

THE GREAT WAR AND THE ANNUS MIRABILIS

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ABSTRACT

Patrick Eichholz: The Great War and the Annus Mirabilis
(Under the direction of John McGowan)

This dissertation surveys British literary culture from 1914 to 1922, including works of fiction, poetry, philosophy, art history, and literary criticism. From each genre, I have culled prominent examples of postwar formal theory and experimentation. The three central works are Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The attention to form exhibited in each of these works has come to define what it means to be a modernist in their respected genres. Beginning in 1914, the dissertation examines Woolf, Eliot, and Wittgenstein's work in the context of the Great War and in dialogue with the various other formalisms that arose in the war's wake. Traditionally, high modernism and the war are considered to be two distinct subjects, just as formalism and historicism are commonly considered to be two distinct modes of study. This dissertation challenges both of these divisions by examining the form of high modernist literature as an index to the tumultuous historical period out of which it emerged. In the various examples, the exigencies of the war can be seen time and again leading writers to reexamine the formal assumptions upon which their genres are based. I argue that this general turn toward form does not coalesce into any one ideology, but rather yields an assortment of new literary, philosophical, and critical approaches that, a century later, remain quite useful.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Walter Benjamin

OGTD *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. Verso, 1998.

T. S. Eliot

ECP *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*. 6 Volumes. Edited by Ronald Schuchard, Johns Hopkins UP, 2014-17.

EL *The Letters of T. S. Eliot: Volume I*. Edited by Valerie Eliot. Faber, 2009.

Roger Fry

FR *A Roger Fry Reader*. Edited by Christopher Reed. U Chicago P, 1996.

VD *Vision and Design*. Brentano's, 1924.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

NB *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, 1961.

PI *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Macmillan, 1969.

TLP *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C. K. Ogden, Routledge, 1981.

Heinrich Wölfflin

PAH *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*. Translated by Jonathan Blower. Getty, 2015.

Virginia Woolf

JR *Jacob's Room*. Edited by Suzanne Raitt. Norton, 2007.

MT *Monday or Tuesday*. Hesperus Press, 2003.

VWD *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volumes 1-5*. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. Hogarth Press, 1977-1984.

VWE *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volumes 1-6*. Edited by Andrew McNeillie, Hogarth Press, 1988-1994.

VWL

The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volumes 1-6. Edited by Nigel Nicolson, Hogarth Press, 1976-1980.

INTRODUCTION: MODERNISM, FORMALISM, AND HISTORICISM

"The Great War and the Annus Mirabilis" is situated between two common stories of postwar British literature: one about an Artist, the other about a War. The first opens with a panorama of a modern city. In one of the innumerable windows, the Artist is bent over her desk absently listening to the sound of the horns and motors below. She looks a bit haggard, having worked herself to the brink of something awful. It could be any of a number of things: privation, blindness, suicidal ideation, the influenza, acedia, neurasthenia, madness. Rather than attend to any of that, however, she continues to scratch away at the work before her, knowing that the formal patterns she has inherited are obsolete and that something utterly new is required if she ever hopes to capture the energy throbbing through her city. To get at the experience of modern life, she will need to extend the boundaries of decorum and remove the handrails of chronology and causation. Only then will she be able to surrender herself to the clamor of voices in the streets below and follow them wherever they may lead.

The other story begins in an age of innocence. Edwardian England had its problems, of course, with its violent labor strikes, protesting suffragists, and news of simmering discontent in colonial outposts. When viewed from the far-side of the war, however, the summer of 1914 appeared as a lost paradise in England's collective memory. It was not only the soldiers lucky enough to return from the trenches that the war had altered. Besides the unfathomable number of young men killed and maimed across the Channel, there was a sustained foreign campaign directed against British civilians for the first time since the Norman invasion. By the light of the

moon, German Zeppelins scattered their bombs across London, extending the parameters of the war as the machine gun and poison gas increased the quantum of violence at the front. The shadow of this war crept into every corner of postwar life, deepening the divide between the young and the old, male and female, rich and poor. The literature of the period provides an index to this larger cultural shift.

The first of these stories pivots in 1922, the second in 1914. "The Great War and the Annus Mirabilis" examines the ground between these two hallowed dates, following an assortment of writers as they progress from the troglodyte war of 1914-1918 to the height of high modernism in 1922. Along the way, I find what one might expect: the war had indeed changed British literary culture. This change, however, can be difficult to generalize.

For example, anti-German sentiment clearly influenced how the British literary canon was shaped during the 1920s. After the bloodiest European war in history, a network of "baroque" scholars across Europe joined in a reparative project to explore the international web of influence that united the various early modern traditions. Beginning in Germany, the study of the literary baroque quickly spread across Europe and into America between the two wars. The British, however, would have none of it. The comparative studies popular in Europe after the war, which aligned Shakespeare with Calderón and Lohenstein or Donne with Marino and Góngora, were ignored in Britain, where the literary baroque was taboo. At this same time, however, British philosophy was being transformed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, a young Austrian who had *fought against the British*. While the war clearly influenced both the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the postwar revival of the "Metaphysical" poets, the effect on the two could not have been more different. At the front, Wittgenstein's mind does not turn to politics, but to

mysticism and the significance of one soldier's fragile existence in a world so fantastically out-of-joint.

The war's influence also looks quite different in Woolf and Eliot's 1922 work. Rather than directly address the war that was commonly regarded as inexpressible, both Woolf and Eliot use experimental form to gain an oblique view of the conflict's underlying causes and long-term effects. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf uses fragmentation to break up the cultural myths that attracted a generation of young men to a senseless war. Eliot, on the other hand, uses fragmentation to project a postwar wasteland, into which he releases the two most prominent postwar aesthetic movements — dadaism and classicism — to examine how each plays amongst the ruins. Where Woolf asks what could possibly have caused such a war, Eliot examines what could possibly emerge out of it.

The intersection of the war and modernism that is the focus of this dissertation has garnered increased attention since the historicist turn in modernist studies. In the decades preceding the 1990s, however, war writing and modernism were typically considered to be two distinct genres. The traditional canon of World War I literature is comprised of poems written by soldiers during the war and the memoirs published a decade after the Armistice. Between these two productive periods there was a peculiar silence. In 1930, Herbert Read attributes the dearth of war writing in the early 1920s to the disorienting trauma of the war. Having never "got straight" on it, Read writes, the soldiers "had for more than a decade refused to consider the experience" (764). In the study of World War I literature, the year 1922 has long been situated in this latency period between the poetic sketches from the front and the collective memory that developed a decade later.

In the study of modernism, on the other hand, the writers most closely associated with the war were often excluded from the canon of modernist literature on the grounds that they were second-rate. The line between modernism and war writing can be seen in W. B. Yeats' exclusion of Wilfred Owen from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) on the basis that "passive suffering is not a theme for poetry" (MacKay 10). The rise of New Criticism in the mid-twentieth century and its de-historicized attention to a text's formal features only widened the divide between the vaunted high modernists and the war poets and memoirists who employed more traditional formal structures. In *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell deepens this divide by attributing the "technical traditionalism" of World War I literature to the inherent conservatism of war. He writes, "The soldier dwells not just on the preceding war but on the now idyllic period just before the present war as well. For him, the present is too boring or exhausting to think of, and the future too awful. He stays in the past" (314). According to Fussell's formulation, the war writer and the modernist are oriented in opposite directions, one perpetually looking back while the other keeps her eyes trained on the ever new.

Since the advent of the "new" modernist studies, it has become more common to study the war and modernism together. Notable works that examine modernism's influence on war writing include: Allyson Booth's *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* (1996), Margot Norris's *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* (2000), and Claire Buck's *Conceiving Strangeness in British First World War Writing* (2015). Over the past twenty years, the war's influence on the non-combatant "high" modernists has also been subject to more extensive study. Prominent works in this line include: Trudi Tate's *Modernism, History and the First World War* (1998), Vincent Sherry's *The Great War and the*

Language of Modernism (2003), and Marina MacKay's recent *Modernism, War, and Violence* (2017).

My dissertation contributes to this general effort by focusing on the war's impact on formalist literature. I define formalist literature broadly, including works of high modernism that employ experimental form as well as works that theorize about form. After the war, there was a proliferation of formalisms, including the "Bloomsbury formalism" of Roger Fry, the widely adopted formalist criteria Heinrich Wölfflin developed to distinguish the baroque from the classical, Wittgenstein's picture theory of language, and Eliot's "impersonal" criticism. I draw examples from a wide spectrum of disciplines in order to accentuate the differences between the various formalisms and formal experiments that came to define postwar modernism. The idea I wish to dispute is that the formalist turn during the modernist era represented a coordinated effort to remove and protect literature from the nightmare of history. While it is true that some writers sought refuge in aesthetic form during the war, others saw the manipulation of form as a political weapon. By collating the various uses formalism was being put to after the war, I hope to dispel the notion that there is any one ideology at work behind them all.

Andreas Huyssen and Frederic Jameson have been influential in arguing that modernism harbors an ideology of form. Both Huyssen and Jameson have argued (adopting the theoretical framework from Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) that modernism is in fact driven from behind. It is not a movement toward the new, but away from the old. Modernism must continue to produce new forms to keep up with the various taboos it is continually placing on conventional formal structures. With no set goal toward which it aspires, modernism comes to define itself against the mass culture and the popular artists who acquiesce to their audience's expectations and desires. A good example of modernism's oppositional stance

can be seen in the subtitle of Margaret Anderson's modernist journal: *The Little Review: A Magazine of the Arts Making no Compromise with the Public Taste*. In *After the Great Divide* (1986), Huyssen defines high modernism as "an insistence on the autonomy of the art work, its obsessive hostility to mass culture, its radical separation from the culture of everyday life, and its programmatic distance from political, economic, and social concerns" (vii). Huyssen here echoes Fredric Jameson's argument from *The Political Unconscious* (1981):

The perfected poetic apparatus of high modernism represses History [...until] the political, no longer visible in the high modernist texts, any more than the everyday world of appearance of bourgeois life, and relentlessly driven underground by accumulated reification, has at last become a genuine Unconscious. (280).

In *A Singular Modernity* (2002), Jameson reiterates his argument that modernism is driven by an escape velocity, depicting modernism's endgame in categorically negative terms: to disorient, disintegrate, and dislocate. According to Jameson, modernism's violent break with representation was enacted to facilitate a more pure encounter between the artist and her own aesthetic material (language, stone, paint) staged in "an aesthetic category cleansed of larger cultural implications" (159). Modernism's definitive move, according to this model, is to turn inward toward its own form that it might more definitively turn its back on everything else.

The variety of formal literatures included in this dissertation do not align with this general pattern. The artists and theorists discussed below all turned toward form around the time of the First World War, but they did so for different reasons. Roger Fry developed a formalist theory because he loved Cézanne and wanted everyone else to love Cézanne too. Fry's formalist aesthetic theory was meant to demolish the wall dividing high art from the mass culture. The formal distinction at the heart of Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915) was meant

to denationalize his discipline. Writing during a war he hated, Wölfflin's aim was to accentuate the formal continuities that united the nations that were engaged in killing one another. In his early criticism, Eliot used formalism, and coined phrases like "objective correlative" because he wanted to sound scientific like his friend Bertrand Russell. Wittgenstein similarly began working out his formalist theory of language to prove his genius to Bertrand Russell. Woolf had to use an experimental form in *Jacob's Room* because she felt the form of the old Bildungsroman was complicit in promoting the war she sought to critique. Besides displaying the variety of uses formalism was being put to around the time of the First World War, this dissertation will model an approach to modernist studies that uses formal analyses of literary texts to enhance historical understanding. In her study of György Lukács wartime formalism, Judith Butler writes:

A certain transmutation and sublimation of themes takes place as it emerges as form, and form carries within it the history of this process, the process by which form comes into being. In this sense, form is not a technical device imposed upon thematic or historical material: it is the index by which historical life becomes distilled and known, where its tensions are encoded and expressed. (6)

Rather than placing formalism and historicism in antagonistic relation to one another, I will employ each in turn to better tack between modernism's two most persistent myths.

The Myth of 1922

The midwife, of course, was the first to know. After navigating large portions of *Ulysses* into *The Little Review* between the Comstock Act and the author's intransigence and whittling *The Waste Land* down to a trim 430 lines, Ezra Pound was ready to crow. Sitting over Eliot's drafts in December 1921, he had no doubt that "a grrreat littttery period" had begun (*LE* 628).

He would need to proclaim it to the world. The Christian era was over. In the Spring 1922 issue of *The Little Review*, Pound provides a calendar for the new era in which all time is marked in relation to Wednesday, October 30, 1921, the day Joyce completed *Ulysses*. According to Pound's calendar, it was no longer AD 1922, but Year 1 p.s.U. (*post scriptum Ulixi*). Even if Pound was a bit off in dating his historical pivot (Joyce would continue writing into every blank space on every galley and page proof he got his hands on until his book was printed in February), his insistence that literary history was cut in two sometime around 1922 continues to shape our understanding of modern literature.

The aura of 1922 has since been sustained by the collection of scholarly works dedicated to the "annus mirabilis." In *Reading 1922* (1999), Michael North recreates the vibrant literary culture in which Eliot and Joyce's famous works first appeared. By doing so, North shows the extent to which the "intellectual amber" that now adheres to *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* was constructed by later critics. While North manages to chip away at the sense of timelessness that has accrued on the work of Eliot and Joyce, writing at length on the philosophy, sociology, film, fashion, and popular fiction of 1922 does little in the end to discredit Pound's insistence that 1922 was indeed a special year. Two more recent works offer a more full-throated exaltation of the annus mirabilis: Kevin Jackson's *Constellation of Genius: 1922: Modernism Year One* (2012) and Bill Goldstein's *The World Broke in Two* (2017). Goldstein takes his title from Willa Cather's famous comment that "the world broke in two in 1922" and endorses the idea (as does Jackson) that "nineteen twenty-two is a dividing line in literary history," a "literary apocalypse" during which "the language of the future" was invented (Goldstein 1-2).

While the influence of Pound's rupture narrative can be traced into the present, the argument that it might be a bit overblown can also be traced back to 1922. In his preface to *The*

Forsyte Saga (1922), John Galsworthy plays the role of the elder curmudgeon with esprit as he dismisses any notion that a literary period could ever claim to be so truly new:

'Let the dead Past bury its dead' would be a better saying if the Past ever died. The persistence of the Past is one of those tragicomic blessings which each new age denies, coming cock-sure on to the stage to mouth its claim to a perfect novelty. But no Age is so new as that! (viii)

If one might expect such a response from an inveterate Edwardian like Galsworthy, it is more surprising to find Virginia Woolf advancing a similar argument in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Begun in 1922 and set on a single summer day in 1923, *Mrs. Dalloway* bears the obvious imprint of Joyce; the narration jumping amongst the disparate thoughts of an array of characters held together by their shared experience of time passing over one London day. Woolf departs from Joyce, however, in situating her action in the shadow of the Great War, which Joyce largely avoided by setting his own novel in 1904.

Woolf spent the war writing *Night and Day* (1919), a marriage plot set in an alternative London, one in which young men were not conscripted and there was no reason for young women to retreat to the coal cellars at night. In a letter, Katherine Mansfield compared the elision of the war in Woolf's wartime fiction to treason. In her review in the *Athenaeum*, Mansfield describes how odd it felt to read a novel that was "so shut and sealed from us to-day," so "unaware of what has been happening" (81). Mansfield's criticism clearly affected Woolf, who would examine the subtle means by which the war infiltrated postwar life in each of her subsequent novels.

Early in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter Walsh is walking through Regent's Park when he sees two "lovers squabbling under a tree," and concludes, "never had he seen London look so enchanting"

(71). To account for the city's charms, Peter considers the recent advancements in women's fashion and cosmetics. Then he channels Ezra Pound:

Those five years — 1918 to 1923 — had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now for instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago — written quite openly about water-closets in a respectable weekly. (71)

This man was, of course, James Joyce, who had declaratively planted Leopold Bloom "asquat on the cuckstool" in *The Little Review* in June of 1918 (Joyce 68). Eliot was apparently just as struck by this scene as Peter Walsh, placing his own "white-armed Fresca" in a similar position in an early draft of *The Waste Land* that Pound wisely edited out. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, what at first appears to be a tribute to Joyce quickly shades into critique.

It is Peter Walsh, after all, that Woolf has proclaim the water-closet theory of modernism. Earlier that morning, Peter's life had been measured by Clarissa Dalloway and summarily dismissed as a protracted folly (46). In Regent's Park, Woolf provides an incisive example of just how bad Peter's judgment can be. The scene in the park between "the young man in the overcoat" and the "poor girl" is not a simple "lover's squabble" (71). Septimus Smith has not been right since the war. Just before Peter's arrival, Septimus notices his wife, Lucrezia is no longer wearing her wedding ring. He then sees the ghost of a friend who had died in the war. He cries out. When Peter arrives, he sees Rezia fighting her husband back onto his park bench. On the way to Regent's Park, Peter had encountered a troop of young reservists marching up Whitehall to place a wreath at the Cenotaph (51). Woolf positions Peter as he struggles to account for how the city changed in the past five years (is it the make-up? the loosening

propriety standards?) a few feet from a shell-shocked veteran suffering hallucinations while a war remembrance ceremony is being conducted across town. The staging here is clearly designed to undermine any idea that it was simply a shift in literary style that had recently broke the world in two.

The Myth of 1914

In his autobiography, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), Wyndham Lewis sets Pound's calendar back eight years, locating the cataclysmic break in human history in 1914. On his first page, Lewis writes "the War is such a tremendous landmark that locally it imposes itself upon our computations of time like the birth of Christ. We say 'pre-war' and 'post-war', rather as we say B.C. or A.D." Lewis does not disagree with Pound that the arts had recently undergone a profound change, nor does he refute who was responsible. Besides Pound and himself, Lewis includes Eliot, Joyce, and Hulme amongst the "Men of 1914," a group of avant-gardist who had found in "the war about to start" the impetus they required to declare war on their predecessors, break through conventional restraints, and establish a truly modern art (Lewis 256).

The idea that modernism and the war were intertwining phenomena is also at the center of Modris Eksteins's provocative European cultural history, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989). By studying a wide variety of European art before August 1914, Eksteins argues that modernism was not a simple byproduct or reflection of the war, but a contributing factor in the conflict. Across Europe in the years leading up to the war, Eksteins finds a widespread celebration of aestheticized violence, not only amongst avant-garde provocateurs like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, but in the ballets of Stravinsky, the criticism of Conrad and Yeats, and the anthropology of James Frazer. The characteristic violence in British

letters in 1914 can be seen in the essays of the Edwardian establishment and the avant-garde Vorticists alike. The eminent Edmund Gosse (aged 65), describes war in 1914 as "the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood is the Condy's Fluid that cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect" (Hynes 12). That same year, Ezra Pound (aged 29) asserts that the new generation stands poised to "sweep out the past century as surely as Attila swept across Europe" (Hynes 8). While their targets are different (Gosse is taking aim at *fin-de-siècle* decadence while Pound's wrath is directed at Gosse and his Edwardian ilk), both writers cast their aesthetic projects in the same militant terms, suggesting a bit of combat and destruction (both real and figurative) would provide a salutary purgative for both English life and letters.

In *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003), Vincent Sherry examines the wartime work of three London-based non-combatants (Woolf, Eliot, and Pound) to reveal the direct impact the war had on British high modernism. Sherry argues that one can see in the modernist experimentations of Woolf, Eliot, and Pound a satiric reflection of the language used by liberal politicians and journalists who had to twist themselves in knots each day to defend a war that went against all their intellectual principles. Sherry identifies 1914 as a watershed moment in which liberal rationalism cracks:

If the year 1500 marks the joint origin of "liberalism" and "modernity" in our contemporary scholarly chronology [...] that date establishes the longevity of a philosophy that comes to term in 1914. In the political discourses of the Great War, where language of public reason goes so massively and disastrously wrong, the first words of a truly novel consciousness may begin to spell themselves out in the reverse lettering of this discredited myth, in a modernity against itself, in modernism. (16)

In the mass graves scattered across Europe, the Meliorist myth of continual human progress through science and technology was laid to rest. Sherry adds to this common story by showing how the difficulty in modernist texts can be used as a Richter scale registering the initial shockwaves of the crashing paradigm.

Where Eksteins finds modernist artists laying the imaginative groundwork for the war and Sherry examines how experimental literature reflects the false logic perpetuating the war, Samuel Hynes provides an excellent history of the Myth of the War that coalesced in the later retellings of the conflict. In *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1990), Hynes sees in the multitude of war memoirs published in the late 1920s and early 1930s a collective narrative taking shape. It goes like this:

A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned, and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance. (xii)

As this myth became increasingly engrained in the English cultural consciousness, the year 1914 became increasingly significant, representing a gap in history. Philip Larkin's "MCMXIV" (translated 1914 in Arabic numerals) provides an affecting representation of the thick glass this myth installed between all postwar generations and their Edwardian predecessors. Larkin's ekphrastic poem marvels over a 1914 photograph of young men eagerly lining up outside a London recruiting station. The incredible distance separating the viewer from the smiling young

men in the picture is registered in the Roman numerals in the poem's title. *A War Imagined* examines the extensive effect the Myth of the War had on British culture at large. Hynes argues: "No one after the war — no thinker or planner, no politician or labour leader, no writer or painter — could ignore the historical importance or frame his thoughts as though the war had not occurred, or had been simply another war" (Hynes xi). Through the meticulous study of various postwar literary styles and theories, this dissertation will come to support Hynes general thesis concerning the war's pervasive impact on postwar life. The influence of the war, however, cannot be measured in isolation.

The Convergence of the Twain

When Woolf began writing *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1922, the publication of the *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock'* (1922) was being debated in the editorial pages of the *Times* alongside the works of Joyce and Eliot. When he initially called for the commission, Lord Southborough acknowledged that his subject was not a pleasant one:

All would desire to forget it ——— to forget the roll of insanity, suicide, and death; to bury our recollections of the horrible disorder, and keep on the surface nothing but the cherished memory of those who were the victims of this malignity. (Bogacz 227).

Two years after the Armistice, however, there were still 65,000 ex-serviceman drawing disability pensions for neurasthenia, 9,000 of which were still undergoing hospital treatment (Bogacz 227).

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the two myths of modernism entwine in Septimus Smith. His impaired thought processes provide the perfect object for Woolf's new fragmentary technique. At the same time, however, Septimus represents a new historical type in British literature that remains firmly tethered to the experience of 1914-1918.

A model for Septimus can be found in the government's 1922 "Report on Shell-Shock." Alongside the testimonies of various doctors and psychiatrists, there is the story of one "gallant officer" who was called before the commission. During the first three months of the Second Battle of Ypres, the personnel of this young officer's battalion changed "almost completely, four times" (89). On one particularly harrowing day, an officers' meeting was interrupted by a bomb, killing three on the spot and injuring a number of others. After removing the bodies and attending to the wounded, the officers proceeded with their conference. Moments later, a second bomb knocked the narrator unconscious and buried him in a pile of rubble. Upon regaining consciousness hours later, he was met by the medical officer who had been sent to replace him. He is shown a wire that reports he is dead. This angers the young officer, who sends his replacement away so that he may finish his shift with the remains of his battalion. By the time he is relieved, seventy percent of the battalion that entered the trench with him two days before were dead. Despite it all, the young officer marches back to quarters displaying no emotion whatsoever. Then he recounts:

Just about dawn we got back as far as where the quartermaster had come to meet us. He brought up all the officers' horses and there were no officers to ride them, and when I saw the horses and realised what had happened I broke down and I cried. That finished me.

(91)

In the "Shell-Shock Report," the noted anthropologist and neurologist, W. H. R. Rivers suggests that shell-shock is not particularly new, nor is it caused by any sudden shock. It is rather a common response to the prolonged exposure to extreme stress. The First World War produced an unprecedented number of nervous conditions, Rivers reports, because life in the trenches was inordinately stressful. It was not just the initial jolt of the powerful bombs, but

their relentlessness, which confined the soldier to his underground dugout and prevented him from getting any rest. Rivers presents his theory: "man's normal reaction to danger is what I call manipulative activity. Every animal has a natural reaction to danger, perhaps more than one, and man's is manipulation of such a kind as to get him out of the dangerous situation" (57). The restrictions of trench warfare, Rivers argues, denies the soldier any way of performing the manipulative activity that might help him to release some of his pent-up stress.

This lack of manipulative action also contributes to another unique side effect of the First World War — the lack of stories the soldiers brought home with them from the front. In "The Storyteller," (1936), Walter Benjamin attributes the recent drop in good storytelling to the disjunction and terror of the trenches and the journalistic tendency to always explain everything. What makes a good story, according to Benjamin, is that it does not expend itself in the telling, leaving a space for the listener to wonder. Rather than coming to a point, a good story should branch off toward a variety of interpretations. He takes his example of a good story from Herodotus. After his victory at the Battle of Pelusium in 525 BCE, the Persian king Cambyses sets out to humiliate his defeated Egyptian counterpart, Psammenitus, by forcing him to sit outside the city gates. First, Psammenitus' daughter is sent out of the city with the slaves to fetch water. Then a group of young Egyptians are sent out bound with bits in their mouths. These men are being led to their execution. Psammenitus sees that his son is among them. Throughout it all, however, Psammenitus betrays no emotion. When Psammenitus happens to see an old friend in beggar's rags, however, he beats his head and wails (Herodotus 129-30).

Benjamin praises this story for having excited generations of readers to wonder about the behavior of the Egyptian king. Montaigne argued that there is no special significance to the old beggar, but that he just so happens to be present when the king finally exceeds his capacity for

grief. Benjamin offers three other possible explanations, all of which attend to the social distance between the beggar and the king (90). With the 1922 "Shell-Shock Report," however, another interpretation might be offered. It is not the social position of the beggar, but the state of passivity forced upon Psammenitus that precipitates his breakdown. The fact that his army is defeated and his children enslaved does not move the king. It is his own powerlessness that brings him to tears. The manipulative actions that define his role as king, father, and friend are denied him in turn. When he beats his head and wails, he is exhibiting the classic signs of shell shock.

By naming her own shell-shocked soldier "Septimus," Woolf gestures towards modernism's third main coordinate, which lies somewhere far beyond 1922 or 1914. During the war, Ezra Pound published *Cathay*, a book of translations from classical China. In *Novelty* (2013), Michael North describes how Pound found the phrase that would come to define modernism's obsession with novelty — "make it new" — on a Chinese washbasin from the eighteenth-century BCE (164). In his criticism, Eliot similarly defines modernism through its engagement with the anthropological past, whether in Stravinsky's transformation of "the rhythm of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn," or Joyce's "mythic method," which manages to bring some order to the chaos of modern life by imposing a Homeric structure (*ECP II* 369, 478). The classically educated English Lords responsible for compiling the "Shell-Shock Report" of 1922 were similarly inclined to reach back to the literary tradition to help them understand a new medical diagnosis. Besides consulting leading doctors and psychologists, the war committee also consulted Lucretius and Shakespeare. Sir Frederick Mott, a pioneer of biochemistry, quotes extensively from *De rerum natura*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Henry IV* to depict the recurring dreams that continue to haunt the shell-shocked soldiers years after the war (10-2). Working

during the "annus mirabilis" of British high modernism, Woolf similarly refracts the tortured thoughts of Septimus Smith through quotes from his beloved Shakespeare. His fragmentary reflections are in turn incoherent and insightful. He defies in this way the stable categories the doctors and psychiatrists in *Mrs. Dalloway* are continually trying to force him into. A 1916 editorial in *The Lancet* suggests that medical practitioners need to get out of the old binary way of thinking when considering cases of shell shock. They write: "In medicine there is a neutral zone, a no-man's-land, a regnum protisticum, which really defies definition. This nebulous zone shelters many among the sad examples of nervous trouble sent home from the front" (627).

When Woolf recasts this nebulous zone in the mind of Septimus, which darts about from 1923 back to 1914 through the detours of Elizabethan England and an atopic mysticism, she provides us with a synecdoche for modernism at large. In the history of British literature, the early twentieth century has come to represent a no-man's-land that similarly defies definition. The rupture narratives that once defined the discipline have been challenged over the past decade by several continuity narratives that attempt to work modernist literature back into the literary and philosophical traditions that proceed and surround it. Michael North's work has successfully exposed the tenuousness of the high-low divide that once defined modernism. In *Modernism and the Ordinary* (2009), Liesl Olson focuses on the prevalent depictions of habit and everyday life in a modernist tradition too often defined by its shocks and epiphanies. Lisi Schoenbach's *Pragmatic Modernism* (2012) and Megan Quigley's *Modernist Fiction and Vagueness* (2015) both study modernist literature in dialogue with established philosophical traditions, while Vincent Sherry's *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (2015) and Beci Carver's *Granular Modernism* (2014) align modernist literature with *fin-de-siècle* culture and the naturalist tradition in turn. Taken as a whole, these various studies reveal the incredible

confluence of influences that have contributed to the modernist movement in literature. The fifty-five chapters of the new *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (2016) attests to the fact that there never was any one "Modernism." In the chapters below, I will attempt (on a much more modest scale) to show how "Formalism" — which the new modernist studies is still too often defined against — might also be broken up and its individual pieces reevaluated within their own historical contexts.

CHAPTER 1: THE GREAT WAR AND WOOLF'S "NEW MOULD"

What is the relationship between art and life? This was the preeminent question debated at 46 Gordon Square in 1910. The ethics of G. E. Moore had dominated the discussion the previous year; now it was the aesthetics of Roger Fry. Looking back, Vanessa Bell identifies 1910 as a transition point in the fabled talk of Bloomsbury, the time in which "we stopped talking about 'the good' and started talking about Cézanne" (Q. Bell 52). Fry's 1909 "Essay in Aesthetics," the first exposition of what became known as Bloomsbury Formalism, argued that the concerns of art and life were distinct, that art presented "a life freed from the binding necessities of our actual existence" (VD 21). The pragmatic objective of Fry's aesthetic formalism was displayed in the catalogue for his 1910 *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, in which formalist principles were used to defend modern French painting against the charge that it failed to properly represent physical reality or the impressions physical reality makes on the artist. The discourse of formalism allowed Fry to extend the discussion of a painting's function beyond the limits of accurate representation to include the expanded emotional and intellectual possibilities afforded the artist by manipulating formal features. The remarkable influence Fry's formalist theories had on the English art market can be seen in the transformation of paintings by Matisse and Picasso from objects of derision to safe investments in ten years time.

In Bloomsbury, the influence of Fry's formalism is perhaps most pronounced in the painting of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, but can also be found in Virginia Woolf's fiction. A famous example takes place on the climactic final page of *To the Lighthouse*, where Lily Briscoe

realizes her vision and finishes her picture by painting a line down the middle of her canvas. In a letter, Woolf acknowledged her debt to Fry and expresses her regret that she had not dedicated the novel to him. In "The Essay on Aesthetics," Fry defines post-impressionism by the architectural elements it brings to impressionism to steady the eye around "the central line of the picture" (*VD* 31). In her letter to Fry, Woolf describes the lighthouse not as a symbol pointing to something beyond the novel's frame, but as the novel's central architectural support. Channeling Fry, Woolf explains that, "one has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together" (*VWL III* 385).

The influence of Fry's formalism might also be detected in the date, December 1910, Woolf famously argues "human nature changed" (*VWE III* 421). While it was not uncommon in 1924 to assert that human nature had recently changed, it was certainly odd to date this shift with Fry's Post-Impressionist show rather than with the Great War. Woolf's decision to bypass the war and locate the fault line of modern life in 1910 could be used to corroborate one of the more influential critiques of postwar formalism, that it buttresses the socio-political order by concealing its presence. In this chapter, I will develop an alternative interpretation of Woolf's postwar fiction by studying how history informed Woolf's formal experimentations between 1919 and 1922.

The Functions of Formalism: *Night and Day*

Fry never intended for his formalism to coalesce into a stable doctrine. By 1920 he had grown suspicious of his own aesthetic theory, describing it as "a purely practical one, a tentative expedient [...] held merely until such time as fresh experiences might confirm or modify it" (*VD* 285). In 1928 he was ready to scrap it altogether, writing "One runs a theory as long as one can

and then too many difficulties in its applications - too many strained explanations accumulate and you have to break the mould and start afresh" (*FR* 318). While Fry's aesthetic theories clearly influenced the work of his Bloomsbury associates, the model of this influence was more dialogic than dogmatic. Fry's theories were not simply absorbed into the treatises of Clive Bell, the paintings of Venessa Bell and Duncan Grant, or the fiction of Virginia Woolf, but was scrutinized, extended, and refuted in these works. As Jane Goldman writes, Bloomsbury did not profess a common creed, but "thrived on dissent and disagreement" (435). This section will examine the historical circumstances in which Fry developed his formalist theory, how he came to distinguish his own formalism from that professed by Clive Bell, and how Woolf's wartime fiction can be read adjudicating between Fry and Bell's competing claims.

Since first encountering the pictures of Paul Cézanne in 1906, Fry had been searching for a way to bring modern French painting to a British public resistant to non-representational art. To do so, he needed to insert a wedge in public opinion between aesthetic value and accuracy of representation. Fry believed that the predominate impressionist school had pushed the naturalist tendency to its limit, producing an unadulterated representation of the sense-data processed by the eye at any given moment. The question Fry raises in his formalist theories is if this is all we should expect from a painting?

Putting up a firm wall between art and life allowed Fry to explore what a picture might do beyond representing the objects that comprise a visual field. What unites the artists Fry dubbed "post-impressionist" was their desire to escape the passivity of impressionist representation that they might assert their own emotional and intellectual design onto what they see. In 1919 Woolf famously applied the principles of impressionism to fiction writing, imploring her fellow novelists: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in

which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness" (*VWE III* 33-4). This fidelity to sense impressions, Fry would argue, comes at a cost. What his formalist theories are designed to accentuate is the "emotional significance" that passes through the artist's net when accuracy of representation is held above all else (*FR* 82). In the catalog for his 1910 *Post-Impressionists* show, Fry describes how artists like Cézanne had created a more emotive art by "subordinating representation of parts to expressiveness of the whole design" (*FR* 85). Post-impressionist art is in this way made "conterminous with the whole range of human inspiration and desire" (*FR* 85).

Fry's formalism does not seek to restrict art's domain, therefore, but to extend it. The theoretical touchstone for Fry's formalism is Leo Tolstoy's "What is Art?" Tolstoy describes art as a means of communication between the artist and the viewer, that "the work of art was not the record of beauty already existent elsewhere, but the expression of an emotion felt by the artist and conveyed to the spectator" (*VD* 293). Where Tolstoy goes wrong, according to Fry, is in subordinating aesthetics to morality by focusing solely on the moral content of the picture. Tolstoy's emphasis on the expressive potential of art, however, remains a major theme throughout Fry's essays. Rather than establish an impermeable boundary between art and life, Fry's formalism charts an alternative path by which life can enter art. In a post-impressionist picture, the distance between the represented object and the viewer is increased that the viewer might be brought into closer proximity to the artist by studying her manipulation of line and color. In Cézanne's pictures, Fry understands "form to be the direct outcome of an apprehension of some emotion of actual life" (*VD* 294). By shifting the focus to the artist's emotions and ideas, Fry opens a new avenue through which an artist's socio-historical condition might influence her work.

Fry's 1912 "Art and Socialism" explains how social conditions directly influence artistic production. Fry bemoans capitalism for creating an environment where "nearly all our art is made, bought, and sold merely for its value as an indication of social status" (*VD* 69). The essay directly links art and life by imagining how tweaking social conditions might effect the processes by which art is made and used. First, Fry suggests the economic divide between the rich and the poor needs to be leveled to reduce the influence plutocrats exert on the art market. The plutocrat appraises a picture according to its symbolic value, desiring the picture that best reflects its owner's affluence. Fry imagines that if social conditions were leveled, the price of pictures would plummet, thus forcing all artists to return to the applied arts to earn their bread. According to Fry, this would have two beneficial effects. First, it would relegate the fine arts to a leisure activity taken up without the pressures of making money. All art produced in Fry's "Great Society" would be amateur art that reflected a community's shared values, not the values of the academicians, politicians, and plutocrats who dispense honors and commissions in a capitalist culture. Fry writes that "the greatest art has always been communal, the expression — in highly individualized ways, no doubt — of common aspirations and ideals" (*VD* 62).

In July of 1913, Fry opened the Omega workshops in an attempt to realize the ideals expressed in "Art and Socialism." In her biography of Fry, Woolf describes how he was overcome by the incredible enthusiasm generated by his post-impressionist show at Leicester early in 1913. It seemed to Fry that the artists and public were finally coming together. To further bridge this gap, Fry designed a space in which "young artists made chairs and tables, carpets and pots that people like to look at; that they liked to make. Thus they were to earn a living; thus they would be free to paint pictures for pleasure not for money" (*FR* 189). Fry's contemporaneous attempt to sever art from life in his formalist aesthetic theories while

imagining how art and life might be rebound in his social and economic writings is a testament of the distinctive fluidity of Fry's thought.

It was Clive Bell who transformed the formalism Fry considered a "tentative expedient" into aesthetic doctrine (*VD* 285). When Chatto and Windus offered Fry the chance to codify his aesthetic theory in book form, he deferred, suggesting the commission be given to Bell instead (Reed 128). Fry, who was always adapting his theories to accommodate new experiences, was uncomfortable with the prospect of arguing one definitive interpretation of art history. In *Art* (1914), Bell exhibits no such hesitancy, relishing the polemicist role. Working out from Fry's formalist distinction between art and life, Bell proceeds to cleanse it of all historical contingency. Where Fry had oriented the emotional response of the viewer toward practical ends (to reconnect people with an art that has become increasingly commodified and forge a direct connection between the English public and the post-impressionists) Bell isolated the individual's emotional response before a picture as the ne plus ultra of aesthetics. The theory of art as an emotive communication that Fry adapted from Tolstoy is cut out. What is left is the viewer's isolated "aesthetic emotion" (Bell 6). Where Fry's theories were always seeking a wider audience, Bell restricts the aesthetic emotion to a select few, the "sensitive people" who alone can appreciate art (6).

Having severed all connections between art and life, Bell leaves himself little ground upon which to define the aesthetic emotion at the heart of his formalism. What excites the aesthetic emotion, Bell writes, are "forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws" which he then places under the rubric of "significant form" (11). In his review, Fry draws attention to the tautology at the center of Bell's argument. Having defined the distinct quality that unites all works of visual art as "significant form," Fry asks "How do we

recognize significant form? By its power to arouse aesthetic emotion. The reader will probably ask: What is aesthetic emotion? And Mr. Bell will reply, the emotion aroused by significant form" (*FR* 158). Reading his formalist theory reduced down in this way leads Fry to doubt that there could be a purely aesthetic emotion. In his review, Fry imagines painting to be of a "composite nature" like poetry, which relies upon an "admixture of form and content" for its effect (*FR* 159).

Fry and Bell's formalist theories might be contrasted by their conflicting images of transcendence. In *Art*, Bell describes the aesthetic experience through a vertical model of transcendence, in which one is "lifted above the stream of life" and "transported from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation" (25). Fry, on the other hand, proposes a horizontal model of transcendence in which the person standing before a picture is granted access into an artist's created world. This world is not located above the viewer's own, but is bound to the intellectual, emotional, and socio-historical conditions of the artist that produced it.

Woolf's position in Fry and Bell's ongoing debate about aesthetic form was crystalized through her work on *Night and Day*. The novel is an exquisitely designed drawing-room comedy written during the bombardment of London. Between nights spent in the coal cellar, Woolf spent the war superposing a twentieth-century marriage plot on the formal skeleton of a Shakespearian comedy. After an elaborate dance of rotating partners, the music stops in the end with all the protagonists matched with a suitable mate or fulfilling career. Clive Bell considered *Night and Day* "a work of the highest genius," as it clearly possessed the significant form he considered to be art's highest virtue (*VWD II* 307). Carrying no mark of the war, *Night and Day* provides the perfect test case for Bell's formalist theory that art can indeed ascend "above the accidents of time and place" (Bell 36).

Woolf's wartime letters to her sister, Vanessa Bell, attest to her own wartime efforts to keep her art and life separate. Woolf writes about the war as much as she does *Night and Day*, but she does not allow the two subjects to overlap. In a letter from July 1916, Woolf describes her intention to write a novel based on her sister's life; the next month she describes the zeppelin that flew directly over her house in broad daylight. It is not until Armistice Day that these two themes collide, as Woolf complains to Bell about the people carousing in the streets below disrupting her work: "oh dear, now drunken soldiers are beginning to cheer. How am I to write my last chapter with all this shindy" (*VWD II* 290). In her letters, the war appears to be no more than a distraction. When *Night and Day* is published in October 1919, four months after the Treaty of Versailles is signed, it provided its readers the perfect tool for measuring how much the war had altered the role of fiction in postwar society.

The reviews of *Night and Day* mostly agree on two points: the form is impeccable, but the complete silence concerning the war is unsettling. E. M. Forster reads it as "a deliberate exercise in classicism," its form being "as traditional as *Emma*" (127). The novel's conventional form invited debate about the obligation of fiction writers in regards to the war. Katherine Mansfield, whose brother, Leslie Beauchamp, was killed in the war, hated *Night and Day*. In her letters, Mansfield described Woolf's novel as "a lie in the soul" that declares "the war never has been" (Q. Bell 69). The war, Mansfield argued, placed an ethical imperative on the writer. She writes: "I feel in the profoundest sense that nothing can ever be the same — that, as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise: we have to take into account and find new expressions, new moulds for our new thoughts and feelings" (Q. Bell 69).

Mansfield's review of the novel was less trenchant, expressing more disbelief than anger. The novel is praised as "fresh, new and exquisite, a novel in the tradition of the English novel,"

an "up-to-date Austin" (Mansfield 80). Reading the novel after the war, however, produced an unsettling effect. Mansfield compares the novel to a ghost ship coming to harbor, "in the midst of our admiration it makes us feel old and chill: we had never thought to look upon its like again!" (Mansfield 81).

Woolf begins distancing herself from the formalist assumptions under which she wrote *Night and Day* soon after reading the reviews. In a 1920 review of Elizabeth Robins' *The Mills of the Gods and Other Stories*, Woolf redirects Mansfield's criticism of *Night and Day* at Robins, calling her "a pre-war writer" who has failed to register the effect the war has had on British society (*VWE III* 228). Woolf argues that one can not write in 1920 as one had before a war which "withered a generation before its time" (*VWE III* 228). After the war, Woolf comes to argue that the work of fiction is subject to the historical forces at work on the writer and the reader, that it cannot transport either of them above the stream of life.

After the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Fry was also growing more forceful in his critique of Bell's pure formalism. In his 1920 "Retrospective" to *Vision and Design*, Fry derides Bell's quixotic attempt "to isolate the purely aesthetic feeling from the whole complex of feelings" (*VD* 296). For Fry, formalism was less an abstract idea than a useful tool for carving out a space in Britain for abstract art to be made and discussed. Fry's formalist championing of abstract art before the war should not, however, be confused with the formalism Clement Greenberg popularized in 1940. Fry, a renowned critic of the Italian masters like Cimabue and Giotto, never censures representation wholesale. His formalist theories sought to extend the possibilities of painting rather than delimit them. Greenberg's formalism, on the other hand, places the various arts on an ironclad historical arc toward ever greater abstraction, which Greenberg approvingly describes as "hold[ing] the artist in a vise" (37). Fry was not a polemicist

like Bell or Greenberg, his own theories being based in a methodology of doubt and reevaluation that prevented him from ever displaying the assurance and bravado of the formalists he is often associated with.

In the years after the war, Fry became increasingly weary of the unrestrained movement toward abstraction; conceding in a 1921 review of Picasso that, "We are intrigued, pleased, charmed, but hardly ever as deeply moved as we are by pictures in which representation plays a larger part" (*FR* 345). Where his 1912 catalogue for the second post-impressionist exhibition had placed great hope in the abstraction of post-impressionist design, "the logical extreme of such a method would undoubtedly be the attempt to give up all resemblance to natural form, and to create a purely abstract language of form — a visual music; and the works of Picasso show this clearly enough" (*FR* 239). After the war this quest for purity in art is abandoned. In his 1921 introduction to his Mallarmé translations, Fry concedes that "it may be that the greatest art is not the purest" (*FR* 301).

The distinction between life and art or art and history became increasingly difficult to maintain for both Woolf and Fry after the war. In her biography of Fry, Woolf suggests that the wartime formalism he professes in "Art and Life" might have served as a coping mechanism against the horror of the time. She writes, "If he survived the war, it was perhaps that he kept the two rhythms in being simultaneously" (*Roger Fry* 214). Leonard Woolf describes his wife's work on *Night and Day* during the war in the same terms, as a formalist exercise that helped Woolf cope with the compound trauma of the war and her recent bout of mental illness. By the time the Peace was signed, however, both Woolf and Fry were ready to break the old mould and start afresh.

A Crisis of Form: *Monday or Tuesday*

The insufficiency of traditional narrative forms to represent the war was a common theme in various genres of postwar writing. The French historian Marc Bloch describes his own recollections as a soldier as "a discontinuous series of images, vivid in themselves but badly arranged like a reel of movie film that showed here and there large gaps and the unintended reversal of certain scenes" (89). The fragmentary nature of the soldier's memories contributed to "the conspiracy of silence" that followed the Armistice, a decade in which very few war narratives were published (Hynes 425). In a 1926 review, Richard Aldington noted how the soldiers returning to civilian life after the Great War did not return home with the same stories as the veterans of former wars, but with a "torturing sense of something incommunicable" (363). In 1930 Herbert Read writes:

[They] had for more than a decade refused to consider the experience. The mind has a faculty for dismissing the debris of its emotional conflicts until it feels strong enough to deal with them. The war, for most people, was such a conflict, and they never 'got straight' on it (764).

In "The Storyteller" (1936) Walter Benjamin describes this same silence accompanying the soldiers to Berlin. The conditions of this war, Benjamin observed, had left the soldier somehow poorer in communicable experience:

A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (84).

According to Benjamin, the experience of mechanized trench warfare compromised the soldier's most basic storytelling mechanism, preventing him from weaving the vivid fragments from his memory into a comprehensive whole.

In *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell argues that irony eventually served as midwife for the flood of war books published during the late twenties and early thirties. Irony demands that its reader code-switch at certain points and begin reading against the syntax, a practice that is representative of the demand placed on the soldier confronted with a war that ran exactly counter to his expectations. In Sassoon's "Attack," the soldiers who go over the top to engage their enemy do not resemble the heroes of old, but "flounders in mud" (Sassoon 71). No Man's Land was not the epic stage upon which world-historical events could be bent to the hero's will. The soldier's individual war experiences did not cohere into a larger pattern like that of *War and Peace*. The high rhetoric in which the war was sold by the politicians and the press was equally unsuitable. The arbitrariness that governed how men lived and died was an affront to a traditional understanding of the martial virtues. In *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), abstractions such as Glory and Honor are rendered obscene by the war, until "only the names of places had dignity" (Hemingway 165). Fussell argues that it was the great disparity between the hope the soldiers brought to this particular war and its realities that made it so suitable for irony. The war was sold as the war to end all wars, the war that would mark the culmination of a historical arc toward peace and prosperity.

The variance between expectations and reality was at no time more pronounced than on the morning of July 1, 1916. By all reports, it was a glorious summer morning. Field Marshal Douglas Haig had gathered 110,000 British troops at the Somme for what promised to be the last great battle of the war. Soldiers had rushed to the line to take part in the final push that would

break the German line and clear the way to Berlin. Haig described his plan in a letter the night before as divinely sanctioned. Four hours after sunrise, there were 60,000 British casualties, nearly 20,000 dead outright with thousands more suspended between life and death in No Man's Land, where their screams were heard for days (Stevenson 1). Before the war, Rupert Brooke described his expectations upon enlisting in the poem "Peace," where he thanks God for the war and the opportunity to join his countrymen "as swimmers into cleanness leaping" (Brooke 3). From the trenches, Ivor Gurney ironically twists Brooke's line, opening his poem "On Somme": "Suddenly into the still air burst thudding / And thudding, and cold fear possessed me all" (Gurney 157).

If irony helped to represent the gaps between soldiers' expectations and experiences, satire was the preferred form for exposing the social divisions at home. In the wake of the war and the Suffrage Movement, satire was used to describe the lingering distrust that separated combatants from non-combatants, men from women, and the young from the old. In *A War Imagined*, Samuel Hynes identified satire as the spirit of the postwar years, the twenties being identified with Aldous Huxley's bitter satires that accentuated the divisions between social classes and the war's alienating effect.

In *Monday or Tuesday*, Woolf uses satire in her first efforts to introduce the war into her fiction. A likely model for Woolf's war satire is Siegfried Sassoon. In her *TLS* reviews of *The Old Huntsman* in May 1917 and *Counter-Attack* in July 1918, Woolf praises Sassoon for accentuating the differences between the physical realities of the war and the manner in which it was narrated in England. In her review of *The Old Huntsman*, Woolf cites the poem "The Hero" in full. The poem's first stanza depicts a common scene of a mother receiving news of her son's death. Her son, she is told, "fell as he'd have wished" (Sassoon 29). She is given a note from the

Colonel honoring her son, "the hero," whose death in service represents the capstone of a meaningful life. While the mother finds consolation in this story, the soldier who delivers it knows it to be a mass-produced fabrication, remembering the eponymous "hero" as a "useless swine" (Sassoon 29). In Sassoon's poetry, the theater of war is dominated by heavy artillery, machine guns, mud, and barbed wire, confining the soldier to a passive position where he awaits a death that is meted out indiscriminately from above on the brave and the cowardly alike.

Juxtaposing the everyday horror experienced in the trenches with the government sanctioned narratives produced at Wellington House, Sassoon forces the reader to question her relation to the war. After reading Sassoon, the nightly ritual of studying the papers and tracking casualty figures for some sign of progress feels obscene. Woolf finds in Sassoon's satire a stinging indictment of British civilian life: "We say to ourselves, 'Yes, this is going on; and we are sitting here watching it,' with a new shock of surprise, with an uneasy desire to leave our place in the audience" (*VWE II* 120).

In *Monday or Tuesday*, Woolf sets up "A Society" like a good Sassoon poem, using a simple interpersonal narrative to diagnose one of the underlying causes of the war. In a 1916 letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, Woolf connects the politics of the war with those of the Women's Suffrage Movement:

I become steadily more feminist, owing to the Times, which I read at breakfast and wonder how this preposterous masculine fiction keeps going a day longer — without some vigorous young woman pulling us together and marching through it. (*VWL II* 76).

Woolf argues that the nation's war policy is skewed by the monologic thinking of British policy makers who are all drawn from a common gender, class, and educational background.

"A Society" depicts a women's organization designed to investigate the fundamental truth upon which their society is structured: that women are to populate the world, men to civilize it (*MT* 9). The story follows a *Lysistrata* plot as the women swear off childbearing until it can be proven that the world run by men is not completely mad. The story's comedic structure, in which the various women dress as men to gather research in London's various power centers, is broken suddenly on 4 August 1914 by the calls of war in the street. Poll, the woman who has been studying history at the British Museum, explains English military history in a succession of dates: 1760, 1797, 1804, 1866, 1870, 1900, which she can now add 1914. The society disbands with each woman left to confront "the horror of bearing children to see them killed" (*MT* 21). The truth uncovered by the society is a Silenian truth that can only innervate the knower and is better left unknown. As history bore out, the women in the story who bore children in 1914 would see their own sons come of age in the shadow of another ominous date: 1939. If the war has placed the comforts of ignorance beyond the women's reach, the story implies that the only path forward is for the women to gain a more permanent foothold in the halls of influence where the nation's narrative is daily being crafted.

Despite her satirical acuity, Woolf quickly turns to alternative narrative forms in *Monday or Tuesday*. Where the tendency of satire is toward the macrocosm, Woolf wants her own fiction to remain oriented toward the individual character. Woolf does not describe her mission like Swift's, "to mend the world," but rather to "enclose the human heart" (*VWD II* 13). Woolf wants to write about the war through its effects on an individual character in a way that distinguishes that character from the million others who shared a common fate. In her review of Sassoon, Woolf quotes from "To Any Dead Officer," which laments the deindividuating effects of the war as it manufactured "stacks of men" to be dispensed in mass graves (Sassoon 84). The British

policy during the First World War was to bury all human remains at the Front, with the bodies that were mangled beyond identification classified as "missing." There were close to 90,000 missing British soldiers in Flanders alone. Rather than using satire to tell a story that functions as a synecdoche for a larger political or social narrative, Woolf wanted to use her fiction to affirm the individual that the war was threatening to erase. To do so, Woolf would need to devise an alternative narrative structure to the one the government was applying to all those who died in the war. In her wartime reviews, Woolf criticizes the standard soldier narrative in which each man "fell as he'd have wished" as no less homogenizing than the war itself (Sassoon 29).

Woolf was particularly critical of how her friend, Rupert Brooke, was remembered after succumbing to sepsis in 1915. In *The Times*, Winston Churchill used the occasion of Brooke's untimely death to reaffirm the war effort, assuring the readers that Brooke had "advanced towards the brink in perfect serenity, with absolute conviction of the rightness of his country's cause" (Marsh 185). In her review of John Drinkwater's *Prose Papers* in 1917, Woolf complains how the idolization of Brooke obscures the range of the young man's potential and the tragedy of his early death. When Woolf remembers Brooke as one whose "scholarship or public life seemed even more his bent than poetry," she develops a counter-image to contrast with the apotheosized soldier-poet destined to die young (*VWE II* 203).

In her review of Edward Marsh's 1918 memoir of Brooke, Woolf criticizes Marsh for using Brooke's death as the interpretive lens through which he reads his entire life. According to Woolf, the fact that Brooke was bitten by a mosquito and died of sepsis while passing through the Greek isles on a misguided military operation, conceals more than it reveals about Brooke's character. Woolf writes that, "Nothing [...] but his own life prolonged to the usual term, and the work that he would have done, could have expressed all that was latent in the crowded years of

his youth" (*VWE II* 278). In Marsh's account, Brooke's twin ambitions converge in 1915 with the publication of his *1914* sonnets and his death in military service. Woolf finds this image of a life ripened for early death odious, asserting that the war did not fulfill Brooke's life, but cut it short. Woolf concludes her review: "One turns from the thought of him not with a sense of completeness and finality, but rather to wonder and to question still: what would he have been, what would he have done?" (*VWE II* 282).

In her diary, Woolf was more unsparing in her criticism of Marsh's work, calling it "a disgraceful sloppy sentimental rhapsody" (*VWD I* 171). The opprobrium Woolf directs at Marsh, however, is unjust in one regard: it was not Marsh who had first proposed that Brooke's life be read in a mythic register, but Brooke himself. In his letters, Brooke was happy to assume the role of a world-historical figure. In a 1915 letter to Miss Asquith, Brooke explains how delicious the Royal Navy's upcoming Dardanelle Campaign is to a sensibility shaped by a classical education. He writes:

I'm filled with confident and glorious hopes. I've been looking at the maps. Do you think perhaps the fort on the Asiatic corner will want quelling, and we'll land and come at it from behind, and they'll make a sortie and meet us on the plains of Troy? It seems to me strategically so possible. Shall we have a Hospital Base (and won't you manage it?) on Lesbos? Will Hero's Tower crumble under the 15" guns? Will the sea be polyphloisbic and wine-dark and unvintageable? [...] Should we be a Turning Point in History? Oh God! (Marsh 162-3)

Even though Brooke did not survive to witness the Ottoman defeat of the Royal Navy, there is evidence that he did come to recognize in his last days the insufficiencies of the mythic method for understanding his present condition. The Homeric references Brooke employed en route to

the Dardanelles are conspicuously absent from his final poem, dated the month of his death, April 1915. From his sickbed, Brooke fashions his countrymen not as voyaging Achaeans, but as fleeting shadows cast by a magic lantern:

I could but see them - against the lamplight - pass
Like coloured shadows, thinner than filmy glass,
Slight bubbles, fainter than the wave's faint light,
That broke to phosphorus out in the night,
Perishing things and strange ghosts - soon to die
To other ghosts - this one, or that, or I. (Marsh 189)

Brooke's last image of death is stripped of historical allusion and transcendent accouterment. This is not a death that lends significant form to the individual life that proceeded it, but functions as a *memento mori* to the living, a reminder that we too are perishing things.

Brooke's letters and last poetic fragments presented Marsh with two contrasting options for representing his death. By accentuating Brooke's last poetic fragment and the accidental circumstances of his death, Brooke's life might be presented as a baroque meditation on the capriciousness of life and death, in which Britain's finest is felled by a mosquito. Instead, Marsh holds Brooke up above the common lot. In the date and location of Brooke's death, Marsh finds the marks of divine sanction etched on Brooke's fate. Marsh writes: "Here then, in the island where Theseus was buried, and whence the young Achilles and the young Pyrrhus were called to Troy, Rupert Brooke died and was buried on Friday, the 23rd of April, the day of Shakespeare and of St. George" (Marsh 180). In Marsh's account, Brooke was destined to become a martyred soldier-poet, a faithful servant of both mythic Greece and Mother England. Brooke, like a character in a novel, cannot escape his fate. His travels from Canada and America to Fiji and

Tahiti only underscore the firm grip of destiny, pulling him always to a remote Greek isle that he might die at twenty-seven in the service of the Royal Navy.

The great advantage of the converging narrative structure that climaxes in an honorable death for a noble cause is that it offers consolation to the bereaved. During and after the Great War, thousands of war memorials were built in Britain, most of them in the style of the Edwardian Classical Revival. These monuments sought to impose a sense of order and symmetry on the Great War by aligning its memory with the wars memorialized in the past. The most famous World War I monument is the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Belgium, which honors the British soldiers who were killed and whose remains were never identified while fighting in the Ypres Salient. The Gate's classical design resembles the Arch of Titus in Rome and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. The memorial that was built to honor soldiers is thus incongruously modeled after monuments celebrating the imperial conquests of Rome and Napoleonic France. The place on the inner aspect of the Menin Gate where Reginald Blomfield sketches the names of the missing is filled in the Arch of Titus with images of Jerusalem being pillaged by Roman troops. The unsavory political implications of the monuments classical form were not lost on Sassoon, whose 1928 sonnet, "On Passing the Menin Gate," contrasts the "doomed, conscripted, unvictorious" dead with the "pomp" of the memorial's classical design (Sassoon 188). In revising "Art and Socialism" for *Vision and Design* (1920), Fry similarly complains of the precedent of "crassly mediocre and inexpressive" public art in Britain that the recent war monuments fully maintained (*VD* 63). What Fry and Sassoon both suggest is that sculptures built to memorialize the Great War should register in their form the shock and immense suffering that war produced.

Woolf extends this critique of postwar neoclassicism in her 1918 review of Maurice Hewlett's *The Village Wife's Lament*. For a poem about a woman bereft of husband and son, Woolf writes it "has too much cogency, the thoughts follow each other in too orderly a fashion" (*VWE II* 293). The disorientation of the war is lost in the regularity of the poem's meter and rhyme. The problem with the neoclassical monuments to the war dead, whether they be in the narrative of Edward Marsh, the poetry of Maurice Hewitt, or the architecture of Reginald Blomfield, is that they serve as an index of continuity rather than of change. In her postwar fiction, Woolf seeks an alternative narrative form in which the tensions, uncertainty, and the overwhelming sorrow of the period might be registered more effectively.

In *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), Woolf uses a variety of techniques for avoiding the closed narrative structure she criticizes in her essays. What Woolf seeks to subvert in her own war fiction is the "he died as he would have wished" narrative which naturalize the horrific conditions of the war and legitimizes the politics that produced them. In a diary entry from January 1920, Woolf holds up three of her short stories as exemplary of her new method: "An Unwritten Novel," "Kew Gardens," and "The Mark on the Wall." Woolf's diary reads:

happier today than I was yesterday having this afternoon arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel. Suppose one thing should open out of another — as in An Unwritten Novel — only not for 10 pages but 200 or so — doesn't that give the looseness & lightness I want: doesn't that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything? My doubt is how far it will enclose the human heart — Am I sufficiently mistress of my dialogue to net it there? For I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist. Then I'll find

room for so much — a gaiety — an inconsequence — a light spirited stepping at my sweet will. Whether I'm sufficiently mistress of things — that's the doubt; but conceive mark on the wall, K. G. & unwritten novel taking hands & dancing in unity.

(*VWD II* 13-4)

Feeling settled on the form of her next novel, Woolf continues in the same diary entry to wonder about the theme. The three exemplary stories, however, share a common theme: the war. In each, it is the gravitational pull of the war just off stage that calls forth the looser, more open form Woolf commends.

In "An Unwritten Novel," the strain of the war continually prohibits the story from getting off the ground. Woolf uses narrative metalepsis in the story to foreground the narrator's own struggles over the action narrated. The narrator forgets names and reprimands character who refuse to stay still while she struggles to keep everything straight. The story reads more like a precursor to Beckett's *The Unnamable* than to *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the fabric of the story is always untwining in the narrator's hands. She is unable in the end to recognize her own characters: "Well, my world's done for! What do I stand on? What do I know? That's not Minnie. There never was Moggridge. Who am I? Life's bare as bone" (*MT* 40).

The story that ends in unravelment begins conventionally with the narrator reading the *Times* in a train car with five strangers. A glance at the *Times* and at the railway stations as they pass place the narrative on a southbound train between Surrey and Eastbourne on the day after the Treaty of Versailles was signed, 29 June 1919. What disrupts the story's progression is the expression of unhappiness on the woman's face seated across from the narrator. This unhappiness is not unique to the woman, as the narrator surveys the other four faces in the train car to observe the mark the war has left on each. What distinguishes the woman is that she does

not "play the game" as the rest do, she does not make any effort to conceal what she feels (*MT* 27). Glancing from her paper to the woman's face, the narrator is presented with two irreconcilable narratives: the shocked silence of the one serving to undermine the steady progress of the other. As the newspaper assures its reader that the war is over, the woman's face discloses the contrary. The woman's unhappiness gives the lie to the assurances of the news cycle that life is back on track and proceeding as it had before the war.

The subject of "An Unwritten Novel" is the sorrow that passes through the net of both the daily papers and the novel form alike. The woman's unhappiness does not lend itself to the "richness and rotundity, destiny and tragedy" that the narrator believes a novel should possess (*MT* 35). Minnie Marsh's sorrow cannot be confined to the diegetic level, but quickly spreads to the narrator who vainly seeks "protection against such sorrow" by folding her paper into "a shield" (*MT* 28). As the narrator begins to feel the same twitch between her shoulder blades that affects Minnie Marsh, the form of her novel quickly dissolves in her hands. To represent the postwar sorrow that Minnie Marsh refuses to conceal, Woolf will first need to devise a narrative form loose enough to follow this sorrow as it freely plays across the boundary separating the teller of the story and the story told.

"Kew Gardens" and "Mark on the Wall" present two methods for loosening the narrative structure in a story so that the hypotactic syntax and causal links that usually hold a plot together might be dispensed with without completely disabling the narrative. In "Kew Gardens," a strict adherence to the unities of time and place provides enough cohesion to allow the narrative to roam freely amongst a disparate collection of characters. The story's narrator has a fairy's dexterity, listening to the thoughts of one person (or snail) before jumping to another as they pass. This technique of an alternating free indirect discourse based solely on physical proximity

is perfected by Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel that incorporates an exhilarating variety of perspectives while maintaining a steady progression of time in a well-defined space.

Time is kept in "Kew Gardens" by the progression of shadows and the seasonal blooms. The thoughts of the various characters all seem to conform to the park's cyclical pattern, the first couple is thinking back about old lovers while watching their small children run ahead of them. The final two characters are young lovers plotting their first visit to a reputable cafe for their afternoon tea. Life, it seems, is moving in accordance to the established rhythms of the sun and the flowers. The story's central couple, however, remains disconnected from the cyclical patterns directing the lives around them. The old man is affected by the same twitching fits as Minnie Marsh. He jerks about as he explains his plan to commune with the war dead. He tells his companion about a recent disruption of the spheres, proclaiming, "now, with this war, the spirit matter is rolling between the hills like thunder" (*MT* 52). To quell the approaching storm, he has devised a machine that will connect the bereaved to the roaming spirits so that they might find peace. His companion's only response is a wave of his stick toward the flowers as they pass. The old man, however, cannot see the flowers, the sun, or the people walking by, his mind remaining trained on the distant voices that threaten to pierce through the garden's calm.

In "The Mark on the Wall," the setting and action of the story are again stabilized, except that it is not to study the variety of perspectives that accumulate in a common space, but to plumb the mind of one sedentary individual. As the narrator contemplates a mark of unknown origin upon her wall, she gives herself over to the desire "to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts" (*MT* 61). The story's loose form allows the narration to enter the "quiet spacious world" within the narrator's mind, in which "one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin" (*MT* 65). The story's paratactic form allows the

stream of thoughts to proceed free from the impediments of coordination or subordination. In its movement away from the hard separate facts of history, the story provides the perfect target for Jameson's critique of modernist formalism as a form of escapism.

Woolf invites this critique at the end of "The Mark on the Wall" as the narrator's companion enters to disrupt her sensuous reverie about the life of a tree. The man allows himself no such fantasies, preferring the hard separate facts the woman is attempting to escape. He's going out for a newspaper, even though he admits: "it's no good buying newspapers Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God-damn this war! . . . All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall" (*MT* 68). With this he departs and the story abruptly ends. The question that had occupied the sedentary narrator is met with a definitive answer: the mark is a snail. Having closed this line of inquiry, the man turns to the more critical issues of his day. There is, after all, a war on. With Jameson's *A Singular Modernity*, a cogent argument can be developed for why the narrator should give over her idle daydreams and follow her partner's lead.

Woolf, however, uses her story to formulate an unlikely defense of the political efficacy of the story's experimental form and the escape it offers. When she first notices the mark on the wall, the narrator fights off the temptation to get up and investigate. Doing so would transform the mark into a determinate object that could then be explained and catalogued amongst all the other hard facts. Remaining in her seat, however, the mark serves as an invitation to wonder. Rather than narrowing in on one answer, the narrator unfurls all the possibilities that extend out from the mark. The unstable mark quickly becomes the center of a room that appears equally unstable: the book-binding tools, bird cages, iron hoops, steel skates, and the coal scuttle that once filled the room have all recently been transformed into instruments of war. Under the

influence of the mark, she wonders what in the room will endure the dust that is accumulating on the mantle. The tapestry tablecloths that were so important to Sunday luncheons before the war are already beginning to appear as phantoms.

While considering the indeterminate form on her wall, the woman begins wondering about what other forms might be subject to change. For instance, there is "the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency" (*MT* 63). Studied beside the mark on the wall, Whitaker's Table of Precedency becomes subject to the same Heraclitian flux; the bureaucratic formalism upon which her society is structured appears no less rigid than Aquinas' great chain of being. This too appears amenable, as the woman considers how even Whitaker's has become "since the war half a phantom to many men and women, which soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where phantoms go" along with "the mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints" (*MT* 64).

By juxtaposing the woman's reverie with the man's newspaper at the end of the story, Woolf asks which is in fact more fertile ground for political action. In "The Storyteller" (1936), Walter Benjamin contrasts the contents of the newspaper with the contents of a story. According to Benjamin, a newspaper contains information that can be immediately disposed of once it is consumed:

The prime requirement is that it appears 'understandable in itself,' [...] Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. (89)

Where a newspaper is rendered obsolete in a day, the story endures from generation to generation by remaining open to a variety of retellings and interpretations. Like the mark on the

wall, the story invites one to consider the possibilities that extend out from it. When the narrator in "The Mark on the Wall" is interrupted by her companion, she is considering the life of a tree and all the various ways in which that life might be extended in the objects made from its wood. Woolf writes: "I should like to take each one separately - but something is getting in the way [...]. There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me" (*MT* 67). Of all the possible afterlives a tree might enjoy, the newspaper the man goes out to buy is the most fleeting. In the newspaper, the world's stories are transformed into information in much the same way the man's investigation transforms the mark on the wall into a snail that can be dismissed as soon as it is classified.

In each of the three stories Woolf imagines dancing in unison while planning *Jacob's Room*, a burgeoning historical sense is interwoven with a heightened concern with form. In "An Unwritten Novel," Woolf displays a postwar sorrow that is incompatible with the biographical form, building toward no climax and revealing no hidden meaning. To modify the biographical novel form, Woolf decenters her characters in "Kew Gardens" by displacing its anthropocentric focus, passing from her characters to the effects of planetary movements and the machinations of a snail. In the tradition of Pascal, Woolf uses rapid shifts in scope to excite a sense of wonder before the unseen forces at work in the world, which Pascal describes, "as startling in their minuteness as others are in the vastness of their size," the contemplation of which leaves one "suspended between the two gulfs of the infinite and the void" and "trembl[ing] at nature's wonders" (230). In "The Mark on the Wall," Woolf introduces another coordinate into her baroque topography by exploring the depths of the individual imagination. Rather than integrating her characters into the larger social processes as is typical of the biographical novel, Woolf explores in *Monday or Tuesday* the various methods through which they might be kept

apart. By the time she begins drafting *Jacob's Room* in 1920, Woolf has developed the formal means with which a historically informed biographical novel might repudiate rather than justify the social order that shapes the protagonist.

The Postwar Novel: *Jacob's Room*

Jacob's Room adheres to the general outlines of the Bildungsroman, tracing a young man's development between the ages of 19 and 26. There are two conspicuous dates in the novel. In the second chapter Jacob Flanders moves up from Rugby to Cambridge in October 1906, placing him on a parallel path with Rupert Brooke. The other conspicuous date is 3 August 1914, the final day before Britain enters the war that will claim the protagonist's life. By assimilating the basic structure of the Bildungsroman, Woolf foregrounds the form's underlying assumptions: that over the course of the novel a fluid youth of 19 will develop into a substantial, socially integrated man of 26. Marsh's biography of Rupert Brooke is exemplary of this form, in which the young man's entrance into the social order extends an aura of meaning on both the young man and the institution he enters. In *The Theory of the Novel*, written during the Great War, György Lukács describes the symbiotic relationship between the character in a novel and the social ideals he comes to embody:

The central character of a biography is significant only by his relationship to a world of ideals that stands above him: but this world, in turn, is realized only through its existence within that individual and his lived experience. Thus in the biographical form the balance of both spheres which are unrealized and unrealizable in isolation produces a new and autonomous life that is, however paradoxically, complete in itself and immanently meaningful (78).

In "The Storyteller," Benjamin also locates this process of cross-signification at the heart of the novel form. He writes, "by integrating the social process with the development of a person, [the novel] bestows the most frangible justification on the order determining it" (88). According to Benjamin, the novel form is oriented toward discovering the meaning of a character's life, a process which in turn naturalizes the social structures within which this meaning is discovered.

Woolf's negative example for *Jacob's Room* is Brooke's biography, which both justified the war policies Woolf opposed and naturalized Brooke's tragic death. In "The Storyteller," Benjamin provides a quote from Moritz Heimann that examines the formal assumptions Woolf faces in narrating the life of one of the war dead. Where Heimann writes that "a man who dies at the age of thirty-five is at every point of his life a man who dies at thirty-five," Benjamin revises the statement: "a man who died at thirty-five will appear to *remembrance* at every point in his life as a man who dies at the age of thirty-five" (Benjamin 100). By changing the tense, Benjamin replaces the projection of an iron-clad fate with the projections made by our own desire for closure. Benjamin uses the Heimann quote to explain the popularity of the novel form, a form that is oriented toward a single vanishing point, its "Finis" in which everything is explained and all loose ends are tied. Accentuating the novel's closed narrative structure, Benjamin aligns the novel with the newspaper as twin forces conspiring to bring the age of storytelling to a close by replacing the open interpretive structure of the story with forms that incorporate their own explanation.

Together, Lukács and Benjamin provide a clear depiction of the structural impediments Woolf faces as she conceives of a Bildungsroman that critiques rather than confirms the social institutions that shape her protagonist. Identifying the Bildungsroman form as one such institution, Woolf's critique must be both internal and external, turning a suspicious eye on the

assumptions of her own novel form as well as those shaping the educational and political systems inhabited by her protagonist. Woolf's critique of British society in the lead up to the war, therefore, is inscribed as much in her story's form as it is in the narrated action.

The most conspicuous formal feature in *Jacob's Room* is the 148 line spaces of various sizes dispersed within the narrative. The fragments that comprise the novel are not connected with hypotactic syntax, but leap about in space and time. These gaps shift the novel's focus away from Jacob's actions to the narrator's act of remembrance. *Jacob's Room* is narrated after the war by a woman mourning Jacob's death. The breaks in the narration are representative of how the bereaved experienced the loss of those gone missing in the war. With no body, no known burial site, and little information about the circumstances of death, the bereaved had very little narrative support for coping with their sudden loss. In order to write of this war, Marc Bloch suggested that "oblivion must have its share" in the story (77).

In *Jacob's Room*, the most unsettling gap in the narration falls between the final two chapters. In the penultimate chapter, Jacob is absentmindedly tracing the outline of the Parthenon in the dirt and arguing with the park attendant; in the final chapter he is simply gone, his room empty. The novel's final scene marks the time that has silently passed since Jacob was last seen contemplating his future in Hyde Park. Withholding the circumstances of her protagonist's entrance into military service and death, Woolf denies her reader the climactic build-up of the traditional biographical novel. Eliding the circumstances of the protagonist's death prevents the reader from abstracting a final "meaning" from his life. Placed in the gap between two chapters, Jacob's death is transformed by Woolf into an occasion for mourning rather than explanation.

Woolf's use of blanks in *Jacob's Room* to represent the disjunction and sorrow produced by the Great War can be compared to the way Flaubert uses blank spaces in *Sentimental Education* (1869) to register the emptiness felt by many after the founding of the Second Empire. In a January 1920 article in *La Nouvelle Revue française*, Marcel Proust argues that Flaubert's blank spaces better reflect the revolution of 1848 than the depicted action:

In my view the most beautiful thing in *A Sentimental Education* is not a sentence, but a blank. Flaubert has described page after page, in great detail, Frédéric Moreau's actions, including the most irrelevant. Frédéric sees a soldier attacking a rioter with his sword, who falls dead. 'And Frédéric, open-mouthed, recognized Sénécal.' Here we have a blank, an enormous blank, and without transition time flows not by quarters of hours, but by years, by decades. (Ginzburg 92)

In the gap between chapters five and six of the third part of *Sentimental Education*, the action on the diegetic level is superseded by the narrator, who allows the time he had been meticulously chronicling to spill unimpeded through his fingers. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf heightens the effect of the blank by allowing not only a block of time to slip out of her novel, but the very life of her protagonist. Reaching the setting sun on the third of August 1914, the narration stalls. The novel's final scene, in which Jacob's mother and friend collect Jacob's belongings after his death, indicates what has been elided. The novel has no climax or epiphany. The war does not lend any significance to Jacob's life, but simply ends it.

The war that would customarily serve as the climax of the soldier's biography is not removed from *Jacob's Room*, but repositioned. Rather than the focal point toward which Jacob's life progresses, the war is a constant encumbrance for the narrator who continually abandons the action of her story to study the war's doleful shadow as it plays across her every scene. The

narrator can find no sanctuary in her narrative from the steady drumbeat of the war. Even the routine attendance at Kings College Chapel foreshadows the unspoken event that is the source of her sorrow:

Look, they pass into service, how airily the gowns blow out, as though nothing dense and corporeal were within. What sculptured faces, what certainty, authority controlled by piety, although great boots march under the gowns. In what orderly procession they advance. (*JR* 23)

In the novel's first recorded scene, Jacob already appears more like a *momento mori* than a real boy. The novel opens with Jacob gone missing. When he is found, he has a sheep's skull in hand. The chapter ends with this child "fast asleep, profoundly unconscious. The sheep's jaw with the big yellow teeth in it lay[ing] at his feet" (*JR* 8).

To convey that it is the war that is the unspoken source of the narrator's mourning, Woolf provides some unambiguous hints in her initial naming and placing of her protagonist. Jacob's surname, Flanders, was the site of the Battles of Ypres and Passchendaele, the region in Belgium where the British suffered the majority of their casualties during the war. Jacob's hometown of Scarborough was made synonymous with the war effort in the ubiquitous "Remember Scarborough!" recruiting poster, which depicts scenes from the German bombardment of the spa town on 16 December 1914. The attack on Scarborough's undefended civilian population represented the first foreign attack on British soil since 1797 and inflicted the worst civilian casualties in a foreign attack since the Norman invasion in 1066 (Bradshaw 13). A British audience in 1922 would have had little trouble reading the portents in the story of a young man named Flanders born in Scarborough in 1887.

If the narrator of *Jacob's Room* sees the war everywhere, Jacob appears to be completely oblivious of the approaching conflict and the effect it will have on his life. The character development one expects in the protagonist of a Bildungsroman is conspicuously absent from Jacob. One of the recurring criticisms of the novel in its first reviews was that its central character had very little character to speak of. Upon first reading the novel, even Woolf's husband noted the spectral quality of the characters, comparing the novel to "a puppet show" (*VWD II* 186).

The manuscripts of *Jacob's Room* suggest that the distance separating the novel's reader from its protagonist was deliberately maintained by Woolf. The general tendency in Woolf's revisions was to excise the moments in the text that reveal Jacob's interiority. For instance, in a pivotal moment in Jacob's courtship of Clara Durrant, he is footing the ladder that Clara is perched upon as she gathers grapes. The drafts of the scene provide an internal view of Jacob struggling with a profession: "'I haven't said it' Jacob thought to himself. I want to say it. I can't say it. Clara! Clara! Clara!" (Bishop 70). In revising the scene, Woolf retains Clara's internal thoughts while denying all access to Jacob besides what he manages to announce, an aborted "Oh, Miss Durrant" as Clara turns her back to him (*JR* 48).

In the rare moments we are allowed behind Jacob's expressionless mask, little is found there that would endear him to his reader. He harbors illusions of grandeur, some unsavory opinions of women, and an aversion to the "beastly crowd" (*JR* 28). He is searching for a calling. He has loyal friends. He is in most respects a typical young man of his class. In "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," Woolf describes Bel-imperia from Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* as "an animated broomstick," which seems to be a fair representation of her ambition for Jacob Flanders as well (*VWE IV* 66). In the final year of her protagonist's life, the narrator asks: "But

how far was he a mere bumpkin? How far was Jacob Flanders at the age of twenty-six a stupid fellow? It is no use trying to sum people up" (*JR* 123). By flaunting the analysis of character one expects to find in a biographical novel, Woolf redirects her reader's attention away from her character to the social forces that led him to the battlefield.

The penultimate chapter of *Jacob's Room* cuts the scene of Asquith and his cabinet drafting the declaration of war with contemporaneous scenes from across London. In the park, Jacob is not thinking about the Germans in Belgium or Britain's obligations to France, but about "civilization" and the woman he loved in Greece. At the other end of Hyde Park, Clara Durrant is walking from the site of the old Exhibition, where the Crystal Palace once stood, to the Wellington Monument, a nude statue of Achilles. As London prepares to enter the war, Clara is depicted walking from the emblem of Enlightenment progress to the emblem of what the narrator calls "the Greek myth" (*JR* 109). By juxtaposing these two scenes with the one in Whitehall, the narrator suggests that the "unseizable force" of history that seems to descend overnight on London had in fact been prepared by many hands over many generations (*JR* 125).

Among the millions who flocked to Hyde Park in 1851 to see the Crystal Palace was Fyodor Dostoevsky, whom Woolf praised as "the greatest writer ever born" (*VWL II* 5). Beginning in his 1863 travelogue *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* and culminating in *Notes from Underground* (1864), Dostoevsky develops a critique of the Crystal Palace as the embodiment of Enlightenment rationalism and warns against its homogenizing effects. In *Winter Notes* Dostoevsky describes the shudder he felt upon first entering the Crystal Palace, "you feel a terrible force which has united all these numberless people here, from all over the world, into a single herd; you become aware of a colossal ideal " (35). In *Notes from Underground*, the underground man projects a dystopian image of the future around this colossal

ideal, in which everything is "ready-made and also calculated with mathematical precision, so that all possible questions will vanish in an instant, essentially because they will have been given all possible answers. Then the crystal palace will get built" (24-5). The underground man anticipates a future in which Enlightenment rationalism crowds out all other modes of engaging with the world, a future in which freedom, dialogue, and struggle all drop out as history is driven by reason into the deep ruts of progress. It is within the Enlightenment paradigm of sustained progress that H. G. Wells can write in 1914 *The War That Will End War*. The emergent irony in postwar literature provides an index for how rapidly this Enlightenment paradigm depreciated after the war.

Dostoevsky's fear that history was converging around a single idea, thus eliminating the dialogic sphere in which dissent might be registered, is shared by the narrator of *Jacob's Room*. To contest the determinist view of recent history bent toward one inevitable end, the narrator continually expands her narrative lens to draw attention to the alternative worlds transpiring just outside of Jacob's room. While Jacob sits in his room at Cambridge, penning essays like "Does History Consist of the Biographies of Great Men?" and thinking about the broad arc of civilization, the narrator remains outside his window (*JR* 28). As a woman, she is not invited to share in Jacob's intimate gatherings at Cambridge or in the student's special relationship with history. When Jacob hears the bell, he comes to the window looking "satisfied; indeed masterly[...] the clock conveying to him (it may be) a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor" (*JR* 34). Rather than imagining herself at time's pinnacle, the narrator who remains outside keeps time by the cycles of the moon and colors of the night: "the feathery white moon never let the sky grow dark; all night the chestnut blossoms were white in the green; dim was the cow-parsley in the meadows" (*JR* 28). Positioned outside "the light of Cambridge," the

bell does not speak to the narrator as it does to the students within, who hear it, "as if intoned by somebody reverent from a pulpit; as if generations of learned men heard the last hour go rolling through their ranks and issued it, already smooth and time-worn, with their blessings, for the use of the living" (*JR* 34).

If the narrator's gender prevents her from developing an accurate record of what transpires within Jacob's room, it does provide her an external perspective from which she can accurately depict the effects Cambridge has on Jacob. After graduating, Jacob begins framing his own life as if he were one of the world historical figures from his essay. While studying at the British Museum, Jacob muses that: "The flesh and blood of the future depends entirely upon six young men. And as Jacob was one of them, no doubt he looked a little regal and pompous as he turned the page, and Julia Hedge disliked him naturally enough" (*JR* 85). By shifting perspective from Jacob to the feminist seated beside him, the narrator provides an alternative vision of history to the one in which Jacob imagines himself playing a central role. When Julia reads off the names inscribed in the dome of the British Museum Reading Room, she does not decipher an arc toward progress, but evidence of systematic oppression, as she curses: "Oh damn, why didn't they leave room for an Eliot or a Brontë?" (*JR* 84). As the narration nears 1914, the adverse effects of the great man theory extend beyond the populations marginalized by it. Reading his life within the great man paradigm, Jacob has no choice on the eve of a world war but to make himself a "tool and means of the World Spirit" (Hegel 28).

The narrator in *Jacob's Room* uses windows throughout her story to counter the determinist historical path Jacob ascribes to himself. Back at Cambridge, the narrator at one point stops trying to peer through the windows to consider instead what the men confined within are unable to see:

A step or two beyond the window there was nothing at all, except the enclosing buildings—chimneys upright, roofs horizontal; too much brick and building for a May night, perhaps. And then before one's eyes would come the bare hills of Turkey—sharp lines, dry earth, coloured flowers, and colour on the shoulders of the women, standing naked-legged in the stream to beat linen on the stones. The stream made loops of water round their ankles. But none of that could show clearly through the swaddlings and blanketings of the Cambridge night" (*JR* 34).

Rather than a light on a hill, Cambridge is here described as a blanket over the head of its residents. Just as Woolf had sought out the hidden benefits of being denied a Cambridge education by shaping her own reading practices, the narrator of *Jacob's Room* is keen to point out the opportunities that are precluded along Jacob's privileged path.

To accentuate all that Jacob misses, the narrator often leaves him behind to go check out what is happening in the street below or follow one of the passing characters across the Waterloo Bridge to explore the Surrey side. The narrator's desire to break free of the course plotted by Jacob becomes most pronounced on Jacob's tour to Greece. As the train hurtles down Italy, Jacob looks out the window feeling quite content thinking about the hundred pounds in his pocket and the social capital he is soon to acquire in Athens:

After doing Greece he was going to knock off Rome. The Roman civilization was a very inferior affair, no doubt. But Bonamy talked a lot of rot, all the same. "You ought to have been in Athens," he would say to Bonamy when he got back. "Standing on the Parthenon," he would say, or "The ruins of the Coliseum suggest some fairly sublime reflections," which he would write out at length in letters. It might turn to an essay upon civilization. (*JR* 108)

Over the course of his classical education, Jacob has spent so much time in the imagined cities of Athens and Rome that his current tour seems redundant. Before he arrives, he already knows what he will see, how it will make him feel, and what he will write about it.

Jacob's imperious attitude in a foreign land is satirized in Woolf's early short story, "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus," which was written shortly after Woolf's own tour of Greece in 1906. The British travelers in the story are Cambridge educated like Jacob and imagine themselves to be "the rightful inheritors" of the Greek tradition (64). The current inhabitants of Greece are described as a "spurious people" and "barbarians" for not responding properly when addressed "in their own tongue as Plato would have spoken it had Plato learned Greek at Harrow" (64). Like the group of British tourist in Woolf's story, Jacob travels to Greece to commune not with the people or the land, but with an idea. Plotting himself upon a linear model of civilization, Jacob, a Cambridge educated Englishman, believes himself to be the rightful heir of the Spirit passed down from the ancient Greeks. After a late night of drinking, Jacob and Timmy Durrant like to quote Greek playwrights to one another, believing that they are "the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant" (*JR* 59). This is why Jacob is so confident en route to Athens that he already knows what he will experience there. As the narrator explains in "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus," in Greece "Germans are tourists and Frenchmen are tourists but Englishmen are Greeks" (61).

The trajectory of Jacob's own thoughts en route to Greece are so distasteful to the narrator that she jumps the train. Noticing the "accidental villas among olive trees" as they pass through Italy, the narrator leaves Jacob dreaming about the Parthenon to find "a lonely hill-top where no one ever comes" (*JR* 108). The narrator does not want to follow Jacob and commune with the marble remains left behind by the great men of old. She writes, "what I should like

would be to get out among the fields, sit down and hear the grasshoppers, and take up a handful of earth - Italian earth" (*JR* 108).

In drawing attention to the ripening olive trees and the sound of grasshoppers, the narrator juxtaposes the cyclical rhythms of the day and the season to Jacob's linear conception of progress. Where the narrator modestly places herself amongst the natural cycles, Jacob is always imagining himself at the precipice of history. On the morning of August 3, 1914, the narrator diverts attention from the daily newspaper to focus instead on the cyclical return of the sun:

Sunlight strikes in upon shaving-glasses; and gleaming brass cans; upon all the jolly trappings of the day; the bright, inquisitive, armoured, resplendent, summer's day, which has long since vanquished chaos; which has dried the melancholy mediaeval mists; drained the swamp and stood glass and stone upon it; and equipped our brains and bodies with such an armoury of weapons that merely to see the flash and thrust of limbs engaged in the conduct of daily life is better than the old pageant of armies drawn out in battle array upon the plain. (*JR* 131)

In the rhythms of everyday life, the narrator finds a contrast to the epic temporality that converges upon one decisive event on the plains of Troy or the rooms of Whitehall. The manner in which the Greek myth could distort the war for a classically educated Englishman is evidenced in Rupert Brooke's final letters, in which he imagines himself en route to the Dardanelles as one of the hairy-headed, bronzed-armored Achaeans on hollow ship navigating the wine-colored sea. Superposing a Homeric narrative structure over Gallipoli can only distort the fate that will be suffered there by the British Navy.

What the Greek myth does provide, however, is political cover for the government that is believed to house the World Spirit. Hegel writes that such a nation "has an absolute right as the

vehicle of the World Spirit" and "against it, the spirits of other nations have no rights" (Hegel 101). A population schooled to believe that their nation has inherited this Spirit as it has been passed down from the ancient Greeks will be less inclined to scrutinize their government's war policy, believing their eventual victory to be divinely sanctioned.

When Clara walks past the statue of Achilles in Hyde Park on the Third of August 1914, she begins reading the inscription: "This statue was erected by the women of England . . ." (*JR* 134). Before she can finish, she is twice interrupted. First, she begins to laugh; then she is almost run over by a riderless horse. The riderless horse is commonly included in military funerals and parades to commemorate fallen soldiers. Its appearance moments after Clara had mistaken a passerby for Jacob is yet another portent of the fate our protagonist is soon to meet. And yet it is not the horse that stops Clara from reading the statue, but her own laugh. For Clara, there is something amusing about the women of England erecting a statue of a nude Greek holding a raised sword at his waist to commemorate the Duke of Wellington. What seems merely incongruous to Clara, however, symbolizes for the narrator one of the underlying causes of the war:

It is the governesses who start the Greek myth. Look at that for a head (they say)—nose, you see, straight as a dart, curls, eyebrows—everything appropriate to manly beauty [...] First you read Xenophon; then Euripides. One day—that was an occasion, by God—what people have said appears to have sense in it; "the Greek spirit"; the Greek this, that [...] The point is, however, that we have been brought up in an illusion. (*JR* 109).

Woolf asserts that it is women who propagate the Greek myth as much as men in *Jacob's Room*. The novel's amorous gaze centers on Jacob, who is repeatedly being compared by the women

around him to a Greek statue. Besides the female gaze of the narrator, Julia Eliot studies him for a portrait, Fanny Elmer paints his face and dresses him as a Roman emperor, Lucien Gravé at the Parthenon aims her kodak at Jacob's head amongst the statues, and the dancers at the Guy Fawkes festival declare him the most beautiful man, garland his head, and make him sit on a gilded chair.

The narrator is careful to catalogue all the times Jacob misreads situations due to the Greek myth. Jacob mistakes Florinda's frankness in sexual matters as a sign that she is a good Greek woman, an illusion the narrator repeatedly mocks. When Jacob mistakes himself for an expert on civilization because he can quote Greek with Timmy Durrant, the narrator shifts her focus from the two young men stumbling home after a late night to the workmen stumping forth to begin their day that the reader might see the disconnect between Jacob's theorizing about civilization and the material conditions which sustain it. The two young men do not see the workers, but imagine instead that "Civilizations stood round them like flowers ready for picking. Ages lapped at their feet" (*JR* 59). The "astonishing clearness" with which Jacob looks out his window after reading the *Phaedrus* is undercut by the narrator's transition from pensive-looking Jacob thinking about rhetoric to the actual argument taking place at the pillar-box down the street, of which Jacob knows nothing (*JR* 87). As the war approaches, the narration leaves little doubt that the Greek myth will cause Jacob to misread it as well.

Beyond developing a critique of three of the hidden forces contributing to the war: the Greek myth, the great man theory, and the Bildungsroman, Woolf also uses *Jacob's Room* to explore how the novel form might be manipulated to suggest different narrative patterns. To displace the linear conceptions of time that undergird both the biographical novel and the Hegelian model of history, Woolf introduces a number of cyclical methods for keeping time.

Besides focusing on the planetary cycles, the seasons, and routines of everyday life, Woolf also includes in *Jacob's Room* a ritual conception of time that makes no claim of progress, but binds generation to generation through a shared faith. Chapter Eleven concludes with the narrator abandoning all her characters that she might wander alone into the Scarborough church:

Even at night, the church seems full of people [. . .] the timbers strain to hold the dead and the living, the ploughmen, the carpenters, the fox-hunting gentlemen and the farmers smelling of mud and brandy. Their tongues join together in syllabbling the sharp-cut words, which for ever slice asunder time and the broad-backed moors. Plaint and belief and elegy, despair and triumph, but for the most part good sense and jolly indifference, go trampling out of the windows any time these five hundred years. (*JR* 106-7)

Inside an empty church, the narrator can imagine an ideal space in which the individual that is held apart in the biographical novel might be dissolved again into a ghostly congregation that is drawn from various generations and classes. In depictions of Jacob's London, the narrator's focus is always upon how class divides her 172 named characters (Neverow liv). When Jacob goes to visit Countess Rocksber, the narrative splits in two to account for what is transpiring on either side of the Countess' window. While Jacob enjoys the wine and cigar proffered by the woman "fed upon champagne and spices for at least two centuries," the shot is cut to include Moll Pratt sitting upon the cold pavement selling violets outside the Countess' window (*JR* 78). The scene of Jacob in the company of Miss Perry and the other "spinster ladies of wealth" is cut with the scene of Jacob in the company of Laurette, an engagement which ends with Jacob depositing so many shillings on the mantelpiece and being escorted out by Madame (*JR* 81). It is only alone in an empty church that the narrator can momentarily consider the grounds upon which all these characters might be held together.

During the first months of the war, the appeal to a ritual time had political reverberations, offering an alternative structure that accentuated what continued to bind the people living in countries at war. In December 1914, Woolf's friend Margaret Llewelyn Davies and her fellow suffragettes drafted an open Christmas letter to their counterparts in Germany and Austria to be published in the international suffragist publication, *Jus Suffragii*. In their letter, the British women appeal to the Christmas season to pledge continued solidarity with the women of Germany and Austria and renounce the sensational stories that were daily being reported to demonize the enemy population and justify the targeting of civilians. The letter asks: "shall we not steadily refuse to give credence to those tales so freely told us, each of the other?" (Oldfield 12). In the ritual return of Christmas, the suffragettes of England renew their pledge to tend to all the sick and injured prisoners as the sons and husbands of their sister suffragettes from Germany and Austria.

The Christmas appeal of the British suffragettes was reflected at the Front in the Christmas Truce of 1914. After months of endless bombardment, there were stories from up and down the line of the formidable silence of the first Christmas in the trenches, during which the soldiers emerged unarmed and walk upright to exchange Christmas greetings with their enemy counterparts. There were impromptu gift exchanges and caroling. The threat posed by a shared ritual calendar was quickly recognized by the generals, as strongly worded ordinances were issued from both sides forbidding such fraternization from ever occurring again (Fussell 10).

In a diary entry from August 1918, Woolf imagines another model of time that undermined the war narrative. Studying a photo of her brother, Adrian, from the front, Woolf writes:

The existence of life in another human being is as difficult to realise as a play of Shakespeare when the book is shut. This occurred to me when I saw Adrian talking to the tall German prisoner. By rights they should have been killing each other. The reason why it is easy to kill another person must be that one's imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him - the infinite possibilities of a succession of days which are furled in him, & have already been spent. (*VWD I 186*)

The everyday acts of war, the routine aiming of weapons with the intent to kill, are predicated in Woolf's account upon a simplified narrative structure. The soldier's duties require him to quell his curiosity and imagination to the point in which he can look across the line and see nothing but closed books, each inscribed "enemy."

When Woolf described the war as a "preposterous masculine fiction" in her letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, she attributes the fiction to a multitude of authors (*VWL II 76*). Besides the Army Staff and politicians, there were the daily newspapers, which used casualty figures as a metric for progress. In *Literature and the Body* (1988), Elaine Scarry writes how "the 'body count' in war is a notoriously insubstantial form of speech" since "numbers and numerical operations are [...] habitually thought of as abstract, as occupying a space wholly cut off from the world" (viii). If the daily quantification of the dead had a desensitizing effect on the public, so to did the standard narrative of the individual soldiers who lost their lives. In Marsh's memoir of Brooke, Woolf sees the same sluggishness of imagination that allowed soldiers to daily take aim at the enemy across the line. What Marsh fails to consider is the possibilities that remained furled within his subject at the time of his death. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf sought a way to modify the biographical novel form to preserve the various futures that remained furled within her own protagonist on the eve of war.

Thomas Hardy's poem "The Man He Killed" (1909) provides Woolf a model for decentering a soldier narrative by manipulating the story's temporal frame. In her essays, Woolf admired Hardy's ability to narrate outside "the stir of the present and its littleness" (*VWE IV* 507). In "The Man He Killed," Hardy dilates his time frame to consider the past and possible futures that extend out from an isolated battlefield encounter. The poem's soldier-narrator refuses to confine his experiences within his government's established narrative, imagining the man he killed not simply as his foe, but as a man who, like himself, might have been out of work and enlisted off-hand, a man that in another setting he would happily have bought a drink and perhaps forged a bond of friendship much more enduring than that which bound either of the men to their nation's geopolitical ambitions. Hardy's poem, like Adrian's photo, alters the political and ethical frame of the war by inviting one to imagine the life of the enemy combatant as an unfinished narrative that only he could properly tell.

In *Jacob's Room*, the narrator attempts to preserve Jacob's life from glib explanation or symbolization by two means. First, like Hardy, she elides her story's climactic event, withholding the death scene that had been foreshadowed from the first page. Second, Woolf refuses to define Jacob's character, arguing that "character mongering is much overdone nowadays" (*JR* 124). Where the meaning of a biographical novel is typically produced by understanding the protagonist's character in reference to his death and his death in reference to his character, Woolf denies her reader access to either of the referents required for abstracting a meaning from Jacob's life. In his friend's loyalty and the determination of the narrator to tell his story, the reader can intuit that there is something about Jacob that she is continually being denied access to.

By flaunting the expectations embedded in the biographical novel form, Woolf invites her reader to consider the alternative functions of her novel. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf repeatedly breaks the causal chain of her story with line spaces and syntactical breaks that allow alternative temporal structures to be introduced that do not conform to the developmental model of the Bildungsroman. Woolf cycles through various temporal frames, from the newspaper's daily barrage of information: "A strike, a murder, football, bodies found; vociferation from all parts of England simultaneously" to the anthropological view assumed by Mrs. Flanders knitting on the ruins of an old Roman camp, whose lost "two-penny-halfpenny brooch [becomes] for ever part of the rich accumulation" (*JR* 77, 106). The narration incorporates both a view of history being bent toward progress by a series of great men and a history conforming to the cyclical patterns of the seasons and rituals. By stacking temporalities in this way, Woolf denaturalizes each one in turn to produce an effect not unlike that of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, where Wittgenstein attempts to study what lies beneath all the various methods for telling time, only to discover:

We cannot compare any process with the "passage of time" — there is no such thing — but only with another process (say, with the movement of the chronometer). Hence the description of the temporal sequence of events is only possible if we support ourselves on another process. (*TLP* 6.3611)

Approaching time from opposite directions, Woolf and Wittgenstein reach the same conclusion: that there is no essential method with which to measure the "passage of time" and that our conception of time remains dependent upon the form we apply to it. In *The Theory of the Novel* (1916), Lukács argues that the novel, unlike all other literary forms, "includes real time among its constitutive principles" (121). According to Lukács, time is elevated in the novel so that a

course might be plotted horizontally toward an immanent meaning after "the bond with the transcendental home has been severed" (122). Where Lukács' wartime theory focuses on the novel's dependency upon time for its unity and immanent meaning, Woolf's postwar fiction explores how the time that gives shape to the novel is in turn shaped by the novel.

In Woolf's postwar fiction, the increased reliance on historical time does not displace her formal experimentation. The 1919 publication of *Night and Day* demonstrated to Woolf that history could be represented in a novel in peculiar ways, as her elision of the war made her readers more cognizant of the war that lent her drawing room comedy its otherworldly effect. After the war, Woolf renounced the formalist belief that the rhythms of life and art could be held apart, writing in *Jacob's Room* that "History backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain" (JR 37). Woolf's postwar turn toward history does not, however, signal a complete abandonment of Fry's formalist theories. Woolf retains in her postwar fiction Fry's keen interest in aesthetic form, but instead of attempting to isolate the effect of form on some pure aesthetic emotion, Woolf manipulated her formal design to produce an index of the predominant everyday emotions of postwar life, especially the disillusion and desolation of those who, like the narrator in *Jacob's Room*, lost a loved one. In the novel's disjointed form, Woolf represents a world that is out-of-joint, inviting one to cast a suspicious eye over everything that might have contributed to making it thus, including the narrative forms in which we remember our dead, tell our history, and keep our time.

CHAPTER 2: DADAISM AND CLASSICISM IN *THE WASTE LAND*

One of the most salient features of *The Waste Land* is its capaciousness. The poem's leaping style and variety of source material create a carnival atmosphere in which contrasting images and ideas commingle. This chapter studies the peculiar convergence of dadaism and classicism in the poem. As Eliot was writing *The Waste Land* in the wake of the Great War, the classicist call to *rappel à l'ordre* was being opposed by a dadaist program designed to disintegrate all creeds that they might pass like sand through the fingers (Van Doesberg 29). The conjunction of these contradictory positions in *The Waste Land* places a strain on any comprehensive reading of the poem.

In Eliot criticism, the common method for dealing with the poem's classicist and dadaist tendencies is to handle them separately. In 2009, Lawrence Rainey designated classicism as one of the three terms upon which "nearly all accounts of Eliot's poetics turn" (Rainey 301). Theodore Ziolkowski's *Classicism of the Twenties: Art, Music, Literature* (2015) provides an example of how the poem continues to serve as a monument of interwar classicism. In accounts like Ziolkowski's, "the inanities of dada" are mentioned only to serve as a contrast (Ziolkowski 3).

In the wake of the new modernist studies, however, the trend has been to deemphasize *The Waste Land*'s classicist nostalgia for a lost order to focus instead on the ludic indeterminacy created by the poem's avant-garde form. In the fourteen essays that comprise the 2015 *Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land*, classicism is mentioned only two times, one of

which is to contrast Eliot's verse to the new classicism of Ezra Pound, Jean Cocteau, and Andre Gide (Rabaté 22). In the same volume, Dada is mentioned seventeen times.

Of course Eliot was not a dadaist. At the height of Dada's notoriety, Eliot was working at a bank. The distance between bankers and dadaists was accentuated by Raoul Hausmann and Johannes Baader's 1918 April Fool's prank, which put the authorities of the Berlin suburb of Nikolassee on notice that a Dada republic was soon to be established there. In preparation, the city's bankers were asked to transfer all funds into an account set aside for the nascent republic. The community "mobilized its militia in response, two thousand strong, warily awaiting the onslaught of Dada hordes" (Rasula 71). The famously staid Eliot, who was working days at Lloyd's Bank and nights defending an idealized Tradition, could serve as a caricature of everything that Hausmann and Baader were mobilizing against.

Despite their temperamental differences, however, Eliot was heedful of the dadaists while writing *The Waste Land*, reviewing the dadaist poetry of Tristan Tzara, soliciting contributions from Francis Picabia, and writing an evaluative essay on Dada Paris. While editing *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound was publishing dadaist verse and attending dadaist events. This chapter's first section will provide the fullest account to date of Dada's influence on *The Waste Land*, an area of research that remains underserved. The second section will then study how Eliot's definition of classicism was changing during this same period, positioning the third section to address the chapter's central question: how can a poem be both dadaist and classicist? How are we to formulate a coherent reading of a poem that maintains a claim at each of the antipodes of interwar modernism?

Dada in *The Waste Land*

In *The Waste Land*'s climactic fifth section, "What the Thunder Said," a poem thirsting for water and order is promised both by the sound of an approaching storm. Within the poem's cacophony of voices, an authoritative voice from on high interjects: "DA / *Datta* [...] DA / *Dayadhvam* [...] DA / *Damyata*" (400-18) In his notes, Eliot cites the Upanishads for the passage, in which Prajāpati's resounding DA is interpreted as "dāmyata" by the gods, meaning "control yourselves," "datta" by the men, meaning "give," and "dayadhvam" by the demons, meaning "be compassionate." In addition to these three interpretations, a reader in 1922 might be expected to hear a fourth echo in the thunder's voice. In his famous performance piece, "Dada Manifesto 1918," Tzara thunders:

DADA; abolition of memory

DADA; abolition of archeology

DADA; abolition of prophets

DADA; abolition of the future (Hentea 109)

Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* during the height of Dada's popularity. In 1920 Picabia was receiving ten to twenty articles a day about Dada from his press-clipping company (Hentea 149). Considering *The Waste Land*'s penchant for mixing the discordant, be it the Gospel of Luke and a newspaper article, Marvell and a sailor song or Shakespeare and ragtime, the idea that Eliot might overlay a trending avant-garde movement with a Upanishad written in ancient Sanskrit is not incongruous with the poem's general patterning.

After the thunder's proclamations, the poem ends with a line from an English nursery rhyme, an Italian epic, a Latin poem, a French and an English play, before returning to the Sanskrit Upanishads. The method here appears guided more by chance than by artistic control:

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina

Quando fiam ceu chelidon — O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadvam. Damyata. (426-432)

Each of the poem's final lines wrong-foots its reader's expectations. The rapid shifts in language and genre create an effect similar to that of Tzara's chance poems, composed of words drawn at random from a hat. All means of anticipating what will come next are abolished. When the poem cycles back in its penultimate line to: "Datta. Dayadvam. Damyata," one might be forgiven for hearing under the divine imperatives their thudding counterpoint: Dada, Dada, Dada.

While the dadaistic overtones in the thunder's voice have been previously noted, they have yet to have much of an impact on how the poem is interpreted. The allusion to Dada in *The Waste Land* was first mentioned in Michael Levenson's *Genealogy of Modernism* (1983), which narrates English modernism as a progression of avant-garde movements that are guided back into the fold of the literary tradition by Eliot's expert hand. Levenson's genealogy culminates in *The Waste Land*, which he argues is a paradigm of British classicism. Working within this interpretive frame, Levenson aligns the echoes of Dada in the poem with the larger effort to root the avant-garde in the soil of deep traditions. Linking the ur-syllable, DA, with the latest manifestation of modern art allows Eliot, like Stravinsky, "to transform the rhythm of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn [...] and the other barbaric cries of modern life" (*ECP II* 369).

Levenson is careful not to put too much pressure on the allusion to Dada, however, describing it twice as "tentative" (242). Dada's presence in *The Waste Land* places a strain on Levenson's main thesis, since it was Dada's chief goal to outflank all such efforts at institutional appropriation. Tzara writes in "Dada Manifesto 1918:" "I am against systems; the most acceptable system is that of having none" (Hentea 109). The discussion of Dada in *Genealogy of Modernism* is confined to an endnote, suggesting that the incompatibility between Dada and a classicist interpretation of *The Waste Land* was not lost on Levenson.

In a 2015 article, "Form, Voice, and the Avant-Garde," Levenson revises his position, asserting that the repeated "Da" in the thunder's voice "cannot have failed to evoke dadaism" in the reader of 1922 (99). With the elevation of Dada's role, Levenson recasts the poem he had once credited with institutionalizing classicism as a paradigmatic example of avant-garde poetics. Where he had once sought out the pattern and order imposed by the poem, Levenson's focus shifts in 2015 to the poem's noise and the indeterminate "sounds [that] keep leaking out" (99). In his two distinct accounts of the poem, Levenson provides a compelling case for the poem's classicism and dadaism in turn. The question that remains, however, is how these contradictory tendencies are to be understood together.

After Levenson, the allusion to Dada in the thunder's voice is twice mentioned in 1990. According to both Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio and Garrett Stewart, however, Dada is introduced only to be more emphatically rejected. According to D'Ambrosio, the Sanskrit in the thunder's voice acts as, "a charm against Dada and its ramifications," while Stewart identifies in Dada a threat to Eliot's belief in "art's hieratic aspirations," evoked only "to be drowned out by a more resonant phonemic fiat" (D'Ambrosio 114, Stewart 186)

In 2001, Daniel McGee similarly subordinates Dada to what he understands to be the poem's larger classicist mission: to imagine a culture reunited by a pure idiom. McGee writes that "the dadaist degeneration of language is precisely what is identified throughout the poem as the great menace to be guarded against," that the thunder's voice represents "the organic growth of meaning from 'DA'" as it naturally progresses from its Indo-European root to its Sanskrit, Latin, and English variations (McGee 63). McGee's organic semantic model falls apart, however, once "dada" is registered in the poem's repeated DA. In 1916 Hugo Ball explains Dada's appeal by noting the word's etymological heterogeneity: "Dada is "'yes, yes' in Rumanian, 'rocking horse' and 'hobbyhorse' in French. For Germans it is a sign of foolish naïvité, joy in procreation, and preoccupation with the baby carriage" (Ball 63). Even if one assented to McGee's claim that Eliot brought a dream of linguistic reunification to *The Waste Land*, it is difficult to imagine such a dream surviving the poem's own semantic disintegrations.

Beginning with the assumption that *The Waste Land* is a thoroughgoing work of classicism, D'Ambrosio, Stewart, and McGee all produce a watered-down version of Dada that never poses a threat to the poem's symbolic patterning. Dada is depicted like an inoculation, a small dose of an external threat introduced to ready the poem's classicist defenses. This image of Dada, however, is completely at odds with how it was being presented by its adherents. In 1922, Tzara described Dada not as an inoculation, but as a spreading virus, "a virgin microbe which penetrates with the insistence of air into all those spaces that reason has failed to fill with words and conventions" (Richter 191). If Dada is incorporated into *The Waste Land*, there is no reason to assume that it signifies something other than what was professed by the dadaists themselves in the publications Eliot was reading.

Eliot's first public comment on Dada came in his 1919 review of Tzara's *Vingt-cinq poèmes* (1918). Eliot writes that Tzara is "rather clever" and shows interest in his tonal patterns before criticizing Tzara for being "deficient in tradition," concluding, "M. Tzara's work does not appear to have very deep roots in the literature of any nation" (*ECP II* 66). Eliot's charge against Tzara is more fully explained in his subsequent submission to *The Egoist*, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Published two months after his review of Tzara, Eliot's famous essay is an expansion upon his criticism of Tzara's dadaist verse, which lacked "the historical sense, [...] the feeling that the whole of literature [...] has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (*ECP II* 105).

Eliot's early misapprehension of Dada is most evident after he quotes Tzara, "ganga bouzdouc zdouc nfounfa mbaah," and asserts, "the only way to take this sort of thing is very seriously" (*ECP II* 66). Tzara would disagree. In "Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto" Tzara declares that "art isn't serious" (Tzara 2). One of the principle aims of Dada was to destabilize the art institution by removing art's aura and disrupting its assimilation into the politico-economic order that drove Europe into total war. When chance is introduced as the driving force behind a poem or painting, when a sculpture is destroyed on stage, the work of art is severed from its conventional relations with the artist-creator, with the art market, and with the national tradition. Dada art seeks to escape from Eliot's Tradition by refusing to be serious. It was against the serious politicians and academics who signed "The Manifesto of the Ninety-Three" in October of 1914 in support of the German invasion of Belgium that Dada was defining itself against.

Despite their theoretical differences, however, Eliot remains fascinated by Tzara's experimental form. Eliot quotes from Tzara twice in his 1919 review of contemporary poetry to

the exclusion of Herbert Read and Conrad Aiken, the other two poets reviewed. A 1922 letter from Tzara to Jacques Doucet accentuates some of the surprising affinities to be found between Tzara's method and the method of *The Waste Land*. Describing *Vingt-cinq poèmes*, Tzara writes:

In 1916 I resolved to destroy literary genres. I introduced in poems elements judged to be inappropriate there, such as newspaper phrases, noises and sounds. These sonorities (which have nothing to do with imitative sounds) were meant to constitute a parallel to the efforts undertaken by Picasso, Matisse, Derain, who employed in their paintings varied *materials*. (Hentea 104)

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot expands upon Tzara's multimedia foundation, building his own poem out of various spoken dialects, operatic arias, popular songs, and the calls of barmen and various birds.

The Waste Land also expands on Tzara's mixing of languages. In "la grande complainte de mon obscurité un," Tzara blends his native Romanian into the French. The poem's bilingualism instills a sense of homelessness that is consonant with the poem's historical context, the gathering in Zurich of those displaced by the War. The Romanian imperative, "nu mai plânge" (do not cry) cuts through the asyntactical catalogue of French nouns that bunch together in a confusion of subjects and objects (Hentea 105). While the poem clearly lacks the historical sense Eliot refers to in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," it succeeds in developing a sense of the poet's particular historical moment. An aspiring poet from the borderlands of Europe is attempting to wrestle his emotions into a master idiom that sticks to his palate, pulled simultaneously between his family home in Moinesti and the home of his poetic ambitions in Paris, both of which are rendered inaccessible by the War. The "mind of Europe" that Eliot refers to in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" is here clearly rebuffed by the younger

Romanian (*ECP II* 105). For Tzara, the mind of Europe does not represent a cohesive text for the young poet's study, but an impediment to the only texts he cares about at the moment:

les lettres de ma mère
qui doivent passer par la russie
par la norvège et par l'angleterre (5-7)

Tzara's book is marked throughout by this sense of displacement and loneliness. While in his review Eliot criticizes Tzara's work for lacking deep roots in the literature of any nation, in *The Waste Land* the poet exploits the advantages of shallow roots in the same way Tzara does in *Vingt-cinq poèmes*. *The Waste Land's* incredible sense of motion depends upon rapid scene shifts that prevent any one place, time, or idea from fully developing. The dadaist Francis Picabia extols the extirpation of one's roots as a prerequisite for attaining modernity's cardinal virtue of mobility. He writes, "You have to be a nomad, pass through ideas as one passes through countries and cities" (Hentea 163). The poetic voice of *The Waste Land* is such a nomad, moving constantly from tradition to tradition, from Lake Starnberger to Lake Geneva, from the banks of the Thames to the banks of the Ganges, touching down everywhere, coming to rest nowhere.

What distinguishes the rootlessness of *The Waste Land*, however, is that the position is voluntarily assumed by Eliot in a way it cannot be by Tzara, a Romanian Jew. The 1866 constitution of Romania denied Jewish citizenship. Arriving in Zurich in 1916, Tzara found in the Cabaret Voltaire a venue in which his marginal status could be refashioned and his art repurposed as a response to "the horror of our time" (Ball 64). Through his own engagement with Dada, Eliot would similarly modify his understanding of tradition. When he returns to Dada in 1921, tradition is no longer presented as an unmitigated good that advances in steady

steps, quietly assimilating the new by rearranging the old. Through Dada, Eliot began to see the benefits of what Jochen Schmidt calls "the tradition for breaking tradition" (Hamilton 313).

In "The Lesson of Baudelaire" (1921), Eliot presents Dada as a possible curative for those "stuffed with tradition to the point of bursting" (*ECP II* 306). Eliot couches this positive reassessment of dadaism, however, in nationalist terms. Eliot describes Dada as a "moral criticism of French literature and French life" that is not applicable in London (*ECP II* 306). Eliot's attempt to confine Dada to France is peculiar considering Dada's commitment to anti-nationalism, a commitment that could not have escaped Eliot. While he was editing *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound was in 1921 contributing to Picabia's *391*, a dadaist publication which had previously been printed in Barcelona, New York, Zurich and Paris. Eliot had solicited Picabia's work for *The Criterion*, writing to Pound that he was, "particularly anxious to obtain Picabia, for whom I have much respect" (*EL* 642). The internationalism that is a hallmark of Picabia's career was also a founding principle of Dada Zurich. The original *Cabaret Voltaire* review in 1916 listed its contributors by nationality:

French (G. Apollinaire, B. Cendrars), Italian (F. Canguillo, F. T. Marinetti, L. Modegliani), Spanish (P. Picasso), Romanian (M. Janco, Tr. Tzara), German (Hans Arp, J. van Hoddis, R. Huelsenbeck), Dutch (O. van Rees), Austrian (Max Oppenheimer), Polish (M. Slodki), Russian (W. Kandinsky), and stateless - Emmy Hennings. (Hentea 73)

The January-March 1921 issue of *The Little Review* included the manifesto "Dada soulève tout," which touted signatories from France, America, Spain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Belgium. In this context, Eliot's effort to contain Dada in France speaks to his lingering ambivalence about a movement that he is compelled to write about while holding at a distance.

He asserts in 1921 that Dada has value, but that "it is probable that this French performance is of value almost exclusively for the local audience" (*ECP II* 306). In *The Waste Land*, Dada's influence can be seen extending much further than Eliot would care to admit.

The extent of this influence, however, became increasingly more difficult to see as the poem elbowed its way to the heart of the literary canon. The majority of modern readers first experience *The Waste Land* now on the bible paper of a Norton anthology. The poem that John Crowe Ransom referred to as "one of the most insubordinate poems in the language" is now a chief representative of canonical Literature (North 170). By printing Eliot's endnotes as footnotes, the Norton editions further exasperate the alexandrine compulsion to break rhythm to continually check historical references. The poem and notes develop a hermeneutic circle in which the notes buttress the poem that in turn provides a counterbalance to the works referenced, many of which were under assault from the postwar avant-garde. Richard Aldington praises Eliot for having fended off this attack. In *Life for Life's Sake*, Aldington writes, "Just after the war, in confusion and reaction against everything prewar and war, there was an almost unanimous belief among artist of the vanguard that all the art of the past was so much dead stuff to be scrapped" (20). From this general tumult, Eliot emerged as the mediating figure between the avant-garde and tradition, brokering what Levenson calls the "*rapprochement* between modernist literature and traditional authority" (219). The image that developed from this narrative, Eliot as Classicism's Knight, is born out of the assumption that the avant-gardism of *The Waste Land* is a false facade. Terry Eagleton compares the poem's avant-garde formal features to "the meat with which the burglar distracts the guard-dog while he proceeds with his stealthy business" (150).

To accentuate the formal similarities between *The Waste Land* and Dada, the poem can be compared to an imagined night at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. Hugo Ball founded the Cabaret to stage a heterogeneous assortment of live entertainment culled from across Europe. On any given night there would be various types of spoken poetry, drama, music and dance performed before a famously fervent crowd. The show was disunited in language and form, freely mixing “low” dadaist pranks and popular song with intricately structured pieces of “high” modernist art from the likes of Arnold Schoenberg and Stéphane Mallarmé. The only thread that held the acts together was their common theatrical impulse. The dadaists “dragged onto the stage” all non-theatrical art forms that they might be rejuvenated by the mantic energy of their Cabaret (Puchner 149). When the anxiety of influence is quelled, the experience of *The Waste Land*’s pell-mell mixture of voices in various languages and registers is not unlike that of the Cabaret Voltaire.

The 2011 Faber and Faber iPad app for *The Waste Land* features the single-actor, sundry voiced performance of the poem by Fiona Shaw, which premiered at La Théâtre du Vaudeville in Brussels in 1995 before moving to Dublin, London, Paris, New York and Madrid. Shaw embodies each voice, each of the poem’s transitions affecting a complete transformation of both her tone and demeanor. Shaw transports the poem from the library to the music hall, singing with operatic decadence the Wagnerian passages and with Broadway histrionics "That Shakespearian Rag" and the Australian sailor song. Rather than stalling the poem's narrative progression, the friction between the various allusions contributes to the poem's distinct energy. As the single actor moves through the gauntlet of voices, we are compelled to wonder what it is that propels her forward. Is she grasping toward some lost order that can lend a sense of cohesion to the poem's fragments, or is she, like Benjamin's angel of history, simply being blown

forward against her will by the gale force produced by the wreckage that is continually being hurled at her feet?

The poem's progression of cuts from image to image and from voice to voice ensures that no one object or character can migrate to the center. An undifferentiated desire to speak emerges that is bound to nothing. To borrow Michel de Certeau's terminology, the poem foregrounds the *volo* over the *cogito*, desire over knowledge (Certeau 167). The reader's access point to the poem is not through its library of references, but through a shared desire that reaches beyond the limits of its narrative structures. The poem's motivating desire is characterized by both the rapacious gathering of texts and the hasty discarding of each in turn. The object upon which this desire can steady itself is absent from the poem. As the poem's "I" moves through the parade of voices, it is cleansed of all individuating characteristics. With neither a stable personality motivating it from behind nor an identifiable object toward which it aspires, the poem is compelled to speak by a desire in excess of the prescriptions of all the ideologies that are brought into the poem and discarded in turn.

Besides its theatricality, *The Waste Land* also shares Dada's sense of transnational movement and the penchant for upsetting traditional aesthetic standards. On his way to Switzerland in 1921, Eliot stopped in Paris to leave a copy of his poem with Pound at the height of his "Dada phase," punctuated by his participation in *L'Affaire Barrès* in May 1921 and the writing of "Kongo Roux," a madcap piece of incoherence accented with typographical and syntactical eccentricities that Picabia published in *391*. Richard Sieburth argues that it was under Dada's influence that, "Pound was able to editorially elicit from Eliot's manuscript the disorder, the dispersion, and above all the *pace* characteristic of the 'young aesthetic' of Paris" (Sieburth 66). The critical backlash engendered by *The Waste Land* also aligns the poem with the dadaist

succès de scandale. Charles Powell called *The Waste Land* “so much waste paper” and an unsigned review in *Time* rumored the poem was “written as a hoax,” that its “only obvious fault is that no one can understand it” (North 137-66). Such reviews would have made prized clippings for any dadaist.

Beyond the initial jolt registered in Britain and America, Kamau Brathwaite traces the subversive influence the poem had on Caribbean poetry after the Second World War. More than the printed text, it was Eliot's recorded voice that provided Brathwaite with a model for introducing nonstandard inflections and improvisational rhythms into his verse. The iPad app for *The Waste Land* includes Eliot's own recordings of the poem, which Brathwaite remembers first hearing on the radio in Barbados: "In that dry deadpan delivery, the riddims of St. Louis (though we didn't know the source then) were stark and clear for those of us who at the same time were listening to the dislocations of Bird, Dizzy, and Klook" (Braithwaite 30). In associating Eliot's verse with avant-garde jazz from the 1940s and 50s, Brathwaite presents Eliot's strategies for breaking established forms in terms strikingly similar to those Eliot used in 1921 to describe his own effort, "to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" (*ECP II* 375).

The Waste Land's dadaist tendencies combine to produce a counter wind pushing against the classicist attempts to *rappel à l'ordre*. Besides the direct allusions to Dada, there are the unfilled syntactical gaps and the refrain of "nothing" echoing through the poem. A passage from "The Fire Sermon" is set at Margate, the seaside resort where Eliot took his rest cure:

'On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect
Nothing.' (300-306)

In "A Game of Chess," the neurasthenic woman inquires about a wind heard under the door:

'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'

Nothing again nothing.

'Do

'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

'Nothing?' (117-123)

The dull echo of nothing evokes Picabia's often quoted 1920 "Dada Cannibalistic Manifesto:"

DADA smells nothing, it is nothing, nothing, nothing.

It is like your hopes: nothing

like your paradise: nothing

like your idols: nothing

like your political men: nothing

like your artists: nothing

like your religions: nothing (Hentea 140-2)

Like Picabia, Eliot uses negation in *The Waste Land* to accentuate the breach that remains between postwar reality and the dream of a Europe pieced back together. The connections the poem is frantically attempting to establish all prove tenuous. Madame Sosostris's numinous authority and the suggestion in the notes that her wicked pack of cards might unite the poem are undermined by the "bad cold" clouding the clairvoyant's vision (44). When Sosostris is traced back to the Huxley novel she was adopted from, we find a carnival huckster. Like the mixing of

Prajāpati's dictates and Dada's anti-dictates, the poem continually weaves into its intricate semantic patterns the pullstring that can send the whole thing unraveling.

Eliot's Two Classicisms

T. S. Eliot identified as a classicist in 1928, six years after publishing *The Waste Land*. Six years before *The Waste Land*, in 1916 Eliot taught a course on the modern tendency toward classicism. On his syllabus, classicism is defined as "Form and restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government" (*ECP I* 471). In his 1928 preface to *Lancelot Andrewes*, he describes his own position as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion" (*ECP III* 513). What Eliot means by his famous declaration, however, is not immediately clear as he goes on to describe both classicism and royalism as prone to clap-trap, the former being "completely vague" while the latter is "at present without definition" (*ECP III* 513). The evasions in the preface continue in the essays, in which Charles Baudelaire emerges as an unlikely model of both Christianity and classicism.

"The Idea of a Literary Review" (1926) provides a clearer definition of the classicism Eliot later mixes with reactionary politics and dogmatic religion. Classicism is here defined as a tendency "toward a higher and clearer conception of Reason, and a more severe and serene control of the emotions by Reason" (*ECP II* 762). Eliot includes a classicist reading list with works by Georges Sorel, Charles Maurras, Julien Benda, T. E. Hulme, Jacques Maritain, and Irving Babbitt. Eliot's preface to *Lancelot Andrewes* suggests that his own essays might be appended to this list, which varies a great deal in topic and perspective, but can be loosely united by the general movement away from individualism toward adherence to a higher order, whether that order be by way of socialism, fascism, or the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Eliot's 1927

profession of "Classicism" can thus be aligned with a general anti-liberal movement prominent during the first quarter of the twentieth century that spans both the Atlantic Ocean and the English Channel. What animates this loosely conjoined movement is a shared distrust in liberal laissez-faireism developed out of an image of the human being as naturally good. Rather than Rousseau's noble savage, the classicist movement projects an image of the human as fallen and in need of external stricture and order. Classicism, as Eliot defines it here, is a big tent under which a variety of ideologies can be housed, admittance being based on a general understanding of the human being as naturally weak and in need of rigid institutional support.

While Eliot does not publicly commend this anti-individualist strain of classicism before 1924, the syllabus for his 1916 Oxford Extension course on modern French literature attests to his longstanding interest. On the syllabus, classicism is defined as a reaction against romanticism with Rousseau serving as the anti-hero. Eliot's notes for the first lecture describe romanticism as an exaltation of the personal and individual, an emphasis upon feeling, and a belief in the fundamental goodness of human nature (*ECP I 471*). In his second lecture, Eliot identifies a twentieth-century shift toward classicism. He writes, "The classicist point of view has been defined as essentially a belief in Original Sin – the necessity for austere discipline" (*ECP I 472*).

The striking parallels between Eliot's 1916 syllabus and Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism" (which was not published until 1924) have been the subject of previous debate amongst Eliot scholars (Schuchard 63-9). In his letters, Eliot repeatedly denied having read any of Hulme's essays before their 1924 posthumous publications in *Speculations*. While Hulme himself is not listed on Eliot's 1916 syllabus, however, the Allen and Unwin edition of Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* is Hulme's translation, the preface of which provides the

argument from "Romanticism and Classicism" in miniature. Despite being published a full decade before "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme's "Translator's Preface" was actually written at a later date. Here, the romantic and classical antithesis is presented in the clearest terms, "for the one, man is by nature good, and for the other, by nature bad" (Hulme 249). Hulme traces Romanticism's faith in man's natural goodness back to Rousseau's *Social Contract* and the image of man born free, but everywhere in chains. Eliot's course on French literature begins with this same text. In both Hulme and Eliot's account, classicism is aligned with a belief in Original Sin and romanticism with "all who do not believe in the Fall of Man" (Hulme 250). Projected forward, Hulme's classicism presents a pessimistic outlook focused on human limitations contrasted with the romantic faith in "inevitable *Progress*" (Hulme 251). After viewing cave paintings in the Pyrenees in 1919, Eliot echoes Hulme's renunciation of progress by claiming that "art never improves" (*ECP II* 105). Eliot's 1916 syllabus displays an interest in classicism that clearly predates *The Waste Land*.

While planning *The Waste Land*, however, Eliot's attitude toward classicism shifts. In a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in October 1920, Eliot doubts the usefulness of terms like romantic and classical, suggesting that "it would perhaps be beneficial if we employed both terms as little as possible, [or] if we even forgot these terms altogether" (*ECP II* 275). While Eliot does not explain why he now rejects the terms, in *The Waste Land* he describes the gap that remains between them; the poem's decentered voice shedding its romantic individuation without locating the seed out of which the post-romantic order is to emerge.

The influence of Hulmean classicism is most evident in *The Waste Land*'s apocalyptic image of the hooded hordes and falling towers. Eliot cites Hermann Hesse's "The Decline of Europe" (1920) for the passage. Hesse's essay reads Dostoevsky to diagnose the moral decay

produced by the excesses of romanticism. Hesse writes, "We cannot kill the primal instincts, the animal in us [...] but we can in some measure restrain and calm them, make them to some extent serviceable to the 'good' in the way one harnesses an unruly nag to a good cart" (79). Like Hulme, Hesse's essay charts a course away from an individualist ethic toward one based in an Outer Authority. In May 1922 Eliot travels to Montagnola, Switzerland to meet Hesse, arranging there to have "The Decline of Europe" translated while also soliciting an article to appear alongside "The Waste Land" in the inaugural issue of *The Criterion* (EL 645). While Hesse's critique of romanticism is clearly reflected in *The Waste Land*, the poem never isolates any one Outer Authority to serve as its "good cart." After the apocalyptic scene influenced by Hesse, the poem's rate of fragmentation only increases, suggesting no new order has been found.

The notes Eliot adds to the December 1922 Boni and Liveright edition of the poem, however, argue otherwise. The centrifugal force created by the poem's incredible assortment of allusions is countered by the centripetal motion of the notes directing the reader to the poem's hidden center. The notes assure us that there is a place amidst the fragments where all the women become one woman, where St. Augustine and Buddha merge, and where Christianity is folded back into the vegetation ceremonies from which it first developed. Presumably this hidden vanishing point is to be sought in a very good library, one in which Paul Deussen's *Sechsig Upanishads des Veda* can be laid beside the London County Council's *Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches* while a recording of Gene Buck and Herman Ruby's "That Shakespearian Rag" plays in the background. Those still struggling to see the poem's hidden order are directed to Jessie Weston's writings on the Grail legend, or to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, or to the poet's own modified version of the Tarot pack. As Michael Coyle notes, the poem's two main anthropological guides contradict one another (Coyle 161). According to

Frazer, myth has been rendered obsolete by science. Frazer compares religious acts to "pulling at strings to which nothing is attached" (Frazer 66). Weston, on the other hand, asserts that "the Otherworld is not a myth, but a reality" (Coyle 161). The notes Eliot appends to his poem, while promising a definitive order, can be just as allusive as the poem itself.

Classicist readings of the poem rely on two general strategies for excavating its hidden pattern. One can go small by seeking the poem's order in the poet's own creative act, a method aligned with the classicism Eliot describes in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth." The other option is to go big and assert that the hierarchies Eliot later avows, Church, Crown, and Canon, provide hidden buttressing to the poem's mosaic of fragments.

The first of these two methods searches out the network of incremental orders that combine to produce the poem's surprising sense of unity. Lawrence Rainey's study of the composition history supports this more local approach. A rigid overarching plan, Rainey argues, would not have survived Pound's editorial interventions. In Eliot's letters, basic questions about the number of sections and whether Phlebas the Phoenician or the notes should be included remained open to the end. Noting the remarkable fluidity of the process, Rainey concludes that the poem's order is "fundamentally contingent and retrospective. Not a realized plan or program, dictated by some predetermined notion of mythic structure or ritual pattern" (22). Through repetitions in image and theme and a network of interlocking formal components, the poem achieves a sense of unity. If this unity reflects nothing more than the poet's own ingenuity and the tenor of his personal emotions, however, the question remains what makes the poem particularly classicist?

Eliot attempts to answer this question in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (1923). While Eliot never mentions his own verse in the article, the "mythic method" he develops to defend *Ulysses*

is clearly meant to be extended beyond Joyce's novel. Eliot argues that the reason critics like Richard Aldington find *Ulysses* shapeless and meaningless is that Joyce is employing a new form that confounds the traditional critical apparatus. Novel readers have been conditioned to expect a "narrative method" founded on an underlying faith in inevitable progress. Eliot indirectly suggests that the war has rendered such a method outdated by citing Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* and Lewis' *Tarr*, both written in the years immediately preceding the war, as the last examples of an expiring form. The "mythic method" is presented as a post-narrative alternative which allows a text to retain a sense of order after a notion of strict causality has been abandoned. Eliot suggests that the narrative structures that lent shape to the texts of former ages have lost their adhesive strength in the commotion and violence of the modern world. Against this rising sense of orderlessness, the mythic method emerges as "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (*ECP II*: 478). Using Homeric myth, Joyce achieves a modest victory by imposing a personal order on the great impersonal Chaos of modern life.

Eliot then aligns Joyce's mythic method with the modern tendency toward classicism. This classification is odd considering the individualism inherent in the mythic method. The article ends, "only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in [making the modern world possible for art]" (*ECP II*: 478). This is a far cry from Eliot's later allegiances to Church, Crown, and Canon. External institutions and ideologies are conspicuously absent from "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," presumably having been consigned along with the "narrative method" to the trash heap by contemporary history. The modern artist, without external support, must go it alone,

salvaging what broken-down structures he can find that might lend some sense of order to his work.

While this image of the scavenger artist aligns with *The Waste Land* as well as it does with *Ulysses*, it remains hard to see what makes it particularly classical. To make the work fit the assigned category, Eliot reconfigures the category. To expand the scope of classicism, Eliot first removes it from its binary relation with romanticism. He asserts in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" that classicism is not "an alternative to 'romanticism,'" but "a goal toward which all good literature strives" (*ECP II* 478). Eliot then isolates classicism from all institutional supports so that it might subsist of nothing more than a general orientation toward some vague sense of order. The criteria for classicism is rendered incredibly lax, "one can be classical in tendency by doing the best one can with the material at hand" (*ECP II* 478). When he describes this material, Eliot bypasses all political and religious organizations to focus instead on Homeric myth, "psychology [...] ethnology, and The Golden Bough," the mythic method being one "for which the horoscope is auspicious" (*ECP II* 479). Eliot's own use of *The Golden Bough* and the Tarot pack for organizing *The Waste Land* clearly aligns the work with the mythic method, one in which the artist maintains his autonomy by residing outside all ideological and institutional organizations that he might pick and choose what he may.

This is not, however, the classicism Eliot defines in 1926 with works by Sorel, Maurras, Benda, Hulme, Maritain, and Babbitt. With the definition of classicism offered in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," a new constellation of "classicists" might be imagined that includes the Merz Pictures of Kurt Schwitters and Dada collages of Hannah Höch. In a 1921 "London Letter" to *The Dial*, Eliot suggests that the works of Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Diaghilev are classicists according to this expanded definition. He writes, "A new form, like that of the

modern ballet, is as strict as any old one, perhaps stricter. Artists are constantly impelled to invent new difficulties for themselves; cubism is not license, but an attempt to establish order" (*ECP II* 369). If classicism demands no more than doing the best one can with the material at hand in an attempt to establish order, *The Waste Land* is undoubtedly a work of classicism. The only problem with this definition is that it is not at all what we typically mean when we speak of Eliot's classicism.

The unified vision of Eliot's classicism is produced by folding two conflicting definitions together. By using the same term to describe two contradictory tendencies in modern thought, one an individualist's call to shore the fragments of modern life as best one can, the other an anti-individualist's call to seek institutional shelter, Eliot overlays the 1928 critic on the 1922 poet on the 1916 lecturer. This composite portrait of Eliot the Classicist has since been taken as a type for modernism at large. In *Genealogy of Modernism* (1984), Michael Levenson tells the story of English literature between 1908 and 1922 as a movement from "a fundamentally individualist perspective" to an "aggressively anti-individualist" perspective (211). The book traces the progression of literary doctrines from Impressionism to Imagism to Vorticism, all working toward their final synthesis in Eliot's Classicism. Modernism here finds its resting place, the avant-garde being guided back into the fold of the literary traditions by Eliot's expert hand. Levenson's book ends with an extensive reading of *The Waste Land*, which is classified as classicist according to the definition provided by the poet in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth." Levenson's genealogy is excellent except that it ends before arriving at its prescribed harbor, at the "aggressively anti-individualist" brand of classicism in English modernism. Hulme's *Speculations* will not be published until 1924. It is in 1926 that Eliot first publicly defines Classicism aligned with Maurras and Maritain (and not Yeats and Joyce). Levenson uses

"Ulysses, Myth, and Order" to move Eliot's espousal of the more reactionary brand of classicism up to 1923, a position from which it can cast its shadow over *The Waste Land*. The only problem with this is that the classicism described in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" celebrates the unaffiliated individual artist working in the hinterlands beyond all "Outer Authority" that is central to Levenson definition of Classicism (210). Calling the mythic method classicist does not create a continuum of thought from Eliot's 1916 lecture on modern French literature to *Lancelot Andrewes*. The period in which Eliot was writing *The Waste Land* is bookended by his 1920 letter to the *TLS* disparaging classicism as a useless term and his 1923 reinvention of classicism as a do-it-yourself exercise in cultural appropriation. This is emphatically not the classicism Eliot will later align with royalism and Anglo-Catholicism.

Eliot's review of Hulme's *Speculations* in April 1924 suggests Eliot had come to recognize the inutility of his expanded definition from the year before. Here we see Eliot for the first time publicly endorsing the more reactionary definition of classicism, one that does not shy away from dogma and ideology. Making *The Waste Land* conform to this more exacting rubric, however, introduces a new set of difficulties. If the classicism of "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" concerns itself with what lies between the poetic fragments, focusing on the poet's ability to reassemble the disjointed, the classicism of Eliot's later essays must be sought instead in an allegorical space behind the poetic fragments.

Terry Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology* (1976) provides a classic example of how the poem might be more directly aligned with Eliot's later definition of classicism without the detour of "Ulysses, Order, and Myth." Eagleton divides the poem into two texts. He writes: "Behind the back of this ruptured, radically decentered poem runs an alternative text which is nothing less than the closed, coherent, authoritative discourse of the mythologies which frame it" (Eagleton

150). Eagleton's reading assumes Eliot's later ideological commitments shadow the poem. If the poem is harboring reactionary content behind its progressive form, however, this reactionary content should be registered somehow in the poem's representations of Church, Crown, and Canon, the three institutions Eliot later avows.

The religious images in *The Waste Land* are pulled from four world religions. To align the poem with Eliot's later conversion to Christianity, Cleanth Brooks asserts that the poem represents a Christian conquest of the image-reservoirs of all other religions that the calcifying stock of Christian images might be replenished (Brooks 185-210). In response, critics like P. S. Sri and Ben Bakhtiarynia have reasserted the prominence of the poem's Buddhistic themes (Sri 39-52, Bakhtiarynia 111-32). The poem's longing to extinguish spring's burgeoning desires and return to winter's forgetfulness and rapid-fire shifts in voice and persona align with the Buddhistic ideal of impersonality. Hindi references are given pride of place in the poem's final section, in which an authoritative voice from on high speaks Sanskrit, which is also the language of the poem's final lines. The multiplicity of religious allusions makes the poem into a Rorschach inkblot in which any number of beliefs could find confirmation depending upon which fragments are isolated. The poem's lack of hypotactic syntax inhibits the reader from confidently subordinating one set of religious images to another. It is only through the imposition of some external organizing principle (such as asserting that the poem must foreshadow Eliot's later conversion) that an order can be imposed on the disparate religious fragments.

The poem's political commitments can be studied through its representation of the King. Eliot's notes refer to the "Fisher King" from the Grail Legend, whose blighted kingdom calls out

for a hero's decisive action. In *The Waste Land* this decisive action is continually being deferred by the brooding King:

While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him,
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year (189-195)

The Fisher King is impervious to the theater of death playing out around him. The scene reflects the conditions in the trenches during the horrible winter of 1917. Wilfred Owen's "Exposure" depicts the trenches as a dull canal replete with mice and iced over corpses with "half-known faces." The frozen earth has refused to take back the dead. As in *The Waste Land*, Owen's winter scene is calling out, if not for salvation, at least for a reprieve from the constant suffering: "But nothing happens" (Owen 48).

In 1917, Eliot sends another harrowing image of the war's unburied dead to *The Nation*. The magazine ran a series of letters from the trenches to which Eliot contributed a letter from his brother-in-law, Maurice Haigh-Wood. In the letter, Haigh-Wood considers how the horror of the front might be registered without the gallows humor so often resorted to by soldiers struggling to convey their experiences to non-combatants. The letter offers an alternative picture:

A leprous earth, scattered with the swollen and blackening corpses of hundreds of young men. The appalling stench of rotting carrion mingled with the sickening smell of

exploded lyddite and ammonal. Mud like porridge, trenches like shallow and sloping cracks in the porridge - porridge that stinks in the sun. (*EL* 205)

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot places his monarch in the midst of these unburied bodies that the political actions and inactions that perpetuated the War might be directly juxtaposed to their human costs. When the poem returns to the Fisher King in its final ten lines, he remains in the same position, only the seasons have changed:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order? (423-6)

From here the poem untwines, its final eight lines drawn from eight sources in five languages. The order the Fisher King mulls is not to be found in the poem. With his kingdom reduced to an arid waste land and the exposed bones of his people bearing witness against him from all sides, the King does nothing.

Eliot's frozen monarch can be compared to the kings of the baroque theater that Walter Benjamin was studying at the same time Eliot was writing *The Waste Land*. With the publication in 1918 of *The Willy-Nicky Correspondence*, the familial telegrams sent between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Tsar Nicholas II (as well as their mutual cousin "Georgie," King George of England) in the days immediately preceding the Great War, it is no surprise that royal ineffectualness would be a common theme in the postwar work of both Eliot and Benjamin. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), Benjamin describes a recurring scene from the baroque theater reflected in his own modern Germany. In a moment of national crisis, a state of emergency is called. At this moment, all eyes turn toward the royal scepter for deliverance from imminent ruin. But like Eliot's Fisher King, the king of the baroque mourning play is a model of

princely indecision. Rather than moving toward the reestablishment of order, the mourning play is propelled forward by an accumulation of corpses like those that surround the Fisher King. Benjamin concludes that these scenes effectively strip all theological allegories from representations of political power. The king in *The Waste Land* appears similarly denuded of salvific power (*OGTD* 218).

In *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), Matthew Arnold depicts literature as a firewall that might preserve cultural cohesion after the fall of all other institutions. In *The Waste Land* this firewall also appears in ruin, as Arnold's beloved Literature is cut with the sounds of the modern city and music hall. In the poem's third section, Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" slides into an Australian sailor song about a prostitute. The poetic voice of "To His Coy Mistress" and Sweeney, the "john" visiting Mrs. Porter, are reduced to their common pursuit of carnal pleasure. Eliot opens with Marvell's, "But at my back from time to time I hear," instilling in his reader an expectation of transcendence. But instead of "Time's wingèd chariot," Eliot gives his reader the jolting "sound of horns and motors" (197). Rather than moving upward, we are suddenly being rushed across town to the brothel. Eliot's motor brings,

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water (198-201)

The passage's downward trajectory can be accentuated in a dramatic reading of the lines, Marvell's courtly iambs sliding down into a guttural rendition of the lascivious sailor song Eliot cites in his notes.

In the poem's second section, "The Game of Chess," another of England's "best" goes slumming. A crowd is spilling out of a London bar at closing time. Lil's lament — her bad teeth, a nearly fatal delivery, her bad abortifacient pills, bad nerves, five children, and a marriage that appears on the brink of collapse — is continually interrupted by the bartender's interjection to get out. In the street, behind the slurred salutations of the drunken crowd are Ophelia's final lines: "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (172-3). The line blends into the litany of "Goonights" preceding it. Eliot's notes make no mention of Ophelia's brief appearance. She appears only that she might disappear again, her voice fading into the general tumult of those leaving the bar and dispersing into the night.

Asserting stable ideological commitments in such a poem can be exceedingly difficult. Eagleton, however, locates one instance in which the gap between avant-garde form and reactionary content collapses:

At the end of the poem the 'covert' text does, for once, speak, in the cryptic imperatives delivered by the voice of the thunder. It is not T. S. Eliot, or a character, or the 'phenomenal' text who speaks; it can only be an anonymous, conveniently hypostasised absolute. What the thunder enunciates is a withdrawn ascetic wisdom whose ideological implications are at odds with the 'progressive', pioneering, typographically-conscious forms of the poem itself. (Eagleton 150)

While Eagleton is right that a "hypostasised absolute" can be heard in the thunder's voice, this is not *all* that can be heard there.

The Waste Land as Baroque Allegory

When the sounds of classicism and dadaism intermix in the thunder's voice, it strains our attempts to shore the poem's fragments into a coherent whole. Surely the poem cannot be classicist *and* dadaist. While the paratactic arrangement of dislocated fragments and semantic ambiguity align with the methods of Dada, the poem certainly does not adhere to the credo of Tzara's "Dada Manifesto 1918" that "the best system is to have none" (Hentea 109). The poem's restlessness betrays a classicist desire to lend "a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (*ECP II* 476). The problem in *The Waste Land* is that the accrual of more and more fragments does not reveal the shape and significance hoped for.

Nowhere is the coterminous desire for and absence of order more apparent than in the typist's flat. In a poem in constant transition between disparate fragments, the typist scene is the focus of forty-one contiguous lines. A celebrity narrator, Tiresias, is introduced to add further weight to the scene which settles into the steady cadence of elegiac quatrains. In his notes, Eliot further accentuate the scene by suggesting that "what Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (218).

The sexual encounter between the typist and the young man carbuncular is framed by references to the rape of Philomel. In Ovid, the tragedy of Philomel centers on her passionate resistance to King Tereus. After being "so rudely forc'd," Philomel manages to announce the crime committed against her despite being locked away and deprived of her tongue (205). In *The Waste Land*, Philomel's desire to cry out, immortalized in the nightingale's cry that twice rings through the poem, is contrasted with the silence in which the typist shrouds her own uninvited sexual encounter:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference. (235-41)

The young man carbuncular gives a patronizing kiss and descends an unlit stair. The benighted scene ends with neither remonstrance nor remorse; the typist, “smoothes her hair with automatic hand” and puts a record on the gramophone (255). The sex of the young man carbuncular is never registered in moral terms as good or evil or in ethical terms as right or wrong. In the absence of evaluative structures, the scene proceeds according to its least common denominator, the sex drive of a young man. The horror of the scene is not that what transpires is wrong or evil, but that it is unable to attain any significance at all. Without established moral or ethical boundaries, transgressions cannot be registered. Where the Philomel story that frames the typist's scene is a tragedy of violated boundaries, in the typist's flat Eliot removes all boundaries to stage an even more haunting anti-tragedy. Where Philomel loses her tongue, the typist is deprived of her very will to cry out.

In his early criticism, Eliot continually asserts that poetry can establish the missing network of correspondences that might lend significance to the vacuousness of modern life. In "Hamlet and his Problems" (1920), Eliot writes that each "*particular* emotion" has its own particular "*formula*" (*ECP II* 122). The objective correlative is here described as if it were the

result of a laboratory experiment: "given the sequence of events these words were automatically released by the last event in the series" (*ECP II* 122). The end product is verified by a sense of "artistic 'inevitability'" that is no less authoritative than repeatability is in scientific experimentation (*ECP II* 124). In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," the artist becomes "a bit of finely filiated platinum [...] introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide" (*ECP II* 105). This chemical bath is meant to cleanse the artist of the personality that might inhibit her from attaining to scientific objectivity. The basic assumption underlying Eliot's scientific metaphors is that art can reliably unite the material and the transcendent.

The confidence displayed in Eliot's early criticism, however, appears in doubt in his early poems. In "Preludes," Eliot is continually re-setting the scene in preparation for a "spot of time" like those in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, but the anticipated moment of transcendence that might penetrate the "trivial occupations" and "ordinary intercourse" never comes (Wordsworth 565). Each of Eliot's preludes end with an upward motion that is conspicuously lacking in transcendent significance. The first ends with the routine lighting of street lamps while the second concludes with the mechanical image of "all the hands / That are raising dingy shades / In a thousand furnished rooms" (21-3). In the third, "the yellow soles of feet" are raised into "soiled hands" (37-8). The cosmic significance hinted at in the poem's penultimate line, "The worlds revolve like ancient women" is broken in the final line, where these enigmatic figures are bent down, "Gathering fuel in vacant lots" (53-4). Written under the influence of the French Symbolists, Eliot's "Preludes" repeatedly defer the anticipated moment of correspondence, the poetic images remaining scattered among the material detritus of the city: the grimy scraps, the broken blinds, the muddy feet, and the stale smell of spilt beer.

In his notes to *The Waste Land*, Eliot asserts that there is a hidden order uniting the poem and that texts like *The Golden Bough* and *From Ritual to Romance* can serve as guidebooks for accessing this allegorical level. Derived from the Greek for "other," *allos*, allegory is a means to speak the other. Allegory aims to lend shape and substance to an abstract other with poetic images, narrative structure, and rhetorical devices. Departing from the terra firma of mimesis, allegory explores disembodied ideas from religion, political philosophy, or psychology. In his 1929 *Dante*, Eliot describes the demands allegory places on its reader to "suspend both belief and disbelief" (*ECP III 700*). The two greatest philosophical poems according to Eliot's essay, *The Divine Comedy* and *Bhagavad-Gita*, both explicate matters of religious dogma and morals through allegory. To appreciate either work requires a primary ascent from the reader to follow beyond the mimetic realm into a second level structured by traditional moral teachings. The allegory outfits the dogma with "*clear visual images*" within which it might be seen and felt as well as thought (*ECP III 700*). While *The Divine Comedy* and *Bhagavad-Gita* are structured upon conflicting dogma, they both demand of their reader the temporary suspension of their belief and disbelief that their underlying dogma might be more clearly perceived. Taken sequentially, one and the same reader can enter into both works in due course.

In *The Waste Land*, however, Eliot deviates from his own critical precepts by cutting one allegory with another, using a montage approach that does not produce clear visual images. The poem's final seven lines toggle back and forth between the *Divine Comedy* and *Bhagavad-Gita*, demanding the reader to suspend not only belief and disbelief, but the demands of logic as well. The doctrine of reincarnation and eternal damnation are mutually exclusive. When two contradictory images of divinity and the afterlife are laid one over the other, the outline of each becomes blurred. The dogmatic clarity achieved in the *Divine Comedy* and *Bhagavad-Gita* is

dependent upon a one-to-one correspondence between material object and a stable transcendent idea. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot's combination of allegorical fragments gathered from across the globe unsettles the very possibility of such a correspondence. The variety of allegories stacked one on top of the others exposes the arbitrary nature of the allegorical process itself. As more and more allegories are introduced, the likelihood that they all might converge on one stable idea becomes increasingly remote. Rather than working in the tradition of Dante where allegory is used to "make for simplicity and intelligibility," *The Waste Land's* use of allegory produces the opposite effect, uprooting allegorical fragments from their coherent dogmatic systems and mixing them to produce an unsettling brew of contradictions (*ECP III* 700).

While Eliot was writing *The Waste Land*, Walter Benjamin was developing a theory of baroque allegory that offers an alternative framework for understanding the relation between an aesthetic image and transcendent reality. Instead of successfully establishing links between poetic symbols and transcendent referents, baroque allegory gestures toward the yawning abyss that separates our material images from transcendent reality by repeatedly staging the failure of the symbolic act. In baroque allegory, what is revealed in this repeated failure is "the infinite qualitative distinction" between the human and divine (Kierkegaard 126). As *The Waste Land* strays from Eliot's own writings on allegory, Benjamin's theory of baroque allegory might help us chart where the poem is heading.

Benjamin first conceived his theory of baroque allegory during the Great War, a period in which the mourning play tradition that had long been disparaged for its violent extremes and ostentations was being revived in Germany. Benjamin attributes this increase in attention to the historical similarities between Germany during the Great War and during the baroque period, a

time marked by the social, political, and theological upheaval of the Thirty Years War and Counter-Reformation.

Juxtaposing Benjamin and Eliot's contradictory interpretations of *Hamlet* will help elucidate the differences between their two approaches to allegory. Where Eliot concludes that *Hamlet* is an "artistic failure" for staging an emotion (Hamlet's melancholy) that has no concrete referent, Benjamin celebrates *Hamlet* as the greatest of the mourning plays for the exact reason Eliot condemns it. According to Benjamin, Hamlet's melancholy speaks to a world in which the human and the divine are separated by an impenetrable void, a world emptied of all objective correlatives in which "the final phantasmagoria of the objective" has been finally swept away (233). After perceiving "the scene of [his] existence as a rubbish heap of partial, inauthentic actions," Hamlet must learn to act without the aura of divine significance (Benjamin 139). The source of Hamlet's triumph, according to Benjamin, is in his ability to proceed in the absence of objective correlatives, consigning himself in the fifth act to an unknown and inaccessible "divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.10). In this final turn, "melancholy [is] redeemed" as Hamlet finds in his own inability to read a higher significance into his actions the necessary first step toward a blind leap of faith (Benjamin 158).

Benjamin's theory of baroque allegory allows for a much more sensitive reading of *The Waste Land* than Eliot's theory of the objective correlative. According to the rubric of "Hamlet and his Problems," *The Waste Land* can be catalogued alongside *Hamlet* as an "artistic failure" for muddling its symbols and failing to produce the requisite sense of "artistic inevitability." If the poem's library of criticism coalesces around any one fact, it is that the poem's formula opens out to various allegorical interpretations depending upon which fragments are accentuated and ignored. If the poem's multiplicity of uncertain signs indicates a symbolic failure according to

Eliot's rubric, read within the framework provided by Benjamin, the breakdown of the symbolic function can be read as the necessary first step in a baroque allegory.

According to Benjamin, baroque allegory spotlights our innate will to meaning by leaving it to hum in a constant state of frustration. The baroque allegorist pushes the symbolic mechanism into overdrive, "piling up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification" (Benjamin 178). However, the desire for transcendent significance is overwhelmed in the end by the exasperating multiplicity of connections that can be made in a Fallen world divorced from all stable transcendent referents. The allegorist's frantic collecting and combining of fragments, therefore, works paradoxically to accentuate the gap that forever remains between the human and the divine, between art and any higher significance.

Baroque allegory is designed in this way to produce a sense of revulsion in its audience. Martin Opitz provides this catalogue of subjects for his mourning plays: "the commands of kings, killings, despair, infanticide and patricide, conflagrations, incest, war and commotion, lamentation, weeping, sighing and such-like" (Wolin 63). The only thing placed behind these macabre images are lengthy historical endnotes. The allegory is designed in this way not to be seen through, but to be looked away from. The only horizon-line that remains between the immanent and transcendent is the line dividing life from death. Benjamin writes that "Death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance" (Benjamin 166). It is for this reason that the baroque stage is so often littered with corpses, the corpse being the only possible symbol of a transcendent reality that, if it exists at all, can only be accessed on the far side of the grave.

The Waste Land's frantic piling of poetic fragments is clearly reminiscent of the baroque mourning plays that Benjamin was studying at the same time Eliot was writing his poem. In his note to line forty-six, Eliot describes how he drew certain connections between his various fragments "quite arbitrarily." The hooded figure, the "third who walks always beside you" from the poem's final section is associated in the notes with both the "delusion" of Antarctic explorers "at the extremity of their strength" as well as with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (359). In the note to line forty six, this same figure is also associated, at least Eliot writes, "in my own mind," with The Hanged Man from the Tarot pack and the Hanged God in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Rather than the sense of artistic inevitability Eliot lauds in his essay on Hamlet, *The Waste Land* provides all the most salient features of Benjamin's baroque allegory, hermeneutic anxiety, "ambiguity, multiplicity of meaning [...] and richness of extravagance" (OGTD 177).

Further aligning *The Waste Land* with Benjamin's baroque allegory is the poem's cyclical return to the corpse. Besides the unburied bodies that surround the Fisher King and the underwater *danse macabre* performed by the decomposing Phlebas, Eliot included in an early draft of "What the Thunder Said" a man who "lay flat upon his back, and cried / 'It seems that I have been a long time dead: / Do not report me to the established world'" (*Facsimile* 113). As the animate corpses accumulate in *The Waste Land*, the poem begins to resemble the baroque theater as it is described by Blair Hoxby, "a theater of the limen, a space betwixt-and-between the living and the dead, a world of dying and mourning" (91). Eliot's efforts to extend this interstitial space in the poem can be seen in his ambiguous verb tenses. In the fifth section Eliot writes, "We who were living are now dying / With a little patience" (229-30). The line places life in the past tense with death still off in the future. It is in the violet half-light between the two that *The Waste Land* is set.

The procession of characters suspended between life and death begins in the poem's epigraph, spoken by the Cumaean Sibyl, who is forced to suffer her own body's decomposition. Having asked Apollo to live forever, the Sibyl forgot to stipulate about the state in which she would be preserved. She thus continues to age with no hope of death, a prisoner trapped within her own corpse. Eliot quotes from Petronius, who provides the Sibyl's one request ("I want to die") in Greek. After this epigraph, the poem begins:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth with forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (1-7)

Levenson has convincingly argued that it is from the perspective of a buried corpse that the cruelty of April and warmth of snow-cover are to be understood. Spring is described here according to its subterranean machinations. Rain is registered through its influence on dull roots, the stirring of which can represent a threat only to those confined below. By opening "The Burial of the Dead" with the voice of one buried but not yet dead, Eliot immediately establishes the poem's liminal positioning between life and death, memory and desire (Levenson 172-5).

"The Burial of the Dead" ends with yet another animate corpse. In a brown early morning fog, the blurred form of Stetson emerges. The speaker asks: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (71-2). If the poem's first corpse is struggling to transition from life to death, this second is having trouble

transitioning from death to new life. Eliot's notes cite Frazer, who describes a number of vegetation rituals in which the seasonal cycle is interpreted as a dying god returning with the spring. In the encounter with Stetson, this rebirth is threatened by a late frost and a digging dog. "The Burial of the Dead" is thus bookended by two semi-animate corpses; in between these two is this description of the London commute:

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled (62-5)

The passage alludes to the third canto of Dante's *Inferno*. Before the Pilgrim can cross the river Acheron to Hell proper, he encounters a crowd chasing a banner "whirling with aimless speed as though it would not ever take a stand." He is told these are the indifferent who "lived without praise or blame" and thus earned neither salvation nor damnation. Having not truly lived, they cannot now properly die and so remain forever in a liminal state between life and death, a state Virgil describes to the Pilgrim as "so abject it makes them envy every other fate" (Dante 14-18).

In the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin similarly evokes Dante to describe the one path out of the "paper graveyard" depicted in a baroque allegory (*OGTD* 232). Driven by a desire without a stable object, Benjamin describes the allegorist eventually losing his footing amongst the unstable signs and multiplicity of meanings. The allegorical intention, grown dizzy from its accumulation of fragments, enters into a free fall from emblem to emblem down into a bottomless pit. The allegorist awakes to find himself turned, re-discovering himself suddenly under the distant stars of heaven, separated from himself by a black expanse (*OGTD* 231-3). What distinguishes the Pilgrim in *The Divine Comedy* from Benjamin's allegorist, however, is

that when the Pilgrim falls at the end of the *Inferno* and re-discovers himself no longer in Hell but beneath the stars of heaven, he has Virgil prodding him forward and Mount Purgatory under his feet. Thomist eschatology is allegorized by Dante into a means of ascent. Benjamin's baroque allegorist, on the other hand, is left alone to confront the abyss separating him from the divine. After his fall, he identifies his allegories as impotent attempts to fill out and deny the unbridgeable gap separating him from the realm of divine significance. Recognizing his allegory will never reach up to heaven, he must reorient his art to some other use.

After the Great War, there were calls from either end of the political spectrum to instrumentalize poetry to redress the problems of postwar society. While the dadaists positioned their poetry to help overturn the institutions complicit in prolonging the war, the classicists sought to buttress these same institutions as a safeguard against the chaos of modern life. While he was writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot develops a much more modest image of the poet's work. In "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot writes:

When the poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes. (*ECP II* 375).

Here, the deductive method Eliot endorses in his *Hamlet* and Dante essays, beginning with an abstract bit of dogma or an emotion that is then worked into material form through a sequence of images, is replaced by an inductive method that begins with the fragmentary bits of experience at hand that are then shaped into ephemeral wholes. The end product of this process does not

conform to some predetermined plan, but is instead the product of a chance encounter between the particularities of a place in time and the intuition of the individual poet.

In *The Waste Land*, the ambitious programs delineated by the classicists and dadaists offset. If the poem made a definitive turn toward classicism, it would open itself to Charles Maurras's vision of a people reunified by a common culture. If it made a definitive turn toward dadaism, it would open itself to Tzara's vision of absolute liberty, in which everyone dances amongst the ruins of civilization, each "to his own boomboom" (Hentea 109). *The Waste Land* does not, however, make a definitive turn. In the end, the classicist attempt to shore the poem's fragments into stable wholes and the dadaist attempt to discard them appear equally inadequate in a postwar world that is as out-of-joint as it is inescapable. Eliot's responds like the baroque allegorists, who had confronted a world similarly out-of-joint by "piling up fragments ceaselessly [...] in the unremitting expectation of a miracle" (*OGTD* 178). These fragments do not, however, produce the hoped for miracle. *The Waste Land* ends:

Shantih Shantih Shantih

Shantih demarcates the limit of each Upanishad, the point at which human understanding balks. The poem's repeated failure to forge a reliable link between the detritus of the modern world and some higher significance traces the same limit described at the end of each Upanishad. The peace and order towards which the poem strives is recognized in the end to be infinitely beyond the poet's reach.

CHAPTER 3: WITTGENSTEIN'S KALEIDOSCOPE

The kaleidoscope is a device that constantly rearranges the same elements to create new patterns that then crash one into the other. When seen through a kaleidoscope, no object retains its coherency for long before being merged into its neighbor. By comparing Ludwig Wittgenstein's 1922 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to a kaleidoscope, I mean to draw out the ways the text's various components interact and modify one another over the course of the book. Besides a science of logic, the *Tractatus* addresses metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, the meaning of life, and the nature of happiness in German, English, and a *Begriffsschrift*, a logical symbolism. The thesis of this chapter is that the various acts of expansion that define the *Tractatus*: the wartime dilation of Wittgenstein's philosophical project, the introduction of a philosopher-critic to pass judgment on the book on its final page, and the postwar agreement to publish the text with the German and English facing one another, all work together to mirror the disorientating world in which the book was produced. It is in this topsy-turvy world that Wittgenstein will draw his boundaries.

The sense of disorientation becomes increasingly acute as the *Tractatus* nears its end. A book that opens with Bertrand Russell's introductory assurance that this is a work of extraordinary importance and Wittgenstein's own promise that it contains "unassailable and definitive" truths concludes with the philosopher disavowing his own propositions, which he

describes as nonsense (6.54). In the proposition just before this disavowal, Wittgenstein describes the correct method of philosophy:

To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science - i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy - and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. (6.53)

The trouble with the *Tractatus* is that Wittgenstein does not adhere to his own best practices. In the proposition immediately preceding *this* one, Wittgenstein breaks his own austere prescriptions by writing something blatantly metaphysical: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical" (6.522). The patent inconsistencies of the *Tractatus* were first noted in the book's own introduction, where Russell playfully remarks on how "Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" (7). Besides speaking at length on topics he deems to be "inexpressible," like ethics, aesthetics, and the mystical, Wittgenstein also proposes a theory of logic and a picture theory of language before asserting that "Philosophy is not a theory but an activity" (4.112).

While the conspicuous discrepancies between the methods professed and those practiced in the *Tractatus* were a major stumbling block for the book's first readers — including its two main interlocutors, Russell and Frege — the text's internal contradictions have come to represent a low hurdle for most modern readers. One of the few points of consensus to emerge after a century of Tractarian scholarship is that Wittgenstein does (in one way or another) manage to elucidate the "unassailable and definitive" truths he promises in his preface. The question that perpetuates the ongoing "Tractatus Wars" is not whether or not the book's central truths exist, but what exactly they consist of. In a throwaway line from "Das Überwinden: Anti-Metaphysical

Readings of the *Tractatus*" (2015), Warren Goldfarb articulates a foundational premise beneath Tractarian scholarship when he writes, "Of course, here I am assuming that we should like to understand the *Tractatus* in a way that renders it as coherent as possible" (14). The variety of ways in which the *Tractatus* has been rendered coherent over the years, however, warrants a second look at both the text's internal contradictions and the desire for coherence that we, as readers, continue to bring to it.

Over the past century, the *Tractatus* has served an array of functions. The book was foundational in establishing new analytical branches of philosophy in both Vienna and Cambridge during the decade after its publication. More recently, however, Alain Badiou, has argued that the *Tractatus* prefigures philosophy's end, placing it in the anti-philosophical tradition of Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Philosophers such as P. M. S. Hacker and Stephen Mulhall, representing the "traditional" school of interpretation, argue that the *Tractatus* establishes the limits of sense to better gesture toward all the relevant types of "nonsense" that transcend our linguistic and logical constructs. According to the "austere" or "resolute" school of Cora Diamond and James Conant, on the other hand, the text is not built to show what cannot be said, but to show what problems inevitably arise when we set off after ineffable truths that we believe must lie just beyond the rules of logical syntax.

By accentuating and deemphasizing different portions of the text, a variety of "unassailable and definitive" truths can be abstracted. Rather than adjudicate amongst the various interpretations based upon the text's assumed coherency, this chapter will examine the various means by which instability is sown into the *Tractatus* and the philosophical method promoted by a philosophical text that doesn't play by its own established rules. The chapter's three sections will examine three sources of disjunction in the *Tractatus*: its protracted

composition history, the instability of the diachronic and synchronic factors used to distinguish sense from nonsense, and the self-critique the book advances on its final page.

The first section will examine the changes in Wittgenstein's life and thought during the tumultuous six year period in which he wrote the *Tractatus*. When Wittgenstein began working on the book, he was one of the richer men in all of Europe, an aspiring logician who detested all forms of mysticism and aspired to work alongside the world's preeminent philosophers at Cambridge. By the time the book was published, however, Wittgenstein was a poor schoolteacher in rural Austria living on coarse bread and water who liked to read the Gospels to children while wearing the uniform of an extinct empire. If the propositions of the *Tractatus* at times read as if they were written by two different authors, their composition history suggest that this is because, to a certain extent, they were.

The chapter's second section examines how the unavoidable imprecisions of translation helped to shape Wittgenstein's linguistic theory. In September 1913, David Pinsent describes the peculiar sight of Wittgenstein in the throes of philosophical thought: "he mutters to himself (in a mixture of German and English) and strides up and down the room all the while" (Monk 86). Wittgenstein would then scribble his thoughts into German notebooks before testing them in English conversations with his Cambridge associates. I will argue that Wittgenstein was keenly aware of how translation affected the "limit" (*Grenze*) he sought to establish between sense and nonsense and that the gap that remains between the German and English propositions of the *Tractatus* do not, as Michael North has argued, undercut Wittgenstein's theory of language, but rather brings into relief its vital pliability.

The final section will then take up the extraordinary moment at 6.54 when Wittgenstein inserts a wedge between the Tractarian speaker and his propositions, insisting that "anyone who

understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical." In this penultimate proposition, Wittgenstein places his reader in a spot where she must choose to either follow the "me" and "throw away" the nonsense contained in the book she holds in her hand or follow the introductory advice of Russell and proceed back into the text to glean what one can from the more cogent passages. With Gérard Genette's narratology, I will argue that the intrusion of the philosopher into "the world" delimited by the *Tractatus* fundamentally alters all the propositions of which that world is comprised. Rather than follow the "resolute" reading, however, which uses 6.54 to undercut vast swaths of the *Tractatus* as utter nonsense Wittgenstein himself did not believe (but included that his reader might feel the tug of the transcendent that is later shown to lie at the root of all philosophical problems), I will argue that the philosopher's surprising entrance into his philosophical world elucidates the extent to which the assumed motivations and character of a speaker shape the sensible limits of his discourse.

Over the course of the book, the firm boundary Wittgenstein promises to establish between what can and cannot be thought is continually being put in motion by a text jumping from topic to topic and across languages. To establish boundaries in such a volatile environment will require a philosophical approach that extends out from determining the truth function of the isolated proposition to a study of how that particular proposition functions within its discursive ecology and how it informs our understanding of its speaker.

The *Tractatus* in the Trenches

In June 1919, Wittgenstein wrote to Russell from a prisoner-of-war camp in Cassino, Italy that he had recently finished his book, describing it as "my life's work [...] containing all my work of the last six years" (McGuinness 266). Five years earlier, in August 1914, Wittgenstein

enlisted as a volunteer gunner in the Austrian Army. At the time, Wittgenstein had just turned twenty-five and was still reading for his bachelor's degree in philosophy. The dated entries in Wittgenstein's wartime notebooks suggest that large portions of the *Tractatus* were written from the trenches, often during heavy combat. One of Wittgenstein's most fruitful periods, from June to September 1916, corresponds with the period in which Wittgenstein and the Austrian Seventh Army were fending off the Russian Brusilov Offensive, a campaign that resulted in more casualties (1,600,000) than the Battle of the Somme. While writing the book that would distinguish him as one of the preeminent philosophers of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein was decorated for bravery on multiple occasions, including a recommendation for Austria's highest award, the Gold Medal for Valor. To read the *Tractatus* as Wittgenstein suggests it should be read, as his "life's work," will require some understanding of how the life of a young Austrian soldier might inform a logical treatise.

If the *Tractatus* is not traditionally read as a war book, it is because its mathematical arrangement of propositions and scientific tone are antithetical to the literary features typically associate with the war: broken syntax, uncertainty, and expressionism. The *Tractatus* is written in a flat and expressionless tone of a person who appears to know exactly where he is going. In *My Philosophical Development*, Russell complains of the difficulties raised by the austerity of Wittgenstein's prose style. Working through proposition 5.54, Russell finds, "Wittgenstein himself, as usual, is oracular and emits his opinions as if it were a Czar's ukase, but humbler folk can hardly content themselves with this procedure" (88). In the notebooks, however, Wittgenstein is less restrained. He wonders:

Suppose there is something outside the *facts*? Which our propositions are impotent to express? But here we do have, e.g., *things and we feel no demand at all* to express them in propositions.

What cannot be expressed we do not express ———. And how try to ask whether THAT can be expressed which cannot be EXPRESSED?

Is there no domain outside the facts? (NB 52)

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein simply asserts:

For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something *can be said*. (6.51)

Where the rapid pen strokes of the notebooks depict a mind rushing after a furtive quarry, Wittgenstein removes all markers of doubt from his final copy and rearranges his various propositions by number, providing their author an air of preternatural composure.

This formal arrangement lends support to one of the book's theses, that "logic is transcendental" and not subject to the vicissitudes of history (*TLP* 6.13). When Wittgenstein's work is placed beside Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13), it appears that the reverberations of the catastrophic War of 1914-1918 had little effect on the realm of logic. In August 1913, Russell wrote in his diary of his hope that Wittgenstein might serve as his protégée, taking over the fundamentals of logic so that he might turn his attention elsewhere. After reviewing some of Wittgenstein's early logical work, Russell writes "It is probable that the first volume of *Principia* will have to be re-written, and Wittgenstein may write himself the first eleven chapters" (McGuinness 180). In the two main articulations of his prewar thought, the "Notes on Logic" presented to Russell in October 1913 and the "Notes Dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway" in April 1914, Wittgenstein appears to be self-consciously assuming the role Russell

had prepared for him, assiduously investigating how the natural languages and a logical symbolism might mirror the logical networks upon which they are founded.

It is not until Wittgenstein is in uniform that he will strike upon the central metaphor for the "theory of logical portrayal by means of language" he was developing at Cambridge (*NB* 15). While stationed in Galicia in the first months of the war, Wittgenstein came across a story about a trial in Paris in which a model of the crime scene was constructed. On September 29, 1914, Wittgenstein writes: "In the proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally. (As when in a law-court in Paris a motor-car accident is represented by means of dolls, etc.)" (*NB* 7). It struck Wittgenstein that the relation between this courtroom model and the actual scene of the accident is similar to the relationship between a proposition and the world it is constructed to represent. Wittgenstein's "picture theory," the idea that the proposition develops "a model of reality" is based upon the assumption that the world and language share a common "logical form" that allows the simples of language (names) to be linked together in a way that mirrors how the simples of the world (objects) are linked together (2.12-2.18). The complex propositions of language can reflect the complex facts of the world through their common access to a logical form that "*precedes every experience*" (5.552).

With the picture theory in place, Wittgenstein could more clearly distinguish the three types of propositions he had been working with before the war: propositions of logic, significant propositions in which a possible state of affairs in the world is described, and nonsense. Significant propositions work much like the Paris courtroom model, arranging names in logical space to mirror a state of affairs in the world. For such a proposition to work, Wittgenstein writes in October of 1914 that it must "be true or false - agree with reality or not - for this to be possible something in the proposition must be *identical* with reality" (*NB* 15). This idea, echoed

in the *Tractatus* at 2.18, was earlier developed in the "Notes on Logic." Wittgenstein's prewar theory of logic imagines logical space as a geometric plane underlying both our language and our world. For a proposition to function properly on this model, it must draw "a straight line, which divides all points of a plane into right and left," separating its verifying conditions from its falsifying conditions (*NB* 97). By comparing the proposition to a line on a plane, Wittgenstein accentuates the necessary bipolarity of all significant propositions. He writes in a 1913 letter to Russell that "we only then understand a proposition if we know both what would be the case if it was false and what if it was true" (*NB* 123). With this model for the proper functionality of significant propositions in place, Wittgenstein can turn to the two outliers: nonsense propositions and logical propositions.

Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense will be discussed at length in the next section. Here it is sufficient to distinguish the nonsense proposition from the significant proposition by its failure to arrange names in a manner that can be tested against reality. In a nonsense proposition, there is no means for distinguishing what would be the case if it was true or false. Besides nonsense, however, Wittgenstein discovers that logical propositions also fail to adhere to the standards established by his own "picture theory" of language. One of the central tenets of the *Tractatus*, that "the propositions of logic are tautologies," was developed in Wittgenstein's prewar correspondence with Russell (6.1). In a November 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein concludes: "I can sum up by saying a logical proposition is one the special cases of which are either tautologous [...] or self-contradictory" (*NB* 125). That is to say that logical propositions are distinct from the propositions of science in that they *show* their sense in themselves rather than *saying* anything in particular about the world. In another 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein writes: "If I say for example 'Meier is stupid', you cannot tell whether this

proposition is true or false by looking at it. But the propositions of logic — and they alone — have the property of expressing their truth or falsehood in the very sign itself" (*NB* 127). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein distinguishes logical propositions in the same way: "Tautology and contradiction are not pictures of reality. They present no possible state of affairs. For the one allows every possible state of affairs, the other none" (4.462). Where the scientific proposition is oriented toward the world and can be tested against reality (in Wittgenstein's example, Meier's intelligence might be measured against some established standard), the logical proposition *shows* its sense without any need for external verification. In devising a theory of language in which propositions could be sorted out in this way on his truth tables, Wittgenstein reformed the paradigm of twentieth-century logic.

After developing the picture theory in September 1914, however, there is a pronounced shift in Wittgenstein's philosophical notes. With the picture theory in place as the capstone of his prewar logic, Wittgenstein immediately begins considering the philosophical topics that lie beyond the strict logical parameters he had been operating within since 1911, when he first showed up in Russell's rooms unannounced. The pronounced expansion of Wittgenstein's philosophical project that begins in October 1914 coincides with two events to which Wittgenstein would later attribute great significance. The first is his chance encounter with Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief*. A vehement critic of all forms of religion and mysticism before the war, in October of 1914 Wittgenstein entered a small bookshop in Tarnow, Poland. Russell describes the scene in a letter to Ottoline Morrell in this way: "He went inside and found that it contained just one book: Tolstoy on the Gospels. He bought it merely because there was no other. He read it and re-read it, and thenceforth had it always with him, under fire and at all times" (McGuinness 220). Tolstoy's little book became Wittgenstein's talisman for the

remainder of the war. When Ludwig von Ficker wrote of his severe depression in 1915, Wittgenstein responded with a bit of advice culled from his own wartime despair: "Are you acquainted with Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*? At its time, this book virtually kept me alive. Would you buy the book and read it?! If you are not acquainted with it, then you cannot imagine what an effect it can have upon a person" (Monk 132).

The other major event of October 1914 was Wittgenstein's assignment to a captured Russian ship on the Vistula river during the Galician campaign. On board the *Goplana*, Wittgenstein experienced enemy fire for the first time. Wittgenstein would later extol the salutary effects of combat, telling his nephew that the war "saved [his] life" and that "[he doesn't] know what [he]'d have done without it" (McGuinness 204).

Besides changing his life, the events of October 1914 also changed Wittgenstein's philosophy. On the first day of November 1914, Wittgenstein's philosophical notes begin spilling out of their logical container. He exhorts himself to expand his philosophical scope: "Don't get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole single great problem, even if this view is still not a clear one" (NB 23). By May of 1915, Wittgenstein reports back to Russell that his "method has changed drastically" since their last correspondence (Monk 130). During that same month, Wittgenstein begins to write about mysticism in his philosophical notebooks. In what will become proposition 6.52, he writes: "The urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science. We *feel* that even if all *possible* scientific questions are answered *our problem is still not touched at all*" (NB 51). Wittgenstein's effort to delimit the sciences aligns with Tolstoy's efforts in *The Gospel in Brief* to delimit the historical explications of Christianity popularized by Ernest Renan. In his preface to *The Gospel in Brief*, Tolstoy derides scholars who "explore every detail of the life of

Jesus without noticing that [...] even if they were able to reconstruct his whole life in the minutest detail, the question why he, just he, had such influence on people would still remain unanswered" (130). It was by first establishing the limit of the critical paradigm in which they were working that Tolstoy and Wittgenstein could then investigate the questions that lie outside its scope.

In 1915, the logical propositions that dominate Wittgenstein's prewar notebooks become mixed with questions about God, good and evil, and the soul. The evolution of Wittgenstein's thought is exemplified in his critique of the modern *Weltanschauung* on May 6, 1916, an entry that will later be included in the *Tractatus* as propositions 6.371 and 6.372:

At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena.

So people stop at the laws of nature, treating them as something inviolable, just as God and Fate were treated in past ages.

And they are both right and wrong: though the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained.

Philosophy is important, according to Wittgenstein, because it alone can reveal the limits of the scientific paradigm, keeping the scientist honest by "demonstrating to him [when] he has given no meaning to certain signs in his proposition" (6.53). What Wittgenstein contends repeatedly in the final pages of the *Tractatus* is that there are certain topics that cannot be handled scientifically because any discussion of them would inevitably lead one to violate the limits established in the *Tractatus* for significant propositions. When one discusses metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, or mysticism, she will eventually be led to use signs that cannot be reliably

linked to the world and propositions that do not mirror any definitive state of affairs that can be reliably tested through scientific inquiry. Wittgenstein's task in his final propositions is to put both logic and science in their respective places by revealing the topics these two paradigms are ill-suited to consider.

Wittgenstein begins to reflect back on the general trajectory of his philosophy in a notebook entry from August 2, 1916. In the midst of the Brusilov Offensive, Wittgenstein notes: "My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world" (*NB* 79). It is in relation to a second, unspeakable world that Wittgenstein develops his understanding of his own world. Wittgenstein explains his two world model in a famous 1919 letter to Ludwig von Ficker. Wittgenstein tells Ficker that the *Tractatus* is comprised of "two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one" (Monk 178). E. H. Gombrich traces the "two world" model employed by Wittgenstein here back to Plato, who describes our world as a mucky reflection of the transcendent world of spirit in the *Phaedo*. Foreshadowing the *Tractatus*, Plato argues that the limitations imposed by our language restrict our access to the intelligible world beyond. The boundary between these two worlds is made more permeable, however, in the hands of the Christian Neo-Platonists, who interpret the Incarnation as a unique moment in human history in which the divine and human converge. The Christian Neo-Platonists assert that traces of this divine intrusion might still be detected in the two great books: the Scriptures and Creation. In his sweeping treatment of Western history, Gombrich traces a common belief in "two worlds" undergirding both the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions. While each focuses on a different aspects of nature (its order and beauty respectively), both the Enlightenment and Romanticism are founded upon a

conception of nature as a reflecting mirror in which the features of the Creator might still be detected.

When Wittgenstein turns to transcendental topics like God, evil, and mysticism on the final pages of the *Tractatus*, he employs this two worlds model with one key modification. Writing during the bloodiest war to date in human history, Wittgenstein was not well positioned to credit the Enlightenment belief that science and technology naturally arc toward the good. Philosophizing from the trenches, Wittgenstein bypasses the beauty and order of this world to locate value instead in a far off realm cut off from his own (hellish) state of affairs. At 6.41, Wittgenstein writes that "*in* [the world] there is no value [... that value] must lie outside all happening and being-so." In the world, Wittgenstein saw the countless ways human reason and ingenuity could be bent toward the destruction of nature and the more efficient killing of enemy soldiers: the machine gun, chemical weapons, the tank, the mass mobilization of wave upon wave of soldiers, even Wittgenstein's beloved aerodynamics had been weaponized during the war.

It is the introduction of this second world that most distinguishes Wittgenstein's wartime writing from his work at Cambridge. Before the war, Wittgenstein's concerns were very much of this world. He attacked logical problems with the zeal of one desperate to prove he possessed the spark of genius that alone, he felt, could justify his life. In 1912, Russell recounts to Morrell how Wittgenstein took Beethoven as his model, recounting to Russell:

How a friend described going to Beethoven's door and hearing him 'cursing, howling and singing' over his new fugue; after a whole hour Beethoven at last came to the door, looking as if he had been fighting the devil, and having eaten nothing for 36 hours

because his cook and parlour-maid had been away from his rage. That's the sort of man to be. (Monk 45)

More than any particular question of logic, it was the question of Wittgenstein's own aptitude for logic that drove him to seek out and accost Russell in 1911. Certain that he should live like Beethoven, Wittgenstein went to Cambridge to determine if logic was a suitable instrument for his dedication. Wittgenstein's prewar work, dictated to Moore and Russell in turn, was designed to impress the men Wittgenstein hoped would eventually invite him into their ranks. The drastic shift in method Wittgenstein describes to Russell in 1915 can be attributed to both a shift in purpose and audience. In his wartime philosophy, Wittgenstein no longer orients his work toward the Cambridge philosophical elite. In the trenches, the promise of future genius was superseded by the more pressing need to come to terms with the value of a single lived experience in a life that at any moment might be unceremoniously snuffed out.

In Tolstoy, Wittgenstein found an attractive two world model in which the value of a human life was divorced from its exterior state of affairs. What the teachings of Jesus boil down to, according to Tolstoy, is an appreciation of one's "true life" divorced from all bodily, economic, and temporal concerns. According to Tolstoy, the true life is measured by an alternative set of indicators. First, one perceives all humans as a universal brotherhood, since "the true life is a life common to all men" (245). The second is that one will cease to fear death, since "for a man who lives not the personal life but the common life in the will of the Father, there is no death. Physical death is union with the Father" (253). While Wittgenstein clearly failed on the first count (he retained a pronounced loathing for his fellow soldiers throughout the war), he found great solace in this second measure, repeatedly echoing Tolstoy's theory of time

and death in his notebooks while at the same time being honored for his *sang-froid* in moments of extreme danger.

In his philosophical notebooks, Tolstoy's influence on Wittgenstein become most pronounced during times of heavy combat. During the chaos of the Brusilov Offensive, Wittgenstein writes on July 8, 1916:

To believe in God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.

A man who is happy must have no fear. Not even in face of death.

Only a man who lives not in time but in the present is happy.

For life in the present there is no death.

If by eternity is understood not infinite temporal duration but non-temporality, then it can be said that a man lives eternally if he lives in the present. (NB 75)

Wittgenstein here locates God in a second world outside the facts of this world. This depiction of a distant God, inviolate if inaccessible, became increasingly popular during the war. Walter Benjamin and Karl Barth both took up Luther's two kingdoms doctrine during the war to contemplate a divinity infinitely removed from the horrors of the time. In *The Epistle to the Romans* (1921), Barth attributes his key insight "to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth' (Ecclesiastes)" (Barth 10). Wittgenstein's project — to clearly demarcate the boundaries between what can and cannot be said in this world while gesturing toward an array of transcendent topics that lie unspeakably beyond it — aligns with the efforts of Benjamin and Barth to affirm the existence of a second world infinitely divorced from their own. During the war, all three attempt to set the divine at an unthinkable height "to prevent the second world from deflating and gently collapsing

upon their heads" (Gombrich 45). In a conversation with Max Brod just after the war, Franz Kafka joins their ranks when asked about what hope remains in a world so out-of-joint. Kafka replies that there is indeed hope: "Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope — but not for us" (Barnouw 187).

This conception of a second, inaccessible world in which all value and hope of salvation reside proved to be salutary for Wittgenstein in his daily encounters with death. Before the war, Wittgenstein continually confessed to Russell his fear that he would die before completing his work on logic, rendering his life a waste. During the war, in contrast, Wittgenstein repeatedly requested (with his logical manuscripts still incomplete) the most dangerous assignment: manning the observation post. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's newfound stoicism in the face of death is explained in propositions 6.431 and 6.4311:

So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end.

Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death.

If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.

Again, Wittgenstein is echoing Tolstoy, who described the true life as one cut off from the past and future, a life "without time - in the present alone" (221). After the war, Tolstoy's impress is legible once again in Wittgenstein's decision to renounce his entire inheritance in accordance with Tolstoy's dictate that "it is quite impossible to be rich and to fulfill the Father's will" (253). After giving away one of the largest European fortunes to survive the war (Wittgenstein's father had astutely transferred his funds to American bonds), Wittgenstein found work as a gardener's assistant.

If I have belabored the importance of Tolstoy on both Wittgenstein's life and his wartime philosophy, it is because the ascendant "austere" reading of the *Tractatus* argues that the book's second world, or as Wittgenstein puts it in his letter to Ficker, its second unwritten part, is projected only to be seen through. According to James Conant, "the aim of the work is to show us that beyond 'the limits of language' lies — not ineffable truth, but rather — (as the preface of the *Tractatus* warns) *einfach Unsinn*, simply nonsense" (198). This reading derives its authority from Wittgenstein's claim at 6.54 that: "he who understands me finally recognizes them [my proposition] as senseless." This proposition will be studied in depth in this chapter's third section. Before turning from the composition history, however, I simply want to assert that Wittgenstein writes about mysticism during the war with the same earnestness and feverish sense of urgency he brought to his prewar logic. Placed within its wartime context, there appears to be nothing ironic about Wittgenstein's "mystical turn." Further undermining the irony the austere reader assumes must lie at the foundation of the *Tractatus* is Wittgenstein's later commentary. As P. M. S. Hacker writes:

Among the 20,000 pages of Nachlass and the further thousands of pages of students' lecture notes and records of conversations, *there is not a single trace* of any such strategy. It would be extraordinary that in all his conversations with and dictations to his friends and pupils, with Engelmann, Russell, Ramsey, Waismann, Schlick, Lee, Drury, Rhees, Malcolm, von Wright, Anscombe, etc., of which we have records, he never, even once, mentioned or explained what he was up to. (Hacker 381)

The more likely explanation for the unevenness of the *Tractatus* is that it was written by a young man in a chaotic time. Wittgenstein began in Cambridge to excavate the bedrock logic he believed *must* undergird both our language and our world and ends up in the trenches of Ukraine,

where he concludes that "logic is transcendental" and the world adrift (6.13). The *Tractatus* was undertaken by an irascible undergraduate, described by Russell as "far more terrible with Christians than I am," and finished by a decorated veteran, described by Russell as "a complete mystic" (Monk 44, 182). After a week discussing the *Tractatus* line by line with the author in 1919, Russell retained some doubts about the book's internal consistency, but never questioned Wittgenstein's commitment to each proposition. The inconsistency of the propositions reflect the world in which they were written, a world in which "the totality of facts" had been thrown into flux by the war (1.1). To maintain one's bearings, Wittgenstein devises a simple method for distinguishing a significant statement, *sinnvoller Satz*, from utter nonsense (*einfach Unsinn*) (6.1263). In the volatile semantic climate of the war, Wittgenstein argues that maintaining this boundary should be philosophy's chief occupation.

A Provisional Boundary between Sense and Nonsense

In his preface, Wittgenstein describes his ambition for the *Tractatus* in cartographic terms:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit (*Grenze*) to thinking, or rather - not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit (*Grenze*) to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (*Grenze*) (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

The limit (*Grenze*) can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit (*Grenze*) will be simply nonsense (27).

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein takes his place at the vanguard of the "linguistic turn" by accentuating the linguistic medium in which all intellectual boundaries are to be established. At

4.0031, Wittgenstein writes that "all philosophy is 'critique of language.'" By foregrounding language, however, Wittgenstein also threatens to undercut the limit at the heart of his book, since all natural languages are, to a certain extent, adrift. If words function differently over time and within different discourse communities, the pressing question at the outset is how the loose soil of language is to hold the limits Wittgenstein hopes to establish there?

The imprecision of the natural languages is acknowledged on the first page of the *Tractatus*. Even before Wittgenstein's preface, C. K. Ogden's brief translator's note addresses the odd formatting of the definitive 1922 Kegan Paul edition. While the *Tractatus* had been published the year before in the last issue of Wilhelm Ostwald's *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, Wittgenstein had no editorial control over this initial publication and described it as "a pirated edition [...] full of errors" (McGuinness 297). When Ogden offered to publish a bilingual edition, Wittgenstein took the opportunity to correct the mistakes from the Ostwald printing as well as counsel Ogden on the English translation. In his note, Ogden explains that he has printed the German and English texts *en face* because it allows him "a certain latitude" in his English translation. Ogden writes: "Such a method of presentation seemed desirable both on account of the obvious difficulty raised by the vocabulary and in view of the peculiar literary character of the whole" (5). Ogden's introductory note amounts to a translator's confession that a clear gap remains between the two texts on either side of the book's inner binding. In his letters to Ogden, Wittgenstein plainly acknowledges this gap as well. In his comments on Ogden's proofs, Wittgenstein writes beside proposition 4.023 that "this prop I cannot translate" (*Letters to Ogden* 27). If the propositions Wittgenstein uses to firmly establish the limits to thought shift from language to language, how firm can these limits really be?

In *Reading 1922* (1999), Michael North identifies *Grenze* (limit) as "perhaps the most important single word in the *Tractatus*" since it captures both its extraordinary ambition and inevitable failure (37). The *Tractatus* is founded on a utopian hope that the establishment of clear linguistic limits might bring order where everything was once "opaque and blurred" (4.112). The nature of these limits is drawn into question, however, as they shift from the German on the left side of the page to the English on the right. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein asserts that there is a common "logical form" beneath both reality and language which allows us to form a model of reality with our words (2.18). Since all languages share the same "logical form," each language works in a similar fashion to develop a picture that is "linked with reality" and "reaches up to [it]" (2.1511). Following the Tractarian model of language, it might be assumed that two languages that share the same logical form and reach up to the same reality will develop two pictures of that reality that are basically interchangeable. Ogden's bilingual printing of the *Tractatus*, however, clearly shows that this is not the case.

The gap between the two texts can be seen in the word *Grenze* itself. In both the Ogden-Ramsey and Pears-McGuinness translations, *Grenze* is translated as "limit." In the *Philosophical Investigations*, however, Wittgenstein explores the variety of ways the word *Grenze* can be used. Here is G. E. M. Anscombe's translation of § 499:

When one draws a boundary (*Grenze*) it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary (*Grenze*); or it may show where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line (*Grenze*) that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.

The English word "limit" does not include the same range of possibilities as the German *Grenze*. When translating from German to English, one must choose between limit and boundary. Where a boundary is two-sided and is usually thought of as permeable, a limit marks a point beyond which one cannot or is not to venture. North describes the difference in this way, "'Limit' is unitary and metaphysical; 'boundary' is multiple and empirical" (37). Do the *Grenze* in the *Tractatus* represent a boundary or a limit? Simply posing this question, according to North, exposes the limitations of the *Tractatus*:

Implicitly, in its bilingual status on the page, in the differences between the German and the English and between various ways of getting from one to the other, [the *Tractatus*] blurs the very boundaries it was so concerned to establish, or rather it demonstrates that any boundaries that can be drawn are empirical and provisional rather than necessary and permanent (38).

According to North, the key insight Wittgenstein gleans from the *Tractatus* is not contained in the original text but in the subsequent act of translation. Working with Ogden on the 1922 translation, Wittgenstein was forced to confront the "ineluctably contingent character" of all human thought (North 39).

What is elided from this narrative — in which the key insight of the book is found not in the book itself, but in the subsequent act of translation — is the central role translation played in Wittgenstein's philosophy before 1922. Since his first appearance at Russell's door in 1911, "speaking very little English but refusing to speak German" Wittgenstein's philosophical thought was continually being filtered between two languages (McGuinness 88). In 1913, David Pinsent describes Wittgenstein at work, pacing and muttering "in a mixture of German and English"

(Monk 86). These thoughts would then be jotted down in a German notebook before being amended and annealed through English conversations and letters with his Cambridge associates.

The centrality of translation to Wittgenstein's philosophy before 1922 can be seen in the 1913 production of "Notes on Logic." Originating in the bilingual mutterings Pinsent overheard in Norway in 1913, Wittgenstein devised two methods for conveying his thoughts to Russell. First, while visiting the Pinsent family in Birmingham, he dictated his notes to a German-speaking typist at the Berlitz School of Translation on October 7. He asked that this German transcript, once prepared, be sent to Russell in Cambridge. The next day Wittgenstein traveled to Cambridge to discuss his ideas face to face with Russell, who employed Philip Jourdain's secretary to take down a shorthand record of their English conversation. This English transcript was later sent to Norway for Wittgenstein's amendments. The "Notes on Logic" that we have today is Russell's combination of the transcript of their English conversation (with Wittgenstein's annotations) and the German transcript Russell received from the Berlitz School in Birmingham (Biggs 7-11). Besides being passed multiple times between German and English, Wittgenstein employs a *Begriffsschrift* in his "Notes on Logic," a text that cannot be disentangled from the various acts of translation out of which it was developed.

In this context, it is difficult to imagine Wittgenstein was much surprised to find a number of his propositions had been jostled around a bit when converted into English by Ogden in 1922. In his amendments to Ogden's translation, Wittgenstein identifies a number of propositions that do not come off in English. This does not lead him to doubt his linguistic theory, but rather to present Ogden with a variety of loose translations to be studied together. The practice of the translator quickly shades into that of the philosopher as the original German of the proposition becomes an occasion for renewed philosophical engagement. With the array

of examples and loose English approximations, Wittgenstein advises Ogden that he needn't be overly literal. With the German beside the English translation, deviations between the two come to represent an extension of the book's philosophical provocations. Ogden's formatting invites the reader to study the effect the linguistic medium has on "the limit to thought" that is drawn there.

The extent to which a translator's choices shape the book can again be seen in the word *Grenze*. By translating it as "limit," Ogden and Pears both raise the stakes of the *Tractatus*, which now must draw a unitary and metaphysical division through all language to determine once and for all what can and cannot be said. Considering the absolute and unilateral tone Wittgenstein assumes in the *Tractatus*, translating *Grenze* as limit seems appropriate. "Boundary," however, better represents Wittgenstein's method for drawing his *Grenze*. Despite the grandiosity of his prefatory claims, when Wittgenstein gets into the details about how exactly one is to draw a limit to thought, his methods are much more provisional than one might expect. Rather than a theory that establishes a permanent limit between sense and nonsense, Wittgenstein promotes a philosophical practice that teaches the individual how to draw tentative limits in accordance with the specifications of a particular discourse at a particular time.

Wittgenstein begins his explication at the proposition level, which he considers to be the most basic unit of meaning. A word in isolation, Wittgenstein argues, means nothing. He writes, "Only the proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning" (3.3). Wittgenstein's grand ambition to delimit what can be thought begins with a simple lesson on how to read a sentence. The task of the sentence is to communicate something significant. At 4.027 Wittgenstein writes, "It is essential to propositions, that they can communicate a new sense to us. A proposition must communicate a new sense with old words."

By focusing his attention on the proposition, Wittgenstein accentuates the importance of grammar and usage conventions in how propositions convey their meaning.

Since grammar and usage conventions vary from language to language, the limit to what makes sense will vary in turn. The differences in vocabulary and grammar between two languages prohibits the establishment of any one unitary limit that can cut across both languages simultaneously. A significant proposition is one in which the signs are arranged according to recognized grammar conventions to symbolize a definite state of affairs to its audience. A significant proposition is one that works. When a sentence that works perfectly well in one language cannot be translated into another, it does not represent a breakdown in Wittgenstein's method, but a reiteration of how important context and grammar are for the understanding of any given proposition.

To further explain his method, Wittgenstein offers this example: "Socrates is identical" (5.473). This sentence is comprised of intelligible words in coherent grammatical order. An identifiable subject is attached by a copula to an adjective. The sentence's grammar suggests that it *ought* to make sense, except something backfires. Wittgenstein begins with Frege's context principle, which also moves the level of significance from the word (or sign) to the level of the proposition (the symbol). Frege writes in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, "Only in a proposition have the words really a meaning" (71). While Wittgenstein repeats this principle at 3.3, he departs from Frege in determining which propositions communicate something significant and which are nonsense. Wittgenstein writes:

Frege says: Every legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense; and I say: Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and if it has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts.

(Even if we believe that we have done so.)

Thus "Socrates is identical" says nothing, because we have given *no* meaning to the word "identical" as *adjective*. For when it occurs as the sign of equality it symbolizes in an entirely different way - the symbolizing relation is another - therefore the symbol is in the two cases entirely different; the two symbols have the sign in common with one another only by accident (5.4733).

What Frege failed to account for, according to Wittgenstein, is the plasticity of the natural languages in which one sign can serve a variety of different symbols. Legitimately constructed propositions, comprised of these polyvalent words, remain susceptible to unpredictable shifts in meaning. Wittgenstein describes two distinct ways in which legitimately constructed propositions can fail to properly symbolize. The constituent signs out of which the proposition is constructed can either be overburdened with possible meanings or they can appear empty of all significance within the given context. The reason Wittgenstein employs a *Begriffsschrift* in the *Tractatus* is to avoid the inevitable confusion that arises from using unstable signs. In English, the word "cleave" can mean both to sever and to adhere; it is an auto-antonym. With his *Begriffsschrift*, Wittgenstein can regulate the ratio between his signs and symbols and therefore avoid the inevitable ambiguities we encounter in our everyday language when we speak with words that signify in various directions at once.

In the newspaper, there was recently a story about a college president who liked to drop in on unsuspecting undergraduates at lunch with questions like: "What is the Good?" Coming down from a position of authority without any contextual support, the question can be arresting. The mind reaches back to Plato while scrambling across logical space to all the diverse circumstances in which all the various things of the world might be considered "good." How can

one generalize from such a diversity of grammatical usages? The *Tractatus* seeks to provide its reader with a method for identifying the nonsense that lurks behind the solemn significance the college president wishes to bestow upon his question. The sign "good" symbolizes differently when applied to a citizen, a dog, a slice of pizza, or a moral decision. What Wittgenstein wants us to see is how our language bends toward nonsense when the particular symbol that is meant to be represented by a particular sign is not clearly indicated. Before one can find traction on how to answer a question on "the Good," one must determine which particular symbol the speaker is trying to convey under this multi-purpose sign. If the speaker continues in the Platonic vein and insist we speak to the point where all the various symbols converge, the *Tractatus* provides a method for identifying the impossible nonsense of such a request, which is best met with silence.

We encounter the opposite problem with "Socrates is identical." Instead of a word overburdened with meaning, we have a word that carries no meaning at all. The reason "identical" is meaningless has nothing to do with the word, but with how it is being used. There is no good reason why "identical" *couldn't* mean something in this particular context.

Wittgenstein writes, "The proposition is senseless because we have not made some arbitrary determination, not because the symbol is in itself unpermissible" (5.473). The only reason "identical" is meaningless here is that *we* have not given it any meaning *yet*. Wittgenstein is careful not to preclude the possibility that "identical" could be made to carry a meaning in this particular proposition. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes that "when a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation" (*PI* § 500). This banking simile also applies to the *Tractatus*, where words function like paper money with no intrinsic value. Words communicate meaning only when exchanged inside the borders of a

language and in accordance with the laws of its grammar. This language is continuously being modified by its speakers, who ultimately decide which combinations of words are to be accepted and which denied. Wittgenstein's method is designed to spot the indeterminate signs we too often accept as good money.

With "Socrates is identical" placed beyond the *Grenze* of significant propositions, this *Grenze* can be more clearly understood. Rather than an absolute limit, Wittgenstein's *Grenze* appears to be both permeable and mobile. We can readily imagine a significant proposition spoken amongst a crash team at a hospital that would be nonsense to a theater troupe, whose own use of language might strike the sailors on a submarine as nonsensical. Each discourse establishes its own limits, which can then be adjusted to accommodate shifts in their usage conventions.

The duties of drawing the line between sense and nonsense is not, therefore, the special provenance of one heroic philosopher, but a task shared by all the members of a speech community. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein describes philosophy as "not a theory but an activity" (4.112). With the sentence "Socrates is identical," Wittgenstein shows how mundane the activity of philosophy can be. The nonsense the *Tractatus* seeks to identify is not necessarily to be sought in some mystical realm *beyond* thought. Philosophy is not presented here by Wittgenstein as a quest into the silent borderlands of the thinkable, but as a continual act of discernment. The proper subject of philosophy is the language we pass over our tongues everyday. What is offered in the *Tractatus* is a method for taking these sentences apart and examining their mechanics to see if they are in fact communicating a possible state of affairs from one individual to another.

Philosophy imagined in this way as a "critique of language" can have no endgame since its subject remains always in flux (4.0031). In the *Tractatus*, languages are compared to living organisms that develop and evolve. Wittgenstein writes "colloquial language is a part of the human organism and is not less complicated than it" (4.002). Rather than developing static dogma, philosophy will need to develop philosophical practices that are adaptable. For even if it were possible for a philosopher to stabilize language in any one particular moment in time, once that language is returned to its multitude of speakers and again applied to their diverse situations, it will once again dissolve into an assortment of dialects and be reworked into an array of specialized discourses.

An example of this process during Wittgenstein's lifetime can be seen in the short history of Johann Martin Schleyer's artificial language Volapük. After the first book on Volapük was published in Germany in 1880, the language quickly spread to the point that in 1889 there were 283 Volapük clubs scattered across the world with 25 different journals dedicated to the language (Large 67). To his dismay, Schleyer found that the language was no longer his own as Volapük's speakers began introducing a number of "heretical" modifications. Schleyer's efforts to control the way in which the language was used only precipitated its dispersal. Between 1886 and 1896, Volapük splintered into Idiom Neutral, the Langu Universelle, Bopal, Spelin, Dil, Balta, and Veltparl. In his book on universal languages, Umberto Eco notes how the "Babel effect" can be seen in national languages as well, his own books requiring two different translations in Portugal and Brazil (Eco 332). So long as a language continues to pass through the guts of the living, it will remain susceptible to modification.

Wittgenstein's attempt to clarify how language is used in the *Tractatus* aligns with the goals of the larger universal language movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

century. In the years leading up to the First World War, there was widespread enthusiasm not only for Schleyer's Volapük, but Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof's Esperanto (1887) and Giuseppe Peano's Interlingua (1903). These artificial languages, like the *Tractatus*, were founded on a belief that the source of modern problems could be traced back to our language. What was needed to solve the political, scientific, and philosophical problems we faced was a more perfect means of communication. By fixing our language we might diffuse ongoing political disputes (Schleyer and Zamenhof), facilitate the spread of scientific ideas (Peano), and dissolve the problems that have plagued philosophical inquiry since Plato (Wittgenstein). Unlike the others, however, Wittgenstein sees no need to scrap the natural languages, which he finds "logically completely in order" (5.5563). Read within the universal language tradition, the *Tractatus* appears quite modest. Wittgenstein does not set out to fix language, but to reveal how and why our languages work as well as they do. Wittgenstein can then more clearly identify the places where language runs off the tracks.

The question that is raised in the *Tractatus* but never explicitly addressed, however, is how our languages got so full of nonsense in the first place. The philosophical problems the *Tractatus* sets out to solve are those caused by "the misunderstanding of the logic of our language" (*TLP* 27). In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes how "philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*" (*PI* § 38). What exactly it is that leads language astray is considered in Wittgenstein's 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" and 1930 "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough." For contrast, Wittgenstein's answer to this question can be compared to Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). According to Nietzsche, a language reflects the will to power of its speakers. Those who hold power at any historical moment use that power to shape the discourse to their benefit. A language in Nietzsche's model

has no foundation. In *The Wander and His Shadow*, Nietzsche writes that a concept is like a pocket, "into which now this, now that, now several things at once have been put" (159). As we have seen, words in the *Tractatus* function much like Nietzsche's pockets holding various symbols at once. Where Wittgenstein deviates from Nietzsche, however, is in the human desire he sees responsible for leading language astray. Rather than a will to power, Wittgenstein sees a general will to transcendence enticing people to bend their language to accommodate the ineffable.

The silence Wittgenstein maintains on all matters of value in the *Tractatus* (6.4-6.41), is broken in "Remarks on Frazer." After recently rereading the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wonders in 1930 what it was that had motivated him to open his book like this:

1. The world is everything that is the case.
 - 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
 - 1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by these being *all* the facts.

He asks, "For when I began in my earlier book to talk about the 'world' (and not about this tree or table), was I trying to do anything except conjure up something of a higher order by my words?" (vi). In his "Remarks on Frazer," Wittgenstein does not have a problem with conjuring things up so long as it is done in an honest fashion. What Wittgenstein objects to is the attempt to pawn one's conjuring off as science. If these opening propositions tell us little about the world they describe, they do tell us something about their speaker. He is one who wants to leave his body and his world behind to gain a supra-empirical view of the world while insisting all the while that he is engaging in a form of science. In the "Remarks on Frazer," it is not the metaphysical perspective that is condemned, but its improper classification. Wittgenstein writes, "I think now

that the right thing would be to begin my book with remarks about metaphysics as a kind of magic" (vi). As a kind of magic, Wittgenstein thinks that practicing metaphysics is alright.

If Wittgenstein's high esteem for magic at first seems odd, it becomes more intelligible within his larger criticism of Frazer's anthropology. In *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), Frazer traces the evolution of human culture through three general stages: the magical, the religious, and the scientific. According to Frazer, the end goal remains constant in each stage: what all humans want is to understand and control the world that they live in. In the magical stage, people used various means to exert their control directly upon the world only to find that they were "pulling at strings to which nothing was attached" (Frazer 66). In the religious stage, people come to terms with their own limitations to influence the world and sought instead to coax the greater powers above into doing their will. The inconsistent results produced by both magic and religion led humanity to the sciences. By systematically testing hypotheses, definitive progress can be made toward a truer understanding of how the world works and how its power might be more effectively harnessed.

The fundamental problem with Frazer's book, according to Wittgenstein, is that it imposes a scientific rubric on magic and religion. When studied as primitive attempts at science, it is easy to dismiss the rain dance or vegetation rite as an antiquated practice of an ignorant people. According to Frazer's model, the end goal of all civilizations is to evolve out of the magical and religious paradigm into the proper view of the world offered by his own scientism. Reading *The Golden Bough* after the Great War, Wittgenstein finds something revolting in Frazer's blithe faith in human progress and scientific advancement.

What Wittgenstein argues is that magic has not, in fact, been eradicated from England as Frazer believes it has. Even in the hallowed halls of Frazer's beloved Cambridge, a form of

magic was being practiced and propagated by the British Idealists running the philosophy department while Frazer was writing *The Golden Bough*. In the metaphysics of T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart, Wittgenstein saw a form of magic dressed in tweeds. The method of the *Tractatus* is designed to distinguish propositions that are based in science from the nonsense proposition that are dressed up to look like science. Rereading the *Tractatus* after *The Golden Bough*, Wittgenstein is surprised to find a reflection in his own work of that which he condemns in Frazer. Early in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tries to reduce the world and language down to their simples to better understand the correspondence that links them. In the world, Wittgenstein finds that "the object is simple" (2.02). While the logical process behind this proposition looks scientific, if it is asked what Wittgenstein means exactly by "object" here, there is no definition or example offered. For a language to work, the complex logical chains that form our sentences must be comprised of simple names that correspond to simple objects in the world. It is the theory that tells us so. In practice, however, no simple objects can be identified.

While reading Frazer, Wittgenstein concludes that the nonsense embedded in a language will never be deracinated since the roots reach into its speakers' worldview. Frazer's anthropology is filled with words like "ghost," "shade," "soul," and "spirit." That such words are still understood and accepted as good money in Cambridge reveals the perseverance of the concepts Frazer assures us are a thing of the past. While reading Frazer, Wittgenstein discovers "a whole mythology is deposited in our language" (10). Wittgenstein does not, however, see this as a bad thing. The mythology (or mythologies) preserved in our language act as a link connecting us to our ancestors. Where Frazer keeps wanting to accentuate the foreignness of the cultural practices he studies, Wittgenstein insists that we are not so far removed from our "primitive" forbearers as we would like to think.

If words like "soul" and "spirit" still endure, it is not simply that our language acts as a depository of antiquated concepts, but that we still have a use for such words. Frazer's dream of finally overcoming magic and religion will never be realized, according to Wittgenstein, because our will toward transcendence rejects the limits imposed by scientific discourse. Magic cannot simply be dismissed as bad science because it is not a science. Magic advances no theories, but rather gives "representation to a wish; it expresses a wish" (4). A wish, unlike a scientific theorem, cannot be disproved. Wittgenstein describes the subtle forms of magic that endure in his own modern times:

Burning an effigy. Kissing the picture of a loved one. This is obviously not based on a belief that it will have a definite effect on the object which the picture represents.

It aims at some satisfaction and it achieves it. Or rather, it does not aim at anything; we act in this way and then feel satisfied (4).

Wittgenstein is not interested in eradicating nonsense, but in drawing attention to all the places where language and daily practice deviate from the scientific line. What Wittgenstein finds appalling in Frazer is his assumption that the objectives of science must underlie *all* human practices. While it seems odd for the author of the *Tractatus* to also be a defender of magic, the two positions can be reconciled so long as Wittgenstein's distinction between practice and theory remains in place. As a producer of reliable theories, magic is easy to discredit. But as a practice, magic tells us something about ourselves that Wittgenstein warns us against forgetting. It is when our tendency toward magic is ignored that we become blind to the various ways magic can sprout up, even within our "scientific" discourses.

In addition to Frazer's anthropology and his own metaphysics, Wittgenstein sees ethics and religion as especially prone to blurring the line between significant propositions and

nonsense. In the "Lecture on Ethics" delivered to the Cambridge Heretics Society on November 17, 1929, Wittgenstein argues that ethical and religious discourse tends to overburden a language that is designed to convey facts about the world. Wittgenstein compares language to a vessel with a finite capacity; "as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water even if I were to pour a gallon over it" (46). In speaking of the absolute good, one overtaxes the language and produces nonsense. Wittgenstein uses the sentence, "I feel absolute safety" as an example. Such a feeling cannot be tested against reality unless a particular threat is identified. If I forgo buying flood insurance because I do not feel threatened by rising water, my feeling of safety might be tested against the realities of my world. I could measure the elevation of my house against the nearest body of water and study historical flooding patterns for my area. A statement of absolute safety is nonsense because it has no identifiable object and thus cannot be tested.

After delineating how all statements of absolute value devolve into nonsense, however, Wittgenstein confesses that he is still drawn toward making such statements. Studying such statements, he finds:

All I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language.

This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely, hopeless. — Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it. (51)

Wittgenstein here confesses a profound respect for statements he acknowledges to be nonsense. While this confession seems contradictory to the Tractarian program, it is in fact the natural extension of that program. The thesis of the *Tractatus* is repeated here: that statements of absolute value tell us nothing about our world; they are nonsensical. The major difference between the *Tractatus* and the "Lecture on Ethics" is in how Wittgenstein deals with nonsense once it is identified. Where the *Tractatus* insists nonsense be met in silence, in the "Lecture on Ethics" Wittgenstein allows himself a brief profession of his own values. In the "Lecture on Ethics," making such value statements appears harmless enough, so long as they are not mistaken for statements of fact.

Reading both the "Remarks on Frazer" and the "Lecture on Ethics" beside the *Tractatus* provides two valuable perspectives on Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense. Besides "Socrates is identical," the "Lecture on Ethics" identifies statements like "I wonder at the existence of the world" as nonsense as well (47). This statement is a slight modification of proposition 6.44 in the *Tractatus*: "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists." The problem with this latter statement is that it assumes an impossible position outside the only world we know. Despite its nonsense, however, such a statement does manage to express *something*. Similar to the practice of magic, such statements exhibit a frustration with the limits of our language and a desire to go beyond them. Wittgenstein makes it clear again and again that this is perfectly hopeless. After all his efforts to clearly delineate what we can and cannot do with language, however, Wittgenstein is compelled to append an "and yet" clause to account for the irreducible affective remainder left over after all significant propositions have been pronounced. No language could ever circumscribe the range of human desires and values. What Wittgenstein finds in reading Frazer is that people across all cultures are hardwired to speak nonsense and will

never be satisfied with a discourse that is reduced down to the statements that can be empirically evaluated. The persistent will toward nonsense that Frazer finds in "primitive" cultures Wittgenstein finds as well in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, postwar Cambridge, and in himself. If such nonsense cannot be eradicated, Wittgenstein suggests it can be identified. This is what the *Tractatus* is designed to do. Wittgenstein translates his favorite quote from Augustine thus: "What, you swine, you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!" (Waismann 69). The Tractarian caveat to this statement is that when you do talk nonsense, you need to be aware of what it is you are doing.

The problems of philosophy, therefore, are not rooted in nonsense per se, but in our inability to distinguish nonsense from statements that accurately mirror a state of affairs in the world. If all propositions are of equal value in the *Tractatus*, all philosophical practices are not. At 6.53, Wittgenstein positions the philosopher as a border guard between scientific and metaphysical statements. He writes that the philosopher should "say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science [...] and then always, when someone else wishes to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he has given no meaning to certain signs in his proposition." What is conspicuously lacking from this border guard analogy, however, is any sense of enforcement. The philosopher is armed with nothing but a whistle. His job is to make those who cross from the scientific to the metaphysical aware of the border they are crossing over. The philosopher does not condemn the act of border crossing, but demonstrates how and when a discourse that began on one side of the boundary has crossed over to the other side. While this boundary might be drawn differently in different contexts, Wittgenstein argues that it remains always present and muddling it will always lead to confusion.

According to this model, it is just as wrong to expect metaphysics to produce answers to scientific questions as it is to expect science to speak to the meaning of life. According to Wittgenstein, "Philosophy limits the disputable sphere of natural science" (4.113). After the limits of empiricism are established, however, there is a natural tendency to wonder at what lies just beyond them. The question of happiness, for instance, *seems* to extend beyond the limits of neurobiology. Philosophy is positioned at this border between what can be known and what is nonsense, not to augment scientific discourse by filling in the missing answers, but to simply draw attention to the limit. It is hopeless to think that human discourse could ever be confined within this limit, as Wittgenstein notes, "We feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all" (6.52). Wittgenstein is careful here not to assert that the problems of life extend beyond scientific propositions, but that we *feel* that they must, that there is a persistent desire that leads us to continually speak beyond the limits established by the sciences. It is not this desire itself that is the problem, but the demand that this desire be explained scientifically.

The tendency in the *Tractatus* to talk beyond the limits of significant propositions is shared by most of Wittgenstein's critics. The desire that leads some (austere) critics to say there *cannot be* anything beyond this limit is similar to that which leads other (traditional) critics to say there *must be* something beyond this limit. Both positions claim to know what the *Tractatus* asserts is unknowable. Within the tautological demand that concludes the *Tractatus*, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," we can get a sense of the intellectual humility at the heart of the Tractarian program. By continually drawing a line between sense and nonsense, Wittgenstein establishes a limit to what is known to gain a better perspective on all that is not.

If nonsense adds nothing to our knowledge of the world, however, this does not render it entirely useless. With no responsibility to the world and unbound from the authority of fact, the realm of nonsense can open out to an infinite network of "mights" unmoored from the world's intransigent "musts." During the period in which Wittgenstein was writing the *Tractatus*, nonsense was being put to a variety of uses. One motive for talking nonsense is the simple pleasure of it. Nonsense verse, like that found in Kurt Schwitters' 1919 *Anna Blume*, offers its readers an occasion to playfully skip over the limits of sense like a line in hopscotch. The simultaneous poetry and collage verse Tristan Tzara was performing at the time reveals how willful nonsense can also be used as a politically subversive tool. The act of cutting and rearranging a text that has long been held as sacrosanct invites its viewer to let it "run through [her] fingers" and reconsider the authority it has quietly accrued over time (van Doesburg 29). Soldiers returning from the Front also employed nonsense as a way of speaking after a trauma that defied their sense-making capabilities. Robert Graves' *Fairies and Fusiliers* (1918) passes the horror of the war through the filter of fairy tales. In "The Bough of Nonsense" two Fusiliers are returning from the Somme, talking not of Haig's blunder or the million young men slaughtered, but about a famous bough:

Where once a nonsense built her nest
With skulls and flowers and all things queer,
In an old boot, with patient breast
Hatching three eggs; and the next year . . .
Foaled thirteen squamous young beneath, and rid
Wales of drink, melancholy, and psalms, she did (7-12)

When depicting a trauma that by definition violates all established boundaries of what can be thought and felt, a broken syntax can help represent an event that breaks through all the chronological and causal links that traditionally hold our stories together.

In *The Great Riddle* (2015), Stephen Mulhall provides a list of reasons for talking nonsense. Besides our muddled logic, we are driven to nonsense by the pleasure of creating aesthetic and philosophical wholes, by trauma, and by the riddles of Freudian psychology. Besides these, Mulhall notes how theological discourse "bears witness to reality's capacity to outrun our modes of reflective appraisal" (127). Euripides' *The Bacchae* (406 B.C.E.) expertly dramatizes such a moment, when reality transgresses our mimetic capacities. In *The Bacchae*, Dionysius returns to Thebes to establish his rites. Before doing so, however, he must convince a wary Theban populace that he is in fact a god. To this end, Dionysius lays his divinity aside and takes upon himself human limitations that he might better reason with the people. Pentheus, king of Thebes, assumes that the Dionysian rituals must serve some human motive and outlaws them for promoting licentiousness. Dionysius, wearing a smiling mask, presents Pentheus with proofs of his divinity, for which he is shorn and imprisoned. When an earthquake shakes Thebes and frees Dionysius, Pentheus returns in a rage, calling his guards to block the city gates and bring him his armor. Dionysius calmly asks, "Could not a god hurdle your city walls?" (ln. 654). What Dionysius never manages to convey to Pentheus is that his own human limits are not absolute.

Line 811 of *The Bacchae* represents an unique moment in Greek tragedy as Euripides breaks meter. On the printed page, there is an inscrutable alpha, a conspicuous piece of nonsense. The alpha does not represent anything within the context of the play's language, but rather marks the point at which Dionysius breaks the human limitations he had imposed upon

himself up to this point. What is a limit to Pentheus is a mere boundary to Dionysius, who can resort to his divine prerogatives. The play turns at 811. From this moment, Pentheus gives over his armor for the woman's dress and violent death Dionysius has prepared for him. In *The Bacchae*, nonsense is used to show the limit of human understanding. It is exactly Dionysius' inscrutability that marks him as divine. Like the alpha at line 811, Dionysius' smiling mask is an unreadable sign beneath which acts of gentle submissiveness and extreme cruelty are performed. In *The Bacchae*, divinity is defined as a form of nonsense. When faced with such nonsense, one can either attempt to wrestle it into a familiar discourse (Pentheus translates everything Dionysius says into a military or economic analogy) or one can do as Teiresias does and not trifle with it. Teiresias does not know any better than Pentheus whether or not Dionysius is a god, but he does see that there is a limit to his own "quibbling logic" (ln. 203). In an act of humility, Teiresias takes up the thyrsus.

It is the same limit of his own "quibbling logic" that Wittgenstein seeks to establish in the *Tractatus*. In his pursuit of the crystalline essence of logic, Wittgenstein reaches the limit where logic becomes tautological, biting its own tail. It is at this point that his desire outstrips his language. Like the Ethical and the Mystical, logic also eludes his grasp and escapes into the "transcendental" (6.13). Reaching toward the absolute in this way allows Wittgenstein to discover the firm limits of his investigation.

Enter the Philosopher, Bearing Confusion

On the last page of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein applies his method for distinguishing sense from nonsense to his own book. At 6.54 he suddenly drops the hieratic tone to make a personal appeal. He wants us to understand *him*. This moment might be compared to the

parabasis of the Greek theater in which the imagined fourth wall is breached by the actor who lowers his mask to directly address the audience. It could also be compared to the narrative metalepsis of the modern novel, in which the membrane separating an omniscient narrator and her created world is pierced so that a narrator might more directly intervene in the world she has created. 6.54 reads:

My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)

Instead of "the world" or "language" or the "logic" that was the focus of the earlier propositions, Wittgenstein positions a "me" here between his reader and his propositions. It is only by first understanding the "me" that we can hope to understand how a proposition might be both senseless and elucidatory. The problem is that the propositions through which we might develop an understanding of this "me" are at this same time being discredited as senseless (*unsinnig*). In the preface we are told that nothing meaningful can be derived from senseless propositions, that all such propositions are simply nonsense (*einfach Unsinn*). If the *me* introduced at 6.54 first appears as a knife that might cut through the book's ambiguities, we soon realize it is a knife with no handle. For how are we to properly understand a speaker who speaks in nonsense?

The traditional reading associated with P. M. S. Hacker and G. E. M. Anscombe uses the Tractarian distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown to assert a form of nonsense that manages to gesture toward ineffabilia that cannot be factually stated. Supporting the traditional reading are Wittgenstein's notes and letters from the period addressing ethics, aesthetics, and mysticism. At 6.54, the traditional reader sees Wittgenstein make two crucial moves. First, he refers to his propositions as both elucidatory and senseless, suggesting that

pseudo-propositions that fail to conform to the truth conditional standards set in the *Tractatus* can still be elucidatory. Second, Wittgenstein introduces a "me" that the traditional reader defines as "Wittgenstein, author of the *Tractatus*."

The problems with this biographical reading, however, have already been displayed in this chapter's first section. Considering the personal changes Wittgenstein underwent while writing the *Tractatus*, it is impossible to stabilize one consistent image of the author. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein combines his prewar and wartime fragments, covering the seams with an Olympian tone and numerical sense of progress. The book's internal contradictions and sudden shifts from topic to topic make it extremely difficult to isolate one stable point of view that holds the various propositions together.

If the variability of Wittgenstein's biography provides special challenges to reading the "me" in 6.54 as "Wittgenstein," these challenges only compound the general problems involved in applying the same sign to both a living person and a textual figure. Diego Velázquez's 1656 painting *Las Meninas* clearly displays these complications, as Michel Foucault has shown (3-16). Similar to Wittgenstein, Velázquez incorporates a "me" figure in his painting. The one holding a paintbrush and momentarily looking straight out of the painting represents the painter himself, Velázquez. From the reflection in the mirror on the far wall we gather that the large canvas in front of Velázquez is an unfinished portrait of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana of Spain, who must be seated just outside the painting's frame. While on the intradiegetic level Velázquez is looking at the King and Queen, when one stands in front of *Las Meninas* at the Prado, the painting produces the distinct feeling that Velázquez is looking at *you*. The painting is similar to proposition 6.54 in the directness of its appeal. Both texts present a moment in which the boundaries separating the artist from his work and the work from his viewer are collapsed by an

artist making an unmediated appeal to his viewer: "Look at *me*, understand *me*." In both Velázquez and Wittgenstein, however, this appeal for intimacy paradoxically creates a distancing effect.

In *Las Meninas*, Velázquez draws attention to the illusion of mimetic art as a window to a foreign scene by overbooking the position the viewer assumes just outside the picture's frame. As the realist detail and directness of the painter's gaze invite us into the Royal Alcazar, the mirror on the back wall reminds us that we do not in fact belong there. Velázquez places his viewer in a position in the room that is already occupied by the King and Queen. By incorporating the act of painting, Velázquez further accentuates the distance between the viewer and the scene by reminding us that it is not only the royal couple positioned between the viewer and the scene, but the "real" Velázquez as well, painter of *Las Meninas*. Rather than direct access into the Royal Alcazar, we find ourselves looking over the painter's shoulder, who looks over the shoulder of the King, who looks at a painter who is painting a picture we cannot see.

Just as we might call the figure holding the paints in *Las Meninas*, "Velázquez," we might do no better than calling the "me" at 6.54 "Wittgenstein." The problem with this is that combining a biographical and textual figure under a common sign tempts us to conflate the two. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein warns us against this. At 3.324, Wittgenstein describes "the most fundamental confusions" in philosophy that are born out of our mistaking arbitrary linguistic connections for natural affinities. Wittgenstein employs a *Begriffsschrift*, a symbolism in which each sign corresponds to exactly one symbol, to expose the errors produced when our natural languages huddle a collection of disparate symbols under a common sign. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes that "the sign is arbitrary" and meaningless outside of the context of a proposition, and thus searching for some natural connection between a particular sign and an

object in the world is bound to produce confusion and error (3.322). Rather than exposing hidden connections, the *Tractatus* is designed to identify the differences obscured by our language. In a conversation with Maurice Drury, Wittgenstein contrasts his philosophical project to Hegel's idealism, remarking: "Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different" (Monk 536). Confusing Velázquez, the figure holding the paints in *Las Meninas*, and Velázquez, the baroque painter of *Las Meninas*, is an error we are lured into making by our language. The "me" at 6.54 declares that all Tractarian propositions are senseless. The fact that Wittgenstein never echoes this sentiment anywhere in his correspondences, notebooks, or conversations should not surprise us so long as we remember that the person we are asked to understand at 6.54 is *not* the philosopher Wittgenstein, but a narrative device that passes under the same name. This "me" does not bring the reader any closer to the historical Wittgenstein, but paradoxically places him and his propositions at one further remove.

The resolute reading was first developed to critique the biographical reading of 6.54. While the roots of the resolute reading can be traced back to works by Hidé Ishiguro in 1969 and Brian McGuinness in the early 1980s, it was the 2000 publication of *The New Wittgenstein*, and especially the essays by James Conant and Cora Diamond, that placed the resolute reading at the center of the Tractarian debate (Goldfarb 7). Interpreting the "me" at 6.54, the resolute reader replaces the biographical Wittgenstein with the philosophical method described in 6.53, a method in which philosophy is to *say nothing*. Deprived of a discourse of their own, philosophers are asked to police the boundary between the natural sciences and metaphysics. The *Tractatus*, of course, makes some spectacular deviations from the "right method"

Wittgenstein describes at 6.53, attempting not only to explain "the world," but the "logical form" that is "the form of reality" underlying the world (2.18). If the "me" at 6.54 is interpreted as "he who practices the right method of philosophy," the resolute reader can develop a systematic understanding of this "me" by isolating all the "frame" propositions dealing directly with method that can then be used to critique the remaining "body" propositions. For the resolute reader, it is not the propositions themselves that are elucidatory, but the process by which the reader comes to recognize propositions that *seemed* to make sense as in fact senseless that is elucidatory. As Conant writes, "The only 'insight' that a Tractarian elucidation imparts, in the end, is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions of thought" (197). By revealing the senselessness of his own propositions at 6.54, Wittgenstein reveals that there is *nothing* beyond scientific propositions. There is no elucidatory nonsense; there is just plain old nonsense. When Wittgenstein writes that we are to throw the ladder away, he means it. Cora Diamond accuses the traditional reader (and Hacker in particular) of "chickening out," of "pretend[ing] to throw away the ladder while standing firmly, or as firmly as one can, on it" (197). The resolute reader wants to throw the *Tractatus* away without first cramming a handful of "elucidatory" propositions in her pockets.

Resolute readers, however, are no less guilty of stuffing their pockets before throwing away the ladder. The "frame" propositions upon which the resolute reading is based are collected not only from the preface and the last page, but 3.32-3.326, 4-4.003, 4.111-4.112, as well as 6.53-6.54 (Conant 216). The problem with the frame / body distinction is that it runs counter to the language of 6.54, where Wittgenstein makes no qualification about which of his propositions are senseless. There is nothing in the syntax to suggest the reader is supposed to go back and glean "frame" propositions before throwing out the rest.

It is not so much the critique of the book's own senselessness that most distinguishes 6.54 from the rest of the book, but the introduction of a "me" through which we are to understand this senselessness. That the book might at times deal in senselessness is suggested in Russell's introduction and can be seen without the aid of 6.54 by simply applying the book's own methods to its propositions. At 5.47, nonsense propositions are identified by their uncertain signs. As Frege was quick to point out, Wittgenstein's own book is full of uncertain signs. Proposition 2, for instance, places at the heart of Tractarian metaphysics "the existence of atomic facts" without offering any examples of what an "atomic fact" is. In his letters with Wittgenstein, Frege admits to being hopelessly lost from the first page of the *Tractatus*, unable to understand how Wittgenstein meant to distinguish between terms like *Tatsache* ("fact") *Sachverhalt* ("atomic fact") and *Sachlage* ("state of affairs"). Frege could offer no opinion of the book, he wrote, because "the content is too unclear to me" (Monk 175). While Wittgenstein had laid the groundwork for detecting his book's own senselessness, however, the book's withdrawn tone seems especially designed to conceal the "me" in 6.54 until the very end.

If this "me" cannot be reduced to a particular philosophical method or conflated with a biographical figure, it still might be understood through its rhetorical function. Gérard Genette defines metalepsis as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe [which] produces an effect of strangeness" (235). Metalepsis is a breach in the boundary between a creator and his created world; in the case of the *Tractatus*, it is the intrusion of the philosopher into "the world" he describes on the first page as "the totality of facts." To better locate the boundary that divides the world in which the *Tractatus* was written from "the world" it presents, Wittgenstein kicks his foot through the ceiling of his Tractarian world.

According to Genette, moments of metaleptic intimacy work paradoxically to confirm the limits that they appear to be breaking:

[They] demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude - a boundary *that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself*: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells (236).

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein creates a picture, "a model of reality" that he can assiduously delimit (2.12). On the last page of the book, he then reminds us that this picture, like all pictures, reaches up to a reality that it will never quite touch.

To further differentiate our shared world from "the world" of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein turns on his own creation. 6.54 cuts a clean line through logical space. The reader can resolutely follow the "me," declare the book senseless, and discard it, or she can follow Russell back to reexamine the compelling logic in the earlier propositions. Either we can make sense of the book or we cannot. 6.54 forces its reader into a moment of crisis where she cannot simply go along, but must decide.

This moment of crisis is mitigated, however, by the temporal dimension of 6.54. The promised elucidations are not the product of one definitive moment, but are to be arrived at over time. Wittgenstein writes "he who understands me *finally* recognizes them as senseless" (6.54). The Pears and McGuinness translation reads, "anyone who understands me *eventually* recognizes them as nonsensical." Rather than arresting the reading process, Wittgenstein situates 6.54 within a larger cognitive process. Until 6.54, the reader of a philosophical treatise is prepared to accept minor inconsistencies between the individual propositions in an effort to better understand

the larger argument of the book. As Frege explains in "On Concept and Object" (1892), wrestling one's logic into a natural language can be an arduous task. He writes,

By a kind of necessity of language, my expressions, taken literally, sometimes miss my thought; I mention an object, when what I intend is a concept. I fully realize that in such cases I was relying upon a reader who would be ready to meet me half-way – who does not begrudge a pinch of salt (193).

The first time through the *Tractatus*, most readers are more than willing to meet Wittgenstein halfway. If he jumps around a bit from topic to topic, if he introduces terms without defining them, if he neglects to elaborate at certain key moments, we have been conditioned by Russell's introduction and by the treatise form to go along under the premise that Wittgenstein is making an erstwhile attempt at communicating something important. It is within this context that 6.54 can feel like a betrayal. For her labor, the reader is offered a rebuke. Along with the narrator, Wittgenstein introduces an ideal reader into his book at 6.54, "he who understands me." This ideal reader shames us, the non-ideal readers who had apparently failed to understand both him and his propositions. From 6.54, there is only one route to elucidation: going back to the start and beginning the *Tractatus* again.

In this way, Wittgenstein makes an exceptional demand on his reader. After asking in his preface that his book be read in conversation with Russell and Frege, Wittgenstein asks in the end that it be read a second time as a work of nonsense. At 6.54, Wittgenstein tears up the original contract he had made with his reader and draws up another. With this one sentence Wittgenstein alters our perception of every other sentence in the book. If the first time through we had focused our attention on Wittgenstein's logical theory and how it can be applied to the various branches of philosophy, the second time through we keep our eyes trained on the one

who speaks, the one we now know is going to remove his stoic mask in the end to declare everything nonsense. When we return to the opening ontology after reading 6.54, it is not "the world" that interests us, but what it is that is compelling the speaker to describe "the world" in such metaphysical terms. The second time through, the text becomes more of a performance piece. We are attuned to the space between the speaker and his propositions; we are keyed in on the man behind the expressionless mask. At 6.54, Wittgenstein walks onstage like Descartes, to proclaim "Larvatus prodeo," I advance masked, pointing to my mask (Descartes 155).

From this second reading, a second text is produced. In his famous letter to Ficker, Wittgenstein described his book as two texts divided by the limit of thought. It is in the mysterious darkness beyond the border of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein suggests to Ficker, that the Ethical resides. At 6.54 our attention is once again drawn to the limit of what can be clearly said and what lies beyond it, except at 6.54 there is absolutely nothing mystical about this boundary. Wittgenstein tells us that the book we have been laboring to make sense of as a philosophical treatise is in fact senseless. The boundary line that divides what makes sense and what does not cuts right through the center of each proposition we have just finished reading. In his "Notes on Logic," Wittgenstein writes that "the form of a proposition is like a straight line, which divides all points of a plane into right and left" (*NB* 97). A properly functioning proposition performs a bipolar operation, "dividing verifying conditions from falsifying conditions" (*NB* 97). At 6.54, Wittgenstein runs this line straight through his book, forcing his reader to decide which side of the line each proposition belongs. There is no absolute metaphysical limit dividing *Sinn* and *Unsinn*. Wittgenstein encourages us to read the *Tractatus* as *Sinn*; then asks that it be read again as *Unsinn*. By altering our approach, the same book might be instilled with meaning or bled of all its sense.

The second text that emerges out of 6.54 can be compared to the *Quixote* Jorge Luis Borges presents in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" (1939). By imagining the *Quixote* as the work of Menard, an early twentieth-century Symboliste from Nîmes, Borges further extends Frege's context principle. Where Frege had shown how each sign depends upon the proposition it is situated within, Borges shows how each proposition depends upon the larger context in which it was written and received. To explain how this works, Borges takes a passage from Chapter XXXVIII of the *Quixote* in which the author comes down against letters in favor of arms. Borges marvels at how a straightforward line from the seventeenth century can be transformed by Menard's pen:

Cervantes was an old soldier; from him, the verdict is understandable. But that Pierre Menard's Don Quixote - a contemporary of *La trahison des clercs* and Bertrand Russell - should repeat those cloudy sophistries! (52)

What Borges exposes here is the extent to which our assumptions about a text's author shape that text. Borges continually quotes two verbally identical passages to show how replacing one assumed author for another refracts the text's meaning. A reasonable statement about war by Cervantes is tinged with irony when read in the context of the Great War. Where Frege had shown how dependent a word is on its placement within a proposition, Borges shows how there can be no atopic propositions, how each statement is both bound within its discourse and reaches out to its assumed author. When our assumptions about the author change, so does the text.

In such a volatile semantic environment, no theory could ever be proposed to do the work for the individual. As the context in which we communicate is constantly changing, the boundary between *Sinn* and *Unsinn* also remains in flux. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein insists that philosophy be considered a practice rather than a doctrine. In the *Tractatus*,

Wittgenstein seeks to instill in his reader what Piergiorgio Donatelli calls "a fully human linguistic response to the world," an ability to properly assess and participate in the variety of ways language can be experienced (107). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein presents the full range of factors that can throw this language in flux. The author is equal parts Cambridge logician and war poet, a man who asks his reader not to begrudge him a pinch of salt as he sets up his logical theory, and then demands his propositions be read with extreme skepticism. As the various coordinates with which a reader typically orient herself are thrown in motion, Wittgenstein offers a tentative method for establishing linguistic boundaries. In the kaleidoscopic world of the War and the *Tractatus*, a world in which the state of affairs is always subject to change as the terrain shifts and landmarks are removed, these boundaries must remain provisional.

CHAPTER 4: THE BAROQUE TABOO IN POSTWAR BRITISH CRITICISM

During the fall of 1922, Heinrich Wölfflin wrote in the preface to the sixth edition of *Principles of Art History* that "not everything is possible at all times, and certain thoughts can only be thought at certain stages of development" (*PAH* 80). Wölfflin is here referring to seventeenth-century painting, but his general thesis about the historical limitations of thought could also be applied to his own criticism and the Great War that shaped his own particular stage of development. This chapter will study the war's influence on postwar criticism by contrasting the Continental and English responses to the literary baroque movement Wölfflin inspired. In "The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship" (1946), René Wellek cites two hundred publications on baroque poetry, prose, and drama in the twenty-five years following the Great War, but he cannot find a single sustained study of a "baroque" literature before 1914. Influenced by the *Principles of Art History*, an international collection of postwar critics, including Walter Benjamin in Germany, Mario Praz in Italy, Eugenio D'Ors in Spain, Ángel Guido in Argentina, and Morris Croll in the United States began applying Wölfflin's formal categories to early modern poets, playwrights, and philosophers from across the national traditions to accentuate the stylistic similarities and shared influences that united them.

One notable holdout in the postwar spread of the literary baroque, however, was England. In his 1926 Clark Lectures at Cambridge University, T. S. Eliot looks back at the literary tradition after the war and — like the baroque scholars— notes that "our own mentality and

feelings are better expressed by the seventeenth century than by the nineteenth or even the eighteenth" (*Varieties* 43). In his lectures, Eliot relies heavily on Mario Praz and is certainly aware of the literary baroque proliferating in Europe. Throughout the 1920s, however, Eliot, like the rest of the British literary establishment, refused to employ the term.

The baroque taboo in postwar Britain did not, however, prevent the British from fully participating in the general revival of neglected early modern writers during the 1920s. The same impulse to reengage pre-Romantic and pre-Enlightenment traditions evidenced in the Spanish "Generation of '27" reviving the recondite poetry of Luis de Góngora and the German rehabilitation of the extravagant mourning plays of the Second Silesian School is also manifest in the British revival of their own Metaphysical poets during the early twentieth century. In Theodore Spencer and Mark Van Doren's *Studies in Metaphysical Poetry* (1939), five hundred and forty works are cited concerning Metaphysical poetry in the twenty-five years following the publication of Herbert Grierson's edition of Donne in 1912. Spencer estimates that this represents a tenfold increase in scholarship on Metaphysical poetry in comparison to the nineteenth-century rate of publications. But as interest in seventeenth-century poetry mushroomed in England after the war, critics like Herbert Grierson, Herbert Read, and T. S. Eliot were all careful to distinguish their "metaphysical" poets from the transnational stock of "baroque" writers en vogue on the Continent.

By juxtaposing the postwar enthusiasm for the literary baroque in Europe with the British rejection of the term, this chapter will study the extent to which postwar politics, economics, and psychology influenced how the European literary traditions were variously employed and interpreted after the war. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section studies the remarkable spread of the literary baroque across Europe in the years immediately following the

Great War. The second section examines the British taboo on the baroque diachronically, situating the British rejection of the term beside the theoretical arguments developed by the anti-baroque tradition. The third section will then examine the postwar taboo on the baroque synchronically, situating the British celebration of an isolated Metaphysical tradition divorced from the pan-European baroque within the socio-economic climate in England at the time of the Paris Peace Conference. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot describes a literary tradition as a living organism which is continually being modified through the absorption of new texts. This chapter will augment Eliot's examination by considering the external influences at work on Eliot and his contemporaries as they were actively reshaping the British literary tradition after the war.

The Great War and the Rise of the Literary Baroque

In 1913, as the various European nations were stockpiling arms for the next war, Heinrich Wölfflin jotted down the theme for his next book: "*Concordanz der Nationen*" (Levy 25). Dismayed to find "all the oldest artists and professors rallying to the flag," Wölfflin wanted to orient his next work in the opposite direction by developing a set of formal categories that might foreground the figures of consonance that united seventeenth-century European art (Warnke 173). Wölfflin was not immune to the nationalist typologies that proliferated in art history during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1904, for example, Wölfflin attributed the vibrancy of Velázquez to the "rapid perception [gained] through bull-fights and dance-theater" (Warnke 177). Working in the war's shadow, however, Wölfflin began to perceive how easily an art history organized along national borders could be appropriated by a nationalist politics. A Swiss citizen holding an academic chair in Munich, Wölfflin wrote of his amazement in his 1914

diary "that people don't view what's coming with greater horror" (Warnke 175). After war was declared, Wölfflin describes the surreality of attending a rector's garden party, in which fifty professors had gathered to debate "how many millions in war reparations should be demanded [...] speak[ing] of the matter as of a chess game [...] despite the fact that many have sons in the fields" (Warnke 175). It was in response to the blithe celebration of the war and the barrage of jingoistic academic books championing German culture that Wölfflin began writing the *Principles of Art History* during the final months of 1914.

While the wartime notebooks display Wölfflin's preoccupation with the war while working on the *Principles of Art History* (at one point Wölfflin compares his strict writing regiment to military service) the book he writes in a flurry during the first months of the war bears little evidence of any such influence; the *Principles of Art History* is a formalist study written in the objective tone of a scientific investigation (Warnke 174). In the introduction, Wölfflin describes his book seeking out the most general forms of representation and the "preexisting 'optical' possibilities" that work across the various national traditions (*PAH* 93). Wölfflin only mentions the war to account for his work's brevity, which is attributed to wartime paper shortages.

Martin Warnke suggests the war's influence on the *Principles of Art History* is most evident in the book's conspicuous absences. In his introduction, Wölfflin describes how questions of aesthetic style are typically answered by referring to the individual artist's technique and the culture in which the work was produced. In the *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin deemphasizes each of these criteria to focus instead on "a third factor" he believes to be driving art history, "for which differences in individual and national character are of no great consequence" (*PAH* 94). Wölfflin's formal asceticism, his denial of cultural explanations for

aesthetic phenomenon, Warnke argues, represents a political act of resistance in Germany during a time in which all cultural production was being instrumentalized to serve a political end (Warnke 177).

Turning away from an artist's personal and cultural history, Wölfflin concentrated instead on what he calls the history of "seeing as such" (*PAH* 93). Wölfflin's five distinctions between the classical and baroque are designed to accentuate the general philosophical perspective of a given work of art. Besides the individual and cultural, Wölfflin argues there is a third ontological factor that runs through art history separating works that depict a stable state of being from those that represent a state of becoming. Wölfflin writes:

The baroque makes use of the same system of forms, though it no longer produces perfection and completeness, but movement and transition instead; not the finite and comprehensible, but the infinite and colossal. The ideal of beautiful proportion disappears, interest attaches itself to things that happen rather than things that are. (*PAH* 91)

Wölfflin's classical and baroque reflect two worldviews, one founded upon the stable Platonic forms, the other projecting a perpetual state of flux. To echo Nietzsche, Wölfflin's predecessor at the University of Basel, the baroque work of art depicts a world in which Heraclitus was "eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction" (*Twilight of the Idols* 481). Each of Wölfflin's five distinctions serve to differentiate between these opposing philosophical perspectives. Where the classical is linear and focused on distinct outlines, the baroque is more painterly, blurring outlines to allow a greater sense of flow and indeterminacy. Where the classical is oriented upon distinct planes, the baroque favors shadowy recessional spaces. Where the classical work is balanced within the picture's frame, the baroque work creates a sense of

motion that breaks through the picture's frame, the picture representing a passing moment that is not yet complete. Finally, the classical virtue of clarity gives way to a baroque affinity for obscurity and indistinctness.

In his conclusion, Wölfflin foregrounds the political implications of his classical and baroque distinctions. By producing a system of aesthetic analysis in which the national tradition of a given work of art is superseded by the work's ontological tendencies, Wölfflin is able to delineate the Italian influence on German art in the *Principles of Art History* at the same time he is commenting in his diary about the "countless Italians with bayonets advancing at the border" (Warnke 175). Wölfflin's formalism is designed to shine a light on the affinities running beneath the temperamental differences of an Italian like Bernini and a German like Dürer. Making these transnational connections during the war is important, Wölfflin argues, because it provides an image of seventeenth-century Europe as "a coherent unity, just as the culture of modern Europe can also be understood as a coherent unity" (*PAH* 315). On the final page of the *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin drops all pretense of scientific objectivity to profess the underlying faith upon which his book is based, that "for all the difference in national character, that which binds humanity is stronger than that which divides it" (*PAH* 317).

If the current events of 1915 provided little support for Wölfflin's faith in a unified Europe, the success of his book suggests that his desire for a reunited Europe was commonly held. Despite wartime distribution restrictions, Wölfflin's book sold exceptionally well. By the time Roger Fry finally got ahold of a copy in England to review in 1921, the book was already in its fourth edition. By the end of the century, the *Principles of Art History* would be translated into twenty-one languages, becoming a foundational text not only in art history, but also in establishing a new paradigm for the study of early modern literature.

The popularity of Wölfflin's formalist approach, however, also attracted a number of spirited critiques during the 1920s. In his 1925 "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory," Erwin Panofsky outlines a common argument against the ahistorical reduction of all art into two prefabricated categories. Panofsky complains that Wölfflin's categories fail to "come to terms with the diversity of artistic phenomena because they restrict the wealth of phenomena into one system of absolute contrasts, which even in itself is not without contradiction" (Panofsky 52). In the conclusion to *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin anticipates this line of attack, preempting Panofsky by questioning himself "the degree to which one is actually entitled to speak of two forms at all," since "everything is transition" and "the history of forms never stands still" (*PAH* 305-9). In the end, Wölfflin writes how he would be happy to consider other possible categories than the five proposed in the *Principles of Art History*. It is not, he argues, the categories themselves that are at the heart of the book, but the unexpected patterns these categories reveal. What the classical and baroque distinction offers the art historian is an alternative method by which to study the hidden congruencies that are usually obscured by the nationalist categories typically imposed on art history. He admits that his methods might be faulty, but he never doubts his intuition that there is a hidden aesthetic aquifer uniting the various European nations that were at the time engaged in total war.

Besides attracting the censure of prominent art critics like Panofsky, Arnold Hauser, and E. H. Gombrich, the generality of Wölfflin's formal analysis also invited critics from outside art history to consider how they might apply Wölfflin's key insight: that a philosophical worldview might be reflected in the form and style of a given work as much as in its content. In the year after Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History*, Oskar Walzel published an article exploring the baroque features of Shakespeare's plays. In his 1916 "*Shakespeares Dramatische Baukunst*,"

Walzel cites Wölfflin and the distinction between Raphael's symmetry and the open form of Rubens to compare the effects of a Shakespeare play to the plays of Corneille and Racine. Working outside the neoclassical strictures of the French Academy, Shakespeare creates a sense of unbalance and chance in his plays. Walzel cites Shakespeare's tendency to lose track of central characters, allowing Cleopatra or Lear to go missing for long stretches of the drama, or the proliferation of minor characters, or the mixing of genres that lend a Shakespeare play a sense of disorder that is foreign to Racine, who retains his focus on the central character, distributes his action evenly, and constructs his plays to move methodically toward an inevitable climax. In a Shakespeare play, there is a sense that the action has slipped out of the playwright's steady grip, lending the drama an aleatory feel that is foreign to classical French drama. Like a good Rubens painting, Shakespeare's deviations from classical symmetry introduce a sense of tension, movement, and dissonance into the composition that leaves certain portions of the work obscured by shadow and directing the viewer to consider what might lie just beyond its visual frame (Walzel 83-101).

With Wölfflin's formal methodology, Walzel can write on a British and French dramatist during the war without having to comment on the "national spirit" of either. As Wölfflin's categories allowed him to dispassionately contrast the painterly vision of a Dutch and Italian during the height of the war, Walzel uses the same formalist approach to avoid the common wartime rhetoric about the cultural barbarism of foreign national traditions. The extended relevance and transnational appeal of Walzel's study is evidenced in the 1997 French translation of the article, "L'architecture du drame shakespearien," in a special issue of *Littérature* edited by Thomas Pavel. In her introduction to the French translation, Anna Guillemin places Walzel

alongside Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, who were similarly motivated to seek out figures of consonance in European literature in the shadow of another world war.

Walter Benjamin also began planning a book on the baroque, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, in 1916. Like Wölfflin and Walzel, Benjamin deemphasizes the national character of baroque art to focus on its philosophical foundations. Benjamin can thus interweave into his study of "German tragic drama" representative plays by Calderón and Shakespeare (*OGTD* 233). Benjamin argues that the German playwrights of the mourning play tradition like Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, Martin Opitz, and Andreas Gryphius have been devalued because they have been held to a foreign standard. The playwrights of the second Silesian school should not be censured for failing to produce classical tragedies because they had not set out to write classical tragedies, but were developing instead "a completely different way of looking at things" (*OGTD* 53). Following Wölfflin's model, Benjamin sets up a binary opposition between the classical and the baroque as two "modes of representation as such" that represent two contradictory worldviews (*PAH* 93). Where the classical conception of an orderly world encourages one to seek out traces of divinity as they are etched in nature and art, the baroque conception of the world places the divine at an infinite remove.

Rather than focusing on a distinctly German tradition, Benjamin turns to the baroque during the war in an effort to better understand the pan-European origins of the conflict. In a 1935 letter to Gershom Scholem, Benjamin classifies *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* with his Arcades Project as attempts to excavate the origins of modern European culture (Newman 11). Lutz Koepnick has suggested that Benjamin's interest in early modernity during the war was born out of a desire to study the catastrophe enveloping Europe, to provide a "pathogenesis

of the modern age" (Koepnick 278). What Benjamin finds when he looks back to the "origin" of German tragic drama is a tradition intricately bound up with the rest of Europe.

Benjamin traces the distinguishing baroque allegory of the mourning plays to the transnational emblem tradition. During the Middle Ages, emblems were based in Christian dogma and served didactic purposes, as in the allegory of Dante. During the Renaissance, however, writers increasingly attempted to base their emblems in nature, believing that the Creator's divine plan was made legible in Creation. Based on a neoplatonic notion of correspondence, the emblemists took up the visual characters of Chinese ideograms and Egyptian hieroglyphics as their models. Francis Bacon admires the ideogram's ability to "express neither letters nor words in gross, but Things or Notions" (Bacon 166). Marsilio Ficino finds the same immediacy in Egyptian hieroglyphics, which appear as "an image of divine ideas," imitating the "simple and fixed form of the thing itself" (Hoxby 88). Excited by these discoveries, European emblemists during the early modern period sought to produce a more perfect form of communication comprised of images rather than words. A proliferation of emblem books were published with images derived from across the Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew and Christian traditions.

Born out of a shared desire for a universal language that more closely approximated the book of nature, these emblem books paradoxically came to accentuate the arbitrariness of all language. As the emblem books accumulated, Karl Giehlow describes the babel of conflicting signs produced by authors attempting to retain "the dogmatic power of the meanings handed down from the ancients" only to find that one and the same object was imbued with contradictory dogmatic significance in the different traditions (*OGTD* 174). Taken as a mass,

Benjamin writes that the emblem books reveal "that one and the same object can just as easily signify a virtue as a vice, and therefore more or less anything" (*OGTD* 174).

Benjamin uses mourning plays from both the German and English traditions to describe how this semantic ambiguity affected dramatic form. In Gryphius' *Catharine of Georgia*, the action centers on the thorny-crown emblem. In a nightmare, the queen feels her crown tightening upon her head until it pierces her skull. Catharine's companion, Salome, interprets the emblem according to the conventions of the emblem books. The thorns within the crown represent the hidden burdens placed upon those who rule. After the Shah enters, taking Catharine captive and forcing her to either convert and marry or be mutilated, the queen considers a more spiritual interpretation of her dream that foreshadows her own martyrdom. Gryphius' play, however, doesn't adjudicate between the two contradictory interpretations of the dream. Salome's realpolitik interpretation suggests Catharine might concede to the Shah's demands and suffer his rule for the good of her people. Catharine's second interpretation clearly beckons her to place her immortal soul above all political considerations. Such scenes stage what Jane Newman calls "the antinomies of Baroque emblematics" (Newman 174). In the end, Catharine refusing the Shah's demands and is tortured, mutilated, and killed. The audience, denied access to Catharine's mutilated body, cannot read how it might correspond to the details in the queen's original dream. The audience is left in the end with only the Shah's assurance that Catharine's body was transformed into an angelic form. This report is open to doubt, however, since the Shah is a madman prone to hallucinations.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the antinomies of Baroque emblematics run in reverse. Where Gryphius' play provides the emblem but obscures its meaning, Shakespeare presents a character's affect that lacks a proper emblem, or as Eliot famously calls it in "Hamlet and His Problems"

(1920), an objective correlative. According to Benjamin, the reason the audience cannot identify the exact object of Hamlet's melancholy is that this melancholy is a response to the expansive blackness that separates his actions from divine salvation. *Catharine of Georgia* and *Hamlet* stage in this way two routes to the same crisis of correspondence that is typical of baroque drama. Catharine's thorny crown and Hamlet's melancholy both frustrate the audience's desire to properly read them. Semantic ambiguity renders each opaque, preventing the reader from seeing through them to their symbolic content. The success of these two plays as baroque allegories, Benjamin argues, requires that they first fail to symbolize, frustrating our desire to see the material image merge into the transcendent. In the baroque allegory, the impenetrable darkness that separates the human and the divine is made perceptible through the accumulation of failed symbols. What is thus represented in baroque allegory is the absolute breach between human history and salvation (Wolin 71).

In the seminal works of Wölfflin, Walzel, and Benjamin, the baroque is embraced as a distinctly transnational phenomenon that provided wartime critics a way to work across national borders. Despite their pan-European perspectives, however, Jane Newman has studied how the baroque scholarship of each was appropriated to serve the German war narrative. While baroque studies were spreading throughout Europe and the Americas during the 1920s, it was in postwar Germany that the baroque enjoyed its greatest influence. Newman attributes the special appeal of the literary baroque in Germany to the political uses baroque scholarship could be put to in a nation eager to distinguish its own literary tradition from the neoclassicism associated with the enemy French.

The publication history of Walzel's seminal 1916 article on Shakespeare provides an example of how the baroque could be turned to nationalist ends. Walzel's essay was originally

published in the shadow of Verdun and the Somme, in the fifty-second volume of the German *Shakespeare Yearbook*. Writing about an English playwright in Germany during this period could not be divorced from its political implications. Newman notes how the 1916 *Shakespeare Yearbook* is prefaced with a report from the German Shakespeare Society's annual meeting, in which it was remarked that there were no representatives from England in attendance. Hermann Ulrici, the president of the society, offers a peculiar explanation for this fact, interpreting it as evidence of the devolution of British scholarship, which had been reduced to an "inhumane chorus" by the war, shouting "vile fictions [...] of crucified prisoners and children's hands being amputated" (Newman 132). The study of Shakespeare in Germany is presented by Ulrici as a patriotic act aligned with the larger goals of the German military. Ulrici argues that the British are inept at tending their own heritage and thus unfit guardians of Shakespeare. The Germans, whose special closeness to Shakespeare had been professed since the time of Herder, should therefore be regarded as the Bard's rightful heirs. While Walzel's formal analysis of *King Lear* can appear politically innocuous today, in 1916 no German scholarship concerning an English work could avoid being transformed into a political instrument.

More surprising than the Germanization of Walzel, however, was the manner in which Benjamin's baroque book was appropriated by scholars who identified with the Nazi party during the time Benjamin himself, a German Jew, was forced to flee the country. Studying the footnotes in Nazi contributions to baroque studies, Jane Newman reveals that the conventional wisdom professed by Theodor Adorno in 1955, that Benjamin's "name had been repressed in and by the public German consciousness since 1933," is not accurate (Newman 187). Newman reveals that Benjamin is actually cited quite frequently throughout the 1930s in Nazi-sponsored texts and that his work was not, as George Steiner reaffirms in the English introduction to *The*

Origin of German Tragic Drama, rendered extent by the rise of National Socialism. Despite the book's density and a theological foundation that was antithetical to Nazi ideology, party-affiliated scholars still managed to abstract from *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* a celebration of a German-centric baroque tradition that could be used to buttress a Nazified literary history.

If German nationalism can help account for the heroic age of baroque studies in postwar Germany, however, it does not explain the international spread of the literary baroque across Europe and the Americas during the same period. Where the tendency in Germany was to focus on the Germanic node in baroque studies, scholars outside Europe were much more interested in the intricate network of synapses that connected Italian Marinism, Spanish Gongorism, English euphuism and metaphysical poetry, the French *préciosité*, and the German *Trauerspiele*. In his review of baroque literary studies, Wellek notes how interest in these various early modern traditions peaked again after the Second World War amongst scholar émigrés like Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, Helmut Hatzfeld, Karl Viëtor, Richard Alewyn, and Américo Castro. Wellek (another European émigré) ends his extensive 1946 study of the literary baroque by identifying the hope of a reintegrated Europe underlying the twentieth-century search for a seventeenth-century pan-European tradition. The literary baroque, Wellek writes, is a term that always "prepares for a synthesis" (Wellek 97).

The analogies between the baroque seventeenth century and postwar Europe also contributed to the literary baroque's popularity. In his 1936 book *Du Baroque*, Eugenio d'Ors goes so far as to classify the postwar period in which he is writing as "Barocchus posteaebellicus" (d'Ors 161). Rather than focusing on the seventeenth-century baroque, however, d'Ors follows Nietzsche's cyclical model of history, in which baroque topoi (epigonism, excess, exhaustion)

recur in all "late" historical periods. In *Du Baroque*, d'Ors does not simply align his own historical moment with seventeenth-century Spain, but places it upon an extensive timeline of the baroque that reaches across all recorded history and spans the globe, including both a "Barocchus buddhicus" and "Barocchus romanus" (d'Ors 161).

José Antonio Maravall provides a more focused representation of the baroque culture that appealed to twentieth-century scholars in his book: *Culture of the Baroque* (1975). According to Maravall, the baroque seventeenth century was a time of crisis marked by extended wars, plagues, the beheading of a king, mass incarceration, and an Inquisition. Drawing his examples from across Europe, Maravall identifies some common literary themes that were popular during this tumultuous period. In baroque literature, the world is variously described as mad, upside down, a labyrinth, or a stage upon which everything is transitory and unreal. In early modern drama, these themes were often associated with images of the carnivalesque, blood, gruesome violence, and doom. From Hobbs, Maravall cites the common image of the wolfish man, representative of social distrust and the widespread pessimism of the period. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* depicts a baroque psychology in which social, religious, and political bonds have all been frayed. Pascal describes the individual during this chaotic time as unmoored: "a dramatic, fragile, variable creature, [an] uncertain and floating creature" (Maravall 156). In seventeenth-century literature, Maravall notes a general shift away from the classical adjectives (logical, restrained, clear, serene), and an increased use of their baroque antonyms: irrational, fantastic, complicated, obscure, changing (Maravall 207).

The general appeal of these seventeenth-century topoi after the Great War was cited in Eliot's Clark Lectures, where the remarkable popularity of metaphysical poetry is attributed to the commonly held belief that "it is valuable to understand the poetry of the seventeenth century

in order that we may understand that of our own time and understand ourselves" (*Varieties* 43). In his lectures, Eliot seeks in the poetry of Crashaw, Cowley, and especially Donne the origins of the modern mentality. In Donne, Eliot finds "a great deal of the modern *recherche de l'absolu*, the disappointed romanticism, the vexation of resignation at finding the world other than one wanted it to be" (128). While Eliot never explicitly compares his own poetry to his seventeenth-century predecessors, his descriptions of metaphysical poetry are often just as applicable to his own verse. For instance, in Donne Eliot finds a lament for a lost order represented in a tangle of conceits suggesting "a mind in chaos" (133). The sense of "disintegration" Eliot feels while reading Donne is attributed to the loss of a coherent philosophical system resulting in "the absence of order, the fraction of thought into innumerable thoughts" (155). In 1926, Eliot finds in the disorderly and extravagant works of the seventeenth century an uncanny reflection of his own time.

In 1925, the year before Eliot delivered his Clark Lectures, Walter Benjamin submitted *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* for his habilitation at the University of Frankfurt, where he argues much like Eliot that it is in a neglected seventeenth-century literary tradition that his own culture finds its best reflection. Benjamin explains his attraction to the second Silesian school by citing the parallels between his own Weimar Germany and a seventeenth-century German culture defined by catastrophic war and economic collapse. In *The Thirty Years War* (1938), C. V. Wedgwood expands upon the parallel suggested by Benjamin, providing an appraisal of the Thirty Years War that was just as applicable to the most recent European conflict. Wedgwood writes:

The war solved no problem. Its effects, both immediate and indirect, were either negative or disastrous. Morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading,

confused in its causes, devious in its course, futile in its result, it is the outstanding example in European history of meaningless conflict. (526)

Wedgwood's indirect indictment of the interwar politics of her own day is also evident in her description of the Peace of Westphalia, which "was like most peace treaties, a rearrangement of the European map ready for the next war" (525). In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin finds these same parallels running through the arts of the two periods. Behind German Expressionism, Benjamin identifies the same "unremitting artistic will" that drove the seventeenth-century baroque, the same "desire for a vigorous style of language, which would make it seem equal to the violence of world-events" (*OGTD* 55).

The modern implications of Benjamin's work can be further elucidated by juxtaposing it with Karl Barth's wartime theology. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin argues that the sense of mourning that defines the second Silesian school is a byproduct of Luther's renunciation of good works as a means to salvation. By accentuating the qualitative difference between God and man, Benjamin argues that Luther effectively stripped the divine aura from human action. In *The Epistle to the Romans* (1921), Barth delineates the political implications of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine for modern Germany. Writing in direct response to the war, Barth rebukes the German academic establishment and all the prominent intellectuals who had signed "The Manifesto of the Ninety-Three" which justified the invasion of Belgium by aligning the goals of the German military with those of Divine Providence. With the two kingdoms doctrine, Barth aims to sever absolutely theological considerations from the politics of the moment. According to the doctrine, an impenetrable darkness separates humans from the Divine Will, rendering the profession that one is surely doing God's Will unintelligible. Barth writes, "There is here no merging or fusion of God and man, no exaltation of humanity to divinity, no

overflowing of God into human nature" (Barth 30). The goal of Barth's wartime theology is thus to take the "Gott" out of the popular World War I slogan: "Für Gott, Kaiser und Vaterland."

Where Barth accentuates the political implications of the two kingdoms doctrine by exalting God above all national interests, Benjamin focuses on the psychological effects of the doctrine on the isolated individual. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin holds up Hamlet, schooled at Wittenberg, as an exemplary inhabitant of the Lutheran worldview. Hamlet's *taedium vitae* is typical of the mourning play tradition, which presents a world in which good works have been renounced as a means of salvation (*OGTD* 139). In the fourth act, Hamlet muses: "What is man, / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more" (4.4.36-8). Benjamin attributes Hamlet's triumph to his ability to act in the absence of any external sign of his righteousness. In this final turn, Benjamin describes Hamlet orienting his life "to the Christian providence in whose bosom his mournful images are transformed into a blessed existence" and his "melancholy [is] redeemed" (*OGTD* 158). Hamlet's leap of faith, according to Benjamin's reading, is predicated upon a first recognition that he cannot know the Will of God and is powerless to earn his own salvation. In both Benjamin and Barth, the problems of modern Germany are based in the perversion of Lutheranism manifest in the theological justifications for invading Belgium in "The Manifesto of the Ninety-Three." In the radical theological doubt of Hamlet, Benjamin finds an antidote to the particular madness of his day.

In conclusion, the appeal of the literary baroque after the war can be attributed to a variety of sources. If nationalism helps explain the initial proliferation of baroque studies in Germany, the international spread of the literary baroque attest to the expanded uses Wölfflin's formalist methods could be put to as scholars from across Europe and the Americas began

searching out the figures of consonance working across the various arts. After the Great War, scholars returned to the seventeenth century to imagine alternative models for modernity by reconfiguring the vertical relationship between the human and the divine as well as the horizontal relationship amongst the European nations.

The next section will examine the theoretical problems that arise when a concept that was originally developed to describe seventeenth-century Roman architecture is extended to disparate art forms across various national traditions. Panofsky's original critique of Wölfflin's formalism, that his baroque-classical distinction reduces all aesthetic problems into a single antithesis situated outside historical reality, becomes increasingly more apt as Wölfflin's model is variously applied across the arts. In "The Classic Is the Baroque" (1982), Marshall Brown studies the flexibility of Wölfflin's original formula, emphasizing the historical and perspectival alterations that can transfer a particular work across Wölfflin's classical-baroque divide. Where Brown has convincingly argued that the *Principles of Art History* establishes a morphological method that accounts for historical shifts in both art production and reception, the critics who adopted his methods were much more likely to produce the static typology criticized by Panofsky. As the baroque was transposed onto literary studies, certain literary devices became markers of a baroque literature: antithesis, asyndeton, paradox, and hyperbole. The problem with classifying a work as baroque by the presence of certain literary tropes is that all the definitive "baroque" tropes appear across the literary traditions. The study of the literary baroque, therefore, remains always on the verge of slipping into meaninglessness by sweeping away all historical difference to accommodate the most general claims, such as Eugenio d'Ors proclamation that "the earth is classical, the sea baroque" (Zamora 1).

Anti-Baroque Theory from Winckelmann to Greenberg

The suspicion that arose to meet the literary baroque in postwar Britain had theoretical roots running back over two centuries. The term baroque was first applied in art criticism during the eighteenth century. Its etymology, although contested, is generally traced back through the thirteenth-century Portuguese term for a misshapen pearl, *barrôco*, which is derived from the Latin for wart, *verruca*. This etymology faithfully reflects what eighteenth-century critics generally thought of the baroque. The term was originally used to describe the odd deviations from classical standards in late Renaissance architecture. Johann Joachim Winckelmann was one of the first to employ the term to criticize art that copied nature in all its diversity without bothering to seek out the ideal form embedded therein. In his 1755 *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, Winckelmann accentuates the grotesqueness of the baroque in his own etymology, in which the term is "derived from the word signifying pearls and teeth of unequal size" (122-3). Winckelmann's ideal, the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of the Greeks, is defined against the "lordly racket" of the baroque (Panofsky 20). Winckelmann was tremendously successful in embedding his own values in the burgeoning field of art history as well as influencing the neoclassical movement that supplanted the baroque.

As Papal Antiquarian in Rome, Winckelmann was daily surrounded by the work of Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini, the founders of baroque architecture. Winckelmann's objections to the baroque is exemplified in the most salient features of the two. Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (1646) flouts the first virtue of architecture, its sense of stability, by curving the exterior walls to instill a sense of energy through the illusion of constant motion. Bernini's alterpiece at Sant' Andrea al Quirinale (1670) incorporates the church's architectural components with its paintings and sculptures to narrate the ascent of Saint Andrew's soul into

heaven. A painting of the crucified saint in torment is surrounded by golden angels of stucco passing effortlessly in and out of the back wall as they prepare to receive Saint Andrew's soul, which is depicted like the angels in a malleable stucco breaking through the church's structural features. The heavenly ascent of Saint Andrew's soul leaves a hole in the tympanum as it passes through (Carreri 45).

Borromini and Bernini did not identify their work as baroque, nor did they imagine themselves contributing to a collective movement. In the authorized biography of Bernini written shortly after his death, however, Filippo Baldinucci describes how Bernini did self-consciously flout inherited rules in pursuit of his ideal *bel composto* (Careri 29). Baldinucci writes, "The opinion is widespread that Bernini was the first to attempt to unite architecture with sculpture and painting in such a manner that together they make a beautiful whole" (Baldinucci 74). The effect sought by such a total art was a sense of wonder, or *meraviglia*. Baroque art emphasizes the rhetorical aspect of architecture by elevating theatrical effect over conventional form. Baroque art puts all questions of decorum aside that it might more directly come out to engage and astound its viewer.

The Roman Baroque of Borromini and Bernini, before being cast as the *bête noire* of eighteenth-century European criticism, enjoyed a period of phenomenal popularity, initiating the first global art movement. Radiating out from Rome, the baroque quickly spread across Europe before being carried east by Peter the Great and across the Atlantic with the Spanish Conquest. The baroque's lack of defined rules and its general disregard for boundaries made it amenable to innumerable variations. In Russia, the baroque splintered off into distinct Petrine and Naryshkin styles in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, while in Latin America, the European style was quickly appropriated by local artists who introduced additional tension points to baroque aesthetics by

combining native and European styles. Churches designed by artists like José Kondori in Bolivia and Aleijadinho in Brazil display how baroque styles continued to evolve throughout the eighteenth century in Latin America, where Indian and African elements were intermixed with the European to produce yet another *bel composto*. An example of the new style can be seen in the Church of San Lorenzo in Postosí, Bolivia (1744), in which Kondori refashions the European caryatid into the *indiatid*, a column which is fashioned in the likeness of indigenous women in contrast to its European counterparts (Zamora 189).

The extension of the baroque from a pejorative architectural term into a trans-disciplinary aesthetic classification began at the University of Basel during the second half of the nineteenth century. While on the faculty at Basel, Jacob Burckhardt, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Heinrich Wölfflin published in turn *The Cicerone*, "On the Baroque," and *Renaissance and Baroque* between 1855 and 1888, transforming baroque studies from a stylistic hiccup dividing the Renaissance from the Neoclassical period into a multi-purpose critical tool.

In *The Cicerone*, Burckhardt extends baroque studies beyond architecture by focusing on a distinct baroque dialect in Italian painting during the late sixteenth century. Rather than a failed classicism, Burckhardt sees in baroque art a shift in artistic values, an alternative approach that requires an alternative standard. When Burckhardt comes to reject the baroque, therefore, it is not simply because it deviates from classical norms, but because he opposes the theoretical assumptions underlying this shift. Bernini's altarpieces, which freely mixed various media to attain a *bel composto*, Burckhardt found pretentious and wanting in decorum. Following the strict formal boundaries established in Lessing's *Laocoon*, Burckhardt derides the baroque mixed-media altarpiece as "pompous architectural decorations with pictures" (43). Caravaggio's play with light and shade is attacked on the same lines, for its "indifference to the true

representation of forms," which left the paintings open to "vulgarity and vagueness" (220).

While Burckhardt obviously prefers the classical, he develops the critical apparatus in which the classical values of clarity and symmetry can be clearly juxtaposed with the baroque predilection for shadow and unbalance. Once this binary is outlined and abstracted from a strictly architectural discourse, it represented the perfect vehicle for the transvaluation project of Burckhardt's junior colleague at Basel, Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche, who sought to destabilize Enlightenment reason by reexamining its binary opposition with instinct, criticized baroque studies for unthinkingly perpetuating a set of inherited value judgments. In his "On the Baroque," published as aphorism 144 in the second volume of *Human, All Too Human* in 1878, Nietzsche takes aim at "the ignorant and arrogant" who "immediately associate [the baroque] with something to be disparaged" (245).

One notable nineteenth-century exception to this generalization was Charles Baudelaire, who greatly admired the baroque features of the Église Saint-Loup de Namur on his trip to Belgium in 1864. In *Pauvre Belgique*, he writes: "tous d'un style varié, fin, subtil, baroque, une *antiquité nouvelle*." (193). Baudelaire finds in Saint-Loup an enticing blend of contradictions, a "merveille sinistre et galante" with "un terrible et délicieux catafalque" (193). Baudelaire's sensual appreciation of baroque art provides a contrast to Nietzsche's intellectual justifications.

Nietzsche, in fact, never manages Baudelaire's high commendation of baroque art. While insisting the baroque needs to be recuperated from its detractors, in the same breath Nietzsche describes the baroque as a symptom of late artistic periods, a style ever falling short of the highest virtues. Nietzsche's conflicted stance can partly be explained by his association of Richard Wagner with the baroque. Nietzsche's high regard for Wagner, evidenced in his earlier *Birth of Tragedy* and "Wagner at Bayreuth," had weakened by 1878. In "On the Baroque,"

Nietzsche's classical-baroque binary mirrors in many ways the Apollonian-Dionysian binary from *The Birth of Tragedy*, except that the Wagner who personifies the baroque in 1878 is not as highly esteemed as the 1872 Dionysian Wagner. Despite his reservations about the quality of Wagner's operas and baroque art more generally, in "On the Baroque" Nietzsche does manage to extend the study of the baroque across time and discipline, depicting it as a recurring phenomenon cycling through history from ancient Greece to the present day, not only in painting and music, but in poetry and prose as well.

Nietzsche also explores how baroque form might reflect an alternative philosophical worldview to that represented in classical art. According to Nietzsche, baroque periods are ushered in when the will to form that drove classicism is replaced by a sense of rhetorical exigency. Nietzsche defines the baroque artist as one who "does not care whether he honestly guides the hearts and minds of his fellow men, like a shepherd, or whether he captures them by surprise, like a robber" (245). Nietzsche's concentration on rhetorical effect over form aligns with Bernini's own method of breaking inherited formal prescriptions to better instill a sense of *meraviglia* in his viewer. According to Nietzsche, intermixing painting and architecture, the carnal and divine, Christian and pagan, is all permissible for the baroque artist in the pursuit of "the greatest dramatic tension" (245). Why it is so exigent for the baroque artist to produce this dramatic tension is never fully explained by Nietzsche, who hints at an underlying sense of spiritual crisis that instills the desire to "make the heart tremble [...] because heaven and hell are too close to the emotions" (245). The underlying theoretical motivations of baroque art are examined in more detail by Wölfflin.

In 1888, the year Wölfflin joined his mentor, Jacob Burckhardt, on the faculty at Basel, he also published *Renaissance and Baroque*, which sought to establish a value-neutral analysis

of the two styles by exploring the psychological motivations underlying their formal differences. Wölfflin theorized that baroque art was the product of a Jesuit impulse that sought to overwhelm the imagination of its audience through the increase in scale and illusory effects produced through manipulations of form and light. The total art forms developed during the baroque era—the painted copulas that produced the illusion of limitless space and the exhortation of departing angels to join them in their vertiginous ascent, the altarpiece in which the saint escapes from his marble encasement — these "total" effects have been attributed to the Jesuit spirit of conquest by critics like Benedetto Croce during the modernist period and Robert Harbison during the twenty-first century. When the Jesuitical nature of baroque art is discussed in modern scholarship, it most often connotes the baroque's associations with Counterreformation politics. It is not as an authoritarian aesthetic, however, that Wölfflin presents the baroque in *Renaissance and Baroque*.

Rather than politics, Wölfflin associates the Jesuit impulse of baroque art with the spiritual retreat program spelled out in Ignatius' 1545 *Spiritual Exercises*, which commands a total reformation of a retreatant's time and environment, as well as directing the five senses along with reason toward the one goal of spiritual transformation. Nothing escapes careful choreography during an Ignatian retreat, from the lighting of the room, meal portions, and the alternation of bodily postures. In prayer, the retreatant is provided a number of locations from the Biblical narrative to which she might apply her imagination in the "mental representation of the place" (Ignatius 17). Once the contours of this place are established in the mind, the retreatant is invited to sensually enter into the scene. If the scene is the upper room in Jerusalem where the disciples have gathered for their last Passover with Jesus, then she might imagine herself imitating Jesus by handling the feet of all those who had spent the day walking from Emmaus, or sharing bread with your betrayer. As is famously noted in the first chapter of Erich

Auerbach's *Mimesis*, the Bible is in many places a paratactic text replete with narrative lacunae. These dark apertures in the Biblical text represent to Ignatius entrance points where one might feel, taste, hear, and smell that which cannot be clearly see.

It is toward such a "total" effect, the sensual overwhelming of the audience, that Wölfflin sees baroque art aiming. The political efficacy of such an effect should not, however, be overstated. The sublime moment, when the rational orientation is arrested before the inassimilable object, is, as Kant asserts, transient. Lost in Rome, one might happen down a side street that suddenly opens onto the Trevi Fountain. While the sudden apparition of the fountain's splendor as it spills into the square and climbs up the architectural façade of the adjoining building might be momentarily arresting, this "baroque effect" will eventually give way to hunger or the exigencies of a bus timetable. When Harbison describes the baroque as an "authoritarian mode" which seeks to "intimidate the undefended individual," he seems to overextend the temporal effect any one work of art could possibly have on the individual. Even in those rare moments in which an individual might find herself "undefended" before an apparition, such moments do not typically have a lasting effect, but are quickly assimilated back into one's habitual existence (Harbison viii).

Rather than the copiousness and grandeur of what is present, Wölfflin argues in *Renaissance and Baroque* that it is in fact what is missing from the baroque work of art that produces its distinct sense of *meraviglia*. By focusing on the significant absences, Wölfflin challenges the "authoritarian" reading which describes baroque art as a bludgeon to the nervous system. Rather than offering a sense of fulfillment—which Wölfflin associates with the balance and symmetry of classical art—the baroque offers tension and dissonance, incongruous juxtapositions, and a mixing of forms that produces a sense of restlessness that awakens the

viewer's desire for that which is *not* present. Wölfflin describes the Jesuit impulse in baroque art pointing beyond all earthly institutions, exciting in its viewer "a desire to be sublimated in the infinite" (86). In the typical example of baroque art — the copula filled with an angelic host inviting the viewer to join them in their heavenly ascent — the gaze of the ascendant figures directs the viewer's own gaze to that which cannot be seen through the light that floods in at the peak of the copula. For Wölfflin, this is the baroque trajectory: the surfeit of represented figures, decorative detail, and the extension and massiveness of forms all work in unison to draw the viewer's attention to what still defies representation. Not unlike Don Juan's 1003 sexual conquests, the baroque's exuberant will to abundance describes in the end not fulfillment, but an unremitting sense of absence (Certeau 4).

Wölfflin asserts in *Renaissance and Baroque* that the total effect of baroque art is not confined to any single nation or historical period. Adopting Nietzsche's model of a cyclical baroque, Wölfflin expresses a desire to trace the origins of baroque art beyond Bernini to ancient art as well as forward to Wagner. In a suggestive passage, Wölfflin anticipates the literary baroque in an offhand analogy that likens the contrast between Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1584) to that between Renaissance and baroque architecture. While Wölfflin never pursues this interdisciplinary line of study himself, his 1915 *Principles of Art History* will provide the formal criteria for hundreds of such studies during the twentieth century.

Before assessing the value of applying an architectural concept like the baroque to a literary text, however, the prevalence of such interdisciplinary commerce might be noted. In *The Pound Era* (1971), Hugh Kenner draws attention to how dependent literary critics already are on architectural terms. To prove his case, Kenner tours Henry James' famous "house of fiction,"

noting the text's "structure" and assessing its "surfaces" before descending into its interior "depths." The windows of the text provide both an "outlook" and "insight." The house is peopled by characters who are similarly assessed in three dimensions, complexity lending "roundness" to those who would otherwise remain flat. Texts that can create a new "space" for difficult social topics to be explored are commonly celebrated (Kenner 27). Considering how imbedded extra-literary terminology is in our literary discourse, any actual attempt at eradicating imported terms and better policing the boundaries between the disciplines seems impractical at best.

The theoretical argument against these spatial metaphors is that they obscure the literariness of literature, a temporal medium consisting of words presented sequentially on a page. In *Laocoon: or, The Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing argues that literature is good at presenting action, while painting and sculpture are good at presenting form. Lessing's practical advice is that one should use the right tool for the right job. If the task at hand is to describe a flower, there is an art-form for that, namely, painting. Flowery poetry, like all descriptive poetry, is simply not expedient, poetry being better suited to describe progression than static forms. The radical sense of purity Lessing's later apologists will bring to the distinction between the arts is notably absent from Lessing's own work, which does not advocate for the absolute isolation of each individual art-form, but rather accentuates a single distinction that divides all the arts into two general categories: the contiguous and the consecutive. Lessing does not prohibit the intermingling of arts that find themselves on the same side of this divide. Music, poetry, and dance — all temporal arts consecutively arranged — can all be fruitfully combined according to Lessing, a point Richard Wagner is keen to accentuate in his own theoretical writings (Brown 97). Applying this same line of thought to the contiguous

arts, Bernini's *bel composto*, his free mixing of architecture, painting, and sculpture, could also escape censure by preserving Lessing's principle boundary between the temporal and spatial arts.

Lessing's *Laocoon* does not, therefore, militate against all artistic hybridization. Working in dialogue with Winckelmann, Lessing often tries to extend artistic freedoms rather than limit them. As a dramatist, Lessing perceives the extension of Winckelmann's neoclassical principles from the plastic arts into the dramatic arts as a threat. Lessing's refutation of Winckelmann, however, is clothed in a prefatory affirmation of his neoclassical principles, so long as they are confined to the plastic arts. Lessing echoes Winckelmann's ideal of noble simplicity and quiet grandeur while discussing sculpture, extoling *Laocoon and His Sons* for registering pain in a dignified sigh without resorting to grotesque facial contortions. Lessing stiffens against Winckelmann, however, when he turns to literature. The contiguous and consecutive divide in the arts is positioned by Lessing to serve as a barrier between his drama (and that of his beloved Shakespeare) and Winckelmann's neoclassical dictates.

Lessing's *Laocoon* compliments in this way his argument from *Letters Concerning the Most Recent Literature* that classicism is stifling the dramatic arts, which should look away from France to Shakespeare as a model for how drama might develop outside the strictures imposed by the French Academy. Lessing's deferment to Winckelmann in matters of sculptural decorum, therefore, provide cover for Lessing's departure from neoclassicism in regards to poetry, which should resist the imposition of a foreign code of conscience. By creating a barrier between the consecutive and the contiguous arts, Lessing preserves an aesthetic space in which Laocoon's scream might still be heard. According to Lessing's theory, Virgil is not to be faulted for letting Laocoon scream a scream which not only fills all Trojans with horror, but "breaks the yielding skies" (Bk. II ln. 296). The rules of decorum developed in sculpture, Lessing argues, would be

detrimental if applied to literature, which is a temporal art designed to proceed through the moment pregnant with climactic suggestion to the climax itself.

Four years after the *Laocoon* is published, its theory of decorum is challenged in Franz Xaver Messerschmidt "character heads," a collection of busts in which all the extremes of passion are represented. Lessing, echoing Winckelmann, argues against such emotional extremes in sculpture, "not because screaming betrays an ignoble soul, but because it disfigured the countenance in a hideous manner" (19). Messerschmidt flaunts all neoclassical rules of decorum by carving out an indecorous hole in the middle of the face, with all distinguishing features collapsing into the abyss of the mouth, frozen in a scream eerily dissociated from its sound. Lessing condemns such climactic images in sculpture, paradoxically, because they deny temporal extension. At the same time that Lessing defines sculpture according to the atemporal contiguity of its elements, he insists that the frozen image should always invite the viewer to reincorporate it back into a larger narrative, the pregnant moment providing a window to its own immediate past and future. The statue of *Laocoon and his Sons* is thus praised for eliding the scream without silencing it, since "when Laocoon sighs, the imagination may hear him scream" (29).

If good sculpture invites the viewer to play out the scene in this way, how can this temporal extension be squared with Lessing's central division between the contiguous and the consecutive in art? Messerschmidt's heads, unlike *Laocoon and his Sons*, are truly contiguous, resisting all attempts to make sense of the depicted emotion by fitting it back into an established narrative pattern. The problem with sculptural depictions of a climax, according to Lessing, is that "beyond this there is nothing, and to show the eye the extremest point is to bind the wings of Fancy" since "that visible fullness of expression [is] the limit beyond which it cannot go" (29).

A Messerschmidt head would thus be faulted for presenting an emotion without a bodily referent or external object. By closing itself off to all progression, the bust disables our compulsive drive to make sense of it by incorporating the isolated object back within a pre-established narrative pattern, like that provided by Virgil's *Aeneid*. By retaining their illegibility, the Messerschmidt head denies all narrative extension and escapes time. These heads, according to a strict reading of Lessing's temporal and spatial distinction, would thus represent the true antithesis of poetry.

If Lessing arrives at a different conclusion than this, it is because he subordinates his own theoretical distinction (the contiguous vs. the continuous in art) to a more general concern for aesthetic decorum. When Irving Babbitt reboots Lessing's Laocoon project in the twentieth century, he is not motivated by Lessing's theory, but by his own violated sense of decorum. In *The New Laocoon* (1910), Babbitt replaces Lessing's temporal and spatial divide for individuated "genre tranché" (vii). Babbitt's prohibitions against mixed media are, therefore, more categorical as each trespass contributes to the general "confusion of the arts" (ix). In studying the after-history of Lessing's *Laocoon*, Babbitt cites Novalis, Tieck, and Friedrich Schlegel to describe the limits of Lessing's influence. The situation only grows worse as Babbitt moves later into the nineteenth century, as is evidenced in "Gautier's *transpositions d'art*, Rossetti's attempts to paint his sonnets and write his pictures, and Mallarmé's ambition to compose symphonies with words" (ix). Babbitt's survey of the modern arts presents a landscape overrun with "eleutheromaniacs," artists driven by a furious desire for freedom in violation of all the limits of genre and decorum (197). Wagner's total art and Baudelaire's synaesthetic poetry are singled out for special censure. Babbitt's task in the *New Laocoon*, to preserve the sanctity of each art through better policing of the borders between the arts, can seem quixotic considering the expanding use of collage, from Picasso's 1912 *Still Life With Chair Caning* to Blaise Cendrars

and Sonia Delaunay-Terk's poetic-pictorial collaboration on *Prose of the Tran-siberian and of the Jeannie de France* (1913). Against this backdrop, Babbitt can appear as a historical curio, a Cassandra crying as the walls dividing the arts were being set afire all around him.

Babbitt's argument for greater limitation in the arts is retained, however, by a prominent strain of modernist criticism that stretches from T. S. Eliot to Clement Greenberg. In Eliot's 1917 "Reflections on Vers Libre," Babbitt's former student dutifully recites the thesis of the *New Laokoon*: "there is no freedom in art" (518). While Eliot clearly shares Babbitt's concern that the modern arts are becoming unmoored, he deftly shifts his strategy for maintaining the integrity of the disciplines. Rather than trying to police the volatile borderlands between the arts, Eliot instead focuses on the vital core that defines any particular art-form. In poetry, that core is the "artificial limitations" imposed by pattern, meter, and rhyme (518). Eliot's critique of the *vers libre* movement is that it has no positive principle, attempting to define itself solely through what it rejects. Eliot asserts that categorical rejections of all restraint will collapse the "contrast between fixity and flux," poetry relies upon for its tensive energy (518). To prevent a devolution into chaos, Eliot argues that even the freest poetry must maintain contact with "the ghost of some simple meter" (518). The ethereal image here is indicative of Eliot's softer approach to delimiting the scope of each art. Rather than militating against all cross-disciplinary experimentation, Eliot insists only that "the ghost" of formal restrictions be permitted to accompany the artist on any such exploration. It is not in the name of some violated sense of decorum that Eliot makes his request, but a concern that an art that loses touch with all artificial limitations will cut itself off from perhaps its greatest resource: its own tradition. Eliot's essay warns that the ideal of unlimited freedom embraced by the *vers librist* will end in a new form of

despotism as the poet who has renounced all tradition will suddenly discover herself under an empty sky with no light to guide her but the wavering polestar of the ever new.

Eliot's effort to shore up poetry's center is taken to the extreme in Clement Greenberg's "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940). Rather than the ghost of formal strictures, Greenberg asserts that it is the material medium itself that provides each art its unifying force. The Laocoon tradition reaches its finest distillation in Greenberg, as he releases the arts from their common pursuit of mimesis that they might all turn inward to confront "the opacity of [their own] medium" (32). It was in pursuit of experience that artists most often found themselves venturing beyond the boundaries of their home discipline. So long as the arts were engaged in representing the same poly-sensual experience, there was an impetus for them to combine their powers in pursuit of their common quarry. Greenberg's essay seeks to disable the gravitational pull of mimesis so that each art might splinter off to orbit its own medium. With the arts properly introverted, the aesthetic borderlands no longer need policing. Giving up its chase after meaning, poetry is left with its consecutively arranged sounds "approaching the brink of meaning and yet never falling over it" (33). Sculpture and painting, released from their obligations toward representation, are free to concentrate on the stone, the flat canvas, and the dyestuffs. Greenberg proclaims: "The arts, then, have been hunted back to their mediums, and there they have been isolated, concentrated and defined" (32).

The confusion of the arts lamented by Babbitt is thus resolved by Greenberg. Having renounced mimesis, the arts can realize their own sovereignty each within their own walls. The question that remains, however, is what exactly a post-mimetic art is supposed to do? According to Greenberg, pure poetry is to "agitate the consciousness with infinite possibilities" without compromising itself by professing any one in particular (33). Painting is meanwhile driven by its

own "inexorable" logic toward greater abstraction "and a further sterilization of the expressive factors" (37). It doesn't matter if the artist is Van Gogh, Picasso or Klee; for Greenberg: "All roads led to the same place" (37). Having escaped the mimetic vortex, abstract art creates its own centripetal force around the primary colors and a handful of geometric shapes.

During the modernist period, as Babbitt, Eliot, and Greenberg were each theorizing about what distinguishes one art-form from the others, modern artists were exploring the possibilities of mixed-media composition. Eliot, himself a poet, was less inclined to demand the artist be placed "in a vice," as Greenberg gleefully suggests (37). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot displays how effective mixing media can be, as he interweaves traditional verse structures and poetic devices with fragments of common speech, operatic arias, and popular songs. Ezra Pound was at the same time testing the capacity of his own verse form in the *Cantos*, inserting an assortment of fragments from across the world, including ideograms, a Chinese form of pictorial writing. In the theater, Bertolt Brecht was experimenting with the *gestus*, a theatrical body that is meant to speak while Kurt Schwitters was producing "Merz Pictures" comprised entirely of refuse collected from the street. Gertrude Stein was writing Cubist poems, while in America theater owners were experimenting with various forms of Smell-O-Vision, a method of enhancing motion pictures through olfactory stimulation. Underlying these various experiments in aesthetic form (some more successful than others) is the common belief that there is something to be gained by playing in the borderlands between the various arts. According to Bernini, such multimedia compositions can produce a sense of *meraviglia*. By combining media, the artwork becomes defamiliarized as it is loosed from any one stable generic category. In *Untwisting the Serpent* (2010), Daniel Albright uses a musicological vocabulary to celebrate these modernist

hybrids, which "vibrate between media," in order to discover the "figures of consonance" that can only be produced by combining the arts (6).

Having outlined the theoretical arguments that have traditionally been made for and against the transposition of aesthetic concepts and methods, we can ask to what extent these theoretical considerations explain the British resistance to the literary baroque. The Laocoon argument against the literary baroque is that the application of architectural concepts to literature muddles our understanding of each individual discipline by eliding their distinguishing differences. This theoretical argument had little influence, however, in the British revival of metaphysical poetry. In Herbert Grierson's *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (1921), metaphysical poetry is "inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned the human spirit" (xiii). It is precisely in violating the boundary between poetry and philosophy that a poem becomes "metaphysical" according to Grierson, who makes no effort to confine his definition to any particular nation or historical period. According to Grierson, the criteria for metaphysical poetry extends no further than the happy combination of philosophical thought and emotion, making Dante just as much a "metaphysical" poet for his sensationalization of Thomistic thought as Donne is in his poetic handling of Mediaeval Scholasticism. According to Grierson's formula, Lucretius's engagement with Epicurus makes him metaphysical in much the same way as Cowley becomes metaphysical in his handling of Hobbes.

The elasticity of Grierson's definition of metaphysical poetry is further exploited by Eliot in his 1926 Clark Lectures. Following Grierson, Eliot juxtaposes the metaphysical poetry of seventeenth-century England to the poetry of *trecento* Italy before extending Grierson's definition forward in time by applying it to the Symbolists of nineteenth-century Paris and

musings about the "metaphysical" nature of his own postwar moment. This cyclical image of metaphysical poetry clearly mirrors the cyclical baroque that was professed by Nietzsche, Wölfflin, Praz, and d'Ors. When Eliot praises the metaphysical poets for "extending the frontiers of this world" that their reader might "feel the pull of heaven and hell" beyond, he is unknowingly echoing Nietzsche's definition of the baroque, which sought to "make the heart tremble [. . .] because heaven and hell are too close to the emotions" (*Varieties* 95).

Further muddling the distinction between the English study of the metaphysical poetry and the European study of the literary baroque is Mario Praz's influence on Eliot. In 1925, Eliot reviews Praz's *Secentismo e marinismo in Inghilterra* for the *Times Literary Supplement*. Praz's book depicts the intricate web of influence within which John Donne and Richard Crashaw worked, focusing in particular on the influence of Giambattista Marino and Luis de Góngora. Praz unites all these poets under the common rubric of the baroque. The title of Eliot's review, "An Italian Critic on Donne and Crashaw" suggests Eliot's ambivalent relationship with Praz, a critic he clearly admires, but at the same time wants to keep at a distance. This distance is maintained by Eliot (who in 1925 was not himself a British citizen) by continually referring to Praz as a foreign reader of Donne and Crashaw. Praz is praised for exhibiting "the great benefits which foreign criticism and foreign scholarship can confer" (*ECP II* 596). Eliot relies heavily on Praz's book while at the same time eliding the central idea of Praz's study: that there was a network of influence connecting seventeenth-century poets from across Europe and England that is evidenced in their shared "baroque" features. Eliot, writing as an American rapidly scaling the hierarchy of British criticism, recognized the baroque to be unstable footing for his own ambitions. In his review, Eliot praises Praz for supplying "what has been a conspicuous defect of English criticism of Donne: a comparison between Donne and the metaphysical poets of the

age of Dante" (*ECP II* 596). Eliot will organize his Clark Lectures on this very theme. Eliot is less enthusiastic, however, about developing Praz's other thesis, that Donne and Crashaw were major figures in a pan-European baroque movement.

In *The Universal Baroque* (2007), Peter Davidson traces the British resistance to the baroque back to Elizabethan times. In sixteenth-century England, the baroque was perceived as a foreign threat connected to the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the French, the two institutions against which the British nation defined itself against. Such historical considerations might help explain the special exemption Richard Crashaw received from British critics. In 1933 and 1934, E. I. Watkin and T. O. Beachcroft both publish works placing Crashaw within the Continental baroque tradition. What qualifies Crashaw for this dubious dispensation, presumably, is his renunciation of his Protestant faith for Catholicism, Oxford for Paris, and the English language for Latin. In his Clark Lectures, Eliot only mentions the baroque while discussing Crashaw. Eliot's portrait of a baroque Crashaw, however, is that of an eccentric foreigner. In his lectures, Eliot argues that "had [Crashaw] lived today he could only have dwelt in Florence or in Rome" (178). This chapter's next section will more closely examine postwar British culture to understand why Eliot assumed it was impossible to be both baroque and British in 1646 and 1926 alike.

Suspicion in Postwar British Culture and Criticism

In three of the seminal studies of metaphysical poetry: Grierson's 1921 *Metaphysical Lyrics*, Eliot's 1921 review of Grierson, "The Metaphysical Poets," and Herbert Read's 1923 "The Nature of Metaphysical Poetry," Dante is generally acknowledged to be the forefather of the British metaphysical tradition. While the British were eager to embrace a *trecento* Italian

precursor to Donne, however, they were reluctant to associate Donne with his Italian contemporary, Giambattista Marino. As European and American scholars in the 1920s were incorporating an assortment of seventeenth-century British writers, including Shakespeare, Donne, Crashaw, Milton, Browne, Bacon, Dryden, Massinger, and Ford into a transnational web of baroque literature, British scholars insisted on preserving the distinctness of their own seventeenth-century authors, who they variously classified as Metaphysical, Cavalier, Elizabethan, Jacobean, Carolinian, or Commonwealth, but never baroque. If the theoretical arguments against the literary baroque (that it only confuses the national, temporal, and disciplinary distinctions that lend definition to a literature) could also be used to censure the metaphysical tradition Eliot describes leapfrogging about European history, the study of the British taboo on the baroque will require an expanded view of the political, economic, and psychological conditions in which this taboo was imposed.

The most obvious social factor working against the literary baroque in postwar Britain was the Germanic origins of baroque studies. In 1926, as the literary baroque was establishing its first roots across Europe and the Americas, Josef Körner complained about how the baroque had dominated the talk "in all the lanes and squares" of Germany for over a decade (Newman 45). The difficulties of transporting a critical movement from wartime Germany into England can be seen in the reception history of Walzel's 1916 article on Shakespeare. When read in French translation in the 1997 issue of *Littérature*, it can be difficult to understand why Walzel's article had never been translated into English and why the "baroque" features of Shakespeare's plays have not received more attention in Britain. When the German context of the article's original publication in the *Shakespeare Yearbook* is considered, however, with its introductory

complaints about England's philistinism and deceitful propaganda, it is easier to understand why the baroque Shakespeare was not more warmly received back in England (Newman 132).

The animus toward Germany in England after the war is registered in the campaign speeches for the general election of December 1918. The major issue of the election, held the month before the Paris Peace Conference, was German reparations. When engaging with the crowds, British politicians faced quick rebukes whenever they attempted to cut their anti-German vitriol with concerns for the long-term economic and political stability of Europe. In the week before the election, it was rightly suggested in the London *Times* that "it is the candidate who adopts Mr. Barnes's phrase about 'hanging the Kaiser' and plumps for the payment of the cost of the war by Germany, who rouses his audience and strikes the notes to which they are most responsive" ("The Election," *Times*, 9 Dec. 1918, p. 9).

The effect the general appetite for revenge had on politicians in the run-up to the election can be seen in the swift reversal of Eric Geddes, the First Lord of the Admiralty, on the subject of reparations. When Geddes had suggested, not that the Germans *should not* pay the full cost of the war, but that it might be beyond their capacity to do so, he quickly became subject of widespread suspicion. In a December 1918 speech at Cambridge, Geddes made his amends to the public by forcefully demanding: "we will get out of [Germany] all you can squeeze out of a lemon and a bit more. I will squeeze her until you can hear the pips squeak [...] I would strip Germany as she has stripped Belgium" (Keynes 142).

The same pressure that so quickly turned Geddes was also felt by the Prime Minister. On December 9, five days before the election, the *Times* ran an article titled "Making Germany Pay," pressing Lloyd George to quit his speculations about Germany's postwar economic outlook and

the ramifications of reparations on the political stability of Europe. What the Prime Minister needs to do in Paris is quite simple: make the Germans pay. The editorial reads:

We repeat that Mr. Lloyd George would do well to make this procedure perfectly clear. There is far too much suspicion of influences concerned to "let the Germans off lightly," whereas the only possible motive in determining their capacity to pay must be the interests of the Allies. ("Making Germany Pay," *Times*, 9 Dec. 1918)

The political efficacy of this argument was not lost on the Prime Minister, who three days later published his election program in six points, calling for "fullest indemnities from Germany" under the nationalist slogan: "Britain for the British" ("Coalition Programme," *Times*, 11 Dec. 1918). In the lead-up to the election, George found that his speeches on disarmament, the League of Nations, and the establishment of a long-term European peace simply did not resonate with the British public in the same manner as his calls for German retribution. When asked at a rally about what he planned to do about the Germans currently living in Britain, George knew what was expected of him, firing back to great applause: "Oh, they won't be long in this country. They are going to be fired out" ("Prime Minister on Conscription," *Times*, 12 Dec. 1918). Demanding fullest indemnities from the Germans, George's coalition government won a landslide victory in December 1918, an election in which the Liberal party conceded 236 seats in the House of Commons.

In *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1920), John Maynard Keynes contrasts the short-term domestic gains of this "Britain for the British" policy with its long-term effects on European stability. Keynes criticizes the severity of the British reparations policy on two accounts. Retrospectively, Keynes argues that the terms demanded by the British represented a breach of contract, reaching far beyond the agreed terms of surrender established in the Fourteen

Points. What is much worse, however, is the manner in which the Treaty will diminish the future prospects of a European peace. Studying the Treaty, Keynes predicts that it will lead to widespread starvation and instill the enmity upon which nationalist and militarist politics thrive. He writes: "If we aim deliberately at the impoverishment of Central Europe, vengeance, I dare predict, will not limp" (268).

In his polemic against the Treaty of Versailles, Keynes argues that nationalist policies that are designed to ensure the nation's interests above all else will end up producing the opposite effect. The flaw in the fullest indemnities policy, according to Keynes, is that it is founded upon a faulty conception of the world economy as a zero-sum game in which Britain stands to gain from the depletion of Germany. What is lost in the popular calls for retribution is the fundamental fact of twentieth-century economics that "the world markets are one" (295).

Considering the dependency of England on stable European markets, Keynes finds "the vast unconcern of London" in regards to the immense political and economic problems facing postwar Europe to be baffling (7). In demanding fullest indemnities, Keynes argues that Britain has compromised its morals (by directly contributing to the starvation of millions while also visiting the iniquity of one generation upon their children), while also compromising its own national security. When Germany is squeezed, Keynes explains, the ramifications will not be confined within Germany's borders. He writes:

Europe is solid with herself. France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Holland, Russia and Roumania and Poland, throb together, and their structure and civilization are essentially one. They flourish together, they have rocked together in a war [...] and they may fall together. (5)

According to Keynes, the postwar dream of the British — that they might finally turn their back on Europe and her problems — is as dangerous as it is wrongheaded since there is little hope that the British would remain unaffected by the economic collapse of Europe or the recommencement of war. After a year at the Conference of Paris, Keynes argues that any attentive Englishman was "bound to become [...] a European in his cares and outlook" (5).

Keynes' emphasis on England's special relationship to "the solidarity of the European family" mirrors the attempt made by the literary baroque movement to accentuate the weave of influence that bound seventeenth-century English literature with its European counterparts (Keynes 285). Returning home from the Paris Conference in 1919, upset by his lack of influence, Keynes concluded his *Economic Consequences of the Peace* with this bleak assessment of postwar culture: "Never in the lifetime of men now living has the universal element in the soul of man burnt so dimly" (297). In his "Meditation 17" (1624), Donne famously depicted this "universal element in the soul of man" in the very figure of continental Europe that Keynes admonishes the British for having turned their back upon. Donne writes: "No man is an island; entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less" (113). The British refusal to engage the literary baroque and read Donne and his fellow metaphysical poets as "part of the main" of seventeenth-century European literature is symptomatic of the same nationalist instincts that Keynes found eroding British economic policy. In 1922, Alexander Shand will accrue these various symptoms to diagnose postwar Britain with a pandemic case of "Suspicion."

In the *British Journal of Psychology*, Shand describes Suspicion as a rarely studied condition that is most prominent "in times of war and social disorder" (195). According to Shand, Suspicion infects society like a contagious pathogen, "spread[ing] from one person to

others in a social group or class, or in the nation at large, by suggestion, in response to prevalent social conditions [... as] in the great war men watched suspiciously the aliens from enemy countries in their midst" (195). Shand traces the early symptoms of postwar Suspicion back to the prewar armament and the wartime internment of foreign nationals. Now that the war is over, Shand worries that Britain has its Suspicion still.

Shand argues that Suspicion can be detrimental to both its individual host and the culture in which it is manifest. On the individual level, Suspicion "inclines [one] to imagine evil [...] disposing one to hatred instead of love" (196-7). The suspicious individual is thus prevented from either practicing Christian ethics or entering into the prospective economic ventures upon which capitalism relies. When Suspicion spreads throughout a culture, Shand argues, it "destroys social intercourse [...] and paralyzes the life of the community which reposes on some degree of confidence between its members" (196). The untwining of social trust leaves each member in an infernal state of attention. Shand quotes Shakespeare, "suspicions all our lives shall be stuck full of eyes" to develop an image of the suspicious person that resembles the giant from Greek mythology, Argus Panoptes, who is forced to keep one eye eternally open to guard against the threat that, at any moment, might be mounting just beyond the horizon (198).

If Suspicion often leads to a pathological sense of distrust, Shand argues that it is not necessarily born out of an irrational assessment of one's social conditions. After delineating the various threats posed by the economic and political instability of an increasingly interconnected world, Shand concludes that the twentieth-century pandemic of Suspicion reflects the greater uncertainty of modern times. Suspicion can thus be helpful in promoting a general state of preparedness "to prevent our being taken by surprise" (199). According to Shand, Suspicion is comprised not only of anger and fear, but also a sense of curiosity that compels us to better

understand potential threats and measure the various responses they might require. In its interpretive nature, Suspicion thus resembles Keats negative capability, which allows one to remain indefinitely suspended in a state of uncertainty, allowing contradictory possibilities to continually hum unresolved.

In *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Rita Felski argues that the Suspicion that permeated the first half of the twentieth century had a major impact on the development of literary criticism. Citing Shand's 1922 "Suspicion" article, Felski identifies in the Great War era a historical inflection point in which a "*vernacular suspicion*" spreads throughout European culture (43). While the intellectual forebears of modern critique are traced back through Ricour's "masters of suspicion" (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) to Descartes and Kant, Felski argues that it is not until "the chaotic upheavals and tumultuous violence that mark the dawn of the twentieth century" that suspicion went global (43). After the propaganda, violence, and disillusionment of the Great War, Felski writes, "individuals do not need to consult Freud or pore over Nietzsche" to develop a keen sense of suspicion (43).

In *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell sees the wartime culture of suspicion reflected in the pervasive irony in postwar literature. In *A War Imagined* (1991), Samuel Hynes similarly attributes the rise of satire to wartime suspicions, arguing that satire was "the spirit of the post-war years" (Hynes 397). Through both irony and satire, the marginalized and oppositional voice entered mainstream British literature, introducing an anger and bitterness to literary discourse that accentuated the various social divisions that defined postwar culture, separating the old from the young, the rich from the poor, and women from men. Felski augments Fussell and Hynes' study of postwar literature by noting how the culture of suspicion influenced "high" modernist formal experimentation as well. Felski writes:

In the experimental ferment known as modernism, writers are drawn to formal devices that systematically block readers from taking words at face value. Suspicion is not merely a matter of content or theme, manifest in the jaundiced perspectives of solipsistic narrators or misanthropic characters. Rather, it is also triggered in readers via the properties of the literary medium. Opening a book, they are confronted with an array of perplexing or contradictory signals that require intensive acts of deciphering. Readers are forced to read against the grain of the text, to question motives and cast around for concealed clues. Suspicion and interpretive unease, as Margot Norris notes apropos of James Joyce, are actively provoked by literary texts rather than being imposed on literary texts. (42)

In modernist narrative devices, Felski identifies both the reflection of wartime suspicion and the seeds out of which postmodern theory would later sprout. Felski argues that, "suspicious readers are preceded and often schooled by suspicious writers. Indeed, much of what has counted as theory in recent decades riffs off, revises, and extends the classic themes of literary and artistic modernism" (42). According to Felski, the suspicion Shand first identified in wartime British culture has since been institutionalized by literary modernism and postmodern literary theory in turn.

Felski's study of suspicion in early twentieth-century culture is one part of her larger archeology of modern literary studies. It is the suspicion that permeates twenty-first century literary criticism that most interests Felski, who seeks to delineate the benefits and limitations associated with the predominant hermeneutics of suspicion. The major justification for critique, Felski writes, "is the political claim to come 'from below,' to be a conduit for the interests of the downtrodden and oppressed" (45). Suspicion provides readers from the social margins a form of

resistance to the power structures that help shape both the text and the society in which it was produced.

The problems associated with critique, Felski argues, are based in the unquestioned assumption that critique is always ethically and intellectually more rigorous than all other forms of interpretation. Bruno Latour drew attention to critique's underlying ambivalence in his 2004 "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?" (2004). Studying the rhetoric of internet conspiracy theorists and climate change skeptics, Latour finds that the same critical approach he champions can also be employed to undermine the scientific research and ethics that might unite humanity in working to protect our shared planet. Writing at the moment in which his arguments for the social construction of knowledge are being echoed throughout America's graduate programs, Latour begins to contemplate the negative side-effects of the doctrine that "there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, [and] that we are always prisoners of language" (Latour 226). The problem with critique, Latour argues, is that it is usually only employed on beliefs and objects that the critic doesn't like or doesn't believe in the first place. When critique is used to simply debunk other people's fetishes, it only serves to deepen the divide separating people with different cultural practices or people who profess different beliefs.

Focusing in particular on literary studies, Felski argues that an overreliance on critique restricts a critic's interpretative range, leaving her without a vocabulary to explain what compels her in a text or why certain texts produce pleasures that others cannot. In the end, Felski commends Bruno Latour, Eve Sedgwick, and Donna Harroway for developing "postcritical" approaches to literary studies that retain the close eye of suspicion without the "reflex negativity" that too often plagues modern critique (186). Assuming a more pragmatic approach, Felski

presents critique as an ambivalent tool that can be used to great effect, but the value of which cannot be disassociated from the purposes to which it is being applied.

Where Felski is primarily focused on the influence suspicion exerts on twenty-first-century literary culture, this chapter has argued that the "social form of Suspicion" Shand identified in 1922 also shaped the literary criticism of the 1920s (Shand 195). Studying the influence the war and the culture of suspicion had on postwar scholarship can be difficult, however, due to the subtle means by which this influence is manifest. Rather than isolating a representative work of British criticism, this chapter has studied the absence of such a work, noting how the most influential critical movement to emerge from the war was silently passed over in England. Having delineated the theoretical and social factors contributing to the baroque taboo in Britain, a final word might be said on the taboo's larger impact on twentieth-century British criticism. Since it can be difficult to weigh an absence, the advantages of the literary baroque might be recapitulated in one final example.

In a series of essays written during the 1920s, the American Morris Croll applied the framework of the literary baroque to study how seventeenth-century European literature both shaped and was shaped by its socio-historical matrix. Croll studies literary form as an index of larger social change, suggesting a middle path between the formalist and historicist binary that would come to define twentieth-century criticism.

Croll's efforts to excavate the social bedding from which the great harvest of seventeenth-century literature developed, from the self-reflection of Montaigne to the scientific deliberations of Bacon, were first presented in his 1914 article, "Juste Lipse et la Mouvement Anticicéronien." Croll's general argument is that the great expansion of literary expression that takes place across Europe and England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century is predicated on a

first shift in rhetoric. In the Anti-Ciceronian movement of the 1570s, Croll locates the epicenter of a seismic shift in modern thought in the seemingly innocuous decision by scholars like Lipse to replace Cicero with Seneca as his rhetorical model. Croll's argues that the development of new literary styles and new modes of thought do not require the discovery of some radically new approach, but often come about through the return to a neglected rhetorical model from the past.

Croll's thesis, that modernist literary movements are often rooted in neglected traditions of old, is adopted by Michael North in his study of the modernist literature that was contemporaneous to Croll's scholarship. In *Novelty: A History of the New* (2013), North finds that even the definitive modernist injunction, "make it new," is itself a product of historical rehabilitation. Our modern understanding of the phrase as a foundational call to arms for early twentieth-century artists to definitively break with the past, North explains, was not developed by the artists of the early twentieth-century themselves, but by the critics of the 1950s. The phrase was first associated with modernist poetic innovations in a 1957 article by Northrop Frye. While Ezra Pound had variously applied the phrase, he did not associate it with his original poetry, but with his work as a translator. Pound derived his famous phrase from the French, "*fais-le de nouveau*," which was in turn a translation of a character inscribed on the washbasin of a Chinese king from the eighteenth-century BCE (North 164). Pound first includes the phrase, alongside the original Chinese character from which it was derived, in his 1928 translation, *Ta Hio*. Pound then uses the phrase as a title for a 1934 collection of essays on the Provençal troubadours before reimagining the Chinese character from which "make it new" originated as a hatchet, which in his 1935 *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* he associates with the Fascist axe that promises to clear the cultural field for the advent of the new (170). In the end, North argues, the

genealogy of "make it new" reflects Pound's idiosyncratic method of historical appropriation while writing the *Cantos* more than it does any general call for an absolute break with the past.

What is occluded by the rupture narrative of modernism is how breaking with one tradition often serves to more closely align an artist with an alternative tradition. For instance, when Eliot and Woolf wish to break with their Edwardian forbearers, they each cite John Donne as a model for their new style. In *The Second Common Reader*, Woolf identifies in Donne the same impressionist instinct that she lauds in her famous essay, "Modern Fiction." She describes Donne as "a bold and active mind that loves to deal with actual things, which struggles to express each shock exactly as it impinges upon his tight-stretched senses" (27). Where Woolf finds in Donne the sense of shock that so often defines postwar literature and culture, Eliot finds in Donne the fragmentation of his own modern life that is reflected in his own modern verse. In his 1927 lecture "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," Eliot describes his impressions of Donne's thought:

I found it quite impossible to come to the conclusion that Donne believed anything. It seemed as if, at that time, the world was filled with broken fragments of systems, and that a man like Donne merely picked up, like a magpie, various shining fragments of ideas as they struck his eye, and stuck them about here and there in his verse. (*ECP III* 254-5)

The link between the British modernists and their seventeenth-century models has been subject of increasing attention over the past twenty years (Greene 1999, Hinojosa 2009, Matthews 2013). In *Shakespeare among the Moderns* (1997), Richard Halpern theorizes that the special appeal of Renaissance literature for the modernists was that it alone could provide "a sufficiently dark reflection of [their] own catastrophes" (9). If the British did not identify their seventeenth-century predecessors as "baroque" like their Continental counterparts, they certainly did

participate in the general adaptation of early modern rhetorical models to create a distinctly modernist aesthetic for the early twentieth century.

At the same time Eliot and Woolf were returning to early modernists like Donne, Chapman, and Browne for inspiration, Croll was studying how these early modern writers were bypassing Cicero and returning to the neglected writers of the Roman Silver Age: Seneca, Tacitus, and Pliny, to develop their own modernist style. In *Ciceronianus* (1528), Erasmus praised the pointed "Attic" style for being more conducive to scientific and philosophical thought than the copiously rounded Ciceronian period. Muret, who practiced law, noted how cumbersome the strictures of Ciceronian rhetoric had become after the machinations of both the law and politics were moved out of the public square in which Ciceronian rhetoric was originally developed and into back rooms that called for a less ceremonious style (Croll 64).

Along with the virtues of brevity, the Anti-Ciceronians also began experimenting with the more expansive rhetoric of obscurity they found in a recuperated Tacitus, the *prince des ténèbres* (Croll 153). The potential virtues of dissonance, excess, and obscurity were explored during the seventeenth century by a wide range of writers, including in England Chapman, Browne, Donne, Bacon, and Jonson.

The importance of the literary baroque in the development of Croll's scholarship becomes most apparent in his 1923 essay, "Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon." After locating in early modern literature a bifurcation in Anti-Ciceronian rhetoric, Croll encountered a problem with his terminology. To describe the more curt style, Croll had adopted the term "Attic" from Erasmus, which was widely celebrated as a catalyst for the scientific revolution, as it cut away the formal requirements that prevented a direct treatment of the thing under observation. Croll's adoption of the term "Attic," however, led him to also employ its counterpart, "Asiatic," to

describe writers who averted the symmetry of the Ciceronian period through expansion rather than contraction. The problem with using the term "Asiatic" (besides the off-putting racial undertones it presents to the modern reader) is that the term has since Ancient Greece been used in a categorically negative manner. Employing the Attic/Asiatic binary, Croll cannot avoid dredging up the centuries worth of value judgments that he now wishes to dispel. Applying the term "Asiatic" prevents Croll from fully exploring the mysterious appeal he finds in the more digressive writings of Burton and the letters of Donne.

Croll finds his way out of this dilemma by turning to the baroque. At the end of his essay "Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon" (1923), Croll expresses his exasperation with all the terms currently available to describe early modern literature in English. Besides the insufficiencies of Attic, Asiatic, and libertine, he also derides the English alternative, metaphysical, as hopelessly vague before considering the advantages of "the baroque style in prose" (201). Once the Asiatic and Attic qualities of early modern literature were brought under the common umbrella of the baroque, Croll found it to be much easier to delineate the advantages of the more copious style. By stretching the Ciceronian period, early modernists were able to more easily track the elusive wanderings of their own thought. It is no accident, Croll argues, that the seventeenth century produced such a remarkable gallery of "*peintures de la pensée*" from writers like Montaigne, Burton, Donne, and Shakespeare (Croll 210). Since human thought lacks the rounded character of the Ciceronian period, it was only after the strictures of Ciceronian rhetoric were loosened that English prose could more accurately trace the vacillations of thought as they are deftly described by Northrop Frye, "stumbling through emotional entanglements, sudden irrational convictions, involuntary gleams of insight, rationalized prejudices, and blocks of panic and inertia, finally to reach a completely incommunicable

intuition" (Frye 76). What makes seventeenth-century prose so lively, according to Croll, is the writer's ability to investigate this tangle without continually having to check for the rhetorical mode of egress prescribed by the Ciceronian period.

With the literary baroque, Croll could also bypass the nationalist restrictions associated with the "metaphysical" tradition to note how the stylistic similarities between writers like Montaigne, Burton, and Donne were not incidental, but the product of a common return to Silver Age writers such as Tacitus. According to Croll, the distinctly British seventeenth-century tradition touted by his English contemporaries reflects more the isolationist tendency in twentieth-century criticism than the realities of seventeenth-century Europe, in which the literatures of the various nations were bound through the common influence of the Latin tradition. As Croll notes, it was only late in the sixteenth century that the vernacular displaced Latin as the language for all serious modern thought, not only in Europe but in England as well. The stylistic similarities in seventeenth-century prose, poetry, and drama that were the subject of so much interest after the Great War, Croll argues, were largely based in a shared European heritage that was rooted in a common engagement with Latin texts.

Read as a whole, Croll's essays provide a model for how a close reading of a prose style can inform one's understanding of the social systems in which that style developed. Croll's historically based study of literary form serves in this way to reaffirm Roland Barthes adage from *Mythologies*, "that a little formalism turns one away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it" (112). The reason formalism has come to represent a reactionary dismissal of history in twenty-first-century criticism is the subject of Richard Strier's "How Formalism Became a Dirty Word" (2002). Strier distinguishes two distinct strands of formalism developed in the middle of the twentieth century. The prevailing strand Strier refers to as the "aesthetic

formalism" that is associated with Cleanth Brooks and the New Critics, who sought to study literary form at the exclusion of everything else. The other, less influential, strand of formalism Strier associates with Croll, Aurbach, and Spitzer. Strier refers to this more socially integrated formalism as "indexical formalism," which is based in the belief "that formal features of a text, matters of style, can be indices to larger intellectual and cultural matters" (Strier 211). The fact that formalism is a dirty word in the twenty-first century Strier attributes to the great success of the New Critics to shape formalism in the public imagination as a single purpose tool used for severing a given text from all its surrounding context.

In 1956, T. S. Eliot was already warning against the excesses of the New Criticism he had been credited with institutionalizing. In the "Frontiers of Criticism," Eliot describes the odd feeling of reading a New Critical handling of one of his own poems. While Eliot concedes that it is perfectly natural for a poem to invoke different responses in different readers, what distinguishes the New Critic is the insistence that his interpretation is the only true one, being derived entirely from a scientific handling of the text itself. Eliot dubs the practitioners of this approach "the lemon-squeezer school of criticism," for their tendency to work "without reference to the author or to his other work, [to] analyze stanza by stanza and line by line, and extract, squeeze, tease, press every drop of meaning out of it that one can" (*ECP III* 537). In the effort to eliminate all spurious explanations, however, Eliot finds that this approach threatens to explain away any pleasure a poem might have originally produced as well.

According to Strier, it was the de-historicized approach of the New Critics that made the study of a text's literary form or social context a wedge issue in literary studies. The extended impact this quarrel has had on Anglo-American literary criticism can be seen in Felski's continued pleading, as late as 2015: "No more separate spheres!" (*Limits of Critique* 11). As

critics continue to argue for the primacy of either literary form or social history in the twenty-first century, Strier directs attention to the alternative history of twentieth-century formalist studies in the work of Croll, Auerbach, and Spitzer. The advantages of "indexical" formalism is that it does not demand the critic to adjudicate between Frederic Jameson's injunction that we "Always historicize!" and Martin Puchner's counter-injunction that we "Always formalize" (Jameson ix, Puchner 93). When reading Croll, one sees how questions of form and history are hopelessly entwined.

Felski's call that we break through the aesthetic formalism versus socially-engaged critique binary to explore "postcritical" possibilities has gained considerable support recently, evidenced in the compelling forum on *The Limits of Critique* in the March 2017 *PMLA*. At this particular moment, as Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* passes its centennial, the special advantages of the literary baroque might be reconsidered. Working out of a strict formalist structure, Wölfflin came to assert that "not everything is possible at all times," and that the formal limits established in an artwork can provide an important index of the historical moment in which those limits were imposed (*PAH* 80). In the example of the baroque taboo in postwar Britain, this chapter has displayed how Wölfflin's general argument about the historical contingency of aesthetic perception can be applied to the work of criticism as well as to the work of art. In the literary baroque, the hopes of interwar Europe are reflected alongside its suspicions, as critics from across the belligerent countries worked together to reconstruct the web of mutual influence that bound seventeenth-century European literature, producing a counter-image to a Continent riddled and scarred by trench warfare. If the baroque had little impact on Anglo-American criticism after the Great War, one hundred years later it might still serve as a model for those searching for a more generous approach to literary studies. As the modernists

revived the early modernists of the seventeenth century, who in turn revived the authors of the Silver Age to develop their own distinct style, modern critics searching for a new postcritical approach might benefit from returning to our own neglected tradition, the literary baroque, to develop a socially-engaged criticism that is not so firmly rooted in distrust and suspicion.

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