mainly through the work of Franz Kafka. English-language modernism features a number of assimilated Jewish characters. In Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, though he has been baptized three times, continually meditates on his Jewish background, and Joyce frequently associates him with the Old Testament prophet Elijah. Although he is in many respects an anti-hero, most readers sympathize with Bloom and even admire him, but more stereotypical Jews represent the disagreeable aspects of modernity in works such as Eliot's "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar," Langston Hughes's *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The widespread anti-Semitism of the period was enthusiastically shared by some modernist writers, notably Eliot, who complained in *After Strange Gods* (1934) that society was not well served by having "any large number of free-thinking Jews" (quoted in Ricks 1988: 41). Although Yeats was not guilty of anti-Semitism, he was attracted to elements of fascism and, on the verge of the Second World War, wrote a screed in favor of eugenics in *On the Boiler* (1939). The worst anti-Semite of the group was certainly Ezra Pound, who, in his propaganda radio broadcasts for Mussolini during the war, spoke favorably of pogroms against the Jews, and railed in his *Cantos* against Jewish usury, "yidds," and "kikery."

Particularly in the later modernist period, it was the search for visionary alternatives to contemporary politics and society that often led the modernists to such reprehensible views. The spirit of religious crisis in the period is exemplified by the case of D. H. Lawrence, raised by his pious Congregationalist mother to read the Bible daily. Lawrence later criticized Christianity for its narrow morality but incorporated biblical themes and language in his works. He read Nietzsche, developed a fascination with Aztec religion, prophesied the imminent apocalypse of Western civilization, and created his own religious and mythical system to affirm the flesh in contrast with what he saw as the life-denying forces of traditional Christianity and modern civilization. Like some other modernists, Lawrence embraced anti-Semitic caricatures and authoritarian fantasies about hero worship and *Blutbrüderschaft* (blood-brotherhood). Lawrence's *Apocalypse* (1931), published posthumously, was an extended commentary on the Book of Revelation, in which he affirmed his religion of life. Ultimately, despite Lawrence's horror of the deadening effects of modernity, *Apocalypse* provides one of the most optimistic modernist accounts of religious life, one that finds the substitute for Christian religion not in Reason, Money, Power, Race, or Dialectic, but in Life: "The dead may look after the afterwards. But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours, and ours alone, and ours only for a time. We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and part of the

living incarnate cosmos" (Lawrence 1980: 149). Not all the modernists found such a joyful alternative to traditional religion.

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Politics

Tyrus Miller

“The politics of modernism” is an intensely controversial topic, precisely because it touches upon so many fundamental questions of modernism’s conceptual definition, historical context, critical reception, and cultural impact. Some critics have seen modernist literature and art as harbingers of anarchy, nihilism, and a leveling “revolt of the masses.” To others, modernism appears to reject democratic values and advance an intrinsically elitist world-view with an elective affinity for fascism and imperialism. On the extreme poles of the political spectrum, modernism’s legacy could be contemporaneously denounced by Nazi art politicians as an instance of racial degeneracy and by Stalinist art politicians as the vehicle of formalism, fascism, and ruling-class decadence. Even in pluralistic, democratic contexts, however, modernism’s political meaning has been the subject of widely divergent opinions. Most critics have seen modernist art and literature as closely linked to twentieth-century politics but, beyond this general association, there has been little consensus on how precisely this might be so. This critical dissension, however, does not merely reflect the fractious ideological and methodological commitments of modernism’s critics. It also points to the internally divided, ambivalent political character of modernism and avant-gardism as cultural phenomena.

Beginning in the 1920s, reflecting on the first great wave of modernist experimentation, Frankfurt School critics such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse discussed the practices of modernism as models of new, progressive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. For these critics, modernist art and literature offered real-world fragments of as yet unrealized social utopias, thus providing an alternative critical perspective on a social order in which commercial culture and propaganda play an increasingly preponderant role.

In considering the work of the modernist composers Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, for example, Adorno weighed these composers’ innovations in terms of their implicit consequences for human experience more generally. In the emancipated dissonance of Schoenberg’s early “free atonal” pieces such as *Erwartung*, Adorno

discerned a protest of the individual against social regimentation and rationalization. At the same time, however, in Schoenberg's equalization of each musical element and replacement of large-scale tonal form with many small musical events, he perceived a utopian picture of a free society of individuals interacting in unprecedented ways. Thus, for Adorno, this early Expressionist work of Schoenberg exemplifies how modernist art can function as both a critique of existing conditions and a utopian alternative to them. Using these works as his standard, he judged as "regressive" Schoenberg's later twelve-tone compositions, which unlike his earlier works were based on more rigid rules for permuting and combining the twelve notes of the chromatic scale. If in "free atonality" the musical "individual," the singular event in which sounds interacted, was self-ordering and autonomous, in the twelve-tone system musical order seemed to follow an external law imposed by the dictatorial composer-designer of an abstract system. In an analogous but opposite way, Adorno likewise harshly judged Stravinsky's appeals to archaic myth and communal ritual in *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces* and his forceful use of rhythm to create drama and tension. In Adorno's view, Stravinsky reduced the musically voiced "individual" to an expression of external compulsions: fate, the will of the primitive community, the archaic rhythms of the seasons and the earth. While admitting the greatness of Stravinsky's musical achievement, Adorno nevertheless stressed what he saw as the short step between Stravinsky's compositional aesthetic and the archaism of a lesser composer such as Carl Orff, whose use of myth aligned him explicitly with the ideologists of Nazism.

Amidst the anti-authoritarian cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, a number of French poststructuralist thinkers likewise took inspiration from modernist literature and art as positive models of difference and dissidence, against which normative social regimes could be critically measured. Michel Foucault, for example, wrote on Gustave Flaubert and Jorge Luis Borges in relation to the institutions of the library and the encyclopedia. In other studies, he considered the relations of language, image, and power in the writings of Raymond Roussel, in the novels of Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski, and in the verbal-visual rebuses of René Magritte. Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard freely alternated between studies of philosophers and meditations on modernist artists such as Antonin Artaud, Marcel Proust, Francis Bacon, and Marcel Duchamp. Their "aesthetic" studies were not merely a philosopher's venture into literary or art criticism but, rather, philosophical interpretations of the radical forms of subjectivity, experience, and social organization that these modernist artists adumbrated in their works. Roland Barthes's essays offered theoretical justification for the experimental novel and the political modernism of playwright Bertolt Brecht and filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, while Julia Kristeva developed a sophisticated semiotic theory of "poetic language" to argue that the aesthetically revolutionary poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, the Comte de Lautréamont, and Stéphane Mallarmé was integrally linked to the wider social upheavals of the later half of the nineteenth century in France, from the 1848 revolutions through the Paris Commune to the Dreyfus Affair.

In contrast to these more affirmative views of modernist politics, the Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukács considered modernist literature's disintegration of realist narrative and character to be symptomatic of a broader decline in bourgeois society. As the workings of capitalist society had become ever more opaque to the bourgeois individual, he believed, so too had the individual character at the heart of the modernist novel lost its capacity to coordinate and synthesize the elements of ethics, passion, and action in the fictional society of the text. In the context of the anti-fascist struggle of the 1930s, Lukács focused particularly on the baleful role of the Expressionist avant-garde in Germany, whose subjectivist extremism, mysticism, and archaism he interpreted as symptoms of the ideological degeneration that had allowed the Nazis to come to power in 1933. Lukács was further confirmed in this judgment by the unfortunate fact that a few of the greatest Expressionist artists, for example the poet Gottfried Benn and the painter Emil Nolde, had greeted the Nazi regime affirmatively. On the other hand, he tarred all Expressionism and by extension all avant-gardism with the brush of fascism, while ignoring the manifestly anti-modernist tendencies of Nazi artistic policy, which culminated in wholesale condemnation of Expressionism as *entartete Kunst* ("degenerate art").

Fredric Jameson, a sophisticated heir of Lukács, sees in modernist techniques a defensive "repression" of an increasingly unbearable history. Critical decoding of modernist texts brings their repressed contents to the surface, revealing the hidden "political unconscious" of the age and giving testimony to a history of suffering increasingly inaccessible to direct representation. Other recent historical studies in literary and art history, in contrast, stress the "ideological" role played by a universalizing, "non-ideological" modernism during the Cold War. For them, unlike for Lukács and Jameson, it is not the hidden ideological content of the modernist work that is historically important, but rather its very obscurity, its abstraction from subject matter and ideological themes. The "free," "autonomous" creative activity of modernist writers and artists, they argue, was regularly pointed to as exemplifying the culture of democracy in the ideological war of position between the two Cold War power blocs. Modernist art's refusal to represent an ideology in a directly discernible way made it, they conclude, an ideal "ideological tool" against the all-too-apparent connection of art and ideology in the socialist bloc countries.

The historiography of modernism and its political meaning are affected not only by critical methodology, but also by specific historical, geographical, and political contexts of reception. Thus, for example, during the Cold War, in the "Eastern," socialist half of Europe, divided from the West by the Iron Curtain, modernism had a different, though equally complex, political significance than in "Western" democratic Europe. State socialist regimes could treat modernism as a threat to the instituted order or, to a greater or lesser extent, allow it a margin of tolerance to appease the intellectuals and gain legitimacy. The degree and nature of divergence of avant-garde art from state cultural policy, however, was quite different in the first years following the Russian Revolution, in the periods of intense Stalinist repression in the 1930s and 1950s, and in the relatively liberal periods, such as the mid-1960s and the Glasnost

period of the 1980s. Moreover, the official artistic ideology of socialist realism was uneven within the socialist bloc, hence, too, the degree of intolerance towards modernist experimentation. As official cultural policy, socialist realism remained uniformly strong in the Soviet Union, while in satellite states such as Hungary and Poland, after the mid-1950s, it was considerably weaker and with the passage of time merely residual. In the renegade socialist republic of Yugoslavia, socialist realist art was nearly absent, as it was seen as a hostile Russian imposition. Instead of socialist realism, an "official" modernism, coexisting with national folkloric culture, was the norm.

To some degree, however, in most state socialist countries artists could employ modernist techniques of disruption, negation, and scandal to contest the state-supported culture. This possibility significantly diminished with the collapse of socialist systems after 1989. Before the system change, Central and Eastern European artists tended to stress precisely the formalistic, universal, apparently anti-ideological facets of the modernist heritage as a way of demonstratively resisting the compulsory politicization of art as a state ideology. Modernist art could, by extension, symbolize a broad range of individual protests against socialism's saturation of social space through ideological and bureaucratic control. During the post-socialist transition, however, these same modernist values no longer had the same meaning, since the political context had changed so drastically. In the rapidly changing institutional and psychological background of societies in transition, modernist techniques no longer had a stable cultural background against which they clearly appeared transgressive. Some contemporary critics in the former socialist countries have even suggested that a once radical, critical modernism has come to occupy a conservative, "official" ideological role in post-socialist society, serving primarily to preserve the competitive advantage of an ex-dissident elite against the new challenge of feminist, minority, and other young artists with concerns different from those of the previous generation.

One of the most important theoretical formulations of the politics of modernism and the avant-garde was Peter Bürger's path-breaking book, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, published originally in German in 1974 and in English translation in 1984. It is safe to say that this book, especially its English edition, transformed scholarly discussions of the topic and even had some direct impact on the contemporary art world in the 1980s and 1990s. Though it has subsequently been heavily discussed and criticized, thus highlighting several shortcomings of the book, Bürger nevertheless made two enduring contributions. First, in discussing the avant-garde and its implicitly or explicitly political claims, he focused attention on the *institutional* conditions in which art was produced and received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the classical avant-gardes had their moment of flourishing. Second, on the basis of this institutional analysis of art, he rigorously distinguished between "modernism" and "avant-garde," terms that have often been conflated or loosely defined.

Modernism, in Bürger's view, was positively dependent on the autonomous status that art had achieved in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Art had emerged

within the social division of labor with a distinct name, a professional status, criteria of admission, and standards of evaluation that set it apart from other types of socially valuable activity. For Bürger, however, this institutional autonomy was not merely the *formal condition* of modernism, but also its *fundamental content*. Modernism's characteristic imperative to innovate and the typical claims of critics that the modernist work registers a unique artistic consciousness are, for Bürger, nothing other than gambits in a struggle to preserve the autonomous status of art in the social field. In the absence of traditional criteria for evaluating modernist works of art, individual artists, and these artists' innovative uses of language and form, become self-validating standards of aesthetic value.

Avant-garde, in contrast, can be understood as a reaction against modernist autonomy, a rejection of modernism's increasingly rarefied artistic communication and an attempt to restore art's effective power in social life.

The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. . . . When the avant-gardistes demand that art become practical once again, they do not mean that the contents of works of art should be socially significant. The demand is not raised at the level of the contents of individual works. Rather it directs itself to the way art functions in society. (Bürger 1984: 49)

Bürger dates this avant-garde break conventionally, situating its main period *circa* 1910–30. During these years, pursuing this change of function, avant-garde artists organized themselves in quasi-political groups, utilizing tools of publicity such as staged demonstrations and scandals, manifestos, newsletters and journals, rebel exhibitions and schools to break out of the isolation they perceived within the modern arts. In some cases, too, most notably in the Soviet Union and during the post-First World War revolutionary upheavals in Hungary, Germany, and Italy, politicized avant-gardes sought to link their aesthetic projects directly to emergent revolutionary states.

Though the vast diversity of cases in several countries and across the arts cannot be reduced to a single measure, Bürger's theory provides a good abstract model for understanding the political behavior and structure of major European avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, Expressionism, and Surrealism. Moreover, it would be wrongheaded to reject the theory because it does not account for every fact. The very function of such an "ideal-typical" model is to provide a coherent framework within which historical investigation can draw out nuances and distinctions. In this sense, Bürger can be said to have successfully identified the broad tendency of avant-garde movements to challenge the autonomous status of art.

One can be justifiably skeptical about Bürger's adoption of 1910 as the starting-point for the beginning of the avant-garde revolt, a date that clearly serves to draw a sharp dividing line between earlier "aestheticist" modernisms and later avant-gardes such as Futurism and Dadaism. The "pre-avant-garde" movements of international art nouveau and secessionism, however, were often even more radical from a *functional*

point of view than the avant-gardes that immediately followed them. In these earlier movements, paradigmatically “aestheticist,” artists challenged the hierarchy of the arts and embraced the less prestigious “applied arts,” “industrial arts,” and “design” in polemical opposition to traditional genres of painting and sculpture. Artists also rejected academic specialization according to media, in some cases bringing graphic art, poetry, typography, book design, architecture, furniture-making, and other media together as part of an integral artistic activity. In addition, these movements coincided with the formation of artist colonies where utopian “lifestyle” ideas from anarchism and socialism to feminism and sexual liberation could be tried out in practice. The example of the secession movements suggests that Bürger’s model of the avant-garde might be profitably extended at least back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the politics of the avant-garde can be observed, in isolated cases, in its incipient forms.

One fascinating instance of the complex interweaving of artistic revolution and political radicalism can be seen in the evolution of the Hungarian avant-garde in the years from 1915 until 1925, a period that spans the First World War, a socialist regime in power for six months in 1919, and the subsequent counter-revolution and dispersion in exile of nearly all Hungary’s radical artists. This instance offers an important case study for a number of reasons. First, the Hungarian avant-garde was, in comparison to the fractious and many-stranded Russian avant-garde, relatively centralized around a few journals and a few leading individuals. Thus, it is possible to see the political developments in a perspicuous form. Second, the socialist revolution, in which the artists of the avant-garde were active participants, passed through all the stages from ascendancy to defeat in a brief, intense period of a few months. The developments are thus punctual and, again, rather more simple than in the case of the Soviet Union. Third, the patterns of exile community and its political dividing lines can be seen in a particularly clear, almost claustrophobic form in the Hungarian case. Finally, given the Europe-wide importance of Hungarian artists such as the Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy, theorists such as Georg Lukács and Ernst Kallai, and avant-garde writers and editors such as Lajos Kassák – who all lived and worked outside Hungary after the collapse of the socialist “Council Republic” – the political fate of the Hungarian avant-garde directly affected broader European trends in the 1920s.

Poet, essayist, editor, and painter Lajos Kassák was unquestionably the single most important figure in the Hungarian avant-garde. He founded the journal *A Tett* (The Act) in the autumn of 1915. Modeled on the German Expressionist-activist journal *Die Aktion*, published by the pacifist and anarchist-leaning writer Franz Pfembert, *A Tett* exhibited an uncertain mix of modernist experimentation in writing, translation of advanced poetry from abroad, and leftist social commentary focused particularly on the war. Poems such as Kassák’s own “Mesteremberek” (Craftsmen) or his lyrical explication of Carlo Carrà’s painting “Anarchist Funeral” brought to the pages of *A Tett* the proletarian settings and crowds of the metropolis, while the essays of

Imre Vadja and other collaborators directly addressed topical problems such as war, internationalism, and the unity of Central Europe.

In 1916 Kassák composed a programmatic manifesto for the journal, polemically attacking tradition and convention and underscoring an agenda of social transformation. The war was at the center of both the need for and the possibility of a new society, in Kassák's view.

The blood that is being criminally spilled nowadays will be calmly absorbed by the soil, but when the fruit ripens, its taste will be bitter in our mouths for a long time to come, with the taste of the horrors suffered. Mendacious, glorified legends may emanate from today's casemates, but for a long time to come eyes that are open will still be confronted with the wavering question and exclamation marks of mutilated human bodies. (Kassák, in Benson and Forgács 2002: 161)

One can sense in Kassák's allegorizing conclusion a prefiguration of the typographical radicalism, inspired by Futurism and Dadaism, that he would only later attempt to put into practice in the pages of the later journal *Ma* and in his books of picture-verse. At the time, however, the key was to lament the suffering and violence of the events, while seizing hold of the new forms of experience, new creative forces, and new means of expression that the war had revealed.

The aggressive, activist tone of *A Tett* had two principal effects. At the cultural level, it provoked a response by Mihály Babits, a brilliant poet, a learned critic, and a central figure in the prestigious modernist journal *Nyugat* (West), which included other literary luminaries such as Endre Ady, Arpad Toth, Dezső Kosztelanyi, and Georg Lukács in its pages. Babits, though also committed to the modernization of Hungarian culture and also anti-war in his politics, represented the claims of tradition and poetic craft against what he thought to be the superficial mannerism and posturing of the avant-garde. In a respectful, but increasingly pointed exchange between Babits and Kassák, one can see the younger poet grow increasingly conscious that Babits's reform-minded modernism could no longer suffice, either in art or politics; a revolutionary, "avant-garde" break was needed. The second effect was more directly consequential: the journal was banned by the authorities. The immediate motive for this censorship was Kassák's publication, in translation, of international poets, including from "enemy" countries. This gesture was a knowingly provocative one, and was a logical outgrowth of the principled anti-nationalist and anti-war stance of the 1916 program.

Kassák revived the journal under the title *Ma* (Today), which at first continued in the programmatic footsteps of *A Tett* and included many of the previous contributors as well. However, along with a much more integral role of the visual arts in the new journal, a new note of public agitation was sounded, particularly in programmatic texts of Kassák such "The Poster and the New Painting," published in November, 1916. The distance traveled can be measured by comparing the conclusion of the *Tett*

program, which took up the pathos of the suffering soldier's body as an implicitly Expressionist language of question marks and exclamations, to a passage in the poster manifesto that uses the same metaphor to more activist ends. Like the poster artist, Kassák argues, the new painters seek to communicate and persuade: "Their pictures are not intended as interior decoration, but purport to be so many live question and exclamation marks for the thinking masses" (Kassák, in Benson and Forgács 2002: 165). When the revolution in Hungary broke out in 1919, this activist stance would take on its most intense and literal form. Already before the revolution had entered its socialist phase, the journal *Ma* proclaimed its commitment to communism: "Long live the Communist Republic that is the sole and ultimate liberator from economic and political slavery!" (Benson and Forgács 2002: 213). Artists connected with *Ma* such as Kassák's brother-in-law Béla Uitz made agitational posters using modernist techniques to heighten the impact of their messages, while the journal itself published special "political" issues that featured Expressionistic woodcuts, Vladimir Lenin's iconic face or groups of proletarian figures in revolt.

In the early days of the revolution, Kassák hoped to make the activist group the official representative of revolutionary art. Analogies were raised between political and aesthetic dictatorship, a rigorous control over artistic production, education, and dissemination to sort out revolutionary from reactionary tendencies. For example, the activist painter Uitz published an article explicitly arguing that "Dictatorship is needed in painting as much as it is needed in today's society" (Uitz, in Benson and Forgács 2002: 225). Georg Lukács, who was responsible for cultural policy during the Council Republic in Hungary, rejected this "dictatorial" role for the avant-garde, but defended its place in the overall mission of building a new socialist culture, noting the useful volunteer work of some of its members. Not everyone was as broadminded as Lukács, however. Kassák and his followers soon found themselves under attack not only from the political right, but also by authoritative voices within the communist movement. Most importantly, they were denounced at a Communist Party assembly by the party leader, Béla Kun, who characterized the *Ma* group as the product of "bourgeois decadence." Kassák's response, his "Letter to Béla Kun in the Name of Art," reasserted his past and present commitment to socialism, but in addition declared that the artist's outlook is more universal than that of the politician. "The dynamics of our worldview," claimed Kassák, "precludes affiliation with the interests of any political party. For the unattainable, ultimate goal of the struggle we have launched is man himself in the image of the universe, beyond party politics, beyond national or racial ideologies. . . . [F]or us the purpose of life is not class warfare, for class warfare is only a means toward attaining the absolute man whose sole way of life is revolutionary action" (Kassák, in Benson and Forgács 2002: 231).

Needless to say, this elevated utopianism did not impress the dogmatic politician Kun, who was sufficiently convinced of the superiority of practical politics to cosmic insight. The journal *Ma* was shut down by the communists already before the collapse of the Council Republic, and afterwards, Kassák and his comrades were imprisoned or forced into exile by the counter-revolution. Kassák himself went to

Vienna after a brief period of imprisonment and restarted *Ma* in exile with a new, international orientation relatively distant from direct entanglement in communist politics. Though he remained an avowed socialist throughout his life, by 1923 Kassák was arguing in *Ma* that it was necessary for artists to go “back to the workbench,” to pursue their craft as a specialized labor among other forms of constructive labor in society: a clear step back from the avant-gardist overcoming of artistic autonomy he had advocated in his most activist moment. Others of his former comrades split from Kassák to embrace a communist art politics connected to the Communist Party and the Proletcult (Proletarian Culture) movement in the Soviet Union, while still others left the avant-garde arena to pursue individual careers in the arts, literature, criticism, or teaching.

In a few years, thus, the Hungarian avant-garde ran the gamut from aesthetic and political radicalization, to active involvement in a utopian experiment in revolutionary culture, to dispersion of the movement and its retrenchment in previously rejected positions. In his notorious speech to the Party assembly, Kun noted that the revolution in Hungary had gone further organizationally in two and a half months than the Russian Revolution had in a year. In this hothouse climate, the Hungarian avant-garde achieved a maximum of fusion of its artistic activity with the movement of social revolution, but also foundered on the limits of this convergence. Even more clearly than in the more extended and complex circumstances in the Soviet Union, the unique case of Hungary reveals the paradox of an activist “avant-garde” whose futuristic vision stood on the verge of becoming actual. Its ambiguous fate suggests that despite the artists’ desire to put the imagination in power, the critical, political energies of the avant-garde may be inseparable from their *inactuality*. The avant-garde’s political dreams, one might conclude, remain utopian only so long as their awakening into reality is still to come.

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The Physical Sciences

Michael H. Whitworth

Revolutions

In December 1919, the popular science writer and literary journalist J. W. N. Sullivan surveyed the contemporary cultural scene. It was a moment of transition, which he likened to a Victorian form of slide show, a “dissolving view,” where one slide had not disappeared but the next had not come into focus. Though the situation in politics and religion was disorienting, in art it was worse. There was no unifying pattern to contemporary work. Science too was going through a period of transition, and Sullivan argued that art needed to rediscover the universe just as the physical sciences had done:

If art is to survive it must show itself worthy to rank with science; it must be as adequate, in its own way, as is science. To do that, it must become, to an unprecedented degree, profound and comprehensive, for it is living in a world which is unprecedentedly wide and deep. (Sullivan 1919a: 1362)

The immediate context for Sullivan’s survey was the announcement of the experimental proof of Einstein’s general principle of relativity. Einstein’s special theory, advanced in a paper in 1905, had attracted little attention beyond the scientific community, but the general theory, which provided an entirely new approach to gravitation, proved more sensational. The announcement, made by A. S. Eddington at the Royal Society on November 6, 1919, created newspaper headlines, and came to be seen as the moment when Einstein deposed Newton from the throne of physics. Sullivan proposed that contemporary artists needed their own Einstein, an individual who could “unify the most disparate phenomena” and “disturb something as fundamental as our notions of space and time.” In retrospect, it is clear that pictorial modernism had already produced one such artist, Picasso, and that literary modernism was to produce several of a similar stature. The question remains of what, if anything, they owed to developments in modern physics.

Innovations and Anachronisms

The science of thermodynamics had developed long before modernism, but the literary reception of science is often beset with anachronisms (Clarke 2001: 4–5). The second law of thermodynamics, formulated in the early 1850s, states that the energy available for use in a given system is always decreasing. A system is any definable portion of space, be it a star or a steam engine. The second law marked the first blow for the “classical” physics that had developed from the work of Isaac Newton. Classical physics posited a universe in which events were predictable, provided the scientist possessed sufficient information, determinate (that is, subject to strict laws of cause and effect), and reversible (Clarke 2001: 8). The second law suggested that reversibility was not possible. Moreover, it is a law of statistical generalization: it applies not to individuals, but to the crowd; it introduced a new conception of scientific law (Eddington 1928: 67, 75–7). In its vision of fragmentation and disorder as inevitable features of the universe, thermodynamics stood in contrast to the optimistic visions of progress that were drawn from evolutionary theory.

Theories of matter began to change rapidly in the late nineteenth century. The discovery of Röntgen rays (later X-rays) in 1895 was the most sensational development, and the one most rapidly absorbed by the wider culture: in 1896 non-technical journals such as the *Cornhill* and *McClure's Magazine* turned their attention to the phenomenon; in 1897 the young Virginia Woolf went to a lecture on the rays, and in the following year Joseph Conrad had an X-ray photograph made of his hand (Whitworth 2001: 150 n.16). Though later years saw more precise models of the atom (such as Niels Bohr's “solar” atom of 1913), and greater understanding of radioactivity, the later developments did not alter the fundamental revelation of the X-ray: what had appeared to be solid was porous. Ernest Rutherford's splitting of the atom in late 1910 added to the shock: what had appeared to be permanent was changeable.

Einstein's general theory of relativity introduced a new level of mathematical sophistication into the physical sciences. Rather than explaining gravitation as a *force*, an idea that could be related to muscular force, it explained it as due to distortions in space-time. Whereas Newtonian physics had placed matter in a three-dimensional universe built on the geometrical axioms of Euclid, with time as a separate dimension, Einstein's theory placed it in a universe in which space and time could not be separated and in which Euclid's axioms did not hold true. While non-Euclidean geometry is easy to introduce in its basic elements – the surface of a sphere is non-Euclidean, for example, as is the surface of a doughnut – the mathematics is difficult, and the more complex spaces impossible to visualize. The mode of explanation employed by physics had made a decisive break with everyday or “common-sense” notions. Moreover, Einstein's theory marked a change in scale: at the ordinary human scale, Einstein's theory gave results very similar to Newton's; it was only when dealing with high velocities and immense masses that its greater accuracy became apparent.

The problems of visualization became apparent in later quantum mechanical theories of the atom. Classical physics had assumed that energy, like most other quantities, could be subdivided infinitesimally. In 1900 Max Planck had demonstrated that energy exists in certain minimum units or quanta. Planck's quantum theory helped Bohr explain why the orbits of electrons around the nucleus, unlike the orbits of planets, could exist only in certain radiuses or levels. As an atom absorbs energy its "state" does not change gradually, but abruptly, a "quantum leap." The observation of an atom requires an input of energy. Shining a torch into a dark room puts energy into it, but does not normally disrupt the contents. However, at the small scale of the atom, the energy affects what is observed. Hence Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: the more accurately we know the energy and momentum of a particle, the less accurately we know its position in space-time, and vice versa (Bohr 1928: 586). Although the uncertainty principle concurred with Romantic notions of man's relation to nature (as Wordsworth said, "we murder to dissect"), quantum mechanics also produced an unprecedentedly non-picturable model of the atom, one in which particles behave in seemingly self-contradictory and extraordinary ways. Like advanced non-Euclidean geometries, the multiple dimensions of Schrödinger's wave mechanics defy visualization (Eddington 1928: 80–1, 211–19).

Both relativity and quantum mechanics require a change in the epistemological outlook of classical science. In fact, both may have drawn inspiration from developments in epistemology that had begun in the 1880s. Descriptionism, as advanced by Ernst Mach in "The Economical Nature of Physical Inquiry" (1882), held that physics should not seek to explain physical phenomena, but merely to describe them as economically as possible. Scientific laws are not inherent in nature, but are merely mental constructs. In Britain, Mach's theories had found an enthusiastic supporter in Karl Pearson, author of *The Grammar of Science* (1892). In France, equally influentially, mathematician Henri Poincaré had argued that it was meaningless to ask whether Euclidean geometry was "true": one might as well ask whether the metric system was true and the old system of weights and measures was false (Herbert 2001: 67). As a young man, Einstein was attracted to Mach's iconoclasm, as well as the philosophical content of his works, though he grew steadily more critical of his position (Holton 1973: 203–4, 219–59). Einstein, like many scientists of his generation, also read Pearson's *Grammar* (Whitworth 2001: 86 n.15). In the literary world, meanwhile, T. S. Eliot encountered it in 1913 as part of Josiah Royce's seminar (Smith 1963). Descriptionism was useful, at the very least, as a way of skeptically questioning established theories and breaking their monopoly on truth. The modesty of its claims about the authority of science was also palatable to the humanists who tended to control university funding (Heilbron 1982; Whitworth 2001: 116–17).

Relativity and quantum mechanics have many things in common: both can be accommodated within descriptionism; both raise challenges to classical and Newtonian physics. However, their similarities, which have led to them being grouped under the name "the new physics," should not obscure very real differences (Cain 1999: 47). Although both break with Newtonian ideas of space and time, Einstein's vision of

physics was classical in the sense of being deterministic: notoriously he said, when surveying quantum mechanics, that God “does not play dice” (quoted in Holton 1973: 120).

Topical Allusions

Given the increasingly complex mathematics of the physical sciences, it may seem miraculous that the latest developments reached a non-specialist public at all. However, while experimental verification required detailed knowledge of the mathematics, the largest conceptual innovations were treatable in non-technical language. There is widespread evidence of a lively interest in the new physics, certainly in the literary and generalist journals such as the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Nation* (London), and to some extent the *Criterion* and the *Dial*. Popular science books were widely reviewed: not only the bestsellers, such as A. S. Eddington’s *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928), and James Jeans’s *The Mysterious Universe* (1930), but also many other, now-forgotten titles. As well as reviews, some papers carried short expository articles on the physical sciences. Readers of the *Athenaeum* under Middleton Murry from 1919 to 1921 were particularly well served, an important fact, given that its contributors and readers included modernist authors such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Ezra Pound. In the late 1920s literary interest cooled somewhat, and a more skeptical attitude became apparent. Popular science books often undertook to relate the latest developments of science to larger questions, trying, for example, to heal the Victorian breach between religion and science. Such incursions of scientists into philosophical questions beyond their competence irritated many literary writers. By the late 1920s, some Christians had come to argue that faith should not need the support of science; atheists argued that science should not be encouraging superstition. However, greater skepticism about popular science writing did not completely remove scientific ideas from the literary world.

Not only were the latest ideas available to literary readers, but there is evidence that they caught the attention of literary writers. Some writers who mentioned relativity focused on the theory and its author as journalistic sensations, and paid little attention to their intellectual content. When Einstein appears by name in poetry, it is often as the type of the celebrity – as in William Carlos Williams’s “St. Francis Einstein of the Daffodils” (1921) – or of the genius – as in Marianne Moore’s “The Student” (1932). As early as May 1920, Rose Macaulay reproduced the *Daily Mail*’s headline of November 7, 1919, “Light Caught Bending,” as part of the cultural backdrop of her satirical novel *Potterism*. While Macaulay’s Arthur Gideon criticizes the headline in a way that implies knowledge of the theory – “it was an idiotic way of putting a theory as to the curvature of space” – most of his reflections concern the reception of relativity by the newspapers. He finds the newspaper’s headline encouraging, as it suggests that people are interested not only in the usual sensational topics (“divorce, suicide, and murder”) but “in light and space, undulations

and gravitation.” However, Gideon predicts, editorial sermons will also assimilate the theory within their conventional world, reassuring readers that “the finiteness of space did not limit the infinity of God” (Macaulay 1920: 231–2).

Literary Form

The most distinctive qualities of literary modernism, its experiments with style and structure, have by their very nature tended to cover their tracks, leaving scant evidence that might confirm or disprove connections to the radical developments in the physical sciences. However, evidence is not altogether lacking. The self-reflexive phrases or images found within many modernist works – phrases about “fragments” in *The Waste Land*, for example – provide something tangible; additionally, there are rich resources in the form of essays and reviews by modernist authors and their contemporaries. At the most general level, modernist works have much in common with descriptionism. Their tendency to draw attention to their own textuality means that the reader cannot completely forget that the world they depict is an artificial construct; furthermore, the depiction of the world from multiple perspectives in many modernist works further serves to remind the reader of the role of interpretation in the creation of reality. J. W. N. Sullivan made the point most directly in the same week that he urged modern artists to pay more heed to science. He felt that John Middleton Murry, whose essays he was reviewing, was wrong to assert that he had discovered the underlying harmony of the world: “the beauty with which the artist is concerned,” wrote Sullivan, “is no more inherent in reality than are the uniform time and Euclidean space in which he locates the physical world” (Sullivan 1919b: 1365). James Joyce, although realist in many respects (as T. J. Rice has argued, 1997), employs techniques which leave the reader doubting whether beauty is inherent in reality. Moreover Stephen Dedalus, contrasting his artistic intentions with the nostalgia of Yeats’s Michael Robartes, implies that the artist can create beauty as well as imitate it: he wishes to press in his arms “the loveliness which has not yet come into the world” (Joyce [1916] 1952: 286). Roger Fry’s “An Essay in Aesthetics” (1909) similarly argues that the role of art is not to imitate the beauty inherent in nature, but to create independently beautiful objects. Such a theory is not identical to descriptionist philosophies of science, as scientific theory necessarily entails some form of reference to nature. Nevertheless, both grant greater imaginative power to the artist or scientist than earlier realist theories. Those pressing the claims of new physical theories often noted their mathematical “elegance” or “beauty,” and the importance of the aesthetic factor in science was hotly debated in the pages of the *Athenaeum* in 1920 (Hutcheon 1984: 52–5; Whitworth 2001: 135–45).

The experience of reading new forms of literature led reviewers to venture into unfamiliar discourses in order to find suitable analogies. In some comparisons the new physics stands simply as the token of a bewildering modernity, or of the high degree of specialization displayed by modern authors. T. S. Eliot’s 1923 comparison

of James Joyce's use of myth in *Ulysses* to "the discoveries of an Einstein" does not imply any knowledge of the content of Einstein's theory (Eliot [1923] 1975: 177). However, other comparisons have greater depth. Writing about *Ulysses* in 1919, Virginia Woolf employed vocabularies from many different sources: the idea of a flame which "flashes its myriad messages through the brain" apparently derives from psychology. However, the "flickerings" of that flame, the "flashes" of significance in the Hades episode, and, above all, the "restless scintillations," suggest the vocabulary of modern physics. All are terms or images that could be associated with the X-ray machine; while "scintillation" had long had a non-technical meaning, since 1903 it had been used specifically to refer to the flashes of visible or ultraviolet light emitted by fluorescent substances when struck by high-energy particles (Whitworth 2005: 179–80; Woolf 1919). Given that these phrases occur in the context of Woolf's well-known dismissive references to the "materialism" of Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy, and the "solidity" of their craftsmanship, they become particularly interesting. They imply that in Joyce's work, reality can be known only indirectly, through the flashes it emits in the novelist's laboratory; they imply that the world is less solid and less readily knowable than was previously believed.

In the same year, writing about the plays of Ben Jonson, T. S. Eliot was clearly looking for precedents for a modern aesthetic. He contrasted the humanist depth of character in Shakespeare's work with the "flatness" of character in Jonson's, but was concerned to recuperate the concept of flatness.

Jonson's characters conform to the logic of the emotions of their world. It is a world like Lobatchevsky's; the worlds created by artists like Jonson are like the systems of non-Euclidean geometry. They are not fancy, because they have a logic of their own; and this logic illuminates the actual world, because it gives us a new point of view from which to inspect it. (Eliot 1919: 637–8)

Einstein had used Riemann's geometry, not Lobatchevsky's, but nevertheless, coming only a week after Eddington's announcement, Eliot's remarks were very topical. However, topicality need not imply superficiality: the remark suggests a great deal. By reminding the reader of the arbitrariness of geometrical systems, it suggests that aesthetic and ethical systems are similarly arbitrary. It suggests that what appears as a distortion from one frame of reference may appear true from another. Harriet Monroe's later exuberant description of *The Waste Land* draws in a more submerged way on the same idea: the poem was a "wild dance in an ash-heap before a clouded and distorted mirror" (in Grant 1982: 167). Her image of the distorted mirror not only rewrites the long-established realist image of art as a mirror held up to nature, but also gestures toward the use of distorting mirrors in expositions of non-Euclidean geometries; such mirrors are the most immediate experience most people are likely to have of a geometrical transformation (Whitworth 2001: 208, 213).

Later critics have developed other analogies between modernist literature and the ideas of the new physics, sometimes drawing on contemporary authorities in support, sometimes ignoring them. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle has led many critics

astray. As Bohr stated it: “any observation of atomic phenomena will involve an interaction with the agency of observation not to be neglected” (Bohr 1928: 580). For many critics, the interaction of observer and observed suggests analogies both with the depiction of human subjects in modernist literature, and with the interaction of readers with that literature; the delicate, fragmentary forms of modernist literature are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of the interpreting consciousness. The problem with the analogy is not so much its looseness – analogies require a degree of looseness – but its chronological imprecision: Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle is often presented as a causal influence, yet many of the works for which such interaction could be posited were written well before Heisenberg had formulated the principle. If modernist writers were influenced by science, the influence came from the longer-established idea of descriptionism, from which Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle also indirectly derives. In 1914, having studied Pearson, T. S. Eliot had argued in a seminar paper that “[t]he act of describing brings alteration of the object described” (Smith 1963: 121). In 1920, Eddington suggested that “the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature” (Eddington 1920: 201). Heisenberg was not saying anything new: what he achieved was a precise mathematical formulation of how such philosophical generalities applied to our knowledge of position and of energy and momentum of subatomic particles (Bohr 1928: 586).

Relativity theory has also inspired some very loose generalizations, usually to the effect that it “made everything relative.” As several critics have noted, Einstein had originally considered calling his theory not “relativity” but “invariance” theory (Cain 1999: 49). Some of what modernism appears to owe to relativity may in fact derive from a neglected nineteenth-century tradition of philosophical relativism (Herbert 2001). Nevertheless, the idea that relativity “made everything relative” was first voiced in the 1920s, and, though philosophically questionable, has historical actuality.

The recognition of the ambivalence involved in responses to relativity has produced more subtle readings of its relations to literature. Such ambivalence may be seen as a subset of the larger ambivalence of literature to science in the period: literary writers wish to borrow some of the cultural authority of science, yet also to maintain their autonomy. Cain’s reading of the form of *The Waste Land* has ambivalence at its core: the poem “displays itself as made up of nothing but its constituent influences . . . There is no actual ‘text,’ simply the relations between temporal and spatial states of the text; it is the relations that are the absolutes. Yet paradoxically there *is* a text” (Cain 1999: 60). Cain’s account overemphasizes the prominence of quotation and “influences” in *The Waste Land*, and would be better applied to poems such as Louis Zukofsky’s “Poem Beginning ‘The’” (c.1927) or more recent works such as Tony Lopez’s *False Memory* (2003). Nevertheless it brings *The Waste Land* interestingly close to Eddington’s pronouncement that, at the moment of its greatest achievement for centuries, physics had become “an empty shell,” “knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content” (Eddington 1920: 200). The artist who connects nothing with nothing is nevertheless creating something.

A close reading of the popular science writing of the period can also illuminate particular texts, and at times can illuminate the underlying assumptions of modernist form. One should not expect the whole of a physical theory to find itself incorporated into a literary work: rather, one finds fragments of imagery and vocabulary from science subjected to processes of condensation and displacement. For example, the fact that light travels with a finite velocity, known since 1675, became newly interesting and significant when it was placed at the center of Einstein's special and general theories (Whitworth 2001: 170–97). The information that reaches our eye always arrives belatedly. The most vivid expository example appears in Camille Flammarion's *Lumen* (1872): on a distant planet, light rays that left the earth in 1815 would only just be arriving; the Battle of Waterloo would appear to be happening "now." Physicists Balfour Stewart and P. G. Tait suggested in 1875 that light was producing "continual photographs of all occurrences" (quoted in Clarke 2001: 174). These illustrations continued to circulate in expositions of relativity.

The idea was readily absorbed into literary discourse, particularly in the form of reflections on stars and starlight. Meditations on stars have a long literary history, but the finite velocity of light has peculiarly modern associations: its provides a physical embodiment of the tendency of thought to lag behind perception in the fast-moving modern world; the medium of perception seems to lag behind the percept. The idea has prompted many meditative lyrics: W. J. Turner's "In Time Like Glass" (reprinted in W. B. Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936)), Louis MacNeice's "Star-Gazer" (1963), and the fifth section of Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* (1966). Characters in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) similarly meditate on starlight (Whitworth 2001: 183–5). The idea also finds its way into Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*: as his contemporary Marcel Brion noted, the "Willingdone" Museum suggests Flammarion's Battle of Waterloo illustration (Brion 1929: 32); as Jaun / Haun departs, he is told that he will be "looked after" like a "beam of light" receding a "photophoric pilgrimage" (Joyce [1939] 1960: 472).

Beyond specific instances, the larger implications of the idea are equally significant. Like the psychology and anthropology of the period, it speaks of atavism, of the continued presence of the past. Modernist works, particularly those given to quotation and pastiche, disrupt the idea of there being a single present moment; they arrange constellations of quotations, each belonging to its own distinct time. In this context, imagery of light and stars in the works take on a new significance. The light in Eliot's *Burnt Norton* (1935) is particularly closely associated with memory, while the image in *East Coker* (1940) of captains, merchant bankers and eminent men of letters going out into the "vacant interstellar spaces" merges the classical idea of the stellification of the dead with a modern materialist idea of light.

Language

As the foregoing examples suggest, the new physics changed the language: for instance, in the absence of a universal timeframe, it is impossible to speak of past events being

perceived “now” on a distant planet; adverbs of time and place must become nouns, coupled with possessive pronouns; we must speak of “our then” and “their now.” The problem was as acute for quantum mechanics as for relativity physics. As Bohr recognized, “every word in the language refers to our ordinary perception” (Bohr 1928: 590). Implicitly, Bohr throws down a challenge: language must adapt to the newly discovered reality. While the broader trend of linguistic experimentation in modernism undoubtedly has its roots elsewhere, the conceptual difficulties faced by the new physics stimulated some specific examples. In *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Joyce frequently transposes space and time, or augments a “temporal context” with a spatial reference: “at the time” becomes “for the space of the time being”; “thereabouts” becomes “thenabouts,” and “anywhere” is supplemented by “anywhen” (Duszenko 1994: 64).

Though W. H. Auden’s poetry does not foreground linguistic experiment to the extent of *Finnegans Wake*, he occasionally transforms adverbs of time and place into substantives. In “The Last of the Old Year” (Winter 1926–7, first published in his *Juvenilia* (1994)), “Here scowled at There; the Now and This / Enjoyed at last connubial bliss.” That Auden’s locutions owe something to relativity texts is further suggested by his reference to “the tensor $G_{\mu\nu}$ ” in the following line, tensor calculus being central to the non-Euclidean mathematics of Einstein’s general theory. In Auden’s *Collected Works* we find extensions of this method, such as “the mountains of instead” (“Autumn Song,” March 1936), and “Is there a once that is not already?” (“Not in Baedeker,” 1949). Apparently independently of Auden, Michael Roberts wrote about “some one-where world / Where algid tiny vapours turn” (“Sirius B,” written February–June, 1931). “One-where” is borrowed from lines in Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “Harry Ploughman” about “his thew / That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank.” To that extent, it has nothing to do with the new physics. However, Roberts’s transformation of the word from an adverb to an adjective significantly alters it. A “one-where” world is, apparently, a world that is not “somewhere” or “anywhere,” but in one place only. The adjective might seem redundant, but it reinforces the impression of the intense gravitational field of Sirius B, a star on the verge of becoming a black hole; it is so much in its own place that light can scarcely escape it.

Afterlife

With the exception of the X-ray, which soon found a use in medicine, for many years the new physics had no practical impact on people’s lives. Although the explosive power held within the atom was widely recognized in the 1920s, it was not until 1945 that an atomic bomb was used in war. During the 1920s and 1930s the new physics was available to literary writers as a storehouse of images, concepts, and thought experiments that could be put to various uses. Although science, once appropriated, could be turned to many and diverse uses, the new physics was inherently suited to describing unfamiliar and uncanny states of subjectivity. Its suitability was due not only to its novelty, which meant that its concepts carried an aura of

unfamiliarity, but also to its dealing with events that lay beyond the reach of unaided human perception. Popular science texts frequently invited their readers to imagine extreme physical states, for example in terms of the number of dimensions available, the density of matter, the temperature, the velocity, or the scale. Such states offer metaphors for those aspects of modernity that test the limits of “common sense.” D. H. Lawrence’s often quoted letter to Edward Garnett (June 5, 1914) does not draw on advanced physics, but his search for what is “non-human” in humanity had a natural affinity with ideas in the new physics. In *Women in Love*, Gerald appears to Gudrun like “a piece of radium,” a “fatal, living metal” (chapter 29). T. S. Eliot, by inventing “non-Euclidean humanity,” similarly sought to capture what was “non-human” in humanity, breaking with the realist psychology typified by Shakespeare.

The academic codification of modernism began in the era of New Criticism, which was also the era of the atomic bomb. Early academic accounts of modernism presented it as irrationalist and antiscientific: it sought truth in primitivism, myth, and the unconscious; science was held responsible for quantification and the reduction of life to sterile facts; science was responsible for the machine-gun and poison gas. Such accounts of modernism made little distinction between technology and pure science. Nor did they allow for more complex responses: it was possible for authors to reject certain scientific values while accepting the newer and more intriguing discoveries; it was possible to categorize materialism and determinism as “Victorian” and reject them, while embracing descriptionism and probabilistic approaches.

The reappraisal of modernism’s relations with science was made possible by several factors: by literary theory from 1968 onwards questioning narrow definitions of literature; by the decline of the New Critical account of modernism; and by the publication of letters and diaries which provide detailed insights into the intellectual interests and milieu of key modernist writers. Contemporary novelists and poets continue to be fascinated by the new physics and its later developments: Thomas Pynchon’s use of thermodynamics in *The Crying of Lot 49* (1967) and J. H. Prynne’s use of scientific discourses in his poetry are the two most prominent examples, but there are many others. While contemporary appropriators of science deploy and reshape it in their own distinctive modes, their attempts to create a more comprehensive vision for literature have sharpened awareness of an earlier generation’s cross-disciplinary interests.

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The Biological Sciences

Angelique Richardson

With the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 the quest to know what and why and how it was to be human, moved, with dramatic speed, to center stage. As Heschel noted in *Who is Man?:* "A theory about the stars never becomes a part of the being of the stars . . . we become what we think of ourselves" (1965: 7). The need to establish, to interrogate, to know, the boundary between self and other, in a time of bewildering social change – needs that were no strangers to nineteenth-century fiction and its explorations of identity – intensified, for places for drawing that boundary had suddenly opened up. Man had, practically overnight, become a fully paid-up member of the animal economy, and lines of distinction had urgently to be drawn between self and newly conceived other.

The possibility that the body might offer a fleshly index to the mind gained scientific credibility in the nineteenth century. It first found expression in physiognomy, which, underpinned by mind/body dualism, conceived of the body as material envelope to the ethereal soul. The idea of reading the soul through the face was not new; what was novel was the systematic precision that it received from its founding father Johann Caspar Lavater, whose *Essays on Physiognomy: For the Promotion of the Knowledge and Love of Mankind* appeared between 1775 and 1777 and was translated into English in 1789 (see Dames 2004 and Tytler 1982). Then, in the 1840s, as the concept of the mind increasingly displaced the soul, phrenology ("bumpology" to the skeptics) developed a more materialist conception of mind. Focusing on the bony structures of the skull and forehead, phrenology divided the brain into a congeries of different organs or faculties (twenty-seven according to Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828), thirty-five according to his popularizer Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776–1832)), and shifted the focus from character to mental processes (see Cooter 1984 and Young 1970). In 1828 the Scottish popular theorist George Combe (1788–1858) published his best-selling *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects* (1828). According to the political economist Harriet Martineau (1802–76), whose sixteen letters on mesmerism appeared in the *Athenaeum* in 1844 (and in book form the following year), it was outdone in readership only by the Bible, *Pilgrim's*

Progress and *Robinson Crusoe*. Phrenology, based on the idea of fiercely competing energies, applied the principles of the marketplace to the economy of the psyche, offering an explanatory framework for internal division, and grounding the self in the experience of conflict (it was a discourse in which writers, for example the Brontës, Eliot and Wilkie Collins, found much of interest; on the relations between phrenology and economic and philosophical discourse and on its impact on ways in which the individual was portrayed in the novel, see Shuttleworth 1996).

The notion that struggle played a central role in the emergence of mind out of matter was not new; the Reverend Thomas Malthus, for example, grounding capitalism in the relentless forces of biology in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), remarked:

it could answer no good purpose to enter into the question whether mind be a distinct substance from matter, or only a finer form of it . . . As we shall all be disposed to agree that God is the creator of mind as well as of body, and as they both seem to be forming and unfolding themselves at the same time, it cannot appear inconsistent either with reason or revelation, if it appear to be consistent with the phenomena of nature, to suppose that God is constantly occupied in forming mind out of matter and that the various impressions that man receives through life is the process for that purpose. (202)

The various events of human life, including “roughnesses and inequalities” seem, he observed, “peculiarly calculated to promote this great end” and “the first great awakers of the mind seem to be the wants of the body” (a subject he had originally intended to make a second part to his *Essay*) (203). Darwin read Malthus in the 1830s and gained from the *Essay* the impetus for his theory of natural selection.

With the emerging materialist conception of mind, and the Darwinian dissolution of boundaries between human and animal, human distinctiveness was under threat. Darwin’s *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, an absorbing collection of material that space had prevented him from including in *The Descent of Man* (1871), and which he published the following year, is one striking example of the new mappings of mind and human consciousness that were emerging; expressions of, and resistances to, the idea that humans were driven by instinctive animal urges that would come to find their most free and innovative expression in the experimental forms of modernist fiction. For Darwin, even the higher faculties, such as moral sentiments, had developed as part of evolutionary strategy, a means to survival (1871: 1, chapter 5), and he concluded that his study of human and animal expressions was further confirmation “that man is derived from some lower animal form” (1872: 365; see also Darwin 1871: 2.404).

The physical basis of mind

Centrally engaged in the debates on developing conceptions of mind were Darwin (1808–82), Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Henry George Lewes (1817–78), the last two friends with whom George Eliot (1819–80), who shared their preoccupation

with the life of the mind, was variously in love during her lifetime. In 1866 George Grote, professor of Classics and treasurer of London University, deliberated over whether to describe Spencer as a “physiologist, or psychologist or physical philosopher” (see G. Jones 2003: 1); this lexical quandary highlights not only Spencer’s polymathic genius, but also the proximity between areas of knowledge – of body, and of mind – that it would prove increasingly difficult to keep apart as the embodied nature of mind was uncovered.

It was part of Spencer’s synthesizing project to apply biology to all aspects of life. Embracing organic evolution in the 1850s, and popularizing the term evolution (Darwin initially used the phrase “descent through modification,” and referred to Spencer as “the great expounder of the principle of Evolution” (1872: 10)), Spencer saw consciousness as arising out of unconscious processes that were themselves part of an instinctive adaptation to the environment, processes of *development and differentiation* (see Bourne Taylor and Shuttleworth 1998: 83). Thus, crucially, the mind – or consciousness – develops through the process that Spencer termed “survival of the fittest,” and Darwin came to term “natural selection.” In his *Principles of Psychology* (1855) Spencer developed a physiological account of memory. This was an idea that Eliot would have come into contact with both as Spencer’s close friend and through her involvement with the *Westminster Review* at this time. The *embodied* nature of memory, and the physical disorderings that bad memories – memories that failed to pass peaceably into what Spencer terms unconscious memory – find clear expression in her novel of 1866, *Felix Holt*, in which the adulterous Mrs Transome is tortured by her past. The agony of remembrance presents *physiologically*. Eliot speaks in the author’s introduction of the palpable nature of memory: “red warm blood . . . darkly feed[s] the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams” (84), and Mrs. Transome confesses “every fibre in me seems to be a memory that makes a pang” (490).

This close alliance – or union – of mind and body, which has been most recently expressed in neuroscience (see, for example, Hirsch and Weinberg 2003; LeDoux 1999, 2003; Searle 1984), can be seen from a cursory look at the titles that nineteenth-century mental science was producing. In 1852 Henry Holland (1788–1873), physician to Queen Victoria and a cousin of Elizabeth Gaskell, published *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, and shortly afterwards the Scottish theorist and utilitarian Alexander Bain (1818–1903), a central figure of mid-Victorian psychology and founder, in 1876, of the first psychological journal, *Mind*, published two works that would be standard textbooks in the field for the remainder of the century: *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859). According to John Stuart Mill, “Mr. Bain possesses, indeed, an union of qualifications peculiarly fitting him for . . . the physical investigation of mind . . . [h]aving made a more accurate study than perhaps any previous psychologist, of the whole round of the physical sciences . . .” (in Young 1970). Bain brought together physiology and associationism, the idea that mental life consists entirely of sensory data which through association with other sensations become “ideas” or perceptual data (see Dames 2004: 95, and, on Bain’s later shift

from a physiological emphasis to a developmental theory of mind, 109). Associationism evinced little interest in individual or collective pasts (in this regard it shared common ground with phrenology), but heredity became increasingly important to concepts of mind as the century progressed. For example, the renowned psychiatrist Henry Maudsley (1835–1918), who published *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* in 1867, subscribed to biological determinism.

Lewes was, during this time, working out the relations between mind and matter. In *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859) he focuses on the functions of the nervous system, and, in particular, on automatic processes. In *Problems of Life and Mind*, the first volume of which appeared in 1874, he deliberates at length on the nature of matter, concluding that it is “the Felt viewed in its statical aspect” (2.262). By the time of his death in 1878 he had published five volumes of his study. The title of the third, *The Physical Basis of Mind* (1877), expresses the thesis central to the work as a whole; the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* summarizes it thus:

with respect to the nervous system, he holds that all its parts have one and the same elementary property, namely, sensibility. Thus sensibility belongs as much to the lower centres of the spinal cord as to the brain, contributing in this more elementary form elements to the “subconscious” region of mental life. The higher functions of the nervous system, which make up our conscious mental life, are merely more complex modifications of this fundamental property of nerve substance.

Lewes was also publishing on these issues in the periodical press. Thomas Hardy, increasingly interested in shifting conceptions of the nature of mind, copied into his notebook the following from an article by Lewes in the *Fortnightly Review* (1877):

Physiology began to disclose that all the mental processes were (mathematically speaking) functions of physical processes, i.e. – varying with the variations of bodily states; & this was declared enough to banish forever the conception of a Soul, except as a term simply expressing certain functions. (Hardy 1985: 1.92, quotation with slight variations)

Hardy grouped himself “among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*” (1928–30: 198) and, at the end of his life, listed as the thinkers most important to him “Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Comte, Hume, Mill” (Weber 1965: 246–7). His last novel (*Jude the Obscure*, [1895] 1985), before he rejected the form as ultimately compromised and compromising, opens with a resigned acceptance of pain, and a distinct sense that mind and body are biological phenomena, constituted of the same stuff – of a basic cellular unit of life, and yet, somehow, fundamentally at odds:

As you got older and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring,

garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it.

If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man. (1985: chapter 2, 57)

Something has gone painfully awry, a mismatch in the scheme of things (except, as Darwin revealed, there was no scheme); what Hardy would come to see as over-evolution (April 7, 1889): “A woeful fact – that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect” (1928–30: 1.285–6), though he knew full well that in a universe where there was no plan, no Godly design, and evolution could go anywhere and everywhere, any which way it chose without reprobation, the idea of “too extremely developed” began and ended with human perception. Filled with references to the latest thinking in biology, Hardy’s notebooks offer a record of the late nineteenth-century preoccupation with the nature of mind. Edmund Gosse (1849–28), Hardy’s friend and the author of *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments* (1907), a chronicle of the mid-Victorian clash between science and religious orthodoxy, remarked in an article in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1918, that in 1875 Hardy’s conversations with Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf’s father, had turned upon “theologies decayed and defunct, the origin of things, the constitution of matter and the unreality of time” (Cox 1970: 447). To take further illuminating examples from Hardy’s notebooks:

although all conscious volition is matter in motion . . . it does not follow that all matter in motion is conscious volition . . . elaborated consciousness [Qy. how much complication is necessary to produce consciousness]. (1.174)

or

phenomena of will . . . can only be considered as the last transformation of the great natural forces of light & heat & electricity, passing through the mysterious involvements of the human nervous system. Conscience merely makes the last step in the upward evolution. It has no independent reality, no distinct laws. It falls with all that depends upon it under the empire of force which rules all nature. (Tulloch 1876: 476–7, in Hardy 1985: 1.88; abridged quotation)

and

Unless you assume the ultimate atom to have some inner qualities analogous to those which we call those of mindstuff – there is no explaining how the mental universe developed out of the physical. . . . *Another hypothesis* . . . represents mind as never interfering in the course of physical events, but at best representing a mere inner aspect of the outward frame of things – a sort of backwater from the stream of physical forces. (*Spectator*, 1882, in Hardy 1985: 1.148)

Such material conceptions of the nature of mind, of consciousness, had little time – or space – for soul, and one of the anxieties underpinning these searchings after the constitution of life was the expulsion of the spiritual. Resistance to such ideas came immediately, and helps to explain the reactive flourishing of spiritualism (see for example Bown, Burdett, and Thurschwell 2003; Luckhurst 2002; Owen 2004). Frances Power Cobbe, responding to what William Carpenter had referred to as unconscious cerebration in *Human Physiology* (1855), argued against the biologization of mind and, instead, for “the entire separability of the conscious self from its thinking organ, the physical brain”: Cobbe 1870: 330–3). And the *Edinburgh Review* scoffed at Darwin’s attempt to explain the origin of intellectual faculties by purely materialist argument: “Mr Darwin, before he can fairly argue from matter to mind, must prove that they are both the same thing, which is manifestly impossible” (Dawkins 1871: 207).

For some, the physical basis of mind and thought challenged not only the notion of the soul but of freedom itself. In *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874) Carpenter argued for a “cerebral reflex,” or the automatic workings of all mental activity, arguing that “the Will can never *originate* any form of Mental activity”:

the connexion between Mind and Body is such, that the actions of each have, in this present state of existence (which is all of which Science can legitimately take cognizance), a definite *causal relation* to those of the other; so that the actions of our Minds, *in so far as they are carried on without any interference from our Will*, may be considered as “Functions of the Brain.” (1875: 28)

If matter constituted all life force, so that mind, or spirit, has a material basis, and the highest sentiments or thoughts were ultimately the product of physical process, then what implications did that have for the nature of these higher states? Carpenter’s treatise, however, also works to resist this deterministic idea, allowing for agency.

On the other hand in the control which the Will can exert over the *direction* of the thoughts, and over the *motive force* exerted by the feelings, we have evidence of a new and independent Power, which may either oppose or concur with the automatic tendencies, and which, according as it habitually exerted, tends to render the *Ego a free agent*. (1875: 28)

For Carpenter, man’s nobility exists in the will, but for others, notably Edward von Hartmann, the will too was part of an evolutionary process. Hardy struggled with this idea in his fiction as he strives to address questions of agency and motivation. His epic drama, *The Dynasts* (1904–8), is a study of fatalism, egoism, and history as the outcome of a purposeless, unconscious Immanent Will. It concludes with a vision of consciousness increasingly informing will as history proceeds.

Struggle

Darwin knew, and was fearful from the outset, of the potentially debasing implications of his theory of descent through modification. On the one hand, he was offering a picture of humanity, and therefore of society, subordinate to basic animal impulses, a society riven with the forces of competition, or biological capitalism (see Desmond and Moore 1992). His ideas rapidly found popular expression. In the words of W. R. Greg (who had a few years earlier suggested that unmarried women be shipped off to the colonies) writing in *Fraser's Magazine*:

We have kept alive those who, in a more natural and less advanced state, would have died – and who, looking at the physical perfection of the race alone, had better have been left to die . . . In a wild state, by the law of natural selection, only, or chiefly, the sounder and stronger specimens were allowed to continue their species; with us, thousands with tainted constitutions, with frames weakened by malady or waste, with brains bearing subtle and hereditary mischief in their recesses, are suffered to transmit their terrible inheritance of evil to other generations, and to spread it through a whole community. (1868: 359)

Three years later in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin offers strikingly contradictory views on the subject. Noting that

we civilised men . . . do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. (1.168)

he offers in his next paragraph an empathetic, emphatic refutation of eugenic principles on the grounds that “the noblest part of our nature” would be lost if “we were intentionally to neglect the poor and helpless” (a strategy of negative eugenics) (1.168, 169).

But it was the idea of struggle that made its imprint on the mid-Victorian mind. Edward von Hartmann’s bestselling *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* appeared in 1868; Hartmann was a devotee of Schopenhauer and Darwin, and Freud in turn read Hartmann, referring to *Philosophy of the Unconscious* in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) (see Sulloway 1992: 253 n. 11, and Freud 1900: 134; on the influence of Schopenhauer and other nineteenth-century philosophers of the unconscious (at a time when psychology, literally “science of the soul,” was part of philosophy), especially Hartmann and Nietzsche, see Ellenberger 1970: 208–10, 275–8, 542–3; on Hardy and Hartmann see Richardson 2004). Hartmann begins his study with a quotation from Schopenhauer: “the Materialists endeavour to show that *all*, even *mental* phenomena, are *physical*: and rightly; only they do not see that, on the other hand, everything physical is *at the*

same time metaphysical" (1893: 1.57: italics in original). This bound-upness of mind and body, the ultimate interchangeability, or sameness, even, of the flesh and mindstuff, though it had been gaining credence through the century, was an unusual idea to circulate so publicly. From the outset Hartmann was clear about human relation to animals:

the time has gone by when the animals were contrasted with the free man as locomotive machines, as soulless automata. . . . deeper insight into the lives of animals . . . has shown that with respect to mental capacity man differs from the brutes in degree and not in kind, just as the brutes differ among themselves. (1893: 1.59)

Humans were driven by instinct, and instinct was, in Hartmann's incisive formula, "purposive action without consciousness of the purpose" (1893: 1.79). Both animals and humans depended not on any finer sensibility, but on instinct, for their survival.

Sensuous perception, which forms the foundation of all conscious mental activity, is dependent on a whole series of unconscious processes, without which aids on the part of instinct Man and Animal would perish helplessly, since they would lack the means of perceiving and of making use of the outer world. (1893: 1.353)

For Hartmann the unconscious is a primary evolutionary strategy; the supreme life force:

one must only accustom oneself to the thought that the Unconscious can be led astray neither more nor less by the lamentation of millions of human individuals than by that of as many animal individuals, if only these torments further *development*, and thereby its own main design (1893: 2.13)

There is little space here for Darwin's tentative gesturings to human nobility and distinctness from other animals. While Hartmann argued that the conscious *should* expand – what Freud would summarize in his 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* as the goal of psychoanalysis, "where id was, there shall ego be" (Wo Es war, soll Ich werden) – he warned that the real loss to human life and experience would come with the *repression* of the unconscious: "woe to the age which violently suppresses its voice, because in one-sided over-estimate of the conscious-rational" (42).

In 1917 the Harvard biologist William Morton Wheeler observed:

now I believe that the psychoanalysts are getting down to brass tacks. . . . They have had the courage to dig up the subconscious, that hotbed of all the egotism, greed, lust, pugnacity, cowardice, sloth, hate, and envy from which every single one of us carries about as his inheritance from the animal world. (Wheeler 1917: 316, in Sulloway 1992: 4)

In fact, though, it was the mid-Victorians who revealed the unconscious (as they, and Freud, would call it). Nicholas Dames, in an illuminating essay on psychology and the novel, argues that to understand the diverse and undisciplined field of Victorian psychology it is necessary to unlearn what we know about Freud, but, as Frank Sulloway and others have demonstrated, Freud's intellectual inheritance is both Victorian and profoundly Darwinian. As Freud himself noted in his autobiography, in the early 1870s "the theories of Darwin, which were then of topical interest, strongly attracted me, for they held out hopes of an extraordinary advance in our understanding of the world" (1925: 8). In 1874, as a medical student at the University of Vienna, he had attended Carl Claus's "General Biology and Darwinism." While Ernest Jones, Freud's translator and biographer, noted, "if psychology is regarded as part of biology, and surely it must be, then it is possible to maintain that Freud's work, that is, the creation of psychoanalysis, signifies a contribution in biology comparable in importance only with that of Darwin's" (Jones 1930: 601, in Sulloway 1992: 4). As Sulloway notes, Freud began his career as a biologist, although he would later down play the biological side of the radical synthesis of psychology and biology that he created in psychoanalysis (4).

This blurring between disciplines that were still forming found similar expression in the ideas and career of William James (1842–1910), brother of Henry James; having trained at Harvard as a doctor in the 1860s James became Professor of Physiology in 1876, Professor of Psychology in 1880 and then Professor of Philosophy in 1885 (on the formation of psychology as a discipline see Rylance 2000). In "A Plea for Psychology as a 'Natural Science'" in the *Philosophical Review* (1892) he wrote "I wished, by treating psychology *like* a natural science, to help her to become one." His seminal book, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), which aimed at codifying the field, began with an account of brain physiology and underlined the influence of the French experimental psychologist Claude Bernard, and Wilhelm Wundt's *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1873–4). His final work, published posthumously, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912), suggests that he saw mind and body as both forming part of a more primary, single, essence, "pure experience."

The Limitations of Reason

Darwin wrote in his M notebook, which he began in 1838, "evolution discovered: metaphysics must flourish"; that is, psychology (which is what he means by metaphysics) is going to flourish if the irrational, which biology will reveal as central to human existence, is predominant (Sulloway suggests that "M" stands here for "Metaphysics," noting that this is the term Darwin consistently uses for his studies on human psychology (1992: 240)). And, it is no accident that in the wake of Darwin, realism becomes increasingly eclipsed; the three-decker novel condenses and fragments, and new forms proliferate. The new obsession with the mind, and with a newly physicalized mind, found clear expression in the novel, in particular the sensation

novel with its preoccupation with the *physiology* of feeling, with the senses, with the nerves that hold, or fail to hold, character together (see Dames 2004 and Shuttleworth 1993). In 1883, Hardy copied into his notebook the assertion that “according to Zola the novel has passed out of the region of art into that of physiology and pathology” (Tilly: 265, in Hardy 1985: 1.153). But it was not till the closing decade of the century that these ideas really began to infuse fiction, devising new literary forms.

Modernism was a resistance to the dominance of reason; to the humanist idea of the development of the self through education, and to the eighteenth-century idea of human perfectibility through reason. It embraced existence and experience at a depth that escaped the constraints of consciousness. And, arguably, it finds its first expression in the late nineteenth-century fiction of the New Woman. Not all New Women, however. The term is a mixed bag; several were dutiful women of empire writing to stem the tide of moral and physical degeneration – another narrative which biological science unleashed in the latter half of the century, and in their fiction they urged women to repress their instincts, their passions, in favour of *rational* reproduction which they argued was the way to regenerate the race (see Richardson 2003; on degeneration more generally see Pick 1993 and Greenslade 1994). In so doing they, perhaps surprisingly, shared some common ground with reactionaries who used biology to argue against emancipation and equality for women, arguing that women’s constitutions did not fit them either for suffrage or study, and that it was at their peril that they chose the path of the bluestocking. Biology cut both ways; embracing development, it also enabled an argument *against* change and, expressly, social change, which would protest that excessive education would damage the reproductive health of women. In the same year that *The Origin of Species* appeared, Spencer warned in the *Quarterly Review* against the higher education of women: “by subjecting their daughters to this high-pressure system, parents frequently ruin their prospects in life. Besides inflicting on them enfeebled health, with all its pains and disabilities and gloom, they not infrequently doom them to celibacy” (1861: 176) (this essay is reproduced in Spencer’s *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (1861); the book was reprinted several times, with a cheap edition appearing in 1880, and it remained in print well into the twentieth century).

The biologist and writer Grant Allen (1848–99) dreamed of a society in which women would seek no goal beyond motherhood, which he figured as their natural and only true function. He warned that the emancipation of woman might leave her “a dulled and spiritless epicene automaton”; healthy girls who embarked upon higher education (“mannish training”) became unattractive and unsexed, and “both in England and America, the women of the cultivated classes are becoming unfit to be wives or mothers. Their sexuality (which lies at the basis of everything) is enfeebled or destroyed” (Allen 1889: 179). Here, he concurred with several New Women, including Sarah Grand, Ellice Hopkins, and George Egerton, who warned against the nervous disorders, in particular hysteria, to which celibate adult women lay themselves open – an argument which anticipates Freud. Writing in 1900 Egerton

warned that “woman is, if she could only realise it, man’s superior by reason of her maternity – the negation of that is her greatest cowardice. They have gone on wrong lines in trying to force themselves into man’s place as an industrial worker.” Allen declared with outspoken vigour in the *Universal Review*:

Not all the Mona Cairds and Olive Schreiners that ever lisped Greek can fight against the force of natural selection. Survival of the fittest is stronger than Miss Buss, and Miss Pipe, and Miss Helen Gladstone, and the staff of the Girls’ Public Day School Company, Limited, all put together. (1890: 52)

He went on to warn that if the “girl of the future” did not turn her hand to child production, and renounce ideas of equality, she would soon be “as flat as a pancake and as dry as a broomstick” (Allen 1890: 57). And, as the sun set on Edwardian England, the social purist Mary Scharlieb warned against the effect of learning on the constitution of girls, fearing it would lead to nervous disorders.

But several New Women also perceived the idea that there was a fundamental clash between the social and the sexual – the clash through which the unconscious was formed, and that fiction that would emancipate women would need to be able to free and narrate experience from the limits of consciousness. Herein lay another, quite different, effect of biology on both the perceptions of women and fiction. For biology was essentially lawless, chancy, chaotic and animalistic, and showed that the human psyche was ruled by unwilled biological drives and irrational impulses. Some years before Joyce and Woolf brought the stream of consciousness to center stage, New Women dream, indulge in sexual fantasy, shop impulsively and recklessly and take drugs to free their minds (see Richardson 2002b). Emphasizing throughout her fiction the *animal* nature of women (which caused Hardy to write in the margins of the short story collection *Keynotes* (1893), next to Egerton’s celebration of “the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman,” “This if fairly stated is decidedly the *ugly* side of woman’s nature” (Millgate 1982: 356–7)), Egerton writes:

if I did not know the technical jargon current today of Freud and the psychoanalysts, I did know something of complexes and inhibitions, repressions and the subconscious impulses that determine actions and reactions. I used them in my stories. (1932)

The narrator in “Gone Under” (*Discords*) declares that “the *only divine* fibre in a woman is her maternal instinct”; it was the finest fiber of her being, the deep, underlying generic instinct, the “mutterdrang” (Egerton 1983: 101 emphasis in original). Here she seems to want to spiritualize motherhood, but ultimately her stories embrace the instinctive, driven, animal side of human nature.

For Egerton and, later, Virginia Woolf, the biology and experience of women necessitated that they have their own literary form. As Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929):

The book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work. For interruptions there will always be. (101)

These were ideas that would be reworked and refined in the late twentieth century in *écriture féminine*. Egerton differed from those of her sisters who put their faith in reason; for Egerton it was through giving free rein to instinct, not bowing with discontented resignation to the dictates of civilization, that humanity might be made well.

Hartmann in 1868 had urged the importance of art in keeping alive the unconscious: "occupation with the arts is so necessary a counterpoise to the rationalistic education of our time, as that in which the Unconscious finds its most immediate expression," but he was quick to point out that it was not any old art that could fulfil this function:

certainly not such a technical art-exercise as is carried on at the present day from fashion and vanity, but initiation into the feeling for the beautiful, into the comprehensive and the true spirit of art. (2.43)

The new and freeing forms of modernism would give the unconscious the immediate expression it coveted. And one of the earliest modernist forms was the short story. Its rise coincided with the birth of psychoanalysis; both are underpinned by a fascination with the workings, the knowing, and the unknowability, of the mind. Late nineteenth-century short stories and collections self-consciously signal this preoccupation with mind and the nature of consciousness through their titles. For example, Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893), *Discords* (1894), including "A Psychological Moment," and *Symphonies* (1897), Ella D'Arcy's *Monochromes* (1895) and Grand's *Emotional Moments* (1908) suggest moods, emotions and momentary situations rather than narratives, and in the 1890s the short story became the most popular genre for women writers. Offering up snapshots, fragments, short stories captured the essentially indefinable nature of identity. Plot was to be reduced in favor of psychological development. Whatever their political outlook, women writers of the time participated in fiction's inward turn. W. T. Stead, sex reformer and editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, remarked: "woman at last has found woman interesting to herself, and she has studied her, painted her, and analysed her as if she had an independent existence" (1894: 64). As Hugh Stutfield put it in "The Psychology of Feminism," they were turning themselves "inside out" (1897: 104). While it would be simplistic to read subjectivity along reductively gendered lines, or to neglect the effects of other social and bodily divisions such as class, and race, on perceptions of self and other, it is none the less clear that women at this time were exploring new spaces, new interiors which had previously been denied them, as they told their own stories, and in doing so, constructed *themselves*. Stutfield complained:

Psychology – word more blessed than Mesopotamia – is their never-ending delight; and modern woman, who, if we may believe those who claim to know most about her, is a sort of enigma, is their chief subject of investigation. (104)

The nameless man in Katherine Mansfield's "Psychology" ([1921] 1981), speaking very fast, declares: "I simply haven't got any external life at all. I don't know the names of things a bit – trees and so on – and I never notice places or furniture or what people look like."

"Do you mean you feel that the . . . young writers of today are trying simply to jump the psychoanalyst's claim?" asks his nameless woman interlocutor. "Yes, I do," he replies (1). The new conceptions of mind that demanded new fiction had been made possible, and essential, by biology.

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6

Technology

Sara Danius

Ezra Pound once contemplated the impact of technology on modern culture. He was poring over a vast number of black-and-white pictures of American-made machines and their component parts – cylinders, drill-grinders, telescope axles, revolving cranes, recording pyrometers, and the like. Carefully arranged on a flat surface, the disassembled machine parts readily appeared as aesthetically gratifying objects in themselves, photographed as they were according to the sober pictorial aesthetic that one typically finds in production catalogues.

Pound's intention was to provide a gloss on the formal beauty of machines, their plastic as well as their sonorous qualities. In his view, that beauty was intimately tied to the purpose and function of the technological object. But Pound was not only interested in the sensory pleasures of machinery. He wanted to move beyond received ideas about the nature of the machine. Why should not the world of *poiesis* (making, producing, creating) overlap with that of *techne* (art, skill, know-how)? Even, and perhaps especially, when we speak of aesthetics?

The idea that the category of art occupies a space radically different from that of the machine is part of an influential Romantic legacy that has obscured the intersections of art and craft, of aesthetics and technology, of modernism and modernity, of high and low. The common, essentially Romantic, understanding of words such as “art” and “culture” is a product of the Romantic period and the dramatically increased industrialization process in the eighteenth century. Raymond Williams has shown that the meaning of the word “art,” which commonly had meant “skill,” now developed a specialized significance. A new distinction emerged between “artist” on the one hand and “artisan” or “craftsman” on the other. In the world of art and imagination, as opposed to that of craft and fancy, the emphasis on skill turned into an emphasis on “sensibility,” “creativity,” and “originality” (Williams 1958).

For Pound, one thing was certain. “You can no more take machines out of the modern mind, than you can take the shield of Achilles out of the *Iliad*,” he concluded in *Machine Art*. Pound wrote these words at the end of the 1920s. This was the

decade when Edgard Varèse's noisy urban symphony *Amérique* was first performed, Man Ray invented his rayographs, and László Moholy-Nagy his photograms, Fernand Léger screened his film *Ballet mécanique*, Sergei Eisenstein shot *Potemkin*, and Bauhaus school photographers explored technological motifs.

The 1920s also saw the appearance of an extraordinary number of literary achievements, from Woolf and Moore to Eliot, from Rilke and Kafka to Brecht, from Gide and Breton to Proust. When encyclopedic novels such as Andrej Belyj's *Petersburg* (1922), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924), John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), Hermann Broch's *Sleepwalkers* (1930–2), and Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* (1930–2) are subjected to closer scrutiny, it becomes apparent that they in fact also chronicle the advent of modern technology, each in its own way. Even Proust's great novel, *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27), that formidable monument to subjective temporality, orchestrates a whole world of technological innovations. This is one of the ways in which Proust builds up the theme of times lost. Like a host of writers born in the late nineteenth century, he dwells on how the new machines and their environments alter the ways of the world.

In a key episode, the narrator relates his first telephone conversation with his grandmother. Transported across vast distances, her voice hits him as though for the first time, disembodied, tiny, abstract. He now realizes, for the first time, that one day his adored grandmother will die and turn to dust. The experience is as uncanny as it is unsettling, to be sure, but it also awakens the intellectual impulse that animates large parts of the novel. In fact, we owe to Proust one of the earliest and most sophisticated reflections on how established habits of hearing and seeing undergo change in the age of mechanical reproduction. Indeed, embedded in the pages of *Remembrance of Things Past* is a psychology of technological transformation that may be grasped as a theory in its own right (Danius 2002). At the end of Proust's novel, the narrator's grandmother is long since dead; the horse-driven carriages in the Bois de Boulogne have been replaced by shiny automobiles; telephone calls have lost their singular magic and are part of daily life; and airplanes are simply airplanes, no longer reminiscent of that sublime creature between wings of steel that the narrator once saw hovering above the treetops in Balbec. The old world has aged beyond recognition.

Proust explores the arrival of the modern at that short-lived moment when the old rubs against the absolutely new. But technological change is more than just subject matter. In Proust as in numerous early twentieth-century writers, it also makes itself felt in the inner form of the literary work – on the level of style, rhetoric, imagery, figuration, representation, syntax, or phrasing. When, for example, the real is rewritten as spectacle, or defamiliarized, or rendered in its sensory immediacy, writers such as Proust, Joyce, Woolf, Lewis, Conrad, Musil, and Kafka readily draw on means of representation inherent in photography, chronophotography, phonography, and cinematography, even, and perhaps especially, when they seek to reproduce the freshness of lived experience.

Consider a scene in *Ulysses*, in which a window motivates the tight framing of the visual impression: "The blind of the window was drawn aside. A card *Unfurnished*

Apartments slipped from the sash and fell. A plump bare generous arm shone, was seen, held forth from a white petticoatbodice and taut shiftstraps. A woman's hand flung forth a coin over the area railings. It fell on the path." In Joyce's urban galaxy, seemingly insignificant objects, activities, and phenomena take center stage. The disembodied hand acquires a life of its own, as do the card and the plump arm; they even acquire a syntax of their own. And this object-centered syntax shares a formal affinity with that inherent in photographic means of representation, including cinema: the still, the framing, the close-up. A tightly framed visual impression of a hand appears also in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and here the delimitation is motivated by the car window: "Passers-by . . . stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to see except a square of dove." Or think of the scene in Kafka's 1927 novel *The Man Who Disappeared (Amerika)*, when Karl Rossman gazes at a photograph of his parents. All of a sudden, his mother's hand becomes visible, as though it were an entity unto itself: "How was it possible to gain so powerfully, from a picture, the unshakable conviction of an emotion concealed by the person who was depicted? And he averted his eyes from the picture for a little while. When he turned to look back at it again, he noticed his mother's hand, which hung down right in front from the arm of the easy chair, near enough to kiss."

A hand is not just a hand, the painter and critic Fernand Léger remarked in 1925. "Before I saw it in the cinema, I did not know what the hand was!" Thanks to cinematography and its ability to undo the work of perceptual habit, Léger suggested, a visual revolution was in the making: "The dog that goes by in the street is only noticed. Projected on the screen, it is seen, so much so that the whole audience reacts to it as if it discovered the dog. The mere fact of projection of the image already defines the object, which becomes spectacle" (Léger 1973: 22). In Joyce as in Kafka and Woolf, the hand turns into an autonomous entity. It is stylized, reified, denaturalized. If it is not a hand, it may be a teaspoon, or an onion, or a yellow bar of soap, or a nostril. Beginning with the advent of photography, such modes of description become increasingly prevalent; and everyday things in particular make their way into the fabric of modernist writings. In this way, numerous syntactic, stylistic, and rhetorical features that we have come to associate with literary modernism can usefully be thought together with uniquely photographic and cinematographic means of representation (Cohen 1979; Spiegel 1976).

Technological change also makes itself felt on other formal levels. Even such seemingly insignificant means of written communication as punctuation marks are mobilized as allies in the attempt to represent the experience of the modern, notably the excitement of speed and accelerated motion. This tendency can be seen in Futurist manifestos in particular, but elsewhere as well. When, in 1906, the Belgian writer Eugène Demolder relates an exhilarating motoring trip through Spain, exclamation marks and periods acquire an expressive status of their own. What is more, in *L'Espagne en auto*, as Demolder's book is called, the road through the countryside is made visible by double lines of carefully spaced dots interspersed

here and there in the speed-infused description. In modernism, periods and exclamation marks are no longer mere punctuation marks; they also serve as syntactic traffic signals.

For Pound, it was obvious that the machine was to the modern mind what the legendary shield episode was to Homer's epic. Yet it has taken a long time for modernist scholarship to catch up with the spirit of Pound's brilliant analogy. It is only recently that scholars and critics have come to realize the utter importance of modern technology for the emergence of modernist culture, and to engage in a more systematic and comprehensive inquiry into the interfaces between these two distinct yet related realms.

Yet, given that the modernist era coincides with the historical period that saw the advent of phonography, chronophotography, cinematography, radiography, telephony, electricity, the conveyor belt, and technologies of speed, why has this coexistence attracted little scholarly attention until recently?

There are several reasons. One is the experience of war, especially of the First World War. Like never before, large parts of Europe had been subjected to methodical destruction. This is what T. S. Eliot had in mind when he settled for the title *The Waste Land* (1922). The war seemed like a giant death machine, especially since recent technological advances in armor, warfare, and intelligence collection had been put to systematic use. Indeed, the Great War introduced whole new levels of abstraction, rationalization, and automatization. Photography, for example, that mechanical reproduction of the visual real, was a crucial element in the art of conducting war. It displaced the hand and the eye as means of gathering information, and that process of abstraction was reinforced by the use of airplanes: these turned into new platforms for surveillance and replication of the visual terrain. At the same time, however, photographic images also brought the terrifying message home. With chilling precision, they documented the devastation and made it visible to the public. The First World War brought ideologies of progress into serious crisis, especially those related to modern technology.

Another reason, partly related to the first, is that traditional accounts of modernism have often been marked by a general anti-technological bias. This can be seen in monographs of individual authors, but also, and above all, in expository studies, companion volumes, and handbooks. When such studies are analyzed more closely, a recurring conceptual pattern comes into view. This is the topos of *opposition*. Sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, the proposition tends to be the following: the condition of modernist culture is opposition. And this is never more apparent than when the question of the machine – the technological, the mechanical, the automatic – is at issue. Modernism, especially literary modernism, has frequently been understood and theorized as *external* to modernity. Underlying such anti-technological bias is typically the assumption that technology is to be understood as an automated and essentially nonhuman process of means and ends. Technology, in short, equals pure instrumentalism. Such a notion is misleading, not only from a philosophical point of view but also from a historical one. Anyone who decides to study aesthetic modernism

more carefully will discover how difficult it often is to keep categories of art apart from those of technology.

The past two decades or so have seen a formidable interest in the study of technology and modernism. This trend signals a materialist turn in modernist studies; at the same time, it also reflects the revival of discussions of modernity that has taken place in the wake of the debates about postmodernism and the cultural logic of late capitalism. In this critical enterprise, a crucial task has been to uncover, explore, and describe the many links between the world of technology and that of modernist cultural practice. But the greatest challenge has no doubt been to revise the very terms in which the historiography of modernist art and culture has typically been embedded – terms that have shaped, structured, and in many cases distorted our view of the modernist landscape, in particular the impact of machine culture. As a result, the map of modernism is in the process of being redrawn; and a different topography is about to emerge. The second industrial revolution is no longer approached as a mere backdrop to modernist aesthetics; instead, technology is increasingly treated as a vital part of the logic of much early twentieth-century culture. New reading methods have emerged, as well as new interpretive rationales. Today the study of modernism and technology is not only a widely accepted area of research; it is a scholarly field in its own right.

There are important forerunners, especially in the fields of architectural history and cultural theories of technology. Walter Benjamin's legendary 1936 article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is still widely read and debated. It forms something like a triptych together with "The Storyteller" (1936), an essay on the status of storytelling and the decay of plot in the modern age, and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), an essay on how the effects of industrial capitalism make themselves felt in Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* (1857). Benjamin's writings have survived surprisingly well in the age of hypertextuality and digital media. The usefulness of his work lies partly in his sophisticated conception of the nature of representation, partly in his subtle approach to mediation and historical causality. In addition, Benjamin's theory of modernity is linked in interesting ways to his highly original theory of historiography, as can be seen especially in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999). In this projected cultural history of Paris in the Second Empire, a study that occupied Benjamin during the last ten years of his life, the complex relationship between art and technology is a focal point.

In 1930, Lewis Mumford drafted the first version of *Technics and Civilization* (1934), a sign as good as any that Benjamin's concerns were shared by many critics and theorists in the period. Mumford offers a large-scale survey of how the machine has helped transform human environments and forms of life during the last thousand years, with an emphasis on how modernist culture assimilates technology, especially in the realms of architecture, sculpture, and the pictorial arts. The protagonist in Mumford's story is the machine; yet he usefully stresses throughout that technology is a human product, not an autogenetic entity endowed with its own agency and inertia. To study the machine is necessarily to study human behavior.

Yet another full-scale treatment of how technology affects human forms of life is Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (1948). The author of *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), a monumental treatise on the modernist art of handling space, now set out to trace the shaping role of mechanization in the organization of daily life since the early nineteenth century. Beginning with the human hand, an organic tool that can seize, hold, press, pull, mold, knead, search, and feel, Giedion demonstrates in minute detail how that primary means of modifying the environment has been extended through a vast array of technologies, from the assembly line to compact bathrooms with one-piece double-shelled tubs. In Giedion, things speak: an eggbeater is a richly textured allegory of how humans have fought battles with nature in their homes.

Despite such insightful inquiries into the culture of the second machine age – here I have mentioned only a few – it was not till the 1980s that scholars and critics, especially in the US, Britain, and Germany, began to explore more systematically the various ways in which aesthetic modernism is implicated in these historical processes. To be sure, it has always been agreed that to understand avant-garde movements such as Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Surrealism, and Vorticism, one must take into account the advent of modern technology and its cultural meanings. But when it comes to the novel and to poetry, the notion of aesthetic autonomy has loomed large on the critical horizon, even in those cases where modernity has been posited as a “context” or “background.” Indeed, much traditional historiography of the modernist period is marked by an ideology of partition – between technology and its effects on the one hand, and the ostensibly free activity of the artistic mind on the other. One would have to go back to pre-Romantic times in order to find a notion of art and of aesthetic activity that does not operate in contradistinction to *techné*.

In this context, Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (1983) is a pioneering work of cultural history. Discussing how advances in modern technology and science help reorganize time and space in the modernist period, Kern offers a comprehensive and detailed account of how such changes make themselves felt in literature, music, and the visual arts. In the late 1980s, scholars and critics, especially in the field of cultural studies, began to pay increasing attention to how modernist texts mediate changing conceptions of the human body in the wake of technoscientific transformation (Armstrong 1998; Banta 1993; Huyssen 1986; Jacobs 2001; Seltzer 1992).

The work of Friedrich Kittler marks a poststructuralist turn in the attempt to investigate technology and modernism. In *Discourse Networks* (1990; originally published in 1985 as *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*), the category of “writing” – *schreiben*, but also *aufschreiben* (discourse) – is at the center. Conceived in the widest possible sense, it includes not only handwriting and typewriting, but also *photography*, *chronophotography*, *phonography*, and *cinematography*, all technologies for representing analogically the real. Kittler's concern, then, is with technologies of inscription. Influenced by Benjamin's writings, Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964),

and Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (originally published as *Les Mots et les choses*, 1966), Kittler's study offers a radical revision of the history of modern literature, one that also serves as a critique of established ways of telling that history. Kittler's point of departure is neither the Text nor the Word, but the materiality of media. Matter, in his view, is not only prior to meaning; it structures meaning. And because he holds that the materiality of media precedes processes of signification, he seeks to develop a discourse analysis capable of making visible the conditions of possibility for meaning to occur in the first place. Around 1900, Kittler argues, a new "discourse system" came into existence, triggered by the advent of new technologies for inscribing sense data such as phonography and cinematography. As a result, the reign of the written word came to an end; and the medium known as the book lost its age-old monopoly on storing information. Using examples drawn predominantly from the German context, Kittler traces how cultural and theoretical artifacts alike respond to such paradigmatic change.

At the same time, Kittler's work raises a set of theoretical questions that all studies in the field of technology and modernism have to deal with. For example, Kittler implicitly ascribes agency to technologies such as the typewriter, the phonograph, and the cinematograph, as though they were primary causes of historical change. But technologies do not drive history, not alone. A materialism of Kittler's brand needs to be supplemented with a philosophy of history that allows for a rigorous consideration of historical change and, by implication, of the relations of technology and art.

Media studies is now a growing field, as is literature-and-technology studies. Part of the attraction is the materialism that such perspectives seem to offer, especially in scholarly contexts once shot through with idealist assumptions about the nature and function of artistic practice. Another part of the attraction is the hands-on approach, the material thereness seemingly inherent in the phenomena under discussion: panoramas, fountain pens, cameras, daguerreotypes, newspapers, gas light, typewriters, light bulbs, projectors, film reels, telephones, and so on. But materialism for materialism's sake is meaningless. What is all too often forgotten is that the materiality of media is as mediated a phenomenon as the cultural texts and artifacts that scholars subject to analysis.

In the mid-nineteenth century, many European countries and large parts of the North American continent had already seen the emergence of so many new technologies of communication: photography, telegraphy, and mass-produced newspapers. With the coming into being of the railway system, a vast infrastructure had been created that accelerated the circulation of humans, commodities, and traffic at a pace previously unseen. As a result, a powerful network of information highways began to spread everywhere. But what, if anything, sets the modernist period apart from the mid-nineteenth century in terms of technological innovation? And if there is reason to speak of a historical difference, is it a quantitative or a qualitative one? That is to say: when does modernity begin, and how should it be periodized? Has modernity come to an end, or is it to be understood as an unfinished project? In short: what, if anything, is new and different about modernist culture?

These are complicated issues, vigorously debated in contemporary literary and historical scholarship. It is not merely a question of empirical evidence; it is also, and above all, a question of how history and historical change are to be approached, conceptualized, and theorized. This is particularly true of the relations between modernism and modernity (Jameson 2002).

To grasp the specificity of the modernist period, and especially that of modernist aesthetics, it is useful to consider a set of historical circumstances that are mediated by technological change: the historicity of habits of perception; the emergence of mass culture proper; and the rhetoric of death and human finitude.

1 *The question of perception.* The modernist period sees the effects of the advent of technologies of perception, not only visual ones such as photography, chronophotography, cinematography, and radiography, but also auditory ones such as phonography and telephony. The period also witnesses the expansion of the railway system and the advent of the automobile; these forms of communication are first of all technologies of speed, to be sure, but they may also be understood as technologies of perception. Both the train and the car mobilized the gaze. They can usefully be approached as visual framing devices on wheels, and were also treated that way by numerous modernist writers, painters, and filmmakers, from Proust and Matisse to the entrepreneurs behind that cinematic fairground attraction known as Hale's Tours.

Each of the technologies mentioned above has its own distinct history. Yet they all share an aspect that grants them a vital role in any inquiry into the relations of modernist aesthetics and modernity: they address the human sensory apparatus in a more immediate manner than do, for example, production technologies, and therefore raise questions having to do with experience, knowledge, truth, and verification. In effect, to investigate technologies of perception in the modernist period – the philosophical and artistic debates that surrounded them; the discourses through which the understanding of their operations and effects were framed; the environments in which they became embedded and naturalized, and so on – is also to investigate questions of aesthetics. Why? Because aesthetics is essentially concerned with the ways in which the human body, through the senses, may derive gratification from certain artifacts and activities that belong to the empirical world. The etymology of “aesthetics” can be traced back to a cluster of Greek everyday words that designate activities of sensory perception in both a physiological sense, as in “sensation,” and a mental sense, as in “apprehension.” *Aisthetikos* derives from *aistheta*, things perceptible by the senses, from *aisthetai*, to perceive.

This is also why the discipline known as philosophical aesthetics, institutionalized in eighteenth-century Germany, is primarily concerned with the sensory infrastructure of the human body. It is only later that issues such as the essence of art and the nature of beauty turn into primary problems for theorists of the aesthetic. There is, then, a close connection between aesthetics and technologies of perception that sets the modernist period apart from earlier ones. Beginning with the invention of

the photographic camera in the 1830s, a technology came into existence that, for the first time in history, enabled the mechanical reproduction of the visible dimension of the real. The French critic Roland Barthes once suggested that the photographic image is an “anthropologically new object” (Barthes 1981: 88). With the advent of phonography a few decades later, yet another “anthropologically new object” emerged. It now became possible to record, store, and reproduce the auditory dimension of the real. Like the photographic image, the phonographic reproduction of an auditory impression subjects the recorded phenomenon to a process of abstraction. It strips the impression of its spatial origin as well as its temporal one. From now on, the human voice could be treated as a purely acoustic phenomenon, as an autonomous entity, to be reproduced again and again, complete with the meaningless noise that always surrounds it and that now moved into the foreground. Listen to the sound of this recorded voice in *Ulysses*: “Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseagain hellohello amawf krpthsth.”

Ezra Pound once famously exclaimed: *Make it new!* It is a phrase that epitomizes a basic modernist impulse. Make it new: technologies of perception such as phonography and cinematography helped change not only the world but also the perception of that world. At the same time, they also offered new modes of representation with which to describe that new world. Artists, writers, and composers were quick to explore these new possibilities, and a large number of formal innovations in the period can be interestingly related to the technologies of perception that emerged in the second machine age.

2 *The question of mass culture.* The second historical circumstance that helps define modernist culture is the advent of mass culture proper, that is, a technologically mediated and commercialized mode of cultural practice that is produced, distributed, and/or consumed on a massive scale. In fact, the modernist period sees the appearance of two distinct cultural spaces – mass culture and high culture (Adorno and Horkheimer 1989; Jameson 1990; Williams 1989). In the realist era – that of Balzac, George Eliot, and Tolstoy – it still made little sense to make such divisions. With the growth of mass culture, the established media economy was subjected to a radical destabilization. The esteemed institution called Painting had to compete with that of Photography; and the institution of Literature and that of the Theater had to reckon with a powerful newcomer: the Movies (Benjamin 1987; Malraux 1965). Little by little, a divide emerged between cultural practices that were less or not at all informed by technologized production and those that were. In a word, between high art and mass culture.

Historically speaking, works of art have always been reproducible in one way or other, to be sure. But – and this is the key argument in Benjamin’s work of art essay – what sets the nineteenth century apart from earlier historical periods is that entirely new forms of cultural production begin to emerge. Mechanical reproduction is no longer merely an external question; indeed, it is now constitutive of the production process. Beginning in the 1830s, works of art can be produced specifically with a view to their reproduction; yet there is no “original” art work to be “copied.” In

principle, one may produce as many photographic prints as one likes from a negative, but it is pointless to ask for an “original” or “authentic” print. The same is of course true of phonography and cinematography. For the first time in world history, Benjamin therefore suggests, the function of the work of art is stripped of its mythic-religious roots. But if the photograph, or the phonographic record, or the film, knows no original, it is equally meaningless to speak of copies. Indeed, in the wake of mechanical reproducibility, the conceptual couple “original/copy” loses its hold; and the very notion of art – its nature, function, and vocation – is brought into crisis.

This new situation is thematized, implicitly or explicitly, in an overwhelming number of works in the period. What happens to narrative and writing in the modern age? This question engages writers from Mallarmé to Apollinaire, from Mann to Joyce. When Proust’s narrator sets out to articulate the aesthetic program for which *Remembrance of Things Past* serves as a vehicle, he insists that literature is everything that cinematography is not, and he does so not once but three times in the same episode. “Some critics now liked to regard the novel as a sort of procession of things upon the screen of a cinematograph,” Proust writes in *Time Regained*. “This comparison was absurd. Nothing is further from what we have really perceived than the vision that the cinematograph presents.” Yet Proust, for all his critique of the new medium, was to make use of modes representing speed and movement that are uniquely cinematographic. Clearly, the rise of motion pictures forcibly opened the art of writing to a re-evaluation of fundamental aesthetic questions, just as the advent of new media and technologies of perception from the early nineteenth century onwards occasioned a reconsideration of the status of art and culture.

3 *The rhetoric of death*. In the modernist period, the image of the machine is often clustered together with images of mortality, finitude, and spectrality, so much so that the constellation emerges as a modernist topos. Consider, for example, Joseph Roth’s brutal, raging, almost hysterical attack on the movies in *Antichrist* (1934) – for Roth, the cinema literally represents the Hades of modern man. Or think of the deadly automobile chase in Herman Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* (1927). The famous X-ray episode in Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* is equally instructive: it makes the young protagonist realize that he is mortal, as he is made to perceive his own skeleton exposed within the living flesh. Even Mann’s gramophone, “that little coffin of fiddlewood,” inspires images of death.

Kafka’s short story “In the Penal Colony” (1919) is a particularly rich case study. It features an inscription machine that imprints its mortal message on the human body, a truly uncanny invention charged with unmistakable allegorical meanings. At the end of the story, the apparatus sets to work in perfect tranquillity. But soon all goes awry. Kafka renders the event with a deadly precision that mimics that of the penal machine:

The harrow was not writing, it was only pricking, and the bed was not rolling the body, it was only lifting it, quivering, against the needles. The traveler wanted to do something, perhaps stop the machine: this was no torture, such as the officer was

aiming for, it was full-blown murder. . . . But the harrow with the forked-up body was already turning aside. . . . The blood flowed in a hundred streams – not mingled with water; the small water pipes had likewise failed this time. And now the very last element failed: the body did not separate from the long needles, it poured out its blood but dangled over the pit without dropping. The harrow was about to return to its old position, but as if noticing that it had not yet freed itself of its burden, it remained above the pit.

Kafka's short story exposes, in exemplary fashion, a modernist imaginary in which death is part of a cluster of ideas that gather around the image of technology. Does it not, then, testify to a more general anti-technological tendency within artistic modernism? This is true. But the recurrent death-machine figure, for all its existential overtones, also served as a way of managing those historical processes called modernization. Indeed, it worked to make sense of the social, economic, and cultural upheaval that, in the spirit of great early twentieth-century sociologists such as Tönnies, Weber, and Simmel, has so often been designated as a transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, or from organic community to disintegrated society.

While it is no doubt true that a certain strand of modernism often sought to transcend, critique, or undermine what was thought of as the effects of modern technology, modernist art and culture were nevertheless profoundly affected by those same developments. To trace the question of technology through the modernist landscape is to become aware of the extraordinary richness, hybridity, and multiplicity of the works produced in the period – even if we limit ourselves to the classical modernist canon. The author of such nightmarish tales as *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and “In the Penal Colony” was in fact a passionate moviegoer who indulged especially in cheap flicks, a hobby that has left stylistic traces in the letters, short stories, and novels that Kafka was to write (Zischler 2003).

And another major figure of the early twentieth century, Proust, was a self-declared motoring fan and, what is more, one of the first French writers to explore the experience of speedy car rides. A little-known article, “Impressions de route en automobile,” was of paramount importance to the great novel that he was to write. The piece was first published on the front page of the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* on 19 November 1907. Fifteen months later, on 20 February 1909, the very same newspaper featured a historic modernist document, also on the front page. It was the first Futurist manifesto. In the starkest terms possible, F. T. Marinetti celebrated the motorcar, proclaiming that the world had been enriched by a new beauty – the beauty of speed. Kafka, Proust, and Marinetti inhabit widely different spheres within the modernist universe. But this only shows that Pound's intuition was right: the machine is as central to the modern mind as the shield of Achilles to the *Iliad*.

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Psychology

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As Michel Foucault has shown (1961), among the first great shifts to accompany the demise of religion and the emergence against it of Enlightenment rationality was the division of reason, not from religion, but from madness. A nosological shift – the creation of a new descriptive field available to medical diagnosis – was also an epistemological one: the mind was no longer partitioned into good and evil, but into the rational and the irrational. The religious antinomies that precede it historically shadow this new pairing, but its consequences are different. Reason's domain was necessarily psychological. Reason was now the guardian of a soul that was by definition divided, turning the self into its first, and chief, object of scrutiny. So began, to use Christopher Lasch's phrase, the culture of narcissism. The conventional critical emphasis upon madness in modern literature is a durable way of showing how clearly modernism descends from the Enlightenment split that Foucault describes (Gilbert and Gubar 1979; Valentine 2003). But modern literature's transgressive energies and liminal orientations – Virginia Woolf is its *locus classicus* – merely heighten what is already at work in the comparatively stable if neurasthenic world of the later novels of Henry James: an emphasis on the self, and the difference between self-knowledge and self-regard.

This shift in the history of modern literature is nowhere more evident than in the shift from James's own early fiction to his later phase. It is a shift that has served generations of critics as an organizing assumption about the history of the novel as a whole. In fiction before James, the world predominates; in fiction after James, the mind predominates. Compare the opening sentence of *The American* (1877) with that of *The Ambassadors* (1903). The shift from outside to inside is manifest. *The American* begins with James's fashionable hero in a pose of aestheticist lassitude that borders not only on exhibitionism but also on pretension: "On a brilliant day in May, in the year 1868, a gentleman was reclining at his ease on the great circular divan which at that period occupied the center of the Salon Carré, in the Museum of the Louvre"

(James 1877: 1). It is the pose that is ambiguous, not the man. Whether or not a doubleness invades the soul of Christopher Newman we have as yet no idea. We do not know if he is as ambivalent about his mannerisms as the morally impatient reader of James may be about him. How different is the beginning of *The Ambassadors*. Once again the focus is on James's hero, but the terms have changed, perhaps only slightly, but with enormous differences in implication: "Strether's first question, when he reached the hotel, was about his friend; yet on his learning that Waymarsh was apparently not to arrive till evening he was not wholly disconcerted" (James 1903: 17). By the end of the sentence we are firmly established within Strether's mind, even to the point of feeling his ambivalence about his friend's absence ("not wholly disconcerted"). Strether is, it appears, relieved to have some time to himself despite missing his friend's expected company. Nor are we asked merely to identify with Strether. This is free indirect discourse, with the narrator shaping the construction of Strether's thoughts for our consideration as well as simply presenting them to us for the purpose of sympathy. What differences contribute to Strether's ambivalence? If we are asked to know Christopher Newman where he does not know himself, we are asked to know Strether where he presumes to know more about himself than he really does.

It is often to Henry's brother, William, author of *Principles of Psychology* (1890), that historians turn to find terms to describe Henry's prose. Here is an influential passage from the *Principles*: "Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. . . . It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*" (William James 1890, I: 239). Despite the combination of "comparison" and "suppression" (1890, I: 288) required to constitute an object's "fringe" (258), as James puts it, or, in a splendid phrase, its "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" (288), James regards this process as one of "consciousness," or, in the decisive assumption, "voluntary thinking" (259). Although the mind organizes "tendencies" (254) of thought rather than real perceptions, its agreements with other minds is considered an agreement about "the same object," he concludes, making "thought cognitive of an outer reality" (272).

James's descriptions of consciousness hardly do justice to the psychical processes that his brother's novels both describe and provoke. William's "consciousness" is too limited notionally to account for them. No wonder historians invoke Henri Bergson's work to account for the techniques of modern fiction in more detail. Says Bergson in a passage from *An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889): "I do not see how . . . differences of sensation would be interpreted by our consciousness as differences of quantity unless we connected them with the reactions which usually accompany them, and which are more or less extended and more or less important" (Bergson 1889: 37–8). As in *The Ambassadors*, the transposition of the self's fluctuating impressions by language into social myth or ideology is the *Essay's* real subject. Unlike brother Henry, however, even Bergson cannot describe the state of perilous epistemological twilight in which Strether exists. It is because he cannot give up the

idea of “consciousness” any more than brother William can. Nor can either give up the notion that the world is simply given.

Neither Bergson nor brother William will do to describe brother Henry’s fiction. *The Ambassadors* – and *The American*, too, for that matter – deal with states and data quite precisely *not* given to consciousness. Whether or not they eventually enter consciousness is the ethical drama that James’s novels customarily play out. Like Bergson, what brother William cannot describe in brother Henry’s prose is the unconscious – that which exceeds the grasp of any sense of awareness based on the presumption that one can see objectively, without the biases that make us, unconsciously, who and what we are. Formulating the unconscious is the province of European psychology in the nineteenth century, the product of myriad influences reaching back to the Enlightenment. It is just this history that American clinical psychology, following brother William, represses; it is its enabling negation. This repressed history leads not to academic psychology, but to Freud and psychoanalysis. The tradition of the unconscious is what joins modern literature with psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, in a variety of ways, and not just as cause to effect, or even as mere parallelism. So rich is Freud’s own achievement that the different trends in modern literature actually unpack different trends in Freud himself. It is no surprise because Freud summarizes and reconfigures the numerous influences that overdetermine him.

“The effect of Freud upon literature,” wrote Lionel Trilling in 1950, “has been no greater than the effect of literature upon Freud” (32). By the literature Freud had influenced, Trilling meant modern literature; by the literature that had influenced Freud, Trilling meant Romanticism and its Enlightenment antecedents. Here Freud’s own widest influences assemble (Ellenberger 1970) and, with them, the influences that produce the psychology of modernism as a whole. Unlike English and French Romanticism, German Romanticism, which precedes them both, included Novalis, a doctor; British Romanticism counted a professional apothecary surgeon, Keats, among its chief poets, and among its intellectual sources the associationist psychology of David Hartley, medical doctor as well as philosopher. Indeed, the hard division between science and poetry that emerged in the early twentieth century with the rise of technical research (Whitehead 1925) was not yet in place when Fechner began a second career in the 1860s as Doctor Mises, journalist, spiritualist, and literary entrepreneur. Psychology’s earliest modern terrain is not science but philosophy, especially the sensationalism of John Locke, which prefigures Hartley’s associationism by more than a century. Psychology’s presumably intimate relation to idealism is already a problem in Locke, for whom sensory experience builds the mind as well as the body.

The simple division between idealist and materialist never structures the history of modern psychology in the first place. Contemporary with Hartley is the development of interest in the brain and nervous system (Richardson 2001). Brain science is the link between the sensory philosophy of Locke and Hartley and the materialism of

a literary tradition from Keats to Pater that takes body and brain to be continuous rather than at odds. By 1820, phrenology, despite its notorious future as a cult practice and locus of popular assumption about intelligence, had emerged as the first attempt to map the brain. Its background is the discovery in 1781 of “animal electricity” by Galvani and the notion that mental activity could be broken down into component parts and actually studied. The anatomy of the soul had replaced its salvation. In the hands of a physiological philosopher like Hartley, the notion of “association” therefore included the physiology that underlay the mind’s psychology. Like Galvani’s electricity, Hartley’s “vibrations,” as he called them in his 1749 *Observations*, strove to connect physical stimulation with events in the mind using the “association” as the mediator between sensation, ideation, and feeling. Erasmus Darwin, in *Zoonomia* (1794–6), gives us the term “sensorium” to describe a connectedness of brain and perception that is no longer simply ideal. Franz Joseph Gall in turn gives us the notion of the brain itself as a systematic organ. The emergence of the brain as the biological source of thought, feeling, and sensation therefore complicates the otherwise idealist air of Romanticism, British Romanticism in particular, and likens the neural atmosphere that surrounded Romanticism with the neurological atmosphere later in the century that surrounded the birth of psychoanalysis. Like Hartley, brain science had already made both Romanticism and psychology materialist affairs, not by becoming mechanistic, but by situating ideas in a relation to the “sensorium.” Keats’s hands-on involvement with the sciences of the body has produced generations of scholarship preoccupied by the connection between his emphasis on sensation and his experiences as a surgeon actually handling the material of his own metaphors.

Out of the cauldron of Romantic science and philosophy emerged in turn the distinct disciplines of neurology, psychology, and psychoanalysis; psychiatry, ironically enough, emerges, like psychoanalysis, as a late nineteenth-century response to neurology, although also as a response to the new psychoanalysis, with which it is largely contemporaneous. Here the descriptive insouciance of psychiatry as a discipline finds its own root – and literary – cause. Emil Kraepelin’s profuse nosographies of psychiatric disorders, like the more exacting ones of C. G. Jung’s chief at the Burghölzli Clinic in Zurich, Eugen Bleuler, functioned as the scrim upon which Freud painted a far richer specificity of mind, due in large part to the literary and philosophical reading that had spurred his own mind beyond the conventions of a purely descriptive medicine.

Freud’s teacher Ernst Brücke, in whose laboratory Freud worked as a young neurologist from March 1881 to July 1882, was the contemporary of Hermann Hemholtz, who had borrowed the term “conservation of energy” from mechanical physics to describe a regulatory principle in the nervous system in 1845 (Sulloway 1979: 66). Working under these assumptions in Brücke’s Physiological Institute as he dissected everything from crayfish to the nervous systems, including the brains, of human cadavers, the young Freud was taught to regard neurological processes as reflexive discharge, the body’s way of relieving buildups of tension.

For G. T. Fechner of Leipzig, however, William James's great rival, Hemholtz's "conservation" was not a process of reflex or discharge but of "constancy." The organism seeks equilibrium through absorption rather than through discharge, which, for Fechner, unlike Hemholtz, is a pathogenic state. The body expunges stimulation rather than absorbs it only when stimulation is toxic or inassimilable. But even more is at stake in Fechner's recasting of "conservation" than the change from discharge to absorption. It is the old question of mind and body. Fechner moots the problem of a difference between mind and body – between idealism and materialism, psyche and soma – by regarding them as continuous. Sense perception and the internal production of images in memory or in fantasy are – as they were in Hartley and will be in Fechner's disciple Freud – interdependent. What is their mediator? It is a "residuum" (Bergson 1889: 64), to use Bergson's description of Fechner's idea, of memory and assumption. It is what Freud will call the unconscious. Propped on the brain in a recapitulation of its development, the mind, says Fechner, is also a part of the body as a whole.

The birth of psychoanalysis is assigned to the moment that Freud abandoned his "seduction theory" in 1897 in a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, moving within and discovering "psychical reality." But this is not to say that Freud's inwardness was ideal.

I will confide in you at once the great secret that has been slowly dawning on me in the last few months. I no longer believe in my *neurotica*. . . . In every case the father, not excluding my own, had to be blamed as a pervert – the realization of the unexpected frequency of hysteria, in which the same determinant is invariably established, though such a wide spread extent of perversity towards children is, after all, not very probable. . . . There are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between the truth and fiction that is cathected with affect. (Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, September 21, 1897 (no. 69), Freud 1950: 259–60)

Like the shift from early to late James, the shift here is from the external to the internal, from the real, presumably, to the ideal, from events to representations. But this is to simplify matters.

The difference between abreaction or catharsis – and between hypnosis and psychoanalysis proper – was precisely the difference between Hemholtz's "discharge" and Fechner's "constancy." For Hemholtz, the nervous system could be expunged, or "swept clean," to use the vocabulary of Anna O., Breuer's first psychoanalytic patient. For Fechner, by contrast, discharge and catharsis do not function transparently. Real or not, thought leaves a trace of itself behind. Discharge never sweeps clean because a residue, or memory, whether physical in the case of reflex, or ideational in the case of the mind, is required to give a person a history, a mode of being in the world. For Freud the conclusion was plain. One had to assume a residue or trace – a memory – in, or, indeed, *as* the unconscious. Here emerges another key difference, the difference between neurology and psychology themselves, and the nature of Freud's passage

from the first to the second. Freud's own terms in the posthumously published *Projects for a Scientific Psychology* (1950 [1895]) are the clearest. It is the difference between a mere "quantity" of stimulation (by which we traditionally mean the "physical") and the emergence, propped upon it, of "qualities," or ideas (by which we traditionally mean the "psychological"). This vocabulary suffuses the period from Bergson to Pater. The difference is well stated by the subtitle of Pater's *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (1885) – the difference between "quantity" ("sensations") and "quality" ("ideas"). Only in the passage from quantity to quality does an organism achieve the quality of having what we call personality – the quality, as it were, of having ideas as well as sensations.

Freud not only well represents the numerous elements that constitute the prehistory of modern psychology, but actually links all of these histories up in a way that makes psychoanalysis their veritable sepulcher. Psychoanalysis's picture of the mind is also a picture of its own emergence as a discourse and of the ways it solves the problems it inherits from its precursors. This is the surest way of regarding Freud's own achievement as a properly literary one. Its reflexivity – the exactitude with which *récit* and *histoire* coincide – is without precedent in the history of writing (see Derrida 1967). The more efficient grows Freud's view of the mental apparatus, the more efficient grows the mental apparatus that psychoanalysis describes. When psychoanalysis gazes at itself in "On Narcissism" (1914), Freud sees that, like the infant child, it still requires the supplement of a theory of images, or, more precisely, of image-acquisition – of identifications, as they will soon be called – to people the mind with "ideas." With *Group Psychology* (1921), the notion of "identification" coordinates this movement of "ideas" in the individual. The ego is given its determinations by the images produced by social interaction, beginning with the infant's first moments of life. Here symbolization and primary process – "idea" and "sensation" – begin their work together.

To facilitate the shift from sensation to idea, Freud's work contains three distinct notions of the unconscious, each a function of the three principal stages through which psychoanalysis passes in its conceptual development, and each an overturning of the one before it. Each is also a function of strands in the historical overdeterminations that structure Freud as a thinker. How does Freud's notion of the unconscious evolve? The early period, beginning with the *Project* and *Studies on Hysteria* and cresting with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, regards the unconscious for the most part as "topographical," as Freud calls this first model of mind – a seething landscape of repressed instincts within us. James Strachey, editor of the *Standard Edition* of Freud in English, translates the German "*Trieb*" as "instinct" rather than as "drive" – a notorious point of contention in debates about Strachey's translation – because it designates the "frontier," as Freud puts it, "between the mental and the somatic"; it is the "psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind" (Freud 1915: 122).

Here enters a related strand in the crowded cultural history that Freud inherits. This is the discourse of race of which nineteenth-century science is a product and

against which it is a reaction. Simultaneously among the direct progenitors of psychoanalysis and among its targets, theories of racial difference and valuation, often tied to the emergence after 1870 of an organic rather than a liberal notion of nationalism, abounded in both Europe and the United States. They structured the unconscious assumptions of disciplines ranging from ethnology to philology, with their organizing contrast between the civilized and the savage. The global hierarchies that such a contrast underwrites were useful to imperialism. Weir Mitchell's Western rest cures for East Coast neurasthenics were the consumer counterparts of decisive scholarly texts on the subject, the most popular and influential of which was Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892), a comprehensive description of the causal relation between skull types and degenerate personalities, posture and sexual predisposition, facial features and morals. This form of thought has a familiar destiny in the discourse of Nazi eugenics (Gilman 1993; Mosse 1964).

The doctrinal decade – the first decade of the century – saw the exemplification of psychoanalytic theory in clinical studies such as *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). But in the next decade, this attempt to offer universal proof for psychoanalytic investigation led to a metaphor for the unconscious different from the instinctual ones of the early phase – the metaphor of primitive myth. Now the focus was on image rather than instinct, on the “representative,” to use Bergson's terms, rather than on the “affect.” Here *Totem and Taboo* (1912) is the key text, with its view of the father as a rival to his sons. Drawing on the Cambridge anthropologists James Frazer, Jane Harrison, and E. B. Tylor, Freud found myth to be the universal reflection of unconscious process. This is also the version of the unconscious that most appealed to Freud's disciple C. G. Jung, who rejected the libidinal theory of the instincts in precisely the year that *Totem and Taboo* was published. He goes on to produce an influential psychoanalysis with a doggedly mythical rather than instinctual unconscious whose popular heirs include Joseph Campbell. Whatever shape it may take – the Greek, the Indic, the African – “myth is,” as Thomas Mann put it in “Freud and the Future” (1930), “the foundation of life; it is the timeless schema, the pious formula into which life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious” (422).

Freud's own reimagining of the unconscious during the metapsychological phase (1915–17) is what allows his third model of the unconscious to emerge with the amplitude that it does. In “On Narcissism,” Freud discovers that the child must find an image to connect to autoerotism in order to enter the human order. This is how the child constructs a relation between “sensations” and “ideas” (see also Laqueur 2003). A retroactive relation between body and mind is produced which is not there at the start of life. The temporality of this relation is precisely what Bergson cannot imagine in the *Essay*, and the reason he cannot solve the problem of the advent of “ideas” as Freud can. This temporal relationship is what Freud means by the unconscious. This unconscious is neither material nor ideal, but both at the same time. The mind that Freud goes on to describe in *The Ego and the Id* in 1923 is a history

and partition of his own three views of the unconscious: “id” is “instinct”; “superego” is myth; “ego” is the attempt to manage the difference between them – between “sensations” and “ideas.”

Modern literature inherits one of these three trends or tendencies in Freud, which helps us to divide it into three versions or modes: the “instinctual” modernism of D. H. Lawrence and its gross materialism; the “mythic” modernism of T. S. Eliot and its crude idealism; and the “material” modernism of Katherine Mansfield, Willa Cather, and Virginia Woolf, with its notion of the unconscious as that which links the “instinctual” and the “mythic” – “sensations” and “ideas” – the way that the later Freud does: through language and society, particularly through the medium of identification. The work of Joyce forms an instructive double pathway between mythic and material modernism.

Nordau’s exorbitant physicalism finds no better literary exponent than D. H. Lawrence. Lawrence, at least in his conventional profile as prophet of liberation through the “instincts,” is in search of what he calls in the posthumous “Study of Thomas Hardy” (1936) “the primal soil” (417), “the unfathomable womb,” “the powerful, eternal origin” (418). Although he uses the term “consciousness,” Lawrence, unlike William James, has in mind a core of being that far exceeds awareness. Indeed, Birkin’s labor in *Women in Love* (1921) rests on making conscious this deep instinctual core as a path towards human salvation. *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Lawrence 1921a) lays out the doctrine behind *Women and Love*, and links it explicitly to a reading of Freud that emphasizes, to the exclusion of other factors in psychoanalysis, Freud’s focus on instinctual life. “We are,” says Lawrence, “too mentally domesticated” (Lawrence 1921b: 21): “We must discover, if we can, the true unconscious, where our life bubbles up in us, prior to any mentality. The first bubbling life in us, which is innocent to any mental alteration, this is the unconscious. It is pristine, not in any way ideal. It is the spontaneous origin from which it behooves us to live” (1921b: 13).

To be sure, Lawrence’s great trilogy – *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), and *Women in Love* (1921) – exhibits technically what Lawrence describes as a “criticism” of its own “system of morality” (1936: 476) – a debate about Lawrentian doctrine among Lawrence’s characters. In a generous reading, the trilogy is not doctrinal but dialogical and reader-directed, measuring response, as do many of Freud’s own texts, rather than imposing doctrine. Lawrence’s poems are similarly self-correcting by virtue of their endless revision of earlier tropes (Chaudhuri 2002). Less articulated novels such as *Aaron’s Rod* (1922) or *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928/32) garner no such dispensation. But a doctrine of the instincts leaves a heaviness behind, even in the great trilogy. Lawrence’s notion of the “star” “equilibrium” of the love-relation, as Birkin calls it (Lawrence 1921b: 139), is his version of the Mitchell rest cure from stress, the redemption from moral degeneration unavailable in Nordau. Birkin’s “star” “equilibrium” is idealist to the extent that the “being” it discovers is material and, in Lawrence’s self-frustrating epistemology, therefore distinct from it. Even awareness must die in Lawrence to vouchsafe the truth of the material to which

it must, redemptively, submit. Sensations are valuable when they become ideas. But once they become ideas, they lose the Bergsonian purity that made them valuable. The “pure balance” (139) that Birkin wishes to achieve with those he loves is therefore the only qualified one within the novel’s story. For Lawrence, such a balance is achieved by the novel itself, which suspends in equipoise Birkin’s impassioned voice and the more conventional novelistic diction to which it is polemically – and constitutively – opposed. As a writer, Lawrence benefits from the very alienation that assails his characters. The gap between their lives and their self-understanding is, as it is in James, his very subject.

T. S. Eliot’s influential review of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, published in *The Dial* in 1923, discovers in Joyce’s novel what Eliot called the “mythical method” (Eliot 1923). Based on the *Odyssey*, *Ulysses*, by Joyce’s own testimony, is serious about what Eliot described as its mythical correspondences, from the manifest parallelism between the novel’s organization and that of Homer’s epic to the less obvious mythic alignments produced by Joyce’s naming techniques and his use of puns. “In using the myth,” says Eliot, “in manipulating the continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him” (Eliot 1923: 177). For Eliot, the “mythical method” is the *sine qua non* of modern literature because it allows the embattled present to find roots in the deeper strata of the Indo-European past – in its “mythic” unconscious. Eliot’s is, however, a somewhat restricted view of universality from a global perspective; not all civilizations, even ancient ones, are created equal.

Eliot’s polemical animus as poet and critic alike – what Christopher Ricks views as a strategy of provocation designed to engage the reader to wrestle with him (Ricks 1988) – has as its justification his belief in a beneficent mythical undertow to human experience. Its clearest psychoanalytic counterpart (if that is what it is) is Jung’s “*anima*” – that part of the mind filled with vital, procreative energy. R. F. C. Hull, Jung’s translator, frequently translates Jung’s “*Seele*” as “soul,” unlike Strachey’s rendering of Freud’s use of the same term as “psyche.” Jung’s, like Eliot’s, is a religious version of the unconscious. *Anima*, for Jung and for later disciples such as Joseph Campbell, is given expression in ancient myth and ritual of the kind described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), and by Jessie L. Weston, in a book that influenced Eliot deeply, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920). Jung elevates the mythic side of the Freudian unconscious in order to free himself from the doctrine of unconscious libido. Eliot elevates the mythic side of the unconscious in order to stem the tide of history.

That Eliot had studied Sanskrit while a student at Harvard is emblematic of the assumption about cultural value with which his work is allied: that it is timeless and presumably universal. For Harvard students, learning Sanskrit was cultural capital. Phonological correspondences between Sanskrit words and later European ones led to comfortable conclusions about how universal meaning is, and to the notion, still current in linguistics today, of a human “protolanguage” from which early written “variants” like Sanskrit presumably derived. Myth, like the Hindu ones that Eliot

equates with those of Greece and Rome in *The Waste Land*, is the instrument of this universalism, its emanations, as it were, in historical time. Allied with Eliot's mythic fascination with the *Vedas* – the projective and compensatory aspect of Eliot's colonialism – is the more manifestly idealist philosophical preoccupations exhibited by Eliot's interest in the work of F. H. Bradley.

This is also the program of Eliot's poetry. Like Lawrence, he is doctrinal, although in a different way. He is, like Lawrence, also dialogical, and thereby provokes not only agreement with his program but also gives his program its own immanent critique. *The Waste Land's* extraordinary suppleness as a poem is challenged by its rude impositions of mythic *doxa* upon its shifting materials. "A poem that is to contain all myths," wrote F. R. Leavis, memorably, in 1932, "cannot construct itself upon one" (Leavis 1932: 81). The poem tries to recontain its polysemy by means of the "mythical method," but the flooding of its mythic correspondences and their unmooring are the poem's chief activities. Eliot separates dialects in value even as he mingles them in the poem's narrative flow. The equivalences do not hold when the candidates are bourgeois or black. The poem becomes a site of contention rather than a movement toward the harmonization of its plural voices. Nor is the contention only political; it invades all the poem's topoi. The nightingale in "A Game of Chess" is a universal symbol for "inviolable voice" (line 101), as in Keats, although it is precisely Keats's use of the nightingale for rather more specifically ambivalent effects that makes Eliot nervous about the bird's very universalism. The "reverberation" (line 326) of memory, as Eliot calls it in "What the Thunder Said," is at one and the same time what allows the correspondences to be invoked, and what washes away or unseats the parallels they wish to stabilize. Indeed, the poem's own constant movement corresponds rather exactly to the structure of the shift from sensations to ideas in Freud: the shift from difference to metalanguage, from dialogue to dialectic.

Real history, alas, interferes, as in Joyce, with the neatness of a "continuous" mythic history. *Ulysses*, despite Eliot's review, regularly interrogates just this use of myth. Eliot, whose ultimately medieval and agrarian program grows clearer and clearer in his later criticism, can follow his hero Joyce only so far. While Joyce shares with Eliot's classicist modernism a use of myth, he departs from Eliot in focusing on myth's displacement in real time by ideology, much as our third mode of modernism will do. No wonder, then, Eliot's lament at the end of *The Waste Land* that his myths are but piecemeal attempts to defend against the complexities of the real history he abjures: "These fragments," he writes, "I have shored against my ruins" (line 431). Does a dialogical modernism ever take precedence over its rivals?

There is indeed a third kind of modernism that is not only resolutely dialogical but that takes its dialogism from a sense of life that corresponds to Freud's third and most elaborated notion of the unconscious, the material and social unconscious. This third modernism, one emphasizing not only social interaction but also symbolization, is also a feminist modernism. Its tradition can be traced from Katherine Mansfield, émigré New Zealander, through both Willa Cather in New York and Mansfield's close friend Virginia Woolf in London. Cather's essay on Mansfield shows how

Mansfield's particular focus is on what Cather calls the "double life" that everyone leads: "Even in harmonious families there is this double life: the group life, which is the one we can observe in our neighbour's household, and, underneath, another – secret and passionate and intense – which is the real life that stamps the faces and gives character to the voices of our friends" (Cather 1936: 109). It is as though Mansfield – and Cather – have actually made James a novelist of the Freudian unconscious. Here is a theory of images and the way they connect sensations and ideas through the identifications that the social life of the family provides. The "double life" is the Freudian unconscious in its most mature form: "the material and social investiture," as Cather puts it in "The Novel D meubl " (1922: 40), out of which the self emerges as such.

An emphasis on Mansfield's influence upon Cather and Woolf not only suggests a new way of mapping the history of modern fiction, particularly a sound relationship between British and American modernism. It also suggests that neither psychoanalysis nor the techniques of literary modernism are an extension of idealism either as a philosophy of mind or as an aesthetic practice. An aestheticist regard for inwardness is not at odds with the social sphere to which its concerns are presumably opposed. Mansfield, Woolf, and Cather draw common inspiration from Walter Pater. But neither is Pater an idealist; his sense of perception is resolutely material, especially in the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* (1873), where the vocabulary is very often a scientific one. Indeed, the materialism of Mansfield, Cather, and Woolf evidences a continuity with the materialist Romanticism of Hartley, Keats, and Pater all alike, a Romanticism from which the quite distinct careers of Lawrence and Eliot have led us astray.

Mansfield's influence is key to showing us what Cather and Woolf share. The material and social "investiture" of the self is represented in Mansfield's own stories as early as "The Tiredness of Rosabel" (1908) and as late as "Bliss" (1918) and "Prelude" (1918). Mansfield's world is the shifting boundary between sensations and ideas, often among children, and the social identifications that allow children and adults alike to protect themselves against the very social order from which they are in symptomatic flight. For Cather and Woolf, this "investiture" is played out in different national settings and under the weight of different suns – for Cather the relation between country and city, for Woolf that between the normative and the transgressive. But the focus of representation is a common one that highlights the relation between sensations and ideas, as it does for Mansfield herself. For Cather, this relation is best studied in the young person's inscription into the protocols of local community that may or may not be adequate to her. Some of Cather's heroes simply change their surroundings like Thea Kronborg or Lucy Gayheart; others reinvent local community by recasting its terms, like Jim Burden or Tom Outland. Only in an active relation to landscape, as in the focus on farming in *O Pioneers!* (1913), or to ideology, as in the focus on business law in *A Lost Lady* (1923), can the self's materiality and sociality come into being. *A Lost Lady* even provides the psychosexual grounds upon which these later modes of social inscription are propped.

For Woolf, “investiture” is best studied in Clarissa Dalloway’s ambivalence, or Mrs. Ramsay’s fluctuation between Victorian hostess and Paterian aesthete. The striking of London’s clocks in an inexact relation to the strokes of Big Ben in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) is a fine emblem for the way in which the self’s particularity is a function of the separate peace it makes with the social order. As in the writings of Freud, this proceeds in Woolf’s novels through identification, with *Jacob’s Room* (1922) inaugurating this tendency in Woolf’s classic phase by regarding idealization as the source of depression, much as Freud himself does in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917). This is the exact focus of *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

Mrs. Dalloway and the first volume of Freud’s *Collected Papers* in English were published by the Hogarth Press on the same day – May 14, 1925. Lytton Strachey’s younger brother, James, had begun his career as Freud’s chief translator and editor of what would become the *Standard Edition* of Freud’s works. Strachey’s career was carried out at the very center of the Bloomsbury Group’s daily life. Woolf’s brother Adrian Stephen was also a psychoanalyst, as were other Bloomsbury *habitués* like Joan Rivière, who served as first translator of both “Mourning and Melancholia” and *The Ego and the Id*. That the material production of English Freud was a physical labor of Woolf’s immediate circle of friends is the last and best historical instance of the very real relation between modernist literature and psychology.

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Anthropology

Patricia Rae

Anthropology and Ethnography

Understanding the complicated intersections between anthropology and modernist literature requires us to be aware of the broad distinction between “anthropology” and “ethnography.” While the former term refers to the science of humankind in the widest sense, the latter refers to the practice of investigating and describing individual cultures. The former can generally be seen as encompassing the second, though in some contexts the difference between the general and the particular object of study, hence between an “anthropological” and a specifically “ethnographic” approach, is a matter of decisive importance.

Within anthropology in the broadest sense we might identify two major strains of influence on modernist literature. On one side was the insight it offered into trans-historical patterns of myth and ritual, enabling writers to make sense of apparently disconnected fragments of history, text, and experience. On the other was a challenge to think about how members of one cultural group might go about investigating and representing another, with the aim not of discovering universals of human experience but of acknowledging and respecting cultural difference. Interest in these two areas has dominated different eras in modernist literary criticism, with the former being more prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s and the latter achieving dominance in the wake of poststructuralism. This broad shift of emphasis, and the ongoing exploration of “modernist anthropology” – a term that has been applied not only to modernist literature inflected by anthropology but also to recent anthropological writing that has borrowed some formal experiments from modernist literature – has also contributed to significant reassessments of the politics of modernist works.

Comparativism vs. Ethnography

The two poles of influence mentioned above correspond roughly to two kinds of anthropological inquiry: evolutionary comparativism and functionalist ethnography. The first of these, whose first major spokesman was the British Quaker E. B. Tylor (1832–1917), and whose key conduit for modernist literature was Sir James G. Frazer (1854–1941), dominated the phase when anthropology was first being defined as a science, in the late nineteenth century. The second, developed in England by Alfred R. Radcliffe Browne (1881–1955) and more fully and influentially by Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) in the 1920s, represented a reaction against some of its key assumptions and goals. Also worth mentioning for its opposition to comparativism and for its importance to modernist writers in America is the school of cultural relativism developed by Franz Boas (1858–1942), which shared many of Malinowski's goals and principles.

The aim of evolutionary comparativism was to compare the stages of evolution of disparate cultures by comparing their similar cultural features. Its method rested on two contentious assumptions: a belief in the psychic unity of humankind, or in the universality of certain traits and behaviors, and a concept of cultural evolution in which all societies progress through an identical series of evolutionary stages – in Tylor's formulation, from “savagery” to “barbarism” to “civilization.” Comparativism regarded each socio-cultural phenomenon, whether custom or ritual or superstition or object and method of worship, both as animated by a timeless law and as representing its culture's particular evolutionary phase. Significantly, it was not required that the comparativist have first-hand knowledge of the cultural phenomena he analyzed: as Frazer explained in “The Scope and Method of Mental Anthropology” (1921), he could assess his data from the comfort of home, evolving order out of chaos by eliciting the general principles or laws that govern them.

One of the key comparativist works for literary modernism, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (published in two volumes in 1890, and subsequently expanded to twelve), is a magisterial example of the comparativist method. Having as its goal to illuminate the legend of the Golden Bough, as related by Servius in his commentary on Virgil, it reviews many examples, from all parts of the world and all periods of history, of the custom of killing men and animals regarded as divine, and classifies these according to a three-step model of evolution in which a “magical” phase cedes to a “religious” one and later to a “scientific” one. Much of Frazer's data came from reports by missionaries and other world travelers, and it consists not of whole stories but of thousands of fragments of information about local customs. He organizes these by identifying a parent myth that contains them (and also Servius's legend): a story in which the well-being of a people is bound up with the well-being of a king, and in which the king therefore has to be killed and replaced before he degenerates into ill-health. By appealing to this organizing myth, Frazer is able not only to reveal the significance of his fragments, but to reveal similarities between contemporaneity and

antiquity. He also uses the fragments to elaborate and explain his evolutionary phases: the magical one, in which people tried to control events through ritual, the religious one, in which they appealed to deities for help, and finally the scientific one, in which they take on the task of controlling the world themselves, by attempting to understand the laws that govern it. Like most evolutionary comparativists, whose work owed much to Darwin, Frazer operated from an assumption that evolution meant progress: the emergence of science represented the triumph of the fittest.

The value judgments attending Frazer's and other comparativist studies, in which contemporary cultures from around the world were valued according to their level of scientific advancement, or their distance from ritual and superstition, were of dubious political consequence. Their assumptions clearly facilitated conclusions about the superiority of modern European or American societies over "savage" or (to use a term of special resonance for modernist literature and culture) "primitive" ones. One of the most significant and influential challenges to evolutionism and its attendant ideology came from the American anthropologist Franz Boas, who was for the first three decades of the twentieth century Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, and whose students included Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead. Boas is credited with narrowing the focus of anthropology to ethnography: that is, with advocating the detailed study of the customs of *particular* societies, without any regard, necessarily, to their place in a wider system. His second challenge to comparativism was to reject the model of teleological progress: if different societies were to be compared, their differences were to be explained as a consequence of historical circumstances, not of different degrees of advancement along the same line. Together, these principles contributed to Boas's formulation of the notion of "cultural relativism": the idea that societies are different, but none of them is superior to, or more advanced than, any other. Boas's notion of "culture," which displaced the value-loaded term "civilization," was key for many American thinkers, writers, and artists in their battle against racism. The "cultures" of African-American and Native American communities could now be described with respect, without reference to damaging assumptions about the "natural" or "prehistorical" or "infantile" character of "primitive" societies.

The "relativism" in Boas's "cultural relativism" applied exclusively to value judgments about societies, not to the epistemological powers of the anthropologist: Boas and followers maintained an unexamined faith in the rationality and objectivity of their findings and records. A different view, however, emerged in Malinowski's theory of functionalist ethnography. Functionalist ethnography concurred with Boasian ethnography on two important points. First, its goal was not so much to compare and judge several cultures as to provide detailed and appreciative accounts of local and particular ones. (The term "functionalist" denotes an interest in the interrelated "functions" performed within a society conceived as a biological organism: funerals, weddings, mating, kinship, trading, and religious rituals. Every custom, material object, and belief was assumed to perform a useful and necessary function within the organism; it was assumed, too, that a totalizing and synthetic understanding of a

particular culture was attainable through the careful collection, transmission and analysis of ethnographic data.) Second, it rejected the comparativist's practice of armchair gathering, insisting instead on intensive fieldwork, or "participant observation," in which the ethnographer lived in daily contact with the people whom he was studying. He was then to communicate his impressions in the form of a monograph, for which Malinowski provided a model in his account of doing fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). The significant thing distinguishing Malinowski from Boas – and what has earned him the reputation of being the first properly "modernist" ethnographer – was that he emphasized the importance of bringing a spirit of "relativism" to the ethnographer's way of seeing.

The aim that differentiated Malinowski's work from that of contemporaries like Boas was its effort to dramatize the Nietzschean principle that every observer is embedded in a culturally constructed linguistic system – that he is "in a state of culture while looking at culture." To put it in terms borrowed from William James, who indirectly influenced Malinowski, the goal was to portray not just the objective "facts" of the culture under investigation but the fieldworker's "pure experience" of those facts, in a form that did not edit out the perceiving subject from the perceived object. James, as well as subsequent theorists of ethnography, called this approach to representation "radical empiricism." In effect, it was a policy of full disclosure: as James put it, radical empiricism disallows anything not directly experienced, but at the same time is not to "exclude . . . any element that *is* directly experienced."

In formulating his goals for *Argonauts*, Malinowski vowed that he would foreground in his work the "customs, beliefs and prejudices" into which he, as observer, had been acculturated, that he would disclose these *even where they have interfered with his ability to get "into real touch with the natives."* The interplay between the observer and those he observes – which may include his failure to comprehend what he sees, or his disgust and horror at alien practices, or his physiological responses to the ethnographic situation – was to be as vital a part of the record as any of the details about native customs. Through his records, the participant-observer would both communicate the visceral difference between the mores of one culture and another and create grounds for empathetic connection with readers from his home culture, who could recognize their own orientations in his responses and thus "imagine themselves set down" in the field. (Intriguingly, Malinowski also declared his intention to "be the Conrad" of anthropology – to give as full and honest an account of his experience in the Trobriands as his compatriot Conrad had given of Marlow's in *Heart of Darkness*.)

Had Malinowski remained faithful to his stated principles, the relationship between his ethnography and modernist psychological fiction might have been one of simple kinship. But the question of the relation between the two practices has been made much more interesting by the insights into Malinowski's failings provided by the publication, in 1967, of the original field diary from which *Argonauts* was derived. The diary revealed the father of modernist ethnography to have been far from completely honest about his reactions in the field. Whitewashed from the official record were numerous references to the Trobrianders as "niggers" and his desperate wish to

be free of “the atmosphere created by foreign bodies.” (Ironically, one of the most significant of the reactions never to make it into the final text was one formulated in terms borrowed from Conrad’s Kurtz: “On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to ‘Exterminate the brutes.’”) As Clifford has observed, the great revelation of the diary is that Malinowski, despite his stated intentions, was in the end committed to fashioning himself as an “Anthropologist-hero”: an “authoritative” persona who was free of distorting biases and absorbed in “sympathetic understanding of the [O]ther.” In other words, like Boas, he assumed the intellectual authority of a scientist, representing himself as detached, objective, and profoundly empathetic, capable of knowing what it was to live in the shoes of his native subjects. In short, it was not in the end radical empiricism, but self-censorship, not a Nietzschean message about culturally determined epistemological limitation, but an unchecked expression of the will to knowledge, that the father of modern ethnography modeled for his followers.

Clifford’s critical analysis of the will to knowledge in Malinowski is but one example of the critiques of ethnographic practice that have emerged in anthropological theory in the past two or three decades. Since the publication of the influential anthology *Writing Culture* in 1982, Clifford, George E. Marcus, Michael Fischer, Arnold Krupat, Mary Louise Pratt, Marianna Turgovnick, Trinh T. Minh-Ha and others have offered some powerful indictments of the epistemological assumptions and, ultimately, the politics, of ethnographic writing. Influenced by Michel Foucault and Edward Said, among others, they have indicted the unbalanced power relationship between the ethnographer and his subject, locating a structural homology between it and both colonialism and the patriarchy. A question raised by these critiques of ethnography – one made especially intriguing by Clifford’s account of Malinowski’s failure to emulate Conrad – is whether we may find in modernist literature, and particularly in the tradition of modernist psychological fiction following from Conrad, some *successful* realizations of Nietzschean or “radically empirical” ethnography: experience-based writing about culture that is both self-revelatory and self-critical. As I shall show shortly, scholars have been coming to recognize that modernist literature embodies critiques of ethnographic practice that anticipate these recent ones, and indeed that some of its formal practices are worthy of emulation in present-day ethnography.

Anthropology and Modernist Literature and Culture

One dimension of modernist literature and culture to which both branches of anthropology contributed was an interest in, sometimes a celebration of, the “primitive”: Picasso’s Cubist interpretations of African masks and Roger Fry’s commentaries on the aesthetic form of ethnographic artifacts, Freud’s contentions about the primitive instincts in all of us, Conrad’s sense that the “dark” impulses of the Congolese are shared by their European brothers, Lawrence’s fascination with primitive sexuality, the Harlem Renaissance writers’ and artists’ *négritude*. On the one hand, this fascination

can reflect the new appreciation of other cultures implicit in ethnographic fieldwork, and repudiate the assumptions about the superiority of Western “civilized” cultures implicit in evolutionism, attitudes that dovetail with modernism’s other struggles to cope with the effects of increased globalization and rapid technological change. On the other hand, however, as Marianna Turovnick has observed, the modernist celebration of the “primitive” is at risk of inadvertently reinforcing the evolutionist model, by conceiving of the celebrated cultures as “natural” or “untamed” or “infantile” or “irrational.” True cultural relativism proved a difficult balance to maintain.

The influence of evolutionary comparativism on modernist literature is well established. The vogue for myth criticism in the 1950s and 1960s enabled numerous commentaries on allusions to myth and ritual by modernist writers, and also analyses of their reliance on myths as organizational devices. Justification for the latter emphasis typically came from T. S. Eliot’s 1923 review of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, where he affirms the potential of myth to lend order or coherence to the apparent chaos of modern life. Joyce’s organization of his novel according to the mythical pattern governing the *Odyssey* mirrored the achievement of Frazer and other comparativists: it brought “pattern into the heterogeneity of human culture,” and presented “a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity.”

Thoroughgoing myth criticism can be found on the work of many modernist writers, from Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, and Pound to Virginia Woolf and H. D. The cases of Yeats and Eliot might serve here as illustrations of the impact of evolutionary comparativism on modernist literature, in part because they show how that influence is sometimes also accompanied by some resistance to its Darwinian valuations. Yeats was the first major modernist poet to read Frazer (it is no accident that the bird in one of his best-known poems rests on a “golden bough”) and his interest in *The Golden Bough* was continuous with a larger passion for collecting Irish folklore that was politically motivated. He conducted his own research into instances of ritual, magic, and supernatural experience among the Irish peasantry, even seeking to re-enact these with other members of his Celtic Mystical Order, as part of a contribution to the nationalist Celtic Revival. His hope was that through resurrecting Celtic myth and magic he might counteract the dominance of Irish Protestantism and make of Ireland “a Holy Land.” Yeats’s later poetry is studded with allusions to Irish myth and legend, and also to the *ur*-myths identified by Frazer that these reflect, and these serve the cause of Irish nationalism not only by their presence but also by lending meaning to some of the losses endured in that cause. The sad case of Charles Parnell, for example, is illuminated by the legend of Cuchulain, and that in turn by Frazer’s account of the Roman Attis cult and other instances of blood sacrifice and its beneficial consequences.

Eliot encountered *The Golden Bough* and other studies of myth and ritual inspired by it during his formative years studying at Harvard and in Europe, and *The Waste Land* is the work of modernist literature that shows Frazer’s influence most consistently and clearly. Eliot’s protagonist lives out a quest on the pattern of Frazer’s parent myth, his object being to restore the health of an infertile land and an ailing king

with whom his own spiritual well-being is deeply identified. Some of the details of his quest, including its setting, derive not directly from Frazer, but from Jessie Weston's Frazer-inspired *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), which connects the Grail legends to some of Frazer's ancient fertility rituals. Others, such as the images of the Hanged Man, the Wheel, and the corpse planted in the garden, come directly from *The Golden Bough*. The poem foregrounds parallels between various stages in Frazer's many variations on the parent myth and episodes not only in the protagonist's consciousness but in the lives of others in the contemporary world in which he dwells, and also in the story of the buried and resurrected Christ, which he contemplates. Although the significance of the poem's ending has been much debated, it is generally agreed that the protagonist attends to his own health and rediscovers a religious faith that promises to restore health to the waste land. One of the effects of the many allusions to myth and ritual in the poem is to reinforce the comparativist faith in the psychic unity of humankind: what seems at times a deeply personal poem reveals how widely the motions of despair, desire, and faith resonate across times and cultures.

Despite their considerable debt to Frazer, both Yeats and Eliot resisted some aspects of his philosophy. Most obviously, perhaps, they both rejected the evolutionist view that the shift from "magical" and "religious" phases to a "scientific" one represented progress. Yeats, after all, devoted his energies to resurrecting magical activity in an age of science. He treated the fruits of anthropological (and magical) research in his poetry not as data of scientific interest, but as details incorporated into a living symbolism, which he invited the reader to experience as if in his or her own reverie. Through details like the portrait of the incompetent seer Madame Sosostris, whose limited power of understanding is no match for the protagonist's final, healing religious vision, Eliot would seem to agree with Frazer in celebrating the "religious" phase over the "magical" one, but his bleak vision of the contemporary world suggests that the "scientific" phase is in no way more desirable than an era in which people turned to the deities for help.

With the shift in focus in anthropological studies to ethnography has come a shift away from myth criticism to studies of modernist literature as ethnography. That is, critics have become interested in how modernist writers treat not just the facts about different cultures uncovered by anthropology, but the interaction between the participant-observer and his or her subjects. Insights into this interaction have been shown to shape not only the content of the writing but also its experimental form. Given his importance for Malinowski, Conrad has been an obvious subject of critical interest in this regard: Marlow and Kurtz are both, in a sense, participant-observers who discover the limits of their tolerance for, and their affinities with, the primitive "other." That Marlow's investigative journey into the "dark heart" of Africa is so clearly also a journey into the darkness of his own soul is ample testimony to Conrad's rejection of any pretense to scientific objectivity and its attendant will to power. Another modernist writer whose fiction has been shown to foreground the limitations of the ethnographic gaze is Virginia Woolf. As Carey Snyder has observed

about Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, the narrator's encounter with a remote Amazonian village marks the first break in her omniscience; the language and culture are unintelligible to her. Woolf further subverts the power relations implicit in ethnographic practice by introducing shifts in perspective, making the English observer herself the object of the gaze of a native woman. For Snyder, the experiments with narrative perspective in this novel prefigure subsequent, more radical ones in Woolf's *corpus*, and are evidence of the influence of ethnography on one of the major accomplishments of her fiction: its challenge to the notion of a stable, unified identity. Snyder joins a growing body of critics, including James Clifford, Marc Manganaro, Susan Hegeman, Gregory Castle, Patricia Rae, and Beth Harrison, who see in the narrative experiments of modernism the realization of the "radically empirical" display that Boas never attempted and from which Malinowski retreated. The narrator-participant-observers in an increasing number of modernist novels and ethnographies, produced by Woolf, Joyce, George Orwell, André Breton, James Agee, and Zora Neale Hurston, to name a few, have been shown to be anything but objective and dispassionate: their "pure experience" of alien cultures is rendered in detailed accounts of their desires, somatic sensations and feelings of disgust, and of their limitations in empathy and other forms of understanding. Contributing to these representations are several techniques familiar to students of modernist form. The use of multiple narrative perspectives, for example, is a useful tool for displaying failed empathy. Catachrestic or Surrealist metaphors can foreground both the unconscious, erotic desires attending the ethnographic gaze and the odd collisions of similarity and difference involved when someone from one culture attempts to understand the practices of another.

Some of the most interesting modernist experiments in representing participant-observer experience come in the form of a subgenre of ethnography known as "auto-ethnography." In its most general usage, the term refers to the study of the customs, not of a foreign culture, but of one's own culture, broadly defined: an example here would be the important British movement Mass Observation, inaugurated in the 1930s, whose goal was to produce for the British people an "anthropology of ourselves." A narrower definition, articulated by Mary Louise Pratt, describes it as the practice "in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them." The auto-ethnographer, who identifies to some degree with the culture under description, may engage with the stereotypical representations of it held by his audience, who stands outside of it. Notable literary examples under the most general rubric would be George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), and Surrealist works like Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* (1926) and André Breton's *Nadja* (1928). In these cases, the difficulties of coming to terms with a "foreign" culture are transposed onto the task of exploring the other "nations" within one's own, nations constituted by class. The ethnographer becomes the slummer; his representations of the underclass in his own society play creatively with tropes drawn from the discourse on foreign cultures. In the narrower

category defined by Pratt, we might note the example of Joyce's Bloom, who describes the culture of Dublin to outsiders in terms that have been made familiar to them through the Celtic Revival. As Gregory Castle has shown, Bloom often parodies those familiar terms, in ways that challenge not only the imperialist assumptions of an English audience, but also the inadvertent re-creation of imperialist power structures in the epistemological claims of the Revivalists themselves. Other key examples of modernist auto-ethnography in Pratt's narrower sense are found in the work of Zora Neale Hurston, who trained with Boas at Columbia in the 1920s and was well educated in the language professional ethnographers used to write descriptive appreciations of "primitive" cultures. In works including *Of Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938), Hurston subverts Boas's pretense at accurate reportage by having her "native" informants blatantly lie to her narrator-ethnographers, who share their race if not their cultural background; she records her ethnographers' emotional reactions to what they see, and has them borrow from the oral traditions of the cultures they study in their own reporting. Like Joyce, Hurston manages to celebrate the cultures she describes while subverting the problematic power structures often implicit in the ethnographic gaze. Joyce's and Hurston's narrators also foreground the problem with classifying examples of auto-ethnography precisely into examples where the observer belongs or doesn't belong to the culture or race being described, in that all of them to some degree problematize the whole question of what class and race *are*, hence whether anyone, including the narrator and his or her subjects, can ever be said to belong *essentially* to one class or race or another.

The influence of anthropology on the form of modernist literature isn't confined to experiments in narrative point of view. Another formal characteristic typical of literary modernism that anthropology may have shaped is a tendency toward techniques of juxtaposition, parataxis, or "spatial form." Potential models for such methods came from both the comparative evolutionist and ethnographic functionalist traditions. It has been suggested, for example, that Eliot may have owed to Frazer's *The Golden Bough* not only much of the content of *The Waste Land* but also its manner of presenting a variety of cultural materials side by side. Eliot's poem has also been likened to a comparativist museum display, or, in the work of Susan Hegeman, to the presentations ensuing from a "salvage ethnography." A similar genealogy has been suggested for the catachrestic metaphors and startling collages in Surrealist art and literature. It might be argued that these techniques in themselves contribute to a spirit of cultural relativism, for the presentation of similar-but-different cultural materials without commentary tends to leave value judgments up to the reader.

Anthropology, Ethnography, and the Politics of Literary Modernism

Because modernist literature and art engage with anthropology in many different ways, it is impossible to say in general whether the interaction between the two

contributed to a progressive or a reactionary politics. The information about other cultures provided by comparativists and ethnographers alike opened up many possibilities for questioning Western cultural values in an age of rapid modernization and colonial expansion. Sometimes those acts of questioning reinforced egregious assumptions about non-white races and non-Western cultures; sometimes they enabled an unprecedented appreciation for those others. Whatever the overall effect, it is fair to say that the increased interest in the poetics and politics of ethnography in the past decade is facilitating some surprising new insights into the political significance of familiar features of literary modernism. Some of the most offensive statements coming from the mouths of Marlow and Bloom, or of Woolf's and Orwell's participant-observers, for example, can now be reread as admirable efforts not to whitewash the divisive prejudices that arise in cross-cultural exploration. The frequent self-absorption of modernist narrators, their failure to empathize with others or to comprehend the things they see, can now be recuperated, not as things in themselves, but as means of dramatizing the difficulties effaced under the guise of "ethnographic authority." Attentiveness to the power structures and value judgments implicit in primitivism has enabled a more rigorous policing of these things among modernist writers, but at the same time, an understanding of the significance of different formal methods for presenting anthropological data is challenging long-standing assumptions about the values these writers attached to different cultures, and ultimately to the course of human history. This exciting critical work is likely to continue for some time to come.

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Obscenity and Censorship

David Bradshaw

Put forward by the likes of the influential newspaper columnist James Douglas, the epitome of prudery and self-righteous indignation between the wars, the proposal that books should have to be cleared by an unofficial board of censors prior to publication (in the same way that films had been regulated by the voluntary British Board of Film Censors since 1913) received clamorous support in some quarters and impassioned opposition in others in the late 1920s. As Henry Havelock Ellis (whose *Sexual Inversion* (1897) had been suppressed as an obscene libel in 1898) put it in his contribution to a symposium on “The ‘Censorship’ of Books,” “The question of the censorship of literature – and, in the wide sense, of art and the cinema – with special relation to what is called ‘obscenity’ has lately come violently to the front” (Darling et al. 1929: 437). Like Ellis, another contributor to the symposium, E. M. Forster, expressed his abhorrence at the new climate of prohibition in the United Kingdom, while conceding that pornography, literature designed to stimulate “physical provocativeness” (444), needed to be outlawed. Virginia Woolf, agreeing with Forster on both counts, summarized her own hostility to literary censorship with characteristic bite: “if modern books become so insipid, so blameless, so full of blank spaces and evasions that we cannot read them, we shall be driven to read the classics, where obscenity abounds” (447). The comments of Forster and Woolf chimed with the near universal disgust within the literary community at the prospect of book censorship, with the young Evelyn Waugh a well-nigh lone voice in (conditional) favor of unofficial control, though by the time *Vile Bodies* was published in 1930, Adam Fenwick-Symes’s second-chapter encounter with an oafish Customs official at Dover (during which his copy of the dubious-sounding *Purgatorio* is confiscated) suggests that Waugh, too, had stepped into line.

Obscene libel had been established as an offence at common law since 1727, but it was the banning of *The Well of Loneliness* which had made it such a hot topic in the late 1920s. Radclyffe Hall’s impeccably restrained lesbian novel of 1928 was withdrawn from sale by its publisher, Jonathan Cape, after he had sought Home Office advice as

to its likely prosecution. James Douglas had warned Cape that he was going to lambast the novel in the next issue of the *Sunday Express* and the publisher had lost his nerve. Up to that point, reviews of *The Well* had been generally favorable but Douglas, infamously, declared on August 19 that he “‘would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel’” (Parkes 1996: 147). Cape did arrange for *The Well* to be published in Paris, but it was subsequently banned in the UK, despite the willingness of many prominent writers of the day (none of whom was called by the judge) to testify at its trial in November to its seriousness and purity of intention. Hall appealed against the suppression of her novel, but it would be another twenty years (1949) before *The Well* was freely on sale in the UK, though it was legally available in the United States from 1929 after its publisher had first been condemned for obscenity and then cleared of it.

It was widely suspected at the time (and it has subsequently been confirmed) that William Joynson-Hicks, universally known as “Jix” and later ennobled as Lord Brentford, British Home Secretary from 1924 to 1929, had gone to some lengths to ensure that *The Well* was banned. Not for the first time, however, a concerted effort to suppress an issue had precisely the effect of placing it on everyone’s lips. As Rebecca West put it, *The Well*’s “expectation of life would in normal circumstances have been something well under six months, and in that brief span would not have focused much attention. But its suppression (as well as providing the homosexual movement with a handsome, distinguished, and estimable martyr) gave the lower sections of the Press power to disseminate the subject matter of [the novel] to the greater extent which was represented by the difference between fifteen shillings (which was the price of the novel) and twopence (which is the price of a Sunday newspaper). Thanks to Lord Brentford there are now but few children old enough to read who are not in full possession of the essential facts regarding female homosexuality” (Causton and Young 1930: 10).

But if the *The Well of Loneliness* prompted the most celebrated censorship trial in Britain during the modernist period, it was far from being the only such case. The following year, 1929, for example, witnessed the banning of Norah C. James’s *Sleeveless Errand* (a novel that attempted to be faithful not only to the mores of post-war life but, more problematically, to its profane language: Marshik 2003) and the eruption of a less public but hardly less significant fuss over Richard Aldington’s *Death of a Hero*. Aldington prefaced his anti-war novel with a note recording his (disingenuous) “astonishment” when his publisher informed him that “‘certain words, phrases, sentences, and even passages’” which were then considered “‘taboo in England’” would have to be dropped from the book. Aldington argued that he had “‘recorded nothing which I have not observed in human life, said nothing I do not believe to be true. I had not the slightest intention of appealing to anyone’s salacious instincts.’” Yet it was a sign of how fearful of prosecution publishers had become in Britain that the novel appeared (at Aldington’s request) with asterisks marking where potentially objectionable material had been removed (Willis 1999). Only in 1965 did an uncut version of *Death of a Hero* appear in the UK. Other anti-war books to cause a rumpus

in 1929, either in the UK or the USA or in both countries, were Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*.

In fact, few writers of the modernist period did not at one time or another have to concede to, contend with, circumvent or subversively engage with the threat of censorship, either in the form of legal action or when their publishers acted to forestall official sanction (see, for example, Parkes 1996: 162–78 on *Orlando*). Among the host of writers working in Britain and Ireland whose texts were mutilated in this legal and cultural minefield (or who did not even attempt to send certain books across it) were E. M. Forster, James Hanley, Frank Harris, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis (*False Bottoms* had to be retitled *The Revenge for Love* after Boot's, a twentieth-century circulating library, refused to stock it), Rose Macaulay, George Moore, Ezra Pound, and G. B. Shaw. Indeed, the pressures exerted by the agencies of official censorship and the various decency watchdogs, coupled with the restrictions imposed by publishers and the incalculable effects of self-censorship, featured so prominently in a writer's life at this time that the tension between legal constraint, moral opprobrium and artistic freedom might be seen as the defining triangulation of the age. "All the banning, burning, seizing, and censoring in the 1920s, under authority of the obscenity laws, forced authors who wanted to be published either to alter their texts under the guidance of sometimes sympathetic but justifiably nervous publishers or to publish unexpurgated texts outside their country, usually in Paris, where expatriate presses after World War I busily flouted conventions" (Willis 1999). But by publishing beyond the reach of the law, authors such as D. H. Lawrence also ran the risk of piracy and the other perils of proceeding without the protection of copyright.

The Well of Loneliness was prosecuted under the terms of Lord Campbell's Obscene Publications Act of 1857, which he had introduced (in the face of determined opposition) specifically to combat pornography or, in Campbell's less than watertight formula, "works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in any well-regulated mind" (Craig 1962: 42). Campbell's ambiguity was only enriched by the *obiter dicta* of Lord Justice Cockburn, who stated in his equally porous "Hicklin" doctrine of 1868 that the "test of obscenity is whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscene is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" (Travis 2000: 7). Despite its shocking vagueness, Cockburn's phrasing had the result that if anyone (usually an organization such as the National Vigilance Association (NVA)) complained under oath before a magistrate that an obscene book was being sold, and the complaint was upheld after police investigation, then the book would be banned. The first publisher to be prosecuted using the Cockburn test was Henry Vizetelly, who was fined £100 in 1888 after being found guilty of obscene libel when he issued translations of three of Zola's novels, "one of which, *La Terre*, was condemned in court by the Solicitor General, Sir Edward Clarke, as 'a novel full of bestial obscenity,

without a spark of literary genius or the expression of an elevated thought'” (Parkes 1996: 6). The following year, Vizetelly was back in court on another obscenity charge, this time for publishing further Zola novels, as well as works by Maupassant and Bourget. He was sentenced to three months in prison and died a ruined and broken man a couple of years after his release. As Edward de Grazia has made clear, “Vizetelly’s trials are of great significance because they are the first examples in an English-speaking country of the use by government of the law of obscenity to suppress plainly meritorious literary works” (de Grazia 1992: xi). The Cockburn test would form the basis of the legal definition of obscenity in the USA until 1933 and in the UK until 1959.

The NVA and the powerful Victorian circulating libraries (which were at the forefront of the attack on *Jude the Obscure* and many other late nineteenth-century novels), in particular Mudie’s and Smith’s, continued to exercise considerable influence over what could or could not be published in the Edwardian period and it was against this rooted culture of prudery and proscription that the two most prominent modernist authors to be censored, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, first took up their pens. *Sons and Lovers* (1913) was banned by public libraries, and soon after its publication in September 1915, a magistrate ordered *The Rainbow* to be seized following a vociferous commotion in some sections of the national press. James “Prussic Acid” Douglas was one of the most outspoken opponents of the novel, intoning gravely in his newspaper that “when literature refuses to ‘conform to the ordered laws that govern human society . . . it must pay the penalty. The sanitary inspector of literature must notify it and call for its isolation’” (de Grazia 1992: 57). It was largely as a result of Douglas’s remarks (which were read out in court) and those of other journalists that 1,011 copies of *The Rainbow* were destroyed under the Campbell Act, while the American edition of 1916 only appeared after a number of unauthorized expurgations had been made (Parkes 1996: 21–64). *Women in Love* fared little better. When it first appeared in New York in 1920, it did so in a privately printed limited edition marked “for subscribers only” to protect it from the attentions of both government officials and vigilant prudes. Two years later, however, the novel attracted the baleful eye of John S. Sumner of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (NYSSV) and, as a result, Justice John Ford of the American Supreme Court tried to ban it in 1923, receiving an irate telegram from Lawrence for his trouble (de Grazia 1992: 75).

It was in a vain attempt to avoid further problems of this kind that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was printed in Florence in 1928 and was only available by private subscription. Nevertheless, the appearance of the novel provoked a tempest of scandal and confiscations in both the USA and the UK, where Jix was desperate to prevent as many copies as possible getting into the country. Ironically, the manuscript of *Pansies*, seized by the authorities at the beginning of 1929 after Lawrence had sent it by registered mail to his agent in London, was an early victim of this *Lady Chatterley* crackdown. Jix was no less horrified by Lawrence’s poems, and a mutilated *Pansies* only appeared in 1931, the year after Lawrence’s death, with fourteen poems eliminated

from it. Soon after the seizure of his poems, thirteen of Lawrence's paintings, on display at a private gallery in London, were also taken away by the police. After a court hearing, the gallery owners were forced to withdraw the paintings from the exhibition. An incensed Lawrence retaliated to this triple blow with *Pornography and Obscenity*, in which he rounded on Jix, "the grey Guardian of British Morals," and all the "grey ones, left over from the last century, the century of mealy-mouthed liars, the century of purity and the dirty little secret" (Lawrence 1929: 12, 25; see also Parkes 1996: 107–43).

Douglas had greeted the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 with a typically hysterical piece in the *Sunday Express* – "I say deliberately that it is the most infamously obscene book in ancient or modern literature. The obscenity of Rabelais is innocent compared with its leprous and scabrous horrors. All the secret sewers of vice are canalised in its flood of unimaginable thoughts, images, and pornographic words" (Douglas 1922) – but by the early 1920s Joyce was used to this kind of obloquy. Indeed, his entire career bears testimony both to the pervasiveness of Grundyism and the intrusiveness of censorship in the modernist period and to modernism's dissident and resourceful negotiations with them. "For the publication of *Dubliners* I had to struggle for ten years," Joyce told Carlo Linati in 1919. "The whole first edition of 1000 copies was burnt at Dublin by fraud [in 1912] . . . As for the *Portrait*, it was refused by nearly all the publishers in London. Moreover, when the courageous review *The Egoist* decided to publish it, not one printing works in the whole United Kingdom could be found to consent to print it. It was printed in America. The sheets were sent to London and bound there. My new book *Ulysses* was to appear in the *Egoist* of London. The same old story. From the beginning the printers refused again" (Joyce 1966: 132–3). The US Post Office seized and burned copies of the *Little Review* carrying installments of *Ulysses* in 1918, and two years later the NYSSV filed a complaint against the same magazine for publishing an extract from the "Nausicaa" chapter. The editors of the *Little Review* were arrested and in 1921 convicted of publishing an obscene libel (Parkes 1996: 65–106). Similarly, not long after *Ulysses* was published in Dijon in 1922, 500 copies of it were burned at the borders of the USA and the American authorities' campaign against the novel continued throughout the decade. In "a 1928 Customs Court decision upholding the *Ulysses* ban, the judge explicitly cited the presence of obscenity 'of the rottenest and vilest character'" (Boyer 2002: 248).

In the UK, *Ulysses* was banned in 1922 after the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Archibald Bodkin, read only Molly Bloom's concluding monologue – in other words, a mere forty-two of its 732 pages – and found it suppurating with "glaring obscenity and filth" (Casado 2000; Travis 2000: 21, 24). For the next fourteen years, the Post Office and Customs strictly enforced this ban, confiscating any copy of *Ulysses* which came into their hands: 499 copies of the second edition were burned at the port of Folkestone. And when a Cambridge bookseller applied to the Home Office in 1926 for permission to import a copy on behalf of the young F. R. Leavis, who wanted to lecture on the novel at the University, Bodkin got to hear of it and

had the future critical powerhouse investigated. “Mr Leavis must be a crank or worse,” sneered Bodkin (Casado 2000; Travis 2000: 18–44).

In the early 1930s, however, the case against *Ulysses* in both the USA and the UK began to fall apart. When Random House, who were determined to publish the novel in America, attempted to import a copy of *Ulysses* from France it was seized before it reached them. The publisher decided to fight the authorities and this led to two landmark trials. At the conclusion of the first, in December 1933, the discerning Judge John M. Woolsey rejected both the specific charge of obscenity against *Ulysses* and the Hicklin test of obscene libel in general. In his acute and eloquent judgment Woolsey said that despite the “unusual frankness” of *Ulysses*, he did “not detect anywhere the leer of the sensualist” and therefore the book was “sincere and honest” in intent, not pornographic. In concluding, Woolsey acknowledged that the novel was “a rather strong draught to ask some sensitive, though normal, persons to take. But my considered opinion, after long reflection, is that whilst in many places the effect of *Ulysses* on the reader undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac” (Moscato and Le Blanc 1984: 308–12; see also Pagnattaro 2001). Random House published *Ulysses* a few days later (with an excerpt from Douglas’s *Sunday Express* diatribe on the dust-jacket) and sold 33,000 copies of the novel within weeks.

Woolsey’s judgment was upheld by the US Court of Appeal in 1934, and it was largely as a result of these two American trials that the British ban on *Ulysses* was lifted in 1936. With the legitimization of *Ulysses* on both sides of the Atlantic, long-standing (if profoundly hazy) distinctions between pornography and aesthetics began to look increasingly untenable. Tropes which had once been proscribed soon became fetishized as the last word in high modernist verisimilitude – and not just in Leavis’s Cambridge and other academies but in the wider cultural world beyond them. More recently, however, the degree to which Joyce was inhibited by censorship and the lengths to which he went to evade it (a line of interpretation most boldly yet painstakingly advanced in Vanderham 1998) has been challenged. In a revisionist reading of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* against the background of the Anglo-American social purity movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in particular the NVA and the NYSSV, Katherine Mullin has sought to position Joyce “as neither victim nor hero, but instead, and more interestingly, as an agent provocateur,” a man who anticipated the prudish uproar that was bound to engulf his writing “through the creative appropriation of prevailing debates about art, morality and sexuality.” Mullin even goes so far as to suggest that “Joyce’s fiction daringly incited the cultural conflict which would make him notorious” (Mullin 2003: 3).

Though their interventions were sometimes catastrophic and always a nuisance, Jix, Douglas, and the London Public Morality Council (better known as “Prudes on the Prowl”: Craig 1962: 96–8) were but the watery counterparts of the egregious Anthony Comstock, insatiably active secretary of the NYSSV until his death in 1915, Sumner, his successor in that role, and powerful moral pressure groups such as the Boston Watch and Ward Society. Although *The Scarlet Letter* had ruffled the odd

reviewer's feathers and *Leaves of Grass* had almost landed Whitman in the dock, there had been only one prosecution for literary obscenity in the USA before 1890 (though there had been many convictions for the sale of "immoral" books, such as *The Arabian Nights*). But from then on, thanks to the untiring efforts of Comstock, Sumner, and their like, a "sustained" effort to censor fiction is apparent (Lewis 1976: 1, 11–25). Among American authors of the period to feel the heat of organizations such as the NYSSV or the agencies of federal government (such as the Post Office), or to self-censor, were Djuna Barnes (*Ryder, Nightwood*), James Branch Cabell (*Jurgen*), Erskine Caldwell (*Tobacco Road, God's Little Acre, Tragic Ground*), Floyd Dell (*Janet March*), Stephen Crane (*Maggie*), Theodore Dreiser (*Sister Carrie, The Genius, An American Tragedy*), William Faulkner (*Sanctuary, The Wild Palms*), Lillian Hellman (*The Children's Hour*), Sinclair Lewis (*Elmer Gantry*), Henry Miller (*Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn, Sexus*), Margaret Mitchell (*Gone with the Wind*), Upton Sinclair (*Oil!*), and John Steinbeck (*The Grapes of Wrath*).

Provoked by the interception of the British unexpurgated edition of *All Quiet on the Western Front* by the US Customs Bureau and also its seizure of three copies of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Bronson Cutting launched a crusade against literary censorship in the US Senate in 1929 which aroused a great deal of interest both at home and abroad. Cutting's most determined antagonist was Senator Reed Smoot and their ongoing skirmishes culminated in a key debate of March 17, 1930. In a short essay entitled "Document," Aldous Huxley, whose own books had already brought him into conflict with what he called (after H. L. Mencken) the American "smuthounds" (*Point Counter Point*, for example, was listed as "unacceptable" by the Boston Watch and Ward Society in 1928, effectively outlawing it) as well as with Douglas and "Prudes on the Prowl" in England, quoted with relish from a newspaper report of this debate: "Senator Smoot of Utah: 'I did not believe there were such books printed in the world.' (Senator Smoot had brought, as exhibits, Robert Burns's *Poems* (unexpurgated edition), Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*, Casanova's *Memoirs*, George Moore's *A Story-Teller's Holiday*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover, My Life and Loves* by Frank Harris, and that Mrs. Beeton's cookery book of love-making, the *Kama Sutra*.) . . . 'If I were a Customs Inspector, this obscene literature would only be admitted over my dead body . . . I'd rather have a child of mine use opium than read these books.' . . . Senator Blease of South Carolina was more eloquent even than Senator Smoot . . . [H]e was quite ready to 'see the democratic and republican form of government for ever destroyed, if necessary to protect the virtue of the womanhood of America . . . The virtue of one little sixteen-year-old girl is worth more to America than every book that ever came into it from any other country'" (Huxley 1932). In the end, both Smoot and Cutting claimed victory but, as Paul Boyer has argued, the "1929–30 debates had a bracing effect on the anti-censorship consensus which had been forged in the heat of the decade's censorship battles" and "a major liberalization" of US Customs policy ensued (Boyer 2002: 236, 237; for a detailed contextualization of the debates see Boyer 2002: 207–43). It was against this background that Woolsey came to his momentous *Ulysses* judgment.

Though set in Dublin, *Ulysses* was written elsewhere, of course, and not least because Joyce was all too familiar with the influence wielded in his native land by such organizations as the Irish Vigilance Association (founded in 1911) and the Catholic Truth Society (founded in 1868). Only a year after the birth of the Irish Free State and the publication of *Ulysses*, a Censorship of Films Act passed into law, with a Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature being set up in 1926. Yeats, Beckett, and Shaw were all outspoken in their criticism of the proposals which came out of it – Pound writing bluntly from Rapallo “the idiocy of humanity obviously knows no limits but the text of your proposed Censorship Bill adds yet another clause to the axiom” (Adams 1968: 49) – but this distinguished opposition could not prevent the passing of the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929. Central to this legislation was the establishment of a Censorship Board, which began its work in 1930 and which was “empowered to report to the Minister of Justice on books to be registered and banned for obscenity or for dealing with contraception or abortion, the Minister then to issue prohibition orders, without right of appeal” (Haight and Grannis 1978: 98).

What little support there had been among intellectuals for a censorship board in Britain slowly ebbed away in the 1930s, but the trial of Count Geoffrey Potocki de Montalk, a New Zealander who would later lay claim to the throne of Poland, showed that obscenity was still being taken very seriously by the guardians of the law. In January 1932, Montalk took five poems, including his earthy translations from Rabelais and Verlaine, to a London printer. The small collection was entitled *Here Lies John Penis*, the printer complained to the police, and Montalk and his associate were arrested, charged with obscene libel and detained in prison for three days, even though Montalk only wanted the poems “set up in linotype so that he could print copies on a hand press at home for circulation among his friends” (Craig 1962: 86). At the opening of his trial on February 8, Montalk, who wore his hair two feet down his back and appeared dressed in his customary long purple robes and sandals, asked to swear on a volume of Shakespeare rather than the Bible – all of which did little to endear him to the Recorder of London, Sir Ernest Wild. In his summing-up, Wild stated that he was not prepared to have Montalk “deflower our English language” with vulgar words, adding: “‘A man must not say he is a poet and be filthy. He has to obey the law just the same as ordinary citizens, and the sooner the highbrow school learns that, the better for the morality of the country.’” The jury found against Montalk and he was sentenced to six months in prison for having attempted, as Wild put it, “to deprave our literature.” Yeats called his imprisonment “‘criminally brutal,’” and an appeal fund was supported by, among others, T. S. Eliot, H. G. Wells, J. B. Priestley and Huxley. But the appeal, which was heard on March 7, was unsuccessful and Montalk continued his sentence for obscene libel without having *published* an indecent syllable (Craig 1962: 85–91).

Other notable obscenity prosecutions of the mid-1930s resulted in the suppression of Wallace Smith’s *Bessie Cotter*, a novel about a prostitute, in 1935, and Edward Charles’s “scientific study of sex and marriage,” *The Sexual Impulse*, in the same year (Craig 1962: 94–6), but with the lifting of the embargo on *Ulysses* on both sides of

the Atlantic, the threat of censorship slowly retreated (with many a faltering step) from then on. It could be argued, however, that it was only with the implementation of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, which radically overhauled Campbell by establishing a new distinction between pornography and literature, and which made statutory provision for the acquittal of works whose publication would be in the interests of literature, science, learning, or the general good (even though their tendency might be such as to deprave and corrupt), coupled with the unbanning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the USA in 1959 and in Britain in 1960 (following the landmark London trial in which five of the jurors had difficulty reading the oath, never mind the novel), that modernism, if not literature and culture in general, was finally and fully un gagged.

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Language

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The human fascination with language begins long before modernism. Much of Socrates' struggle against sophistry and uncritical prejudice in fifth-century BC Athens focused on the nature of human speech, and in his *Cratylus* Plato was already debating theories of the origin of our words for phenomena. With the rise of science during and following the Renaissance, this fascination intensified, now with a new emphasis on language as a prime cause of misunderstanding and error. In his seventeenth-century treatise, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke devoted one of the work's four sections to words, dwelling at length on their "abuses," and in the School for Languages section of *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift lampooned both pedants' tendencies to generate books from sheer words and science's effort to avoid words altogether. Although such concerns seem recognizably modern, Gerald Bruns has shown that they actually drew on traditions that were ancient, suggesting that what some have considered modernism's "turn" toward language might better be understood as the most recent development in a long history (Bruns 2001).

However, it is also true that, in Europe and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the subject of language began to take on an unprecedented centrality. The philosopher Bertrand Russell, who lectured at Cambridge from 1910 to 1916, shared Locke's view that many of the problems of philosophy arose from verbal confusions, but he took this idea further, maintaining that these confusions came about, not merely from abuses of words, but from language's customary form. For Russell, as for his student Ludwig Wittgenstein, the proper meaning of a name was the object to which it referred, but the reason this bond with reality failed to eliminate confusion was that the forms of our everyday speech distorted it. The philosophical task was to disclose this inner order. In his "theory of descriptions" in *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (Russell 1919), Russell set out to show how sentences such as "Unicorns don't exist," or "There is no highest prime number," could still be meaningful even if no real objects corresponded to the names "unicorn"

and “highest prime number.” His solution was to analyze such sentences into their logically fundamental parts, an operation that he believed revealed that “unicorn” was actually not a name and that the sentences in which it appeared were composed of logical relations only, without definite reference. In this way, he believed, he had eliminated the philosophical enigma of how words for fictional objects could exist.

It is less important to assess the satisfactoriness of Russell’s theory than to see how it gave to language a new philosophical importance. For those impressed by it, language no longer seemed merely an imperfect instrument for communicating philosophical conclusions. Now language was itself the object that any ambitious philosopher investigated. Wittgenstein, who studied with Russell at Cambridge in 1912–13, took this idea still further. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (originally published 1921), which Wittgenstein assembled from brief philosophical remarks he had written while an artilleryman during the First World War, he argued that whatever could be said meaningfully could be analyzed into elementary propositions, which expressed certain fundamental relations among objects, what he called “states of affairs” (*Sachverhalt*). According to the *Tractatus* these states of affairs represented the basic relational possibilities of the world, and a fact – the observable reality that determined whether any given proposition was true or not – was the existence of one or more of these states of affairs. In his introductory essay to the *Tractatus*, Bertrand Russell cited “Socrates was wise” as an example of an elementary proposition that expressed a true state of affairs, that is, a fact. The world was the complete set of such facts.

Part of what was revolutionary about Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* was its persuasive representation of all meaningful sentences as functions of logic, a condition that the analysis of any actual sentence could lay bare. When such an analysis was complete, it revealed that the sentence’s meaning was simply its fit with the world. But the other part of what seemed startlingly new was Wittgenstein’s repudiation of so much that earlier philosophy had considered essential: ethics, aesthetics, the question of immortality, God. For young Wittgenstein, statements about these things, no matter how well-formed, meant nothing, a discovery that seemed bad news for philosophy, since it showed “how little is achieved when (philosophical) problems are solved” (Wittgenstein 1961: 4), but good news for humans generally, since it meant doubts about art, virtue, and immortality also meant nothing. As Wittgenstein concluded, “The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem” (Wittgenstein 1961: 73). Anxieties over death raised no questions.

In retrospect, it seems unclear whether the *Tractatus* was more notable for demonstrating the fundamental reliability or the ultimate superfluousness of language, but it is clear that Wittgenstein’s representation of actual speech as the disorderly mask of an orderly system exerted a powerful influence. Not only in professional philosophy, but also in the work of such figures as Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, Darwin, and others, this sort of revelation seemed to satisfy widespread cravings. In some such way it accounts for the influence, beginning at virtually the same time, of a philosophically incompatible but similarly comprehensive theory of language, that of

Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course on General Linguistics* (originally published in 1916). Saussure was a Swiss linguist, not a philosopher, one whose early training was in the history of languages, but he was drawn to linguistic theory by his sense of the incoherent state of his discipline. For Saussure, linguistics was unique among the sciences in having no pre-given object of study. His idea was that the methodology of linguistics must itself "create" this object (Saussure 1966: 8–9), which Saussure called *langue*, translated as "language" or sometimes "the language system." For Saussure, *langue* was that part of human speech which comprised the system of possibilities and necessities controlling concrete acts of speaking, or *parole*. Saussure believed that the fundamental laws of *langue* were uniform in all languages and sign systems. His theoretical goal was to explain these laws.

Langue is probably most readily understood through Saussure's account of two of its laws: signification and value. For Saussure, the basic unit of language was not the word but the sign: a unity of a *signifier* (or spoken sound) with a *signified* (or idea in consciousness). His point in characterizing the primitive constituent of *langue* in this way was to free linguistic theory from an illusion of objectivity produced by the uniform appearance of printed words. Spoken sounds, which printed words represented, became functional constituents of the language system only by virtue of their link with ideas. Considered in isolation, the sound of any word varied unpredictably from user to user and group to group, just as ideas apart from verbal representation were amorphous and indistinct. What gave to both signifier and signified, sound and idea, the definiteness necessary for language was their link with each other. In this way, the Saussurean sign remained distinct from the words one actually heard or read in the same way that Saussure's *langue* remained distinct from English or Japanese.

However, the originality of Saussure's theory was not in its insistence on the indissolubility of *signifier* and *signified*, but in its radical sundering of them. As Saussure noted, linguists generally agreed that signs were arbitrary, since there seemed no basis in reality for calling one's female sibling "sister" rather than "soeur," but what linguists had failed to appreciate, Saussure believed, was the theoretical consequences of this arbitrariness. The most important of these consequences was the difference between signification and what Saussure called linguistic value. Although a sound became a signifying unit in the system only by virtue of its link with a signified, once in the system the unit's value was not determined by this link but by its relation to and contrast with other units. That is, what determines the value of the word "man" in a particular sentence ("C'mon, move your man!") is not the sexual make-up of the signified (e.g., the queen in chess) but the word's relation to other words that might compete for its place in the sentence: "pawn," "hand," "piece," etc. For Saussure, this meant that the value of each unit was determined wholly by the linguistic system itself, by *langue*, not by any link to a reality outside the system. Linguistic values were insular. In contrast to the necessary fit of sentences with the world in the *Tractatus*, Saussure's signs seemed to exist in a world apart. Or as Saussure expressed it in his startling conclusion: "[I]n language there are only differences without positive terms" (Saussure 1966: 120).

For those impressed by Saussure's work, this model of a self-regulating system without real basis would comprise the distinctive features of any phenomenon interpretable as a language. So, for Roland Barthes in his 1950s study of French popular culture, *Mythologies*, the marketing of cleaning agents could be analyzed in Saussurean terms as a signifying system organized around contrasting units – chlorinated fluids, soap powders, detergents – each of which was itself conventionally (or what Saussure called “syntagmatically”) associated with series of morally salient signifiers. Barthes believed such an analysis revealed the ideological mechanism that endowed arbitrary differences with value, a mechanism operating independently of either the actual cleaning agents or the material interests producing them. In similar fashion, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss adapted Saussure's linguistics to the study of ancient mythology, showing that historical contradictions could be given a reassuring appearance of reasonableness through a system of contrasting narrative units, and French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan famously declared the Freudian unconscious to be itself structured like a language, arguing that the protean content of the human psyche was barred from signification in the same way that signifieds were disjoined from signifiers.

Of course, Saussure's *Course* did not originate this conception of linguistic autonomy. For many poets and novelists, it derived from Gustave Flaubert's famous struggle with the writing of *Madame Bovary* (1856), a struggle that seemed to disclose words' formative power. As Guy de Maupassant later described it, Flaubert's discovery was that the power of any word was revealed in its capacity to make a particular object recognizable, differentiating it from all others in its class. “Whatever we want to convey, there is only one word to express it, one verb to animate it, one adjective to qualify it” (Maupassant 1979: 33). Literature became distinguished from other linguistic practices by this search for the uniquely expressive word. Although not all those writers influenced by *Madame Bovary* focused on literature's medium, early modernist novels and poems regularly treated language as a scene of struggle and difficulty. In Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (1903) Lambert Strether's moral quandary expresses itself as a confusion over the words he has heard in polite conversation, and J. Alfred Prufrock's alienation is epitomized in his outburst, “It is impossible to say just what I mean!” In Gertrude Stein's “Melanctha” (1907) the protagonist Melanctha criticizes the physician, Jeff Campbell, for failing to recognize his own words' intractability: “No, Dr. Campbell, it certainly does seem to me you don't know very well yourself, what you mean, when you are talking” (Stein 1990: 82). For early modernists otherwise as different as James, Eliot, Stein, W. C. Williams, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, language seemed characterized as much by this independence as by any fit with consciousness or phenomena.

One may feel uncertain, however, whether such a view ultimately accorded more with Saussure's *Course* or Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. The modernist writer's emphasis on words' resistance to fixed meaning or reference, as well as on language's power to form otherwise vague perception, seems in retrospect to recall the self-regulating system of Saussure's *langue*. This resemblance is reinforced by T. S. Eliot's concept of

literature as itself a system, one “in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works of literary art . . . have their significance” (Eliot 1920: 50). Recent commentators such as Geoffrey Galt Harpham have even taken this belief in linguistic autonomy to be the defining modernist attitude (Harpham 2002), and some such view certainly seems to have underwritten the tendency of poets, especially after the First World War, to treat words themselves as material realities. As W. C. Williams remarked, “The word must be put down for itself, not as a symbol of nature but a part” (Williams 1923: 102). In his *ABC of Reading* (1934), Ezra Pound took Chinese ideograms to exemplify this materiality of poetry’s medium, an idea he sought to exemplify in the writing of his *Cantos*, and the Russian Formalist critic, Viktor Shklovsky, elaborated a similar idea in his concept of *ostraniene*, variously translated “defamiliarization” or “enstrangement.” In his *Poetics of Prose* (1925), Shklovsky contrasted everyday language with literary language, arguing that whereas the former sought to make understanding automatic, the latter tried to “enstrange” it, impeding comprehension and rendering experience palpable. Although Shklovsky’s theory, somewhat like Flaubert’s, began by using words to retrieve objects from conventional neglect, it ultimately turned attention to words themselves, interpreting avant-garde experiments with typography, syntax, orthography, and form as techniques for enstranging language.

Despite these Saussurean affinities, however, the concern with language among English and American modernists probably owed more to Wittgenstein’s early philosophy than to linguistics. Like Saussure’s *Course*, the *Tractatus* had acknowledged the potential for words to detach themselves from reality, differing only in treating this autonomy as a problem, a source of widespread nonsense and fanaticism. During the first half of the twentieth century, the English-speaking world seemed much more impressed by this sort of critical diagnosis, especially when combined with Freudian notions of repression, than by theories of words as free-floating signifiers. In Ernest Hemingway’s early novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes’s strictures against talk, for example “You’ll lose it if you talk about it” (1926: 249), reflected a Wittgensteinian concern for the inseparability of meaning and facts, as well as a suspicion of the superfluousness of words used to express values. This kind of suspicion seems even more evident in Addie Bundren’s monologue in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, where words for “sin and love and fear” are treated as immaterial substitutes for real experience, “just sounds that people who never sinned nor loved nor feared have for what they never had and cannot have until they forget the words” (1930: 173–4). Although an immediate philosophical consequence of the *Tractatus* was to turn philosophers away from the arts toward science, especially in the work of the Vienna philosophers known as logical positivists, the interpretation of meaning as factual reference exerted considerable influence on the modernist understanding of literature. Much of the putative formalism of the American New Critics assumed this idea of content, largely derived from the work of I. A. Richards, a Cambridge theorist for whom fictions were emotive expressions devoid of reference (Richards 1925), and the split of interiority and objectivity in Virginia Woolf’s novels also presupposed this

philosophical background, to which Woolf and other “Bloomsbury” writers were exposed through Russell and G. E. Moore.

However, the modernist view of language that explicitly aligned it with literature was neither Wittgenstein’s nor Saussure’s, but that of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Although Heidegger’s greatest influence in the English-speaking world would not come until after the Second World War, the period Fredric Jameson has called “late modernism” (Jameson 2002), already in his early treatise *Being and Time* (originally published in 1927) Heidegger had interpreted language as fundamental to human existence as such. Heidegger’s account of language, not as factual reference or autonomous system, but as the disclosure of the world as a human habitation, set up a conflict between words’ revelatory power and their degradation in everyday use, what Heidegger called “idle talk.” For Heidegger, the human task was to actualize one’s potential for meaning historically, through care and involvement, from within a ubiquitous and anonymous “they.” Although poetry played no role in *Being and Time*, its single brief appearance (Heidegger 1962: 205) foreshadowed its centrality in Heidegger’s later writing. In the essays “Language” and “The Origin of the Work of Art,” composed before mid-century but published in final form only in 1959 and 1960, Heidegger treated art works as “unconcealments” of human being, ones in which the material or “thingly” character of the expressive medium (paint, marble, sound, words) was not consumed but first disclosed as what it authentically was. This gave to poetry a special prominence among the arts, since as the verbal practice in which “the word only now becomes and remains truly a word” (1975: 48), it revealed all that in *Being and Time* language in general had revealed. For Heidegger, the authentic being of language, unknown to linguistics and science, became available only in the event of speaking and “(w)hat is spoken purely is the poem” (1975: 194). In this way, poetry became aligned with philosophy itself.

Although it has been remarked that Heidegger’s account of language seems best fitted to enigmatic literary works like James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Bruns 1989: 45, 54), its most immediate audience was a succession of French philosophers for whom modernist literature, in general, seemed of fundamental importance. For Maurice Blanchot, Jean Paul Sartre, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, Heidegger’s interpretation of language as being’s disclosure turned writing into the struggle for liberation from an order that, in both political and metaphysical senses, was already given. Although in some of their writings Heidegger’s eventful speaking became absorbed within Saussure’s system, Heidegger’s treatment of poetry remained crucial. In Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (originally published in 1967), Heidegger’s work was situated within an ancient metaphysics, one according to which what was pre-given and self-evident – that is, “present” to consciousness – was embodied in the speaking voice. For Derrida, language interpreted as a revelatory event necessarily presupposed this proximate and inflected form, while written language detached words from their speakers, setting them free of predetermining context. Derrida’s own writings sought both to exemplify and articulate this notion of language, which he characterized with his term *differance*, a coined term that combined Saussure’s

system of differences with Heidegger's actualization of meaning over time. Derrida's essays became disclosures of conditions without definite pre-existence which looked for their formal closure to a future indefinitely postponed.

Despite the profound differences among the versions of language found in the *Tractatus*, Saussure's *Course*, Heidegger's writings, and *Of Grammatology*, all conceived of language as somehow distinct from its everyday occurrence. Like the American linguist Noam Chomsky, for whom language consisted of a sentence-generating grammar or algorithm, each thinker concluded that, in order to understand how words functioned, one needed to make explicit something not obvious in common usage. In the early 1950s this idea was challenged by two philosophers, J. L. Austin, who taught at Oxford immediately following the Second World War, and Wittgenstein, who from his return to Cambridge in the early 1930s until his death in 1951 sought to correct his early work. Neither Wittgenstein nor Austin was interested in formulating a theory of language *per se*, but both believed that careful attention to the circumstances of ordinary usage comprised a powerful critique of earlier philosophy, especially logical positivism. For Austin, philosophy's persistent shortcoming was the crudeness of its categories. In constructing arguments, philosophers lumped together importantly different phenomena, accepting as, for example, "unintentional" any act without an intention and so failing to discriminate among inadvertent, unthinking, spontaneous, accidental, and aimless acts. The result was that, when studying moral action, philosophers habitually overlooked crucial details that conventional usage acknowledged: "such obvious facts as that we can act at once on impulse and intentionally, or that we can do an action intentionally yet for all that not deliberately, still less on purpose" (Austin 1979: 195). Examining how words were actually used whenever intentions were at issue, Austin believed philosophers could learn, not just about the word "intention," but about the phenomenon of intentionality, thus shedding important light on such problems as determinism and free will.

Although some interpreters have wished to make a sharp distinction between Austin's work and that of the later Wittgenstein, both men were impressed by differences in the philosophical and everyday use of such words as "know," "intend," "understand," and "mean," and neither was convinced that philosophy's use was more exacting or reliable. Although in *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein denied that any single set of features was common to everything called language, he believed that language could be productively studied through comparison with games. The comparison turned less on rules than on strategy and skill, since Wittgenstein wished to challenge the idea that our use of words could be explained by rules. That is, the point of "language games" for Wittgenstein was to emphasize the similarity of using a word in a specific situation and making a move or play in a game, two spheres of activity in which one's familiarity with aims and consequences normally proved more crucial than rules or definitions. When he declared that in most cases "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein 1997: 20), he meant to challenge the positivists' reduction of meaning to reference, while at the same time focusing

his investigation on what Saussure would have called *parole*. This focus on actual use helped bridge the divide between fact and value in the *Tractatus*, making the systematic functioning of language a matter, not of some controlling system, but of human agreements discoverable in the playing of our language games.

However, Wittgenstein's immediate concern was less with games as models of language than with their use to solve intellectual problems. Modifying his idea of logical form in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein claimed in *Philosophical Investigations* that philosophical problems arose from certain formal analogies in our expressions, analogies such as that between "Keep your investments in mind" and "Keep your investments in Miami." To elucidate these problems, he proposed carrying out a "grammatical investigation," a set of procedures for examining how a word like "mind" was used in the array of language games in which it normally occurred. Wittgenstein believed that these investigations would show that words like "mind" functioned differently from words for places or containers, and the resulting clarity would demonstrate why questions about the existence of the mind were futile. In a vivid comparison, Wittgenstein remarked that asking such questions was like trying to determine whether the infinitive "to sleep" was in active or passive voice (Wittgenstein 1997: 22). No answer could be found, not because the mind was fictitious, but because the question, as philosophy asked it, was not a move in any game, any circumstance where answers could have point or consequence. In this way, Wittgenstein believed that studying our language could free us from the compulsion to repeat arguments to no end.

Although some philosophers felt that Wittgenstein's focus on language trivialized philosophical problems, others considered his critique of the medium of philosophical expression a revolutionary breakthrough. By reconceiving meaning in terms of actions, Wittgenstein and Austin turned attention from the verification of assertions to the circumstances of asserting, questioning, promising, etc. Marjorie Perloff, Charles Altieri, Mary Louise Pratt, John Searle, J.-F. Lyotard, and other critics and philosophers found this redirection of interest to offer a fruitful approach. Wittgenstein's influence also extended beyond literary scholarship and professional philosophy to include late twentieth-century poets and novelists, especially those who, like the poets associated with the important journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* (Andrews and Bernstein 1984), sought to continue modernism's explorations of literature's form and medium. Ron Silliman, Rosemarie Waldrop, Charles Bernstein, and Guy Davenport were among those who used Wittgenstein's work in their poetry, fiction, and essays. However, the late modernist whose use of words was most convincingly compared to that of Wittgenstein was Samuel Beckett. Like *Philosophical Investigations*, Beckett's plays and fiction of the same period tended to treat the medium of expression as itself a source of problems, and like Wittgenstein's stated goal, many of Beckett's narrators and characters sought only to bring their compulsive speaking and writing to a close. In the work of Wittgensteinian philosopher Stanley Cavell, Beckett's language shared the positivists' goal of a purified literalism, a linguistic condition incompatible with figuration and paraphrase. What seemed Beckett's futile

search for an originary self was for Cavell a Wittgensteinian repudiation of ceaseless justification and a struggle for ordinariness (Cavell 2002: 156).

Although important studies of language continued to appear during the last decades of the twentieth century, after the 1970s the widespread interest in language as key to problems of knowledge and culture largely subsided. How exactly to account for this change remains unclear. Much of the focus on language by literary critics had presupposed a relation between linguistic structures and political structures, and during the 1980s many American critics began to feel that politics could be approached more directly. Historicist studies and examinations of race, class, and gender tended to displace studies of signification systems, and where theories of language remained in use, the new task was to explain their relation to economic and social forces. In linguistics proper, especially in England and America, Saussure's influence had waned after the Second World War, and during the latter portion of the twentieth century the idea that language could be studied as a distinct entity came under widespread criticism. Increasingly, professional linguists were interested in the relation of verbal expression to brain functioning and primitive symbolic behavior, and linguists such as Roy Harris began to speak of language as itself a "myth." English and American philosophy had never been greatly influenced by Heidegger, but during the 1970s there was also an erosion of support for the "linguistic turn" represented by Wittgenstein and Austin. Where Wittgenstein's later philosophy continued to have influence, it took the form of arguments in the philosophy of mind, as in the work of Saul Kripke, and Richard Rorty took Wittgenstein's disclosure of the linguistic basis of philosophical problems as symptomatic of the end of philosophy altogether. But regardless of how one explains this change, by the end of the twentieth century, the radically self-exploratory practices that had characterized modernism, at least within fields dependent on verbal expression, seemed reduced to a marginal and minority activity, and along with modernism's decline, language retreated to a peripheral position in cultural and intellectual life.

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Geography

Nico Israel

“More delicate than the historian’s are the map-maker’s colors.” As the poet Elizabeth Bishop suggests, maps, by giving shape to space, reveal histories in ways often more nuanced than those of written historical narratives. In the late nineteenth century, maps tell delicately and succinctly of a world undergoing dramatic transformation. Marlow, the narrator of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, describes just such a map, one he fondly remembers from his own childhood: “Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say: [‘]When I grow up I will go there[’]” (11). Embedded in Marlow’s narrative of the “glories of exploration” is a history of domination: the “blank spaces” rapidly being filled in represent territories coming under the sway of colonial power.

Glancing at a map of the world at the beginning of the twentieth century – the period of literary modernism’s emergence – reveals a world completely “colored in,” to extend Marlow’s metaphor, with a handful of empires in economic, political, and/or military control of most of the rest of the globe. France’s colonial reach spread to North and Central Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia; Russia’s comprised most of Eastern Europe and Central Asia; the Ottoman Empire extended over southeastern Europe and the Middle East; Japan had begun to occupy parts of East Asia; Germany ruled over much of Central Europe and small parts of Africa; and Britain, most powerful of all, controlled territory in Central and Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and East Asia (with incursions into China), as well as all of Oceania and almost the entirety of South Asia, including India, the “Jewel in the Crown,” which in the mid-nineteenth century had come under the direct rule of Queen/Empress Victoria. During the previous hundred years, significant parts of the so-called New World, including the United States, Brazil, and Haiti, had achieved varying degrees of political and economic independence, but the contours

of the world map confirm why many historians dub the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the “Age of Empire,” which is to say, the age of modern colonialism.

Of course, colonialism as both an idea and a form of domination had been around for several thousand years, in both geographical “East” and “West,” and an attitude of cultural incomprehension had almost always accompanied it. The ancient Greeks named many of the peoples they conquered “barbarians” – “bar-bar” in supposed imitation of the sounds of their speech. The word “colony,” deriving from Indo-European roots, comes to English from the Latin *colonia*, from *colere*, to cultivate; a *colonus* is a settler who cultivates. Given this etymology, it is perhaps no surprise that the Roman Empire, which controlled most of Europe for several hundred years, introduced the notion of “cultivation,” indeed, of “culture,” that would be invoked to justify many later European colonial missions.

Modern colonialism differs from earlier forms of colonial political authority in several key respects. First, it was truly a global system, in which a majority of the peoples of the world were dominated politically and economically by powers located thousands of miles away. The sheer scale and distance of its reach makes modern colonialism something qualitatively new and distinct. Second, modern colonialism was part and parcel of the project of modernity – the narrative of rationality, development, and progress that by the nineteenth century had become the declared *raison d'être* of much of Europe. A colony's natural resources were frequently exploited using modern technology (railroads, steam engines, telegraphs, and so on), relying on modern banking practices and drawing on a capitalist division of labor, and administered (if distantly) according to the dictates of modern government and politics. Third, modern colonialism was not only an outgrowth of the discourse of Enlightenment; it was rationalized by that discourse. Modern colonialism depended not just on saving the souls of “natives” (a rhetoric that had justified the colonization of the Americas in prior centuries) but, at least nominally, on bringing the fruits of Western education and technology to the colonized. Another scene from *Heart of Darkness* illustrates the pervasiveness of this rhetoric, as Marlow sarcastically describes his naive European aunt's enthusiasm for the colonial project: “I was also one of the Workers, with a capital – you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about ‘weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,’ till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable” (1988: 15–16). Undergirding these lofty claims about “weaning the ignorant” from their “horrid ways,” as *Heart of Darkness* everywhere shows, was the blunt reality of exploitation in colonization, in which vaunted technological efficiency frequently failed, and in which, given the atrocities committed by the colonizers, the rights of man seemed very distant indeed. As Marlow dryly remarks in response to his aunt, “I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit” (16). It was this exploitation in search of profit that, in fact, had to a large extent helped to fuel the accumulation

of wealth of such cities as London and Paris, which wealth in effect allowed them to portray themselves as beacons of light.

While modern colonialism was the dominant form of sovereignty for most of the world's inhabitants at the beginning of the twentieth century, new nationalisms were simultaneously emerging, making the map of Empire, with its various shadings, even more complex. The idea of the nation-state as a means to express popular political will had begun to flower in Europe in the late eighteenth century, but Europe came around to the idea slowly: ironically, it was the examples of the United States, Haiti, and Brazil that helped influence and refine European national movements (and, eventually, postcolonial liberation struggles). Meanwhile, the United States itself, during the Spanish-American War (1898), had begun to demonstrate territorial ambitions of its own. Although France had revolted against its monarchy in 1789, it did not become a recognizably modern republic until 1871, around the time that Germany and Italy themselves became consolidated "nations" (as opposed to collections of loosely affiliated dukedoms or principalities). Many European peoples began to view nationalism as a local means to overcome the sovereignty of distant empires (think of the Poles in relation to Russia, or the inhabitants of the Balkans in relation to the Ottoman Empire); but, as the examples of France, Germany, and Italy demonstrate, nationalism in itself did not necessarily counteract or challenge Empire. Indeed, it is the confluence of nationalism and imperialism that in part led to the disastrously bloody world war of 1914–18, after which the map of the world was again dramatically reconfigured.

Modernism, which expresses in its very name a connection to time, emerged in relation to these spatial-geographical, which is to say cultural-political, conditions. If, as I have argued, there could be no "modernity" without modern colonialism (or modern colonialism without modernity), modernism as a cultural form is equally unthinkable outside of the network of modern colonialism under which it flowered. And just as modernism can be considered both a product and a critique of the project of modernity, to which it responds both with embrace (adopting the commandment "make it new," as well as the belief in universal principles of aesthetics and ethics) and hesitation (revealing the limits – even hypocrisy – of notions of progress and rationality), so modernist expression responds to modern colonialism with creative ambivalence. Consider the rise of anthropology, a consummately modernist discipline: anthropologists relied on the colonial enterprise in order to function, frequently following colonial trade routes to reach their subjects of study, only, through their best work, to give the lie to notions of racial superiority by claiming an ultimate commonality among all human beings. In psychoanalysis – another quintessentially modernist cultural form – Freud draws on the notion of the "dark continent" to illustrate the existence of the unconscious; one of the aims of exploring that terrain is to reveal the function of "taboo" in modern European societies. In philosophy, Heidegger's ontological investigations draw on an idiom of the non-Western (usually combined with pre-Socratic Greek thought) to challenge the Western concept of subjectivity. To take a fourth, more specific example, this time from modernist

visual art, Picasso's famous painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) depicts, in disjointed fashion, nude women in a European bordello with their faces covered by African and pre-Columbian masks, thereby revealing a connection between gender, oppression, and desire that crosses continents, albeit problematically.

The colonies occupied a large if often unrecognized role in the everyday life of Europeans (who wore garments made of cotton grown in British India, drank tea from the Dutch East Indies and coffee from Africa, smoked cigars and cigarettes rolled from tobacco grown in Cuba, drove automobiles with tires made from South American India rubber, and so on). It is not surprising, then, that the European scientific and aesthetic imagination in the period in which modernism emerged responded to the same global framework. Of course, the flow of ideas, like the flow of goods, did not move in only one direction, and forms of knowledge produced in European capital cities also exerted immense influence on the colonies (and the educated colonized) themselves. For example, the rational "international style" in architecture that developed in Germany and France is virtually unthinkable without notions of the East observed and generated, in part, in the colonial framework; its move toward horizontality and simplicity both drew on, and eventually influenced, ideas of "elsewhere." (Le Corbusier later designed and constructed significant buildings in India, leaving a distinct impression on a generation of Indian architects.) Bengali author Rabindranath Tagore, who in the early twentieth century was championed by W. B. Yeats and others for the direct simplicity of his "local" tales, was well aware of modernist narrative innovation and its claims concerning universality. This is to say that, in the twentieth century, binary ideas of center and periphery rarely apply; the map of modernism is far more delicate than those terms will allow.

Of course, tracing the geographies of colonialism in modernism writ large, or even exclusively in literary modernism, would extend beyond the scope of a brief essay. Literary responses to colonialism in the early twentieth century are diverse and complicated, not least because the colonies cannot be considered as a single entity; after all, India, for example, occupied a quite different place in the colonizing imagination than did Africa, East Asia or parts of the Caribbean. On the other hand, even a consideration of the apparently more limited question of the geographies of British and American literary modernism runs into an immediate problem of geographical nomenclature. Who ought to count as British and who American? After all, some of the most highly regarded "British" modernist writers – Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett – were Irish, although all were born prior to independence, when Ireland "belonged" to Britain; both Joyce and Beckett lived much of their lives in Paris, while Yeats passed several years in London. Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Marianne Moore were American, but they also lived in London for long stretches of time and shunned supposed American provinciality; consequently they are often considered "British" writers. Wyndham Lewis was Canadian. Conrad, who was born in Ukraine, spoke and wrote English as a third language, and lived on England's southeast coast, was, of course, a Pole. Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and W. H. Auden though are practically alone among innovative "English" British literary

modernists. Forster spent formative years in colonized Egypt, and Auden would eventually emigrate to New York. Across the ocean, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, William Faulkner, and Langston Hughes are decidedly “American” modernists, but each was influenced by (even if they took issue with) British and continental modes of expression. Elizabeth Bishop herself lived a good deal of her adult life in Brazil.

Given the peripatetic and transitory quality of the life of so many well-known modernist writers, it is perhaps no surprise that locations beyond England and America appear frequently as the subject of texts, and in previously unimaginable ways. While it is certainly the case that Western literature has always taken travel (and conquest) as primary subjects – think of *The Odyssey* and *Robinson Crusoe*, early examples of their respective genres of epic and novel – the geographical dimensions of modernism are to these earlier representations of travel what the airplane is to the sailing-ship. Consider two novels often viewed as existing on the cusp between Victorian and modernist fiction – Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), texts that initially seem worlds apart but that share certain key features with regard to their representations of space. *Dracula* posits a locale, Transylvania, on the edge of different empires (Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) – an indeterminate, polyglot, sexualized zone in which the English solicitor Jonathan Harker becomes both captivated and captive. In the second half of the novel, the vampire Dracula comes to England in search of more victims to seduce. Dracula brings a monstrous “out there” “in here” and raises the question of national security (and purity) precisely with regard to spatialized conceptions of “invasion.” Meanwhile, *Kim* features a young orphan (the son of an Irishman fighting for imperial Britain) on an adventure that takes him through much of the polyglot territory of India. The teenage Kim, tanned dark by the sun and fluent in local languages, can pass for an Indian. He serves as companion to his Himalayan friend and teacher the Teshoo Lama, while wittingly and unwittingly participating in the so-called Great Game being played out by Britain and Russia for political control of different parts of the region. *Kim* thus places an “in here” (a plucky Irish/British adolescent) “out there,” expressing both an anxiety about control of colonial India (the obverse of *Dracula*’s fear of invasion) and, simultaneously and unmistakably, profound love for the conquered land and its colorful people. Both texts raise the question of what conquest means for national and international identity: Stoker’s Europeans must figure out who or what Dracula is, in order to terminate him, whereas Kipling’s Kim repeatedly asks “Who am I?,” querying the boundaries between racial and elective affinities. In rendering these selves in relation to various landscapes, local and foreign, both texts – *Dracula* implicitly, *Kim* explicitly – suggest a deep connection between mapmaking and political power.

With the emergence of high modernism in the early years after the Great War, the anxieties about political and subjective containment expressed in these two geographically savvy mass-market novels reached their apotheosis. Consider *A Passage to India* (1924) and *The Waste Land* (1922), both enormously influential texts in which

geographies (which is also to say, cultural geographies) play an especially important role. Forster's novel begins with a *tour de force* description of the terrain of the fictional Indian city of Chandrapore – muddy lowlands, riverside inland, forest-like hilltop – demonstrating how the inhabitants of the city – peasants and underclass, indigenous and “Eurasian” middle class, and British colonizers – occupy that land, exerting political power or receiving the effects that flow from that power. At the geographical and conceptual heart of the novel are the intractable, unchartable Marabar caves, whose “fists and fingers” are the only “extraordinary” thing about Chandrapore, and in which the dynamics of race and desire collide. Something happens there to Adela Quested, or maybe it doesn't. The caves themselves are dark, reflective and echoing: they utter “boum, ouboum.” Their very sublimity and formlessness becomes all the more evident as the Englishman Fielding leaves India and approaches the beautiful “buttercups and daisies of June” in Europe. The rhetoric of accident, miscommunication, and delay that pervades the novel seems to spring out of an irreconcilability in the lands themselves, an irreconcilability that, despite a mutual desire for consummation, reaches its logical conclusion in the final meeting of Fielding and Dr. Aziz, the Indian Muslim accused by Miss Quested of some indescribable offense in the caves. “Why can't we be friends?” asks Fielding. “It's what I want. It's what you want.” “But,” the novel emphatically responds, “the earth didn't want it”: “No, not yet,” “No, not there” (316). These “nos” are almost a literal form of geo-graphy – of earth-writing, so to speak – in which the land itself contains and expresses anthropological, racial, and, above all, political ideas.

While *A Passage to India*, rather like *Kim*, presents the geography of India as both sublime and untimely, *The Waste Land*, not unlike *Dracula*, portrays a malaise-filled London under threat of invasion and destruction. In a telling stanza in Part III, “The Fire Sermon,” the unidentified speaker of the poem is propositioned by a foreigner:

Unreal City
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
 Asked me in demotic French
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.
 (III: ll. 207–14, Eliot 2001: 12)

Mr. Eugenides, nominally “well born,” is repulsive not merely because he is a “merchant” carrying shipping papers, or because he is homosexual (carrying currants, supposedly a sign of same-sex desire), or because he speaks coarse French, but, perhaps in a condensed combination of all these things, because he is from Smyrna, on the border between Greece and Turkey, a place that in the grammar of the passage is rendered an adjective rather than a noun, as though to intimate a sleaziness associated with the very sound, in English, of “Smyrna.” In the early twentieth

century, Smyrna, like many cities of the southern Mediterranean, was home to many different ethnicities – Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Sephardic Jews, and Syrian Christians – and was indeed heavily impacted by the First World War and its aftermath. Rather like the Transylvania of *Dracula*, it was associated with a kind of ethnic confusion, in this case combined with a supposedly crass, Levantine (well-nigh Phoenician) commercialism. That the “Smyrna merchant / Unshaven” from the moral and commercial “periphery” should propose a dirty Brighton weekend at the Metropole with the speaker adds impetus to a generalized disgust at the “throbbing waiting” sterile sexuality that pervades *The Waste Land*.

Yet Eliot’s notion of an “away” that infects “home” is, in *The Waste Land*, rarely so simply, binarily, conceived. To escape from the throbbing, waiting, and wanting of filthy, monotonous, engine-driven London the text turns to a Hindu and Buddhist idiom derived from a particular idea of India. “Datta. Dayadhvan. Damyata,” the words (meaning, respectively, Control Yourselfs, Give, Have Compassion) that, along with “shantih shantih shantih” (the peace that surpasses understanding), close the text, are taken from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The use of Sanskrit as a spiritual escape hatch from the aridity of the text is particularly ambivalent, as it suggests either an *outside* to Western modernity (connecting this gesture with Yeats’s and Pound’s occasional fetishization of the East as antidote to Western excess and affectlessness) or, given the nineteenth-century discovery of Sanskrit as an earlier, more primary branch of the Indo-European language tree, something *prior* to that modernity, something indeed “traditional” for it. Again we see an imagined geography in a text, this time a poem, relating to conceptions of not only space and place, but also, intimately, time.

If we consider representative experimental texts of late modernism – say, Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* and Beckett’s *Endgame* – the very idea of place and its representation seems to have undergone a drastic transformation, perhaps appropriate to the disastrous Second World War and its own reconfigurations of space and time. In *Ulysses*, Joyce had already presented an average day of a lower-middle-class ad-man in 1904 Dublin as capable of containing and expressing the entire history of both West and East, as though all significant events, ideas, and places could centripetally collide in this relatively insignificant city, which is itself rendered with extraordinary geographical exactitude. Peregrinating hero Leopold Bloom’s intensely geographical imaginations of exotic places – notably Hungary, Gibraltar, and the Holy Land – are all, like Ireland at the time, under the sway of colonialism, and the very idea of an “outside” to Dublin, to colonialism, and to captivity is (often hilariously) debunked. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce does what would soon be accomplished by V-2 rockets and the nuclear bomb: he fundamentally challenges space-time continua, though he works, unlike rockets and bombs, with the explosive possibilities of language alone. Individual words unite different languages and times, while episodes – if they can even justifiably be called episodes – take place in different places, simultaneously. The book is, consequently, a notoriously difficult text to map. For our purposes, a brief examination of its conclusion will have to suffice:

So. Avelaval. My leaves have drifted from me. All. But one clings still. I'll bear it on me. To remind me of. Lff! So soft this morning, ours. Yes. Carry me along, taddy, like you done through the toy fair! If I seen him bearing down on me now under whitespread wings like he'd come from Arkangels, I sink I'd die down over his feet, humbly dumbly, only to washup. Yes, tid. There's where. First. We pass through grass behush the bus to. Whish! A gull. Gulls. Far calls. Coming, far! End here. Us then. Finn, again! Take. Bussoftlhee, mememormee! Till thousaendsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a loved a long the (628)

The idiom here is vernacular Irish-English, but Greek and Latin peek through, as do elements of the Old and New Testaments. Land, water, and air exert their presence in unison. We are at once floating on the Liffey in Dublin ("Lff!"), being carried by a father along the thoroughfare ("toy fair"), and, on arriving at the gates of heaven, receiving "the keys to" an uncertain kingdom, if we should choose to worship (or "wash up"). We are flying with the seagulls on gossamer wings with our Dedalus-dad, too close to the son/sun (I sink/think), and yet are simultaneously "gulls" for having imagined ourselves anyplace but "here" in the place of writing (and reading), where "leaves" (of paper) are "drifting away," becoming only a "mememormee" (a memory combined with a command to remember me, sounded in the gulls' call). Joyce's immensely complicated sense of geography is succinctly expressed in the "there's where," which is both assertion and question.

The question of geography initially seems something of a red herring in Beckett, minimalist to Joyce's maximalist – whose sense of place in (and out of) theater extends from the "small men in a big space" of the early play *Waiting for Godot*, to the "thenceless thitherless there" of the late play *Worstward Ho*. Beckett rarely portrays physical movement of any productive kind; his characters are often defined as subject to massive inertia, or, as in the case of the novelistic trilogy (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*), to completely botched journeys. Yet, there is, in *Endgame*, a marked sense of "earth writing," in which the physical existence of land outside Hamm and Clov's home/bunker reflects a specific historical condition. In fact, the word "earth" is strikingly prevalent in *Endgame*, and it plays an especially telling role in the following exchange, in which the blind Hamm asks his beloved/loathed Clov what he sees out the window (which, in order to reach, Clov must stand upon a chair):

CLOV: The earth.

HAMM: I knew it!

(Angrily.)

But there's no light there! The other!

(Clov pushes chair towards window left.)

The earth!

(Clov stops the chair under window left. Hamm tilts back his head.)

That's what I call light!

(Pause.)

Feels like a ray of sunshine.

(Pause.)

No?

CLOV: No. (63–4)

As in a similar, earlier passage in which Hamm says “Nature has forgotten us,” and Clov replies “there’s no more nature,” here “earth” seems to stand as much for the obviation of life as a guarantee of its existence; this is a world in which Hamm, cursed, asks, like an animal in search of warmth, “let there be light,” but there is no light. If, for decades, geographical passages such as these were read in terms of universal existentialist notions of “man’s plight” – as though Hamm and Clov, like *Godot’s* Vladimir and Estragon, were somehow everymen, everywhere – in retrospect the text seems ever more clearly related to the onset of Cold-War geopolitics and, especially, the emergence of postcolonial societies during the period in which the text was written. And if Hamm and Clov indeed somehow allegorize both US/Soviet power games (including the threat of nuclear war that undergirded these “games”) and the colonizer/colonized relation (between Europe and the so-called third world) then what Beckett suggests is a brand new economy of power relations on “earth,” in which “master” and “servant” are wholly inadequate terms.

These few examples of major texts of British and American literary modernism demonstrate how geography – conceived here as intimately linked to the representation of culture, temporality, and geopolitics – relates to and impacts on not just settings or themes in literary texts (which would be easy enough to show) but indeed their very expression itself. As modernism develops, as it becomes more formal and formalized, this is increasingly the case. There is an immense conceptual distance between Stoker’s or Kipling’s sense of place and space and Joyce’s or Beckett’s – just as there is between Stoker’s and Kipling’s and, say, Victorian “realists” Charles Dickens’s and George Eliot’s – not because Joyce and Beckett were more gifted artists, or because they were writing for different audiences, but because they were responding, in the shapes of their sentences and even words, to a radically changed and changing geopolitical map of the world. If Beckett, rattling the cage of meaning, put an end to literary modernism – as some critics argue is the case – then that is because the altered condition of the globe began to call for new modes of expression.

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Publishing

Mark S. Morrisson

Modernism and twentieth-century mass culture were born more or less simultaneously and engaged each other in a complex, vibrant relationship that ranged from the openly affirmative to the haughtily adversarial. Among the most significant aspects of the developing commodity culture were rapid changes in the publishing industry that modernists faced in their search for a reading public – and several scholars have attempted to interpret these modernist encounters with the literary market. One collection of essays (Willison, Gould, and Chernaik 1996) outlines: a late nineteenth-century conflict with the mass-market press, which was at times mediated by the newly emerging profession of the literary agent (the careers of Henry James and Joseph Conrad serve as examples); a turn against the literary establishment by writers such as Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford and the rise of subscription and de luxe editions, such as the first edition of *Ulysses*; and, finally, a rapprochement between the marketplace and modernism, exemplified by the American general trade publication of Joyce's *Ulysses* by Random House in 1934 and T. S. Eliot's accession to the board of the publishing house Faber and Gwyer (later Faber and Faber) in 1925 (Willison, Gould, and Chernaik 1996: xiv–xv). Others have provided alternative maps of modernist publication, such as Lawrence Rainey's detailed examination of what he calls “a tripartite publishing program – journal, limited edition, and public or commercial edition” (Rainey 1998: 101). Contemporary modernist scholarship has focused intensely on the material components of a text – for example, its layout and design, the paper used, the edition, the publisher, and the print run – as constitutive of the text's historical meaning. Ignoring such issues in favor of an ahistorical ideal of “pure text,” warns editorial theorist George Bornstein, “obscures the social embedding of its . . . contents” (Bornstein 2001: 14). Modernist publishing strategies represent a rich series of efforts to shape the print culture of modernity, and they provide us with insight into the culture from which the texts of modernism arose.

Publishing at the Turn of the Century

Early twentieth-century advertising agencies, brand products, and mass publicity helped create demand for an ever-increasing array of new commodities. But if the modern consumer began to define himself or herself in terms of commodities, virtually every step of that process depended on the nineteenth-century emergence of mass-market periodicals – what cultural historian Richard Ohmann terms the “magazine revolution” (1996: 340). Technologically innovative rotary presses and Linotype machines – as well as inexpensive paper – allowed major publishing houses, such as those of Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe), Sir George Newnes, and C. Arthur Pearson in England to produce mass-market papers like the *Daily Mail* and magazines such as the *Strand*, *Tit-Bits*, and *Pearson's Weekly*. American publishers Cyrus Curtis, William Randolph Hearst, Frank Munsey, and S. S. McClure similarly made fortunes on *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Munsey's*, and *McClure's* (Morrisson 2001: 3). Advertising agencies steered their clients toward highly effective magazine ads (Ohmann 1996: 104–5), and advertising revenues quickly surpassed subscription income for publishers, who developed a new publication strategy: they sold periodicals for less than the cost of production of each issue, thereby increasing circulation, and they more than recouped their losses in increased advertising charges. (Not coincidentally, James Joyce's modern Everyman, Leopold Bloom, is an advertising canvasser for a mass-market newspaper in turn-of-the-century Dublin.)

Book publishing, too, expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The standard 31s. 6d. three-volume novel had been a staple of Victorian lending libraries – but too expensive for most readers to purchase. Publishing houses began to switch to 6s. single-volume novels and then to even cheaper paperbacks by the turn of the century, and they also shifted from lump-sum payments for novels to a royalty system (Keating 1989). A larger audience could afford to buy the newly cheap fiction – and the “best-seller” was born, with authors like Marie Corelli selling not a few thousand books but hundreds of thousands of copies of each new title. While the new royalty system increased pressure on writers, the expanded print culture also provided them with historically unprecedented readership and publication venues (Keating 1989).

Yet the Victorian period saw a reaction *against* the mass-production press as well. The Arts and Crafts movement, for example, challenged the Industrial Revolution's assembly lines, mass-produced commodities, alienated labor force, shoddy housing, and gloomy work spaces. An alternative vision of artisanal production as aesthetically, socially, and morally redemptive soon influenced book publication, and the gold standard of Arts and Crafts publishing was, beyond a doubt, William Morris's Kelmscott Press, founded in 1890. Morris, as Gillian Naylor notes, argued that a book “should be conceived as architecture, each detail contributing to the whole, so that the paper, the ink, the type-faces, the word and line spacing, the placing of the margins and the integration of illustration and decoration all had to be considered

in detail, and in relation to the complete book” (1971: 111). Kelmscott Press designed its own typefaces, used handmade paper or vellum and expensive ink, and lavishly illustrated books with woodcuts by Edward Burne-Jones and other Pre-Raphaelite artists. Not surprisingly, it printed only a limited number of each book (Naylor 1971: 111), which were highly sought after by collectors. (Today, a copy of the Kelmscott Press’s edition of Chaucer can fetch more than \$100,000.) Radical politics had undergirded the original Arts and Crafts movement. But by the modernist period, the commodity status of the expensive handmade luxury edition was clearly solidified, and modernists would inevitably face the question of their place within commodity culture.

Magazines: From Little Magazines to Slicks

Among modernism’s major contributions to twentieth-century culture was the little magazine. The genre had a few nineteenth-century precursors (the Pre-Raphaelite magazine the *Germ*, for instance, or the Symbolist magazines of the 1880s and 1890s in France), but it came into its own in the early twentieth century. Advances in printing technologies and cheaper paper prices permitted small print runs, and these magazines managed to survive, even if only briefly, on little capital. Some of the most significant for modernism were the American magazines the *Little Review*, the *Dial*, *Poetry*, *Others*, *Contact*, and *The Masses*; the London periodicals the *New Freewoman*/*Egoist*, the *New Age*, the first few years of the *English Review*, the *Criterion*, *Poetry & Drama*, and *Blast*; and the Parisian *transition* and *Transatlantic Review*. Others, such as *Tambour* and *Broom*, have been less studied, but they also featured significant writing and published major authors. Modernist authors themselves were often the editors. Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Robert McAlmon, Ford Madox Ford, Ernest Hemingway, Rebecca West, Eugene Jolas, and H. D., among others, were all involved in editing little magazines. (Other writers gained more lasting fame as editors, including Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*; Margaret Anderson of the *Little Review*; Dora Marsden of the *Egoist*; and Harold Monro of the *Poetry Review*, *Poetry & Drama*, and the *Chap-book*.)

While many little magazines initially aspired to become much more broadly circulated and commercially successful, even engaging with the advertising and circulation-building strategies of the mass-market press (Morrisson 2001), they rarely exceeded a few thousand subscribers. Yet their freedom to publish non-mainstream literature and to bring it into dialogue with unfettered radical political, social, and philosophical currents of thought – and their ability to experiment with typography, layout, and design – contributed to shaping modernism as a *movement*, rather than as a number of individual writers and artists working in isolation. In other words, the little magazines, where the most famous modernist works were often first published, helped writers make connections and form group identities. Moreover, many little magazines published not only critical essays by authors but

also correspondence from readers, thus enabling a dynamic, ongoing public discussion of modernism.

Take, for example, two magazines that published much of the key work of early modernism – the *Egoist*, in London, and the *Little Review*, which moved from Chicago to New York to Paris. The *Egoist*, edited by Dora Marsden and then Harriet Shaw Weaver (Joyce's patron), published in serial form Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* and much of *Ulysses* before he could find book publishers for either. It also printed Wyndham Lewis's most significant early novel, *Tarr*. It provided an important platform for Imagists (with Richard Aldington and H. D. serving on the editorial staff and Pound helping direct material into the magazine), a key voice for Vorticists, and a space in Britain for the work of American modernist poets who had not made the transatlantic journey. T. S. Eliot briefly served as assistant editor and published his most famous early critical work, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in the magazine. But the *Egoist* also publicized radical social movements, juxtaposing modernist literature with feminism and the stridently anti-statist Egoism espoused by Dora Marsden. The magazine's correspondence section encouraged readers to explore these connections publicly.

Likewise, the *Little Review*, edited by Margaret Anderson (with help from Jane Heap) beginning in 1914, advanced many of the same interests on the American side of the Atlantic that the *Egoist* had in Britain. It brought American, British, Irish, and Continental strands of modernism together and helped situate them in dialogue with the radical politics and social causes of the day. After Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* launched Imagism in the States in 1912 and 1913, the *Little Review* not only published Imagist poetry by Pound, H. D., Aldington, Amy Lowell, Williams, John Gould Fletcher, and others but also featured, as the *Egoist* had, much critical discussion of the aesthetics of Imagism. It also published Moore, Stevens, and Marsden Hartley, as well as several American expatriates, including Stein, Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, Malcolm Cowley, and Eliot. The *Little Review* brought out fiction by Wyndham Lewis, Mary Butts, Hemingway, Dorothy Richardson, Barnes, Jean Toomer, and others, and, of course, it serially published James Joyce's *Ulysses* for American readers until a court decided in 1921 that the novel violated obscenity laws. Artists involved in the key aesthetic movements of the day – including Surrealism, Parisian and Berlin Dada, Blaue Reiter, Vorticism, Cubism, and Constructivism – appeared in its pages as well.

In spite of the vibrant strands of modernism these magazines published, their circulations remained small. The initial print run of the *Egoist* (under its original name the *New Freewoman*) was 2,000, but that dropped quickly to 1,500, then to 1,000. By 1915 it was generally publishing print runs of 750, with a one-time extended print run of 1,250 for the special "Imagist" number of May 1915 (Morrisson 2001: 104), and by the end of the First World War the *Egoist* had only ninety subscribers left and a print run of only 400 (Morrisson 2001: 113). The *Little Review* fared slightly better, ranging between around 2,000 and 3,000 subscribers (Morrisson 2001: 243 n. 22).

But even if the editors of little magazines never reached their hoped-for audiences, modernists shaped print culture in other ways as well. A larger-circulation magazine genre, the “slick,” not only took notice of modernism but in some cases also advocated modernist aesthetics and culture. The fashionable slicks (so named for their slick, glossy pages) began to address their middle- to upper-middle-class audience’s interest in modernist culture by publishing modernist work. (Two of the highest paying slicks, *Esquire* and *Collier’s*, for instance, published Hemingway stories.) Some even adapted modernist aesthetics to their advertisements (Murphy 1996: 69–84). The most significant example of a slick that served as a conduit for modernism to upper-middle-class readers and the “Tired Business Man” was *Vanity Fair*, whose editorship had been taken over in 1914 by Frank Crowninshield, the publicist for the groundbreaking Armory Show of 1913 (63). Indeed, Crowninshield published a number of key modernist writers and artists (including Picasso, Gauguin, Matisse, Eliot, Cummings, Stein, and Lawrence) and also appropriated much of the look of the most avant-garde journals (63). *Vanity Fair* sold more ads than any of its competitors (69), and in 1922 its total circulation was 96,500, with \$500,000 in advertising revenue and \$357,000 in circulation revenue (Rainey 1998: 98). Michael Murphy argues that what “*Vanity Fair* suggested to its readers *most powerfully* . . . was that being modern – and by extension even being modernist – was not about market *phobia* at all, but precisely about market *savvy*” (64).

By the 1920s, in fact, the proliferation of different types of magazines publishing modernism actually gave modernist authors more choices in public self-presentation. For example, as Lawrence Rainey has shown, T. S. Eliot (and, behind the scenes, Ezra Pound) negotiated with multiple magazines and a book publisher to arrange for the publication of his *tour de force* of modernism, *The Waste Land*. Eliot arranged to publish the poem almost simultaneously in October 1922 in two periodicals – his own British magazine, the *Criterion*, and the *Dial* in the United States – and in book form in December 1922 with the American publisher Horace Liveright. As Pound and Eliot searched for an American journal in which to publish the poem, they considered both the *Little Review* and *Vanity Fair*, but they chose to publish the poem in the *Dial*, whose circulation was around 9,500 (Rainey 1998: 98). In addition to the obvious inducement of being offered the Dial Award for 1922 (with its \$2,000 purse), Eliot felt that the *Dial*, which had more than three times the readership of the *Little Review* and published much modernist work but avoided the overt commercialism of *Vanity Fair*, would confer on his poem the cultural distinction he desired for it (Rainey 1998: 105). Some of the modernists themselves had begun indeed to acquire the market savvy of their “slick” publishers.

Anthologies

Another important mode of publishing that helped consolidate identity and public recognition was the anthology. These anthologies primarily focused on poetry, and

they often overlapped with self-promotional efforts occurring in the little magazines. For example, Ezra Pound launched Imagism in 1912 and 1913 first by creating a new identity for Hilda Doolittle (“H. D. Imagiste”), sending work by her and by Aldington to *Poetry*, and then publishing Imagist manifestos in the March 1913 issue of *Poetry*. Pound eyed the success of the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, published in England by Harold Monro, the proprietor of the Poetry Bookshop. From a meager first run of 500, the 1911–12 first volume *Georgian Poetry* had sold 9,000 copies by the end of 1913 and some 14,000 copies by 1920 – excellent sales for a modern poetry volume (Grant 1967: 91–9). Pound persuaded Monro to publish an anthology of Imagist verse, entitled *Des Imagistes*, that printed poems by Aldington, H. D., F. S. Flint, Skipwith Cannell, Lowell, Williams, Joyce, Ford, Allen Upward, John Courson, and of course Pound himself. Much of the work featured in the anthology hardly resembled the description of Imagist principles that Pound had directed into *Poetry*, but it scarcely mattered, since the press quickly picked up on and helped consolidate the new “movement.” *Des Imagistes* (1914) did not repeat the commercial success of the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, but it had served its function. Amy Lowell then published a series of Imagist anthologies with Houghton Mifflin between 1915 and 1917 that sold much better than Pound’s work (Carpenter 1988: 254) and further solidified the aesthetic in the press. *Some Imagist Poets: An Annual Anthology* featured the work of Aldington, H. D., Fletcher, Flint, D. H. Lawrence, and Lowell. Similarly, Edith Sitwell used her *Wheels* anthologies (1916–21) to challenge the conservative neo-Romantic *Georgian Poetry* and to promote a group of poets – including of course all three Sitwells, Nancy Cunard, Aldous Huxley, Iris Tree, and Helen Rootham – at the beginning of their careers.

Anthologies could be used to focus broader collective identities that contributed much to modernism, such as a racial identity (see Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (1925)) or a regional identity (like Alice Corbin Henderson’s American Southwest collection, *The Turquoise Trail* (1928)). Other anthologies significant to modernism chose the broadest of editorial principles, presenting themselves simply as collections of important contemporary verse in English (for example, Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson’s *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (1918)). But anthologies were often most effective in helping modernist poets when they chose a more narrowly defined focus. Though anthologist William Stanley Braithwaite included some modernist poetry from 1915 in his widely popular annual *Anthology of Magazine Verse and Year Book of American Poetry* (1913–58), the modernist poetry appeared buried among hundreds of traditional poems from major mainstream publications like the *Century Magazine*, *Scribner’s*, and *Good Housekeeping*. Braithwaite’s principle of inclusiveness often made him the butt of modernist criticism.

Book Publication

Though modernists often first published work in little magazines, or occasionally in anthologies, they ultimately hoped to make some money and put their writing into

a more durable and sometimes more widely distributed book form. And just as many modernists published their own little magazines, many of them, especially those who had been unable to land contracts with major commercial publishers (or who resented the editorial intrusion that those houses often made into their work), created their own small publishing houses. These presses – including, for example, Harriet Shaw Weaver’s Egoist Press and Harold Monro’s Poetry Bookshop in London, Nancy Cunard’s Hours Press and Harry and Caresse Crosby’s Black Sun Press in Paris – sometimes operated on a shoestring to print by hand on inexpensive home printing presses. At other times, they farmed out the printing to commercial printers as they grew in size or produced long novels. They aimed to publish modernist work that would be rejected or constrained in commercial publishing houses, though the paths they took differed – either publishing fairly modest trade editions or producing expensive de luxe limited editions. The Cuala Press in Dublin, which published much of Yeats’s twentieth-century work, even had explicit connections to William Morris’s book publishing (Bornstein 2001: 24–5). I will illustrate these two tendencies with two famous examples: the Hogarth Press and Shakespeare and Company’s first edition of Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press, founded in 1917 in the Woolfs’ drawing-room, freed Virginia and many of her Bloomsbury friends from the constraints and demands of a commercial publishing house. Starting with *Two Stories* by Leonard and Virginia, with four woodcuts by Bloomsbury artist Dora Carrington, they used their small hand press, which could only set two pages at a time, to print an edition of around 150 copies. The Woolfs quickly moved on to other projects and eventually to a larger press (Willis 1992). While the small hand-set edition with artful dust jackets and woodcuts by Bloomsbury artists such as Carrington and Woolf’s sister, Vanessa Bell (who designed the dust jackets for most of Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth books), might seem very much in line with the Arts and Crafts tradition of book making, the Hogarth Press did not make its own type, as Morris’s Kelmscott Press had done, and they quickly encountered the limits of their hand press. When the 150 copies of the hand-printed edition of Woolf’s *Kew Gardens* sold out in June 1919, the Woolfs simply had a commercial printer reprint the volume (Willis 1992: 12). Indeed, Woolf’s novels were printed by commercial printers, given the demands of setting and printing an entire novel on a hand press.

The edition size of Woolf’s mature novels of the 1920s was fairly typical of a commercially successful novel of the day. The initial printing of the first edition of *Mrs. Dalloway* was of 2,000 copies, and *To the Lighthouse* began with a first impression of 3,000 copies, followed quickly by another 1,000 copies for the second impression. These numbers indicate a decent commercial success during the period. (Ford’s popular novel, *The Fifth Queen* (1906) for instance, had sold 2,850 copies in its first two years of publication (Morrisson 2001: 214 n. 6).) *To the Lighthouse* was Woolf’s biggest seller at the time of its publication, with her American publisher, Harcourt Brace, printing 4,000 copies initially. *Orlando* soon became an even greater commercial success, with an initial edition of 5,000 copies published by Hogarth, followed by an immediate second impression of 3,000, and a few months later a third impression of

3,000 copies. Harcourt Brace's first edition was of more than 6,000 copies (Willis 1992: 132–3). Though not best-sellers by current standards, Woolf's novels were commercial successes, and Hogarth served not as a small luxury edition press but as a path to modernist publication in competent and pleasing commercial editions. Willis notes that after *To the Lighthouse* was published in a Uniform Edition in 1930, the Woolfs "established the customary practice of putting each successive book of Virginia's into the cheaper Uniform Edition after several reprintings of the first edition" (155).

The Hogarth Press published 474 titles from 1917 to 1941, the year of Virginia Woolf's suicide, and it accomplished several things. Though the major writers of Bloomsbury other than Virginia Woolf – Forster, Keynes, Fry, and Lytton Strachey – already had contracts with large publishing-houses before the founding of the press, they published with Hogarth pamphlets and shorter works that would have been difficult to place with other publishers. Between the pamphlets, the major poetry by T. S. Eliot and others, the novels, the library of psychoanalysis, the works on socialist and labor politics, and the European literature in translation, Hogarth, as Willis puts it, "became the educational arm of Bloomsbury. The press, its authors, and its publications thus moved Bloomsbury to a more central position in English intellectual and political life than it had usually been accorded" (400). Indeed, three Hogarth authors eventually won Nobel Prizes in literature, and three others won Nobel Prizes for peace. But, perhaps above all, the press allowed Virginia Woolf the freedom to experiment with every novel, to write without a conservative male editor hobbling her at every step, and this freedom allowed her to develop as one of the key modernist fiction writers and a major feminist voice for her generation (Willis 1992: 399–401).

But if the Hogarth Press chose a middle road between mainstream mass-market publishing and limited luxury-edition publication, other modernist presses quickly realized the strategic value of the collector's market. The most famous example of this publishing path is no doubt the first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. As Lawrence Rainey puts it, this first edition, published by subscription by American expatriate Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company, "signaled the decisive entry of modernism into the public sphere via an identifiable process of commodification" (44). As with his earlier fiction, Joyce experienced difficulty getting *Ulysses* published. A legal decision forced the *Little Review* to cease serial publication of *Ulysses*, and that decision caused Joyce's American publisher B. W. Huebsch to refuse to publish the novel without excisions. Joyce arranged with Sylvia Beach, the proprietor of the Parisian bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, to publish a de luxe edition with 100 signed and numbered copies on Dutch handmade paper to sell at 350 francs, 150 numbered copies on larger-sized verge d'arches paper, unsigned, to sell at 250 francs, and 750 numbered copies on handmade paper to sell at 150 francs. Bookstores would only receive a 10% discount, rather than the usual 30–5%, and Joyce would receive a 66% royalty, rather than the 15–20% that an ordinary edition would have paid him, or even the 25–30% a private edition might have earned him (Rainey 1998: 50).

This was a fine deal indeed for Joyce, and, as Rainey notes, it “had the effect of turning every purchaser of the edition into a quasi-patron, someone directly supporting the artist himself” (53). But who were the intended buyers for such an expensive de luxe limited edition? There were several individual buyers, many of them modernist authors, but the press primarily targeted bookstores acting as speculators (who would sell some copies but retain others until the entire edition had sold out and the prices had soared), book collectors, and investors (Rainey 1998: 52–3). A signed first edition of *Ulysses* has sold for as much as \$150,000 and even now it typically fetches from \$60,000 to \$70,000.

This form of modernist publication of de luxe editions was not without its problems. As Rainey concludes, “Here was the final and consummate paradox of modernism. Though we tend to associate modernism with the emergence of the New Criticism and the triumph of close reading, the effect of modernism was not so much to encourage reading as to render it superfluous. What modernism required was not the individual reader but a new and uneasy amalgam of the investor, the collector, and the patron” (56). Not only did such a system set up a monopolistic market practice as arbiter of aesthetic value, but it also was susceptible to the collapse of what Rainey calls “the fragile economy of patron-investors” (73). Moreover, Joyce Wexler (1997) has even argued that the patronage system in which Joyce worked after *Ulysses* cost him, through the obscurity of *Finnegans Wake*: “Caught in the embrace of an avant-garde readership, Joyce sacrificed the Irish public he had once sought” (72).

Yet there were indeed readers of *Ulysses* who were not able to invest in the de luxe Shakespeare and Company edition. Some readers had read much of the novel as it was at least partially serialized in the *Little Review* in America and the *Egoist* in Britain. The Egoist Press was able to bring out a British edition, printed in France, and readers in America were able to read pirated serial editions of the novel in 1926 and 1927. The pornography publisher Samuel Roth brought out a bowdlerized pirated version of the book in serial publication in his *Two Worlds Monthly* that sold perhaps as many as forty thousand copies a month (Wexler 1998: 66). Roth also brought out *Ulysses* in a pirated book edition of 10,000 copies in 1929 before a 1933 court decision lifted the ban on *Ulysses* and the first official American edition was finally published by Random House in 1934.

And finally, I must add that, though they may have been less colorful, many established commercial publishing houses also brought out several modernist titles – sometimes after they had already been published by a small press and attained celebrity, as in the case of Random House publishing *Ulysses*, but sometimes bringing out their first editions. Some of the presses mentioned above – Liveright, Faber and Faber, Macmillan, and Harcourt Brace – are good examples of mainstream presses which invested in modernist publishing. Others are Chatto and Windus, in Britain, which published Lewis and eventually took up the Hogarth Press, and Henry Regnery, the right-wing American publisher that published Lewis and Pound for many years. Other small presses – such as New Directions – founded after the initial years of modernism have carried the torch into a new century.

Finally, the post-Second World War boom in modernism, after the advent of the New Criticism in university classrooms created broader audiences for it, was also made possible by the escalation of mass-market paperback publication of modernist work. The entrance of modernism into the university classroom, indeed, paved the way for modernist works such as *Ulysses*, or *The Great Gatsby*, or even the poetry of T. S. Eliot to reach new audiences – the size of which would have astounded the original small press and little magazine publishers of modernism.

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Sex and Sexuality

Liesl Olson

A discussion of sex and sexuality during the modernist period should begin with the groundbreaking work of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who claimed that all behavior is motivated by the desire to feel pleasure. According to Freud, two instincts – sexuality (*eros*), and aggression, or the death drive (*thanatos*) – are controlled by a powerful form of internal energy that he called the libido. From *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (first published in 1905 and revised over the next twenty years) to his later writings on group psychology, religion, and creativity, Freud emphasized the primacy of the libido, the force, as he saw it, behind the most defining features of human civilization. Through psychical transformations, the libido is not only the stimulus for great works of art, but for social order, and even progress itself. While many of Freud's theories – especially as they relate to the fields of physiology, medicine, and psychology – have been challenged or rejected, he is still recognized as one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. His impact upon how the modern world understands sex and sexuality is so extensive as to be almost imperceptible, creating “a whole climate of opinion” in W. H. Auden's words (1989: 93).

Freud's work had a profound influence upon the literature and art of the modernist period, and upon past and current critical scholarship in modernist studies. His emphasis on bringing into consciousness the conflicts and fantasies of the unconscious helped move contemporary discussions of sexuality out of the Victorian closet. Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press began publishing Freud's work in English during the early 1920s (“a turning point in the dissemination of psychoanalytic theory in England” according to Elizabeth Abel (1989: 1)). Writers like James Joyce, H. D., André Breton, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, and Samuel Beckett, among others, were also deeply interested in (and sometimes suspicious of) Freud's theories of the unconscious, about his method of dream interpretation, and about psychoanalysis more generally as it was practiced by others like Carl Jung and Melanie Klein. And while Freud's influence on modern literature was not always

direct, we might view Freud's investigation of the unconscious as a phenomenon simultaneous with literary modernism's interest in interiority, what Fredric Jameson has called modernism's "strategies of inwardness" (1979: 2) and Georg Lukács has disparaged as modernism's turn toward the subjectivity of the bourgeois self (see Lukács 1963).

We read novels not for the action, E. M. Forster suggested, but in order to experience "the secret life, which each of us lives privately" (1927: 113). This interest in the private life – the "dark places of psychology" in Woolf's words – goes hand in hand with modernism's representation of sex and sexuality (Woolf 1984: 152). Yet the radical inwardness of modernism cannot be extricated entirely from external, historical factors. The discourse of sexuality that exploded during the modernist period is belied by the fact that it has taken much longer for the gendered construction of sexuality to be scrutinized. In *Three Essays*, Freud foresees a critical emphasis on the differences between sexuality and gender, making explicit the fact that they are not the same thing, though Freud's demarcations are not always exact. Michel Foucault argues in his widely influential three-volume *History of Sexuality* ([1976–84] 1978–86) that the concept of sexuality is inherently fluid, and contingent upon particular historical influences. Foucault asserts that there is never simply one singular historical discourse impacting sexuality but multiple discourses, including "demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism" (1978: 33). In this sense, Foucault's work resituates the Marxist idea that modernist literature abandoned social reality in favor of subjective interiority. Modernism's treatment of the interior self – specifically, of sexuality – was inevitably influenced by the historical moment.

The term "sexuality" in fact first appeared during the early nineteenth century in works of both science and literature. Though being sexual and having sex, of course, were not activities that suddenly became more prevalent, the use of the word does suggest a cultural awareness or anxiety about sexuality that emerged in conjunction with other developing fields of knowledge. While Freud was examining individual and social behaviors, advancements in science relating to the biological mechanisms of reproduction were also contributing to a changing discourse about sexuality. For instance, sexuality emerged linguistically at the same time that Margaret Sanger was advocating legal birth control, a term that she coined in lieu of euphemisms like "family limitation" and "voluntary motherhood." Sanger specifically challenged the United States Comstock Act of 1873, which banned the circulation of obscene literature and "any article whatever for the prevention of conception, or for causing unlawful abortion" (Brodie 1994: 256). The Comstock Act made it a federal offense to disseminate contraceptives through the mail or across state lines. Sanger was arrested for opening the first birth-control clinic in 1916. Her campaign for women's reproductive freedom was aided by the suffragist movements of the first decades of the twentieth century. After women won the right to vote, Sanger continued to be instrumental during the 1930s in challenging the provisions of the Comstock Act, which were gradually repealed over the course of subsequent decades.

Simultaneously, the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a growing cultural anxiety about diminishing birth rates among the upper classes, a topic that has received recent critical attention in conjunction with how modernist writers contributed to public debates about “degeneration.” Afraid that less desirable elements in the population – like Jews and Irish Catholics – were outbreeding all others, eugenicists worried that the Anglo-Saxon race would be overrun (see Childs 2001; Greenslade 1994; Pick 1989). So did many of the writers of the modernist period, from Henry James’s concern, on returning to America in 1904, that “alien” immigrants were overwhelming the country, to W. B. Yeats’s endorsement of eugenics in “On the Boiler” (he had joined the Eugenics Society in 1936), to T. S. Eliot’s description of dysfunctional “breeding” in *The Waste Land* (see Bradshaw 1992 and Cheyette 1996). Aged thirty-one, “Lil,” whose husband has been “demobbed,” already has five children, and is unwell after apparently attempting to abort another. Eliot’s “typist” and “young man carbuncular” suffer from a similarly appalling sexual life. While she is “bored and tired” from the dulling effects of mechanized, industrial work in London, he none the less “assaults” her (Eliot 1980: 44, 41). The virile, procreating working classes find a counterpoint in the estranged, cultured couple who cannot communicate, and who perhaps have no sexual life at all, as she explains, “My nerves are bad to-night” (Eliot 1980: 40). In this sense, Eliot’s seminal poem of high modernism pits the degeneration of highbrow culture against a growing working class – a dynamic at work in Eliot’s mix of canonical and popular cultural references in the poem as well.

“Sexual inversion,” as homosexuality was then known, was certainly one sign of cultural decline, according to Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1895), an extremely popular work of pseudoscience. As a Jew and Zionist, Nordau advocated “muscle Jews” – defined by their strength, sexual potency, and moral uprightness. Nordau attacked other marginalized figures, specifically aesthetes, Symbolists, and decadent artists, who he believed were at the heart of the culture’s degeneration. Published as Oscar Wilde was being arrested and convicted of “gross indecency,” *Degeneration* argued against any kind of sexual practice that deviated from the imperative to procreate. Nordau specifically singled out Wilde as the paradigm of sexual degeneracy, suggesting that Wilde’s perverse sexual practices were the result of degenerate erotic urges that could be traced biologically through his ancestors.

Certainly many artists challenged this discourse of degeneration, or presented homosexuality in radically different terms. Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) is a case in point. A novel about lesbian love that was considered radical at the time of its publication, *The Well of Loneliness* draws upon Hall’s own life, recounting the painful loves and losses of Stephen Gordon, an aristocratic Englishwoman coming to terms with her condition as a “female invert.” Hall was influenced by the theories of her friend Havelock Ellis, who argued in *Sexual Inversion* (1897) that homosexuality is not a pathological condition, but an innate disposition, similar in most aspects to heterosexuality. Freud makes a similar point in *Three Essays* (in which he draws upon Ellis’s work), claiming that sexuality is a process independent

of an individual's sex and that all children are born "polymorphously perverse," a term describing how everyone has both homosexual and heterosexual libidinal attachments (Freud 1962: 57). Both "constitutional" and "accidental" factors, according to Freud, interact to influence an individual's choice of sexual object (1962: 12). None the less, Ellis and Freud continued the psychiatric tradition of labeling non-heterosexual sexuality "perversions" and "aberrations."

Similarly drawing upon this language, *The Well of Loneliness* to some extent sustains the cultural stigma that it simultaneously challenges. While advocating the innate nature of "sexual inversion," the novel treats Stephen with more pity than approval. Moreover, *The Well of Loneliness* depicts Stephen's character in terms that are specifically gendered as male, including her athletic ability, her comfort with men's clothing, her physical mannerisms, and her desire to serve in the First World War. In this sense, "female inversion" in *The Well of Loneliness* is defined by a woman's proclivity to feel and act like a man, not by a woman's distinct experiences as a lesbian. Hall's exploration of Stephen's "inner" life suggests that Stephen, becoming a writer, might take on "a curious double insight – writ[ing] both men and women from personal knowledge" (Hall 1990: 205). But this interior doubleness is qualified by Radclyffe's Hall own historically specific understanding of lesbianism as an aberration, albeit inherent, and one which required courage for an individual to acknowledge.

Composed in a style that might befit a nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*, *The Well of Loneliness* contains no graphic depictions of sex. None the less, Hall's novel caused quite a scandal. The editor of the *Sunday Express*, James Douglas, declaimed: "Perhaps it is a blessing in disguise . . . that this novel forces upon our society a disagreeable task which it has hitherto shirked, the task of cleaning itself from the leprosy of these lepers and making the air clean and wholesome once more" (Jivani 1997: 36). Proceedings were brought against Jonathan Cape Ltd., the book's publishers, under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, and the case appeared before the Chief Magistrate of London in November 1928 (Jivani 1997: 37–9). The book was judged (in explicitly anti-homosexual terms) to be obscene and was therefore banned from further sale. Many prominent writers and intellectuals protested the ban in letters to the *Nation* and the *Daily Chronicle*, including Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot, George Bernard Shaw, Lytton Strachey, and Leonard Woolf. While *The Well of Loneliness* was never banned in France or America, it could not be legally purchased in the UK until 1949.

Some of modernism's most famous works – *Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Lolita* – were in fact made famous by the obscenity trials that accompanied their publication, a phenomenon that identifies a breaking-point between emerging artistic freedoms of expression during the modernist period and significant legal barriers concerning the representation (and repression) of sexuality. With *Ulysses*, Joyce was aware of what he was up against, having struggled with Irish publishers regarding the use of the mere word "bloody" in *Dubliners* (Kelly 1991: 238). None the less, Joyce vigorously emphasized the yearnings and pleasures of the sexual body in *Ulysses*. Defecation,

masturbation, menstruation, childbirth and orgasm are central events in a novel centering on the peregrinations of a man exiled from his home while his wife has a sexual tryst.

Molly Bloom's monologue in the novel's final chapter, most notably, has been celebrated for its frank depiction of female sexuality. After reading the novel, Carl Jung wrote to Joyce, "The 40 pages of non stop run in the end is a string of veritable psychological peaches. I suppose the devil's grandmother knows so much about the real psychology of a woman, I didn't" (Ellmann 1959: 642). Nora Joyce, however, apparently told Samuel Beckett, "He knows nothing at all about women," a statement emphasizing the fact that Molly Bloom is a character constructed distinctly by a man (Ellmann 1959: 642). As Brenda Maddox has suggested in *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom*, Molly satisfies male fantasy: "she is lethargic, illogical, unreasonable, vain, self-preoccupied, passive, and always in bed" (Maddox 1988: 208). Moreover, Joyce's description of Molly's afternoon orgasm with Blazes Boylan has been seen as comically exaggerated: "coming for about 5 minutes with my legs round him I had to hug him after O lord I wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all" (Joyce 1934: 754).

But Molly has also been read as a radical feminist. She is critical of Blazes' roughness ("like a Stallion driving it up into you because that's all they want out of you with that determined vicious look in his eye" (Joyce 1934: 726)); she wonders if men may be superfluous and finds naked men amusing ("what a man looks like with his two bags full and his other thing hanging down out of him or sticking up at you like a hatrack no wonder they hide it with a cabbageleaf" (Joyce 1934: 753)); and she fondles herself while having lesbian fantasies ("the smoothest place is right there between this bit here how soft like a peach easy God I wouldnt mind being a man and get up on a lovely woman" (Joyce 1934: 770)). The urgency and humor of Molly Bloom's voice has inspired a diversity of critical opinions regarding the representative nature of Joyce's depiction of women's desire. Moreover, if the previous chapters of *Ulysses* border upon the "obscene," Molly Bloom's monologue ensures that the novel ends by affirming the explicit physicality of the sexual act.

Censorship laws differed by country, and in the case of Joyce's *Ulysses*, these differences made for a checkered publishing history. *Ulysses* was initially published in *The Little Review*, a small Greenwich Village magazine, beginning in installments in 1918, while four selected chapters of the novel were published by Harriet Weaver's *Egoist* in London. After the "Nausicaa" chapter was published by *The Little Review* in 1920 – the chapter in which Bloom masturbates while watching a lame girl by the seashore – the secretary of the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice, John S. Summers, lodged a complaint against the magazine's publishers, Margaret Andersen and Jane Heap. Under obscenity provisions in the United States Postal Code, Andersen and Heap were found guilty of publishing obscenity, fined, and ordered to cease publication (Ellmann 1959: 517–19). When in 1922 Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company published the first full edition of *Ulysses* in Paris, copies immediately sold out, no doubt partly because of the popularity that the American suppression of

Ulysses bestowed upon the novel. The lifting of the United States ban in 1933 came only when Random House waged a long legal battle. After spending several months reading the novel, United States District Court Judge John Woolsey finally ruled that *Ulysses*, as legally defined by the court, was not obscene (defined as: “tending to stir the sex impulses or to lead to sexually impure and lustful thoughts”). Rather, “the effect of ‘Ulysses’ on the reader,” Woolsey wrote, “undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, [but] nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac” (Joyce 1934: xii–xiv).

The works of many modernist writers were considered “obscene” simply because they broached the subject of sexuality in terms that were more frank, or more explicit, than what had gone before. The social repression of sexuality during the modernist period no doubt gave any discussion of it a kind of transgressive power. But as Foucault points out, it is perhaps too easy to think of a history of sexuality in terms of how sexuality has been repressed, since this dynamic bequeaths unqualified revolutionary power to anyone who speaks about it openly (see Foucault 1978: 6). There were a variety of ways in which sexuality was represented during the modernist period, and perhaps these differences in approach are more apparent in genres other than literature, specifically in the visual arts. For example, while Edouard Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) depicts a naked prostitute’s blank ennui, Picasso’s African-masked *Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) rejects formal realism, emphasizing instead a connection between modernity and the primitive. While the two works share some features, perhaps the strongest link may be the shock with which they were received. Neither painter, however, was motivated first and foremost by the desire to scandalize the public.

While frequently at odds with the conventions of a reading public, literary representations of sexuality were similarly diverse in scope and distinguished by very different ideological points of view. Whereas *The Well of Loneliness* depicts “sexual inversion” as an individual’s innate predisposition, Gertrude Stein’s love poem “Lifting Belly,” written around 1917, pays tribute to the erotic life of lesbian lovers using coded words like “cow” for orgasm. Stein’s radical use of language – playful, lyrical, but often indecipherable – is a far cry from Hall’s conservative realism. In one passage, for instance, Stein’s repetition and reordering of the word “Caesar” exemplifies a verbal flexibility that coincides with the poem’s bending of sexual norms:

Did she say jelly
 Jelly my jelly.
 Lifting belly is so round.
 Big Caesars.
 Two Caesars.
 Little seize her.
 Too.
 Did I do my duty.
 Did I wet my knife.
 No I don’t mean whet.
 Exactly four teeth.

Little belly is so kind.
 What did you say about accepting.
 Yes.
 Lifting belly another lifting belly.
 (Stein 1989: 24)

Among other things, “Caesar” suggests a name for a dominant lover, an affectionate command to “seize her,” and a “caesarian” delivery – all meanings that underscore the poem’s exploration of power, pleasure, and the female body. The back-and-forth dialogue of “Lifting Belly,” moreover, evokes the rhythms of the body during sex, or the intimacy of sexual conversation. As many readers have noticed, it takes very little imagination to read explicitly into the poem – and in this sense Stein’s “Lifting Belly” is both stylistically and ideologically revolutionary.

D. H. Lawrence’s enduring fascination with sex, from *Sons and Lovers* (1913) to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), recalls Hall’s formal conservatism even as his open depiction of sexuality – particularly anal sex – astonished readers as much as Stein’s verbal experimentation. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* describes sex as a strange union of historical forces and individual fulfillment, in keeping with Lawrence’s critique of “sexless England” (1968: 508). Lawrence believed that England, in the wake of the First World War, needed to be “regenerated” by the “arising of a new blood-contact, a new touch, a new marriage” (1968: 508). The language of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is more graphic than even Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as the machinery of Joyce’s styles often obscures the exact nature of the sexual event – a fact that Judge Woolsey no doubt recognized when he lifted the ban on Joyce’s novel. Lawrence does not shy away from simple, explicit language. In order to encourage men and women to “think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly,” Lawrence explained that he needed “to use the so-called obscene words, because these are a natural part of the mind’s consciousness of the body” (1968: 489, 490). Sex between Constance (or Connie) Chatterley, the wife of a minor nobleman who has been wounded during the war, and Oliver Mellors, the gamekeeper on the Chatterley estate, summons up a primeval past and sparks Connie’s birth as a “woman”:

She felt his penis risen against her with silent amazing force and assertion, and she let herself go to him. She yielded with a quiver that was like death, she went all open to him. And oh, if he were not tender to her now, how cruel, for she was all open to him and helpless!

. . . But it came with a strange slow thrust of peace, the dark thrust of peace and a ponderous, primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the beginning. And her terror subsided in her breast, her breast dared to be gone in peace, she held nothing. She dared to let go everything, all herself, and be gone in the flood.

. . . Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, . . . till suddenly, in a soft,

shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman. (186–7)

Both frank and hyperbolic, Lawrence's prose marks sex as more than just physically pleasurable – as an experience that is much greater, and much more pure, than the body itself. Connie is obliterated and then “born” again, as if her womanhood is defined by heterosexual sex, even contingent upon the male “thrust” of creation. Lawrence apparently disliked the physical realism of Joyce's sex, conceiving of Connie Chatterley distinctly in contrast to what he found sordid about Molly Bloom (see Delany 1996). “The last part of [Ulysses] is the dirtiest, most indecent, obscene thing ever written,” Lawrence told his wife Frieda (Ellmann 1959: 628). Lawrence wanted to connect sex and the soul: “This Ulysses muck is more disgusting than Casanova,” he said, “I *must* show that it can be done without muck” (Mackenzie 1966: 167). Joyce had a similar opinion of Lawrence's work, referring to “Lady Chatterbox's Lover” and Lawrence's “usual sloppy English” (Ellmann 1959: 628). Despite these comments, Lawrence was aware that he and Joyce had much in common, especially their publishing difficulties. Having faced censorship with his earlier novels, Lawrence had *Lady Chatterley's Lover* printed privately in Florence by Orioli Press in 1928, and distributed by subscription only in Europe and America. The novel was subsequently suppressed and confiscated in the UK and America, though several pirated editions appeared. It was not legally sold in the UK until 1960, after a well-publicized obscenity trial. Commenting on the way in which he and Joyce were most notorious for writing obscene literature, Lawrence wrote in 1922: “We make a choice of Paola and Francesca floating down the winds of hell” (1987: IV, 340).

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Part II
Movements

Literary Symbolism

Marshall C. Olds

As a school of literature, Symbolism refers to three phases of a vital part of the development of literary modernism: first to an artistic movement in France and Belgium during the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century; then, retrospectively and most importantly, to its immediate sources in French poetry beginning in the 1850s; and finally to the influence that both of these had on European and American literatures throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The designation then, had its original and official application to the second and, it must be owned, from a literary point of view the least significant of these phases. The perceived failure of the Symbolist movement to generate major works drew attention to the writers from whom it drew inspiration, and so by the 1920s the especially suggestive term Symbolist had come to be associated primarily with the movement's four great predecessors who remain among the most influential writers of the French tradition, not only with respect to France's poetry but across national boundaries and genres. While the emphasis in this brief introduction will be predominantly literary, it must be pointed out, too, that the second phase, the Symbolist movement proper, played a vital cultural role and is an area where much original research is currently being conducted.

In its primary context, then, Symbolism refers to the four poets who preceded the Symbolist movement: Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98), Paul Verlaine (1844–96), and Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91). They are also the principal sources of influence on many of the writers outside of France who were drawn to the new aesthetic tendency they helped define. Each in his own way was responsible for powerful innovation, having gathered up the principal threads of the French poetic tradition since the sixteenth century along with German, British, and American contributions to Romanticism. Beyond the simple designation of an aesthetic tendency, Symbolism is a useful term as applied to the works of these poets in that it refers at once to an important feature of poetic content and to an attitude toward the figurative operation of literary language.

The symbol became prevalent in modern literature with Romantic poetry and was tied to the visual image. Tropes such as the symbol were especially prominent in nineteenth-century literature which, as Philippe Hamon and others have pointed out, is marked by an increased tendency toward the visual referent. The Romantic symbol is generally an isolated referent – a thing or a place – presented as the embodiment of some greater truth. Moreover, the Romantic poem is usually unambiguous as to what that greater truth is.

Charles Baudelaire is generally credited with having extended the application of the literary symbol beyond the individual instance as it was practiced by the Romantics to reveal the principal function of poetic language. In the sonnet “Correspondances” (Correspondences, 1857), he points to the way in which every element in nature – that is, in all material reality – evokes, or corresponds to, an immaterial essence in much the same way as words evoke images of the things they name:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisent parfois échapper de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

(Nature is a temple where living pillars sometimes emit words that blend together; in passing through it, Man traverses forests of symbols that observe him with a familiar eye.)

Unlike the Romantics for whom symbolic value was invested in a privileged object, for Baudelaire all things have symbolic value. The physical universe, then, is a kind of language that invites a privileged spectator to decipher it, although this does not yield a single message so much as a superior network of associations. In the rest of the sonnet, Baudelaire demonstrates how this “language” works by a process of almost infinite suggestion and cross-reference. Baudelaire likened this to the psychological disorder of synesthesia, whereby a stimulus to one of the five senses elicits a response normally associated with another sense: for instance, when seeing a certain color the viewer will hear a particular sound. Poetically, this allows for great figurative leaps that are presented as metonymy. In the sonnet, Baudelaire’s examples come from among the least tangible of stimuli, smells:

“Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d’enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
– Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,
Ayant l’expansion des choses infinies,
...
Qui chantent les transports de l’esprit et des sens.

(There are smells that are cool like the touch of children’s skin, sweet like oboes, green like prairies, – And others, corrupt, rich and triumphant, having the expansion of infinite things, . . . that sing the transports of the mind and the senses.)

Baudelaire's thought is sometimes associated with the Neoplatonism of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) for whom the material world was but the imperfect image of an ideal one. While Baudelaire often used the vocabulary of an ideal Platonic reality, it was principally to express the distillation that art operates both on the physical world and on memory and experience. Many of his poems show how poetic language operates in creating symbolic value and how the poem itself acquires the status of symbol. Indeed, language is at the heart of the issue and, while Baudelaire did not invent the modern prose poem, he did develop it considerably in his collection of short prose works, *Le Spleen de Paris* (Paris Spleen, 1869), where the narrative symbolic form of allegory replaces the lyric symbol. It is just this insistence on the unique role of literary language that will be a distinguishing feature of Symbolism.

Stéphane Mallarmé was Baudelaire's principal literary heir in the following generation. The younger man's first mature poems were strongly and consciously marked by the elder's. From Baudelaire, Mallarmé also acquired his admiration for Edgar Allan Poe and his appreciation of contemporary poetry's sister arts, music and painting. Beginning in the mid-1860s, however, in poems elaborated painstakingly over years and sometimes decades, Mallarmé developed a poetics that severely challenged the representational function of literary language while maintaining post-Romantic poetry's fundamental relationship to the visual image. Reacting in part against journalism, against literary Realism and, increasingly as the years passed, against the naturalism of Emile Zola, Mallarmé sought an idiom that would suggest rather than describe, invoke speculative doubt rather than analytic certainty, and emphasize words at least as much as their referents. Such an approach puts self-conscious operations of language on an equal footing with the images created by them, so that the symbolic value of the image refers more to associations created within the poem than to relationships outside it. A famous example of Mallarmé's Symbolist poetics is found in the "Swan" sonnet (1885). The poem presents the visually tenuous image of a white, or blank, nothingness: a swan at first light trapped in the winter ice of a lake and covered with frost. With one wing free, the poem speculates, the bird may attempt to liberate itself, but in vain.

Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui
 Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre
 Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre
 Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui!
 Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui
 Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre . . .

(The virginal, ever-recurring, and beautiful new day, might it tear for us with a stroke of its wild wing this hard lake haunted beneath the frost by the transparent glacier of flights not taken! A swan of yesteryear remembers that it is he, magnificent but without hope, who breaks free).

The spasm of its death-song will shake its neck:

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie
Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie . . .

(Its entire neck will shake this white agony inflicted by the space on the bird who denies it).

The end of the poem shifts to the night sky and to the constellation of the Swan (Cygnus):

Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,
Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris
Que vêt parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.

(Phantom assigned to this place by its pure brilliance, it goes motionless in its cold dream of scorn which, amid useless exile, is donned by the Swan.)

The capitalized "Cygne" designates both the constellation and, as an ideal and apotheosized form, the now absent "swan of yesteryear." For many readers, this word suggests its homonym (*Signe*), or "Sign," here referring back to the suggestive absence that has generated it. The poem has produced a symbol, but one that is fundamentally self-referential in pointing to its own origins. (The title of another poem was "Sonnet allégorique de lui-même" (A sonnet, allegorical of itself)). Mallarmé's poetics often rely on such extended meanings suggested through intricate word play, erudite neologisms, the multiple meanings that words may have, and an idiosyncratic though quite consistent practice of syntax allowing for an aleatory sentence structure. As his predecessor had done, Mallarmé applied his understanding of language to prose, especially to his essays (of all genres!), which he referred to as "poèmes critiques" (critical poems). Mallarmé's difficult and somewhat precious style at once is absolutely unique and has come to be viewed as representative of the *fin de siècle* because it was so often imitated, especially by the poets of the Symbolist movement.

The contributions of Paul Verlaine to the aesthetics of Symbolism are two. The first concerns the symbol. His fleeting visual images, often made even less precise by the evocation of indistinct sounds – voices overheard, the wind in the leaves, far-off musical instruments – tend to correspond to feelings, dreams, or imperfectly grasped perceptions. Verlaine's use of the symbol, then, is not to establish correspondences between our material world and an ideal one (even of art or language), but rather to create parallels between external reality and the succession of affective responses that make up much of our inner life. To blur further this boundary between outer and inner worlds, Verlaine often chooses images of an already mediated reality – from literary and or painterly sources, even from garden statuary – instead of drawing directly from nature. Known almost exclusively for his verse, Verlaine made his second major contribution to Symbolist poetics in relation to meter. Possessing an

unusual facility with the French poetic idiom, he used rare rhythmic combinations to great effect, as in “Chanson d’automne” (Autumn Song, 1866) which establishes a pattern of two lines of four syllables followed by a line of three:

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l’automne
Blessent mon cœur
D’une langueur
Monotone. . . .

(The long sobbings of the violins of autumn wound my heart with monotonous languor).

In his important essay “Music and Letters” (1896), Mallarmé pointed out Verlaine as the source of the new poetry’s divergence from the national tradition to become an increasingly individualized mode of expression.

Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91) was literarily precocious, his finest poetry written in the brief period between the ages of fifteen and twenty (1870–5), after which time he abandoned literature altogether. His styles changed rapidly, often within weeks. The earliest poems from this period, some of which would later influence Surrealist poets like René Char, were already intensely visual, even visionary in their imaginative reach. Symbolic content was often related to the child-seer himself, as in “Le Bateau ivre” (The Drunken Boat, 1871), or to a very personal universe cryptically revealed through language, as in “Voyelles” (Vowels, 1871). *Illuminations*, the collection of prose poems composed during the last year and a half of poetic activity and published in 1886 by Verlaine, are landscapes and brief narratives in which Rimbaud makes use of an impressive range of sentence structures. The narratives are animated visions (“Royauté,” “Conte,” “Being Beauteous”). Visual movement is also central to the landscapes which often rely on the motion of the sun (“Ornières,” “Marine”). All of the illuminated scenes suggest great change, whether toward strength and beauty or toward decline, not only in the observer or protagonist, but in entire populations or civilizations (“Villes,” “Mystique”). The symbolic or allegorical meaning of these pieces remains intensely personal and enigmatic. A rare intervention by the poet-narrator seems to speak to the entire collection, “J’ai seul la clé de cette parade sauvage” (I alone have the key to this barbarous parade) (“Parade”).

In its specifically literary context, the term Symbolist was first used in the 1886 manifesto published by Jean Moréas in the literary review *La Vogue*. Moréas was defending the group of young poets of which he was a part from the charge of decadence leveled against a poetics that relied on a “musical” understanding of syntax, preciousness of diction, arcane references, and non-mimetic images springing from the personal imagination. Decadence was a term in wide circulation. In J.-K. Huysmans’s influential novel *A rebours* (*Against the Grain*, 1884), a naturalist though not unsympathetic *summu*m of the period, the aesthete hero des Esseintes professes admiration for the poetry of Rome’s decadent period, with which he sees contemporary

parallels, Mallarmé prominent among them. By the late 1880s, the terms Decadent and Symbolist were nearly synonymous, both referring to a high degree of individuality and a disregard for aesthetic norms, the latter, though, specifically designating a sensibility associated with “le rêve” (dream) or “l’idée” (the idea). The Decadence and Symbolism of the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century may be viewed as two different emphases within the same movement.

Much of this Symbolist writing is considered today to be stylistically and thematically derivative of the four poets discussed above. A few major writers did emerge from this generation, however. Paul Valéry (1871–1945), Mallarmé’s most prominent disciple, combined psychological states of anticipation with abstract speculation (*Monsieur Teste*, *Charmes*); poet and playwright Paul Claudel (1868–1955) revitalized Christian symbolism (*L’Hôte*, *Cinq grandes odes*); and Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949) applied Germanic folk sources and the fantastic to the new hermetic style (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *L’Oiseau bleu*).

The Symbolist movement of 1886–1900 was especially prominent in the other arts. Some of the period’s most often treated subjects – Salome and Saint John, Jacob wrestling with the Angel, Narcissus – were taken up by painters such as Gustave Moreau, Paul Gauguin, and Odilon Redon. There were related developments in architecture and design, notably with the art deco style. In music, Claude Debussy’s revolutionary “Prélude à L’Après-midi d’un faune” (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, 1894) was an orchestral response to Mallarmé’s epoch-making poem, “L’Après-midi d’un faune” (1876). Debussy also set Maeterlinck’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* as an opera (1902). Richard Strauss’s opera *Salome* (1905) returned to that quintessentially Symbolist heroine. Symbolist poems were frequently set as art songs by the most innovative composers writing up to 1917 – along with Debussy, Gabriel Fauré and Maurice Ravel, among others.

The literary culture of the Symbolist movement was vibrant. The bohemian faction congregated around Verlaine in the Left Bank cafés, while those more inclined toward idealism and aesthetic theory frequented Mallarmé’s Tuesday gatherings at his apartment in the Rue de Rome. Literary reviews espousing Symbolism proliferated after 1886, each having its own bias. Among the most significant were: *La Pléiade*, publishing the Belgian poets; *La Vogue* specializing in free verse and publishing Rimbaud’s *Illuminations*; the *Revue Indépendante* publishing important essays on the new aesthetics, notably by Mallarmé; *La Revue Blanche* cast the widest net, publishing young non-French writers, such as the American Francis Vielé-Griffin (1864–1937), giving a voice through Léon Blum and others to Jewish culture, promoting Dreyfusism, and establishing the ties between the political anarchism of the 1880s and 1890s and the individualist tendencies inherent in Symbolist aesthetics. André Gide (1869–1951) and Marcel Proust (1871–1922), whose stylized syntax and psychological use of metaphor would revolutionize prose narrative in France, had their first publications in these reviews. Collectively, these often ephemeral periodicals were a veritable laboratory for new aesthetic and social ideas.

From its beginnings, Symbolism had an international character. Among its major sources were Poe, Swinburne, Wagner, and later, Whitman. Early projects looked

beyond national borders, as with Mallarmé's attempt in the early 1870s to create an international confraternity of poets. Finally, one must recognize the diverse nationalities represented by the young writers drawn to the movement of 1886 and to Mallarmé's Tuesdays: Belgian (Emile Verhaeren, Georges Rodenbach), Greek (Moréas), Polish (Teodor Wyzewa), American (Stuart Merrill), Irish (Oscar Wilde). This international profile (viewed by some as non-French) was not without negative repercussions in the France of the 1890s marked by the xenophobia of the Dreyfus Affair. More positively, though, it encouraged the spread of Symbolism beyond France and Belgium to other traditions reacting against Realism. Symbolism is considered today to have become a fully European literary movement, from Hungary (Endry Ady, 1877–1919) to Portugal (Eugenio de Castro, 1869–1944). Among the most important figures associated with Symbolism were the Russian poet Aleksandr Blok (1880–1921), the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), and the German poets Stefan Georg (1868–1933) and Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926).

In the Americas, Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867–1916) employed Verlainian musicality to liberate Spanish verse from its prosodic traditions. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Symbolism, along with Surrealism, had a pervasive influence on Latin American literature. A major instance is that of Mexican poet and novelist, Octavio Paz (1914–98) whose work establishes ties between Mallarméan influences and mysticism.

In Britain and the United States, the role of Symbolism has been significant in the development of modernist prose and poetry. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), by British poet and critic Arthur Symons, had widespread influence, bringing the younger French poets to the attention of William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) and James Joyce (1882–1941), both of whom would be further marked by Mallarmé's late poems and essays. The British novel of the early twentieth century saw the use of images and symbols supplanting realist narrative devices, not only in the work of Joyce but also in that of Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) adapted Symbolist aesthetics to his own very individual poetic style and to his critical writing (his notion of the objective correlative, especially). Eliot's deep appreciation of Symbolism's hermetic nature and formal complexities in turn influenced, in the period between the world wars, the analytical criticism of the Cambridge Critics in England and the New Criticism in the United States, as well as American poets Ezra Pound (1885–1972), John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974), and Wallace Stevens (1879–1955).

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Dada

Robert Short

If modernism, in Robert Hughes's famous phrase, delivered "the shock of the new," then Dada was its most fundamentalist avant-garde. For many of its adherents, Dada was scandal for scandal's sake. The machine-gun rattle of its two-syllable moniker summed up its manifesto and stood for its program. Unlike its near relation, Surrealism, which kept going as an organized movement for fifty years or so, Dada's shock was short and sharp. Its bonfire of the certainties that was kindled in 1916 and burst into flames a couple of years later had burned itself out by 1923.

The onomatopoeic label "Dada" was discovered, according to the most favored – though inevitably disputed – account, by lucky chance in Zurich, when the Romanian-born poet Tristan Tzara inserted a knife at random into a dictionary. (It also happened to pinpoint the brand-name of a hair lotion advertised widely in Zurich at the time.) In any case, it was seized on because it sounded like infantile babble. It also meant something – albeit something different – in just about every language on earth. Thereafter, Dada went in for defining itself in countless, contradictory manifestos, most explosively perhaps in Tzara's "Manifeste Dada 1918," where Dada is called "the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE."

That Dada was necessary and not just a self-indulgent game for alienated bohemians was demonstrated by the simultaneous advent of Dada-like phenomena in world art capitals as distant as New York, Barcelona, and Berlin, and by the rapidity with which Dada was welcomed all over Europe once the word was out. Fleshed out, Dada inspired a succession of memorable provocative gestures, actions, and happenings, rather than works of art as traditionally understood. The most famously iconic of these have come to typify Dada for later generations. Marcel Duchamp added a moustache to a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, retitling it *L.H.O.O.Q.* ("She's got hot pants"). Francis Picabia labeled an ink blot the "Immaculate Conception." Man Ray studded the operating surface of a commercial flat iron with tintacks and called it "Gift." In Hanover, Kurt Schwitters – when he was not making over his

apartment as a Caligari-esque “Merzbau” – used to gather up used tram tickets and other ephemera and detritus from the pavements and gutters and assemble them into abstract art. In Cologne, Max Ernst and friends mounted an art show entered through a gentlemen’s urinal and featuring an ax which visitors were invited to use on the other exhibits. As for the Dadas of Paris, they promised that Charlie Chaplin would grace one of their events and that they would shave themselves bald on stage.

That the Dada explosion occurred when it did was hardly accidental. Wherever they might be located, the Dadas’ primary motivation was protest against the First World War. The instigators of the first Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich were almost all expatriates who had migrated to neutral Switzerland from their home countries in order to avoid being caught up in what they saw as the debacle of Western civilization. The presence of Marcel Duchamp in New York or Francis Picabia in Barcelona was similarly explained. Dada turned its intellectual fire on the cults of national aggrandizement and materialism that they were certain had led to the assembly-line slaughter. A movement of artists and writers, Dada was bound to turn on the institutions of art and literature themselves because both had to be acknowledged as products, reflections, and even supporters of the dominant culture that had unleashed the war and were thus criminally implicated. But rather than being overtly political, like say, a Lenin or a Romain Rolland who shared their Swiss refuge, Dada’s revolt was primarily moral and expressed itself in the cultural sphere of the “symbolic.” In a spirit of generalized skepticism and aggressive iconoclasm, the Dadas set about dismantling aesthetic conventions and debunking the received canons of reason, taste, hierarchy, and social discipline. In their place, they cultivated chance, the arbitrary, the unconscious, the primitive, the cosmic, and the anarchically vitalist – just about anything and everything indeed that was anathema to the mentality of right-thinking people and warmongers.

It is difficult to imagine Dada happening without the First World War. Nevertheless, there were all sorts of avatars of its spirit among the pre-war avant-gardes. Early modernism, born in a climate heavily influenced by the ideas of Einstein and of Freud, had already queried the capacity of conventional discourses to communicate authentically the experience of contemporary life. Hugo von Hofmannsthal had announced a “crisis of language” thanks to which words had become disconnected from meaning. Cubism had disconnected visual representation from the world of appearances. In terms of formal innovation, Dada was not especially original. It took collage from Cubism. Its eccentricities with typography went back to Apollinaire and to Futurism. Marcel Duchamp’s first “readymade,” consisting of a bicycle wheel mounted on an upside-down stool, was created in France in 1913. It could be argued that the Dadas, by fleeing to countries “above the struggle,” were simply maintaining the impetus of a pre-war avant-gardism that was brutally interrupted by the “recall to order” among the belligerent powers – with the caveat that the Dadas saw themselves as a movement of the spirit rather than just another aesthetic “ism” jockeying for a position ahead of the game.

Because Dada was essentially an attitude of mind, it is not easy to determine when and where it made its first appearance. A good case, however, can be made for New York, where the Dada spirit was unmistakably active well before its official baptism in Zurich in 1916. Its foci on the Hudson were the salon of the rich art collector Walter Conrad Arensberg and the circle round the photographer Alfred Stieglitz and his magazines, *Camera Work* and *291*. Apart from Man Ray, the leading figures, Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia, hailed from old Europe, fleeing from the conflict there in June 1915. Dada before the word, Duchamp had already caused a commotion at the notorious 1913 Manhattan Armory Show with his Cubist-inspired *Nude Descending a Staircase*. New York Dada never had a formal program. Its mood was exuberant, undogmatic and irresponsible – a kind of urban carnival. But its three instigators were at one in their resolve to “unlearn painting,” to destroy the myth of art with a capital “A,” and to question the meaning and status of the creative act itself. Nothing could have been more Dada.

Dada acquired its *état civil* and self-consciousness in Zurich and it was from landlocked Switzerland – “a birdcage surrounded by roaring lions” according to Hugo Ball – that the manifestos, reviews, and correspondence issued which internationalized the Dada phenomenon. Its mental climate was already established by the summer of 1916 in the nightly performances at its first headquarters, the Cabaret Voltaire. Hans/Jean Arp evoked the frenzied mood as paying customers were provoked into near-riot by the Dadas’ antics on the stage: “Total pandemonium. The people around us are shouting, laughing and gesticulating. Our replies are sighs of love, volleys of hiccups, poems, moos and miaowing of medieval Bruitists. Tzara is wriggling his behind like the belly of an oriental dancer. Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping. Madame Hennings, with a Madonna face, is doing the splits. Huelsenbeck is banging away non-stop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying them on the piano, pale as a ghost.”

But there was an earnest intent behind the Zurich Dada rowdyism. Hugo Ball was a disciple of the anarchist Bakunin, whose motto was *Destruam ut aedificabo* – “Destruction is a prelude to rebuilding.” For Ball, image-smashing was only a preliminary act of mental hygiene after which the real task of rehabilitating art as “a meaningful instrument of life” could begin. The primitivism of the sound poem was a step toward a pristine, Adamic language. The invocation of unconscious forces was part of a controlled psychological regression which would form the basis of a social “rebeginning.” Similarly Hans Arp credited art with the power of healing and of ending the rift between Man and Nature which he saw behind civilization’s ongoing suicide. His remedy for discord at first took the form of austere, geometrical work whose symmetry and abstraction seemed to him to possess the quality of universality. Zurich Dada, especially in its first years, gave space to naive, mystical aspirations and various forms of social utopianism. In formal respects also, it was heterogeneous, drawing on Marinetti’s Futurism for its simultaneous poetry and bruitism, on German Expressionism for its caricatural distortions, distrust of reason and hostility toward bourgeois, industrial society. Symbolism, Cubism, and Constructivism were other

elements thrown into the Zurich Dada melting-pot. Such eclecticism was hardly surprising given the diversity of the community of expatriates thrown together there, at one only in their abhorrence of the war and their determination to keep out of it. By 1918, Tzara, with the aid of Walter Serer, and of Francis Picabia who had recently arrived in Switzerland, was able to stamp the Dada label with a more single-minded and aggressive nihilism, at the cost of a growing rift with artists who were seeking once again to “become a positive force in life.” Soon after, peace was signed. The exiles returned to the native lands and Zurich Dada petered out.

Elsewhere, Richard Huelsenbeck, phonetic poet and “Dada drummer,” had already rallied a formidable band of Dadas in Berlin after he went back in the spring of 1917. Leading figures in this Dada Club were Franz Jung, the photomontagist John Heartfield, his brother Wieland Herzfelde, George Grosz, Hannah Hoch, Raoul Hausmann, and Johannes Baader, self-styled “Oberdada” (“Super-Dada”) and founder of Christ & Co. Ltd. Berlin Dada’s first task was to see off its domestic rival, from whose ranks most of the Dadas were themselves renegades. Expressionism was denounced for its typically German Romantic inwardness, for its growing conformism and general loss of nerve. Action, increasingly violent and political, was what counted for the Berlin Dadas. The political context in the war-torn and incipiently revolutionary German capital necessitated this militancy. So in a succession of swiftly banned reviews, the Berlin Dadas campaigned in turn with the Spartakists and the communists. At their first International Dada Fair in 1920, they hung a dummy dressed in a German officer’s uniform from the gallery ceiling; it had a pig’s head and a placard, “Hanged by the Revolution!” Hausmann urged that the simultanist poem should become the communist state prayer and the churches be requisitioned for Dada performances. Perhaps Berlin Dada’s fate was to be too closely tied to that of the German Revolution. When the latter was routed, the Dada Club itself disintegrated, riven with ideological discord. Nevertheless it forged formidable subversive weapons in the satirical art of George Grosz and in “photomontage” – the reassembling of disparate visual materials to comically aggressive effect – a technique which has done sterling agitprop service for divers Leftist causes ever since.

Dada, animated largely by Max Ernst and Johannes Theodor Baargeld, was lively in Cologne between 1919 and 1922. In Hanover, under the name of *Merz*, one-man band Kurt Schwitters kept playing Dada tunes longer than anywhere else. And ephemeral Dada-like manifestations have been discerned in many other major European cities. But unquestionably, it was in Paris, the world capital of modernism in the arts, that Dada made its biggest impact and reached its apogee. Nowhere else did Dada so accurately correspond to the stereotype that has gone down in history – a compound of noisy demonstrations, destructive humor, categorical refusal, and universal doubt. Dada activists from most of the other, earlier centers of activity converged on the “City of Light.” The war and demobilization meant that Dada had been a long time coming. In fact it had to await the arrival from Zurich in January 1920 of Dada impresario Tristan Tzara – backed as usual by Francis Picabia who was already in residence – for Dada to break out on the banks of the Seine. An impatient

and wildly expectant welcome was given Tzara/Dada by a whole cohort of disaffected young poets grouped around a disparate roster of avant-garde reviews: *Nord-Sud*, *Sic*, *Z*, *Proverbe*, *Projecteur*, 391. . . . But by far the most important was *Littérature*, edited by André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Philippe Soupault, the nucleus of what was to become, three years later, Surrealism. Still hesitant about the direction in which poetry should go – if any – the *Littérature* group saw in Dada a sharp and salutary cauterizing operation on corrupted forms, after which a fresh start could be made. Throughout the spring of 1920, Dada's Paris season of soirées, lectures, and salons brought public indignation to a paroxysm. Techniques of provocation that had been tried out at the Cabaret Voltaire were brought to a fine art. A major element in these programs was the recitation of Dada manifestos whose nihilism was unparalleled:

Dada itself feels nothing, it is nothing, nothing, nothing
It is like your hopes, nothing
Like your heaven, nothing
Like your idols, nothing
Like your politicians, nothing
Like your heroes, nothing
Like your artists, nothing.

But when scandal and shock turned into celebrity and Paris learned how to love Dada, it quickly became the victim of its own success. And its commitment to anarchy and disorder contributed to its own demise. Before long, the Paris Dadas were turning their derision on each other. Dada events descended into internecine punch-ups. At the center of it all was the fundamental clash between Dadas loyal to Tristan Tzara, who wanted to keep going with more of the same cultural guerrilla exercises, and the group around André Breton, who were determined to move on. By early 1922, Dada in Paris was effectively dead.

What did the brief trajectory of Dada's fiery comet leave behind it? Most immediately, in Paris, it led on to Surrealism. Former Dadas like the Germans Hans Arp and Max Ernst and the Belgians René Magritte and Edouard Mesens transformed themselves effortlessly into Surrealists. The great majority of erstwhile Dadas had been recruited into the ranks of Surrealism by 1924 – although Tzara and Picabia were notable refuseniks. The Dada experience had radicalized and lent muscle to initially tentative rebelliousness on the part of André Breton and the group around *Littérature*. Their falling out with Dada was more than just competitiveness within the avant-gardes' institution. For example, where automatism for the Dadas had been just another weapon for bashing reason and denigrating the mind as a site of mechanistic abjection, for the Surrealists, following cues from Freud, automatism was a portal into the unconscious: not a nonsense, but the privileged source – along with dreams – of an innocent, regenerative language, rich in imagery both verbal and visual, that was uncontaminated by cultural conditioning. And while Dadas treated love derisively, the Surrealists worshiped romantically at its altar.

Dada was a temporary meeting-point for a significant number of modernism's pioneering artists. Paradoxically, the repudiation of art proved to be a stimulus to art. Laying waste possesses its own aesthetic, albeit a minimalist one. In the longer term, Dada became a benchmark for all sorts of cultural negation and exuberant waywardness. By simultaneously rubbishing art in the received canon and proclaiming as art anything an artist chose to call so – even, in Duchamp's case, a mass-produced gentlemen's urinal – the Dadas posed the question "What is art?" that has been central to aesthetic debate ever since and part of the *raison d'être* of Pop Art, minimalism, and conceptual art. Unsurprisingly, Dada's specter rose again after the Second World War, in the light of atrocities that rendered indecent the consolations of art. As Adorno had it: "No poetry after Auschwitz." There were powerful echoes of Dada in the *Cobra* movement and in the Theatre of the Absurd. The cut-up techniques of writers such as William Burroughs and B. S. Johnson looked back to Tzara's texts made by pulling words at random out of a hat. Politically, the Dada spirit made a comeback in the anarchistic urban protest of the Situationists, who themselves helped spark the "Events" of 1968. While it maintained modernism "as usual" in the midst of the killing of 1914–18, Dada punctured modernism's prevalent optimism and, in its skepticism about so many of the humanist convictions that still underlay the modernist enterprise, it powerfully prefigured the later twentieth century's postmodernism.

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Futurism

Tyrus Miller

The Futurist movement began in 1909 with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," published first in *Le Figaro* in Paris, then in several other European newspapers in the coming weeks. In colorful, attention-grabbing, often humorous style, Marinetti announced Futurism as a movement of accelerated modernization, of ecstatic optimism in technology and urban life, and of national renewal for an Italy crushed by its pre-modern past and sick with the "smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni* and antiquarians" (Apollonio 1973: 22), in the words of the founding manifesto. Futurism projected a new European cultural role for emergent Italian metropolises such as Milan and Turin, rivaling the hegemonic centers of European modernity of the time, London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. Committed to the most modern manifestations of the present day, Futurists extolled the noise and clamor of their great cities, the speed of automobiles and airplanes, the mobility and abstraction of high finance, and the aggressive power of enraged crowds. Soon, through the affiliation of talented young visual artists and theorists such as Carlo Carrà, Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini, Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero, and Antonio Sant'Elia, the Futurist movement was depicting modern life as a dynamically unfolding force-field of bodies in motion, technologies, and urban spaces. In their programmatic writings, they sought to envision a multifaceted, multimedial art that could measure up to and tap the sources of modern power and energy. They wanted to wrench art out of separate, sacred spaces of contemplation in which its forces remained dormant – the domestic interior, the library, the museum – and to maximize the work's emotional impact. They desired an art that could arouse intense feelings and directly motivate material transformations in the everyday life of Italian city-dwellers, while elevating the prestige of Italy in the international arena. Engaging in a vigorous program of international publicity and propaganda in pursuit of these goals, they helped to give rise to like-minded, though independent, tendencies in Russia, Britain, France, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and even Japan. But as the final synthesis and acme of all these

Futurist aims – modernization, mass mobilization, liberation from tradition, technological innovation, and national self-assertion in Europe – they looked to militant politics and nationalist war, which they found united in Mussolini’s Fascist vision.

Indeed, already in 1924, the conservative anti-Fascist philosopher Benedetto Croce had gone so far as to claim that Fascism could legitimately be seen as the *beir* of Futurism, rather than the Futurists being merely artistic fellow travelers of the Fascist movement, or worse, the cultural servants of the Fascist state, as they would in fact subsequently become. Croce writes:

For anyone who has a sense of historical connections, the ideological origins of Fascism can be found in Futurism, in the determination to go down into the streets, to impose their own opinion, to stop the mouths of those who disagree, not to fear riots or fights, in this eagerness to break with all traditions, in this exaltation of youth which was characteristic of Futurism. (Quoted in Taylor 1974, 1979: 12)

At the level of theoretical sources, both the Futurist and Fascist movements sought inspiration in such key European thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Georges Sorel to justify their activist, vitalistic, irrationalist ideology. In practical terms, both combined an aggressive revolutionary militancy with fierce nationalism and anti-communism. Both disdained the slow-moving, passive, corruptible institutions of liberal democracy in favor of oratory, force, and mass mobilization on the streets. And in direct political terms, many – though not all – of the early Futurists who survived the First World War became intellectual cadres in the Fascist movement, already in 1918 founding Fascist Futurist Clubs in Ferrara, Florence, Rome, and Taranto. Marinetti, the single most representative figure of the Italian Futurist movement, remained loyal even to the butt end of the Fascist regime, dreaming still in 1944 of a revival of Futurism through the murderous Nazi-collaborationist “Social Republic” established near the war’s end on Lake Garda near Verona.

In a much-quoted remark in his 1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility,” the German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin offered a brief political diagnosis of this seminal avant-garde movement. Futurism, Benjamin wrote, elevated war into an object of aesthetic beauty. This aesthetic glorifying of war, in turn, constituted Futurism’s essential link to Fascism, already forged shortly after the First World War, during Fascism’s early years of struggle for power. Though Benjamin was explicitly referring to a manifesto from the 1930s (Marinetti’s manifesto for the colonial war in Ethiopia, launched by Mussolini in 1935), he might just as well have cited the more classic Futurist documents of the 1910s, when it was a new, vital artistic and political movement. As evidence of Futurism’s militarism, he might, indeed, have cited a notorious passage in Futurism’s originating document, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” penned by Marinetti and published in Paris on February 20, 1909. Point nine of the Manifesto reads: “We will glorify war – the world’s only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women” (Apollonio

1973: 22). Or he might have referred to Marinetti's diagrammatic "Futurist Synthesis of the War," which opposed such allied countries as Serbia, Belgium, France, Britain, Russia, Montenegro, Japan, and Italy to Germany, Austria, and Turkey. While such characteristics as "independence" and "ambition" are associated on the chart with Serbia or "intelligence" and "courage" with France (and likewise for all the allied countries), their enemies receive only a litany of insults ranging from German "sheepishness" and "constipation of industrial camelots" to Austrian "clotted blood" and "bedbugs – priests" to the dismissive ascription of "= 0" as Turkey's defining quality. The whole diagram of warring countries is traversed by a wedge, penetrating the bad German, Austrian, and Turkish alliance and marking a divide between "Futurism" and "Passéism." He might also have presented as evidence Marinetti's poetic text *Zang Tumb Tuuum*, published in 1914, which attempts to recreate the sensory experience of warfare in the Balkans in October 1912, the battle of Adrianopolis between Turkish and Bulgarian forces. As he explains in "Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility," a manifesto from 1914, Marinetti saw in war the optimal means to the Futurist goal of dispersing the ego, to scatter "it into the universal vibration and reach the point of expressing the infinitely small and the vibrations of molecules. . . . Thus the poetry of cosmic forces supplants the poetry of the human" (Apollonio 1973: 155). The new, super- and trans-individual aesthetic intensities offered by modern technology – and above all, the technology of modern warfare – more than compensate for the cost in human lives, as Marinetti sees it: "I observed in the battery of Suni, at Sidi-Messri, in October 1911, how the shining, aggressive flight of a cannonball, red hot in the sun and speeded by fire, makes the sight of flayed and dying human flesh almost negligible" (Apollonio 1973: 155–6). In sum, Marinetti could claim in his November 29, 1914 call to students that the war was the most beautiful Futurist poem yet.

This picture of an organic link between Futurism and Fascism, between Futurist art and militarism is complicated by the early existence of a parallel Futurist movement in Russia, the Ukraine, and Georgia, which exhibited many of the same artistic and cultural features of Italian Futurism yet embraced, in the main, an antipodal left-wing, communist, or anarchistic orientation. Unlike the highly centralized, relatively uniform Italian Futurist movement, in which the leadership of Marinetti held clear sway, the Eastern European Futurists were factional, fractious, and dispersed among several camps and locales. There were distinct versions of Futurism with defined thematic and stylistic foci, articulated theoretical positions, exclusive publications, and central personages: ego-Futurism, cubo-Futurism, the "Mezzanine of Poetry" and "Centrifuge" groups, the Company 41° (which operated out of Tiflis, Georgia), and the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) during the Soviet period. Although there was some knowledge of Italian Futurism among the Russian artists and even a rather disastrous visit by Marinetti in January 1914, the Russians were split between a majority who dismissed the Italian poet and those, like the Mezzanine figurehead Vadim Shershenevich, who propagated Marinetti's words and thinking. The existence of this parallel, internally differentiated Futurist movement in Russia and Eastern

Europe suggests that the political expression of the Futurist aesthetic may depend more on specific personalities and context rather than on some essential features of the Futurist world-view.

A crucial distinction between Italian and Russian Futurism lay in the former's resolute embrace of technology, the dynamism of capitalism, and the modern city, while the Russians remained ambivalent toward modernity and its manifestations. In his 1914 "Manifesto of Futurist Architecture," Antonio Sant'Elia clearly expressed the Italians' hopes for a transfigured urban life as the object of their artistic agitation:

We are the men of the great hotels, the railway stations, the immense streets, colossal ports, covered markets, luminous arcades, straight roads and beneficial demolitions.

We must invent and rebuild the Futurist city like an immense and tumultuous shipyard, agile, mobile and dynamic in every detail; and the Futurist house must be like a gigantic machine. (Apollonio 1973: 170)

But, as Anna Lawton points out, several of the key Russian Futurists reveal a strong "primitivist" streak, an "underlying archaism," that led to anxious ambivalence toward the modern city and to a nostalgically utopian search for roots, linguistic and mythic, in Slavic language, culture, and history (Lawton and Eagle 1988: xx). Typical in this regard is the Russian Futurist Velimir Khlebnikov, who investigated the roots of the Russian language to invent new, "transrational" (*zaum*) words expressing contents that were putatively deeper than those of conventional language. Thus, in a section of his long visionary poem *Zangezi*, he plays with the Russian root "um" (meaning "mind"; note too that the Russian Futurists' keyword "zaum" shares this root, "za-um," "trans-mental," "trans-rational"):

Suum.
 Izum.
 Neum.
 Naum.
 Dvuum.
 Treum.
 Deum.
 Bom!
 Zoum.
 Koum.
 Soum.
 Poum.
 Glaum.
 Raum.
 Noum.
 Nuum.
 Vyum.
 Bom! bom, bom!

It's the big booming bell of the mind.
 Diving sounds flying down from above
 at the summons of men.
 Beautiful is the tolling of the mind.
 Beautiful are its pure sounds.
 (Proffer and Proffer 1980: 26)

Similarly, in another long, apocalyptic vision, "Goodworld," Khlebnikov evokes the cosmic intercourse of the world in the form of the mythic, prelapsarian speech of the major rivers:

Where the Volga will say "I,"
 The Yangtze will add "love,"
 And the Mississippi – "all of,"
 Old Man Danube will add "the,"
 And the Ganges's waters – "world."
 (Proffer and Proffer 1980: 29)

The Italian Futurists themselves might extol the irrational intensities of the emotions over abstract thought, and even claim, as did the painters Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini in 1912, the need "to forget entirely one's intellectual culture" in order to become "the primitives of a completely renovated sensitiveness." Yet it is clear that their appeal to "primitiveness" has nothing to do with returning to or recovering the archaic or mythic past. Rather, it implied wiping the past clean and starting with a "primal" receptiveness to the new worlds of speed, technology, and urban experience. An anecdote narrated by the literary critic and linguist Roman Jakobson, then a close fellow traveler of the Russian Futurists, captures well this divide between Marinetti's radical anti-traditionalism and the Russians' explosive mixture of ultramodernity and archaism. As a proficient speaker of French, Jakobson was enlisted as translator during Marinetti's visit to Russia in 1914. He recounts the following conversation: "[Marinetti] asked me whom I considered to be a Futurist. I replied – Khlebnikov, to which Marinetti responded that he was a poet who wrote in the stone age, not a poet who knew our time. I answered with all the impertinence I could summon up, being still a child but already a Futurist: 'Vous le dites, parce que vous vous comprenez dans les femmes, mais pas dans les poèmes' (You say that, because you understand women but not poems)" (Jakobson 1992: 21).

In his essay on "Futurism as Social Phenomenon," the Soviet critic Boris Arvatov, defending Futurism against the charge of bourgeois decadence, downplayed the split between Italian and Russian Futurism and argued for a common social orientation of the two wings of Futurism. He identified a number of progressive elements of Futurist theory and practice, despite the associations of Italian Futurism with Fascism and of the Russian Futurists with the Soviet state. Futurism as an artistic movement, Arvatov believed, was socially rooted in a particular segment of the bourgeois class, the "technical intelligentsia," who had an interest in sweeping away traditional

obstacles to technological change and other forms of modernization. This remains, in his view, a progressive task in both Italy and the USSR, especially given the relatively low level of urbanism and industrialism in both countries at that time. Several positive features of Futurism's aesthetics follow from this social origin in the technical intelligentsia. As artists, the Futurists have an especially attentive understanding of objects and their dynamics, a crucial awareness for modern life. They orient themselves toward technique and the "positive processing of materials," shifting art's task from "passive reproduction of life" to "autonomous transformation of materials" (Arvatov 1972: 100). They effectively destroy the divisions between the aesthetic and the utilitarian. Through their publicity and public performances, they seek direct contact with their public, thus removing art from its special preserves and bringing it into effective relation with everyday life. Finally, they argue that art needed to be rooted in its epoch and hence "emphasized the principle of the social-historical relativity in aesthetics" (Arvatov 1972: 99), a crucial tenet of any materialist art history and criticism.

From our present-day perspective, it is all too easy to dismiss as doomed wishful thinking Arvatov's attempt to salvage the Futurist legacy for a Soviet art politics that was on the brink of turning toward socialist realism and becoming little more than a servile purveyor of state ideology. Nevertheless, in his attempt to defend Futurism against its attackers, he offers what is perhaps still the best set of criteria for evaluating the enduring achievements of the movement. In their theoretical expositions and practical experiments, the Futurists were aiming at no less than a total revolution in the arts, and not just in artistic style, but in art's function and its spaces of reception as well. The Futurists' self-betrayal and the defeat of their ideals at the hands of the Italian Fascist and Soviet Stalinist states must, of course, lead us to re-examine with a stern critical eye the limits of their program and practice. But it should not, finally, blind us to the magnitude of their revolutionary ambition and the degree to which they indeed managed to develop new forms of art that still have not exhausted their significance today.

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Vorticism

Alan Munton

Vorticism was a radical British movement in the visual arts and literature. Its centre was London, its moment occurred between 1913 and 1915, and the magazine *Blast* was its dramatic vehicle. Vorticism was both a visual explosion upon the British scene, and a literary event in early modernism. It represents one of the rare occasions when a group of British artists, working together, maintained a distinctive movement over a period of time. A revival was attempted in 1919, but the movement was snuffed out by the First World War. The only comparable movements are the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of the 1850s and the Young British Artists (YBAs) of the 1990s. The dominant figure in Vorticism, as artist, writer, and instigator, was Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957).

Membership may be defined narrowly as the eleven who signed the two manifestos in the first number of *Blast* of June 1914, notably the painters Wyndham Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, William Roberts and Helen Saunders, and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Ezra Pound was, with Lewis, the most significant writer. A broader definition adds the sculptor Jacob Epstein and the painter David Bomberg, who participated but did not sign. There was significant involvement by women. Jessica Dismorr was a manifesto signatory, Dorothy Shakespear appeared in *Blast 2*, and the artist Kate Lechmere proposed, financed, and organized the Rebel Art Centre (active from late March till the end of July 1914). The photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn made “Vortographs” in 1916–17, but did not appear in either number of *Blast*. (A second issue of *Blast*, the “War Number,” appeared in July 1915.)

Literary Vorticism was various and includes the Vorticist manifestos by Lewis, Gaudier, and Pound, each inconsistent with the others. Lewis’s “Vortices and Notes” in *Blast 1*, and his “A Review of Contemporary Art” in *Blast 2*, together defined Vorticist art. Lewis’s play “Enemy of the Stars” (*Blast 1*), lying somewhere between Expressionism and a just-performable theater, attempted to make language abstract. The “Poems and Notes” by Dismorr in *Blast 2* include poems, prose-poetry and a short story which redefined the London environment and personal relations in Vorticist

terms. Wadsworth's review of Wassily Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* stresses "the principle of inner necessity" in a way consistent with Vorticist practice. Not Vorticist, but differently radical, were Rebecca West's feminist short story "Indissoluble Matrimony" in No. 1, and T. S. Eliot's "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" in No. 2. *Blast* 1's extract from *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford) was the last gasp of an ironic Impressionism about to be overtaken by the modernism of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Lewis's *Tarr* (1918).

Vorticist art had a content and a geometry of its own. The content is the real world of work and the streets, of dress, dance, and the body in motion, of the new city and its architecture, of industry, ports, and real and imaginary machines. The body is understood as violated by machinery, or defined by it, so that (contrary to the usual account), Vorticism does not so much celebrate the machine as recognize that in a newly mechanized environment the body "now, literally, EXISTS much less" (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 141), and that the psyche too is under pressure. Vorticism would have been impossible without Cubism, but surpasses the limitations of Cubist subject matter (the still life, portrait, or café scene) by learning from Italian Futurism that the modern world is full of exciting but potentially oppressive objects that Vorticism takes over, abstracts, and promptly freezes. Futurism celebrates and enjoys the interpenetration of objects, Vorticism contemplates and stands back with detachment – and yet an Expressionist energy animates the movement. Characteristic Vorticist work has a stasis that is barely controlled, a sense of strain as forms struggle to be free, and an incomplete abstraction that leaves behind recognizable forms.

It has long been recognized that "*Blast* was, in itself, a Vorticist work of art, and perhaps the most successful of all Vorticist works of art" (Wees 1972: 192). The name *Blast* was put forward in November 1913 by the painter C. R. W. Nevinson, who was so much attached to the Futurism of F. T. Marinetti that he fell out with Lewis's group and did not appear in the magazine he had named until its second number. "The Vortex" was the invention of Ezra Pound, who used the phrase in a letter of December 19, 1913 to William Carlos Williams to mean a center of vigorous cultural activity (Paige 1982: 28). The Vortex took time to reach Lewis. As late as May 16, 1914 he told the Leeds Art Club that there were three movements in modern painting, Cubism, Expressionism, and Futurism. On June 12 the group heckling Marinetti at the Doré Galleries described themselves as "Vorticists," and the word appeared in print in a report of that event in the *Manchester Guardian* the next day, and in an advertisement in the *Spectator*, also on June 13. Vorticist "theory" was thus a late addition to *Blast*. All references to the movement are in the front or back sections of the 164-page magazine, and the "Blast" and "Bless" Manifesto does not use the word. The first *Blast* is dated June 20, but – delayed by the need to black out supposedly obscene lines in a poem by Pound – was available for reviews to appear in *The Times*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Egoist* on July 1.

Vorticist rhetoric was a late improvisation, an exclamatory prose-poetry about revolutionary art in a machine age, projecting a state of mind never before imagined:

Our Vortex is proud of its polished sides.
 Our Vortex will not hear of anything but its disastrous polished dance.
 Our Vortex desires the immobile r[h]ythm of its swiftness.
 Our Vortex rushes out like an angry dog at your Impressionistic fuss.
 Our Vortex is white and abstract with its red-hot swiftness.

(Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 149)

Immobile and yet active, swift and yet still, machine and yet abstraction, colored simply but dangerously, this – one of Vorticism’s many rhetorics – introduces the movement in a half-buried passage that *Blast*’s first readers would have had difficulty in finding. Unmistakable was the opening Blast–Bless manifesto, a marvel of typographical inventiveness whose loud black capitals and controlled force surpass its fluid and more tentative model, the “Distruzione”–“Costruzione” and “Merda ai” against “Rose a” structures of Apollinaire’s “L’Antitradizione Futurista,” published in *Lacerba* in September 1913 (illus. Cork 1976a: 249–50). Lewis characteristically moves from personal concerns, such as the British weather, to the conditions necessary for a revolutionary culture. The blasting of “years 1837 to 1900” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 18) disposes of the Victorian period, and the “Britannic Aesthete” Oscar Wilde is cursed (15). The psychic context of Self is invoked positively when laughter is blessed as “this hysterical WALL built around the EGO” (26).

Blast’s readers would have expected the introductory Manifestos to make a definite statement of position, as the Futurists’ did. Instead, Lewis upsets expectations by both Blasting and Blessing the same cultural entities, whether England or France, humor or the sea. The second Manifesto complicates this: “Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves,” adding: “We discharge ourselves on both sides” (30). Reacting against Marinetti’s southern Futurism, and arguing for an active northern and indeed “native” British art, the manifestos are intelligently provocative, internationalist, and suggestively enigmatic: “Shakespeare and Montaigne formed one literature” is set close to “Humour is a phenomenon caused by sudden pouring of culture into Barbary” (37). There follow the names of the eleven artists and writers, signatories to a manifesto which was not the assertion of a point of view, but a poised and deliberately contradictory performance toward which signed *agreement* seems a paradoxical response.

The “Blast Group,” Lewis wrote in 1927, was “composed of people all very ‘extremist’ in their views” (Lewis 1993: 38), but in 1956 he denied the group conception: “Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally, did, and said, at a certain period. This may be expanded into a certain theory regarding visual art; and (much less theoretically) a view of what was excellent in literary art” (Fox and Michel 1969: 451). At this latter date – a year before his death – Lewis was preoccupied by artists’ influence upon twentieth-century culture, which is why the first of these sentences makes a claim about organization. Lewis edited, designed, and eventually paid for *Blast*, ran the Rebel Art Centre with Kate Lechmere, set up exhibitions, wrote prefaces for catalogues, and arranged press publicity. He was an early, if badly

organized, cultural entrepreneur. He argued the theory of Vorticist art in “A Review of Contemporary Art” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 2): 38–47; Fox and Michel 1969: 58–77), but later argued that literary Vorticism was “less theoretically” viable because unlike visual art “words and syntax were not susceptible of transformation into abstract terms” (Lewis 1984: 129). *Blast* existed primarily to promote Vorticism as an art movement, in Lewis’s intention.

Vorticist art possessed a recognizable visual language long before it was named. Mostly executed in the years 1913–15, the work of more than a dozen British artists showed a knowledge of recent developments in France and Germany, a critical response to them, and the conceptual and technical ability to confront their environment. Machine aesthetic was asserted most strongly in Jacob Epstein’s *Rock Drill* (first version 1913), in which a dangerous hooded figure with sweeping legs sits astride a real rock drill, progeny awaiting birth beneath its armor, erotic penetration explicit. This, the most shocking yet most typical Vorticist work, was an aberration in Epstein’s otherwise conservative career. Gaudier’s (*Hieratic*) *Head of Ezra Pound* (1914; O’Keeffe 2004, chapter 15) makes of Pound’s marble bust a penis shape, its confident eroticism a challenge to Epstein’s atavism. The aerial perspectives upon ports and the high-angle views of abstracted Yorkshire towns in Wadsworth’s paintings, watercolors and woodcuts delineate a calm version of Vorticist tensions. Wyndham Lewis’s painting *The Crowd* (1914–15) is about urban revolt, yet its very stasis is a critique of the excitements of Luigi Russolo’s *The Revolt* (1911–12). Similarly, *Portrait of an Englishwoman* of 1913–14 is an inversion-critique of Matisse’s *Femme au Chapeau* of 1905 (Durman and Munton 1982). In the same satirical spirit, Helen Saunders’s bright *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (c. 1915–16; Edwards 2000a, plate XXXIX), where a woman’s head leans over child and womb, is a critique of Epstein’s dark drawing for the pregnancy sculpture *Female Figure in Flenite* (both 1913; Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): facing p. 120). Abstraction, for Lewis, was not a cutting away from the complex given of nature, but a penetration of the bases of the real: “We must constantly strive to ENRICH abstraction till it is almost plain life, or rather get deeply enough immersed in material life to experience the shaping power amongst its vibrations” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 2): 40). This project is “subjective intellection” (Lewis 1963: 505), and close to magic.

What of Vorticism’s writers? Ezra Pound made a poor contemporary. His “Vortex” statement struggles to be modern, speaks of “primary form” in the arts, and of “primary pigment” in painting, characterizes “The Turbine” of the Vortex as “all the past that is living and worthy to live,” and cites Pater, Whistler, and himself as antecedents (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 153–4). Here, as in the *Blast* advertisement declaring “END OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA” (*Egoist*, April 1, 1914, 140), Pound misses the point. Gaudier’s “Vortex” is a more plausible self-creation drawn from the history of art. He rejects Renaissance humanism in favor of the art of primitive cultures, a position he may have derived from T. E. Hulme. More in touch than Pound, Gaudier cites Epstein, Brancusi, Archipenko, Modigliani, “and myself” as “WE the moderns” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 158). A different non-primitivist modernity

appears in *Blast* 2 when Dismorr writes of Piccadilly: “Towers of scaffolding draw their criss-cross pattern of bars upon the sky, a monstrous tartan” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 2): 66). “June Night” imagines a way of living in the city – uneasy among “stately urban houses” she feels “a strayed Bohemian, a villa resident” who “must get back to the life of the thoroughfares to which I belong” (68).

The institutional history of Vorticism begins at the Omega Workshops (active 1913–19) run by Roger Fry in Fitzroy Street, London. After a dispute in October 1913, Lewis, Frederick Etchells, Cuthbert Hamilton, and Edward Wadsworth left, and exhibited with Nevinson, Epstein, and Bomberg in the “Cubist Room” section of the *Exhibition of English Post-Impressionists, Cubists and Others* (later the London Group) in Brighton, November 1913–January 1914. They showed as the London Group, with Gaudier and William Roberts, in March 1914. All showed again in *Twentieth Century Art: A Review of the Modern Movements* at the Whitechapel Gallery, May–June 1914. The *Vorticist Exhibition* at the Doré Galleries in June 1915 was the only dedicated show by the group in Britain, and added Dismorr, Saunders, and Lawrence Atkinson, with Duncan Grant from the Omega among those invited to show – this was surprising, because Bloomsbury “Impressionism” was one of the developments Vorticism defined itself against. In January 1917 John Quinn organized in New York the *Exhibition of the Vorticists at the Penguin* (a club), showing seventy-five works, some pre-Vorticist, by Lewis, Etchells, Wadsworth, Dismorr, Roberts, and Saunders. Finally, in March 1919, Lewis, Dismorr, Wadsworth, Etchells, Hamilton, and Roberts were joined by E. McKnight Kauffer, Charles Ginner, William Turnbull, and the sculptor Frank Dobson for the “Group X” exhibition at the Mansard Gallery in a disappointing post-Vorticist return to varieties of realism. The Vortex was last invoked provocatively in Lewis’s pamphlet *The Caliph’s Design: Architects! Where is your Vortex?* of October 1919, and recurs – again in an architectural context that reminds us of Vorticist cityscapes – in “Plain Home-builder: Where is Your Vorticist?” in *The Architectural Review* in 1934 (Lewis 1989: 246–56). The question marks tell their own story.

Eight attacks on paintings, porcelain, and a mummy by suffragists between March and May 1914 caused Lewis to write in “TO SUFFRAGETTES” that “We make you a present of our votes” (Lewis 1981 (*Blast* 1): 151), but warned that they might destroy a good picture by accident. Lewis’s unequivocal support is striking, given his (largely undeserved) reputation for virulent anti-feminism. “My literary contemporaries,” Lewis wrote later, “I looked upon as too bookish and not keeping pace with the visual revolution,” and “to show them the way” (Lewis 1984: 129) he wrote the play “Enemy of the Stars” (Lewis 2003). An astringent dualism sets two characters, Arghol and Hanp, against each other in a verbal contest that turns to violence when Arghol sleeps and lets out a snore so unbearable that Hanp stabs him, and then drowns himself. Arghol, a type of the artist, represents the imagination against what exists – that is, “the stars.” This difficult exploration of the nature of the self – can it be uncontaminated by its surroundings? – and Self’s relation to the Other is a key text of early British modernism (Edwards 2000b, chapter 5).

The activity around Vorticism and *Blast* was so frenetic, involved so many individuals, provoked so many internal disputes and so much public debate that a record of events has taken decades to establish. Reliable research began in 1972 with William C. Wees's still-valuable *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*. Richard Cork's indispensable two-volume study *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* was published in 1976 and 1977. There are useful essays in *Vorticism*, edited by Andrew Wilson in 1988. The essays in *BLAST: Vorticism 1914–1918* (Edwards 2000a) include feminist redefinitions and further discoveries. *Blasting the Future! Vorticism in Britain 1910–1920* (Black 2004) explores, in an unfocused way, some of Vorticism's Futurist sources. Despite all this work, the case for Vorticism as a European movement beside Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism can never now be made because so many of its major works are lost. Vorticism largely *preceded* the war that snuffed it out, only occasionally predicted that war, and can be interpreted as the art of a moment of optimism when it seemed that the present could be grasped and the future transformed.

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Imagism

Patrick McGuinness

The story of Imagism is as contested as it is brief, while its principles (ironically for a movement which prized the luminous detail and the exact word) were from the start unclear, disputed, and even conflicting. Accounts of Imagism, whether historical or critical, have been marked by questions of precedence and intellectual copyright: Who “invented” Imagism? Who best exemplified its principles? Who were the “true” Imagists, and who the bandwagon-riders? These claims and counterclaims, fully documented in a variety of books and articles, risk occluding the poems themselves and obscuring the particular energies that came together to create this short-lived but significant movement in modern poetry. They risk also distracting from the more worthwhile questions Imagism raises: What were its tenets and where were its roots? What of the originality, quality and importance of its poetry? And finally, what was its legacy?

The obvious starting-point is T. E. Hulme, the philosopher-poet who died in action in 1917. Hulme was influenced by European intellectual tradition and well versed in the literary debates of Symbolist and post-Symbolist French literature. He argued for *vers libre* and for an end to crabby rhetoric and high-falutin poetic ideas, seeking what he called a “new spirit” in poetry, itself a reflection of a new “attitude of mind” in culture and philosophy to which the old forms and conventions were inappropriate. Like the French philosopher Henri Bergson, from whom Hulme took the idea of *images successives* (successive, often colliding images, that derail habitual modes of thought and perception), he argued that figurative language (metaphors, similes, analogies) has a lifespan and becomes ineffective from overuse. The poet’s task is to discover new analogies to keep language moving vibrantly towards expression. As he put it in his “Lecture on Modern Poetry”: “Prose is the museum where the dead images of verse are preserved.” Hulme was a member of the Poets’ Club, in whose 1909 yearbook, *For Christmas MDCCCXVIII*, two of his poems, “Autumn” and “A City Sunset,” were published. These are often seen as the earliest “Imagist” poems. The Poets’ Club could not hold Hulme for long; in March 1909 he set up

what he called the “Secession Club” with F. S. Flint, a more bohemian and avant-garde group. The group, also known as “The School of Images” was joined by F. W. Tancred and Edward Storer, and, in April 1909, the 24-year-old Ezra Pound, recently arrived from America. Writing in the *Egoist* in 1915 (by which time the movement had split and the disputes about its foundation and principles had begun), F. S. Flint declared that “there was a lot of talk and practice among us, Storer leading it chiefly, of what we called the Image.” Flint added: “In all this Hulme was the ringleader.” But it was Pound who took charge of the promotion and publicity for what he christened, with its exotic French ending, “Imagisme.”

The American poet Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) arrived in London in 1911, where she encountered Pound (a former fiancé), and the young English poet Richard Aldington. Pound informed them in spring 1912 that they were “imagistes,” and began promoting their work. Pound was foreign editor for Harriet Monroe’s recently founded *Poetry*, and sent her material by both poets. They appeared (with H. D. signed “H. D. Imagiste”) in the January 1913 issue of the magazine. In the March issue came the first “manifestos” of the new movement: Flint’s “Imagisme” and Pound’s “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste.” Flint outlined the three following precepts, which have come to define the movement’s broad values:

- 1 Direct treatment of the “thing” whether objective or subjective.
- 2 To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
- 3 As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase not in sequence of a metronome.

At this early stage, the principles were economy, formal freedom, and precision. Flint focuses mainly on what Imagism is *not*, and his short piece reads more like a promotional feature than a manifesto. It was left, as we shall see, to Pound’s “A Few Don’ts” to articulate Imagism’s principles in something like a theoretical frame.

Meanwhile, Pound had published his *Ripostes* (1912), in which he printed the “Complete [*sic*] Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme.” It was the first time the word “Imagiste” had been used in print. An act of generosity on Pound’s part perhaps, but it was also a sort of appropriation, whereby Hulme became an appendix to Pound’s work, relegated to the realms of Imagist “prehistory” (Pound’s note mentions “the forgotten school of 1909,” though it was far from obvious that anyone had forgotten them). Pound went on to edit the first anthology, *Des Imagistes*, in March 1914. The poets included were Flint, Skipwith Cannell, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford Madox Ford), Edward Upward, and John Cournos, as well as Pound himself, H. D., and Aldington. The book was badly received, but it was also uneven and disunited in the approaches taken by individual authors (for instance, James Joyce’s poems contained images, but could hardly be said to be “Imagist”). This disunity of practice, already implicit but overridden by the obvious novelty of much of the poetry, was to become increasingly difficult to

sustain. The following year, in 1915, the *Egoist* published Flint's "History of Imagism," which Pound called "bullshit." Flint's offense had been to emphasize the role of Hulme and Storer in the movement's inception and to downplay Pound's. As Pound felt control of the movement's origins slipping away from him, he sensed also that its future was easing out of his grasp. It was the American poet and heiress Amy Lowell, flush with money and contacts, who took over. Pound had by then aligned himself with the Vorticists, leaving Imagism (by now, as a sign perhaps of its absorption into the English language, without its final *e*) to Lowell. Pound called them the "Amygists," and transferred his energy, and many of his critical terms, to Vorticism. Lowell produced three Imagist anthologies, each published simultaneously in Britain and the US. *Some Imagist Poets* appeared in 1915, 1916, and 1917, reaching a different and wider public than Pound's, and developing enough momentum to bring the writers some recognition. Lowell brought in D. H. Lawrence (a contributor to the Georgian anthologies also) and the American John Gould Fletcher, notable for his ambitious sequences of "polyphonic prose." In 1930 (by which time Lowell had died) there appeared a last *Imagist Anthology*.

It is Pound's version of events that critics have tended to follow: briefly stated, Imagisme as promoted by Pound was a vigorous, edgy, and obviously avant-garde movement, iconoclastic in its practices and radical in its theoretical discourse. Imagism post-Pound accentuated matters of presentation without connecting these to greater, more profound ways of thinking about language. However, it could equally well be argued that the only Imagist true to Pound's view of Imagism was Pound himself. Only Pound developed a radical theory of the image according to which he occasionally wrote, while the others, in their different ways (and with very little by way of theories or manifestos) wrote as they wished within a loosely defined program. The danger with positing Pound's ideas as the original principles is that it underplays the freedom of the other poets and assumes some sort of overarching agreement on what constituted Imagism in the first place. There is little evidence that this was the case.

Pound's "A Few Don'ts" is the first outline of Imagist principles to address matters of technique and language with any sort of sustained focus. "The 'Image,'" he wrote, "is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art." Pound focuses on one of Imagism's most ambitious aims: simultaneous perception of things overlaid, fused, interpenetrating. There is also a preoccupation with scale: the Imagist poem is not bound by its brevity, but rather intensified by it; it expands from compression, taking one out of linear time and into a new dimensional fusion. Pound had insisted on images as fusions and superimpositions, scale- and time-defying splicings of different orders of perception. For all his characteristic bossiness, Pound's piece is notable for its precision: Imagisme is more than just a penchant for images, it is a way of thinking about the expressive capacities of language itself. Among Pound's other warnings are: "use no superfluous word, no

adjective, that does not reveal something” and “Go in fear of abstractions.” In “A Retrospect” Pound described the Image as “that which presents an intellectual or emotional complex in an instant of time,” to create a poetry of “super-position[, i.e.] one idea set on top of another.” The aim was “to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.”

If we turn to “Imagist” poems themselves, we may gauge the extent to which the products measure up to the theory. T. E. Hulme’s, which Eliot described as among the “most beautiful poems in the English language,” do not have the force and vigor of his prose, though they are haunting and in their minor way original. Here is one of the best known, “Autumn”:

A touch of cold in the autumn night –
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

The moon is “like” a red-faced farmer, the stars “like” town children. The poem relies on similes and describes sequential perception (first one thing, then the next) rather than simultaneity or fusion. It moves toward a small epiphany and its gesture is one of reduction of the grand rather than an aggrandizement of the small. But at no point are the two orders fused. Similarly, the inner and the outer (the subjective and objective) are face to face but not joined. Another fragment from Hulme is rather different, and can be said to approach the Imagist ideal as defined by Pound:

Old houses were scaffolding once
and workmen whistling

Gone are the tentative similes and the self-conscious subjective voice; instead we have the fusing of time scales and periods in a tiny masterpiece of compression.

One of the most illustrative Imagist poems is Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro”

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Hugh Kenner devotes three pages of *The Pound Era* to this poem, in an analysis which exults in the poem’s seemingly inexhaustible meshwork of reference and allusion. It is enough for us to note the poem’s lack of copula, and the way it overlays and fuses images visually rather than in narrative sequence. We also note how important the title is – it grounds the poem in an urban context of present-tense technological advancement, only for the next line to send the reader into the vegetal

world and a mythologized ancient Far East. Another poem by Pound demonstrates the Imagist poem at its suggestive best, from a few lines of which one may imagine a whole drama of loss and sorrow:

O fan of white silk
 clear as frost on the grass-blade
 You also are laid aside

Another poem that shows the Imagist aesthetic at its sharpest is H. D.'s "Oread":

Whirl up, sea –
 Whirl your pointed pines,
 Splash your great pines
 On our rocks,
 Hurl your green over us,
 Cover us with your pools of fir.

The two images, sea and trees, remain distinct yet paradoxically intertwined; each assumes the other's qualities to express itself in a new and memorable way. The effect is of images interlocked or fused rather than joined grammatically. H. D. expresses a visual perception, but the poem also evokes the sound of crashing water and wind through trees, opens up the horizontal axes (waves) and the vertical axes (pines), and draws on a dramatic interplay of height and depth. A feeling of awe is created in six short lines. The best Imagist poems are about movement, energy, and inwardness; the least successful are static scenes conveyed through purely visual reference. At its best and most ambitious Imagist poetry is about fusion, about the porous threshold between inner and outer, abstract and concrete, the intimate and the glitteringly impersonal. It aims to cut away the means by which we understand the world in order to immerse us into the world. One of its primary methods (in Pound and H. D. at least) is to abolish the division (one might say the hierarchy) between vehicle and tenor in metaphorical language, between the *like* and the *likened*, inert fixing agents in what should be the poem's dynamic process.

The movement derived its principles from a variety of sources: Bergson and French post-Symbolism (Gourmont, the *vers libristes*), Classical verse, and Japanese and Chinese poetry. There are, we should note, two Far Easts in early modernism: the first is the inherited *fin-de-siècle* bric-à-brac of fans, bowls, petals, the sort of *japonisme* and *chinoiserie* we find aplenty in the derivative Imagist poems (Amy Lowell's, for instance); the second, a far more galvanizing force, is the dynamic "ideogrammatic" method that Pound developed from Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*. Imagism was also influenced by the art of the time: such different movements as Impressionism, Cubism, and Vorticism. Another context might be the nascent sciences of the period. Rutherford split the atom in 1913, and perhaps some Imagist terms were inflected by the language of nuclear science such as fusion and fission, and the liberating of vast energies from tiny matter. As a movement, Imagism

was international, but in its Anglo-American composition it was a truly cross-Atlantic grouping. Indeed it was in America that Imagism's legacy was most profitably used and extended – we may see Imagist influence on poets as diverse as Marianne Moore, Janet Lewis, Hart Crane, and even the early Yvor Winters. The most important group to develop from Imagism were the Objectivists (Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and Carl Rakosi), whose work both built on Imagist principles and rectified the movement's perceived failings (the charge of being over-aesthetic, apolitical, and subjective).

It is interesting to reflect that several of the poets associated with Imagism – Williams, Pound, H. D. – went on to write foundational modernist epics. Between the Imagist poem and, say, Pound's *Cantos* (in which Imagist techniques of intercutting and superimposition are abundantly displayed) we may see modernism's ambition to conquer both ends of the spectrum: history and the instant, the flashing moment, and the great narrative panoramas of history (in Pound's case) and geography (in Williams's). In one sense, Imagism may thus be seen as both the counterpart and the reflection of epic modernism.

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Surrealism

Mary Ann Caws

Before being a movement in art, Surrealism was a literary movement. In the beginning, there was Dada. Its noisy iconoclastic tornado was first whipped up at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, presided over by Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball, and others, including Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, and the future head of the Surrealist movement André Breton (“We are all presidents of Dada”). Its language(s) were multiple, some understandable and simultaneously present (in the multivoiced text: “Un amiral cherche une maison à louer/An admiral is looking for a house to rent,” and so on, four voices in one) and some in so-called primitive tongues, witness to the newly influential African and Oceanic art and culture sweeping the Occident in the first part of the twentieth century. Its violence of words and action suited the warlike atmosphere of Europe at that moment. It was based on a collective spirit, as Surrealism was to be. But Tzara and Breton thought differently. Generally speaking, while Dada was negative in its impact, with a stylistic and ideological bent toward destruction, Surrealism was essentially positive, turning its efforts toward changing the mind and the world. Breton wrote a piece called “Après Dada” (After Dada), but the anti-logical basis of Dada survived in Surrealism, aided by Freud and the theories of the unconscious.

But the Frenchmen returned to Paris, and contributed to a journal called *Littérature* (partly in ironic jest: *lis tes ratures*, read what you have scratched out, *lits et ratures*, beds and scrapings, and so on). And Tzara came to Paris, awaited with eagerness by Breton in particular. After the debacle of the Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture, in 1934, when Breton was not allowed to speak until the very end – the much-loved and homosexual René Crevel, author of “Miss Fork Mr. Knife,” “Babylon,” “Are you Mad?” and the brilliant essay “Le Clavecin de Diderot,” committed suicide partly over that debacle – Surrealism started up. Its founding document, besides the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) was the *Poisson Soluble*, written by Philippe Soupault and André Breton in tandem in 1919. Breton claimed that, just before falling asleep, he perceived a phrase that “knocked at the window.” The visual image that came to him

was of a man cut in two by the window; this was not addressed to his hearing, but to his visual perception. And later, the tone-deaf Breton would advocate with still more stridency: “Let the curtain fall on the orchestra.” Breton had, during the war, worked in a psychoanalytic ward in a hospital, thus the origin of his concept of “spoken thought.” The liberation of images, visual and verbal, depended on the speed of thought. For this freeing of the mind and its imaginative capacity, Breton found himself the heir of the poets Rimbaud and Lautréamont.

Surrealism experimented widely with other methods besides automatic writing for liberating consciousness, including trances or sleep-speaking – here the poet Robert Desnos excelled. Spontaneous marks were thought of as the beginnings of free expression, whether on canvases or paper; Desnos drew images of his dreams and writing: mermaids, tombs, explorers. Following on the aesthetic principles of the image previously stated by Pierre Reverdy for Cubism in writing – that is, the forced convergence of contraries – all the chosen images of Surrealism are, as it were, double-jointed: a swinging door, communicating vessels, the convergence of things previously separate or/and contradictory, such as day and night, life and death, and so on.

As an illustration, a famous untitled poem of Breton contrasts a black beach and a volcano smoking with snow, and presents the reader with a visual and vertical reversal, in which everything is upside-down – so that the woman’s arms appear below her legs. It is like a mirror reflection, and the mirror/glass/ice convergence in the French word “glace” makes this verbally concrete. One element into another, sea and land, and all of this rules out the existence of evil. The poem begins with hearsay and the land of contraries:

They tell me that over there the beaches are black
With the lava run to the sea . . .

and ends with a no less convincing convergence of impossibles:

All the flowering appletree of the sea.
(Caws 2001b: 32)

In any case, any expression of the unconscious appeared to be on the right path to freedom from logic and the bourgeois order of things, as were all varieties of madness and the naive art of children. What was of the highest importance was what the Surrealists called a lyric behavior, or a continuous state of expectancy: an openness to chance. Chance had its perfect emplacement on the sidewalk, the frequent site of a magic encounter. For all these reasons, Surrealism called itself the tail of Romanticism, but one that remained *prehensile*. Everything was open, nothing was tired or used up. “Always for the first time,” begins of one Breton’s great poems, whose first verse it is. It ends like this:

leaning over the precipice
Of the hopeless fusion of your presence and absence
I have found the secret
Of loving you
Always for the first time.

(Caws 2001b: 31)

This very openness, post-logical, characterizes Surrealism's optimistic outlook.

During the Second World War Breton and his wife Jacqueline found shelter in a house near Marseilles, and then went into exile in New York, thanks to the intervention of the American Varian Fry, as did the artists Matta Echaurren, André Masson, and Kurt Seligmann. Breton spoke no English, nor did he care to learn any, but he corresponded with American writers and painters through Matta, and became friends with Robert Motherwell, who translated his work. This resulted in the immense influence of Surrealism on Abstract Expressionism and the New York School. Matta's concept of free marking or "doodling" (as Motherwell stated it) spread to the painters through this conduit, as did the notion of openness – here we think of Motherwell's own series of *Opens*. Another famous Surrealist associate in New York was Joseph Cornell, who had become acquainted with and enthusiastic about André Breton's theories and writings: many of his boxes are Romantic and Symbolist in feeling, and equally many are Surrealist in their ways of envisioning objects and possibilities. Although Cornell expressed serious reservations about what he thought of as the dark side of Surrealism, in which madness was at a premium, he continues to be associated with the Surrealist movement in many minds.

Breton and Desnos were both great admirers of Pablo Picasso, whom Breton never stopped wanting to associate with Surrealism, until Picasso's adhesion to the Communist Party in the 1940s occasioned their split. Breton marveled at Picasso's ease and lyricism: "How could the texture of this blue cigarette pack ever be more beautiful than alongside this empty glass . . . ?" In *Surrealism and Painting* (Breton 2002), his essay on "Picasso in his Element" accords the latter so much genius that he, "freed of any simple moral preoccupation, remains master of a situation that without him we might have thought desperate." He helps us to forbid the "survival of the sign after the signified thing." Of Picasso's imaginative freedom, Breton comments: "when my imagination coincides with my memory, it is time to give up." In any psychological struggle between what has been experienced and what is still to be so, anything that has been thought will lose out to what is about to be thought. The future always wins over the past. Paintings (like those of Braque) have to hold their own against famine as well as against other art.

Paul Eluard's famous collection of essays on art, called *Donner à voir* (To give to have or, literally, To give something to be seen, that is, To reveal), stresses the imaginative powers of the poet. Breton emphasized how important it was not to separate the looker from the looked-at; between them, he said, there was a magic thread, a communicating wire, as there was between the "communicating vessels" in

the scientific experiment to which his own volume *Les Vases communicants* refers. Again, it is a question of different or even opposite elements merging.

As the street is the perfect place for surprise (Tzara had it that the yes and the no would meet on street corners like grasshoppers), the theory of objective chance ("*le hasard objectif*") says that you may well come across in the outside world an answer to a question you didn't know you had. Something, perhaps, that was haunting you. Breton's famous novel or photographic essay of 1928 about the crazed woman he loved for a while, called by her name, *Nadja*, begins "Who am I? . . . doesn't it all come down to whom do I haunt . . . ?" (Breton 1960: 7) ("Qui suis-je? . . . tout ne reviendrait-il pas à savoir qui je 'hante'?"). What are my haunts? What would a Surrealist haunt or haunting be? A face, a place, a landscape, seascape, mountainscape. Something that changes our life, bringing in "le merveilleux" or the marvelous. The daily marvelous, nothing beyond our senses.

How very hard to run a movement and be oneself. Tristan Tzara somehow managed it with Dada, as long as he did, but then Dada died. As for Breton, something about his personality and everything about his style permits the singular endurance of his self and his strong *selving* (a word borrowed, on my part, from Gerard Manley Hopkins, scarcely a Surrealist icon).

An intensely Celtic atmosphere suffused Breton's entire life and works. His Breton blood seeps through every page and, as I now reread him, every thought. I know the conjunction of name and place seems overdetermined (lest you think I miss the wordplay – ah, words are not playing, says Breton, they are making love). In any case, Breton's deep sense of gloom and foreboding, as well as his attraction to mysticism and a kind of positive idealism, combined for him, in his time, and for us now, to lead beyond the pragmatics of a movement. Unlike its predecessor Dada, Surrealism has lasted a *very* long time. It may have officially died in 1966 or a little later, with Breton's own death, but some of us consider it still alive, in its varying aspects. In any case, Breton and Surrealism coincided for at least forty-two years. Not bad for a person and a movement to be so vivid at every step of the way.

André Breton as an individual, with all his failings and usual fallings in and out of love, was – and is, to those who now read him – unforgettable. Leonine, massive, sure, rhetorically and visually gifted, and famously deprived of any sense of musical tone (that saved a lot of time), Breton's notions became Surrealism. Not that he didn't write with others: with Philippe Soupault in the beginning, then with Paul Eluard, or with Eluard and the younger Provençal poet René Char. (I used to love Char's story about Breton, who had of course believed in anonymous texts, spontaneous expression, and all that, being the one who wanted his signature absolutely there. Apart from the peculiar irony of it all, it is a grandly Surrealist tale.) No less did I love his wife Jacqueline Lamba's insistence on the puritanical side of this man whose face mesmerized me: he would not, she said, be seen without his shoes on.

Breton was a man who believed above all in the notion of the collective and in the reactions of the group which he organized: he never wanted to call Surrealism a school, as he once stated in an interview. It was rather a grouping in the sense of

Charles Fourier's socialist cells or groupuscules, based, as Breton insisted, on the idea that all passions are good. Breton's thought was eventually to change along with his life, but the style remains high on itself and intense in its effect. His most high-styled and influential works remain, along with a few very great poems, the following: *Break of Day* (1934), *Nadja* (1928, revised by the author in 1962), *Mad Love* (1937), *Arcane 17* (1947), *Free Rein* (1953), and *Communicating Vessels* (1955).

In one of the essays published in *Break of Day*, "The Automatic Message" of 1933, he reflects back on the celebrated founding technique of Surrealism, with the kind of philosophical regret that will characterize his combination of nostalgia and optimism, looking back at that primary experience with Philippe Soupault. Breton's is a passionate and impassioned manner, whether he is writing about the "verbo-auditory automatism" in its creation of "thrilling visual images for the reader" (Breton 1999: 141), or about St. Teresa, in the same essay:

Simply by virtue of the fact that she saw her wooden cross transform into a crucifix of precious stones, and that she held this vision to be at once *imaginative and sensorial*, St. Teresa of Avila can be said to command the line along which mediums and poets take their place. Unfortunately, she's still only a saint. (Breton 1999: 143)

That Breton should eventually have been disappointed in the techniques of automatism does not affect his initial excitement over them, or their ongoing importance in the worlds of literature and art. What they unleashed, apart from a remarkable series of writings and events, was in fact a whole point of view recognizably that of a free spirit.

A free spirit he himself was, but one easily depressed when his pragmatic sense told him his idealistic moves were not working. First, his desire for political involvement had led him to alter the first Surrealist journal, called *La Révolution surréaliste*, where the announcement of the delights and importance of automatic writing was made, putting Surrealism at the service of the revolution (*le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*). Then his discussions with the "cell" of gas workers to which he was assigned by the Communist Party did not lead to any satisfaction on his part or comprehension on that of the workers, and he was desperately disappointed. He had subsequently, in his ardent wishing to put Freudian dream analysis at the service of Surrealism, the same sense of disappointment when his long-wished-for encounter with Freud led to no entrancing discussion of psychoanalysis or the role of dreams. For Freud took little interest in this French movement or in its leader, with whom he had an exchange of letters noticeably cold, reprinted in Breton's *Communicating Vessels*, named for the scientific experiment of the same name, containing the most theoretical of Breton's essays on dream. Freud didn't, as it were, *get Surrealism*, finding this group of French dreamers and theorists of dream mere amateurs and remaining unimpressed by the poetic side of their investigations, incomprehensible to him. On his side, Breton found Freud's office drab, like his waiting-room, he said, and the great man small and dreary. His instant judgments were often long-lasting. They were (witness

this one) sometimes a bit harsh, even in their detail, demonstrably wrongheaded, and always absolute, yet it is Breton's eye for detail and his zestful judgments that give his writing its distinctive lilt and occasional zip.

In one of the most self-revealing pages of *Communicating Vessels*, in the same volume as the Breton–Freud correspondence, Breton avows his despair at the feeling of the epoch, entirely given over to the capitalist mode of gaining riches, of an immediate efficacy in “the human effort to produce,” of a value placed on notoriety as opposed to the “problem of knowledge” which seems to him paramount. His lament marks the extreme limit of his disappointment with the fate of the great Surrealist idea:

This time I live in, this time, alas, runs by and takes me with it. That crazed and, as it were, accidental impatience in which it is caught up spares me nothing. There is today, it is true, little room for anyone who would haughtily trace in the grass the learned arabesque of the suns. (Breton 1990: 135)

And yet, listen to Breton's relentless and finally very moving idealism about human imagination, that basis of the lyric behavior which he would claim for all Surrealist believers (for that is what, in the long as well as the short run, it comes to):

In the clamor of crumbling walls, among the songs of gladness that rise from the towns already reconstructed, at the top of the torrent that cries the perpetual return of the forms unceasingly afflicted with change, upon the quivering wing of affections, of the passions alternately raising and letting fall both beings and things, above the bonfires in which whole civilizations conflagrate, beyond the confusion of tongues and customs, I see man, what remains of him, forever unmoving in the center of the whirlwind. (Breton 1990: 138)

Breton's insuperably poetic style, as in the passages just quoted, comes over more clearly in his essays than in his poetry. Many of his uneven but frequently exalted poems with their alternation of everyday detail and impassioned conviction end on a larger vision, that of the unity of perception, the privilege of poetic vision, and on so far unrealized human possibilities. “I touch nothing but the heart of things I hold the thread,” one of them ends (Caws 2001b).

A poem or a prose piece might end on the natural sweep of a merging universe, where an element from one field crosses over into the next like the elements in Surrealist games, which are to be taken not as words playing (“*jeux de mots*”) but as words making love. Here, the unexpected clash of opposites then marrying their parts works to tie up the closure of the poem, as, in his theoretical writings, opposites merge in a telescoping that is the aesthetic point of Surrealism, like the preceding poems about convergences. The poem “*Sur la route qui monte et qui descend*” (“On the road that climbs and descends”) ends with the convergence of elements: “Flame of water guide me to the sea of fire.”

The importance of the communicating vessels, the swinging doors, and the connecting wires as images of primary importance depends on Breton's intense and unshakable sense of the doubleness of everything – these contrasts that can be bridged only by a sort of miracle, or the daily marvelous. About this point sublime, where the contrasts merge, Breton writes to his tiny daughter whom he calls “Ecusette de noireuil” (“Squirrelnut of Hazelmunk”). He can designate the “point sublime,” he says in a letter to her at the end of *Mad Love*, but he cannot live there, nor can she, nor anyone. We all live in what he termed a “terrifying duality” which we cannot overcome by wishing, or by the naive scaffoldings and bastings that we are tempted to make, to hide the abyss. Over this chasm of contradiction, such brave (and, some would have it, lunatic) souls as Antonin Artaud have taken their creations without using any guardrails. This is the kind of mental bravery Breton admires.

His own spirit, free but tested, is perhaps at its summit in his poetic treatise about “l'amour fou” – both untranslatable and translated as *Mad Love*. “Reciprocal love, such as I envisage it, is a system of mirrors which reflects for me, under the thousand angles that the unknown can take for me, the faithful image of the one I love, always more surprising in her divining of my own desire and more gilded with life” (Breton 1987: 93). *Mad Love* recounts, or rather chants, his love for Jacqueline Lamba, who appeared to him in his habitual café. She seemed “swathed in mist – clothed in fire? Everything seemed colorless and frozen next to this complexion imagined in perfect concord between rust and green: ancient Egypt, a tiny, unforgettable fern climbing the inside wall of an ancient well, the deepest, most somber, and most extensive of all those that I have ever leaned over.” And yet, when they take their first walk of love, Breton's doubt is everywhere present: “Life is slow, and man scarcely knows how to play it. . . . Who is going with me, who is preceding me tonight once again? . . . There would still be time to turn back” (Breton 1987: 45).

Now Breton's hope – always present, even in or conceivably because of, this hesitation – lies in the reconciliation of opposites. That optimistic belief in linking relies on the conducting wire leading from field to opposing field, which is Surrealism's characteristic and optimistic way of dealing with the universe. If that optimism is lost, then all Surrealist hope is gone. It will not do to say that we are determined by the human condition: Breton is diametrically opposed to our accepting such a paltry state of things, the opposite of the “state of grace” and Surrealist vision of what might be possible.

First of all, the muses who can combine the realms of perception are primary. Breton's notion of the “femme-enfant,” the child-woman who combines in herself opposite ages so that time “holds no sway over her” is important beyond the notion of time. For she is another avatar of the miraculous female principle upon which he calls in the legendary mermaid Mélusine, powerful against the principle of war, which is a male principle, like rationality. In the volume called *Arcane 17*, written in North America during his visit, he extols this ambiguous figure as the one able to undo all ego-based systems, not subject to them any more than she is subject to place or time.

Breton was a dealer in art objects, particularly African ones, and the Surrealists were all passionate about the kind of bearing an object in the external world could have on their imagination, or on their inner world. So the Surrealists, wherever they were, would make expeditions to parks, but in particular to flea markets and to antique stores, in order to discover objects with primitive power, able to unleash those passions in their possessors. The goal of this search for passion was a total reviewing and redoing of the way the world could be changed by the Surrealist optimism. That such a goal was, of course, impossible in no way impeded Breton's rhetorical flow of style or his high-flying ideas. It was as if the more impossible situations and desires led him to greater heights of rhetoric. From an ordinary human point of view, Surrealism as Breton conceived it was vastly overreaching – but his was not an ordinary point of view. Surrealism was infinitely ambitious, having as its goal the transformation of both life and world, along with human understanding, by what Breton called a “lyric behavior.”

Breton's self-writing and idea-writing may seem overblown, but they are none the less admirable for that. The new mythology he saw himself as participating in depended on his style of assurance, like that of the much-admired Gaston Bachelard, a postman turned phenomenologist and professor, and often called the philosopher of Surrealism. For both men, perception itself was to be replaced by admiration, the passive seeing of what is in the universe by the active involvement in it. The history of the Surrealist group and of Surrealism itself is, of course, inconceivable without the ideas of Breton. As they developed, from his association with Dada through the heroic period of Surrealism to his later quest for a more mystic component, they were always of supreme importance for the aesthetic and ethics of his time in France. Surrealist art and principles have as their main goal liberation from any sort of limitation or constriction imposed by anything outside them: in this spirit, they intended and still intend to remake the world, language, and the self. And perhaps they have gone as far as any movement in modernism along that path.

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Expressionism

Richard Murphy

With the onset of the so-called “Expressionist decade” of 1910–1920 German culture experienced momentous new impulses in the fields of theater, cinema, literature, and art. Like other modernist artists, the Expressionists felt the need to create new forms of representation through which they could respond to the massive changes associated with the arrival of the twentieth century and the new civilization of modernity. For in the new century rapid economic growth and a surge in technological progress combined to change the face of reality swiftly (Vietta and Kemper 1975: 110–17). Innovations such as electrification, radio, the automobile, and the airplane, as well as expanding systems of transport, the mass media and the cinema, emerged within a very short time. Yet modernity was also experienced as an anomic situation, involving a lack of guiding moral, behavioral, and spiritual norms. Modernity was associated with the experience of disorientation, as a new generation sought to find its place within an outdated and largely patriarchal system of values still geared toward the experiential and social patterns of the previous century.

What with the massive influx of a newly industrialized workforce into the busy metropolis, the city became the paradigm for the Expressionists’ experience of contemporary reality. The city signified an energized, heterogeneous and often overwhelming environment, with its electrified tempo, its semiotized cityscape of street signs and advertising hoardings, and the crass contrasts on the street between the smug and prosperous bourgeoisie on the one hand and society’s outcasts and deprived classes on the other. Much Expressionist prose and early poetry consequently reflects the experience of a “cognitive overload,” in which the sheer mass of data pouring in upon the individual from all sides in the city overwhelms the subject’s ability to make sense of it (Vietta and Kemper 1975: 30–40).

The Expressionist poets’ response to this metropolitan experience frequently takes the form of a “telegram style,” a kind of creative aphasia in which logical associations and linking words are omitted, and any pretense of producing syntactically complete sentences is abandoned in favor of a breathless juxtaposition of isolated perceptions

and images, as they stream in upon the writer. In the “one-line” style of the “Reihungsstil” (Sequence Style) poetry especially, disparate perceptions and events can only be registered in the form of a list of images. The poem does not hold together “organically,” and there is little sense of an obvious semantic wholeness to link together the various parts of the text. Instead the reader is called upon to create an aggregate picture on the basis of these heterogeneous images and fragments (Murphy 1999: 79–80). The influence of new technology is also present here: there is a clear link to the cuts and editing associated with the technique of montage in the recently created artistic medium of film.

The Expressionist “Ich-Drama” (Drama of the self) and “Stationendrama” (Drama of stations [of the cross]) also has a montage structure. Lacking a conventionally linear plot and usually devoid of dramatic tension, plays such as Reinhard Sorge’s “Der Bettler” (1911; The beggar) are constructed around a central figure as he wanders among reflections of his own persona, on a vaguely defined path toward redemption or spiritual enlightenment. Again the crucial feature of this montage format is one shared by a variety of Expressionist structures. As well as the one-line method of the “Reihungsstil” poetry, we also find this form in the “epic” structures which figure in the prose of Döblin and, most famously, in the plays of Brecht. In all of these open forms, individual components, images, or scenes may be left out without detriment to the effect of the whole, since meaning depends less upon the direct interrelation of parts, that is, on a traditional organic relationship between them, than upon the creation of an overall, aggregate image.

The very form of these texts, the disjunctive and fragmented structure, as well as the increased demands it places upon the audience’s participation, is vital in mediating a corresponding sense of fragmentation, breathlessness, confusion, and strain. In the so-called “simultaneity poem” (“Simultangedicht”) the rapid succession of heterogeneous items from different sources also has the defamiliarizing and leveling effect of bringing everything down to the same plane. Jakob van Hoddis’s key poem “Weltende” (End of the world) – often regarded as the “Marseillaise” of the Expressionist “revolution” – succeeds by these means in linking a variety of disjunctive images, and with a disturbing effect:

And on the coast – the paper says – the flood is rising.

The storm is here, the wild seas hop
Onto land, to flatten thick dams.
Most people have a cold.
Trains are falling from the bridges.

The threat of a devastating flood is juxtaposed with other spectacular disasters without further explanation or logical links. This creates an eerie sense of apocalypse – not least when these massive events are placed alongside the (now slightly mysterious) head cold from which everyone seems to be suffering. Again the implication – and it is a message reinforced by the very *form* of the poem – is one of uncertainty: no stable

vantage point is available, let alone a more elevated or godlike standpoint, from which these troubling issues can be ordered or safely “put into perspective.”

From the point of view of a traditional aesthetics, such texts are clearly a provocation and can be thought of as providing the kind of assault on convention associated with the idea of the *avant-garde*. For example, they do not offer a conventionally “realistic” representation of modernity. Indeed, it was for reasons such as these that the critic and theorist Georg Lukács famously preferred Thomas Mann’s recognizable image of social reality to Kafka’s apparent distortions (Lukacs 1971). Similarly, the texts of the Expressionist *avant-garde* also signally refuse to satisfy the conventional expectations made of the poet, namely the sovereign ability to unify or conceptually integrate multifarious perceptions. Yet clearly this is not to be thought of as a failure of Expressionism, but rather as a crucial aesthetic principle.

The juxtaposition of heterogeneous images reflects the disintegration of the bourgeois world and the chaos of modernity. And if the object world appears confused and fragmented in these texts, then so too does the poet who is the implied subject of these disparate perceptions. For the disjointedness of these images is also the reflex of an incoherent subject who is struggling not only to organize perceptions and language but also to preserve a sense of internal unity, of selfhood.

Furthermore, where the environment is presented as chaotic, overwhelming and threatening, it frequently appears as an autonomous being in its own right. By contrast the subject is now associated increasingly with images of reification, coldness, or death, and so takes on a subordinate and passive position. Expressionist texts are consequently full of images of anxiety, psychological alienation, spiritual disorientation and “transcendental homelessness” (Anz 1977). This depiction of the crucial change in the subject’s experience of the object world, and the reversal in the normal power relations with the environment, culminates in a full-scale “dissociation of the self” (Vietta and Kemper 1975). This characteristic inversion of the subject–object relationship is evident in the first stanza of Lichtenstein’s poem “Punkt” (Point):

The desolate streets flow all ablaze
Through my extinguished head. And cause me pain.
I feel clearly that I will soon fade away –
Briar-roses of my flesh, do not stab so.

The poet’s relationship to the outside world has changed radically here: it is clearly unlike the relationship to Nature that we imagine was enjoyed by the poets of Romanticism. Instead, the environment has become an active and destructive force threatening the subject. And as is often the case in Expressionist poetry, there appear now to be no clear boundaries between an aggressive object world and the weakened subject, so that the streets seem to run without halt, straight through the head of the writer. By contrast to the newly energized city, the poet is presented as weak, ephemeral, and on the point of dissolution or death.

Another important aspect of this “dissociation of the self” is the experience of alienation from the prevailing social, familial, and moral-religious structures. The Expressionist writers were almost exclusively male, from well-to-do, often Jewish, bourgeois families, and in their early twenties when the movement began (most were born around 1890). Their common experience was the need to escape from what was perceived to be a stifling, conservative, and restrictive society, and in particular from the patriarchal family structure associated with the overbearing figure of the father. Expressionist texts abound with Oedipal antagonisms in which the father–son conflicts take on a symbolic dimension, as a mode of playing out the younger generation’s rebellion against a traditional and philistine form of civilization. Because of a kind of “cultural lag” (Anz 1977), the hierarchical structure inherited by Wilhelminian society appeared outmoded and out of step with the early twentieth century, not least given the rapid advances made during the same period not only in the fields of science and technology, but equally in psychology and social thought. Along with the figure of the smug, self-satisfied citizen and philistine “Bürger” (burgher), the father-figure was seen as the primary representative of this outdated form of civilization, and together they became the Expressionists’ principal targets. Hasenclever’s play “Der Sohn” (The son) is the paradigm of these texts, in which a monstrous patriarch-figure imposes rigid constraints on his son’s every spiritual, artistic, and erotic desire, resulting in a revolutionary uprising by the younger generation and a call to oppose the dominating force of all fathers.

Rather than simply shocking or “slapping the face” of the bourgeoisie though, many Expressionists moved on from this rebellious stance to develop a full-scale “critique of civilization” in all its forms (Vietta and Kemper 1975: 83–110). In the more sophisticated of the Expressionist texts, such as Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis,” these Oedipal dilemmas are represented in a more self-reflexive way which ironizes not only the father-figure but also the residual elements of bourgeois identity within the son. Kafka’s text for example satirizes the particular pride that the father of Gregor Samsa takes in his own renewed role as breadwinner and head of the household after the sudden decline of the son. And Kafka’s text carries this out much more subtly than many of the Oedipal texts of Expressionism, for example by focusing on the importance of the father’s new uniform as an emblem of the social status which his new job gives him. At the same time, Kafka’s text satirizes the son, who, even after being plunged into a momentous existential dilemma by his fantastic transformation into an insect, contrives to ignore it by prioritizing his bourgeois preoccupations and concerns: absurdly, he dutifully consults the train timetable and worries instead about being late for work, despite his metamorphosis.

If the traditions and systems of norms inherited from the previous century no longer seemed relevant to the new age, it was Nietzsche who had first formulated this situation in a way which struck a chord with the Expressionist generation. Echoing Nietzsche’s idea of the “death of God,” the Expressionist writer (and later Dadaist) Hugo Ball described a situation in which the inherited certainties and cosmologies

failed to provide meaning and a viable system of values. Ball writes: "God is dead. A world broke apart . . . Religion, science, morals – phenomena which emerged from the anxieties of primitive peoples. A world breaks apart. There are no more pillars and supports, no foundations that would not have been shattered. Churches have become castles in the air. Convictions prejudices . . . The meaning of the world faded away" (Anz and Stark 1981: 124; trans. Murphy 1999: 52).

The experience of transcendental homelessness and abandonment by God figures frequently in Expressionist poetry via a number of variations on the theme of the "empty heavens" (Vietta 1976: 155–79). For example, Alfred Lichtenstein writes "And over everything hangs an old rag – / The heavens . . . heathenish and without sense"; while Oscar Loerke writes in a similar vein, "The house of heaven pales into uncertainty." This strategy of bringing the sublime down to the level of the quotidian is not limited to the common theme of spiritual emptiness, and it frequently takes the form of creating other pointedly de-aestheticized tropes. The practice of treating with contempt a realm traditionally afforded reverence develops into a form of iconoclasm – another pertinent example of the avant-garde character of the Expressionist movement. For instance, a contemporary audience trained to expect the poet to adopt a traditional Classical/Romantic approach when confronted with a set of conventionally poetic Nature topoi (such as the night sky) would be shocked to see Ernst Blass reduce the moon to "a slime / On an enormous velour of the falling night" while the "stars quiver tenderly like embryos"; or to see the poet Klabund describe the "evening clouds" as being "like drunken coffins" (Murphy 1999: 62).

Perhaps we can describe this important aspect of the Expressionist aesthetic by saying that it is characterized by the tendency toward both excess and de-aestheticization: not only do the Expressionists shun the conventionally beautiful in favor of the ugly, the deformed, the squalid, the diseased, and the insane, but they are also attracted to extreme situations, such as madness, the modern metropolis, the apocalypse, or the Great War. Aspects of this aesthetic approach can be seen even in the cinema of Expressionism, such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, in which the make-up, costumes, and physical gestures of the key characters, and even many of the sets, are marked by excess (Murphy 1999: 218). But as the example of this film's narrative makes clear, it would be a mistake to write off Expressionist representation simply as the product of hallucination.

To be sure, texts such as Heym's short story "Der Irre" (The madman) transfigure the world entirely according to the distorted perspective of the central figure. And there are also occasions when the depiction of the environment functions metonymically, as a mirror of subjectivity (as in the "Ich-drama" with its multiple projections of the poet's selfhood). Yet it is more accurate to view the fundamental aesthetic of Expressionism in terms of a two-way process: rather than any straightforward mimesis, the modern world's effect upon the writer comes to the fore, in as far as the writer projects a correspondingly nuanced meaning back upon the world represented. If this produces an inner vision, an extrapolation of reality's "essence," or a reality which appears filled with dynamic intensity, then this is not so much a

distortion of fact as a response that places in the forefront the central issue: the way in which the writer experiences modernity.

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Literary Impressionism

Max Saunders

When the “Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs” put on the first of their eight exhibitions in Paris between 1874 and 1886, they didn’t call themselves Impressionists. It was the art critic Louis Leroy, deriding Claude Monet’s sketch-like, shimmering, Japanese-influenced *Impression: Sun Rising*, who inadvertently gave the movement its name. Impressionism has remained a problematic term ever since; contested within both art history and literature. As one of its leading critics, Richard Brettell, argues: “There is no doubt that Impressionism is the best-known and, paradoxically, the least understood movement in the history of art” (Brettell 1999: 15).

Brettell distinguishes between two central senses. The first, and narrower, refers to the participants in the group exhibitions – the key figures being Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas, Sisley, and Berthe Morisot. Even here, the delineations of Impressionism are hazy. Artists who developed their techniques into something beyond Impressionism – artists like Cézanne, Gauguin, and Seurat, appeared in some of these group exhibitions. These three, together with Manet and Van Gogh, were included in 1910 in the first of two famous exhibitions in London organized by the Bloomsbury art critic Roger Fry and titled “Manet and the Post Impressionists.”

The broader, if more contentious, sense seeks to define Impressionism as an aesthetic position: “as an offshoot of Realism interested principally in the transcription of visual reality as it affects the retina of the painter within a discrete, and short, period of time. Hence, Monet’s paintings are impressions that can, again, be closely linked to the contemporary writing and thinking about photography” (Brettell 1999: 15–16).

There are two essential features of this analysis. First, that Impressionism foregrounds visual experience. Cézanne famously said that Monet was “only an eye – but what an eye!” Though all painting necessarily operates through the medium of vision, in Renaissance or Classical painting the visual generally indicates something beyond itself: spiritual or religious ideas; biblical narratives; historical events; mythical or individual persons; idealized landscapes, and so on. Similarly, light acquires a new

significance in Impressionist art. Whereas in earlier painting illumination again often acquires spiritual significance, and chiaroscuro is used to represent plastic form, Impressionism is energized not just by the emerging technology of photography, but also by developing theories of light, of light waves, vibrations, color theories, the relationship between colors, the observation of the colors of shadows. Second, these secularizing tendencies paradoxically propel Impressionism in paint away from literal realism or verisimilitude and toward the psychological; away from the attempt to represent perceived objects with photographic realism, and toward the process of perception, the subjective experience of vision.

Bretell further distinguishes two major divisions within Impressionist painting. The first is "Transparent Impressionism," where painters produce "what appear to be impressions of visual reality." Monet is the "canonical" figure here. "The subject of the painting is the entire visual field in front of the painter rather than clearly separate forms in illusionistic space." The second is "Mediated Impressionism," in which painters followed the lead of Degas or Renoir. For them, "visual reality is conceived not as a vibrant colored field, but as a social world in which the figure and its various 'grounds' must be analysed to be understood" (18).

Writers were soon applying the term to literature and music too. Ferdinand Brunetière's essay "L'Impressionnisme dans le roman" appeared in 1879 (Brunetière 1896). But from another point of view, what the Impressionists were painting could be said to come from literature, to take its inspiration from an influential essay by Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863). Baudelaire was writing about the pre-Impressionist painter Constantin Guys. Yet the essay can be read as anticipating Impressionism in its advocacy of the beauty of everyday life – and especially of the life of leisure in the modern city; of speed of execution; and in its preference for the ceremonies of modernity rather than adherence to the classical tradition. Similarly, in British writing the crucial figure is Walter Pater, who had already begun to explore the notion of the "impression" by 1873 (before the first "Société anonyme" exhibition), when he wrote in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*: "in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is" (Pater 1910: viii).

Discussions of "Impressionism" as a literary term tend to begin by acknowledging different types of resistance to its use – especially skepticism about what it might mean applied to verbal rather than visual art. Leroy was posing what seemed to him an impossibility: making a school out of the sketchy and the numinous. As Jesse Matz has argued, the vagueness that "Impressionism" can connote seems integral to its signification as a critical term (Matz 2001: 17–18). Is literary Impressionism like Impressionist painting, writing of intense visuality, writing which moves on rapidly (by analogy with the speed of Impressionist brushstrokes) without full elaboration, preoccupied with the processes of perception rather than the thing perceived, particularly concerned with aesthetics and the perception of beauty?

This definitional problem is compounded by a historical one. In art history the chronology is much clearer. Pictorial Impressionism is decidedly an affair of the late

nineteenth century and the *fin de siècle*. “Post-Impressionism” had been identified by 1910, the year that, according to Virginia Woolf, “human character changed” (Woolf 1988: 421). In literature one can distinguish two ways of understanding Impressionism chronologically. One is very specific, and sees it as exactly contemporary with Impressionism in paint: something occupying the space between Realism and modernism, and coinciding with the origin of phenomenology. The other is more concerned to trace the notion of the “Impression” further back: philosophically, to its origins in British empiricism and skepticism in the work of Locke, Hume, and Berkeley; in literature, to the psychological realism of the mid-nineteenth century.

There has been a major renewal of critical interest in the concept of literary Impressionism recently. This has explored both versions. There have been valuable monographs focusing on individual writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as James, Stephen Crane, Conrad, and Katherine Mansfield, in relation to Impressionism (see Hoople 2000; Nagel 1980; Peters 2001; van Gunsteren 1990). There have also been comparative studies, such as those by Peter Stowell (which is restricted to the *fin de siècle*) and Todd Bender (which takes the longer view). But the work of two critics in particular has transformed the history of literary Impressionism and its relation to modernism. Paul B. Armstrong’s *The Challenge of Bewilderment: Understanding and Representation in James, Conrad, and Ford* concentrates on the three writers in English most often now called Impressionist, and offers a powerful philosophically inflected reading of their fiction. Where Armstrong gives the chronologically narrower account of Impressionism, the critic who has written most convincingly on the longer history of literary Impressionism is Jesse Matz, whose excellent study follows critics such as Fredric Jameson and Michael Levenson in arguing that Impressionism is a fundamental antecedent to literary modernism. Matz’s central literary figures include the James/Conrad/Ford trio, and also Hardy and Proust. But these are framed with extensive discussions of Walter Pater and Virginia Woolf.

Matz traces the ambiguities in the “impression” from its empiricist origins, when it is both the passive receiving of the stamp of the world, and the mental activity of perceiving and thinking about what is received. He begins with Proust, showing how he poses moments of intensely visual sensation and pictorial prose, which might appear as typically Impressionist, only to reject them in favor of another definition of impression: the classic moments of involuntary memory in which a present impression recalls a past one. It is this structure connecting impressions across time, and thereby “regaining” or appearing to transcend time, that constitutes Proustian Impressionism. By redefining the impression in this way, Matz is able to trace striking continuities from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. The gem-like flame with which Pater wants to burn; the wondering or haunted consciousnesses of James’s novels; Conrad’s rigor in trying “to make you *see*”; the modernist epiphanies of Proust, Joyce, and Woolf: all these (and one could add others: Lawrence’s visionary vitalism; Eliot’s Tiresias foresuffering all; Pound’s desire to reconnect with the divine energies of Homer or Dante) represent a specific

paradigm, which corresponds to a new way of thinking about how the mind works (where phenomenology, pragmatism, and Bergsonian vitalism coexist), about the experience of knowing, and the relationship between perceiving and understanding.

Told in this coherent way, the history of Impressionism complicates both Realism and modernism, showing that Impressionism was not just the fundamental antecedent to modernism, but the ground on which modernism is constructed. The *style indirect libre* of Joyce as well as Flaubert is, after all, a technique for rendering impressions. This isn't to argue that writers such as Proust and Woolf aren't modernists, but that their work is still profoundly engaged with the idea of the impression, and how to represent it.

Several of the authors who have since been discussed as Impressionist were (at least initially) hostile or ambivalent toward the term, as was Flaubert writing to Turgenev in 1877: "After the Realists, we have the Naturalists and the Impressionists. What progress! Bunch of clowns" (Heath 1992: 29). Henry James's judgment of Impressionist painting in 1876 may seem startlingly negative now:

The young contributors to the exhibition of which I speak are partisans of unadorned reality and absolute foes to arrangement, embellishment, selection, to the artist's allowing himself, as he has hitherto, since art began, found his best account in doing, to be preoccupied with the idea of the beautiful. . . . None of its members show signs of possessing first-rate talent, and indeed the "Impressionist" doctrines strike me as incompatible, in an artist's mind, with the existence of first-rate talent. To embrace them you must be provided with a plentiful absence of imagination. . . . the Impressionists . . . declare that a subject which has been crudely chosen shall be loosely treated. They send detail to the dogs and concentrate themselves on general expression. (James 1956: 114–15)

But James was later to soften his views. And, as Matz shows, the concept of the "impression" was to become central both in his critical work, such as "The Art of Fiction," and his later novels, particularly *What Maisie Knew* and *The Ambassadors*.

It is partly, as Eloise Knapp Hay argues, that the connotations of the term were becoming less pejorative. Joseph Conrad too was ambivalent about the term, shifting from his early rejection of Impressionist painting, via his "qualified praise" of Stephen Crane's writing, to a position where he himself began consciously to aim at Impressionist effects (Hay 1976: 55). Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897) is often discussed as a manifesto of Impressionism:

art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential – their one illuminating and convincing quality – the very truth of their existence.

...

Such an appeal, to be effective, must be an impression conveyed through the senses. . . . My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*.

Two paradoxes emerge here. First, Impressionism is supposed to concentrate on the visible world. But it does this in order to get at something that can't be perceived visually: the "truth" "underlying" the "visible universe." Conrad's celebrated credo – "it is, before all, to make you *see*" – is doubly ambiguous. Does "before all" mean before in time (first you see the visual perceptions, then you work out what they are; what Ian Watt called "delayed decoding")? Or does it mean "above all": in other words, that it is less important to struggle to understand: you should just have the impressions, the sensations, the experience; be an artist rather than a philosopher? Either way, the important point is Conrad's emphasis of the word "see," which brings out the ambiguity of that word too: to see with the eye, or with the understanding. The second paradox is that while Conrad's art renders the visible universe as a way of revealing the secrets that lie beneath it, what it finds is precisely that they *are* secrets; enigmas, mysteries. They elude rational "seeing," and remain recalcitrantly baffling phenomena.

Ford Madox Ford's case is different. He proclaimed himself an Impressionist from the start. For him, literary Impressionism precedes pictorial Impressionism, and means the "conscious art" with which an author produces impressions in words of lived impressions. He sees literature as reaching technical maturity as Impressionism appears in the mid-nineteenth century in works by Stendhal and particularly Flaubert and Maupassant; and he sees this line as developed by Henry James and, in the twentieth century, by the formal experiments practiced by modernists such as Conrad, Ford himself, and Pound. Two classic examples give the best sense of Fordian Impressionism. The first (written while he was working on *The Good Soldier*) gives an intensely visual sensation:

I suppose that Impressionism exists to render those queer effects of real life that are like so many views seen through bright glass – through glass so bright that whilst you perceive through it a landscape or a backyard, you are aware that, on its surface, it reflects a face of a person behind you. For the whole of life is really like that; we are almost always in one place with our minds somewhere quite other. (Ford 1914b: 174)

The second example, from *Joseph Conrad*, is also about the building up of a super-imposed multiple perspective. In this case it is an impression of a man: one who has much in common with Edward Ashburnham. And the passage describes perfectly the method of his fiction – especially *The Good Soldier* – and is characteristic of his Impressionist method of criticism, theorizing by fictional examples:

it became very early evident to us that what was the matter with the Novel, and the British novel in particular, was that it went straight forward, whereas in your gradual making acquaintance with your fellows you never do go straight forward. You meet an English gentleman at your golf club. He is beefy, full of health, the moral of the boy

from an English Public School of the finest type. You discover, gradually, that he is hopelessly neurasthenic, dishonest in matters of small change, but unexpectedly self-sacrificing, a dreadful liar but a most painfully careful student of lepidoptera and, finally, from the public prints, a bigamist who was once, under another name, hammered on the Stock Exchange. . . . Still, there he is, the beefy, full-fed fellow, moral of an English Public School product. To get such a man in fiction you could not begin at his beginning and work his life chronologically to the end. You must first get him in with a strong impression, and then work backwards and forwards over his past. . . . That theory at least we gradually evolved. (Ford 1924b: 129–30)

Here the emphasis is on process: on the instability of impressions; how they constantly transform and astonish; how they necessitate time-shifts – the working “backwards and forwards.” Where the first example concentrates on the phenomenology of Impressionism – what the experience of perceiving things is like – the second is also attentive to its epistemology – its processes of knowing and understanding.

Besides writing fiction which he defined as Impressionist, Ford was also a prolific critic, producing perhaps the most sustained and extensive investigation into literary Impressionism in the twentieth century, which anticipates the longer version of its history as beginning in Realism, and goes through Aestheticism and into modernism.

Just as Impressionism in painting prepared the way for Pointillism, Post-Impressionism, and Cubism, so literary Impressionism metamorphoses into modernism. It is particularly drawn to moments of defamiliarization, when a character’s identity is threatened, when their set ways of being and doing and perceiving are disrupted, and their experience acquires a rawness and directness that makes it more real for us. In this it approaches to the stream of consciousness, which modernism was to develop out of Impressionism. It also makes us more aware of the medium, construction, composition, form, techniques, just as visual Impressionism intensifies awareness of the picture surface.

Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is in many ways a Post-Impressionist work, concerned with being modern; modernist; doing things differently from the preceding generation. Yet its content is very much that of the Impressionist painters: the bourgeoisie at leisure; by the seaside. Woolf shares with Impressionist and modernist writers the desire to free the novel from the tyranny of story. In her key essay “Modern Fiction” she rejects the patriarchal-institutional complex which binds us into its structures of linearity, time, and authority: “some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant” has the writer in thrall, she argues, “to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole.” She goes on to ask whether novels must be like this:

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being “like this”. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. . . . Life is

not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. (Woolf 1968: 188–9)

The trouble is that readers of prose, and especially longer, novel-length prose, are generally less happy to get rid of stories than viewers of pictures, perhaps because of the different temporalities of the two arts (see Empson 1987: 448). Most of the other critical objections to the Impressionist method turn on the claim that rather than getting us closer to the experience of reality, it falsifies it. Some modernists found the preoccupation with the eye problematic. Ezra Pound, for example, wrote that “Impressionism belongs in paint, it is of the eye”; and argued that: “A ball of gold and a gilded ball give the same ‘impression’ to the painter. Poetry is in some odd way concerned with the specific gravity of things, with their nature” (Lindberg-Seyersted 1982: 10). Observation is of course the foundation of the scientific method, and Pound’s use of scientific vocabulary is (as “in some odd way” concedes) scarcely scientific. But other writers more interested in science (such as Conrad, Wells, Woolf, Lawrence, or Joyce) were aware of the ways in which science and technology were beginning to show how the eye was not the measure of the universe, unable to perceive electricity, atoms, X-rays, radiation, forces, viruses, genes.

Some see Impressionism as inherently obfuscatory. E. M. Forster, for example, speculated about Conrad that perhaps “he is misty in the middle as well as at the edges, that the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel” (Forster 1936: 135). For Lawrence, Impressionism in paint was a doomed attempt to escape from the physical body into a realm of light (Lawrence 1936: 563). There can be a political dimension to this charge too: an argument that what is being obfuscated is the reality of social inequity, whether of gender, class, or race. Most of the leading Impressionist authors have been criticized on at least one of these counts of political suspectness. James is often criticized for the exclusiveness of the social elite he anatomizes. Proust and Woolf have been castigated for snobbery. Ford’s ideal of communication between landowners and peasants has been attacked as an unrealistic survival of feudalism. Conrad’s fiction, especially that of the sea, has been criticized for offering as a microcosm a predominantly male section of society; and the debate continues over whether he is a critic of imperialism, or himself complicit with its racism. However, comparable charges have been leveled at most types of art. They shouldn’t occlude the pervasiveness of Impressionism across the arts from the late nineteenth century.

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Part III
Modernist Genres and
Modern Media

The Novel

Jesse Matz

It is customary to define the modern novel as a reaction against its Victorian predecessor. Victorian writers, it seemed, used their novels to moralize or to idealize, when their priorities ought to have been aesthetic or more truly realistic. Real life and fine perceptions alike evaded them. Their narrators were implausibly omniscient, their descriptions too dull, their concerns too conventional. Their plots began and ended too simply and too neatly – predictable crises giving way to easy closure, typically in marriage or in death. Such limitations, inherited by the moderns, found them with no way to reflect modern times. Modernity had changed everything, bringing global war, urban chaos, revolutionary technology, sexual freedom; the novel inherited by the moderns, however, seemed essentially traditional – slow, staid, set, and so unable to match the flux, the bewilderment, the excitement that now defined modern life. Therefore the moderns tried to “make it new” by trading the novel’s regular forms for experimental forms of flux, perplexity, openness, skepticism, freedom, and horror. They replaced omniscience with fixed or fallible perspectives, broke their chapters into fragments, made sex explicit, and dissolved their sentences into the streams and flows of interior psychic life. Time and space dissolved as well, as did any faith that the world’s appearances could reflect its realities, or that “objective” truths existed. Indeed, the moderns went as far as to question reality itself. Whereas the novels of the past had taken too much for granted, the fiction of the future would question all forms of belief, perception, and judgment. It would open itself always to new ways of seeing and representing the world.

The causes for these changes are similar to those of modernism more generally. What specifically motivated the modernist novel, however, was a desire to stress the *art* of the novel (to enhance its aesthetic distinction relative to poetry, painting, and music), and a change in the nature of the human relationships to which fiction is perhaps uniquely responsible. Social distinctions between men and women, imperialist and colonized, lord and servant were breaking down, and, along with them, the

standard frameworks for fictional representation. Socially and aesthetically, then, novelists broke new ground, expanding the territory of fiction vastly in these opposite directions.

This customary definition comes to us from the modern novelists themselves, and the things they said to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. Thomas Hardy, for example, was among the first to react against Victorian “prudery” and, “weary of puerile inventions and famishing for accuracy,” among the first to favor “frank” modern treatment of real human passions (1997: 256). Virginia Woolf famously spoke against the prior generation’s penchant for inert material details. In Arnold Bennett and other Edwardian writers she found no real feel for “life itself” – for modernity’s perpetual flux of impressions, due to which “human character changed” around 1910. Woolf welcomed the tendency in newer writers to abandon all conventions in pursuit of the “incessantly varying spirit” that animated the life of the moment (1988: 33). Likewise, D. H. Lawrence called for a new kind of novel, in his foreword to *Women in Love* (1920), where he noted that “we are now in a period of crisis” in which it was critical to “bring forth the new passion, the new idea” (1987: 486). Such impulses toward change came from all corners of fiction, even from the apparently traditional pages of Willa Cather, who noted that the novel had become “overfurnished” and that it had become necessary to “throw all the furniture out of the window” to make room for “the essential materials of art” (1970: 44).

This impulse to modernize the novel dates back at least to Flaubert, and to three ways he modernized his *Madame Bovary* (1852). Flaubert chose not to blink at the complexity of moral corruption but rather to portray it in fully realistic detail. Detail meant psychological detail, and Flaubert was one of the first writers to devote a large portion of the fictional record to the inner life of consciousness, crafting a fictional form that could meld novelistic discourse with the human mind. The combination here of acute realism and fine form made Flaubert perhaps the originator of the modern novel, for it encouraged writers to think in new ways about the novel’s cultural role. What had been a relatively low form of writing (broadly appealing, free of standards, rarely put on par with poetry, music, or painting) began its ascent of the aesthetic scale, enabling later writers to make the novel a forum for bold cultural experiment. Once Flaubert’s aesthetically experimental treatment of the human consciousness of modern realities became the pattern for fiction’s future – once he had produced this influential “book about nothing, a book with no reference to anything outside itself, which would stand on its own by the inner strength of its style” – the modern novel was well begun (1980: 154).

The modern novel then reaches its apotheosis just after the First World War, with a set of revolutionary modernist texts, most notably James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), which represents both a high point and an endpoint for the novel as a form of representation. An encyclopedia of modernist forms, attitudes, and problems, *Ulysses* innovates a new narrative style in many of its eighteen chapters, each of which dramatizes some new condition of modern subjectivity, amounting to a diverse and comprehensive realization of the modern writer’s hope for new ways of seeing and

forming the modern world. Showing city life in its full range of excitement and terror, frank in matters of sexuality and physical being, and documenting ordinary life in unprecedented dynamic detail, *Ulysses* opened the modern novel most widely to the changing realities of its times. And since it did so with such unprecedented breadth and focus (taking in all of Dublin, but on a single day), it may have represented an *end* to the modern novel – the last word in the representation of the experience of modernity.

The same perhaps was true of three other consummations: Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27), Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925), and Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities* (set in 1913, published in 1952). Proust's book perfected the modern novel's temporality – the subjective realities of flux and change, opposed to the ever more restrictive time of public chronology. Free of regular linearity, limitless in its temporal reach, *In Search of Lost Time* took the exploration of the patterns of human consciousness to its far limit. Musil dramatized the state of the fragmented modern self, the “vanishing subject,” which as an incoherent jumble of impressions, had to lack the stable “qualities” traditionally attributed to human identity. Stein stretched the bounds of novelistic cultural history past its linguistic breaking-point. Fragmentary and yet also synoptic, transcendent while finely particular, these books show us the modernist experiment in fiction at its peak: all four try to find forms adequately experimental, expansive, and dynamic to take in the rich, elusive, plural effects of modernity.

What ended this experimental ambition, according to the customary account, was a set of developments antagonistic to aesthetic detachment. From Flaubert to Joyce, there prevailed a kind of aesthetic idealism – a faith that fictional art could (or ought to try to) reflect or even get the better of modern realities. But in the years that followed the publication of *Ulysses* and *In Search of Lost Time*, political exigencies and social contingencies tended to discredit aesthetic priorities. What began with Flaubert and reached its high point with Joyce hit stumbling blocks in the 1930s, for example, when the real threats posed by totalitarian regimes made fictional renderings of consciousness and of temporality seem pointless or even irresponsible. George Orwell noted in modernist novelists a “too Olympian attitude, a too great readiness to wash their hands of the immediate practical problem” presented in sociopolitical life, a tendency to see life “very comprehensively” but “through the wrong end of the telescope,” and his attitude became the prevailing one at mid-century. Why play with literary forms (why retreat into the vagaries of interior consciousness, for example) in the face of the pressing need to document in direct, clear, critical prose real political dangers? Politically minded critics had already complained about the modern novel's irresponsible detachment, what Marxist critic Georg Lukács called the “negation of history” effected by writers whose “surrender to subjectivity” and “disintegration of the outer world” perniciously derealized social reality (1962: 21–5). The writers of the 1930s agreed, and often thought modernism an unaffordable luxury, especially for fiction, which had perhaps the best chance and the greatest responsibility publicly to dramatize social and political crisis. And as the threats of

the 1930s gave way to the horrors of the Second World War and the absurd terrors of the Cold War, the experiments of modern fiction seemed only more inappropriate and irresponsible. Or even naive: As modernity redoubled its dangers and excitements and extended into the condition of *postmodernity*, it seemed to leave the merely modern novel far behind. And so the customary account typically says that the modern novel begins to die out in the 1930s, breathes its last gasp in the first moments of the Second World War (perhaps with the last works of Joyce and Woolf – *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and *Between the Acts* (1941)), and lies dead and buried by the time of the postmodern developments of the 1960s and beyond.

Within this customary framework – from 1890 to 1939, between the Victorian and the anti-modern – what specific goals, styles, and attitudes characterized the modern novel? What exactly did Woolf, for example, do to pursue that “incessantly varying spirit” of “life itself”? How did the inner life of the mind make its way onto fiction’s public page? What brought urban experiences to life there? How exactly do we define the particular aspects of this literary form?

Modernity itself, the modern novel’s main preoccupation, was also its fundamental formal inspiration. Modernity meant *change* – a perpetual departure from all tradition, a fascination always with the new, a hunger for the future rather than the past. As Baudelaire first put it, modernity favored “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent,” and fascination with these things meant making fiction, too, more dynamic, protean, and variable (1972: 403). Faster, fragmentary writing could not only make fiction feel more like life itself, but perhaps also encourage the sort of nimble thoughts and feelings readers might need to thrive amid modernity’s tumultuous effects. So John Dos Passos, author of *Manhattan Transfer*, wrote “simultaneous chronicles” new for their power to jumble together all the shifting sensations of metropolitan perception – a power vital, he felt, for fiction “to survive in the dense clanging traffic of twentieth-century life” (1927: 20).

But along with this dynamism comes skepticism. Modernity’s changes also made writers doubt their judgment and their senses, making doubt perhaps the dominant mood of modern fiction. A world constantly in flux was one in which nothing could be certain. It demanded constant recognition of human fallibility and failure, as in the fiction of Joseph Conrad. Conrad was fascinated by the stupefying array of images borne to us from the sensuous world – and also by the mercurial passions warring together within the hearts of men. His characters are subject to misapprehensions and mistakes and they often find it impossible to get at the truth or connect with one another. Marlow, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness* (1899), expresses Conrad’s overarching skepticism when he asks, “Do you see the story? Do you see anything?,” and then admits, “It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream sensation. . . . No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one’s existence – that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone.” Marlow’s regret pervades much of modern fiction, where doubt often leads to ironic reflection upon the

elusiveness of truth and the failure of meaning, and styles of description and narration often devolve deliberately into ambiguity and confusion.

Such skepticism often dwells upon the gap between appearances and reality. Modern novelists frequently discover deeply ironic or even ruinous differences between the way things seem and what proves true about them. Henry James offers a symbol for this difference in the object named by the title of *The Golden Bowl* (1903): the perfect golden surface of the bowl conceals crystal which is cracked, much the way the novel's fine situations hide flaws and even evils. Appearances reverse realities in this fashion, in a way fundamental to the modern novel's epistemology. Impressions and presuppositions exist to be corrected or defied; truths and realities retreat to story's end, or beyond.

To try for truth nevertheless, modern writers frequently come at it from different perspectives. Another key feature of the modern novel's epistemology is its sense that truth and meaning vary with point of view. Things appear differently to different people, and the modern novel therefore tends to vary its perspectives. William Faulkner, for example, noted that no single point of view could be sufficient to tell the complete story of the Compson family in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929): "I wrote the Benjy part first. That wasn't good enough so I wrote the Quentin part. That still wasn't good enough. I let Jason try it. That still wasn't enough. I let Faulkner try it and that still wasn't enough" (237). Sufficient representation demands many tellings, and the full story comes out only as alternative versions present its different sides. Correlative to this interest in multiple perspectives is a belief in the relativity of truth. Modern novels deal in no absolutes – moral, perceptual, or cultural. Rather, they take truth to be a relative thing, contingent upon circumstances, changing with time and place.

Truth became "subjective": relative perspectives ruled out objective styles of seeing and speaking, debunking the faith that knowledge or judgment could be free of bias, motive, or error. This shift from the objective to the subjective took place most prominently in the rejection of third-person omniscient narration. Traditional narration conducted with objective impersonality as if from a comfortable and authoritative remove from the objects of narration had come to seem unrealistic, or at least ineffective in conveying the reality of limited human experience and knowledge. By contrast, the subjective narrator – speaking or overheard in the act of living, directly involved with the people, objects, and concerns of his or her narrative world, or aligned with some particular character's point of view – became the only way to achieve narrative verisimilitude. Depending on the temperament of the writer in question or the mood of the story, this stress on subjective experience could be negative or positive. In Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, the radical subjectivity of experience is cause for regret and leads to tragedy. Ford's main character fails to see the truth about his marriage and his social set; when he does finally discover the objective reality behind his subjective delusion, the result is anguish: "No, by God, it is false! It wasn't a minuet that we stepped; it was a prison – a prison full of screaming hysterics." But in the writing of Woolf and Joyce the radical subjectivity

of experience tends not toward regret for the gap between delusion and reality but pleasure over new and special immersion in full immediate feeling. There is not an impoverishment of understanding but an intensification of it, an increase in writing's felt ardor.

In any case this subjectivity was an aspect of the modern novel's close attention to individual human psychology, the "movement inward" that was perhaps its most symptomatic feature. "Consciousness" is the modern novel's signature field of play, not only because of the modern writer's interest in personal and subjective experience, but in response to what new discoveries in psychology had revealed about the workings of the human mind. Empirical psychology and psychoanalysis found mental life to be more chaotic, unreasonable, atavistic, and divided than people had suspected. Whereas common sense might have had faith in a mind ruled by reason and deliberate intentions, modern psychology made it ever more clear that it was but a flux of sensations and perceptions, dissolving from one occasion to the next, and ruled (if ruled at all) by unconscious desires not always available to conscious awareness. The psychology of William James had had particular, foundational influence here – upon the development of the "stream of consciousness" style so famously innovated in the modern novel. James discovered that "Consciousness . . . does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. . . . It is nothing jointed; it flows." Since "A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described," James suggested that it be called "*the stream of thought, or of consciousness, or of subjective life,*" and those writers who followed his lead tried to chart the stream of consciousness by dissolving fiction's traditional mental boundaries (1955: 224–49). This flowing dissolution did not simply mean running together sentences and flooding narration with random thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Accurate characterization became a matter of plumbing new depths of idiosyncrasy and confusion; plot turned now on decisions, realizations, and reflections that were more minute, idiosyncratic, and heterogeneous; and narration itself took wholly new forms – each of which could vary depending upon the quality, mood, or motivation of the minds it sought to match.

Consciousness, already a focus for Flaubert, became fully elaborate in Henry James's psychological novels, and fully experimental in the stream-of-consciousness styles of Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Proust, Dorothy Richardson, and others. James built all his novels around minds "finely aware and richly responsible" – perpetually given much more to minute and exquisite acts of thought than to any "outer" activities. Richardson's *Pilgrimage* departs even further from outer formulae of plot and incident to trace whatever patterns its heroine's mind might follow. And then such unconstructed writing deconstructs even more chaotically into the sights and sounds and smells of *Ulysses* and its imitators, as the modern novel searches for a new realism in the actual incoherence of the human mind.

Character lost coherence as a result: unified selves fragmented into such a welter of perceptions, motives, memories, and desires that fictional people ceased to have the fixed, standard "qualities" that had made them engaging and memorable in

the novels of the past. Or, lost within their own mental flux, they ceased strong engagement with the outside world, lapsing into “solipsism.” Such dispersal and removal of selfhood was Thomas Mann’s concern in *The Magic Mountain*, in which Hans Castorp, disoriented by illness and isolation from ordinary life, finds at the core of his self an alarming provisionality – a random array of fleeting moods and notions in the place of any fixed self. The same dissolution was strikingly lamented by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who noted that while he had once felt whole and “everywhere . . . at the center,” now “everything fell into fragments for me, the fragments into further fragments, until it seemed impossible to contain anything at all within a single concept” (1986: 21). As modern novelists tried to capture this fragmentation of selfhood, their characters became less real in the traditional sense, provoking Arnold Bennett to complain (of Virginia Woolf’s figures) that “the characters do not vitally survive in the mind” (1968: 88). But Woolf herself thought her “ghostly” characters far more true to life. For her and like-minded writers, dissolving selves were an opportunity to focus in on the *essence* of selfhood – to turn away from merely material identities and discover anew the very process of soul-making.

These, then, are some of the changes in fiction’s form and focus that follow from the way modern novelists sought to debunk absolutes and to pursue change. Epistemological skepticism, a penchant for the aleatory and fragmentary, this interest in subjective interiority and identities in flux: these all followed from the shift in representational foundations effected by modernity itself. So did a range of other consequences: now, everyday life – albeit seen with a sense of “the numinous in the commonplace” – became the object of fiction no longer concerned to contrive dramatic plots and situations (Burgess 1965: 21); lyricism – once reserved for poetry – now enhances the aesthetic distinction of sentences freed from responsibility to conventional action; and, as we will now see, modernity also entailed a fundamental change in the novel’s temporality, its moral status, and its cultural purpose.

The early years of the modern novel saw a profound change in the nature of “public” time. Standardization (around Greenwich Mean Time, in railway schedules, in the workday) made time seem more and more a matter of public discipline. “Private” time (lived according to human mood, natural cycles, local customs) seemed imperiled, or at least substantially different from time now lived by the clock. Against the absolute order of public time, modern writers began to seek the truth of real temporal experience; against the false linearity of clock time, they tried to make fiction more true to the heterogeneity of human temporality. They also tried to make it more true to the vagaries of human memory. Just as the passing of time had come to seem more irregular, the past had come to seem more elusive, in contrast to what familiar stories and records implied about its easy accessibility. The past therefore appears in modern novels as something to be discovered only haphazardly, imperfectly, and through much effort.

Most famous for these temporal reconceptions is Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27). Proust dramatizes memory’s creative imperfections, showing that the past returns to us mainly when we make no effort to retrieve it, that there are

moments utterly lost to us unless chance (or some special aesthetic effort) returns them to us, and that the most accurate record of a life is one that weaves its way incessantly among distant but interrelated moments. Nonlinearity results: moments can seem to last for years, years can seem to pass in moments, and a typical day can compose itself out of past, present, and future moments all at once. Writing's truth and value (Proust implies) depend on this effort to depart from chronology, and for most other modern writers, chronological sequence likewise gave way to time-shifts, loops, tangents, and reversals, as narrative time set itself against the clock. Simple record of the passing of time gave way to "moments of being," and to fascination with "duration," which the philosopher Henri Bergson very influentially defined as "pure heterogeneity," "a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another without precise outlines," "the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*."

The change in *moral* focus went in favor of ambiguity. Determined above all no longer to preach or to allow the art of fiction to devolve into moral argument, modern novelists traded ethical priorities for aesthetic ones, and made bald realism more typical than any preference for good over evil. Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence were particularly keen to free the novel from positive ethical responsibilities, expressing the prevailing mood when they described the novel as a form for direct, visceral, passionate engagement rather than moral advocacy. Hardy insisted that fiction present "impressions" not "convictions" (1974: 24), and Lawrence wanted to silence "the didactic statements of the author" so that the "low, calling cries" of impassioned characters could offer access to a more purely sensuous world (1985a: 205). Moral certainties would become unavailable as the ambiguity of human motivation, the relative nature of goodness, and even the savagery of human appetites would have the last word. Sexuality and basic physical experience would finally get due representation: what had been illicit or irrelevant now became the proper stuff of fiction, as freer explorations of basic needs broke open fiction's moral frames. Of course, this free exploration had its own ethics. Lawrence, for example, wanted to bring bodily being into the novel because he felt that culture had departed too far from physical life into detached intellectuality. By making his fiction more sensuously detailed and freeing sensuous experience from moral restriction, Lawrence hoped to reinvigorate culture itself, and this effort indicates the alternative ethics of the modern novel – its reinterpretation of fiction's cultural role.

Wanting the novel to reintegrate human sensibilities, wanting it to offer alternatives to public time or to find a form in urban chaos, modern writers often hoped that the novel could significantly counteract the bad effects of modernity. Even despite the despair that often characterizes modern fiction, even despite its characteristic irony, it often has an idealistic wish to find new forms of salvation. In some accounts, the modern novel occupies a critical moment of faith in art's powers of redemption. Its practitioners took aesthetic experiment to new heights, in the hope that doing so could yet reform or redeem culture. Before them, fictional art had not aspired so high; after them, loss of faith in art would turn fictional experiment into something

more like a game. This is one way to draw the modern novel's boundaries: between Victorian realisms and postmodern play, it traces a "pattern of hope" (Spender 1963: xiii) and is the "one bright book of life" that "supremely can help you" (Lawrence 1985b: 197).

In a moment we will ask if this designation is accurate – if we should define the modern novel as a bright hope intervening between Victorian and postmodern darker ages. First, we need to wonder more generally about this customary definition of the modern novel. Did the modern novel truly make the difference intended by its writers and implied in its forms? Were there limitations and overstatements, delusions or failures in this effort to make fiction able to represent modernity?

It is critical to recall, in any account of the modern novel, that the novel has *always* been modern. Always that literary form most keyed into the contemporary, never really set in its ways, always (by name) *new*, the novel has forever been the sort of experimental form the modernists claimed they made it. This perennial modernity in the novel must discredit, to some extent, the modernists' account of their contributions to literary history (and the celebratory account of modern fiction that has followed from it). Indeed the modern novel's signature attributes – its skepticism, interiority, temporal heterogeneity, amorality – are things that crop up perpetually throughout the novel's history. More accurate than the customary account of the emergence of modernity in the novel might be one that reverses things to say that the novel only became "traditional" for a very short time in the nineteenth century (when in certain quarters it became "Victorian") and that modernism in the novel was just a reversion to type. Perhaps we only stress the originality of the "modern" because the moderns themselves wanted to perpetuate a myth favorable to their own status, or even because some false ideology made them complicit with commercial culture's lust for the new.

Even if the modern novel was as modern as it has seemed, there are limitations that must moderate any celebration of its revolutionary effects. Devotion to aesthetic form and the relative detachment from real-world practicalities may have made the modern novel too radically *autonomous*. Some have argued that whereas modernity and its problems demanded full sociopolitical engagement (especially from the novel, the most social of aesthetic forms), the aesthetic experimentation prized in the modern novel made it shy away from such commitment. And since this detachment may have been a function of privilege, it might discredit modern fiction, and seemed to do so especially when the exuberant 1920s gave way to the hard 1930s and critics came to see aestheticism not only as irresponsible but the target of anti-modern animosity. Criticism of the modern element in literature was enough to take the wind out of its sails: into the 1930s, the wish to be modern largely gave way to a penchant for more traditional forms of social realism, a more direct and uncomplicated form of representation. Many therefore date the end of the modern novel itself to the end of that decade, but some go further, and claim that anti-modernism brought to light truths about modern fiction that discredit its claims to positive aesthetic modernity.

And yet even the most aesthetic of modern novels had never really been so detached. The form of the novel itself compels social engagement (as other forms of art perhaps do not) and it is important to stress the difference this built-in sociality has made to the history of modern fiction. Even Hans Castorp and Faulkner's Benjy must engage with others, must come to us through certain socially collaborative means, in lines of filiation that link them to larger worlds of politics, commerce, and belief. This simple fact entails two major considerations. First of all, that the novel could never be as radically modern (as fully experimental – as much a rupture) as other kinds of modern art, because it could never entirely root out the novel's traditional concern with the problem of the individual's relation to the larger world, or completely dispense with such things as the ethics built onto narrative cause and effect. These are basic and bare limitations (and perhaps debatable ones) but they rightly make us focus here on the fundamental difference genre makes to the development of modernism in its particular instances. And this difference in turn entails a second consideration: the possibility that the modern novel involves a different kind of modernism – that its essential engagement not only sets it apart from those more autonomous modernist forms (Imagist poems, abstract pictures) but preserves a space of social responsibility within or despite modernism's more general aestheticism.

Do these complications rule out any precise periodization or definition of the modern novel? If even before 1857 the novel was modern, if it never really gave up on the social engagements that allegedly resumed and outmoded the modern in the 1930s, then when does modern fiction begin and end? Some answers to these questions would sidestep dates entirely and define the modern element in fiction as a transhistorical tendency, one that appears whenever technological change causes impatience with traditional styles of representation and results in self-consciously fragmented, introspective, and difficult forms of writing. Other answers to these questions would try for a compromise between historical dates and transhistorical qualities and note an important, definitive emergence of the modern element in fiction at a key moment of crisis: that which intervened between the two world wars, when extremes of crisis and optimism coexisted in a perilous and unique historical balance.

Does the modern novel then have a future? What happened to it, in these customary and revisionist accounts, after the Second World War and beyond? Is the modern novel still around today – either as a vital literary form or as a valid category for literary criticism?

After modern fiction cleared the way for fiction with more strictly realist priorities, the advent of postmodernism renewed the tendency toward experiment, but experiment without modernism's aesthetic idealism: this is one way of saying how the modern novel leads to what comes next. Just after the war, writers persisted in preferring a plainer, more sober, more directly useful or easily entertaining form of fiction; later, when innovation regained popularity, it did so without the cultural intentions that distinguished the modernist impulse. Writers like Woolf or Lawrence hoped that aesthetic experiment could help to counteract or critique the bad effects

of modernity; postmodernists, by contrast, engaged in aesthetic experiment without such expectations, and their experiments therefore tend more fully toward pure play and insouciant deconstruction of the languages of representation. This postmodern turn may have meant a truly final end to the modernist impulse, if in fact modernism's less total, more romantic innovations were wholly antiquated by postmodern skepticism. But it is possible that they were not, and many writers still seem to make use of modernist techniques in the spirit of modernist idealism – proof either that the modern impulse is indeed a transhistorical one or that post-war and post-modern reactions against modernism in fiction have not been as final as they might have seemed in their moment.

As for the critical attitude: Is it critically and theoretically accurate or useful to distinguish modern fiction from the Victorian, from the postmodern, and from the traditional forms of writing produced concurrently with books like *Ulysses* and *The Magic Mountain*? Two very opposite answers to this question seem true. It is true that greater distance from and scrutiny of the modernist moment makes its fiction seem less truly special, distinct, or new. Modern claims to importance seem less credible, more ideologically suspect, and less impressive. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Proust and Joyce, Mann and Woolf did things differently – and that imitators and inheritors have never quite attained to their significance, authority, ingenuity, or acclaim. That these qualities survive even our most theoretically and politically rigorous revisions of their literary history indicates that the modern novelists did make a profound difference in a form that deserves distinction and that it is valid or even vital to collect its attributes, motives, and problems within the very category that they themselves named.

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Poetry

Adam Parkes

Writing in 1910–11, the English poet and critic T. E. Hulme claimed that the two major traditions in poetry, romanticism and classicism, were as different as a well and a bucket. According to the romantic party, Hulme explained, humankind is “intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance”; that is, our nature is “a well, a reservoir full of possibilities.” For the classical party, however, human nature is “like a bucket”; it is “intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent” (Hulme 1987: 117). But it was not only that romanticism and classicism were as dissimilar as a well and a bucket; their contents were different, too. To draw water from the well of romanticism was, in effect, to pour a “pot of treacle over the dinner table,” while the classical bucket was more likely to be full of little stones – or jewels, perhaps. Romanticism, in Hulme’s view, was the result of displaced religious fervor; it represented the return of religious instincts that the “perverted rhetoric of Rationalism” had suppressed, so that “concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience” (Hulme 1987: 118). Classicism, by contrast, traded in dry goods – dry, hard goods, to be precise.

Hulme left little doubt as to which side he was on. “It is essential to prove,” he argued, “that beauty may be in small, dry things. The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description. . . . I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming” (Hulme 1987: 131–3). If by “dry, hard, classical verse” Hulme meant poems looking like the fragments of Sappho, he didn’t have to wait long to see his prophecy fulfilled.

The hard sand breaks,
and the grains of it
are clear as wine.

Far off over the leagues of it,
the wind,

playing on the wide shore,
piles little ridges,
and the great waves
break over it.

So wrote Hilda Doolittle in “Hermes of the Ways,” the first poem that she signed “H. D., Imagiste” at the behest of her fellow American expatriate Ezra Pound. From Pound’s perspective, the Imagist movement that he co-founded in 1912 with H. D. and the English poet Richard Aldington was finished well before the First World War began in August 1914; throughout this war-torn decade, however, Imagism continued to spawn the poetry of “small, dry things” whose coming Hulme had predicted a few years before.

Indeed, modernist poets weren’t content merely to break down the extended heroic narratives – the “spilt religion,” as Hulme put it – of their treacly nineteenth-century predecessors; they insisted on breaking down small things into ever-smaller particles and subparticles. This logic of disintegration is clearly at work in poems like “Hermes of the Ways,” where each line is metrically unique, creating a sense of perpetual freshness – an apotheosis of modernity, as it were. The same logic is even more explicit in Marianne Moore’s “The Fish” (written and first published in 1918), which follows a characteristically metonymic course from its piscine point of departure to another thing (or part of a thing) to another part of another thing, and so on.

With its syllabic stanzas arranged to resemble the scales of a fish, so that the act of reading mimics the act of perceiving the small wet thing from which the poet takes her lead, this poem was acclaimed by H. D. as the first piece of genuinely modern verse. Important as it was, this was only part of the story of the birth of modernist poetry. On H. D.’s and Hulme’s side of the fence, to be sure, were many poets who made major contributions to literary modernism, including not only Pound and other early Imagists like F. S. Flint but also William Carlos Williams and the American Objectivist poets of the 1930s (notably, George Oppen and Louis Zukofsky). On the other side of the fence, however, ranged a number of poets, such as W. B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens, who were famous for spreading romantic treacle – and for spreading it not just over the dinner table but over the garden furniture and even the garden itself. Or so it has often seemed. The terms handed down by Hulme, Pound, and others have been frequently recycled by participants in later critical debates about the nature and the legacy of the modernist movement. One might regard the modernist era as “the Pound era,” as Hugh Kenner called it in his most influential book; or one might, like Harold Bloom and Helen Vendler, see Yeats and Stevens as the pre-eminent figures in modern Anglo-Irish and American poetry; or, accepting Pound’s importance for American poetry, one might follow Donald Davie in arguing that in twentieth-century British poetry, “the most far-reaching influence, for good and ill, has been . . . Hardy” (Davie 1979: 3). None the less, to all of these major critics of the 1970s, it seemed clear which poets dealt in small, hard currency and which in romantic confectionery. For Kenner, Pound’s was the great modernist

imagination – concrete, historicist, political – while Stevens (the author of “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”) was to be dismissed as a writer of nonsense verse in the tradition of Edward Lear (Kenner 1971: 517). Neither Bloom nor Vendler disagreed with the terms on which this comparison rested; they simply reversed the criteria of aesthetic judgment, reading Stevens (like Yeats) as a major poet of sublime, transcendent, apolitical imagination, and assigning Pound a relatively minor role in the story of modernism.

Since the 1970s, when these powerful readings of modern poetry were forged, modernist scholarship has developed several new directions. Critics still employ the same language – or at least a version of the same language – to describe modern verse, but there’s much less certainty as to where romantic slop ends and hard, dry classicism begins. While critics as diverse as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Fredric Jameson have agreed that the central division in modernist aesthetics concerned an obsession with the “thing” (as espoused by Pound in his Imagist phase (1968: 3)) and the apparently contradictory desire to explore its symbolic associations (illustrated by Yeats, Symons, and others), it no longer seems as obvious as it once did which poets pursued things and which courted their symbolic correspondences. Or, to put it another way, it seems less clear to contemporary critics which poets sought to inhabit the world and which attempted to soar above it. That, Yeats wrote in 1908, was the “choice of choices”: “There are two ways before literature – upward into ever-growing subtlety, with Verhaeren, with Mallarmé, with Maeterlinck, until at last, it may be, a new agreement among refined and studious men gives birth to a new passion, and what seems literature becomes religion; or downward, taking the soul with us until all is simplified and solidified again. That is the choice of choices – the way of the bird until common eyes have lost us, or to the market carts” (Yeats 1968: 266–7). For many recent critics, the issue has less to do with the question of whether Yeats, or Pound, or Eliot chose the way of the bird or the market carts than with the question of *when* these poets chose one way and *under what circumstances* they tried the other.

The results of this critical re-examination of the modernist inheritance have been wide and various. Pound, for instance, has emerged as a much more consistently and ambitiously romantic figure than he was previously taken to be. In contemporary criticism, he is less exclusively the poet-sculptor of an influential early study by Donald Davie than the autobiographical quest-poet whom Ronald Bush describes in *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* ([1976] 1989). In this romantic guise, Pound has become a poet whose reactionary politics (evinced in his anti-Semitism and admiration for Mussolini) betray the grand public ambitions lurking within the idiosyncratic historical designs, or what Pound called the “ideogramic method,” visible on the poem’s surface (Bush 1989: 4). Building on the work of such critics as Bush, James Longenbach shows that Pound’s transformation into a romantic poet with otherworldly, spiritualistic tendencies occurred somewhat earlier than was once thought. Studying the three winters of 1913–16, which Pound spent with Yeats in the seclusion of rural Sussex, Longenbach has revealed how, at the very time that Pound

is often supposed to have helped Yeats to become more modern, Yeats influenced Pound in the opposite direction. For just when Pound was roughening Yeats's diction and toughening his attitude, he himself was encountering some of Yeats's most esoteric occult theories. Thus Pound's most famous exercise in Imagist poetics, "In a Station of the Metro" (1916), may be read as cultivating precisely the sort of spiritualistic awareness (or what Pound called "'symbolism' in its profounder sense") that is usually associated with Yeats:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

In light of Pound's sustained exposure to Yeats, Longenbach argues, the most significant word in this haiku-like poem may be "apparition" (Longenbach 1988: 78–82).

None of this is to say that Pound is no longer regarded as a historical poet; on the contrary, Pound's assertion that the *Cantos* were a "poem including history" continues to resonate powerfully among students of his work (Pound 1960: 46). What has changed, though, is the way in which Pound's historicism is understood. Instead of taking it at face value, contemporary critics emphasize how Pound's interest in the "thing" is inseparable from a tendency to seek out anything but the thing. It is an often-remarked paradox (or apparent paradox) of the *Cantos* and of literary modernism in general that the pursuit of concrete particulars frequently issues in long works of abstract design (*Finnegans Wake* and Williams's *Paterson* are other much-cited examples); intriguingly, Pound's notorious political views have been read in just these terms. On one hand, as Robert Casillo and others have argued, Pound's anti-Semitic pronouncements often claim "nature" as their ground of authenticity; on the other hand, the very concept of nature to which Pound (like fascism) turns is itself a historical construction – an abstraction designed to serve discreditable ideological ends (Casillo 1988: 106–54).

Recent critical readings of Yeats and Stevens have proved similarly mobile. In 1973 Davie sought to clarify Hardy's significance for twentieth-century poetry by comparing his emphasis on "historical contingency, a world of specific places at specific times" with Yeats's attempt to "transcend historical time by seeing it as cyclical, so as to leap above it into a realm that is visionary, mythological and . . . eternal" (Davie 1979: 3–4). Despite the controversy aroused by Davie's argument for Hardy's preeminence, there was nothing in his brief comparative portrait of Yeats to provoke disagreement from Bloom, Vendler, or Frank Kermode (whose accounts of Yeats have been equally influential). Such readings of Yeats have persisted; indeed they remain commonplace. But they have been forced increasingly to coexist with very different interpretations that take up the modernized post-Poundian Yeats, whose work actively engaged with the political struggles of his time – in particular, the Irish rebellion against British rule and the establishment of the Irish Free State (1922). These politically and historically oriented readings of Yeats have been marked by variety and division. Some critics have argued that Yeats's attitude toward such

historical events was ultimately an aesthetic one, and that his poetry recorded those events merely in order to transcend or “aestheticize” them – a maneuver characteristic of fascism, according to theorists from Walter Benjamin to Terry Eagleton. Indeed, according to a famous essay by Conor Cruise O’Brien (first published in 1965), fascism and a blood-and-soil species of nationalism were fundamental elements of Yeats’s work. Other readings, however, have drawn attention to the ways in which Yeats’s poetry resists the overarching narratives of fascism and nationalism, by emphasizing the dialectical tensions that make struggle the hallmark of his various imaginative activities. Essays expressing various positions in this debate may be found in Jonathan Allison’s useful collection, *Yeats’s Political Identities* (1996). Books by Elizabeth Cullingford and Marjorie Howes have revealed further complexities in the politics of Yeats’s poetics, by exploring the intersections between discourses of nationalism and gender; the results of such intersections in Yeats’s writings, these critics argue, are variable and even contradictory. Thus current critical arguments about Yeats concern not only the question of whether his primary subject is poetry or history but also the question of whether – when Yeats does open the door to history – the political elements of his poetry may only be read to his discredit.

Wallace Stevens’s poetry once seemed to shut the door on history even more firmly than Yeats at his most esoteric; in the last few years, however, our sense of Stevens also has begun to change. Since the publication in 1991 of groundbreaking readings by Alan Filreis and James Longenbach, Stevens has begun to emerge as a poet who was very much engaged with the historical developments of his time, so that the “rage for order” for which his work has long been famous has come to be understood as an imaginative response to actual encounters with social and political disorder. Or, as Marianne Moore put it in her typically astute review of Stevens’s first published book, *Harmonium* (1923), the “achieved remoteness” of the poems constituted the author’s reaction to his own “susceptibility to the fever of actuality” (Moore 1986: 91, 93). Thus in Stevens, as in Yeats, the transcendental urges of poetic imagination may now be read dialectically in relation to the historical imperatives of the time. In a second book on Stevens, Filreis goes so far as to argue that a poet once renowned for lofty indifference to a world in which he made his living as an insurance executive may be seen as drawing aesthetic, as well as ideological, sustenance from a “frenetic interplay” between literary modernism and the American left during the 1930s (Filreis 1994: 12). In a similar vein, Michael Szalay contends that Stevens’s Depression-era poetry participated in a “New Deal modernism” that evolved in tandem with “the public activities of the modern welfare state” in Roosevelt’s America (Szalay 2000: 120–61).

If Stevens no longer seems a fitting representative of the once familiar image of an aesthetically aloof and politically conservative modernism of the 1920s, the leftist poets of the 1930s no longer furnish the simplistic image of politically engaged poetry with which they were once commonly associated. The 1930s have often been characterized as a decade of part-reaction against the radical formal abstraction (and conservative politics) of 1920s modernism and part-adaptation of modernist

experimentalism to new realist (and socialist) purposes. Recent criticism has eroded this version of the 1930s at both ends. W. H. Auden, the British poet so often identified with the image of an ethically driven, politically committed 1930s aesthetic, has been read both as a late romantic and as a proto-postmodernist. In Edward Mendelson's important study *Early Auden* (published in 1981 and followed in 1999 by *Later Auden*), we find a poet who is less the anti-romantic poet of general critical acclaim than an alienated late-romantic amid the waste land of modern industrial culture between the two world wars. In this sense, Auden's work may be seen as a further extension of the romantic continuum that runs through the various modernisms of (for example) Yeats, Pound, and Lawrence. According to some readers, however, Auden's poetic techniques anticipate the deconstructive insights into language and signification of such contemporary philosophers as Jacques Derrida (Emig 2000); or they give rise to a "poetic dialogism" that vies with the novelistic dialogism celebrated in the writings of Bakhtin, by making us acutely aware of the social and aesthetic consequences of reading poetry (Boly 1991). Instead of reading 1930s poetry as part of a larger shift toward social realism, then, some critics are rereading it as a sophisticated inquiry into the very nature of literary representation – an inquiry made all the more urgent by the political interests that informed the period.

The broadly historical, contextualist orientation of modernist studies in the last quarter-century has resulted not only in revised views of established figures like Yeats, Pound, Stevens, and Auden but also in renewed attention to a wide array of poets – including many women writers and writers of color – who were often left out of previous critical accounts of the period. Just as Moore's pre-eminent successor among American women poets, Elizabeth Bishop, has begun to receive more attention from scholars of post-Second World War poetry than was once the case, several of Moore's female contemporaries, such as Mina Loy and Laura Riding, feature more regularly in scholarship on the modernist period itself (see, for example, Dickie and Travisano 1996). At the same time, critics such as Michael North have explored some of the ways in which the literature of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s intersected with modernist discourses that emerged in those years. As North argues in *The Dialect of Modernism* (1994), previously neglected strands of modernist verse – notably, the "racial masquerade" of Eliot, Pound, and Gertrude Stein – become visible when these poets are read alongside Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and other African-American authors. Similarly, North's reading of two books published in 1923 – William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All* and Jean Toomer's *Cane* – discovers much common ground in the authors' interest in the poetic possibilities embodied in specifically African-American patterns of speech.

This critical turn to issues of race and gender has been accompanied by an often overlapping interest in the relationship between modernist poetry and sexuality, which has enriched our understanding of modern poetry in several ways. Feminist revisions of the period have drawn on contemporary theoretical and historical approaches to sexuality to suggest ways of repositioning H. D., for example, within the modernist movement. H. D. has come to be seen not merely as Pound's Imagist

protégée but as a lesbian and feminist poet whose vision of modernity offers a clear alternative to the overt masculinism of some of her male contemporaries. Cassandra Laity reads H. D. as the author of a “female modernism” that reclaims the Decadent late-Victorian precursors – Swinburne, Rossetti, Pater, Wilde – whom many of her male counterparts spurned; Diana Collecott considers H. D. to be central to a modern lesbian poetic tradition that embraced other modernists, including Amy Lowell and Virginia Woolf, as well as later writers, such as Adrienne Rich and the African-American poet Audre Lorde. Eve Sedgwick’s influential work on “homosexuality” has inspired other innovative interpretations of the various collaborative efforts that were so crucial to the modernist enterprise – notably, Wayne Koestenbaum’s account of Pound’s editing of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Bette London’s discussion of the Yeatses and automatic writing. Approaches informed by recent attention to sexuality have also produced important new readings of gay male poets like Auden (see, for example, Richard Bozorth on Auden as the gay heir of Byron and Wilde) and Hart Crane (see Langdon Hammer on Crane’s romantic, homoerotic reading of Eliot and other modernist precursors).

Many of these historically and culturally informed approaches have converged in recent years on a figure who has hardly featured in our discussion to this point: T. S. Eliot. The widely disseminated image of Eliot as the poet of impersonality, or headmaster of what Philip Larkin derided as the “No Through Road to Life” school (1984: 217), has long since been usurped by a many-sided figure, whose work now appears to be as incomprehensible without reference to his debts to post-romantic aesthetics (Longenbach 1987; Menand 1987; Schwartz 1988) as it is illuminating when read in light of poststructuralist philosophers, such as Paul de Man, who wrote in his wake (Riquelme 1991). These enriched philosophical readings of Eliot have been accompanied by cultural readings that challenge another familiar image of Eliot: the cultural traditionalist and political reactionary, whose only natural heirs were the Southern Agrarians and New Critics of the 1930s and 1940s. Hammer’s study of Crane’s career alongside that of his one-time mentor Allen Tate (a prominent Agrarian and New Critic) clarifies two very different lines of development – one classical and reactionary, the other romantic and homoerotic – that may be traced from Eliot to later poets like Robert Lowell. Meanwhile, North’s account of Anglo-American modernism’s interface with African-American literature in the 1920s resensitizes us to the musical rhythms of jazz that animated much of Eliot’s poetry – a connection that was frequently made at the time (North 1999: 146). Other recent readings of Eliot, such as Ronald Schuchard’s in *Eliot’s Dark Angel* (1999) or David E. Chinitz’s in *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (2003), show how fully Eliot engaged with the popular cultural forms of his time, including jazz, music-hall songs, cartoons, detective fiction, and radio shows. Chinitz argues that Eliot’s French Symbolist inheritance, widely acknowledged in previous criticism, “was complemented by the nearly suppressed yet indispensable influence of American jazz,” which reveals itself in lines like these from an early, untitled piece published in 1996 in *Inventions of the March Hare*:

What, you want action?
 Some attraction?
 Now begins
 The piano and the flute and two violins
 Someone sings
 A lady of almost any age
 But chiefly breast and rings
 “*Throw your arms around me – Aint you glad you found me*”
 Still that’s hardly strong enough –
 Here’s a negro (teeth and smile)
 Has a dance that’s quite worth while
 That’s the stuff!
 (Here’s your gin
 Now begin!)

In their structure, rhythm, and methods of allusion, Chinitz urges, these lines anticipate the Jazz-Age poetry of the African-American writer Langston Hughes (Chinitz 2003: 36–7).

Such readings suggest that it may be misleading to argue, like Andreas Huyssen in his influential book *After the Great Divide* (1986), that mainstream modernism emerged in reaction against mass culture (and thus divided itself from an avant-garde that remained receptive to so-called low cultural elements). Scholars have further refined our understanding of Eliot’s position in relation to modern culture by showing how his career, like Pound’s, has to be studied in the context of larger social phenomena, including the professionalization of poetry in twentieth-century America (McDonald 1993) and the institutionalization of the avant-garde in the modern age of consumerism (Rainey 1998). Thus, if it still makes sense to describe Eliot as a man of “culture” – as Richard Poirier does when comparing Eliot with Robert Frost (1990: 39–46) – our sense of that culture and of Eliot’s relationship to it has become more complex, or “elastic,” as Chinitz has it (2003: 6).

Indeed, given the elasticity some critics are now discovering in Eliot, it’s tempting to say that it no longer makes sense to talk, as Hulme once did, of romantic wells and classical buckets. It’s worth recalling, however, that Hulme himself allowed that the romantic well might also be called a “reservoir” – a nod in the direction of romantic expansiveness that anticipates contemporary reinventions of the literary landscape. It might be more accurate, then, to argue that these cultural readings displace Hulme’s romantic well-cum-reservoir from the individual poet onto culture itself. Thus, in current Eliot criticism as in many other areas of literary academia, the romantics have it – albeit in a new multicultural guise.

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Drama

Stephen Watt

The modern drama . . . rides in on the second wave of Romanticism – not the cheerful optimism of Rousseau . . . but rather the dark fury of Nietzsche, with his radical demands for a total transformation of man’s spiritual life.

Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt* (1962)

Any account of American drama must begin by noting the casual disregard with which it has been treated by the critical establishment. . . . In the standard histories of American literature it is accorded at best a marginal position.

C. W. E. Bigsby, *Modern American Drama, 1945–1990* (1992)

Robert Brustein’s description of an international phenomenon in the later nineteenth century that included the work of such figures as Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Anton Chekhov, and Bernard Shaw, and C. W. E. Bigsby’s of a condition that still obtains in criticism of American letters, can tell us much about the difficulties a “modern” drama experienced just coming into being. Consider, for example, the paradoxical situation in which well-known critic Harold Bloom found himself in introducing two books on Arthur Miller, whose plays remain central to the American theatrical repertory. In his introduction to a 1987 anthology of essays on Miller, Bloom identifies what he regards as *the* “half-dozen crucial American plays”: Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949), which he disparages as reading “poorly,” Eugene O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh* (1939, first produced in 1947) and *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* (1939–41, first produced in 1956), Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), Thornton Wilder’s *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942), and Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story* (1958). Bloom wonders aloud how a country that can claim such novelists as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner – and poets like Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Wallace Stevens – can “offer us only O’Neill, Miller, and Williams as its strongest playwrights” (Bloom 1987: 2).

The paradox surfaced again some years later when he included Miller in a series entitled “Bloom’s Major Dramatists,” yet in his preface asked, “Does Miller, like Eugene O’Neill, write the plays of our moral climate, or have we deceived ourselves into overestimating both of these dramatists?” (Bloom 2000: 9). A “major dramatist,” it seems, may not be so major after all.

Yet, as vital as the nineteenth-century *theater* was in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, it is difficult to refute Bloom’s thesis that American *drama* before the twentieth century was not nearly so accomplished – or so modern. And neither was drama on the nineteenth-century London stage. That is to say, like Bloom’s gallery of canonical American poets and novelists of the nineteenth century, a roster of accomplished British writers requires little effort to assemble. All the Romantic poets would doubtless make the list, as would Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, Lord Tennyson, and others. By contrast, the names of successful dramatists like Douglas Jerrold, Tom Taylor, W. G. Wills, Tom Robertson, and, the most prolific of them all, Dion Boucicault (1820–90), a Dublin-born playwright and actor whose plays garnered large audiences in England, Ireland, and America, are little known or remembered. Just as the American stage required the maturation of Eugene O’Neill, so too the Victorian theater awaited productions of Henrik Ibsen’s plays in the 1880s and 1890s, the talents of such writers as Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, and in particular the work of two transplanted Irishmen, Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw. For the most part, then, *modern* drama – for the moment, definable as plays that aspired to more than commercial entertainment – was a late arrival on the London stage. Shaw’s controversial *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* was written in the early 1890s, yet not produced for a decade because of opposition by the Lord Chamberlain’s Reviewer, a state censor; and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, hardly experimental in form or theme, appeared in 1895. Thus, if American drama before the rise of O’Neill amounted to little more than a bastard cultural form of questionable merit, its British cousins hardly exhibited a more distinguished pedigree.

The difficult birth of a modern drama in Britain and America is typically explained – or rationalized – in a familiar historical narrative premised on a particular geography and economy in which drama’s tortuous development is attributed to the primacy of London’s West End and New York’s Broadway, then redressed by a series of movements against this hegemony. By 1825 or so, New York replaced Philadelphia as America’s cultural center, as theatrical expansion on and around Broadway occurred rapidly in the middle decades of the century. The centrality of New York theater continues to this day, although nothing in contemporary Manhattan can equal the estimated eighty playhouses built in the Broadway area between 1825 and 1900. A similar surge in theatrical activity transformed Victorian London. After the repeal of the Patent Act in 1843, a law that restricted the number of houses allowed to produce so-called “legitimate” drama, two theaters in London grew to twenty by mid-century and to sixty-one by 1900 (Booth 1980: 1–3). *Theater* was indeed on

the rise in the nineteenth century but, if this is so, how could the *drama* have suffered in the process?

Answers to this question typically invoke a congeries of factors: state censorship in England, the lack of sophistication of nineteenth-century audiences, and the economics of the popular theater. Like that of London, the populations of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia exploded in the early and middle decades of the century. During the 1840s, for example, Boston absorbed 37,000 new arrivals in 1847 alone, many of them poor Irish escaping the Great Famine of 1845 to 1851 (O'Connor 1996: 60). Philadelphia's population of over 72,000 Irish-born residents in 1850 grew to over 95,000 just a decade later (Clark 1973: 29). Poor and uneducated, these new arrivals sought work in America's nascent industrial economy, and in what little leisure time was afforded them, few attended revivals of Shakespeare or productions of classical plays. Consequently, other entertainments emerged, blackface minstrel shows, for instance, the origins of which date to the later 1820s. Not surprisingly, given the competition for jobs and housing between newly arrived African-Americans and Irish, several popular minstrel stars were actually Irish immigrants like Barney Williams. Williams also starred in such comedies as *Ireland and America* (1851) and *Irish Assurance and Yankee Modesty* (1854), in which playwright James Pilgrim "investigated strategies which allowed his comic protagonist to endorse modern values even as he pursued old-fashioned pleasures" (McConachie 1987: 2). The assimilation of new arrivals into a burgeoning multicultural America in the 1850s was facilitated by such genres as the Irish comedy, which, although accomplishing significant cultural work, can hardly be termed "modern."

In addition to offering amusing caricatures of immigrants – some positive, too many derogatory – mid-nineteenth-century drama also entertained by providing elaborate treats for both the eyes and ears. In America, the lavish costumes, music, and dancing of minstrel shows were paralleled by spectacle in such popular plays as Dion Boucicault's *The Poor of New York* (1857) and *The Octoroon* (1859), and Augustin Daly's *Under the Gaslight* (1867). Like historical drama of the period with its "archaeologically correct" sets and properties – W. G. Wills's *Charles the First* (1872), for example, which propelled Henry Irving to stardom in Victorian London – plays like these were crafted to lead to so-called "sensation scenes": scenes of high emotion and visual extravagance. *The Poor of New York* includes a roaring tenement fire; *The Octoroon*, an exploding steamboat; *Under the Gaslight*, the rescue of a character from a locomotive. Audiences' appetite for visual stimulation seemed almost insatiable, as numerous plays and musicals achieved little more than *The Black Crook* did in 1866, according to one reviewer: "The scenery is magnificent; the ballet is beautiful; the drama is – rubbish" (John Ranken Towse in the *New York Tribune*, September 17, 1866, quoted in Hewitt 1959: 195–6).

In England and Ireland, this precise criticism of stale plays demanding elaborate scenic effects was revised into a mantra by proponents of a modern drama. Reviewing an 1895 production for the *Saturday Review* starring Henry Irving, the leading actor

of his day, Bernard Shaw lamented, “[H]ow am I to praise this when my own art, the art of literature, is left shabby and ashamed amid the triumphs of the arts of the painter and the actor?” (Shaw 1932: 1.14). Envisioning an Irish Literary Theatre in 1897, William Butler Yeats responded similarly to a rehearsal: The “modern coats and the litter on the stage draw one’s attention away from the dramatic world evoked. . . . I want to be able to forget everything in the real world, in watching an imaginative glory” (Yeats 1954: 308–9). To stage such “imaginative” glories, Yeats turned to British designer Gordon Craig, whose innovations and writing exerted worldwide influence. In his 1919 manifesto *The Theatre – Advancing* Craig, son of Irving’s leading lady Ellen Terry and former *habitué* of Irving’s fashionable Lyceum Theatre, compared the “perishable” theater with a more durable one:

It is a negative affair at best, this present theatre. . . . It costs as much as would a durable theatre, yet endures only a few years. The public of the present theatre is in love with the latest thing, and spends millions of money in order to have one glance at it. . . . In fact the present theatre is the triumph of an effete public. (Craig 1919: 25–6)

Proponents of the “new drama” like Shaw, London reviewer A. B. Walkley and American writers William Dean Howells and Clyde Fitch expressed similar dissatisfaction with the status quo, advocating, in Howells’s case, the advent of an Ibsenite stage realism and, in Yeats’s, a Craig-like non-representational, poetic theater.

But modern drama had more to contend with than a popular taste for spectacle. As historians of the American theater emphasize, a Theatrical Syndicate that monopolized theater ownership for several decades beginning in the mid-1890s made the production of new, untested dramas even more difficult. One result, evident over the past century, has been a series of movements away from Broadway and commercial dramatic productions, beginning with the community theater and “Little Theater” movements of the *fin de siècle* and the early decades of the twentieth century. Two of the most famous companies of the latter variety, Chicago’s Little Theatre and Massachusetts’s (later New York’s) Provincetown Players, prompted British critic and translator of Ibsen William Archer to proclaim that modern drama in America was born outside of New York City:

The great hope of the future lies in the fertilization of the large by the little theater, of Broadway by Provincetown . . . in the region of Washington Square and Greenwich Village – or ultimately among the sand dunes of Cape Cod – we must look for the birthplace of the New American Drama. (quoted in Sheaffer 1968: 342)

While the term “birthplace” concretizes the origin of a New American drama too specifically as 1915, the year in which the Provincetown Players was founded, Archer’s observation is a trenchant one. Inspired by the 1911 American tour of actors from Dublin’s Abbey Theatre, Maurice Browne established the next year an intimate playing space that seated only ninety-one playgoers on Michigan Avenue near the Chicago Art Institute (Lock 1988: 106–12). Lady Augusta Gregory, co-founder

with Yeats and Edward Martyn of the Abbey Theatre in 1904, urged Browne to train amateur actors and avoid “spoiled” professionals, and to overcome the lack of money with originality. The results of Browne’s experiment were enormously influential, as Charles Lock explains: “The Chicago Little Theatre was to name a movement; and transferred – when in 1914 Margaret Anderson named her Chicago periodical the *Little Review* – the word ‘little’ would characterize a style and a politics of modernism” (109). That style, that politics, attracted a coterie audience that included Eugene Debs, Emma Goldmann, Clarence Darrow, and Theodore Dreiser to see works by Yeats, Shaw, Arthur Schnitzler, Maurice Maeterlinck, and puppet and dance theater as well.

At least two points seem inferential from this history. First, for a modern drama to be conceived in Britain and America, it needed to escape an expensive commercial theatre, finding more receptive audiences elsewhere. This is precisely why the Little Theatre Movement was followed in the 1950s by the so-called Off-Broadway Movement, in which a 1952 revival of Tennessee Williams’s *Summer and Smoke* paved the way for famous productions of O’Neill, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, and others. Similarly, the 1960s witnessed the birth of an “Off-Off” Broadway in warehouses, lofts, and coffeeshouses, intimate spaces where non-commercial, alternative theatrical entertainments could be staged inexpensively for an audience very different from the one that supported musicals and comedies on Broadway. Second, a *modern* drama, through either form or content, attempts to express something new or “just now,” as the Latin root of “modern,” *modo*, denotes. In the case of Glaspell’s 1915 comedy *Suppressed Desires* written for the Provincetown Players, that “new” reality included the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, an issue given its fullest expression on the American stage in O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Strange Interlude* (1927), and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929). As these titles intimate, new understandings of “desire” and “mourning,” especially those understandings linked to a revised conception of human subjectivity, were sweeping America and Europe in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

All of this suggests the need for a second history of modern drama’s uneasy development that emphasizes dramatic form. While this history is theoretically separable from a narrative about a perishable theater of spectacular effects and mediocre plays, the two are irreducible. It might begin with melodrama, a portmanteau word combining “melody” and “drama,” a form that grew to dominate the repertoires of mid- and later nineteenth-century companies. At its most banal, melodrama provided “a means of affirming a belief in a reductive perception of reality” (Mason 1993: 153), a perception as one-dimensional as the characters who occupy its world. Any avid filmgoer understands the potency of such a formula: reduce the complexity of international terrorism (or intergalactic evil) to the motivation of a “bad guy” or group and oppose this evil with heroes as played by Arnold Schwarzenegger or Harrison Ford; create spectacular effects in battles or calamities; add a beautiful woman to be rescued – or, better, one to help wage a battle against evil. Plays of this kind, in what Thomas Postlewait labels the “suspect history” of American drama,

are eventually replaced by more serious plays represented by an Ibsen-like or Shavian realism. But *emergent* cultural forms don't simply *replace* prior ones; aesthetic "forms" are hardly ever so pure. "Most of the time," Postlewait observes, "we can find melodramatic elements in realistic drama and realistic elements in melodramatic plays" (Postlewait: 55). Indeed, melodrama still thrives today; it has never been annihilated by a form called *realism*.

In this "suspect history" of modern drama in America, realistic plays by James A. Herne, Clyde Fitch, and William Vaughn Moody followed the dramatic revolution instigated by Ibsen with the publication of *A Doll's House* in 1879 and its first production later in London. There, the work of Pinero, Jones, and Shaw followed; in 1880s and 1890s America, a similar phenomenon occurred. But, we might ask, what was so "realistic" about *fin-de-siècle* realism? For its opponents, it seemed obsessed with the basest of human instincts, with desires that had never been represented so vividly on stage before and should never be seen again; for its champions, it marked the resurgence of a serious medium able to confront complex social, political, and psychological issues. Realist drama on stage aspired to the scenic, even scientific, objectivity of the photograph; it "not only asserts a reality that is natural or unconstructed, it argues that such a reality can only be shown on stage by effacing the medium – literary style, acting, *mise-en-scène* – that discloses it" (Worthen 1992: 14, 15). Unlike melodrama, in which actors routinely address the audience in asides and through a self-evident acting style replete with stock gestures, realistic drama demands acting that "erases itself from view"; the actor thus becomes a "vehicle of a fully coherent character" that relates objectively to the audience, seldom speaking to it or drawing it into a kind of pact or confidence (Worthen 1992: 19).

Photographic verisimilitude and the playwrights who embraced it can provide only one chapter in a narrative about the rise of modern drama. For the theater imagined by Gordon Craig and poets like Yeats had little to do with "objectivity." Rather, as theorized perhaps most succinctly by the later French writer-producer Antonin Artaud – and in a ironic return to an advocacy of the visual over the literary and linguistic emphases of writers like Shaw – a modernist drama sought to define the theatre as, first, a place for seeing not just listening. In his 1958 manifesto *The Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud observes, "Once we regard the language of the *mise en scène* as the pure theatrical language, we must discover whether it can attain the same internal ends as speech, whether . . . it can claim the same intellectual efficacy as the spoken language" (Artaud 1958: 69). Yeats's poetic drama – *Purgatory*, *On Baile's Strand*, and *The Death of Cuchulain*, for example – O'Neill's experiments with expressionism, and Sean O'Casey's later expressionist dramas such as *Red Roses for Me* (1942) anticipate Artaud's claims. The political forms of Bertolt Brecht's "epic theatre" and the agit-prop drama of Depression-era America such as Clifford Odets's *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) and Langston Hughes's *Don't You Want to be Free?* (1938) represent yet other directions in which modern drama has traveled – and is still traveling.

The struggle continues.

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The Visual Arts

Richard Weston

Modernism's roots lie deep in the transformations brought by industrialization. New means of mobility and communication – telephone and radio, bicycles and automobiles, ocean liners and aircraft – compressed time and space. Electric lighting spread through major cities, eliminating the division between day and night. And new materials – large sheets of glass, cast and wrought iron, steel and reinforced concrete – demanded ways of building for which traditional styles offered little guidance.

The speed and scope of these changes was matched by intellectual developments. The stable world represented by Classical science was supplanted by a strange universe in which neither time nor space was absolute, and matter itself became transparent to X-rays and prone to radioactive decay. Even the idea of an objectively intelligible world was undermined by ideas in psychology that William James, writing in 1890, crystallized when he described reality as a subjective “stream of consciousness.”

In architecture, new building types – train sheds, markets, department stores, vast exhibition halls – demanded large, well-lit interiors, and most architects, hidebound by their devotion to traditional styles, were ill equipped to meet the challenge. In their place, engineers – “modern men par excellence,” as the Viennese architect Adolf Loos, later dubbed them – emerged as pioneers of the new architecture. Its first great monument, the Crystal Palace, built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, was the work of a gardener, Joseph Paxton. Enclosing some 19 acres, the cast-iron-and-glass envelope defined a radically new kind of space, suffused by light, too vast to grasp in a single glance, and devoid of the familiar play of shadows by which people were used to gauging an interior.

Paxton's achievement was rivaled by Eiffel's Tower and Dutert and Contamin's Galerie des Machines at the Paris Centennial Exhibition of 1889, but it was in America, above all in Chicago, that the potential of the new means of construction was first explored for more everyday needs. The catalysts were again technological: the invention of the lift and the telephone, and innovations in fireproof, steel-frame construction, made possible the tall office building or “skyscraper.” Wrapped in

almost continuous bands of glass and largely stripped of ornament, they epitomized the direct, “functional” expression of interior space and structure that would become hallmarks of Modernism. The Chicago suburb of Oak Park was the setting for even more innovative designs by Frank Lloyd Wright. Challenging the traditional conception of a building as a composition of discrete rooms, he built a series of houses and a church – Unity Temple (1905–7) – in which the interiors unfolded as continuous spatial “organisms,” anticipating the “free” or “open plan.”

Artistic responses to the experience of modernity were bewilderingly various, but two common themes emerged. Firstly, there was a concentration on the formal means or “language” particular to each discipline. As photography took over the representational tasks of painting, artists were free to think, as Emile Bernard wrote in 1890, of a painting as “essentially a surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.” Analogously, the “material” of architecture was seen as space itself, not the physical stuff of building. And secondly, familiar conventions – naturalism and perspective in painting, ornament and symmetry in architecture, tonality in music, narrative in the novel – were rejected in the search for compositional structures better able to represent the complexities and contradictions of modern life.

The first fully Modernist paintings were exhibited in Paris at the Salon d’Automne in 1905. The violence of their colors outraged the public, earning the group – Henri Matisse chief amongst them – the nickname Fauves (wild beasts). Two years later, Pablo Picasso painted *Les Femmes d’Alger*. Its distorted and shattered nudes mounted an even more violent assault on conventional ideas of beauty, anticipating his subsequent development – with Georges Braque – of the most influential of all the Modernist movements, Cubism.

In a Cubist painting such as Braque’s *The Portuguese* of 1911–12, space and form are represented by faceted planes of color that alternate tantalizingly between being read as figure or ground. Space is shallow, devoid of perspective, and rendered tactile rather than optical. Figures are fragmented and seen from multiple viewpoints – eyes frontally, the nose in profile – a feature widely interpreted as an attempt to represent the passage of time through “simultaneity,” a term borrowed from the philosopher Henri Bergson. In 1912, Picasso glued a piece of oilcloth printed with the pattern of chair-caning to a canvas: “collage” had been born and, with the related technique of montage, was to become one of the Modernists’ favored means of suggesting the disjunctions of urban life.

Although their art was abstract, Braque and Picasso did not dispense with subject matter. The first non-figurative paintings were made by the Russian, Wassily Kandinsky, whose *Improvisations* and *Compositions* of 1910–11 consisted of seemingly spontaneous arrangements of color. He believed these were capable of provoking spiritual and emotional feelings in the viewer and, like the founders of earlier Expressionist movements, such as Die Brücke in Dresden and the Blaue Reiter in Munich, saw the artist as a visionary seer and agent for social and spiritual change.

Similar ambitions informed the work of that most austere of Modernists, the Dutchman Piet Mondrian. Like Kandinsky’s, his work was grounded in Theosophy,

the kitsch religion founded by Mme. Blavatsky that attracted a surprising number of followers amongst artists. Consisting of rectangles of primary color framed by vertical and horizontal lines, Mondrian's mature paintings were projected as embodiments of universal harmony distilled from the underlying order of Nature.

The determination to transform the world, not just to represent it, was widely shared, but the first avant-garde movement with the declared aim of changing everything – art, society, morality, religion – was conceived in Italy and, in an extraordinary media coup, born on February 20, 1909 on the front page of the newspaper *Le Figaro*. The article, by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, described a night of frenzied creativity followed by a violent joyride in that quintessential modern machine, an automobile. Extolling the love of danger and beauty of speed, the Futurists embraced the “shock of the new” and set a pattern for future avant-garde movements. Their work was less innovative than their ideas, however, although Marinetti's *paroliberismo* (words-in-freedom), with its aggressive mix of typefaces, bound the message to the medium in ways that anticipated concrete poetry and modern graphic design.

The bewildering explosion of activity in the arts was abruptly interrupted by the outbreak of war, and the chaos of conflict was the catalyst for widespread calls for a “return to order.” In 1916 in The Netherlands, sensing the time was right for “a collective and heroic act of creation,” the painter Theo van Doesburg founded the De Stijl movement. His aim was “clarity, certainty and *order*,” and the New Art – epitomized by the work of Mondrian, whom he enlisted to the cause – was intended as a model for a radical New Life. The De Stijl aesthetic was given compelling three-dimensional expression by the carpenter-turned-architect, Gerrit Rietveld. His *Red and Blue Chair* (1917–18) became a potent icon, whilst the Schröder House (1923–4) offered the most complete vision of a new architecture yet built. Conceived as a total environment of floating colored planes, it rejected all preconceived conceptions of “house,” and with them that expression of resistance to gravity which had underpinned traditional architectures.

In Paris, the painters Amédée Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (who changed his name to Le Corbusier) wrote a critique of Cubism. Describing it as “the troubled art of a troubled era,” they advocated a new, all-embracing Purist style, based on rational machine production, not individualistic expression. In their magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, founded in 1918, they extolled “The Engineer's Aesthetic” of American factories and grain silos, while the beauty of ocean liners, airplanes and automobiles was invoked to support their call for a return to the Classical virtues of form regulated by considered proportions.

Le Corbusier's ambitions were simultaneously conservative and radical – a duality echoed in Picasso's Classical nudes of the 1920s, and in the paintings of Fernand Léger – and with the completion of the Cook House in Paris in 1926 he codified, as the “Five Points of a New Architecture,” the basis of a potentially universal style for the Machine Age. Raised above the ground on slender columns, enclosed by thin, planar walls, and surmounted by a roof garden, the house was conceived as a continuous volume. Relieved by the structural frame of their traditional load-bearing role, the external walls could be cut by continuous ribbon windows, while the internal

partitions were freely arranged and sections of floor omitted, allowing unprecedented spatial continuity across and between floors. Although initially he built mostly private houses, Le Corbusier dreamed of a Radiant City of tower- and slab-blocks set in flowing parkland, an antidote to the disease-ridden streets of “tubercular Paris”: vigorously promoted during the 1930s, it eventually proved attractive to cities faced by massive housing shortages following the Second World War.

The first phase of Le Corbusier’s work culminated in 1930 with the completion of the Villa Savoye in Poissy. Organized around a central ramp, this was a weekend house on the grand scale – and, with Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion of 1929, one of the defining masterpieces of Modernist architecture. Determined to free architecture from “aesthetic speculators” and return it to its roots in building, Mies had established his avant-garde credentials through a series of theoretical designs in which he proposed new formal languages for glass, brick, and reinforced concrete. In 1927 he was invited to direct the Weissenhof housing exhibition in Stuttgart. Featuring designs by numerous leading European Modernists, it attracted the ridicule of the National Socialists: having prospered in the Weimar Republic, Modernism would be banished by the Nazis. The Rationalist movement in Italy, a fusion of Modernist innovation and Classical discipline, fared somewhat better under Mussolini, but in Russia the creative outburst that blossomed in the aftermath of Revolution soon fell foul of Stalinist orthodoxy.

The most important center of Modernist design in Europe, and the century’s most influential art and design school, was the Bauhaus, founded in Weimar in 1919. The arts in Germany were then in the grip of an Expressionist outburst, and the school’s first director, Walter Gropius, initially envisaged promoting a quasi-medieval unity of the arts. By 1923, however, the teaching was unashamedly committed to rational, machine-age design for industry. The faculty became a roll-call of Modernist masters (László Moholy-Nagy, Paul Klee, Josef Albers and Marcel Breuer), and the designs which poured out from the staff and students – for kitchens and lamps, typography and graphics, fabrics and furniture – were characterized by a reduction to simple geometric forms that quickly became synonymous with the word “Bauhaus.”

The optimistic determination to build a new, more rational future was by no means universally shared and, with the founding of the Dadaist movement in Geneva in 1916, the desire to begin again was manifested as a subversive assault on the bourgeois culture and values that they believed had led to war – hence Marcel Duchamp’s urinal – “fountain” and his addition of a moustache to a print of the Mona Lisa. Dispersed after the War, several of the leading Dadaists – notably Richard Huelsenbeck and John Heartfield – pioneered the use of photomontage, a technique whose disjunctive collisions of disparate views quickly spread to the cinema.

In 1922 Dadaism was effectively subsumed by Surrealism. Its founder and one-time Dadaist, André Breton, promoted “pure psychic automatism” as a means of undermining bourgeois society. In time, however, even Surrealism’s most bizarre or disturbing imagery – in the paintings of Salvador Dalí, or the early films of Luis Buñuel – was domesticated, not least through the language of advertising.

Modernist architecture never really gained public acceptance, but Modernist design was pervasive by the early 1930s – in fashion photography and posters, glassware and cutlery, magazine design and furniture. New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) emerged as a major advocate, and a 1932 exhibition influentially christened the new architecture, “The International Style.” Four years later, MOMA introduced Dada and Surrealism to American audiences. It left a deep mark on several painters – including Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko – who would later be protagonists of arguably the last major Modernist movement, Abstract Expressionism. Finally, in 1940, MOMA presented “Organic Design,” which in turn helped to promote a major trend in post-war design, epitomized by the architecture of Eero Saarinen and the furniture of Charles and Ray Eames.

With the influx of leading Europeans, including Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Piet Mondrian, and the Surrealist Max Ernst, the USA was poised to assume a leading role following the Second World War. In California, the Case Study House program promoted by John Entenza through his magazine *Arts and Architecture* crystallized a vision of a relaxed lifestyle that made the new architecture acceptable to a wider public. And, at the hands of Mies van der Rohe, what would prove to be a truly international style, promoted by major corporations with global ambitions, emerged. Pursuing his “less is more” ideal to its limits, Mies reduced buildings to a structural frame and envelope of glass. In his hands, as for example in the exquisite Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois (1946–50) and 860–80 Lake Shore Drive apartments, Chicago (1948–51), it could be supremely elegant. But built on the cheap by architects with a less sure eye for proportion and detail, the results became increasingly banal. They none the less appeared in cities worldwide, hailed as emblems of efficiency and prosperity.

The corporate promotion of Modernism was matched by the widespread adoption of a reductive version of the Corbusian city of towers. Faced with massive shortages of both housing and skilled tradesmen, authorities worldwide opted to build vast estates of medium- and high-rise housing, frequently using prefabricated construction systems. They were a world apart from Le Corbusier’s original vision, flawed though that was, and even more remote from his post-war architecture which, in common with that of arguably the two major talents to emerge in the 1950s, Louis Kahn and Jørn Uzon, owed more to the inspiration of ancient cultures and of nature than to the fading rhetoric of the Machine Age. The aim, none the less, was to embody timeless, cross-cultural values, and it was this commitment, finally, that distinguished the Modernist adventure from the postmodern assertion of the impossibility of any such universal discourse.

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Film

Laura Marcus

Film, it could and has been argued, is a quintessentially modernist form. The visuality of cinema, at its most intense before the coming of sound film in the late 1920s, and its singular appeal to the eye, allowed for a rendering of Pound's modernist dictum "Make it new" as "See it new." Film, according to many modernist and avant-garde writers and artists, was a break with habituated perception. Such accounts of seeing the world, and in particular the object world, as if for the first time, brought about a concept of cinematic representation as both the absolutely new and the archaic or primitive, a double temporality at the heart of modernist culture in general.

Still photography brought together art, nature and technology in unprecedented ways; film took photography into a new dimension by putting the still image into motion and thus representing a world of, and in, movement. Movement, in turn, had been placed at the heart of modernist and avant-garde artistic practice. Artists attached to the various avant-garde groupings – Futurism, Cubism, Dada, Constructivism – aspired to bring into their work kinesis (motion), rhythmic pattern, collage, simultaneity, "motor space" (in which multiple views of an object are captured in the art work), and a "qualitative space" which broke with traditional perspective and introduced subjective perception. These values, often described as essentially cinematic, were also introduced into the experimental films that began to appear at the beginning of the 1920s, including those of Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Hans Richter, Fernand Léger, René Clair, and László Moholy-Nagy. For many avant-garde artists, cinema came to represent an image of what a future art might become, though one that was not yet realizable. Much avant-garde writing on the cinema from this period was strongly utopian, such as Blaise Cendrars's "The ABCs of Cinema" (1917), in which he wrote of the coming of a "new humanity" whose "language will be the cinema" (Cendrars 1992: 28).

For Soviet filmmakers in the 1920s, including Sergei Eisenstein and Vladimir Pudovkin, an understanding of movement in film was inseparable from "montage." The constructed nature of meaning in the cinema, its organization of reality, rests on

cinematic cutting and the sequencing and juxtaposition of shots, and was at the core of the political cinema of this period, with formal innovation directed towards the radical social message. Where Pudovkin understood montage editing as “linkage,” a way of connecting separate images, Eisenstein’s models were those of “shock” or “collision,” and of a dialectics in which a “third meaning” emerges from the juxtaposition of two shots. The Surrealist cinema of the same period arose from a very different political context, but also worked with narrative (by contrast to the tendency in Dadaist cinema to reject linear narrative sequences) in order to disrupt and rupture conventional habits of perception and concepts of reality, producing shocking images and juxtapositions (as in Louis Buñuel’s *L’Age d’or* (1928), in which the slitting of an eyeball is an attack on the very organ to which cinema’s appeal is made; Conrad 1998: 466; Wood 1999: 226), and representing worlds of dream, fantasy, and desire.

The “movement” of cultural modernity has become inseparably linked to modern urban experience and to a model of time defined by the momentary, the fleeting, and the ephemeral. As the German novelist Alfred Döblin, author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, wrote in a 1928 review of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*:

The cinema has penetrated the sphere of literature; newspapers must become the most important, most broadly disseminated form of written testimony, everybody’s daily bread. To the experiential image of a person today also belongs the streets, the scenes changing by the second, the signboards, automobile traffic. . . . A part of today’s image is the disconnectedness of his activity, of his existence as such, the fleeting quality, the restlessness. (Döblin 1994: 514)

In this account, cinema, the daily newspaper and the urban street-scene are outward elements of a modernity in which concepts and experiences of time and subjectivity have altered radically.

One of the best-known accounts of these far-reaching changes in the nature of modern experience is that of Walter Benjamin, in his 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Here Benjamin wrote:

Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. . . . Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. (Benjamin 1968: 236–7)

Where Döblin suggested the continuities between the experiences of watching a film and moving through the modern city, Benjamin explored the power of film and photography to transform reality and to go beyond the limits of human perception. He was almost certainly, in the passage quoted above, taking issue with the view,

expressed by the writer Franz Werfel (in a review of Max Reinhardt's film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) that film elevates itself into an art when it abandons (in Benjamin's paraphrase of Werfel) "the sterile copying of the exterior world with its streets, interiors, railroad stations, restaurants, motorcars, and beaches" and turns to the expression of "all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural." Film, in Benjamin's account, has the power to turn the everyday into the marvelous by revealing, and holding up before the viewer, a world at once familiar and unknown: "The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses" (Benjamin 1968: 237).

Benjamin's emphasis on film's ability to reveal the minutiae of a gesture, or "a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride," recalls the motion-studies of the late nineteenth century, in which (as in the stop-motion photography of Jules-Etienne Marey and Eadward Muybridge) the point was not to construct a continuity out of still images, but to break down motion into its component parts. The paradoxical nature of filmic representation – which creates the illusion of movement in its projection of a series of still images – is displayed in much modernist and avant-garde film. The Soviet filmmaker Dziga-Vertov, who shared with Benjamin the idea that the camera possesses the power to reveal the hidden meaning of everyday events, represented, in his city-film *Man with a Movie Camera*, the processes of cutting and splicing the strips of celluloid that make up the film, demonstrating what the film theorist Béla Bálazs called, in his discussion of film editing, "the power of the scissors" (Bálazs 1952: 120). Isolating images as stills, and then reanimating them, Vertov both unveiled the illusion of filmic movement and bodied forth the power of film to make still things move. René Clair's *Paris qui dort*, like *Man with a Movie Camera*, explores the topography of the city and, as Annette Michelson has noted, "plays upon the relation of still to moving image," with the mad scientist of this "science-fiction" film, Dr. Crase, becoming the filmmaker himself: "Setting a city careening headlong into the dizzying pace of modernity, he can at will arrest the flow of life in the ecstatic suspension of time itself" (Michelson 1979: 43–4).

The 1920s were the decade of the city film, developed by filmmakers including King Vidor, Cavalcanti, Paul Strand, Joris Ivens, Fritz Lang, and Walter Ruttmann. Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927), which used editing as a way of representing the rhythms of a day in the life of the city, mapping Berlin through montage, has striking affinities with the literature of the period, including *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. It is significant that Joyce, when the question of making a film of *Ulysses* first arose, named Ruttmann (whose films prior to *Berlin* were highly abstract and experimental) and Eisenstein as the filmmakers appropriate to the endeavor.

"I maintain," the artist and filmmaker Fernand Léger wrote in 1926, "that before the invention of the moving-picture no one knew the possibilities latent in a foot – a hand – a hat" (Léger 1926: 7). Léger's account of "the possibilities of the fragment or element" has significant parallels with Joyce's representations in *Ulysses* of part-objects and of human forms in which feet and hands and hats appear independently of the whole. Eisenstein saw *Ulysses* as confirmation of the relationship between

montage and “inner monologue,” and of montage form as a reconstruction of the laws of the thought process (Eisenstein 1972: 51). We might also understand Joyce’s focus on the minutiae of the everyday and the breaking down of gesture into its component parts as inflected by the ways in which the camera framed reality, and by the new relation to the object-world, including the animation of the inanimate, that it brought into being.

In his account of *Ulysses*, Alfred Döblin, as we have seen, wrote of cinema “penetrating” the field of literature. Other writers constructed a more defensive demarcation between the territories of literature and film. Some, like D. H. Lawrence, were profoundly hostile to the cinema; in his novel *The Lost Girl*, and in a number of essays, Lawrence represented the contamination of modern culture by cinematic vision. Aldous Huxley’s celebration, in the mid-1920s, of animation and the fantastical elements of cinema was also a way of protecting the established arts of novel and drama from trespass by the new, popular art of the film (Huxley 1926). Virginia Woolf’s essay “The Cinema,” first published in 1926, similarly rejected film adaptations of literary works, arguing that cinema’s fascination lies both in its early documentary impulse, its recording of reality or actuality, and in its potential to create a new visual “language,” which would be abstract and experimental and yet capable of “capturing” the life of the streets and the experience of modernity (Woolf 1950).

Huxley’s and Woolf’s hostility to adaptations, motivated as it may have been by a need to defend the terrain of literature, is in line with the anti-narrative ethos of avant-garde artists, writers, and filmmakers. Léger wrote of the “fundamental mistake” of filming a novel, and of the ways in which such an endeavor represents “a completely wrong point of departure” for the “incredible invention” of cinema, “with its limitless plastic possibilities.” Directors, he argued, “sacrifice that wonderful thing, ‘the image that moves,’ in order to present a story that is so much better in a book. . . . It is such a field of innovations that it is unbelievable they can neglect it for a sentimental scenario” (Léger 1924). Léger’s “Dadaist” film *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) is composed of images of everyday objects in movement, machine imagery, and the repetitive movements of human figures. It opens and closes with a fractured and recomposed graphic representation of the figure of Charlie Chaplin, whose intense appeal both to mass audiences and to the French avant-garde is revealing of the new configurations between mass and minority culture that cinema brought into being.

Léger, Ivan Goll (whose book *Die Chaplinade* was published in 1920), and Gertrude Stein found in the early Chaplin films forms of rhythm, repetition, and automatization which they saw as performances of the essence of the cinematic machine and of modernity itself, and as profoundly at odds with the movements of plot and story. When Stein and Chaplin met in 1931 (after the making of his first sound film, *City Lights*), Stein seems to have suggested to Chaplin that he was working against his own rhythms and those of essential cinema. As Chaplin later recorded their encounter: “She theorized about cinema plots: ‘They are too hackneyed, complicated and contrived.’ She would like to see me in a movie just walking up the street and turning a corner, then another corner, and another” (Chaplin 1966: 302).

The fascination expressed here with the representation of movement and movement alone chimes with Stein's aesthetic of the continuous present and of repetition with difference, and her repudiation of narratives rooted in the past, historical or individual. It also recalls the modes of representation to be found in the *actualité* films of early cinema, suggesting again, as in Léger's account, that film's development was for the most part "a wrong turning." This was the phrase used by Jean Cocteau, as quoted by René Clair, to describe the steps in film history that had led to the German Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919–20): "People began to photograph theatre. Gradually that theatre became cinematographic theatre, but never pure cinema. . . . *Caligari* was the first step towards another even more serious mistake which consists in flatly photographing eccentric sets, instead of achieving surprises through camera work" (Clair 1953: 15).

Cocteau's view of *Caligari* was shared by a number of other modernists, including Blaise Cendrars and Ezra Pound, but for many commentators the film had opened up new dimensions of cinematic space, and a new understanding of the "plastic" and architectural aspects of film. In Britain, Europe, and the United States, *Caligari* became "an exemplary film for the early art cinema" and, in its mixture of modernist and conventional realist elements, "a kind of model of the artistic film, a paradigmatic alternative film for a developing alternative discourse" (Budd 1990: 89). Woolf, in "The Cinema," may have looked away from the film itself to speculate on the representational possibilities afforded by an accidental shadow on the screen, but it was none the less *Caligari* that afforded her the occasion for her meditations on cinema, its past and its future.

Theoretical and critical commentary on the cinema in its first decades was substantially devoted to the question of the autonomy of film. If film was to be established as an art form, should it be allied to one of the established arts – sculpture, painting, ballet, theatre, literature, music – or should the claim be made for its aesthetic autonomy? Should it claim a lineage from the older arts, or was it unprecedented? The film theorist and aesthetician Rudolf Arnheim wrote in 1931: "For the first time in history a new art form is developing and we can say that we were there. . . . All other arts are as old as humanity, and their origin is as dark as ours. . . . Film, however, is entirely new" (Arnheim 1997: 13). Eisenstein criticized such positions, in his essay "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today," in which he rejected "premises of some incredible virgin-birth of this art," arguing that "both [D. W.] Griffith and our cinema prove our origins to be not solely as of Edison and his fellow inventors, but as based on an enormous cultured past," based substantially in literary history. (Eisenstein 1949).

Eisenstein made his argument on the basis of the connection between Dickens and the American filmmaker D. W. Griffith, though ultimately he sought to forge a link between Dickens and "film-craftsmanship in general." The essay brings Dickens's London and modern New York into the same frame, not so much by making Dickens's city modern, but by finding in the modern metropolis its semi-rural or small-town other. Eisenstein moved through the various ways in which Dickens's work can be

seen as proto-cinematic, finding in his writing the techniques of the close-up (of objects and faces) and of parallel action, from which montage developed. He argued for a further link between Dickens and the cinema through the fact that Dickens's novels "bore the same relationship to [his readers] that the film bears to the same strata in our own time. They compelled the reader to live with the same passions." He found in Dickens, as in the cinema, "an extraordinary plasticity," observation and optical quality, and alighted, in the opening of the last chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities*, on a "dissolve": "How many such 'cinematic' surprises must be hiding in Dickens's pages!" Quoting the opening of chapter 21 of *Oliver Twist*, Eisenstein broke the passage into smaller pieces than had its author, so that it takes on something of the form of a film scenario: he described the "accumulation and quickening tempo" of the passage, its "gradual play of light," which builds up, as Eisenstein's description itself builds up, to "the fullest cinematic sensation of the panorama of a market." Finally, he argued that Dickens's works "were produced as the works of a city artist," and that his "urbanism" "may be found not only in his thematic material, but also in that head-spinning tempo of changing impressions with which Dickens sketches the city in the form of a dynamic (montage) picture."

The essay moves from a view of Dickens's London as peaceful and patriarchal, to its and his modernity, via an analysis of montage techniques in his writings, so that montage becomes the connection between film and literature, and between past and present. It is as if we have had, as readers, to work through the dynamics of montage – the dynamic, that is, of cinema, as Eisenstein constructed it – in order to be able to perceive Dickens as the writer of the modern city, as the creator of a "dynamic (montage) picture." Cinematic technique thus gives us the Dickens of the modern metropolis, as the city writings give us a "cinematic" Dickens. And yet the dialectics of Eisenstein's argument might also suggest that the pre-modernist Dickens, the writer of the provincial, patriarchal city, has not been wholly displaced by the modern urbanist but, as in the example of New York, can be seen again by a shift in perception, by viewing a skyscraper as a vertical arrangement of (horizontal) small-town dwellings.

If the past can be so preserved in the present, film historiography must also be rethought, the model of "newness" or the "virgin-birth" giving way to an understanding of precedence. Furthermore, and fundamentally, we would have to rethink the position from which I started; that film is quintessentially "modernist." It might rather be a meeting-point between "realism" and "modernism," and between nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultures, and thus invite new ways of constructing all such categories.

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Music

Bernard Gendron

Musical modernism is generally agreed to have emerged during the first decades of the twentieth century, in the path-breaking work of Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Béla Bartók. Their achievements were built on the work of such late nineteenth-century transitional figures as Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Ferruccio Busoni, and Claude Debussy. Musical modernism came to an end with the academicized serialism of Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt, roughly in the 1960s. In the intervening period, it found expression in a multiplicity of quite distinct (and sometimes idiosyncratic) agendas, formulated and carried out by, among others, Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Maurice Ravel, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Paul Hindemith, Charles Ives, Edgar Varèse, and Benjamin Britten. Musical modernism is also deeply inscribed in certain genres of popular music, most tellingly in the “modern” jazz of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, and others.

The Aesthetics of Modernist Music

Such a rich diversity of musical practices cannot be captured by any one aesthetic template. But three aesthetic philosophies – formalism, expressionism, and avant-garde shock – can be seen to be at work, either singly or in some conjunction, in any modernist music. (In this chapter, the word “expressionism” is not restricted to the artistic movement of that name and hence is not capitalized.) Formalism subordinates descriptive content to formal design; extreme formalism, as in abstract art, eliminates all descriptive content, leaving only form behind. While formalism emerged as a contending aesthetic in the nineteenth century, it only achieved full acceptance in modernist practice. Expressionism subordinates descriptive content to what is expressed by a work, be it inner feelings, insights, lifestyles, *Weltanschauungen*, and so on. As a dominant aesthetic, expressionism emerged in nineteenth-century romanti-

cism, along with the idea of the genius artist. But in modernism it takes on greater latitude, moving beyond individual expression to that of collectivities, the unconscious, or the dislocations of modern life. Avant-garde shock seeks explicitly to provoke feelings of outrage, disorientation, disgust, or irritable incomprehension. Its objective may be to undercut the pretenses of institutional art, to break down the walls between art and life or between creator and viewer, to awaken the unconscious, or to dramatize conditions of oppression and injustice.

The Grand Formalist Narrative: From Tonality to Serialism

There is an influential tendency to view the modernist era as a succession of increasingly ambitious formalist experiments moving toward a final goal or limit. In the visual arts, this is the familiar narrative describing the evolution from realistic figurative painting toward abstraction, through the intermediary stages of Impressionism, Cubism, and so on. In music, it is the apparently parallel evolution from tonality through atonality to serialism.

Tonality became the dominant system of Western art music between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Roughly, it follows two principles. First, the music revolves around a central pitch – the keynote of the major or minor diatonic scale. One is allowed to wander away from this center, for example through modulation to a closely related key, so long as one returns at the end. Second, and relatedly, tonal music is driven by the harmonic narrative of consonance, followed by the tension of dissonance, with a final resolution into consonance.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, composers such as Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Mahler were increasingly testing the limits of, and subverting, the tonal system, without abandoning it. Inevitably (it is thought) the system had to break down, which was achieved by Schoenberg during his so-called “atonal period” (1907–9). In *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (The book of the hanging gardens), and *Erwartung* (Expectation), he dispensed with both a central organizing pitch and the resolution of dissonance into consonance. The outcome, in his words, is the “emancipation of dissonance” (Morgan 1991: 67). In the grand narrative, this is the founding moment of modernist music.

Atonality was only a way station for Schoenberg, who sought to devise a new musical logic, which is called “serialism,” to replace tonality. His lead was enthusiastically taken up by his two students, Berg and Webern. Serialism produces patterns of all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, never repeating a given pitch until the eleven others have been in play. Compositions are distinguished, in part, by their unique sequences of pitches (“tone rows”), repeated and also done in reverse, or inverted, or initiated in a different pitch. A second generation after the Second World War – Olivier Messiaen, Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Milton Babbitt – pushed serialism into domains beyond pitch selection. One now subjected the parameters of duration, dynamics (volume), and attack on notes to serialist row

sequences. That is, each pitch in a tone row, for example, might have its particular duration, attack, and volume. In the grand narrative, this is the apogee of modernism, the point beyond which it could not go.

In their outright opposition to academic serialism, John Cage and the so-called post-Cageans are given credit for initiating musical postmodernism in North America. In the turn to indeterminacy, Cage rejected the notion of the composer as someone who tells musicians what to play and audiences how to hear, as the academic serialists were doing in excruciating detail. Inspired by non-Western musical traditions (as Cage was), post-Cageans rejected the busy musical narratives of modernist music, by resorting to long sustained tones (La Monte Young) or hypnotic modular repetitious processes (Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass), effecting at the same time a return to tonality.

Stravinsky and Modernist Reinvention

This grand narrative, however well it fits one stream of musical modernism, cannot do justice to the whole. Though virtually all composers deemed “modernist” challenged the tonal system by abrogating some of its rules, very few abandoned it outright. Rather, some, including Richard Strauss and Darius Milhaud, experimented with bitonality or polytonality, with two or more tonal centers. Others, while keeping a tonal center, subverted the tonal rules of harmonic motion, for example, by reverting to nonstandard chordal intervals, away from the basic triad of tonality (Debussy, Bartók), or by treating chords statically (Debussy, Stravinsky), letting them stand alone as sound combinations in their own right.

Stravinsky, Schoenberg’s main rival, presents us with a quite distinct, but equally compelling, paradigm of modernism. Like Picasso, and later Miles Davis and the Beatles, he is the prototype of the artist constantly reinventing himself, the master of surprises and shifting identities. Stravinsky’s multifaceted career, highlighted by his earlier Russian period (*Rite of Spring*, 1913), followed by neoclassicism (*Pulcinella*, 1920) and later by serialism (*In Memoriam Dylan Thomas*, 1954), exemplifies less an inner logic toward some implicit endpoint than a willful shift of directions. He treated serialism, as he previously had Russian folk song and eighteenth-century classical forms, merely as appropriated musical materials or techniques on which he stamped his ever-changing compositional individuality.

Expressionism and the Folkloric

Formalist experiments are often not ends in themselves but serve the needs of expression. The creepy dissonances of Schoenberg’s atonal *Erwartung* evince the psychic disintegration of the protagonist in her foreboding run through the forest looking for her lover. Theodor Adorno, the major philosopher of musical modernism, heard

Schoenberg's atonal music as the expression of the disoriented unconscious of an aging, crisis-ridden capitalism. Similarly, in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the rhythmically repeated dissonant chords appeal not primarily because of their divergence from the prescriptions of tonal harmony, but because of the violent Dionysian frenzy to which they give vent.

As exemplified by the *Rite of Spring*, one of expressionism's most important roles in modernist music was to legitimate primitivism and the turn to the folkloric. Of course, folk music was also a resource for original formal devices and insights. But what ultimately drew modernist composers to folk music was the prevailing perception of it as an authentic expression of the life form and spirit of an organic community, a welcome contrast to the anomie of modern urban life. No one better embodies this perspective than Béla Bartók who, having spent years researching rural Hungarian and other East European folk musics, incorporated many of their formal features into his compositions, such as unusual melodic intervals and the harmonic possibilities they implied (*Bluebeard's Castle*, 1911 and *Cantata profana*, 1930). But he made it clear that the primary value of this peasant music is its "amazing expressive power." He urged composers not to museumize the folk music they appropriated, but to incorporate into their work "the very atmosphere of peasant culture" (Albright 2004: 245). Through his expressive aesthetic, Bartók was effectively giving force to a major (but not universal) imperative of modernism, which is to find authentic, archaic roots for the most unfettered artifice and experimentation.

Related to the folkloric aesthetic, but more expansive in scope, are the various kinds of musical nationalisms (for example, Sibelius's *Finlandia*) which, while pursuing a modernist agenda, seek to express a national character, mood, or spirit. Charles Ives, perhaps the most self-consciously American composer of the twentieth century, quotes extensively in his work from a wide variety of vernacular musics – fiddle tunes, cowboy songs, hymns, Stephen Foster compositions, marching bands – which he complements with evocations of the sounds of city and country, to convey the feel of dim childhood memories (*New England Holidays*, 1917–19) or the ambiance of local time and place (*Central Park in the Dark*). He would frequently weave these characteristically tonal musical quotations into a distinctly post-tonal unitary pattern, with "wrong" notes, chordal dissonances, ambiguous key centers, and so on.

High and Low: Black and White

Some modernists also engaged in a friendly interchange with popular music. But this usually was not legitimated on expressionist grounds, given the general impression of popular music as commercialized and industrialized entertainment bereft of any authentic roots in a community. But an exception was made for Afro-diasporic music, regarding which the boundaries between folk (for example, spirituals, Brazilian carnival music) and popular music (for example, ragtime, jazz) were consistently blurred by European onlookers. Thus, Darius Milhaud could, in the same reverential

spirit, appropriate Brazilian folk dances (such as samba, maxixes) for one orchestral piece (*Le Boeuf sur le toit*, 1919) and Afro-American popular music (jazz and blues) for another (*La Création du monde*, 1923). He was clearly viewing commercial jazz and blues as deep expressions of contemporary African-American life forms. This “authentic music,” he said, is “endowed with a lyricism which only oppressed races can produce.” It has “roots in the darkest corner of negro soul” and “vestigial traces of Africa” (Gendron 2002: 88). Milhaud was only one of many European and American composers dipping into the treasure trove of black popular music, particularly ragtime (Debussy, Satie, Stravinsky) and jazz (Ravel, Ernst Krenek, George Gershwin, and again Stravinsky). Of course, they were drawn to the unique formal devices as well as to the expressive power – the syncopations of ragtime, the bent “blue notes” and grainy timbres of jazz and blues. Ultimately, commercial jazz and blues exhibited in the eyes of some modernists that ideal synthesis of the utterly modern and utterly archaic which they sought to achieve in their own work.

Avant-Garde Shock and the Timbres of Modernity

Musicians played a somewhat secondary role in those artistic movements most associated with avant-garde shock – Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, the so-called historical avant-gardes. There was no Surrealist music, given André Breton’s antipathy toward the medium. The Futurist and Dadaist house musicians, Francesco Prataella and Hans Heusser, did little more than promote formalist innovations (such as the use of microtones) when they were not ensconced in the nineteenth-century salon tradition. It was left to non-musicians within these movements to articulate the most important and transformative musical ideas. (Of course, Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* is the emblem of modernist shock and Schoenberg’s atonal experiments elicited many *frissons*. But in both cases, shock was a mere byproduct and not an indispensable aesthetic means.)

In his groundbreaking “Art of Noise” manifesto (1913), the Futurist painter Luigi Russolo sought emphatically to demolish the distinction between music and noise so foundational to European art music. Privileging the sounds of urbanity – of streetcars, backfiring automobiles, artillery, factories, and so on – as the real music of the time, he was actively involved in the invention and orchestration of noise instruments (*intonarumori*, or “noise intoners”), such as “exploders” and “howlers,” which were designed to mimic these sounds or explore new ones. Less than ten years later, Soviet Futurists in Baku staged a city-wide concert of factory sirens, steam whistles, foghorns, and artillery.

Russolo was in effect introducing a new agenda for musical modernism, the incessant search for new timbres. A decade later Varèse, thinking beyond mere noise machines, advocated the invention of sophisticated electronic instruments which would produce an unprecedented array of sounds from any point on the pitch continuum. These did not become available for him until much later in his career, when he composed *Poème*

électronique (1958), which combines edited magnetic tape of natural sounds (*musique concrète*) with those electronically produced. At around the same time, young serialists, always on the lookout for new musical variables to subject to strict compositional control, vigorously exploited the new electronic studios (Stockhausen) and computer centers (Babbitt).

In another Futurist manifesto on music, the poet Filippo Marinetti urged his fellow artists to adopt the playfully irreverent attitudes of music halls and vaudevilles toward high art. In them, he claims, one finds an exemplary model for the “ironic decomposition of all the worn-out prototypes of the Beautiful, the Grand, the Solemn” and the “destruction of immortal masterworks” by plagiarism and parody (Kirby and Kirby 1986: 179–93). Dadaists enthusiastically took up this vaudevillian project in their *faux* music hall, the Cabaret Voltaire.

In various guises, this aesthetic of appropriation of musical lowbrowism made its way beyond the confines of the historical avant-garde, into other modernist compositions. Erik Satie, who regularly peppered his scores with comical or incongruous instructions, composed “furniture music” (*Musique d’ameublement*, 1920), that is, music as unobtrusive background for other activities, or what today we would call “elevator music.” Kurt Weill made use of the banalities of cabaret music (in *Threepenny Opera*, 1928) to produce the “alienation effects” of Brechtian theater.

Popular Modernisms? Jazz and Rock

By the early 1930s, the high-art infatuation with jazz had come to an end, turning in some instances (Adorno, Krenek) into rank hostility. But not long after, jazz reversed the process of appropriation. In the bebop revolution of the 1940s, led by Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, jazz transformed itself from a wholly entertainment music to a modernist art form, becoming in effect “modern jazz.” Critics played a key role in providing a defining narrative for jazz modernism, but divided along racial lines. The mostly white critical establishment (for example, Martin Williams) subscribed to a formalist narrative, which viewed every new development in modern jazz – bebop, modal jazz (Davis), free jazz (Coleman) – as a further progressive step in liberating improvisation from the constraints first of melody, and later of chord changes, rhythmic structures, and so on. By the 1950s, black critics – most importantly Amiri Baraka – countered with an expressionist narrative. In this view, the successive formal breakthroughs are an attempt to restore in jazz an authentic expression of the blues and the black community, in the face of the culture industry’s tendency to constantly standardize, dilute, and “whiten.” The modernist era in jazz is understood to end in the late 1960s, with the advent of jazz–rock fusion (Davis again).

It would be distortive to place rock music wholly under the modernist umbrella, despite the modernist strains which it has exhibited. The decisive factor is that formalism, the most pervasive aesthetic of modernism, at best plays only a subordinate role in rock practices and criticism, as is attested by the relative scarcity of theoretical-

critical analyses of musical scores – the music of the Beatles being an interesting exception. Expressionism, when present in rock, is more often of the romantic-individualistic type than of the modernist-communal. The community component in rock has been conceptualized more by subcultural theory – an offshoot of structuralism – than by any expressionist aesthetics. Some rock subgenres – punk and hip-hop in particular – quite explicitly engage in avant-garde shock tactics. But, as Andreas Huyssen has argued persuasively, the neo-avant-garde movements since the 1960s are more reasonably placed within the postmodern ambit. And this is perhaps where rock belongs.

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Dance

Susan Jones

The startling first performance of the Ballets Russes in Paris in 1909 had a far-reaching impact, not only on the world of dance, but on emerging modernist culture in general. This company, composed of Russian dancers, never performed at home, but achieved international renown by touring outside Russia between 1909 and 1929. Sergei Diaghilev, who formed the group, was initially associated with the innovative Russian arts journal *Mir iskusstva* and organized the famous exhibition of Russian art in Paris in 1906. He then assembled dancers, painters, musicians, and literary figures in an extraordinary artistic venture. As director and impresario of the *Ballet Russes*, Diaghilev enticed many leading artists (including Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, and Tamara Karsavina) away from the Imperial Russian Ballet of the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg. With Fokine as chief choreographer, and Alexander Benois as company designer, the Ballets Russes initiated a new period of experimentation in dance.

Instead of the full-length narrative productions associated with the Maryinsky, such as Marius Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty* (1890), Diaghilev offered a series of one-act ballets, including the now famous works choreographed by Fokine, *Les Sylphides* (1909), *The Firebird*, *Schéhérazade* (1910), and *Le Spectre de la Rose* (1911), as well as Vaslav Nijinsky's seminal work, *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and his sister Bronislava Nijinska's *Les Noces* (1923). The impact of pieces like *Rite* or *Les Noces* still endures, although other works now strike us as closer in style to traditional classical ballet. But at the time, even *Les Sylphides*, which employs conventional balletic vocabulary, radically deconstructed assumptions about what constituted ballet. At the end of the nineteenth century, three-act narrative ballets used a rigid formal structure. The plot was advanced during passages of mime interpolated between choreographed set pieces. By contrast, Diaghilev's choreographers often dispensed with complicated story lines, favoring mood and evocation over technically virtuosic *divertissements*, while their choreographic abstraction celebrated dance as an art form in its own right. Diaghilev also exploited Nijinsky's extraordinary physical talent, recovering the role of the

male dancer from the ballerina's domination of the art form in the nineteenth century (as in his famous gravity-defying "leap" through the window of the set of *Spectre*, to which one of Virginia Woolf's characters alludes admiringly in *The Years*, 1937). Fokine's choreography, moreover, reflected a late Romantic interest in the vernacular in that he revitalized stale choreographic methods with his research into folk and national dance forms. These he incorporated into works like the *Polovtsian Dances* from *Prince Igor* (1909).

Diaghilev's contribution to dance was based on his ability to encourage artistic collaboration. Throughout the Ballets Russes' history, choreographers such as Fokine, Nijinsky, and later Léonide Massine, Nijinska, and George Balanchine worked together with the most provocative experimentalists of the avant-garde in other art forms. Diaghilev hired controversial composers such as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Ravel, Debussy, Richard Strauss, Satie, Falla, Milhaud, and Poulenc. He also commissioned décor from artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Bakst, Benois, Gontcharova, Derain, Braque, Utrillo, Miró, Tchelitchev, De Chirico, and Rouault. Gregorio Martinez Sierra, a noted Spanish poet and dramatist, worked with Diaghilev as librettist for *El amor brujo* (1915) and *Le Tricorne* (1919). Jean Cocteau and Sacheverell Sitwell wrote the libretti for *Le Train Bleu* (1924) and *The Triumph of Neptune* (1926) respectively. A work like *Parade* (1917) represents an extreme example of Diaghilev's collaborative method. The ballet had a libretto by Cocteau that was influenced partly by the Futurist theories of Apollinaire, choreography by Massine, Cubist designs by Picasso, and music by Satie, epitomizing the spirit of the avant-garde cultivated by Diaghilev and emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of modernism (Garafola 1989: 99).

In London, performances of the Ballets Russes provoked polarized responses from writers and intellectuals. Wyndham Lewis complained of the decadence and superficiality of Diaghilev's "high bohemia" (Lewis 1927: 30). But he wrote against a tide of praise from Bloomsbury intellectuals who were inspired by the energy and the proliferation of form, color, and sound associated with the new ballet. The latter position had been indicated by Woolf in her biography of Roger Fry when she remarked that in 1913, the year in which Fry opened the Omega Workshop, "He went to see the Russian dancers, and they, of course suggested all kind of fresh possibilities, and new combinations of music, dancing and decoration" (Woolf 1995: 158). Woolf attended performances of the Russian Ballet with Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell, but even after the death of Diaghilev in 1929, Bloomsbury continued to engage with the modern ballet performances offered by Diaghilev's direct successors in England: the Camargo Society and the Vic-Wells Ballet. (Camargo had been established through the work of the Russian ballerina Lydia Lopokova and her husband, the Bloomsbury economist John Maynard Keynes; Vic-Wells, which later became the Royal Ballet, was founded in 1931 by Ninette de Valois, who had previously worked with W. B. Yeats on his *Plays for Dancers* when she was choreographic director for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1926). Vanessa Bell designed *High Yellow* for the Camargo Society in 1932 and *Pomona* for the Vic-Wells Ballet (choreography by Frederick Ashton, music by Constant Lambert) in 1933, and

Duncan Grant designed *The Enchanted Grove* for Vic-Wells in 1932 (Nicolson and Trautmann 1981).

Yet Diaghilev and his successors were by no means the only source of experimentation in dance at the beginning of the twentieth century. Individual performers such as the American artists Loïe Fuller (who first gave her famous “Serpentine” dance in Paris in 1892), Isadora Duncan (who began performing in 1896 in New York but quickly moved to Europe), and Maud Allan (debuted in Vienna in 1903) initiated a form of free dance. These women used improvisational methods and emphasized the authority of individual corporeal expression, offering a radical alternative to the elaborate ballet productions associated with the European opera houses at the end of the nineteenth century. Loïe Fuller integrated into her performances a flourishing array of textiles and materials, striking lighting effects, mirrors and theatrical devices, inspiring literary Symbolists like Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Symons, Yeats and the stage designer Edward Gordon Craig. Mallarmé may have been thinking of Fuller when he wrote of the expressive, nonverbal communication of the dancer, “writing with her body, she *suggests* things which the written work could *express* only in several paragraphs of dialogue or descriptive prose” (Mallarmé 1956: 62).

One of the most distinctive sources for modernism in dance came from Switzerland and Germany, where Expressionist dance emerged before the First World War in the physical health programs and eurhythmics of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and in the work of Rudolph Laban and Mary Wigman. Dalcroze devised eurhythmics as a system of dance in which the “inner harmony” of the individual aimed to find expression in spontaneous rhythmic movement. This did not mean, however, that the corresponding physical movement would itself demonstrate “harmony” or “beauty.” Following Dalcroze, Mary Wigman’s *Witch Dance* (1914) suggested, in its energy and chaotic form, a philosophy closer to Friedrich Nietzsche’s Dionysian principle, outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871). In fact, Dalcroze’s ideology coincided with that of several radical exponents of “dissonance” in dance and in painting, and may be compared to Nijinsky’s replacement of conventional “beauty” with that of an angularity of choreographic forms in *L’Après-midi d’un faune* (1912) and *Rite of Spring*, or of Kandinsky’s emphasis on the equal expression of inner harmony *and* discord in “Concerning the Spiritual in Art” (1911), which he demonstrated in his own painting in works like *Kleine Freuden* (1913).

Some of Dalcroze’s methods found their way into both the Ballets Russes and British ballet of the twentieth century through the important figure of Marie Rambert, a Polish dancer who married the English playwright and director, Ashley Dukes, and founded the first British ballet company, Ballet Rambert, in 1930. Rambert had trained in eurhythmics with Dalcroze and had been hired by Diaghilev to assist Nijinsky with his choreography of the complex rhythmic patterning of Stravinsky’s score for *Rite of Spring* in 1913. But Rambert’s legacy was also important for dance in Britain, as her company produced during the 1930s and 1940s some of the most distinguished ballet choreographers of the twentieth century, amongst them Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor, and Andrée Howard (Rambert 1972).

Ashton and Tudor went on to establish careers elsewhere. But the work of all three choreographers for Rambert reveals an enduring hallmark that may be traced to her training with Dalcroze and her early Diaghilev influences. Their work is associated with a musicality and a sensitivity to dramatic outward expression motivated by a passionate interior impulse. These choreographers also absorbed a number of literary influences. The early Rambert performances at the Mercury Theatre were frequently attended by the London literati (including several Bloomsbury figures, as well as T. S. Eliot and Louis MacNeice). The literary impact on these choreographers combined with the Dalcroze/Diaghilev background filters through to their work, resulting in an updating of the narrative ballet during this period. T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* may have influenced Tudor in his temporal dislocation of the narrative of *Lilac Garden* (1936) (Sawyer 2003). Howard reproduced the mood and register of novels such as David Garnett's *Lady into Fox* (1922), exploring the suppression of atavistic drives in polite Edwardian society for her 1939 ballet of that name. And she used an episode of Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913), drawing on his investigation of nostalgia and lost innocence for *La Fête étrange* (1940). These choreographers expressed through the choreographic content, rather than the use of superficial, histrionic gesture, a presentation of interior psychological conflict that took inspiration from earlier literary modernists such as Proust, Woolf, and Eliot.

Continental European contributions to twentieth-century dance included the seminal influence of Rudolph Laban, who worked in the German educationalist tradition before the Great War and in England at Dartington Hall School from 1934. Drawing to some extent on the nineteenth-century theories of movement of François Delsarte, he devised a system of dance notation that is now used throughout the world and initiated a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between diverse physical activities. The impact of his vision can be found in the work of dancers, choreographers, and theatre artists as wide-ranging as Joan Littlewood, William Gaskill, Joan Plowright, and Kurt Joos, whose pre-war critique of European diplomacy, the *Green Table*, established modern dance in 1932 as a site of political commentary and resistance. Joos is often cited as the first major figure in the development of *Tanztheater*, a cross-fertilization of dance and drama that gave rise to later exponents of the form such as Pina Bausch and Sasha Waltz.

We can trace a separate tradition of modern dance in the United States that began with the work of Duncan, Fuller, Allan, and Ruth St. Denis at the beginning of the century, developing through the 1920s and 1930s through figures such as Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman, and continuing with the work of Merce Cunningham and José Limón. Cunningham's cool minimalist detachment owes much to his collaboration with the American composer John Cage; Humphrey's studies of choreography increased the impact of dance on American education; Limón integrated cultural influences from his Hispanic background. In spite of these indigenous artists, European influences on American modern dance may have been absorbed through Mary Wigman, who initially toured the United States between 1930 and 1932. Her abstraction of style emphasized the autonomy of

dance as an art form to an even greater degree than that of her teacher Dalcroze, and we may detect in some of Graham's group work a reflection of Wigman's interest in communal movement as a dynamic force in tension with that of the individual.

Wigman's influence draws attention to the impact of primitivism on modern dance on both sides of the Atlantic, in line with preoccupations in painting and literature. In Europe, Fokine and Nijinsky had both shown an interest in indigenous dance forms and rituals. In the United States, Graham drew inspiration from the Pueblo Indian culture of New Mexico. The development of jazz and the Harlem Renaissance initiated the influence of black dance on contemporary styles. Josephine Baker's performances in Paris in the 1920s brought jazz dance to Europe. Although influential critics such as André Levinson admired her work, they nevertheless described it in "orientalist" mode, misinterpreting her dancing by comparing Baker's "negro frenzy" to the virtuosity of the English hornpipe (Acocella and Garafola 1991: 74). The work of dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham, who researched Haitian and Caribbean dance forms in the 1950s, was widely disseminated in Europe and the United States through her contribution to film.

In considering these diverse but interrelated forms, we need to address more generally the question of what constitutes a "modern style." The modern period witnessed the integration and reformation of a number of choreographic methods, yet choreographers often broke away from the highly formal techniques and syntax of classical ballet and instead adopted an earthier style that is now loosely defined as "modern dance." A general distinction between these two forms can be identified in classical ballet's anti-gravitational dynamic, its emphasis on symmetrical form, line, and elevation, while modern dance vocabulary tends to utilize the pull of gravity, often exhibiting a tension between the body's embrace of the floor and a reaching away from it. Louis Horst, Graham's composer and partner, described this effect when he claimed that "strongly dissonant movement . . . is a state of physical being throughout the body – a complete physical awareness which furnishes the dance with a new texture: tense, full of potential action, one part pulling against another" (1967: 50–1). As in Wigman's *Witch Dance*, we might trace the philosophical impetus for Horst's dance aesthetic to the agonistic forces described by Nietzsche in the *Birth of Tragedy*, where he cites the dissonance of Wagner's music as an example of "the modern" (which may have led to Adorno's privileging of Schoenberg and Stravinsky). Nietzsche identified a conflict between Apollonian (rational) and Dionysian (chaotic) principles in art. This perception found its complement in the development of many areas of modernist aesthetics, including dance, and may partly account for the influence of German Expressionism in dance on both sides of the Atlantic.

Of course, the polarization of dance into "classical" and "modern" styles is too schematic, as many early "modernist" choreographers, such as Fokine, Nijinsky, Massine, and Nijinska, frequently retained much of the classical vocabulary while integrating un-balletic, or dissonant, elements. Isadora Duncan, who claimed to offer a "free" dance style alluding to the expression of movement depicted on Greek vases, included in her choreography very basic classical jumps, such as the *temps levé en*

arabesque, as well as various forms of lilting *pas de basque*. Moreover, classical ballet endured as a technique in the twentieth century, and many choreographers associated with “modern” ballet, such as Massine in his symphonic ballets of the 1930s, Balanchine – especially in the “neoclassical” Stravinsky ballets he choreographed mid-century for New York City Ballet – Tudor, Roland Petit, John Cranko or Kenneth Macmillan, continued to experiment with the traditional form. Others working in the later twentieth century, such as Jiri Kylian, William Forsyth, or Mark Morris aimed for a fusion of classical and contemporary styles. By contrast, the leading exponents of American modernism, such as Graham, Cunningham, and Limón denied any relationship with classical technique, developing instead their own individual systems that subverted the very basis of ballet training.

While dance aesthetics was transformed during this period, its impact on modernist music, painting, and literature was wide-ranging. Diaghilev launched Stravinsky’s career with *The Firebird* in 1909. Henri Matisse’s painting of the same year, *The Dance*, drew attention to the metaphorical potential of dance to express economy of form in the other arts. Wilde’s *Salomé* and W. B. Yeats’s *Plays for Dancers* owe something to a Mallarméan or Symbolist account of the dancer, but they also arise from the idea of dance as an atavistic force. In a climate of skepticism about language, the dancer emerged as a provocative emblem in literature, often gesturing beyond the limitations of the body (Jenny’s “dancing” in Woolf’s *The Waves*, for example), or problematizing the nature of creative authority, as in Yeats’s famous line from “Among School Children”: “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” It could be argued that the presence of the dancer in the text merely stands in for the inarticulable in an argument about semiotics versus semantics (Lawrence uses the idea of dance as a site of “unconscious” drives in *Women in Love* and “The Woman Who Rode Away”). Yet dance entered the discourses of modernism more frequently than is sometimes assumed. A journal of radical modernist aesthetics established by John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield in 1911 took the title *Rhythm*, publishing articles on a wide spectrum of the arts, including reviews of the Ballets Russes by Anne Estelle Rice. And in *The Dance of Life* (1923), the sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis remarked that “the significance of dancing, in the wide sense . . . lies in the appeal of a general rhythm” (Copeland and Cohen 1983: 478). As a contemporary reviewer of *Rite of Spring* remarked of its first performance, “the literalness of plot has gone” (Unnamed reviewer 1913: 470). Dance, which at the start of the twentieth century began to shed the conventions of classical ballet, strikingly illustrated many of the modernists’ preoccupations with the subversion of nineteenth-century aesthetics.

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Architecture

Lee Morrissey

Modernism is a response to – and sometimes a reaction against – the conditions of modernity. For architects, who organize space through building, the conditions of modernity include the ability to traverse larger spaces in less time, increases in population (with resulting urbanization), and new building technologies; implicitly, existing methods of construction, their related “styles,” and the often unplanned jumble of buildings that make up older cities come to seem unfortunately pre-modern, and therefore antiquated. Modernist architecture is usually associated with a fifty-year period between the second decade of the twentieth century and the mid-1960s; with the diffusion of the influential work of several major architects such as Walter Gropius, Philip Johnson, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe; with use of steel, glass, and concrete; and with a “rational” style for buildings often featuring a strongly linear design. As a response to the conditions of modernity, modernist architecture tries to shape, and therefore also to reshape, what is known as the “built environment.” Because some of the built environment is itself relatively new, and often the hastily built result of demographic pressures, there is a way in which modernism attempts to shape the very dynamics of modernization. In the process, modernism acquires a fundamental ambiguity. On the one hand, modernist architecture modernizes, and is, therefore, part of the condition of modernity. On the other, as it reshapes the built environment, modernist architecture rejects the ad hoc process of modernity, and therefore represents a profound critique of the conditions of modernity. The tension between these two treatments of modernity runs through the history of twentieth-century architecture.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, much of architectural design and practice would have been familiar to architects, masons, and stonemasons who had worked centuries, maybe even millennia, earlier. Large-scale architecture remained, as it had been, largely a matter of stone arches and load-bearing walls. Sometimes, as in medieval architecture, the arches – moved outwards – became buttresses, and the walls could open up for huge expanses of colored glass; other times, the arches would

crisscross, and the resulting curve in the walls would produce domes. Still, across the centuries, to build a large building was basically to lay one piece of stone directly on top of another. Because load-bearing walls take up a great amount of space at the base of a building, the thickness there determines and limits the ultimate height of the structure. It is also a very expensive method of construction, requiring a wide lot and a huge volume of stone. By the end of the nineteenth century, though, there is a dramatic change: steel-frame construction. With a steel frame (and the development of the elevator), by contrast, taller buildings could be built on the same area of land, much less expensively on a per-square-foot basis. In *Autobiography of an Idea* (1956), as Louis Sullivan describes the process whereby land prices rise with population pressures, requiring that buildings make a maximal use of space, we can see architecture finding its conditions of modernity. The first examples of such construction can be seen in the buildings designed by the firms of Adler and Sullivan and Burnham and Root, most famously in Chicago, still rebuilding after the fire of 1870.

Using iron and steel was not without precedent. Paxton's Crystal Palace (London, 1851), I. K. Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge (Bristol, UK, 1864), and the Roeblings' Brooklyn Bridge (1883), are among those predecessors that had shown it was possible to build on a new scale, covering great spans, with metal. However, these earlier uses of new materials and explorations at an increased scale mimicked existing architectural styles. The Clifton Suspension Bridge, for example, was meant to have featured sphinxes, and the Brooklyn Bridge imitates Gothic arches. In steel-frame tall buildings, by contrast, the façade indicates the building's structure. Thus the importance of Sullivan's famous phrase, "form ever follows function." In Adler and Sullivan's Guaranty Building (Buffalo, N.Y., 1896), for example, vertical lines of ornamented terracotta tiles jut out beyond horizontal rows of windows, and suggest the presence of the steel columns behind. In the tall steel-frame buildings of the 1890s and 1900s, such as the Flatiron Building, in New York City (Burnham and Root, 1903), the architectural conditions of modernity had found a modern architecture. However, this modern architecture was not yet what is now called modernist. The vestiges of the Gothic Revival still clung to the sides of these tall buildings, as can be seen most dramatically in the Woolworth Building (New York City, 1911–13). It combines the strong verticality of a steel-frame building and a structure expressed through the façade, but also imitates medieval European cathedrals, with, among other things, gargoyles (including one of Cass Gilbert, the architect, holding a model of the tower and another of Woolworth paying for the building with cash).

As early as 1892, Sullivan argued in *Ornament in Architecture* that if architecture were to become truly modern, it would have to dispense with such ornamentation for a few years. What we now call modernist architecture pursues this de-ornamenting of modern architecture – although without Sullivan's sense that it should simply be a transitional phase. Initially, this is particularly true of the European modernist architects. Indeed, one could say that modernist architecture emerges in Europe through an engagement and reconsideration of the modern architecture pioneered in the United States. An important early figure in this transition is Austrian architect

Adolf Loos. After finishing his architectural education in Germany, Loos traveled to the United States in 1893, and visited Chicago. That is, Loos arrived in the United States and Chicago just as the tall building was taking shape, and one year after the publication of Sullivan's *Ornament in Architecture*. Loos returned to Vienna in 1896, but the influence of Sullivan's earlier essay can be seen in Loos's *Ornament und Verbrechen* (Ornament and crime, 1908). Loos argues that modern culture has reached a level at which ornament is no longer necessary. His essay initiates not only an important anti-ornamental aspect to modernist architecture; it also reflects a complicated interplay between US and European design that will lead, about three decades later, to the United States reabsorbing from Europe a modernist architecture often inspired by an earlier American architecture of modernity.

1923 saw the publication of the twentieth century's most important book of architectural theory and design: Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*. More than any before, Le Corbusier's book examined architecture's conditions of modernity, reviewed existing modern architecture, and proposed a large-scale modernist architecture in response. There is a central, modernist concern running through and motivating the argument of the book; for Le Corbusier, architecture was causing "social unrest," and could solve it. "Architecture or revolution," he claims (14). Le Corbusier offers architecture as a way of ordering the disparate experiences and spaces of modern existence. He believes that "modern life demands, and is waiting for, a new kind of plan, both for the houses and the city" (8). Le Corbusier turns to a few related models, illustrating his idea with photographs: a steel bridge designed by Eiffel, industrial factories, and North American grain elevators. Le Corbusier discovers in these sites of modern production the ornament-free architecture Loos calls for: no details, and no visible stylistic affiliations or additions. He sees, in other words, the potential for a modernist architecture, something that could become, he believes, an orderly built response to the conditions of modernity. He calls it "the Engineer's Aesthetic" (7). The trick, then, is how to take such modern architecture as had sprung up for the modern economy and turn it into a plan for living a well-ordered life in modernity.

By 1923, the ideas Le Corbusier synthesizes in *Vers une architecture* were already circulating among architects across Europe. In Germany, for example, when architects working at a collective and school of design called the Bauhaus held their first exhibit, the text accompanying the show also discussed the engineer, concrete and glass. An important difference, though, between these other treatises and *Vers une architecture* is how Le Corbusier's book self-consciously connects modernist architecture with design in Classical Greece and Rome. Le Corbusier's French title, *Vers une architecture*, could be translated as "toward an architecture." But in his insistence on the Classical connection to mathematical, universal law, there is a way in which Le Corbusier is also claiming that there is only "one architecture," toward which good architecture should turn in response to changing conditions of modernity. Although the 1927 English edition is inaccurately titled *Towards a New Architecture*, one could be forgiven for subsequently thinking that modernist architecture, especially

in cities, was both a new architecture, and the only one. For during the interwar period, the modernist architecture developed by Europeans out of a modern architecture they saw in North America returned to the United States, and thereby went global. A variety of factors, including flight from the Nazis and the impending Second World War, brought modernist architects to the United States. Once there, though, these architects were in a position, institutionally, to disseminate the theories and manifestos of the 1910s and 1920s. For example, the founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, transformed Harvard's Graduate School of Design, even designing its facilities (1950); students in the revamped program included I. M. Pei (Louvre Pyramid, 1989; Bank of China, Hong Kong, 1990) and Philip Johnson. Both are excellent examples of how modern architecture returned to the States as modernist architecture and of how it then spread from there.

The expatriate modernists arrived in the States at a time when their vision for an orderly, transparent form for the office building met with a receptive audience in the executives of office buildings. Gropius's new group, the Architects Collaborative, for example, designed the Pan Am Building (New York, 1958–63; now the Met Life Building). Le Corbusier completed the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard (1963), and contributed sketches for the UN headquarters. But the architect who profited most from the trip across the Atlantic was van der Rohe. In his "Working Theses" (1923), he had theorized the office building as a "work of organization of clarity of economy" (Conrads 1971: 74). In post-war United States, he was invited to build his glass and steel vision in Chicago with the campus for the Illinois Institute of Technology (1940–1), and 860–80 Lake Shore Drive, a residential version of the same glass and steel type (1941–51), and in New York with the Seagram Building (1954–8). It is not so much a question of whether these architects could have designed such buildings in Europe, although that is unlikely considering the devastation after the second world war in thirty years. More important is the sense that today's unornamented modernist glass and steel tall buildings may have something to do with a post-war American business model exported around the world. On one level, these buildings also descend from van der Rohe's description of the office-building form decades earlier in Europe. But, as we have seen, they also have roots in late nineteenth-century modern US architecture. They are thus related to the technological developments of pioneering steel bridge builders, and, as le Corbusier implies, to an overarching sense of order as old as the Greeks. It is important, that is, not to overstate the modernity of modernist architecture.

It is also important to wonder what happened to the pioneering sense of modern architecture that came together in the American Midwest around the beginning of the twentieth century. In this, Louis Sullivan remains the pivotal figure. For his studio included a young architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, who would go on to become America's most important architect. Like the modernists, Wright worked in glass and reinforced concrete, and with what le Corbusier called the Engineer's Aesthetic. The house known as Fallingwater (Bear Run, Pennsylvania, 1935), for example, features two outdoor decks that jut out prominently and without vertical support

over a creek that flows thereby under the house. Those decks, made of reinforced concrete, are held in place by the weight of the house's tower, set on the other side of a massive boulder that serves as an anchor and a fulcrum to the cantilevered result. Like the modernists, Wright addressed what he saw as architecture's conditions of modernity: the automobile and, in North America, the comparatively great availability of land. Wright designed a range of responses. Among the earliest are the Prairie Houses, low-rising open-floor-plan homes that sprawl across the ground, with horizontal bands of windows and overhanging roofs. The "ranch style" and "bungalow" homes now spread throughout North America descend from this style, not only because the plans for Wright's houses were for a time available from mail order companies and in popular magazines (and thus through other conditions of modernity). Still, Wright always had a complicated relationship with modernist architecture. He never dispensed with ornament, even if the form of those ornaments followed function, as his former employer might have said. Thus, in the Johnson Wax Administration Building (Racine, Wis., 1936–9) the tall columns holding up the roof of the main space terminate in mushroom shapes, through which light filters down to the workers below. Or, in the Guggenheim Museum (New York City, 1943), the spiral pattern of the structure itself is matched by circles embedded in the terrazzo flooring that spills out of the building on to the sidewalk along 5th Avenue outside. With the distance of the passing years, it is possible now to see Wright as an architect who continued to practice modern architecture during the height of modernist architecture.

Although modernist architecture is a response to modernity, including conditions of architectural modernity, it was also an "International Style," as H. R. Hitchcock and Philip Johnson described it in 1932. Modernist architects and modernist architecture crossed national borders within Europe, and crossed the Atlantic as well. Since the 1960s, with the passing of what is now called "high" modernism, there has been an argument that architecture has become postmodern. That may be. But there is also a way in which what had always been an International Style has instead become the globalized one.

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Photography

Maggie Humm

Modernity conquered the world through pictures, appropriating “invisible” and visible spaces with new technologies of vision including X-rays and photography. In turn, twentieth-century modernism is obsessed with issues of visibility. In the major years of modernism, new vocabularies of vision were transforming literary and cultural texts, for example *Ulysses*. Although photography was invented in 1839 and, in a sense, predates modernism, photographic technologies and modes of perception are vital to the history of modernism and its visual cultures. In addition, much of twentieth-century art was either made as photography or experienced through photographic reproductions.

Photography criticism initially therefore struggled to tell the story of modernist photography in categories like modernist art: in genres like “landscape,” and through the expressive and technically innovative creativity of its leading pioneers (Evans and Hall 1999). But from the 1970s, with translations of the writings of the pre-war Marxist Walter Benjamin and the post-war semiologist Roland Barthes, critics began to recognize how much modernist photographers themselves moved between industrial “low” culture and high art, for example Man Ray and Germaine Krull, and began to look at what photography does as much as defining its characteristics (Barthes 1977; Benjamin 1972).

The history of modernist photography, critics now agree, starts in 1900. Photography contributed photograms (exposing sensitive paper to light), photomontage (cuttings), and abstractions to art movements including Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and Russian Suprematism. In the 1920s and 1930s the key photographers, Alexander Rodchenko, Man Ray, and László Moholy-Nagy were also avant-garde artists. In America the Clarence White School of Photography encouraged the turn from pictorialism to modern design (Rosenblum 1987), and in the years after the First World War the work of four photographers – Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Alvin Coburn, and Edward Weston – marks American photography’s most modernist moment. Stieglitz’s use of formal structures in *The Steerage* (1907) was praised by

Picasso. By photographing close up everyday objects and textures, Paul Strand produced abstract photos that were not “documentary” but a new modern form. As Strand argued, “all good art is abstract in its structure” (Hill and Cooper 1988: 14). Similarly, Alvin Coburn’s *Vortograph* (1917), a portrait of his friend Ezra Pound fragmented by mirrors, also mirrored Cubism (Clarke 1997).

Although an America–Europe binary is porous because the émigré Moholy-Nagy transformed American photography education by founding the Institute of Design in Chicago, certainly in France and Germany from the 1920s, advances in photo reproduction techniques, with the new wide-angle lenses and high-speed shutters, enabled photographs to have widespread circulation in journals. These disseminated modernist ideas of space and time much further in Europe than Stieglitz had been able to do in his American journal *Camera Work* (Coke 1986). One of the first exhibitions of modernist photography, the Salon de l’Escalier in Paris in 1928, was followed the next year by the major German Film and Foto (FIFO) exhibition. If modern photography was perceived as an individualistic medium in America and Europe, in Russia El Lissitzky’s *The Constructor* (1924) linked modern photography to collectivism and Constructivism.

Although Douglas Crimp claims that “photography’s re-evaluation as a modernist medium signals the end of modernism,” certainly the conception of photography as an art, initiated in the 1920s and 1930s, has persisted (Crimp 1993). This is because, until photography was accepted by mainstream galleries, the important moments of modernist photography were books: Moholy-Nagy’s *Malerie, Photographie, Film* (1925), August Sander’s *Place of Our Time* (1929) and Walker Evans’s *American Photographs* (1938) (Light 1995). Modernist literature warmly embraced photography. Succeeding Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman’s celebration of the daguerreotype in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century Virginia Woolf’s deep knowledge of photography, her constant photographic practice and use of photographic referents inspired her to choose photography as a generative medium in many books, particularly in *Three Guineas* (Humm 2002). While it would be wrong to say that photography and the other arts were straightforwardly reflectionist, modernist artists as much as writers utilized photography. For example, from 1919 Matisse had photographs taken of his works in progress. In turn the American photographer Walker Evans, who married a painter, was inspired by Surrealism in Paris in 1926 and loved the high modernism of Joyce and Pound.

Yet the specificity of modernist photography as a practice also gripped intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s. Particularly in the writings of Walter Benjamin and the cinema critic Siegfried Kracauer, the activity of photography is opposed to art’s aura because photography and cinema have political promise as mass media (Benjamin 1972; Kracauer 1995). Photography could extend our understanding of the material world while providing access to subjectivity, or what Benjamin calls “the optical unconscious,” by capturing gestures and details. These intellectual theorizations were crucial to positioning photography as a modern art. The “new” style involved formal simplicity and patterning, dramatic viewpoints, a use of close-ups, dramatic tonal

differences, and conspicuous cropping. Subjects included machinery, tall skyscrapers and everyday objects and plants shaped into anti-realistic images. Man Ray invented the Rayograph (1920) by placing objects onto light-sensitive paper (with Moholy-Nagy the products of this process are more generally referred to as “photograms”). Dramatic camera angles were employed by Rodchenko and Coburn, particularly in Coburn’s *The Octopus* (1912) taken from New York’s Metropolitan Tower (Light 1995). The Berlin Dadaists transformed photomontage from commercial design into a modernist aesthetic and the use of modernist serial imagery continued after the Second World War both in Europe and in America in the work of Robert Flick and others.

But modernist photography’s extreme formal close-ups or oblique shots of the female nude are its main innovation (Rosenblum 1987). Photographers, particularly Edward Weston, utilized a sexually charged language to make the body’s surface erotic (Armstrong 1998). Women modernists did not always share this masculine enthusiasm for erotic portraiture. Margaret Bourke-White for example, combined an expressive modernist vocabulary in *High Level Bridge, Cleveland* (1929) with the emotional politics of *Sharecropper’s House* (1937). Imogen Cunningham made abstract patterns of industrial structures as well as photographing plant forms with emotional closeness. Cunningham, together with Weston and others, co-founded the west coast F. 64 (small lens aperture) group, whose only public exhibition (although F. 64 was hugely influential through reproductions) included the work of Consuelo Kanaga, the photographer of African-Americans who had discovered negritude in Paris. Black modernism in America repudiated formalism and, in the 1920s photographs of James van de Zee, created a style of urban modernity to visualize the “New Negro” with psychological depth and social pluralism.

It is crucial to note these issues of gender and race to contextualize the more canonic American photographers such as Stieglitz, Strand, and Weston. Stieglitz was the first to bring modern art to America in his 291 gallery. Here, and in his journal *Camera Work*, Stieglitz generated the concept of the photograph as an art object. His now celebrated photographs *The Flat Iron* (1903) and *The Steerage* (1907) with their autochrome process turned Manhattan into abstract patterns and ideal forms. Strongly influenced by Vassily Kandinsky’s work in the 1920s, Stieglitz went on to make small, brilliant images of clouds he called “equivalents” which became an influential technique.

Paul Strand, Stieglitz’s friend, began in 1916 to photograph household objects using form and tonality, rather than naturalism, to shape his images, in a fundamentally modernist way. Influenced by Picasso’s Cubism and by Dada, Strand’s photographs of New York City, published in *Camera Work*, created modernist textures and forms in tight framing. From the 1920s, Strand applied his aesthetic to urban and natural images in what became known as “New Objectivity” (Rosenblum 1997).

Meeting Strand in New York in the early 1920s encouraged Edward Weston to a pure “straight” photography. Together with Ansel Adams, Weston adopted a photographic language of pure form exemplified in the brief titles of his photographs:

Breast (1922) and *Pepper* (1929). Weston announced his dedication to modernism in a lecture in Los Angeles in 1922 (Stebbins, Quinn, and Furth 1999). Modernism had arrived in LA with an exhibition of American modernist paintings and the erection of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House in 1920. Weston experimented with abstract patterns of vegetables, shells, and nudes using light and texture. For example, Weston's portrait of his naked son *Neil, Nude* (1925) rejects the child's specificity in favor of an idealized image. In Mexico Weston focused more on landscape abstractions. Weston's interest in indigenous art and simplified forms grew into a belief in universal visual rhythms, making Weston a leader of American modernism in the 1920s. He gained the first Guggenheim Photography Fellowship in 1937, although his landscape photography in the thirties suggests a rejection of pure formalism.

A similar tension between a modernist ideal image and a commitment to photography as evidence marks the work of the American Walker Evans in the 1930s. Evans's major contributions are the books *American Photographs* (1938), and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, co-authored with James Agee, in 1941. The book format encouraged Evans's formal modernist record of poor tenant farmers. This problematic – of making poverty aesthetically “beautiful” – impacted on the work of all the photographers funded by the Farm Security Administration including Dorothea Lange and Margaret Bourke-White. But Evans's photographs are apparently simple portraits, often taken in full light in middle distance, albeit with abundant visual motifs. This “snapshot” quality was very influential on much later American photographers in the 1960s such as Diane Arbus and influenced John Szarkowski's curatorship of photography at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and his enthusiasm for a photography of the “everyday.” Similarly Evans's love of street signs inspired later artists such as Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol.

European and Far Eastern modernist photography took a different direction. For example *Hosokawa Chikako* (1932) by the Japanese photographer Kozo Nojima explored a universal modernist vocabulary but without the American attention to documentary detail (Rosenblum 1987). In some senses the development of European modernist photography came more from the development of photographic techniques. In Italy, for example, the photographer brothers Anton and Arturo Bragaglia experimented with “photomovementistics” of multiple exposures to illustrate the simultaneity of movement and dynamism in urban modernity. Other innovations in camera technology, particularly the new lightweight Leica cameras, were exploited by André Kertész when he arrived in Paris from Budapest in 1928. Dedicated to rendering urban time and daily life Kertész utilized a gamut of techniques including multiple viewpoints in his *Meudon* of 1928, reflective surfaces and close-ups. But it was Man Ray who was the pioneer of experimental European photography in following his invented rayograms with the promotion of photography as an art form. Man Ray's innovative images, such as *Glass Tear* (1930), took him in the direction of Dadaism and Surrealism in which the subjective, as much as the formally objective, creates the photographic effect, and Ray's work featured in the key exhibition curated by Alfred Barr, “Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism,” at MOMA in 1936–7.

In Russia Alexander Rodchenko, one of the leading Constructivists, also used experimental viewpoints for psychological effect. In the 1920s Rodchenko montaged photographs of streets and their users into a structural geometry. By reflecting himself in *Chauffeur, Karelia* (1933) Rodchenko made explicit the photographic construction matching his double-exposed photoreportage of the late 1920s. Moholy-Nagy shared Rodchenko's interest in a new language of photography and himself visualized photography as a key determinant of modernist culture. Both artist and educator, first at the Bauhaus and later at the Institute of Design in Chicago, Moholy-Nagy led formalist photography into a new aesthetic which he called "the new vision," the title of his key book (Coke 1986). From 1922, Moholy-Nagy wrote over thirty key articles about his ideas and featured in many exhibitions. In collaboration with his wife Lucia, Moholy-Nagy experimented with photomontage, unusual viewpoints and framing, negative prints and photograms, all of which also marked his painterly style.

Paradoxically, with the founding of MOMA's department of photography in 1940 which exhibited Moholy-Nagy among others, the continuity of modernist photography began to fragment. The Americanization of modernism more generally in the arts continued in the post-war period, with the emergence of the New York School, the writings of the influential critic Clement Greenberg, the abstract 1950s photographs of Minor White and Aaron Siskind, and John Szarkowski's curatorship at MOMA (1962–91). But elsewhere in America and in Europe, with the development of film, video and digital aesthetics, photography, if a quintessential modern medium, was no longer essentially modernist. Increasingly from the 1970s, the abstractions of modernism came under attack, particularly in the British journal *Creative Camera*, as is evident in the journal's preferred plural terminology of "photographies" (Brittain 1999). But if postmodernism hotly contested a modernist aesthetic and looked to popular culture for inspiration, paradoxically it appropriated and even celebrated the most canonic modernist photographers. For example, Sherrie Levine's 1979 *Untitled (After Edward Weston)* is simply a copy print from a reproduction of the famous 1926 Weston photograph *Torso of Neil*. In any case, perhaps the idealization of modernist photography as abstract individualism is itself a postmodern construction.

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Part IV
Readings

W. H. Auden: *Look, Stranger!*

Steven Matthews

W. H. Auden's 1936 collection *Look, Stranger!* (which appeared in the US under Auden's preferred title, *On this Island*, a year later) gathered many of the poems he had written since the beginning of the decade. The book was immediately perceived as being in many ways an advance upon its predecessor, *Poems* (1930; revised edition 1933), the volume which had gathered Auden's early poetry. Gavin Ewart, reviewing *Look, Stranger!* in November 1936, noted that "Since his first book, Mr. Auden's verse has undergone a considerable simplification and a more severe formal discipline, emerging both concise and emotive." Auden's friend C. Day-Lewis found in the volume "a subtlety of meter and a formal coherence which his verse has sometimes lacked before" (Haffenden 1983: 220, 228).

The reasons behind this new poetic urgency and clarity are manifold. The intervening years between the two books of lyrics had seen the publication of Auden's school-set "English Study" in an eclectic mixture of prose and verse, *The Orators*, and of three dramas culminating in *The Ascent of F6*, also from 1936, a collaboration with the novelist Christopher Isherwood. The poetry of *Look, Stranger!* displays mastery of a great range of poetic modes, including songs, ballads, political verse, and love lyrics. Formally, no two poems are alike, apart from the sonnets. The volume deploys as a result a variety of tonalities, styles and vocalizations, demonstrating the development which Auden's poetry had undergone through his work in the different genre of theater entertainments – all of which also mix their modes – across these years. The inwardness and obscurity of Auden's early manner had continued in *The Orators*, a fact acknowledged by Auden himself, and commented upon by T. S. Eliot, the editor at his publishers, Faber and Faber. Work on the dramatic presentations across this time had therefore been at least partly responsible for the emergence of the clearer and more immediate style on display in *Look, Stranger!* This was the style which was to be further developed in Auden's work after his move to America in 1939.

What links *The Orators* with *The Ascent of F6* and *Look, Stranger!* four years later is a shared exploration of the issue of heroism, of a romantic vision of personality, and of its relation to both psychological and religious characteristics. This issue provided literature with a common theme, as Valentine Cunningham has mapped it, in the early years of the 1930s, as Britain emerged from a time of depression and dispiritedness following the First World War (Cunningham 1988: 158). As Janet Adam Smith noted in a further contemporary review of this 1936 lyric collection, "The question implicit in 'F6', and in several poems of 'Look, Stranger!' is one which Mr. Auden has asked explicitly elsewhere: What shall the self-conscious man do to be saved?" (Haffenden 1983: 229). Smith's allusion is to a book review Auden had written in 1934 on the soldier and Arabist T. E. Lawrence, the "moral" of whose life Auden concluded to be that "Self-consciousness is an asset, in fact the only friend of our progress. . . . But its demands on our little person and his appetites are so great that most of us, terrified, try to escape . . . which is fatal."

T. E. Lawrence was to become one of the models for the central character in *The Ascent of F6*, Ransom, a character who seeks to overcome that human facet of self-consciousness in his attempt to conquer the fictional mountain of the play's title. In the 1934 review on Lawrence, however, Auden had noted the contemporary danger of all such attempts to absorb the dissentient voices within the self in some greater action: to "escape from reason and consciousness . . . is indeed . . . to enlist in the Great Fascist Retreat" (Auden 1996: 61–2). Hitler had come to power in Germany in January 1933, and across the early part of that year he had suspended civil liberties and the freedom of the press, and begun the persecution of the Jews. The poems gathered in *Look, Stranger!*, several of which dwell upon the landscape of England and the possibility of its integrity being breached from outside, derive something of their directness from the way they ponder the nature of this historical danger. In ways that predict T. S. Eliot's patriotic envisioning of transhistorical resolution in *Little Gidding*, mid-way through the long-threatened Second World War, Auden's poetry from ten years beforehand considers the relation between the troubled present and a tradition conceived in national terms. It also ponders crucially within these paradigms the relation of the self-conscious and emotionally charged individual to these wider pressures.

This is most famously the case in "Out on the lawn I lie in bed," the second poem of *Look, Stranger!*, which had appeared on its original publication under the deceptively innocent title "A Summer Night." As Eliot would in *Little Gidding*, Auden finds his model of imagined integrity here on a concerted yet self-aware version of pastoral poetry. The poem initially offers a vision of felicity and comradeship, as the narrator sits in a summer garden with friends. But this opening idealism is soon perceived for the fictional construct that it is, as the speaker's attention is brought to brood upon the moon which "climbs" not just this local but the national and the "European sky." Such brooding leads the poem to acknowledge the "doubtful act" which "allows / Our freedom in this English garden":

The creeped wall stands up to hide
 The gathering multitude outside
 Whose glances hunger worsens . . .

(Auden 1936: 15)

The early 1930s in Britain had seen confirmation of long-term unemployment in the economy as old heavy industries declined; the situation was exacerbated by the restrictions placed upon state benefits for the unemployed by the National Government, and by the introduction in 1932 of stringent means tests on those applying for benefits (Davis 1999: 214). In a book review of 1935, Auden had declared of such moves by the government that “a social system under which they are possible is grotesque” (Auden 1996: 126). But Auden’s 1933 poem had already recognized an incipient loss of psychological control over any ability to sustain those artificial barriers which might prevent the individual from being swept away by such hidden impoverishments, as “traces of / intentions not our own” loom. The poem at this level anatomizes the false consciousness operating in the nation.

When viewing the various threats to that nation from both within (the unemployed) and without (the deteriorating situation in Europe), Auden conjures a shared sense of degeneration, familiar in English since the 1895 translation of Max Nordau’s book with that title. Degeneration had haunted particularly the key British modernist writers, including D. H. Lawrence, Auden’s frequent literary interlocutor in the early 1930s. In “Out on the lawn,” “what by nature and by training / We loved, has little strength remaining,” and is therefore threatened by “the crumpling flood,” which will

Hold sudden death before our eyes
 Whose river-dreams long hid the size
 And vigours of the sea.

England is cast as an inherently pacifist and pastoral nation, one averse in its contained dreams to wider uncertainty. Auden’s metaphor for the potential apocalypse is again typical of the era – witness Stephen Spender’s critical work *The Destructive Element*, published in 1935. What is different in this poem, and truer to D. H. Lawrence’s repeated vision in both his novels, such as *Women in Love*, and in his prose meditations on psychoanalysis and apocalypse, is Auden’s projection of this overwhelming “flood” as simply a form of renewal, if a ghastly one. The poem ends, in other words, with a reconstitution of the opening scene, and the wish that “After discharges of alarm, / All unpredicted may it calm / The pulse of nervous nations.”

The key to this redemptive strand in the poem is provided by the fact that the moon, which had been integral to the unnerving widening of the perspective to include the specter of Europe, retains something of its traditional poetic associations with the personal life and the vagaries of love. Indeed, syntactically, the two perspectives are seen to be continuous:

From gardens where we feel secure
 Look up, and with a sigh endure
 The tyrannies of love:

And, gentle, do not care to know,
 Where Poland draws her Eastern bow,
 What violence is done . . .

(Auden 1936: 4)

At this moment, Auden's sense of pastoral resistance seems to invoke a similar plangency to that of such earlier writing as Rupert Brooke's sonnet "The Soldier," with its concluding "laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, / In hearts at peace, under an English heaven" (Silkin 1981: 82) rather than positing a postmodernist alertness to failures of national and psychological continuity. Such tensions between the personal and the historical or traditional are similarly queasy in their disproportion in Auden's poem (the "tyrannies of love" which seem syntactically to equate with the European drama in June 1933), and a belated awareness of this is perhaps resonant behind Auden's late attempt to reread the poem through his subsequent experience of reconversion to Christianity (Fuller 1970: 99).

This is a tension which goes to the heart of the relation which Auden's collection has to its modernist forebears, and is one which has divided recent critics of his work, and particularly of this volume and key poem. Stan Smith has objected to the way in which "the volume overflows with embarrassing vocatives and visions of 'universal love'"; Michael O'Neill and Gareth Reeves have praised the way in which "the personal may be intimately related to the political but the two spheres do not – as in earlier poems – bewilderingly swap places." For them, in this poem, the "tyrannies of love" direct attention toward "other forms of tyranny and endurance" without themselves being belittled by the process (O'Neill and Reeves 1992: 149; Smith 1997: 31).

What is undoubtedly new to Auden's work in *Look, Stranger!* is the urge to confront these difficult relations between the personal and the political. Part of the drama of the book lies in the way in which the perspective of the predominant voice in the poems is so flexible and open to revision; rapid shifts in the origin and perspective of the poetry's address, and in style and tone, lead to an effect not dissimilar to that of founding modernist texts such as *The Waste Land*. The poem from which Auden's book derives both its British and American titles, poem V, is a deeply Hopkinsian enterprise in its alliteration and complex assonance. But what is striking is that across its three stanzas the "stranger" is enjoined to be looking both inward and inland, and outward across the sea. "Look, stranger, at this island now / The leaping light for your delight discovers," the poem opens, as the addressee is asked to pause "Here at the small field's ending." The atmosphere is potentially little-Englander in its mention of the white "chalk wall" of the cliffs which stand against "the pluck / and knock" of the tide. And yet, by the final verse, the stranger is almost forgotten, and the nature and tone of the poem's address have completely altered. The speaker now looks over the sea at the ships departing, a "full view"

which may enter memory, as the ships “all the summer through the water saunter” (Auden 1936: 19).

This is an odd dislocation to encounter within three brief stanzas. *Look, Stranger!* seems fascinated by islands, both in Britain as an island state and in islands *per se* as magical, liminal spaces of holiday between the limited but comforting assurance of the mainland and the more unsettling and uncertain element of the open sea. In poem VII, “Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys,” “some waving pilgrims were describing islands. // ‘The gods,’ they promised, ‘visit us from islands,’” and poem XXX, “August to the people and their favourite islands,” allows Auden to consider in the most sustained way in this collection his relation to his past and to the ambition of his craft. Elsewhere, Auden adapts the hawk’s-eye perspective which he had learnt from the work of Thomas Hardy, a perspective carried over from his early work, toward the new scope of this book, in its survey of the state of England. Poem XVII opens with Auden viewing an expanse of the land, Nelson-like:

Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand,
A fathom of earth, alive in air,
Aloof as an admiral on the old rocks,
England below me . . .

(Auden 1936: 42)

As in other poems already cited, the volume’s speakers are all as anxious to establish their physical location in the landscape, whether that of England or Scotland or some imagined realm, as to establish their spoken presence temporally: “Here . . . I stand.” These twin pressures confirm both the volume’s urgency and its immediacy. But as “Look, stranger, at this island now” suggests, that “here” might establish both a specific perspective inland and inward upon the marvelous, and a less directed and established reference to a more uncertain space such as “memory,” related to some potentially absurd or nonsensical childish world where ships “all summer through the water saunter.” At issue again, as for modernist poetics, is conscious control, the assurance or otherwise of a concerted address operating through and across the poems.

The introduction Auden co-authored with C. Day-Lewis for *Oxford Poetry 1927* alluded to “the prime development of this century,” the way in which “the psychological conflict between the self as subject and the self as object . . . is of most importance to the poet.” Such vicissitudes of course inhere fundamentally in the work of T. S. Eliot, the reading of whose *The Waste Land* in Spring 1926 led Auden to destroy much of his own early work and to adopt the modernist style. The first verse paragraph of Eliot’s work contains similar uncertain shifts of perspective to those noted in “Look, stranger.” By the time of his essays and reviews of the mid-1930s, however, Auden had developed this preoccupation into a methodology of reading and writing, one intimately allied to his other prime interest at this time: psychology.

In the long meditation on “Psychology and the Arts To-day,” for instance, the task of psychology, “or art for that matter,” “is not to tell people how to behave, but by drawing their attention to what the impersonal unconscious is trying to tell them,

and by increasing their knowledge of good and evil, to render them better able to choose." For that reason, psychology (and presumably art) must be "opposed to all generalisations." Remember the "here" of the poems collected in *Look, Stranger!*, and the somewhat lewd injunction to Isherwood's "strict and adult pen" at the end of "August for the people" to "Make action urgent and its nature clear." "You cannot tell people what to do," the essay on psychology continues, "you can only tell them parables." As such, they will take from the encounter with psychology or art "each according to his immediate or peculiar needs." For this reason, as Auden put it in the introduction to an anthology of poetry which he worked on with John Garrett also at this time, the precise nature of the content of any one poem is irrelevant.

Only when it throws light on our own experience, when these lines occur to us as we see, say, the unhappy face of a stockbroker in a suburban train, does poetry convince us of its significance. The test of the poet is the frequency and diversity of the occasions on which we remember his poetry. (Auden 1996: 103, 106)

To this extent, the subject and address of poetry must remain a fugitive thing, largely dependent upon the note it *may* strike in a particular reader's mind at a particular moment in their lives. Of course, Auden's sense of the parabolic nature of psychology and of art looks forward to his later Christianity, as does his sense that they both extend our "knowledge of good and evil"; this is something which emerges more clearly in the other long essay of 1935, on "The Good Life."

But it is noticeable that *Look, Stranger!* exploits from the outset the kinds of leeway opened up by the assertion – post-Eliot, and yet unlike him – that all writing in these genres offers a parable. The poet's ambition toward simply becoming memorable does not imply a necessity of either origin or destination in thinking about the nature of the speaking voice in the poem. Rather, it diverts attention to technical matters. Particularly in his writing on another of his influences, the late-medieval poet John Skelton, Auden in the early 1930s showed his consciousness of the pacing of verse in English. In 1934, he makes "a rough-and-ready generalisation that the more poetry concerns itself with subjective states, with the inner world of feeling, the slower it becomes, or in other words, that the verse of extrovert poets like Dryden is fast and that of introvert poets like Milton is slow."

There can be no doubt of his own allegiances, or of his attempt to write a fast poetry which conforms to "the natural unit of speech rhythm," the four-accented poetic line, which he also claims in this article to be truer to "conversation" than the standard English pentameter (Auden 1996: 88–9). The opening of "Look, stranger" itself varies its four accents with skeltonics, the division of the four-beat line into two twos:

Look, stranger, at this island now
 The leaping light for your delight discovers,
 Stand stable here
 And silent be . . .

“Out on the lawn” varies four- with three-beat lines. The complex alliteration, assonance, and rhyme assure that the poetry is memorable. But the speed of the voice also ensures the mobility of the thought, the refusal to brood upon the inner life, which is inappropriate, given the sense of national failure and pressure of historical circumstance which the book instills.

To that extent, the invocation of poetry as a countering force when greeted in the suburban train by the unhappy face of the stockbroker, as it is put forward in the introduction to the anthology *The Poet's Tongue* which Auden edited at this time with Garrett, is emblematic. Partly in response to events in Europe, Auden's poetry and prose of the early 1930s had been freighted with a reactive reflection upon the mediocrities of contemporary British life. In an essay for the popular newspaper the *Daily Herald* during that crucial spring of 1933, for instance, Auden was troubling over – though in terms which recalled thinkers from the nineteenth century such as William Morris and their descendants in the early twentieth such as D. H. Lawrence – the pettiness and subservience of much diurnal grind and habit: “You have the goods, you have the leisure; goods, the material with which to satisfy your wants, and leisure, the time in which to satisfy them. Are you happy?” Auden recognizes that, as he puts it in a 1932 essay, “Writing,” the social and educational divisions which are inherent in capitalist economies, divisions which in the British system are mappable onto class issues, render literature both less good and less effective in being able to address these wrongs. “Whenever society breaks up into classes . . . literature suffers . . . to-day, writing gets shut up in a circle of clever people writing about themselves for themselves. . . . Talent doesn't die out, but it can't make itself understood.” More apocalyptically, elsewhere in these prose writings he claims that education is redundant in these circumstances, since “nobody believes in our society, for which the children are being trained” (Auden 1996: 36, 24, 28).

Look, Stranger! registers this disillusionment with the automatic and bureaucratic nature of modern living in various ways. Poem XII is sarcastic in its detailing of the limitations of such lives, dismal in their aspirations as Eliot's “young man carbuncular,” the house agent's clerk who has a pointless liaison with a secretary in *The Waste Land*:

As it is, plenty;
As it's admitted
The children happy
And the car, the car
That goes so far
And the wife devoted . . .
(Auden 1936: 32)

These skeltonics are vicious in revealing the “loss” and nonsense, again, with which such a life imbues the contemporary bureaucrat. The monetary profits of such a life are simply another form of blindness, that pervasive theme in the volume, blindness about what life might be. Poem III, “Our hunting fathers told the story,” puts the issue more starkly, as a mythologized primitive past is juxtaposed with the reduced

present, where the hunter can only “hunger, work illegally, / and be anonymous” (17). The conclusion of the prose writings of this period would seem to be, however indirectly, that socialism is the *minimal* solution to such an awful situation on the home front, socialism which will at least attempt to eradicate the financial inequities of this world.

Poem XIV, which appears much altered from its original magazine appearance as “A Communist to Others,” is the most declarative statement Auden ever made on this theme. As such, the verse is unobtrusive, although the targets are very Audenesque, and must have been surprising to the “comrades” to whom in its original version’s first word the poem is addressed.

O splendid person, you who stand
 In spotless flannels or with hand
 Expert on the trigger;
 Whose lovely hair and shapely limb
 Year after year are kept in trim . . .

You are not jealous yet, we know,
 But we must warn you, even so
 So pray be seated . . .

(Auden 1936: 35)

More successful, perhaps, are those poems in the book which seek, as J. B. Priestley had in prose in the 1934 *English Journey*, and as George Orwell was soon famously to do in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), to provide an overview of the state of the nation. This tone is signaled from the poem situated as Prologue to the collection.

“O love, the interest itself in thoughtless heaven” urges the simplicity and the joy of personal emotion and desire, but is haunted by the fear that the other “eternal tie,” that between a person and England, might be under threat,

For now that dream which has for so long contented our will,
 I mean, of uniting the dead into a splendid empire,
 Under whose fertilising flood the Lancashire moss

Sprouted up chimneys, and Glamorgan hid the life
 Grim as a tidal rock-pool’s in its glove-shaped valleys,
 Is already retreating into her maternal shadow . . .

Under these failed industrial and cultural circumstances, as for the metropolitan lives in *The Waste Land*, connection in the personal life is under threat, as

Standing on these impoverished constricting acres,
 The ladies and gentlemen apart, too much alone,
 Consider the years of the measured world begun.

(Auden 1936: 11–12)

As it was for Eliot, the yearning in the final verses here is towards a mythic past in which a pattern might be established for the present, a typical conflation “of the Future into actual History” as had happened before when Merlin arrived in this land.

As such, here and later in the book, love’s “power” is predicated upon its remoteness from the detailed circumstances of the poem. Poems XXVI and XXVII offer perhaps the only unqualified visions of love in the collection, unqualified though only in that the love expressed offers a temporary escape from the threats of time. More often elsewhere, love is in itself insufficient to the circumstances, its “power” irrelevant. The sonnet which forms XX might seem to encapsulate the romantic ambitions not just of the situation but of the book, as it opens “Fleeing the short-haired mad executives / . . . Upon the mountains of our fear I climb.” But the view at the top is only into the lovers’ eyes, a Narcissus-like experience which leaves the return to the world a reminder of the unknown nature of true inner experience. Elsewhere loneliness predominates, as in the two song lyrics written for setting by Benjamin Britten, or there is uncertainty about the true nature of love itself, as in the conclusion to XXI, “Easily, my dear, you move, easily your head.” Most telling, perhaps, is that hawk-like perspective asserted at the opening of “Here on the cropped grass,” which soon elides into a meditation upon the failure to connect, since “When I last stood here I was not alone.” The final stanza of the poem relapses into a return to “my situation”:

“The poetry is in the pity,” Wilfred said,
 And Kathy in her journal, “To be rooted in life,
 That’s what I want.”
 These moods give no permission to be idle,
 For men are changed by what they do;
 And through loss and anger the hands of the unlucky
 Love one another.

(Auden 1936: 46)

The allusions to Wilfred Owen and Katherine Mansfield seem to license the kind of return which, in the absence of human relationship, the poet is forced to make. Yet they illustrate the constantly qualified, and variously and repeatedly authorized, vocalities of *Look, Stranger!* which, in its conscious attention to the pressures of history, finds its address and traditional lyric assurance constantly undermined, as had been the case of the modernist texts which precede and direct it.

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Djuna Barnes: *Nightwood*

Rebecca Loncraine

Djuna Barnes once described herself as the most famous unknown writer, and to an extent she was right. During her lifetime her name was widely familiar, but her work was little read. Barnes was herself partially responsible for her lack of a readership. From the 1950s until her death in 1982, she lived in Greenwich Village, New York City, in seclusion. During this time, many editors approached her to request the republication of her early work, but she flatly refused. Her reply to a questionnaire sent by the *Little Review* to “the artists of the world” in 1953, read simply, “I am sorry but the list of questions does not interest me to answer. Nor have I that respect for the public” (Broe 1991: 66). In the latter years of her life Barnes seemed determined to keep herself out of print. After her death, however, several editions of her work were republished and scholars began to re-examine her writing.

Born in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, in 1892, Barnes was brought up on a farm and educated at home by her grandmother, Zadel, who was a suffragist, journalist, and spirit medium. In 1912 she moved to New York where she began her writing career as a journalist. In 1921 she moved to Paris where she lived until the mid-1930s, mixing with the expatriate literary community there. Barnes wrote successfully in a number of genres, and her work consistently revises and subverts traditional genre categories. She wrote short stories, journalism, drama, poetry, and three experimental “novels,” and she illustrated much of her own work. In 1928 she published two of her most successful works. *Ryder* is a biography of her family, written in mock Elizabethan verse combined with Joycean wordplay, and *Ladies Almanack*, also written in mock Elizabethan, is a ribald satire of the lesbian expatriate community, with whom Barnes mingled at this time.

Nightwood appeared in 1936. The book had taken many years to write, and it proved difficult to publish. Its controversial subject matter, experimental style, and generic ambiguity (being both a satire and a tragedy) meant that many editors were unwilling to take it on. It was finally published in Britain by Faber and Faber, under the editorial guidance of T. S. Eliot. *Nightwood* follows the character Robin Vote

through a series of erotic entanglements. She marries Felix Volkbein, an Austrian Jew who has fabricated a Christian aristocratic heritage for himself. She has a son with Felix before leaving him for Nora Flood, a bohemian circus promoter. The focus of the book is the subsequent breakdown of their affair, which sees Nora grow increasingly obsessed with the drunken Robin and with her new lover, Jenny Petherbridge. Dr. Matthew O'Connor provides a long and verbose commentary on these relations. This tangled web of personal obsessions is set in between-the-wars Europe and America in an atmosphere of spiraling anti-Semitism, rising fascism, and an underground bohemian expatriate community peopled by outsiders: Jews, transvestites, lesbians, First World War veterans, circus freaks, and disinherited aristocrats.

Although drawn partially from Barnes's years in Paris, and her protracted, painful relationship with the artist Thelma Wood in particular, *Nightwood* moves beyond autobiography. Critics have argued about who constitutes *Nightwood*'s protagonist, some suggesting that it is Nora Flood, others that it is Robin Vote, Felix Volkbein, or Matthew O'Connor, the transvestite mock gynaecologist whose monologues form the backbone of the book. Barnes once remarked that "there is more surface to a shattered object than a whole," and this applies to her novel, which has no center, being a series of fractured edges instead. Following its publication, *Nightwood* attracted much favorable attention. Graham Greene saw it as a great religious work and Dylan Thomas admired its language and style (Broe 1991: 196, 199). Between the 1940s and the early 1980s, however, the text languished at the very edges of critical studies. It gained the status of a cult classic and was trumpeted by those who were themselves on the edge of the literary canon. It influenced Jean Genet and Monique Wittig, for example, and William Burroughs stated: "I consider it one of the great books of the twentieth century" (Broe 1991: 206). Since the 1980s, studies of her writings have mushroomed, and *Nightwood* is now rightly regarded as a seminal twentieth-century text.

In his 1937 review of *Nightwood* for the *New York Times*, Alfred Kazin discussed the book in relation to Virginia Woolf's attacks on "realism in the novel," suggesting that "Miss Barnes is not even concerned with the immediate in time that fascinated the stream-of-consciousness novelists" (Broe 1991: 197). One of the earliest critics to recognize the importance of *Nightwood*, Joseph Frank, drew similar comparisons between Barnes and her literary contemporaries. In *The Widening Gyre*, Frank proposed a distinction between modern writers who "transfer verisimilitude to internal rather than external phenomena," and Barnes's writing, which "abandons any pretensions to this kind of verisimilitude" (Frank 1963: 28). Frank argued that the structure of *Nightwood* is spatial rather than temporal. A reader who approaches this novel with expectations of linear narrative and character development will find themselves bewildered. In a moment of textual self-consciousness, O'Connor says, "I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it" (Barnes 1995: 141). "The eight chapters of *Nightwood* are like searchlights," says Frank, "probing the darkness each from a different direction yet ultimately illuminating the same entanglement" (Frank 1963: 31). The novel can be read independently of any time sequence, as a series of vibrant

tableaux. In a mirroring of the structure of the text, the comments which follow are a series of searchlights, designed to illuminate particular features of the book.

In an article on the Irish writer J. M. Synge, Barnes wrote: "criticism is so often nothing more than the eye garrulously denouncing the shape of the peephole that gives access to hidden treasure" (Gallagher 2001: 279). Barnes may have denounced criticism as voyeuristic (and hypocritical) but in reading *Nightwood* she forces the reader to become a voyeur. Live spectacle is a key feature of the text, and the circus, in particular, appears throughout the story. Most of the characters visit the circus: Felix socializes with circus folk, Nora Flood works as a circus promoter, and it is at the circus that she and Robin first meet. Circus freaks, such as the tattooed man, the paralyzed man, the bearded lady, and the human torso, are described in great detail as emblems for the main characters in the story.

For Jane Marcus, the centrality of the circus marks the carnivalesque liberatory politics of the novel. She reads it as a "prose-poem of abjection," and as a "book of communal resistances of underworld outsiders to domination" (Broe 1991: 231). It is true that in *Nightwood* the socially abjected take center stage, "centring the marginal," but, as with all Barnes's work, the politics of this project are ambiguous. The critical reassessment of Barnes's oeuvre was initially underpinned by a view of her work as liberatory. However, recent scholarship has shown that her writing is often politically problematic. Any reader must ask themselves whether in describing the private pain of a variety of characters in the European underworld, Barnes is voicing victimization; or whether, far from flouting "bourgeois concepts of normality by privileging the private pain of a panoply of 'monsters'" (Broe 1991: 232), *Nightwood* flattens out the differences between the marginalized by grouping transsexuals, lesbians, circus freaks, war veterans, and Jews together. Mairead Hanrahan addresses this issue in reference to the characterization of Felix Volkbein in particular, and she asks whether Barnes reifies the anti-Semitic stereotypes she might otherwise have rejected (Hanrahan 2001).

Through the figure of the circus freak, *Nightwood* explores the idea that the identities of outsiders are fabricated by the center. In his famous preface to the Faber edition of *Nightwood*, T. S. Eliot warned the reader that "to regard this group of people as a horrid sideshow of freaks is not only to miss the point, but to . . . harden our hearts in an inveterate sin of pride" (Barnes 1955: 6). But it is Eliot who fails to realize that the identities of the socially abjected are perspectives afforded from the center. This is particularly pertinent to Barnes's use of the language of sexology. O'Connor describes Robin as an "invert": "what is this love we have for the invert?" he asks (194). These satirical descriptions refer to the idea of homosexuality as "inversion," popular at this time (Parsons 2003: 68–70). We know that Barnes rejected such categorization, asserting of herself, "I am not a lesbian. I just loved Thelma," and her 1928 *Ladies Almanack* is a satire of sexology. Radclyffe Hall, an adherent to the notion of inversion, is roundly satirized in the book in the character of "Tilly Tweed-in-Blood" (Broe 1991: 156–93). However, Barnes uses the iconography of inversion in her descriptions of character. For example, in the opening scene

of *Nightwood* she recounts Felix's birth and the pregnant Hedvig is described in her hour of delivery as a woman of great "strength and military beauty." Once she had "thrust him from her," "with the gross splendour of a general saluting the flag, she named him Felix" (Barnes 1995: 11). In contrast, Guido, Felix's father, is described with "his stomach protruding slightly in an upward jutting slope that brought into prominence the buttons of his waistcoat and trousers, marking the exact centre of his body with the obstetric line seen on fruits" (12). *Nightwood* satirizes the idea of inversion; as Diane Chisholm suggests, Barnes "flaunts a queer scepticism" (Parsons 2003: 71), but at the same time the novel's imagery is drawn from the same framework. Of Robin, the doctor remarks, "she was always holding God's bag of tricks upside down" (Barnes 1995: 162), and this is true of Barnes's approach to stereotypes: she turns them on their head but she will not let go of them altogether.

The 1930s saw the gradual marginalization of forms of live entertainment such as the circus, the progressive illegalization of live "freak shows," and the increasing cultural dominance of cinema. Laura Winkiel and Jean Gallagher argue that Barnes is nostalgic for live performance and the audience-performer interaction which the circus entails (Gallagher 2001; Winkiel 1997). In an era when live performance was being eclipsed by cinema, Barnes chooses to structure her story through circus as a means of recollecting a cultural experience where spectators could participate in the show; in contrast to the cinema, where the audience is expected to be subdued, quiet, and overwhelmed. Live forms of entertainment open up the possibility of the participant observer who, unlike the cinema spectator, can interact with the spectacle.

Barnes stages her story in the circus, with its accompanying freak shows, in order to make difference visible. Robin Blyn and others have read this in the context of the rise of fascism and as a prophecy of Hitler's attempt to eradicate the marginal altogether (Blyn 2000). The book has been seen as "an attack on the doctors and politicians who defined deviance and set up a world view of . . . normal and abnormal" (Broe 1991: 249). *Nightwood* is nostalgic for the freak show as a space in which difference is made visible, a heterogeneous space "that can accommodate the unusual, the marginal" (Winkiel 1997: 20). Matthew O'Connor describes Robin Vote obliquely as "like the paralysed man in Coney Island . . . who had to lie on his back in a box, . . . and suspended over him where he could never take his eyes off, a sky-blue mounted mirror, for he wanted to enjoy his own 'difference'" (Barnes 1995: 207). Barnes too enjoys the "differences" she describes but she, like the paralyzed man, is similarly unable to fix their meaning. This is typical of Barnes's work, which consistently places readers in the position of (reluctant) voyeurs who must decide for themselves the meaning of the spectacles put before them. The live-entertainment setting attempts to make space for a participant reader who "can engage in varied and contradictory interpretations" of these troubling spectacles (Winkiel 1997: 20).

O'Connor's long soliloquies may be understood as external monologues because, unlike many of her literary contemporaries, Barnes does not attempt to depict "the life of the mind" and believable psychological interiors. In an important piece of early journalism, "When the Puppets Come to Town" (1917), Barnes recounted a

visit to a puppet show, and in her descriptions of the marionettes, she references Kleist's "The Puppet Theatre," and reveals her fascination with performing objects. She writes of the puppets that "they are filled with a . . . charming angular fidelity to moments that we should have slurred by our roundness of perception and our more flexible motions." The characters in *Nightwood* can be understood as sophisticated marionettes, their movements awkward but poignant. Characters are called "living statues" (Barnes 1995: 35) and "wax works" (223) and, most memorably, the trapeze artist is described as having "a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, red and yellow . . . – one somehow felt that they ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies. . . . [T]he span of the tightly-stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll" (27–8). The mannequin-like status of the characters further supports Frank's reading of *Nightwood* as a series of tableaux.

Jane Marcus reads the novel as an explicit engagement with psychoanalysis, suggesting that O'Connor is a double-sided satire of both the Freudian psychoanalyst and the Catholic priest, two types of authority which elicit confessions from their patients/penitents (Broe 1991). The book satirizes the Freudian concept of female hysteria and the medicalization of homosexuality: "*Nightwood's* project is to expose the collaboration of Freudian psychoanalysis with fascism in its desire to 'civilise' and make 'normal' the sexually aberrant misfit" (Broe 1991: 233). Deborah Parsons suggests that for Barnes, psychoanalysis is "one of a history of reductive disciplinary systems of identity" (Parsons 2003: 68). For Laura Veltman, in contrast, O'Connor is a parody of Protestant myths about the subversive influence of the Catholic confessional (Veltman 2003). Critics differ in their interpretations of the satirical target of *Nightwood* but all agree that the character of O'Connor pillories the authority of the Church and the medical establishment. In a rare moment of articulacy, Robin says to the doctor, "you talk all the time and you never know anything" (Barnes 1995: 112).

Nightwood is characterized by an excess of language and style. Sarah Henstra argues that the overabundance of language is part of the book's satirical depiction of the gap between what is said and what is meant (Henstra 2000). The Duchess of Broadback, a trapeze artist, friend of Felix's and fellow mock aristocrat, says to O'Connor, "are you . . . saying what you mean, or are you just talking?" (Barnes 1995: 34). *Nightwood* is riven with mixed metaphors, jarring images and sudden shifts in register. As Catherine Whitley puts it, Barnes "constructs sentences of multiple, discontinuous images which seem to digress from rather than to clarify a point" (2000: 89). The prose style of the book makes it seem as though "the text competes with and subverts itself" (2000: 91). This makes for difficult reading, as Barnes attempts to overwhelm the reader, so we become as drunken and disoriented as Robin Vote.

Barnes's writing draws on an eclectic range of intertextual references, from Elizabethan poetry to early film noir. *Nightwood* is peppered with references to fairy tales (Red Riding Hood, princes and princesses, Punch and Judy), but it is Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, itself a satire of knowledge and authority, which

most clearly underlies the text. Barnes often references Carroll's stories in her writing. Throughout *Nightwood*, as in *Alice*, characters have absurd conversations, where nobody knows what is being discussed, and people speak in riddles. The doctor spouts opaque aphorisms like "in time everything is possible and in space everything forgivable" (Barnes 1995: 181), and "death is intimacy walking backward" (183). As in *Alice*, nobody listens. Characters speak as though to an audience, but not to each other. We are consistently told that Jenny does not listen to Robin, Nora never listens to anyone except Robin, who never listens to her, and the doctor heeds nobody and never answers anyone's questions. "Don't get restless – I'm coming back to the point," says the doctor (144), but he never does. Like the peculiar "wonderland," or the strange world "through the looking-glass," where everything is in reverse, *Nightwood* depicts an underground underworld inhabited by people who are incomprehensible to those who have not been down the rabbit-hole or climbed through the mirror.

Like *Wonderland*, *Nightwood* contains many troubling miniaturizations. The opening chapter describes Hedvig, Felix's mother, as having "some condensed power of the hand . . . as sinister in its reduction as a doll's house" (15). Like a doll's house, the novel is sinister and delicate. The world is suddenly miniaturized and Nora transformed into a giant as though, like Alice, she had obeyed the command to "eat me" on a jar of cookies: "The world and its history were to Nora like a ship in a bottle; she herself was outside and unidentified" (82). Nora's obsession reduces Robin so that "in Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, . . . and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood" (86). These miniaturizations abound in *Nightwood*. Jenny Petherbridge is described as having "a fancy for tiny ivory and jade elephants; . . . she left a trail of tiny elephants wherever she went" (99). Though a slim novel (some have even called it a novella) *Nightwood* is, like Jenny's jade elephants, a miniaturization of a "gargantuan" text (Parsons 2003: 60). The grand human struggles depicted in the book are condensed and distilled. The density of *Nightwood* means that it is a deceptively "bigger" book than its 239 pages suggest.

Critics have begun to look more closely at the significance of cities in *Nightwood* (Parsons 2000). Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacas's 1925 essay, "Naples," can be used as a tool for decoding the novel's urban space as well as its wider meanings. In "Naples," Benjamin and Lacas describe the Italian city as being characterized by a law of porosity: "Porosity is the inexhaustible law of life in this city, reappearing everywhere" (Benjamin and Lacas 1997: 417). The idea of porosity suggests an absence of boundaries and divisions between phenomena, a permeation of one thing by another, a merger of, for example, old and new, public and private, sacred and profane, and this describes *Nightwood*. As Jane Marcus puts it, "*Nightwood* is about merging, dissolution and above all hybridization – mixed metaphors, mixed genres, mixed levels of discourse from the lofty to the low, mixed 'languages' from medical practice, circus argot, church dogma, and homosexual slang" (Broe 1991: 223).

Nightwood crisscrosses seamlessly the cities of Europe and America. The book opens in Vienna, moves swiftly on to Paris, then New York, back to Paris via

Vienna, and finally to America again. The reader is often hard pressed to work out in which city scenes are set. To complicate matters further, characters, like early Situationists, recount memories from one city while making their way through another. O'Connor's elongated anecdotes take us briefly to Naples and London, Nora and Robin travel "from Munich, Vienna and Budapest into Paris" (Barnes 1995: 84), and Nora tells us, "I left Paris. I went through the streets of Marseilles, the waterfront of Tangiers, the *basso porto* of Naples" (222). This urban meandering mirrors the somnambulant wanderings of Robin Vote, who takes "trains into different parts of the country, wander[s] without design" (234). The text is built out of scraps of European and American cities to produce an alternative, imaginary urban landscape. This reflects Barnes's attempt to produce an alternative night-world of outsiders who have constructed their own geographies, a "fluid space of an itinerant and liminal subculture" (Parsons 2003: 70).

Benjamin and Lacas go on to describe the social life of the city, saying that, "dispersed, porous, and commingled is private life. . . . [E]ach private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life" (Benjamin and Lacas 1997: 419). They suggest that the "true laboratories of this great process of intermingling are the cafés" (421). In *Nightwood* there is no distinction between characters' internal lives and their social exteriors, and cafés constitute the social space where they spew forth external monologues. O'Connor takes Felix to the *Café de la Mairie de VI* where they recount (to themselves as much as to one another) curious anecdotes which have no punchlines or obvious significance. In a Parisian café, O'Connor speaks to a ramshackle collection of late-night drinkers, including "an ex-priest," and he says "I wouldn't be telling you about it if I weren't talking to myself" (Barnes 1995: 228). Speaking to himself and in public are one and the same. Victor Burgin suggests that one of the main features of modernist space sees "porosity compet[ing] with a dialectic of interior/exterior" (Burgin 1995: 145), and this is true of *Nightwood*, in which brief citings of what appear to be private psychological interiors, such as dreams (93–5), are rapidly transformed into external, public performances.

In "Naples," it is "impossible to distinguish the mass of the church from that of the neighbouring secular buildings" (Benjamin and Lacas 1997: 416). Similarly, in *Nightwood* the sacred and the secular blur together. O'Connor visits numerous churches to contemplate the peculiar events taking place in *this* world, and in the final chapter, Nora and Robin meet in a chapel, where Robin appears to make ready to perform an ungodly act of bestiality with Nora's dog. Religious imagery is used in similes that describe obscene acts, bodily functions, same-sex love and O'Connor's cross-dressing. Barnes revels in blasphemous profanities, but she also blurs the distinction between the sacred and the profane.

Benjamin and Lacas observe that, "high domes are often to be seen only from a few places, and even then it is not easy to find one's way to them" (Benjamin and Lacas 1997: 416). Prominent architectural features appear in the distance but as they try to find their way to them through the winding streets of Naples, the features move. This curious effect occurs in the process of interpreting *Nightwood*, where prominent

features shift as you approach them to take a closer look. Moreover, those prominent features prove especially difficult to read. “Naples,” in fact, offers a unique image of interpretive uncertainty: “one can scarcely discern where building is still in progress and where dilapidation has already set in. For nothing is concluded” (Benjamin and Lacas 1997: 416). This is an apposite image of *Nightwood*, in which everything, its politics especially, remains unconcluded. As Matthew O’Connor puts it, “what an autopsy I’ll make, with everything all which ways in my bowels.”

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Samuel Beckett: *Murphy*

H. Porter Abbott

Stretch Modernism

The work of Samuel Beckett is a challenge to any and all labeling. Written over a period of sixty years (1929–89), his oeuvre stretches well past the conventional dates for modernism. He has been called a modernist, a late modernist, the last modernist, and the first postmodernist. One problem is that Beckett is a moving target. Every text he produced was a new departure, though in this he is very like those modernists (Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, Stein, Picasso, Malevich, Schoenberg, Stravinsky) whose serial reinvention of forms stands in marked contrast to the more leisurely evolution of nineteenth-century oeuvres. Within Beckett's productive diversity, the early novel *Murphy* (written in London in 1935–6) is, as a novel, both conventional and outrageous. And whether or not one grants any meaningful distinction between modernism and postmodernism, *Murphy* is also stretched between an already well-entrenched modernism and a future that was at the time not clear at all.

Unlike the work of Beckett's maturity, which often left its first reviewers struggling to find some familiar point of purchase, *Murphy* when it appeared was recognizable as both a novel and a parody, a "burlesque of the sophisticated kind" (Graver and Federman 1979: 46). Though the reviews were mixed, the novelist Kate O'Brien could rejoice in its "glorious wild story, . . . starred all over with a milky way of skeptic truths" (49). *Murphy* is in fact two stories, orchestrated with exactitude and thematically connected. The first of these, involving most of the book's "puppets," is a satire on the folly of love's pursuit. The second, involving Murphy, is a rendering of the quest for peace of mind doomed by the needs of the body. Both themes are ancient, but here rendered in interlocked stories that conclude at the same time, the key to the story of love's pursuit (Murphy) being found only with Murphy's death. Thematically, the story of love's pursuit is the obverse of Murphy's. It features the world of desire in which the imaginary is confused with the real and the consummation of desire is invariably a disappointment. In this world, "love requited is . . . a

short circuit" (6), an interruption of "the glare of flight and pursuit" (29). Murphy, by contrast, enjoys a love for Celia that is fully requited. His dilemma is a conflict not of desire but of need: the needs of the body (sex and survival) and the need of the mind to escape those needs by traveling through inner zones of increasing freedom until he is "not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom" (112). As his story confirms, such freedom in any prolonged state is incompatible with the needs of the body except through insanity, a condition beyond Murphy's capability.

In its travesty of the carefully plotted novel, *Murphy* expresses a modernist dissatisfaction with the constraints of traditional linear narrative. But where modernists chose to fragment the story (Faulkner) or displace the focus to molecular events of no traditional interest (Woolf) or expand the discourse at the expense of action (Conrad), Beckett tightened the screws on the conventional business of a "well-made plot" to an unrivaled degree. And though *Murphy* in this regard is still genuinely representational in its attack on certain absurdities of the human condition, it also lampoons the way it represents, mocking in its own characters and design what Beckett considered the mechanical, "clockwork" inadequacy of popular nineteenth-century novels by authors like Balzac. In this way, *Murphy* is modernist by being excruciatingly conventional. Beckett was only rarely to engage in such zealous plotting in his later work, but there are two other aspects of this novel that not only stretch modernist practice but also anticipate defining traits of his later work.

Abuse of the Reader

Walter Ong famously argued that the passage from oral to written discourse and the consequent separation of sender from receiver required the construction of the reader in the written text. In oral delivery, "the real audience controls the narrator's behavior immediately" (Ong 2002: 417); in written delivery, there is no audience until the text is read, so writers have to fashion their readers by rhetorical means, indicating in sometimes very subtle ways what their readers' sensibilities should be and how they should respond to one passage or another. After print allowed the proliferation of texts in the Renaissance, Ong argued, it still required centuries to refine this rhetorical equipment: from a general audience sharing the necessary cultural information that Sydney assumed, through the implied eighteenth-century "coffeehouse habitués" of Addison and Steele, to the quite small inner circle of readers implied in modernist texts (Ong 2002: 414–15). In an era that had for the first time achieved almost total literacy in Britain and a market to satisfy it, the rhetorical discrimination of audiences was something that modernists thrived on. James Joyce, at nineteen, was already preparing to write for a necessarily restricted audience: "If an artist courts the favour of the multitude he cannot escape the contagion of its fetichism and deliberate self-deception, and if he joins in a popular movement he does so at his own risk" (Joyce 1964: 70–1). Ong notes how, in a modernist as particular about his audience as Ernest Hemingway, the rhetorical indicators of the in-group can be as nuanced as

definite articles and demonstrative pronouns. Modernist writers also created an art for the few by openly scorning within that art the lazy readers and “*hypocrites lecteurs*” from the culture of the many.

In this context, Beckett is an intriguing figure. In his twenties he had already breathed deeply of the rarefied air of high modernist coterie consciousness, and in his first published words at the age of twenty-three, written in advocacy of Joyce’s *Work in Progress* (later *Finnegans Wake*), he turned at one point to address the legions of Joyce’s readers for whom Joyce had not written and who were incapable of ever entering the inner circle of those few for whom he had:

And if you don’t understand it, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other. This rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense is made possible by a continuous process of intellectual salivation. (Beckett 1929: 13)

What is interesting in Beckett’s case is the sheer energy of his attack on the reader, particularly as it appears in his first three books of fiction, all written in his twenties: “If we can rely on you (and you) to suspend hostilities for the space of just one paragraph (one in a bookful, is that exorbitant?) and abdicate your right to be entertained . . .” (Beckett 1992: 39). In *Murphy*, the abuse is so insistent, one wonders at times who, if anyone, Beckett is writing for at this stage of his career. Murphy himself is a “strict non-reader,” while the “gentle reader” of nineteenth-century fiction has devolved to the “gentle skimmer” of *Murphy*: “Try it sometime, gentle skimmer” (Beckett 1957: 84). Each attack on a potential reader in *Murphy* can be viewed as another separate exclusion from the small circle of those for whom the implied author does write. If his implied readers do not skim, for example, they must also avoid pretensions to culture: “The above passage is carefully calculated to deprave the cultivated reader” (118).

But are there, then, any good readers for this novel that reads for the most part like a chore imposed on a narrator who would rather be doing anything than writing for any audience, however select? “The sun shone,” he begins, “having no alternative, on the nothing new.” Of all the possible worlds to write about, the actual world of this novel is a boring world. Boring, yet physically inescapable:

Murphy sat out of it, as though he were free, in a mew in West Brompton. Here for what might have been six months he had eaten, drunk, slept, and put his clothes on and off, in a medium-sized cage of north-western aspect commanding an unbroken view of medium-sized cages of south-eastern aspect. Soon he would have to make other arrangements, for the mew had been condemned. Soon he would have to buckle to and start eating, drinking, sleeping, and putting his clothes on and off in quite alien surroundings. (Beckett 1957: 1)

This world is “a colossal fiasco” that can be escaped only in the recesses of the quarantined mind, and only some minds at that (selected madmen, *Murphy*). The

best place in such a mind – “so pleasant that pleasant was not the word” – is a “flux of forms” beyond all possibility of narrative representation (112–13). Thus even trying to describe this more than pleasant “zone” of Murphy’s mind is a “painful duty” (113). As for all the rest – that is, the narratable business of this text – the narrator can barely contain his contempt and is impatient to be done. Accounts of dialogue are given “expurgated, accelerated, improved and reduced” (12). We are assured that a passage “will not take many moments” (87). As the end approaches, “all things hobble together for the only possible” (227) and then again, laboring the point, “So all things limp together for the only possible” (235).

For the real Samuel Beckett, as John Pilling has shown in some detail, the writing of *Murphy* was worse than painful. “Poor stuff,” he wrote McGreevy as he was setting out, “and I have no interest in it,” and later: “There is little excitement attached to it, each chapter loses its colour and interest as soon as the next is begun” (Pilling 1997: 127). Later still, he writes that “all sense and impulse seem to have collapsed,” and toward the end: “Murphy goes from bad to worse” (128). When he had finished, he wrote McGreevy, “I am very tired, of it and of words generally” (129). It is as if Beckett’s disdain for his task were replicated first in Murphy’s disdain for the world in which he is sentenced to live and second in the narrator’s disdain for the task of rendering that world. As Murphy is the unmoved mover of all action in this novel, getting rid of him is an imperative, without which the clockwork mechanism of this novel, like the sun, threatens to go on forever. There has been some small controversy over whether Murphy’s death is entirely an accident. The unlikely possibility of suicide is raised within the text. Rubin Rabinovitz suggests that he may have been murdered by Cooper (Rabinovitz 1984: 113–18). C. J. Ackerley proposes the even more “unconscionable” hypothesis that he was murdered by the poet Ticklepenny (Ackerley 1997–8: 205–6). But the need to get rid of Murphy, literally to blow him up, is so patently that of the implied author that the narrator himself is little inclined to hide the gratuitous nature of the jimmy-rigged gas heater that is laboriously installed to this end. “It seems strange that neither of them thought of an oil-stove. . . . [A]ll the trouble with tubes and wires would have been avoided” (Beckett 1957: 164). In this reading, then, it wasn’t Cooper or Ticklepenny or Murphy, or even chance, but the narrator who did it, acting on orders from above.

Murphy is blown up between the twelfth and thirteenth chapters. In the thirteenth his remains are “freely distributed over the floor” of a saloon and by morning “swept away with the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit” (275). The fourteenth, and last, chapter is a coda showing us a life that, as Pilling rightly observes, “has no need of a Murphy . . . to bring it into being” (Pilling 1997: 145). Set at the Round Pond, with Celia and her uncle, Mr. Kelly, flying his kite, the chapter ends with the repeated refrain of the Rangers calling “*All out. All out.*” The device recalls T. S. Eliot’s modernist use of the barman’s closing-time refrain “HURRY UP PLEASE, IT’S TIME” in the second section of *The Waste Land*. Yet the difference of effect is immense. The moral and spiritual urgency that Eliot packs into his phrase are countered by the exhaustion in Beckett’s. To quote Pilling once more, “The

characters are 'All out' like a cricket team, or like a very tired novelist" (145). "All out" are the last words of *Murphy*, telling what few readers remain that it is high time to leave this book.

Could the audience of implied readers actually vanish altogether in an act of complete authorial indifference to any and all audiences? In Hemingway's late memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, the poet Evan Shipman is described as "a very fine poet . . . who truly did not care if his poems were ever published" (Hemingway 1964: 146). Shipman is one of the few reader/writers who remain unscathed among the many well-known historical characters that Hemingway skewers in *A Moveable Feast*. In this context, Shipman embodies one modernist ideal: the writer so in love with his craft as to be indifferent to his audience. Critics have seen Hemingway's memoir as itself an excursion back to the time when Hemingway himself was an author without readers – a time before the Fall, when he could write altogether unconstrained by the audiences that come with fame.

Yet *Murphy* is a somewhat different case, and the reading I have proposed for it is clearly an absurdity since it is pegged to an implied author who openly excludes all readers, including myself, from the category of implied reader. To put this another way, the elect for whom the implied author writes his novel are those insufficiently deluded to waste their time on it. A further problem with this reading is that *Murphy* is a work of extraordinary wit, of intricacy of design and verbal brilliance, and many are the readers who not only have enjoyed it but laughed out loud as they read. And finally, there has been a rich commentary on *Murphy* from as far back as the early books of Hugh Kenner (1961) and Ruby Cohn (1962). And if there is biographical evidence that Beckett was, at the least, of two minds about his novel, there is indisputable evidence that he was keen to publish it, that is, to have readers, and he persisted in sending it to numerous publishers until finally he gained an acceptance one and a half years after finishing it. Moreover, he was delighted "when McGreevy found the characters 'lovable'", even though he was constrained to respond, writing no doubt from his heart: "I find the characters so hateful myself" (Pilling: 129).

One could argue, then, that the author of *Murphy* was at one and the same time a committed writer, keen to be recognized, and keenly aware of his own emergent gifts, yet as keenly aware that he was writing, however brilliantly, in a medley of alien voices and in a literary form that belonged to others. In this view, the novel was an exhausted genre and Beckett in his twenties an exhausted author still laboring within its confines. By Beckett's own account, he did not find his own voice or write the things he truly felt until ten years after the completion of *Murphy* (Knowlson 1996: 318–20). As James Knowlson cautions, it is easy to overestimate the abruptness of the "revelation" that Beckett experienced in his mother's room in the spring of 1946, yet the change over the preceding decade was immense, and the art that emerged did so in a distant interior place, alive with contradiction and a wit that maintained its dry, nuanced quality even in the most extreme grotesquerie. Audiences continued to be a problem for this late, late modernist, but now because they were all too many and often aggravatingly attentive. By 1958, he could look back nostalgically in

much the same way Hemingway did in 1961 to the period when he was known only to a few friends: "I feel I'm getting more and more entangled in professionalism and self-exploitation and that it would be really better to stop altogether . . . than to go on with that. What I need is to get back to the state of mind in 1945 when it was write or perish. But I suppose no chance of that" (Gontarski 1996: xvi). Two years earlier, writing to the director Alan Schneider after the fiasco of *Godot's* American premier and referring to his own advisory work on a London production, he said that "if they did it my way, they would empty the theatre" (Harmon 1998: 8). His words were not entirely a joke, nor meant entirely as a consolation.

Abuse of the Language

A year after Beckett wrote McGreevy that he was "tired . . . of words generally," he wrote his German friend Axel Kaun of his dissatisfaction with language in its entirety and the need to use and abuse it in radically new ways: "As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute" (Beckett 1983: 172). Yet what most impressed *Murphy's* first readers and continues to impress is its insistence on calling attention to itself as a fabrication of words: what Dylan Thomas in an early review complained of as "its general verbosity" (Graver and Federman 1979: 47). *Murphy* above all else is a supremely rich barrage of tropes, allusions, voices, puns, and the kind of seven-dollar words that would send any reader to the dictionary: "Apmonia," "tetrakyt," "Bollitoes," "triorchous," "strangury," "prosodoturfy," "nosonomy," "ectropion." This displacement of a novel's center of gravity to the words of which it is made is in itself modernist. Yet there is more than one way of reading this language as language and the critical response has worked industriously in this regard as well to stretch this novel between past and future.

Auden once said that poetry is the only art you cannot half read. Understood necessarily at a molecular level, poetry's verbal concentration and economy require work. Much of modernist poetry was an insistence on Auden's insight. Eliot and Pound required a learned readership, steeped in literary tradition and willing to read closely. This attitude migrated to the novel, and one finds the same demand for readerly attention in novels by authors as diverse as Joyce, Djuna Barnes, and David Jones. To this degree there was already an audience prepared for a novel by Joyce's young associate. What was to Thomas the pyrotechnics of a show-off was for Kate O'Brien a book that warranted the kind of lifetime investment that Joyce expected of the readers of *Finnegans Wake*. Once read, in her words, it is a book "to be read again, very slowly, with as many pauses as may be to pursue the allusions and decorations which may have had to be guessed at in first flight. . . . I shall read it again and again before I die" (Graver and Federman 1979: 49). O'Brien's pleasure in the verbal texture of this novel has been shared by numerous readers ever since. It reached a kind of apotheosis sixty years later with *Demented Particulars*, C. J. Ackerley's

indispensable annotation of the entire novel. As Ackerley's scholarship makes abundantly clear, Beckett wrote very much in the manner of Joyce, Eliot, and Pound, in so far as he relied in almost every line on extensive reading in "the European and classical traditions, literary and philosophical" (Ackerley 1997–8: xi).

But as Ackerley also notes, Beckett's verbal play extends laterally, rather than vertically: "*Murphy* is a novel of surfaces rather than symbols" (xxv). And though there are a few moments of emotional depth in the representation of Celia, the prostitute Murphy abandons, Beckett's almost complete confinement of attention to the verbal surface of this novel is again a stretch from modernist roots. S. E. Gontarski, in his preface to the annotated *Murphy*, described the work of Beckett's twenties as "assemblages, intertextual layerings, palimpsests, the effect of which is to produce (if not reproduce) multiplicity of meanings in a manner that will come to be thought . . . as Postmodern" (Ackerley 1997–8: viii). Proponents of a postmodern, poststructuralist Beckett, of whom there were a sizeable number publishing books in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, have occasionally been moved to reach back into Beckett's early work, drawing it into the ambit of Beckett's post-war fiction. Beckett himself seems to invite this in his continuing internal references to the name "Murphy." Daniel Katz found in Murphy's name itself an instance of Beckett's lifetime exploration of "the problematics of the effects of the signature, naming and names" (Katz 1999: 41). Steven Connor found in *Murphy*'s abundance of repetition a demonstration of "the indigence of language" (Connor 1988: 23), its instability and endless supplementarity. Richard Begam, in a bold stroke, included both *Murphy* and Beckett's next novel *Watt* (written 1942–4) with the Trilogy in what he called Beckett's "Pentalogy." But in tracing the development of Beckett's "lapsarian epistemology," Begam none the less assumes in *Murphy* a conventional representational intent by which we can trace the drama of Murphy's failed quest and the "arbitrary and mechanistic world" in which, to his sorrow, he finds himself (Begam 1996: 49).

"In the beginning was the pun," thinks Murphy, in a travesty of the opening words of the Gospel of St. John. Murphy's thought certainly does seem premonitory, since the world of Beckett's post-war fiction is a world in which meanings continually overlap, slipping and sliding over a surface with no apparent foundation. The duplicity of the pun suggests an originating duplicity out of which came a baffling multiplicity of imperfect worlds. Yet in context, Murphy's stress is on the pun as the lowest form of joke. It is a comment on the ill fit of this world to human desire: "What but an imperfect sense of humour could have made such a mess of chaos" (65). There are 125 puns in *Murphy* (Ackerley 1997–8: 245–6), some of them very bad indeed, including Murphy's favorite: "Why did the barmaid champagne? . . . Because the stout porter bitter." In what follows this pun, Beckett violates the rule that you cannot explain a joke in order to enter Murphy's appreciative mind: "On the one hand the barmaid, fresh from the country. . . . On the other the stout porter, mounting the footrail, his canines gleaming behind a pad of frothy whisker" (140). The point to stress is that this is the imagined world, a world like the first zone of Murphy's mind, over which he has some control. It is a world where things do slip

and slide in a play of endless combination. But the world in which Murphy must live his days is the world of “nothing new,” presided over by the mechanical laws of supply and demand and *quid pro quo*.

The volatility of *Murphy* is a clear sign of an author still finding his way. In this he had much company among modernists. Arguably, Beckett was always still finding his way, but what is striking in the case of *Murphy* are the intimations of aesthetic suicide in his attacks on the two fronts I have addressed in this chapter. For without his reader and his medium, it is hard to see any future for his craft. At the same time, *Murphy* is grounded in a traditional representational poetics that it shared with many other modernist texts, commenting on the world in ways that Beckett was to let go with thoroughgoing abandon in his next work of fiction, *Watt*. Yet *Murphy* is none the less a remarkable achievement in its own right, stamped with its author’s originality, and, as Kate O’Brien recommended long ago, well worth reading again and again.

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Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*

Brian W. Shaffer

A century after its emergence, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (serial publication 1899; book publication 1902) remains a staple text of literary modernism. Conrad wrote other fictions that have come to be regarded as major achievements – *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), and "The Secret Sharer" (1912) – but it is *Heart of Darkness* that remains his most studied, taught, and debated work, and which for the past quarter-century has stood at the center of various controversies over the nature of the modernist literary canon and the relation between politics and literature. This is probably because Conrad's novella, as Cedric Watts observes, is at once "oblique autobiography, traveller's yarn, adventure story, psychological odyssey, political satire, symbolic prose-poem, black comedy, spiritual melodrama, and skeptical meditation" (Watts 1996: 45). Whatever the reason for its fame, there is no doubt that it has left an indelible imprint on numerous works of twentieth-century literature and popular culture, from Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* in the 1920s, to V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* in the 1970s and 1980s (for more on the novella's impact on popular culture, see Dryden 2002), and that it continues to make a lasting impression on readers today.

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) was born Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski in a Poland occupied and partitioned by Prussian, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian powers. His mother and father (the latter of whom was exiled by the Russian authorities for Polish nationalist activities) were dead by the time that Conrad, an only child, was twelve years old, and he was raised by a maternal uncle. By the age of fifteen Conrad's dream of working in the merchant marine took shape, and between 1875 and 1894 Conrad worked on French and then on English merchant ships. We may credit this sailing experience with leading Conrad to a career as a novelist. Not only was it aboard these sailing vessels that he toured so many parts of the world – Africa, Europe, and the Near and Far East of Asia – that would later become the locales of his fictions, but it was also on these French and English ships that Conrad gained

fluency and began to write in the French and English languages (rather than in his native Polish). Conrad repeatedly hinted that he did not choose English so much as it chose him: if it were not for the “sheer appeal of the [English] language, my quickly awakened love for its prose cadences, a subtle and unforeseen accord of my emotional nature with its genius,” he wrote Hugh Walpole in 1918, he might never have “written a line for print” (Zabel 1947: 113).

It is perhaps easier to understand why Conrad chose to settle in Britain, where he became a naturalized citizen in 1886. As Morton Zabel puts it, England, then in her era of “great political and economic ascendancy, represented to Conrad the stability and security – ‘the sanity and method’ – of Western life, and her merchant marine, then supreme in prestige, confirmed her appeal to a child of lost causes, a partitioned homeland, and a family disintegrated by sacrifices and heroic martyrdom” (Zabel 1947: 113). Conrad took his English name in the year of the publication of his first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), married an Englishwoman a year later, and lived in England for the remaining three decades of his life. This is not to suggest that Conrad's attitude toward Britain, which at this time controlled approximately one-quarter of the earth's surface, was exclusively adulatory or worshipful. Indeed, Conrad never lost a sense of his foreignness; and this difference of background afforded him a perspective from which to observe and judge the British Empire that was unavailable to many Britons. This background also made Conrad the most worldly, least provincially English, of all English novelists, and it undoubtedly contributed to his complex attitude toward Britain – a fondness for its democratic institutions, yet a skepticism regarding its colonial agenda – that is registered in Conrad's enigmatic *fin-de-siècle* novella.

Heart of Darkness plumbs the depths and shallows of the imperial idea as few English fictions have done; and the roots of the novella are in Conrad's first-hand experience of European colonization in Africa. In the latter months of 1890, Conrad worked in the Belgian Congo, in the employ of the Société Anonyme pour Commerce du Haut-Congo, as Captain of the river boat *Roi des Belges* (for more on the Belgian colonial context of *Heart of Darkness*, see Hochschild 1998). In contrast to what he expected to discover, his experience of the European-African ivory trade – what *Heart of Darkness* labels “the merry dance of death and trade” (1998: 17) – was disillusioning. Conrad first recorded his impressions of this experience in what is now called his “Congo Diary” (see Kimbrough 1988); and his second written treatment (but first fictional one) was his biting satirical short story of 1897, “An Outpost of Progress.” His second and final fictional treatment of European colonization in Africa – the more meditative, open-ended, modernist *Heart of Darkness* – followed. At first published serially, in the February, March, and April 1899 issues of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a journal with a largely conservative, middle-class, and professional male readership, the novella was then republished in Conrad's 1902 book “*Youth*” and *Other Stories*.

Heart of Darkness begins on a deceptive note, which may be taken as an early hint that the novella is not what it seems. The narrative opens on the cruising yawl *Nellie*,

which is anchored in the Thames, on the outskirts of London, to await the turning of the tide. The adventure recounted in the novella concerns not the present *Nellie* cruise, which commences only after the novella concludes, but an adventure remembered by one of its passengers, Charlie Marlow, who recounts his experience in the Belgian Congo, in order to pass the time, to the other *Nellie* passengers: a lawyer, an accountant, a Director of Companies, and a merchant seaman, the unnamed narrator who silently transcribes (and frames) Marlow's story, occasionally interjecting his own take on things. The novella's "false start" and complex narrative structure, which subsequently become familiar devices in much modernist fiction, prove to be crucially important dimensions of this novella. The *Nellie* frame achieves at least two important things. First, it inscribes in Marlow's tale (and implicates in the imperial crimes detailed therein) Conrad's *Blackwood's* readers; after all, Conrad's audience in the magazine, Marlow's audience aboard the *Nellie*, and the Europeans doing the colonizing work in Africa (the accountant on the *Nellie* is mirrored in the accountant-station chief in Africa), all of whom profit from colonization, are engaged in a common mission. Second, the novella's complex narrative structure also foregrounds incertitude – the partial, interested, subjective nature of human knowledge, and the difficulty of gaining a purchase on, of fixing, the "truth" of an event or situation – another staple implication of much modernist fiction, from Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915) and Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), to Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). If, as Kenneth Graham writes, "'Heart of Darkness' calls for some further consideration as a modernist manifesto, announcing in 1899 the note of its new era," this is due chiefly to the novella's "epistemological ambiguity": its opposition to the "positivistic, mechanical view of the universe that saw meaning as objective and single," and to the "idea that the act of communication in words is reliable" (Graham 1996: 211, 213). Significantly, Marlow's story of Africa and Kurtz – both are encompassed in the novella's suggestive title – does not come to us directly but is received and "packaged" by this unnamed narrator, one who sees the political situation quite differently than does Marlow (and Conrad) himself.

This sharp difference of politics between Marlow and the narrator first emerges when it becomes clear that the two view Europe's imperial agenda through vastly different lenses. Shortly after the narrator enthuses over the "Hunters for gold" and "pursuers of fame" who had "gone out on that stream [the Thames], bearing the sword, and often the torch," and over "The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires" that had once set sail on that "venerable stream," Marlow reminds his audience that "this also [Britain] has been one of the dark places of the earth"; that "darkness was here" during the time of the Romans, who had to cope with ancient Britain's uncivilized "Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages, [its] precious little to eat for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink" (9–10). Marlow deflates the pro-imperial narrator's assumptions about the British Empire by conceiving of the Roman conquerors of Britain as possessors of little more than

brute force – nothing to boast of since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. (10)

Marlow here hints to his *Nellie* audience that the European conquerors of Africa confuse their military and technological superiority with moral and religious superiority, which is belied by the atrocities the Europeans commit against the conquered Africans in the name of God and Civilization, just as he earlier challenges his “excellent” aunt’s view that colonization is all about “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” by reminding her “that the Company was run for profit” (16).

Putting Marlow’s audience on stage fulfills another purpose for Conrad: he builds in an audience for Marlow that appears not to grasp the more subversive implications of his tale. Instead, this audience views it as a rambling, semi-coherent attempt at passing the time – as an unsuccessful entertainment. Marlow at one point asks his audience, “Do you see him [Kurtz]? Do you see the story? Do you see anything?” The narrator shortly after breaks in, as if in answer: “It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another. . . . There was not a word from anybody. The others might have been asleep” (30). This exchange can be read as suggesting not only that Marlow’s audience fails to “see” him and understand his story, but that it may no longer even be listening. Earlier, the narrator comments that Marlow, in telling his story, reveals the “weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear” (11). The narrator also distinguishes Marlow from other seamen, who tell their audiences more conventional and comprehensible tales, “the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut” (9). Unfortunately for Marlow’s silent, possibly uncomprehending, certainly inattentive audience, it is “fated” instead, as the narrator puts it, for them “to hear about one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences” (11).

One cannot entirely blame Marlow’s audience for misconstruing his exotic tale. Indeed, his suspense-building, doom-foreshadowing treatment of how he ended up in Africa possesses all of the trappings of a stock adventure romance, from Marlow’s studying of “blank” maps of the mysterious continent as a boy (in particular he recalls the serpentine Congo river, which resembled “an immense snake uncoiled,” which early on charms him (12)), to his being processed by the company bureaucrats at its headquarters in the “sepulchral city” (70) of Brussels, Belgium.

One obvious dimension of the novella’s critique of imperialism concerns its depictions of the brutal enslavement and murder of Africans at the hands of European colonizers. But a more penetrating (if more subtle) dimension of this critique concerns the novella’s dismantling or deconstruction of the clichéd oppositions between Europe and Africa, civilization and savagery, by which the Europeans articulate their superiority over the Africans. *Heart of Darkness* executes this critique in two ways: by reversing and leveling the binary tropes, images, and symbols by which European

primacy is understood; and by revealing the extent to which the rhetoric of the colonizers functions not so much to illuminate as to obfuscate the reality of European-African relations.

On the first score, Eloise Knapp Hay long ago recognized that the novella displays “repeated reversals or inversions of normal patterns of imagery, warning us to perceive that what appears to be bright and white may turn out to be dark or black in many different senses; that what seems holy and sacred may prove to be idolatrous and even diabolical” (Hay 1963: 137). The following is a partial list of these dichotomies, the first term of which (describing Europe) is understood to be privileged over the latter one (describing Africa), in a hierarchical relationship that would have been taken for granted by Conrad’s readers, Marlow’s audience, and the Europeans doing the “civilizing” work in Africa: civilization/savagery, light/dark, white/black, good/evil, order/chaos, restraint/rapaciousness, efficiency/inefficiency, historic/“prehistoric,” reason/feeling, male/female, sanity/insanity, mind/body, culture/nature, Christian empire/“God-forsaken wilderness,” Thames river/Congo river. All of these hierarchical binaries are invoked by the novella only to be undone therein (in a move that presages what poststructuralist thinkers argue all texts do). For example, Brussels, an imperial capital, is deemed a “sepulchral city” (70); and London, the “biggest, and the greatest, town on earth” (7), is also depicted as “monstrous” and as giving off a “brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars” (9). Numerous images of light and white take on connotations not of truth and illumination but of lies and obfuscation: Marlow encounters “blinding sunshine” (20), “sunlight” that lies (71), white fog and mist that obscure vision and are “more blinding than the night” (41), and the blinding white “smoke” of European guns (67). It is the Europeans and particularly Kurtz (“All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (50)) who are depicted as rapacious, while the abused and starving Congolese slaves, who are said to be cannibals, remain oddly “restrained” in their behavior. Even the Thames and Congo rivers, the first a commercial and civilized stream, the second likened to the nefarious serpent in Genesis, a tempter to dark and deadly knowledge, are imaged as one and the same river by the novella’s end (76). Put simply, the stereotypical hierarchies represented by these binaries are not allowed to stand.

On the second score, the language of the European colonizers is repeatedly shown to distort and lie about the state of affairs in Africa. The native Congolese are called “enemies” (17), “criminals” (19), transgressors (28), and “rebels” (58), when it is in fact the criminally transgressive Europeans who better fit this bill. The colonists fancy themselves philanthropists (Marlow speaks of the “philanthropic pretense of the whole [colonial] concern” (27)), yet their love of humanity, ironically, is expressed in acts of theft, enslavement, and murder. This use of language to hide rather than to reveal the truth of things is a dimension of language that deeply interested Conrad, who wrote that “half the words we use have no meaning whatever and of the other half each man understands each word after the fashion of his own folly and conceit” (quoted in Wasserman 1987: 107). Conrad also wrote, in a letter of 1898, that “Words blow away like mist, and like mist they serve only to obscure, to make

vague the real shape of one's feelings" (Karl and Davies 1986: 108). Seen in this light, the colonial rhetoric and the white mist that Marlow encounters have the same impact: both are blinding agents that obscure from view what is really taking place in the Congo.

Marlow's (and indeed the reader's) journey into the "heart of darkness" is structured around the three Company stations and station chiefs he encounters en route. Most obviously, the company stations function to support, practically and logistically, the business of colonization: they exist for the purpose of getting personnel in and ivory out; for the purpose of "trade," administration, and supply. Yet the claims about these stations extend considerably beyond these literal functions to include "philanthropic" (27) motives: the spread of civilization and progress and light; indeed, the spread of all the virtues of the first, privileged half of the binary sets. In the words of one company employee, "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course but also for humanizing, instructing, improving" (34). However, the stations in reality function as sites of enslavement and murder, of the "merry dance of death and trade" (17). Even the pretense of philanthropy is eventually abandoned.

The outer station chief, the company's chief accountant (an echo of Marlow's *Nellie* accountant), is notable for his arch-bureaucratic precision in the service of a cruel colonial machine. This idea is explored through the incongruity of his appearance – his "varnished boots," "brushed hair," "starched collars and got-up shirt fronts" (21) – and his job. When Marlow asks him how he "managed to sport such linen," having lived in the middle of the jungle for the past three years, the latter registers "just the faintest blush" and replies, "I've been teaching one of the native women about the station. It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work" (21). One implication of this exchange is that the accountant has been teaching the native woman to provide him with sexual as well as laundry services; that the blush, distasteful work, and dirty laundry all function euphemistically. Conrad here introduces the rape-of-Africa motif, which arises frequently in the novella. Slightly later, for example, Marlow figures Africa as a body being violated by male Europeans: "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe" (32–3).

The central station chief further develops the trope of the "hollow" modern European (a trope picked up on in T. S. Eliot's 1925 poem "The Hollow Men"). If the outer station chief is likened to a "hairdresser's dummy" (21), the central station chief, who talks of little save his "percentages" (his commission-based salary), proudly boasts of never sickening, as if he lacks "entrails," leading Marlow to imagine of this "papier-mâché Mephistopheles" (29) that "perhaps there was nothing in him" (25). The hollowness of the European colonizers of course points the way to the inner station chief, Kurtz himself, who is depicted, paradoxically, as both a "universal genius" (30) and a "hollow sham" (67). The plundering of African ivory and violating of African women undertaken by the previous station chiefs are undertaken with still more gusto by the rapacious Kurtz, who is said to possess a strong "appetite"

both for ivory and women yet who is also seen by Marlow as “hollow at core” (58). Kurtz is a walking paradox: larger than life yet empty, radiantly charismatic yet impenetrably dark, a man who reveals both benevolent and genocidal intentions toward the Congolese.

There is not the space here to rehearse all of the various readings of the superlatively enigmatic Kurtz that have been offered over the past century. However, Conrad does provide us with a series of clues as to how to read Kurtz, from this character’s “small sketch in oils” of a “woman draped and blindfolded carrying a lighted torch” (27); to his “peroration” on the natives, commissioned by the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs,” which concludes with the postscript to Europeans to “Exterminate all the brutes!” (50–1); to the decapitated, shrunken “heads on the stakes,” with their faces turned to face the house (57), that Kurtz has had placed around his compound; to his choice of a fearless Congolese lover (60) over his timid and ignorant European fiancée or “Intended,” who, more than a year after Kurtz’s death, basks, according to Marlow, in her own false yet “unextinguishable light of belief and love” (73). Together these cryptic vignettes suggest a number of (at points contradictory) things: that Kurtz has come to see through the lies and hypocrisies of the colonizers, and for this reason becomes a renegade; that he sees Europe’s benevolent and genocidal impulses toward Africa as two sides of the same coin (Kurtz would agree with the claim of the narrator of H. Rider Haggard’s *Allan Quatermain* (1887): “Civilization is only savagery silver-gilt” (Kucich 2003: 5)); that he seeks to embrace the “nightmare” reality of the human will-to-power (Kurtz here appears to be a caricature of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, a figure much in currency in literary circles at this time) rather than to deny this reality, as the moralizing but hypocritical Europeans are shown to do; and that he has gone from pretending to be a god to the natives to actually believing himself to be one. Clearly, the one thing that Kurtz has found to be more valuable than growing rich and claiming his Intended’s hand, more desirable than “wealth and fame” (67), is to become God. As in most Western tales of hubris, Kurtz’s attempt to don the mantle of the almighty proves to be lethal.

The above interpretations of Kurtz are supported by the famous deathbed scene, in which Marlow perceives Kurtz to be glimpsing directly the unadulterated reality of things, in a “supreme moment of complete knowledge,” as “though a veil had been rent”:

I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror – of an intense and hopeless despair. . . . He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath:
 “The horror! The horror!” (68)

Although Marlow does not (and perhaps cannot) articulate precisely what the “horror” is – he falls back on the vague assessment of Kurtz as a “remarkable man” who had “something to say” and who “said it” (69), a man who “had summed up” and had

“judged,” a man whose stare “was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, [and] piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness” (69) – he makes clear his approval of Kurtz’s courage in embracing that horrific reality, and his disappointment in his own inability to follow: while Kurtz had “made that last stride,” had “stepped over the edge,” Marlow had “been permitted to draw back” his “hesitating foot” (69). Prizing the truth of Kurtz’s “choice of nightmares” over the lies of the Europeans, who dream “insignificant and silly dreams” and “whose knowledge of life” is “an irritating pretence” (70), Marlow nevertheless returns to Europe, where he attempts to explain to his *Nellie* audience his disconcerting experience in the Congo (and perhaps to exorcise the ghost of Kurtz that still haunts him).

The last of Marlow’s tasks upon returning to Europe is to take news of Kurtz’s final moments to the dead man’s Intended, a woman whom, by the time of his death, Kurtz has presumably all but forgotten. The justly famous penultimate scene in the novella involves this remembered encounter between Marlow and the Intended, which affords Conrad one more opportunity to counterpose Kurtz’s ugly truths and Europe’s beautiful lies, the (masculine) brute reality and the (feminine) “saving illusion” (74). Over the course of this encounter the dusk deepens and the darkness grows (73), which mirrors the darkening *Nellie* frame of the narrative and suggests a darkness to the novella that is not only visual but moral and epistemological as well. Marlow lies to the Intended, telling her what she wants to hear, that Kurtz’s last words were “your name” (75), rather than the truth, which “would have been too dark,” he feels – “too dark altogether” (76).

Unsurprisingly, critical assessments of *Heart of Darkness* have run the gamut, from the archly adulatory to the fiercely condemnatory, from the biographical, psychological, and religious readings of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, to the colonial, postcolonial and feminist readings that followed over the next four decades. No issue of reception has proven more controversial, however, than Conrad’s position on and the novella’s treatment of race – an issue made famous by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe’s 1975 lecture on *Heart of Darkness*, later published as “An Image of Africa” (see Kimbrough 1988). In this piece Achebe, the author of the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1959), accuses *Heart of Darkness* of parading “in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities,” and of calling into question “the very humanity of black people” (Kimbrough 1988: 259). The essay goes on to accuse Conrad of being a “thoroughgoing racist” (257) and of choosing “the role of purveyor of comforting myths” (253), and to argue that this “offensive and deplorable” (259) book should be struck from the canon. Responses to Achebe’s charge of Conrad’s “obvious racism” (Kimbrough 1988: 258) also have run the gamut; these responses have dominated *Heart of Darkness* criticism over the past three decades (comprehensive treatments of this debate can be found in Kimbrough 1988, Denby 1995, Firchow 2000, and Hawkins and Shaffer 2002). My own view is that, whatever the shortcomings of Conrad’s depiction of Africans, his novella effectively undermines the racist colonial practices of his day, in the spirit of his letter of 1903: “It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which

seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerates the Congo State today.” Incredibly, Conrad adds, “seventy five years or so after the abolition of the slave trade (because it was cruel) there exists in Africa a Congo State, created by the act of European Powers where ruthless, systematic cruelty towards the blacks is the basis of administration” (Karl and Davies 1988: 96–7).

Cedric Watts has called *Heart of Darkness* “rich, vivid, layered, paradoxical, and problematic” (Watts 1996: 45), and such descriptors also pertain to the novella’s title, the meaning of which is “over-determined” in the Freudian sense of having numerous, often logically contradictory sources – of having a diversity of possible meanings that have been “condensed” into a deceptively simple designation (Freud 1952: 32). Not only does the title allude to the African continent, which at the time of Conrad’s novella was seen by Europeans as a place of “darkness” (in racial, moral, and epistemological senses); it alludes, somewhat more surreptitiously, to the dark heart of Europe itself, in which one can hear, if one only listens, “The horror!” whispered persistently. In his great book on Conrad, Ian Watt calls *Heart of Darkness* “Conrad’s nearest approach to an ideological summa” (Watt 1979: 148). Although establishing this enigmatic novella’s precise ideological position remains a challenge, one thing, a century after this work’s emergence, is clear: Conrad’s complex, cryptic, controversial fiction is a fitting example and emblem of literary modernism.

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T. S. Eliot: *The Waste Land*

David Chinitz

"*The Waste Land* gave the time's most accurate data, / It seemed," a reminiscent Kenneth Koch wrote of the 1950s (1987: 7). As Koch's "It seemed" wryly suggests, not everyone thought so, though many intellectuals did. The conviction that *The Waste Land*, a poem published some thirty years before, still spoke for "the time" depended on a sense that one inhabited an elastic historical period that had begun before the First World War and stretched out into some indefinite (and probably dismal) future. One's time was the culturally barren "modern" era, and *The Waste Land* was its diagnosis. Even today, one finds the poem spoken of loosely as a work of "our time" or of "modern times," usually with the implication that *The Waste Land* continues to give "the time's most accurate data."

With its sweeping vision and its tone of urgency, *The Waste Land* invites and, indeed, almost demands such a reading. And it may be said fairly enough that many of the large problems with which the poem concerns itself remain live issues. War has not grown less brutal, nor the metropolis less alienating, nor commercialism less pervasive since 1922. Yet there is much to be learned by reading *The Waste Land*, somewhat against its grain, as a poem of *its* time – as a literary work, in other words, that came out of and expressed something about a particular historical moment frequently termed the Jazz Age. *The Waste Land* is the poem, after all, of "O O O O that Shakes-peherian Rag," a detail that articulates Eliot's puckish relation to the popular culture of his day, to which he was genuinely yet ambivalently attached (Chinitz 2003: 44–9). But *The Waste Land* also belongs to the Jazz Age in many less apparent ways.

In opposition to the romantic myth of inexorable human progress, *The Waste Land*, like a number of other prominent modernist texts, adopts a cyclical model of history. Anthropology, still a new and developing science, testified that numerous civilizations had existed in the past and had been succeeded by others. Western civilization, so viewed, is one of many, rather than the pinnacle of human achievement and the inevitable foundation for humanity's future perfection. An obvious corollary is that an ending is sooner or later to come:

What is that sound high in the air
 Murmur of maternal lamentation
 Who are those hooded hordes swarming
 Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
 Ringed by the flat horizon only
 What is the city over the mountains
 Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
 Falling towers
 Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
 Vienna London
 Unreal

The Waste Land was a major contribution in its time to the discourse of *Kulturpessimismus* or “cultural pessimism” given its most thorough expression in Oswald Spengler’s influential work of metahistory, *The Decline of the West* (1918). Civilizations, according to Spengler, have organic life cycles: they are born, they grow and flourish, and eventually they die – a conclusion no more escapable than human mortality. All towers fall in the end, as Eliot’s unmarked question insinuates.

Of course the end of a civilization, even one’s own, is not the end of history; history continues with its replacement, as the city in *The Waste Land* not only “cracks” but “reforms,” only to “burst” again. What will take its place is unfathomable, originating elsewhere and among others. Who, as the poem asks, *are* those “hordes” – a heavily loaded word, suggesting teeming assailants from the ruthless East – gathering on the horizon? The hordes are faceless, “hooded” for the present, “stumbling” but already “swarming,” collecting their forces, preparing to move. As this unsettling image reminds us, *The Waste Land* shares its historical moment with such alarmist works of Jazz-Age prognostication as Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) and Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920). Against imagined Asian and African threats to European civilization, vulnerable after the fratricidal madness of the First World War, Stoddard advocates “the essential solidarity of the white world” (169). What for Stoddard looms as a battle of the great and noble against a sinister enemy appears in *The Waste Land*, however, as a cleansing away of something irredeemably rotten. Like Spengler, Eliot presents the impending collapse of his civilization as historically inevitable, and even as a necessary precondition for any rebirth of culture. The poem voices, certainly, an overwhelming sense of bereavement at the prospect. Yet it finds wisdom in an acceptance embodied, tellingly, in the East – in Buddhism and in the Upanishads. “Shantih shantih shantih,” the poem’s final speaker intones, invoking at the last moment “The Peace which passeth understanding.”

The Waste Land gives literary expression to Eliot’s harrowed *Kulturpessimismus* not only through its content but through its technical innovations. A mingling of realistic and phantasmagoric detail produces an oppressive sense of waking nightmare, as when we see the shore of a “dull canal . . . round behind the gashouse” littered with pallid corpses, or when, in a boudoir, “staring forms” in the paintings on the

walls “[l]eaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.” With its scores of allusions, *The Waste Land* embodies what Eliot called the “historical sense” of culture, a deep awareness of the living presence of the past. With its fragmented and often ironically twisted use of these references, however, the poem might be said to represent in its very form the shattering of that culture. “These fragments I have shored against my ruins,” the final speaker comments, as if the whole poem were a sort of hopeless salvage operation. Similarly, the dramatic voice that Eliot had developed in such earlier poems as “Prufrock” and “Gerontion” is atomized here, as a large number of coexisting and competing voices sound together. Often – as in the first verse paragraph of the poem – it is not easy to tell where one voice ceases and the next begins. The speaker who says “Summer surprised us” is surely not the one who said “Winter kept us warm” three lines earlier, but the transition between them, discernible in the lengthening of the lines and by the introduction of German words and place names, is masked by the parallel structure. The poem’s distinct voices thus blend, sometimes cacophonously, in a collective speech. Through its phantasmagoria, allusion, fragmentation, and heteroglossia, *The Waste Land* thus represents and speaks for a civilization in crisis.

One need not seek far to locate the sources of Eliot’s sense of crisis. The Great War, still in 1922 an open wound, is a continual ominous presence in the background of *The Waste Land*. Though the identification of Lil’s husband, Albert, as a demobilized soldier is the poem’s only explicit reference to the war, its gruesome imagery – “I think we are in rats’ alley / Where the dead men lost their bones” – practically reeks of the trenches and of the “No Man’s Land” between them, where rats nightly devoured the corpses of the slain. Marie’s mention of her cousin, the archduke, summons up Europe’s Hapsburg nobility deposed, after centuries in power, by the War, and recollects the assassination of an archduke that touched off the conflagration. The line “Bin gar keine Russin, stamm’ aus Litauen, echt deutsch” (“I am not Russian at all: I am Lithuanian, authentic German”) invokes the escalating European nationalism that paved the way to the hostilities. The War comes across as a dirty struggle for economic dominance comparable at best to the ancient Punic Wars (“You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!”), in which Rome vanquished Carthage to gain supremacy in Mediterranean trade.

The failure of culture in *The Waste Land* is concentrated in its portrayal of the “Unreal City,” with its “brown fog,” its polluted river, and its rat-infested banks. The streets and structures named in the poem take us from the modern city in general to the City of London – the town’s commercial center – in particular, hinting again that the oppressiveness of the environment is connected with a social system driven by the quest for wealth. As the church bells chime at nine “[w]ith a dead sound on the final stroke,” the clerks who staff the City’s capitalist machinery surge through the streets to their workplaces like a river of zombies. Though miserable and alienated, they are too enervated to protest or even to groan in the active voice: “Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, / And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.” The speaker thinks of the souls in the vestibule of Dante’s Hell, who languish

with neither grace nor damnation. It is shocking when he singles out an individual from this faceless crowd and addresses him in a wild shout; shocking, too, when we suddenly find ourselves implicated in his accusation: "You! hypocrite lecteur! – mon semblable, – mon frère!" We readers belong to the scene and exclude ourselves from the company of these undead only in hypocrisy. An employee of Lloyds Bank, Eliot himself flowed with the crowd every morning to work in the City. His note on the "dead sound" chimed by the clock of St. Mary Woolnoth calls this "A phenomenon which I have often noticed."

The crisis at the center of *The Waste Land* is thus one of values and of politics; it is also, and relatedly, a crisis of epistemology. As a philosopher – and Eliot would have had a Ph.D. in that discipline had he ever returned to Harvard to defend his completed dissertation – Eliot was an extreme skeptic who saw all truth as provisional: what we perceive as reality appears real to us because we participate in a social consensus that validates it. Truths, that is, are only conventions accepted among what Eliot calls "communities of meaning" (Perl 1989: 45). Without a stable "community of meaning," there *is* no truth, no reality, and each human being is utterly isolated from all others, imprisoned in his or her own consciousness:

I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Eliot's note to these lines refers us both to Dante's *Inferno* and to the philosopher F. H. Bradley, the subject of Eliot's dissertation: "the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul."

Communal representations of reality have traditionally been rooted in religion, so that when a faith breaks down, the culture that had depended upon it loses coherence. Their unifying Christian myth in a state of collapse ("for you know only / A heap of broken images"), no wonder the citizens of Eliot's imaginary Waste Land, like many of their real-world counterparts, are seeking alternatives – in the divination of Madame Sosostris and her "wicked pack" of tarot cards; in "free love"; in religious systems borrowed from other civilizations. Eliot himself, around this time, considered converting to Buddhism. Within five years, he would commit himself to Anglicanism, seeking both a meaningful relation with the divine and immersion in the "community of meaning" that most immediately surrounded him and that, if besieged in his time, might yet suffice for him.

Eliot's sense of social crisis is not entirely separable from the personal crisis he suffered in the same period. His impulsive marriage in 1915 to Vivienne Haigh-Wood had been a disaster from the beginning, strained by Vivienne's neuroses and almost constant ill-health, and by Eliot's difficulties with intimacy (Gordon 1988: 119–21). Disheartened by public and private calamities alike, the poet experienced a psychological breakdown in 1921; *The Waste Land* was written in its throes and in its

aftermath. Unable to sift the poem from the mass of material he had produced, Eliot turned the typescript over to his friend Ezra Pound, who pared the sequence down to approximately half its original size to produce the work that was published in 1922. The drafts of *The Waste Land*, finally published in 1971, are a remarkable document in the annals of poetic composition and collaboration.

The Waste Land dates from a period of rapid change in sexual mores, gender norms, and the institution of marriage. Walking a thin line between symbolism and social criticism, the poem treats barren sexuality and the victimization of women as both a metaphor for and a consequence of a broken world. The myth of Philomel, raped by her brother-in-law, King Tereus, and transformed by the gods into the first nightingale, figures the poem's present:

Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.

One looks through this painting "as though" it were a window because the world of 1922 "still . . . pursues" the violence and the lusts of an ostensibly distant and barbaric past.

Sex in *The Waste Land* is never healthy and seldom fertile. Lil has borne Albert five children, to the destruction of her own body; a subsequent pharmaceutical abortion ("It's them pills I took, to bring it off") has done further damage. Her unsympathetic friend's response – "You are a proper fool . . . / What you get married for if you don't want children?" – associates marriage with procreation but connects neither with love. The "Thames-daughters" recount their joyless sexual encounters by the river; and since nothing can go right in the Waste Land, the riverbank in winter, in the absence of these shabby liaisons, seems bleakly forsaken. Sweeney visits the house of the notorious Cairo madam Mrs. Porter, whose "daughters" were infamous for transmitting syphilis to British soldiers. Like Actaeon stumbling upon Diana bathing, Sweeney stumbles through sex to his own death. Such episodes simultaneously *comment* upon modern sexual expression and *represent* a generalized and pervasive cultural sterility.

The same is true of Eliot's typist, whose lifestyle reflects the contemporary reality that single women are entering the clerical workforce for the first time in large numbers and are thus no longer fulfilling more traditional home-making duties. Returning from work in the afternoon, the typist finally clears the breakfast plates left on the table in the morning as she rushed off to work. With company expected shortly, she "lays out food in tins" rather than cooking a meal and setting a table. The typist's living quarters reflect her independence of the traditional family structures that would in the past have sheltered her existence and policed her body; her

public display of her underwear, left to dry on the windowsill and the sofa, represents her consequent sexual freedom, which the poem registers as tawdry. The typist's indifference to her own violation by an unsavory male clerk is a further sign (and result) of social decay:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."

One might, and many women did, see economic independence as liberating; in *The Waste Land*, it seems to present opportunities not for fulfillment – the typist hardly seems fulfilled – but for predation: the employer's exploitation of her labor; a co-worker's exploitation of her sexual availability. This is not exactly a progressive viewpoint, though to be sure it raises questions that troubled some 1920s feminists as well (see, for example, Dorothy Parker's powerful short story "Big Blonde"). To historicize the scene in this way complements and enriches but does not invalidate the earlier New Critical readings that, seeking "universal" rather than nonce political meanings, tended to find in it an indictment of a world so devoid of spirituality that even the most intimate human relations are reduced to mechanical functions (see, for example, Brooks 1948: 21–2). A part of the richness of *The Waste Land* lies in its way of maintaining at the same time both intense social engagement and visionary detachment.

Eliot's Notes on *The Waste Land* explain "the title, . . . the plan, and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem" by referring readers to the legend of the Holy Grail, whose history was traced in Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, and to the fertility rites inventoried in James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Most treatments of the poem since the 1970s have downplayed the importance of this material to the extent that earlier readings made it central. That much of the Grail-quest material was added late, and that it hardly underlies a "plan" for the entire poem, is demonstrable, and Eliot himself expressed "regret [for] having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase" after his sources (1957: 110). The fact remains, though, that Eliot's use of symbolism drawn from Frazer and other anthropological sources is already visible in the poems, such as "Sweeney among the Nightingales" and "Gerontion," that precede his composition of *The Waste Land*. Such material was thoroughly enmeshed in Eliot's thought and perception, and it is integral to the themes and methods of *The Waste Land* as well (Crawford 1987: 127–49).

Eliot was particularly fascinated by Frazer's influential collection of cross-cultural myths concerning the death and resurrection of a fertility god, and the annual rituals that purported to restore fertility to the land by re-enacting those myths. The story of the Fisher King was one exemplar of this nearly universal pattern – one that survived, according to Weston, from prehistory into the late medieval period and was integrated, along the way, into the Grail legend. Wounded in the thigh or genitals, the Fisher King languishes pain-ridden and impotent, his land likewise

withering under a curse. The King, as it happens, is the keeper of the Grail cup, and life will not return to the Waste Land until a sufficiently worthy knight comes to perform the ritual that will restore the King. The King is healed, however, only so that he can die a peaceful death with his land resurrected and the Grail safely bestowed on the questing knight.

The Fisher King longs for a resumption of life, even if it entails his own death. The denizens of Eliot's Waste Land, by contrast, insistently prefer a sterile quietude to the perils of living. The first speaker in "The Burial of the Dead" is dismayed that "spring rain" threatens to awaken the undead to "a little life." A permanent sleep would be preferable; to wake to life is to return to suffering. None knows this better than the Sybil of Cumae, who by her own misguided wish was endowed with immortality but not perpetual youth; she appears in Eliot's epigraph (from the Roman satirist Petronius) as a shriveled old thing, completely desiccated yet unable to die. Marie, who once found life in a moment of daring on a sled and now flees the snow in her old age, seems similarly, if figuratively, shrunken. The theme of dryness is immediately taken up by the next speaker, who describes in prophetic language a desert landscape with decaying buildings and desecrated altars, the relics of a once-thriving civilization now sinking in the sand.

Just as water commonly figures life and fertility, its absence in *The Waste Land* represents sterility and desolation. The inhabitants fear life and so fear water. They reject the suffering that must precede renewal, the storms that would usher in the spring, the risks that attend human love. To live mechanically, to remain buried, to go through the motions of a life mostly barren of feeling is easier. Faced with the fertile sensuality of the "hyacinth girl," whose hair is wet and whose arms are filled with breathing flowers, Eliot's swain is paralyzed, as impotent as the Fisher King. Like all his fellows in "The Burial of the Dead," he is "neither living nor dead," confined by his terror in a nebulous, in-between state. His failure is framed ironically by the strains of *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner's grand vision of a legendary love. Both quotations from the opera allude to the sea. The fortune-teller Madame Sosostris immediately warns the poem's next protagonist, "Fear death by water," lest he follow the "drowned Phoenician Sailor" to the bottom. The reminiscence of Ariel's Song from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, which promises regeneration for the drowned – "Of his bones are coral made, / Those are pearls that were his eyes" – does nothing to quell these fears: the transformative power of water is rejected. No revitalization is thus possible, for the fertility god must die before he can be revived. And the very idea of resurrection repulses the inhabitants:

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!"

Bodies “planted” in a “garden” remain alive in the safe, vegetative way of the poem’s first speaker. They may bloom; they would rather not. But that the corpse may rise whole from the ground, if the dog works its mischief, is an even more dreadful possibility. Morbidly fearful of regeneration, the inhabitants misread the vegetation ritual as gothic horror. *The Waste Land* surprises us when in Part IV, “Death by Water,” the long-dreaded drowning finally transpires in language that is almost consoling. Forgetting his barren business of getting and spending, the Phoenician sailor sinks gently toward oblivion:

A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.

After the ghastly scenes of living death that dominate the first three sections of the poem, and particularly after the frenzied “Burning” of “The Fire Sermon,” Phlebas’s watery afterlife seems unexpectedly welcome. In the final section of the poem, “What the Thunder Said,” water has finally become an element that is actively sought rather than feared: “If there were only water amongst the rock,” the speaker there laments.

Is this change the sign of a hope for the future? That question returns us to the poem’s image of “hooded hordes” and to its reading of history. The cyclic model does indeed hold out hope for the future of civilization – only, it will be someone else’s future, someone else’s civilization, and its coming into being first requires “our” death and the eradication of all that “we” have made. No wonder the inhabitants of Eliot’s Waste Land cling to their scant existence, fear the spring rain, and shudder at the thought of resurrection: new life comes in only with the annihilation of the old. Their dried-up lives will drag on until they can accept, like the Fisher King, that the Grail must be passed on to its next keeper. Perhaps the search for water in “What the Thunder Said” does suggest a step taken in that direction.

But the situation does not resolve itself within the poem. The closing movement of *The Waste Land* offers only repeated instances of suspended plots, implying an uncompleted action (Levenson 1984: 199–200). We leave the Grail quest at the chapel, its penultimate stage, with the hermit missing; we leave Jesus on the road to Emmaus, resurrected but yet unrecognized by his disciples; we leave the land as dry as ever, with rain seemingly imminent but never quite arriving. A late speaker whom one is tempted to identify with the poet contemplates setting his “lands in order” and girds himself for the approaching storm. If his “Shantih shantih” conclusion is not altogether ironic, it at least implies a heavily willed and fragile sense of peace. And in its struggle toward such a peace in the face of an uncertain future of falling towers, *The Waste Land* may remain, after all, a poem of our time.

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William Faulkner:
The Sound and the Fury
Karl F. Zender

The Sound and the Fury, William Faulkner's fourth novel, did not initially command a wide readership. Greeted by reviewers with a mixture of praise, puzzlement, and dismissal, the 3,300 copies published in the first edition (1929) and in two subsequent press runs (1931) sufficed to meet demand for fifteen years. Not until 1946 was a second American edition published, by which time all of Faulkner's novels were out of print (Minter 1993: ix). Beginning with that second edition, though, and continuing for over fifty years, *The Sound and the Fury* has grown steadily in readership and critical stature, to the point where the book is now widely considered to be both Faulkner's finest achievement and one of the defining works of American literary modernism. Although a number of challenges to the novel's status have emerged in recent years, most readers would agree with André Bleikasten that "had [Faulkner] written only *The Sound and the Fury*, this book alone would have provided sufficient evidence of his genius to ensure him a place among the foremost fiction-makers of the twentieth century" (Bleikasten 1982: xi).

Much of the fascination of *The Sound and the Fury* lies in its combination of daring formal experimentation with vivid characterizations and a deeply moving core story. The novel is in four sections, the first three of which are narrated by three brothers, Benjamin, Quentin, and Jason Compson, the fourth by an anonymous third-person narrator. (A fifth section, "Appendix, Compson: 1699–1945," written in 1945, is included in some editions of *The Sound and the Fury*, but it is not part of the novel proper. See Dickerson 1975 and Matthews 1991: 119–25.) The brothers share a number of concerns, most notably an obsession with the sexual behavior of their sister, Candace ("Caddy"), but they are also sharply distinguished from one another, a fact reflected in the differentiated narrative methods Faulkner devised for them. Benjamin ("Benjy"), the youngest of the four siblings and the narrator of the first section, is a congenital idiot, thirty-three years old on the day of his narrative, April 7, 1928, the Saturday of Holy Week. He is incapable of cause-and-effect reasoning or of controlling the movement of his mind into and out of memory. Quentin, the

oldest sibling and the narrator of the second section, is a suicidal Harvard student, obsessed with his sister's loss of her virginity. His narrative takes place on June 2, 1910, the last day of his life; the section ends as he departs to drown himself in the Charles River. Jason, the third sibling in birth order, after Caddy, and the narrator of the third section, is a rage-filled bigot, dominated by his mother and obsessed with real and imagined grievances. Although occurring later in the novel, Jason's narrative takes place on April 6, 1928, Good Friday, a day earlier than Benjy's. The fourth section occurs on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1928. At its center is a church service attended by Dilsey Gibson, a family servant, and Benjy.

As the dates indicate, the present-time narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* is divided between 1910 and 1928. Sequences of reported memory depict events occurring before and between these dates, most prominently the children's activities on the day in 1898 when their grandmother ("Damuddy") died. Passing references suggest a still earlier history for the Compsons, one in which "one of our forefathers was a governor and three were generals" (Faulkner [1929] 1991: 101). When envisioned chronologically, *The Sound and the Fury* can be seen to tell the familiar story of the decline and fall of an aristocratic family. In contrast to the governor and generals of an earlier generation, the father of the family (also named Jason) is a dipsomaniac, given to cynical pronouncements about time and fate; his wife, Caroline, is a hypochondriac, emotionally distanced from three of her four children and obsessed with questions of family status. Already by 1910, the family has declined economically to the point where they must sell a pasture to pay for Caddy's wedding and Quentin's year at Harvard. By 1928, the family has declined further, with Quentin and his father both dead, Benjy castrated, Caddy rejected by her husband and expelled from the family, and the younger Jason reduced to working as a clerk in a hardware store and to stealing money sent by Caddy for support of her daughter (also named Quentin), now seventeen years old and about to run away from home.

A remarkable quality of this story of decline and fall is the animus it directs toward the Compson parents and the sympathy it offers to three of the four children. In effect, the novel is an inverse *Bildungsroman*, a coming-of-age story in which emphasis falls not on successful maturation but on the obstacles preventing its attainment. In their immediate form, these obstacles are familial: *The Sound and the Fury* is one of the great narratives of family dysfunction in the history of literature, and the genius of the work can be seen in the variety and intricacy of the ways in which the parents are depicted as disabling the lives of their children. One thinks, for example, of where Quentin would have been in September 1910, had he not committed suicide the previous June. The answer is somewhere other than Harvard, for the family clearly had money enough to pay for only the single year. They have sent Quentin to Harvard not to prepare for his future but to sustain a fantasy of their own past status, a fact Quentin alludes to when he thinks "Harvard is such a fine sound forty acres is no high price for a fine sound" (174). Similarly, Caddy's marriage is a subterfuge forced on her to conceal the fact of her illegitimate pregnancy. And the history of maternal disengagement from Benjy pervades the text, heard in such

details as the contrast between Mrs. Compson's "What is it now" (5) when she is obliged to attend to his needs and Caddy's "What is it" (7) when she does the same.

Were the novel limited to a dramatization of the traumas of family life, it would be a fine work of art. But Faulkner invokes as well a variety of historical and cultural contexts – the southern setting, the Easter week symbolism, social changes occurring in the 1920s – within which the Compson family's decline takes on larger significance. Foremost among these is the southern setting. As David Minter observes, southern history

is dominated by three deeply "un-American" experiences – first, a sense of failure rather than success, one telling mark of which was a long, deep "un-American" experience with poverty . . . ; second, an equally "un-American" experience of defeat in war . . . ; and third, a profound sense of moral failure and guilt associated with defending the institutions of slavery and segregation. (Minter 2001: 6)

A characteristic southern response to these experiences combines defiant nostalgia for the "lost cause" of the pre-Civil War aristocratic social order with hostility toward the North, hostility fueled by the ways in which northern financial interests were treating the South as an internal colony, exploitable for its natural resources of agriculture, timber, and oil (Tindall 1967: 81–103, 594–8).

Both of these attitudes are aspects of Faulkner's artistic vision from his earliest days as a writer, but not until *The Sound and the Fury* did he find an effective means of integrating them into a work of fiction. In *Flags in the Dust* (first published in shortened form as *Sartoris*), the novel Faulkner wrote immediately prior to *The Sound and the Fury*, nostalgia for the southern lost cause and distaste for northern values are premises of the work, expressed through romanticized depictions of the Civil War generation of the Sartoris family and contrasting satiric depictions of the northern-influenced generation of their grandchildren. The breakthrough into artistic maturity of *The Sound and the Fury* consists in large measure of Faulkner's resituating these attitudes inside the minds of individual characters and inside the images, symbols, and metaphors through which their culture is evoked. No longer a perspective on southern (and American) history that readers are invited to *share*, southern nostalgia and hostility are now attitudes that we are invited to *judge*, in terms of their influence on the novel's characters and the world in which they move.

A reader's first experience of *The Sound and the Fury*, however, is not of the novel's chronological narrative in either its familial or its cultural dimension. Readers instead encounter a disorienting text whose first section literally constitutes the "tale told by an idiot" mentioned in the passage in *Macbeth* from which Faulkner adapted the novel's title. It is an open question whether first-time readers are better advised to plunge into the section unassisted or to seek help from guides to interpretation. (Excellent orientations to the novel's narrative method can be found in Polk and in Ross and Polk.) In either case, bewilderment fairly quickly gives way to awareness of the regularities governing Benjy's narrative. One soon notices that italic type almost

always functions as a signal of Benjy's movement into or out of memory; that his inability to anticipate the future is indicated by an absence of question marks; and that his lack of understanding of causal relations is suggested by peculiarities of phrasing, as when the golfers Benjy observes are said just to "hit," not to hit the ball, and Luster is said to be "hunting" (3), not to be hunting for something (Polk 1993: 140). Over time, one also discovers that the present-time narrative and the memory of the day of Damuddy's death are presented in strict chronological sequence, and that the section moves toward increasingly corrosive recollections of the disappearance of Caddy from Benjy's life – a movement culminating, tellingly, not in Caddy's departure at the time of her marriage, which is narrated first (20–2, 36–40), but in the loss of her virginity, some nine months earlier (68).

In an unpublished introduction written in 1933, Faulkner located the inception of *The Sound and the Fury* in the scene of the children playing at the branch (17–20) and in the slightly later scene of Caddy's climbing a tree to look in at her grandmother's funeral, with the other children looking up at "the muddy bottom of her drawers" (39), dirtied in her earlier water play. In the introduction, Faulkner spoke of the water in the branch as "the dark, harsh flowing of time" and alluded to "the symbology of the soiled drawers" (Faulkner [1933] 1993: 230–1). Although Benjy is incapable of stating a reason for his distress, he intuits, and resists, this symbology. Caddy's loss of her virginity matters to him because it signifies her departure from the role in which he wishes her to remain fixed, of serving as a source for the nurture withheld by his mother. It is part of the genius of *The Sound and the Fury* that the meaning of Benjy's resistance to Caddy's immersion in the flow of time reaches out from this context in a variety of directions. Benjy's persistent statement that the pre-sexual Caddy "smelled like trees" (6) links with his calling the golf course "the pasture" (3) eighteen years after it has ceased to be one to intimate an inchoate sorrow over the passing of an agrarian age. Similarly, his inability either to avoid entering memory or to emerge from it unaided emblemizes the destructive power of the southern obsession with the lost cause. And his age of thirty-three, the Christological age, pairs with the placement of his narrative on Holy Saturday, the day on which Christ is dead and not yet reborn, to lend cultural resonance to what Faulkner calls, in his introduction, Benjy's "grief of bereavement" (Faulkner [1933] 1993: 230).

The second and third sections extend the novel's meditation on the symbology of the soiled drawers along a developmental axis, with the second section exploring the late-adolescent level of Quentin's narrative and the third section the "adult" level of Jason's. Faulkner devised styles for these sections appropriate to the two brothers. Quentin, neurotic, puritanical, a "half-baked Galahad" (110), is as dominated by memory as Benjy, but in a more fluid fashion. Because he possesses normal mental capacities, Quentin has the ability to enter and leave memory volitionally, so that when a memory drifts toward a locus of pain, he can at least attempt to shift his thoughts elsewhere. This ability produces movements between thoughts that are more frequent and less distinctly marked than Benjy's: there are approximately twice as many time shifts in the second section as in the first (Bleikasten 1976: 94), and

the shifts are not always signaled typographically. The section does exhibit wide typographical variation, however, used to indicate the depth of Quentin's immersion in his ruminations. When he is engaged in present-time narration, Quentin observes the usual conventions for representing dialogue. But as he drifts further into thought, "ordinary conventions of punctuation, paragraphing, and speaker identification" are gradually abandoned, as if to indicate that Quentin is "deeply and involuntarily immersed in memory" (Ross and Polk: 49–50).

Like the first section, the second tells a double story of past and present, mingling the events of Quentin's final day with memories of Caddy's wedding in April 1910 and of her affair (her first) the previous summer with Dalton Ames. The section also presents a double narrative of another sort: the story that Quentin attempts to tell and the one revealed in the failure of that attempt. Toward the end of the section, when Mr. Compson says, "we must just stay awake and see evil done for a little while," Quentin replies, "it doesnt have to be even that long for a man of courage" (176). From Quentin's perspective, he is acting as a man of courage in the behaviors – the incest fantasy, the tearing off of the hands of his watch, the meticulous preparations for suicide – by which he seeks to impose meaning on his existence. Lurking behind this conscious story, though, is a counter-story of despair, incapacity, and shame. This counter-story emerges most fully in a long uninterrupted memory sequence toward the end of the section (149–64). Because Quentin is unconscious or semi-conscious at the time of this sequence – the result of a fist-fight – he is incapable of the repression and denial with which he usually seeks to conceal his inner confusion. The result is a narrative sequence resembling in its photographic realism (although not in its style) the representations of memory in the first section of the novel.

Quentin's memory sequence centers on two events: his encounter with Caddy at the branch just after the loss of her virginity, and a subsequent encounter with Dalton Ames on a bridge over the same stream. The narrative of these encounters renders vividly Quentin's sexual and maturational self-doubt. As he sits beside Caddy on the bank of the stream, Quentin twice asks whether she remembers "the day damuddy died when you sat down in the water in your drawers" (151). Then, with Caddy's acquiescence, he holds his knife to her throat and begins a highly phallic attempt at dual suicide: "yes the blades long enough"; "youll have to push it harder"; "touch your hand to it" (152). This return to the symbology of the soiled drawers evokes the novel's collocation of death, time, and sexuality in a more revealing fashion than does Quentin's conscious incest fantasy, in which incestuous imaginings function not as an emotionally fraught bridge into adult life but as a retreat from it. Here too, psychological meanings merge with cultural ones, for Caddy's willingness to enter into the stream of time exposes the destructiveness of Quentin's nostalgia. "[H]es crossed all the oceans all around the world" (150), Caddy says of Dalton Ames, a comment linking her sexual adventuring to a desire to break free of southern insularity. Beside this boldness, Quentin's devotion to an outmoded southern code of honor reveals itself to be a life-denying form of evasion.

In his 1933 introduction, Faulkner spoke of how Benjy's "grief of bereavement" could not "be leavened with understanding and hence the alleviation of rage as in the case of Jason, and of oblivion as in the case of Quentin" (Faulkner [1933] 1993: 230). In the third section, readers encounter "rage" in a narrative whose relation to the "grief of bereavement" only gradually reveals itself. Like the second section, the third tells a double story, one that its narrator, Jason, tries to tell and one that he reveals inadvertently. Because Jason is capable of controlling thought to an extent that his brothers are not, his narrative deviates less from normal conventions of representation than do theirs: it contains no italic passages, it maintains a primarily chronological organization, and its syntactic breakdowns are less extreme and less frequent. But as John T. Matthews observes, "Jason has not solved the Compson crisis. He has only silenced it" (Matthews 1982: 92). In contrast to his brothers, Jason points himself determinedly toward the future, both behaviorally and stylistically. His financial manipulations require constant attention to present and future time, and his frenetic narrative, spoken in the present tense, attempts to maintain a similar focus. But emerging from beneath this attempt is a story of domination by the past, both psychologically and culturally, no less thoroughgoing than the ones revealed by his brothers' narratives.

As Faulkner's 1933 comment suggests, the psychological dimension of this story consists of a displacement of need into anger. Like the second section, the Jason section contains a long memory sequence (194–211), focusing on Mr. Compson's funeral (c. 1912). If we reflect on Jason's circumstances at the time of this memory, we can find grounds for extending sympathy to him. An adolescent, eighteen years old, he has been thrust into adulthood, responsible for the support of his hypochondriac mother, his handicapped brother, a sponging uncle, and (it appears) his infant niece. But if we in fact do not extend sympathy to Jason – and few readers do – it is because he cannot extend it to himself. As he recalls standing beside his father's grave, "watching them throwing dirt into it," he says "I began to feel sort of funny"; slightly later he says, "I got to thinking about when we were little . . . and I got to feeling funny again, kind of mad or something" (202, 203). "Feeling funny" is as close as Jason comes to naming the grief of bereavement at the core of his being. Any time he approaches that core, he veers away, behaviorally into anger, stylistically into broken locutions and impersonal diction. So too in cultural terms, for his virulent racism displaces into aggression both the extent of his dependence on Dilsey and his fear of being "declassed" to a status equivalent to that of blacks. (Despite Jason's complaints about having "a kitchen full of niggers to feed" (230), the only servants remaining in the Compson household in 1928 are Dilsey and Luster; and Uncle Job, the black man whom Jason attempts to "boss" at the hardware store (189–90, 249–50), is his co-worker, not his employee.)

The overall movement of *The Sound and the Fury*, "a progression from murkiness to increasing enlightenment" (Brooks 1963: 325), culminates in the fourth section, where the third-person narrative seems to possess an interpretive authority absent in the earlier sections. But as André Bleikasten observes, the "point of view [in the

fourth section] is neither that of an all-seeing and all-knowing narrator nor that of a detached and strictly objective observer." Instead, "Faulkner's method is . . . conjectural, and its tentativeness is evidenced by . . . words or phrases denoting uncertainty" (Bleikasten 1976: 175–6). A similar disinclination to provide a "solution" to the previous narratives characterizes the content of the section. The disappearance of Caddy is progressive throughout the novel: the vivid childhood memories of the first section move forward in time and dwindle in intensity in the subsequent sections, until in the fourth section Caddy never appears in person and is mentioned only infrequently. The hope for the future that Caddy embodied disappears as well, as her daughter – the last fecund Compson, since Jason is capable of sex only with prostitutes – is discovered to have run away. So when Dilsey says "I've seed de first en de last. . . . I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin" (297), it is literally the end of the Compson history of decline and fall that she sees: a decaying house, a hypochondriac, a bigot, an idiot.

Poised against this bleakness is the Reverend Shegog's sermon in the church service preceding Dilsey's "I've seed de first en de last." In form and content, the sermon recasts elements found elsewhere in the novel. "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!" says the Reverend Shegog, invoking collective memory and Christ's sacrificial blood as sources of redemption, in contrast to the depictions elsewhere of individual memory as a locus of pain, and of "blood" as a debilitating obsession with family status. Similarly, the transformation of voice into vision, the words of the sermon into "I sees, O Jesus! Oh I sees," contrasts sharply with the solipsism of the earlier sections, where "voice" never succeeds in moving beyond itself into a shared vision of meaning and value. But these contrasts do not mean that the church service is offered as an answer to the pain and confusion that overwhelms the Compson family. The novel's final depiction of achieved order is instead savagely ironic. It consists of Benjy and Luster's journey around the town square, at the center of which "the Confederate soldier gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand" (319). When the inexperienced Luster starts around the square in the wrong direction, Benjy responds with "[b]ellow on bellow" (320). After Jason savagely reorients the carriage and Luster continues around the square in the customary direction, Benjy grows calm, "as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, . . . window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (321). Order is restored, but only as mindless habit, an unvarying ritual at the center of which stands a sightless reminder of the lost cause.

In the fifty-plus years since its emergence into prominence, *The Sound and the Fury* has been the beneficiary of many insightful critical readings. Chapter-length analyses in the 1960s by (for example) Brooks and Vickery established initial parameters for interpretation; these were followed in the 1970s by two impressive book-length studies: André Bleikasten's *The Most Splendid Failure* and John T. Irwin's *Doubling and Incest / Repetition and Revenge*. In the last twenty years, the revolution in styles of reading inaugurated by feminism, ethnic studies, deconstruction, and cultural materialism has produced fresh new readings. Feminist commentators, no longer

acceding to formalist rationales for Caddy's lack of a narrative voice, have discovered for Caddy more varied identities than the ones imposed upon her by her brothers. This style of reading has been extended to other female characters as well, with the novel's demonization of Mrs. Compson no longer accepted as a fictional "given" but instead interrogated as a cultural construction (cf. Gwin 1990; Trouard 1993; Weinstein 1992: 11–41). Deconstructive readings have similarly challenged traditional interpretations. Arguing that "[w]riting does not respond to loss, it initiates it," John T. Matthews reads *The Sound and the Fury* not as grieving over the disappearance of "absolute plenitude" but instead as celebrating deferral, "the happy resource of the prolonged life of speech" (Matthews 1982: 19, 71).

At times, the post-1970s revolution in styles of reading has produced challenges to *The Sound and the Fury*'s iconic status. This is true particularly for cultural materialist commentators, some of whom see the subjectivity of the novel's narrative method as unduly restricting its range of cultural reference. Because Mr. Compson and Quentin do not understand the historical sources of their fatalism, they express it abstractly, as if it were an inevitable consequence of time itself. Not until Faulkner makes the history of the South (in particular its history of racial trauma) his explicit topic, these commentators claim, does he achieve true literary greatness. Had he not discovered this subject matter, Eric Sundquist argues, in an opinion strikingly at variance with the one quoted at the beginning of this essay, "*The Sound and the Fury* would . . . seem a literary curiosity, an eccentric masterpiece of experimental methods and 'modernist' ideas" (Sundquist 1983: 3; cf. Moreland 1990, *passim*). This opinion, however, is exceptional in its stringency. Faulkner himself characterized *The Sound and the Fury* as "the one I love the most," the one among his novels with "the most passionate and moving idea" (Blotner and Gwynn 1959: 77) For the foreseeable future, that passionate and moving idea, the lost Caddy and her doomed family, will continue to compel the admiration of legions of readers.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald:
The Great Gatsby
Ruth Prigozy

The Great Gatsby (1925) has become one of the most popular and familiar novels in the world, translated into many languages, with sales in the United States and abroad reaching over 300,000 every year. And the name of the book – that of its main character – is familiar even to those who have not read the novel. “Gatsbyesque” describes a person who has remade himself and has achieved a position that as a child he could only imagine. The word has been applied to former President of the United States William J. Clinton, as well as to billionaire Bill Gates, who uses a quotation from the novel over the gated entrance to his estate. “Gatsby” appears so frequently as a noun or adjective that readers know what it means, even if they have not read the novel. There are no characters in American literature, with the notable exceptions of Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, who have achieved similar worldwide familiarity, but even Tom and Huck are not synonymous with a personal philosophy and a guide to living as is Gatsby. The popular Horatio Alger stories did create a figure whose career became the basis for a belief about success in America, but Alger does not invoke the resonance of Gatsby, nor the complexity of meaning surrounding him that has fascinated readers for more than eighty years.

There are several “Gatsbys” in contemporary culture: for students and the general reader, there is Fitzgerald’s readable yet complex novel. In popular culture, Gatsby is an illustration for advertisements in magazines and newspapers, and on television. And for those who may or may not have read the novel, “Gatsby” is an idea, often a distortion of the original figure in the novel, yet one that has particular significance in discussions of wealth, ambition, success, and honesty.

For twenty-five years, the novel was virtually forgotten; its resurrection in the early 1950s was part of the rediscovery of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had died at the age of forty-four in 1940. When the critics of the 1950s turned their attention to the novel, they applauded the writing, the symbolism, the colorful evocation of excesses of the Jazz Age. Until very recently, however, *The Great Gatsby* has not been regarded as an example of modernism, certainly not as works by Hemingway and Faulkner

have. In fact, *The Great Gatsby* has been difficult for critics and theorists to classify, so unusual is its narrative design, its elusiveness, its seeming unwillingness to be placed in any category. Yet its refusal to fit comfortably into a literary mold, and its almost elastic ability to lend itself to markedly differing interpretations, suggest that the novel may indeed be an exemplar of modernism, particularly if we agree that revolutionary changes in narrative style and structure (like Joyce's) or language (like Hemingway's or Faulkner's) are not the sole determinants of modernist fiction.

Although the novel did not achieve immediate success with the reading public, major writers recognized *The Great Gatsby* as unlike any work they had read. T. S. Eliot, whose *The Waste Land* (1922) is regarded as a major influence on *Gatsby*, notably in the valley of ashes passages in chapter 2, wrote to the author: "It seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James" (Fitzgerald 1945: 310). Edith Wharton recognized the modernist sensibility in the novel, when she praised the "great leap" Fitzgerald had taken, remarking that she would have liked more background on Gatsby's early life, "But you'll tell me that's the old way, & consequently not *your way*" (Fitzgerald 1945: 309). Gertrude Stein, noted for her modernist innovations in language and narrative construction, praised the novel's style, comparing Fitzgerald's evocation of his epoch to Thackeray's in *Pendennis* and *Vanity Fair*, and noting, "You make a modern world and a modern orgy" (Fitzgerald 1945: 308). Praise from three of the most important contemporary writers somewhat assuaged the impact of the weak sales and of the consensus of critics that *The Great Gatsby* was a novel of limited scope – the Jazz Age – with unappealing or repellent characters. Even at Fitzgerald's death, the *New York Times's* obituary described *Gatsby* as "not a book for the ages, but it caught superbly the spirit of the decade" (December 24, 1940). Part of the problem, as one critic so astutely notes, is that too much critical emphasis has been placed on sources of the novel, when in fact, it is, like so many other modernist works, "a mutation" (Berman 2002: 81).

It is indeed ironic, considering its initial reception, that in the lists of greatest books of the century proposed in 2000 by authors, and magazine and newspaper editors, it was often placed second, just behind Joyce's *Ulysses*. As Ronald Berman has observed, "*The Great Gatsby* is about American issues," among them the changes that had occurred in the nation from the post-Civil War years up to the 1920s. The new world was notable for "broken relationships and false relationships; a world of money and success rather than of social responsibility; a world in which individuals are all too free to determine their moral destinies" (Berman 2002: 83). The novel is concerned with aspects of American history and culture, and reflects issues raised in the writings of Josiah Royce, John Dewey, and Walter Lippman (Berman 1997). But *The Great Gatsby* may find its greatest appeal in the way it confronts matters that affect readers of all nationalities: the quest for success, the yearning for a future filled with hope and possibility, and, above all, the desire to recapture a long-lost golden moment from the past, a moment that, however unrecapturable, embodies for all of us a dream of transcendence. It is the dream so unforgettably evoked in the last lines of the novel where, however lost that dream may be, we, like Gatsby and the early

Dutch sailors, “beat on, boats against the current,” refusing to accept failure (Fitzgerald 1998: 141). But the nature of the American dream itself is difficult to define, its meaning constantly altering as ineluctable changes occurred in American society. For Gatsby, the struggle even to understand that dream had become impossible.

The poor naïve believing son of a bitch. He dreamed of a country in the mind and he got East and West Egg. He dreamed of a future magic self and he got the history of Dan Cody. He dreamed of a life of unlimited possibility and he got Hopalong Cassidy, Horatio Alger, and Ben Franklin’s “The Way to Wealth.” What else could he imitate? (Stern 1970: 247)

How can a novel so brief – nine chapters, fewer than 150 pages – convey so many meanings, and many more not yet cited? As we examine the narrative structure, the language, and the characters, we cannot help marveling at Fitzgerald’s brilliance in compressing into so few pages subjects that Theodore Dreiser would treat in over one thousand pages in his masterpiece, *An American Tragedy*, published in the same year. Both writers would focus on the rise of an industrial society and the difficulty for those born into the lower classes of penetrating the insurmountable wall that kept intact the privileged world of wealth and position.

The narrative structure of *The Great Gatsby* is the key to the meaning of the novel. Nick Carraway, who has arrived from the Midwest to seek his fortune in the bond market on Wall Street, is the first-person narrator. It is through Nick’s eyes that events unfold, and we, the readers, learn of Gatsby and his history as Nick does – in pieces, out of chronological order, so that the mystery of Gatsby’s origins is not disclosed until the end of the novel, after he has been murdered. Nick’s perceptions are often unclear, the meaning of the events he conveys frequently elusive, “Nick sees things unclearly because almost no relationship holds true” (Berman 2002: 90). The language is so marked by indefiniteness, subjectivity, and ellipsis that the reader is forced to seek a perspective that will provide meaning and clarity.

Nick’s own story is linked with that of Gatsby throughout: as Gatsby seeks to win back Daisy Buchanan, his love of five years earlier, Nick begins an affair with Daisy’s untrustworthy friend, Jordan Baker. He has become so caught up in Gatsby’s dream that he allows himself to pretend that Jordan can provide him with a taste of the romantic wonder that emanates so palpably from Gatsby. But Nick learns the truth about that world and its inhabitants, and breaks off his relationship with Jordan because he is in danger of becoming a “bad driver,” like the other representatives of the world of East Egg. The novel opens and closes with Nick’s judgment of people and events, both the first and last chapters soaring beyond the confines of traditional narrative, its triumphant style imparting definition to the life and meaning of the great Gatsby: in chapter 1, “Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men” (6), and in chapter 9,

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning –

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (141)

The chapters alternate between parties – big parties and small parties, each culminating in an act of violence that echoes the violence of the world of gangsters and thieves so prominently featured in newspapers of the period. That world is represented by Meyer Wolfshiem and Gatsby himself, who, despite his almost naive innocence about the true nature of Daisy Buchanan's "love" for him, is a successful member of the New York City underworld. That Gatsby has been forced by circumstances, notably his inability to succeed through diligence, honesty, and determination (as he learned quickly when he was left with nothing after working for Dan Cody), softens our perception of him, and adds another dimension to the sense of mystery that enshrouds him.

Despite the novel's many mysteries, it is filled with specific references to its time: the First World War, popular figures from the Broadway scene (Gilda Gray, Joe Frisco, David Belasco), advertisements, popular songs, movies, and especially the New York of gangsters and thieves that Prohibition had strengthened. Fitzgerald had met Arnold Rothstein, who became the model for Meyer Wolfshiem, explaining how this one meeting crystallized his own creative impulses: "in *Gatsby* I selected the stuff to fit a given mood or 'hauntedness' . . . rejecting in advance . . . all of the ordinary material for Long Island, big crooks, adultery theme and always starting from the *small* focal point that impressed me – my own meeting with Arnold Rothstein, for instance" (Fitzgerald 1963: 551). Fitzgerald, who would be credited with coining the term "Jazz Age," makes the 1920s into a "strange distillation of unlimited wonder and opportunity foundering on human excess and waste" (Lehan 1990: 10). But all of these evocations of the period swirl around the mystery of the man at the center of it all, Jay Gatsby, and, as bits of information are parceled out, the mysteries increase. Thus the author had a significant task in resolving the narrative. What do we make of the incremental violence? Tom Buchanan breaks Myrtle's nose, the cars collide in Gatsby's driveway, the individuals in each paragraph of the guest list (at the beginning of chapter 4) meet violent ends, and finally, double homicides are committed at the conclusion – by automobile (one of the artifacts of the new technological age, prominent throughout the novel) and by a gun – ironically, in the hands of a garage mechanic rather than the underworld figure whom he shoots.

At the center of the novel are concerns about class and status. Tom Buchanan's rant about the "dominant race" of "Nordics" losing control to "the colored races" (14) reflects a widespread fear that civilization was being threatened by ethnic and racial groups that were now becoming prominent forces in American society. Gatsby's quest for Daisy as the fulfillment of his romantic and spiritual dreams is linked with the efforts of other outsiders to achieve the success that only wealth and position

ensure. But of course, the tight circle of entrenched wealth is forever closed to those who were not born into it. Gatsby's tragic end is the only possible outcome for someone who truly believed that he could buy his way into that world, where Daisy stood "gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (117). The guests at Gatsby's party are *nouveau riche*, with names that reflect their immigrant origins, and even Nick, walking alone in New York City, recognizes how insurmountable is the wall that separates wealth from poverty – and how many sad young men, like Gatsby, will thus never find the happiness that might give meaning to their lives: "At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others – poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner – young clerks in the dusk wasting the most poignant moments of night and life" (47). Myrtle Wilson, like Gatsby, aspires to something better, and she excuses her adulterous affair with Tom Buchanan on the basis of social class. She remarks of her husband, George Wilson, "I married him because I thought he was a gentleman" (30), admitting that she had been deceived by the fine suit he had borrowed from a friend for the wedding. Her vitality as well as Gatsby's are doomed by their close encounters with a class marked by a deadly drift and inertia, a class that uses people and things for passing enjoyment and discards them without remorse. Fitzgerald sums up the destructiveness of the Buchanans and their cohorts, as Nick, having learned all that he needs to know about the terrible course of events, concludes: "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (139).

Gatsby is also about the creation of a self in a new world in which personal identity all too frequently may reside in the perceptions of others. Fitzgerald's emphasis on vision is symbolized by the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg in an advertising poster, brooding over the valley of ashes. Clearly, it is necessary to create a personal identity that can somehow overcome the new fluidity of social classes, to appear to belong even if one's efforts are doomed, as reflected in Tom's reference to Jay Gatsby as "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere," in Gatsby's origin as James Gatz, an aspiring young man who realizes that he must create a new self to exist in the world to which he seeks entrance, in the guests at the parties who are named yet remain unidentified by their names, in the boarder, Klipspringer, who has a name but whose identity is elusive, and even Nick Carraway's family "that invents a royal ancestry to better fit into a class system that the wealth from nineteenth-century expansion created" (Fitzgerald 1998: xxxiv).

Many of the early reviewers of the novel praised Fitzgerald's style, his language, his rhythmic and nuanced sentences, his use of symbolism and imagery that suggest – as the author intended – a kind of poetry. Fitzgerald once described his language as "blankets of excellent prose" (Fitzgerald 1963: 342) which is filled with images of flowers, and most important, with colors, like the "green" of the light at the end of Daisy's dock and the "fresh, green breast of the new world" (140) that beckoned to

the Dutch sailors who first arrived in the new world. As one critic has noted, Fitzgerald's use of a color often seems incongruous when linked with a particular object, like "yellow cocktail music" (Bryer 1984: 34). He also links nouns with unusual adjectives ("snub-nosed motor boat" (10)), and there is a recurring motif of impermanence suggested by such words as "drift," "innuendoes," and "murmurings," that suggest the shifting moral ground of the novel as well as the nature of the world in which it is set.

In a striking passage that conjures up echoes of religion in a dim, half-forgotten past, we understand the meaning of Gatsby's quest: it is to turn back the clock to the moment five years earlier when he experienced a golden moment that for him symbolized eternity, the moment when he wed his "unutterable visions" to Daisy's "perishable breath" and she "blossomed like a flower" (86–7) – the moment he *must* recapture, for he has forever embodied his spiritual vision in the material world: in the person of Daisy Buchanan, "whose voice suggests to him an eternal life inextricably associated with money" (Fitzgerald 1998: xxxiii). Time is at the center of the novel, as Nick realizes when he advises Gatsby that one can't bring back the past (Gatsby, of course, believes that he can), and Fitzgerald uses no fewer than 450 words related to time, notable in a novel whose chronology is so elusive. The language is so fluid and subtle, however, that those words blend unnoticed into the narrative flow.

Fitzgerald's combination of the language of indefiniteness and subjectivity contrasts forcefully with passages of soaring, rhythmic, and utterly controlled prose, suggesting the contradictions that have so intrigued readers and critics throughout the years. The very last line of the novel best expresses that contradiction: beating on, like "boats against the current" doomed to be "borne back ceaselessly into the past," suggests *both* the futility of our pursuit of our dreams, and the refusal, in the face of what should signify despair, to give up those dreams. For Gatsby, the pursuit is an act of heroism that his unsavory past can never erase. Indeed, Gatsby's quest leads to Nick's understanding of the events of the past summer and his judgment, in his final words to Gatsby, "They're a rotten crowd. . . . You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (120).

It is difficult to find one meaning in the novel as this discussion has indicated, but we can agree on several overriding concerns: it is about the nature of America as it developed in the post-Civil War era when the idealism inherent in the nation's founders was rejected by the ruthless settlers of the frontier, accompanied by the rise of the Robber Barons; it is about the worlds of East and West, not simply the communities adjacent to New York City, but two American worlds – the Middle West and the East and their conflicting values; it is about the corrupted world of the New York of the 1920s, the result of the betrayal of the vision – indeed, the dream – of those who first stepped ashore three centuries earlier, a dream symbolized by Gatsby's fruitless effort to recapture his own early dream.

But perhaps the most important concern in the novel, as expressed through Nick Carraway's slow evolution, is the search for moral order. At the start of his narrative (and we should not forget that but for Nick, we would know nothing of Gatsby and

the events of that summer), Nick says that when he returned from the East last summer, he wanted the world to be “in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever” (5). Nick has prided himself from the outset on suspending judgments, yet by the conclusion of the novel he has provided judgments on Gatsby, and on the Buchanans, and, most important, he has upheld the values of friendship and loyalty. In taking charge of Gatsby’s funeral, and performing the countless tasks after Gatsby’s death, he embodies a moral code that no longer exists in the world that he has come to know over that fateful summer. He has cleaned up the mess made by the Buchanans and, in the process, has told the reader all that he knows about Gatsby. In so doing, he has in fact salvaged Gatsby’s dream – at least for the readers of his narrative. And it is that dream that is at the core of the novel. However much we may argue with the many possible interpretations and meanings contained in the novel, we cannot ignore Gatsby’s dream – a dream that has kept the character and the novel alive for all of us throughout the decades since its publication. That dream transcends cultural and social divisions, for it is the dream of Everyman, not simply that of the Dutch sailors and of the settlers of America, but of every person who knows that each life must have a meaning and will not rest until it is found. That despite the inevitability of decline and death, the human spirit never ceases trying to pursue its destiny is the lesson of the novel. Somehow, if we continue to beat against the current, as Jay Gatsby did until the end, hoping to recapture our own lost illusions, we too will not have relinquished our dreams, and the capacity for hope and romantic readiness may live on as Gatsby’s does in Nick Carraway and in the readers of *The Great Gatsby*.

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Ford Madox Ford:
The Good Soldier
Sara Haslam

Introduction

The Good Soldier is worthy of a place in this book for several reasons. It is replete with the thrill of the new, in form and content; it is written by Ford Madox Ford, champion of all things modernist; it is vibrant with contemporary intellectual energies. In its wrestling with how the human subject comes to knowledge, *The Good Soldier* is allied to modernist investigations in philosophy, psychology and language. In its literal and figurative obsession with sex, from adultery to homosexuality to incest, it belongs to the era of Freud's emergence onto the British literary scene, and the ascendance of the New Woman – New Woman writers notoriously discussed “female sexuality and suppressed desire” (Nelson 2001: x). In its use of imagery and metaphor, often to do with sight, light, and energy, it is indebted to contemporary physics.

But Ford's novel does not always yield so neatly to analysis, particularly on an initial reading. As the two female protagonists do battle with one another, religion, class-consciousness and sexuality all supply motivational force. Geographical matters broaden Ford's scope, and competing American and European perspectives serve to complicate things further. Can it really be true, for example, as the narrator attests, that Americans “envisage” sexless marriages “without blinking” (Ford 1995: 58)? Form can prove to be as challenging as content in this respect. Pregnant with irony like my last example, and similarly reliant on visual imagery, the narrator muses as he comes to a close: “so there you have the pretty picture” (160). But this isn't so, and in more ways than the narrator knows. Even if that “you” has read the novel with care, because of its use of modernist time shifts the semantic picture is likely to remain hazy, perhaps obscure. You may not “have it” completely, or even at all. Close up, an imagistic carriage is needed to contain the coterie of “screaming hysterics” (12) of which he tells, and the picture cannot be described as pretty even from the vantage point offered by distance (his or ours). Aside from the subject of his story,

this might be because he in general sees with a pointillist's vision (17) – though he conjures up Rubens's *The Straw Hat* (c. 1625) on one occasion when eschewing this more modernist technique (22). In addition, his colors often stand in stark, glittering contrast to one another and do not blend pleasingly. In one scene, Florence wears a "very white hat," underneath her hair is "copper-coloured," her eyes "flash very blue" (22); later she is "running with a face whiter than paper and her hand on the black stuff over her heart" (75). There are other reasons too why a reader may not, in fact, "have the pretty picture" (or want it either), despite what we will learn about Ford's particularly visual kind of modernism.

Ancient epistemological debates as to the status of evidence gleaned by the senses were invested with renewed vigor by scientists and philosophers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Modernist writers, Virginia Woolf, James, Conrad, and T. S. Eliot amongst them, related these debates in theory and in practice to contemporary fiction and poetry. Virginia Woolf makes her position in this debate clear in the following famous statement, published in her essay "Modern Fiction" in 1919. Sense-impression is her goal, tracing the impact on the mind of an ordinary individual of an intensely affective variety of stimuli:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come . . . and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there. . . . Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit . . . ? (Woolf 1986: 160)

Ford's position might be said to be exemplified by *The Good Soldier*, which launches itself into the fray with its first, compelling, line, "this is the saddest story I ever heard" (9). Compounded by a dominant vocabulary that is highly dependent on visual imagery, as we have already begun to see ("so there you have the pretty picture"), the narrator's senses form our interpretive framework from the start. I have taken a thematic approach in this essay, investigating the pervasive sensuality of Ford's novel, but more crucially its relationship with the knowledge with which it has to deal. This is where things become more complicated than the Woolf quotation might imply. Dowell's senses form our interpretive framework: how far we trust them is a matter for Ford, and for modernism more generally too. Attention to sight and hearing forms the majority of my argument; touch and smell figure too.

Plot and Publication

John Dowell, the American narrator of the text (in a nice pun, he, "Do-well," is from Philadelphia), has Puritan roots. With his wife Florence, who suffers from a heart condition, he meets an English couple, Edward and Leonora Ashburnham, while

taking the waters in Continental Europe. The two couples are at Nauheim when they meet in 1904. Ashburnham impresses Dowell with his physical presence; he is the “Good Soldier” of the title. The couples are friends for nine years, during which time Florence and Edward have an affair, and take other lovers too. Leonora tries to apprise Dowell of the state of things soon after they meet, on a joint trip to Marburg, but he thinks that her distress is caused solely by the fact that she is a Catholic in a Protestant stronghold, being taunted by Florence. Dowell does eventually discover Florence’s duplicity; she does not have “a heart” at all (and Ford would have intended the obvious pun), but uses the fact of their separate bedrooms to take other men into hers. On the night she sees herself as discovered by her husband, the same night that she sees herself as replaced in Ashburnham’s affections, Florence commits suicide. The woman who supplants her, Nancy Rufford, is the Ashburnhams’ ward. She is sent away from Bramshaw Teleragh, the Ashburnhams’ Hampshire house. Dowell accompanies her and Edward to the train station, and, shortly afterwards, Edward cuts his own throat. As the novel concludes, the hypocrisy of the upper-class “game” of sexual infidelity has been exposed. Edward and Florence are dead, Nancy is mad; Dowell compares the destruction with the “sack of a city” or the “falling to pieces of a people” (11).

Ford traces some real-life events that he transformed into the novel in a volume of his cultural criticism, *The Spirit of the People*, in 1907. “I stayed at the house of a married couple one summer,” he writes. “Husband and wife were both extremely nice people – ‘good people,’ as the English phrase is. There was also living in the house a young girl, the ward of the husband, and between him and her an attachment had grown up. It was arranged that Miss W— would take a trip around the world. The only suspicion that things were not of their ordinary train was that the night before the parting P— said to me: “I wish you’d drive to the station with us to-morrow morning.” He was, in short, afraid of a “scene” (148–50). The imagined impact of that scene is played out in Ford’s conclusion to *The Good Soldier*. Displaying modernist credentials, Ford published three and a half chapters of his novel in the Vorticist magazine *Blast* – edited by Wyndham Lewis – on June 20, 1914 under the title *The Saddest Story* (Ford was persuaded to change it because of the outbreak of war). The full novel appeared as *The Good Soldier* in March 1915, published by John Lane. Reviews “were sparse and mixed,” writes Martin Stannard, with positive receptions from the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Observer*, and Rebecca West in the *Daily News* (Ford 1995: ix). Later analyses, from writers such as Graham Greene and A. S. Byatt, have helped to resituate the novel at the centre of modernism’s literary output.

Sense Perception

Joseph Conrad’s preface to *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* (1897) is often taken as a manifesto for early modernism (see Kolocotroni, Goldman, and Taxidou 1998, or

Levenson 1984). It can be compared with Woolf's later "Modern Fiction," by way of content. In his preface, Conrad argues that the artist's quest (which despite my initial contextual remarks he opposes to the quest of the thinker, and the scientist) is the subjective rendering of every aspect of the visible universe. "There is not a place of splendour or a dark corner of the earth," writes Conrad, "that does not deserve, if only a passing glance of wonder and pity." "All art appeals to the senses," he continues; "my task is before all to make you see" (Conrad 1963: 12–13). Ford collaborated on novels with Conrad, beginning with *The Inheritors* in 1901, and with him developed a modernist theory of Impressionism (see chapter 21, "Literary Impressionism") that they would use in their novels. Impressionism to both writers was about developing the ability to "make you see" as a reader, with the eyes of the imagination: "it's the business of a novelist to make you see things clearly" is how Ford puts it in *The Good Soldier* (76). The phraseology here is provocative and deliberate; these writers want a reader to see, feelingly, what could not be seen before. The darkness of Conrad's corner, into which the reader is to look, might be to do simply with ignorance, or with repression, or with lack of empathetic imagination. Whatever its cause, its preponderance is to be challenged by the new, dedicated light of the modernist novelist.

John Dowell's aim, as narrator, is to give the reader an "all round impression" of the events which make up his story (101). Evocative of the contemporary Cubist experiments of Picasso and Braque, as well as of the doctrine of Impressionism (it sounds as though Conrad would approve of him), Dowell is trying to tell us that he will show us the story from all angles; every perspective will be revealed and nothing will remain hidden. "And now, I suppose I must give you Leonora's side of the case," he says, a little faintheartedly, after giving us Edward's (117). In order to be able to do this, he would have to adopt Leonora's visual technique. She looks at Dowell at the start of the novel with an all-round "lighthouse" stare (29) – prefiguring the central motif in that later modernist novel, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) – which Ford spends nearly a page describing. She does manage to see from every angle, and has light on her side too. But if Dowell cannot adopt her facility, then he might learn from his wife instead. Florence has the "seeing eye," an acute and restless skill which means, he tells us, that she never has to visit a new place more than once (16). After borrowing either of the women's visual techniques, Dowell would have to process his sense-impression, interpret it subjectively, before passing it in all its illuminating glory on to his reader. And this is where Dowell gets into difficulties (in ways implied by my plot summary), and simultaneously becomes one of those modernist accoutrements, an "unreliable narrator," a very different ideal from that in Conrad's preface.

Both Florence and Leonora know what to make of the things they see. A park's shadows are as nothing to Florence's capabilities, and she sees Edward in the dark with Nancy, killing herself as a result – so sure is she that her eyes have told her that a new affair looms (77). Equally keen, when Leonora sees Florence place a finger on Edward's wrist, she knows it means they are lovers. There is little in this novel to be

seen, and known, that is not to do with sex (and this is why critics often adopt a Freudian perspective in their analysis of the text). When Dowell, amazed, and desperate, at the story he has told, asks himself about his wife's adulterous experience, he chooses his words appropriately: "how can [Florence] have known what she knew? How could she have got to know it? To know it so fully?" (12). Leonora's lighthouse stare at Dowell also reveals similar information, but it sets Dowell apart from all other characters in the novel and renders him unreliable too. It tells her that he is not a sexual threat, and is, indeed, not a sexual man (for him, appetites are to do only with food (38)). Immediately she begins to treat him, and not his wife, as the invalid of the partnership (remember that Florence is ostensibly ill). Our inference must be that Dowell is not correctly impressed by, and is thus unable to interpret, much of what he sees because sex itself makes no impression on him. After all, Dowell also sees Florence touch Edward's wrist, but the act's significance is lost on him, and thus, of course, initially on his reader too. We are in the hands of a narrator that Ford cannot use to cast any direct (or even close to objective) light, because of a lack of sexual status. Knowledge and experience are inextricably linked; the former is based on the latter and abstractions are without merit. If Ford had chosen Leonora to tell this tale, we can extrapolate, our conceptual journey would have been less hesitant and fragmented than it is.

Despite this focus on Dowell's lack of vision, when he dreams he does see things which he relates clearly and confidently. It is left to his unconscious mind alone to show him pictorial representations of his jealousy and rage (53); he also is able to identify the repression of his instinct (83). Ford thus indicates the existence of ways of knowing that do not, necessarily, depend on physical experience. But Dowell is prevented from using these ways of knowing by their buried and protracted nature. As he tells us his story, the sight of the picture that we receive is always compromised, reflected off the harsh patina of repressed instinct that informs his relationship with the world. Though Ford's novel is not as interested in sense perception gleaned by means other than the visual, Dowell's hearing is similarly challenged.

Dowell's understanding of events *is* developed throughout the novel as he learns information from others. What his eyes have not been able to tell him, his ears can, to a degree, make up for as he is taken into confidence by Leonora in particular. Retrospectively, then, his knowledge is progressed; his sights are explained and contextualized in narrative. But when he is not treated to others' confessions, his hearing proves to be as remiss as his sight, particularly, as we might surmise, when the issues at stake are sexual ones. He cannot hear Florence's lovers as they arrive and leave, nor when they are in her bedroom, even though he is charged with having to be ready to enter it to administer life-saving drugs should her heart give out. Living at Bramshaw Teleragh at the end of the novel, he remains unaware of the nocturnal comings and goings, and the vigils and telephone calls, of its inhabitants. When an acquaintance tells him that the last time he saw Florence it was coming out of another man's bedroom, he can't apply this information to his relationship with Florence to the extent that it teaches him anything else about it (72). Most crucially,

perhaps, on the final page of the novel, Edward whispers something that Dowell does not catch, and therefore cannot tell us. In an earlier version of the novel Ford made Dowell hear as Edward said, on looking up to Heaven, "Girl I will wait for you there," implying an imminent attempt at suicide (162 n. 3). But Ford altered it in the published version. Why? In possession of information that would more definitely than Edward's face have indicated his intention for suicide (and how wrong Dowell has been before in the way he interpreted sights, and words too), Dowell would have found it harder to return to the house as he did. Though he can imply he knew Edward was going to kill himself because of the way he looked at him (a wild claim in itself, even for someone with a better record), and his farewell remark, hindsight is less damning than it would be if he had actually heard what Edward whispered, as he did in the earlier draft. More convincing to me, though, is the supposition that Ford is indicating once more the tenuousness of Dowell's relationship with his senses. Edward's uncaught whisper is a highly dramatic illustration of Dowell's sensory, and thus epistemological, confusion.

Perhaps most interesting in formal terms, in relation to what Dowell does or does not hear, are his provocative remarks to his imagined listener. (He invokes the oral tradition early on, and all associated doubts of transmission, but actually he writes his narrative down of course (15, 149).) When he does address his listener/reader, he laments not being able to hear him or her responding to the things he says (17, 102, 129); looking for that response he perseveres through the silence with which he is met. Elsewhere it becomes apparent that Dowell is critically aware of the nature of his listeners: he says Leonora listens like his mother, or like his doctor (40). Is the listener he condemns for that punishing silence some combination of the two? It could well be a version of the talking cure that Dowell envisages as, in his imagination, he sits himself down to tell his tale. A therapeutic, or analytic, listener might be one who can assist him in getting the sight of the catastrophic break-up of their "four-square coterie" out of his head, for, at the end of his tale, once Dowell knows and sees it all, he wishes that he didn't. Whatever the silence indicates to him about his listener, it does not render him silent in his turn. Perhaps, as he continues with his tale, he remains hopeful that some kind of healing response will be forthcoming.

In ways like this, speech is intricately related to both sight and hearing in this novel. The things Dowell tells his reader/listener, or tells others in Ford's novel, are dependent on where he is in his accrual of knowledge. This process is an attenuated one, as the years during which the events of the novel take place seem to mean few additions to it, and then, once the suicides have begun, he starts to comprehend and can in turn use his own words to relate what it is he learns. His words spill out all at once then, looking back over the span of the decade. What he says in the real time of the novel is useful to us only in the sense that it is evidently incomplete – as at the scene at Marburg.

I want to conclude this section by turning briefly to Dowell's employment of smell. Typically, this sense fails him too. Florence kills herself with "prussic acid" (or cyanide). The phial that contains it is in her hand when she is discovered, and

Dowell recognizes it because it has traveled with him throughout his married life as, supposedly, the container for the nitrate of amyl that Florence would need, *in extremis*, for her heart condition. Dowell asks himself how he could have known that this phial did not contain what he imagined it did “during all the years of his married life” (75). The answer is that the substances smell entirely different.

The Reasons for Ford’s Choice

Dowell, hampered by sensory deprivations of the kind I have detailed, is not our narrator by accident, despite what we have learned about the aims of modernist fiction in shedding light into dark corners. The light that is shed by him may not be brilliant; it is filtered instead through an astonishingly life-like consciousness, formed by this peculiarly stunted subjectivity and active repression. Ford chose Dowell to tell his modernist tale because of this subjectivity, because of what Dowell, in all his incapacities, has to say about the modern condition. In the dramatic extent of his subjectivity, in the way Ford has drawn his doubts and ignorances and inabilities, I think we are supposed to witness the sheer distance from objectivity that informs his character, and perhaps many others drawn by modernist novelists. Objectivity, as I have indicated, was rarely an Impressionist, or a modernist, ideal (although T. S. Eliot’s essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919) provides a well-known explication of something like this aim, and it could helpfully be read in conjunction with the understanding of modernism I have outlined here), and both Impressionism and modernism are often characterized as remorseless in their privileging of the individual instead. The earlier quotation from Woolf shows how this might be so (and Michael Bell tells us that part of the movement away from the nineteenth century was to do with the dislodging of science as “objective truth” (Bell 1999: 14).)

Affected by gaps in his knowledge and in his relationship with the world, Dowell tells a faltering tale about an acutely painful existence. He does so with a nervous energy bred of his half-ignorance, fed by it in fact. Ford knew that energy was constant. “No force is ever lost,” he wrote in 1910, “and the ripple raised by a stone, striking upon the bank of a pool, goes on communicating its force for ever and ever throughout space and throughout eternity” (Ford 1910: 299–300). The energy which Dowell doesn’t express sexually has to go somewhere, and while some of it goes into those frustrated letters to *The Times* about the trains not running on time (38), more of it is used to animate gaps and confusions, doubts and suspicions, making us aware of the darkest places of human consciousness. His visual inadequacy, his silence, and his deafness, may not be there to be trusted, but they communicate just the same. In the way it sheds light into dark corners, Ford’s novel makes us work with fragments, with kaleidoscopic rather than brilliant light. As an illustration of affective subjectivity, this methodology is entirely true to the modernism dear to Ford and Conrad. It is advised in other ways too, for, visualizing one aspect at a time, tentatively, we

learn about a frighteningly destructive vision of sexuality, in which incest and torturing infidelity loom large. Seeing in the dark can extract a high price, as Florence discovered when she “got it in the face” (77) and committed suicide as a result. It is this that I indicated in my introduction when I suggested that we may not “have the pretty picture,” because we do not, actually, want it, and nor is civilization ready for it. When sex is the matter at hand, Ford may be saying, piece by piece, in shadow and in light, is the way to see, and to tell, a story.

Theorizing this position, and in conclusion to this essay, I want to suggest that *The Good Soldier* acts in particular to accelerate modernism’s attention to the different levels of consciousness, and ways of knowing, that are displayed by the human subject. Ford’s modernism anticipates Woolf’s, not only in its use of visual imagery, but also in its desire to represent the variety of methods by which we enact ourselves, and can perhaps be understood. Dowell manifests this variety, and, in some ways as a consequence, is an extreme example of the unreliable narrator. He describes a development from Conrad’s Marlow, say, in this respect (see chapter 34, “Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*”), because of the ways in which his doubts are bound to his identity as well as to the tale he has to tell. And so *The Good Soldier* can also be said to heighten the sense of chaos and fragmentation identified by many commentators as endemic to modernist literature. Offering treatment, as it does, of sexuality, psychology, time, epistemology, and suicide, it is no wonder that the *Morning Post* made the prediction (April 5, 1915: 2) that Ford’s great novel would have “no indifferent readers.”

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The Poetry of H. D.

Diana Collecott

“Poets are useless” is the challenge H. D. confronts in the first volume of her *War Trilogy*. “So what good are your scribblings?” asks the same mocking voice, and the poet replies: “this – we take them with us / beyond death” (H. D. 1983: 518–19).

As an American by birth, who had acquired British citizenship in 1914 following her short-lived marriage to Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle chose to remain in England throughout the Second World War – “here, where people first read my poetry.” (This, despite “divided loyalties” as a born republican in the midst of a royalist revival, and as a descendant of the European diaspora relocated at a centre of empire). During the war years, while her partner, the British writer Bryher, was tramping the shattered City to piece together remnants of Shakespeare’s London, Mrs. Aldington was making pilgrimages to Chelsea, to trace the remains of the Moravian community that had settled there, as in her native Pennsylvania, in the eighteenth century.

The pacifism and mysticism of Moravian Christianity is vital to the mature poetry of H. D. It accounts for the tone and content of much of her *Trilogy* (as the three poems have come to be known by successive editors and critics), which is both biblical and revisionary. This long poem culminates in the apocryphal story of Kaspar – one of the three magi at Christ’s birth – retold by a 1940s feminist, who foresaw that the post-war world would be “a new era for Woman.” H. D.’s wartime defense of poetry is strictly spiritual, in its invocation of both Old and New Testaments:

... remember, O Sword,
 you are the younger brother, the latter-born,
 ...
in the beginning was the Word.

At the same time, she invokes pagan antecedents – the worlds of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, with which she was familiar through study and travel – creating the kind of cultural conjunction achieved by Milton in *Paradise Lost*:

. . . Mercury, Hermes, Thoth
invented the script, letters, palette;
the indicated flute or lyre-notes
on papyrus and parchment
are magic, indelibly stamped
on the atmosphere . . .”

(H. D. 1983: 519)

The *Trilogy* begins in this spirit of synthesis, and this enunciation of artistry transcending time. The first lines of “The Walls Do Not Fall” are specifically located in Lowndes Square, SW, where H. D. spent the war years in a small flat, shared with Bryher. Beneath the dedication, “To Bryher / for Karnak 1923 / from London 1942,” we read:

An incident here and there,
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square:

(H. D. 1983: 509)

Immediately, the scene shifts to Egypt, which the two women had visited almost twenty years before, and to verses that initiate the themes of inscription and prophecy which will be sustained throughout the *Trilogy*. They anticipate the moment in the second volume, when the speaker sees “Holy Wisdom” as an iconic female figure who

carries a book but it is not
the tome of ancient wisdom,
the pages, I imagine, are the blank pages
of the unwritten volume of the new.

(H. D. 1983: 568–70)

This dream-vision occurs in a doorway “where . . . / there was no door” (H. D. 1983: 562), an ambivalent liminal state that is also anticipated in volume 1 where, by smooth enjambements, the ruined temples of Karnak and Luxor are connected to the evacuated buildings of a bombed modern city:

there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there as here, there are no doors:
the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain falls here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures:

(H. D. 1983: 509)

Then, with an abruptness imitated by repeated colons in H. D.'s script, the scene jumps cinematically to the Roman world, under stress from volcanic eruption: "Pompeii has nothing to teach us . . ." (H. D. 1983: 510). The pronoun has moved too, within twenty lines, from the demotic "your (and my)" of the poem's opening verses, to the "us" of a collective identity shared by those who survived the London Blitz of 1940–1: "we passed the flame: we wonder / what saved us? what for?" (H. D. 1983: 511). There is a difference between this common "we" of poem 1 and the elite "we" of the poets and intellectuals in poem 8: "we, authentic relic, / bearers of the secret wisdom" (H. D. 1983: 517).

It was in the vatic mode of this "inner band / . . . of the initiate" that H. D. participated in a wartime reading to raise funds for the Free French forces. On the same platform were John Masefield (the Poet Laureate), Walter de la Mare, the Hon. Vita Sackville-West, Edith Sitwell, Lady Dorothy Wellesley, and T. S. Eliot. It will be noted that this poetic elite was also a social elite, at an event in the West End of London organized by Osbert Sitwell and patronized by the Queen. H. D. read "Ancient Wisdom Speaks" (H. D. 1983: 482–4), a paean to endurance and survival close in spirit to parts of the *Trilogy*; T. S. Eliot read "What the Thunder Said," a magisterial message of peace and renewal from the end of *The Waste Land*. The trajectories of these two poets, both then in the ascendant, intersect on this date, April 14, 1943, as they had done during the First World War, when both were American expatriates living in London. During the first nine months of 1940, Eliot and H. D. were witnessing war in the air – and writing – within a mile of each other, in Kensington and Knightsbridge. H. D. was forbidden to use her manual typewriter during air raids, because it sounded like gunfire and alarmed the local Civil Defence patrols; Eliot served his turn as an Air Raid Warden in Emperor's Gate.

Cyrena Pondrom has suggested that the three books of H. D.'s *Trilogy* (published successively in 1944, 1945, and 1946) respond radically to Eliot's *Four Quartets* (published successively in 1940, 1941, 1941 again, and 1942), to the extent that "key poems of vision in 'Tribute to the Angels' rewrite Eliot's vision in 'Little Gidding'" (Pondrom 1987–8: 156). She has also noticed the thematic resonances between the second movement of this last quartet, and the opening poem of H. D.'s first volume, "The Walls Do Not Fall." Generally unnoticed is the prosodic resonance in their common choice of *terza rima* for these key passages. The medium of Dante's *Divina Commedia* inscribes both poets in the tradition of the long poem that is both historical and visionary, both discursive and iconographic; but it also adds to the risks taken by modernists newly engaged with major issues of peace and war, spiritual quest and personal survival. As one might expect, the same medium makes manifest the difference in style between these poets, which may well correlate with their difference in gender.

In his celebrated evocation of silent streets after a night of air raids, Eliot introduces an insistent anapaestic rhythm into Dante's triads, together with almost menacing half-rhyme:

In the uncertain hour before the morning
 Near the ending of interminable night
 At the recurrent end of the unending
 After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
 Had passed below the horizon of his homing
 While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin . . .
 (Eliot 1969: 193)

If Eliot's metric is intentionally heavy-footed, as he and his "familiar compound ghost . . . trod the pavement in a dead patrol," H. D.'s adaptation of her own free verse cadences to Dante's measure combines, in Alicia Ostriker's view, "forward momentum with lightness and hesitation" (Ostriker 1987–8: 148). For this critic, such qualities correlate with the woman poet's sense of her undertaking at the outset of "a major philosophical poem" (Ostriker 1987–8: 151). What most distinguishes the opening poem of *Trilogy*, however, is not hesitation but variegation: subtle gradations of sound and hue that connect this project with what I have identified elsewhere as the Sapphic aesthetic (Collecott 1999: 138–41).

mist and mist-grey, no colour,
 still the Luxor bee, chick and hare
 pursue unalterable purpose

 in green, rose-red, lapis;
 they continue to prophesy
 from the stone papyrus:
 (H. D. 1983: 509)

Where Eliot deploys alliteration for authority and emphasis, H. D. playfully subsumes repeated consonants in patterns of assonance: *pursue . . . purpose . . . lapis . . . prophesy . . . papyrus*. In sequences such as these, shifting accents syncopate the beat: *no-colour . . . rose-red . . . continue . . . stone*. She is, as Ostriker says, "a mistress of the inconspicuous off-rhyme" (Ostriker 1987–8: 149): *gone . . . guns; your . . . colour; here . . . hare; no doors . . . endures*. Breath matters above all to this "poem, / writ in the air" (H. D. 1983: 442), where sound is continually transformed into sense and openness is both the means of writing and its meaning:

ruin everywhere, yet as the fallen roof
 leaves the sealed room / open to the air,
 . . .
 so, through our desolation,
 thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us . . .
 (H. D. 1983: 510)

H. D. and Eliot first met on Sunday May 20, 1917, in her Bloomsbury room. H. D. had taken over the literary editorship of the *Egoist* from her husband, when he joined

the army in 1916; now Eliot was taking over from her. He wrote his mother that his colleagues were the *Egoist's* owner and editor-in-chief, whom he described as "a Miss Weaver, a funny little spinster" and "a Mrs. Aldington, better known as 'H. D.', a poetess" (Eliot 1988: 181). It was Ezra Pound who had recommended Eliot to Harriet Shaw Weaver, as he had recommended Richard Aldington before him. It was also Pound who, in 1912, had sent to *Poetry* (Chicago) the first of Hilda Doolittle's poems to be published, over the writing signature "H. D., *Imagiste*." His letter to *Poetry's* editor, Harriet Monroe, reports: "I've had luck again, and am sending you some modern stuff by an American, I say modern, for it is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic . . ." (Pound 1982: 11).

Only two years later, Pound was announcing a new discovery, in similar terms, writing to Harriet Monroe of T. S. Eliot: "He is the only American I know who has . . . actually trained himself *and* modernized himself *on his own* . . ." (Pound 1982: 40). In this way, H. D.'s poetry was effectively displaced by Eliot's in the annals of Anglo-American modernism, much as she was literally displaced by him in the offices of the *Egoist*. On both fronts, the consequences were far-reaching: the appearance of H. D.'s poems in that magazine's pages, almost continuous from early 1914 to mid-1917, abruptly ceased. Like the speaker of "Eurydice," the last of the poems to appear in the *Egoist*, H. D. went underground.

The poet had made her debut only a year before, with *Sea Garden*, exemplifying the lucidity and concision that gained her the title of "the perfect Imagist" (Sinclair 1927: 462). Also in 1916, she published much-praised translations from Euripides, which prepared H. D. for the dramatic and narrative work that would spring forth as she emerged from Imagism. If her male colleagues resisted that emergence, female colleagues encouraged her. Marianne Moore and May Sinclair were in no doubt about the evidence of sustained talent and capacity for transformation in H. D.'s *Collected Poems* of 1925: Moore praised the "secure, advancing exactness of thought and of speech" (Moore 1925: 112), while Sinclair drew attention to an immeasurable gain in "depth and range" (Sinclair 1927: 462). This volume included all the poems from *Sea Garden* (1916) and H. D.'s subsequent books, *Hymen* (1921) and *Heliadora* (1924), together with two transitional sections. These were a group of translations from ancient Greek, and *The God*, which consisted of poems published between 1913 and 1917, but never gathered into a separate volume.

That phantom volume, *The God*, sums up the themes and energies of H. D.'s earlier work and projects them forward into what Sinclair called the "profounder vision" of her middle and later periods. Short poems like "Oread," "The Pool," "Hermonax," and "Sitalkas," which recalled to Sinclair the "pure Imagism" of *Sea Garden*, share its conflicted setting of shore and sea and its erotic conjunction of sweet and salt. "Moonrise" and "Orion Dead" carry over from the earlier volume the Artemisian motifs of "Pursuit" and "Huntress," reminding us that H. D.'s talent was never limited to lyric, but always thrust toward narrative and dramatic modes. The parenthesis "(Artemis speaks)" after the title "Orion Dead" is a sign that the "highly activated feelings" that Rachel DuPlessis registers behind the Greek names and

legendary characters of H. D.'s poetry are vocalized in intense soliloquies (DuPlessis 1986: 13). "Heliadora," "Nossis," "Thetis," and Penelope in "At Ithaca" set the tone of *Heliadora*, following the extended dramatic monologues of "Pygmalion" and "Eurydice" in *The God*, and preparing us for the "heroic voice" of *Helen in Egypt* (H. D. 1985: 176).

The questing, and questioning, "I" is a typical feature of these poems. The title-poem "The God" starts with a repeated "I asked" (H. D. 1983: 45). The mortal's interrogation of a deity who combines attributes of Zeus and Dionysus turns on the god's power to intervene in human life, to alter the life of the individual. The poem mimics this transformation of the protagonist from "a shell / emptied of life" to one flush with color: "wine-red, / . . . cyclamen-red, colour of the last grapes" (H. D. 1983: 46–7). Opposite features of *Sea Garden* – "shrivelled seeds," "masses" of flowers (H. D. 1983: 10, 30) – are here integrated, not simply with states of being, but with trajectories of mind and body. "Adonis" achieves this most tellingly; its movement is evident in a single stanza:

each of us like you
has died once,
each of us has crossed an old wood-path
and found the winter leaves
so golden in the sun-fire
that even the live wood-flowers
were dark.

(H. D. 1983: 47)

After the excited, ecstatic mode of the earlier verse, we hear here the clear and steady tones of later, little-known poems such as "Sigil":

Now let the cycle sweep us here and there,
we will not struggle,
somewhere,
under a forest-ledge,
a wild white pear
will blossom . . .

(H. D. 1983: 414)

The route between these achieved moments of lyric grace led H. D. through the kind of self-questioning that tortures the aspirant in Keats's "Fall of Hyperion." H. D. vividly dramatizes this struggle in "Pygmalion," transposing her art of poetry to his art of sculpture, and tracking the artist's descent from arrogance to despair:

I made image after image for my use,
. . .
I made god upon god

step from the cold rock,
 . . .
 and now what is it that has come to pass?
 . . .
 . . . each of the gods, perfect,
 cries out from a perfect throat:
you are useless . . .

(H. D. 1983: 49–50)

“Pygmalion” does not resolve such issues but ends, as it began, with profound questions that the speaker turns on himself. *The God* is full of cries and questions – from the passionate outcry of “Eurydice” to the suicidal cry of an “Oread” out of Wilde. Even its shortest poem, “The Pool,” begins with a question – “Are you alive?” – and ends with one: “What are you . . . ?” (H. D. 1983: 56). By contrast, “Adonis” is in the vocative mode, and looks forward to the rapture of *Hymen*, with its celebration of Apollo in “Evadne” and its “Song,” “You are as gold . . .” (H. D. 1983: 132–3). Just as “Sea Rose” is the key poem of *Sea Garden*, giving a Sapphic signature to the start of H. D.’s poetic career, so “Adonis” is a key to the more complex mode of H. D.’s “new birth” (Sinclair 1927: 462) in *The God*.

True to her Romantic sympathies, H. D. admired W. B. Yeats and followed his practice of carefully constructing each volume of poems. Eileen Gregory has established the “affective coherence” of *Sea Garden* (Gregory 1990: 139–40), and we know that H. D. conceived of *Hymen* as a “sequence.” In planning *The God* for her first *Collected Poems*, H. D. deliberately disrupted the order in which the poems appeared in periodicals or anthologies and even their original groupings. Hence a series of poems published in the *Egoist* in 1917 (“The God,” “Adonis,” “Pygmalion,” “Eurydice”) are placed before six poems published from 1913 to 1915 (“Oread,” “The Pool,” “Moonrise,” “Orion Dead,” “Hermonax,” and “Sitalkas”). Whereas “Oread” and “Orion Dead” (originally titled “Incantation”) had appeared together in 1914, the diminutive “Oread” now follows on the heels of Eurydice’s long stride and “Sitalkas” (the earliest poem in the group, published in the *New Freewoman* in 1913) is the penultimate poem in *The God*. As a result, I have argued, the whole volume has a dynamic structure analogous to a musical composition or a dramatic text (Collecott 1999: 144–5).

The last poem of this phantom volume, “Tribute,” despite its classical setting, is a long critique of contemporary commercialism and militarism, dating from 1916. Its position replicates that of a similar poem, “Cities,” at the end of her first volume, bearing out Robert Duncan’s comment on it: “She had only a handful of Imagist poems; she ends up *Sea Garden* with a long poem that shows she’s always . . . wanting to write a long poem and a poem that goes toward narrative” (Duncan 1985: 24). By reading *backward* into H. D.’s early work from her mature poetry – *Trilogy*, *Helen in Egypt*, and *Hermetic Definition* – rather than *forward* from “H. D., *Imagiste*,” Duncan alerts us to the strengths that are increasingly evident as the poet moved out of the initial Imagist phase. The reluctance of Pound and his followers to acknowledge this

movement as development rather than “repetition” (Pound 1982: 114) means that May Sinclair’s recognition that in 1917 H. D. was undergoing a vivid transition which would prepare her for the later, greater work, has been widely ignored.

Many years later, “Eurydice” was disinterred from *The God* and included in the posthumous *Collected Poems: 1912–1944*. This volume was edited by Louis Martz of Yale University (where the bulk of H. D.’s manuscripts remained after her death in 1961). It reprints the *Collected Poems* of 1925, together with a subsequent volume *Red Roses for Bronze* (1931), two hundred pages of previously “Uncollected and Unpublished Poems” from the same period, and the complete text of the *Trilogy*. Generated by the rediscovery of H. D. by feminist poets, critics and scholars in the last decades of the twentieth century, the *Collected Poems* of 1983 is thus a significant tome, which registers the belatedness of a modernist poet unavailable except in partial selections for over forty years. It nevertheless represents only half of H. D.’s poetic output, arresting her in mid-career.

A second volume of *Collected Poems*, covering the years 1954–61, would include the long poem she called her Cantos, *Helen in Egypt* (first published 1961); *Vale Ave* (first published 1982); and the final powerful triad: *Sagesse*, *Winter Love*, and *Hermetic Definition* (all three published as *Hermetic Definition* in 1971). Together, these amount to almost 500 pages largely missing from the modernist canon; combined with the 600-odd pages of *Collected Poems, 1912–1944*, this represents a formidable body of poetry, even before H. D.’s many novels, essays, short stories, and plays are considered. Readers and critics have been slow to recognize this poet’s effort to struggle out of the chrysalis of “H. D., *Imagiste*” and the creative energy that forced her to obey the same, stern goddess who spoke to Sappho:

why must I write?
 you would not care for this,
 but She draws the veil aside,
 unbinds my eyes,
 commands,
 write, write or die.

(H. D. 1971: 7)

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Langston Hughes:
Fine Clothes to the Jew
 Edward Brunner

Always controversial, Langston Hughes made one of his most controversial decisions early in his career. In January 1927, he published *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, his second collection of poetry. Eleven months earlier, Alfred A. Knopf had published Hughes's first book, *The Weary Blues*, to a gratifying level of acclaim. But this second book was a disappointment to all but a handful of his followers, and for many it was worse than disappointing – it was a scandal, an outrage, a step back from respectability. Sales of the book, Hughes's biographer Arnold Rampersad reports, would always remain among the least of all Hughes's publications. The collection was in every way a provocation. Its startling title was disarming even in the openly racist 1920s where "Jew" was a casual term of disapproval. Its poems were notably *unpoetic*. Most were written in a crude black dialect, and many used a form directly borrowed from the blues. Yet the collection was a crucial turning point not only in Hughes's career but in the trajectory of the writers in the Harlem Renaissance. By no means a sensationalized portrayal of African-American life, it is instead an innovative presentation of the emotional landscape of the urban black community in America. And it is a particularly subtle record distinguished by its sensitivity to the tactics employed by those who must learn to survive within a racist culture. Most impressively, its poems retain for today's reader a sinister aura of danger and mystery.

Nothing in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* was as startling to its first readers as its exploitation of the newly popular form known as "the Blues." All of the writings in the first and the last of the collection's six sections – seventeen poems – appear to be nothing less than direct transcriptions of blues lyrics:

Homesick blues, Lawd,
 'S terrible thing to have. . . .
 To keep from cryin'
 I opens ma mouth an' laughs.
 (Hughes 1927: 24)

Although serious poetry based on the blues form would be honorably developed in the mid-1930s by left-wing poets like Muriel Rukeyser, Sol Funaroff, and Sterling A. Brown, there was nothing literary about the blues in the 1920s. If anything, the “blues craze” of the period was understood to be a phenomenon of mass culture, ignited by Mamie Smith’s surprise hit, “Crazy Blues,” issued in 1920 by a fledgling recording industry that was just beginning to market itself to black consumers. (Recordings guaranteed the blues would explode into a market far beyond just those who could read the sheet music like “Memphis Blues” (1912) that was published by W. C. Handy, self-proclaimed “Father of the Blues” in his 1941 autobiography.)

The degree of outrage that greeted Hughes and his blues-based poetry is difficult to appreciate today when the blues, fully assimilated to the American musical heritage, is no longer regarded as a violent interloper. (That role has now been assigned to another African-American invention, rap.) A sharp sense of betrayal is evident in the fury of the book reviews in the black press that labeled Hughes a “sewer-dweller” (New York *Amsterdam News*), that derided his blues-based poems as “piffing trash” (*Pittsburgh Courier*) and that dismissed the entire collection as “unsanitary, insipid, and repulsing” (Chicago *Whip*); “it is questionable,” writes Rampersad, “whether any book of American poetry, other than *Leaves of Grass*, had ever been greeted so contemptuously” (Rampersad 1993: 60–1). Especially to an older generation of African-American intellectuals, heavily invested in the Spiritual as an emblem of black sensibility, the blues was commercial junk.

Hughes’s second book breached decorum in other ways. As ambitious as Harlem Renaissance poets were, they usually confined themselves to traditional forms. For Countee Cullen, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Claude McKay, it was a political act just to write a sonnet. Their point was to demonstrate that African-American experience could easily appear within a prosodic framework that had been developed by Shakespeare, extended by Milton, and employed by Keats. In their polished iambic pentameter lines, dialect certainly had no place. When earlier writers used dialect, like James Weldon Johnson in *Fifty Years* (1917), it was a device for capturing a rural sensibility. To summon a glimpse of a rapidly fading past, Johnson could write in “Dat Gal o’ Mine”: “Hair don’t hang ’way down her back; plaited up in rows; / Wid two en’s dat’s behind tied with ribbon bows” (Johnson 2000: 143). In contrast to older writers like Johnson and to his own Harlem Renaissance contemporaries, Hughes seemed to be attracted to a commercial form that peddled lurid tales of loose women and murderous men. Narratives of drunkenness, despair, suicide, and murder were wrapped up in a rough-hewn dialect that purveyed a brutalizing sensuality:

I calls for ma woman
 When I opens de door.
 She’s out in de street –
 Ain’t nothin’ but a ’hore.
 (Hughes 1927: 59)

Not surprisingly, then, as historian David Levering Lewis writes, “when *Fine Clothes to the Blues* was published, the dean of Afro-American bluenoses, Professor [Benjamin] Brawley, publicly reproved ‘the sad case of a young man of ability who has gone off on the wrong track altogether’” (Lewis 1982: 192).

So distressing was Hughes’s departure from standards of good taste that some saw malign influences at work. One presence singled out as nefarious was Carl Van Vechten, best-selling novelist, essayist, and photographer. A gay white man with a flamboyant lifestyle, he was a close associate of many notables in Harlem as well as Manhattan. Songwriter and lyricist Andy Razaf could invoke his name in a song from his 1930 *Kitchen Mechanics’ Review*, encouraging whites to venture uptown: “like Van Vechten, / Go inspectin’” (Singer 1992: 239). A powerful friend of Hughes (who had introduced Hughes’s work to his publisher, Alfred A. Knopf), he was also a devotee of the blues. In essays published in 1925 and 1926, he described the blues as “symbolic poetry . . . eloquent with rich idioms, metaphoric phrases, and striking word combinations.” The blues were more than “picturesque locutions,” though; they also reflected the deceptions of a racist society that expects an African-American to “meet a white man with a smile and a joke” (Van Vechten 1960: 95). If black artists did not soon recognize the power of their heritage, then others would exploit it:

the Negro is sensitive, justifiably so, regarding his past, and in facing the world he wants to put on a new front. He is therefore inclined to conceal his beautiful spirituals, his emotional Blues, to make too little of his original dances. . . . Thus he readily delivers his great gifts to the exploitation of the white man without – save in rare instances – making any attempt, an attempt foredoomed to meet with success, to capitalize them himself. (Van Vechten 1926b: 102)

(Similar words were spoken by “Russett Durwood,” Van Vechten’s surrogate in his scandalous *roman à clef* of Harlem nightlife, *Nigger Heaven* (Van Vechten 1926a: 222).) In addition, Van Vechten collaborated with Hughes on several blues-related projects. In one of the 1925 essays, he cited Hughes as if he were a field informant who recalled blues lyrics, and when he presented a selection of Hughes’s work to *Vanity Fair* readers, he chose a group of Hughes’s own blues-based poems. Hughes reciprocated. When Van Vechten had to replace certain song lyrics that he had reproduced without permission in the pages of his best-selling novel, it was Hughes who, literally overnight, provided replacements: seventeen “songs and snatches of the blues,” credited in later editions as “written especially for *Nigger Heaven* by Mr. Langston Hughes” (Van Vechten 1926a: 287).

The examples of the blues that Van Vechten solicited for his novel, though, differed in important respects from Hughes’s representations of the blues in the poetry of *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. Blues in the 1920s came in two distinct types. There were the “Classic Blues,” also known as “Vaudeville Blues,” in the commercialized W. C. Handy mold. Their lyrics often included *doubles entendres*, and they were to be

performed in a bravura style by divas in a cabaret setting. But there were also “Folk Blues,” modest productions by singers whose piano or guitar playing was their only accompaniment. Their lyrics could incorporate local happenings, regional characteristics, and folk idioms. These Folk Blues were also commercial ventures, but they conveyed a down-home makeshift quality designed to appeal to urban blacks who wanted to retain strong ties to their rural roots.

The lyrics that Van Vechten wanted from Hughes for *Nigger Heaven* were, with few exceptions, in the “Classic” or vaudeville format:

You ain't gonna ride no chariot tonight
 'Less you take your sweet mama along!
 I say, Ben Hur, you ain't goin' out
 Till you listen to this song.
 I know you been drivin'
 To some other girl's door
 But I'm gonna see to it
 You don't drive there no more.

(Van Vechten 1926a: 246–7)

This song is the work of a performer addressing an audience, throwing off smart remarks that will be appreciated. It is also deliciously sensationalized. By contrast, Hughes's blues poems are based on the structure of the “Folk Blues” and they begin with situations that cannot be shrugged off. They start by establishing a devastating reversal from which the speaker has had to rebound. In “Hard Luck,” when you fall on hard times, there's nothing else to do but

Gather up yo' fine clothes
 An' sell 'em to de Jew.

(Hughes 1927: 18)

Hughes's contributions to *Nigger Heaven*, moreover, avoided broad dialect. When idiomatic locutions appeared, they tended to be nondescript (“I'm gonna see to it”). But the dialect in Hughes's blues-based poetry is pervasive, part of a larger struggle to understand.

I'm black an' ugly
 But he sho do treat me kind.
 High-in-heaben Jesus,
 Please don't take this man o' mine.

(Hughes 1927: 82)

In such dialect, Hughes carefully avoids infantilizing distortions. As William J. Maxwell notes, Hughes (with Andy Razaf and Sterling Brown) was instrumental in moving writers away from the turn-of-the-century Dialect School with its broad

“Hyeahs” and “Chillen’s” (Maxwell 1999: 44–5). And finally, Hughes is not intent upon reducing all black expression to the blues. He also presents work that is in the mode of the spiritual, the ballad, the work song, and the shout, though he understands that the spirit of the blues must necessarily underlie all expressions of African-Americans as long as they are held within a racist society.

Van Vechten surely encouraged Hughes’s shift to a dialect-based blues-inflected verse line, but Hughes had reasons of his own for moving in this new direction – including a desire to establish a strong black voice. Although the title of his first book, *The Weary Blues*, promised a glimpse into the distressing side of African-American life, the collection in fact offered carefully modulated poems that preserved the despair in a black man’s voice even as they downplayed an environment of violence. Many poems in this collection closely resembled works in the expansive free verse of the Whitman tradition as recently modified by Carl Sandburg (in his 1916 *Chicago Poems*), and just as many seemed to share a strategy of compression that Imagists like Amy Lowell were perfecting. *The Weary Blues* was an exemplary début performance. But as Rampersad gruffly noted: “the blues is not present in the book – in spite of its sonorous title. . . . The result is a mulatto-like text” (Rampersad 1993: 58). Some years later, when Hughes was recalling *Fine Clothes to the Jew* in his 1940 autobiography *The Big Sea*, he wrote that “the Blues, spirituals, shouts and work poems of my second book were written while I was dragging bags of wet wash laundry about or toting trays of dirty dishes to the dumb-waiter of the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington” (Hughes 1940: 271–2), and he associated these poems with the teeming urban sprawl of Washington’s Seventh Street “where the ordinary Negroes hang out” who “played the blues, ate watermelon, barbecue or fish sandwiches, shot pool, told tall tales, looked at the dome of the Capitol and laughed out loud” (Hughes 1940: 208).

Hughes also insisted that he wanted to produce not a simple record of what these “ordinary Negroes” did but a complex representation of how they comprehended their experience, distilling it into songs, ballads, spirituals, and stories that were full of contradictions: “I tried to write poems like the songs they sang on Seventh Street – gay songs, because you had to be gay or die; sad songs, because you couldn’t help being sad sometimes” (Hughes 1940: 209). Or as he wrote in his “Note on the Blues” that prefaced *Fine Clothes to the Jew*: “The mood of the Blues is almost always despondency, but when they are sung people laugh” (Hughes 1927: 7). That the blues could be a complex and contradictory form – produced as pain but consumed as joy – would have been a central discovery for readers of this collection. The blues were not simply a transcription of African-American experience: they were also a transformation of that experience that was designed to be shared with others.

The first to be written of these transcription-like poems was “Midwinter Blues” (dating from February 1926, just after *The Weary Blues* had been published) with its speaker who ironically undermines mainstream discourse, clashing “Twas” and “befo” in a direct citation of a line from the well-known Clement C. Moore poem:

In de middle of de winter,
 Snow all over de ground, –
 'Twas de night befo' Christmas
 Ma good man turned me down.
 (Hughes 1927: 84)

No Christmas Eve present for this speaker – only rejection. “Midwinter Blues” registers sorrow even as its speaker subtly mocks the idea that gifts should ever be expected. The text claims attention as a blues performance (each of its stanzas follows a similar six-line format, with the middle two lines more or less repeating the opening two) whose speaker is a woman – though the vexed issue of Hughes’s own sexual preference leaves this somewhat open (Schwarz 2003: 68–87).

Hughes does not shrink from describing a culture of poverty in which relationships are precarious, in which sexuality has a commanding power. Though sexual innuendo surrounds the speaker who sings of the man who left in winter “when de coal was low,” Hughes is less interested in presenting sensationalized events than in foregrounding how the speaker copes. In the last couplet, the speaker announces a plan to buy a rose bush and plant it by the back door so when death comes they “Won’t need no flowers from the store” (Hughes 1927: 84). The leap from midwinter to the center of spring is unexpected, bracing, and redemptive. In his superb analysis of these poems, David Chinitz admires the “ironic misdirection” in the speaker’s concern, “half funny, half pathetic”: “The woman’s self-pity, as is not uncommon in the blues, is both desperate and exhibitionistic, and the final pout shows her thoughts already turning back to a world she doesn’t really expect to be leaving.” Here as elsewhere these Blue-based poems send a small triumphant signal, or, as Chinitz remarks, commenting on the typical reluctance of the blues to “rise to a climactic ending, even in performance,” “the end of the song is not the end of the singer” (Chinitz 1996: 189).

What Hughes accomplished in “Midwinter Blues” set the stage for the poems that would follow. If *The Weary Blues* was as elaborately orchestrated as a Cotton Club show mounted for visiting whites, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* is as disruptive as a glimpse backstage, a stark reality check. The subtle associations among its six sections prefigure Hughes’s volumes to come (*Shakespeare in Harlem* in 1942, *Montage of a Dream Deferred* in 1951) whose poems are not separate entities but provisional statements with a spoken-word element that links them in a dialogue. And though Jonathan Gill notes that Hughes in his 1959 *Selected Poems* “broke up the sequence, destroying the sense of redemption in the six-section poem,” it is none the less, as he says, a volume that “begins in uncertainty and hard luck at sunset, passes through the dark night of religion, sex and love, and ends with a bleary but hopeful sunrise” (Gill 2000: 86).

Certainly *Fine Clothes to the Jew* benefits from a sequential reading. The blues-based poems in the first section are presented as unsophisticated utterances, samples of folk art. But the works in the book’s interior four sections also show that the blues has

a basis in events from everyday life. Blues-like phrasings recur in the poems from these sections, suggesting the constant work of transforming and containing violence and despair. Poems in section two reveal the dislocations produced by a service economy whose participants must market themselves as menial laborers or sex workers. Section three is a skeptical survey of the “spiritual” experience, in so far as religious longings define the self as inherently flawed, even evil. Section four immerses us in a night-town, in which recurring acts of violence destroy the chance for enduring relations between men and women as self-contempt gives rise to anger.

Is this situation unique to the North? Hughes widens his focus in a fifth section to find a similar vein of stress and discord in the South, complicated by the scandal of interracial sexual relations. When we return, then, to the blues form in the final section, we hear these poems as expressive outcries of pain and sorrow. But we also hear something else. The first set of blues in the opening pages had been stark records of dead-end moments:

love is
Such a strange disease.
When it hurts yo' heart you
Sho can't find no ease.
(Hughes 1927: 22)

Early, early in de morn,
I's so weary
I wish I'd never been born.
(Hughes 1927: 23)

But the blues in the sixth section, though produced under similar distress, offers sharp advice: “Don't you fool wid no men cause / They'll bring you misery” (Hughes 1927: 85); or casts a threat: “Wish I had wings to / Fly like de eagle flies. / I'd fly on ma man an' / I'd scratch out both his eyes” (Hughes 1927: 86); or dreams of sexual grandeur: “Eagle rockin', / Come an' eagle-rock with me. / Honey baby, / Eagle-rockish as I kin be!” (Hughes 1927: 88). In this last section, then, the blues becomes a strategy for distilling and containing the anguish and the loss that is embedded in the everyday life of previous sections.

Outrageous, bitter, yet defiantly affirmative, the African-American vernacular poetry that Hughes developed in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* was especially welcomed by younger members of the Harlem Renaissance. In an essay that Hughes published in the *Nation* in July 1926 at the same time as he was developing his blues poems (“The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”), he not only defended writing that responded to “the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues” but asserted it as a generational imperative: “We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame” (Hughes 1926: 692, 694). Young artists in general felt that American

poetry might benefit from more barbarism, not less. The state of current poetry was satirized in a 1925 *Vanity Fair* piece by one “John Savage,” who offered thumbnail biographies of mock versifiers like George H. Steer (“The very odor of beefsteak nauseates him”), Aloysius Cabot (“He has never knowingly used a capital in order to indicate a proper name”), and Hildegard Potts (“Everyone remembers her ode beginning: ‘Reluctant onions pittances to cabs’”) (Savage 1925: 21). Such precious inbreeding was opposed by upstart publishers like Alfred A. Knopf and Boni and Liveright who encouraged experiments in the vernacular. “Jimmy’s got a goil, / goil, / goil” began one e. e. cummings poem from *Is 5*, published by Liveright in 1926 (cummings 1965: 63). Literary intellectuals like Waldo Frank and Matthew Josephson admired the achievement of Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923), an impressive amalgamation of poetry, prose, and drama that mixed Imagism and Impressionism in comparative portraits of rural Georgia and urban New York. Free of arid experimentalism, fresh in its “primitivism,” such work could help countermand a “machine age” that had lost contact with its elemental side. Commenting on the sudden embrace of black art in the 1920s, David Levering Lewis has wryly remarked: “White rediscovery of Black Americans followed logically and naturally, for if the factory was dehumanizing, the university and the office stultifying, and the great corporations predatory, the Black American, excluded from factory, university, office and corporation, was the ideal symbol of innocence and revitalization” (Lewis 1987: 62).

But the aspect of *Fine Clothes to the Jew* that remains haunting years later is not its symbols of innocence but Hughes’s sharp awareness of how little his speakers have to work with. “Hughes’s black proletariat is endowed,” David Chinitz has observed, “with an inexhaustible energy that veils and relieves its suffering” (Chinitz 1996: 178). Thus there is both an unbearable bluntness and a ferocious wit in the final lines in “Hard Luck” that place a man lower than a creature. If he was a mule he could get a wagon to haul, but

I’m so low-down I
Ain’t even got a stall.
(Hughes 1927: 18)

To be a mule would be a step up: that identity would bring work and shelter, instead of the stripping away of clothes and the loss of dignity. And as Adam Gussow reminds us: “After Emancipation . . . one could always hire another black laborer to replace the worked-to-death, or murdered, body one had been exploiting. Fresh mules, on the other hand, required a cash outlay” (Gussow 2002: 210). But there is “nothin’ for you to do” – only to offer this ironic expression that is quintessentially self-aware and utterly human. Still, Hughes wants to intimate that always there is the tiniest and slimmest of victories possible – a “victory” that turns upon a witty observation or a subtle swerve in tone or a hint of defiance or a sigh filled with triumph. As we listen, we are continually moving freely between fragments of dialogue that might emerge from daily life and snatches of the blues that exemplify what the

Seventh Street dweller might listen to, or recognize, or even provide in response to events. "Like most black poets of this century," poet Timothy Seibles reminds us, "Hughes perceived poetry not as some academic exercise intended as grist for fussy scholars and critics, but as a tool for restructuring the consciousness of society" (Seibles 1991: 165–6). While these texts certainly depict the brutality of a culture of poverty, they are never unmediated presentations but tonally complex representations that, with artistry that calls attention to its starkness and its limitations, concoct a survival strategy from almost nothing.

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Zora Neale Hurston:
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Cheryl A. Wall

In February 1927 at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston boarded a southbound train at New York City's Penn Station. Her destination was her hometown of Eatonville, Florida. She was on a mission, as she later described it, to collect Negro folklore. The fieldwork was in fulfillment of requirements for the bachelor's degree in anthropology she was pursuing at Barnard College. Franz Boas, the founder of the discipline in the United States, was her mentor. Hurston left behind the circle of friends, including poets Gwendolyn Bennett, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes, and novelist Wallace Thurman, with whom she had worked on *Fire!!*, the legendary "little magazine" whose single issue would become a collector's item. Although the group could not sustain the journal, their writing would help define African-American modernism. While creators of *Fire!!* worked mainly in Harlem, white American artists downtown in Greenwich Village were producing modernist fiction, drama, poetry, and painting that shared a similar vision. For short periods over the next two decades Hurston would return to New York, but she would never make it her home. She spent most of her time on the road. Crisscrossing the South, she signed on at lumber mills and turpentine camps, apprenticed herself to hoodoo doctors, and wrote in rented cabins in Florida backwaters. Ironically, her departure from the modernist city deepened the modernist impulses in her writing, as an analysis of her perspectives on language, culture, and gender reveals.

As the author of four novels, two volumes of folklore, a memoir, scores of essays and short stories, and several plays, Hurston was the most prolific African-American woman writer of the first half of the twentieth century. She has just recently been recognized as a modernist. For much of her life (1891–1960), and for decades after her death, she was barely recognized at all. In 1972 Robert Hemenway, then at work on her biography, referred to Hurston as "one of the most significant unread authors in America." That is no longer true. Scholars have recuperated Hurston's work and restored her reputation at the same time that scholars have revised and broadened definitions of modernism to include writers whom Marianne DeKoven terms

“anti-canonical.” Prominent among these are the writers of the Harlem or New Negro Renaissance, a cultural awakening among African-Americans that occurred between the two world wars. Even among the New Negroes however, Hurston went against the grain. She did not consider urbanization to be a synonym for progress. Most of her writing was set in the rural South. She was more interested in intra-racial tensions than interracial conflict. Rather than social reality, she was most concerned with exploring “that which the soul lives by.” Finally, despite the harsh racism of the period, Hurston wrote as if gender were as important a determinant of identity as race.

For Hurston early in her career, the modern was less a matter of “making it new” than of recognizing what was already new in traditions that had been invisible to the dominant society in the United States. In her landmark essay, “Characteristics of Negro Expression,” first published in Nancy Cunard’s massive anthology *Negro* in 1934, she observed that “we each have our own standards of art, and thus we are all interested parties and so unfit to pass judgment upon the art concepts of others.” Although statements like this one might have grounded an artistic manifesto, “Characteristics” is not one; the essay was drawn from the notes Hurston took while traveling through the South. Here she summarized the findings of seven years of research by identifying the aesthetic principles that informed African-American expression.

First and foremost was the primacy of drama. “Every phase of Negro life is highly dramatised,” she wrote. “There is an impromptu ceremony always ready for every hour of life.” As an ethnographer, her task was to record those ceremonies; as a novelist, she would re-create them not to provide “local color,” but to appropriate the ritualized improvisation that was at the core of the folk aesthetic. Secondly, Hurston named and defined the “will to adorn” that could appear to the eyes of outsiders as excess. She was happy to concede that “decorating a decoration” was the point. Behind this will to the beautiful was a “feeling” that “there can never be enough of beauty, let alone too much.” To most of her contemporaries, asserting the importance of beauty in the lives of poor black people was startling, and to many it was irrelevant given their struggle to survive, but it was typical Hurston. She pressed the point to argue for the humanity of black people, an argument that would have been painful and redundant for her to make directly, and to emphasize that the qualities most central to African-American expressive culture were not reactive. Racial oppression was not all there was. For that reason she proclaimed famously in “How It Feels to be Colored Me,” that she was “not tragically colored.” In “Characteristics,” as she noted the impact of the “will to adorn” on language, Hurston observed slyly that “no one listening to a Southern white man talk could deny” the influence of black speech on his.

Two other characteristics that Hurston cites – angularity and asymmetry – resonate strongly with key currents in modernism. African sculpture is a common touchstone. Not unlike Picasso, who called performer Josephine Baker “the Nefertiti of now,” or Alexander Calder who depicted Baker in motion, Hurston saw similarities

between African sculpture and African-American dance. "Every posture is another angle," she observed and noted that the "effect [is] achieved by the very means which an European strives to avoid." For Hurston these effects are omnipresent in everyday black life; dance is only one manifestation. Asymmetry is likewise characteristic of African sculpture. Hurston claimed to be unable to cite examples of African-American visual art, despite the fact that she had worked on *Fire!!* with Aaron Douglas, who was one of the best-known black painters of the time. She found examples instead in Hughes's blues poetry, in music, and in dance. The presence of both rhythm (with its regularity) and asymmetry (with its irregularity) seemed paradoxical, but the combination produced the abrupt and unexpected changes to which black dancers were always ready to respond. In a companion essay, "Spirituals and NeoSpirituals," Hurston emphasized the "rapid juxtapositions" and "jagged harmonies" she heard in African-American sacred music. Several of the characteristics of African-American expression that Hurston identified bear more than a passing resemblance to the stylistic practices – including aesthetic self-consciousness, simultaneity, and juxtaposition – that scholars cite as characteristics of modernism.

Unsurprisingly for a writer, Hurston devoted most of her attention to theories of language. She offered her claim that "the American Negro has done wonders to the English language" without a whiff of defensiveness. At a time when most US social scientists and political leaders believed strongly in the inferiority of African people, Hurston's stance was heretical and courageous. Conventional wisdom held that black people did not speak standard English because they could not. Some scholars attributed the failure to physiological differences between the races; others just believed in the intellectual differences. Hurston gave no quarter to such pseudoscience. With a welter of examples from her fieldnotes to buttress her conclusion, she enumerated the "Negro's greatest contribution to the language" as the use of (1) metaphor and simile, (2) the double descriptive, and (3) verbal nouns. More important than the specific linguistic practices are the attitude toward language that they represent. Hurston saw in the "will to adorn" an experimental attitude toward language, a willingness among her informants to make things up and to make things new.

Hurston was one of a small group of writers who first broke free of the limitations of "Negro dialect." In his preface to the first edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), written just before the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, James Weldon Johnson lamented the insidious influence of the minstrel tradition on African-American literary production. He believed that black writers were constrained by the dialect derived from the popular theatrical representations or, more accurately, misrepresentations of black life throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, because it had only two stops – humor and pathos – which rendered it incapable of expressing complexities. When Johnson revisited the issue in the second edition of his classic anthology published in 1931, he recanted his position. Hughes and Sterling Brown had proved him wrong. They crafted black vernacular English that bore no taint of the minstrel cork. They did so by plumbing the forms in which black folk spoke for themselves.

African-American vernacular forms, particularly the spirituals and the blues, were the building-blocks for African-American modernism as the work of Hughes, Brown, Jean Toomer, and Hurston demonstrates. By inventing the genre of blues poetry, Hughes was able to escape the mantle of protest poet. Rather than appealing to the consciences of his white compatriots, his poems distilled the joys and sorrows of African-Americans. Brown, an amateur folklorist, emulated work songs and blues ballads in his poetry. In *Cane*, Toomer employed the rhythms of work songs and spirituals as well as stream of consciousness and techniques borrowed from the Imagist poets. No writer of the period was more attuned to black folk speech than Hurston. Her extended forays into the field where she transcribed scores of folklore texts would eventually yield provocative theories of black vernacular English. But, Hurston first grappled with the challenge of creating a distinctive literary language in the short stories she wrote during the 1920s.

Hurston avoided the pitfalls of minstrel representation by drawing on her own experiences. "The Eatonville Anthology" (1926) took its title from the all-black town where she grew up. A series of sketches portrays villagers as types: the pleading woman, the man with the train, the thief, the liar, the beaten wife, and the vamp, but they do not fictionalize their lives. Hurston's short stories often do. She names her characters after her neighbors and borrows biographical details. One may infer that she retains elements of their speech as well, even as she begins to fashion it into something that resonates on the page. "Sweat," the multilayered story published in *Fire!!* in 1926, illustrates the process.

The focus of the story is marital conflict, a theme to which Hurston returned often in her career. Delia Jones, the protagonist, remembers the love that she brought to her marriage but has long since decided that her husband Sykes never reciprocated it. In the interim Sykes has grown dependent on the money Delia earns as a washerwoman – a dependence that embitters him toward her. Sykes wants to be rid of Delia, but he wants to keep the house her money has bought. Delia, whose religious faith has supplanted her passion for her husband, is determined to remain in her home. The United States census of 1910 lists a "Syke" Jones residing in Eatonville, who with his wife had nine children, one of whom was named Delia. No children distract the story's focus from the two characters who face off against each other. In response to Sykes's provocations, Delia gradually sheds her meekness and defends herself by "talking back" or "specifying," as Hurston terms it. For the reader, no less than the characters, the impact is startling. Sykes is defeated, but Delia's victory is a spiritual loss. As it explores the complexities of Delia's motives and actions, "Sweat" becomes a spiritual allegory. It appropriates biblical symbols and myths and recasts them in the "Negro idiom," that Hurston believed was capable of revealing the full panoply of human ideas and emotions.

Loosely based on the lives of her parents, her first novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) tells the story of Lucy and John Pearson's courtship and marriage, John's swift rise to prominence as a Baptist minister, his equally swift fall as a result of his marital infidelities, Lucy's strength and perseverance, and the family's ultimate dissolution.

The “will to adorn” is evident on every page. “Ah means tuh prop you up on eve’y leanin’ side” is a declaration of love. “Ah got divorce in mah heels” puts action into words. Ritualized improvisation is a principle at work in each interaction. John, who is a poet/prophet, preaches about a Judgment Day, “when de two trains of Time shall meet on de trestle / And wreck de burning axles of de unformed ether / And de mountains shall skip like lambs.” By contrast, at John’s funeral, the eulogist evokes a Christian heaven but the drums and chants that respond to his sermon suggest an African spirituality. The performance alludes to a spiritual connection between Africa and African-Americans, transmitted through music and memory, that cannot be confirmed in fact. Writers throughout the twentieth century would explore this connection; it seems grafted on here. Indeed, the rich wordplay of *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* – its profusion of metaphor and simile – overshadows the plot. As Hemenway asserts, the novel is best understood as “a series of linguistic moments.” Many are memorable.

Embracing the dual aspects of her career, Hurston proclaimed herself “a literary anthropologist.” After achieving modest success as a writer during the 1920s, Hurston enrolled at Barnard College in New York. She started out as an English major, continuing the course of study she had begun at Morgan Academy and Howard University where she previously studied. But, after taking an anthropology course, Hurston switched gears. No department rivaled that of Columbia, the university of which Barnard was part; along with Boas, Ruth Benedict and Gladys Reichard were on the faculty. Margaret Mead, a recent recipient of the Ph.D., was doing fieldwork in Samoa when Hurston arrived on campus in 1925. Even before she graduated, Hurston would set out to do fieldwork herself. But rather than the South Pacific, her first field would be the US South. Her travels later took her to the Bahamas, Jamaica, Haiti, and Honduras; she was an anthropologist of African cultures in the New World. Her books, *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938), map these journeys.

In addition to the seventy folktales it recounts, *Mules and Men* documents the everyday experiences of black Americans in the rural South. The tales do not exist apart from the lives of the people. Consequently, the book shows when and how, by and for whom tales are told. In addition to the Br’er Rabbit tales that previous collectors had highlighted, Hurston, who was the first African-American to publish a volume of African-American folklore, introduced the cycle of John-and-Master tales in which the slave John frequently outwits his master. *Mules* presents storytelling in a context of work and play; an appendix contains “Negro songs with music.” As if to confirm the observation that “there is an impromptu ceremony always ready for every hour of life,” *Mules* reports cultural practices including card games and courtship rituals, lying sessions and religious rites – including rites of conjure or hoodoo, a pre-Christian belief system derived from African spiritual traditions. *Mules* is literature as well as ethnography. As it result, it long failed to satisfy scholars in both disciplines. That has changed. Marc Manganaro argues insightfully that “transmutations” between the disciplines are what the book is about. Hurston’s

project was not only to produce a compendium of folklore, but to posit a theory of culture as “porous . . . fluid . . . mobile . . . less than tidy and wholly synecdochic.” She contributed to the redefinitions of culture set forth by other pioneering anthropologists including Benedict, Boas, and Bronislaw Malinowski.

In “Folklore and Music,” an article written for the Federal Writers Project in 1938, Hurston reaffirms the principle of cultural relativism at the heart of anthropology. “Folklore is the boiled-down juice of human living. It does not belong to any special time, place, nor people. No country is so primitive that it has not lore, and no country has yet become so civilized that no folklore is being made within its boundaries.” Folklore reveals the common humanity of people across cultures. Neither the so-called primitive nor the so-called civilized could claim superiority. Hurston fashions a metaphor that owes much to Benedict’s “arc of human potentialities,” even as it extends the food imagery with which the essay begins. She asserts that in folklore the “world is like a great, big, old serving platter.” Each local culture is like a plate that has “a flavor of its own because the people take the universal stuff and season it to suit themselves on the plate.” In her fieldwork, Hurston relied on this perspective to navigate between cultures. Consequently, she was largely able to avoid the myths of exotic primitivism that disfigured many cross-cultural and interracial encounters among modernists.

However, the evidence of *Tell My Horse* demonstrates that she was not immune to the distortions these myths engendered. The book includes valuable information about the folklife of Jamaica and Haiti. For example, it documents African survivals in spiritual practices, records natural remedies and recipes, and includes the earliest transcriptions of Haitian Creole. It analyzes insightfully the interaction of race, class, and gender. Unfortunately, Hurston fills in gaps in her research with gossip and stereotypes; her depiction of Haitian politics is particularly flawed. More valuable than the research she conducted was the novel she wrote while she was in the field. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is by all accounts Hurston’s finest work.

Her long-standing interest in the relationship between gender and language finds its fullest expression in the novel. From its opening scene, *Their Eyes* establishes its concern with the properties of words. “Burning statements” and “killing tools” resolve themselves into “a mood come alive. Words walking without masters; words walking together like harmony in a song.” The setting is the store porch, the liminal space Hurston often draws in her writing. Neither wholly public nor private, it fosters free expression for blacks whose labor is exploited during the day. For women, however, it is not a safe space. The protagonist Janie Crawford is the object of the sitters’ leering ridicule. *Their Eyes* emphasizes throughout the obstacles a woman faces in the struggle to gain a voice in a culture that places a premium on speaking.

Janie’s quest for identity depends on her ability to speak herself into being. But, she is thwarted by the presence of powerful speakers whose voices drown hers out. Her grandmother Nanny is an accomplished storyteller, skilled autobiographer, and inspired preacher, whose metaphors fuse the biblical and the domestic in arresting ways. “Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin’ on high, but

they wasn't no pulpit for me. Freedom found me wid a baby daughter in mah arms, so Ah said Ah'd take a broom and a cook-pot and throw up a highway through de wilderness for her." Nanny's experience as a slave limits her vision; the only freedom she can imagine is premised on the privileged life of her owners. Nevertheless her eloquence – and emotional blackmail – overwhelm Janie, who agrees to marry a man she does not love.

Janie's second husband, Joe Starks, helps her escape, but his ambition to be a "big voice" and a "ruler of things," portends further unhappiness. Even before he has consolidated his power as landlord, storekeeper, postmaster, and mayor of Eatonville, he claims the platform his growing status ensures. Joe becomes a great speechmaker. Though the townspeople admire his accomplishments, they find him "compellent." As one observes, "he loves obedience out of everybody under de sound of his voice." Everybody includes Janie. Joe's template for success is borrowed from the dominant society that oppresses him and his community. He uses his wife, as he does his big white house and accouterments of wealth, to mark the difference between himself and others. Janie tries to resist domination by both Nanny and Joe by forcing them to take her dreams seriously – particularly the vision of love and marriage that encapsulates her gift of metaphor as well as her idealism. But she fails. She is too diffident to challenge her grandmother, and her dependence on her husband is reinforced by his physical violence. Eventually she does "talk back" to Joe and reclaims a measure of her self-respect. But only after Joe dies is Janie free to devise a life of her own choosing.

Her partner in this new life is Tea Cake, a blues troubadour several years younger than she, who exemplifies the principles Hurston set forth in "Characteristics." Everything he does is acted out. Tea Cake makes a performance out of leaving a room. He plays an imaginary guitar after he pawns his real one and begs Janie's forgiveness by singing her a song. His speech is dipped-in-blues. He might "get his habits on," that is, drink and gamble, but he assures Janie that she has "de keys to de kingdom." Playful and erotic, their relationship is also egalitarian: they both work in the fields and do household chores. Ultimately, Janie kills Tea Cake in order to save her own life. Rachel DuPlessis observes of twentieth-century women writers that they inverted or deployed narrative strategies explicitly to delegitimize romance plots. In *Their Eyes* the romance plot becomes communitarian. Tea Cake's primary importance to Janie is as cultural guide. The kingdom to which he gives Janie the keys is African-American expressive culture. That culture in turn gives Janie her self.

Their Eyes constitutes Hurston's imaginative configuration of the ethnographic and literary ideas she had grappled with from the beginning of her career. The drama of the impromptu ceremonies of everyday life provide a context for, and a correlative to, the drama of self-discovery that Janie enacts. Adhering to the tenet of "the will to adorn," the novel deploys poetic metaphor both in its lyrical passages such as Nanny's sermon and in those moments when Janie specifies against Joe. In the former case, adorned language registers affirmation of African-American discursive traditions,

while in the latter it protests against the oppressive structures imposed directly or indirectly by the dominant society.

Few chapters in recent American literary history have been more dramatic than the reclamation of Hurston's life and work. When she died in a Florida welfare home in January 1960, she was forgotten and penniless. All seven of her books were out of print. Today almost everything she published is available, and scholars have uncovered several lost manuscripts. The story of her life has assumed almost legendary status, and her image circulates throughout US popular culture – from books and musicals to television game shows. While this belated recognition is welcome, Hurston's legacy derives from the new understandings of language, culture, and gender she achieved and from the power and beauty of the literary language she created.

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James Joyce: *Ulysses*

Michael Patrick Gillespie

Composition and Publication History

James Joyce began writing *Ulysses* in late 1914 or early 1915, within months of the publication of his short story collection, *Dubliners*, and after the completion of his *Bildungsroman*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In 1915, during the early stages of the composition, Joyce and his family were forced to move from Trieste, where they had lived for over a decade. Because they were at the time citizens of the British Empire, they were considered enemy aliens by Austrian authorities. They traveled to neutral Zurich where, for the next four years, Joyce eked out an existence giving language lessons, subsisted on government and private subsidies, and wrote a good portion of his novel. In 1919 Joyce and his family briefly returned to Trieste, and then moved to Paris at the invitation of Ezra Pound. The idea was to find a quiet place to allow Joyce to complete *Ulysses*, but in fact the Joyces would remain in Paris for the next twenty years.

The concept for *Ulysses* originated around 1906 in plans for a short story of that name that Joyce planned to include in *Dubliners*. It was to center around a figure inspired by an actual Dubliner of Joyce's acquaintance, Alfred Hunter, a man thought to be Jewish and rumored to have an unfaithful wife. However, as Joyce explained in 1907 to his brother Stanislaus, the story "never got any forrader than the title" (1966: 2.209).

Nearly a decade later, when Joyce returned to the idea, he expanded the structure from a short story to a novel, layered the narrative with complex themes, built up engrossing characterizations, and elaborated upon stylistic innovations prefigured in his earlier writings. By mid-June of 1915, Joyce had written the first chapter, and had drawn up an outline for the rest of the book. Although he would trim its length from the original plan of twenty-two chapters to eighteen, the creative framework of *Ulysses* was in place from his earliest writing.

In 1918, though three more years of work remained on the novel, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, editors of the American journal, the *Little Review*, began to bring out a serialized version of *Ulysses* in their magazine. From the March 1918 number through the September–December 1920 issue, twenty-three installments, covering the first fourteen chapters from Telemachus to the beginnings of Oxen of the Sun, appeared in the *Little Review*. Then, in September of 1920, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice lodged a complaint with the Court of Special Sessions, and forced Anderson and Heap to cease publication of these installments. Meanwhile, the London periodical, the *Egoist*, published three chapters – Nestor, Proteus, and Hades – and a portion of a fourth – Wandering Rocks – beginning with the January – February 1919 issue and continuing until the December 1919 number. Publication ceased, however, because Harriet Shaw Weaver, publisher of the journal and lifelong benefactor of Joyce, could not find a printer willing to set type for any of the other chapters.

These experiences foreshadowed the difficulty that Joyce would face in finding someone to bring out his completed novel. In 1921, as *Ulysses* was nearing completion, Joyce made numerous unsuccessful attempts to interest publishing houses in his work. When he had seemingly exhausted all possibilities, Sylvia Beach, an American living in Paris, approached Joyce with a unique proposition. Beach owned the bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, and she offered to bring out *Ulysses* under its imprint. A Dijon printer, Maurice Darantière, not only agreed to print the work but also provided multiple sets of galleys (which Joyce then used to revise and expand his chapters, in the process increasing the length of *Ulysses* by one-third). On February 2, 1922, Joyce's fortieth birthday, he received the first copy of his novel.

Throughout the 1920s, Beach continued to produce editions of *Ulysses*. At the same time, the Egoist Press, with the help of a French printing house, brought out the first British edition in 1922, and in 1932 the Odyssey Press in Germany took over continental publications. Two years later, after a well-publicized obscenity trial in the United States, Random House printed the first American edition, and John Lane produced the Bodley Head volume, the first version of *Ulysses* actually published in Great Britain. In 1984 Hans Walter Gabler and a team of German scholars edited a three-volume synoptic version of the novel for Garland Publishing in New York, and two years later Random House brought out a single-volume edition of Gabler's revised text. In 1992, after a brief lapse in copyright in the UK, a number of reprints of older English editions appeared. Another edition was begun while *Ulysses* was out of copyright in England, the highly controversial 1997 reader's version edited by Danis Rose. However, the Joyce estate successfully prosecuted it for overly extensive quotation from in-copyright unpublished manuscripts of *Ulysses*, forcing its withdrawal. The British copyright on Joyce's works was reinstated in 1996, and *Ulysses* has never gone out of copyright in the United States (although the legitimacy of the US copyright has been recently questioned). To date, no further large-scale revisions of *Ulysses* have appeared.

Narrative Structure

From his decision to cast it as a novel, Joyce maintained his concept of *Ulysses* as a three-part narrative. In the first part, the Telemachiad, he traces developments in the life of Stephen Dedalus, a character whom he had first introduced to readers in his earlier novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The second part, the wanderings of Ulysses, follows Stephen and Leopold Bloom in their peregrinations, first separate and in the end together, around Dublin on a single day, June 16, 1904. The final section, Nostos or homecoming, consists of a soliloquy by Molly Bloom, giving her account of her childhood and her description of life with her husband Leopold.

The parts of *Ulysses* did change somewhat over the process of its composition. In particular, Joyce shortened the proposed length of the novel from twenty-two chapters to eighteen, and divided attention between Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Bloom's wife Molly. The final version still evokes a vivid picture of the lives of diverse lower-middle-class Dubliners at the beginning of the last century.

Joyce used *The Odyssey* as a literary touchstone for his work. That is not to say that he slavishly imitated Homer's epic poem, but he did echo certain elements to give readers a sense of the broad narrative ambitions of his own work. While the book's title, Joyce's inclination to call his chapters (at least during the composition process) after characters and events from Homer's epic, and his persistent application of certain epic conventions keep readers aware of his literary antecedents, allusions to Homer simply provide the scaffolding upon which Joyce elaborates his own world-view.

This approach should not diminish its epic status. Though some critics prefer to call *Ulysses* a mock epic, such a term seems to trivialize Joyce's achievement. An epic traditionally expresses the strengths and weaknesses of a society as embodied in an individual, and Joyce certainly reflects this approach through his portrait of Leopold Bloom. Further, although Joyce has filled his narrative with the experiences and feelings of ordinary characters – as opposed to recounting the adventures of heroes like Achilles, Orlando, Beowulf, or El Cid – these individuals wonderfully illustrate the ambivalent beliefs and contradictory values of the modernist ethos from which Joyce's novel emerges. In that fashion, *Ulysses* captures the essential object of epic narratives, reconfigured for modern sensibilities.

An awareness of epic conventions, however, while enriching one's sense of the work, is not the key to reading *Ulysses*, for the narrative turns on the lives and perspectives of the three characters mentioned above: Stephen Dedalus and Leopold and Molly Bloom. Joyce uses these diverse individuals to present different experiences and to project different opinions about the Dublin world that they all inhabit. With some inevitable overlap, they none the less succeed in highlighting both the uniqueness of their own positions and the commonness that they share with all other citizens of the city.

Readers familiar with *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* will find in Stephen Dedalus an extension of the character formed by the previous novel. He remains the

aloof, solipsistic outsider, committed to art and suspicious of the world around him. At the same time, Stephen is not a static character. In the interim between the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the beginning of *Ulysses*, Stephen has spent time in Paris, lost his mother, and confronted the possibility that his abilities may not match his artistic aspirations. He sees other clever young men, like Buck Mulligan, with whom he shares rooms in a Martello Tower in Sandycove just south of the city, gaining far greater acceptance, and he feels a need, not evident in the previous novel, for recognition by his fellow Dubliners. Additionally, Stephen is more human and even more humane than he was in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and this modification in his nature allows for a much more complex representation.

While the opening of *Ulysses* might give one the impression that it will be an extension of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in fact the central character of the novel is the middle-aged Jewish advertising salesman, Leopold Bloom. The dominant concerns of the narrative revolve around Bloom's life and his relations to his family, his fellow Dubliners, and the world in which he finds himself. As Judge John M. Woolsey, the jurist who in 1933 lifted the ban on publication of *Ulysses* in the United States, noted, Bloom is *l'homme moyen sensuel*. In keeping with this role, Bloom's thoughts, appetites, and experiences mirror those of the ordinary early twentieth-century urban man. Further, his marginalization – as a Jew in a Catholic country, as a sober and responsible man surrounded by drunken profligates, as a cuckold in the midst of men who give little thought to their families – sets him up as a unique reflection of the modern condition.

Molly Bloom, though in many ways the antithesis of her husband, provides the perfect complement to his nature. She is impulsive where he is cautious. She is self-centered where he has a strong feeling for the community (despite, paradoxically, his alienation from many of the institutions of that society). She is passive where he is quite active. At the same time, they share striking distinguishing features. Both have insistent sensual appetites. Both are strong-willed. And both feel a sense of loneliness in the midst of a crowded city. Molly's monologue, the long, unpunctuated final chapter of the novel, provides a wonderful summation of the contradictions and complexities of her nature. And, significantly, it provides a stunning rhetorical *tour de force* for a conclusion.

Stylistic Innovations

Even among the unconventional forms of British modernism, *Ulysses* distinguishes itself as a work that foregrounds some of the most radical disruptions of the traditional structure of the novel. At the same time, although stylistic innovations punctuate every chapter, they rarely represent an original approach. However, Joyce showed an uncanny ability to integrate a wide range of diverse forms into a unified imaginative expression, and his sustained application of these forms showed an admirable ability

to reconfigure conventional form and to interpolate new approaches into an extremely powerful narrative.

Perhaps the best-known stylistic technique employed in *Ulysses* is stream of consciousness (also called “interior monologue,” though some critics insist on distinctions between the two terms), a form that Joyce claimed to have borrowed from the French novelist Edouard Dujardin. Narratives can present stream of consciousness through a range of variations, but the central purpose remains constant: an associate evocation of a character’s thought patterns without the usual transitions found in conventional narratives. In the Calypso chapter, for example, the reader encounters Leopold Bloom for the first time, and the narrative immediately plunges one into his thoughts as he contemplates a pet cat:

They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them. She understands all she wants to. Vindictive too. Cruel. Her nature. Curious mice never squeal. Seem to like it. Wonder what I look like to her. Height of a tower. No, she can jump me. (45)

Such intimate reflections not only give us insight into the character’s thoughts but into the way that the character forms his impressions.

Joyce’s narrative also enforces our sense of the effect of individuals on the larger social context through a technique known as free indirect discourse, a method used throughout nineteenth-century novels but refined by Joyce. It consists of an intermingling of the narrative voice with a voice that evokes a particular character without specifically identifying him or her as the source. Here in the same chapter, we see a description of Bloom that proves to be remarkably like his nature:

Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods’ roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine. (45)

In addition to the narrative variations within sentences and paragraphs, Joyce incorporated a range of shifting, though distinctive, styles to characterize various chapters. The critic Hugh Kenner once said that one of the things that *Ulysses* is about is how to read *Ulysses*, and the first six episodes (Telemachus through Hades) educate us on this process, gradually accustoming the reader to the vagaries of stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse. Then, as one begins to feel familiar with the pace of his discourse, Joyce abruptly inserts the interpolations of the seventh chapter (Aeolus). Episodes eight and nine (Lestrygonians and Scylla and Charybdis) return to the mode of the first six even as both expand the punning and wordplay that become increasingly evident over the course of the novel. The fractured narrative recurs in chapter 10 (Wandering Rocks), with clearly segmented sections within the episode and abrupt interpolations punctuating each section. The next episode

(Sirens) employs a discourse dominated by musical motifs while chapter 12 (Cyclops) breaks up the narrative with more lengthy interpolations than previously seen. The next episode (Nausicaa) inverts expectations by beginning in a voice mimicking the tone of a romance novel, and chapter 14 (Oxen of the Sun) imitates literary styles from the writings of Roman Britain to the street-corner slang of the novel's present. The long fifteenth episode (Circe) follows a dramatic form while the next (Eumaeus) returns to the by now familiar stream of consciousness. Chapter 17 (Ithaca) advances the narrative through a question-and-answer format, and the final episode (Penelope) is presented in a long unpunctuated soliloquy.

Themes

As befits the epic ambitions of the novel, its narrative takes up a great many topics. Joyce touches on religion, national identity, history and myth, politics, sexuality, and other issues, all woven into the feelings and perceptions of the characters. However, certain central concerns dominate the discourse and provide the structure for the exploration of all other subjects.

Throughout the day, issues of family and individuality dominate the attentions of Bloom, Molly, and Stephen. For Bloom, images of his late father, Rudolph, and of his son, Rudy, who died just eleven days after his birth, move in and out of his consciousness as he moves around the city. Concern for his fifteen-year-old daughter Milly, now living away from home, and over the restlessness of his wife, Molly, also informs his views. On top of all that he struggles throughout the day with his own identity in a seemingly hostile society. Through these recollections Bloom not only establishes the domestic parameters of his life, but also traces for readers the complex elements of his nature.

Although only the final chapter makes us privy to Molly's thoughts, in it she too spends a great deal of time balancing personal and public concerns. Memories of her life with Bloom dominate, and much of what she recalls serves to justify her infidelity that day. At the same time, it becomes clear from her monologue how deeply her relationship with Bloom, and to a lesser degree with Milly and Rudy, informs her nature.

Stephen Dedalus is obsessed with family matters. From the opening chapter, his thoughts return to the death of his mother and to the pain and guilt he feels because of it. Although they do not meet that day, Stephen also often recollects his father, Simon Dedalus, and in doing so faces the danger of becoming the image of his father, a man he had criticized in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as "a praiser of his own past." At the same time, Stephen cannot deny his guilt over the sufferings of his younger brothers and sisters, even as he withholds real support for them. Unlike the domestic-minded Bloom, Stephen flees from family obligations, fearing they will impede his art.

Experiences of loss and return are linked to concerns for family and individuality. On June 16th Bloom wanders the city, furiously endeavoring to suppress painful

thoughts of Molly's infidelity. Ultimately, he does return home, with Stephen Dedalus in tow, and reconciles himself to spending another night with the woman for whom he still feels great love. Stephen broods about loss – domestic, creative, social – throughout the day, and, as he becomes drunk, the pain it has caused emerges. He leaves Bloom's house early in the morning of the 17th unsure of where he will go, but his recollections have made clear to the reader the deep need he feels for some sort of return. Though on the day of the narrative Molly never leaves the premises of the home she shares with Bloom, her adulterous liaison produces as much a sense of loss as it gives a sense of gratification. In her discursive soliloquy, she does her best to reconcile herself to her life and her husband and to return emotionally to the life that they share.

Because of Stephen's ambitions as a writer, Molly's attempts to establish herself as a singer, and Bloom's concern for the practical side of life, art and commerce stand as important concerns for them all. Stephen spends much of the day hoping to convince others that he merits respect for his literary talents, even as he tries to cover his aching need for recognition with flippancy and alcohol-fueled recklessness. None the less, even as he seems to scorn the mercantilism of his fellow Dubliners, he understands the palpable threat that the need to earn a living poses to his ambitions. Molly, bored with the life she is living, uses her singing as a vehicle to move her out of the tedium of her daily life and away from the pain that she still feels eleven years after Rudy's death. However, she is too undisciplined to cultivate her art and too acquisitive to ignore the allure of materialism. Bloom, though very much a practical businessman in his own mind, retains a love of art, even if his tastes may seem pedestrian to the sophisticated Stephen. As much as for any other character, art has a redeeming quality for Bloom, presenting moments of pleasure and escape unavailable elsewhere in the day.

Critical Interpretation

The first formal effort to interpret *Ulysses* actually took place several months before the final version of the novel appeared. In December of 1921 Valery Larbaud, a noted French literary critic, with Joyce's approval and cooperation, gave a formal lecture at Sylvia Beach's bookshop Shakespeare and Company. (Larbaud would later play a major role in creating the first French translation of the novel.) Joyce quickly realized that critical analyses would make the task of reading his complex narrative less daunting. He materially aided Stuart Gilbert, who in 1930 published the first book-length study of *Ulysses*. Four years later, Joyce's close friend, Frank Budgen, published a recollection of his acquaintance with Joyce in Zurich during the First World War that contained a great deal about the composition of *Ulysses*. In 1931, the American critic Edmund Wilson wrote on *Ulysses* in his essay collection *Axel's Castle*, and in 1941 Harry Levin published the first book-length study of Joyce's writing by an American, *James Joyce: An Introduction*.

It was not until after the Second World War that what would come to be called “the Joyce industry” began to make its presence felt with a series of important studies. In 1947, Richard Kain produced a groundbreaking examination of the Dublin ambiance that informed Joyce’s novel. Hugh Kenner published *Dublin’s Joyce* eight years later, and in doing so immediately claimed the distinction of being one of the foremost close readers of Joyce’s work. In 1962, Robert M. Adams, with meticulous care, showed readers how Joyce worked to weave actual elements of turn-of-the-century Dublin into his novel.

The rise of structuralism in the late 1960s and the forceful emergence of poststructuralism in the 1970s reconfigured the critical landscape for interpreters of *Ulysses*. Critics no longer turned to the methods of New Criticism, old historicism, or biographical studies to illuminate the novel. Weldon Thornton showed the cumulative importance of Joyce’s allusive habits of composition in his 1968 encyclopedic compendium of references in *Ulysses*. In 1970 David Hayman presented a playful look at the narrative systems underlying Joyce’s writing. Three years later, Zack Bowen’s study foregrounded the centrality of music in Joyce’s works. Three years after that Michael Groden painstakingly traced the layered composition process that Joyce followed, and three years after that Roy Gottfried examined how that composition functioned at the more basic level of narrative expression. In 1981 Karen Lawrence showed how recently articulated critical theories opened interpretive possibilities heretofore ignored, and Brook Thomas continued that work a year later by raising questions regarding the narrative complexity of *Ulysses*.

The critical breakthroughs of the 1970s brought questions of form and structure to the foreground in the 1980s. These were neatly summarized by Bernard Benstock in his 1991 book that showed a deft assimilation of the intricacies of these methodologies. As the 1990s progressed, readers showed ever more diversity in themes that they felt applicable to interpretations of the novel. Maria Tymoczko became the first of a number of commentators to explore the significance of Joyce’s Irish identity. Mark Osteen offered a sophisticated materialist critique of the world of the novel. Neil Davidson took up issues of ethnicity as reflected in the treatment of Bloom in Joyce’s novel. John Rickard drew attention back to the creative impulse that informed *Ulysses*. And Paul Vanderham was one of a number of writers who examined the impact of censorship on the composition and reception of the novel.

Limitations of space have forced me to cite only a few of the many important critical works dealing with *Ulysses*. In the last three decades a great many important interpretations have appeared in other venues, employing feminist theory, Lacanian psychoanalysis, postcolonial criticism, and a range of other approaches. A recent summary of this work, written by Michael and Paula Gillespie, has the luxury of space that I lack here.

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D. H. Lawrence: *Women in Love*

Joyce Piell Wexler

Women in Love is about much more than women and love. Written during the First World War, D. H. Lawrence's great novel is about the meaning of love in a world that has lost almost all other sources of meaning. Lawrence takes the absence of religious faith as a given and asks what can replace it as a counterweight to materialism. An early conversation between Gerald Crich and Rupert Birkin introduces the problem. Positioned as foils, Gerald is the "born unbeliever" (Lawrence 1987: 58), and Birkin is the seeker of belief. They agree that life "just doesn't centre. The old ideals are dead as nails – nothing there. . . . seeing there's no God" (58). They know that they have to find the "aim and object" of their lives themselves (57). Gerald argues that this search must be grounded in empirical reality: "You've got to start with material things. . . . And we've got to live for *something*, we're not just cattle that can graze and have done with it" (56). He finds purpose in observable achievements such as "finding out things for myself – and getting experiences – and making things go." Birkin, in contrast, believes in love: "I want the finality of love" (57, 58).

But love is not final. It takes many forms, and Birkin himself soon seeks something beyond it. He longs for something that is "further than love, beyond the scope, as stars are beyond the scope of vision, some of them" (146). This state is not divine or supernatural, nor is it subjective. Since it is immaterial, it depends on language. In the 1919 foreword to the novel Lawrence argues that the individual "struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. . . . *It is the passionate struggle into conscious being*" (Lawrence 1987: 486). Implying the prior existence of something unconscious that must be brought to consciousness, this statement is consistent with the Freudian model of layered subjectivity. Like Freudian dreams, the novel uses extremity, contradiction, and repetition to represent the unconscious. Birkin's comment on Gudrun's behavior describes much of the novel: "It goes by contraries, like dreams" (94).

At the same time, Lawrence is concerned with the social conditions that determine the individual's "struggle into conscious being." Contemporary events have made

this struggle harder than ever: "We are now in a period of crisis. Every man who is acutely alive is acutely wrestling with his own soul" (Lawrence 1987: 486). Each may think that he struggles alone, but coming to consciousness requires collective action: "Men must speak out to one another" (486). And the struggle has social consequences: "The people that can bring forth the new passion, the new idea, this people will endure" (486). *Women in Love* covers the struggle on both the individual and the social fronts. Lawrence adheres to the psychological principle of "both/and" rather than the logical rule of "either/or." The novel fully recognizes the materialism and cynicism of its time and also offers a vision of meaning in everyday life.

Bringing dichotomies together, Lawrence's response to the late nineteenth-century crisis of belief differs from the exaltation of spirit over matter in Symbolism and Expressionism. The Symbolist premise was that the "visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream" (Symons 1899: 4). To combat what he called the "nightmare of materialism" (Kandinsky 1977: 2), Wassily Kandinsky articulated the Expressionist aesthetic as a turning away from empirical reality: "The more obvious is the separation from nature, the more likely is the inner meaning to be pure and unhampered" (Kandinsky 1977: 50). While Lawrence similarly departs from realism to convey non-empirical experience, he balances symbolic passages of heightened rhetoric with detailed descriptions of specific times and places.

Lawrence names the coordinates of his point of departure in Gudrun's description of Shortlands, Gerald's family home: "'eighteenth century, for certain; Dorothy Wordsworth and Jane Austen, don't you think?'" (Lawrence 1987: 48). Birkin regrets that a comparable combination of Romantic poetry and realist fiction has disappeared from the modern world. He admires "Jane Austen's England" because "'it had living thoughts to unfold even then, and pure happiness in unfolding them,'" instead of the "'sordid and foul mechanicalness'" of the present (355). When Ursula points out that Jane Austen's world was "'materialistic enough,'" Birkin counters that it was not *merely* materialistic: "'It could afford to be materialistic,' said Birkin, 'because it had the power to be something other – which we haven't. . . . try as we may, we can't bring off anything but materialism: mechanism, the very soul of materialism'" (355). His praise for Austen implies the need for a new balance between empirical and non-empirical reality.

To find meaning in contemporary life, Lawrence developed a symbolic method that represents the capacity for belief without limiting that capacity to particular beliefs. He decided that *Sons and Lovers* (1913) would be his last realistic novel, because he was tired of its "hard, violent style full of sensation and presentation" (Lawrence 1981: 132). The new style appears in the Brangwen family saga that he divided into *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921). Lawrence's symbolic method begins with images of empirical reality but then evokes multiple associations. Unlike allegories in which one set of meanings displaces another, symbols never abandon their starting-point. Lawrence indicates his symbolic intention by mixing conventions of realistic prose with various kinds of extremity. Extraordinary events occur, thoughts and feelings are contradicted and repeated, and poetic features such

as figurative language, rhythmic phrasing, and alliteration appear. For example, the description of Birkin and Ursula en route to the Alps alternates sharp observation and symbolic heightening: "They drank hot, watery coffee, and ate the long rolls, split, with ham between, which were such a wide bite that it almost dislocated Ursula's jaw," yet their journey is also mythic: "It was all so strange, so extremely desolate, like the underworld, grey, grey, dirt grey, desolate, forlorn, nowhere – grey, dreary nowhere" (Lawrence 1987: 390). The interweaving of closely observed acts and symbolic associations locates the intangible and the unknown in the tangible and familiar.

Just as Lawrence undermines the literary binary of realism and symbolism, his use of contradiction challenges common cultural binaries such as body and mind, matter and spirit, history and myth, conscious and unconscious motivation, male and female personality. Instead of synthesizing or fusing opposites, the novel keeps them in suspension. The contradictions in *Women in Love* demand new ways of thinking about the world. The novel overcomes dualism through duality, claiming that the immaterial meaning of life is inseparable from its material reality.

Lawrence explained his intention in relation to his concept of character. He told his editor that character should follow a "rhythmic form, like when one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown" (Lawrence 1981: 184). The metaphor suggests the need to find a pattern underlying the diverse data of experience:

You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically-unchanged element. (Lawrence 1981: 183)

His example is carbon, whether in the form of coal or diamond. As different as coal and diamond may be, thinking of them in relation to carbon as their common element recasts their differences into a significant relationship.

The novel examines the "allotropic states" of love by shuffling characters into various couples: Birkin and Ursula, Gerald and Gudrun, Birkin and Gerald, but also Birkin and Hermione, Gerald and Pussum, Gudrun and Loerke. A series of symbolic scenes allows the couples to illustrate various conceptions of love. These extend from Birkin's credo that love is the "aim and object" of life to Loerke's cynical disparagement of it: "L'amour, l'amore, die Liebe – I detest it in every language. Women and love, there is no greater tedium" (Lawrence 1987: 458). Each character is distinct, delineated by particulars of birth, family, and social position. Nevertheless, each has the capacity for the expansive interiority Birkin most fully exhibits, and each can deny it as coldly as Loerke does. The main characters exist within the bounds of a specific historical context and also have an inner life of mythic dimensions.

Birkin and Ursula's dialogues test alternative ideas of love and lead to the novel's most positive relationship. Birkin cannot tell Ursula that he loves her until he

defines love in his own terms. He objects to the dialectic principle in Ursula's view of love: "'Proud and subserved, then subservient to the proud – I know you and your love. It is a tick-tack, tick-tack, a dance of opposites'" (Lawrence 1987: 153). To undercut such binaries of power, he creates a symbol: "'One must commit oneself to a conjunction with the other – forever. But it is not selfless – it is a maintaining of the self in mystic balance and integrity – like a star balanced with another star'" (152). This kind of commitment, he believes, is the only social bond left: "'I do think,' he said, 'that the world is only held together by the mystic conjunction, the ultimate unison between people – a bond. And the immediate bond is between man and woman'" (152). This "mystic conjunction" is not transcendence of the body but something added to physical experience. It affirms the need for intimate relationships yet preserves the separateness of each partner. Descriptions of their love-making combine physical acts and metaphysical terms such as "inhuman," "mysterious," and "revelation":

Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as a palpable revelation of living otherness. (Lawrence 1987: 320)

But Birkin's ideal does not reign unchallenged. Ursula is wary of the indeterminacy of symbols, and she perceives coercion in Birkin's image of "star equilibrium." She compares Birkin to his male cat's "lust for bullying – a real *Wille zur Macht*" (Lawrence 1987: 150), protesting, "'I don't trust you when you drag in the stars'" (152). Nevertheless, her skepticism coexists with her attraction to a man who at least believes in *something*. Birkin's ideal of duality evokes a responsive "duality in feeling" in Ursula:

And it was this duality in feeling which he created in her, that made a fine hate of him quicken in her bowels. There was his wonderful, desirable life-rapidity, the rare quality of an utterly desirable man: and there was at the same time this ridiculous, mean effacement into a *Salvator Mundi* and a Sunday-school teacher, a prig of the stiffest type. (129–30)

Ursula's critique of Birkin illustrates the novel's characteristic use of contradiction to affirm a duality.

Birkin also undercuts his ideal. As soon as he and Ursula pledge their love in "Excuse," he reveals that he wants more. He dreams, "'To be free, in a free place, with a few other people!'" His wish disturbs her: "Those 'few other people' depressed her" (Lawrence 1987: 316). Ursula understands the symbol of "star-equilibrium" (319) as binary stars, but Birkin is apparently thinking of a constellation. Dissatisfied with the exclusivity of the couple, Birkin seeks a "complete" relationship with a man: "'But a permanent relation between a man and a woman isn't the last word – it certainly isn't'" (352). As he explains to Gerald, "'I believe in the *additional* perfect

relationship between man and man – additional to marriage’” (352). Birkin proposes a *Blutbrüderschaft* to seal their bond, but Gerald is unable to acknowledge his feelings in a ceremony: “‘We’ll leave it till I understand it better,’ he said, in a voice of excuse” (207). The erotic and emotional dimensions of their attraction emerge in the wrestling match in “Gladiatorial,” as the metaphorical language describing their physical acts evokes symbolic meanings. And before leaving the Tyrol with Ursula, Birkin renews his offer: “‘I’ve loved you, as well as Gudrun, don’t forget,’ said Birkin bitterly. Gerald looked at him strangely, abstractedly” (440).

Gerald and Gudrun are just as capable of expansive inner lives, but they succumb to the materialism and cynicism of their culture. Although Gerald is identified with the physical world of coal, clay, ice, and snow, he is also associated with “eternity,” “infinity,” and “the God-motion” (228). He believes that “the essential secret of life was harmony,” yet he puts “his philosophy into practice by forcing order into the established world, translating the mystic word harmony into the practical word organisation” (227). If he translates “harmony” into “organisation,” it is because he understands both words. As the “industrial magnate,” Gerald earns the same adjective as Birkin – “inhuman”: “It was this inhuman principle in the mechanism he wanted to construct that inspired Gerald with an almost religious exaltation” (228). Gerald’s failure is not that he seeks the “inhuman principle” in the physical world but that he seeks it nowhere else.

As an artist and a Brangwen, Gudrun also has the capacity for interiority. Her dance before the Highland cattle symbolizes her desire. The free indirect discourse of the narrative describes her actions as well as her unconscious feelings:

[Gudrun] went in a strange palpitating dance towards the cattle, lifting her body towards them as if in a spell, her feet pulsing as if in some little frenzy of unconscious sensation, her arm, her wrists, her hands stretching and heaving and falling and reaching and reaching and falling, her breasts lifted and shaken towards the cattle, her throat exposed as in some voluptuous ecstasy towards them, whilst she drifted imperceptibly nearer, an uncanny white figure, towards them, carried away in its own rapt trance, ebbing in strange fluctuations upon the cattle. . . . (167–8)

The passage reports what Gudrun is doing, and it also uses repetition and similes introduced by “as if” and “as in” to connect her acts to inner states. The symbolic dimension of the scene is assimilated to a plausible historical context in details like Ursula’s singing a popular song of the period, “Way down dar in Tennessee,” to accompany the dance. When Gerald and Birkin suddenly appear, Ursula fends off the realistic question, “‘What do you think you’re doing?’” with a contemporary explanation, “‘We were doing eurhythmics,’ laughed Ursula” (168). Gudrun is embarrassed that Gerald has witnessed her display of desire and slaps his cheek. He takes up her challenge, saying, “‘You have struck the first blow.’” She replies, “‘And I shall strike the last’” (171). Symbolic scenes throughout the novel convey the erotic violence of their love by mixing pain and pleasure.

In "Death and Love" Gerald and Gudrun enact an X-rated version of Sleeping Beauty in Beldover. He improbably enters the Brangwen household at night, climbs the stairs in the dark, finds Gudrun's bedroom, and makes love to her there. Gerald's trance-like state expresses his desire as a compulsion that neither he nor Gudrun can resist. He seems "godlike" to her, "an apparition, the young Hermes" (343): "Save for the extreme beauty and mystic attractiveness of his distinct, strange face, she would have sent him away. But his face was too wonderful and undiscovered to her. It fascinated her with the fascination of pure beauty, cast a spell on her, like nostalgia, an ache" (343). Terms like "mystic," "spell," and "undiscovered" suggest a transcendent spiritual state, as "strange," "fascinated," and "nostalgia" suggest more common feelings. The sensory perception of beauty and the sensation of an "ache" connect her physical desire for him to enchantment. At the same time, she is aware of the actual situation: "She saw that his boots were all clayey, even his trousers were plastered with clay. And she wondered if he had made footprints all the way up" (343). Her realistic worries situate her enchantment in everyday life.

After they make love, Gerald sleeps as Gudrun rides waves of feeling: "This mood of extremity, when she lay staring into eternity, utterly suspended, and conscious of everything, to the last limits, passed and left her uneasy. She had lain so long motionless. She moved, she became self-conscious. She wanted to look at him, to see him" (345). Sex brings on the "mood of extremity," but the mood is not any one thing. The language of visionary experience conveys positive feelings: "eternity," "utterly suspended," "to the last limits." But Gudrun passes from this transcendent state back to the depths of self-consciousness: "She felt an overwhelming tenderness for him, and a dark, understirring of jealous hatred, that he should lie so perfect and immune, in an otherworld, whilst she was tormented with violent wakefulness, cast out in the outer darkness" (346). Since Gerald sleeps through these fluctuations, he cannot be blamed for her fall from "eternity" to an "otherworld." The extremity of her mood gives their sexual encounter multiple meanings, and the physical reality of sex makes all of them credible.

The final scenes in the Alps bring the themes of the novel together. The snow-bound landscape engages the rhetorical question that Shelley poses in a similar setting in "Mont Blanc":

And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

In *Women in Love*, the silence and solitude of the Alps *are* "vacancy." The contrast between the symbolism of the bare mountain in Shelley's poem and in Lawrence's novel marks the cultural transition from doubt to disbelief. The twentieth-century figures face the barren snow and ice with no transcendent source of meaning to provide relief. For consolation, Birkin and Ursula turn to one another: "I couldn't bear this cold, eternal place without you,' he said. 'I couldn't bear it, it would kill

the quick of my life'” (408). The cold is so intense that it symbolizes something that seems “eternal.” Similarly, Ursula “belonged only to the oneness with Birkin, a oneness that struck deeper notes, sounding into the heart of the universe, the heart of reality, where she had never existed before” (410).

As Ursula's soul expands to fill the lifeless landscape, Gudrun's shrinks into itself. She feels the full force of emptiness: “It was unbelievable that one could live there uncrushed by all this terrible waste of whiteness and silence and clear, upper, ringing cold” (491). Losing her capacity to believe in anything, Gudrun becomes “purely cynical” (396), and the “contest” with Gerald intensifies (441). In contrast to the physical and spiritual “star equilibrium” of Birkin and Ursula, Gudrun and Gerald lapse into sensation: “He and she were separate, like opposite poles of one fierce energy. But they felt powerful enough to leap over the confines of life into the forbidden places, and back again” (399). Defensively denying any emotional connection, they pass through the allotropic forms of sensation:

But between two particular people, any two people on earth, the range of pure sensational experience is limited. The climax of sensual reaction, once reached in any direction, is reached finally, there is no going on. There is only repetition possible, or the going apart of the two protagonists, or the subjugating of the one will to the other, or death. (451)

Although Gerald rather than Gudrun actually dies, she suffers a kind of death in “the cold devil of irony that froze her soul” (476).

Murderous rage is a component of Gudrun and Gerald's love. She dreads being dominated, though it is her desire for Gerald that gives him power over her: “And because she was in his power, she hated him with a power that she wondered did not kill him. In her will she killed him as he stood, effaced him” (455). Gerald dreads being rejected. When Gudrun tells him that she is leaving, he says to himself, “I ought to kill her here. There is only this left, for me to kill her.’ A heavy, overcharged desire to bring about her death, possessed him” (461). Gudrun strikes Gerald first. To make him stop beating Loerke, repeating Hermione's assault on Birkin, she “raised her clenched hand high, and brought it down, with a great downward stroke, over the face and on to the breast of Gerald” (471). Gerald's immediate reaction is astonishment, and then he feels a sexual thrill that combines pain and laughter, hate and desire: “Wide, wide his soul opened, in wonder, feeling the pain. Then it laughed, turning, with strong hands outstretched at last to take the apple of his desire” (471). He begins to choke her: “What bliss! Oh what bliss, at last, what satisfaction, at last!” (471). Gerald fantasizes that his attack and her resistance are erotic: “He was unconscious of her fighting and struggling. The struggling was her reciprocal lustful passion in this embrace, the more violent it became, the greater the frenzy of delight, till the zenith was reached, the crisis, the struggle was overborne, her movement became softer, appeased” (472). When he realizes what he is doing, he stops himself: “A revulsion of contempt and disgust came over Gerald's soul. The

disgust went to the very bottom of him, a nausea. Ah, what was he doing, to what depths was he letting himself go! As if he cared about her enough to kill her, to have her life on his hands!" (472). The repetition of phrases, the exclamations, the hyperbole of "bliss" and "frenzy of delight," and the formality of "overborne" reinforce non-empirical terms like "soul," "unconscious," and "passion." Then he feels "a nausea" as he sees what their love has become. This visceral image marks his return to empirical reality, and it repeats Gudrun's expression of contempt for what she imagines their life would be if they married: "At any rate we'll spare ourselves the nausea of stirring the old broth any more" (419).

Understood strictly as realism, Gerald's attempt to strangle Gudrun is an appalling celebration of misogynist violence. The scene is not as offensive as it would be in a realistic novel, however, because the heightened rhetoric pushes the sexual violence toward symbolic meanings. Gerald's attack on Loerke and Gudrun is not merely a metaphor for his feelings – it is a real event in the plot – but Gudrun responds to its symbolic meaning more fully than to its literal meaning. She has had similar wishes and has acted on them. When she learns that Gerald is dead, she feels like a murderer rather than a victim, asking Loerke, "'We haven't killed him?'" (475). In Birkin's presence, she feels guilty: "She knew he knew" (476).

Instead of holding Gudrun responsible, Birkin blames Gerald for rejecting him: "'He should have loved me,' he said. 'I offered him'" (480). He reaffirms the physical and spiritual qualities that made him love Gerald: "He remembered also the beautiful face of one whom he had loved, and who had died still having the faith to yield to the mystery" (480). In contrast to Gudrun's cold composure, Birkin weeps: "because of his heart's hunger, suddenly his heart contracted, his own candle all but fell from his hand, as, with a strange whimpering cry, the tears broke out" (479). Loving another man and expressing his love openly, he shatters conventions of masculinity. Ursula is "aghast" at his emotion. His words of regret, "'I didn't want it to be like this'" (479), remind her of the Kaiser's lament for the war dead, "'Ich habe es nicht gewollt,'" and she looks "almost with horror on Birkin" (479). Thinking of the Kaiser's words, Ursula extends the meaning of Gerald's death in the cold and ice of the Tyrol to the generation killed in the war. Her thoughts ignore the wartime antipathy between Great Britain and the Central Powers, another cultural binary Lawrence undermines.

Ursula never accepts Birkin's love for Gerald: "'Aren't I enough for you?' she asked" (481). Birkin's answer epitomizes Lawrence's quest to encompass binaries: "'You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal'" (481). She argues that his want is "'an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity'" and that "'it's false, impossible'" (481). But Birkin has the last word: "'I don't believe that,' he answered" (481). Birkin's refusal to choose between the social binaries of loving women or loving men enacts the primary value the novel advances: seeking more. The extremity of this instance causes it to symbolize the rejection of other binaries as well.

To go beyond what is known, to refuse to close oneself to experience, is Lawrence's proposal for supplementing materialism. It is a direction, a way of living, that avoids

specifying any creed. Instead of advocating a single, foundational belief, Lawrence affirms the value of belief against cynicism and the need to ground belief in material reality. Into the particularized lives of diverse characters, the novel pours intense passion and subtle thought, social analysis and sexual gratification. Blending observation of the ordinary world with evocation of extreme feeling, the novel implies that all this and more is possible for anyone.

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Wyndham Lewis: *Tarr*

Andrzej Gasiorek

Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, an explosively original and demanding novel, was recognized as a major modernist work as soon as it burst onto the cultural scene. Lewis started work on *Tarr* – his first published novel – in 1907 or 1908, and he kept rethinking and revising it over the next decade. In its original conception it centered on the figure of Otto Kreisler. Lewis hoped to place it with Ford Madox Ford's *English Review*. But Lewis kept changing his mind as to what he wanted from this narrative. It went through several possible titles ("The Bourgeois-Bohemians," "Between Two Interviews," "Otto Kreisler's Death") before he settled on *Tarr*. The novel's long gestation, and the late introduction of the character for whom it would eventually be named, suggest that Lewis was unsure where he wanted to place his focus. A related problem concerns the fictional status of Tarr himself, a character who functions in many ways as a spokesman for the author and who has been criticized as one of the novel's weakest aspects. But the text works on different levels. It is a novel of ideas in which characters are the mouthpieces for contrasting viewpoints, principally about art; a psychological study of mental breakdown; a satire of bohemian life, sexual behavior, and social pretension; and an example of an external modernist aesthetic opposed to the subjectivism of writers such as Joyce and Woolf.

Tarr was none the less inextricably linked to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Indeed, Lewis's novel seemed fated to be linked with Joyce's even before it was published, as Paul O'Keeffe has demonstrated (O'Keeffe 1996). *Portrait* was serialized in the *Egoist* in 1914 and 1915, and Pound, who was keen to promote both Joyce and Lewis, planned to approach John Lane with Joyce's manuscript. When Lewis expressed concern that the two novels would be competing with each other, Pound chose to submit Lewis's manuscript first, while holding back Joyce's *Portrait*. When Lane rejected *Tarr* it was sent to Werner Laurie, before eventually finding its way to Harriet Shaw Weaver, who agreed to publish an abridged version of the book despite her reservations about it. *Tarr* was serialized in the *Egoist* from April 1916 to

November 1917; the book was published in the United States by Knopf in June 1918 and in the United Kingdom by the Egoist Press in July 1918.

The novel's plot is a deceptively simple one. Tarr is an aspiring artist who is entangled in a sexual relationship with the bourgeoisie Bertha Lunken, from whom he is struggling to free himself. He palms her off on Kreisler, a debt-ridden German student who is failing to establish himself as an artist. The unpredictable Kreisler spirals out of control; he rapes Bertha and provokes the Pole Louis Soltyk, of whom he is intensely jealous, to a duel. Kreisler's manic behavior turns the duel into a tragicomic farce, and when Soltyk is accidentally killed Kreisler commits suicide. Tarr has by this point met the *Übermädchen* Anastasya Vasek, and the sophisticated sex and conversation indulged in by these two lords of creation is contrasted with the stodgy domesticity of Tarr's relationship with Bertha. But Tarr has maintained throughout the novel that surrender to a woman represents death to the artist: whereas the *homme moyen sensuel* expresses his vitality by way of sex, the artist must use it to fashion himself as a creative figure whose primal power is reserved for the aesthetic sphere. Anastasya threatens this psychic model because her quality as a human being demands recognition as an equal. Tarr is left with two choices: an instrumental relationship with Bertha, which will allow him to retain his theory of art as the sublimation of libidinal drives, or a symbiotic relationship with Anastasya, which will require him to rethink his stance. The novel ends inconclusively. Bertha gives birth to a child thought to be Kreisler's, and Tarr marries her in fulfillment of an earlier pledge, while continuing to see Anastasya. The last paragraph makes it clear that nothing has been resolved and that Tarr will continue to oscillate between these two female types.

A plot summary such as this does no justice to the subject matter of a complex text. *Tarr* is a *Künstlerroman* that traces the progress of an aspiring artist who articulates an aesthetic theory, which then comments reflexively on the novel in which it is elaborated; it satirizes Parisian bohemia, presenting it as a sham existence absolutely uncondusive to the creation of genuine art; it offers a powerful account of psychological collapse as the product of Oedipal conflicts, class resentment, and cultural anxiety; it depicts social relations as agonistic and duplicitous; it explores the nature of mimetic desire and exposes the defensiveness of a threatened masculinity; it projects a world hovering on the edge of meaninglessness in which existential dread is never far from the surface of an ersatz social life. Above all, *Tarr* is stylistically innovative, evolving a disruptive, cascading language, which is unlike that of any other modernist writer, and a narrative structure that defies accepted novelistic conventions.

The question of style is of decisive importance. Pound's and Eliot's reviews of *Tarr* offer fascinating insights into early responses to the novel. Pound valued the novel for its departure from the outworn canons of the well-turned realist novel, its anti-bourgeois sentiments, and its vitality, describing it as "the most vigorous and volcanic English novel of our time" (Pound 1963: 424); Eliot, in turn, considered that *Tarr* exemplified "the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man" (Eliot 1918: 106). Pound, however, was troubled by the contrast between *Tarr* and

Portrait. The key difference between them concerned the matter of style: whereas both writers achieved a laudable “intensity,” Joyce was “cold and meticulous” while Lewis was “brimming with energy, the man with a leaping mind.” Yet *Tarr*’s “faults” – principally its discursiveness, the lack of critical distance between author and protagonist, and the patchy quality of its prose – made Pound uneasy (Pound 1963: 423). An influential voice in the early critical reception of Lewis’s work, Pound helped to establish the terms in which the two writers would henceforth be seen: Joyce’s perfection of language and manner set against Lewis’s volcanic energy and rebarbative style.

The respective rhythms and registers of *Portrait* and *Tarr* differ markedly. Joyce’s mellifluous prose unfolds in smooth cadences, whereas *Tarr* offers a pyrotechnic display in which syntax is inverted, prepositions, pronouns, and articles are suppressed or eliminated, sentences crackle with electric power, and words explode off the page. Consider this description of Solyk’s response to Kreisler’s arch suggestion that Solyk should grant him a kiss:

The will broke out frantically from the midst of bandages and a bulk of suddenly accruing fury. Solyk tore at *himself* first, writhing upright, a statue’s bronze softening, suddenly, with blood. He became white and red by turns. His blood, one heavy mass, hurtled about in him, up and down, like a sturgeon in a narrow tank. . . . His hands were electrified. Will was at last dashed all over him, an arctic douche. The hands flew at Kreisler’s throat. His nails made six holes in the flesh and cut into the tendons beneath. Kreisler was hurled about. He was pumped backwards and forwards. His hands grabbed a mass of hair; as a man slipping on a precipice gets hold of a plant. Then they gripped along the coat sleeves, connecting him with the engine he had just overcharged with fuel. (Lewis 1918: 272–3)

This extraordinary passage produces a self-division within both characters, their respective body parts functioning independently of their owners’ minds. Solyk’s will commits violence against himself before the caged torso can be freed from conscious restraint, but once it is released, the “wild body” is in charge of proceedings. The passive constructions introduced towards the end of this passage reveal the extent to which both humans are caught up in a whirlwind of rage that Lewis’s sentences can barely contain, the language of the text coming close to being overcharged with a too easily combustible fuel.

In a scene such as this Lewis depicts the experience of extreme anger in an unexpected way. The effectiveness of his description relies on the original imagery, the vibrant verbs, and the portrayal of the subject as a fragmented entity unable to control its actions. modernism’s commitment to “make it new,” to disrupt conventional modes of perception, informs Lewis’s search for a language and a narrative form that could destabilize habitual assumptions. *Tarr* offered him the opportunity to take apart the building-blocks of the traditional realist novel, to rethink its principles of construction from the level of the individual sentence right through to the overall structure of the text. T. S. Eliot grasped this when in the course of his essay on

Ulysses he described the apparent formlessness of *Tarr* and *Portrait* as the product of “a conscious or probably unconscious dissatisfaction with the form” of the novel itself (Eliot 1975: 77). Other critics have also emphasized this aspect of Lewis’s work. Fredric Jameson (1979: 2) notes that in *Tarr* “the sentence is reinvented with all the force of origins, as sculptural gesture and fiat in the void”; Marshall McLuhan (1980: 65) has praised the “stereoscopic novelty” of its urban descriptions; and John Russell (1978: 124) has emphasized the ways in which Lewis’s external method breaks actions up into discrete moments, producing “a kind of minute-by-minute changing frieze.”

Tarr was signally concerned with the presentation of reality in a new way. In a letter to Hugh Kenner, Lewis explained that “the highly-energised imagery” he deployed in the novel was an extremist attempt to match the visual radicalism of *Blast*; he wanted to create a “piece of writing worthy of the hand of the abstractist innovator,” and he considered that in doing so he had successfully “produced a somewhat jagged prose” (Lewis 1963: 552–3). Lewis was to render this disjunctive prose more accessible when he rewrote the book in 1928, after he had concluded that the abstract novel was a cul-de-sac, but the original version overturned readers’ expectations and demanded a new hermeneutics. Lewis’s radical style had a purpose that may more easily be discerned when one turns to a key statement in *Time and Western Man* (1927): “Language has to be destroyed before you transform ideas at all radically” (Lewis [1927] 1993: 5). In *Tarr* this language serves an external mode of narration and a pungent satire. The text assaults a reified society and dismantles the clichés by which its imitative citizens live, displacing what it spurns with its own performativity. This exorbitant style is not mimetic but productive; it envisages the writer as a transformative force and his texts as mastering reality through their rhetorical power. It embodies Vorticism’s doubled commitment to destruction and creation, satirizing those who engage in a masquerade of life and offering its own wit, artifice, and ingenuity – in short, its inimitability – as a corrective.

The creative aspect of the text thus functions principally in two ways: firstly, its energy and linguistic power brings the puppets it excoriates to life, investing them with a vitality they are incapable of generating themselves; secondly, it offers an alternative not only to the sham bohemia it mocks but also to the subjectivism of a modernism that Lewis considered to be suitable solely for the writer “dealing with (1) the extremely aged; (2) young children; (3) half-wits; and (4) animals” (Lewis 1934: 98). This alternative aesthetic preserves the boundary between “art” and “life,” proposing an inorganic conception of sculpture as its regulative model. Art is to approach the stability, order, and immutability that human life cannot vouchsafe the individual. The key passage occurs towards the end of the novel: “Deadness . . . in the limited sense in which we use that word, is the first condition of art. The second is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of the statue are its soul. No restless, quick flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it. It has no inside. This is another condition of art; *to have no inside*, nothing you cannot *see*” (Lewis 1918: 299–300).

This passage presents the view that has most commonly been attributed to Lewis. But taken on its own it is misleading even about his character's aesthetics, to say nothing of his own. For a large part of the novel's energy and passion stems from its satire of a life it knows all too well and which it embraces for the purposes of art. Thus Tarr says of himself:

"I am the Panurgic-Pessimist, drunken with the laughing gas of the Abyss. I gaze on squalor and idiocy, and the more I see it, the more I like it. = Flaubert built up his *Bouvard et Pécuchet* with maniacal and tireless hands. It took him ten years. That was a long draught of stodgy laughter from the gases that rise from the dung-heap? He had an appetite like an elephant for this form of mirth. But he grumbled and sighed over his food. = I take it in my arms and bury my face in it!" (Lewis 1918: 26–7)

This set piece supports the theory of comedy articulated in the text in which stoical humor is rejected as a form of reality avoidance, in favor of an acerbic satire that strips away illusions, even if what is thereby disclosed is the grotesque nature of human life.

Tarr persistently runs aesthetics and psychology together. The dualism of intellect and senses demarcates the individual (as thinker, as artist) from the slavish bohemians who are portrayed as ersatz figures, and informs a theory of art in which retreat from life represents a solution to the perils of intersubjectivity and social mimesis. The flip side of this aesthetic is an attachment to corporeality as the source of art, and the tension inherent in this dualism seems not to be resolved in *Tarr* but to function as the wellspring of its own creativity. If "life" is objectionable because it is associated with a destabilizing libidinality and because it is the site of a shadow-play in which cipher-like figures act out their petty psycho-dramas, then the artist is not simply a disengaged figure, but an alienated one, who is enraged by the *bêtises* he daily witnesses in a world in which hell is other people. Yet this infernal masquerade is the material out of which art comes. Thus it is important to note that the novel does not stick to the rigorous aesthetic terms laid down by Tarr. When Lewis wrote to Augustus John that he had "just finished an 'analytic' novel about a German student" he noted that the "language is not travaillé [*sic*]: any beauty it may possess depending on the justness of the psychology, – as is the case in the Russian novels" (Lewis 1963: 65). This makes it clear that a concern with the psychology of character was very much in Lewis's mind, a point picked up by Rebecca West in her review of the novel (West 1918).

There is a tension in *Tarr* between an external aesthetic, which is principally associated with satire, and a psychological intensity that emerges in the analysis of Kreisler. Kreisler and Tarr are doubles, and critics have read them as opposites betokening a range of dualisms: art/life, Vorticism/Futurism, mind/body, ideas/passion, and ego/id. When thought of in relation to the novel's debates about art, Kreisler emerges as an extreme case of an expressivist aesthetic, a man who, in Eliot's terms, fails to understand that art is neither the unleashing of emotion nor the

expression of personality. Some critics have seen the presentation of Kreisler as the novel's most successful feature. West judged that its real achievement was Kreisler, "the murderous clown" (West 1918: 68) – a brother to Stavrogin and the epitome of German bellicosity as evidenced in the First World War, while Tarr sees him as a man who has failed to sublimate his sexuality into art, and who has floundered from the sphere in which he belongs into one in which he cannot get his bearings, a confusion of identity and context that has cataclysmic consequences for Bertha, Soltyk, and Kreisler himself.

Kreisler's rape of Bertha offers a brilliant example of Lewis's technique at work, its distanced perspective capturing Kreisler's split identity and his dissociation from his own *ressentiment*:

She saw side by side and unconnected, the silent figure drawing her and the other one full of blindness and violence. Then there were two other figures, one getting up from the chair, yawning, and the present lazy one at the window – four in all, that she could not bring together somehow, each in a complete compartment of time of its own. It would be impossible to make the present idle figure at the window interest itself in these others. A loathsome, senseless event, of no meaning, naturally, to that figure there. It had quietly, indifferently, talked: it had drawn: it had suddenly flung itself upon her and taken her: and now it was standing idly there. (Lewis 1918: 194)

A disjointed, broken-up personality, Kreisler is driven by subterranean forces which he cannot comprehend. In keeping with the spatializing imperatives of the Vorticist aesthetic, Lewis breaks up this tragic scene into discrete tableaux, each of which is snapshotted as an isolated temporal incident. By portraying Kreisler's assault as a series of seemingly unrelated, unmotivated actions, Lewis shows that it springs from a vortex of emotions that follow no coherent pattern. At the end of the scene the two characters are at opposite ends of the room in which the fateful event has taken place, two objects that have momentarily collided, before being violently flung apart.

Kreisler is, however, an overdetermined character, and although his psychology is drawn with tremendous insight, he cannot be seen *only* in terms of his undoubted paranoia. Jameson sees him as an allegorical type whose psychopathology figures "that complex of German feelings which served as the ideological justification for the War" (Jameson 1979: 92–3). This reading subtends his view of the novel's narrative structure as producing a form of national allegory, and Paul Peppis (2000) has in his account of the novel also focused on its exploration of national identity. In Jameson's account this structure is then overlaid by a psychic allegory in which Tarr's ego confronts Kreisler's id. Peter Bürger's reading of the Tarr–Kreisler doublet stresses the division "between modern and avant-garde artistic practice" and "the opposition between two different articulations of subjectivity" (Bürger 1992: 128, 136), the novel demonstrating the failure of Kreisler's confused attempt to bring art into life praxis. Alistair Davies suggests that *Tarr* adapted the Nietzschean novella to the novel form; on this reading, the text traces Tarr's development into a "true creator" while Kreisler, his "sick and pathological counterpart" (Davies 1980: 109), embraces

death. Michael Levenson, in contrast, sees *Tarr* as a self-unraveling text that disrupts the dualistic structures it has put into play and undermines all attempts at narrative control (Levenson 1991).

These critical approaches neglect to point out that despite Tarr's pronouncements, the novel does not present his alienation from "life" as a solution to the problem of the artist's identity but rather expresses his dilemma in stark terms. As a character Tarr is perhaps best understood as the product of an unresolved psychological-aesthetic conflict between the alchemical Panurgic-Pessimist who embraces what is base in life in order to transmute it to artistic gold and the isolated creator who withdraws from the inauthenticity of an existence that he misogynistically codes as "female." The language of sexual differentiation is one of the novel's most noticeable features, and in Tarr's mouth it takes the form of male hysteria. Consider this: "How foul and wrong this haunting of women is! = They are everywhere! = Confusing, blurring, libelling, with their half-baked, gushing, tawdry presences!" (Lewis 1918: 32). Or this: "There was only one God, and he was a man. = A woman was a lower form of life. Everything was female to begin with. A jellyish diffuseness spread itself and gaped on the beds and in the bas-fonds of everything. Above a certain level of life sex disappeared, just as in highly organised sensualism sex vanishes. And, on the other hand, *everything* beneath that line was female" (Lewis 1918: 313–14).

This articulation of masculine anxiety reveals a desire not only to ward off the destabilizing effects of the emotional life but also to resist the abjection of the sexed body. Anne Quéma notes that in *Tarr* women are associated with formlessness, and she suggests that the text's demarcation of men from women serves to protect masculine identity by removing it "from the sexual level to the intellectual or nonphysical" (Quéma 1999: 114). Tarr's strategy is to code both the affects and corporeality as "female" and to fantasize an act of autogenesis by way of which the gynocratic realm may be left behind. Given that his aesthetic theory is predicated on the separation of "sex" from "art," one can see why critics such as Levenson have stressed that his version of libidinal sublimation takes "a sharp unpleasant twist towards misogyny" (Levenson 1991: 122). Nor can this evident misogyny be elided. But Tarr is not Lewis, and other critics have pointed out that his views are called into question. The issue turns on the extent to which Tarr is undermined as a character, his sexual politics concealing hostility to a generalized process of social mimeticism. And a good deal hangs on how one interprets the novel's closing paragraphs. Does the position that Tarr has championed remain intact or is the reader to see it as a problematic stance that has been dismantled?

A novel of *Tarr's* complexity yields no simple answers to such questions. Peter Nicholls notes that sexual desire in *Tarr* "produces a sort of lacuna in the subject" and argues that "while there is plenty in Lewis's work to evidence chauvinism in these matters, there is also much to show that he was trying to uncover a process of social identification which went beyond the categories of gender" (Nicholls 1995: 186, 187). Tarr, moreover, does not emerge well from the text's scrutiny of his behavior: he is a distinctly lopsided figure with "no social machinery but the cumbrous

one of the intellect"; an egoist whose relations with others are instrumental, for the "function of a friend is to be a substitute for [the] defective self"; and a man who cannot cope with reciprocity, since he needs "an empty vessel to flood with his vitality, and not an equal and foreign vitality to coldly exist side by side with" (Lewis 1918: 23, 31, 314). Tarr's narcissism is the sign of an alienation not just from sexed corporeality but from all of life's troubling vicissitudes.

Lewis's work occupied a marginal place in modernist studies for many years, partly because his external aesthetic was at odds with the inward turn taken by novelists who were swiftly canonized, and partly because his oppositional stance and his trenchantly expressed views were deemed to be politically offensive. But his singular contribution to modernism has been belatedly recognized, and his innovative novels – *Tarr* among them – are acknowledged as part of an alternative modernist tradition that was for too long neglected. A novel such as *Tarr* is still an unsettling, provocative text – energetic, challenging, shocking. Julian Symons pointed out long ago that on its publication *Tarr* appeared to many critics as "a signpost for English literature, a truly revolutionary work in style and feeling" (Symons 1992: 106), but that this attempted revolution failed, since few writers followed Lewis's example. Paul Edwards has suggested that this may be because Lewis's "fierce scepticism seems to undermine all grounds of value, all attempts to find a 'grand narrative' in nature or in our technological extensions and substitutions for it" (Edwards 2000: 4). *Tarr* stands as a reminder of this uncompromising vision.

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Mina Loy: *Lunar Baedeker*

Michael Thurston

Much of what we want to know about Mina Loy's poetry – her program, her procedures, even her printed fate – is encapsulated in her first collection's title. We might first note the misspelling of "Baedeker" (the mistake was made by Robert McAlmon, whose Contact Press published the volume). This error presages a printing history through much of which, as Peter Quartermain has written, "Loy has been abominably served by editors of shall we say questionable competence" (Quartermain 1998: 75). Of more substantial significance, though, are the words themselves. "Baedeker," of course, refers to the series of travel guides published by Karl Baedeker and his successors beginning in 1827. Carolyn Burke describes these as "old-fashioned, opinionated, reliable, . . . the handbook familiar to all European travelers" (Burke 1996: 321). "Lunar" suggests that this handbook is a guide to unfamiliar terrain; a "Lunar Baedeker," then, would be a guide to fantastic landscapes, or to those states conventionally associated with the moon: femininity, creativity, madness. Or, perhaps, the phrase offers the moon *as* a guide and implies that precisely those culturally devalued identities – woman, artist, lunatic – are analogues for the Baedeker's maps, descriptions, and itineraries. (The latter possibility matches Loy's promise for "new forms as offered by creative genius": "it is the new form, for however great a period of time it may remain a mere irritant – that moulds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it" (Loy 1996: 151).) Finally, Loy's manner of combining words here must be noted. The title phrase invites multiple interpretations and offers no means for resolving discrepant readings.

Lunar Baedeker comprises two parts: "Poems 1921–1922" and "Poems 1914–1915." The later poems, especially those on Joyce, Brancusi, and Wyndham Lewis, at once explore and create the "lunar" landscapes of modernist experimentation. The earlier poems depict and inhabit specific European locales. Carolyn Burke (1996: 323) emphasizes the book's first half, especially the poems on Loy's fellow modernists, and finds "a series of transits through the stages of an argument" about contemporary society and the role of the artist within (or against) it, about modern consciousness

and the ability of the artist to represent or reshape it. The earlier poems simply offer Loy's pre-1921 work as "an archive." For Burke, the "lunar" supersedes the "Baedeker."

Unfortunately, this reading of the volume's structure consigns to the "archive" two of Loy's most often read and important poems: "Love Songs" and "Parturition." Of course, the division between the volume's two parts is not absolute; as Ellen Keck Stauder has pointed out, Loy's interest in abstraction, in "representation that recognizes the contingency of the material," powerfully connects the apparently disparate projects of "Brancusi's Golden Bird" and "Love Songs" (Stauder 1998: 358). Stauder's argument rightly directs us to thematic and formal continuities across the volume, to connections between Loy's moon and her map. Those connections are, most prominently, Loy's emphasis on artistic vision and her recognition of the difficulties women artists face in realizing their vision.

As her most tireless editor and promoter Roger Conover writes, "For a brief period early in the twentieth century, Mina Loy was the belle of the American Poetry Ball. But for the rest of the century, she has been dancing alone outside the hall, *poeta non grata*" (Conover 1998: 246). While Loy was once well known enough to be included in a "Who's Who in Manhattan" cartoon, while she was interviewed by the New York *Evening Sun* as an exemplary "New Woman," while she was often photographed by Man Ray, while she knew and was known by such canonical modernists as Duchamp, Picabia, Pound, and Williams, while she joined the small group of avant-garde writers and artists involved with Arthur Kreymborg's influential *Others* magazine, Loy's work was largely out of print and out of mind until it began to receive critical attention in the 1980s.

Mina Gertrude Lowy was born in London on December 27, 1882, the oldest of three daughters in her middle-class family. When she was seventeen, her father sent her to study art in Munich; she later studied with Augustus John in England. In 1903 she married Stephen Haweis, an English painter. The couple lived in Paris, where they had three children and where they participated in shows at the innovative Salon d'Automne. In 1907, Loy moved to Florence, where she lived until 1916 and where she came to know the Futurists F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini, with both of whom, according to Virginia Kouidis, "Loy probably had affairs" (Kouidis 1980: 8). Loy left Haweis and traveled to New York in 1916, where she settled into a community of avant-garde writers and artists. She began to publish poems in modernist little magazines in 1914, when "Café de Néant" appeared in *International*. Her *Songs to Joannes*, an early version of the poem that would appear in *Lunar Baedeker* as "Love Songs," was published as the entire April, 1917, issue of *Others*, but Loy published no volume of verse before *Lunar Baedeker*.

Published in an edition of several hundred copies by Robert McAlmon's new Contact Press (which also published Hemingway's *Two Stories and Ten Poems*, Williams's *Spring and All*, and Bryher's *Two Selves* in 1923), *Lunar Baedeker* was printed on cheap paper and sold for \$1.50. The collection was not highly regarded by the critics who bothered to review it. In *Poetry*, for example, Harriet Monroe regularized the poet's punctuation when she quoted from "Apology of Genius" ("supplying, if the

author will pardon us, a few punctuation marks”) and went on to opine that “this poet’s style, like that of many another radical, dilutes instead of concentrates” and that Loy’s work is “descriptive, explanatory, philosophic – in short, prose, which no amount of radical empiricism, in the sound and exclamatory arrangement of words and lines, can transform . . . into the stuff of poetry” (Monroe 1923: 101, 102–3). The book is not without its flaws; even a sympathetic reader today might be put off by Loy’s insistent alliteration, such as this (in the volume’s title poem):

Onyx-eyed Odalisques
and ornithologists
observe
the flight
of Eros obsolete
(Loy 1923: 2–3)

Or by the obscurity of lines like these, from “Der Blinde Junge”:

Pure purposeless eremite
of centripetal sentience

Upon the carnose horologe of the ego
the vibrant tendon index moves not.
(13)

Nevertheless, *Lunar Baedeker* includes at least two poems of obvious and lasting power (“Love Songs” and “Parturition”) along with several others that successfully exemplify modes of modernist experimentation.

As we might expect in the work of a poet who began as a painter and who made visual art throughout her adult life, one key component of Loy’s poetic vision is vision itself. This is especially obvious in some of the later poems that take art works as their subjects. “Brancusi’s Golden Bird,” for example, describes the sculpture in precise and compelling terms:

this breast of revelation
an incandescent curve
licked by chromatic flames
in labyrinths of reflections.
This gong
of polished hyper aesthesia
shrills with brass
as the aggressive light
strikes
it’s significance [*sic*]
(18)

We find here several techniques with which Loy will approach the visual throughout *Lunar Baedeker*. Genitive phrases (“breast of revelation”) link abstract and concrete as if to make ideas perceptible and to imbue the visible with greater meaning. Erotic diction (“breast,” “licked”) re-creates the physical pleasure of intense visual perception. Language strains to capture visual effects (here “shrills” verbalizes an adjective). It is tempting to include “it’s significance” as an example of the latter, a pun that packs multiple meanings into the phrase (the light strikes the gong’s significance, the play of light is significance itself), but the apostrophe is probably best read as another of McAlmon’s printing errors. Together, these devices enact vision even as they describe the visual.

The same thing happens in “Café du Néant,” perhaps the earliest poem included in the volume (first published in *International* in August, 1914). The poem describes a Paris café, lingering on “young lovers” and finally dwelling on one young woman “smiling as bravely / As it is given to her to be brave” (29). Loy uses painterly composition of visual elements, vivid colors, evocative descriptions (“brandy cherries / In winking glasses / Are decomposing harmoniously”), and even stage directions (“the concentric lighting focussed precisely upon her”) to make visible this scene and its significance: the death of love’s myth. More than this, though, these techniques foreground the act of seeing so that the poem is about vision itself at least as much as it is about love or death or Paris.

Loy’s foregrounding of the visual is especially compelling when she deploys aural as well as visual means to achieve it. Some of the later poems in *Lunar Baedeker* call attention to the act of the eye not only verbally but also through typography and spatial patterns on the page. In “Crab-Angel,” for example, Loy “paints” the title image with alliteration and spacing:

An atomic sprite
perched on a polished
monster-stallion
reigns over Ringling’s revolving
trinity of circus attractions

(10)

Such devices are present, though, in some of the volume’s earliest poems as well. “The Costa San Giorgio,” one of the three “Italian Pictures” and a poem Carolyn Burke (1980) calls “one of the first English poems to employ simultaneity and juxtaposition as formal principles,” uses typography, space, and sound repetition to present (rather than describe) a busy commercial street:

Shaving
ICE CREAM
Licking is larger than mouths
Boots than feet

Slip Slap and the string dragging
 And the angle of the sun
 Cuts the whole lot in half
 (Loy 1923: 34)

Both early and late poems emphasize not only what the eye sees but how the eye sees, how it travels over and interprets visual data. Loy's ambition here shows the influence of her early education as an artist and of the avant-garde communities in which she circulated (the Italian Futurists and the visual and verbal artists associated with *Others*, with Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, and with his *Camera Work* magazine).

If the mechanics of vision, especially artistic vision, formally manifest themselves throughout *Lunar Baedeker*, the volume also dramatizes a set of problems with which vision is beset. Loy's poems acknowledge the location of perceptual power in bodies; they register the social and conventional forces that would limit vision and its artistic expression: bourgeois propriety, religious prohibition, ignorance. They limn the social contexts that encourage or enable vision and its artistic expression: avant-garde geniuses and movements, the modern city, with its fast pace and its surfeit of signs. Most powerfully, the volume's major poems – "Parturition" and "Love Songs" – intertwine these preoccupations, exploring the particular difficulties faced by artistic vision embodied in female subjects, subjects who suffer most acutely the forces of convention, who circulate in modern cities, and who find themselves thwarted by sexist assumptions even amidst avant-garde collectives.

"Parturition" is the volume's closing poem, and with it Loy finds her book's end in its, and her career's, beginning. First published in *Trend* in 1914, the poem is precisely about beginnings from endings; it stages a birth, a "realization," a coming into being. Loy represents maternity as the painful labor of a body that is itself the locus of a speaking subjectivity:

I am the centre
 Of a circle of pain
 Exceeding its boundaries in every direction.
 (40)

The poem offers as the product of this labor not only, and perhaps not even chiefly, the newborn. Burke has argued that "an entire mode of female consciousness breaks out of the confinement to which convention has relegated it" in the poem (Burke 1987: 147). Maera Schreiber writes that the speaker "gives birth to herself" through the act of childbirth "as a scene of psychic reorientation" (Schreiber 1998: 98). In her acute and persuasive reading of the poem, Janet Lyon argues that Loy's labor produces "something that every avant-garde artist needs but few have: to wit, the capacity for parallax vision, which will move her dialectically out of common sense and into knowledge" (Lyon 1998: 390).

In its representation not of childbirth *per se* but of the subject's transformation through that experience, "Parturition" achieves an ultimately creative and integrative

vision. In the delirious night hours, the pain of labor “surpass[es] itself” and enables the speaker to unify

the positive and negative poles of sensation.
Uniting the opposing and resisting forces
In lascivious revelation.

(Loy 1923: 43)

The work of the body to give birth results in a momentary “Negation” of the self “as a unit.” This negation, however, is not a transcendence of the body; rather, it is a deeper experience of the body’s forces in tension and balance. It yields not an escape from the body but a “revelation” expressed precisely in terms of bodily pleasure and desire: “lascivious.” Loy uses a contrasting figure of vision and desire to clarify her artistic point. The speaker’s cosmologically significant desire is contrasted with the mundane sex life of “a fashionable portrait-painter” whose attitudes are summarized in the song he sings on his way to a dalliance: “All the girls are tid’ly did’ly / All the girls are nice” (Loy 1923: 42). This representative of commercial art (or art-as-commerce) posits a superficial universal Woman (“all the girls”) even as he reduces the universal to consumable size through diminutives. Meanwhile, the speaker is “climbing a distorted [*sic*] mountain of agony,” traversing the self and recapitulating the evolution of the species to become a more powerfully universal principle: “Mother I am.” Moreover, this “infinite Maternity” exceeds gender, or genders creation:

Indivisible
Acutely
I am absorbed
Into
The was-is-ever-shall-be
Of cosmic reproductivity.

As Lyon points out, though, Loy never forgets the institutional barriers, even among artistic avant-gardes, with which this kind of creation will be met. “The irresponsibility of the male,” Loy writes in “Parturition,” “Leaves woman her superior inferiority.”

This peculiar problem – the social limits placed on a visionary subject position located in a female body – is the burden of “Love Songs.” That poem opens the second half of *Lunar Baedeker*, “Poems 1914–1915,” but the dates are misleading. While early versions of parts of “Love Songs” were published in the mid-1910s and while the longer “Songs to Joannes” in which most of “Love Songs” appeared was published in 1917, the “Love Songs” of 1923 is so heavily revised that it might best be considered a new poem. Where the 1917 “Songs to Joannes” comprises thirty-four numbered sections, “Love Songs” has only thirteen. Moreover, those sections are themselves condensed and, in some cases, reordered within the sequence; the second section of “Love Songs” was the eleventh in “Songs to Joannes,” for example, while

the fourth part of “Songs to Joannes” becomes the seventh of “Love Songs.” The new poem does not include some of the most often analyzed sections of “Songs to Joannes,” and among the materials excised are those upon which critics have hung readings of the poem as an obliquely autobiographical account of Loy’s affair with Giovanni Papini. In his notes to *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, Roger Conover writes that “the later version tends to be suggestive and abstract, where the early version is more explicit and graphic,” and he suggests that the “obscure language” of “Love Songs” might have been calculated to avoid the sort of censorship Joyce’s *Ulysses* had suffered in the United States (Conover 1996: 224). Whatever her motivations, the revisions Loy made between 1917 and 1923 effectively produce in “Love Songs” a new poem.

The two overlapping poems, “Songs to Joannes” and “Love Songs” have received more critical attention than any of Loy’s other poems. While readings typically address both thematic and formal issues in the poem(s), they tend to emphasize one over the other. For Eric Murphy Selinger (1998), Schreiber (1998), and Paul Peppis (2002), then, the poem is a treatment of love (conventional romantic love, sexual love, or “free love” respectively) and its discontents. For Burke, Peter Quartermain (1998), and Peter Nicholls (2002), on the other hand, the poem’s chief interest is its experimentation with language and poetic form. Readings by Kouidis (1980). Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1998), and Lyon (1998) stand out for their fairly equal attention to love and language in the poems. Kouidis’s early, influential, and still persuasive discussion sums up the case nicely:

In the *Love Songs*, or *Songs to Joannes* (1915–1917), Mina Loy unites her most innovative structural experiments with her bleakest examination of female selfhood. . . . Loy’s analysis of failed love requires . . . radical deformations of line and image. The result is a collage of fragments of body and mind; religious and romantic values; of past, present, and future times. The accomplishment of fitting form to experience merits the *Love Songs* consideration with such modernist efforts to structure new perceptions of self and world as Stein’s *Tender Buttons*, Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Williams’s *Kora in Hell*, Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and Marianne Moore’s “Marriage.” (Kouidis 1980: 60)

The famous opening of “Love Songs” locates the problem in a tradition that dresses the desiring body in love-song clichés even as it locates itself in an alternative, satirical tradition whose highlights might include Rabelais and Rochester (whose “Fair Chloris in a pigsty lay” seems to lurk just invisibly behind Loy’s opening gesture):

Spawn of fantasies
Sifting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage
“Once upon a time”
Pulls a weed white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous membrane.

(22)

and battledore posit sex as a game, as the libidinal exercise of bodies without regard for meaning. The exercise is not without potential violence (“feathers are strewn”). Nor does the speaker wholly affirm the game; section IV ends with a plea that “sons and daughters” not be seduced “To the one / As simple satisfaction / For the other” (24). But where the intellection of II reveals only an odor, the sport of sex at least leaves “pink-love” and “feathers” in its wake. DuPlessis suggests that this image might even be read as evidence of the female’s victory over the shuttlecock or “birdie” (57).

A key way in which the poem explores its “suspect places” is through knowledge or vision or pleasure or creation imagined in the subjunctive mood. The pattern is set in part I: “I would an eye in a Bengal light.” The space invites us to add a verb to the auxiliary: “I would be?” “I would have?” However we might complete the phrase, “would” indicates that the speaker’s wish (her “will”) is not fulfilled. In part VII, the speaker recalls a surreal scenario:

Bird-like abortions
With human throats
And Wisdom’s eyes.
(25)

The section concludes with a subjunctive wish:

I would have lived
Among their fearful furniture
To teach them to tell me their secrets.
(25–6)

Again, the phrase suggests that things are otherwise; the speaker did not stay and learn from the avian family. In perhaps the most important occurrence of the pattern, each stanza of Section IX begins with what could have been (but is not) the case:

We might have coupled
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment
Or broken flesh with one another
At the profane communion table
Where wine is spilt on promiscuous lips.

We might have given birth to a butterfly
With the daily-news
Printed in blood on its wings.
(26)

The realization in a bodily sexual coupling of a communion figured in divine terms fails to occur. A new life (what Schreiber calls the “Love Child”) at once other-worldly (winged) and historical/social (“the daily-news”) goes ungenerated.

The last two “Love Songs” conclude the sequence on an even more emphatic note of lost opportunity and the simultaneous failure of union and creation. XII suggests a final defeat of Pig Cupid’s “erotic garbage / ‘Once upon a time’” when the speaker and auditor shed their “petty pruderies” and “sidle up / To Nature,” but XIII violently forecloses any positive possibility:

The wind stuffs the scum of the white street
Into my lungs and nostrils.

(28)

Recalling the first section’s “wild oats sown in mucous membrane” and the “trickle of saliva,” the “scum” of this last “Love Song” renders the speaker breathless and, perhaps, speechless. Stifled by this seminal metonym, the speaker can only watch as “Exhilarated birds” fly into the night, “Never reaching —.” Where “Songs for Joannes” ends with a wry dismissal of love (“the pre-eminent littérateur”), Loy’s later and revised “Love Songs” follows a similar shrugging away of Nature (“that irate pornographer”) with a creative female subject’s smothering and grounding. While XIII grants agency to “the wind,” the rest of the poem suggests that the real perpetrators are the conventions of gender roles and relationships in patriarchal society.

“Love Songs” ends, then, on a profoundly pessimistic note. We can find more positive possibilities suggested, though, in the volume’s overarching structure. *Lunar Baedeker* begins with the celestial (in “Lunar Baedeker”), descends through the landscapes of contemporary art and society (“Joyce’s Ulysses,” “Brancusi’s Golden Bird,” “Der Blinde Junge”), and, at the end of its first section, passes into the Underworld (“O Hell”). The volume’s second half begins with the purgatorial “Love Songs” and concludes with “Parturition,” a poem that at once treats and enacts rebirth. That rebirth occurs on a cosmological scale and so directs us back to the moon with which the book begins. *Lunar Baedeker*, then, is not simply a survey of the modernist mind with an appendix on the poet’s progress to date. Nor is it a collection of poems linked solely by their concern with the making of art itself. Rather, Loy’s guidebook maps a cycle of descent and ascent, of death and transfiguration, of eternal (and maternal) Creation that promises to renew both art and society.

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Marianne Moore: *Observations*

Catherine Paul

Reviewing Marianne Moore's *Observations* (1924) in 1925, the poet Richard Aldington could not settle on one analogy to describe Moore's book: "It is like an aquarium . . . it is like a zoo; it is like a fantastic museum; it is like a prim parlor; it is like the notebook of a professor of psychology; it is also like a clipping bureau" (Gregory 2003: 74). Indeed, her poetry is populated with fascinating specimens – living and dead, organic and textual, of personal and general interest. And like these institutions, it offers new ways of seeing humanity. Aldington's array of metaphors gestures to the book's variedness, making that a deliberate piece of its identity. Such an implication can be deceiving; the contents are not random; rather, the volume asks readers to examine the specimens in relation to one another, to combine intense looking with synthesizing. And as a book that consciously challenges social and literary conventions, *Observations* requires readers to question their own ways of reading poetry.

Observations was the first authorized book of Moore's poems. Winifred Ellerman, better known as Bryher, had published a collection of Moore's work in the UK, simply titled *Poems* (1921), but without Moore's permission. In a letter to Bryher of July 1921, Moore expressed modest embarrassment: she likened herself to that "variety of pigeon that is born naked without any down whatever." Graciously, she noted that although she believed "that to publish anything now would not be to [her] literary advantage," she was "very touched by the beauty of all the printing details" (Costello, Goodridge, and Miller 1997: 164). Moore had been publishing in literary magazines for almost ten years, but as Robin G. Schulze argues, *Observations* was Moore's "first self-conscious attempt to shape her oeuvre for public consumption beyond the limits of small periodicals" (Schulze 2002: 15).

When in June 1924 Lincoln MacVeagh, editor of the Dial Press, asked to publish a book of Moore's poems, she declined. But Scofield Thayer, editor of the *Dial* magazine, had wanted the book so that Moore could be a candidate for the 1924 Dial Award, and he contacted her in August, pleading. She accepted. The book first

appeared in December 1924, in a run of 250 selling for two dollars, and in time to announce her Dial Award in January 1925. A second edition was in the works by March 1925, and in the first half of 1925, the book sold 488 copies (Schulze 2002: 36). The dust jacket made special efforts to attract readership, including a layer of gold foil, and the announcement, "The DIAL AWARD for 1924" (Schulze 2002: 35–6, 41). The volume and its sales satisfied Thayer's belief that it was time for Moore to appear in book form in the United States.

The title of Moore's volume speaks to the hybrid genre of her writing. She often called her writings "observations" rather than poems, and she wrote in 1922 to Robert McAlmon that she understood some readers' reluctance to think of her writings as poetry, "for sometimes I deliberately insert a prose phrase with a view to its standing as prose" (Costello, Goodridge, and Miller 1997: 188). Indeed when *Poems* was published, she told Bryher that she would have preferred the title *Observations* (Costello, Goodridge, and Miller 1997: 164). Reviewing her poems in the *Dial* in January 1925, the poet and novelist Glenway Wescott noted that he was not writing of Moore's "'observations' as poems; she herself has not called them poems." Instead, he likened them to "essences of conversations" where "each word conveys an emotion as clearly as if it were a colour" (Gregory 2003: 51). These small observations, however, often indicate a greater understanding, important, yet easily missed. The volume opens with "To an Intra-Mural Rat," a sort of snippet, likening the titular rat to those people with whom one's experience is fleeting: the poem concludes that one's experience with such people (and such rats) is often "Too brisk to be inspected." This poem speaks to the need to take such observations seriously. And although we tend to think of Moore's works now as poems, this alternate way of identifying their genre speaks to the precise detail, awareness of the act of looking, and the immense significance that she grants to her observation of seemingly insignificant things.

For instance, "Radical" is about a carrot. The poem considers the tuber's shape – its pointy bottom and its thick top – as willful and energetic. Giving the vegetable qualities of "ambition, im- / agination, outgrowth, / / nutriment" she calls it a "wedge-shaped engine with the / secret of expansion." She compares a straw-hat-wearing man's surprising thought about this carrot, whose "happiest moment has / been funereal in comparison with this," with the lesson the carrot itself teaches: whatever "is impossible to force, it is impossible / to hinder." Moore's depiction of this carrot has in it all the intensity of color, flavor, and energy that the vegetable does, transforming it from a common orange thing into a bearer of great meaning. Such transformation comes from oscillation between observation and reflection.

Observations functions differently from many books of poems, thanks to its unique apparatus. It was the first collection of Moore's poems to contain her now famous "Notes," offering sources for quotations and references. While many modernists appended notes or glosses to their writings – T. S. Eliot's intimidating notes to *The Waste Land* (1922) may be the most famous example – Moore's stand out in their revelation that she drew as frequently on the popular press as on works of classical

literature. Glenway Wescott likened her poetic making to the building of a “miscel-lany”: “It is woven, as the curious notes manifest, with phrases from neglected books and poor magazines – *Vogue* as a source of poetry is phenomenal – studded with zoological observations, and illustrated by conversational episodes” (Gregory 2003: 50). The range of materials demands the reimagining of what is “appropriate” for poetry; the notes to “An Octopus,” for instance, are dominated by popular-press guidebooks. And the notes often suggest a reading counter to the poem’s. Her poem “Silence,” for example, begins, “My father used to say, / ‘Superior people never make long visits. . . .’” The poem elaborates on that notion, almost all within the quoted speech of that father, who in being “my father,” lends authority to the poem’s sentiment. However, the notes reveal that the whole statement “My father used to say, ‘superior people never make long visits, then people are not so glad when you’ve gone,’” comes from a conversational remark from a Miss A. M. Homans, Professor Emeritus of Hygiene at Wellesley College. Now the whole poem “Silence” reads as ironic, a critique of the very sentiments it expresses (Paul 2002: 174–5). While the notes allow a curious reader to track borrowed phrases, and often point to unlikely sources for poetry, they do not always satisfy, and they demand a more complex method of reading poetry.

Moore’s apparatus does not end there. Unlike most books of poems, *Observations* has an index, referencing not only poems’ titles, but also subject matter, so that a reader interested in “Utah,” for instance, could turn to “People’s Surroundings,” with its lines:

landscape gardening twisted into permanence:
straight lines over such great distances as one finds in Utah or in Texas
where people do not have to be told
that “a good brake is as important as a good motor”

Or the entry for “Egyptian” reveals connections among several poems, asking a reader to examine them together. A reader interested in “Egyptian discernment” should read “England,” whereas one curious about “Egyptian low relief” might turn to the notes for “When I Buy Pictures.” And while those seeking knowledge about “Egyptian vultures” might find satisfaction in “A Fool, a Foul Thing, a Distressful Lunatic,” those keen to see Moore’s response to “Egyptian pulled glass” could consult her poem “An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish.” Conversely, one poem generates numerous subject references. “Novices,” for instance, catalogues how novices “anatomize their work”: although the poem begins with collectors, it is really about writers. As the notes show, its many quotations come from an array of writers, including Anatole France, W. S. Landor, Boccaccio, Gustave Flaubert, and Arthur Haydn. A reader need not feel uncultured for not recognizing that last name, as his quotation draws from an article published in the *Illustrated London News*, describing objects of Chinese porcelain “dispersed by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson” in 1921. The index’s subject references for the poem include “authors,” “the buyer,” “smell of

cypress,” “spontaneous passion of the Hebrew language,” “jade water,” “the seller,” “supertadpoles,” and “verbs.” Seemingly small details become the poem’s subject. Readers are invited to learn from these poems as they might learn from a textbook: the information, however, is self-consciously personalized, anecdotal, even erratic, as if emphasizing the strange processes through which we acquire objects, experience, and knowledge, and the lengths to which we go to make sense of this accumulated mass (Paul 2002: 152).

Louis Gilmore, reviewing *Observations* in the *Double Dealer* in June 1925, called Moore “a poet’s poet,” concluding that “it is unlikely that Miss Moore’s poetry will ever be popular. It is too cool, too cerebral, too objective” (Gregory 2003: 73–4). The detail in Moore’s poems challenges readers, as it often leads to complex grammatical structures that readers must decipher to make sense of the poem. For instance, “Those Various Scalpels” imagines the parts of “your” body as scalpels for dissecting destiny. The first twenty-two lines (of twenty-eight) form one long sentence. This sentence begins with the poem’s title, making the first two lines an appositive introducing a sequence of “your” parts:

THOSE VARIOUS SCALPELS

Those
various sounds consistently indistinct, like intermingled echoes
struck from thin glasses successively at random – the
inflection disguised

To begin by likening the scalpels to sounds, to continue by offering a metaphor to convey that sound, and then to explain that the sound itself is occluded, creates a precise but multisensory understanding of these scalpels. The introduced sequence of parts follows, and further complicates the scalpels by showing that they refer metaphorically to “your hair,” “your eyes,” “your raised hand,” “your cheeks,” “your other hand,” and “your dress.” She provides a complex and multifaceted sense of

your other hand

a
bundle of lances all alike, partly hid by emeralds from Persia
and the fractional magnificence of Florentine
goldwork – a collection of half a dozen little objects made fine
with enamel in gray, yellow, and dragon fly blue; a
lemon, a

pear
and three bunches of grapes, tied with silver: your dress . . .

In addition to the difficulty deriving from how Moore breaks her lines – dividing nouns from their articles, or often syllable from syllable of a single word – there is the cascade of explanation and gloss. Imagining this poem as a series of boxes enclosing boxes, the “your other hand” box – itself enclosed within the “those various

scalpels” box – contains the bundle of lances, the Persian emeralds, the Florentine goldwork (a box in itself, holding the half-dozen little objects), and the pieces of fruit. Once such deciphering is complete, however, a reader still wobbles, asking such questions as, What is the antecedent for “they” in line 21: “Are they weapons or scalpels?” One must surmise that “they” are everything already presented. The speaker says that “these things are rich / instruments with which to experiment but surgery is not tentative.” And concluding the poem, the speaker turns the scalpels – already themselves not literal scalpels but a way of understanding the various parts of “your” body – into a metaphor for tools of observation and comprehension. The poem closes with another question:

Why dissect destiny with instruments which
are more highly specialized than the tissues of destiny
itself?

This seems a simple question, and it would be, were the lines preceding it, with their listing, imagery, and metaphors, not so complicating. This kind of difficulty – comprising imagery, interpretation, grammar, and reason – is typical of Moore’s poetry, which demands readers’ movement between the poetry’s material and its genuine significance, and balance between careful examination of minute detail and the ability to combine those details into a larger insight.

As can be seen from the passage above from “Those Various Scalpels,” Moore’s use of poetic form is distinctive and adds an extra challenge to her verse. Hugh Kenner says her poems are for the eye, not the ear: “We learn that there is a system not by listening but by counting syllables, and we find that the words are fixed within a grid of numerical rules” (Kenner 1975: 98–9). Very often the title of the poem becomes part of the syntactic structure of the first lines, as with “My Apish Cousins,” whose first sentence concludes in the first line, “Winked too much and were afraid of snakes.” To these challenges, the critic John M. Slatin adds “Moore’s use of rhyming syllabic verse in conjunction with a diction more usually associated with prose, and the shape that usage gives to her basic form of composition – the stanza” (Slatin 1986: 60). Moore used her syllabic stanzas more as tools for composition than for the poems’ final form – later revision often eclipses a poem’s original stanzaic form – and a reader might conclude that the unusual stanza shapes are not the product of order (Holley 1984). Syllabic forms, which only count numbers of syllables rather than following a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, are almost impossible for readers to detect; they are a form to be used by the writer, not the reader. Such forms are reminders of the complicated interactions between writers and readers that poetic language requires.

Such issues come to the fore in “Poetry,” her most explicit rumination on her art form. The poem as it appears in *Observations* opens with her now famous declaration, “I too, dislike it.” It examines how to read poetry – “with a perfect contempt for it” – and what makes good poetry. She presents her insights using tangible examples of

the phenomena of which she speaks. To note “that we / do not admire what / we cannot understand,” she offers such images as the example of “the bat, / holding on upside down or in quest of something to / / eat.” She reminds readers that even unexpected material, such as “‘business documents and / / school-books’” (a phrase borrowed from Tolstoy’s diary), has a place in poetry. What matters is not what is used but how well it is used: “when dragged into prominence by half poets,” she cautions, “the result is not poetry.” Poets, she argues, borrowing a phrase from W. B. Yeats, must become “‘literalists of the imagination’” and must “present / / for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them.” Poetry privileges “the genuine,” and she concludes that if you “demand on the one hand, / the raw material of poetry in / all its rawness and / that which is on the other hand / genuine, then you are interested in poetry.” As a discussion of her art, “Poetry” centers on Moore’s exploration of poetic language.

It is also an instance of Moore’s dramatic tendency toward revision, a tendency that both demonstrates how her ideas changed over time and stands in the way of readers trying to find the Marianne Moore who published *Observations*. The poem as it appeared in the first edition of *Observations* is twenty-nine lines long, down a line from its first presentation in Alfred Kreyborg’s *Others* magazine, where it was published in July 1919 (Schulze 2002: 205–7). In both of these early printings of the poem, the poem’s stanzaic pattern is quite regular, although the last stanza in the *Observations* version is shorter than the others because of the excised line. By the time that the second edition of *Observations* was published in 1925, however, Moore had cut the poem further, to a mere thirteen lines, printed as free verse (Schulze 2002: 207). She eliminated many of the subtler points about good writing and good reading, leaving several images, but eliminating the famous “imaginary gardens with real toads in them”: this version of the poem is not worried about the genuine. Instead she focuses only on the assertion that “we do not admire what we cannot understand,” concluding the poem with the simple line, “enigmas are not poetry.” This revision, then, not only cuts back on the work’s detail and subtlety, but offers a completely different conclusion. However dramatic such revision seems, it pales before the reduction for the later volume *Complete Poems* (1967), where the poem has but three lines:

I, too, dislike it.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine.

The genuine is back, and now Moore’s concerns about poetic difficulty have vanished. These revisions offer not only a writer never satisfied with her work, who imagines her poems as living things in constant flux, but a poet whose views of her own art are similarly alive (Kappel 1991: 152–4). Even during the period encompassing the preparation of the first and second editions of *Observations* – about a year and half – Moore’s sense of her art changed dramatically.

One aspect of Moore's poetry that surprised early readers was its refusal to be restricted to typically feminine subjects. Louis Gilmore noted in his review of *Observations*, "That a book of poems by a woman should contain not a single 'love-poem' or a poem of motherhood is in itself singular" (Gregory 2003: 74). Indeed Moore's difference from other women poets of her time allowed her greater recognition from male poets during the modernist period. Many male poets of the period, including T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, defined their aesthetic in gendered terms and dismissed women writers who wrote about traditionally feminine experiences. Moore was the exception. Even her longest poem "Marriage," with a subject appropriate for a "poetess," handles the familiar romantic subject in an unfamiliar way, opening the poem by referring to its titular subject as "this institution," going on to call it something "requiring all one's criminal ingenuity / to avoid!" She studies marriage with skepticism while chastising those who would treat it lightly (Schulze 2002: 455–65).

The poem opens with one of Moore's characteristic impersonal constructions, setting her voice at a distance from the opinions expressed:

This institution,
perhaps one should say enterprise
out of respect for which
one says one need not change one's mind
about a thing one has believed in,
requiring public promises
of one's intention
to fulfill a private obligation

We could not be further from the romance that Gilmore expects from most "poetesses." Not only is marriage an "institution" or "enterprise" with "public promises" and "private obligation," but the whole passage is written using the impersonal "one." The reader is thereby told to expect the no-nonsense, realistic view that the poem takes.

Recognizing the difficulty of so thorny a topic, the poem reflects that "Psychology which explains everything / explains nothing / and we are still in doubt." Moore centers on the relationship of Adam and Eve, representatives of husbands and wives; the speaker asks early, "I wonder what Adam and Eve / think of it by this time[.]" Imagined conversations between the two place responsibility for the institution's problem on the partners who enter into it. It seems an impossible pairing, between her who argues that "'Men are monopolists'" and him who claims "'a wife is a coffin.'" The poem alternates between the speaker's own reflections on human tendencies, and on gendered behavior, and comments borrowed from others: Moore's precise position is hard to ascertain, because this is one of her most quotational poems. Note, for instance, that Adam's and Eve's complaints above are each printed in two sets of quotation marks. Indeed, Moore's notes show that both comments come from other sources. Adam's comment is "quoted by John Cournos from Ezra

Pound,” suggesting a long stream of transmission before Moore placed it in Adam’s mouth. And Eve’s derives from Miss M. Carey Thomas, President Emeritus of Bryn Mawr College, in her Founder’s address at Mount Holyoke College in 1821. In the context of the speech, one cannot be certain whether the “men” are those of the male gender, or human beings generally (common usage at the time), but in Eve’s complaint the denotation is clear. The poem’s main characters play with language much as Moore does, respecting and manipulating other people’s words to make poetry. The net result is a poem whose meaning grows from a community of voices: one of the finest instances of Moore’s strategic quotation, it seems not so much a statement of her beliefs as a depiction of the objective reality of the institution. Bonnie Costello has likened Moore’s use of quotation to the modernist art practice of collage, where newspaper, pictures, or clippings are pasted onto the surface where an artist is painting. She notes, “Moore’s words and images are ‘pasted’ in the sense that they are fragments of other continuities.” Such an act is ultimately a “gesture of irony,” an attempt to show that, borrowing a phrase from “Poetry,” “the imaginary garden with real toads in it can never be secure” (Costello 1981: 213). Moore’s use of quotation adds to the sense that her poems are containers, like zoos, for things that have a life of their own, that both support her assertions and turn in their own directions.

Observations requires a new way of reading and understanding poems. Moore’s use of poetic form challenges readers to rethink poetic art. Her employment of quoted language and her inclusion of notes complicates reader expectations of originality in poetry – the post-romantic notion that a poem should offer an individuated insight into experience or emotions. The impersonal and observational voice she employs asks readers to challenge the constrictions that traditional notions of gender imply. Through her model of observation, she asks readers to look harder themselves, whether at the poems and their subjects or more widely. In these ways, *Observations* is more than a collection of important and wonderful poems: it is a call to rethink the art of poetry altogether.

A note on texts: Readers of Moore have long been limited to *Complete Poems* (1967), a late volume authorized by Moore and containing the forenote, “Omissions are not accidents.” It omits many of Moore’s early poems, and dramatically revises others, thereby hiding what *Observations* might have looked like, and leaving readers ignorant of the Moore of 1924. In recent years, however, the earlier Moore is back in print. All quotations here from *Observations* follow Robin G. Schulze’s excellent *Becoming Marianne Moore*, which reproduces facsimiles not only of the *Observations* volume, but also of Moore’s poems in little magazines, bringing the early Moore to light once more.

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Ezra Pound: *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*

Michael Coyle

Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley: Life and Contacts* (1920) occupies a possibly disproportionate place in literary history. Among Pound's most widely anthologized pieces, the poem nevertheless is neither the most accomplished nor the most experimental work from his London period (1909–21), the period prior to his sustained work on the *Cantos*. In fact, *Mauberley* was published three years after the first so-called "Ur Cantos" (called "Ur Cantos" because Pound subsequently rejected and replaced them), and a year after these "Ur Cantos" first appeared in book form. That book, *Quia Pauper Amavi* (1919), comprised four experimental poetic sequences, each of them formally distinct: "Langue d'Oc," "Moeurs Contemporaines," "Three Cantos," and "Homage to Sextus Propertius." It is the last of these sequences that represents the apotheosis of Pound's work prior to the *Cantos*. "Propertius" joins Pound's formidable strengths as a translator to his dynamic urge to "make new" poetic tradition; the poem ventures political critique without losing its aesthetic commitments, moving ever onward in quest of newer and more open poetic form. And yet, it is *Mauberley* and not "Propertius" that most often captures the imagination of new readers; it is *Mauberley* that is more often praised by critics (with some notable exceptions, like the late Donald Davie) and most often is assigned in college English courses. To understand why is to understand much of what makes this poem singular, and also much of what is singular about Pound's relations with readers.

Mauberley is taken to announce Pound's break with London. Indeed, in a note to the 1926 edition of *Personae*, Pound explained: "The sequence is so distinctly a farewell to London that the reader who chooses to regard this as an exclusively American edition may as well omit it and turn at once to ['Homage to Sextus Propertius']." It is a farewell both to the life that Pound had made in the then imperial capital, and also to the aesthetic ambitions to which he had hitherto dedicated his career. This farewell would make the poem of interest under any circumstances, but it is the way in which Pound says "goodbye to all that" that marks the real interest of this poem. The poem follows the aesthetic struggles of its titular subject

without itself observing the aesthetic principles for which Mauberley stood. Mauberley is at once the protagonist of the sequence and its satirical object – a feat that Pound manages by borrowing from what was then still radical *narrative* rather than *poetic* means. The key to how this happens can be found in the poem's two references to the nineteenth-century French novelist, Gustave Flaubert. The first reference comes in the opening section of Part I; the second comes in the opening section of Part II. The line, "his true Penelope was Flaubert," is often read as though Flaubert was Mauberley's *real* Penelope; it is more revealing to take the word "true" as a kind of epithet, so that Flaubert becomes the faithful Penelope waiting for the wandering Mauberley to return (stylistically) home. In this sense, the first reference suggests that Mauberley wasted years fishing "by obstinate isles" and by doting on the bewitching Circe, rather than returning home to the Ithaca of *le mot juste* ("the right word"); the opposition here is between language that is bewitching – florid or ostentatiously poetic, and language that is exact – true and concrete language. Over the course of his career, Pound praised Flaubert many times for his dedication to *le mot juste*. But Flaubert stands for something more as well, something that can help us follow the unfolding of Pound's poem. Flaubert was the inventor of free indirect discourse, a technique that blurs any clear distinction between first and third person narration, wherein what different characters think or feel shapes the idiom or diction of the ostensibly omniscient narrator. Glossing Stephen Ullman's definition of what he calls a "style" but I am calling a technique, Dominick LaCapra (1982) explains:

free indirect style combines the advantages of [directly and indirectly reported speech]. The author is not committed to an exact reproduction of words or thoughts; yet he is able to dispense with explicit subordination (involved in phrases such as "he said that" or "he felt that") and to retain the emotive and expressive features and the very inflexions of the spoken language. Free indirect style is reported speech masquerading as narrative. It means a break in style and a certain shock to the reader. (129–30)

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley deploys several strategies of this kind. The poem positions us sometimes inside Mauberley's consciousness, and sometimes outside it viewing him with ironic detachment and even ridicule. The poem itself unfolds in ways that highlight various kinds of discontinuities; two principal parts each divide into sections bearing individual titles: Part I comprises 13 subsections, and Part II comprises a further five. The title for Part I, "H. S. Mauberley (Life and Contacts)," would seem to emphasize the man; the title for Part II, "1920 (Mauberley)," clearly emphasizes the moment. These different emphases circumscribe one of the principal conflicts in the poem. Stylistically, the two parts differ in significant ways. Part I is often "aesthetic" in style, while Part II – with its important dateline, "1920" – is more compressed, more aggressively modernist. So when in Part II Pound repeats the phrase "His true Penelope / Was Flaubert," the phrase is ironized in quotation marks, the break into two lines suggesting further that there was something too self-indulgent in Mauberley's style. That is, the longer line of the early style has been replaced by a new style, starker and more chiseled, less patient of elaboration.

These distancing effects are virtually uninterrupted in Part II of the poem. We so consistently see Mauberley in third-person terms that it becomes a question whether the “Medallion” that closes the poem is, as critics like Jo Brantley Berryman or Ian F. A. Bell have suggested, Mauberley’s masterpiece, or whether it constitutes the final sign of a precious failure. Is the medallion a perfectly realized work of art, or does it represent the transformation of a life into a metal *objet d’art*? The ambiguity here is deliberate. Far from signifying an imperfectly realized design on Pound’s part, this ending is by design open: an openness that gives form to Pound’s own deep ambivalence about the aesthetic in its relations to politics, history, and culture. The poem gives form to tensions fundamental not just to the shape of Pound’s career, but to the career of modern poetry: all of this in a poem that never had a separate American edition (its first American publication came in 1926, when the reissue of the 1909 *Personae* as a collected shorter poems formally distinguished Pound’s earlier work from the *Cantos*), and whose British edition (Ovid Press) numbered only 200 copies. *Mauberley* has cast and continues to cast a long shadow.

To begin with, *Mauberley* fits received ideas about Pound, and about his inability to connect with either popular taste or even the dominant “literary” tastes of his time (or ours). In this way, the persona of Mauberley himself would seem to exemplify the age-old notion of the poet in the ivory tower:

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry: to maintain “the sublime”
In the old sense. Wrong from the start –

The poet, “out of key with his time,” erred most fundamentally not in *how* he struggled to make his art but rather in striving to “resuscitate the dead art” at all. His values were as out of place as they were untimely – indeed, they were out of place *because* they were “untimely.” Do these lines represent Mauberley’s own thoughts, or do they represent the poet’s account of him? Syntactically, it would seem to be the latter; however, the second section (“The age demanded an image / of its accelerated grimace,” etc.), which contains no third-person references but is identical in perspective, suggests that we are hearing from Mauberley himself. In other words, the movement between these sections generates ambiguity through the deployment of Flaubertian free indirect discourse. Section III continues in this manner, ending with the sarcastic parody of an ancient address to the god:

O bright Apollo,
. . . What god, what man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

This third section, almost Swinburnian in attitude (“Christ follows Dionysius”), is more surely Mauberley’s voice than anything else in the poem. Its final figure of the

Pound made no more secret of his rivalry with Browning than the Bishop did of his with Gandolf. And like Browning's Bishop, Pound is here anxious "to dazzle the serious future ages." But note, too, the question, "Whom shall I hang my shimmering garment on": it anticipates Mauberley's "What god, what man, or hero / Shall I place a tin wreath upon!" In other words, at every moment the distinction between poet and character, so crucial to Browning's dramatic monologues, threatens to collapse – but never wholly does. Pound uses Mauberley less as a character than as a self-conscious persona – and does so in order to suggest that the causes of Mauberley's failure and his own are more than merely personal.

By combining features of Flaubertian free indirect style with elements of Browningsque dramatic monologue, Pound essays a new openness of form. *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* pursues a principle of coherence that is (1) not narrative based, and in this way anticipates the real work on the *Cantos* still to come, (2) not argument based, and in this way departs from the "Ur Cantos," and (3) not based on the stable identity of a single speaker. The absence of a single or sustained perspective is the most fundamental way in which this poem prepares the way for the *Cantos*, which move freely among what might sometimes appear to be a veritable babble of voices. Some thirty years ago, Hugh Kenner wrote of Pound's "paratactic" principle of composition, "parataxis" being "the placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (of coordination or subordination) between them" (*OED*). Pound derived that compositional principle, too, from Browning – but it is only implicit in *Mauberley*. Anticipating that later parataxis, and perhaps helping lead to it, *Mauberley* develops perspectival ambiguity. In a certain sense, Pound exploited Flaubertian narrative technique without developing a sustained narrative voice, just as he promised the form of a dramatic monologue only to explode it with various intrusions of free indirect style.

Interpretive ambiguity is further heightened by the unstable relations between the poem's two parts. Where Part I seems to invite sympathy with Mauberley's struggles, Part II is frequently mocking in tone. Passages are repeated – as we have seen with "His true Penelope / Was Flaubert" – almost tauntingly. Consider the transformation of another instance: the opening line of Part I, "For three years, out of key with his time, / He strove to resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry" becomes "For three years, diabolus in the scale, / He drank ambrosia." Whereas the language from Part I suggests active struggle, the drinking of ambrosia suggests a kind of self-indulgence, an effete indolence. By the end of the third section of Part II, the speaker finds nothing in Mauberley's career "but maudlin confession / Irresponse to human aggression." It would seem, then, that Part II trumps Part I, and that readers inclined to associate the style of Part I with Pound's early pre-*Cantos* work – and the style of Part II with the mature work of the *Cantos* – are wholly justified. And yet, most of the poem's most memorable lines are to be found in Part I. Most of the material beloved of and quoted by readers comes from Part I – and even if this situation bespeaks an impulse to find a Pound more responsive to traditional notions

of poetry, it matters. In what sense (other than simple textual placement), then, can we claim that the second part gets the last word?

The tension between the two parts cannot in any simple way be resolved. The sometimes magnificent language of Part I is not to be dismissed simply because the language of Part II is more aggressively and more self-consciously modern. The two parts of the poem suggest a dilemma; the wanly aesthetic manner and the aggressively modern manner do not and cannot cancel one another. As the poem gives form to – and so performs – this conflict, it suggests that the utter rejection of the aesthetic would come at too high a cost. Reject it completely Pound never did. In the *Cantos* some of his most overtly political-ideological writing is delivered in his most old-fashioned, most aesthetic manner – as in the much-quoted *Usura Canto* (XLV) of 1936, a poem initially published in the London journal, *Prosperity*:

Usura rusteth the chisel
It rusteth the craft and the craftsman
It gnaweth the thread in the loom
None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;

Pound inveighs here against the economic system that supported twentieth-century Western culture, but does so in self-consciously archaic language, language meant to have a kind of scriptural feel, language whose very archaism implicitly suggests an alternative to modern values. This poem takes up subject matter normally deemed unpoetic (banking and economics), but treats it in an intensely lyrical poetic style that suggests poetry commands a broader view of things than the colluding worlds of banking and politics. Thus Pound uses formal means to make “unpoetic” subject matter palatable to readers of poetry – an innovative combination of motives and methods that still felt new in 1936, but which Pound had introduced sixteen years earlier, in *Mauberley*.

In the characteristic modernist manner of “present, don’t tell,” the central movement of *Mauberley* (the tension between Parts I and II) happens on the level of form, even as Pound rejects nineteenth-century notions of formal coherence; that is, although there is unmistakable formal design to *Mauberley*, it does not attempt organic unity, or even closure. Pound is interested not in delivering a finished and coherent image of the character, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, but rather in using Mauberley as a persona to explore the principles and limitations of both his own previous work and of the London literary scene in general. Pound’s ending, the ekphrastic ‘Medallion,’ offers overt resolution neither to Mauberley’s struggles nor even to his sense of purpose, so much as an antique beauty in chiseled modernist form. In other words, it effects a kind of synthesis of the conflicting styles of the poem’s two sections.

On the level of things said, Part II apparently prevails over Part I, and yet the lyricism of Part I proves to this day to be irrepressible. The power of *Mauberley*’s language to endure the scathing critique of Part II accounts for much of its enduring attraction for readers; in turn, this attraction can help us understand the pre-eminent

place that *Mauberley* continues to occupy in popular estimations of Pound's pre-*Cantos* work.

However, other formal aspects of the poem complicate this reassuring picture. For one thing, *Mauberley* represents a deliberate turning away from the Imagism that had made Pound's reputation up to that point; indeed, *Mauberley* even eschews the commitment to free verse (or "*vers libre*," as Pound preferred to call it) that Pound had established as a first principle of modern poetry. By the end of the First World War, Pound had long since come to regret having done so, because it seemed to him that too many of the new poets threw off the constraints of regular rhyme and meter without having assumed in their place a sufficiently rigorous commitment to form. *Mauberley* actually began as a joint project with T. S. Eliot, the two poets resolving to update the satirical quatrains of the French Poet, Théophile Gautier (1811–72).

The quatrains of Gautier's *Emaux et camées* (1852) have most often been remembered for their social critique; but Gautier developed his satire by emphasizing form and image and, in a manner that struck contemporaneous critics as classicist, de-emphasizing emotion. All of these tendencies figure in Pound and Eliot's recursive turn to Gautier-like quatrains. Indeed, section XII of *Mauberley* begins with a translation from Gautier's "Le Château du Souvenir"; notice how the third line defuses the potential emotion of the first two, and the fourth displaces all in the experience of art appreciation:

"Daphne with her thighs in bark
Stretches toward me her leafy hands," –
Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine's commands . . .

Pound's quotation marks acknowledge that he is translating, but they also begin distancing us from the moment of transformation (Daphne metamorphosing into a tree to escape her pursuer), so that we are not invited to experience either Daphne's terror or her possible sense of escape. Instead, Pound's illusion-shattering word, "Subjectively," effects its own transformation, so that the experience to which we are witness is merely one of looking at a painting – and looking idly, since what the speaker's moment is really about is waiting for the arrival of his patron. Here, as we so often find when Pound is at his best, the language plays out the experience it describes. The poem does not merely tell us *about* something but endeavors, rather, to *present* it to us, so that we experience some part of it directly. As Michael Harper has written, this whole scene represents "the social function of a poetry that accepted confinement within the realm of the aesthetic"; in other words, the poem ridicules a society which so removes poetry from the world of meaningful experience, which treats art (and poetry) as so rarefied as to rob it not only of dignity, but also significance and power. This much we can see as a legacy accepted from Gautier.

Both poets followed through on the project, and both published their results with the Ovid Press in 1920: four months before Pound brought out *Mauberley*, Eliot

delivered his second volume of poetry, *Ara Vos Prec* (published in the United States simply as *Poems 1920*) – a volume that included “Gerontion” and the misanthropic “Sweeney” poems. This commitment to social critique, and with it the tendency to avoid emotion, two years later proved central to *The Waste Land* (1922), arguably Eliot’s most significant work, but soon thereafter began to give way to philosophical and religious concerns. In Pound’s case, however, although the ironizing detachment was not to endure, the commitment to social critique would permanently remain central to his poetry.

In fact, *Mauberley* proved central to Pound’s further development in other ways as well. For instance, as Steven Yao has observed, Pound’s cross-lingual rhymes anticipate the cross-cultural dimensions of the so-called “subject rhyme” method of the *Cantos*, where Pound develops analogies between distinct historical figures or events. Consider these lines from the opening section of Part I:

Unaffected by “the march of events,”
He passed from men’s memory in *l’an trentiesme*
De son eage; the case presents
No adjunct to the Muse’s diadem.

The French phrase, “in *l’an trentiesme de son eage*” (in the thirtieth year of his age) rhymes with “diadem,” and sets up several associations. The source of the line is François Villon’s *Le Testament* (1461), a poem that Villon purportedly wrote while awaiting execution. Mauberley, by contrast, did not die in his thirtieth year, but merely “passed from men’s memory”: a poet unmissed by the public and become irrelevant to the future of letters. Notice, too, how even though these lines describe a poet lacking in vitality, a poet who added nothing to the crown of poetry, Pound’s lines themselves are anything but wan or merely aesthetic. In this sense, the vitality of Pound’s formal accomplishments distances him from the persona he adopts as a way of challenging his own early work.

This is in part what Pound meant when in 1922 he wrote to one of his former professors at the University of Pennsylvania, Felix Schelling, that “(Of course, I’m no more Mauberley than Eliot is Prufrock. *Mais passons.*) Mauberley is a mere surface. Again a study in form, an attempt to condense the James novel. *Meliora speramus.*” *Meliora speramus*: “We hope for better things.” That hope is implicit in every aspect of this poem. Indeed, the starker style of Part II serves to demonstrate that he is unprepared to rest on his laurels; Pound’s “goodbye to all that” will be ongoing and lifelong. But other aspects of these remarks bear reflection. First, Pound’s underscoring of the notion of persona (“I am no more Mauberley than Eliot is Prufrock”). Second, the allusion to the [Henry] James novel: a version in English, Pound thought, of what Flaubert had initiated in French: a passionate commitment to *le mot juste*, but also – Pound believed and affirmed in his critical writings – a profound form of social criticism. Finally, Pound’s famous assertion that “Mauberley is a mere surface,” a phrase which serves notice that readers would do well to resist trying to think of

Mauberley as a character, and to think of him more as a kind of trope – a poetic device functioning to concentrate diverse phenomena in one place.

Ultimately, it is appropriate that *Mauberley* has so found favor with readers and anthologists, because the poem plays out Pound's always difficult and often vexed relations with the public. *Mauberley* is truly a transitional poem, but the transitions are not merely a matter of the poet's individual growth; they have much more to do with Pound's increasingly clear sense of what he could expect from readers, and the distance between those expectations and all for which he might hope. Poets before Pound (and Eliot and the other modernists) were in a better position to know who their public was. But – in part because of the growing power of modern media such as film and radio, and in part because of the increasingly international horizons of the literary world after the First World War – Pound would spend the rest of his long career trying to identify the audience for whom he was writing. The years ahead would bring a long succession of popularizing primers (*ABC of Reading*, *ABC of Economics*, etc.), all aiming to create the audience whose existence he could not assume. In this process, *Mauberley* was Pound's wake-up call to himself. Thereafter his writing would never again be the same.

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Dorothy Richardson: *Pilgrimage*

Laura Marcus

“A literary work, for reader and writer alike, remains essentially an adventure of the stable human consciousness,” wrote the novelist Dorothy Richardson in a statement published in 1933 (Kunitz 1933: 15). Richardson’s thirteen-volume novel-sequence or *roman fleuve* *Pilgrimage*, her life’s work, in many senses of the term, was an “adventure” in narrative form, in the representation of the experiencing self or consciousness, and in the nature of the recorded experiences themselves, which are those of a young woman who, at the start of the sequence was, like her creator, “flung . . . on the world at the age of seventeen without qualifications for the art of making a living” (letter to Sylvia Beach, December 1934, Richardson 1995: 281). Richardson, born in Abingdon, Berkshire (now in Oxfordshire), in 1873, was the third of four daughters. Her father, Charles Richardson, on inheriting his father’s very successful wines and provisions business, sold it within months, using the money to set himself up as a gentleman and pursue his intellectual interests. The family’s prosperity continued for much of Richardson’s childhood, but by 1890 Charles Richardson was in significant financial difficulties, leading Dorothy Richardson to apply for a post as a pupil-teacher in a school in Germany, and in 1893 he was declared a bankrupt. This fall from bourgeois security was to give Richardson a sense of social disenfranchisement as both loss and liberation in ways that resonate throughout her writing.

Pilgrimage is an autobiographical fiction, with all the complexity that this term, both composite and oxymoronic, carries with it. Its thirteen volumes, or, to use Richardson’s own preferred term, “chapters,” recount the experiences of the years between 1891 and 1912 through the consciousness of her autobiographical/fictional persona, Miriam Henderson. It is a woman’s *Bildungsroman*, or, perhaps, a *Künstlerroman* (a novel of the making of the artist), for in the final sections of *Pilgrimage* we see Miriam beginning to write her story. It is also, as the title suggests, a quest narrative. Written substantially in the third person, though at times moving into first-person narration (a shift whose proportions alter from the early to the late volumes, with the “I” becoming increasingly prominent), it creates a literary space of its own between

the genres of the novel and of autobiography. It also raises difficult issues for biographers and critics, in that, while close connections exist between the narrative of Richardson's life and that of Miriam, her creation and alter ego, the two cannot be seen as wholly identical. Moreover, while the dominant tense of *Pilgrimage* could be construed as a perpetual present, the novel-sequence also exists in two time-continua; that of the experiences recounted and that of the time of writing.

Pilgrimage was first published as a series of separate novels in the following sequence: *Pointed Roofs* (1915), *Backwater* (1916), *Honeycomb* (1917), *The Tunnel* (1919), *Interim* (1919), *Deadlock* (1921), *Revolving Lights* (1923), *The Trap* (1925), *Oberland* (1927), *Dawn's Left Hand* (1931), *Clear Horizon* (1935). *Dimple Hill*, the penultimate volume, was published with the collected edition produced by J. M. Dent and the Cresset Press in 1938; *March Moonlight*, the final, incomplete volume, with the edition brought out by Dent in 1967. Richardson's wish that the separate volumes all be published under the lead title *Pilgrimage*, with the titles of the individual volumes appearing as part titles, represents a model of part to whole which is in turn suggestive of two different concepts of "experience" in German philosophical traditions: "*Erlebnis*" (the realm of subjective, immediate responses to the world) and *Erfahrung*, understood, in at least one of its definitions, as a more accretive, totalizing narrative model, which contains within it "*fabren*," the German word for taking a journey. Richardson's overall title *Pilgrimage* acts as a container for a series that is open-ended and unbordered.

When Richardson wrote the first volume of *Pilgrimage*, *Pointed Roofs*, in 1913, she was forty years old, and the author of essays and reviews, published in little magazines, including Charles Daniel's anarchist paper *Ye Crank: an Unconventional Magazine* and the *Freewoman*, sketches for the *Saturday Review*, and translations. After more than a decade of poorly paid work as a dental assistant in Harley Street, during which, Richardson wrote later, "the small writing-table in my attic became the centre of my life," she had left London for the country, staying first in Sussex, then in Switzerland, and finally in Cornwall. During this period she developed close connections with a Quaker family in Sussex, an involvement with a way of life and thought that would lead to her book *The Quakers Past and Present*, published in 1914, but whose more immediate impact was on her unfolding idea for a novel. The sketches she wrote at this time were a preparation for this; and at the heart of it lay a new way of representing memory and experience.

In Cornwall, living in virtual solitude for several months, Richardson understood, as she was later to represent it, that at the center of her novel must be a heroine who would also be alone in her narration, not mediated through an authorial consciousness as if "the drama was a conducted tour with the author deliberately present telling his tale" nor, as in the case of Flaubert, creating the pretence of imperceptibility (Richardson 1989: 139). As Richardson's biographer Gloria Fromm writes, "the developing consciousness of her heroine would be all there was" (Fromm 1994: 66). In *Pilgrimage*, Fromm suggests, "Dorothy Richardson found the way to be someone else and herself at the same time" (91), a doubling, mirroring or multiplication of

selfhood (Stephen Heath (Kappeler and Bryson 1986: 127) and Jean Radford (1991: 118) have referred to “Miriam” as encoding a “myriad I ams”) which also lay at the heart of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

The connection between the three writers was made by Leon Edel in his 1955 study, *The Psychological Novel: 1900–1950*, which gave substantial space to *Pilgrimage* and described it as a work which, along with the texts of Joyce and Proust, heralded the birth of the “modern psychological novel” (Edel 1955: 11). Richardson much admired the work of Proust (she read the volumes of *A la recherche* repeatedly and in a variety of sequences that offer some clue to her apprehension of *Pilgrimage* as a work to be absorbed through synchrony as well as diachrony or chronology) and, in particular, “his reconstruction of experience focused from within the mind of a single individual.” Novels, she wrote in an essay on the genre, are “a conducted tour . . . into the personality of the author, who, willy-nilly, and whatever be the method of his approach, must present the reader with the writer’s self-portrait” (Richardson 1948: 190). Towards Joyce she expressed more ambivalence, writing in a letter of the difficulties of finding a balance

between two methods, the direct method (what the critics call the indirect method, but we know as the method of direct unmediated experience) & the method of statement, of giving information. Information there must be, but the moment its [*sic*] given directly as information, the sense of immediate experience is gone. Yet [to present] nothing but immediate experience spells the titanic failure of Joyce. It is the great & abiding problem of all those who take the inward way, this business of getting something tremendously there as it were unawares. (Letter to P. Beaumont Wadsworth, April 30, 1923, Richardson 1995: 68)

Pointed Roofs opens at the point at which the seventeen-year-old Miriam Henderson is preparing to leave for Germany. The first two paragraphs of the novel give us Miriam on the evening before her journey:

Miriam left the gaslit hall and went slowly upstairs. The March twilight lay upon the landings, but the staircase was almost dark. The top landing was quite dark and silent. There was no one about. It would be quiet in her room. She could sit by the fire and be quiet and think things over until Eve and Harriett came back with the parcels. She would have time to think about the journey and decide what she was going to say to the Fräulein.

Her new Saratoga trunk stood solid and gleaming in the firelight. To-morrow it would be taken away and she would be gone. The room would be altogether Harriett’s. It would never have its old look again. She evaded the thought and moved to the nearest window. The outline of the round bed and the shapes of the may-trees on either side of the bend of the drive were just visible. There was no escape for her thoughts in this direction. The sense of all she was leaving stirred uncontrollably as she stood looking down into the well-known garden. (Richardson 1979: 1.15)

It is, as Jean Radford has noted (1991: 27), a “quiet naturalistic opening” that nonetheless challenges the reader with its shifts between inner consciousness and external representation, and its spatial, material representation of thought. The novel opens onto “landings” and thresholds – between inner and outer, light and dark, past and future. Miriam imagines or, more precisely, seeks to evade the imagining of the room when she, and her Saratoga trunk (which accompanies her throughout the sequence of novels), are no longer in it. This “thought” leads us back to one of the central premises of *Pilgrimage* as a whole; that we will see nothing that is not refracted through Miriam’s consciousness. “There was no one about” encapsulates Richardson’s two, interconnected, aspirations for her novel; that it should be “a book on the inviolability of feminine solitude or, alternatively, loneliness” (Richardson 1995: 281) and that Miriam would be “alone” in the sense that the novel would have no accompanying narrator.

These first paragraphs also indicate the centrality of space to the novel-sequence as a whole. The rooms in which Miriam lodges are, simultaneously or variously, spaces in and through which she moves, as an embodied self; sites of consciousness; visual arenas of colour, light and shade. The detail deployed in the description of interior spaces suggests a realist aspiration, but it is rarely separable from a phenomenological consciousness, in which objects are presented as given to perception, and in which appearances, including and especially the “mood” of a room, can alter radically from moment to moment. In *The Tunnel*, Miriam enters, unaccompanied, the attic room she will be renting in London’s Bloomsbury:

The window space was a little square wooden room, the long low double lattice breaking the roof, the ceiling and walls warmly reflecting its oblong of bright light. Close against the window was a firm little deal table covered with a thin, brightly coloured printed cotton table-cloth. When Miriam drew her eyes from its confusion of rich fresh tones, the bedroom seemed very dark. (2.13)

As in this registering of an alteration from light to dark, itself the product of Miriam’s acts of attention, Richardson’s version of “realism” entails an immersion in her heroine’s consciousness as it moves in and out of engagement with scenes, events, and people, and with space, movement, light, and reflection.

The intensity of this engagement with the phenomenal world at times appeared to Richardson’s critics as a purely retinal response to surface appearances, a criticism suggested in Virginia Woolf’s review of *The Tunnel* (1919). After Richardson’s dismantling of the traditional novel’s “scaffolding” (to borrow the terms with which Woolf described her own experiment in narration in *Jacob’s Room*):

There is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson, the small sensitive lump of matter, half transparent and half opaque, which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated procession, and is, we are bidden to believe, the source beneath the surface, the very oyster within the shell. . . . That Miss

Richardson goes so far as to achieve a sense of reality far greater than that produced by the ordinary means is undoubted. But, then, which reality is it, the superficial or the profound. . . . [Miriam's] sense of touch, sight and hearing are all excessively acute. But sensations, impressions, ideas and emotions glance off her, unrelated and unquestioned, without shedding quite as much light as we had hoped into the hidden depths. (Woolf 1992a: 15)

Woolf habitually drew the distinctions between her own work and that of Joyce and Richardson on the basis of surface versus depth in the novel form. In suggesting that Richardson's reality was "superficial," Woolf undercut the novelist May Sinclair's account (itself couched in thoroughly Jamesian terms) of "the sheer depth of [Richardson's] plunge" (Sinclair 1990: 446). Yet Woolf, in her review of *Revolving Lights* (1923), volume 7 of *Pilgrimage*, suggested that Richardson's method did allow her to "descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of Miriam Henderson's consciousness." This it achieved, Woolf argued, through its fashioning of a new form of sentence. Richardson, she wrote, "has invented, or, if she has not invented, developed and applied to her own uses, a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (Woolf 1992b: 51). Such terms became central to a later generation's considerations of feminine writing and "the gender of modernism."

Woolf's imaging of Miriam's consciousness, in her earlier review, as the "very oyster within the shell" also anticipated her 1927 essay "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," in which the self opens itself up to the experience of the London streets by leaving behind the spaces of the private house: "The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye" (Woolf 1993: 71). *The Tunnel*, the fourth volume of Richardson's sequence, takes Miriam into her London decade. Her years as a teacher and governess in Germany, the North London suburbs, and the English home counties, represented in the first three volumes of *Pilgrimage* respectively, constitute a period ended by her mother's suicide, the event and experience named, in a later volume (*Backwater*), as "the horror that had wrenched her life in twain" (Richardson 1979: 1.250).

Working as a dental assistant for a pound a week, living in rented rooms in Bloomsbury squares and streets, eating in cheap cafés, Miriam celebrates her freedom in the spaces of the city: "the strange, rich difficult day and now her untouched self here, free, unseen, and strong, the strong world of London all round her, strong free untouched people, in a dark lit wilderness, happy and miserable in their own way, going about the streets looking at nothing, thinking about no special person or thing, as long as they were there, being in London" (2.76). As significant as the representations of rooms and houses in *Pilgrimage* are those of the city streets, and Richardson depicted both spheres as intimately linked, with Londoners, as she wrote,

“going about happy, the minute they were out of their houses, looking at nothing and feeling everything, like people wandering happily from room to room in a well-known house” (2.156).

The city is also a distinctly gendered arena in *Pilgrimage*, as Richardson explored what it meant for a woman to claim its freedoms. “Strolling home towards midnight” toward her lodgings in Bloomsbury, dark shadows, “the great dark open space in front of the church . . . and the harsh voice of an invisible woman” edge into Miriam’s consciousness “as she strolled down the street controlling her impulse to flinch and hurry” (2.30). The urban world Miriam embraces contains fear as well as freedom: “No one who had never been alone in London was quite alive. . . . I’ve got free – nothing can ever alter that, she thought, gazing wide-eyed into the fire, between fear and joy” (2.76). In her lodging-house she meets individuals whose “outsider” status – the figures of the Jew and the “cosmopolitan” are central to these sections of *Pilgrimage* – she both connects with and distances herself from. The London of the turn of the century is also, for Miriam, a world of political, philosophical and scientific clubs, lectures and debates – on Darwinism, Fabianism, anarchism, idealist philosophies, egoism, suffrage feminism, aesthetics – which are rarely separable, for her, from the troubled question of male and female identity or “nature.”

The central volumes of *Pilgrimage* are also inflected by an ongoing argument with the ideas of H. G. Wells. Richardson was a school-friend of Amy Catherine Robbins, who became Wells’s wife in 1895. At the start of Richardson’s London life, she made contact again, and Richardson met Wells in 1896. His fictional counterpart in *Pilgrimage* is Hypo Wilson (Amy appears as Alma); Wells noted this in his *Experiment in Autobiography*, in which he described the *Pilgrimage* books “as a very curious essay in autobiography; they still lack their due meed of general appreciation; and in one of them, *The Tunnel*, she has described our Worcester Park life with astonishing accuracy” (1934: 2.557). He reserved fuller details of his relationship with Richardson – or, at least, his version of the relationship – for the memoir posthumously published in 1984 under the title *H. G. Wells in Love*, in which he referred the reader to the tenth volume of *Pilgrimage*, *Dawn’s Left Hand* (Wells 1984: 64). Here Richardson depicted Hypo Wilson’s relentless sexual seduction of Miriam, which brings her little pleasure, in part because she is absorbed by Amabel, a young woman she has recently met. Miriam’s relationship to Amabel is represented as a mirroring of selfhood, in stark contrast to Hypo’s failure to understand the least, as she sees it, thing about her: “For so dismally, in every one, he saw only what they were becoming or might become, and of the essential individual knew, and wanted to know, nothing at all” (Richardson 1979: 4.220).

Throughout her writing, Richardson returned to the dichotomy of Being and Becoming, often gendering them as female and male respectively. Hypo Wilson is represented as committed to “a ceaseless becoming,” and to a version of “modern life” which “doesn’t, dear Miriam, admit of intensive explorations of the depths of personalities. . . . to-day we are on the move, we’ve got to be on the move, or things will run away with us (4.334). *Pilgrimage*, it could be argued, was written against

much of what Wilson/Wells stood for, in his life and his writing: his rejection of introspection; his indifference to the concept of an “essential” selfhood, unmappable by biology; his overwhelming commitment to a concept of the future as that of the race and as progress, rather than to a future which unfolds out of past and present, and exists in a continuum with them. “‘Future life,’” Miriam muses in *Oberland*, “is a contradiction in terms” (4.59). The “utopia” of *Pilgrimage*, as Stephen Heath has argued (1986: 144), is the utopia of individuality. Underlying, or perhaps coexisting with, the text’s representations of flux, movement, and multiple selves would appear to be a profound belief in an inviolable identity and “the continuous moment that was always and everywhere the same” (4.176).

In *Clear Horizon*, the eleventh volume of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam tells Hypo Wilson that “the formation within myself of another human being, and so on ad infinitum . . . is neither the beginning nor the end of feminine being” (4.331). Miriam’s affair with Hypo comes to an end when she turns out not to be pregnant with his child, as she had thought she was. For Richardson, there appears to have been a miscarriage, and this, added to the strains of the existence she had been living for many years, led to a breakdown. It was at this point, in 1907, that she left London. Her writing during the next few years, which she spent for the most part in rural Sussex, consisted substantially of sketches, largely of Sussex life, for the *Saturday Review*. In these short pieces, she explored ways of transmitting the immediacy of experience, as a participant observer, and the relationship between what is remembered and what is experienced, in a form of apprenticeship for the writing of *Pilgrimage* itself.

She left Sussex for Cornwall, staying first with the writer J. D. Beresford and his wife, and then alone in the cottage they had rented, near Padstow, while she wrote *Pointed Roofs*. Beresford encouraged her to send her book to the publishers Duckworth, where her reader was Edward Garnett, and wrote the introduction to the volume. Here Beresford argued that the description of neither realist or romantic was applicable to Richardson, who is rather “the first novelist who has taken the final plunge; who has neither floated nor waded, but gone head under and become a very part of the human element she has described” (Beresford 1915: vii), a description, as we have seen, picked up by both May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf.

From 1918 onwards, Richardson and her husband Alan Odle (an artist fifteen years her junior, whom she married in 1917) began to spend a good part of the year in Cornwall, living a hand-to-mouth existence on the money Richardson made from reviewing and translating. From the 1920s onwards, the writer Bryher (Winifred Ellerman), who later wrote of Richardson that, as the author of *Pilgrimage*, “she was the Baedeker of all our early experiences” (Bryher 1962: 174), gave them financial support. She was providing funds not only for Richardson and Odle but also, as she and Richardson saw it, for the continued existence of Miriam and *Pilgrimage*, threatened as they were by the demands of freelance writing.

Bryher also opened up to Richardson the opportunity to write about a form now seen as central to her mode of vision and representation – the cinema. In 1927, Bryher (along with Kenneth Macpherson and H. D.) had founded a new magazine,

Close Up, dedicated to “the art of the film.” She invited Richardson to contribute, and her film articles became part of a series to which she gave the overall title *Continuous Performance*, gathering the individual pieces up into a larger whole in ways that mirror the relationship between *Pilgrimage* and its individual chapter-volumes. In response to Bryher’s initial request, Richardson wrote: “I know I have some notes somewhere & will look them up. But I fancy they are simply about seeing movies, regardless of what is seen” (letter to Bryher, spring 1927, Richardson 1995: 134). This attention to the nature of the medium itself, rather than to specific films, was undoubtedly her most significant contribution to cinema criticism, as she would herself suggest in one of her final articles for the journal, which ceased in 1933, when she wrote of “the continuous performance, going on behind all invitations to focus upon this or that, of the film itself” (Richardson 1998a: 207).

In her film articles, Richardson was both an observer of, and a participant in the emergence of, a new form of consciousness, registering and analyzing the new ways of seeing brought about by the cinema and the cinemagoer’s changing, developing relationship to the new art of the film. She laid great emphasis on place: on the “local” aspect of “locality” and on the value of remaining loyal to the cinema in which one’s filmic apprenticeship is served, in literal support of her claim that “the film, by setting the landscape in motion and keeping us still, allows it to walk through us” (Richardson 1998b: 201). Light and motion are also at the heart of *Pilgrimage*’s vision, in the earlier volumes as a form of pre-cinematic consciousness. In *Deadlock* (volume 6), for example, the metaphor of the kaleidoscope is used to represent the city as a series of shifting shapes and patterns: “a maze of shapes, flowing, tilting into each other, in endless patterns, sharp against the light . . . always within the magic circle of London” (3.85–6). *Dawn’s Left Hand*, which Richardson began writing in 1927, the first year of *Close Up*, opens with Miriam’s return from Switzerland, where she finds light at its most radiant, to London: “The memories accumulated since she landed were like a transparent film through which clearly she saw all she had left behind; and felt the spirit of it waiting within her to project itself upon things just ahead, things waiting in this room as she came up the stairs” (4.441). Consciousness has become a “screen” rather than a “stream,” the latter a metaphor Richardson had resisted from the point at which May Sinclair had written of *Pilgrimage*: “It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson’s stream of consciousness going on and on” (Sinclair 1990: 444).

Like her fellow contributor H. D., Richardson expressed hostility toward the coming of the “talkies,” though, as she suggested in one of her *Close Up* pieces, the aesthetic of the silent film could be seen as the gift of the transition to sound, brought into (new) being by what succeeded it (Richardson 1998c: 200). “Silence” became connected for Richardson with the values she saw as enduring: feminine “Being,” Quaker meditation, the durative self. Yet sound and voice are also at the heart of *Pilgrimage*. The city is always heard as well as seen, while one dimension of the radical mimesis of *Pilgrimage* is Richardson’s art of mimicry, and her extraordinarily acute ear for dialect, accent, and the rhythms of speech. Much of the comedy of the

text resides here and in those episodes in which the garrulous Miriam holds forth to increasingly exhausted auditors.

As Richardson grew older, it would seem that her creation, Miriam, began either to exhaust or to elude her. Yet she resisted the attempts of publishers to represent the novel-sequence as complete. Throughout the 1930s, she was negotiating with J. M. Dent and Cresset Press for an “omnibus” edition, but was horrified by Richard Church’s assumption that *Clear Horizon* – the eleventh volume in the series – represented the completion of *Pilgrimage*. When the Dent edition did come out in 1938, with the twelfth volume, *Dimple Hill*, included, Richardson wrote of her “dismay and disgust” at its presentation “as a complete work” (Richardson 1995: 350). *March Moonlight* appeared as “Work in Progress” in 1946, in three installments published in the journal *Life and Letters*, and was subsequently included in the reissued edition of *Pilgrimage*, published posthumously by Dent in 1967. This last volume is, however, much briefer than the others in the series, and it is clear that Richardson had by no means seen the novel-sequence as having been brought to a conclusion. In one sense, of course, its very project resisted closure. As she was to write of the work: “To go ahead investigating, rather than describing, was what seemed to me from the first minute must be done” (letter to Bryher, May 8, 1994, Richardson 1995: 496). Richardson died in a nursing-home in 1957.

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Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives*

Jaime Hovey

A century after its publication, Gertrude Stein's 1906 triptych *Three Lives* remains one of the best-known and most troubling texts of modernist literary experimentalism. The three lives of *Three Lives* are those of, first, "The Good Anna"; second, "Melanctha"; and finally, "The Gentle Lena." While all three stories are naturalistic accounts of the sad lives and unhappy deaths of women who sacrifice themselves for others, "Melanctha" has garnered the most critical attention. Its prose is experimental, its narrator is unreliable, its subtext is lesbian, and its protagonist is African-American. Stein rewrote "Melanctha" from an earlier, unpublished autobiographical novel, *Q. E. D.*, about a lesbian love-triangle. Although she claimed in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to have completely forgotten her first novel, it is now generally agreed that she transported large sections of it verbatim to "Melanctha." Stein's ambivalent "forgetting" of *Q. E. D.* and her careful rewriting of it as a mostly heterosexual black text complied with a cultural racism in which white bourgeois lesbianism could be articulated only through encoding and displacement. Stein both adopts and parodies racist attitudes with her obtuse narrator, who cannot understand the protagonist Melanctha apart from "tragic mulatto" stereotyping. Yet the complex ways race, sexual knowledge, and narration work in the text also suggest that Stein was also drawing affiliations between lesbian and African-American subjectivities as classes oppressed for expressing "natural" dispositions.

Critical appraisal of "Melanctha" is itself a study in various kinds of silencing. Many critics either downplayed its racial themes or dismissed it as insulting. Many white critics resorted to the identity politics of the token reader, using the favorable opinions expressed toward the work by James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larson, and Richard Wright as sufficient evidence to dismiss any charges that the text might be racist. For example, although Malcolm Brinnin's 1959 *The Third Rose* faithfully cited Claude McKay's scornful dismissal of the piece as "more like a brief American paraphrase of Esther Waters than a story of Negro life" (121), Brinnin praised *Three Lives* for its exploration of "human encounters which are by nature essentially

unchanging" (123). This conflict reflects the larger, historic cultural racism of a universalizing literary aesthetic: in 1931 Edmund Wilson applauded that "we become so immersed in Melanctha's world that we quite forget its inhabitants are black" (1991: 238).

This view began to change in biographies and other scholarship that appeared after the Civil Rights movement. By 1970 Richard Bridgeman was reading "Melanctha"'s stereotypes as racist caricatures, arguing that "the principles of the story are not black at all, but only new, revised versions of the characters Gertrude Stein had described in *Things As They Are* [*Q. E. D.*]. As for the background of 'Melanctha,' it swarms with clichés about the happy, promiscuous, razor-fighting, church-going darky" (52). Feminist critics disagreed about the extent to which the text could be considered racist: Sonia Saldivar-Hull (1989), for example, strongly criticized feminist critics who read over Stein's racist and classist stereotypes, while Catherine Stimpson argued that Stein's aversion to "raw racial injustice" was something that "must be balanced against the fact that racial stereotypes help to print out the narrative" (Stimpson 1977: 501).

One of the chief reasons for the longevity of the debate about the text's racial themes is that critics who get caught up in condemning or defending Stein's use of race in this text risk falling into the trap of the narrator him/herself, whose efforts are directed at formulating a pseudoscientific system of racial classification to explain all of "Melanctha"'s characters. The inability of these stereotypes to explain the actions of human beings constitutes the central drama of the narrative, which repeatedly fails to "know" Melanctha by her external appearance, circling around her in a futile attempt to fit her body into racist discourse. The narrator's racism, bourgeois values, and heterosexual assumptions resist readers' efforts to get at the reasons for Melanctha's failures, while providing the most explicit key to the formation of Melanctha's subjectivity within the society of which the narrator stands as representative. Eventually a gap opens between the narrator and the narrative; the narrator's stereotypes become less and less relevant to Melanctha's story, anxious tics which function as impediments to meaning, moving the reader back and forth in a dialectic between narrative causality and Melanctha's critique, in her arguments with her lovers, of those cultural values.

"Melanctha"'s insistence on sexualized racial stereotypes and sexual euphemisms in order to tell the story exposes the "unknowing" narrator of the text as one whose willed ignorance is a conscious pose. In "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English" (1982) Catharine Stimpson characterized the lesbian novelist in English as a master of the coded text: "She learned that being quiet, in literature and life, would enable her to 'pass.' Silence could be a passport into the territory of the dominant world. . . . If the lesbian were to name herself, her utterance might carry a taint from speaker to listener, from mouth to ear." Conversely, as Eve Sedgwick writes of coming out, naming one's self "can bring about the revelation of a powerful unknowing as unknowing, not as a vacuum or as the blank it can pretend to be but as a weighty and occupied and consequential epistemological space" (Sedgwick 1990:

77). A façade of “unknowing” fails to allow Stein’s narrator to satisfactorily account for Melanctha’s circumstances by telling the full story of her lesbian desires: formulas which cheerfully articulate racism while silencing lesbian desire are repeatedly, tenaciously used throughout the story. Yet the text also alerts the reader to different kinds of “knowing.” The lesbian Jane Harden imparts the knowledge that comes from sexual experience to her lover Melanctha, and Melanctha uses this knowledge to teach her lover Jeff Campbell how to begin thinking outside available social narratives.

“Melanctha” opens with the death of Rose’s baby, which the narrator attributes to a stupidity and neglect tied squarely to race. Thus Stein places this story, as she had earlier placed *Q. E. D.*, squarely within “scientific” discourses of degeneration which argued that the Negro would soon disappear, having degenerated since emancipation to an immoral creature whose poverty, high infant mortality rate, and sexual impurity were signs of their genetic inability to survive (Frederickson 1971: 249–51). Stein’s “Melanctha” begins: “Rose Johnson made it very hard to bring her baby to its birth.” It soon becomes clear that this difficulty is not due to something that Rose does, but what she is: “the sullen, childish, cowardly, black Rosie grumbled and fussed and howled and made herself to be an abomination and like a simple beast.” Clearly the narrator’s use of “abomination” to suggest bad behavior is a strange choice here, pointing to the tendency in the narrator to overstatement and imprecise language, as is the combination of “simple” and “beast” (can a beast be complex?) and the use of “black” as an adjective for a negative personality trait. The only thing Rose actually does is experience the pain of childbirth with less than equanimity. It is the narrator who chooses to attribute Rose’s refusal to meekly and mutely deliver her child to racial characteristics, and to suggest that such behavior should be reviled as less than white, and by extension, less than human. The sexist assumption that Rose shouldn’t complain in childbirth becomes in the logic of racism the attribute of a lower species – a species which might not be able to survive because of the incomplete mothering skills particular to those less fitted to breed:

Rose Johnson had liked the baby well enough and perhaps she just forgot it for awhile, anyway the child was dead and Rose and Sam her husband were very sorry but then these things came so often in the negro world in Bridgepoint, that they neither of them thought about it very long. (85)

This narrative voice annoys with its non sequiturs, its prejudices, its frustrating concentration on certain questions at the expense of others, its inability to know the subjects of its discourse. Thus the text focuses on the puzzle of “reading” the degenerate lesbian body, illegible and therefore doubly dangerous, echoing degeneration’s emphasis on the discrepancy between physiognomy “types” – the taxonomies which the narrator attempts to set up – and the hidden narrative of degeneration which “connoted invisibility and ubiquity” (Pick 1989: 9).

The narrator's description of Melanctha and Rose is enthusiastically and explicitly racist, equating whiteness with virtues such as intelligence and subtlety; blackness with coarseness and sexual promiscuity:

Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose, and why was this unmoral, promiscuous, shiftless Rose married, and that's not so common either, to a good man of the negroes, while Melanctha with her white blood and attraction and her desire for the right position had not yet been really married? (86)

Although some critics point to "decent" as disrupting Rose's stereotypical construction, Stein was a modernist who, like others in the movement she helped found, loathed bourgeois decency. Moreover, Stein's narrator constantly hypothesizes what Melanctha's "inner" narrative might be and where it might have come from, fitting her into a taxonomy where a "black" nature predisposes her to enjoy the more "primitive" pleasures such as "new things and excitements" (117) which the proper Jeff Campbell, though similar in appearance, eschews: "Melanctha Herbert almost always hated her black father, but she loved very well the power in herself that came through him. And so her feeling was really closer to her black coarse father, than her feeling had ever been toward her pale yellow, sweet-appearing mother" (90).

These stereotypes correlate power with racial darkness, and respectable habits with whiteness. According to the narrator, Melanctha's mixed-race boyfriend Jeff is more influenced by the white side of his nature, causing him to want to "live regular and work hard and understand things" (117) in a properly middle-class way, repressing desire. Rose Johnson, who is dark, should be more primitive according to the narrator's racist formulas, but Rose also lives a respectable married life. This conflict between physiognomy and inner proclivities frustrates the narrator's pseudoscientific racial taxonomies. Rose, like Melanctha, is a puzzle to the narrator, evading the essentialism in which Rose's racial characteristics should prove stronger than her upbringing by white people, just as Melanctha frustrates the narrator's attempt to ascribe her behavior to genetic influences. Desire, the narrator informs us, is socially disruptive, that part of Melanctha's "black" side which dooms her never to enjoy the respectability and security of marriage: "Melanctha Herbert was always losing what she had in wanting all the things that she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others" (89).

"Melanctha"'s characters must all negotiate a path between "established convictions" and sexual "excitements." Jeff Campbell – like his antecedent Adele from *Q. E. D.* – initially espouses values which reward the repression of a racialized desiring nature with social respectability. Yet such repression is clearly against the sensual grain of his character; Adele's "instinct for comfort that suggests a land of laziness and sunshine" (55–6) becomes Jeff's "free abandoned laughter that gives the warm broad glow to negro sunshine" (111). Stein's racializing of Adele's sensual nature deploys a

readily available stereotype in order to essentialize Jeff's tendency to "wander," rendering his affair with Melanctha as more instinctive, embodied, and primitive. Conversely, "Melanctha"'s Rose Johnson and James Herbert are both dark-skinned, yet neither possesses the racist characterization of the culturally "black" disposition which the narrator repeats over and over, "joyous with the earth-born boundless joy of negroes" (86). Both Rose and James get "properly married," while the "pale" Melanctha and "so white" Jane Harden become lesbian lovers wandering on the margins of respectability. These racial stereotypes are further complicated by their traces of *Q. E. D.*'s "sexual mulatto" type (in Stein's earlier text, the lesbian Mabel Neathe possessed a "brown" face of desire at war with her repressed white body).

In "Melanctha" it is Jeff's own internalized racism that predominantly interferes with his happiness, and his internalization of stereotypes of African-American sexuality as degenerate that causes him to distrust their relationship for so long:

One kind of loving seems to me, is like one has a good quiet feeling in a family when one does his work, and is always living good and being regular, and then the other way of loving is just like having it like any animal that's low in the street together, and that don't seem to me very good Miss Melanctha. (124)

The attempt to render, in a language riddled with discursive stereotypes and cultural prejudices, a transparent, detached narrative of bodily experience disrupts the narrative itself. The narration circles upon itself, as if the narrator neither understands nor has words for what is happening. The "talking" Jeff favors is unable to help him resolve the moral dissonance he experiences when these two value systems throw each other into question. When the truth of Jeff's bodily experience contradicts the conventions upheld by the narrative discourse, the narrative begins its circular, vague repetition, its useless moral formulas mirroring the narrator's insistence on wrongheaded stereotypes:

Jeff felt a strong disgust inside him; not for himself really, in him, not for what it was that everybody wanted, in them; he only had disgust because he could never know really in him, what it was he wanted, to be really right in understanding, for him, he only had disgust because he never could know really what it was really right for him to be always doing, in the things he had before believed in, the things he before had believed in for himself and for all the colored people, the living regular, and the never wanting to be always having new things, just to keep on, always being in excitements. All the old thinking now came up very strong inside him. He sort of turned away then, and threw Melanctha from him. (155–6)

Jeff's encounter with his body terrifies him because his conventional thinking is unable to sort out sexual knowledge, or sexual pleasure: "Then he really knew he could know nothing" (156). Thus he distances himself from Melanctha by taxonomizing her in the same way the narrator stereotypes Rose, as a sexually promiscuous "always chasing excitements" kind of black woman. Whenever the racist stereotypes upon

which the narrative is built begin to deconstruct, the narrative moves circularly, vaguely, repetitively, beginning to detach itself hysterically from a story it can no longer make sensible within its racist and sex-phobic conventions.

Yet although the narrator argues that Melanctha is a passive victim of her body and its desires, it is apparent to readers that Melanctha's lesbian experiences with Jane Harden as well as her sexual experiences with Jeff Campbell give her both knowledge and power. This power comes through the two channels of confessional discourse and bodily experience: "There was nothing good or bad in doing, feeling, thinking or in talking, that Jane spared her" (106). Melanctha's lesbian experiences with Jane Harden teach her the relations of power that exist between speaker and listener, the power of listening, and the pleasure of power which knowledge of someone else's secrets gives her. She later uses this "understanding" both of the power of sexual knowledge and of masking such knowledge as "unknowing" to maintain the upper hand in her relationship with Jeff Campbell. The "wisdom" that Melanctha gets from listening to Jane Harden's narrative is also a wisdom about Jane's weaknesses, especially the drinking that "made it always harder for her to forgive Melanctha" (107). Melanctha becomes an empowered, "knowing" reader of Jane Harden's body, gaining power over her by understanding her libidinal appetites and excesses.

Narrative euphemisms, such as the biblical "knowing," dissolve distinctions between an inner, bodily knowledge and intellectual discursivity. Yet euphemisms also silence and hide that which specificity reveals. In both *Q. E. D.* and "Melanctha" Stein plays on knowing and deliberately unknowing with the ambiguous "friendship." In the first novel, Helen asks Adele, "tell me will we be friends?" (65), although it is quite obvious that there is physical affection between them. What, then, do they mean? Stein translates this refusal of the distinctions between erotic and non-erotic "knowing" into a heterosexual context when Melanctha asks Jeff, "Tell me for true, Dr. Campbell, will you be friends with me" (127). In this context it sounds coy rather than innocent; a reader would of course assume such a relationship contains an erotic component since it is heterosexual. To the lesbian reader it might also suggest a coded text, or at least remind any reader that "knowing" a "friend" may involve the physical intimacy of Melanctha's earlier affair with Jane Harden, where "In every way she got it" (106).

Ultimately, sexual confidence gives Melanctha confidence to speak, in an argument with Jeff where she dismisses his insistence that "to live regular and work hard and understand things" is "enough to keep any decent man excited" (117). His articulation of respectability, she maintains, is hypocrisy, and she urges him to give in to his "real" nature:

It don't seem to me Dr. Campbell, that what you say and what you do seem to have much to do with each other. . . . It seems to me, Dr. Campbell you want to have a good time just like all us others, and then you just keep on saying that it's right to be good and you ought not to have excitements, and yet you really don't want to do it Dr. Campbell, no more than me and Jane Harden. (117-18)

Jeff's language is one of moral axioms; Melanctha's is knowledge based on physical experience. Melanctha points out that what Jeff says he wants and what he really desires are different, accusing him of an attempt on his part to make the narrative of his body contradict one that might be suggested by his color. By having Melanctha argue for the validity of the body's desires, Stein renders her a literal embodiment of the narrative of the body, a narrative whose demands eloquently interrogate the social imperatives of Jeff's stiff moral strictures. Their conversation is heard because its content is heterosexual; on the other hand, readers never hear Jane Harden's voice. Her lesbian education of Melanctha is outside the codes of bourgeois decency, and her stories are censored by the narrator.

The narrator is often both vague and unreliable; s/he too leaves out "big pieces" of Melanctha's lesbian experience. The novel is framed on both ends with the failure of the friendship between Melanctha and Rose, which results first in the death of Rose's baby and then in the death of Melanctha herself. Several things suggest the intensity of their friendship; first, that we are given contradictory information about Rose by the narrator: she is "unmoral" and "promiscuous," yet married "to a good man of the negroes"; and second, that Melanctha defers to Rose. The narrator declines to tell us whether Rose acts out her promiscuity after marriage, and whether her lovers are men or women. Rather, Rose's stereotyping allows her to pulse with the possibility of transgressive sexual behavior which defers, at least outwardly, to standards of middle-class respectability. Since Rose also attends church even though she "did not care much for religion," it is quite possible that she is equally noncommittal toward matrimony. Her hypocritical deferral to respectability, combined with the narrator's insertion of the word "decent" in the description of personality traits which are clearly intended to be seen as disagreeable, suggests Rose's kinship with *Q. E. D.*'s mannish lesbian, the morally two-toned Mabel Neathe.

Melanctha's pathetic attachment to the manipulative Rose is the final act in her drama of degeneration. From the beginning, the question that bewilders "Melanctha"'s narrator is "Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose" (86). Melanctha abandons the relationship at the center of the story – the affair with Jeff Campbell – for Rose Johnson, who publicly embodies respectability. Melanctha is initially attracted to Jeff because he, too, professes an allegiance to middle-class values, yet once Melanctha awakens his sexual passion and causes him to re-evaluate his beliefs, she loses interest in him. The narrator, too, is interested in paradoxes and the complexity of a divided nature, returning again and again to equations that don't make sense according to racist taxonomies. When the "half-white" Melanctha follows the "promiscuous unmorality of the black people" she is interesting; when she gives that up to "live regular" she is disposed of in two short paragraphs. The narrator's frustration is with characters who do not fit stereotypes: Melanctha should be the "decent" one, while Rose should be the displaced wanderer. This racism effectively obscures the story; its formulas distract us from the lesbian Melanctha's attraction to safety and simplicity, her desire

for someone different from her own “complex” and “desiring” self, her attempt to reconcile her sexuality with respectable norms, and her repeated inability to do so. The tragedy of Melanctha’s unrequited love for Rose, who, as the narrator tells us quickly at the end (although everybody reads over it) “had worked in to be the deepest of all Melanctha’s emotions” (234), is the final proof of Melanctha’s doomed nature, her lesbianism the ultimate signifier of her pathology.

Melanctha is no longer compelling as a narrative subject precisely when she stops being a sexually promiscuous, desiring mulatto following what the narrator designates as the regressive “black” side of her nature. Since her function is to discursively link together sexuality and blackness, then it is no wonder that her moral “reform” and subsequent illness are of little narrative interest. Her function is to float as the sexualized “other” through a story in which she is always chasing respectability, casting away those whose “bottom nature” might drag her down, cast off herself when her own desiring nature, textually coded as dark, proves too threatening. Attracted by Jane’s “white blood . . . that made her see clear” (104), Melanctha leaves Jane because of her drinking; attracted by Jeff because he “never did some things like other men” (125), she abandons him after she teaches him to like doing those “things.” Drawn to Rose’s respectability, she is discarded because her promiscuity, or the possibility of promiscuity which she signifies, threatens Rose’s marriage. However, once Melanctha “began to work and live regular” (235), the narrator loses interest in her. Melanctha stops rebelling against dominant values, but that, too, silences her; she sickens and dies in two sentences, given over to the care of authorities: “They sent her where she would be taken care of, a home for poor consumptives, and there Melanctha stayed until she died” (236).

Melanctha’s consumptive death links her demise on one level to that of the classic “fallen woman” in nineteenth-century literature, while hinting at the real reason as unsatisfied hunger, as consuming desire. The narrator’s callous dismissal of Melanctha echoes that of the smugly bourgeois Rose, who maintains a posture of “unknowing” around Melanctha’s unrequited love for her, seeing Melanctha’s tragedies as both self-created and stemming from an inherent – and thus degenerative – mental instability: “She didn’t do right ever the way I told her . . . I expect some day Melanctha kill herself, when she act so bad like she do always, and then she get so awfully blue” (235). Rose, like the narrator, removes herself from any complicity in Melanctha’s marginalization and death by taxonomizing her unhappiness in medical terms, terms which allow an easy diagnosis and facilitate Melanctha’s speedy expulsion from Rose’s “healthy” existence. Although resistance to racist and “decent” social values exists in the voice of Melanctha herself, which struggles in the text to be heard against the institutionalized discourses which pathologized racial alterity, femininity, and sexual deviance, her characterization as a sexually promiscuous, mentally unstable lesbian “tragic mulatta” clearly links her demise to her desiring body. There is no place for Melanctha in Rose’s carefully ordered world, or the narrator’s, but her story helps contest their small-mindedness and moral respectability, making *Three Lives* one of literary modernism’s most important texts.

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Wallace Stevens: *Harmonium*

Jonathan Levin

First published by Knopf in 1923, *Harmonium* is Wallace Stevens's first volume of poems. Having published exclusively in small magazines throughout the middle and late 1910s and early 1920s, Stevens was already over forty years old when the collection appeared. He had written William Carlos Williams (Williams 1971: 15) some years earlier of what struck him as the "casual character" of the poems in Williams's 1917 volume *Al Que Quiere!* and of his own "distaste for miscellany," which he cites as "one of the reasons I do not bother about a book myself." When he finally does "bother," it only exacerbates his own self-doubt, as is evident in a letter to *Poetry* magazine editor Harriet Monroe, dated October 28, 1922: "Gathering together the things for my book has been so depressing that I wonder at *Poetry's* friendliness. All my earlier things seem like horrid cocoons from which later abortive insects have sprung. The book will amount to nothing, except that it may teach me something" (Stevens 1966: 231). Stevens would later report the "horror" that attended his reading of proofs for the volume (Stevens 1966: 251). Such strong language suggests something more than mere authorial modesty. Even the volume's originally projected title, "The Grand Poem: Preliminary Minutiae," retains some of the ambivalence over what Stevens seems to have felt was the sadly casual and miscellaneous character of his early collected poems. Like the creator in Stevens's 1917 poem "Negation" (not included in the first edition of *Harmonium*, but added to the 1931 and subsequent editions), Stevens is himself "struggling toward his harmonious whole, / Rejecting intermediate parts, / Horrors and falsities and wrongs" (97).

These harsh judgments reflect Stevens's constant sense of the insufficiency or inadequacy of all achieved results (such as published poems) with respect to the yearnings or aspirations that once inspired them. Much later in his career, Stevens would imagine himself embarked on what he would call an "endlessly elaborating poem" (486). If all individual poems are part of one constantly evolving and expanding

poem, then any given poem must necessarily seem disappointing with respect to that larger, ever-emerging whole. This is perhaps why Stevens eventually grew so fond of long, multisectioned poems, which, even while settling briefly into perspective (of a character, an anecdote or fable, a trope), repeatedly fracture perspective to create a sense of ongoing elaboration and prospective fulfillment. One sees this already in early *Harmonium* poems like “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” and “Six Significant Landscapes,” as well as in the several early unpublished or partially published sequences that Stevens chose not to include in *Harmonium* (“Carnet de Voyage,” “Phases,” “Primordia,” “Lettres d’un Soldat (1914–1915),” and “Architecture,” all eventually published in *Opus Posthumous*).

These observations about Stevens’s sense of disappointment on seeing his early poems collected together in *Harmonium* offer insight into the peculiar dynamics of Stevens’s early poetry. His interest in shifting perspectives, to some extent driven by his sense of dissatisfaction with any single perspective, is a product of his distinctive mingling of modernist and Romantic habits of thought. Unlike those among his peers who championed the cause of modernism against what they regarded as the stale remains of the Romantic tradition (a position articulated most cogently by the critic T. E. Hulme), Stevens always sought to straddle the fence between modernist and Romantic aesthetic values. As he noted in a letter, he sought to forge “a new romantic.” He did not, as he makes plain, simply want to return to an old Romantic ideal. Poetry, he comments in the same letter, “is essentially romantic, only the romantic of poetry must be something constantly new and, therefore, just the opposite of what is spoken of as the romantic” (1967: 277). He elsewhere comments that the romantic “belittles” imagination: it is “to the imagination what sentimentality is to feeling” (1951: 138).

This mingling of modernist and Romantic imperatives helps account for the distinctive difficulty of Stevens’s poetry. This difficulty is, however, different in some notable ways from other forms of modernist difficulty. It is not, with Stevens, a matter of allusions to other works of literature (as in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* or Ezra Pound’s *The Cantos*), or developing cryptic parallels between ancient and modern figures or works (as in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*). As critics like Helen Vendler and Richard Poirier have demonstrated, Stevens is difficult because of his famously elusive style: his sentences often seem to be gathering towards an assertion that never quite gets asserted. Sometimes, the syntax will read as if the assertion has been made, but the actual words do not quite deliver the thought, at least not with any satisfying clarity or precision. At the same time, by using a language that is often rich in images and metaphors, and even abstract words and phrases that, by being introduced in unexpected contexts, scramble the gathering meaning of an unfolding sentence, Stevens introduces subtle shades of meaning. At times, these shades become more prominent than the main idea that the sentence seemed to promise at its start. The overall effect occasionally approaches that achieved by the Surrealists, as in the fourth section of “Six Significant Landscapes”:

When my dream was near the moon,
The white folds of its gown
Filled with yellow light.
The soles of its feet
Grew red.
Its hair filled
With certain blue crystallizations
From stars,
Not far off.

Despite the reference here to dreaming, Stevens's poetry does not typically pursue such illogical effects as a means of transcribing the irrational or unconscious logic of the mind. Rather than juxtapose and dichotomize logical and irrational modes of thought, as he felt Surrealism necessarily did, Stevens characteristically sought to weave them together, thereby underscoring their mutual entanglement.

The difficulty of Stevens's poems is also tempered by his sense of linguistic playfulness. Many of the best-loved and most frequently anthologized poems of this period are so utterly playful that they almost seem to mock the will to take them seriously. Of course, critics do take them very seriously indeed, offering all sorts of detailed philosophical, psychological, and socio-historical interpretations. But arguably, these are poems that aim to disrupt this interpretive posture, and to do so with an air of insouciance. Poems like "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," and "Bantams in Pine-Woods" all take this playfulness to an extreme. Stevens was also a master of sound effects, and many of his early poems stand out for their peculiar music. Of course, these poems still invite interpretation. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" is surely a poem about perspective, underscoring, perhaps, that reality – even the reality of a blackbird – is always fluid and shifting. Some of the sections even seem to underscore this idea. In IX, for example, when the blackbird flew out of sight, "It marked the edge / Of one of many circles." Readers might be reminded here of Emerson's essay "Circles," with its sense of the constantly shifting and expanding perspectives constituted by ever-advancing horizons. But such an interpretation can only frame what is more fundamental about this poem: the elusiveness of its theme, and beyond that the always-playful elusiveness of the poem's language, which never seems to settle into any clear pattern. Like the moving eye of the blackbird in the first section, or perhaps like the blackbird flying out of sight in the ninth section, the blackbird always seems just out of reach, or just out of focus. If it settles down, as it does in the last section, one senses that it only settles down temporarily. The blackbird – like Stevens's poetic style – is always on the wing.

One reason to distinguish Stevens from Surrealists or from other avant-garde poets who more willfully frustrate readers' expectations is the commitment to naturalism evident throughout *Harmonium*. Influenced, to some extent, by his Harvard teacher George Santayana as well as by others who taught at Harvard while he was a student

there (especially the psychologist and pragmatist philosopher William James), Stevens sought to displace transcendental yearnings traditionally associated with religious belief into the natural conditions of the physical world. This is not to say that he simply sought to replace religious beliefs with more secular or materialistic ones. Though he was somewhat haunted by the possibility that the modern world really might be reduced to a pure materialism, Stevens always aimed to retain the general emotional tenor of other-worldly beliefs, but without their specifically other-worldly metaphysics. In other words, he hoped to preserve the instinct or passion for myth and religion without the supernatural beliefs that he believed to be false and misleading.

One can find examples of this naturalism almost everywhere in *Harmonium*. In the second section of “Le Monocle de Mon Oncle,” he describes a red bird that “flies across the golden floor”:

It is a red bird that seeks out his choir
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.
A Torrent will fall from him when he finds.

The red bird is a sign of spring, his “choir” and the associated “choirs of wind and wet and wing” at once utterly natural (the actual sounds of spring) and suggestive of some quasi-divine occurrence (a connotation brought forward especially by “choirs”). The bird and the spring are real physical occurrences, but the poetry here hints at, even if it does not posit, some superior reality. Stevens’s reader is characteristically suspended between natural and supernatural realities. Likewise, in the concluding section of “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” the speaker comments:

Beauty is momentary in the mind –
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

Rather than reject immortality, as a thoroughgoing naturalist might, Stevens simply appropriates the term and adapts it to the most fragile and evanescent physical realities. Stevens’s poetry is often pulled in these two directions: towards a reductive vocabulary that aims to capture a wholly naturalistic world, subject to constant change and with no correspondence to a transcendent, eternal realm, and at the same time towards an expansive vocabulary, that hints at a kind of perfection or eternity paradoxically built up out of wholly naturalistic elements.

The interplay of reductive and expansive modes is developed in a pair of poems that originally appeared side by side in the October 1921 issue of *Poetry* magazine, “The Snow Man” and “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon.” Both poems would later appear in *Harmonium*, though they would be misleadingly separated there. “The Snow Man” is effectively a description of the state of mind required to observe a wintry landscape without projecting feelings of misery onto that landscape. It is, then, a poem about

the pathetic fallacy: “the attribution of human emotions or characteristics to inanimate objects or to nature” (*American Heritage Dictionary*). The snow man of the title is not an actual snow sculpture, but is rather a figure of speech referring to someone whose “mind of winter” is invoked in the poem’s first line. Looking out over a cold wintry landscape of ice, frost, and snow-crusting boughs, and hearing the sound of the wind blowing, the snow man does not “think / Of any misery” in the sound of the wind. Rather, “nothing himself,” he “beholds / Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” One long, winding sentence, the poem arguably does not even posit this snow man, since the description is more imperative than factual: “One must have a mind of winter,” as the poem begins, almost as if to explain why our human minds usually do posit misery in such landscapes. The snow man’s “mind of winter” is finally a mark of his almost inhuman reductive strength: he is able to look at the bare winter scene and not impose on it something that is not there (like the feelings of misery that most viewers might be inclined to see there). But Stevens describes more than a negative capacity here. The snow man is “nothing himself,” and is finally able to behold “the nothing that is,” as if nothingness has a positive quality, rendered invisible by our usual preoccupation with things. Readers have linked this “nothing that is” to both Eastern (Buddhist) and Western (existentialist) philosophical traditions. Whatever background one invokes, it is clear that Stevens admires the habit of mind that itself approximates the wintry scene: the internal nothingness that corresponds to an external nothingness.

But “The Snow Man” is only one half of an encompassing dialectic, the other half of which is developed in “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon.” This poem, somewhat revised for publication in *Harmonium*, would appear to describe a sunset over the horizon of a Western sea. Written as a first-person narration, the sun addresses the reader, making this an extreme case of the pathetic fallacy. If “The Snow Man” describes an ego reduced to its most minimal essence, “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon” describes an ego that expands to the dimensions of its surrounding world. Hoon is the artist as solipsist, the creative source of his surrounding world. After initially wondering what the “ointment” sprinkled on his beard, the hymns buzzing “beside” his ears, and the sea whose “tide” sweeps through him were, the speaker insists that he is himself their ultimate source:

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

Like the snow man, Hoon identifies with the external world; the chief difference is that whereas the snow man finds himself in a “bare place” and becomes “nothing himself,” Hoon finds himself in the majestic scene of the setting sun, which he in turn becomes and projects. Stevens once suggested that the name Hoon is a “cipher” for “‘the loneliest air,’ that is, the expanse of sky and space.” The name may well be a contraction of “horizon.” In this sense, Hoon is a figure for the Romantic self who

“half perceives, half creates” the reality he inhabits. Hoon is self-consciously mythological where “The Snow Man” is doggedly anti-mythological; as a personification of the sun setting across and utterly transforming the horizon, Hoon represents the artist or poet whose creativity transforms the world around him. The poem contains one reference to a second figure, the “you” who called the western day through which Hoon descends “the loneliest air.” “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon” is perhaps a response to this weak pathetic fallacy, effectively countering the isolation and despair the phrase suggests with the self’s ample creative resources.

Stevens is drawn to such expansively fecund natural scenes, which invariably remind him of his own creative imagination, but he is also drawn to moments of reductive perception, where he acknowledges the limits of imagination. If the reductive phase eventually becomes a more prominent feature of his later poems, expansive nature is still everywhere in *Harmonium*, from the bucks and firecat of the volume’s first poem (“Earthy Anecdote”) to the many poems that invoke Florida, the sea, and the south: to list only those poems whose titles underscore the point, “In the Carolinas,” “The Load of Sugar-Cane,” “Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores,” “Fabliau of Florida,” “Concerning the Thunderstorms of Yucatan” and “Approaching Carolina” (sections II and III from “The Comedian as the Letter C”), “O Florida, Venereal Soil,” “The Cuban Doctor,” “Stars at Tallapoosa,” and “Sea Surface Full of Clouds.” The reductive moments are harder to locate, but they are nevertheless evident throughout: from the sun that “mirrors nothing” in “Nuances on a Theme by Williams” to the cluster of poems on death and creative impotence near the end of the volume: “The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad,” “The Death of a Soldier,” “Negation.”

No poem displays Stevens’s early faith in an unmediated naturalism more powerfully, and more revealingly, than “Sunday Morning,” first published in *Poetry* in a shortened version in 1916. The poem describes a woman lounging in a “sunny chair” on a Sunday morning, meditating on her lush surroundings as thoughts apparently stimulated by religious Sunday rituals compete with her sense of contentment in her setting. Parts of the poem are spoken by the woman (always in quotation marks), though most of the poem is spoken by a narrator reflecting on the woman and her thoughts. The woman’s troubled yearning for “imperishable bliss” expresses her dissatisfaction with an ephemeral world that, despite its abundant comforts and joys, does not finally yield more permanent satisfactions. The second stanza asks why she should “give her bounty to the dead”: if divinity comes “Only in shadows and in dreams,” could the woman be content to “find in comforts of the sun, / In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else / In any balm or beauty of the earth, / things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?” Characteristically, Stevens displaces the divine into physical realities and human experiences. Divinity, the speaker insists, “must live within herself.” The third stanza provides a short, anecdotal account of the history of divinity, from Jove’s “inhuman birth” among the clouds through Jesus’ sojourn among humans on earth to our present world. Our world, however, appears not to have completed its necessary transition, as the speaker asks, imploringly,

Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be
 The blood of paradise?
 And shall the earth
 Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
 The sky will be much friendlier than now,
 A part of labor and a part of pain,
 And next in glory to enduring love,
 Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

This is perhaps the darkest moment in the poem, suggesting that we have not yet become fully or even sufficiently divine. Key passages from the several sections that follow are cast in the future tense, suggesting that in present time, earthly paradise does not prove altogether sufficient.

The fourth stanza opens as the woman wonders where paradise is when the birds – which otherwise make her “content” – are gone. The speaker insists that there is no “haunt of prophecy” or “visionary south” that endures as

April's green endures; or will endure
 Like her remembrance of awakened birds,
 Or her desire for June and evening, tipped
 By the consummation of the swallow's wing.

Of course, April's green does not endure, which is perhaps why the speaker immediately shifts his focus to her “remembrance” and “desire” which, projected on “awakened birds” of spring and the consummations of summer, displace endurance from the physical to the imaginative realm. In the fifth stanza, which opens with the woman's troubled declaration that “in contentment I still feel / The need of some imperishable bliss,” the speaker asserts that “death is the mother of beauty”: the mere threat of obliteration posed by death makes the perishable things of earth more valuable to us. The sixth stanza imagines what paradise would be like if there were “no change of death” there. Ironically, much of the appeal of such a paradise is that it is “so like our perishing earth,” made up of all the things we value because they are precarious.

If human blood seemed not quite ready to assume its divinity in the third stanza, in the seventh section Stevens invents a group of men engaged in a quasi-pagan ritual. Stevens's tone shifts here as he describes the men chanting “their boisterous devotion to the sun, / Not as a god, but as a god might be, / Naked among them, like a savage source.” Here again, the poem reverts to a future tense, imagining a time when “their chant shall be a chant of paradise, / Out of their blood, returning to the sky.” Figures of what Stevens would later call “capable imagination,” their human voices blend with the natural voices of wind, lake, trees, and hills, achieving, among themselves and in concert with their natural surroundings, a kind of “heavenly fellowship.”

The final section returns to the woman, who hears “a voice that cries”:

The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay.

As Jesus is thus humanized, the speaker summarizes the naturalistic logic of the entire poem:

We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.

In a beautiful sequence of images, the speaker offers examples of “unsponsored” nature: deer, quail whistling “their spontaneous cries,” sweet berries, and, in the poem’s concluding image, pigeons:

And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

The “isolation of the sky,” like the “dividing and indifferent blue” of the third section, reminds the reader of the precarious challenge of living “unsponsored, free.” The pigeons’ “ambiguous undulations” are like the quail’s “spontaneous cries,” only with more of a suggestion that the marks and sounds and patterns made here on earth – by pigeons or by poets observing pigeons – must necessarily bear the trace of our uncertain future. The closing image is poised between the movement “downward to darkness” and the birds’ “extended wings,” underscoring the subtle mixture of uncertainty and hope that characterizes not only the poem but also the larger volume in which it appears.

As suggested by the juxtaposition of the quasi-mythological “boisterous men” chanting in the seventh stanza and the naturalistic description of Jesus’ grave in the eighth stanza, the interplay of mythologizing and anti-mythologizing impulses is another defining feature of Stevens’s poetics. “Anecdote of the Jar,” one of Stevens’s most frequently anthologized poems, captures this interplay. The jar, placed on a hill in Tennessee, organizes the wilderness, but by doing so it also dominates that wilderness. “Gray and bare,” the jar “did not give of bird or bush, / Like nothing else in Tennessee.” Stevens’s tone in this poem is hard to characterize. The simple diction and insistent rhymes, combined with the speaker’s reluctance to reflect or comment on the jar, generate an ironic undercurrent to the poem. The speaker neither praises nor condemns the jar, or at least he does not settle into one or the other attitude. The reader may be led to admire the jar for its ability to make “the slovenly wilderness / Surround that hill,” but might also grow concerned at how thoroughly the jar takes

“dominion everywhere.” In the end, the “Anecdote of the Jar” playfully registers both the costs and benefits of the mythic or poetic impulse. It is at once a celebration of the poetic imagination and a warning about the dangerous potential of any imaginative act.

Stevens never resolved these conflicts in *Harmonium*. Indeed, the effort to resolve them was, finally, the business of his “endlessly elaborating poem.” Eventually, especially once Stevens began to explain his poetics to the public in the series of talks he delivered in his last two decades (most of them collected in *The Necessary Angel*), Stevens would begin to invoke the “imagination” as an explanatory context for his poems. The term appears a few times already in these early poems. In “Colloquy with a Polish Aunt,” the final stanza begins, “Imagination is the will of things . . .” More famously, “To the One of Fictive Music” – one of the later *Harmonium* poems, pointing forward to Stevens’s middle and late phases – ends: “Unreal, give back to us what once you gave: / The imagination that we spurned and crave.” The imagination has been spurned by the Enlightenment tradition, which, in its pursuit of naturalistic explanations, condemns the fanciful traditions and superstitions of the primitive mind. Stevens has some sympathy with this view, since his own metaphysics are markedly naturalistic. But he recognizes too the craving for the richness and beauty and mystery that have been stripped away by modern naturalism. As Stevens’s speaker notes earlier in the poem,

The music is intensest which proclaims
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,
And of all vigils musing the obscure
That apprehends the most which sees and names,
As in your name, an image that is sure.

But the final stanza insists that this realism and precision can go too far:

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
The difference that heavenly pity brings.

The imagination is the instrument of this endowing. It is, for Stevens, a human instrument, answering to decidedly human uncertainties and hopes.

Harmonium was reissued, with a number of additional poems, in 1931, not long before the appearance of Stevens’s second volume of poems, *Idea of Order*. This is the version followed in the 1954 *Collected Poems*.

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Nathanael West: *Miss Lonelyhearts*

Jay Martin

Nathanael West lived for thirty-seven years, during which he wrote four novels, a few short stories, two plays, and a handful of brief essays. His stories were rejected by nearly every journal to which they were submitted. His essays appeared in obscure magazines. The plays received little attention; only one was produced. As for the novels, all were greeted with bewilderment by reviewers. The first of these, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* (1931), received only two reviews. The publisher of his second novel, *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933), went bankrupt upon its publication, and with no copies available for purchase, this book was hardly read. His third book, *A Cool Million* (1934), aroused such confusion that it was scarcely noticed at all and sold dismally. *The Day of the Locust* (1939), his last novel, was deemed “Surrealistic” at a time when only “socially relevant” books were thought to be important.

The trouble was, nothing in West’s works seemed to “fit.” Balso’s dream journey was not merely improbable; for most readers it was flatly incomprehensible. Nobody in *A Cool Million* was likable, least of all the “hero” Lemuel Pitkin; according to this book America was filled with reprobates, criminals, pimps, confidence men, and psychotics. *The Day of the Locust* portrayed a very different Hollywood than that offered in glamorous moviepix magazines; West’s Hollywood is inhabited by vacant-minded Midwesterners, bit players, prostitutes, washed-up vaudevillians, and fake cowboys. Even his only produced play, *Good Hunting* (1938), was bewildering. At a time when people everywhere were anticipating war and therefore looking to military leaders for security, West’s generals talked like idiots; after two performances the play closed. In short, whatever conventional expectations readers brought to West’s work were doomed to be disappointed. “Somehow or other I seem to have slipped in between all the schools,” West lamented to Edmund Wilson in 1939. So, his works fell into oblivion almost simultaneously upon publication.

Of course, from the start he had a few discerning readers – F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Edmund Wilson, William Carlos Williams, and William Faulkner.

West's reputation built slowly. Today, critics are likely to see *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, though deeply flawed, as the last American experimental novel conceived in the unyielding mode of 1920s avant-garde writing. *A Cool Million* has gained immensely in stature as a brilliant work of dark comedy and the finest satirical political novel written by an American. Of *The Day of the Locust* Leslie Fiedler has remarked that it is "the only novel on Hollywood not somehow made trivial by its subject."

The mass audience that was West's subject was never likely to appreciate him. None the less, mass life in America was the most intense object of this imagination. Imaginatively, West possessed only an ordinary, limited sense of individuals, but he was incandescently aware of the particulars of the life of crowds and of people whose sense of self was derived from group life. For him, most people were fragments of the masses. His vision in this area was extremely acute. His talent may be seen in a variety of ways, first as a vision of modern society. Jonathan Veitch writes:

West's importance has grown. But that does not explain why an obscure writer from the 1930's should speak to us so powerfully today. West's obscurity then is at least partly attributable to his own prescience. While many on the left were preoccupied with an anachronistic (and romantic) vision of America as a battleground pitting heroic factory workers against bloated plutocrats, West was quietly chronicling the emergence of a consumer society whose principal actors were not the radicalized masses, but a disenchanting and isolated mass man. (1977: 7)

Once, the masses had been accorded a heroic status as the group in which the socialist future of the world was being prepared; but now, as West sees, they are consumed, degraded and deceived, with no role except hatred, and no purpose except, voyeuristically, to watch the future history of catastrophe play itself out.

In contrast to the social import of West's vision, W. H. Auden focused on the psychological. He noted that West's characters suffered not only from economic but, even more, from spiritual poverty – from what Auden named "West's Disease." West was the first to understand, Auden said, the "disease of consciousness" oppressing modern people, a malaise whose symptom is the inability of people to convert wishes into desires, and whose result is that modern man lives inescapably in a world of make-believe, fantasy, and unlocatable yearning that consumes self, others, and belief even as wishes for the most grandiose and violent fulfillments grow monstrously (Martin 1971: 147–53).

West thus identified with remarkable acuteness the social and psychological sources of the violence so marked in the modern world. His essay, "Some Notes on Violence," was composed during the time that he was writing *Miss Lonelyhearts*, but it applies to all his books. "Sweetness and light," West says, was once the most frequent theme of magazine stories; then, after the First World War, "Art" dominated. In the 1930s, he notes, "their highest common denominator is violence." Stories, he contends, reflect America: "In America violence is daily." In West's work the discontented crowds wait with seething rage and erotic hatred for airplane crashes, highway

fatalities, or sensational second comings; in American society, in his day or ours, they avidly follow the sensational murders in the daily news, or revel in earthquakes, floods, or terrorist disasters. In *The Day of the Locust*, Tod Hackett wanted the mass riot in his painting, *The Burning of Los Angeles*, to have the “gala air” of a “holiday crowd,” in order to represent the crowd’s remarkable delight in destruction. West was no poet, so it was not accidental that virtually his only surviving poem, “Burn the Cities,” envisions a worldwide conflagration. Those who had once been styled “workers of the world” and who were called upon to “unite” are now merely happy conspirators in universal destruction:

Burn the Cities
 Burn London
 . . .
 It will burn
 In the heat of tired eyes
 In the grease of fish and chips
 The English worker will burn it
 With coal from Wales
 With oil from Persia
 The Indian will give him fire
 There is sun in Egypt
 The Negro will give him fire
 Africa is the land of fire
 London is cold
 It will nurse the flame
 London is tired
 It will welcome the flame
 London is lecherous
 It will embrace the flame
 London will burn

(Martin 1970: 456–60)

West’s powerful collocation in the 1930s of violence, hatred, erotic rage, fantasy unfulfillable yearnings, adherence to group impulses, and despair – all repressed into one molten mass of desperation and destruction – is a drama and a social reality that we are still, today, encountering and trying, as he did, to understand or at least endure.

But there is yet one more important element in this roiling brew; that is the empathetic attitude of the author. To observe and understand West’s empathic point of view in its operative character the reader must go to *Miss Lonelyhearts*. Perhaps the reason that *Miss Lonelyhearts* is West’s finest book is that in it his empathy was most intense and his control of it most refined.

In his advertisement for *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* West characterized himself as “vicious, mean, ugly, and insane.” This was his “mask,” in the Yeatsian sense, opposite

to his identity, but identical with his subject. His theme may be “the violently dissociated,” “the dehumanized marvelous” and “the deliberately criminal and imbecilic,” but his personal attitude resided in the sadness of empathy.

It was there at the very origin of *Miss Lonelyhearts*. In March 1929, S. J. Perelman dropped by the Hotel Kenmore where West was working as the hotel manager. Perelman was already making a reputation as a comic writer; eventually he would write regularly for *The New Yorker*. He and West had been close friends at Brown. In 1929 he was dating West’s sister Laura, and they would soon marry.

Perelman had news for West – and an invitation. Perelman proposed, “Come with me to dinner at Siegel’s” – their favorite Greenwich Village restaurant – where, he explained, he was going to meet a young female acquaintance who wrote a lovelorn column for the *Brooklyn Eagle*. New on the job, she had been assigned to write under the name “Susan Chester” to all those who sought advice. She herself regarded the letters as “cuckoo,” and her column she saw as a poor joke. She had told Perelman that he might find in the letters material for a comic sketch, and she promised to bring a batch along for him. It turned out that the letters were of no use to Perelman. But West’s imagination was instantly engaged by them. He saw their pathos, he understood the emotional crises in them, and he felt profound empathy for the correspondents; there was nothing humorous about them. One of the letters he read that night was signed “Broad Shoulders”:

Dear Susan:

I have always enjoyed reading your column, and have benefited by your expert advice. Now I must ask you for advice for myself. I have been married for twenty years. I have a girl 19 and boy of 17. From the beginning I realized that I had made a mistake in marrying my husband. But the children came soon after, and I was obliged for their dear sakes to stand through thick and thin bitter and sweet. And also for decency sake.

“Broad Shoulders” added: “Susan, don’t think I am broad shouldered. But that is just the way I feel about life and me.”

If any one moment in his life could be regarded as absolutely crucial in West’s discovery that he was an artist, it occurred during that night in March, 1929. He was overwhelmed by the letters; all his elaborate personal defenses were swept away in a flood of intellectual exaltation and emotional receptivity. West believed he could do something with them – not comic, though perhaps using comedy to heighten the tragedy in them.

West kept the letters on his desk at the hotel. But it would take him more than three years to mull through them, write sections of his novel, and then revise over and over. He had discovered his core subject and he now struggled to create a unique point of view and form for it, possessing an attitude of moral indignation without righteousness and a sense of tragedy without a vision of redemption. Always sensitive to the new, William Carlos Williams read successive drafts of the novel and then sent to Ezra Pound’s Italian paper, *Il Mare*, a short commentary titled “A New

American Writer,” which begins: “No, I don’t mean *another* American writer. I mean a *new* one: Nathanael West.” In it Williams nicely pinpointed West’s method: “West has taken as his material the [tough] idiom . . . of newspapers, and has counterpointed it with the pathetic letters and the emotions of the . . . city dwellers who write to the newspapers to obtain counsel for their afflictions.” Williams concludes that West “has invented a new manner, [and] . . . a means that allows him the full expression of his sentiments in a language that a journalist would recognize” (Martin 1971: 48–9).

Working carefully and very steadily, West took two years to complete a first draft, showing consummate skill. Finally, in mid-December 1932, he finished *Miss Lonelyhearts*. An accurate judge of his own book, West was confident in his accomplishment. *Miss Lonelyhearts* is the tale of a newspaperman who casually takes on the job of giving advice but thus finds himself confronted by needs which he had, like his fellows, been able before to avoid facing. “Perhaps I can make you understand,” this young man tells his fiancée.

Let’s start from the beginning. A man is hired to give advice to the readers of a newspaper. The job is a circulation stunt and the whole staff considers it a joke. He welcomes the job, for it might lead to a gossip column, and anyway he’s tired of being a leg man. He too considers the job a joke, but after several months at it the joke begins to escape him. He sees that the majority of the letters are profoundly humble pleas for moral and spiritual advice, that they are inarticulate expressions of genuine suffering. He also discovers that his correspondents take him seriously. For the first time in his life, he is forced to examine the values by which he lives. The examination shows him that he is victim of the joke and not its perpetrator.

The novel (as *Miss Lonelyhearts*, though too simply, describes his own transformation) begins in comedy and ends in an exploration of the archetypes of suffering. Perhaps West’s own phrase, “moral satire,” best describes the character of his novel. But both the satire and the morality grow out of a comic vision. Not only does *Miss Lonelyhearts* play lightly and ironically with the obvious fact of his situation as a supposedly female columnist and spill forth several witty, joking replies to his correspondents and friends; his editor, Shrike, is also a master comedian and ironist whose monologues, improvisations, and games are brilliantly witty. Toward any kind of affirmative impulse on the one hand, or any effort at imagining escape from the pain of disillusion on the other, Shrike shows a wit so devastating that it is close to hysteria and implies, what *Miss Lonelyhearts* never sees, that Shrike himself is undergoing torments similar to his own, but has learned to conceal them (even from himself) in sallies of humor. As a result of their numbing of sensibility, Shrike and his followers, the hero does understand, are merely “machines for making jokes. . . . They, no matter what the motivating force, death, love, or god, made jokes.” If he is to learn anything, the hero must learn how to go beyond jokes, as Shrike cannot. For Shrike’s bitterness can neither deny human suffering nor relieve his own pain.

For both men, the central problem is that of value. West was writing *Miss Lonelyhearts* during the same decade in which John Dewey wrote his seminal book

Theory of Valuation (1939). West too asks, how and what can one affirm? “Life *is* worth while,” Miss Lonelyhearts writes in his first intended reply – saying in his italics all that we need to know about the unsteadiness of his beliefs. Asking for guidance, his correspondents really demand gospels and want him to be an evangel of value. Why is there evil in the world? Desperate asks. What are principles of religion? Sick-of-it-all wants to know. What, above all, nearly all the letters ask, is the nature and use of love? What good is love? How far love may be perverted in this dead world – a world of doorknobs – all the letters show.

But the verbal wit with which Shrike has treated questions of meaning has robbed Miss Lonelyhearts of the power satisfactorily to state principles of value and to test these through the responses of others to them. Instead, all his quests are internalized, and to that extent are finally useless to his correspondents and even to himself. He realizes that “when he did speak, it would have to be in the form of a message,” but his attempts to reconcile Fay and Peter Doyle sound clichéd and are either versions of carnal mysticism or highly rhetorical and symbolic imitations of Shrike’s talk. West’s intentions in the very structure and style of the novel are anti-mimetic: West conceived of *Miss Lonelyhearts* as “a ‘novel in the form of a comic strip’.” The characters to be squares in which many things happen through one action. The speeches contained in the conventional balloons.” Imitating a cartoon, he keeps altering normal sequence and proportions and isolates his characters in time, space, action, and language. West believed, as the French Symbolists and Surrealists did, that perfect words could rejuvenate man’s spirit and imagination. But like them, West knew that vague, overused language is destructive and unholy. None of the characters converse; they can only write letters or give orations. Somehow, Miss Lonelyhearts’s meaning strives to transcend the limits of verbalization; he has to get around Shrike’s words in order to express his affirmation. Yet Shrike, even in his similar-sounding name, is a mock Christ, the Jesus Shrike (but also shriek) which is all he really can have instead of God.

The novel is concerned, then, with the possibilities and the usefulness of religious consciousness in contemporary life. In 1931, West told the journalist A. J. Liebling that “he personally has reverted to the mystical” in wanting now to write a “wholesome, clean, holy, slightly mystic and inane” book. He was convinced, he concluded, that “the next two thousand years belong to Dostoevsky’s Christianity.” This book he envisioned was *Miss Lonelyhearts*.

But two years later he produced a very different book from the one he proposed. For West was a sharp observer of the perversions of consciousness, and whatever his convictions or hopes, he was obliged to face the truth that not Christ but the Grand Inquisitor was resurrected in his time. He has Miss Lonelyhearts speak of his job as part of “the Christ business”; and certainly his column is part of a journalistic enterprise arranged on business principles, just as Dostoevsky’s inquisitor has organized his Church on “what sells” to the masses. Not Christ, but the Pharisees, are in the saddle.

Shrike is a representative of the ironic attitude of the 1920s; he believes in nothing unless his belief is in Art, Dada, or the view that the life of irony is superior to the moral life. By contrast, Miss Lonelyhearts is a figure of the 1930s Depression, when religious faiths bloomed profusely. Miss Lonelyhearts wishes to find what William James called an “altogether other dimension of existence.” So, inevitably, irony and idealism go together in the novel, interwoven as inextricably as they had been in an early version of the novel when Shrike and Miss Lonelyhearts were a single person. While Miss Lonelyhearts searches for viable religious ideals, religious cults on every level are satirized not only by Shrike but even by Miss Lonelyhearts himself: meditating on Father Zossima’s sermon, dreaming of the abortive ritual lamb slaughter, psychoanalyzing himself (“I’ve got a Christ complex . . .”). Most of the faiths of the period, with women as their leaders, pointed conclusively to diminished male authority in spiritual matters, underscored by West when he made “Miss Lonelyhearts” the sole name of his male columnist – a name even he uses in reference to himself, so far has it become his true identity. “On seeing him for the first time, Shrike had smiled and said, “The Susan Chesters, the Beatrice Fairfaxes, and the Miss Lonelyhearts are the priests of twentieth-century America.” On the universal, Tiresias-like character of Miss Lonelyhearts, West based the structure of the book: he is balanced between two sexes and two married couples, the Shrikes and the Doyles, inversions of each other; he must encounter now the male of one couple, now the female of the other, in episode after episode. If he himself must be a priest, he must also be a female columnist.

Miss Lonelyhearts can discern only remnants of religious institutions – the newspaper office, a “comfort station” in a park, and a speakeasy. West’s vivid mock presentation of the comfort station in terms of a church – with the toilets as altars and the booths as confessionals – suggests how low the Church can be reduced in modern life. The speakeasy is used repeatedly to suggest the final degradation of the Church. Here Miss Lonelyhearts goes for refreshment, here he has virtually the only “drinks” in the sterile land that he inhabits. Reminders of the religious impulse in modern form flit through the novel. The hero, son of a Baptist minister and inheritor of the temperament of the New England Puritans, has an “Old Testament look.” In writing sermon-like letters to querying congregations, he is in the New Testament tradition of the epistler. Like Saul/Paul, he is on a road that will lead either to his transfiguration or to his destruction. But he also appears as a modern version of Christ. Crossing a park, he “walked into the shadow of a lamp-post that lay on the path like a spear. It pierced him like a spear.” Clearly he is, as he later tells himself, “capable of dreaming the Christ dream.” And near the end of the novel, he sees himself as completely identified with God: “His heart was one heart, the heart of God. And his brain was likewise God’s.” However, as a priest of Christ (the lamb) he has performed a ritual sacrifice badly, even mocking the Holy Family by singing an obscene version of “Mary had a little lamb.” His room, containing only “a bed, a table, and two chairs,” is monastic as well as characteristically urban. “Eating only

crackers, drinking water, and smoking cigarettes," he begins an anchoritic retreat in his room. He smiles at Shrike "as the saints are supposed to smile at those about to martyr them."

In short, West compressed into the person of Miss Lonelyhearts suggestions of several roles and figures of religious tradition. In fifteen chapters, the first of which is a prologue, he made a parallel, as Robert M. Coates (1950) has suggested, "to the symbolism of the fourteen Stations of the Cross, for the progression does become a kind of modern Calvary." But, as it ironically turns out, West writes, "his prayer was one Shrike taught him and his voice was that of a conductor calling stations."

How close West had come to identifying the moral pain of mass life in America is evidenced by the aftermath to the publication of *Miss Lonelyhearts*. Several women threatened to sue West for publishing "their" letters without permission. West, of course, had never seen any of the letters so cited, and indeed he had heavily revised those letters he had gotten from "Susan Chester," but the belief of others that they had written the letters in the novel exhibited how close he had gotten to typical pain.

At the end of the book Miss Lonelyhearts fails, as he must, in his hopeless and misdirected quest. For while he can make some progress toward expressing his new sense of mass pain by clasping hands with Peter Doyle, and while he too runs at last "to succor them with love," he is never able to give expression to his insight in language during an age when language seemed altogether to have lost its power for truth-telling. Miss Lonelyhearts had looked into the blank face of nature for an object of hatred or desire. "But the gray sky looked as if it had been rubbed with a soiled eraser. It held no angels, flaming crosses, olive-bearing doves, wheels within wheels. Only a newspaper struggled in the air like a kite with a broken spine." The gun with which Peter Doyle kills him is fittingly wrapped in a newspaper; for the newspaper column which pushes Miss Lonelyhearts toward his vision ultimately withholds it, since he cannot get around its false language and can speak only its appalling banalities.

Many critics have pointed to the passage in which Miss Lonelyhearts describes to Betty the seriousness of his tasks as an apt summary of the novel. But the very simplicity with which he can describe his mission is a sign of the too simple ways in which he regards it. Far from a summary of his dilemma, this passage points directly to his confusion – it is another indication of the simplifying lie of language. Even at his clearest, he cannot give his spiritual condition adequate expression. Indeed, his "religious experience" precisely turns religious tradition inside out. Christ he symbolizes as a "bright fly," and the "black world of things as a fish," which "suddenly rose to the bright bait on the wall. It rose with a splash of music and he saw its shining silver belly." But the fish traditionally symbolizes Christ, and the fly, man (the profane flies clustering around the bloody lamb). Miss Lonelyhearts's perception of himself, of tradition, and of reality is totally disorganized. He has never understood what it would mean to be a Messiah. Like Betty, he wants order rather than transcendence: he is a Betty without knowing it. Thus, he conceives of himself at

last as a rock. But he is no Peter, only a conglomerate of confusions, yearnings, and self-delusion. The rock is West's brilliantly graphic symbol for the numbing of sensibility, the modern, psychological version of despair.

The experiences of Miss Lonelyhearts thus remain a kind of "psychological case," part of the modern myth, rather than offering a redemptive possibility. But West succeeded where his "hero" failed. His personal empathy for all the characters in the novel kept the author from being a psychologist and maintained him a novelist. West remained the engaged empathetic author. He explained the relations between the novelist and the psychologist by reflecting on his intentions in *Miss Lonelyhearts*: "The novelist is no longer a psychologist. Psychology can become something much more important. The great body of case histories can be used the way the ancient writers used their myths. Freud is your Bulfinch; you cannot learn from him. With this idea in mind, Miss Lonelyhearts became the portrait of a priest of our time who has religious experience. His case is classical and is built on all the cases in James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Starbuck's *Psychology and Religion*." Unable to give expression to his vision, Miss Lonelyhearts is himself an instance of the tragedy which he has recognized. Although he speaks of himself as a rock, it was hardly one upon which a new Church might be founded. West recognized his indebtedness to the psychoanalysts for instances of this experience. "The psychology is theirs, not mine," he says. But in his fiction he could give their psychology power and relevance – his novel could itself be a kind of religious experience. And so, decisively, he adds: "The imagery is mine. . . . I was serious; therefore I could not be obscene. I was honest, therefore I could not be sordid. A novelist can afford to be anything but dull" (Martin 1971: 66–7).

Perceptive readers have agreed that West was anything but dull. It comes as a shock that *Miss Lonelyhearts* was published three-quarters of a century ago, for the book still vibrates with powerfully dramatic representations of a modern condition which we still, even at the present day, must come to understand even as we live it.

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William Carlos Williams: *Paterson*

Daniel Morris

In the first four (of five) books in William Carlos Williams's personal epic poem, *Paterson* (1946–58), the author identifies his gigantic personage as both terrain and city, as well as the incarnation of the poet as a point of collective awareness. The authorial persona becomes an example of what Wallace Stevens referred to as a "Major Man" who has internalized his external environment. As Margaret Glynne Lloyd points out, *Paterson* inscribes "the narrative of the poet Paterson's struggle to establish a fertile contact with his environment and achieve a living language" (Lloyd 1980: 144). The sequential movement of *Paterson*, as Jerome Mazzaro has also said, is the narrative of the ability of the *genius loci* to rescue meaning out of the lonely street. He attempts to find significance in the scenes of divorce, violence, and blocked communication that Williams chronicles in the long poem by bringing the world into an order that mirrors the poet's own relationship to "real life" and to the textual traces of the history of the local scene as they relate to Paterson's experience (Mazzaro 1973: 24). The poet's desire is to overcome a linguistic blockage in order to renew a tie between his subjectivity and what he describes as the "supplying female." Mazzaro has interpreted the "supplying female" to mean society or the immediate world, a connection to which becomes the desired outcome of a poem of communitarian interest figured in erotic terms.

The poem's movement might also be understood to consist of the various ways that Williams, as the Whitmanic giant capable of arising from sleep in order to find a common language through which citizens could find beauty in their lives, might unlock his mind to find that elusive beauty. Among the ways that Paterson tries to unlock beauty are through the recovery of meaning from "dead" history (prose about Alexander Hamilton and the Society for Useful Manufacturers, Book One), through a return to the location of cultural conservation in the library (Book Three), through self-indulgence (his erotic interest in Phyllis, in Book Four), and, primarily in Book Five, through an affirmation of the power of art to preserve the imagination after the artist's death. Williams tries to fasten "real life" to his poetry, and to make "real life"

appear meaningful, through the inclusion of “found” documentary materials in his poem such as newspaper clippings, letters from fellow poets such as Cress (Marcia Nardi) and “A. G.” (Allen Ginsberg), advertisements, and charts offering geological data about Paterson, New Jersey. This “living newspaper” or documentary collage technique is related to literary, theatrical, and photojournalistic projects sponsored by Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration in the 1930s.

The inclusion of documentary material in *Paterson* may be construed as an act of recovery of a distinct sense of language and public culture in a depressed region of the United States. Kathleen Matthews, however, has shown how apparently unmediated newspaper and historical material that appears in Book One about the drunken and suicidal tavern owner Tim Crane and a hapless Reverend Cumming were selected by Williams for inclusion in the poem to represent subtle and not so subtle critiques of Hart Crane and e. e. cummings. A prose episode from Book One, for example, gleaned by Williams primarily from Charles P. Longwell’s *A Little Story of Old Paterson as Told by an Old Man*, describes news of the erecting of a bridge across the Passaic Falls in 1829. Williams felt threatened by *The Bridge* (1930) because it was an attempt to make “living history” out of the documents and legends of the foundation of the United States, including the diary of Christopher Columbus, which Williams accused Crane of stealing from a sample of the explorer’s diaries that appeared in 1925 as a chapter of *In the American Grain*.

The Crane passage may also be read as Williams’s criticism of the direction his own career had taken during the 1930s and 1940s, when, in a series of autobiographical novels published by James Laughlin’s fledgling New Directions Press, the poet’s attention had turned toward the project of self-selling in narrative fictions. In the tale about Crane that appears in *Paterson*, a character named Sam Patch, who originally helped Crane as an active participant in saving from disaster an event of local significance by “quick as a flash” diving into the river to help recover and bring ashore parts of Crane’s broken bridge, ended his life by attempting to exploit, through a national show tour in which he performed daring leaps, that participation for commercial reasons that called attention to the actor’s daring. By telling Patch’s story, Williams includes a warning against the outcome to a project that, by the time he was composing his long poem, turns the attention of the audience toward the celebration of the maker. It is when Patch leaped into the falls to show the superiority of his skill and courage against Crane, and to build his legend as a “famous jumper,” that the project of leaping into the falls becomes a deadly contest. After reading the Patch–Crane incident in Book One, *Paterson’s* “living newspaper” comes to seem most significant when understood as documentation of the pattern of the culture-hero Paterson’s experience, and of his struggle to reach his audience against competing designs. In Book One, we find the poet as mediator of local history, but also as a figure so absorbed in his struggle for acknowledgment that he finds it a challenge to value other voices. A striking theme throughout Book One is Williams’s understanding of his poetry as in conflict with other aspects of culture, and also with the possibilities for regeneration found in the natural world.

As Paterson, Williams also positions himself in Book One as a “lame” or unheroic version of a poet of monumental status. In Book One, part 1, we meet the giant as his dreams enter into the desires of the townspeople. The poet’s task is to interpret the “secret” meanings of a common, but cryptic language, so that the “thousand automatons,” whom Williams as Paterson claims he represents, will be “married,” discursively, to their environment:

(What common language to unravel?
 . . . combed into straight lines
 from that rafter of a rock’s
 lip.)

(Williams 1963: 7)

While this “unraveling” of a common language is his commission, letters that appear in Book One and Book Two written by a young female poet named Cress – a character based on a young author named Marcia Nardi – suggest Paterson’s failure to respond to the material, psychological, or aesthetic needs of individual members of his constituency. In a letter to Paterson, Cress says she is blocked from writing poetry because blocked from feeling. Cress writes that “the outcome of my failure with you has been the complete damming up of all my creative capacities” (Williams 1963: 45). This is Cress’s criticism of Paterson. She feels he is able to show concern for her so long as her words are “made for literature” (86), only so long as he can possess her words as material for his poem. Paterson’s refusal to meet Cress as a friend suggests one of the problems with authenticating his poem through the idealization of the poet’s self. The appearance of the self in human scale must be repressed in order for the poet to appear as a Major Man.

Book One contains many examples that illustrate the ambivalent status of Williams’s situation in *Paterson* as a public poet also concerned with establishing his literary identity within his major poetic work. The poet is portrayed as a mediator of local history, but also as a figure absorbed in his struggle for personal acknowledgment in a way that challenges or disrupts his ability to value other voices. Williams shows how commercial exploitation of local resources destroyed the natural beauty of Paterson, New Jersey. The best example concerns an extraordinarily large pearl that was ruined by treasure hunters (Williams 1963: 8–9). In the prose account, possibly taken from an article that appeared in the *Paterson Guardian* of May 1, 1857, included in Book One, treasure hunters boil open the shell of the mussel that contained the pearl, damaging its rare beauty (Williams 1992: 256). Williams’s story about the commercial exploitation of the pearl replicates in a perverse way the poet’s own attention to finding “beauty in the commonplace,” as it is in the act of discovering rare beauty that it is destroyed. In comic fashion, Williams follows the prose account of the pearl with an account of the poet as an aloof “majority” figure. Paterson appears more interested in his connections to figures in the institutions of religion and literature than in performing his public function of contacting a redeeming language.

As in Book One, Williams continues in Book Two to criticize the poor fit between the vulgarity of the industrial age and the metrical arrangements found in the aristocratic conception of poetry that he does not believe can contain the speech rhythms of the lower-middle-class, largely immigrant, lovers in the park. The poet searches for a formal principle that will return to his place and time the mythic beauty of the Falls and the permanence of art (embodied in the poet's memory of a carved grasshopper from Mexico he is reminded of when he stumbles on a cluster of grasshoppers while wandering in a park). But the book ends with the poet's failure to achieve his task on either a personal or a public scale. The poet leaves the park as a lonely wanderer and the crowd is presented as an amnesiac giant beast. Wandering in the park, Paterson tries to discover a relationship between the artifact and the "world outside myself" without returning the poem to traditional metrical arrangements:

AND a grasshopper of red basalt, boot-long,
tumbles from the core of his mind,
a rubble-bank disintegrating beneath a
tropic downpour

(Williams 1963: 47)

The poet's memory of the archaeological rediscovery of this grasshopper that appeared after a rainstorm destroyed "a rubble bank" transcends the lives of the ancient craftsmen of Mexico. These ancient craftsmen made this object to preserve a trace, a "rumor," of their existence. The object is made to come alive through the "counter-weight" of the "mind's wings," or the wandering poet's own imagination of the previous maker's craftsmanship. This symbol of the stone grasshopper, however, is insufficient for suggesting a poetry of presence superior to "being" unmediated by representation. The inadequacy of this symbol is implicit in the poet's description of his own mind as "a red stone carved to be / endless flight" (Williams 1963: 49). This symbol for the poet's mind suggests that in Book Two the poet cannot situate himself outside of the representational space where he has identified his presence with the movement of his imagination in the poem. In Book Two, the poet has described the inscription of his thoughts on the page as a kind of writing on stone that will last "so long as stone shall last bearing / the chisel's stroke" (Williams 1963: 49). This conception of writing is less available to decay than when writing is preserved in the library as text on paper in Book Three (paper burns), but the presence of Paterson in this poem is not alive. Indeed, like the stone grasshopper that suggests the hands that carved the stone, only the "rumor" of presence is apparent. Like the "news" of a fire that is no longer new once reported, the space of the poem is not conservational of the flesh of the poet ("the flesh dies").

Privileged forms of representation, from the point of view of the choice of media, are twofold in *Paterson*. Privileged representation exists in *Paterson* in forms that are associated with a world prior to the Gutenberg Revolution (the world of the stone carvings of the Mexican grasshoppers in Book Two) and anterior to book culture, the

latter consisting of the array of electronic, or mechanically reproduced, media that have dominated the transmission of information in modernity: radio, television, film, and newspapers. *Paterson* of course is a printed text, and not a radio broadcast or a filmic montage, a hieroglyph carved in stone, nor an altogether unmediated performance. Although this is undeniably true, in Book Three the speaker attempts to repudiate his affiliation with print culture by attacking books written by other authors and by claiming that *Paterson* is not a text, but is instead a living embodiment of the presence of the poet. "The Library," which is the title of Book Three, is presented as a place containing old books of no relevance to the experience anyone has had of contemporary life in Paterson, New Jersey. Occupied by the tombs of poets that are themselves figures for bound texts, the library is set ablaze in Book Three. These entombed poets are condemned to a modern version of the inferno in *Paterson* because they had tried to escape from the chaos of the "roar of the present" that the speaker of *Paterson* wants to "embrace."

Over the course of the poem Williams will try to sustain a logic that will allow him to trust in Paterson as the substantiation of his real presence. Unable to sustain this logic, however, he displaces this knowledge onto the books discussed in *Paterson*, other than *Paterson* itself. They are considered by the speaker to be objects of contempt. But we see the inadequacy and paradoxes inherent in "embrace" as the metaphor Williams adopts to speak about his attempt to introduce his constituents to their own "primary culture," or to a representational practice not alienated from local history, legend, speech practice, or soil. It is only when Williams lets go of his expectations of a representational embrace and final conservation of the human image as equivalent to or as a replacement for the significance of lived experience that the work can open up again to the world outside the poem as an object, rather than as subject, to his lyrical meditations.

The role of the poet as cultural hero is understood in Book Three to be the sacrifice of personal experience on behalf of access to a linguistic force that is devastating to the person exposed to it, but that is also understood to be the resource necessary for the community to appear in language. If the outcome of a leap into the falls is found in the becoming a character in a book, then the message contained about authorship in Book Three – the scene in the burning library – is that this outcome for the poet is an exchange of natural life for the disfiguring presence in the book. The fire that rips through the library, which is the metaphor for the poet who burns the books and changes the physical look of the place (fire being the thing that writing must become when recognition and survival are at stake), is the record of the poet not only remaking the natural ground, but revising the meaning, "glazing" the meaning, of the objectivist poetry that was Williams's signature style and subject matter to begin with:

An old bottle, mauled by the fire
gets a new glaze, the glass warped
to a new distinction, reclaiming the

undefined. A hot stone, reached
 by the time, crackled over by fine
 lines, the glaze unspoiled
 Annihilation, ameliorated: Hottest
 lips lifted til no shape but a vast
 molt of the news flows. Drink
 of the news, fluid to the breath.

(Williams 1963: 118)

Paterson has become “a vast molt of the news.” The trope of the poet is an active fire. The fire transforms all materials in its path into an announcement of the fire’s power to negate the other in its way. The fire replaces the objective artifact – the bottle – as the sign of imaginative value. The imagination of the poet is privileged over the material that he overwhelms. The record of the poet is even given a kind of headline slogan in the next stanza: “Poetry Beats Fire at Its Own Game!”

In Book Three the poet is described as being in competition with the natural force of transformation itself, fire. Williams is here working in the mode of re-creation (reflowering) of a first thing. His work is that of the “second flame, surpassing heat.” This “second flame” places Williams in the position of changing the meaning of a first act. To think of Williams’s project in terms of self-revision, we can read the new glaze on the old bottle as a revision of the meaning of an imagistic poem such as “Between Walls,” with its final image of the shining and broken “pieces of a green / bottle” (Williams 1986: 453). To think in terms of Williams’s project as a revision of public history in order to affirm his personal identity as a poet, we may read this “second flame” as his revision of the meaning of the “real” pieces of texts found in the Paterson Public Library that now reveal the force of the poet as these documents reappear in the space of *Paterson*.

Book Four, composed of three parts and called “A Run to the Sea,” was published in 1951. Williams planned it to be the completion of the poem and the symbolic completion of the poet’s natural life. The allegorical figure of the poetic imagination, the river, is allowed to run its course into “the sea that is not our home,” an infinite space not human. In Book Four Williams contrasts those figures of invention who deserve some form of social credit for inventiveness (Madame Curie) to those figures who defend a static culture (the corrupt preacher Billy Sunday). The story of Curie’s discovery of radium is a metaphor for the act of discovering a language of value in the neglected “corner” or hidden “core” space of *Paterson*. In both cases, the emphasis is on the process of discovery, the labor and sacrifice that lead to the discovery of the “radiant gist,” and not to the final realization of the discovery. This final realization leads to a static and complacent state of affairs that makes further discovery appear unnecessary. Valuable creative action only takes place when the desire to know and the formal knowledge and account of the facts are in a dissonance. The “new formal order,” once discovered, becomes a “tradition,” and therefore a stasis. Hence, accomplishment, from this point of view, is not Williams’s desire, and so the end of Book

Four is a critical moment in establishing Williams's relationship to his own poem, and to his understanding of it as a means toward his ability to emerge after the completion of *Paterson*.

Book Four, part 3, was supposed to have been the end of *Paterson*. In it, Paterson emerges from the sea, like Odysseus in the Nausicaa episode (book 6 of *The Odyssey*). He spits out the seed of a sea plum, suggesting the possibility of a new start, but the endless text of *Paterson* was closing, and so the reader cannot feel hopeful that a resurrection has taken place through the poem. The end of the action of the poem is the symbolic death of the poet. It is fitting that in this final section, when Paterson is said to awaken from the dream of the poem, there is also an account of the hanging of John Johnson, as well as the birth of Venus, or embodiment of beauty, out of the sea foam. While Williams enacts his death in Book Four, and offers the vision of the birth of beauty, the book also ends without the poet's confidence that he has convinced his intended audience of his relevance to their lives.

Williams published Book Five in 1958, when he was, at age 75, recovering from two severe strokes and a depression following his physical incapacity that required hospitalization; the poet died in 1963. This opening up again of the poem suggests that Williams did not believe that his goal of social redemption through the discovery of a common language had taken place, or that a project that aligned presence with an endless display of *écriture* could ever assume a finish. The poem opens again after Book Four, where he was figured as a natural man with his dog returning from a sea which represented the death of allowing the poem to finish and thus entering the tyranny of the past. Ironically, this opening leads to a fifth book that celebrates the autotelic nature of art. Williams's insistence in Book Five on the poem as a work of art unrelated to his substantiation in the poem as a figure of renown or to his community's sense of its "living history" triggers an affirmation of, and a respect for, the possibility of fellowship with other citizens outside the poem. Paradoxically, this release of an identification of the poet with the poem, while diminishing his authority as a representative speaker, also releases Williams from the logic of self-creation as disfiguration, as this was described in the fire scene in the library in *Paterson*, Book Three, part 2.

The emphasis in Book Five is on paying tribute to painters (Juan Gris, Picasso, Da Vinci, Breughel, Toulouse-Lautrec), and to honoring works of art in a variety of forms, including the Greek satyr play and the modern dance. However different these artists and forms of expression may be, each is honored for the seriousness of the "play" (playfulness and artifice) inherent in the work of imagination. Understanding the "work" as a form of "play" becomes an affirmation of the act of making art independent of a content and how this content may be a reflection upon contemporary affairs. Of Toulouse-Lautrec's subject matter, for instance, Williams told Walter Sutton that "he was indifferent to it, and the poet is also indifferent to it. . . . He is a man that respected the truth of the design" (Lloyd 1980: 168). This indifference to subject matter suggests a troubling lack of interest in scenes of exploitation such as occurred in the brothels depicted by Toulouse-Lautrec, but I do

not think it suggests that Williams was uninterested in the suffering experienced by those around him in Paterson, New Jersey. The constructive aspect of the attitude Williams suggests in his statement about Toulouse-Lautrec, and the aspect that he brings with him to Book Five, is his perception of the poem as an object (a “design”) separate from the maker, and not as the final destination for the imaginative person. The work of art is now to be measured by our experience of its form and not by our trust in the maker as an epic hero whose deeds are recorded in the long poem.

While Williams can no longer authorize his poem through the claims to heroism of the poet, he is enabled to play a less ambitious, but survivable, role in cultural affairs in the world outside the poem. This release allows Williams to accept the poem as an act of serious play that affirms his temporary presence through the act of making it, and through the act of teaching others to make art, without his having to appear in the poem as a character such as Sam Patch, which is to say, as a subject made into a sacrificial object. By accepting the design of the poem as distinct from and other to the self, Williams, in Book Five, returns to positions about poetry he held, implicitly, in the famous “thingy” lyrics that he wrote early in his career. In Book Five, the poet’s consciousness is suggested through attention to craft (the invention in *Paterson* of the three-stepped line, for example), but the reader’s attention in terms of the poet’s presence is directed outward to the scene described, which is the appropriate site for the cultural work of the poet.

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Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*

Pamela L. Caughie

By its very title *To the Lighthouse* invokes both a journey and a destination, and yet the novel clearly privileges the journey over the destination, even as that destination is reached. “He has landed,” Lily Briscoe says aloud, affirming Mr. Ramsay’s arrival at the lighthouse; “It is finished” – the ambiguous pronoun suggesting at once the voyage to the lighthouse and the painting begun ten years earlier that Lily has been trying to complete throughout this last section (Woolf 1989: 208). “With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the center. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, . . . I *have had* my vision” (Woolf 1989: 209; emphasis added). With the closing words of the novel, the vision that has been so long in coming recedes into the past, fades at the very moment of attainment. Earlier, Lily thinks of her painting, “It would be hung in the attics, . . . it would be rolled up and flung under a sofa”; and yet, Lily affirms, what the artwork attempted, if not what it achieved, would “remain for ever” (Woolf 1989: 179). The effort matters more than the realization, the momentary trumps the eternal. This evanescence becomes a structural principle, not just a theme, of the modernist text.

The most discussed of Virginia Woolf’s “so-called novels,” as she referred to her works of prose fiction (1978: 81), *To the Lighthouse* has come to epitomize in literary criticism not just Woolf’s fictional accomplishments but modernist literature generally. Its experimentation with temporality and narrative perspective, its self-conscious attention to language, its disruption of a linear plot, and especially its emphasis on the ephemeral comprise the characteristic features of literary modernism, the literature of modernity. “By ‘modernity,’” writes Charles Baudelaire in 1863, “I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable” (1964: 12). With its thirty pages of narration devoted to an evening meal, which, as Mrs. Ramsay leaves the dining room, “was vanishing even as she looked” (Woolf 1989: 111), and to the passage of time in a house bereft of its occupants; with its anti-heroic plot, where nothing much happens, and anti-heroic attitude – “The great revelations perhaps never did come. Instead there were little

daily miracles, . . . matches struck unexpectedly in the dark” (Woolf 1989: 161) – *To the Lighthouse* foregrounds the transient and the mutable. Writing in the *New Republic* in 1922, a date considered the highpoint of modernism, Mary Austin defines the American novel in similar terms: “The novel, more than any other written thing, is an attempt to persuade, at its best to compel, men to give over for a moment the pursuit of the distant goal, and savor the color, the intensity and solidarity of experience *while it is passing*” (“The American Form of the Novel”: 86; original emphasis). In her two key essays on what we have come to call modernist writing, “Modern Fiction” ([1919] 1953) and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” ([1924] 1950), Woolf repudiates the realist conventions of a previous generation of writers who pay far too much attention to exterior events and argues that the novelist’s goal is to convey instead the “myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent” of “an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (1953: 154). *To the Lighthouse* is the consummate achievement of that goal.

It is one of the paradoxes of literary history that *To the Lighthouse*, a novel that resists turning new forms into abiding formulas, has come to represent the quintessentially modernist text. For the process of discarding the narrative conventions of realism to see what else fiction might reveal of life, creating an art of the ephemeral, as many modernists sought to do, cannot end in the codification of a new narrative form without making the destination more important than the journey. Yet, as is the nature of paradox, this one makes sense; for the very term “modern,” as in “modern fiction,” refers to self-consuming artifacts, works of art so identified with their time that they are insistently, incessantly new. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane write: “modernist literary production is perpetually engaged in a profound and ceaseless journey, . . . is less a style than a search for a style” (1976: 29), an insight shared by Irving Howe, who in *Literary Modernism* concludes that modernism can establish a style of its own only by denying itself, “thereby ceasing to be modern” (quoted in Bradbury and McFarlane 1976: 29). As Lily stands on shore looking out to sea, no longer able to see Mr. Ramsay’s boat but still imagining its journey, she thinks: “what she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself *before it has been made anything*” (Woolf 1989: 193; emphasis added). As representative of the art of the moment, and the momentary, *To the Lighthouse* remains suspended between the voyage and the arrival, a highly ambivalent position that is itself characteristic of modernism in literature.

As a major modernist event, in both its form and the time of its appearance on the scene, *To the Lighthouse* could be called a historical novel, though not in the traditional understanding of that genre as fashioned by Sir Walter Scott, whom Mr. Ramsay reads in Part I. Far from giving us a vast range of social types and dramatic actions, connected through an intricate chronological plot, as the traditional historical novel does, *To the Lighthouse* telescopes in on a narrow plot of ground, the Ramsays’ summer home on the Isle of Skye, and the intimate relationships among a handful of family members, servants, and guests. Woolf’s historical imagination is characterized by an acute sense of the passing moment, a historical self-consciousness that compresses

time in the rendering of consciousness, “the atoms as they fall” (1953: 155), and in bracketing events that would typically be given prominence and narrated sequentially, such as the deaths of family members in Part II. In a novel that eschews omniscient narration and teleological progression, what holds together such disparate experiences as a woman knitting a stocking, a man talking on a telephone, a six-year-old boy desiring to strike his father with a poker, a son dying on a battlefield, young women resisting their mother’s solicitous attentions to men, two cleaning women taking their tea together, and a woman artist completing a painting, if not a sense that these experiences, fragmentary as they are, belong to a particular historical moment?

Seeking a new term for her fiction while writing *To the Lighthouse*, for the generic term “novel” seemed no longer appropriate, Woolf suggested “elegy” (1980: 34), and clearly this poetic novel is about change and loss and mourning. Woolf explicitly modeled Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay on her parents, Leslie and Julia Stephen, and the novel functions therapeutically as a recovery of the past, of childhood memories and maternal presence. Upon completing it, Woolf says she ceased to be obsessed with her mother. “I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients,” she writes in her memoir. “I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion” (1978: 94), the pain of privation Lily experiences in the absence of Mrs. Ramsay: “to want and not to have, . . . to want and want” (Woolf 1989: 178). And yet the novel is not strictly autobiographical, for it seeks to render not the life history of the Stephen family, but the experience of “non-being,” the vast part of everyday life not lived consciously (1978: 81), that novels, memoirs, and histories typically ignore. Like Proust, Woolf recovers her own childhood not to dwell on the personal but to present those “moments of being,” what Proust termed *mémoire involontaire*, moments when habit relaxes and memories well up, merging past and present in one stream of time. The moment thus captured reveals at once the depth of memory of the individual characters and a larger pattern that connects everyone – the historical moment. “Consider,” Woolf writes in her late memoir, “what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class” (1978: 93). In rendering the interior monologues and memories of her characters, turning inward, so to speak, Woolf’s novel paradoxically provides a portrait of the age, the complex relations among modernist art and the forces of modernization.

That age began long before we typically date it; for if “modernism” refers generally to the art and literature of the interwar period, for some extending two decades on either side of the First World War, it reaches back as well to writers of the second half of the nineteenth century, and stretches even into the second half of the twentieth. From Baudelaire and Walter Pater in the 1860s to William James and Henri Bergson at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an emphasis on the ephemeral predominates. Writing a few years after Baudelaire’s essay cited above (1964), Pater remarks: “To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought” (*Studies in*

the History of the Renaissance, quoted in Ellmann and Feidelson 1965: 121). Pater's Impressionism provides the language Woolf uses for conveying the "non-being" of daily life: "the moment," "the flame," "the stream," "the ecstasy" are terms Pater employs to connote the impressions and sensations that exist beneath consciousness. Metaphors of water in his writings convey the sense that isolated moments connect the past and the future, as Woolf uses the changing seascape to note the passing of time in Part II, and the wavelike rhythm of Lily's memories and painting in Part III, as Lily feels urged forward and pulled back, looks out to sea and back to her painting, connects the pre- and post-war sections of the novel. This sense of continuity amidst change, of the past flowing into the present and future, informs Bergson's writings, from which Proust developed his notion of *mémoire involontaire*. Bergson's concept of duration (*durée*) conceives change as a quality of the moment, not a movement from one fixed state to another, and memory in his writings is less a receptacle than a force, the past "leaning over the present which is about to join it" (*Creative Evolution*, quoted in Ellmann and Feidelson 1965: 725). William James's use of "stream" to describe consciousness as continuous rather than disjointed, which provides the term "stream-of-consciousness" first used to describe Dorothy Richardson's psychological narration, is yet another example. For these modern thinkers, existence *is* flux.

In so far as narrative strategies such as those Woolf uses in *To the Lighthouse* – such as the rendering of a multitude of impressions that pass through a character's mind in an instant in time, the seamless shifting from one consciousness to another, the compression of time – reveal reality and consciousness as fluid, the modernist novel would seem to come "closer to life" (Woolf 1953: 154) than does the realist novel with its linear plot and discrete events. Indeed, Woolf's textual strategies convey the profundity of the detail and the accidental that Freud postulated in his writings on dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue, and unconscious desire. When Mrs. Ramsay, in a rare moment of solitude, considers the true self beneath the surface apparitions – "Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep" (Woolf 1989: 62) – she seems to intuit the Freudian unconscious, only to experience its disruptive effects a moment later when she suddenly thinks, "We are in the hands of the Lord" (63), a disturbing, intrusive thought that she denies as hers. It is that kind of reality, the irrational or nonrational reality, that modernism makes us feel. As Michael North comments, "a generalized self-consciousness about the irrational that simply had not existed in earlier times . . . became a widely recognized psychosocial fact" (1999: 67). Rita Felski links "modernism's disruption of hierarchical syntax and of linear time and plot, its decentering of the knowing and rational subject, its fascination with the aural and rhythmic qualities of language . . . to the impulses of the unconscious" (1995: 26). According to this view, modernism's radicalism lies paradoxically in its rejection of a realist aesthetic while claiming to represent a "truer" reality. This understanding of the modernist text in turn relies on the concept of the novel as a mimetic form, bearing a reflective relation to the real, a concept richly pursued by Erich Auerbach.

That Woolf's fifth novel has become canonical can largely be credited to Auerbach's formative essay, "The Brown Stocking," which concludes his magnum opus on Western realism, *Mimesis* ([1946] 1953). Itself a classic work in the history of modernism, "The Brown Stocking" provides a close reading of the fifth section of Part I of *To the Lighthouse*. In enumerating the peculiar stylistic features of this passage – e.g., "multipersonal representation of consciousness, time strata, disintegration of the continuity of exterior events, shifting of the narrative viewpoint" (1953: 546) – Auerbach provides what has become a standard definition of modernist narrative form. In particular, Auerbach notes the effect of a narrative in which an omniscient narrator has nearly vanished, giving us no external perspective on the characters and events. The author seems to have no more insight into her characters than the other characters do, often "doubting and questioning" (535) what is presented as the character's thoughts and impressions, so that what one knows of the characters and events must be pieced together from many different viewpoints and subjective impressions. "The exterior events have actually lost their hegemony," Auerbach says (538), an effect which the treatment of temporality in the novel enhances by devoting far more time to the process of consciousness sparked by some random, minor event than the event itself could possibly take up in "real time." Such strategies attempt to get at "a more genuine, a deeper, and indeed a more real reality" (540) than the realistic novel of the nineteenth century.

Reacting as well to this nineteenth-century tradition, Alain Robbe-Grillet in France would later call for a *nouveau roman*. What Robbe-Grillet termed the "new realism," the modern novel as mimesis presents not an objective, factual, or neutral representation of the natural and social worlds, but instead renders the subjective impressions of a perceiving consciousness and its relations to objects in the world (1965a: *passim*). Auerbach distinguishes this changed "attitude toward the reality" represented in the novel from that of the nineteenth-century writers (such as Dickens, Meredith, and Balzac) where the author was the "governing authority" who interpreted his characters' actions "with objective assurance" (535–6). This kind of novel, the kind of realism Woolf repudiates, belongs to the past, says Robbe-Grillet, to a period marked by "the apogee of the individual" (1965b: 28), the "modern" (though not modernist) notion that the individual subject is an autonomous, discrete, rational being, which is why the modernist novel is often said to fragment characters (as Arnold Bennett said of Woolf's novels) or to "dehumanize" the subject. In his 1923 essay "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth" T. S. Eliot (1975) goes further and identifies the novel as a *genre* with the expression of an age that has passed. The novel, he declares, ended with Flaubert and James, a position he later repudiated but one that expresses the modernist view shared by Woolf, Auerbach, and Robbe-Grillet.

The new novel then (if we can even call it that, for certainly Woolf wanted a new term for her fiction) is less about *representation* of the phenomenal world than about *signification* of the shifting relations between a perceiving consciousness and material objects. If such significations are always contingent, random, partial, and provisional, then how can the work of art claim, in Robbe-Grillet's words, "to illustrate a

signification known in advance?" (1965a: 141). How, that is, can the modernist text represent a "more real reality" (Auerbach 1953: 540), whether the collective psyche of the First World War generation or the unconscious of an individual character? Robbe-Grillet's question echoes Bergson's remark fifty years earlier, that for an artist to know in advance what his work would reveal would be "to produce it before it was produced," a notion he dismissed as "absurd" (Ellmann and Feidelson 1965: 726). The notion is also tautologous if we understand the reality we experience as constructed in and mediated through verbal forms.

And so we have moved as seamlessly as Woolf does in shifting from one interior monologue to another, from modernism as mimesis to modernism as formalism. The mimetic conception of the novel, as Woolf points out in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," is a *convention* agreed upon by writer and reader, one that creates the belief that life is like its representation in fiction (1950: 110). If, then, life is in part an effect of the formal relations that shape it, new formal experiments may bring about new forms of life. "Consciousness cannot spontaneously accept or reject new forms," writes Mina Loy; "it is the new form . . . that molds consciousness" ("Aphorisms on Futurism" 246). If the modernist text does provide insight into a deeper, more genuine reality, the unconscious reality that Freud brought to light, it also provides a different understanding of the relation of art to life, and thus a different way of evaluating the truth or significance of the artwork. For its "defamiliarization" (a term from Russian Formalism) of the subject matter and conventions of realism, which readers have naturalized, calls attention to its status as discourse, as language. Thus, "grammar is violated; syntax disintegrated" (Woolf 1950: 115). Formalism proposes that the meaning – or more precisely, the significance – of the artwork resides in its "form," its language, not in its correspondence to something external to it. Writing on Gertrude Stein in 1924, Mina Loy remarks that "there is no particular advantage in groping for subject matter in a literature that is sufficiently satisfying as verbal design" (241). Whether or not *To the Lighthouse* satisfies either its author or its readers simply as verbal design, the novel certainly foregrounds the nature of its own medium.

Woolf's novel has often been read as the literary equivalent of the formalism promoted by art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry, members of Woolf's Bloomsbury circle. Lily's explanation of her painting to William Bankes in Part I encapsulates a modernist-formalist aesthetic (Woolf 1989: 52–3). Her painting of Mrs. Ramsay reading to James is anti-representational ("she had made no attempt at likeness"); it's a matter instead of the relation of lines and colors about a center ("if there, in that corner, it was bright, here in this, she felt the need of darkness"); there is no moralizing content ("mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence"); the artist remains impersonal ("subduing all her impressions as a woman to something much more general"). The notion of pure art, or "significant form," as Bell termed it, depended upon the "relations and combinations of lines and colours" (1949: 8) – or words and sounds – and not on the subject matter or representational aspects of the artwork (Reed 2004: 8–9). Not only in what it says through Lily's

aesthetic theory, but in its very language, particularly in what Woolf referred to as the “eyeless” (Woolf 1989: 135) poetic sections of Part II, the novel draws attention to itself as form rather than story:

So loveliness reigned and stillness, and together made the shape of loveliness itself, a form from which life had parted; solitary like a pool at evening, far distant, seen from a train window, vanishing so quickly that the pool, pale in the evening, is scarcely robbed of its solitude, though seen once. (Woolf 1989: 129)

In such passages, Woolf, like Stein, “has given us the word, in and for itself” (Mina Loy, 241).

In describing the effects produced by formalism in modernist writing, which presents psychological beings rather than characters in the traditional sense of “likeness to life,” Fry used the term “aura,” perhaps the most worried concept in the modernist lexicon. The word aptly describes what Lily’s painting attempts to create: “One wanted most some secret sense, fine as air, with which to steal through keyholes and surround her where she sat knitting, talking. . . . What did the hedge mean to her, what did the garden mean to her, what did it mean to her when a wave broke?” (Woolf 1989: 198). Walter Benjamin defines “aura” in terms that apply to Woolf’s method as well: “the associations which, at home in the *mémoire involontaire*, tend to cluster around the object of a perception” (1968: 186), in this case, Mrs. Ramsay. For Woolf, a “real character” does not mean one who is “life-like” but one who makes us see things through its eyes (1950: 103). A formalist aesthetic, then, provided a weapon against the realism Woolf rejected, especially the omniscient narrative perspective that possesses its characters by knowing everything about them, thereby enabling Woolf to estrange her readers from the realistic conception of reality and drawing attention to its mediation by language.

The involuted structure of the novel, the way its subject matter turns in on and reflects its method, evinces this shift in focus from life itself to the book itself, and suggests the ever-changing relation between the act of perceiving the world and the act of inscribing it in a linguistic or visual form (Caughie 1991: 33–9). Early on Woolf conceived the structure of this novel as two blocks joined by a corridor, which she sketched as an **H** in her notebooks. The elongated blocks figure the depth of consciousness, the “myriad impressions” expanding in the minds of various characters on two distinct but ordinary days, while the narrow corridor signifies the compression of ten years’ passage of time into a brief narrative space, much as Woolf’s famous statement in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” “On or about December 1910 human character changed,” compacts vast changes in “human relations, . . . religion, conduct, politics, and literature” into an arbitrarily chosen moment in time (1950: 96–7). The novel foregrounds the act of creation by means of Lily’s stories of the past (of Mrs. Ramsay, of Paul and Minta, of Charles Tansley) and her role in imagining, even narrating, the scenes with Mr. Ramsay and the children in the boat: “Down there among the little boats . . . there was one rather apart from the others. . . . She

decided that there in that very distant and entirely silent little boat Mr. Ramsay was sitting with Cam and James” (Woolf 1989: 162; emphasis added). That is, the novel structurally mimes Lily’s creative process, calling attention to its status as narrative discourse. At the moment of greatest intensity, when Lily steps into the “waters of annihilation” in her desperate desire to bring back the dead Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf interposes this scene:

[Macalister’s boy took one of the fish and cut a square out of its side to bait his hook with. The mutilated body (it was alive still) was thrown back into the sea.] (Woolf 1989: 180)

This is life, “startling, unexpected, unknown” (Woolf 1989: 180), intruding on Lily’s, and the readers’, illusions. The section functions structurally to keep not just Lily but the reader from being swept up in the waters of annihilation, the nostalgia and sentimentalism stirred by the death of the mother-figure. The disruption also serves to check the tendency toward subjectivism and aestheticism that posed the danger of the modernist stream-of-consciousness method, freeing us from the solipsism of being “centred in a self” (1953: 156). In other words, the modernist novel provides in its very form the shock experience the realist novel would narrate. The abrupt break from Lily’s consciousness in this section, and the indifferent brutality of the scene, reminds us that there is something beyond the text, but that something cannot be assimilated until it is given form, made part of a narrative sequence.

The experience of shock for Benjamin characterizes the modern age, “the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock” (1968: 194). New technologies such as photography and film changed our perceptual apparatus in the way Freudian theory did. “*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* . . . isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception,” Benjamin writes. Likewise, the camera provides close-ups that reveal “entirely new structural formations of the subject,” irising in on details hitherto unnoticed. Thus “the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (1936: 236–8). In so far as mechanical reproduction transforms the nature and function of art, the criteria of beauty, authenticity, originality, and uniqueness no longer pertain. Formalism conceived as “art for art’s sake” reacted by trying to restore “a theology of art,” Benjamin says, a concept of “‘pure’ art” that would preserve its aura by removing art from its social context (1936: 224). In contrast, formalism conceived instead as defamiliarization (and indeed, the Russian Formalists initially used “formalism” pejoratively) uses technical innovations to create an estranging effect, undercutting the illusion created by the artistry, as Woolf does in that bracketed scene cited above. Such techniques draw attention not so much to the way the modernist text imitates film technology, for Benjamin also says modernist art gave rise to the need for film (1936: 238), preparing an audience for its reception; rather, such technical innovation presents in its very form the changed

structure of experience (1968: 156) that characterizes modernity, not just a new *attitude* toward reality. New media, like the modernist text, made audiences “more aware than ever of the fact of mediation” (North 1999: 18).

Auerbach’s “close reading” of the novel, which has become a standard example of the methodology associated with the New Critical formalism emerging in the interwar years, shows how the novel mediates between these two views of formalism. Auerbach’s methodology of close reading serves as an analogue to the modernist text in so far as he exploits the random, isolated, and relatively insignificant passages in a larger work as exemplary of the whole, paying careful attention to the way the text functions on the level of the language rather than to what it says. And yet this formalism does not confine us within the limits of the work itself. On the contrary, the modernist method of attention to detail, as Benjamin makes clear, is emblematic of the broader historical moment, reflecting in its very form “a transfer of confidence” (Auerbach 1953: 547) that defines this era. The “realistic novel” of the interwar period represents a shift not just in the writer’s attitude toward the reality she creates, but also in the collective consciousness of an historical moment (Auerbach 1953: 546, 535). There is “greater confidence,” Auerbach says, in the atomizing of minor everyday events than in “the complete and chronological representation of a total exterior continuum” (548) because the fast-paced changes in science, technology, and economics (not to mention in social relations and national borders) in the early twentieth century undermined any belief in a coherent univocal view. The clash of classes and cultures produced by globalization, what Auerbach refers to as an “economic and cultural leveling process” (552), gave rise to an acute sensitivity to differences that challenged Enlightenment ideals. Thus, Auerbach’s essay, deservedly famous for its method of close reading and its analysis of modernist narrative form, already begins the shift in critical response to the modernist novel from a formalist analysis to a cultural analysis. And so, it seems, we have come full circle, from modernism as formalism to modernism as mimesis.

For Auerbach, “the modernist text thus becomes the ultimate expression of the real contradictions of modernity” (Felski 1991: 26). Auerbach sums up his reading:

What takes place here in Virginia Woolf’s novel is precisely what was attempted everywhere in works of this kind . . . – that is, to put the emphasis on the random occurrence, to exploit it not in the service of a planned continuity of action but in itself. And in the process something new and elemental appeared: nothing less than the wealth of reality and depth of life in every moment to which we surrender ourselves without prejudice. . . . It is precisely the random moment which is comparatively independent of the controversial and unstable orders over which men fight and despair; it passes unaffected by them, as daily life. The more it is exploited, the more the elementary things which our lives have in common come to light. . . . So the complicated process of dissolution which led to fragmentation of the exterior action, to reflection of consciousness, and to stratification of time seems to be tending toward a very simple solution. . . . the first forewarnings of the approaching unification and simplification. (1953: 552–3)

Nowhere is the modernist sensibility expressed so succinctly, the desire for synthesis and unity that characterizes a formalist aesthetic and that responds to the despair and dehumanization of the post-First World War period. The desire to reduce differences between “ways of life and forms of thought” emerging in the modernist era can lead to cosmopolitanism or, as Auerbach warns, to fascism (522). Where fascism provided a bromide for this contradictory and heterogeneous reality, modernism gave it form and significance. *To the Lighthouse* manifests the tension between the historical imperative to acknowledge diversity in the face of an expanding internationalism, and the equally compelling psychological need to seek identity in a common culture.

What Auerbach identifies as trivial and transitory experiences in this novel – knitting a stocking, conversing with the maid, talking on the telephone – are, as many scholars have noted, characteristically women’s activities, suggesting that the differences defining this historical era are as much a matter of the changing experience of gender and sexuality as of war, technology, economics, and mass culture.

They must find a way out of it all. There might be some simpler way, some less laborious way, she [Mrs. Ramsay] sighed. . . . But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties. She was now formidable to behold, and it was only in silence, looking up from their plates, after she had spoken so severely about Charles Tansley, that her daughters, Prue, Nancy, Rose – could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers. . . . (Woolf 1989: 7)

With the words “she was now formidable to behold,” the interior monologue of Mrs. Ramsay shifts to the collective thoughts of her daughters, as they come to share their mother’s sense that they must find a way out of her own feminine role of the Angel in the House. Here we see the seeds of rebellion that come to fruition in Part III when we find that Nancy has no idea what one sends to the lighthouse, Minta’s marriage to Paul didn’t work out, and Lily remains single. These are, we might say, the “new women” of the modern era. In this way, the novel functions as Rebecca West, writing in 1926, says the *Freewoman* did, to expose women’s dissatisfaction with their social positions, thereby undermining the myth of women’s “bland state of desireless contentment, which, when they were beautiful, reminded the onlooker of goddesses” (Scott 1990: 576), as Mrs. Ramsay appears to Mr. Bankes. However, Cam, physically situated between father and brother in the boat scenes of Part III, reminds us how difficult it is to break free of the Oedipal narrative and its costs for female psychosexual development (Abel 1989).

Such change in the structure of sexual experience is felt in the very form of the novel. In the passage cited earlier as an example of the novel’s anti-heroic attitude, the language of “little daily miracles, . . . matches struck unexpectedly in the dark” (Woolf 1989: 161) recalls Woolf’s “moments of being” such as Mrs. Ramsay experiences as a “wedge-shape core of darkness.” Observing the third stroke of the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay watches

with fascination, hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, . . . and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (65)

In Paterian language (ecstasy, wave), Woolf presents an orgasmic moment – the female orgasm as a modernist moment, more about the voyage than the arrival, and as much about language as the body (Raitt 1990: 70–1) – that figures modernism’s changing attitude toward, and obsession with, sexuality and women. Baudelaire singled out women and prostitutes, those in revolt against society, as the special subject matter of modernity (1964: 34–8). The prostitute, Felski notes, “was an insistently visible reminder of the potential anonymity of women in the modern city and the loosening of sexuality from familial and communal bonds” (19). The New Woman (sometimes confused with the prostitute, given her economic independence and social mobility) became an icon of modernity, expressing its revolt against the Victorian past and its liberating potential for the future. Freud’s writings on female sexuality in the late 1920s and early 1930s, even if conservative in equating women with passivity, at least acknowledged women’s sexual desires, and the work of the sexologists, such as Havelock Ellis’s *The Erotic Rights of Women* (1910), advocated for women’s right to a sexual life outside marriage, which Minta achieves, a life made more conceivable by advocates for birth control, such as Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger. The New Woman signified not just the intellectual and cultural emancipation of women that Sanger saw as the most important goal of birth control (1920: 10) but modernism’s radicalism as well.

Perhaps, then, Part II might be read not as a bridge between past and present but as a disruption, especially of the family romance narrative of Parts I and III where James successfully navigates the Oedipal conflict, sublimating his murderous rage toward his father in Part I to his conformity to masculine and patriarchal values in Part III. The cryptic reference to the war in section VI provides a model for this kind of reading: “there was a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath. This intrusion into a scene calculated to stir the most sublime reflections and lead to the most comfortable conclusions stayed their pacing” (133–4). Part II intrudes between the scenes of Part I calculated to stir sublime reflections of Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily’s triumphant vision in Part III. The narrator’s difficulty imagining the thoughts of Mrs. McNab, who tends the Ramsays’ summer home, differs from the kind of narrative uncertainty Auerbach describes in Part I. For in this middle section, Woolf calls attention to her distance from her characters: “visions of joy there must have been. . . . Some cleavage of the dark there must have been” (131). Where the visionary asks “What am I?” and the artist asks “What does it all mean?,” Mrs. McNab continues “to drink and gossip as before” (131). The introduction of Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Blast into the most poetic section of the novel reminds us of the limits of a modernist aesthetics (Caughie

1992). In Mrs. McNab's indifference to the visionary moment, Woolf's novel calls into question the economic and cultural *leveling* process produced by mass culture and the post-war economy and instead brings to the fore the class *gap* made all the more apparent by the General Strike of 1926 (Flint 1986). The narrative desire to capture the moment, to recuperate the past, and to reconcile differences here confronts the limits of its own logic. And that may well be the most subtle but insistent evidence that *To the Lighthouse*, suspended between the journey and the destination, provides if not a portrait, at least a snapshot of the modern age.

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Richard Wright: *Native Son*

Bill V. Mullen

Richard Wright's 1940 novel *Native Son* is a hybrid of mainstream modernist technique and theme and groundbreaking experiment in what critics have called Afro or black modernism. The book shows the influence of Surrealist painting, modernist language experiment, Freudian psychology, existential philosophy, migration sociology and Marxism, each a reference point for Wright's understanding of European and American modernism. It also uses African-American blues and folklore, a particularly African-American standpoint on urban environment, and a keen sense of African-American alienation to supplement modernism's prevailing themes and ideas. In this *Native Son* demonstrates what critic Paul Gilroy has called a "counter-culture of modernity" rooted in African-American diasporic relationship to the larger sphere of Western thought and history.

Wright's writing first demonstrated modernist influence in his 1935 poem "Trans-continental." The poem was dedicated to Surrealist poet Louis Aragon whose work Wright had read in translation after arriving in Chicago in 1928. In his memoir *Black Boy*, Wright cited Surrealist writing as an early influence, especially the work of Gertrude Stein. Stein's story "Melanctha," published in *Three Lives* and written in an experimental black idiom, inspired Wright to consider African-American vernacular as part of modernist language experiment. In his analysis of Wright and Stein, Michael North has referred to African-American vernacular as a "dialect" of modernism. Under Stein's influence, Wright's early poetry, and his novel *A Long Dream*, written before *Native Son*, demonstrated Wright's ambition as stated in his 1937 essay "Blueprint for Negro Writing": "Negro writers must have in their consciousness the foreshortened picture of the whole, nourishing culture from which they were torn in Africa, of the long, complex . . . struggle to regain in some form and under alien conditions of life a *whole* again" (Wright 1978: 47). Wright argued that African-American writers must draw upon both African-American forms like folklore and blues and European and American writers like Stein, Hemingway, and Proust to achieve this cultural "whole." Blueprint's emphasis on alienation as both

the condition of the writer and the experience of modernity underscored Wright's modernist assumption that culture, or art, was one means of integrating and representing experiences of social fragmentation, change or loss. At the same time, Wright's participation in the Chicago branch of the Communist Party, which he joined in 1934, and his support for leftist artists and writers drew him in the direction of what Werner Sollers and Paul Gilroy have called a "populist modernism" using everyday events and popular entertainment forms to register modernity's capacity to determine political, social, and psychological consciousness.

Native Son became Wright's testing ground for all of these ideas. The novel was begun in 1938, the same year that Wright published his first book *Uncle Tom's Children* and one year after he left Chicago to live in New York City. The novel's protagonist is Bigger Thomas, an 18-year-old African-American living on Chicago's South Side. The setting is the Depression. As the novel begins, Bigger, his mother, his brother, and his sister occupy a rat-infested apartment. The apartment is owned by a real-estate mogul named Dalton. Bigger moves under a cloud of "dread" Wright attributes to poverty and racism. Ironically, opportunity presents itself when Mr. Dalton offers Bigger a job as chauffeur. His first assignment is to drive Dalton's daughter Mary and her boyfriend Jan, a Communist, around on a night on the town. The three drink together. Bigger drives Mary home and carries her drunken body upstairs to put her to bed. In the bedroom, they kiss. Mrs. Dalton, who is blind, hears noises in the room and walks past the open door. Panicked, Bigger tries to quiet Mary by placing a pillow over her face; she is accidentally suffocated. Panicked again, Bigger tries to save himself by burning her body in a furnace in the basement of the Dalton home. He flees the scene, but is pursued and arrested. In the interim, he rapes and murders his girlfriend Bessie, throwing her body out the window of her apartment. When he is arrested, Bigger is charged with raping and murdering Mary Dalton. He is defended by Boris Max, a Communist, to no avail. At novel's end he is convicted of both charges and sentenced to death.

One impetus for Wright's story was the case of Robert Nixon, a black man arrested for murder in Chicago in 1938 and executed in 1939. Wright gathered newspaper accounts of the Nixon trial and used them as the basis for Bigger's own trial. Akin to Cubism's collages, or Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy, Wright's use of mass media, as Craig Werner has noted, signifies Wright's engagement with a variety of "discourses" of modernism. For example, Bigger attends a screening of the movie *Trader Horn*, which includes derogatory images of Africans and idealized images of whites; elsewhere, Bigger seeks to mimic *True Detective* magazine crime stories by forging a note implicating Communists in the killing of Mary Dalton. Mass media references signal Bigger's alienation from public spheres of power, but also create reality and perception-altering symbols of his estrangement. These move the novel into a kind of modernist gothic: when Bigger is captured, the scene deliberately recalls the climax of the 1933 film *King Kong*. The character is knocked off the top of a building with firehoses as the ape is forced from his Empire State Building climb by fighter planes. As in other modernist texts, landscape is a projection of distressed

interiority; Wright describes the broken-out windows of tenement apartments as “like the eye-sockets of empty skulls.” Chicago’s South Side is Bigger Thomas’s wasteland.

Numerous critics have also noted the influence on *Native Son* of existential philosophy and Surrealism – both, interestingly, also elements of the global negritude literature movement contemporary with *Native Son*. Eugene Miller, for example (1990), has compared this disjointed account of Bigger’s visit to the Dalton home to the “conscious, awake-dream state of perception” represented in the Surrealist paintings of Dalí or Chirico:

He was sitting in a white house; dim light burned around him; strange
Objects challenged him.

Bigger listened, blinking and bewildered. The long strange words
They used made no sense to him . . . He felt from the tone of their voices
That they were having a difference of opinion about him, but he could
Not determine what it was about. It made him uneasy, tense, as though
There were influences and presence about him which he could feel but
Could not see.

(Wright 1993: 40)

Craig Werner adds to Miller’s perception of Bigger’s disorientation this observation about race and epistemology central to Wright’s book: “the central problem confronted by Afro-American culture closely resembles that confronted by mainstream modernism: the alienated individual experiences a profound sense of psychological and cultural disorientation in a world characterized by an accelerating rate of change; he or she subsequently attempts to regain some sense of coherence by articulating the experience of disorientation” (Werner 1990: 121). Or, as Wright describes it, “The world of sound fell abruptly away from him [Bigger] and a vast picture appeared before his eyes, a picture teeming with so much meaning that he could not react to it all at once” (Wright 1993: 129–30).

For Bigger, as for characters in Beckett, the attempt to “articulate” disorientation and loss is represented through a complex and unresolved conflict between language and action. Bigger’s accidental killing of Mary Dalton expresses the effective silence of taboo around their interracial encounter; Bigger falls dumb and self-conscious in the presence of the white Dalton family; he adopts a “voice” after his crime through the forging of notes meant to implicate other people; when he goes to trial, Bigger never testifies. Max, instead, tells his story. In prison, Bigger desperately tries to imagine a means of conveying his experience to himself and the world; he seeks, writes Wright, “a vast configuration of images and symbols whose magic and power could lift him up and make him live so intensely that the dread of being black and unequal would be forgotten” (Wright 1993: 256). Yet the “symbols” Bigger in fact creates are acts of physical violence to which he attempts to assign meaning. After his arrest, Bigger imagines the death of Mary Dalton as an act of creative willpower, or agency. “What I killed for must’ve been good!” he tells Max in the book’s closing

pages. "It must have been good! When a man kills, it's for something . . . I didn't know I was really alive in this world until I felt things hard enough to kill for 'em" (Wright 1993: 502). Craig Werner here compares Bigger to Eliot's Prufrock – "There will be time to murder and create" (Werner 1990: 117, 130).

In this regard, *Native Son* may be viewed as emblematic of an African-American modernism that European existentialists hinted at when they described the African-American as the true "stranger" whose task is to make meaning out of a brutal, morally uncertain world. Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, Craig Werner, and others have identified the African-American bluesman as the epitome of this figure. Each has argued for the blues as the quintessential form expressing what Ellison called the "near-tragic, near-comic lyricism" of modern black experience. Thus perceived, *Native Son* may achieve the status of a blues. Bigger Thomas's "faint, wry, bitter smile" in the face of his imminent death at novel's end may realize the blues spirit as described by Langston Hughes: "laughing to keep from crying" (Werner 1990: 150).

Yet Wright's capacious interests in politics, sociology and history shared by Joyce, Proust, Dreiser and others cited by Wright as influences adds still further layers to *Native Son* as modernist text. Wright's obsessive interest in *Native Son* in race, racial migration, white supremacy, capitalism and communism speak to what Gilroy calls "counter-cultures of modernity forged in the quintessentially modern conditions of racial slavery." Carla Capetti, for example, has demonstrated how Wright's use of modernist technique often included a critique of mainstream modernism's seclusion from social engagement. "All of us young writers were influenced by Hemingway" Wright said in 1938, the year he began *Native Son*. "We liked the simple, direct way in which he wrote, but a great many of us wanted to write about social problems . . . Hemingway's style is so concentrated upon naturalist detail that there is no room for social comment" (Fabre 1990: 71). In *Black Boy*, his autobiography, Wright declared that growing up under Jim Crow in Mississippi had prepared him for the "naturalism" of the modern novel, especially as it was suited to demonstrating the "suffering" endemic to his family, the descendants of sharecroppers. Indeed in "How Bigger Was Born," an autobiographical essay first delivered as a speech at Columbia University in March of 1940 and added to future printings of *Native Son*, Wright argued that Bigger Thomas was a symbolic composite of young African-American boys he had known in the South who tried, and failed, to challenge Jim Crow. More broadly, Wright wrote, Bigger became representative of a "vast, muddled pool of human life in America" living under conditions of exploitation that could be found in other parts of the world: "I sensed . . . that the Southern scheme of oppression was but an appendage of a far vaster and in many respects more ruthless and impersonal commodity-profit machine." Thus, Wright wrote,

I was fascinated by the similarity of the emotional tensions of Bigger in America and Bigger in Nazi Germany and Bigger in old Russia. All Bigger Thomases, white and black, felt tense, afraid, nervous, hysterical, and restless. From far away Nazi Germany and old Russia had come to me items of knowledge that told me that certain modern

experiences were creating types of personalities whose existence ignored racial and national lines of demarcation, that these personalities shared with them a more universal drama-element than anything I'd ever encountered before; that these personalities were mainly imposed upon men and women living in a world whose fundamental assumptions could no longer be taken for granted; a world ridden with national and class strife; a world whose metaphysical meanings had vanished; a world in which God no longer existed as a daily, focal point of men's lives. (Wright 1993: 520–1)

Bigger Thomas, in other words, was for Wright both an inheritor of Western modernity's narratives of religion, nationality, and commerce, and something of a social and artistic experiment in divining their consequences. Wright's perception of the weighty symbolism of black life was influenced by the Chicago school of sociology pioneered by Robert Park and his friend Horace Cayton at the University of Chicago. Park, Cayton, and Wright all came to argue that the experiences of slavery and migration from South to North made African-Americans both a distinctive social group in the formation of the modern US and a barometer of hundreds of years of accelerated social and political change under Western capitalism. In his collaborative documentary study *12 Million Black Voices*, published one year after *Native Son*, Wright provided his own description of the "modern experiences" which had primed the "universal drama-element" in the psyche of Bigger Thomas:

The many historical phases which whites have traversed voluntarily and gradually through the course of Western civilization we black folk have traversed through swift compulsion. During the three hundred years we have been in the New World, we have experienced all the various types of family life, all the many adjustments to rural and urban life, and today, weary but still eager, we stand ready to accept more change.

Imagine European history from the days of Christ to the present telescoped into three hundred years and you can comprehend the drama which our consciousness has experienced! Brutal, bloody, crowded with suffering and abrupt transitions, the lives of us black folk represent the most magical and meaningful picture of human experience in the Western world. . . .

We black folk, our history, and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America. What we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America is. If we black folk perish, America will perish. (Wright 1998: 145–6)

The gravity of Wright's conclusions bore the weight of *Native Son's* full engagement with the political crises of the 1930s, in particular the collapse of capitalism in the US and around the world. It also pointed to looming alternatives to this catastrophe, particularly the international struggle between communism and fascism.

These events at times intrude into the foreground of the novel. Early in the book Bigger moves between contemplating the attraction of Japanese imperialism to some of his black peers, a real-life phenomenon documented elsewhere by historians, and the message of interracial solidarity clumsily espoused by the Communist Jan and his apprentice Mary Dalton. For Wright, as communist, Bigger Thomas symbolized an

international proletariat at a decisive, dialectical moment of capitalist history: "From these items," Wright wrote in reference to the Russian Revolution and the rise of Nazism, "I drew my first political conclusions about Bigger: I felt that Bigger, an American product, a native son of this land, carried with him the potential of either Communism or Fascism" (Wright 1993: 521).

This theme in the book has historically been one of the most contested. Early reviewers of *Native Son* like communist Mike Gold and Trotskyist C. L. R. James (writing under the pseudonym J. R. Johnson) recognized in the novel a blueprint for articulating the need for black participation in a US, or world, revolution. Samuel Sillen, reviewing the book for the communist periodical *New Masses*, heralded *Native Son* as an affirmation of Marxism, and of Marxist literature's ability to provide a whole or totalizing vision of modernity and alienation: "The tremendous power of *Native Son*," he wrote, "has its ultimate source in a revolutionary vision of life. It is, in the most profound sense, a philosophical novel, a creative affirmation of the will to live and to transform life" (Sillen 1970: 49). Yet the book's reception made it a still more complex symbol of other currents in "populist modernism." It was a Book of the Month Club selection, was immediately adapted into a successful stage play, and arguably became the first African-American novel to capture the attention of both the mainstream publishing market and hegemonic cultural institutions like *Time* magazine, which also reviewed the book favorably. In this regard *Native Son* was emblematic of what critic Michael Denning (1996) has called the "cultural front" of modernism represented in the popular appeal of left culture during the Depression and the 1940s, from the paintings of Diego Rivera to the folksongs of Woody Guthrie to the protest ballads of Paul Robeson.

Native Son also holds a contradictory but key place in feminist interpretations of modernism and Wright's place within it. Margaret Walker, a friend and contemporary of Wright's, was one of the first critics to charge Wright with hostile slighting of African-American women in his writing. Subsequent critics have perceived this as Wright's misogyny, ascribing it variously to Wright's general regurgitation of early-century gender biases against women, and his hostility toward women in his family as recounted in *Black Boy*. More complexly, Maria K. Mootry (1984) uses Georg Lukács's theory of typology in the novel to argue that "All of Wright's women . . . are Mothers or Whores. As mothers, the women are equated with the 'Christian-Feudal-Folk' element of the black experience; as whores they are associated with the abstract, formless and isolated freedom found in a world grown increasingly technological and industrial." For Mootry, *Native Son* discloses modernist gender typologies in its representation of Bessie as "deracinated worker living in the alien industrial world" and Mary Dalton, "the bitch goddess of American success, the forbidden fruit of Marxism and white womanhood." Mootry sees Bigger's struggle to "blot out" womanhood through acts of violence as a form of "narcissism . . . a survival tactic seeking the shock of experience" (Mootry 123). Bigger, Mootry argues, makes and remakes himself through violence against women. Ultimately, Mootry reads the struggle between men and women in *Native Son* as "a

metaphor for the struggle of an oppressed people to deal with history with dignity and meaning" (127).

Wright's novel also anticipated other currents of US and African-American modernism and modernist revisionism up through the 1960s. Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man* appropriated Wright's existential themes, modernist symbolism, psychological perspective and penchant for allusiveness to Western literature. Indeed contrary to conventional wisdom, Ellison's book is an elaboration upon rather than repudiation of modernist elements in Wright's novel: even the title echoes and signifies upon Wright's book. *Native Son* also prompted African-American literary critics like James Baldwin to measure the place of the "protest novel" in the making of twentieth-century African-American literature. Baldwin, and literary critics like Irving Howe, perceived *Native Son* as part of a tradition of naturalistic and modernist literary experiment that began to close down after the 1940s. Arguably, black women writers of the 1950s, like Lorraine Hansberry and Alice Childress, were also influenced in the direction of racial realism by Wright's book, though, for each, formal experiment with genre – the drama, in Hansberry's case, and the vignette or short story in Childress's – may also be indebted to Wright's work in both forms.

The 1960s Black Arts and Black Power movements also recuperated *Native Son* as a touchstone of cultural nationalism, echoing aspects of Wright's seminal "Blueprint for Negro Writing." George Kent's *Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture* identified Wright's novel and his wider body of work as central to the articulation of twentieth-century black experience. Addison Gayle, a founder of the Black Arts Movement (BAM), recognized Wright's struggle with the formal boundaries of modernism as a precursor of the 1960s search by black artists for what BAM called the Black Aesthetic. Wright's rendering of urban African-American male experience in *Native Son* also became a template for landmark works like Eldridge Cleaver's "Notes on a Native Son." More recently, Paul Gilroy has placed Wright's life and work at the center of his diasporic theory of black identity. The black alienation from the Western world so aptly characterized by Wright in *Native Son* is for Gilroy a distinctive brand of Du Boisian "double consciousness" produced by technologies of "racial terror" used to construct Western modernity. Wright's own assertion that Bigger Thomas's estrangement from South Side Chicago epitomized a global crisis of modern consciousness under capitalism is recuperated by Gilroy to describe the "hybridity" of transnational black experience. Thus, *Native Son* continues to be a key text in discussions of modernism and especially the place of race and ethnicity within it.

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W. B. Yeats: *The Tower* (1928)*Edward Larrissy*

The importance Yeats placed on every aspect of the construction of his books, including the order of the poems, is nowhere more evident than in *The Tower* (1928). In his seminal essay, "The Sacred Book of the Arts" (1956), Hugh Kenner emphasized the importance of reading a Yeats poem with attention to the poems that precede and follow it, taking *The Tower* and *The Wild Swans at Coole* as examples. More recently, Hazard Adams has proposed a stronger version of this idea, claiming that the separate volumes Yeats published make up chapters of a "single book" which represents "his fictive or feigned life" (Adams 1990: 11). In this regard, the chief principle invoked by Yeats is what he himself would call an "antithetical" one, whereby one poem will oppose, or at least qualify, that which preceded it. It is a principle influenced by William Blake. Blakean "contraries" become Yeatsian "antinomies," and Blake's related idea that "Opposition is true Friendship" might be claimed to guide the relationship of poem to poem. In Blake, one can see this principle at work in the dialogue between *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. In Yeats one might cite "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" and "The Sad Shepherd," or "The Rose of Battle" and "The Rose of Peace." Within *The Tower*, the aged speaker of the first poem, "Sailing to Byzantium," dreams of escaping from the painful contemplation of Irish youth and fecundity by getting "out of nature" altogether and turning into the image of a mechanical golden bird, triumphantly singing of "what is past, and passing and to come." But in the very next poem, "The Tower," the speaker opens with an enraged cry of frustration at the loss of youth, as if to question any consolation that might be derived from Byzantine detachment. If one stands back further, and examines the relationship of a whole volume to another, one concludes that the placing of *The Winding Stair* (1933) after *The Tower* is significant of another such opposition. *The Winding Stair* offers a more ruminative view of what had been handled with assertiveness and what Yeats called "bitterness" (Wade 1954: 737) in *The Tower*, and the titles are symbolically appropriate. The suggestion of the poet aloof in his ancient and lonely Norman keep was reinforced by his friend Thomas

Sturge Moore's cover-design for the original volume, showing the tower and its reflection in the nearby stream, stamped in gold on green cloth, and surrounded by a geometrical pattern of rectangles. The rectangles echo the shape of the golden tower, and imply artifice, even as the water and the intruding leaves of a tree more hesitantly hint at the fluidity and irregularity of life's processes. The relationship of the poet's edifice of shaped reflections to life and its struggles is a constant theme of the book.

The tower itself possesses other associations which supplement and qualify those of the cover. Any visitor to Ireland would recognize it as one of a type: the many Norman keeps dotted around the Irish countryside. There is evidence that remnants of the old Gaelic gentry had clung on to some of these towers into the eighteenth century, and this idea would not have displeased Yeats. At the same time, even a relatively unimproved tower such as Yeats's would in Ireland constitute a kind of "Big House," so that Yeats is seeking an aristocratic kind of rootedness, albeit of a palpably factitious kind. On the other hand, these towers date from the Norman invasion, and can be harnessed to a symbolism where aristocracy, however refined it may become, takes its origin, as in Nietzsche (whom Yeats had read), from violent usurpation. Both of these suggestions about the development of a civilized aristocratic mode of life, as well as twentieth-century threats to it, are central to the subject matter of *The Tower*, as is particularly obvious from "Meditations in Time of Civil War," among the sections of which are "Ancestral Houses" and "My Descendants."

There are other connotations. The sense of aloofness to which I have referred is specifically that of the lonely scholar of esoteric learning, like "*Il Penseroso's* Platonist" ("My House," p. 201). There are also references to the elements of that learning as Yeats understood it: he believed that the Tarot possessed a depth of esoteric meaning, and one of the trumps in the Tarot, called "The Tower," shows a tower with its top struck off by a zigzag of lightning. This must have seemed an appropriate emblem for the threats to civilization and order revealed in the volume. The Golden Dawn, a magical and quasi-masonic order of which he was a member, was strongly imbued with the doctrines of Rosicrucianism, as was Yeats himself, and Rosicrucian thinkers such as Robert Fludd might emblemize the created universe by means of a temple in the shape of a tower. So Yeats's tower was not only an appropriate place for immersion in esoteric lore, but also a symbol of the wisdom thus gained.

When one looks in more detail at the individual poems and their placings, there is another textual feature to be noted: at the beginning of the volume we travel further back in time with each poem, to judge by the dates which are significantly appended: "Sailing to Byzantium" (1927), "The Tower" (1926), "Meditations in Time of Civil War" (1923), and "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" (1919). There are four further dated poems in the ensuing pages, though unlike the first four they are interspersed with undated poems: "Youth and Age" (1924), "Leda and the Swan" (1923), "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" (1923), and (the final poem) "All Souls'

Night" (1920). As Adams puts it (1990: 146), *The Tower* "enacts two reverse movements of memory," and following John Holloway he relates these to the ideas of "dreaming back" and "return" from Yeats's great synthesis of occult theory, *A Vision*, on which he had been working with his wife George since 1917, and the first edition of which was finally to be published in 1926 ("1925" on the title page). The "dreaming back" is the process whereby the soul after death reprises the events of life in reverse order, learning from its errors and purging itself of its past life. By applying this idea to his living experience, Yeats suggests that distance from the processes of life which is depicted in "Sailing to Byzantium." This is the first poem in the first sequence, but also the last in order of composition, and thus the one which represents what has been learned. The ensuing poems, which go back in time to deal with the "Troubles" in Ireland after the Great War, demonstrate the basis of Yeats's assessment.

"Sailing to Byzantium" enters a qualification against a venerable topos within Irish poetry: the fecundity of Ireland. The aged speaker's decision to travel away from Ireland to Byzantium is the result both of his pained contemplation of the young "In one another's arms" and the fact that they are part of a cycle of nature which ends in death: "Whatever is begotten, born and dies." The reference to death is picked up in the account of Irish violence later in the volume. Byzantium, unlike Ireland, offers a wisdom founded in the eternal, beyond the cycle of life and death: "Monuments of unageing intellect." The manuscripts make it clear that Yeats was originally thinking of offering a realistic context for the speaker's journey: he was to be a medieval Danish traveler, probably from a Danish settlement in Ireland (Stallworthy 1963: 99–100). Yeats thought there was evidence of Irish contacts with Byzantium in the early Middle Ages; and there were certainly Scandinavian ones. But in the final version of the poem the symbolic motive, which was always there, predominates over any realistic one. In *A Vision* Yeats claimed that Byzantium was the site of a unity of creative being where "religious, aesthetic and practical life" were brought together (Yeats 1937: 279). But the type of unity he has in mind is not the same as the unreflective physical self-confidence of Ireland. The discussion in *A Vision* emphasizes the craft of mosaic-workers and goldsmiths and is consonant with the reference to artifice in the third stanza of the poem. That artifice has links with the "intellect," a word with Neoplatonic connections. Yeats would have known from Gibbon (whom he had read) that in Byzantium, the surviving Platonists practiced magic. But Yeats was a believer in magic, as well as in the illumination to be derived from Neoplatonic theories, so this would not have troubled him at all. According to his own understanding of esoteric traditions, both spirits and images in the mind (which he thought were composed of the same substance) subsisted in a realm called Anima Mundi (described in his essay of that name) or the Great Memory. Not only might he imagine that learned Byzantines had similar beliefs, but his final wish to become like a mechanical bird "once out of nature" would be based on these beliefs, since he thought that the imagination could influence the shape taken by the spirit at death.

In this condition, he will join the “sages standing in God’s holy fire / As in the gold mosaic of a wall.” They too are both images and spirits, and that is the reason for the ambiguity of the word “As” (“as if” but also “as well as”): they are in the mosaic, but even in their real existence in *Anima Mundi* their condition is that of images.

As we noted, the following poem, “The Tower,” casts doubt on the esoteric detachment achieved in “Sailing to Byzantium,” beginning with a cry of frustration at ageing. Appropriately enough, its manner is more rambling and discursive. This is by no means uncharacteristic of Yeats. Cairns Craig points out that, although Yeats is well known for his prizing of timeless images in the *Anima Mundi*, his poetry often represents the associative flow of a mind responding to this world (Craig 1981: 72–111). There is no essential contradiction here, however, since association of ideas ends by leading us to the symbols and archetypes stored in the Great Mind. Thus, Yeats’s representation of the flow of association can even encompass the appearance of forgetting something in the middle of a poem, as he pretends to do in “The Tower,” when telling the story of Hanrahan following a magical pack of hounds: “O towards I have forgotten what – enough!” (p. 196). Stan Smith points out (1994: 184) that “Narrative is a paradoxical dimension,” involving “a falling-away from unity of being, the dispersal of the narrated subject into innumerable variants”; however, it is always possible “to regain access to that ‘Great Memory’ in which the ur-text, the originary myth, is stored.” Thus the contrast between “Sailing to Byzantium” and “The Tower” is not as sharp as it looks. It embodies a central theme of the whole volume, the question of the relationship between the contingency of life and the realm of images and ideas.

I earlier quoted Yeats as using the word “bitterness” about *The Tower*. The emotion has much to do with Yeats’s revulsion from Irish anarchy and violence in the years after the Great War. It is indeed important to consider the immediate historical context of the writing of some of the most important poems in the volume. “Meditations in Time of Civil War” (pp. 200–6) and “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” (pp. 206–10) offer detailed and pondered reflections on the history of this period, as does Sean O’Casey’s *Dublin Trilogy* in its very different way. For Irish nationalists, the most important event of the years of the Great War was the Easter Rising of 1916, when republicans mounted an armed insurrection in Dublin. They were swiftly defeated and the leaders executed, an event commemorated in Yeats’s poem “Easter 1916” (pp. 180–2), from his previous volume, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921). At the end of the war, Sinn Féin, the republican party, won most of the nationalist vote, and there swiftly ensued the War of Independence from early 1919 to July 1921. This was a time of guerrilla warfare, ambushes, and assassinations. The Crown forces deployed special auxiliary units, the notorious “Black and Tans,” who exacted reprisals and carried out summary “executions.” Yeats was living in Oxford for most of this period, and was spared the anxieties of the Anglo-Irish as represented, for instance, in Elizabeth Bowen’s novel *The Last September* (1929), which describes the experiences of the inhabitants of a “Big House” during this period. But he had

plenty of informants who could give him a very good idea of what was happening. The opening poem of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," "Many ingenious lovely things are gone . . ." (pp. 206–8), looks back to the complacency of the years before the war, then notes, in a reference to Ireland, that,

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free . . .
(p. 207)

This relates an actual event in the countryside near the tower he had bought, when British "soldieri" did indeed shoot dead a mother with a child in her arms. The second section puts such events in a wider context: evoking the whirling dance of Loie Fuller, the American dancer and choreographer, he compares it to the pattern of the Platonic Great Year of two thousand years. The historical aspect of Yeats's occult system in *A Vision* worked in these terms, positing a constant succession of Great Years, alternating between a subjective temperament, aligned with imagination, heroism and passion, on the one hand, and an objective temperament, aligned with morality, holiness and reason, on the other. These two types of temperament are symbolized by the light and the dark of the moon. (The dark of the moon is solar, rather than lunar.) Thus, in Yeats's cyclical view, history constantly travels around the phases of the moon. Hence he can conclude in this section that "All men are dancers and their tread / Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong." The implication is that the violence of Ireland is part of a larger pattern of the breakdown of Christian civilization, a notion for which his readers had been prepared by "The Second Coming" (p. 187), from *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. Yeats's position, that of the modernist analyzing the collapse of civilization by the light of occult knowledge, looks far less idiosyncratic than it used to (Surette 1993).

In line with a tendency to value aristocracy which had been increasingly apparent in his work since the early years of the century, Yeats implies from the beginning of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" that the social collapse he foresees will take its impetus from egalitarian envy and hatred of the best qualities of humanity: "Many ingenious lovely things are gone / That seemed mere miracle to the multitude" (p. 206). The multitude appears to be a mob who can only wonder at beauty and ingenuity but never create it. This impression is confirmed by the fifth section, "Come let us mock at the great . . ." (pp. 209–10). Yeats goes on, with ironic bitterness, to suggest that one should also mock "the wise" and "the good," but ends with a flourish of savage accusation, inviting us to mock the mockers, "for we / Traffic in mockery" – that is to say, we cannot build but only mock those who presume to do so. The final section, which begins by referring topically to "Violence upon the roads," proceeds to mythologize it as the violence of "Herodias' daughters,"

whom many years earlier he had identified with the *sidhe*. This is an Irish word, usually translated as “fairies,” meaning “people of the wind.” The notorious ambivalence of the fairies is here given a twist of malevolence by Yeats, and he goes on to refer to a fourteenth-century conjuror of evil spirits, Robert Artisson of Kilkenny. Yet again, Yeats is placing contemporary violence within a larger historical movement, governed in part by unseen powers: Herodias’ daughters suggest the influence of spirits and images on history, the phrase “evil gathers head” describes the culmination of a process.

The large historical pattern of the Great Year is given separate treatment in the central pages of *The Tower*, with “Two Songs from a Play,” “Fragments,” and “Leda and the Swan” (pp. 213–15). This last poem refers to Yeats’s theory that a new epoch is initiated by an irruption of the bestial and demonic. Two thousand years before the birth of Christ another Great Year began when Zeus in the shape of a swan (thus, both demon and beast) raped Leda. From her egg were born Helen of Troy and the twins Castor and Pollux. Helen was the occasion of the Trojan War; and the twins could represent division. For Yeats, the idea that the classical epoch is founded in a war over the beauty of a woman means that it is antithetical or subjective, unlike the Christian era which replaces it. But contemporary readings of this poem (Larrissy 1994: 176–8) stress the way in which its language (the verbs “push” and “feel,” for instance) makes it hard to see Leda as merely passive: this is congruent with Yeats’s sense that the natural and the supernatural are entirely interdependent.

“Meditations in Time of Civil War” (pp. 200–6) continues the approach of “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,” and lends it new depth. The Irish Civil War of 1922–3 was a consequence of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. During the civil war period Yeats was back in Ballylee. Violent incidents occurred in the nearby countryside, and Yeats’s memorable references to these in the poem are surprisingly few when one considers the range of events to which he might have referred and the potential dangers to him and his family (Foster 2003: 212–15). His intention was to juxtapose his own search for an aristocratic kind of rootedness in the Irish countryside with the breakdown of order, and to make this juxtaposition the basis for organized “meditations” on the origins, flowering and decline of civilization, both in general and in the particular case of the Christian West.

The first section, “Ancestral Houses,” ponders a paradox about Big Houses, as they were called in Ireland, where they were under threat from the hostility of some of the republican forces. Calling to mind the beauty and productiveness of an aristocratic life unencumbered by “ambitious pains,” Yeats sees it in terms of a venerable image of organic form: the fountain, which never “stoop[s] to a mechanical / Or servile shape.” Yet the flowering of aristocratic life is achieved not by a sweet temperament, but by some “violent bitter man, some powerful man,” who calls in architects and artists who themselves are bitter and violent to create an image of the “sweetness” and “gentleness” they lack and long for. Ironically, the result is that the descendants who inherit the pleasing environment thus created may themselves lack the violence and bitterness necessary for the greatest phases of artistic creation. The next section,

"My House," offers further reflections on the relationship between art and edifice, and on the origins of aristocracy. Yeats recalls that "Two men have founded here": the original occupant, a "man-at-arms," and himself, who transforms the tower into an emblem "of adversity" for his descendants. The man-at-arms is even more violent and bitter than those who built the great houses, belonging to an earlier phase of aristocracy. It was, however, a phase that was necessary to the ensuing one. Yeats and his age come after the great phase, and he wants to bequeath to his descendants the precious image of the sense of adversity which goes with greatness, rather than something redolent of ease, which will be of no use to them. This theme is developed in the two succeeding sections, but in the fifth, "The Road at My Door," we are suddenly in the presence of combatants in the civil war. Yeats encounters at different times both "an affable Irregular" – one of the anti-treaty rebels – and a soldier from the opposing side: a lieutenant in the new Free State army. Unexpectedly, he speaks of how he counts the moorhens in order to "silence the envy in my thought": envy of those who imagine that they have a cause worth dying for. He himself, by contrast, is divorced from such struggles, "caught" in "the cold snows of a dream." This sense of abstracted isolation is picked up in the final section, but in the intervening poem, "The Stare's Nest by My Window," Yeats moves in a characteristically opposed direction, criticizing the fanaticism of the Irish factions who have produced the civil war, but also implying his own responsibility as one who had been actively involved in Irish nationalist politics. Here, more than anywhere else in the poem, he succeeds in evoking the tension and horror of living through the civil war. The refrain in which he calls upon the honey-bees to build in "the empty house of the stare" is an invoking of qualities needed to create the new Ireland: cooperative labor, and that "sweetness" (opposite of "bitterness") which has been one of the themes of the poem. But he has already hinted that "sweetness" is not a quality that predominates in every historical period, and the final section ("I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness" (pp. 205–6)) confirms that this is an epoch of "bitterness." Among the phantoms is a crowd calling for "vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay." Molay was Grand Master of the Templars, and Yeats explains in a note (pp. 460–1) that this cry was "said to have been incorporated in the ritual of certain Masonic societies of the eighteenth century, and to have fed class-hatred." Elizabeth Cullingford has shown (1983: 767–8) that Yeats came across claims that Freemasonry was responsible for the spread of egalitarianism and communism, and that the Golden Dawn, being of a masonic character, was involved in the conspiracy, as was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, to which Yeats had also belonged. Cullingford proceeds to link these facts with the significance in the poem of metaphors derived from building, or "operative masonry" as it is called by Freemasons: "speculative masonry" refers to occult philosophy of the kind Yeats studied in his tower. On the one hand, masons, in the widest sense, have built civilization; on the other, they are implicated in its descent into anarchy and violence. The sense of self-accusation goes wider than the question of whether Yeats has enrolled in a malignant tradition. The end of the poem hints also at some damaging abstraction in

his temperament: it is clear that we are back with the question of the right relationship of life and image.

This question is most memorably raised by "Among School Children" (pp. 215–17), a poem which is very much in the associative mode to which we have already referred. The aging Senator Yeats inspects a school, and as he does so he is said to "dream" of Maud Gonne; her image "floats into his mind." The manner of the poem is thus relevant to the question of ageing in a world where remembered images are so ambiguous: seeming eternal, but capable of referring to the world of change. Considering the different images that occur to "nuns and mothers" – respectively holy images and images of children – Yeats concludes by offering two versions of organic form as testimony that human creativity is best served by a complete identity of life and image: the chestnut tree is a whole, not any of its component parts; the form of the dancer cannot be separated from the form of the dance.

In the first version of *The Tower* Yeats included a poem which applies this idea to his own system. "The Gift of Harun al-Rashid" (pp. 445–50) is a thinly disguised allegory about the wisdom his wife had brought through the mediumship and automatic writing that issued in *A Vision*. Yeats is represented by Kusta ben Luka, supposedly a Christian doctor at the court of Harun al-Rashid. Kusta's wife begins to talk learnedly in her sleep, and he observes that the "abstractions" she brings "Are but a new expression of her body" (p. 450). "All Souls' Night," the next poem in the original printing, and the one with which the volume ends, was also the epilogue to *A Vision*. Yeats recalls dead friends who had speculated with him on the life of spirits. But the first stanza makes it clear that there are two glasses of wine on the table, and we can infer that the second is for his wife, since if a ghost comes it can drink from the mere "wine-breath." The summoning of the dead that follows, while it certainly implies that life is part of the cycle of life and death, comes from the perspective of life. But we should not be misled by the relatively life-affirming character of these final poems into seeing this as the chief emphasis of the volume. Yeats's design in placing "Sailing to Byzantium" first in the volume was to suggest that he had moved toward a greater appreciation of the order to be found in "the artifice of eternity": Byzantium contrasts with Baghdad, whose ruler, Harun al-Rashid, fought so many battles against the Byzantines. Passionate oriental wisdom (for Yeats and Orientalism see Larrissy 1994: 11–13, 141–4) has been relegated in favor of its organization by "sages" and philosophers. But in line with his antithetical method, this was an emphasis which was to be questioned in his next book, *The Winding Stair*. Here the voice of Crazy Jane is only the wildest expression of a passionate investment in the imperfect beauty of physical existence.

NOTE

All references to Yeats's poems are to *The Poems: W. B. Yeats: A New Edition*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (London: Macmillan, 1991), abbreviated in the text as p. or pp. followed by page number(s).

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Modernist Critical Prose

Gary S. Wihl

We are now seventy-plus years from the publication of a series of landmark volumes of literary criticism that redefined the status and purpose of poetry in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The volumes include T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* (1920), F. R. Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), and William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). These exemplary works of modernist critical prose at first appear to belong even more distantly in the past, preoccupied with special qualities of poetic language that have since lost their immediate relevance to the contemporary reader. The reader of these masterworks of literary criticism must come to terms with a style and vocabulary that is in a state of transition. Progressive and revisionist in their outlook and purpose, the critical vocabulary of these three critics is forged out of elements like vivid imagery, engagement with the canonical influences of metaphysical and Romantic poets and the robust dialogue of Elizabethan dramatists, or the individualistic vision of poets and critics who are capable of resisting the dull effects of mass culture, in particular the popular press. The concern with the integrity of the poetic tradition, the high seriousness of reading poetry, and the sharp estimation of superior and inferior literary works have all faded away as the primary tasks of the literary critic today. The apparent concern with poetry's high seriousness in these three volumes obscures the excitement and controversy they generated at the time of their publication.

On the surface, these critical works do not appear to break with the critical approaches of the past. They speak to an elite readership that is practically gone today. Stylistically, they seem rather more retrospective, revisiting the battles of their Victorian and Edwardian precursors, more at home in the company of Pater, Swinburne, or Arnold than in that of other great moderns of criticism such as the Russian Formalists or German-speaking critics like Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin. Even compared with their contemporaries in the world of English art criticism, Clive Bell or Roger Fry or, a little later, Herbert Read, Eliot, Leavis, and Empson appear to operate inside a closed world defined by the tradition of English

literature, the so-called “greats” of literary history familiar to their university-trained readers.

At this time, when we have come to expect radical questioning of the cultural status of the literary work, or what constitutes the beauty of literary language, how can we estimate the true originality in the critical prose of Eliot, Leavis, and Empson? Written in a period of immense creativity and generic experimentation, Eliot, Leavis, and Empson targeted problems that remain central to the study of poetry and fiction. Some patience is required in order to look beyond the dense allusions to the past in their prose. For they all had their sights very much on questions that remain unresolved in the wake of dissonances and reorientations in the field of literary criticism that were occurring before them, including: common versus heightened states of perception; obscure versus intelligible symbolic meanings; ironic versus serious points of view.

The Sacred Wood consists of essays written between 1917 and 1920, and already lays out for the reader a striking departure from the most basic premises of Romantic and Victorian literary criticism. Neither a psychological experience (emotion recollected in tranquillity), nor a window into politics and religion (Arnold’s criticism of life), it presents Eliot’s assertion that poetry is a structure of words, a linguistic artifact, a theme that would gain considerable momentum in Anglo-American literary criticism from Eliot through to the successive formalisms of New Criticism and deconstructionist rhetoric and poetics. The difficult part of Eliot’s breakthrough, however, is to see how he makes the case of poetic autonomy and form by rehearsing questions about tradition and the poetic canon. His writing appears conservative in tone but progressive in outlook. The three key essays in the volume include “The Perfect Critic,” “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” and “Hamlet and his Problems” (which introduced the term “objective correlative” into literary criticism).

“The Perfect Critic” is a fine example of the mixture of styles and arguments that is typical of these modernist critics. In sixteen pages, Eliot manages to cover the canon of literary critics from Aristotle and Horace up through Boileau, Hegel, Coleridge, Arnold, and a near-contemporary, Arthur Symons. The ambition and the economy of the writing are remarkable. Eliot is not attempting to do justice to such a vast range of critics and approaches to literature. Rather, he fully grasps the fact that he is facing a huge burden of accumulated opinions and terms out of which he must look forward to something new. The task he sets for himself in this essay is fully modernist: the literary tradition is both weighty and hollow for his purposes, lacking in guidance for the current state of poetry. Or, as Eliot writes, “The vast accumulations of knowledge – or at least of information – deposited by the nineteenth century have been responsible for an equally vast ignorance. When there is so much to be known, when there are so many fields of knowledge in which the same words are used with different meanings, when every one knows a little about a great many things, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to know whether he knows what he is talking about or not” (Eliot 1920: 9–10).

Literary criticism is laden with terms like emotion, impression, rule, and judgment. The language of poetry is constantly assimilated to psychological or scientific

terminology, rendering its own capacity to elucidate meaning less and less visible. Freed from the burden of past habits, modern poetry may put in motion new capacities for language. Perceptions, in poetry, do not merely accumulate or translate into emotions but rather “form themselves as a structure; and criticism is the statement in language of this structure.” This sentence sets up a radical departure for the reading of poetry that will run its course in new discussions of the role of paraphrase, cognition, and the poetic structures that underlie the canon of English poetry. Modestly put, and in fairly non-theoretical language, Eliot’s essay is a modernist breakthrough in its primary focus on words and structures, which marks the advent of autonomous terms for the criticism of poetry.

In “Tradition and Individual Talent,” one of the most widely read essays in literary criticism of the century, Eliot continues to foreground the specifics of language and form as against imprecise, loose terms for poetry. Even such vast categories as the entirety of poetic tradition and the limitless individuality of poems can be broken down into very precise configurations and examples. Tradition and the individual poet meet in a constant reordering of past and present together, in what Eliot calls a “simultaneous order”: “This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity” (Eliot 1920: 49). At the point of intersection of a long historical line of writers and the writer who revises that line, ever so slightly, poetry is advanced. The strength of this very abstract position lies in its resilience as a method of reading. Eliot does not work with general categories of epic, lyric, or dramatic verse; or with the huge personalities of a Milton, a Dryden, or a Wordsworth. It is once again a matter of feeling the accumulated weight of meanings in poetic words and the capacity to mobilize those meanings in new structures and arrangements. That is the task of modernism, and for Eliot it goes hand in hand with an *impersonal* approach to poetic creativity.

Eliot introduces the (now famous) analogy of the poet as catalyst, as when oxygen and sulphur dioxide are mixed in the presence of platinum, to form sulphuric acid without the slightest remaining trace of the catalyzing platinum. The poet aspires to the condition of the platinum, self-extinction, in order to fuse together the individual, new poem and the traditional meanings that are contained in its words. The perfect fusion of elements, also called the “intensity” of the poetic structure, is what endures in the agony of Othello, the murder of Agamemnon, or Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale.” It is important to note, in examples like these, how deeply and subtly Eliot has completely rewritten previous assumptions about literature, like Aristotelian catharsis, or the neoclassical ideal of the concrete universal, or emotion recollected in tranquillity. The traditionalist, but highly innovative, critical vocabulary changes everything by placing all of the stress on language and structure as the drivers of poetic creation and accomplishment.

In taking on perhaps the most canonical play in the entire English language, *Hamlet*, Eliot brings to the fore the originality of his emphasis on language and

structure as a means of addressing the status of literature. In its central character's anguish, its quasi-Freudian family romance, and its symbolic weight as a traditional masterpiece, *Hamlet* requires a strong analytical hand to turn it into an impersonal expression of the simultaneous order of past and present figures of speech. As Eliot wittily observes, it would be all too easy to use *Hamlet* the way Pater uses the Mona Lisa, as the projective surface for all of the critic's most personal judgments and emotions. Eliot debunks the play as failure, precisely because it cannot yield a decent interpretation of its plot and character. It is, so to speak, formless, and that already puts it outside tradition and literary structure, even though it continues to generate various feelings and emotions on the part of its readers and viewers. For the emotion of the play to be poetic, it would need to find an "objective correlative," a "set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion," which could evoke that emotion. Hamlet's disgust at his mother's behavior, whether direct or transferred from some other source of disgust, does not square with her apparent insignificance to his main concerns. His character is perhaps fascinating but not compelling, not sufficiently formed to rebalance the elements of tragedy and revenge out of which he emerges. Eliot's point is not just another refinement of the arguments he is making in the other essays. In the essay's concluding paragraph, Eliot questions the elements of levity and buffoonery, ecstasy and terror in Hamlet's character. Because so much modern fiction and poetry contains strained mixtures of these same emotions, it is interesting that Eliot does not treat *Hamlet* as the quintessential expression of modernism, as would Freud perhaps, but rather as a failure. This judgment begins to alert us to the true subtlety and complexity of analysis that is also found in Leavis and Empson. The strains of modernism have increased the difficulties of artistic expression, but the direction is toward greater clarity, precision, and attention to structure rather than romanticized associations and sublime confusions.

The effort to break free of Romantic and Victorian poetics finds its most overt, indeed polemical expression in the writings of F. R. Leavis. *New Bearings in English Poetry* announces a new voice in literary criticism, brash, evaluative and confident in the belief that modernist poetry is a decisive break with a romantically flawed emphasis on emotion and sentiment. Where Eliot discounts emotion in order to clear the way for verbal structures and meanings, Leavis makes explicit the need for greater clarity and precision in poetic language in order to face the complexities of modern society. Leavis argues that the poetry of Eliot and Yeats achieves a clarity of language that is missing in the verse of Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, or Hopkins. Given the apparent obscurity of theme and reference in the poetry of Eliot and Yeats, their so-called difficulty as poets, Leavis, like Eliot, appears to be inverting the reader's expectations. But his inversion works because clarity is linked to a description of an intense struggle against the poets who have withdrawn from society and who have written dreamy, idle verse. Poets may achieve verbal clarity, as did many of the Pre-Raphaelites, but if the clarity is that of dream-work, an escapist fantasy, then the poet has capitulated to irrelevant verse making. Throughout *New Bearings*, the

analysis of verbal structure goes hand in hand with an attack on romantic and Victorian notions of pathos, sublimity, utopianism, and reverie – all of which have undermined the intellectual potential of modern poetry. Almost like a modern French philosopher, Leavis investigates the problematic of poetry in relation to the problematic conditions of modern life. The poet's task is not to indulge in disintegration or despair but rather to rebuild poetic expressions of intensity and insight through direct awareness of social situations. How is this actually accomplished?

Leavis's essential arguments come through most clearly in two essays, one on Yeats, which makes up most of the chapter entitled "The Situation at the End of the War," and one on Eliot. Leavis re-examines Yeats's early interest in Rossetti and Pater and the Symbolist movement in France in order to show that Yeats was never really interested in writing poetry about withdrawal and mystical expression. On the contrary, "his dream-world is something more than private, personal and literary" because it begins to draw on common folk elements of Irish culture and uses "Celtic twilight" imagery to achieve a sophisticated representation of an emerging Irish national renaissance. Leavis writes, "The poetry of the *Wind Among the Reeds* . . . is a very remarkable achievement: it is, though a poetry of withdrawal, both more subtle and more vital than any pure product of Victorian romanticism" (Leavis 1932: 38). Yeats's intense effort to keep fast to a national vision, a mythology of independence, is an example of the actual overcoming of Romantic tendencies to disillusionment, frustration, and solitude. Tempted by bitterness and solipsism, "Mr. Yeats was strong enough to force triumph out of defeat," writes Leavis.

Leavis's masculine rhetoric of strength and victory once again presents a stylistic obstacle to what is most original and enduring in his criticism. I said earlier that the English modernist critics appear naive and provincial when compared with the theoretical discourse of a Lukács or a Benjamin. One could wish for a broader array of concepts in Leavis's writing, but for all that, his effort to purge Romantic withdrawal from modern English poetry is comparable to Lukács's efforts (in *Theory of the Novel*) to compare the diminishment of selfhood in the nineteenth-century novel to the mythological field of action in the novel's literary precursor, the Homeric epic. There is a comparable effort to measure dissonant, fragmentary literary expressions according to degrees of social withdrawal and pessimism. Yeats plays the role in Leavis's writing that Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale* plays for Lukács (Lukács 1971: 124–5).

In the case of Eliot, Leavis continues his attack on Romantic withdrawal; Eliot's poetry does not indulge in vague, sentimental imagery. On the contrary, he is a true modernist in his level of technical perfection. The key arguments, however, rest on a very complicated dialectic in Leavis's readings of all the major poems by Eliot. Perhaps more than in any other example of modernist critical prose, the essay on Eliot traces the struggle between dissolution, disintegration and fragmentation and the achievement of precise, highly wrought forms and expressions. Leavis makes constant mention of the "break-up of forms," "the troubles of the modern age," the "lack of organizing principle" that presents the conditions of difficulty in the modern

age. Not only must the poet avoid withdrawal from the social world; he or she must reorganize fragments of perception, where classical myth mixes with banal clichés, heightened vision with grotesque nightmare, the sum of wisdom with equivocation and irony. The exercise in a close reading of Eliot's major poems displays modernist "dissonance" in its full range.

At several points, Leavis describes Eliot's ability to achieve coherence as "musical" (Leavis 1932: 95, 103). "Musical" is a reference to the poetic theories of I. A. Richards. Richards's investigation into poetry as an equilibrium of impulses influenced Leavis, and began to establish the school of criticism associated with Cambridge University. Empson belongs in this group too, and he provides the most original extension of Richards's ideas and principles. The reference to Richards and the musical terminology explain Leavis's glosses on Eliot's poetry: Eliot "attains a compression, otherwise unattainable, that is essential to his aim; a compression approaching simultaneity – the co-presence in the mind of a number of different orientations, fundamental attitudes, orders of experience" (Leavis 1932: 107). Leavis was not a poet. He could not move, like Eliot, between argument and evocation. But on the side of argument, he connects the modernist focus on language with a strenuous effort to come to terms with a problematic world. The previous Romantic or Victorian forms are too weak to grasp the dislocations of the modern world and invite escapism. By inventing new techniques of allusion and cross-reference, modernists like Eliot or Yeats provide categories of selfhood that prove to be stronger and steadier than the personal voices in the preceding Romantics and Victorians.

William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* appeared two years before Leavis's *New Bearings*. In style and approach to the study of poetry it differs sharply from the writings of Eliot and Leavis. It cannot be treated in chronological sequence with the other two works. Empson might be said to start where Leavis leaves off, at a "musical" level of verbal compression and simultaneous orientations, which he defines as the essential ambiguity of all poetry. Why make this the point of departure when it takes so much hard work on the part of Eliot and Leavis to bring us to the point where we can begin to appreciate the "music" of the poetry? The answer to the question lies in the powerful influence of I. A. Richards on Empson. That influence runs throughout the development of Empson's career as a critic even as he proceeds to write in-depth studies of single authors such as Milton or Shakespeare. Empson is a functionalist and a liberal, as polemical as Leavis in his rejection of Romantic self-absorption, but even more iconoclastic in separating his entire approach to literary language from aesthetic questions of beauty, style, form, and voice. Empson has no time for tradition, for the ranking of inferior and superior poets, or for delicately attuned readings of poems. Like Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925), Empson would sweep away critical "nonsense" about the function of poetry. Poetry's function is to balance and reorganize perceptions and orientations, as in the analogy to music, but this function should be embraced in a bold, robust way, as a device for tuning and enhancing the reader's cognitive and affective abilities. Subtlety and delicacy and nuance, in the face of social dissonance, do not interest Empson. By way

of verbal tension, heterogeneous comparisons, and even a touch of confusion, poetry promotes social and ethical development. The seven types of ambiguity refer to the seven stages of increasing verbal tension, approaching, at the seventh level, the point where meanings may be so multiple and confused as to become incommensurable comparisons, as between divine and secular orders of experience. (Empson is also virulently anti-theological in his approach to literature; *Seven Types of Ambiguity* has more to do with an ironic jibe at biblical typology than with a neat, seven-stage classification of verbal ambiguity.) Empson never doubts that the function of poetry is progressive and therapeutic.

At the conclusion of *Seven Types*, Empson writes, "What is needed for literary satisfaction is not, 'this is beautiful because of such and such a theory,' but 'this is right; I am feeling correctly about this; I know the kind of way in which it is meant to be affecting me.'" This self-confident, anti-learned statement is aimed at the common reader. Eliot and Leavis struggle to find special achievement of verbal structure in the midst of disorientation and the blurring of high and low culture. Empson agrees that poetry is a special achievement but the blurring of categories of experience has always been there, as much in Shakespeare, Donne, and Herbert, as it is in Dryden, Pope, and Yeats, all of whom he admires and celebrates. Empson is rather more optimistic that the disorientations of modernist experience provide a better context for appreciating the full range of poetry. It is simply now more accessible to the common reader because the necessity for tuning up one's attitudes and orientations is spread throughout society.

Empson is in close agreement with Eliot and Leavis on the negative legacy of the Romantics, however. Just where one expects to find a high estimation of the common reader, in Wordsworth's pastoral folk, in the common innocence of childhood and simplicity, Empson finds complete lack of ambiguity. Wordsworth practiced a "cult of simplicity" but he was "not an ambiguous poet." He simply stated as "simply as possible the fundamental disorders of his mind," as in the references to the "still, sad music of humanity," in "Tintern Abbey" (Empson 1930: 152). It is not surprising that Empson latches onto the term "music" here, given its structural and theoretical resonance in the writings of all the modernist critics. In a Donne poem, music would be the term used to capture the difficulty of separating out terms and meanings that Donne would have kept in suspension. In Wordsworth, however, the language is relatively simple; only the reference points of the term "music" are in doubt. It is unclear in the poem whether the music resides in nature, via a sort of pantheism, or in the mind of the poet, as a sort of divine immanence. Empson does not attack the Wordsworthian ego, as would Eliot or Leavis; he simply demonstrates a lack of true ambiguity in the verse.

The rejection of Romantic poetry in all three critics points to a consistent, underlying struggle by modernists against the poetic doctrines of the immediate past. Ordinary experience, a reclaiming of the past in new terms, and the identification of a new readership in the transitions between elite and mass culture – these are topics these modernist writers have in common. They cannot be assimilated to one school of

criticism or one point of view, however. Their interest today rests in their precise, highly focused analysis of the problem of reading poetry at a time when it appears to be losing its value and importance. The carefully wrought argument about the structure of images, verbal ambiguity and generic form, common to all three critics, is unsurpassed by contemporary literary critics. The kinds of questions they ask about the nature and purpose of poetry are much the same questions that we find in contemporary literary criticism. We are still struggling to reconcile the special characteristics of literary language with larger cultural problems and insights. The efforts of Eliot, Leavis and Empson are still instructive for students of cultural criticism, the psychology of authorship, and the democratization of the reading public.

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Part V
Other Modernisms

Modernism and Race

Martha Jane Nadell

How can we understand modernism and race, when we cannot come to a consensus about the meaning of modernism itself? Scholars link the term to the period roughly between 1880 and 1950, to formal innovations in art, literature, and music, and to rebellious artistic movements like Surrealism and Imagism. The term is affixed to T. S. Eliot, Igor Stravinsky, and, on occasion, Zora Neale Hurston. Some scholars emphasize the break with Victorian cultural and artistic traditions, while others focus on the aesthetic experimentation that accompanied the self-conscious engagement with the idea of the new. Others explore the centrality of the city to modernist writing, the use of visual abstraction to wrestle with the technological changes in transportation and communication in the first part of the twentieth century, or the importance of the avant-garde. Many scholars include in their discussions lists of those they identify as quintessential modernists, ultimately articulating a canon known as high modernism.

While there may not be a unitary definition of modernism, there is a blind spot in the many studies that explore it. Most scholars writing before the late 1980s give scant attention – if any at all – to the idea of race or to artists who were members of ethnic minorities. In their understanding of modernism’s formal experimentation or its engagement with its historical context, scholars did not consider, for example, the manner in which American writers played with African-American vernacular language or the experiences of Eastern and Southern European immigrants in America. In their lists of the great formal innovators of modernism, they failed to mention writers such as Henry Roth, whose novel *Call It Sleep* included linguistic fragmentation to express the alienation of an immigrant child in the modern city or musicians such as Duke Ellington, a pioneer of the most American form of music, jazz.

Perhaps the easiest way into the relationship between modernism and race is via the distinction many scholars make between modernity or modernization and modernism. As Daniel Singal writes:

Modernism should properly be seen as a culture – a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception – that came into existence during the mid to late nineteenth century, and that has had a powerful influence on art and thought on both sides of the Atlantic since roughly 1900. Modernization, by contrast, denotes a process of social and economic development, involving the rise of industry, technology, urbanization, and bureaucratic institutions that can be traced back as far as the seventeenth century (Singal 1987: 7).

Singal further tells us that “Modernism’s stance toward modernization has typically been marked by ambivalence, with Modernists simultaneously admiring the vitality and inventiveness of technological progress, while decrying the dehumanization it appears to bring in its wake” (Singal 1987: 8).

But where is race in this distinction? In fact, race is central to the process of modernization that Singal describes. Cornel West writes of the “great paradox of Western modernity . . . that democracy flourished for Europeans, especially men of property, alongside the flowering of the transatlantic slave trade and New World slavery.” He reminds us that the development of both the United States and Europe toward the end of the eighteenth century was founded upon the “economic profits and psychic wages extracted from enslaved Africans” (West 1999: 52). Surveying a range of scientific, philosophical, and political thinkers, he also explains how racial hierarchy and difference, which are rooted in the Enlightenment’s embrace of science and rationality, are foundational to modern thought: “The very structure of modern discourse at its inception produced forms of rationality, scientificity, and objectivity as well as aesthetic and cultural ideals which require the constitution of the idea of white supremacy” (West 2002: 90). West argues that the investment in science encouraged “observing, comparing, measuring, and ordering the physical characteristics of human bodies.” In short, the idea of race – a sense of hierarchy linked first to bodily and later to cultural difference – and the social, economic, and political processes associated with it are at the heart of modernity.

By juxtaposing the two approaches – one that insists on the interplay between modernity and modernism and the other that adds to accounts of modernity the idea of race and the experiences of ethnic and racial minorities – we can begin to grasp the centrality and complexity of race for modernists. In fact many writers negotiated, often in troubling ways, the politics and social dynamics of race within Europe and the United States, relations among different racial or ethnic groups, and the aesthetic forms emerging from outside the dominant culture. Moreover, many of the important modernist artists of this period were members of minority groups, and they too had to deal with the problem of modernity. Many European visual artists expressed an engagement with race via “primitivism,” a complex and often troubling idea of the inherent uncivilized, natural, or simple nature of non-Western peoples and art. Scholars locate the seeds of Western constructions of the primitive, cast in opposition to the “civilized” nature of Europe, in late nineteenth-century colonial forays into Africa. An interest in exotic things and people, which combined aesthetic and ethnographic concerns, accompanied European imperial expansion.

Artists who were interested in the idea of the primitive fixed on African and Oceanic sculpture, grouped together under the racialized label "*l'art nègre*" or "Negro Art." Many artists believed that the manner in which much of African and Oceanic sculpture stripped the figure of details through abstraction and stylization could help loosen the grip of European realism. Consider the work of Pablo Picasso. His 1907 *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* is a study of five nude prostitutes. Superimposed on the faces of two of the nudes are African masks. Some have read these masks as an embrace of abstraction; others have seen them as challenging the idea of female identity or Victorian mores, and some have seen them as "demonic" (Haftman 1968: 97). Picasso himself wrote that *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* was his "first canvas of exorcism" inspired not only by the form of the African masks he encountered at the Trocadero but also by his idea of their use as "fetishes," "weapons," and spiritual "tools" (Picasso, quoted in Flam and Deutch 2003: 33).

Some European artists saw Africans as "savage" and their art as inferior to European naturalism (De Zayas, quoted in Flam and Deutch 2003: 95). Others perceived in African cultures and peoples something that could free them from the strictures of society. If modern civilization was troubling, then primitives became an appealing antidote (Nolde, quoted in Flam and Deutch 2003: 53). When the ideas associated with *l'art nègre* emerged in popular culture, the idea of a racialized Africa was connected to freedom, sexuality, and nature, all three evident in Josephine Baker's performances as the banana-skirted Fatou in the cabaret *La Folie du Jour*. In Europe, then, race emerged in modernism in the idea of the primitive from an imagined Africa, both as an alternative to earlier European art forms and as a way of loosening the hold of constricting values and traditions. In the United States, the relationship between race and modernism was, at times, similar to that of European primitivism. However, it was complicated by the presence of a native African-American population and immigrants from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the United States experienced great demographic shifts. Migration and immigration were at their heights. African-Americans traveled from the rural South to the North and Midwest, settling in growing urban areas alongside immigrants whose native languages were not English. Intellectuals of that era debated whether this demographic change would result in a "melting pot" in which all could become assimilated into American culture, or a state of "cultural pluralism" in which difference was maintained and valued. Yet by the 1920s immigration was being limited by laws, such as the 1924 Quota Act and the 1929 National Origins Plan, both of which targeted immigrants who were not from Northern and Western Europe. Anxieties about immigration also surfaced in concerns about the purity of the English language: in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, efforts were underway to standardize English, despite the fact that many writers produced work that employed ethnic or racial dialects. And although this was a period of great productivity for artists from all ethnic and racial groups – especially African-Americans who were part of a movement known as the Harlem Renaissance (see below) – segregation in urban areas was pronounced.

Recent scholars have debated about the nature of American modernism's understanding of race in this context. Did white – and indeed non-white – artists fall prey to some of the same problems of European primitivism, engaging in fantasies of racial difference and stereotypes, exploiting the cultures of non-dominant populations, and drawing firm lines among different ethnic groups? What were the relations among artists, writers, and composers of different ethnic and racial groups: how important was Anglo-American modernism, for example, to African-American writers? Did writers, artists, and others find the “mongrelization” of American culture, as Ann Douglas calls it, valuable and productive or constraining?

Gertrude Stein's “Melanctha” provides a valuable lens with which to examine the complexity of the relationship between race and American modernism. Scholars consistently identify Stein, a second-generation descendant of German Jews and ultimately an expatriate, as a central high modernist writer. Her relationships with many important literary and artistic figures of the period and her experimental prose, which contains stream of consciousness and repetition, make her a common point of discussion. Moreover, her use of ethnic characters, racial stereotypes, and African-American dialect in *Three Lives*, the collection in which “Melanctha” appeared, suggests that her modernism was deeply informed by the idea of race and by African-American culture.

Scholars understand the place of race in Stein's work in a variety of ways. Michael North tells us that the dialect in “Melanctha” is the linguistic equivalent of Picasso's use of African masks. Dialect provided Stein with a means to rebel against the standards of bourgeois society, a rebellion conditioned by the fact that African-American vernacular and African-Americans themselves came to stand for the impure and uncivilized. Carla Peterson argues that Stein's linguistic rhythm is a form of “blackface,” for Stein echoes the syncopation of ragtime, something she encountered during her years in Baltimore, and used black characters “as a protective mask behind which to explore personal sexual matters” (Peterson 1996: 140). Laura Doyle points out that “the narrators in *Three Lives* insult their characters with racial and ethnic slurs . . . lines [that] are calculated to offend” (Doyle 2000: 262–3). Yet Richard Wright and other African-American writers celebrated Stein's ear for the cadences of black speech. Does Stein, then, as Doyle writes, “both critique and collude in the racial order of things?” (Doyle 2000: 268). In the competing interpretations of Stein's work we can see multiple and sometimes contradictory approaches to the relationship between race and modernism.

If we can see the complexity of the relationship between race and Stein's modernism in a single novella, when we open our discussion to other writers the contours of the relationship become more intricate. In his discussion of e. e. cummings, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and others, North describes how invested modernist writers were in the idea of blackness and African-American dialect. “Linguistic imitation and racial masquerade,” he writes, “are so important to transatlantic modernism because they allow the writer to play at self-fashioning” (North 1994: 11). North, however, argues that while dialect may have been freeing for

non-African-American modernists, it was far more complicated for African-Americans who had to struggle to make “dialect into a modern literature so as to avoid the primitivizing pressures of the past” (North 1994: 174). Walter Benn Michaels describes the complicity of other writers, such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, in the rise of early twentieth-century nativism – the sentiment that immigrants, African-Americans, and other “internal minorities” were un-American, foreign, and different (Michaels 1995: 2). Nativism suggested that the non-native could no longer become American; assimilation was impossible because culture itself – what people do, how they behave – had become predicated on identity. Cultural pluralism, rather than the melting pot, was a “new form of racism,” for it saw culture in terms of essential, racial difference. And modernist writers were a central part of this problem as their works, he argues, are “carrier[s] of cultural heritage” (141). Michaels makes a parallel between these writers’ focus on homosexuality, incest, and impotence as attempts to maintain familial – and hence national – purity and their interest in freeing the sign from its “syntactic and semantic conventions” (2). Nativism and modernism, linked under the term “Nativist Modernism,” thus share a problematic “commitment to identity – linguistic, national, cultural, racial” (3).

When we examine the work emerging from ethnic and racial minorities, the connections between race and modernism take on different parameters. The most well-known non-white modernist movement during the 1920s is the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Renaissance. During the 1920s, as African-American migration to Northern areas swelled, a large number of writers, artists, composers, and intellectuals settled in Harlem. Authors such as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, and Claude McKay, visual artists such as Aaron Douglas, Richard Bruce Nugent, and James Van Der Zee, produced novels, poetry, essays, sculptures, paintings, and photographs. Musicians such as Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington performed for those whites who had developed a fascination for their uptown neighbors. Wealthy whites, such as Carl Van Vechten and Charlotte Osgood Mason acted as patrons for writers and artists.

In his 1925 anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, editor Alain Locke wrote about young African-American writers: “It has been their achievement also to bring the artistic advance of the Negro sharply into stepping alignment with contemporary artistic thought, mood, and style. They are thoroughly modern, some of them ultra-modern, and Negro thoughts now wear the uniform of the age” (Locke 1925a: 50). Their unique contribution, he declared, is the “transfusion of racial idioms with the modernistic styles of expression” (50). Indeed, while many Harlem Renaissance artists engaged in the formal experimentation associated with modernism, for the most part they and other intellectuals addressed issues relating to the history and social situation of African-Americans. In *Cane*, the writer Jean Toomer turned imagistic prose and poetry toward the sexual and racial politics of the South and the sound of jazz in the North. Aaron Douglas used African masks and Egyptian motifs in his version of Cubism to illustrate the blues-inflected poems of Langston Hughes. Nella

Larsen dealt with indeterminacy and consciousness in her tale of racial crossing, *Passing*. In his short stories, Rudolph Fisher addressed the experience of alienation that migrants from the rural South to the urban North experience. Intellectuals, ranging from W. E. B. Du Bois to Langston Hughes, debated about the nature of the New Negro, imagined in opposition to the Old Negro of nineteenth-century stereotypes and caricatures. Locke saw in the European investment in African art a way of asserting the modernity and modernism of African-Americans themselves (Locke 1925a: 267). Given the general emphasis on high modernism, it is unsurprising that early scholars saw more race than modernism in the Harlem Renaissance. Houston Baker argues that the Harlem Renaissance gave birth to a unique and indigenous African-American modernism that was concerned with nation building but had little to do with high modernism (Baker 1987: xiv). Other scholars locate the source of African-American modernism in experiences particular to African-Americans, such as the Great Migration or Harlem life (De Jongh 1990; Griffin 1995).

Another strain of scholarship sees the Harlem Renaissance as emerging from the hybridity of American culture. Working with an expanded definition of American modernism, rather than a narrowly defined high modernism, George Hutchinson argues that the Harlem Renaissance developed from America's unique cultural field, which includes the work of America's "native" modernists, the ideas emerging from anthropology and philosophy, and the institutions of print culture. He links the general American "cultural nationalism" of non-canonical modernist thinkers such as Franz Boas, William James, and Horace Kallen to the "cultural racialism" of the Harlem Renaissance. Ultimately, Hutchinson sees the intellectual, personal, and institutional relationships across "'white' and 'black' American culture as intimately intertwined, mutually constitutive" (Hutchinson 1995: 3). Ann Douglas, too, sees general American modernism and the Harlem Renaissance as productive of each other. She draws a parallel between America's separation from Europe and African America's attempts to recover "its own heritage from the dominant white culture." Both had a "common opponent and a common agenda: the demolition of that block to modernity, or so she seemed, the powerful white middle-class matriarch of the recent Victorian past" (Douglas 1995: 5–6).

Although this model of cross-pollination is persuasive, Jeffrey Stewart argues that we must take into account "those black cultural formulations of the 1920s that are not interracial, that were developed for a black audience and linked directly to a segregated social formation lived by the majority of African-Americans during that period." These forms also fall outside earlier understandings of African-American modernism. By addressing "issues of control over the ownership and production of knowledge and culture in the 1920s" and the diversity of African-American reactions to this, we can add artists such as Paul Robeson, who did not figure in earlier discussions of African-American modernism. Stewart thus offers the model of "double consciousness" among Harlem Renaissance modernists: "that is the experience of feeling oneself at one moment an artist, qua artist, à la modernism, with the considerable inflated social status, and then as a Negro, to paraphrase Du Bois" (Stewart 1997: 93).

Perhaps the best way to deal with the relationship between race and modernism is to recognize that there are multiple modernisms. Racial themes and forms were characteristic of much modernist art, regardless of the artist's race or nationality. Yet the meaning of these themes and forms was not nearly as uniform as that commonality would suggest. While some artists were committed to defining and defending racial difference, others embraced the hybridity of modern life. Scholars are only now coming to terms with this multiplicity in the relations between race and modernisms, leaving room for new investigations into the complexity of the field.

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Modernism and Gender

Bonnie Kime Scott

Gender, which is defined as a social construction rather than an essential biological trait, comes in many forms: in languages that assign genders to nouns and pronouns; in what sociologists describe as “sex roles,” which divide and limit what persons of one sex or the other can do in private and public spheres; in efforts to recuperate the culture or traditions of women, as neglected and marginal when compared to those of men; and in performances, where individuals may act or dress their interpretation of gender. “Masculine” and “feminine” are the classic designations within gender, different from the biological male and female, but generally paired, respectively, with them. Lesbian and gay male interpreters have critiqued the underlying binary of the gender pair, suggesting that it also privileges a heterosexual norm (Butler 1998). “Masculinities” and “femininities,” not necessarily respective of sex, and with a great many more positions to occupy, have emerged increasingly. Indeed, greater attention to inter-sex conditions has brought into question even the binary of male and female biological sex. The possibilities and expressions of gender vary tremendously over time. This makes it important to have a rich sense of the cultural contexts of both the modernist era and the criticism that has been written about modernism since its first codifications, as we turn to considerations of modernism and gender.

I have argued that, when scholars now senior in their field were entering their study of modernism, “it was unconsciously gendered masculine.” Though women writers, editors, and performers, and vital lesbian communities, had been part of the modernist scene, “the literary historians of modernism took as their norm a small set of its male participants, who were quoted, anthologized, taught, and consecrated as geniuses. Much of what even these select men had to say about the crisis in gender identification that underlies much of modernist literature was left out or read from a limited perspective” (Scott 1990: 2). The favored perspective was the New Criticism, which offered close textual readings, detached from cultural and personal complexities. It was understandable in the 1950s, when women had been sent back from a wider

wartime sphere to domestic roles, and Senator Joseph McCarthy made academic radicalism a dangerous position. Modernism also was limited largely to high culture, insulating itself from mass culture, which typically was associated with the feminine (Felski 1995: 29). The widening of modernism to include the broader culture of modernity is important to any gender analysis.

A rich cultural reading of modernism, reaching back to the beginning to the twentieth century, reveals that this was an era of great anxiety over gender (see Pykett 1995: 15–20). Traditional regulations of the gender system were undermined by sexual dissonances inspired by the New Woman, as variously discussed in emerging social sciences; the organized struggles for women's suffrage and birth control; by women's experiences of socialism, their participation in war, and entry into the culture and commerce of modernity. The modernist period saw the cultivation of lesbian communities, codes, and identities, with Oscar Wilde's 1895 incarceration for homosexuality still jarring in the cultural memory. Masculinity suffered from the waning of empires, with their aura of masculine command, and the ravages visited upon a generation of men by the First World War. In trench warfare, and subject to modern weaponry, including the use of gas, men proved as susceptible to shell-shock as women had to neurasthenia, and the symptoms were alarmingly similar. Challenges also came from the rise of African-American culture, focused particularly in the energetic rhythms of jazz. D. H. Lawrence is one example of men who hoped that masculinity could be recovered by a turn toward the "primitive," whether in African and Native American traditions, or working-class entertainments. Nature, traditionally gendered feminine, provided authors such as Ernest Hemingway opportunities for reasserting masculine control; seen another way, the wilderness offered a rugged retreat from a supposedly feminized culture. In his manifestos of modernism, Ezra Pound, like his colleagues Wyndham Lewis and T. E. Hulme, selected metaphors of "hard" surfaces, mechanical motions, and science, as opposed to the more chaotic, slushy elements they equated with the female nature (Scott 1995: 97–9). While Pound and T. S. Eliot collaborated with numerous women writers, they selected their elements carefully – Pound praising H. D. where she served his spare concept of Imagism, Eliot carefully working Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* into his notion of literary tradition and an aesthetic of wholeness.

Gender studies emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the second wave of feminism (the first wave includes the modernist period, though it is variously dated back into the nineteenth century). In *Sexual Politics* (1969), Kate Millet was clearly studying fantasies of gender in D. H. Lawrence and Sigmund Freud, among others. She was one of the first to critique the privileging of virility in male modernist texts. Carolyn Heilbrun's alternative approach in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* finds in Virginia Woolf the fulfillment of a "hidden river" in Western gender tradition that avoids the extremes of masculine and feminine. Like Woolf, Heilbrun locates androgyny in male as well as female writers, and has redeeming things to say about Lawrence's females in *The Rainbow*. Heilbrun was one of the early voices of second-wave feminism to recover Virginia Woolf, and particularly *A Room of One's Own*, as a

defining text for the new wave of feminists. In *A Literature of Their Own*, however, Elaine Showalter resisted what she termed Woolf's "flight into androgyny" and she critiqued the women writers of modernism for invoking aesthetic rather than confrontational strategies. "Images of women" was an early rubric for women's studies, which focused upon the feminine gender and took representations by both male and female writers into consideration (see Murray 1973). This work developed useful categories for the analysis of women, opening the place for the discussion of different femininities through the life cycle, and in relation to personal autonomy. Its sensitivity to gender was not matched with sensitivity to race.

By the end of the 1970s, Elaine Showalter had identified two predominant schools of feminist analysis: gynocritics, predominantly Americans and empiricists, who focused upon recovering the writings of women authors from the margins of male-defined culture; and gynesis, an approach to discourse originated by French feminists, and drawing upon poststructuralist theory, including psychoanalysis, linguistics, and philosophy. Gynesis, as Alice Jardine went on to define it, relates to the "expansive putting into discourse of woman" in modernity (1985: 27). Writing the feminine, like the earlier "images of women" studies, investigates male as well as female writers. French feminists, including H el ene Cixous and Julia Kristeva, were drawn to James Joyce, and in particular to his writing of woman (* criture f eminine*) as Molly Bloom (for a range of early and more recent work, see Henke and Unkeless 1982 and Devlin and Reizbaum 1999). Working from a largely Kristevan perspective, Toril Moi countered Showalter's critique of Woolf, finding it was biased toward realist texts, and thus hampered in its approach to modernism. Jane Marcus, through various collections and her own monographs, encouraged a view of Woolf as a counter-voice to patriarchy (see Marcus 1987). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, building upon the success of their study of Victorian women writers, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, turned in the late 1980s to a three-volume study of modernism, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. The first two volumes (1988, 1989), which follow modernism most closely, are premised on the idea of sex war, a term that modernists like Rebecca West employed casually in their early socialist/feminist journalism. Though Gilbert and Gubar certainly belong to the gynocritical rubric defined by Showalter, they are more eclectic than the label might suggest, involving us in their adaptations of Freudian theory and their own play with language. They turn Harold Bloom's theory of anxiety of authorial influence to the tradition of women writers, studying their means of affiliating with the female tradition that came before them. Like the French feminists, they are attuned to language choices. With Joyce, they sense a hostile sentencing of the feminine, and they are suspicious of Leopold Bloom's costumes of androgyny. For female writers, they hypothesize an intuitive, maternal language that is more liberating than the symbolic language of the father so important to the French feminists.

In its first decades, feminist criticism took white, middle-class woman and her writing as a norm, and left her sexuality largely unexamined, or encoded. The 1980s brought a gradual corrective on racial bias from feminist women of color through

manifestos, anthologies, and more extensive studies, including works that located women within an originally male-centered Harlem Renaissance (Wall 1995). The importance of lesbian writers and communities has also gained strength as an area of modernist studies closely allied with modernism. An important early mapping of this territory is offered in Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank*, which visited lesbian women participating in many modernist endeavors, from the salons of Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein, to the bookshop of Sylvia Beach, where James Joyce was able to find a publisher for *Ulysses*. More recent, specialized studies include Erin Carlston's study (1998) of the thinking of three lesbian modernists concerning fascism and Eileen Barrett and Patricia Cramer's collection of lesbian readings on Woolf (1997).

By the late 1990s, we could appreciate that the gender system intersects and interacts with other social constructions, identifications, and discourses, most notably with race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, spirituality, and position in a postcolonial, global political economy. Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls for "sexing . . . racializing . . . Semiticizing . . . and classing modernism, in addition to working on gender in modernism (DuPlessis 2001: 4–6). Susan Stanford Friedman (1998) urges studies that go "beyond gender," to include multiple contours of identity and global geographies. Modernism and modernity are now regularly investigated for their presence in the former colonial world. The turn toward cultural studies in the academy since the mid-1980s has facilitated the sort of intersectional analysis of gender among other cultural systems, highlighted above. The broader investigation of culture, encouraged by the wider category of modernity, also extends the reach of gender into underexplored genres, some of them, like sentimental writing, originally discounted as feminine (see Clark 1991), some of them evocative of the performative, such as the racial masquerade (see North 1994). Modernism now goes into the music hall and studies blackface and transgendered costumes in earnest. Modernist studies, like cultural studies in general, flourishes especially in the visual media, where one of the most influential and controversial theories has been Laura Mulvey's gendering of the gaze as masculine. Masculinity has become a greater focus of study (see examples in Armstrong 1998). While the recuperation of marginalized women writers and female circles is ongoing, there has also been an attempt to reconsider the convergences of the men and women who made modernism (Carlston 1998: 3). In *Modernism, Gender and Culture*, Lisa Rado uses the term "gendered crisscross" to group a set of essays that examine gender within specialized cultural discourses of modernism, such as the matriarchal primitive, the racial primitive, and scientific discourse. Indeed, gender grows more useful as a category the more specifically we investigate its situation, even within modernism.

In what remains of this essay, I should like to turn to some examples of how the study of modernism has been changed by asking questions relating to gender. Indeed, this volume bears the mark of gender studies. Readings from Barnes, H. D., Hurston, Loy, Moore, Richardson, Stein, and Woolf (all authors included in *The Gender of Modernism*) suggest a modernism to which a substantial proportion (one-third) of

women writers has been recuperated. Woolf at first served as the token for female modernists, introduced where her work most nearly fulfilled existing formulas for aesthetic, high modernism. Reading Woolf criticism over the last four decades provides a worthy survey of the changing perspectives offered by and in gender studies. Works such as *Orlando*, a transsexual, transhistorical fantasy novel written for her lesbian lover, and *Three Guineas*, her radical feminist analysis of fascism at home and abroad, transform our sense of the modernist project. The intersection of gender with postcolonial, anti-Semitic, queer, sexual abuse- and class-related questions enriches our sense of modernist literary contexts and discourses. Such inquiries illuminate previously slighted works, such as *The Voyage Out*, *The Years*, *Between the Acts*, and her essays and letters. Work on Gertrude Stein has developed an appreciation of the sensual and psychological effects she achieved, through repetition, and with sound and rhythm. The popular success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* no longer disqualifies it for serious modernist consideration, particularly when it comes to gender relations. Mina Loy has gained stunning momentum in recent modernist studies (see Anderson 1998, DuPlessis 2001, Lyon 1999, and Burke 1990), for her feminism, her own approach to the lyric, and her reflections on other modernists and modernist questions, including Futurism, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein.

Gender emerges in various ways when underexamined genres and venues of modernist production are examined. Important work has been done on the sites of production of modernism, where some scenes of misogyny were played out – most notoriously by Pound at the *Egoist*, the *Little Review* and *Poetry* (Marek 1995). Alternate modernisms and ways of producing texts still reside in the pages of these and other journals where forgotten makers of modernism held sway (see Adrienne Monnier in Benstock 1986). Dorothy Richardson's essays published in *Vanity Fair*, one of many journals that were beneath the notice of "high" modernism, frequently take up subjects relevant to gender (see "Talent and Genius," and "Women and the Future," selected by Diane Gillespie, in Scott 1990). Richardson was also a regular contributor to *Close Up*, the film journal edited by Kenneth McPherson, Bryher, and H. D., where many important reviews by H. D. also appear. Reviews of the sort written by Richardson and H. D. move us into the problem of underanalyzed genres, where gender is played out. The sentimental label long limited the circulation of modernists such as Edna St. Vincent Millay. Modernism has underexplored genres inflected by gender. These include memoirs and letters, long associated with women's writing (Herrmann 2000), travel writing like Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, which could turn equally to politics and aesthetics, and the modernist manifesto (Lyon 1999). We are only beginning to investigate ways that colonial writing of the modernist period was inflected by gender, with female writers and their fictional characters bearing stronger responsibility for maintaining the trappings of tradition (Allan on "Modernism, Gender and Africa" in Scott 2005). The search for modernism/modernity, including its inflection by gender, may best be pursued through the avenue of tracking down reviews, in an increasingly interdisciplinary and international set of locations.

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Modernism Queered

Laura Doan and Jane Garrity

“Modernism queered” is an interpretive act, a particular way of seeing or knowing modernism from the perspective of sexuality, informed by an interpretive framework called “queer theory.” Emerging from the work of influential theorists such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, queer theory challenges the way we know by destabilizing the concepts of sexuality, gender, and subjectivity (Butler 1991; Foucault 1978; Sedgwick 1990). Simply put, queer theory, in recognizing sexuality and gender as discursively produced, invites us to question and rethink received categories of normativity and non-normativity, natural and unnatural, dominant and deviant. In brief here, we will outline some of the trajectories this queer lens on modernism facilitates in relation to lived experience, culture, and representation.

Recent scholarly writing on the experiences of gays and lesbians, among other disenfranchised groups, is already changing the “landscape of modernity” – making it “a more interesting and less familiar place” (Felski 2000: 57). Similarly, reading modernism through the lens of queer theory promises to redraw existing maps by revealing a cluster of shared interests; for example, modernism and queer theory both resist fixity, cross boundaries, and regard with fascination the transgressive, marginal, and liminal. Queering modernism, we should stress at the outset, is not synonymous with an exclusive examination of the lives and cultural production of individuals we would now understand to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered. Such a project – the inclusion in modernist studies of the experiences of dissident sexual subjects – only partially encapsulates what might be achieved from the action of queering modernism. Nevertheless, we begin with an exploration of the emergence within public culture of dissident sexualities to gauge the impact of sexual knowledge within modernity, before turning our critical gaze on queer work within the canon of literary modernism as well as on work produced by sexual minorities.

Contrary to popular belief, modernity did not “invent” sexuality. However, certain social conditions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – above all,

the rise of sexology and feminism – made possible the circulation of certain sexual knowledges which, in turn, heightened visibility and increased intelligibility of a range of sexual subjects. The early sexologists devised categories for a range of sexual practices, behaviors, and identities, and thereby created new species of individuals, such as the homosexual, a figure “variously labelled the Urning, Uranian, intermediate type [or] invert” (Bland and Doan 1998: 41). In marking the shift from the Victorian to the modernist period, literary scholars often point to Oscar Wilde as an important historical marker of homosexual identity. His effeminacy, dandyism, meteoric rise to stardom, criminal prosecution, and months of imprisonment in solitary confinement with hard labor for committing acts of “gross indecency” have generated enduring interest among contemporary critics (Bristow 2003; Sinfield 1994). As Eve Sedgwick reminds us, “the figure of Wilde may have been the most formative individual influence on turn-of-the-century Anglo-European homosexual definition and identity” (Sedgwick 1990: 213). Initially, sexual knowledge was available only to practitioners of law and medicine. Toward the end of the First World War, however, sexology was beginning to filter into public discourse, as was evident in the courtroom exchanges that took place during a sensational trial in England when the Canadian dancer Maud Allan began legal proceedings against the radical right-wing Member of Parliament Noel Pemberton Billing, who had accused her being a member of the “Cult of the Clitoris” (Doan 2001), a phrase as ambiguous as it was unsavory, which some “in the know” understood to indicate suspected lesbianism. This was, to say the least, an astonishingly queer moment as, in the words of the critic Jodie Medd, “the very phrase ‘The Cult of the Clitoris’ introduced dangerous female homosexuality as a new perversion to be discussed, scandalized, and rallied against” (2002: 29). As Medd argues: “While the trial *did* powerfully evoke the ghost of [Oscar] Wilde’s condemned sexuality and artistic practices and *was* deeply enmeshed in the political exigencies of its historical moment, it also crucially introduced the specter of female (homo)sexuality as a locus of national anxiety” (2002: 25). A significant difference between Wilde and Allan, of course, was that unlike sexual relations between men, which could be policed and punished under the Labouchère Amendment (Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885), lesbianism was not subject to legal regulation in Britain. Parliament failed to criminalize lesbianism in 1921, but this was not for progressive reasons; rather, the legislature feared an increase in lesbianism if it were given publicity (Doan 1998).

In the twenties the subject of female sexual inversion once again preoccupied the nation, with the publication of novelist Radclyffe Hall’s lesbian classic, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). After a string of positive reviews, the novel – not its author – was targeted by the *Sunday Express* editor who famously declared that he “would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than [*The Well*]. . . . Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul” (Doan and Prosser 2001: 38). The archconservative home secretary at the time responded by banning the novel as obscene. Thus Hall’s earnest call for the social tolerance of female sexual inverts became embroiled in controversy, which culminated in two widely publicized court

hearings, in which the presiding magistrate ultimately declared *The Well* “an offence against public decency” and ordered its immediate destruction (Doan 2001). Less offensive for the magistrate was the actual depiction of sapphic love (the most explicit passage being “and that night they were not parted”) than the fact that the author did not cast such relationships in sufficiently negative terms.

Like Wilde, arguably Hall’s male counterpart in the modern Anglo-American history of homosexual emancipation, the lesbian novelist – and lesbianism – gained notoriety through a collision with the legal system, but other cultural forces were at work in the evolution of sexual subcultures in the modernist era, in realms such as sport, fashion, journalism, literature, and visual culture. Important studies have touched on queer cultural representation by male writers (Boone 1998; Bristow 1995; Hewitt 1996), but the largest body of work on the queering of modernism in the early twentieth century focuses on what has come to be called “sapphic modernism.” Over the past two decades, feminist scholars of literary modernism have usefully deployed the phrases “sapphic modernism” or “lesbian modernism” to achieve various ends as part of a wider strategy to expand the high modernist canon to include a more diverse group of writers, perhaps even constituting a literary subgenre. For example, in a lucid analysis of the evolution of “lesbian modernism,” Joanne Winning argues that such a process of recovery of female writing from the “canonical wilderness” shows the “fundamentally complex yet crucial relations between lesbian sexuality and textuality in the modernist period” (Winning 2000: 5). These no longer forgotten literary works represent the quintessence of “sapphic modernism,” a movement that, as Shari Benstock explains, “constitutes itself through moments of rupture in the social and cultural fabric” (1990: 198).

Queer theorists use the insights and principles pioneered by the proponents and practitioners of “sapphic modernism” by focusing upon the text’s latent content – upon what is not explicitly named but, rather, potentially inferred – as a way of extracting a queer reading that is not, often, immediately apparent. Such material may be buried for reasons of discretion (for example Gertrude Stein in *Tender Buttons*), or because the author’s representation of the homoerotic is arguably unconscious (for example Nella Larsen in *Passing*). It is critical to remember that obscenity laws in the United States and Britain were used to censor the portrayal of “immoral” sexual themes during the period of high modernist activity, and homosexuality was invariably one of the most prominent casualties of this public censure of “perverse” behavior and desire (De Grazia 1992). Given this homophobic climate of repression, it comes as no surprise that an author’s representation of sexually deviant themes would be veiled, muted, and often difficult to detect. We see, for example, that *Orlando*’s experimental blend of fantasy and truth – which notably escaped public censure in 1928 – is much more circumspect in its portrayal of sapphic desire than is Radclyffe Hall’s starkly realistic lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, published and banned in the same year. The hermeneutic problem for modernist critics who are interested in queer themes thus becomes: how to recognize and locate the homoerotic in texts whose subject matter is not overtly homosexual?

Bonnie Zimmerman advocates the practice of “perverse reading,” that is, performing a creative “misreading” of what other critics have presumed to be a particular novel’s heterosexual imperative in order to recover the text’s latent meanings (Zimmerman 1993: 139). Poststructuralism has influenced queer theory by encouraging critics to “read between the lines” by strategically “inhabiting the text of dominant heterosexuality” and at the same time undoing it, undermining it, and constructing “our own destabilizing readings” (Munt 1992: xxiii). By suggesting that a book may require a different set of interpretive conventions, one recognizes that the inscription of what we might call a queer aesthetic often necessitates a particular deconstructive process, one which aims to extract an author’s duplicitous intentions, and/or the text’s subliminal effects, and ask: upon what historical and cultural conditions does this particular text’s visibility depend? Writing within the context of “sapphic modernism,” Elizabeth Meese’s provocative claim that “[l]esbian’ is a word written in invisible ink” conveys not only that the representation of lesbian desire has historically been subject to the imposition of cultural restraints, but also that lesbianism – as narrative practice – can be defined, for certain marginalized writers, as a kind of conspiratorial inscription, one in which the word “lesbian” functions as a kind of disappearing hieroglyphic, readable and yet necessarily disguised (Meese 1992: 18). Borrowing from Meese, queer theorists extrapolate such insights and put them in the service of new readings of Anglo-American modernism. For example, we recognize that the sign of lesbian and gay presence is frequently detectable only through deflection, through that which is subtle, symbolic, indirect, or covert.

Yet how is this distinct from conventional readings of modernist texts, whose radical experimentalism often requires similar detective reading tactics? Traditionally, the prevailing views of Anglo-American modernism have focused on innovations in language and style, but without any consideration of how they might be linked to non-normative sexual practices. However, modernism’s most recognizable formal techniques – such as unfamiliar syntax, jarring juxtapositions, elliptical and disjointed narratives – are easily legible in relation to the particular problems of queer representation, with its characteristic circumspection and encodedness, its strategic undecidability, and its resistance to transparency. Like much modernist writing, queer inscription privileges subversion, slippage, and the metaphoric language of deviation and substitution. For instance, Virginia Woolf often filters the lesbian content of her writing through the screen of apparently heterosexual subject matter; Djuna Barnes interrogates the topics of sexual “perversion” and deviance by resisting the binary oppositions through which Western culture defines normalcy; Gertrude Stein codes the homoerotic through a pattern of substitutions that contributes to her highly experimental literary style; Henry James’s famous narrative obscurity is linked to the concept of the “open secret” of homosexuality, for, throughout his work, gay content is closeted yet frequently glimpsed; Mary Renault, Marguerite Yourcenar, and Willa Cather celebrate sexual ambiguity through the adoption of male narrative personae; D. H. Lawrence uses primitivist discourse and the psychosexual idea of triangulation as a way to signal the homoerotic; Dorothy Richardson

circumvents the pathologizing discourse that inheres in lesbian embodiment by representing lesbianism through an elaborate discourse of visual mediation; James Joyce destabilizes notions of sexual identity and marshals the homoerotic as way of bringing into focus the ideas of political sovereignty and a resistance to colonialism. In all of these writers, homoerotic desire is often refracted or produced through a specific practice of dissimulation; the sign of the queer, in other words, is almost nowhere figured mimetically. This is also true for writers who are far less stylistically radical than someone like Barnes or James. Although seemingly conventional writing such as that of Nella Larsen, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and Willa Cather appears formally conservative by high modernist standards, the surface simplicity of these women's prose belies an undercurrent of thematic complexity that encodes homoerotic desire. For example, Townsend Warner's fantasy novel, *Lolly Willowes*, is on the surface the story of a middle-aged spinster's feminist awakening, but more covertly – through the mapping of a sapphic subtext – the book can be read as a depiction of one independent spinster's mutation into a lesbian witch (Garrity 2003). Like Cather, whose narrative simplicity masks a complex cross-gendered identification, Warner's seemingly conventional prose constitutes the lesbian through a process of displacement and exchange. Nature, for example, substitutes for the eroticized female body. Judith Butler's argument about lesbian representation in Cather, that it is a "specific practice of dissimulation" that functions as a "perpetual challenge to legibility," provides us with a cogent way of thinking about queer modernist strategies in general (Butler 1993: 145).

The hunt for the presence of the "queer" within modernism has to do not only with foregrounding the historical formation and narrative presence of homosexuality, but also with denaturalizing heterosexuality, a category that has "long maintained its claim to be a natural, pure, and unproblematic state which requires no explanation" (Jagose 1996: 17). Through an examination of the relationship between form and content, queer theorists of modernism look not only for textual markers and clues of homosexuality, but also for evidence of how heterosexuality itself is a construction whose meaning is dependent on changing cultural modes. Both of these aims, viewing heterosexuality as an historically variable construction (despite its claims to universality), and searching for the textual presence of homosexuality (through innovations in form and content), can be said to constitute the main objectives of those seeking to map the terrain of queer modernism. For example, Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915) appears to be an impressionistic novel that is focused exclusively upon the romantic secrets and infidelities of two heterosexual couples, yet upon closer inspection we find that the feminized and unreliable narrator, John Dowell, harbors a concealed passion for the conventional and sentimental "good soldier," Edward Ashburnham. At the same time that it purports to explore heterosexual infidelity, *The Good Soldier* can simultaneously be read as the closeted story of a self-defined "eunuch" who claims to have "no sex instinct" towards his wife yet exhibits tremendous interest in the virility of Ashburnham. Ford also utilizes the word "queer" throughout his text, and even though the term, as Butler reminds us, "did not yet

mean homosexual . . . it did encompass an array of meanings associated with the deviation from normalcy which might well include the sexual" (Butler 1993: 176).

While lesbian and gay criticism, like queer theory, is not a unified body of work, modernists borrow key underlying ideas from each in order to show how same-sex identity and desire is represented textually. A central tenet of queer theory is the deconstruction of oppositional hierarchies, such as heterosexual/homosexual, and the adoption of an anti-essentialist stance in relation to sexual identity. What this means practically for modernist critics engaged in doing "queer" readings is the following: they do not just identify and establish a body of "classic" lesbian and gay writers, but also expose lesbian and gay themes in mainstream, canonical works; they foreground readings that disrupt models of normality and deviance (such as the hetero/homo hierarchy); they privilege literary genres that have been previously neglected (for example, modernism has traditionally devalued conventional form and fetishized stylistic innovation); and they establish a metaphorical framework for what constitutes gay/lesbian/queer representation (for example by hunting for textual moments of liminality, absence, synecdoche, inversion, mirroring, cross-gender identification, blurred boundaries, displacement, and sexual coding). Thus, for example, where early lesbian critics such as Adrienne Rich introduced the notion of the "lesbian continuum," and others scoured female-authored texts for evidence of a unique "lesbian vision," today queer theorists are more likely to argue that William Faulkner presents himself "as a lesbian author," or that the writings of Marcel Proust reveal "the centrality of lesbianism as sexual obsession and aesthetic model" (Michel 1988: 6; Ladenson 1999: 9). The work of Rich, Faulkner, and Proust may all evince lesbophilic desire, but the salient distinction is that the interest of the latter two in lesbianism is not dependent upon the personal testimony of an affirmative, woman-centered erotics. When read through the lens of queer theory, Faulkner's and Proust's "lesbianism" can shed new light on the topic of male feminization in modernist literature. Are these writers' preoccupations an idiosyncratic variant on the male practice of passing as a female author, or do they provide us with an alternative way of imagining sexuality and rethinking the portrayal of lesbianism within modernism? How does the thorny issue of male representation of female homosexuality influence our interpretation of these texts, and how is it further complicated when a gay man is the author? These are precisely the kinds of questions that queer theorists of modernism are asking.

In attempting to define the concept of "queer modernism," we can roughly divide modernist texts into three schematic categories: texts which deal explicitly with the topic of homosexuality (Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, Gertrude Stein's "Q. E. D."); texts – the preponderance of them – which do not overtly advertise themselves as queer books but none the less grapple with homoerotic themes (D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Mr. Fortune's Maggot*, Katherine Burdakin's *Swastika Night*, Mary Butts's *Armed With Madness*); and texts which seem to have nothing to do with homosexuality but none the less reveal nascent homosexual

possibilities upon analysis (Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*). The term "queer" within literary studies enables us to articulate a potentiality that, in prior decades, had gone undetected. It is critical to note that among the three modernist texts mentioned above which engage openly with the topic of homosexuality, only *The Well of Loneliness* was published in its author's lifetime. Forster's novel about homoerotic passion between men, *Maurice*, was composed in 1913 and 1914 but not published until 1971, one year after the author's death. Similarly, Gertrude Stein's "Q. E. D." a frankly autobiographical text about her unhappy relationship with May Bookstaver and Mabel Haynes, was written in 1903 but not published until 1971, twenty-five years after Stein's death. Precisely because modernist authors often disguise their representation of queerness, we must look for signs of it in textual places that expressly demand that we become adept at multilayered readings. Although much work has been done on the intersections between modernism and gender, the topic of modernism and sexuality is still open to rethinking. More work needs to be done on how queer modernist writing is inflected by race, nationality, imperial, and class issues, and on how this writing's use of primitivist discourse often works to shore up conservative notions of Anglo-American national and racial identification. While the meaning of homosexuality is notoriously unstable within modernism, we know that authors often construct their own originary myth of the homoerotic, one that revises ascendant notions of degeneracy while at times retaining sexology's attribution of primitive passions and impulses to the "congenital invert" (Bland and Doan 1998: 201–30). Yet precisely how the modernist conceptualization of the native Other intersects with homosexual definitions and identity is a topic that welcomes further scrutiny. Similarly, while recent analyses of the relationship between sexuality and geography have productively demonstrated how homosexuality is constituted through spatial structures and relationships, precisely how modernist authors represent homosexuality as a constitutive part of the cultural and social locations of modernity is still undertheorized. A central question remains: how can we productively engage queer theory in a rereading of both canonical and non-canonical modernist texts while simultaneously interrogating the foundational assumptions of modernism itself?

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Postcolonial Modernism

Bart Moore-Gilbert

The emerging conjunction of postcolonialism and modernism can be understood in the first instance as one element in the wide-ranging reassessment of the cultural politics of the latter inaugurated in the late 1980s (see, for example, Eagleton 1990; Gilbert and Gubar 1991; Jameson 1988; Scott 1990; R. Williams 1989). Despite their variety and, at times, incommensurability (note the often hostile postcolonial responses to Jameson in Booth and Rigby 2000: 5–7, 21–2), such rereadings share one broad assumption. This is that there was an overemphasis within certain strands of “high” modernism on the supreme value of constructing autonomous aesthetic worlds (for example, Stephen Dedalus’s advocacy of “static” at the expense of “kinetic” art at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*): and that this involved relegating everything outside that sphere, including politics, to what, in his review of *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot (in)famously called “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.” According to this revisionist scholarship, this unhealthy emphasis was replicated in all too much criticism of the field, particularly Anglo-American, until the 1980s. However, postcolonialism’s relationship to modernism is not yet as clear or secure as those of comparable revisionist approaches like cultural materialism and feminism. Despite a relative proliferation of analyses informed by postcolonial methodologies which have advanced the conjunction at a localized level, beginning in 1988 with Cairns and Richards and with Said (1993b), the first general overview of the relations between modernism and (post)colonialism did not appear until Booth and Rigby (2000). Some of this work remains vigorously contested by leading modernist scholars; for example, Bell complains that some of its best-known exponents are “seriously blinkered” (1997: 149).

Thus far the conjunction has taken three principal forms. Firstly, postcolonial frameworks have engendered debate about the degree to which modernism was a product of the colonial encounter. In contrast to earlier critics who recognized the important role of “primitivism” in the constitution of modernism and its debts to anthropology (MacClancy 2003 usefully surveys this work), postcolonialists have

stressed the relations of power which governed such cultural transfers. The inaugural literary-critical instance of this approach is Achebe's critique of Conrad, given in lecture form in 1974. Achebe argues that colonialism's unequal relations of exchange made possible, to take one crucial example, the importation of Fang masks from the Congo, which "marked the beginning of cubism and the infusion of new life into European art that had run completely out of strength" (1989: 16). Later postcolonialists have agreed that the relations between modernism and imperialism are systematic and structural in nature. Said argues that "many of the most prominent characteristics of modernist culture," (he includes its "formal dislocations," "pervasive irony," and "encyclopaedic form") "which we have tended to derive from purely internal dynamics in Western culture and society, include a response to the external pressures on culture from the *imperium*" (1993a: 227). For Gikandi, the success of modernism "depended on its ability to deploy other cultures and experiences – those which seemed most removed from the European traditions the modernists were revolting against – as sources of alternative modes of representation and interpretation" (1997: 147–8).

Such strategic arguments have been complemented by a wealth of more localized research inflected by postcolonial concepts, which has discovered the conjunction in what until the 1980s would have seemed unlikely places. For example, Marcus, following Said, proposed that some of Woolf's writing was deeply preoccupied by empire; and Kathy Phillips, writing "in the wake of postcolonial studies," subsequently raised the possibility of connections between Woolf's mature style and her exposure to the abstraction of African statuary (1994: xiii, xxi). The most detailed such reinterpretations concern Irish modernism; these have widened the focus of some earlier scholarship which explored its nationalist credentials in isolation from other comparable regions (for example, Deane 1985; Ireland was, of course, the first territory of the British Empire to achieve independence in modern times). The more specific case for considering Irish culture of the period 1880–1920 in a comparative postcolonial light was first made by Cairns and Richards in 1988, who draw self-consciously on theorists like Said, Bhabha, Fanon, and Nandy. They suggest that Said's conceptions of "the relations of power inscribed in the discourse of Orientalism are equally applicable to Celticism" and that the Revival was "the culminating episode in a cultural struggle for the leadership and articulation of the people-nation" (1988: 47, 58) of a kind replicated elsewhere. Citing a similar range of postcolonial theory, Kiberd also argues that "the Irish experience seems to anticipate that of the emerging nations of the so-called 'Third World'" (1995: 4) and goes on to bring a variety of postcolonial writers into his discussion of Irish culture, including its modernist phase. Thus he argues that "though Yeats's *Sambain* articles and Rushdie's essays in *Imaginary Homelands* would be separated over time by eighty years, the experiences evoked in them did not markedly alter" (Kiberd 1995: 164; compare Said's linkage of Yeats with the contemporary Palestinian poet Darwish, 1993b: 280).

The major figures of Irish modernism have been subjected individually to postcolonial readings. While Spivak had located Yeats's poetry in relation to anti-colonial nationalism as one amongst several equally important contexts, Said was the

first to read him as primarily a postcolonial poet. Placing Yeats “in a tradition not usually considered his,” Said claims him as an “indisputably great *national* poet who during a period of anti-imperialist resistance articulates the experiences, the aspirations, and the restorative vision of a people suffering under the dominion of an off-shore power” (1993b: 265–6). Cairns and Richards, while aware of Joyce’s ambivalence towards nationalism, see even his earliest writing as part of a “guerrilla campaign . . . striking against the imperial power through his infiltration of its literature” (1988: 80). Kiberd forthrightly presents Joyce as one of “the great post-colonial writers” and *Ulysses* as “a supreme instance of the post-colonial text” (1995: 327, 329; comparable readings of Joyce’s other texts are supplied by Cheng 1995 and Nolan 1995). In turn, Lloyd was the first to view Beckett as postcolonial, arguing that his subject “reappropriates certain modernist procedures from the marginal site of a post-colonial nation” (1993: 56; compare Kiberd 1995: 530–9).

As this suggests, such critics propose that the experimental styles of Irish modernism are best explained as a response to the imperatives of cultural decolonization. Thus Kiberd argues that “the need to resort to non-representational art is obvious to those writers who seek to elaborate a landscape of internal consciousness rather than submit to a despised external setting” (1995: 118). For some in the Irish Renaissance, notably Yeats, according to such perspectives realism was identified as the dominant style of Victorian England. To the extent that his forays into symbolism and other new modes of writing are a rejection of realism, they can also be interpreted as a disavowal of the cultural forms and hierarchies of an imposed imperial civilization. Similar arguments have been made about Joyce. For example, Duffy sees *Ulysses* as inaugurating “postcolonial modernism” by virtue of the fact that it is “*the* text of Ireland’s independence” (1994: 1). Its formal innovations are partly “shock tactics” designed “to force into conflict some of the discourses invented by the colonists to characterize the natives” (1994: 3, 190). Equally, both Cheng and Nolan regard *Finnegans Wake* in ways radically different from mainstream Joyce criticism up to the 1980s, where it characteristically figures as the supreme example of the “self-sufficient” aesthetic object, set against the brute realities of the historical world. Instead, Cheng argues that representations of racial and colonial issues are “one of the central and structuring topics” (1995: 251) of the work and represents it as the culmination of Joyce’s career-long elaboration of an anti-imperial aesthetic. Its construction of a multitudinous plurality of voices and points of view (extending even *Ulysses*’s preoccupation with dialogical narrative modes) becomes, in this reading, the formal analogue of Joyce’s dream of an independent, pluralist and democratic Ireland. More specifically, Nolan emphasizes the extent of orature in *Finnegans Wake*, arguing that “like the work of Salman Rushdie” (between which and Joyce’s she draws many other parallels), it is “clearly engaged in a dialogue with traditional oral narratives” (1995: 145).

Particular emphasis has been laid on Irish modernist experiments with language in this context. Thus Lloyd argues that Beckett’s experiments with, and deformations of, standard English indicate the latter’s attempt to reach “the threshold of another

possible language within which a post-colonial subjectivity might begin to find articulation" (1993: 56). The most extensive and interesting work in this respect has occurred in connection with Joyce. His increasing emphasis on nonstandard forms of English, and on the "adulteration" of "the master's tongue" by other, often subaltern languages, including Irish, is traced in detail by critics like Cheng and Nolan. They conclude that Joyce's strategy is consonant with later postcolonial literature's "bending" and "inflection" of the colonizer's language with local languages, to make it more responsive to non-metropolitan realities and needs, thus pluralizing, domesticating, and democratizing what was formerly primarily an instrument of cultural oppression and foreign rule.

Secondly, as one might infer from its insistence on the material relations governing appropriations from non-Western cultures, postcolonialism has stirred debate about the degree to which Anglo-American modernism, in particular, should be understood as a form of colonial discourse which reinforces dominant forms of thinking about race and empire during the period. The most celebrated and polemical instance remains Achebe's analysis of *Heart of Darkness*, which he denounced as "racist." Achebe complains that for all the undeniable power of some aspects of Conrad's critique of European imperialism, his own (representatively) unconscious racism prevented the writer from seeing Africa and its inhabitants as anything other than anterior, and inferior, to the West. More recently, Qian's study of Pound and W. C. Williams concludes that "Orientalism is a constitutive element" (1995: 5) of some modernist poetry; and Gikandi complains that modernism's deployment of "primitivism" "depends on a certain refusal to confer this [Other] with its own instruments of interpretation or reflection" (1997: 153). Postcolonial critics from the former "white Dominions" have been similarly disobliging about modernism, interpreting it as a tool of metropolitan hegemony over "settler" cultures. For example, Ashcroft and Salter assert that: "The high-cultural discourse of modernism, with its imposition of a set of largely uncontested parameters upon a non-European cultural reality, may be seen to be metonymic of the operation of imperial domination" (Booth and Rigby 2000: 293). This would certainly help explain why realist, rather than (neo-)modernist styles, were so often favored in the early, nationalist, phases of postcolonial literatures in the (to be) decolonized world.

Conversely, Anglo-American modernism has been reinterpreted to some degree and in certain instances as being critical of empire. Conrad's credentials in this regard have been defended against Achebe's strictures not just by metropolitan critics (for example, Bell 1997: 155–6) but in qualified form by later postcolonialists like Said (1993a: 20–35, 227). Similarly, the diasporic writer Caryl Phillips, who asks: "Are we, as Achebe suggests, to ignore the period in which novels are written and demand that the artist rise above the prejudices of his times?" (2003: 6). Equally, Kathy Phillips has argued of Woolf that although many of her works cast "a deflationary light on the ideologies of Empire, her message often has gone . . . undetected" (1994: xxx). Acknowledging an occasional tendency to condescension towards the colonized in her private writings, Phillips none the less concludes that in her maturity

Woolf began to see common cause between women in patriarchy and colonized people. Carr finds similar patterns of identification with the colonized in some Imagist poetry (Booth and Rigby: 64–92), supporting the strategic argument of the volume as a whole about the complexity of modernism's vision of colonialism (and the need to recognize the heterogeneity of both formations): “[C]olonialist tropes co-existed with the ideas and narratives that questioned, and in time helped to end, formal British imperialism” (Booth and Rigby 2000: 2).

Thirdly, postcolonialism has stimulated an interest in “alternative modernisms” and the impact of modernism on (post)colonial writing. Craven has argued that the term “modernismo” was invented in the 1880s by the Nicaraguan writer Ruben Dario, for whom the “themes of anti-imperialism and of racial harmony in concert with multiculturalism” (Craven 2002: 26) were as important as formal experimentation and the rejection of pre-modernist metropolitan styles. From Latin America, in this account, “modernismo” – though not necessarily all the attitudes and practices associated with the term – made its way to Barcelona and thence to Paris. Drawing on the work of Paul Gilroy, Gibbons (1996) makes a comparable argument about Ireland, with large implications for some other (post)colonial locations. Claiming that “the common inheritance of cultures subjected to the depredations of colonialism” was the experience of “disintegration and fragmentation,” Gibbons suggests that they “often evinced a ‘proto-modernist’ outlook” long before the advent of Anglo-American modernism (1996: 6). As this implies, at least some forms of non-metropolitan modernism cannot, therefore, be seen simply as a belated response to the new movement in the West, but are *sui generis*, drawing on resources “precolonial, colonial and postcolonial in origin” (Craven 2002: 23).

By contrast, other postcolonial scholarship focuses on how European modernism was adapted and changed in translation to the non-Western world. As Gikandi argues, modernism had “a wide appeal to black writers in both Africa and the Americas” (1997: 159), with the Harlem Renaissance (which was particularly strongly influenced by the Irish Renaissance) being a notable example in the latter arena. He goes on to suggest that even in contexts where Anglo-American modernism is acknowledged to be historically prior, as in Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean literature, the relationship is not, characteristically, one of simple mimicry. Instead, Gikandi discerns the subsequent elaboration of “a Third World modernism distinct from the prototypical European form” (1992: 5), not least in its desire to confront, not escape, “the nightmare of history” and its deep embrace of issues of political and economic modernization. Mark Williams argues that a comparable kind of counter-discursive strategy of appropriation often marked the adoption of modernism by the dominant ethnic cultures in “settler” colonies. Comparing the trajectory of Katherine Mansfield with other New Zealand writers of her generation, he suggests that “while Mansfield rejected Maoriland” (Williams’s term for early nationalist cultural formations in New Zealand) “in favour of international modernism, they did so in favour of a fiercely localised modernism,” with its own distinctive regional preoccupations and styles (M. Williams 2000: 261).

Finally, one should note that the conjunction has had some important revisionist implications for postcolonialism as well as for modernism. As Attridge and Howes suggest, some recent analyses of Joyce have not only generated innovative interpretations of the writer, but “fresh insights, and . . . new, but fruitful, difficulties” for postcolonialism itself (2000: 4–5; compare Kiberd: 5 and Lloyd 4–7). Such “fruitful difficulties” can be found in three general areas. The first concerns the political assumptions of postcolonialism. For example, Qian’s research challenges the conventional reading of “Orientalism” in postcolonial studies as simply a discourse of Western power. He argues that “this model has shortcomings” because certain modernists, at least, “did not seem to believe in Western cultural superiority” (1995: 2). The second concerns temporality. Kiberd uses Irish modernism to challenge the conventional periodization of postcolonialism as a phenomenon of the post-1945 era, arguing that “postcolonial writing does not begin only when the occupier withdraws; rather it is initiated at that very moment when a native writer formulates a text committed to cultural resistance” (Kiberd 1995: 6). Equally, Gibbons uses the Irish example to challenge dominant ideas about the geography of (post)colonialism. He complains that some of postcolonial criticism’s standard works “refuse to consider Ireland as a suitable case for post-colonial treatment at all” (Gibbons 1996: 174; compare Kiberd 1995: 4–5, and Lloyd 1993: 1–7), and uses Irish modernism in part to argue that they should. Such evidence suggests that the conjunction of modernism and postcolonialism has been productive for both fields of scholarship and augurs well for those who wish to explore it further.

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Global Modernisms

Melba Cuddy-Keane

“Global Modernisms” embraces a wide variety of approaches. Most straightforwardly, it involves the comparative study of modernist texts written in different global locations; more complexly, it can refer to intertextual or interdiscursive practices, and the investigation of global cross-cultural influences *within* individual modernist texts. It can mean studying the rise of translation in the modernist period, or the global reception – past and present – of modernist works. Or it can focus on international or global thinking in the modernist period, ranging from the first efforts to forge international agreements about the arbitration of disputes, armaments reduction, labor laws, and minority rights, to the way writers in this era responded to the rise of global travel and communications or the enveloping threat of world wars. Finally, it can mean probing the networks, allegiances, and interactions among diverse peoples in the modernist period for evidence of collaboration, cooperation, and multidirectional flows. All these are possible and fruitful directions, yet each raises a fundamental issue: the *critical* paradigms that, in studying global modernisms, we ourselves adopt or employ.

As a critical practice, “Global Modernisms” returns to the international theme in modernism to seek new understandings of complex global relations in multicentric and ethically responsible ways. A global approach to modernism must build upon two crucial insights from postcolonial theory: that the economic and political inequalities in the world prejudice both the dynamics and the possibilities of genuine cultural interaction and exchange, and that our understanding of what it means to be human must not begin from a point of privileging the human experience in one limited part of the world. At the same time, global understanding must go beyond the binary paradigms that have informed postcolonial critique: the oppositional constructs of dominant and oppressed, and of declining and emergent, that have characterized the primary relation between the imperial “centers” and the colonial “peripheries.” Global study recognizes that life within artificially mapped borders is always rich, varied, and mixed (both within individual countries and within those

fictive terrains of East and West), while the borders themselves are inevitably porous, transgressed by uneven yet multidirectional flows.

The porosity of borders characterizes globalism as a critical field as well. Where does postcolonial analysis end and global study begin? Is there any clear demarcation to be made between global studies, diaspora studies, immigrant studies, translation studies, and travel theory? And how does transnational feminism add to the mix? Interdependency is the defining feature of global relations, however, and rather than seeking compartmentalization, global studies invites such inter-area and interdisciplinary overlaps as crucial for the understanding of its complex issues. At the same time, to have any conceptual leverage in the midst of such expansive inclusiveness, global studies must also clarify its distinctive materials, methods, and goals.

The emergence of new areas is typically accompanied by skepticism and uncertainty, even concerning the terms to employ. Global, globalism, globality, globalization – all have prompted anxieties over control, whether it be the critic's presumed mastery of a field of otherness or the economic control of transnational corporations over the indigenous poor. But while alternative terms, such as “planetary” (Spivak 2003) and “plenary studies” (Cuddy-Keane 2003a), have been proposed, the best antidote for negative connotations is good critical practice. The advantage of the “global” terms is that they enable interdisciplinary dialogue, not merely within the humanities but with social sciences such as geography, international relations, political science, and economics as well. And while popular usage may seem to have turned these words into contemporary clichés, it also marks them as cultural “keywords” (Williams 1976), encapsulating the significant issues and debates of our time.

Academic study will benefit, none the less, from freeing these terms from the extremes of ideological weighting. “Global” undeniably implies a holistic approach, but realistic applications will take it to signify “pertaining to, affecting, and affected by the world,” rather than comprehensively surveying the entire sphere of global knowledge. The attendant terminology can be usefully differentiated in parallel with Michael Valdes Moses's distinctions among “the self-consciousness we call modernity, the narrative practices we call modernism, and the social, political, and economical process we call modernization” (1995: xii). Globality would then imply the experience or consciousness of the world as one place, globalism the multiple and varying practices that have emerged in response to that condition, and globalization the social, political, economic, and environmental processes that produce, primarily in an accelerating way, an interdependent, interconnected world.

To clarify the terms further, two common misperceptions must be dispelled. First, conceiving the world as one place does not imply homogeneity, nor does it ignore the importance of local identity. As the less than mellifluous coinage “glocal” suggests, “global” and “local,” or “human” and “individual,” are not binary opposites; instead, like “dwelling-in-travel” and “travel-in-dwelling” (Clifford 1992), they are bound together “in a nuanced, mutually constitutive relationship” (Anderson 1998: 265). What takes place elsewhere has an impact on the local, just as the effects of local

events are never solely on the local environment (Friedman 1998). "One place" means "no isolation," not "no distinctiveness."

Secondly, although "globalization" was first used with reference to the contemporary phenomena of multinational corporations, world financial markets, and internet connectivity, the term is increasingly understood as referring to processes that have been deployed broadly throughout history in many different cultural forms. As applicable to the dissemination of spiritual ideas as to the circulation of money, such processes are characterized by mobility, fluidity, and interconnectivity, as opposed to geopolitical formations that depend on the territorially bound (Cuddy-Keane 2003b). The global whole is "one large interactive system, composed of many complex subsystems" (Appadurai 1996: 41), where multiplicity within and porosity across borders define the relations among the parts. Approaching globalization through "pattern recognition" brings a wide range of processes into view, reaching beyond economic to cultural globalization (Held et al. 1999; Tomlinson 1999). Economics plays a foundational role but it does not invariably determine and limit the range of human imagination. And while global systems are as vulnerable to imperialistic exploitation as geopolitical formations (Brennan 1997), the former are arguably more adapted to cooperative, equitable, interactive exchange.

Globalization can thus be approached as a broad cultural and intellectual process extending back at least two thousand years. None the less, the modernist period is increasingly identified as a time of significant acceleration in the speed of intensifying global connections. Sociologist Roland Robertson (1992) regards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century as globalization's "Take-off Phase," citing the sharp rise in global communications, the entry of non-European societies into "international" society, the increasing diffusion and implementation of ideas at the international level (the ecumenical movement, the Olympics, the Nobel Prizes, the Gregorian calendar, and the League of Nations), and the first *world* war (59). Similarly, C. A. Bayly (2004) terms the early modernist period "The Great Acceleration," referencing not only the quickened "pace of inter-regional and global trade" (474) and the "revolution in communications" (461) but also the international activities of the Red Cross, global acceptance of the Greenwich Meridian, and the development of international laws and regulations regarding access to the deep oceans and Antarctica, the movements of ships and river traffic, public health, the protection of animals, and the conservation of the environment (487). Bayly furthermore cites more generalized trends, such as "patterns of middle-class action" (486), assumptions of what religions ought to be (480), "statishness" or governmentality in the broadest sense (474), the "myth of popular resistance" organized into politicized patterns of peasant and working-class agitation (478–9), and the variety and "complexity of ideological positions" (485).

Yet Bayly's story of the world's move to increasing uniformity is the story as well of the rise of nationalisms, the heightening of differences, and the eruptions of antagonisms. This same era is marked by the imperialist reach of England, Belgium, Spain, France, Germany, America, and Japan, and by the rise of national

independence movements in Ireland, India, and other emerging states. Yet even here global connections apply, as concepts of nationalism themselves become objects of global exchange. Like the global and the local, internationalism and nationalism are inextricably intertwined: as Bayly states, “Neither a ‘diffusionist’ nor an ‘endogenous’ explanation of intellectual and social change is satisfactory. What is required is a blending and transcending of both” (295).

Such patterns of contradictory and paradoxical impulses highlight the close relation between critical *paradigms* of globality and modernist *aesthetics*, proceeding from a characteristic anti-foundationalism in both. Despite late twentieth-century claims that modernist aesthetics evinces universalizing, totalizing strategies, situating modernism in its own time reminds us that many, if not most, modernist writers wrote in resistance to the moral, political, and religious fundamentalisms of the previous era. The crucial stylistic modernist features of perspectivism, reflexivity, parataxis, and ambiguity parallel the complex interactive systems of globalist thought, leading us to consider both how modernism models globalism and, conversely, how increasing global connections exerted a formative influence on modernist literary styles.

Approaching modernism through the global prompts a reconsideration of two of modernism’s more controversial features: individualism and cosmopolitanism. Modernism’s focus on individual subjectivity has been criticized for neglecting the social and political, and modernism’s cosmopolitanism for implicitly attributing universality to metropolitan, European views. But a growing number of studies challenge the binary of individual and collective, investigating those versions of modernist cosmopolitanism that derived their communal visions from the recognition of, and responsibility toward, *other* individuals (Cuddy-Keane 2003a). Jessica Berman (2001) shows how modernist narrative models new process-oriented versions of cosmopolitan communities, resisting both authoritarian hierarchies and the coercive goal of ideal consensus, and opening a place for “pariah solidarities” among culturally marginalized or occluded voices. Ross Posnock (1998) examines concepts of the black intellectual during the Harlem Renaissance, revealing a similar turn to performative and anti-proprietary versions of cosmopolitanism that resist the racialized, “imperialist logic of identity” (104) and claim *all* culture as available for *all* to use. Brent Hayes Edwards (2003) tracks a “vagabond internationalism” working, in the black diaspora, outside the logic of capitalist civilization, and acknowledging a complex of linkages marked both by solidarities and by gaps and fissures in translation. Modernist notions of cosmopolitanism originate from different centers, yet they all encode a fundamental complexity at the core.

Global modernism further extends to the study of global encounters – between texts, within texts, and among writers from different locations. Tracking the intertextual traveling of ideas, for example, Stephanie Newell (2000) discusses the indigenization and “regeneration” of George Bernard Shaw’s *The Adventures of a Black Girl in her Search for God* (1932) in *The Adventures of a Black Girl in her Search for Mr. Shaw* (1934) by the Ghanaian writer Mabel Dove. Analysing global encounters *within* modernist texts, Cuddy-Keane (2003b) identifies four tropic structures (Critical,

Syncretic, Co-habiting, and Runaway) that function as alternatives to Orientalism and foreground questions of ethical seeing and ethical response. An increasing body of work investigates the actual networks linking writers and intellectuals from different colonial locations, or crossing the imperial/colonial geographic divide. Elleke Boehmer (2002) examines cross-fertilizations between Ireland and India (see also Viswanathan 2004), and traces in Solomon Plaatje an international interdiscursivity connecting, but also complicating, the lines running from South Africa to Britain, North America, and India. Boehmer further considers the multiply inflected yet often mutually supportive relations between anti-imperialists from the colonized world and radical anti-imperialists – like Leonard Woolf – in the metropolitan centre, positing a new “respect for alterity” stimulated by an awareness of the “shared dilemmas of self-making” and “the influence of a world situation in which such interaccommodations were increasingly being taken into account” (2002: 177). Finally, since crossings between European countries, within the British Isles, between America and Europe, and within the North American continent constituted, even as late as the modernist period, a global encounter of some proportion, the West is now subject to new scrutiny for the paradigms of globalism it may encode.

Although it thus expands the critical frame, global study nevertheless raises questions about cultural inclusiveness. Is globality itself not restricted to a cultural elite? How can modernist culture, so identified with metropolitan centers, be characteristic of regions whose economies are not technologically oriented, or whose peoples have not traveled extensively beyond the immediate geographical region? Conversely, if our study comprehensively encompasses the diversities of cultures and peoples throughout the world, what is the likelihood of identifying common features, beyond delimiting dates, that can be considered distinctively modernist?

First, global ideas do not depend on high-speed communication and world travel. Since globality includes imagining the planet as an ecological system, many cultures – especially, but not only, aboriginal cultures – conceptualize nature in global ways and conceive intricate networks connecting ecological, spiritual, social and political levels. Secondly, as Clifford’s phrase “travel-in dwelling” implies, even people whose lives are rooted in a single, stationary location experience the effects of travel, as the migration of people, goods, and ideas across their borders brings the elsewhere to the here (1992). Thirdly, there were clearly more global travelers and cross-national social and political networks in the modernist period than we have yet taken into account. Current research is documenting an extensive presence of African, West Indian, and Asian travelers and settlers in Britain, for example, complementing ongoing work on immigrant peoples in the United States. We need to study not only how such mobile populations saw, but also how they helped to shape, the place to which they came.

An expanded geographical field may also require some flexibility in historical frame. Modernism generally designates the period 1880–1945, but Global Modernisms requires a longer view. As a case in point, an exhibit held in 2001–2 – *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994* – showcased works

of African Modernism arising out of networks linking African artists with the European avant-garde, the American civil rights movement, and European and American cities (2001). Cultural versionings of modernism happen in different places at different times; currents originating before the mid-twentieth century often build up to waves in the latter half. While “modernism” needs, for coherence, to preserve its grounding in the period roughly from the *fin de siècle* (or perhaps the Japanese Meiji Restoration, or the Chinese Hundred Days’ Reform) to the end of the Second World War, obviously its beginnings and endings need to be adapted to the particular regions involved.

Finally, global perceptions do not depend on an avant-garde aesthetic. Although modernist experimentation and innovation is particularly adapted to pluralistic, relational thinking, it is a fallacy to apply reverse logic and think that relational views cannot be expressed in traditional art. Furthermore, comparative global scholarship can read across the borders of traditional and nontraditional works by considering different engagements with a common global theme, such as the dialectical tensions between pre-modern and modern ways of life (Moses 1995). Cultural privileging can also be countered by incorporating reflections on our own practices as global readers of global modernist texts. David Damrosch (2003) thus questions the way universal significance has, in various times and locations, been differently *produced*, as texts not only acquire new (sometimes recuperative, sometimes appropriative) readings but also fluctuate in and out of the category of works *considered* to have universal significance.

Overall, Global Modernisms confronts the challenge of articulating “a crossroads of multiply situated knowledges” (Friedman 2001: 21), of tracing what Bayly terms the complex “human texture of history” (xxiii) made of multiple strands and subject to the multicentric origins of change. It confronts as well the intellectual goal proposed by Edward Said in his last and posthumous book (2004): a new, inclusive, and democratic humanism achieved through an active and always questioning critical practice. And Said highlights the relevance of this task for modernist critics: “Would it be possible to introduce a *modernist* theory and practice of reading and interpreting the part to the whole in such a way as neither to deny the specificity of the individual experience in and of an aesthetic work nor to rule out the validity of a projected, putative, or implied sense of the whole?” (55). Critically engaging the past in these terms, neither collapsing the parts into the whole nor losing, in diversity, the perception of underlying connectivity, global scholarship seeks to uncover modernism’s potential for generating more tolerant understandings and more ethical commitments to all the peoples of the world.

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Postmodernism

Bran Nicol

Though first used to define a style of architecture in the 1940s, the term *postmodernism* first became widely used in the 1960s to describe a “new sensibility” in literature which either rejected modernist attitudes and techniques or adapted or extended them. In the following decades the term began to figure in other academic disciplines too, such as social theory, cultural and media studies, visual arts, philosophy, and history. Such widespread usage meant that an already contentious term became overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as art and literature.

To understand the postmodern it is therefore useful to distinguish between *postmodernity*, the economic and social conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and *postmodernism*, aesthetic and intellectual production in this period. More specifically, we can say that postmodernism refers to (1) changes in how we live in the period from, roughly, the Second World War to the present day and (2) how these changes have led to shifts in the way we think, feel, and express ourselves culturally and aesthetically.

Postmodernity is an umbrella term for a set of related socioeconomic phenomena. It is “postindustrial” (Bell 1973), as the production of consumer goods has replaced “heavy” industry (such as manufacturing or coalmining); “post-Fordist” (Harvey 1989), in that work is increasingly bureaucratic, and an ethos of flexibility governs labour markets, patterns of consumption, and geographical mobility; and “late capitalist” (Jameson 1984), as areas of society which were previously much less affected by the logic of the market, such as the media, the arts, or education are now effectively run as businesses. Crucially, this changing socioeconomic landscape is underscored by the massive late twentieth-century growth in the power and influence of global mass media.

The consequence of living in a postindustrial, media-saturated world, according to theorists of postmodernity, is that we have become alienated from those aspects of life we might consider authentic or *real*. While our working lives are

still “real” (we go to work and pay the bills) they are not as real as, say, working on the land or building a ship. Instead we spend most of our time at our desks in front of a computer screen processing “information” of one kind or another. What we engage with are effectively symbolic representations rather than real, tangible objects.

This gradual separation from reality has been intensified by the power of the media to shape our experience of the world. We tend to think of “virtual reality” as a kind of science fiction, something available in the near future, once computers are sophisticated enough to enable us to inhabit a fake version of the world but behave as if it were real. But as the postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard has argued (1994), virtual reality is already here, and we all live in it almost every moment of our lives. We “experience” the world through TV news or “reality TV” shows, engage with other people we have never met (in internet chatrooms, or in our fascination with celebrities), use e-mail to communicate virtually to real people. Baudrillard is famous for his idea of “hyperreality,” in which the distinction between real and copy has become eroded. Where, before postmodernity, technology could copy things (e.g. a tape recorder could record sound), we could still distinguish between original and copy. Now technology has erased this distinction with increasingly far-reaching consequences: we can no more tell the difference between the war film and real war than we can distinguish between original music and its digital reproduction.

We might expect that being divorced from reality in this way would have profound consequences for the way we respond to the conditions in which we live – the way we *feel*, in other words. Indeed a loss of reality is a symptom, in psychoanalytic terms, of a range of psychic disorders, from mild depression to full-blown psychosis. Not surprisingly, postmodern theorists have often employed the language of mental disorder to describe the effects of postmodernity on those who live through it. In Fredric Jameson’s famous essay “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (1984), for example, the postmodern mindset is associated variously with schizophrenia, hysteria, nostalgia, paranoia, and a more general “waning of affect.” Crucially, he says, our sense of identity suffers as we are unable to place ourselves in a properly *historical* context. History has become simply a matter of “styles” which can be pastiched in the latest retro clothes or “theme pubs” or in “nostalgia films” like Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974) – a historical film which Jameson thinks bears no reliable traces of history.

The tendency to equate postmodernity with “disorder” means that one of the commonly used phrases to describe postmodern life, Jean-François Lyotard’s “the postmodern condition,” is especially appropriate. But Lyotard is one of a number of theorists who differ from the likes of Jameson and Baudrillard by depicting the condition of postmodernity as potentially more positive.

Central here is the attitude of *self-reflexivity* or ironic knowingness which characterizes postmodern culture. We may be divorced from the real, but at least we *know* we are. More precisely, we know we can no longer take for granted (if we ever did) that

“reality” is something natural, something innocently “given.” Rather, reality is an ideological illusion sustained by the matrix of postindustrialism and media culture. Where ideology once referred to a kind of “false consciousness,” where we were fooled into subscribing to the belief systems of the ruling classes, now we engage with ideology in a more complex way. Instead of being seduced by ideology into acting in the way it wants us to act or believing what it wants us to believe, in fact – to adapt a phrase of the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk’s, we know what we are doing is false, but we do it anyway (1987: 5).

To think of the postmodern attitude in terms of Sloterdijk’s “cynical reason” sounds like a criticism, and indeed some theorists such as Jameson or Slavoj Žižek (Žižek 2002) have condemned postmodernism for just this quality. It means, they suggest, that there is no *political* capacity to postmodernism, everything is simply accepted, there is no attempt to engineer change. But equally we might argue that there is a critical dimension to this knowingness. Lyotard’s book *The Postmodern Condition*, first published in 1979, is mainly about a particular form of ideology which has enabled religion, politics, philosophy, and science to preserve their power throughout modernity. He calls this the “metanarrative,” a kind of grand story which imposes an artificial sense of order and unity on what are in fact a series of disparate events. By doing so the metanarrative justifies why a particular body of thought (science, religion, etc.) should be transcendent (Lyotard 1984: 27–8).

But the characteristic feature of postmodernity, according to Lyotard, is that the power of the metanarrative as a legitimating, empowering force has begun to wane. We simply don’t believe in metanarratives any more. We recognize the rhetorical function of narrative, and appreciate that alternative narratives could be fashioned from the same groups of events. Postmodernity, Lyotard argues, prefers “little narratives” (*petit récits*), those which do not attempt to present an overarching truth but offer a qualified, limited truth, relative to a particular situation. In this way the postmodern mind is political: it suggests a way of challenging dominant systems of power by refusing to believe in their legitimating ideology.

Another way of putting all this is to argue that the postmodern attitude is predominantly *ironic*. Irony is a non-literal usage of language, where what is said is contradicted by what is meant (either deliberately or unwittingly) or what is said is subverted by the particular context in which it is said. It works because we are unconsciously aware that in language meanings are not fixed but contain a myriad other potential meanings. All words are stained by their previous uses, and their meaning changes depending on the tone of utterance or the particular context in which they are uttered. Irony is therefore not just cynical, not just a way of making fun of the world. It demonstrates a knowingness about how reality is ideologically constructed. This ironic attitude is exhibited in works of popular culture which are seen as characteristically postmodern, such as the cartoon series, *The Simpsons*, episodes of which continually allude to, parody, and imitate other TV programmes, films and cultural events. While this tendency might be seen as simply one more source of comedy in a show designed to be funny, *The Simpsons*’s intertextual references and

self-referentiality also serve to remind us how deeply enmeshed our lives are in the world of media representation.

Irony is also the dominant mode of postmodern literature. The most characteristic practice in postmodern fiction is *metafiction*, by which a text highlights its own status as a fictional construct. Self-reference is the literary equivalent of the postmodern ironic attitude, indicating that we cannot accept the “reality” we are presented with in a novel at face value. Metafiction reminds us – most obviously when the author of the text suddenly “enters” the world of the fiction and breaks the illusion, as in John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) or Paul Auster’s *City of Glass* (1985), or through the use of intertextuality (postmodern fiction is full of examples of texts which rewrite or parody or pastiche other texts) – that the work of fiction we read *is* fiction; it is not a magical mirror onto the world but a combination of words on a page that we must make sense of by relating to other texts, not the external world. To state this seems pointless, for even the least self-conscious readers of fiction know that they are “suspending their disbelief” as they read. Yet the implication, as Patricia Waugh makes clear in her book *Metafiction* (1984), is to remind us that the real world is effectively just as constructed, mediated, and discursive as the reality we are presented with in the world of fiction.

The predisposition toward irony in postmodern fiction also suggests an acute self-consciousness about its place in literary history. The novelist and literary theorist Umberto Eco has famously said

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her “I love you madly”, because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, “as Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly.” (Eco 1983)

Thus he is still able to say what he wants to say while at the same time expressing his anxiety that everything has been said before, it is impossible to be original. Eco’s point is that this neatly encapsulates the dilemma for the postmodern writer who is aware of coming *after* the major innovations in literary history – especially modernism. Where modernism had an unparalleled faith in the capacity of literature to innovate, to “make it new,” this faith is lacking in postmodernism. In his essay “The Literature of Exhaustion” ([1967] 1990) the American novelist John Barth argued that after modernism all the various forms of fiction had been “used up.” The only way the postmodern writer could continue to write was by following the model of Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, and self-consciously making the question of exhaustion the very subject of fiction.

Throughout the postmodernism debate there have always been passionately expressed differences of opinion about whether postmodernism really amounts to a departure from modernism or whether it simply continues with concerns originally dealt with by modernist writers. Perhaps a more productive and more accurate way

of describing the relationship between two such inclusive and expansive movements is to follow the logic regarded by Linda Hutcheon as typical of postmodernism. Postmodernism, she argues, is characterized by the logic of “both . . . and . . .” rather than “either . . . or . . .,” tending to represent both sides of an opposition at the same time (Hutcheon 1988). Postmodernism is therefore simultaneously a continuation of and a break with the practices and ideologies of modernism. Metafiction, for example, is central to modernist fiction, which often features novels about novelists (such as Gide’s *The Counterfeiters*) or writing which self-consciously draws attention to itself (such as Joyce’s *Ulysses*). The difference is really one of degree. We might regard the innovative metafictional writing of postmodernist American writers of the 1960s and 1970s, like Barth, Robert Coover, and William H. Gass, as extending this aspect of modernism as far as it will go. Other examples of postmodern fiction take the metafictional in new directions entirely. Hutcheon (1988) has drawn attention to the postmodern fondness for “historiographic metafiction,” a self-reflexive version of the historical novel which teaches us that history is not a given, but something which always comes to us mediated through writing.

As a set of aesthetic practices, then, we might consider postmodernism as a reworking or re-emphasis of aspects of modernism. But the concerns of postmodernist writers indicate a departure from some of the key values of modernism: sincerity, authenticity, originality. This seems indisputably the result of the difference in socio-historical context. To write fiction in postmodernity is clearly a very different endeavor from doing so in the early part of the twentieth century. As Malcolm Bradbury once put it, the postmodern is not only post-war but also “post-Holocaust, post-atomic, post-ideological, post-humanist, post-political” (1993: 268). We might add to this list: postfeminist, postcolonial, *post-ironic*. For it is the sheer dominance of the ironic mode of thought and expression which is surely the key difference between modernism and postmodernism. It is more than just a change in literary style, the way that clothing goes in and out of fashion. The irony of postmodernism signals a break with modernism in so far as modernism equates to a particular kind of elitism and seriousness in art. One of the obvious effects of the acceleration of mass-media and consumer culture is a “closing of the gap” (to use the terminology of Leslie Fiedler’s 1967 polemic “Cross the Border – Close that Gap” (1975)) between elite and mass culture. In postmodernity serious literary novels (such as those of Rushdie or Amis) can make the bestseller lists, while works of “popular” fiction (for example, Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs*) can become fixtures on university courses.

It is worth noting that for all its lack of confidence regarding fictional innovation, postmodernism has also developed its own distinctive genres: “cyberpunk,” for example (as exemplified in the work of William Gibson), which depicts the postmodern world as science fiction, the future already arrived, or “brat pack” fiction (for example by Bret Easton Ellis and Douglas Coupland), novels which take as their subject, and whose form mirrors, the peculiar blend of excess and emptiness of postmodern consumer culture.

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Epilogue: Modernism Now

Marjorie Perloff

The great revolution of the early twentieth century designated by the term *modernism* – a term that refers not only to a period (roughly 1900–30) but to an ethos – remains, at the beginning of our own century, incomplete and *open* to the future: *modernism*, it is now widely understood, is not yet finished, its momentum having been deferred by two world wars and the Cold War so that many of its principles are only now being brought to fruition. But the recognition that we are still modernists has been slow in coming, for in the decades following the Second World War, the common wisdom was that the modernism of the early century was tainted by its racism, sexism, and elitism – its retrograde politics, and “purist” aestheticism. Modernist “genius theory” was mocked by critics of both left and right, as was the purported faith in modernist autonomy and the primacy of poetic form.

But from the vantage point of the new century, the rejection of modernism no longer makes much sense. True, as many of the authors in this collection demonstrate, modernist poems, novels, plays, and films reflect attitudes toward race, class, and gender that now strike us as unacceptable. As Frank Kermode argued, in his early critique *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), the system building and use of explanatory myth characteristic of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis led to “totalitarian theories of form [that were] matched or reflected by totalitarian politics.” Indeed, Eliot’s celebrated cult of “tradition” could be seen, in this context, as a longing for “the continuity of imperial deposits,” a “persistent nostalgia for closed, immobile hierarchical societies.”

Kermode himself was not writing as a Marxist critic, but Marxist theory quickly picked up the thread, as critic after critic came to uncover what Robert Casillo called, *vis-à-vis* Pound, the “genealogy of demons.” Pound’s fascism and overt anti-Semitism, as expressed in his Rome broadcasts during the Second World War, which led to the poet’s decade-long incarceration in St. Elizabeth’s psychiatric hospital in Washington, D.C., were excoriated as somehow inherently modernist. Eliot, after all,

also made overtly racist and anti-Semitic statements in his poetry, as when in “Gerontion,” we read:

My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.

And although most modernist poets did not go as far as Eliot or Pound, they were given, like Hart Crane, to talking of the “nigger-brass percussions” heard in nightclubs, or to referring, like William Carlos Williams in *Paterson*, to a poor slum girl as “Beautiful Thing.” Even Gertrude Stein, who, as a female, lesbian, and Jewish writer, seemed exempt from the prejudices of her day, recycled the racist concepts of her day in her “negro story” “Melanctha,” and we now know that Stein translated – quite willingly – the speeches of the collaborationist Vichy government’s leader Maréchal Petain during the Second World War. And – even more surprising – Bertrand Russell, known for his championship of radical causes, was given, in letters to friends and lovers, to racist and anti-Semitic slurs that make Eliot’s lines in *Gerontion* look almost tame.

But as the early twentieth century recedes in time, we are beginning to understand that modernist values cannot be understood outside their historical context. The modernist era was one in which a remarkable utopian vision, of which more in a moment, culminated in two deadly world wars (or, more properly, one long world war), and two even more deadly ideologies – fascism and communism. In the course of the upheaval that resulted, the Enlightenment faith in rationality and progress was destroyed once and for all. Principles that had been taken for granted for centuries now came in for total transvaluation.

The literature that records this transvaluation is by no means “pretty” – it is merely fascinating and fabulous. For one thing – and it is important to remember this – there is no necessary connection between “good” literature and “good” politics. On the contrary, great literature has more often than not been born of struggle, opposition, and the need to rethink current pieties and accepted values. Secondly, as Theodor Adorno argued persuasively in his *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), the modernist emphasis on form is by no means retrograde, for poetic form functions to resist the ideological pressure it represses. Indeed, *resistance* is the key to the successful artwork, which is thus of necessity dialectical: “the concrete historical situation, art’s other, is [its] condition.” And it is the *poetics* of such resistance that continues to dazzle readers coming to modernist works a century later.

From Rimbaud’s insistence in 1873, that “Il faut être absolument moderne,” to Pound’s 1918 declaration that “no good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old” and his later declaration that “Poetry is news that STAYS news,” to D. H. Lawrence’s demand, in a 1923 manifesto of that name, for “Surgery for the Novel – or a Bomb,” to Williams’s account of the ways in which Marianne Moore’s “wiping

soiled words or cutting them clean out, removing the aureoles that have been pasted about them or taking them bodily from greasy contexts,” modernism perceived its own mission as a call for necessary rupture. Even W. B. Yeats, that self-styled “last romantic,” declared in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935*: “The revolt against Victorianism meant to the young poet a revolt against irrelevant description of nature, the scientific and moral discursiveness of *In Memoriam* . . . the political eloquence of Swinburne, the psychological curiosity of Browning, and the poetical diction of everybody.”

The radicalism of modernist publication, moreover, is attested by its public reception. In 1916, Lawrence’s great experimental novel *The Rainbow* was banned under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, thus setting the stage for Lawrence’s lifelong battle against censorship. Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) could not be published in the United States until the landmark decision of Judge Woolsey in December 1933 cleared the novel of obscenity charges. Poetry was less likely to be judged obscene than the fiction or drama of the period, but again, it helps to remember that Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” now a classroom and anthology classic, was dismissed, in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*, as the senseless rambling of a confused mind, even as Williams’s *Spring and All* (1923), published in an edition of three hundred copies in Dijon, France, was almost entirely overlooked. “Nobody,” Williams later recalled, “ever saw it – it had no circulation at all.” And Gertrude Stein’s “writing” was alternately lampooned and dismissed as “mere” automatic writing – which is to say, pure nonsense.

What was it that made the modernist period, especially in its early utopian stages, so revolutionary? The transformation of an agrarian world into an urbanized one, which went hand in hand with the astonishing inventions of the period – the internal combustion engine, diesel engine and steam turbine, the automobile, motor bus, tractor, and soon the airplane, the telegraph, telephone, and typewriter, the dissemination of electricity, and the creation of synthetic dyes, fibers, and plastics – all these contributed to what Modris Ecksteins in his *Rites of Spring* (1989) has characterized as the *Flucht nach vorne* – the flight forward. The Einsteinian revolution, the “new” non-Euclidean geometries, the invention of the Roentgen X-ray: these heavily influenced the arts and poetries of the early century; witness Marcel Duchamp’s found objects known as readymades, his non-semantic poetry, his use of chance and “playful physics” in *The Large Glass* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*). Consider, too, how the population of the capitals of Europe and New York multiplied. To give just one example: in 1870 Germany, not yet a unified nation, had a population that was two-thirds rural; by 1914 that relationship had been reversed, and two-thirds of all Germans lived in cities. In New York, as in Paris, the advertising industry, mass entertainment, and popular journalism came to the fore and changed the dynamic of art reception. So successful and widespread were the new networks of communication that contact between individual nations became at once much easier and yet fraught with the proximity and hence competition that led to the First World War. The first flight across the English Channel, for example, which

took place in July 1909, and was celebrated by Robert Delaunay in his painting *Hommage à Blériot*, was followed, no more than six years later, by airplanes dropping bombs over Paris in the First World War.

Indeed, the “Renaissance of 1910,” as Guy Davenport calls the pre-war period, came to an abrupt end with the onset of what was the most pointless of wars:

By 1916 this springtime was blighted by the World War, the tragic effects of which cannot be overestimated and which extinguished European culture. (Students reading Pound’s “eye deep in hell” automatically think it is an allusion to Dante until you tell them about trenches.) Accuracy in such matters being impossible, we can say nevertheless that the brilliant experimental period in twentieth-century art was stopped short in 1916. Charles Ives had written his best music by then; Picasso had become Picasso, Pound Pound, and Joyce Joyce. Except for individual talents, already in development before 1916, moving on to full maturity, the century was over in its sixteenth year. (*The Geography of Imagination* 314)

This is a radical view of a radical period but one which is actually quite plausible. Davenport adds that the “collapse” of 1916 was less endgame than “interruption.” Obviously there was to be important literature after the Great War, but what Davenport means is that the revolutionary modes and techniques we associate with modernism – and which have everything to do with the revolutionary changes in the culture itself – were all in place by 1916.

What were these modes? First and foremost, the demise of mimesis, of representation, as the accepted purpose of the literary construct. For the modernists, the role of poetry is not to *represent* the world outside language, but to create a linguistic field that has its own mode of being. “Reality,” by this token, cannot, in any case, be known directly; it can be revealed only by the mediation of the Symbol: one thinks of Hart Crane’s epic poem *The Bridge*, which presents its myth of spanning the American continent by means of the symbolism of Brooklyn Bridge and related circular forms. The projected autonomy of art and its divorce from truth or morality puts heavy weight on the poet him- or herself; the heroic modernist poet is the genius who can and must “Make it New.” In this regard, Gertrude Stein is very much like the T. S. Eliot who was supposedly her enemy: she was a firm believer in genius and in art as the very center (and the opposite) of life. Aesthetic work, for Stein, was the only “work” that really mattered, that made living worthwhile. And although Marcel Duchamp pretended to total “aesthetic indifference” and claimed to prefer playing chess to art-making, there is no doubt that he too did everything in his power – including the avoidance of all military service and inconvenience in both world wars and of marriage as tying the artist down to bourgeois living habits and the need to earn money – to be free to make his readymades, boxes, and the installation of the *Large Glass*.

The corollary of the anti-mimetic contract of modernism is that the art work is autonomous, that it has a life of its own, independent of its possible “reflection” of reality or personal feeling. “Poetry,” Eliot announced in “Tradition and the Individual

Talent," "is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion," although he added, somewhat coyly, "But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things." The new autonomous poem, moreover, avoided the linearity of its Romantic and Victorian predecessors, exhibiting the alogical form Joseph Frank dubbed "spatial form," its parts relating less by causality or sequence than by the metonymic structure of juxtapositions that came to be known as *collage*. Indeed, *collage* – literally a "pasting together," originally applied to lovers – and the key art form for Picasso and Braque after 1912, became one of the dominant forms of modernist poetry. *The Waste Land*, Pound's *Cantos*, Williams's *Spring and All* and later *Paterson*, Mina Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, Louis Zukofsky's "A" – these are collage-texts in which unlikely materials are juxtaposed so as to create a dense semantic structure.

That language, modernist poetics held, had to be *concrete*. From Eliot's *objective correlative* to Marianne Moore's "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," to Ezra Pound's Imagist manifesto in "A Retrospect," with its demand to "Go in fear of abstractions," and his definition of the Image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," to Williams's "No ideas but in things," precision and what Pound called "constatation of fact" were the order of the day. Yet precision did not necessarily mean "clear, visual images" – the term Eliot used to describe Dante's poetry in *The Divine Comedy*. The term could also refer to precision of syntax – a syntax commensurate to the articulation of a complex set of ideas – as in Gertrude Stein or in Wallace Stevens, or, for that matter, to precision of sound, to the finding of the perfectly appropriate rhyme or rhythm, as in Langston Hughes or Jean Toomer. In all these instances, poetry is regarded as an art of "verbivocovisual" (Joyce's term) complexity and difficulty. Whereas Victorian poetry and its American counterpart in the poetry, say, of Longfellow, was aimed at the larger reading public, modernists demanded that the public would meet them more than half-way, would take the trouble to unravel what had taken the poets themselves so long to do. One thinks of Joyce declaring that if it took him eight years to write *Ulysses*, readers ought to be willing to take the necessary time to read it.

Other modernist continuities are more thematic than formal. Modernism attached much importance to the newly discovered Freudian unconscious, to dream work, and to the use of myth and archetypal narratives as organizing structures. Thus *The Waste Land* takes its structural motive from the vegetation myths discussed in J. M. Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, even as Pound's *Cantos* fuse Confucian historiography with Greek myth and the Homeric paradigm of the *Odyssey*. Indeed, Guy Davenport has argued that the "renaissance" of the twentieth century "has been a renaissance of the archaic," that the age defined itself by such discoveries as that of the prehistoric Lascaux caves and their amazing drawings, of the *Kouroi* or Archaic Greece, and the revival of the pre-Socratic philosophers, for whom "science and poetry are still the same thing." "[Buckminster] Fuller," writes Davenport, "is our Pythagoras, Niels Bohr is our Democritus, Ludwig Wittgenstein is our Heraclitus."

The appeal of the archaic goes hand in hand with the modernist obsession with the meaning of exile: indeed, the diaspora literature of our own time begins in the early twentieth century. Most nineteenth-century poets and novelists, after all, lived primarily in and identified with the country of their birth: think of Austen and Trollope, Wordsworth and Tennyson, Dickinson and Whitman. But the 1910s and 1920s witnessed the expatriation of Gertrude Stein, who lived in Paris most of her adult life, T. S. Eliot (London), Ezra Pound (first London, then Paris, then Rapallo, Italy), and H. D. (London, Switzerland). British writers – Lawrence, Ford, Joyce – similarly went into exile. Those Americans who stayed home like Williams, Moore, and Stevens, lived in exotic places in their imagination and introduced foreign words and phrases (mostly French) into their poems. Again, Louis Zukofsky and Charles Reznikoff were both born in the US to immigrant Jewish parents, fleeing the Russian pogroms; Zukofsky’s first language was Yiddish. Other poets, for example Langston Hughes, traveled widely – to Cuba and South America, to Russia and Japan. Poetry thus became a more cosmopolitan, nomadic pursuit than it had been in the nineteenth century. “Questions of travel,” to borrow Elizabeth Bishop’s title, were on everyone’s mind.

What, then, of modernism’s later trajectory? “From the Modernism that you want,” the poet David Antin once quipped, “you get the Postmodernism you deserve.” In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1982), Ihab Hassan drew up a chart, admittedly schematic, of the difference between the two. Here, with some omissions, is Hassan’s schema:

<i>Modernism</i>	<i>Postmodernism</i>
Romanticism/Symbolism	Pataphysics/Dadaism
Form (conjunctive, closed)	Antiform (disjunctive, open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Art object/Finished work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Metaphor	Metonym
<i>Lisible</i> (readerly)	<i>Scriptible</i> (writerly)
Origin/Cause	Differance/Trace
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence

The difficulty with this chart – a difficulty not fully understood when Hassan first put forward this blueprint – is that, as the distance between the first appearance of “postmodernism” and the present has increased, we can see that most of the attributes in the right-hand column were already present in modernism. Can

we, for example, talk of “Gerontion” as a “readerly” rather than “writerly” text? of determinacy in Crane’s *Bridge* or Williams’s *Kora in Hell*? of hierarchy in Stevens’s *Auroras of Autumn*? of “transcendence” in Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*? At every turn, the neat dichotomy between modernism and postmodernism is called into question.

But Antin’s reference to the “modernism that you want” raises further complications. The first item in Hassan’s right-hand column is “Pataphysics/Dadaism.” No doubt, what Hassan meant is that 1960s poets and artists revived these earlier movements and produced such “neo-Dada” works as John Cage’s silent piano piece *4’33”* or Jackson Mac Low’s *The Pronouns*. But after all, Dada was chronologically a modernist movement, and surely Duchamp, perhaps the most quintessential modernist of all, was the purveyor *par excellence* of play, chance, anarchy, audience participation, and especially “Process/Performance/Happening.” The readymades, let’s remember, date from the mid-1910s, the *Large Glass* from 1922, and nothing produced in the “postmodern” era has quite surpassed these works with respect to “Making it New.”

It may be countered, of course, that I am blurring the well-known distinctions between the terms *modernist* and *avant-garde*. But if the past decade has taught us anything, it is that the opposition between the “established,” “conservative” modernist artist and the “radical” avant-gardist no longer has much meaning. Duchamp, in later life, paid homage to Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent”; Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl!* presents itself overtly as an heir to *Paterson* and the *Cantos*, even as John Ashbery’s *Litany* harks back to Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. As for the recent experiments of Language Poetry, such poets as Charles Bernstein and Steve McCaffery, Lyn Hejnia and Susan Howe can now be seen to come squarely out of the modernist tradition, even as they carry play and indeterminacy, chance and dispersal much further.

To recapitulate: it was in the modernist era, especially in its first utopian, radical, optimistic phase, that the great literary inventions of our time – collage, simultaneity, free verse and verse–prose combinations, genre-mixing, indeterminacy of image and syntax – were born. When, in the period *entre deux guerres*, modernism was refigured, it became, of course, more socially and politically conscious, giving us the ethical concerns of the Objectivists, and the poetics of *Négritude* of Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor abroad and those of the Harlem Renaissance at home. After the Second World War, the landscape turned increasingly darker, even for a seemingly light-hearted and jaunty poet like Frank O’Hara, who declares, in a moment of despair recorded in “Ode (to Joseph LeSueur) on the Arrow that Flieth by Day” (1958):

for God’s sake fly the other way
 leave me standing alone crumbling in the new sky of the Wide World
 without passage, without breath
 a spatial representative of emptiness

Yet even for a late modernist like O'Hara, it is art that supplies redemption: "A Step Away from Them," which mourns the deaths of such artist friends as Bunny Lang and John Latouche, as well as that of Jackson Pollock, ends with the lines:

A glass of papaya juice
and back to work. My heart is in my
pocket, it is Poems by Pierre Reverdy.

A tribute to a great modernist precursor: perhaps this is still the poetic condition.

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