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Words like Fire:
Prophecy, Apocalypse, and the Avant-Garde
in Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound

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PhD in Comparative Literature

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Declaration

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

The early twentieth-century avant-garde has cast a long shadow over the popular imagination as producers of manifestos, public scandals, and some of the most enduring art and literature of the last century. In this study, I examine the works of three poets who are not only considered leading avant-gardists, but who are foundational to how both popular consciousness and academic scholarship have understood the avant-garde's theory and practice: Guillaume Apollinaire, F. T. Marinetti, and Ezra Pound. In particular, this study focuses on the recurring themes of prophecy and apocalypse in their work. These themes occur through reference to prophetic and apocalyptic literary or mythical figures, but also through stylistic innovations such as the use of literary personae or the attempt to synthesise diverse artistic forms. Focusing on these themes allows this study to re-engage the question of how these poets, and the avant-garde more broadly, regarded their practice as a social act. Using a comparative methodology in this thesis, prophecy is viewed not simply as a declamatory literary style that foretells the future, but as a particular kind of social relationship to an audience that is at turns mutually supportive and antagonistic. Similarly, apocalyptic thought is presented not merely as an expectation or belief in the end of the world, but as a specific method of imagining a new world that is, in spite of itself, dependent upon the social world of the present.

Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound were major figures in the so-called 'Pre-war Avant-Garde' having established their reputations in the decade prior to World War I. While they each began formulating and proclaiming their views on aesthetics prior to the war, the experience of war had a profound impact on all three. Accordingly, this thesis examines a number of poems from Apollinaire's two major collections: *Alcools* (1913) and *Calligrammes* (1918), the latter containing significant reflections on avant-gardism and war. Marinetti acted as a journalist in the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-1912, which inspired the work central to this study: his Futurist novel-in-verse *Le Monoplan du Pape* (1912). Pound, unlike Apollinaire and Marinetti, did not participate in World War I, and this study explores his sequence *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), a long rumination on art, war, and his engagement with Imagism and Vorticism, but also analyses poems from his collections *Personae* (1908), *Ripostes* (1912), and *Lustra* (1916). This study examines how the acute crisis of the war pressed each of these poets to reconsider their view of the poet-as-prophet in society. In doing so it explores the ethical or political implications of avant-garde aesthetics influenced by and as a response to war.

This study also closely compares these poets' works to the biblical literature from which they frequently derived prophetic and apocalyptic themes. Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound's relationship to religion, particularly Christianity, spanned from ambivalence to hostility, but they

each engage biblical literature in unique and unorthodox ways. While these poets all sought to be identifiably modern, this study demonstrates the ways in which they attempted to recover values from biblical literature that each felt was necessary to establish the independence and autonomy of contemporary art and literature. Therefore, this study's comparative framework is intended to engage the conversation over the spiritual, religious, or transcendent values to which avant-garde art aspired. And drawing significantly from the social theories of art, religion, and culture developed by Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, this thesis contributes to the study of avant-gardism as a social, as well as aesthetic, phenomenon.

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Abbreviations

CEP – Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres Poétiques*

CEPCI-III – Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvre en proses complètes, vols. I-III*

MP – F. T. Marinetti, *Le Monoplan du Pape*

CEP – Ezra Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*

P – Ezra Pound, *Personæ: The Collected Shorter Poems*

*What ciphers risen from prophetic script,
 What marathons new-set between the stars!*
 – Hart Crane, *Cape Hatteras*

*...je voulais être tantôt pape,
 mais pape militaire, tantôt comédien.*
 – Charles Baudelaire, *Mon Cœur Mis à Nu*

*By midnight, I am almost asleep, almost ready
 To dream again of our common disaster,
 ...
 Time to reinvent humanity, I am thinking*
 – T. R. Hummer, *The End of History*

*'Is not my word like fire?' says the Lord,
 'and like a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces?'*
 – Jeremiah 23:29

Introduction

Prophecy, Apocalypse, and Modernity

The themes of prophecy and apocalypse have provided a wealth of images and attitudes for the arts and for those artists who have felt as though their values were at variance with the world around them. Poets in particular have felt bolstered by the characterisation of their craft as a form of prophecy that envisioned a new world just over the horizon, the restoration of a lost paradise, or a divine judgement. With the technological, philosophical, and scientific developments that accompanied the arrival of the 20th century, poets and artists recognised a renewed sense of anxiety over the values and traditions potentially being threatened, or optimism at the possibilities offered to art and culture. This study examines how three poets from a very particular moment in the modernist period were served by the themes and styles presented by prophetic and apocalyptic thought and genres of poetry and literature. They are Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) in France, F. T. Marinetti (1876-1944) in Italy, and Ezra Pound (1885-1972) in England, three poets who were instigators of the common cultural project broadly known as avant-gardism. This project, as the most experimental and polemical subset of early twentieth-century modernism, existed at a 'self-conscious and heroic' extreme whose 'cornerstones' contained a 'revolutionary ethos'.¹ While initially emphasising the nihilistic, destructive element of the avant-garde, Matei Calinescu also describes its 'sense of self-assertion' and goes on to suggest that the general attitude of the avant-garde was destruction for the sake of creating something radically new.² Drawn from military terminology, which denotes a small group that proceeds into enemy territory before the main force, 'avant-garde' also carries connotations of exploration, conquest, and invasion of new and potentially hostile spaces. In order to justify or bolster these acts of uncovering the new, avant-gardists, and poets in particular, were inclined to adopt a prophetic tone condemning the present world or maintaining unjustified optimism for the future. Beginning around the mid-nineteenth century, advances in industrial and communications technology, and developments in philosophy, religion, and science challenged traditional ethics, morals, and epistemologies. The subsequent strengthening of social individuality on the one hand, and nationalism and mass politics on the other, prompted a re-evaluation of the status of art and the artist in society.

The avant-garde operated on the basis that the modern world had to be confronted and challenged by the artist instead of letting art remain in a solipsistic or exclusivist idealism that detached itself from the world through sheer imagination – a state that Marinetti (somewhat

¹ Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 95.

² *Ibid.*, 96.

unjustly) called 'les réservoirs du Romantisme' (*MP*, 72). For some avant-gardists, it meant that the poet was destined to prophesy what was 'to come'; for others, the poet was meant to champion older values that the modern world seemed to be in the process of obliterating. In either case, this stance confronted two sources of tension. The first was between history, as the accumulation of the past, and tradition, as a selective and transcendent value or practice existing across history. The second source of tension was between the future and present daily life, the latter being increasingly ordered, rationalised, and predictable. These two tensions, raised the question of the nature of the future: would it be a grand advent of a world so radically new that it was impossible to contemplate, the rebirth of tradition in modern form, or would it be T. S. Eliot's 'Not with a bang but a whimper'?³ For the view of the future that each poet took was intimately related to their diagnosis of the state of the present society and its potential to embrace the developments of modernity. More pessimistic views suggested a poet documenting the decline of a world that does not necessarily deserve to be redeemed. More optimistic poets and thinkers uncovered the potential for revolutionary change in the increasingly mechanised repetition of daily life. Finally, what was the role of the poet and poetry in the modern society? Was modern poetry meant to goad the world into the new age or was the world a lost cause, doomed to be cast about by the ebb and flow of politics, industrialisation, or culture while the poet lamented society's fate?

The themes of prophecy and apocalypse might have given the speaker a sense of otherness or distinction at a time when crowds, nations, and classes were asserting themselves in the political, cultural, and economic spheres. Furthermore, capitalist production and increases in middle-class wealth and culture advanced the possibility of art catering itself to the mass rather than the connoisseur. I am suggesting that the discourse of prophecy gave poets a sense that their practice was set apart from or set against the normal language and practice of their contemporaries; and the language of apocalypse gave them the sense that they were envisioning, and possibly helping to instigate, a new era in which the appropriate values might reign. What gives prophecy and apocalypse this power is that both assume that something more than what could be 'plainly' experienced is at work in the world, even if it cannot be known through empirical or sensory means. Walt Whitman used the language of prophecy to proclaim in *Leaves of Grass* the cultural – even utopian – possibilities of a rapidly industrialising America:

As in a waking vision,
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy outside and in,
Its manifold ensemble.⁴

The poetic vision had the ability to uncover a hidden reality in the world precisely because the vision revealed that the world was not straightforward, but a 'manifold ensemble' that could only

³ T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1963), 82.

⁴ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 249.

be truly comprehended with the totalising sight of the prophet. Rimbaud seemed to have a similar idea in his discussion of the poet as a ‘seer’ in a famous letter to his friend Paul Demeny (15 May 1871): ‘Le Poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné *dérèglement de tous les sens*. Toutes les formes d’amour, de souffrance, de folie; il cherche lui-même, il épuise en lui tous les poisons, pour n’en garder que les quintessences. Ineffable torture où il a besoin de toute la foi, de toute la force surhumaine, où il devient entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit, – et le suprême Savant! – Car il arrive à l’inconnu!’⁵ In both cases, the prophet is set apart: Whitman is distinguished by his extreme, almost pantheistic, commonality not just with the people around him, but also with nature, faiths, and time, culminating in statements such as ‘I am large, I contain multitudes’.⁶ What sets him apart is that he is more ‘in touch’ with, and a ‘truer’ representation of, the American national spirit as he sees it. On the other hand, Rimbaud’s seer-poet is an outlaw figure, subverting the dominant paradigms of morality and perception – there is no ‘spirit’ other than his own with which he could be aligned.

But in the period covered in this study, the language of prophecy and apocalypse was abetted by developments in art and technology, as well as the trend of conceiving aesthetic movements in terms similar to political parties, with all of the attendant activity of platforms, rivalries, and propaganda. This was the period of sectarian ‘isms’, polemical manifestos, and renewed attempts to dissolve the definitions and practices of art into a maelstrom of aesthetic activity and bohemian arts of living. Likewise, there was a renewed interest in the collective identity and practice of groups defined by aesthetic styles and programmes. Avant-garde manifestos frequently adopted the language of a ‘we’ to ‘make a persuasive move from the “I believe” of the speaker toward the “you” of the listener or the reader, who should be sufficiently convinced to join in.’⁷ Much of the poetry examined in this study explores the questions of who a poet is, what poetry should say and to whom, and how a poem should exist in the modern world. The image of a poet isolated and alienated from society was no longer considered adequate for modern verse. The avant-garde was constantly engaged in attempts to assert the value of art and the wisdom of the artist in the broader spheres of politics, economics, or religion, while simultaneously attempting to retain art’s integrity.⁸ In this sense, this study looks at prophecy and

⁵ Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Antoine Adam (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 251.

⁶ Whitman, *Leaves*, 133.

⁷ Mary Ann Caws, ‘The Poetics of the Manifesto: Nowness and Newness’, in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xx.

⁸ While avant-gardists of this period tended to look askance upon Romanticism, Renato Poggioli argues that Romanticism and avant-gardism had a much more complicated relationship. In particular, the acceptance by both movements of unpopularity and obscurity had a political dimension insofar as both ‘romantic art and avant-garde art are aristocracies subsisting and surviving in the democratic, or at least the demagogic, era’ (Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 52).

apocalypse not simply as rhetoric that the poet employed in various ways, but also in the way that such rhetoric informed, and was informed by, the social behaviour of artistic communities.

What this study seeks to do as well is examine the continued relevance of religious thought in a period, and among literary and artistic groups, that openly proclaimed their suspicion of traditional or orthodox religion, even as it also marked its scepticism of the secular, rationalist thought derived from the Enlightenment. Greek, Roman, and biblical literature provided much of the source material for prophetic and apocalyptic themes. The modernist period of art and literature often engages with the former more explicitly than the latter. For example, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is an obvious example, but Apollinaire's fascination with the Greek figure of Orpheus is more germane to the use of Greco-Roman mythology for a prophetic figure. Given the frequent (although not, as I will show, total) rejection of Christian thought, perhaps Greco-Roman mythology behaved as a kind of refuge from the doctrines of orthodox or everyday religious practices. But biblical literature was often in the background (and sometimes in the foreground) of these writers' aesthetics. Was this because they found aesthetic or moral practices in the Bible that could be used in contradistinction to the Judeo-Christian religion they felt stifled modern culture? Or, was it because, despite their best efforts, biblical myths of prophecy and apocalypse were too ingrained in Western society for these poets to simply discard? As Northrop Frye argues, the Bible provides 'mythical structures' that 'give shape to the metaphors and rhetoric of later types of structure',⁹ be those later structures social, historical, cultural, and so forth. A poet who presented himself¹⁰ as prophetic could not get very far without drawing (consciously or unconsciously) from Moses, Jeremiah, Daniel, or Jesus. Avant-garde art and literature, as implied by the term itself, can be defined by the self-consciousness of being modern, of having a sense of coming from somewhere historically, culturally, and socially. Many of the new art-forms of the avant-garde were informed by a teleology, by the conviction that the world is *going somewhere*. The Bible might then be among the more fruitful comparisons to make with the literature of the avant-garde because both are suffused with the conviction that, whether or not it can be seen or understood, history is heading in a direction, and providence has sent guides to point the way to the new Jerusalem. The literature of biblical prophecy and apocalypse is therefore as much a

⁹ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 35.

¹⁰ The choice of three male poets may in itself justify the occasionally exclusive use of the masculine pronoun when referring to the stance of prophet/poet generally. But as I will examine in the following chapters, the prophetic stance amongst these poets frequently took on a deeply chauvinistic tone, where the masculinised poet/prophet is juxtaposed to a feminised bourgeois culture. Examining the prophetic and apocalyptic thought or influences of female modernist and avant-garde poets such as H. D., Mina Loy, or Laura Riding, or female futurists such as Benedetta, would be a very worthwhile study, but one that lies outside the bounds of the current study.

methodological choice as it is a thematic one. The poets examined in this study drew from a much wider collection of sources than the bible – certainly wider than this study is adequately able to cover. But part of the motivation for this study is to examine the continued relevance of biblical literature among poets who clearly were ambivalent about its legacy.

Literature Review

In studies on the relationship of prophecy to the avant-garde or particular avant-gardists, the terminology of prophecy is frequently presented as a particular declamatory stance by the poet or as the act of prediction. While not neglecting these prior definitions, this study seeks to focus on prophecy and apocalypse as literary genres that speak to specialised modes of social engagement. Tatiana Cescutti's extensive work on Marinetti's transition from Symbolism to Futurism provides one exception to the understanding of prophecy as a declamatory tone or act of prediction. Describing his early epic poem *La Conquête des étoiles* (1902) as 'prophético-initiatique', Cescutti describes prophecy as the visionary revelation of an allegory of artistic creation.¹¹ She engages the concept of the poet-prophet in her discussion of this work, which is rich with comparisons to biblical prophecy and apocalypse, and her work furnishes a good account of how biblical literature supplies not only material, but literary structures to which Marinetti appeals. But this discussion of the poet-prophet ultimately constitutes a small portion of a very wide-ranging work on Marinetti's early poetry. Another exception is Louis Martz's work on prophecy in English modernism, which examines the works of Pound, T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) (1886-1961), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930).¹² While Martz's definition of a prophet as a mediator is highly fruitful, and also contains research specifically in reference to biblical literature, Martz's account leaves aside some of the deeper questions of Pound's relationship to religion and the artistic community in which he found himself. In terms of studies of prophecy's relationship to modernist or avant-garde art or literature, there are, to my knowledge, no works of English-language scholarship. In terms of apocalypse, however, Jane Goldman's *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* provides an overview of modernist English literature that locates an apocalyptic sensibility in this literature's relationship to the image. Goldman defines apocalypse as 'a non-linear, revelatory response to image, where a kind of instantaneous, epiphanic reading occurs in an intense moment of lyric

¹¹ Tatiana Cescutti, *Les Origines Mythiques du futurisme: Marinetti, poète symboliste (1902-1908)* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), 26.

¹² Louis L. Martz, *Many Gods and Many Voices: The Role of the Prophet in English and American Modernism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

aestheticism or subjective introspection.¹³ While apocalyptic literature certainly can involve revelation and epiphany this definition is not specifically connected to biblical literature.

There are a few works that address the relationship of the Bible to modernist or avant-garde literature by treating biblical literature as a well-spring of images and metaphors for authors to draw from at will. Northrop Frye's *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, for example, represents a very advanced study of the mythic structures and typologies supplied by the Bible and through which Western literature and culture are processed. While *The Great Code* is a very valuable contribution to the study of the Bible as literature, it is mainly inclined toward developing a more general literary theory of the Bible and leaves little room for extended, concrete case-studies on how particular authors engaged the Bible more on their own terms. Robert Alter's *Canon and Creativity: Modern Writing and The Authority of Scripture*, on the other hand, does make an effort to engage with specific writers of the modernist period, specifically Franz Kafka (1883-1924), the Jewish poet Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934), and James Joyce (1882-1941). Alter's discussion of canonicity as both cultural resource and locus of rebellion is enlightening but he draws from a wider range of biblical traditions than this study. Furthermore, while Alter draws his subjects from the modernist period, his work is not intended to be a study of modernism or modernist writing. There are no comparative studies specifically related to the Bible and either Marinetti or Pound, but Robert Couffignal published a study of Apollinaire and the Bible in 1966 entitled *L'Inspiration Biblique dans l'œuvre de Guillaume Apollinaire*. Couffignal's work is a wealth of allusions to the Bible found in Apollinaire's poetry and prose works, much of which extends beyond prophetic and apocalyptic literature. It also describes Apollinaire's fraught relationship with his Catholic upbringing. However, for this study, a stronger definition of prophecy and apocalypse are required both to examine the role the Bible played in structuring how Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound presented these themes, and to understand how these themes related to the wider artistic context of these authors and their works.

Prophecy

Prophets are popularly regarded in terms of their utter uniqueness or total separation from the society around them, or by their predictions of the future. Apollinaire may have been recalling Numbers 11:29, where Moses wishes that 'all the Lord's people were prophets', when he wrote in 'Sur les Prophéties' (1914) that 'Tout le monde est prophète', but he was also being knowingly provocative – surely not *everybody* can be a prophet, for prophets are, by definition, separated from the general population (a sentiment echoed in the biblical story). But the truth

¹³ Jane Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse*, (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11.

might, at one time, have been closer to Apollinaire's quip than he knew. In the ancient Near East, prophets were not uncommon, and ancient texts from Egypt to Mesopotamia abound with stories, anecdotes, and legal documents that make reference to various kinds of prophetic figures. The book of Deuteronomy, with its prescriptions on how to know if a prophet is true or false (Deut. 18:15-22), implies that the people of Israel will be confronted with a wide variety of individuals claiming to speak in the name of the divine. And indeed Israel is: Elijah enters into a contest with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah who are in the employ of Queen Jezebel (1 Kgs. 18:19); Jezebel's husband, Ahab, consults about 400 prophets in the decision to go to war (1 Kgs. 22: 6); when King Josiah's royal court, including the temple's high priest, Hilkiah, need to authenticate an apparently religious book, they seek out a prophetess named Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:11); Jeremiah 28 recounts a prophetic dispute between the eponymous prophet who preaches submission to Babylon and a rival, Hananiah, who preaches defiance. Prophets held roles as royal advisers, public representatives, healers, miracles-workers, and diviners of the word of God. In this light, the prophet is a functional vocation within various religious and political institutions.

And yet, the Bible repeatedly locates *the one* prophet who stands above the rest, preaching in spite of the scorn that is frequently heaped upon him for setting himself against powerful institutions. Of the 400 prophets whom Ahab consults, all predict victory for the king, except one Micaiah ben Imlah, whom Ahab dislikes because 'he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster.' (1 Kgs. 22:8). When Ahab's messenger reaches Micaiah, he states that 'the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them' (22:13), to which Micaiah replies, 'whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.' (22:14). Micaiah's singular insistence results in imprisonment for the prophet (22:27), much like Jeremiah's imprisonment in a cistern for preaching against the court of King Zedekiah (Jer. 38:4-6). Frye points out the Bible's determination to focus upon the one true prophet in the midst of cynics and pretenders:

The great majority of prophets, the Old Testament itself makes clear, were well-broken-in functionaries either of the court or of the temple. So it is all the more interesting that the Old Testament should highlight so strongly a number of prophets who spoke out against royal policies and exposed themselves to persecution as a result. [...] the prophet with the authentic message is the man with the unpopular message.¹⁴

This defiance of authority typically casts the figure of the lone prophet in an agonistic light, where he suffers persecution for his devotion to God. In some cases, it may be argued that the Bible's presentation of a single prophet on one side of a conflict and hundreds on the other side is merely literary exaggeration meant to highlight the seemingly insurmountable challenges

¹⁴ Frye, *Great Code*, 126.

confronting God's prophets. In the prophetic contest on Mount Carmel, it is unlikely that 400 is an historically accurate number of Baalist prophets; the point, however, is to emphasise Elijah's isolation and the extent to which Baalist religion had penetrated Israel. Elijah's chances at success seem remote when he laments, 'I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord' (1 Kgs. 18:22), but this serves to underscore the strength of his faith. Among the poets that I examine in this study, this agonistic posture – a poet who clings to an art that is unpopular – is a frequent theme meant to garner credibility by presenting a poet who persists in spite of a dismissive public.

However, the various postures of the prophet do not necessarily tell us what exactly a prophet *is*. Prophets, as foretellers of the future, are certainly one representation of biblical prophecy, although it is debateable to what extent premonition is a central characteristic. Certainly prophets foretell the future, but in the Bible, they do much more than that – they mourn national and personal disasters, they plead for forgiveness for the nation, they sometimes challenge God's justice, they anoint kings and feed widows, and they compose poetry. Biblical scholars who were informed by anthropology took issue with the German sociologist Max Weber's influential thesis that a prophet was defined as a unique, *charismatic* individual that went against the grain of the predominant institutions. 'For Weber, charismatic authority is distinct from traditional authority. [...] the former has no system of abstract rules but involves new demands which frequently break with tradition. The charismatic figure is thus the prophet, who brings a new divine word to challenge the traditional structures of society.'¹⁵ Weber's definition of the prophet will be discussed in more detail below, but other scholars saw the prophet as a mediator between the divine and either the general public or specific privileged groups or individuals.¹⁶ For example, Thomas Overholt proposed: 'Prophets speak for some deity, which necessarily implies that they speak to a particular group of persons. Indeed, we may define *religious intermediation* as a process of communication between the human and the divine spheres in which messages in both directions are "channeled" through one or more individuals who are recognized by others in the society as qualified to perform this function.'¹⁷ This line of research tends to group prophets in with the other sorts of mediators, such as shamans, mediums, magicians, sorcerers, and diviners, but the Bible is reluctant to make that generalisation, and Deuteronomy 18:9-14 makes the unequivocal statement that God's word will be received through prophets and never through any other sort of intermediary. Overholt characterises the Bible's discomfort with other intermediaries in the following way: 'diviners wait to be consulted and rely on mechanical means such as lots to arrive at their message, while prophets come forward at Yahweh's direction and have their message

¹⁵ Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁷ Thomas Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 17.

directly from the deity.¹⁸ The ‘true’ prophet speaks extemporaneously, inspired and compelled by a ‘higher’ power, and unlike other intermediaries, their prophetic craft is not something learned, but granted. This latter characteristic threatens the notion of the prophet’s spontaneous connection with God, reducing that connection to a technical, and therefore possibly transferable, series of skills. This is not to suggest that the transfer of prophetic inspiration did not occur: the tradition of Elijah passing his commission to Elisha is the most notable, but it is exceptional, for as Elijah is miraculously lifted into the sky, the spirit of God passes to his heir (2 Kgs. 2:9-15). Prophecy is typically not represented as a matter of learning and apprenticeship; it is a mark of divine inspiration. But more importantly, the implication of the intermediary waiting for consultation, likely charging for such a service, suggests that an intermediary works at the behest of a client, whereas the true prophet only works for God and is at his or her most ‘prophetic’ when the prophecy is unwanted.

Overholt, in his entry on prophecy in the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* states that ‘prophets were religious intermediaries who functioned at the national level.’¹⁹ The general stance of biblical prophets was to speak on behalf of or against the nation of Israel, even if that speech was directed at the person of the king.²⁰ This is important in the sense that the poets examined in this study have complex and fraught relationships to the nation. Apollinaire and Marinetti tended towards French and Italian nationalism, respectively, though with notably different levels of intensity; Pound is more ambiguous, because he regarded his own native country of America as a cultural and intellectual backwater, but never really found an adoptive home – at least not until his move to Italy and increasing sympathy with Mussolini. His sense of artistic tradition is also notably international as it drew from French, English, Italian, Greek, and Chinese literature, among others. The early European avant-garde, filled as it was with expatriates and refugees, inevitably had conflicted views of the nation, but always attempted to fold the wider fields of politics, economics, war, and nationalism within the boundaries of aesthetics as a transcendent force similar to the prophet recounting Israelite history as a history of God’s salvation.

¹⁸ Thomas Overholt, entry for ‘Prophet, Prophecy’, in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1087.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1086.

²⁰ The Bible rarely makes a clean distinction between the king and the nation. The frequent refrain of ‘He did what was displeasing to the Lord; throughout his days he did not depart from the sins which Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit’ (2 Kgs. 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28) is an indication that the religious practice of the king was reflected in the religious practice of the nation.

Apocalyptic

Apocalypse can be a more problematic term to define because it accompanies a wide variety of religious or non-religious beliefs about the nature of time, history, and justice. Biblical scholars often use the term as short-hand for a cluster of phenomena, but frequently separate it into three categories. The first is ‘apocalypse’ which denotes a genre of visionary literature, named after the Greek term *apokalypsis*, that is broadly concerned with the nature and future fate of the world *as it is currently perceived*. This final caveat is important for my definition as many apocalyptic writings are not so much concerned with the ‘end of the world’, but on the salvation of a particular group at the point of some eschatological moment. In this regard, John J. Collins formulated the following definition of ‘apocalypse’: ‘a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.’²¹ The second category is ‘apocalypticism’, which describes religious practices or beliefs organised around apocalyptic worldviews.²² The third is ‘apocalyptic eschatology’, as a belief in the end of the world, but distinguished from ‘prophetic eschatology’, of which I will say more below. Of the canonical books of the Bible, only Daniel 7-12 and Revelation are included in the genre of apocalypse, but a wide variety of non-canonical writings are often classed within the genre: 1 and 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra, the Sibylline Oracles, 2 and 3 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Testament of Abraham, and many others. I do not intend to suggest that every poem by Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound that I analyse constitutes *an* apocalypse in the sense that Collins defines it, but most demonstrate some aspects of Collins’ definition.

The next complication for discussing apocalypse is parsing the distinction between an apocalyptic belief and an eschatological belief. While we often think of the apocalypse as the end of the world or time, that belief is more specifically eschatological. An eschatological belief can be either religious or secular, an angry god destroying a corrupt world or environmental degradation extinguishing all life on the planet. The nature of that ‘end’ also presents a series of problems, for many eschatologies suggest something beyond that end, whether it be the current social dynamic (and in this sense, Marxism has often been seen as a secularised eschatology) or the physical world itself passing away to a ‘new heaven and new earth’, to take a more literal reading of Isaiah 65:17. In these cases, there is always some reason for hope in the eschatological belief – that after the ‘end’ there is a new beginning. But the fact that there a presumed state of existence beyond the eschatological end does not make that ‘end’ any less total than if we were

²¹ John J. Collins, ‘Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre’, *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9.

²² Paul D. Hanson, entry for ‘Apocalypses and Apocalypticism’, in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 281.

talking about nuclear catastrophe, for the eschatological belief posits the new beginning as so radically different than the current situation, that it cannot be anything less than encompassing the totality of life and history as humanity experiences it. Malcolm Bull makes this very point about the nature of the apocalypse: ‘apocalyptic texts describe a world that grows ever more confusing and may culminate in a new world that is quite unlike the old.’²³ Although, while eschatology and apocalyptic social organisation are distinct beliefs, in practice there is frequent overlap, for it is often suspected that the meaning of history is only revealed at its terminus, or that God’s ‘hidden’ relationship to the world is only made known when the state of that relationship comes to an end.

But a number of scholars have, instead of focusing on apocalypse as a set of beliefs concerning the end of the world or the meaning of history, inquired into apocalypse as a form of social organisation. Since this social organisation is predicated on the belief that no hope for salvation can be found within the institutions and social structures of this world, studies of apocalypticism have frequently focused on the marginalised or self-marginalised status of individuals and groups with apocalyptic beliefs. Ways of acting and behaving in the social world are seen as apocalyptic when those actions are aligned with the imagined world ‘to come’. David G. Bromley’s description of apocalypticism emphasises this aspect of social organisation by marginal groups: ‘Particularly as apocalyptic groups create their own space organized as part of the new order that they construct to authorize ongoing social relations within the group, they inevitably leave themselves in a position of spatial liminality. The community they create is specifically constructed, both to be part of an order that does not yet exist and to be distanced from the existing social order.’²⁴ That is, apocalyptic communities feel themselves on the cusp of a new transformation that is bound to change humanity’s relationship to the cosmos, and establish social structures based on that new relationship. Because the apocalyptic group sees itself as having a privileged knowledge of the new order, apocalypticism often addresses its audience as though they are spiritual élites who have a deeper understanding of the world around them than the common population. But it is worth recalling that apocalypticism is an expression of crisis experienced by the apocalyptic group in its understanding of how the universe is structured and how its values operate in the wider society. Paul D. Hanson summarises this view of apocalyptic thought:

the crisis which sociologists find at the root of every apocalyptic movement is a minority phenomenon. This crisis is the collapse of a well-ordered worldview which defines values and orders the universe for a group of people, thrusting them into the uncharted waters of chaos

²³ Malcolm Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision and Totality* (London: Verso, 1999), 84.

²⁴ David G. Bromley, ‘Constructing Apocalypticism: Social and Cultural Elements of Radical Organization’, in *Millenium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (Routledge: New York, 1997), 39.

and anomie. While the majority continues on the course defined by past norms, the apocalyptic minority calls attention to signs indicating that the course leads to perdition and offers in its place a new vision of life's values.²⁵

Finally, scholars such as Bromley and Hanson regard the relationship between prophecy and apocalypse not as one of absolute distinction, but as two opposing ends of a continuum. Bromley understands apocalyptic social organisation as a radical form of what he calls the 'prophetic method' of contemplating reality. Adopting the paradigm of prophet (spontaneous, discontinuous, contrarian) versus priest (traditional, perpetual, orthodox), Bromley describes the 'prophetic method' as a worldview that

deconstructs and delegitimizes the ultimate understandings established by the priestly method to authorize organizations and relationships in the existing social order and to connect human and transcendent purpose. Apocalypticism simply extends this process. Its assertions – that the organizing logic of the dominant social order is so antithetical to transcendent purpose that unilateral intervention is mandated [...] – mount[ing] a challenge to the established social order that is direct, total, and on highest authority.²⁶

Hanson provides another definition of apocalypse as a relatively extreme form of 'prophetic eschatology'. In Hanson's view, the difference between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology concerns the ability to envision salvation occurring within the political and social structures of the existing social order: while the prophetic office feels that salvation can be found within the contemporary order, the apocalyptic visionary has no such confidence. Hanson writes that at a certain point, when the historical situation has become dire enough, 'The prophets no longer have the events of a nation's history into which they can translate the terms of Yahweh's cosmic will. Hence the successors of the prophets, the visionaries, continue to have visions, but they increasingly abdicate the other dimension of the prophetic office, the translation into historical events. At that point we enter the period of the transition from prophetic to apocalyptic eschatology.'²⁷

Methodology

Although the minoritarian outlook of many in the avant-garde resonates with apocalypticism the tendency towards small sectarian 'isms' is not necessarily the defining feature of avant-gardism. For example, a number of prominent avant-gardists such as Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), or Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) are associated with multiple avant-garde groups precisely because they had little interest in aligning themselves with any particular movement. Rather, I am taking the association of Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound

²⁵ Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 2.

²⁶ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 37.

²⁷ Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 16.

with such movements as an entrance into their language of prophecy and apocalypse. These ‘isms’ gained an identity and sense of purpose by being apart from society, being therefore able to speak ‘prophetically’ from an external viewpoint. Small, hermetic enclaves accompany some of the Bible’s first encounters with prophecy, and to engage with these groups was to have one’s identity thoroughly changed. For example, after Samuel anoints Saul as king of Israel, he tells Saul to meet a small prophetic band: ‘as you come to the town, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the shrine with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre playing in front of them; they will be in a prophetic frenzy. Then the spirit of the Lord will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and *be turned into a different person.*’ (1 Sam. 10:5-6; emphasis added). This is a rare moment in the Bible where music is closely associated with prophetic activity and the social dynamic expressed in these verses seems to be as follows: prophetic activity was understood, in some cases, to constitute an aesthetic practice by small groups of prophets, who believed that such practice ecstatically connected them, both physically and mentally, to the ‘spirit of the Lord’. What is more, whatever identity one might have had prior to the prophetic activity, that identity is, for the time being, invalid and the prophet becomes a proxy for the ‘spirit of the Lord’. While this description of prophecy only accounts for a very small fraction of prophetic activity in the Bible, it does show how questions of aesthetics, community, and prophecy were often bound up with one another.

The rhetoric of prophecy and apocalyptic literature suggests a level of self-understanding and self-presentation *as a poet* or *as a prophet* – but in the realm of aesthetics, religion, or both? Can aesthetics be presented in a religious sense, and if so, how? Anthropology and sociology have long observed how ‘primitive’ arts were related to ideas of magic, and through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, art was primarily the domain of the church. But with the increased autonomy of art from religious, state, educational, and economic institutions, art is able to assert its own values. In this situation, is it possible to see a relationship between art and religious thought and activity? To address these questions, I turn to the sociology of religion elaborated by Max Weber (1864-1920), and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1930-2002) later analysis and application of Weber’s work to the field of art.

Weber asserted that prophets belong to a certain class of leadership that he termed *charismatic*, in which the leader is granted authority based on certain ineffable and extraordinary attributes of personality or ability. Charisma involves ‘a certain quality of individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities’.²⁸ It is this genuine belief, by

²⁸ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social & Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947), 358.

both the prophet and the audience, in the inspiration of the prophet that gives force or credibility to his or her doctrine. As opposed to professional religious practitioners such as priests, who stake their legitimacy on the authority of tradition as ‘incumbents of an “occupation” [...] that is, men who have acquired expert knowledge and who serve for remuneration’,²⁹ Weber distinguishes the prophet by a charismatic ‘call’ to service that cannot be accounted for through rational, much less mercenary, means. Whether these qualities originate from a secular or divine origin, they are believed by both the charismatic leader and his or her followers to be evidence of the former’s transcendence of the profane and the everyday. Weber distinguishes the prophet from other sorts of charismatics, such as magicians or warlords, by the characteristic of the prophet as carrier of a doctrine, a specific ideal used as a yardstick to judge the behaviour of people and the events of history.³⁰ In this way, Weber places the prophet in opposition to the orthodoxy of the hegemonic powers, typically represented by the priesthood or royal court. The prophetic doctrine, which can be either based on a recovery of a seemingly neglected tradition or an insistence on God’s new creation, is therefore seen by Weber as a fundamentally disruptive force. Weber’s view of history is largely grounded on this tension between the rationalising and totalising ideologies and practices of the dominant religious and political systems on the one hand, and the subversive or disruptive influence of the prophet’s charisma and doctrine on the other.

But Weber’s charismatic leader has an element of tragedy in that the vitality of his authority is doomed by the routine (and routinising) structures of law, economics, and politics. If a prophet is successful in challenging orthodoxy, his charismatic impulse is carried by his followers into subsequent institutions and increasingly standardised across subsequent generations. From the moment charismatic authority is established, its animating character is destined to diminish and fade away: ‘Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both’.³¹ Therefore, a danger is posed to charisma when the desire to extend it beyond its original bearer to new disciples or successive generations necessitates the establishment of rules and regulations for the identification of the original charismatic claim in these latter-day apostles. The idea of a charismatic tradition (Weber occasionally uses the term ‘hereditary charisma’³²), while being something of a contradiction in terms, is a common fate for charismatic authority.

²⁹ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964), 245; cf. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 46.

³⁰ Weber, *Sociology*, 47.

³¹ Weber, *Theory*, 364.

³² *Ibid.*, 372.

Weber's sociology of religion fitted within a larger project of understanding how society operated within the constraints of economic organisations. Partly against what Weber felt were overly deterministic Marxist understandings of the economic conditioning of culture, he hoped to demonstrate how areas of life could develop their own internal dynamics and values – in short, their own autonomy – and enter into conflict with other spheres of life, including the economic. Subsequent sociologists, most notably Bourdieu, began to see the dynamics that created autonomy in the religious sphere as applicable to the artistic sphere. In the early 1970s, Bourdieu re-evaluated Weber's theory of religion and prophecy with a number of questions in mind: Why are some people responsive to the prophet's charisma (assuming such a thing even exists) when others are not? In what areas of social life do prophets appear more frequently? Bourdieu considers Weber's theory of charisma to be little more than 'une théorie psycho-sociologique' that has no foundation other than in 'un acte de "reconnaissance"'³³ which fails to tell us much about the prophet's ideal audience, what their interests are in recognising the prophet's charisma, and how they might become a factor in influencing the prophet's doctrine. Bourdieu felt that what prophets did was articulate changing conditions in the society that beforehand had been only implicitly felt, and that the dominant religious orthodoxy had failed to adequately respond to. These changes, be they economic, political, historical, or cultural, altered for the religious community the nature of what 'salvation' actually constituted. For example, when Amos condemned the holy festivals and sacrifices that were the purview of the temple hierarchy (5:21-24), he was articulating a latent belief within a particular class of the Israelite population that there was something more fundamental that was lacking in religious practice, namely justice. In this way, prophetic charisma offers to the audience a sense of legitimacy to the concerns of the laity by aligning with the latter's interests in a way that *seems natural* because the prophet 'porte au niveau du discours ou de la conduite exemplaire des représentations, des sentiments et des aspirations qui lui préexistaient mais à l'état implicite, semi-conscient ou inconscient'.³⁴

When confronted by a prophet, the orthodoxy has either to crush the subversion by re-asserting the validity of its doctrine or change to co-opt and incorporate the prophetic insurgency. The latter recalls the rationalisation of charisma described above: 'la "banalisation" que le corps sacerdotal fait subir à la prophétie d'origine' involves 'la recherche typiquement bureaucratique de l'économie de charisme qui porte à confier l'exercice de l'action sacerdotale, activité nécessairement banale et "banalisée", parce que quotidienne et répétitive, de prédication et de cures des âmes, à des fonctionnaires du culte *interchangeables* et dotés d'une qualification professionnelle

³³ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Une Interprétation de la théorie de la religion selon Max Weber', *European Journal of Sociology* 12:1 (May 1971): 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

homogène'.³⁵ However, before becoming 'banalisée', prophetic charisma establishes itself by offering something the 'corps sacerdotal' cannot. Charisma then becomes a form of credibility or, in Bourdieu's terminology, 'symbolic capital' that produces a belief in the audience that the values of the doctrine being expressed will lead to salvation because it is heterogeneous to orthodox forms of salvation and therefore cannot benefit from the distribution of salvation by way of those forms.

But soon after his analysis of Weber, it became clear to Bourdieu that such sociology could be applied to the field of art and literature. In discussing the social aspects of literature and literary production (and, in fact, Bourdieu's own case-study falls somewhat close to that of this study: the literary world of late nineteenth-century France, including Baudelaire, Zola, Mallarmé, and especially Flaubert) Bourdieu frequently reverts to the language of Weber's sociology of religion. For example, he writes in explicit reference to Weber that, in the literary and artistic world, 'comme la *prophétie* [...] qui, selon Weber, prouve son authenticité par le fait qu'elle ne procure aucune rémunération, la rupture hérétique avec les traditions artistiques en vigueur trouve son critère d'authenticité dans le désintéressement.' This disinterest represents an 'économie charismatique fondée sur cette sorte de miracle social qu'est l'acte pur de toute détermination autre que l'intention proprement esthétique'.³⁶ The idea that artistic authenticity is demonstrated through its disinterest in material or monetary remuneration is derived by Bourdieu from Weber's theory of prophecy. The artist dedicating him or herself to Art as the highest ideal is analogous to the prophet dedicating him or herself to word of God.

As with the prophet whose greater suffering can engender a greater belief in the legitimacy of his message, the more an artist is scorned or ignored, the greater the belief in the sincerity of his practice. What Bourdieu called the 'production of belief' operated in both religious and artistic fields as well, and through similar processes of socialisation certain producers (priests or prophets in religion, artists or critics in the artistic field) and consumers (laity or audience) were more naturally inclined to identify with each other. Take for example, the two following quotations: Bourdieu writes that the nature of religious 'goods and services' depends upon 'l'harmonie qui s'observe entre les produits religieux offerts par le champ et les demandes des laïcs en même temps que de l'homologie entre les positions des producteurs dans la structure du champ et les positions dans la structure des rapports de classe des consommateurs de leurs produits'.³⁷ Secondly, the sociology of artistic production accounts for 'la signification et de la fonction que les pratiques et les œuvres comme prises de position doivent à la *position* de ceux qui les produisent

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 300.

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Genèse et structure du champ religieux', *Revue française de sociologie*, 12:3 (June-September 1971): 319.

dans le champ des rapports sociaux de production et de circulation'.³⁸ The first quotation explains how what constitutes 'salvation' (the quintessential 'religious good') between religious consumers and producers is, in many ways, the result of a seemingly natural and unspoken affinity between the two parties, due to similar positions both within and outwith the religious field. The second quotation applies that affinity between the prophet and laity to artistic production and consumption and suggests that a deep familiarisation with culture, instilled over a long period of time in educational institutions, family upbringing, and social milieu, naturalises artistic appropriation, "Il s'ensuit que les connaisseurs les plus avertis sont les défenseurs naturels de l'idéologie charismatique, [...] qui oppose l'expérience authentique de l'œuvre d'art comme "affection" du cœur ou illumination immédiate de l'intuition aux démarches laborieuses et aux froids commentaires de l'intelligence, en passant sous silence les conditions sociales et culturelles d'une telle expérience'.³⁹ Artistic appreciation is not, from the point of view of charismatic ideology, a 'transferable skill' to be learned, but a natural inclination akin to a kind of cultural genetic pre-disposition; any attempt to grasp a work through a clinical exegesis betrays the rote and mechanical learning of the parvenu, who will never simply 'get it' in the way of the true connoisseur. Rather than something that passively adheres to the prophet and is recognised by the audience – as with Weber – Bourdieu conceives of charisma as an unacknowledged pact between artists and art consumers to regard as natural that which is in fact the product of long-lasting dispositions that Bourdieu called *habitus*.

Bourdieu was then able to show that religion and art are both founded upon the ability to produce in the audience the belief that the values and perspective asserted by the religious or artistic product represent salvation, or grace, or social distinction, or 'good taste'. The prophet or artist never really produces this belief *sui generis*, but articulates changing social conditions as experienced from the perspective of members of similar social positions, which is itself a confluence of class, vocation, social trajectory, family history, nationality, race, and gender. What seems prophetic to one audience may come across as nonsensical, heretical, or contrived to another; what one audience might regard as innovative or avant-garde in art, can seem equally nonsensical to a different audience. Nevertheless, due to the affinity between prophet and receptive laity, artist and receptive audience, the articulation of how one's social position leads to this unspoken understanding between the two sides is neither necessary nor desirable and results in a 'charismatic illusion'. In this way, art and literature were subject to the same cycle of prophetic attacks/orthodox defence described by Weber: established institutions (political, educational, religious, etc.) maintain a monopoly on what constitutes 'legitimate' art, while more marginal

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le Marché des biens symboliques', *L'Année Sociologique*, 22 (1971): 106.

³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Éléments d'une théorie sociologique de la perception artistique', *Revue internationale des sciences sociales* 22:4 (1968): 659-660.

challengers attack those institutions by embracing ‘the new’, arguing that the institutions are sclerotic and out-dated. Or, in agitating for a return to ‘the tradition’ or ‘the basics’, they argue that the institutions have become cynical and corrupt. What a prophet tries to do, vis-à-vis the social world, is ‘à déplacer ainsi la frontière du pensé et de l’impensé, du possible et de l’impossible, du pensable et de l’impensable, [...] permet au prophète d’exercer une action mobilisatrice sur une fraction suffisamment puissante des laïcs en symbolisant par son discours et sa conduite extraordinaires ce que les systèmes symboliques ordinaires sont structurellement incapables d’exprimer’.⁴⁰ Similarly, what the avant-garde artist tries to do is (re)set the terms of a debate between ‘les tenants de l’“art pur”’ and the ‘tenants de l’“art bourgeois” ou “commercial” [...] pren[ant] inévitablement la forme de conflits de *définition*, au sens propre du terme: chacun vise à imposer les *limites* du champ les plus favorables à ses intérêts’.⁴¹ From this particular perspective, there is a relationship between religion and art in the way they achieve legitimacy and challenge orthodoxy.

Prophecy is essentially a challenge to established institutions, whether those institutions are religious, political, or artistic, by mediating between a ‘higher’ authority and the lay public. But prophets establish their authority by being discontinuous, that is, by being apart from the social order upheld by established institutions and asserting the values of a more transcendent order. The more remote the possibility of change within the contemporary social order, the more extreme the form of organisation becomes, leading to apocalyptic thought. This thought asserts that salvation will arrive ‘like a thief in the night’ – from entirely outside of history and society. What I do not mean to suggest, though, is that there is a necessarily chronological element to the transition from prophecy to apocalypse within the works of Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound. Because of the later dating of apocalyptic literature in the Bible, scholarship frequently understands apocalypse as evidence of the ‘death of prophecy’. Robert Carroll, following Hanson, notes that in gradually abandoning the prophetic vocation, ‘perhaps the twilight of prophecy was also the first glimmer in the dawn of apocalyptic.’⁴² In the works that I am examining however, prophetic and apocalyptic beliefs are often represented concurrently from one poem to the next. Part of the advantage, however, of the definitions of prophecy and apocalypse above is that they open the possibility of the two terms being, in practice, not mutually exclusive, but distinguished by degree.

This study then looks specifically at Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound through the lens of prophecy and apocalypse established by the above categories. While the prophetic and

⁴⁰ Bourdieu, ‘Genèse et structure’, 331.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 310.

⁴² Robert Carroll, ‘Twilight of Prophecy or Dawn of Apocalyptic?’, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 14 (1979): 31.

apocalyptic themes of the poets and of the wider avant-garde have been acknowledged, a more systematic understanding of the relationship between the avant-garde poet and these themes is called for. Furthermore, all three of these poets were affected by modern war in their own particular ways, and how the experience of modern warfare affected them and their use of prophetic and apocalyptic themes is a relevant question. As many scholars of the avant-garde have noted, the pose of aggression and warfare was incredibly common to avant-gardists; but an experience of actual, modern war, of the possibility of civilization being genuinely destroyed in an apocalyptic event, compelled many avant-gardists to push this pose of prophetic aggression to its logical conclusion or to retreat and re-evaluate their stance. Before, in the midst of, and after the war, these three poets were deeply concerned with the value of poetry in the modern era, and both Weber's and Bourdieu's analysis of art and religion provide a method of understanding how that value was perceived by these poets in a period of artistic and national crisis.

Corpus of Study

It is an open question which art-form benefited most from the creative blossoming of this period, but poets were almost always at the forefront, as theorists and publicists, of these new creative movements. Even when it can be argued that literature had not made advances comparable to painting, sculpture, photography, and film, poets were the first and most forceful defenders of modernity in the cultural field. From Marinetti's prolific Futurist manifestos, to Tristan Tzara's parody of the manifesto among the Dadaists, to André Breton's loquacious Surrealist efforts, poets felt called to announce and propagate the aims, methods, and values of the new movement. This desire to be the formulator of a new aesthetic, with the aspiration that the rest of the arts will eventually adhere to that aesthetic, recalls Weber's description of a prophet as one with a 'mission' to proclaim 'a religious doctrine or divine commandment'.⁴³ Also similar to Weber's prophet, these aesthetic doctrines were not justified through a discourse designed to appeal to the reason of the public, but by the charismatic will of the poet. Indeed, rationality and comprehensibility before an audience was sometimes seen as cravenness or weakness, and the avant-gardes generally sought audiences among like-minded artists and poets who were naturally inclined to respond positively to art and literature otherwise viewed by the public as heterodox, absurd, or offensive. In this way, the declaration of the avant-garde mission involved aggressiveness and non-conformity in artistic form as well as content. They were as vociferous in their attacks on genteel bourgeois morality as they were in their radical incorporation of the mentality of the modern age, seeking to represent simultaneous perspectives, unheard-of speeds, or newer mediums.

⁴³ Weber, *Sociology*, 46.

The choice of Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound is based on a number of factors. Each incorporates prophetic and apocalyptic themes in the content of much of their poetry that are often drawn from Judeo-Christian literature, regardless of these poets' ambivalence to that tradition. Secondly, their personal experience of dislocation from a national home – Apollinaire's birth in Italy to a Polish mother and a father he never knew, Marinetti's Egyptian childhood and Parisian success, Pound's expatriation from America – gave each a sense of separateness that is a clear characteristic of the charismatic prophet. However, none of these poets accepted a completely rejectionist position when it came to the nation, and much of the content of their poetry is concerned with the problem of developing or identifying a national tradition. Finally, by limiting this study to the few years preceding the war and its immediate aftermath, I mark a number of crucial events for these poets and for the avant-garde: Apollinaire's death at the end of 1918, Marinetti's alignment of Futurism with fascism after the war, and Pound's permanent departure from London and its literary culture in 1920. But the war is particularly important because it forced the avant-garde to confront the destruction/creation opposition that for so long furnished much of its energy. The most extreme agents of avant-garde art expressed themselves in terms of warfare and battle, but when confronted with the reality of modern war, of the apocalyptic possibility of total destruction, Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound were forced to incorporate this new reality into their prophetic tone and outlook.

The political agitation in Europe in the months prior to World War I was preceded by the aggression of the avant-gardes' manifestos, where rival movements were slandered and new styles were promoted, and by avant-garde shows and cabarets often designed to offend bourgeois sensibilities. Avant-gardism, adopting a name that elicits the image of a warrior-class in the realm of art and culture, in some ways predated the European conflict in representing 'the idea of spirit at war.'⁴⁴ Modris Eksteins explains that for avant-gardists, 'whether considered as the foundation of culture or as steppingstone to a higher plateau of creativity and spirit, war was an essential part.'⁴⁵ War and art together were offered up as an alternative to the tedium and sclerosis associated with democratic politics and as a way to advance human civilization. But when confronted by the actual event itself, the millenarian attitudes often, if not always, gave way to a sense of generalised horror, and rather than a rebirth, the war became the best evidence of the inevitable decline of Western civilization. Apocalyptic attitudes and prophetic poses were used by Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound to establish poetry as the authoritative voice on the meaning of the war and the potential for the post-war future.

⁴⁴ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan, 1990), 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

The earliest of the poems which I will examine were published in the decade just before World War I, when these poets were exploring the possibilities of the modern technology and art. But even in this period prior to World War I, combat began to fascinate and intrigue writers and artists in Europe, and one of the earlier pieces that I will examine is Marinetti's 1912 *Le Monoplan du pape: Roman en vers libre*. In the final few months of 1911, Marinetti went to Libya to report on the Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912) for the French newspaper *L'Intransigeant* and was stunned by the sensory experience of modern warfare. *Monoplan*, as well as the collection of his dispatches during the war, *La Bataille de Tripoli* (1912), were written during his time there and represent war as a deeply aesthetic experience. Marinetti spent the following few years proclaiming war as the aesthetic benchmark to which all modern art should aspire. Like Marinetti, Apollinaire had direct experience of war, enlisting in the French army in 1914 and serving until 1916 when he was famously wounded in the head. Significant portions of his collection *Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre* (1918) were written during his time in the war and, while somewhat more ambivalent than Marinetti, often approach modern warfare with a feeling of wonder, excitement, and enthusiasm. Pound's experience of and attitude towards the war was quite different. He never experienced the war first-hand and never enthusiastically supported it. The latest of the poems in the study, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), was published almost a year and a half after the war ended, but several sections of the sequence address the disappointment at the war's cause and cost. In all three cases, the relationship between art and war is explored by the poet, adopting the apocalyptic language of alternative worlds and transcendent values and judgments.

But aside from intimating the technological and cultural possibilities of the future, or initiating a melancholic reflection on the decadence of society, World War I, in many ways, brought this period of the avant-garde to an end as artists were compelled to weigh the choice between a cosmopolitan, experimental, and international aesthetics on the one hand, and the advocacy of specific national cultures on the other. In his early career, for example, Marinetti, being very fluent in French and highly conscious of the Parisian literary world, wrote and published most of his poetry and manifestos in French before re-translating them into Italian. Most notably, the first Futurist manifesto was published in 1909 not in an Italian publication, but in the Paris-based *Le Figaro*. But in 1912, after spending time at the Italian front in Libya, Marinetti's increasing nationalism and belief in Italy's imminent resurgence on the imperial stage prompted him to address himself to Italian audiences more directly than before. *Monoplan*, therefore, is the last major work of his to be initially published in French. While World War I did not end his Futurist activities, it can be seen as ending the so-called 'heroic' phase of Futurism after two of the movement's guiding lights, the painter Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916) and the architect Antonio Sant'Elia (1888-1916), were both killed in the war and Futurism became

explicitly aligned with fascist politics.⁴⁶ Throughout the war, Apollinaire also tended towards a greater degree of nationalism and *L'Esprit Nouveau et les poètes* (1918), written after his time in the war, explicitly places France in the lead among the nations that provided the most beneficent cultural products to the world. After his discharge, however, he wrote some of his most powerful poetry, much of which expresses a deep regret and mourning over the war. He died of Spanish Flu on 9 November 1918 and so the question of where his aesthetic and political views might have led after the war remains largely speculative. Pound is a different case in that he did not serve in the war, and had moved to London from America in 1908, so he did not feel the pressure of national alignment that perhaps Marinetti and Apollinaire did. Partly behind his engagement with the avant-garde was the intent to re-invigorate art and culture, but the war seemed to be evidence that European and Western civilization were beyond repair. But Pound's association with the avant-garde had been dwindling throughout the war, due in no small part to his outsized personality. Many parts of *Maunderley* explicitly expressed Pound's disappointment with London's literary milieu along with his disgust with the war, and it was at this point that Pound not only left London, but also seems to have given up on avant-garde 'isms' altogether.

As stated above, while I do not consider the characteristic of 'isms' to be the most fundamental aspect of the avant-garde, the varying associations of these poets with sectarian movements bears a similarity to prophecy and apocalypse. Apollinaire never dedicated himself to a single movement, but he is probably the most well-known promoter of Cubism in the visual arts, and his poetry is sometimes referred to as Cubist, although the appellation is debateable.⁴⁷ He briefly theorised the aesthetic of Orphism along with the painter Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), and he coined the term Surrealism in the programme to the ballet *Parade* (1917) by Picasso, Cocteau, and Erik Satie (1866-1925). His brief association with Futurism led him to write *L'Antitradition futuriste* in 1913, which contains a list of artistic comrades, Futurist and otherwise. Apollinaire also includes in this manifesto another list of condemnations attacking everything from professors and critics to Shakespeare and Tolstoy. However, this piece is exceptional for Apollinaire, who was ambivalent about certain avant-garde tendencies to which he is frequently connected. After his extremely brief association with Futurism, he sometimes expressed mild disdain for what he felt was the group's strident disregard for tradition. But *L'Esprit Nouveau et les poètes* is his most important theoretical statement on the relationship between poetry, tradition, and modernity. Overall, while he used his charismatic (marshalling all of that term's associations

⁴⁶ Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 126.

⁴⁷ See L. C. Breunig's introduction to the concept of 'cubist poetry', where the question of whether or not cubist poetry even existed was raised, and sometimes rejected, by these same poets (L. C. Breunig, editor, *The Cubist Poets in Paris: An Anthology* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 1.).

to Weber's prophet) personality to promote various aesthetic ideas, he was never particularly dogmatic or doctrinaire about these styles and never approached them as full movements, nor did he ever suggest that there was no room for artistic traditions. However, literary and artistic groups that he felt were modern were always an interest of his, even if he regarded himself, at the end of the day, as a lone advocate for modernity in literature and art.

Marinetti and Futurism were dedicated to an enthusiasm for technology and sought to aestheticise nearly every aspect of everyday life. Prior to Futurism, Marinetti was a rising star in the Parisian literary scene, finding success and camaraderie with a number of poets who were writing in the wake of Symbolism, such as Gustave Kahn (1859-1936) and Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), and Marinetti's early poetry is sometimes classed by scholarship as late- or post-Symbolist.⁴⁸ Marinetti himself might have agreed, as he sometimes referred to the Symbolists as his former 'maîtres' in some of his Futurist writings. But after the publication of the first Futurist manifesto in 1909, and his self-presentation as the prophet of Futurism, Marinetti dedicated himself to the popularisation of the movement for the remainder of his life. He travelled extensively promoting Futurism, giving well-publicised talks in Paris, London, South America, and Russia, and had a notable influence, both negatively and positively, on the avant-garde artists wherever he went. Early on, Futurism was involved in both anarchist and nationalist trends, and promoted irredentist causes advocating for the recovery by force of Italian cities from Austria. But in this period, Futurism typically regarded political activity and democratic politics as irreparably corrupt and decadent. After World War I, Futurism became aligned with Mussolini's fascist movement, and while Marinetti's dual commitment to politics and art was often strained, he remained a supporter of fascism throughout his life even if his active involvement in the party waned somewhat.

Pound, while ultimately abandoning avant-garde movements by the end of World War I, spent a number of years in London theorising Imagism and Vorticism. Because Imagism began essentially in 1912, it was a later development than the avant-garde movements in France, Germany, or Italy, and the Imagists were conscious of that fact. But that delay allowed the Imagists a level of reflection on avant-gardism. For instance, they sometimes denied being a 'movement' and claimed that they had no aesthetic doctrine, but only a loose collection of principles. Tensions about who might lead this movement, if anybody, compelled Pound to leave very soon after the group's formation, for he did not consider Imagism to be compatible with the democratic decision-making desired by other Imagists. Pound later joined with the writer and painter Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915) to

⁴⁸ See Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*; Elizabeth W. Easton, 'Marinetti before the First Manifesto', *Art Journal* 41:4 (Winter 1981).

form Vorticism. They collaborated with a number of other artists in the release of the journal *Blast*, which only lasted for two issues between 1914 and 1915. After Gaudier-Brzeska's death, just before the release of the second issue of *Blast*, the Vorticist group essentially collapsed and Pound showed little interest in joining an avant-garde group afterwards.

Indeed, while these poets were not personally close, the professional acquaintance with each other's works is an important factor in choosing them. As this study will attempt to show, they all presented themselves as charismatic individuals who could authoritatively speak on what it truly meant to be modern. To that end, they were often closely following the poetry, artistic activities, and critical writings that each other was producing. Apollinaire and Marinetti had met on a number of occasions as the Futurists were attempting to promote themselves in Paris.⁴⁹ As noted above, Marinetti, as a young poet in Paris who was also fluent in French, made many acquaintances in the avant-garde movements there, such as the quasi-utopian Abbaye de Créteil writers group, who also met and influenced Apollinaire. Pound was somewhat more distant, in location as well as temperament, to the avant-garde movements on the continent. While he never met Apollinaire, he acquired a copy of Apollinaire's *Alcools* through a mutual acquaintance and in September 1913 he wrote a series of articles on French poetry in which he cited Apollinaire as a major French poet.⁵⁰ When Pound collaborated with Lewis in the publication of *Blast*, they employed lists of praises and condemnations very similar to Apollinaire's in *L'Antitradition futuriste*, a fact that Apollinaire seems to have been happily aware of.⁵¹ Pound was more aware of Marinetti's activities, especially his public lectures on Futurism in London between 1910 and 1912. Moreover, parts of *Blast* were dedicated to criticisms of Futurism even as it clearly borrowed from the tone and style of the Futurist manifestos.

Of Apollinaire's works, this study examines his two major collections of poetry, *Alcools* (1913) and *Calligrammes*. I focus on a number of poems that either use the terms 'prophet' or 'prophecy', or represent the poet as a kind of prophet. In the latter instance, Apollinaire's religious imagery often suggests the older myth of the prophet even as the poet seeks to explore the modern world. Therefore, this study examines two of Apollinaire's most famous long poems: 1912's 'Zone' and 1918's 'Les Collines'. These two poems demonstrate a clear intention on Apollinaire's part to align the modern poet with the myth of the prophet. Apollinaire does not directly use the term 'apocalypse' in the selection examined here, but the concept is frequently alluded to in a variety of terms and images: the end of the world; rebirth and the return of the dead; new eras

⁴⁹ See Francis Steegmuller's account of Apollinaire's personal association with futurist painters and poets, as well as his rather ambivalent take on the movement (Francis Steegmuller, *Apollinaire: Poet among the Painters* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 258-262.).

⁵⁰ Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

and the new man. One of his final poems, 'La Jolie Rousse' (1918), written after Apollinaire had served in the war and reflecting a melancholic attitude toward the avant-garde's aggressiveness, still regards the modern poet as a kind of soldier battling his way into a new age. Apocalyptic thought often involved the tendency towards collective establishments of a way of life that was understood to be only actualised in the future.⁵² This is one tendency that Apollinaire sought in his associations with the avant-garde, and while it is certainly questionable whether he ever found such a community in the here-and-now, I examine a number of poems from *Alcools* and *Calligrammes* to explore how Apollinaire approached this future community.

Of Marinetti's works, I have chosen one rather long piece, and one that has received very little attention from scholars⁵³: the epic free-verse poem, *Le Monoplan du pape: Roman en vers libre*. While this study is limited to poetry, Marinetti (as well as Apollinaire and Pound) frequently resisted strict generic definitions of art and literature, and often viewed poetry as the prophetic voice of new literary and visual arts. This was Marinetti's only major work of poetry between 1908 and the end of World War I.⁵⁴ *Monoplan* is about a pilot flying over Italy, inciting the country to war against Austria. Halfway through the story, the pilot kidnaps the Pope and, at the end, drops him into the Adriatic Sea in a move that can be read as an attempt by Marinetti to express Futurism as an oppositional force to Christianity, and Catholicism in particular. Furthermore, this pilot clearly presents himself as the prophet of Futurism, which, in some of Marinetti's manifestos, is treated as a religion as well as an aesthetic. In his 1914 Italian translation of *Monoplan*, Marinetti signalled the work's prophetic pretensions by changing the subtitle to 'Romanzo Profetico', prophetic novel, and his 'prediction' of war against Austria looked significantly more accurate (Italy remained neutral initially, but declared war on Austria on 23 May 1915). Furthermore, Marinetti's time as a journalist in the Italo-Turkish War, when *Monoplan* was composed, gave him an insight into the nature of modern war that most of his contemporaries in the avant-garde had

⁵² See Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 42.

⁵³ A notable exception is Maria Pia De Paulis-Dalembert's study on Marinetti's translation and re-writing of his own works from French to Italian ('F.T. Marinetti: La Reecriture de l'imaginaire symboliste et futuriste entre le français et l'italien', *Chroniques italiennes* web 12 (December 2007): 1-30), but *Monoplan* only constitutes a small portion of this article. While Cescutti has perhaps the most extensive study of Marinetti's early French works she explicitly excludes *Monoplan* from her study because of the work's overtly political and anticlerical dimensions (Cescutti, 16). Blum's *The Other Modernism*, while the most extensive English-language study of Marinetti's works, makes no reference to *Monoplan*.

⁵⁴ Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) demonstrates some poetic properties, but it seems that he was far more interested in exploring the visual possibilities of typography, or the sound quality of onomatopoeia, both of which constitute the majority of the work. Furthermore, even though he published the work under the Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia" imprint, Marinetti subtitled the work as 'Parole in libertà', which he conceived as a separate genre meant to succeed poetry. For these reasons, I feel that it is safe to exclude this work from any extensive analysis.

not yet imagined. War is presented as a total change in the sense of the self and the world, and it is in this context that, like Apollinaire, Marinetti engages in the imagery of destruction and rebirth. The sense of apocalypse makes itself felt in the attention to destruction as a potentially creative force.

Finally, the selection of Pound's work is drawn primarily from the period prior to his initiation of the *Cantos*. I examine poems from each of Pound's major collections published between 1909 and 1918: *Personæ* (1909), *Ripostes* (1912), and *Lustra* (1916) – all later collected in the 1926 edition *Personæ: The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound*. I also draw from a few unpublished and uncollected poems from that time period. Pound's famous use of personæ, for example, does not directly reference the biblical prophets, but it might speak to Martz's definition of prophecy in his study of the subject's relation to modernist English literature: that the prophet can be seen as one who speaks for another.⁵⁵ Pound did not share Apollinaire's or Marinetti's embrace of war as a sublime aesthetic experience, but he did share their belief that modern war – and World War I in particular – was part of an absolute and fundamental change in the world.

The emergence of the poet as a charismatic individual – acting not simply as an artist, but as a prognosticator and mediator between society and something more supermundane – calls for a more systematic understanding of the place of prophecy within the poetry of this period. Furthermore, the rapid changes in technology and culture created the sense that the world as it had been known was on the cusp of a major transition into a radically new era. Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound, in their own particular ways, nominated their poetry as the place in which the values of the new era could be explored. The following chapters will examine how their works established themselves as prophetically authoritative, and apocalyptically modern.

⁵⁵ Martz, *Many Gods*, 7.

Chapter 1: Apollinaire and Prophecy

In his adult years, Guillaume Apollinaire's religious outlook vacillated between nostalgia and contemptuous dismissal of religious thinking and practice. In poems such as 'Zone' (1912), Apollinaire's generous attitude towards the symbols and rituals of his Catholic upbringing is well known; but where others might keep such religious nostalgia firmly embedded in the past, as part of the naïveté of youth, 'Zone' continually uncovers the impulses of religious longing in the modernity of early twentieth-century Europe. This effort to read into the experience of modern life the energies of faith and religion, while characterising the latter as a distinctly bygone, youthful, primitive, or traditional viewpoint, recalls Northrop Frye's comment on the phases of language, from the metaphorical (identified with myth) to the literal: 'it is the primary function of literature, more particularly of poetry, to keep re-creating the first or metaphorical phase of language [...], to keep presenting it to us as a mode of language that we must never be allowed to underestimate, much less lose sight of.'¹ In this way, poetry in 'Zone' recovers Christian myth but strips it of the trappings of the church by throwing it out into the world of airplanes, automobiles, and the Eiffel Tower. Apollinaire's self-presentation as a prophet is frequently understood in terms of the poet's recovery of tradition as the most avant-garde act possible. The poet-as-prophet speaks to the tradition in the modern world because he is naturally in tune with it², mentally inclined to it, and almost bodily in touch with it. Christianity and biblical literature provided material for Apollinaire to manipulate, re-cast, and re-combine with other sources – all with the intention of expressing the present situation as open to the possibilities of creativity, heroism, and beauty.

Apollinaire was willing to concede the Bible's literary and aesthetic value, even if he had no real interest in the question of its historical veracity or moral efficacy. An article entitled 'Des Faux' he wrote in 1903 illuminates this distinction between the aesthetic and historical. Apollinaire addressed the coscandal of the Tiara of Saitaferne, an ancient crown acquired by the Louvre, and later discovered to be a forgery. Using the Bible as his example, Apollinaire argued that art and literature's value is hardly dependent upon its historical authenticity: 'Les Évangiles sont postérieurs aux personnages auxquels on les attribue et n'expose-t-on pas dans quelque sanctuaire une image de la Vierge peinte par saint Luc?' (*CEPII*, 76³). Apollinaire understood aesthetics as transcending a historically situated author. The element of beauty that animated the original creative impulse could always potentially reappear or be 'discovered' in subsequent works

¹ Frye, *Great Code*, 23.

² Indeed, Frye notes the connection between metaphorical language and nature: 'In the first, metaphorical, phase of language, the unifying element of verbal expression is the "god," or personal nature-spirit' (*Ibid.*, 15).

³ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, 3 vols., ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

identified as ‘fakes’, ‘forgeries’, and ‘imitations’. Even more importantly, Apollinaire extended his argument to reject nostalgia and to respect the contemporaneity of the tiara: ‘La tiare de Saitaphernès donnera au public, j’espère, un grand mépris pour le passé. Le mépris est un sentiment libérateur. Il exalte une belle âme et l’incite aux grandes entreprises.’ The pejorative notion of the ‘fake’ betrays an irrational or unnecessary attachment to the past, while ignoring what made the works of the past beautiful in the first place, whereas a contemptuous attitude towards the past liberates certain ‘belle[s] âme[s]’ to greater goals. In this way, the tiara is ‘beau *comme l’antique*,⁴ inciting the viewer to look beyond everything in a work of art that identifies it as belonging to a particular historical context, and to locate a quality of beauty that places the most modern works of art side by side to the most antique. The fact that the public, as well as the Louvre, was deceived for a time by the tiara shows that in spite of, rather than because of, its historical provenance, it held that ideal or transcendent quality of beauty. Quoting an unnamed forger, ‘un vieillard fort bizarre, vivant en ermite’, Apollinaire summarised this mischievous view of beauty in explicitly supernatural terms: ‘J’ai fabriqué un dieu, un faux dieu, un vrai joli faux dieu.’⁵ Apollinaire, in this instance, projects contradictory ideas onto a single artistic object: with the words ‘vrai’ and ‘faux’ united by a quality of aesthetics. This ‘god’ is false because it acts as a defiance of a particular sense of reality understood as historical ‘authenticity’; on the other hand, it is true in the sense that it represents a tradition of beauty. This contradictory stance defines Apollinaire’s approach to poetry, and the poet-as-prophet: struggling at the border of the ‘longue querelle de la tradition et de l’invention’ (EP, 313⁶), creating work that embodies both the ‘modern’ and the ‘eternal’ simultaneously.

Bourdieu’s description of the prophet as positioned at ‘la frontière du pensé et de l’impensé, du possible et de l’impossible, du pensable et de l’impensable’⁷ allows one then to understand Apollinaire’s dilemma when approaching ‘traditional’ material such as biblical literature and Christian symbolism. If traditional religious materials provide the basis for the ‘pensé’ and the ‘pensable’, then the prophet must begin with those materials, but simultaneously point beyond them to something not yet ‘pensable’. The religious or spiritual message of the Bible was too often yoked to its historical and social context for Apollinaire’s self-positioning as the nexus between the past and the future. Nevertheless, it did provide a wealth of fantastic and mythical imagery that Apollinaire was content to wilfully separate from their historical origins in order to speak of the modern world’s cities, airplanes, radio, and war. Biblical heroes such as

⁴ Ibid., 74; emphasis added.

⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁶ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres Poétiques*, ed. Marcel Adéma and Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1956).

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Genèse et structure’, 331.

Samson and David were ‘chers à Guillaume Apollinaire en raison de leurs prouesses amoureuses’ and ‘les prophètes l’intéressent pour leur aspect merveilleux; ce sont des *enchanteurs* qui dominent le temps et l’espace et reculent les limites de l’existence humaine.’⁸ Apollinaire was primarily attracted to the fabulous and the mythic, and Couffignal states that in general there is in Apollinaire’s approach to the Bible, ‘aucun souci du message spirituel que délivreraient les prophètes’.⁹ On the other hand, the *figure* of the prophet was of deep interest as a way to understand his own vocation as a poet in modern society and to provide rhetorical force to the values he expressed in his poetry. At certain points, Apollinaire willingly shared with his poetry the element of a transcendent doctrine of beauty and creative independence, fused with the biblical imagery that he borrows. In this sense, Apollinaire’s poet-as-prophet recalls Frye’s argument on the use of myth in contemporary contexts: ‘mythical structures continue to give shape to the metaphors and rhetoric of later types of structure.’¹⁰ Therefore, the question of why Apollinaire might turn to biblical literature (as he did many kinds of traditional and mythical literature) can be answered by looking at the way this choice presents prophecy as a metaphor for the activity of the poet in the modern world.

The Prophet’s Place

The religious reflections in ‘Zone’ are intimately connected to Apollinaire’s childhood and understood as a specifically youthful experience. This was not the first time Apollinaire’s poetry assumed the theme of a conflict between a pious youth and a secular maturity. After being born in Rome, Apollinaire’s early education was spent at the Catholic *collèges* of Saint-Charles de Monaco and Stanislas de Cannes. He received significant exposure to Catholic and biblical literature, and his later writings demonstrate a familiarity with a broad range of saints and biblical characters. This early religious education gave him an understanding of Latin, Greek, and possibly Hebrew.¹¹ The piety described in ‘Zone’ seems to have manifested itself more sporadically and spontaneously in Apollinaire’s life because there is scant evidence that he treated Catholic doctrine as infallible truth, and less evidence that he took it seriously enough to consider a religious vocation. As often as he fixated on the biblical prophets or the figure of the Virgin, his wide-ranging reading habits brought him into contact with such bodies of work as ancient Middle- and

⁸ Robert Couffignal, *L’Inspiration Biblique dans l’œuvre de Guillaume Apollinaire* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1966), 96-97.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰ Frye, *Great Code*, 35.

¹¹ A line from *Le Poète assassiné* indicates that Apollinaire had some knowledge of Hebrew and Talmudic literature: ‘Des rabbins ont cru que la même âme habita les corps d’Adam, de Moïse et de David. En effet, le nom d’Adam se compose en hébreu d’Aleph, Daleth et Mem, premières lettres des trois noms.’ (*EPI*, 250).

Near-Eastern mythology and Kabbalah.¹² Despite these rather unorthodox interests, Margaret Davies argues that this exposure to Catholicism did instill in him ‘an out-of-the-ordinary sensibility and a particular capacity for whole-hearted devotion to an ideal’.¹³ As Couffignal describes, Apollinaire’s religious education always remained around the edges of his personality, ‘plus dans l’œil et dans la sensibilité que dans l’esprit’.¹⁴ His impending atheism seems to have fully matured during his time at *lycée* in Nice and he began to favour more ‘profane’ and classical literatures, and Couffignal speculates that in a poem of this period, ‘Lecture’, the reference to a ‘grimoire rongé des vers’ was the Bible.¹⁵

The first half of ‘Zone’ describes a visionary experience of flight, with Christ assuming the role of aviator, but this section is prefaced by the poet’s reminiscence of an evening of prayer as a young boy. Apollinaire was perhaps naturally sceptical of religious dogma but the symbols, practices, and emotions of the religion of his youth are still present in his maturity. While the following lines are clearly memory, they are written in present-tense and are triggered by the view of a street the poet happens to be walking past:

Voilà la jeune rue et tu n’es encore qu’un petit enfant
 Ta mère ne t’habille que de bleu et de blanc¹⁶
 Tu es très pieux et avec le plus ancien de tes camarades René Dalize
 Vous n’aimez rien tant que les pompes de l’Eglise (*ŒP*, 40)

The ‘pompes’ of the church in particular is viewed as a naïve aspect of the young poet’s piousness insofar as the term itself suggests vanity, glitz, or needless pretension. However, this criticism is not meant to dismiss religious belief entirely but to contrast the young poet’s more transient fascinations with the ‘heart’ of Christianity: the hope of the resurrection. In this sense, the piety of the young poet is viewed with a sceptical, if sympathetic, eye. Apollinaire does not begrudge the inexperienced youth the desire to attach himself to Christian practice and symbolism, but this memory is filtered through the secularism of modernity and the experience of maturity. The following lines take on a more serious tone, describing the young poet sneaking into a chapel at night to pray. The stanza shifts at this point to the vision of Christ, and from a contemplation of youth to a consideration of eternity:

Tandis qu’éternelle et adorable profondeur améthyste
 Tourne à jamais la flamboyante gloire du Christ

¹² Couffignal, *L’Inspiration*, 24.

¹³ Margaret Davies, *Apollinaire* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 13.

¹⁴ Couffignal, *L’Inspiration*, 18.

¹⁵ Couffignal dates the poem to February or March of 1897 (*Ibid.*, 23).

¹⁶ The poem ‘Prière’, first published in *Le Guetteur mélancolique* (1952), a collection of previously unpublished works by Apollinaire, contains a nearly identical line that reinforces the association with the Virgin: ‘Ma mère ne m’habillait que de bleu et de blanc / O Sainte Vierge / M’aimez-vous encore’ (*ŒP*, 580).

[...]
 C'est la torche aux cheveux roux que n'éteint pas le vent
 [...]
 C'est l'arbre toujours touffu de toutes les prières
 C'est la double potence de l'honneur et de l'éternité (*CEP*, 40)

The contrast is striking: from the youthful and fleeting 'pompe de l'Eglise' to the eternal. For example, although the youth prays in the chapel over the course of one night, the tree (a probable allusion to the cross) is 'toujours touffu de toutes les prières'. And along with the words 'éternelle' and 'éternité' appearing in close proximity, the torch is not able to be extinguished by the wind, an image that occurs again in the prophetically-themed poem 'Les Collines': 'Torche que rien ne peut éteindre' (*CEP*, 175).

A prophet's youth is not often addressed in biblical literature, but on the rare occasion that it is, there are indications that what Apollinaire is describing in these sections is reminiscent of certain aspects of a prophet's call. Several key points of Apollinaire's poem suggest the stories of the prophet Samuel – the only prophet in the Bible other than Moses or Jesus given something like an extended account of his childhood – as a possible source for these lines. Apollinaire's statement, 'Ta mère ne t'habille que de bleu et de blanc' (*CEP*, 40), prompts Couffignal's observation that 'Ce monde porte les couleurs de l'enfance; ce monde *est* celui de l'enfance.'¹⁷ In a very rare mention of a prophet's mother, 1 Samuel 2:18-19 states: 'Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year'. Hannah, Samuel's mother, takes charge of the young boy's religious fidelity by making for him the proper clothing for a future member of the priesthood, just as the poet's mother dresses him in blue and white, 'the traditional colours of the Virgin Mary.'¹⁸ It is also notable that Hannah, who serves as a model for Mary as a barren woman who is made pregnant through divine intervention (1 Sam. 1:19-20), takes the leading role in the story through her own religious devotion, whereas Samuel's father, Elkanah, is significantly more passive (for example, Hannah has 17 verses of speech whereas Elkanah has only two). Apollinaire, having never known his father, also had a mother who who was more active in his religious upbringing, which might have provided him with a sense of affinity with Samuel. Another small detail suggests the possible influence of the book of Samuel, where Apollinaire writes: 'Il est neuf heures le gaz est baissé tout bleu vous sortez du dortoir en cachette' (*CEP*, 40). 1 Samuel 3:1-18, remarking on Samuel's young age ('Now the boy Samuel'; 1 Sam. 3:1) recounts the opening of the prophet's call narrative. It takes place over the course of an evening ('Samuel lay there until morning'; 1 Sam. 3:15), it notes where Samuel sleeps ('Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord'; 1 Sam. 3:3), and it

¹⁷ Robert Couffignal, *'Zone' d'Apollinaire: structure et confrontations* (Paris: Minard, 1970), 8.

¹⁸ Garnet Rees, ed., *Alcool*, by Guillaume Apollinaire (London: Athlone Press, 1975), 124.

describes the low flame of the lamp ('the lamp of God had not yet gone out'; 1 Sam. 3:3). Finally, both instances stress the aural experience of *hearing* the call. What initially sets Apollinaire on his reverie is the view of the street, but also the sounds that he perceives from various objects. He writes:

Neuve et propre du soleil elle était le clairon
[...]
Le matin par trois fois la sirène y gémit
Une cloche rageuse y aboie vers midi
Les inscriptions des enseignes et des murailles
Les plaques les avis à la façon des perroquets criaillent (*ŒP*, 39)

Only the bell and siren in these lines make an actual sound, and so the 'clairon' of the sun and the bird-like twittering of the signs suggests an aural experience beyond what the poet is hearing in everyday life. He is connecting to something between the basic human sense of hearing and a more profound revelation of the world around him. Likewise, Samuel initially hears the voice of God: 'Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."' (1 Sam. 3:10). Apollinaire feels prepared or ready to receive the call, as opposed to the city around him that is led by the routines and rhythms of daily life.

There are two effects of this attention to the youth of the poet or prophet: it highlights the idea of receptiveness in the poet or prophet; and it places the poet or prophet within an essentially different timeline than the world around him, having been selected from a young age. The emphasis on the city's actual or imagined sounds shows the poet as more receptive to the city's aesthetic and cultural possibilities than the workers who are as much a part of the context of the scene as the posters on the wall. The 'clairon' of the sun in particular seems directed specifically at the poet, whose sensitivity absorbs surroundings as if he were again a youth seeking communion with God. His heightened receptivity, in both the present-day street and in the chapel of his memory, is comparable to Samuel's 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' The innocence – perhaps even naïveté – of youth is nevertheless necessary for the open-ness of the prophet to signals from the supernatural. Similarly for the poet, 'la poésie est partout diffuse [...]; la littérature est descendue dans la rue, abondante, riche, foisonnante'.¹⁹ Being 'called' as a youth also places the poet or prophet within a timescale above and beyond the workdays and weekends of 'Les directeurs les ouvriers et les belles sténo-dactylographes' (*ŒP*, 39). He is, as S. I. Lockerbie states, 'un poète échappant à l'ordre du temps habituel'.²⁰ For example, when God calls Jeremiah, He states, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated

¹⁹ Couffignal, *Zone d'Apollinaire*, 8.

²⁰ S. I. Lockerbie, 'Le Rôle de l'imagination dans *Calligrammes*, deuxième partie: Les Poèmes du monde intérieur', in *Guillaume Apollinaire 6*, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1967), 91.

you' (Jer. 1:5). The attention to the call in the prophet's youth marks him as a figure of both the past and the future as a fundamental part of a divine plan.

There is no seamless transition from youth to maturity in Apollinaire's work. The transition is wrenching, dangerous, and always constitutes a loss as well as a gain. The distinction between youth and maturity, past and future is rarely sharper than the opening of 'Les Collines' and its image of two airplanes, 'L'un était rouge et l'autre noir' (*ŒP*, 171). Also expressed in the image of the spiritual or cosmological conflict between Lucifer and the archangel, there is a contradiction between youth and future²¹ that cannot be avoided. In stanzas 2 and 3, Apollinaire writes:

L'un était toute ma jeunesse
 Et l'autre c'était l'avenir
 Ils se combattaient avec rage
 Ainsi fit contre Lucifer
 L'Archange aux ailes radieuses

Ainsi le calcul au problème
 Ainsi la nuit contre le jour (*ŒP*, 171)

The latter two lines suggest a relationship in which youth and future present a mutual thesis and antithesis: that is to say, they complete and therefore negate each other. The problem is made redundant by the calculation that solves it; night cannot coexist with day, although each implies the other. Youth is itself the preparation for its own negation, for its own death – the loss of love, faith, and ideals. Couffignal notes that this is the context of the final image of 'Zone', 'Soleil coupé' (*ŒP*, 44), where the poet bids farewell to the past, which is for him now dead and lost. He writes of this image, 'Adieu au soleil claironnant, tout neuf; salut à un astre mort, guillotiné, soleil des morts, soleil infernal. Adieu à l'enfance, à sa pureté, à son dieu Jésus-Christ.'²² This is not the optimism towards the future that one might expect from the poet of such pieces as 'La Victoire', but Apollinaire often viewed the passage into the future as a necessary trial rather than as an opportunity. For example, in 'Les Collines' Apollinaire writes several times of the death of youth in terms that are not always enthusiastic about the future:

Jeunesse adieu jasmin du temps
 J'ai respiré ton frais parfum
 [...]
 Adieu jeunesse blanc Noël
 Quand la vie n'était qu'une étoile
 Dont je contemplais le reflet

²¹ See Anne Hyde Greet and S. I. Lockerbie, eds., *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916)*, by Guillaume Apollinaire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 359.

²² Couffignal, 'Zone' d'Apollinaire, 18.

Dans la mer Méditerranée (*ŒP*, 174)

The reflection of the star in the sea, as the image of youth itself, suggests a distant idealisation. The poet is under no real obligation in this state to dedicate himself to faith or the world, and hence experiences life as a fragrance or free contemplation. However, the obverse side of youth's end is a more immediate experience of life, which entails both positive and negative qualities:

Il vient un temps pour la souffrance
 Il vient un temps pour la bonté
 Jeunesse adieu voici le temps
 Où l'on connaît l'avenir
 Sans mourir de sa connaissance (*ŒP*, 174)

The future carries both positive and negative connotations because it contains both 'souffrance' and 'bonté', so in this dual-aspect, the future is not really considered as necessarily better or worse than youth. What does distinguish youth and maturity is that the latter is characterised by a sense of purpose and perspective. When the poet states that this is the time where one can know the future 'Sans mourir de sa connaissance', it is based on this sense of perspective. Youth is not based on a number of years; it is established by the knowledge that brings maturity and perspective, which in itself is the death of youth.

'La fin de la jeunesse', states Lockerbie, 'doit avoir une valeur plus qu'anecdotique. Elle figure plutôt le moment capital où une nouvelle dimension s'ouvre'.²³ Such is the moment of the prophetic call, where the revelation of God opens up an entirely new order of existence for the prophet. Jeremiah's call is a useful example in this sense. Jeremiah protests God's commission by pleading immaturity: 'Then I said, "Ah! Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you and you shall speak whatever I command you.'" (Jer. 1:6-7) While it is tempting to speculate on Jeremiah's protest about being too young in terms of his possible age at the time of his call, Robert P. Carroll argues that such speculation misses the point of the protest, which is a show of humility or inexperience.²⁴ In this sense, youth ends not when the prophet reaches a certain age, but when the commission of God is forced onto him. In the above dialogue between Jeremiah and God, the latter counterpoises the phrase 'I am only a boy' to the act of prophesying. One possible interpretation of this point is that God is simply dismissing Jeremiah's disingenuous excuse; on the other hand, perhaps God is declaring the end of Jeremiah's youth, stating that *because* Jeremiah must go out and prophesy, he is no longer a boy. Therefore, Lockerbie's description of Apollinaire's theme of the end of youth is coherent with the notion of the prophetic

²³ Lockerbie, 'Le Rôle', 91.

²⁴ Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 98-99.

call: Apollinaire, like Jeremiah, leaves youth when the burden of the vocation of poet-as-prophet imposes itself, opening up an entirely new understanding of the self, the world, and time.

Weber, like Apollinaire and Jeremiah, eschews the naïve definition of age as ‘a date registered on a birth certificate’, stating, ‘what is decisive is the trained relentlessness in viewing the realities of life, and the ability to face such realities and to measure up to them inwardly. [...] [I]t is immensely moving when a *mature* man – no matter whether old or young in years – [...] acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere reaches the point where he says: “Here I stand; I can do no other.”’²⁵ Although in both ‘Zone’ and ‘Les Collines’ youth ‘dies’ at the moment of revelation, the literary repetition over several poems (1912 for ‘Zone’; 1917 for ‘Les Collines’) is perhaps the best evidence that Apollinaire never felt that he had entirely moved on from his youth. This is the paradoxical character of charisma described by Weber as a fundamental aspect of the prophet. Charisma in its pure or ideal form is the essence of newness and discontinuity, but when it confronts the world it becomes developed and rationalised as a practical response to the world. If the charismatic moment in Apollinaire is viewed as the free, spontaneous apprehension of poetry, analogously associated with the youthful and prophetic communion with God, then the tension arises when that moment imposes itself as a regularised ethic that must be followed in the world. Of course, this attitude towards maturity is not in agreement with the privileging of youth by a literary avant-garde, as described by Pierre Bourdieu: ‘le primat que le champ de production culturelle accorde à la jeunesse [...] c’est que, dans les représentations comme dans la réalité, l’opposition entre les âges est homologue de l’opposition entre le sérieux “bourgeois” et le refus “intellectuel” de l’esprit de sérieux’.²⁶ As an avant-gardist, maintaining charismatic youthfulness is as important for Apollinaire as the responsibility of the poetic vocation in the world.

‘Zone’ opens with an acknowledgment of the tension between tradition and modernity, and presents a variety of images suggesting the poet as a steadying force. The initial ‘Tu’ to whom the poet speaks in ‘Zone’ is the Eiffel Tower, evoking its exhaustion with the world, which is itself called ‘ancien’. The Eiffel Tower is called ‘Bergère’ and the bridges of the Seine are ‘le troupeau des ponts [qui] bêle ce matin’ (*ŒP*, 39). The simultaneous labelling of the world as ‘ancien’ and one of the most iconically modern structures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as a ‘shepherdess’ is an immediately paradoxical image. One possible interpretation of this image is that the Eiffel Tower acts as a symbol of stability in a world that is changing ever more rapidly; that is, as soon as the modern world is born, it becomes old, and the Eiffel Tower is something

²⁵ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 126-127.

²⁶ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 220.

of a North Star for those who seek to navigate this world. The feminine inflection of the term 'Bergère' - to say nothing of the physical shape of the Eiffel Tower - also lends the image a maternal connotation, which, as shown above, Apollinaire reiterates with the image of his own mother. The image of stability in a migrant world is further reinforced later in the poem without directly deploying the image of the shepherd, but implying it through the associations with the biblical story of the nativity. Speaking of the emigrants that the poet witnesses in Paris, he states, 'Ils ont foi dans leur étoile comme les rois-mages' (*ŒP*, 43), in an allusion to the wise men of the nativity in Matthew 2:1-12. The wise men rely on the star in the East to locate the birthplace of Jesus. However, the version of the nativity as told in Luke replaces these elements with the shepherds (2:8-20); whereas the star acts as a guide in Matthew, the shepherds in Luke, who presumably are guides of their own sort, are themselves in need of direction. Another possible parallel is found in Amos 6:14-15: "Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, [...] and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"". Amos attempts to undercut his position as a prophet by appealing to his status as a herdsman, but ironically reinforces that prophetic position if we think of tending a flock as analogous to tending to God's people. To say that one is a herdsman is to reinforce their qualifications for being a prophet. What Apollinaire might take from these associations of prophecy and shepherding is that the modern poet is both a guide, but is also *being guided* a grander ideal or that the poet represents a teleology specifically into the unknown.

The Bible has numerous images of God or political rulers as shepherds. The image suggests a world or people ultimately in need of guidance, and in the context of prophecy, either God, or God's proxy in the figure of the prophet or king, is put forward as that guide. Ezekiel 34 has a long discourse on shepherds who both betray and rescue their flock: initially, the shepherds are rulers who fail to properly tend to the flock (i.e., Israel); but by the end of the passage, God assumes the role of shepherd, stating, 'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep' (Ezek. 34:15). The metaphor is then applied to King David: God will 'set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd' (34:23). On the other hand, the shepherd can occur in a military context: Jeremiah 6:3 describes invading armies as 'Shepherds and their flocks'; Apollinaire's 'Saillant' (1915) describes an artillery shell as a 'Berger suivi de son troupeau mordoré' (*ŒP*, 227). Apollinaire and Jeremiah also extend the pastoral connotations of shepherd imagery to urban environments. If the Eiffel Tower is a shepherdess, then is it so difficult, Apollinaire seems to be asking us, to see 'le troupeau des ponts' or 'Des troupeaux d'autobus mugissants' (*ŒP*, 41)? Because Jeremiah 6:2 describes Zion in distinctly

pastoral imagery – ‘I have likened daughter Zion to the loveliest pasture’ (6.2)²⁷ – the ‘Shepherds and their flocks’ of the following verse provide the most apt sort of threat. Therefore, pastoral imagery is transposed onto an urban context (albeit with some negative connotations, given the context of condemnation in Jeremiah’s prophecy), ‘The beautiful meadow infested with shepherds grazing their sheep is in reality a city under siege from a formidable enemy.’²⁸ Despite the threat of destruction in Jeremiah, both the prophet and Apollinaire view the city as a potentially fruitful and beneficent place by comparing it to the pasture. However, because in Jeremiah the people have failed to heed the prophet (6:17), pastoral Jerusalem is doomed and will be turned into desolation. Apollinaire is not as pessimistic about Paris, and as the champion of modernity the poet might serve as the appropriate ‘shepherd’.

Apollinaire’s poem has strong themes of guidance, migration, wandering, and misdirection, but whether or not the poet himself needs such guidance is one of the major points of interrogation. Guidance suggests that the guide has a dedication to the future as well as a feel for the past, of having a sense of where one is going as well as where one is coming from, and that the guide is fulfilling a need that is lacking in the broader society. But the poet’s deeply conflicted relationship to religious thought and practice expresses the past and the future as mutually exclusive. Therefore, no guidance is ever quite adequate. But moreover, guidance is directed towards a wider population, and so demonstrates the tension between the sense of individual and common experience:

Si tu vivais dans l’ancien temps tu entrerais dans un monastère
 Vous avez honte quand vous vous surprenez à dire une prière
 Tu te moques de toi et comme le feu de l’Enfer ton rire pétille
 Les étincelles de ton rire dorent le fond de ta vie (*ŒP*, 41)

These lines express a series of incompatible aspects of the poet’s personality – nostalgia and unsentimentality, faith and rationality, glibness and earnestness. The second-person perspective likewise changes from the informal ‘tu’ to the formal (and plural) ‘vous’, and back again. The *common* – as both frequent and as communal – practice of prayer, and the poet’s conflicted reaction to it, reinforces his status as both all-encompassing and absolutely singular. The monastery is an image of withdrawal from society into a state of religious contemplation, but it is also a communal life. However, though the poet suggests that entering a monastery would have been appropriate in a former era, it is not appropriate now. The shift to ‘vous’ in the following line might then be

²⁷ Various translations of this verse diverge significantly, and several include God’s direct assertion that ‘daughter Zion’ will be destroyed. Others do not use the term ‘the loveliest pasture’, but rather ‘the comely and delicate’. However, even in the latter case, Robert P. Carroll argues that the imagery retains connotations of grasslands and meadows (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 191).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

interpreted as a collective second-person, suggesting that the contemporary public, to whom the poet also belongs, feels a level of disdain towards the activity of prayer. The self-derision felt by the poet alone (following the shift back into the singular ‘tu’) creates an explosion of sparks which form the background or foundation (‘le fond’) of the poet’s life. Based on this reading of the above lines, the poet is both fundamentally modern, sharing secular society’s contemporary suspicion of religion, but also expressing longings and inclinations towards certain aspects of Christianity. This contradiction, rather than causing inertia or indecision, is enlivening and defines the poet in relation to the society. He finds a transcendent energy in religion that nonetheless does not sit well with modern secularism and bourgeois morality, which causes friction with society: he is both guide and peripatetic wanderer.

The title of the poem also signifies a space that must be navigated and indeed the poet spends much time recounting his travels across Europe. However, the opening stanzas’ strongly religious imagery establishes the spatial element as less horizontal and more vertical. The obvious image is again the Eiffel Tower extending into the sky, straining to escape the ‘antiquité grecque et romaine’ (*CEP*, 39) of the ground level. The following lines then state that Christianity is entirely modern:

La religion seule est restée toute neuve la religion
Est restée simple comme les hangars de Port-Aviation

Seul en Europe tu n’es pas antique ô Christianisme
L’Européen le plus moderne c’est vous Pape Pie X (*CEP*, 39)

Obscuring the distinction between the past and the future, Apollinaire considers the emergence of Christianity from Greece and Rome as a model for the struggle of modernity to realise itself in the twentieth century. Susan Harrow describes Apollinaire’s use of traditional models in this very way: ‘the efforts of the Moderns are seen to merge with those of the Ancients.’²⁹ This merging, for example, is made by the comparison of religion to the airplane hangars and the connotations of flight and ascent. Furthermore, the description of the pope as ‘le plus moderne’ is likely a tacit riposte to F. T. Marinetti’s *Le Monoplan du pape* (which, as I will show in chapters three and four) presents the pope as anything but modern). In this way, ‘Zone’ presents the struggle for the modern as a literal upward movement equally embodied both by the ascent or resurrection of Christ, the flight of airplanes, or the vertical construction of the Eiffel Tower. After recounting his own youthful religious practice, the poet envisions the airplanes as simply another reiteration of the ascension of Christ to heaven:

C’est le Christ qui monte au ciel mieux que les aviateurs

²⁹ Susan Harrow, *The Poetics of the Quest: A Study of Development and Continuity in the Poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire*, PhD diss. (University of Edinburgh, 1988), 7.

Il détient le record du monde pour la hauteur (*ŒP*, 40)

The impulse to be modern, then, is equated to religious faith, which is itself represented by the ascent of Christ into heaven, and recurring again in the twentieth century by the advent of the mechanical possibilities of flight. Like the pope, Christ himself becomes the paradoxical symbol of modernity:

Pupille Christ de l'œil
 Vingtième pupille des siècles il sait y faire
 Et changé en oiseau ce siècle comme Jésus monte dans l'air (*ŒP*, 40)

The phrase 'il sait y faire' demonstrates an assuredness on the part of Christ that is paralleled in the figure of the prophet, shown in the following lines mimicking Christ's ascent. Apollinaire writes:

Icare Enoch Elie Apollonius de Thyane
 Flottent autour du premier aéroplane (*ŒP*, 40)

Alongside figures of Greek myth and legend the poet envisions the biblical prophets Elijah and Enoch. As Couffignal notes, the choice of Enoch and Elijah is not coincidental, as these two figures of Hebrew literature share a particular trait: 'les deux prophètes ont tous deux été *enlevés* par Dieu sans avoir connu la mort'³⁰: Elijah is taken to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kgs. 2:11), and Enoch is lifted up by God before death (Sirach 44:16). In the context of 'Zone', in which flight and ascent are images of distinctly modern acts, the prophet is a figure of both the past and the future. And while there is no image of the shepherd in these lines (perhaps Apollinaire felt that such a distinctly terrestrial image would have been inappropriate) the flocks of birds coming to meet the airplane/Christ suggests a similar sort of guidance. As neither Elijah nor Enoch experienced death, and as Christ is a figure of resurrection, the act of being modern, of straddling the line between the past and the future, does have the association of escaping from death as an impossible goal. 'Zone' certainly does not present the poet himself as having avoided death like Elijah, Enoch, or Christ, but rather presents a distinction between the poet who has prophetic aspirations, and the poet who inevitably lives in the mortal world. Therefore, the second movement in 'Zone' is downwards into the more visceral, sordid, and deadly world.

The point at which the poet castigates himself for his prayer serves as a pivot between the religiously-inflected effervescence of the previous stanzas on the one hand, and grounding of the poet on the other. After the visionary experience of Christ, airplanes, prophets, and birds, induced by a memory of religious devotion, the poet finds himself 'dans Paris tout seul parmi la foule' (*ŒP*, 41). This brings the poet back to a more human and social level, as one more

³⁰ Couffignal, *L'Inspiration*, 97.

indistinguishable piece of the world itself. This double-movement in ‘Zone’, from the inspired ascent in the beginning of the poem to the descent into the depths of Paris or Europe, has been described by Couffignal as Apollinaire’s farewell to the religious energy of his youth and acceptance of the necessity to engage with the world. But this engagement is by turns humiliating, corrupting, and shameful, a repeated ‘processus que décrit le poète, le “*déclin*”, la dégradation³¹; that is, it is the opposite of the purifying and invigorating feelings of the first half of ‘Zone’. The themes of sin and death are more prominent in this half of the poem, where Apollinaire begins by stating:

Aujourd’hui tu marches dans Paris les femmes sont ensanglantées
C’était et je voudrais ne pas m’en souvenir c’était au déclin de la beauté (*CEP*, 41)

The intimation of death (‘les femmes sont ensanglantées’), connected to feelings of guilt and sin, becomes a personal hell for the poet. The Catholic images that he revered as a youth now engulf him:

Entourée de flammes ferventes Notre-Dame m’a regardé à Chartres
Le sang de votre Sacré-Cœur m’a inondé à Montmartre
Je suis malade d’ouïr les paroles bienheureuses
L’amour dont je souffre est une maladie honteuse (*CEP*, 41)

If the love experienced by the poet as a child – from his mother, from the Virgin, from Christ – was at that time a source of life, then the same love is now a source of shame. Surrounded by flames, drowned in blood, the wanderings of the poet are no longer the elated wonder experienced when passing ‘la jeune rue’, but an experience of being astray. After the initial ascension of the first half of ‘Zone’, the poet experiences ‘une série de parcours qui, souvent commencés dans la lumière et le bonheur, s’achèvent dans les ténèbres et le malheur, conduisant le promeneur au fond d’une impasse barrée, dans un étranglement qui l’emprisonne; butant sans cesse contre une cloison, il recommence indéfiniment son errance à travers ces circuits labyrinthiques’.³² For example, though he travels around Europe, from Marseille, to Coblenz, to Rome, and to Amsterdam, the poet ends up back in Paris facing prison (an allusion to Apollinaire’s brief time in jail for being falsely accused of stealing artifacts from the Louvre) (*CEP*, 42). Between the ecstatic flight and pathetic fall, the poet finds himself caught between duelling and irreconcilable tendencies that are similarly expressed in *La Chanson du mal-aimé* (1909):

Je suivis ce mauvais garçon
Qui sifflait mains dans les poches
Nous semblions entre les maisons
Onde ouverte de la mer Rouge

³¹ Couffignal, *‘Zone’ d’Apollinaire*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 5.

Lui les Hébreux moi Pharaon

Que tombent ces vagues de briques
Si tu ne fus pas bien aimée
Je suis le souverain d’Egypte (*CEP*, 46)

Apollinaire employs the biblical myth of the exodus to understand the image of following ‘ce mauvais garçon’, which, as in ‘Zone’, represents a younger version of Apollinaire.³³ The walls on either side are imagined as the parted Red Sea that provided the Hebrews a passage to safety. The ‘bien aimée’ is pursued by the poet in the image of ‘le souverain d’Egypte’, which suggests both the affection and the overweening possessiveness of the poet’s desire. Describing this scene, Susan Harrow makes an observation that is also applicable to the ambivalence that characterises ‘Zone’: ‘Those pressures are summed up powerfully [...] where the distinctions between urban violence and human vulnerability, biblical persecution and personal guilt, myth and the everyday collapse together in a searing expression of anxiety and desire’.³⁴

Therefore, the poet, like the prophet, is buffeted from either side by desire and responsibility, the high-flown aesthetic or religious ideal and the fallen nature of the world. In this sense, the poet-as-prophet is both guide and in need of guidance in the way that the bible can simultaneously present both God and prophet as shepherd. Understanding the prophet in Bourdieu’s terms, as a distinctly liminal character, the poet cannot but be grounded in human life in order to aspire to the status of prophet. The movement of descent into the sinful and shameful aspects of humanity, in spite of his desire for the light and the air, is, from the point of view of the prophet, an act of conviction and credibility. An obvious comparison to the poet’s punishment – ‘Comme un criminel on te met en état d’arrestation’ (*CEP*, 42) – is Jeremiah’s arrest and imprisonment (Jer. 37:11-38:6). The four preceding stanzas, three of which are stand-alone lines, begin with the phrase ‘Te voici’, invoking a lack of causality, as though the place is disconnected from preceding and subsequent locations. The poet cannot account for why he finds himself in these places, and thus the sense of guidance becomes necessary in order to ‘find his way out’ of this predicament. A potentially more appropriate comparison is that of Jesus associating with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners (e.g. Matt. 9:10; 21:32), placing him among the socially lowest groups. Similarly, the poet finds himself among emigrants:

Tu regardes les yeux pleins de larmes ces pauvres émigrants
Ils croient en Dieu ils prient les femmes allaitent des enfants (*CEP*, 43)

³³ Rees, *Alcools*, 131.

³⁴ Susan Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self: Subjectivity and Representation from Rimbaud to Réda* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 63.

The final line recalls the poet's previous memory of prayer and both he and the emigrants experience feelings of dislocation. This placement among the migrants and criminals aligns the poet's experience with theirs and gives him a kind of credibility among the more renegade tendencies of the avant-garde. Like the prophet Elisha's prophetic conventicle, identifying with the desires of outcasts (1 Kgs. 2:19-22; 4:1-6:7) makes a virtue of necessity. Robert Wilson describes Elisha's 'sons of the prophets' as 'peripheral individuals who had [...] been forced out of the political and religious establishments.'³⁵ And Norman Gottwald argues that prophets with radical messages 'could find a hearing in the community [...] as their fellow Israelites also became critical of the institutions whose powerful effects upon their lives could not be escaped.'³⁶ The poet-as-prophet asserts a knowledge of lived experience that gives him the credibility to speak to and on behalf of the liminal individuals and groups.

However, the conviction of the poet to see brief flashes of his erstwhile religious belief in the modern world always leaves open the possibility of restoration to that earlier state of being. As Francis Carmody has argued, 'The role of the poet is defined by his need or longing for purity and renewal.'³⁷ As in the lines with the emigrants, the poet sees himself in their circular path to Argentina and back, as well as their faith. Elsewhere, the poet glances into the water and has the same ambivalent reaction:

Nous regardons avec effroi les poulpes des profondeurs
Et parmi les algues nagent les poissons images du Sauveur (*CEP*, 42)

Once again, in the depths the poet encounters something that causes him to recoil in horror,³⁸ but intermingled in that image, is the possibility of redemption, resurrection, or renewal. This dual-nature of prophecy became a major theme of Apollinaire's work: he is marginal, but presents himself as central; he is persecuted but always points to the possibility of resurrection and redemption; he is a modern who finds some kind of guidance in tradition. But Apollinaire did not understand this ambivalence as being a natural continuum from tradition to modernity or from youth to maturity. He understood the two states as being mutually exclusive and antagonistic; however, it was the role of the poet to negotiate these two irreconcilable positions over and over again in the separate space of the poetic and the aesthetic.

³⁵ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, 202.

³⁶ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible in Its Social World and in Ours* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 116.

³⁷ Francis J. Carmody, *The Evolution of Apollinaire's Poetics 1901-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 83-84; Carmody specifically refers to 'Zone' and the Italian futurist poet Paolo Buzzi's (1874-1956) 'Ditirambo napoletano', but suggests that this theme is applicable to several other of Apollinaire's poems, including 'Les Collines'.

³⁸ Indeed, Couffignal speculates that the octopuses are a 'symbole évident du nœud des péchés.' (Couffignal, 'Zone' d'Apollinaire, 13).

The Prophet's Call

In the previous section, it was shown how Apollinaire's appeals, both implicit and explicit, to the myth of the prophet situate the poet and poetry in a position of tension and conflict, where the poet must mediate between the impossible demands of the everyday world and the ideal to which he is called. Furthermore, the intensely Christian imagery frames the journey of the poet in terms of resurrection, repentance, and salvation, raising the stakes for both the poet and his potential audience. However, while the self-presentation of the poet as a prophet provides a framework for understanding the poet's place in relation to art and society, it does not entirely convey the 'message' or 'doctrine' typically associated with prophecy. In the field of aesthetics, Weber acknowledged an intimate relationship between artistic production and religion, but concluded that the relation had been strained in his own era, where 'the conscious discovery of uniquely esthetic values [...] causes the disappearance of those elements in art which are conducive to community formation and conducive to the compatibility of art with the religious will to salvation'.³⁹ But this section will demonstrate how it is precisely the attempted recovery of those elements, which Weber felt had been lost to strictly aesthetic values, that was such a concern for Apollinaire. 'Les Collines' is considered one of Apollinaire's 'manifestes poétiques' and its prophetic outlook, both in terms of its future-oriented themes and its position as the fourth poem in *Calligrammes*, has been aptly described by Scott Bates:

Le poème prophétique par excellence de *Calligrammes* exigea un lieu privilégié d'où il pourrait dominer – comme une colline – les beaux territoires situés au-delà. Le poète s'octroya ainsi une autorité de prophète et de législateur du Parnasse dès le commencement du livre et donna en même temps plus d'importance et d'unité à *La Victoire* et à *La Jolie Rousse*, les deux autres manifestes poétiques de l'esprit nouveau qui suffisaient en eux-mêmes pour accorder au livre sa conclusion prophétique.⁴⁰

In stanza 5, at a moment when Apollinaire proclaims himself as spokesperson for a new vision of the world, he places himself between his past and the future:

Où donc est tombée ma jeunesse
 Tu vois que flambe l'avenir
 Sache que je parle aujourd'hui
 Pour annoncer au monde entier
 Qu'enfin est né l'art de prédire (*ŒP*, 171)

The first and second lines replicate the division of youth and future in 'Zone' but place a more pronounced emphasis on the lack of assurance of the youthful poet, and the confidence of the future prophet. The initial line is phrased as a question in the first-person; the second line switches

³⁹ Weber, *Sociology*, 243.

⁴⁰ Scott Bates, 'Les Collines, dernier testament d'Apollinaire', in *Guillaume Apollinaire 1*, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1962), 38.

to the second-person and proclaims the erupting vision of the future. The final three lines are even more assured, completing the progression from a questioning, doubtful 'Je', to an objective 'Tu', to a commanding ('Sache que') 'Je' whose vision of the future in the second line recalibrates the orientation and identity of the speaker as a prophetic advocate of the future. The poet creates a mythic version of the self through the agonising transition from youth to maturity or from past to future. The image suggests a prophetic call wrenching the subject into a new awareness, which compels certain attitudes and actions on the part of the subject.

The poet-as-prophet in Apollinaire commands a wider view of time and space than the average individual. Immediately after announcing 'l'art de prédire' in 'Les Collines', Apollinaire claims:

Certains hommes sont des collines
 Qui s'élèvent d'entre les hommes
 Et voient au loin tout l'avenir
 Mieux que s'il était le présent
 Plus net que s'il était passé (*ŒP*, 172)

The eponymous hills refer to these great men who see the future better than the present or past, whom Apollinaire explicitly notes in stanza 12:

Voici s'élever des prophètes
 Comme au loin des collines bleues (*ŒP*, 172)

Hills are also a common motif in the Bible as Moses, Elijah, and Jesus all received revelations on the top of a hill or mountain.⁴¹ Moses' call is also associated with fire, when he arrives at Mount Horeb and 'the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed' (Ex. 3:2). Moses' encounter, as the only one of the Israelites who can face God directly and survive (see Ex. 33:11, 20), is both exceptional but also a model for other prophets: 'This is what you [Israel] requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this fire, I will die." Then the Lord replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them *a prophet like you* from among their own people [...]"' (Deut. 18:16-17; emphasis added). Apollinaire makes the point that only 'certains hommes' are 'collines' – a notable distinction between the more democratic view of 'Sur les prophéties'. In the latter poem, Apollinaire insists that 'Tout le monde est prophète' (*ŒP*, 186), in the manner that the prophet Joel predicts that 'your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.' (2:28) The distance between 'Sur les prophéties' (1914) and

⁴¹ Couffignal, *L'Inspiration*, 102.

'Les Collines' (1918⁴²) may suggest that Apollinaire's view of prophecy increasingly emphasised a less democratic, more exceptional nature akin to Weber's view of the absolute discontinuity of charisma. However, perhaps the contradiction is less pronounced when charisma is viewed as a force that itself carried an edifying principle. Apollinaire's subsequent statement in 'Sur les prophéties' reads:

Mais il y a si longtemps qu'on fait croire aux gens
 Qu'ils n'ont aucun avenir qu'ils sont ignorants à jamais
 Et idiots de naissance (*EP*, 186)

The attitude of 'We Chosen Few', common among the avant-garde, is cast in less strictly elitist terms. Everybody has the potential to prophesy, but it takes the 'certains hommes' who must shake the people out of their pessimism towards themselves and the future.

The exceptional nature of the poet, as well as the advocacy of the future and 'l'art de prédire', suggests that what Apollinaire has in mind for 'Les Collines' is the prophetic call or commission. As opposed to professional religious functionaries such as priests, who stake their legitimacy on the authority of tradition as 'incumbents of an "occupation" [...] that is, men who have acquired expert knowledge and who serve for remuneration',⁴³ Weber distinguishes the prophet by a charismatic 'call' to service. For example, Apollinaire echoes the prophetic call of Isaiah in stanza 30 of 'Les Collines':

L'on ne me donna qu'une flamme
 Dont je fus brûlé jusqu'aux lèvres
 Et je ne pus dire merci
 Torche que rien ne peut éteindre (*EP*, 175)

The poet is burnt, but the lines suggest that his lips are untouched by the fire, leaving open the question of whether he has been called with the same action that calls Isaiah. Furthermore, the silence of the poet is a reversal on Isaiah who, when given his call by the angel of God, immediately assumes the role of God's intermediary and asks to preach:

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?" And I said, "Here I am; send me!" (Isa. 6:6-8)

⁴² 'Sur les prophéties' was first published in May 1914 (Greet and Lockerbie, *Calligrammes*, 383) but 'Les Collines' first appeared in *Calligrammes*. I follow Bates' argument that while 'Les Collines' is one of the first poems in the collection, its themes are more in common with Apollinaire's writings and poetry from the last two years of his life and was therefore likely written during that time.

⁴³ Weber, *Theory*, 245; see also Weber, *Sociology*, 46.

Isaiah's call narrative presents a number of parallels and differences with Apollinaire that elucidate the latter's understanding of the structure of prophecy in relation to modern poetry. As described in my reading of 'Zone', Apollinaire has a conception of the prophet coherent with Bourdieu's understanding of a liminal figure stretched across conceptual boundaries. Isaiah's call narrative also suggests this liminality both in its place of occurrence and the position of the prophet as participant. As Otto Kaiser describes, the call occurs within 'the Jerusalem temple as the place in which heaven and earth come into contact' and it 'changes the prophet from being a witness to being a participant in the heavenly council. In this way it succeeds in elevating the status of the prophet without violating the transcendence of the divine sphere.'⁴⁴ For this reason, I will refer back to this key moment in 'Les Collines' as well as Isaiah's call narrative in the remainder of this section.

Images of flames and burning are frequent themes for Apollinaire, recalling how 'le Passé, le Dieu de (sa) jeunesse, et d'autres symboles d'une vie antérieure, furent jetés dans le feu'.⁴⁵ For instance, in the poem of *Alcools*, 'Le Brasier' (1908), Apollinaire writes:

J'ai jeté dans le noble feu
 Que je transporte et que j'adore
 De vives mains et même feu
 Ce Passé ces têtes de morts
 [...]
 Où sont ces têtes que j'avais
 Où est le Dieu de ma jeunesse (*ŒP*, 108)

One way of interpreting the fire is as an image of brevity: perhaps as a sign of how quickly the past becomes the past, the poet asks where those symbols and people have gone. And at the end of 'Les Collines', he states that 'Tout n'est qu'une flamme rapide' (*ŒP*, 177). There is the sense that poet-prophets can only exist for the briefest period of time, as in stanza 9, where Apollinaire states of humanity:

Moins haut que l'homme vont les aigles
 C'est lui qui fait la joie des mers
 Comme il dissipe dans les airs (*ŒP*, 172)

These lines present humanity as infinitely aspirational, utilizing both technology and élan to press itself higher and further. However, the actor is swept away by the force of the act, exciting the seas but simultaneously lost in the performance. Similarly, this idea – that a true burst of

⁴⁴ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, second edition, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), 122.

⁴⁵ Lockerbie, 'Le Rôle', 92.

inspiration consumes the subject – was explored in ‘Les Fiançailles’ (1908)⁴⁶, when Apollinaire wrote:

Un Icare tente de s'élever jusqu'à chacun de mes yeux
Et porteur de soleils je brûle au centre de deux nébuleuses (*ŒP*, 130)

The brief and ecstatic flight of Icarus is external to the poet in the first verse, but then Apollinaire imagines himself burning at the centre of the two nebulae/eyes in the following verse. Apollinaire conflates fire and flight just as the call narrative does: the latter portrays the fire, in the form of live coal, being flown to the prophet by seraphs, themselves creatures of fire.⁴⁷ As described above, Icarus appears alongside the flying Christ in ‘Zone’, as well as the prophets Elijah and Enoch, the latter two being ‘les deux prophètes [qui] ont tous deux été *enlevés* par Dieu sans avoir connu la mort’. The appearance of Icarus alongside the ancient Hebrew figures in ‘Zone’ suggests that prophecy must risk burning itself out by flying too high. And the flame suggests that its brief life is inherently tied to its explosiveness; a prophet must ‘burn’ brighter and faster to introduce new ideas into the world.

This explosive flash of inspiration recalls the tragic element of charisma in Weber. The vitality of the charismatic individual’s authority is ultimately doomed by the routine structures of law, economics, or politics. From the moment charismatic authority is established, it is destined to diminish and fade away, as its ‘pure form [...] may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both’.⁴⁸ A danger is posed to charisma when the desire to extend it beyond its original bearer to new disciples or successive generations necessitates the establishment of rules and regulations for the identification of the original charismatic claim in these latter-day apostles. Or, more specifically to Apollinaire, charisma is actualised in the materials and routines of everyday life. Attempting to work against this trend of routinisation, Apollinaire’s poet-as-prophet both represents the utterly instantaneous aspect of inspiration as well as the aspect of inspiration as a continual referent for the poet. On the one hand, Apollinaire highlights the disruptive prospects of modern literature, stating in *L'Esprit Nouveau et les poètes* that ‘La surprise est le grand ressort nouveau’⁴⁹, pushing outside of the realm of the expected or the routine. Or as Croniamantal proclaims in *Le Poète assassiné*: ‘Ton héros, populace, c’est l’Ennui apportant le

⁴⁶ Rees, *Alcools*, 168.

⁴⁷ The Hebrew word *sēraph* is a noun derived from the verb *sārāph*, ‘to burn’. Couffignal speculates from the following line in ‘Fusée’ (1915) that Apollinaire may have been aware of this etymology: ‘Qu’agitent les chérubins fous d’amour’ (*ŒP*, 261). He writes that ‘Les chérubins sont identiques aux séraphins, dont le nom signifiant: les *brûlants* est bien traduit par “fous d’amour”’ (Couffignal, *L’Inspiration*, 105).

⁴⁸ Weber, *Theory*, 364.

⁴⁹ *ŒPC* II, 949.

Malheur.⁵⁰ On the other hand, if humanity ‘n’est qu’une flamme rapide’, then the poet encounters the ‘Torche que rien ne peut éteindre’. A specifically different kind of fire is presented to the poet or prophet, recalling Moses’ call narrative encountering a bush that ‘was blazing, yet was not consumed’. In this way, the most vibrant poet is engaged in a constant struggle with death.

In stanza 36, Apollinaire leaves behind much of the cosmological, mythical, and psychological imagery to ‘reset’ the poem and present himself as a poet ‘à ma table’. But the list of everyday objects – hats, hair, fruit, gloves – are often strongly related to the idea of death. Stanza 37 begins with unrelated and somewhat morbid and banal imagery:

Un chapeau haut de forme est sur
 Une table chargée de fruits
 Les gants sont morts près d’une pomme
 Une dame se tord le cou
 Après d’un monsieur qui s’avale (*CEP*, 176)

The gloves are dead, the lady’s neck has been wrung, and the gentleman has swallowed himself, the latter suggesting a suicidal or narcissistic theme. But Apollinaire frequently couples the images of death with images of explosiveness and creativity. Stanza 38 begins with a representation of killing:

Le bal tournoie au fond du temps
 J’ai tué le beau chef d’orchestre (*CEP*, 176)

From there, it immediately moves to the technical brilliance of the poet, reversing the previous image of death:

Et je pèle pour mes amis
 L’orange dont la saveur est
 Un merveilleux feu d’artifice (*CEP*, 176)

Again, in stanza 39, Apollinaire begins with an image of death:

Tous sont morts le maître d’hôtel (*CEP*, 176)

But then then he finishes the stanza off with images of bubbling activity of the poet’s mind:

Leur verse un champagne irréel
 Qui mousse comme un escargot
 Ou comme un cerveau de poète
 Tandis que chantait une rose (*CEP*, 176)

⁵⁰ *CEPCI*, 298.

The final image of the singing rose is itself and ‘an affirmation over death’.⁵¹ By stanzas 40 and 41, Apollinaire writes parallel images of death and rebirth:

L’esclave tient une épée nue
 Semblable aux sources et aux fleuves
 Et chaque fois qu’elle s’abaisse
 Un univers est éventré
 Dont il sort des mondes nouveaux

Le chauffeur se tient au volant
 Et chaque fois que sur la route
 Il corne en passant le tournant
 Il paraît à perte de vue
 Un univers encore vierge (ŒP, 176-177)

The image of the slave and chauffeur, both subject to the demands of work and routine, are paralleled by their action of grasping the sword and steering wheel, respectively. The curved motion of the blade mimics the curve of the automobile around the corner, and in both cases the motion releases ‘nouveaux mondes’.

There is then a dialectical view of the materials of the everyday world in Apollinaire in that they are evidence of the everyday, but also provide the passage out of the everyday. Weber recognises in charisma a force that ‘repudiates any sort of involvement in the everyday routine world’⁵², and Apollinaire pronounces dead much of everyday life. However, these objects are not necessarily part of the ‘routine world’ of modernity even if they are potentially by-products of it, and ‘the sheer proliferation of palpable things – via their signifiers – imparts the desirability of “thickening” and reclaiming the real against the levelling effects of a mechanized, streamlined world. [...] The subjective engagement with accessible, alterable objects generates acts of transformation – real and imaginary – as the everyday is reworked.’⁵³ This outlook, which seeks to look beyond the economic rationality of the profane world, stimulates the ‘revolutionary force’ of charisma: ‘Charisma [...] may involve *a subjective or internal reorientation* born out of suffering, conflicts, or enthusiasm. It may then result in a radical alteration of the central systems of attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems and structures of the “world”’.⁵⁴ Apollinaire couples the images of death in the three stanzas above with the creative disordering of the world, to prompt that world to achieve the ‘new orientation of all attitudes’.

⁵¹ The foam of poet’s brain is also linked by Greet and Lockerbie to Apollinaire’s head-wound during the war. This is certainly a possible reading, and in either case, creative productivity is still closely linked with suffering, death, and loss (Greet and Lockerbie, *Calligrammes*, 370).

⁵² Weber, *Theory*, 362.

⁵³ Harrow, *The Material*, 72.

⁵⁴ Weber, *Theory*, 363; emphasis added.

By attempting to detect new cultural possibilities out of the fragments of modern culture, the poet in 'Les Collines' necessarily risks himself through engagement with the necrotic character of everyday life prior to its transformation by the poet. This struggle with death, which is to say the struggle with two mutually exclusive modes of existence separated by an absolute threshold, is fundamental to poetry and prophecy. When, for example, Isaiah witnesses God's throne in the temple, he sees that the seraphs cover their eyes in fear of the overpowering force of God's presence (6:2). Likewise, Moses' call narrative suggests that the encounter with God is to risk death. Initially, before Moses realizes that the burning bush is a manifestation of God, he states, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' (Ex. 3:3) Given the injunction against viewing God directly (Ex. 33:20), actively trying to get a better view would have seemed suicidal, and indeed, when Moses finally understands whom he is looking at, he 'hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.' (Ex. 3:6). The result is to prove Moses as the exception to the rule – he, alone, is able to risk the sight of God. Ultimately, the prophets straddle the line between life, death, and rebirth. After being commissioned, Isaiah is instructed to predict destruction on Israel, however within the destruction of the land lies a kernel of redemption:

[?]Even if a tenth part remain in [the land],
 it will be burned again,
 like a terebinth or an oak
 whose stump remains standing
 when it is felled.
 The holy seed is its stump. (Isa. 6:13)

Despite the prophecy of doom Isaiah offers up, he leaves 'the holy seed' from which a new civilization might grow. From the perspective of both the poet and the prophet, bringing something genuinely new into the world risks death, but that death provides the possibility of resurrection. In 'Le Brasier', Apollinaire writes:

Voici le paquebot et ma vie renouvelée
 Ses flammes sont immenses
 Il n'y a plus rien de commun entre moi
 Et ceux qui craignent les brûlures (*CEP*, 109)

The boat and the fire are images of transition, but a transition that cannot necessarily be articulated and understood. The problem with death, as well as its allure, is that the poet cannot articulate what comes beyond the sheer desire for the new.

Whereas Isaiah finds inspiration from a deity whose message he resolves to proclaim, the poet finds it genuinely difficult to describe the 'discoveries' of artistic inspiration. The poet

announces 'l'art de prédire', but he falls into a silent reverie ('je ne pus dire merci') after the prophetic inspiration of the 'Torche que rien ne peut éteindre'. Stanza 31 then begins:

Où donc es-tu ô mon ami
 Qui rentrais si bien en toi-même
 Qu'un abîme seul est resté
 Où je me suis jeté moi-même
 Jusqu'aux profondeurs incolores (*ŒP*, 175)

Lockerbie reads this moment as 'ce point tournée vers le monde intérieur, le rôle de l'imagination ne peut plus être de contribuer à la "magnifique exubérance de (la) vie": il faut en attendre un profit plus subtil. C'est plutôt vers la compréhension de l'homme secret qu'elle sembler aller'.⁵⁵ It is a somewhat mystical experience in the sense that it emphasises the 'extraordinary and private experiences of individuals'⁵⁶ or, what Weber describes as 'the psychological proximity of mystical and spiritual emotion to poetic afflatus'.⁵⁷ Just as the poet is struck by the inspiration of the torch, he is left in an abyss with resonances of self-contemplation and even solipsism. As in 'Zone', where the inspirational high of the vision in the first half leads to an experience of shame and death in the second half, the 'poetic afflatus' in 'Les Collines' is both genuinely, authentically powerful and surprisingly empty. The poet has thrown himself into depths that lack distinction, color, and feeling. It is as if 'l'homme secret', the prophetic aspect of the poet, has reached the heart of the aesthetic experience and finds it incommunicable.

In this way, the ultimate incommunicability of the prophetic experience or prophetic message is a central theme of Isaiah's call-narrative. When Isaiah is confronted with the vision of God on his throne and seraphs before him, his first response is one of regret: 'And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips; and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"' (Isa. 6:5). Isaiah's focus on the 'unclean lips' is suggestive of his *ability* to speak based on the conceit of purity or impurity, that is the alignment of the individual with the divine character. As he is part of the people, rather than part of the divine sphere (which will occur in verse 7), he finds that he cannot speak his experience. What the NRSV translates as 'lost' (*dāmāb* in Hebrew) is related to silence or cessation of speech⁵⁸, leading some translations to render the phrase as Isaiah declaring his silence. Of course, once he has been cleansed, the prophet's immediate response is to declare himself ready and able to speak,

⁵⁵ Lockerbie, 'Le Rôle', 97.

⁵⁶ Richard King, 'Mysticism and spirituality', in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2005), 310.

⁵⁷ Weber, *Sociology*, 119.

⁵⁸ For example, the cognate word *dāmāb* refers to whispering (1 Kgs. 19:12), or the noun *dāmā* refers to quiet or rest (Isa. 62:6).

but then the question turns on exactly what the content of Isaiah's prophecy is. God's words, via Isaiah are thus:

[""]Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand.'
Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed." (Isa. 6:9-10)

Almost half of Isaiah's prophecy – the second half concerns the destruction and possible redemption of Jerusalem – is specifically how the people will not actually grasp the prophecy. Moreover, it suggests that the prophecy itself will become the element of confusion among the people, preventing them from repenting because to hear the prophecy is to have comprehension precluded, 'until the Lord sends everyone far away, / and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.' (Isa. 6:12). Isaiah ends where Apollinaire does, with a prophecy that turns in on itself, unable to be articulated because the content of the prophecy is bound to the idea of incomprehensibility.

The silent or ineloquent prophet is not unique to Isaiah, and occurs in the call of Moses, who claims: 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue' (Ex. 4:10). Yet this does not preclude the prophecy, but simply displaces the meaning of the prophecy back on the subject of the prophet himself. Herbert Marks states, in somewhat psychoanalytic language, that 'Obscuration corresponds rather to the moment of blockage that marks the mind's defeat before the unattainability of the object. It symbolizes not the transcendent order but the prophet's relation to the transcendent order, a relation that includes his mute intuition of his own infinitude.'⁵⁹ *Calligrammes* makes use of the image of the mouth or the voice as one that has the ability to proclaim with the authority of a Moses without specifying exactly what is to be conveyed. 'Chef de Section' (1917) imagines the mouth with a deep sense of power, having both 'des ardeurs de géhenne', referring to the Greek term for Hell (see Matt. 10:28), and even suggests the biblical association with Isaiah's call: 'Les anges de ma bouche trôneront dans ton cœur' (*CEP*, 307). Apollinaire heightens the martial imagery by referring to 'Les soldats da ma bouche' (*CEP*, 307), similar to Isaiah 49:2, which states '[The Lord] made my mouth like a sharp sword' or the description of the resurrected Christ in Revelation 1:16: 'from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword'. Therefore, both poet and prophet vacillate between the ability and inability to speak, and

⁵⁹ Herbert Marks, 'On Prophetic Stammering', in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina Schwartz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 63.

the meaning and incomprehensibility of the prophecy. In these particular moments, Marks sees the prophet's realization of being both subject and object of the call, both identification with the infinite and called upon to produce the infinite in the prophecy, ultimately conveying 'nothing more than the fact of conveyance itself'⁶⁰ In this way, the modern poet presents possibility, as in stanza 10 of 'Les Collines':

Voici le temps de la magie
 Il s'en revient attendez-vous
 A des milliards de prodiges
 Qui n'ont fait naître aucune fable
 Nul les ayant imaginés (*CEP*, 172)

The poet here resembles the prophet Habbakuk when the latter receives not a vision, but the *promise* of the vision:

For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
 it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
 If it seems to tarry, wait for it:
 it will surely come, it will not delay. (Hab. 2:3)

The poet does not foretell what 'le temps de la magie' will bring, but simply promises its eventuality.

Apollinaire then felt that the role of the poet in society was to continually orient people towards the future without establishing the future in any definitive sense. The poet-as-prophet embodies annunciation of the future with a self-consciously public voice in his poetry, replete with second-person imperatives, such as in 'Chant de l'Honneur' (dated 17 December 1915), a dialogue between the poet, France, and the war:

Prends mes vers ô ma France Avenir Multitude
 Chantez ce que je chante un chant pur le prélude
 Des chants sacrés que la beauté de notre temps
 Saura vous inspirer plus purs plus éclatants
 Que ceux que je m'efforce à moduler ce soir (*CEP*, 306)

What the multitude should sing is both the song of the poet himself and the 'prélude' to even more pure and beautiful 'chants sacrés'. The pure, sacred songs are sung by the wider milieu of France, to which the poet is prophet, but deferred to an unknown future. The final line, however, brings the focus back to the poet himself, struggling ('je m'efforce') in the midst of the war to sing the less pure and brilliant songs that the multitude will sing in the future. Indeed, it is in part this

⁶⁰ Ibid., 62.

struggle that allows the multitude the songs that it will sing. In 'Les Collines', taking a more absolutist tone with the reader, Apollinaire writes:

Habituez-vous comme moi
 A ces prodiges que j'annonce
 A la bonté qui va régner
 A la souffrance que j'endure
 Et vous connaîtrez l'avenir (*ŒP*, 176)

The poet has already aligned himself with the future, and demands the same of the reader. And again, he places himself in the position of 'souffrance' that is necessary to meet the burdens of the future. Themes of martyrdom are obvious, but as examined in 'Zone', themes of sin, guilt, death, and suffering are the result of exposure to the religious or aesthetic ideals to which the poet attaches himself. In this sense, the future 'la bonté' and present 'la souffrance' are two perspectives on the same poetic or prophetic process.

The prophecy of progress or modernity is itself not tied to any specific utopian state, but to progress itself as an almost anti-utopian desire for constant change and challenge. As an art critic, promoter of a new generation of painters, and theorist of aesthetics Apollinaire promoted himself as among the vanguard of artistic thought, and cultivated the self-image of an outsider on the margins of culture. In stanza 24 of 'Les Collines', he writes:

Un serpent erre c'est moi-même
 Qui suis la flûte dont je joue
 Et le fouet qui châtie les autres (*ŒP*, 174)

The serpent is the poet, but then transforms into a flute that the poet plays, tempting the audience in the manner of a pan or pied-piper. In the very next line, the serpent then becomes the image of the chastising whip. All three images are an aspect of the poet's own self, tempting (this is perhaps an allusion to the serpent in the biblical story of the Fall of Adam and Eve), enticing, and ultimately disciplining the public. However, because this serpent is still 'moi-même' we find the elision of subject and object of the prophecy: Apollinaire remains, once again, 'nothing more than the fact of conveyance itself'.

The irony then is that for Apollinaire to present himself as an innovator, radical, or vanguard, he must establish himself within a basis of tradition. It is certainly striking for such a poet to employ so frequently religious and mythological imagery, but the poet who wishes to speak prophetically of the 'new age' is never meant to imply an utter disregard for the traditions that formed the basis of literary institution from which the poet speaks. Speaking with the authority of a respected figure or tradition can enlist the trust of the society he seeks to influence, but can also establish a series of role models for potential poets. Norman Gottwald explored the question of whether or not 'radical' prophets might operate within an institutional context and

answered in the affirmative, stating that ‘as a participant in the institution [the prophet’s] criticism might be understood as serious and not frivolous or personally deviant’.⁶¹ When Apollinaire refers to ‘Certains hommes sont des collines’ (*ŒP*, 172) in ‘Les Collines’ he is placing himself with a tradition of ‘promethean’ poets who extend themselves beyond the limits of culture for the benefit of the wider public, nation, or audience.⁶² This maneuver recalls Baudelaire’s ‘Les Phares’: great artists as lighthouses alone on the rocky coast, serving as guides for the present and future, but the image is two-fold: the lighthouse or beacon suggests a long beam looking off into the distance, but it also implies one that can *be seen* from a distance. The ‘phares’ or ‘collines’, because of their visibility, provide a basis upon which a tradition can be constellated and innovated.

Where the mouth might then be silent or stunned in poems such as ‘Les Collines’, when expressing the anticipation of the future, it is equally capable of presenting itself in other poems as the advocate of tradition and order. In ‘La Jolie Rousse’ (1918), the mouth, as the image of God, is placed on the side of the past or tradition:

Vous dont la bouche est faite à l’image de celle de Dieu
 Bouche qui est l’ordre même
 Soyez indulgents quand vous nous comparez
 A ceux qui furent la perfection de l’ordre
 Nous qui quêtions partout l’aventure (*ŒP*, 313)

With a slight echo of Adam being made in the image of God, the mouth represents order and considers the poet according to ‘la perfection de l’ordre’. If, recalling the conflict between youth and maturity in ‘Zone’ and ‘Les Collines’, the annunciation of the future is at the price of the death of the young poet, then the mouth of order acts as constant judgment over the poet, who is necessarily always dwelling in a state of deviation or sin relative to that order. In this way, the mouth made in the image of God resides on the side of tradition and of order in the ‘longue querelle de la tradition et de l’invention / De l’Ordre et de l’Aventure’ (*ŒP*, 313), but this is not to suggest that order and tradition are constraining or arbitrarily punitive, though they might be disciplinary. The language of tradition suggests a view of the broad sweep of history: the poet, aspiring to the ‘heights’ of ‘ceux qui furent la perfection de l’ordre’, can locate the traditional within the modern and vice versa through the vantage point that allows him to see both simultaneously. The image of the ‘collines’ also implies a critical assessment of the past’s value rather than an unthinking nostalgia or sentimentality. In *L’Esprit nouveau et les Poètes*, Apollinaire insists that the new spirit strives to ‘avant tout hériter des classiques un solide bon sens, un esprit

⁶¹ Gottwald, *Hebrew Bible*, 113.

⁶² Greet and Lockerbie, *Calligrammes*, 358.

critique assuré, des vues d'ensemble sur l'univers et dans l'âme humaine, et le sens du devoir qui dépouille les sentiments et en limite ou plutôt en contient les manifestations.⁶³

Danger or risk – a wandering into the unknown – is then the fate of the poet-as-prophet, who must always toil at 'la frontière du pensé et de l'impensé, du possible et de l'impossible, du pensable et de l'impensable'. Tradition is the place where the poet-as-prophet starts, but he always aims at a point unknown even to himself, brought up within a tradition, but then always subjecting himself to the judgment of the tradition:

Pitié pour nous qui combattons toujours aux frontières
De l'illimité et de l'avenir
Pitié pour nos erreurs pitié pour nos péchés (*CEP*, 344)

Missteps for such artists and prophets laboring on the outskirts of culture are inevitable, which accounts for the frequent language of wandering and sin.⁶⁴ Therefore, tradition in the later Apollinaire takes on the same function of religion in 'Zone', as both the cradle of the poet's identity and the obstruction he must transcend: 'Les apparitions divines torturent le pécheur, mais ne lui ouvrent pas le chemin du Paradis.'⁶⁵ This dichotomy is described by Scott Bates as the fundamental characteristic of Apollinaire's 'new spirit': 'L'esprit nouveau se divise ainsi en deux: d'un côté, l'esprit classique français qui apporte l'ordre, la moralité, le devoir, l'honneur, le patriotisme; de l'autre, l'esprit romantique apportant l'aventure, les visions d'avenir, l'audace, la liberté, l'exploration, l'invention et la prophétie. Entre ces deux tendances un moteur puissant: la volonté.'⁶⁶ The Will, the fulcrum on which Order and Adventure pivot, is the driving force of poetic and human creation and all other things are products of it:

On scrutera sa volonté
Et quelle force naîtra d'elle
Sans machine et sans instrument (*CEP*, 173)

Through the individual will or charisma of the poet, the routinisation of tradition can be overcome. 'The bearers of charisma' states Weber, 'the oracles of prophets, or the edicts of charismatic warlords alone could integrate "new" laws into the circle of what was upheld as tradition. Just as revelation and the sword were the two extraordinary powers, so were they the two typical innovators. In typical fashion, however, both succumbed to routinization as soon as their work was done.'⁶⁷ If the classical tradition was itself once established by charismatic,

⁶³ *CEPC* II, 943.

⁶⁴ Apollinaire's claimed in *L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes* that the new poetry 'est plein de dangers, plein d'embûches.' (Ibid., 947).

⁶⁵ Couffignal, 'Zone' d'Apollinaire, 13.

⁶⁶ Bates, 'Le Rôle', 27.

⁶⁷ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 297.

prophetic, or artistic genius, Apollinaire felt, it could serve as a check on the less restrained impulses of the prophetic vision of the modern poet, but these very impulses ultimately pressed the poet forward into the uncharted territories which were his fate.

Chapter 2: Apollinaire and Apocalypse

For Apollinaire, the poet's role in the annunciation of the future was often lonely, the future itself was always realised for and through an elusive 'we' that never quite cohered in his mind or his society. This 'we' variously constituted Apollinaire's colleagues in the avant-garde, the wide range of European cities and countries, and the soldiers he fought with in World War I. The following chapter will examine the implications of apocalypticism on Apollinaire's conception of modern poetry and poets, as well as the effect of the war on the aesthetics and ethics of the poet's relationship to society. What is the nature of community in a future that cannot be known? Are there intimations of this community in present circumstances? Is the poet's relationship with contemporary society necessarily antagonistic? Can a future that is radically alternative to the present be communicated to contemporary society?

David G. Bromley's sociological description of apocalyptic groups demonstrates similarities between the avant-gardes that Apollinaire frequented. The avant-garde 'isms' and apocalyptic religious groups emphasise both collective experience and social liminality, feeling themselves on the margins of society and even human thought. Bromley writes that 'apocalyptic organization segregates itself from conventional society. It is a profoundly antinomian form.'¹ It was not simply the flouting of bourgeois morality that animated much avant-garde polemic that made it, too, 'profoundly antinomian', but the effort to locate beauty outside of the conventional distinctions of high and low art or outside established cultural institutions. Bromley also writes that apocalyptic religious groups 'create their own space organized as part of the new order.'² Like many in the avant-garde, they feel themselves on the cusp of a new transformation that is bound to change humanity's understanding of itself and the universe. This new era would involve the destruction of the former era, and Bromley describes this attitude toward apocalyptic destruction as 'a cataclysm with meaning, one that has as its final purpose not destruction but creation.'³ However, in the absence of the apocalyptic event itself, the new creation is conceived and experienced by apocalyptic groups as much through 'culture work' as through particular forms of social organisation: 'Culture work centers on symbolically recasting relationships of time, space, and logic between the transcendent realm and the phenomenal world, primarily through reconstructing sacred texts and narratives. Organizing for the apocalypse calls for destructuring and separation, enhanced charismatic claims, and extensive dramatization and ritualization of group life.'⁴ The following section will then show how the references to biblical and mythological

¹ David G. Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 39.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, 35.

⁴ Ibid.

literature in Apollinaire are harvested for an allegory of aesthetics and apocalyptic thought as part of the 'culture work' inspired by the avant-garde milieu of Paris.

The Avant-Garde and the Apocalypse

One of the defining characteristics of the avant-garde was the tendency towards collectively constituted movements announced in journals, pamphlets, articles, and, most famously, manifestos. One of the earliest of these movements, Jules Romains's (1885-1972) Unanimism, is notable because it took the idea of the collective as its aesthetic outlook. Romains (1885-1972), like Apollinaire, was amenable to the bohemian lifestyle of the avant-garde and sympathetic to the group of poets known as the Abbaye de Créteil. Créteil, situated on an old estate near Paris, was a utopian project, 'an experiment in communal living'⁵ and 'strongly influenced by democratic and socialist ideology'⁶. However, another, perhaps more important source of inspiration for Romains was urban life itself, the city as a singular living organism. Denis Boak describes Romains's epiphany of Unanimism during 'one evening in October, 1903, when Romains and [Georges] Chennevière were walking up the crowded Rue d'Amsterdam, Romains had the sudden vision that the whole city, shops, passersby, cabs, formed a vast unity, with its own collective consciousness, to which he himself had intuitive access.'⁷ Romains's theory presented an optimistic vision of social intuition. For example, in an early, brief piece of fiction entitled *Le Rassemblement* (1905), Romains describes the spontaneous birth and slow death of a crowd that meets on the street. The novelty of this story lies in its perspective, taking the crowd as its protagonist: 'a group, seen, say, from above – and Romains adopts a kind of birds-eye perspective – might well form, move about, and disperse in precisely the way described.'⁸

Boak suggests Unanimism 'grew directly out of Romains's religious crisis in his teens, and in essence provided a defense against metaphysical solitude, even a substitute religion.'⁹ At the end of *La Vie unanime* (1908), Romains proclaimed, with a forward-looking, almost eschatological expectation, that 'Il faudra bien qu'un jour on soit l'humanité', expressing the future vision of Unanimism.¹⁰ This kind of merging of identities was sometimes cast in religious language, and as Boak describes, Unanimism 'implies that the group has a single soul, the *unanime*, and once created,

⁵ Marcel Raymond, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970), 175.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷ Denis Boak, *Jules Romains* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974), 22. Boak lists a series of possible influences for unanimism, including the social psychology of Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde, the philosophy of Henri Bergson, and literary antecedents from Victor Hugo to Walt Whitman.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰ Quoted in Raymond, *From Baudelaire*, 178.

it becomes, explicitly, a *dieu*.¹¹ Compared with Jesus' discourses on unity in the gospel of John, perhaps Unanimism was even a form of secular Christian communalism: 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (Jhn. 17:20-21). Throughout this entire discourse, Jesus keeps his focus as much on the future community as on the present. The phrase 'on behalf of these' refers to Jesus' contemporary disciples, as opposed to the Christian community 'who *will believe*', whose identity is characterised by a unity between it, Jesus, and God. Jesus' view of the community suggests that it will not fully exist until some point in the future.

A similar combination of Unanimism's future-orientation and collective outlook served as a model for many poets across Europe, including Marinetti and Pound. Marinetti likened the Créteil community to a 'convent' for the avant-garde,¹² whereas Pound found inspiration for Imagism and Vorticism among the theories of Romain Rolland.¹³ Apollinaire formed a personal friendship with Romain and the Unanimist concept of collectives, where the poet attempts to feel himself merged with the population, appears at several points in *Alcools*, such as in 'Cortège' (1912), where Apollinaire writes:

Le cortège passait et j'y cherchais mon corps
 Tous ceux qui survenaient et n'étaient pas moi-même
 Amenaient un à un les morceaux de moi-même
 On me bâtit peu à peu comme on élève une tour
 Les peuples s'entassaient et parus moi-même
 Qu'ont formé tous les corps et les choses humaines (*CEP*, 76)

The poet's identity is diffused throughout the population, and in turn, the individual members of the population construct the poet's identity 'comme on élève une tour'. While there is no definitive evidence that the 'tour' is a sly allusion to the tower of Babel, the association would imply a unity within the heterogeneity of the crowd – an allusion that coheres with Unanimism.

Advocating not so much a series of aesthetic techniques than an overall approach to and outlook on life, Romain saw the modern world as containing 'vast collective sentiments, which created a flux of uncanny physical and spiritual relationships voiding classic concepts of space and time'.¹⁴ Like Apollinaire, Romain was inclined to express a distinctly urban experience that was 'an intuitive concept rather than the product of rational analysis' and 'requires the active

¹¹ Boak, *Jules Romain*, 24.

¹² Marianne Martin, 'Futurism, Unanimism, and Apollinaire', *Art Journal* 28: 3 (Spring 1969), 259.

¹³ Cyrena M. Pondrom. *The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry, 1900-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 26-27.

¹⁴ Martin, 'Futurism, Unanimism', 260.

consciousness of the observer'.¹⁵ Therefore, embedded in the idea of Unanimism is the tension between the collective and the observing poet. The feeling of uniting all aspects of life in the city agreed with Apollinaire's disposition towards simultaneity, that is, the sense that the seemingly disparate aspects of life are interrelated and charged with meaning, and that such meaning is entirely contained within the viewpoint of the poet. However, this unique viewpoint ultimately isolates the poet and Apollinaire's tendency to feel himself alone is the obverse side of Unanimist optimism.

Like most avant-garde groups, Unanimism was very short-lived, and Apollinaire quickly moved on to other artistic movements. But Romain's project is characteristic of a certain trend in the avant-garde that believed the distinction between a world that was individually experienced and one that was collectively experienced as a false distinction. Peter Bürger, in his seminal (if controversial) work on the avant-garde, saw in its attack on the 'solitary absorption in the [artistic] work' as 'the adequate mode of appropriation of creations removed from the life praxis of the bourgeois' a negation of the individual-collective distinction.¹⁶ Apollinaire himself was deeply interested in the prospect of a community of writers and artists: 'professional solidarity was always of the utmost importance to Apollinaire, an extension of his emotional craving for love and affection. He was always ready to join associations of writers, to sit on committees and help the younger generation as much as he backed up his own.'¹⁷ This was not socialism in the socio-economic sense – indeed, it was defined in many ways by the individualism of the artists and writers – but it expressed the view of a new world that could only be experienced in the here-and-now through the practice of poetry. In this way, Unanimism resembles the 'culture work' of apocalyptic social organisation described by Bromley: the tendency towards collective ideas and ideals that re-symbolise the external world in terms of a transcendent reality. Two poems from *Alcools*, 'Les Fiançailles' (1908) and 'Vendémiaire' (1912), were written at the height of Apollinaire's pre-war interest in an avant-garde community and both reflect apocalyptic themes and concerns of friendship and loneliness, destruction and creation. But even more, they reflect the sense of a new creation that drew Apollinaire to such movements in the first place.

'Les Fiançailles' bears an immediate relationship to avant-garde art and literature by its dedication to Picasso; although, to the extent that the poet confronts and associates with others, he resists identifying a definitive individual or group. Rather, the poet presents the struggle for a

¹⁵ Boak, *Jules Romain*, 23.

¹⁶ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 48.

¹⁷ Davies, *Apollinaire*, 178.

new reality, which is offered to the external world but not necessarily accepted by it. The ambiguities at the beginning of the poem situate the entire piece between the external reality of the poet and the new reality conceived by the poet's creativity. Stanza 2 opens with an image that recalls the affection between the Virgin and Christ, but which quickly shifts to an eschatological association:

Une Madone à l'aube a pris les églantines
 Elle viendra demain cueillir les giroflées
 Pour mettre aux nids des colombes qu'elle destine
 Au pigeon qui ce soir semblait le Paraclet (*CEP*, 128)

These lines present the imminent future: a figure of the Madonna will return tomorrow to line the doves' nest for a pigeon that looked like the Paraclete. The actions of the stanza, specifically the creation of the nest, also suggest preparation for a new reality. However, the imprecise language – ‘*Une Madone*’, ‘*semblait le Paraclet*’ – casts doubt on whether or not the poet actually sees what the images suggest. As Susan Harrow describes, the indeterminacy of the poet's vision prevents the reader from really discerning a concrete reality in these lines, and Apollinaire retreats into the safety of an outmoded Symbolist abstraction: ‘On se sent glisser dans une pénombre symboliste. Évasion, abstraction, connotation: l'expression fuit le réel pour se réfugier dans l'imprécis, dans l'insaisissable. [...] Ainsi se développe une rêverie d'amour idéal qui, faute de réaliser ses espoirs de transcendance, aboutit à l'évocation d'une certaine stérilité, de l'inertie des cœurs “suspendus”’.¹⁸

The image takes on the sense of the tragically incongruous: if the figure of the Madonna is creating a doves' nest for the pigeon, then surely there is a mistake. Carrying this misfortune a step further, the specific vocabulary contains a few telling double-entendres: ‘le pigeon’, aside from referring to the bird, can also mean a dupe or a fool; and the Madonna collects ‘giroflées’, which may refer to wallflowers or to a slap to the face. The pigeon is therefore a despised and abused figure – perhaps even a martyr. In this sense, the poet sees a new reality, but that vision of the new reality presents a few obstacles insofar as the poet is incapable of attaining his desires in the reality around him. What this stanza confronts is the incongruity between the poet's creative energy and (lack of) agency, between the future – reserved for the doves – and the pigeon's unfortunate present.

The use of the biblical term, Paraclete, is the strongest indication in this stanza of an eschatology. The Paraclete, which is a feature of Jesus' prophecy in the gospel of John, has been traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit – an association Apollinaire follows in his story

¹⁸ Susan Harrow, “‘Les Fiançailles’: Cristallisation d'un amour’, *Guillaume Apollinaire 17* (1987): 122-123.

'L'Hérésiarque' (1902), where the main character, Benedetto Orfei, states that one of the two thieves crucified with Jesus 'était le Saint-Esprit, le Paraclet'.¹⁹ In the gospel of John the Paraclete (variously translated in the Bible as Advocate, Comforter, Councillor, or Helper) is promised by Jesus to his disciples: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate [*paraklētos*], to be with you forever.' (Jhn. 14:15-16). The identity of the Paraclete is somewhat obscure in the gospels, but as Andreas Hoeck describes, it maintains an eschatological function as either the guarantor of the Christian community until the apocalypse, or as the signal of the apocalypse itself: the Paraclete is 'the unequivocal sign of the arrival of the Messianic age. The Divine Spirit represents the eschatological *continuum* in which the work of Christ, initiated in his ministry on earth and awaiting its termination at his Parousía, is wrought out.'²⁰ However, when Jesus predicts the coming of the Paraclete, he also predicts the inability of the world outside of his disciples to comprehend the Paraclete: 'the world cannot receive' the Paraclete (whom Jesus refers to as the 'Spirit of truth' in this verse) 'because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he abides with you, and he will be in you.' (Jhn. 14:17) Invoking the Paraclete suggests a future-oriented hope ('Elle viendra demain'), but at the end of the stanza Apollinaire shifts to the past ('semblait') as if the hope is now understood as a previous, unfulfilled wish. In bringing together the past, present, and future in these lines, he positions himself in a particular moment where it seems that the past, present, and future are most thickly intermingled.

'Les Fiançailles' takes on the character of a 'message in a bottle', written for a community that does not yet (and may never) exist, but without whom the new reality cannot be manifested. The following stanza shifts from the overtly religious references to a group that has arrived late:

Au petit bois de citronniers s'énamourèrent
D'amour que nous aimons les dernières venues (*CEP*, 128)

Although not explicitly associated, the repetition of the idea of love subtly links the 'dernières venues' with the Paraclete. In 'L'Hérésiarque', Apollinaire relates the Paraclete with love when Benedetto Orfei calls the former 'l'éternel Amour'.²¹ These circular references to love bear a peculiar resemblance to John 14:21, where Jesus explains the meaning of the arrival of the Paraclete: 'They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those

¹⁹ *CEPCI*, 115; two major English translations of the poem also bear out this conflation: Greet translates it as 'Holy Ghost' and Shattuck as 'Paraclete' (Anne Hyde Greet, in *Alcools* by Guillaume Apollinaire, trans. Anne Hyde Greet (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1965), 270-271, 171; Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885-World War I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 67).

²⁰ Andreas Hoeck, 'The Johannine Paraclete – Herald of the Eschaton', *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 4 (Fall 2012): 30.

²¹ *CEPCI*, 115.

who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’ The lines in ‘Les Fiançailles’ are a bit too obscure to precisely identify who the ‘dernières venues’ are, but the implication is that the poet and his kind (‘nous’) already knew love, and that others have joined them, and perhaps will in the future. However, the revelation of love in the gospel verses necessitates a loss of personal identity within the unity of the Christian community. Ernst Haenchen writes that ‘the one with great love wears a mask of nothingness. [...] It is precisely because Jesus has so completely rejected his own importance that he can stand in fully for the Father.’²² Does such a loss of identity occur between the ‘nous’ and the ‘dernières venues’? Perhaps if love, truth, and the creative spirit are considered synonymous within the poem. After their arrival, it is said of the ‘dernières venues’ that ‘parmi les citrons leurs cœurs sont suspendus’ (*ŒP*, 128). The imaginative leap from lemons to hearts in the trees is the creative effect of love, calling forth a shedding of the divisions of this/that, them/us, or self/other. Love becomes the juncture between the real and the imagined: ‘la présence de l’“amour” charge le sens créateur supérieur du potentiel simultaniste par lequel s’opèrent les grandes synthèses poétiques.’²³

But Apollinaire distinguishes the poetic image from love and the act of creation insofar as the latter is an ideal impulse and the former is artistic material. The lemon-hearts are, fundamentally, an act of poetry, completing an imaginative reverie on springtime begun in the first line with the ‘fiancés parjures’, whose name suggests an erroneous or dishonest betrothal. Springtime, that is the act of poetry, ‘laisse errer’ these men and women. Rees suggests that the adjective ‘parjures’ ‘refers perhaps both to the deceptions of art and of life from which the poet strives to emerge’²⁴. Timothy Mathews writes that this doubt ‘calls into question the power of image itself to impose contours in time and space; and it is the fact of relation that is presented as a silence and a broken contract.’²⁵ The springtime, or at least the images of it, lets those perjured fiancés ‘errer’, potentially to find a new union where they might live more honestly like the ‘dernière venues’. But this new union is ultimately ‘parjure’ because art is not the same as real life. Poetry becomes a union or marriage within the vision of the poet, recalling William Blake’s grand synthesis of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; but the marriage is always undermined by the very fact of art being something of a deviation from the real world as a measure of the poet’s desire that cannot be fulfilled in the world. But in Jesus’ discourse on the Paraclete, he contrasts love and hate as analogous to separation and union: ‘If you belonged to this world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but’ because of Jesus’ love, ‘I have chosen

²² Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7-21*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 127.

²³ Harrow ‘Les Fiançailles’, 130.

²⁴ Rees, *Alcools*, 169.

²⁵ Timothy Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire: Theories of poetic language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 54.

you out of the world – therefore the world hates you.’ (Jhn. 15:19). Apollinaire follows this idea: that love is way of picking another out of the world and separating it from the world. But the poetic image, which is driven by the poet’s love and enables his creative capacity, is at the same time a deception. It is both the Paraclete, the ‘spirit of truth’ (Jhn. 14:17), or it is the ‘faux dieu’. In this way, ‘Le matériau poétique [...] se situe par-delà le vrai et le faux’.²⁶ The lived activity of poetry or art enacts, momentarily at least, a new world that confuses the divisions of truth and falsehood, love and hate, and the real world and the desire of imagination.

The first three stanzas, therefore, associate particular groups or communities, largely unspecified and presented as symbolic ideas rather than specific individuals, with art and love. These communities live *in* and *for* the future, in the way the disciples of Jesus live *in* and *for* his expression of love. And this life utterly separates these groups from the world. However, in the following part of ‘Les Fiançailles’, Apollinaire brings the poem back to the real world and real people, to express a series of contrasts with the above stanzas. He writes that:

Mes amis m’ont enfin avoué leur mépris (*CEP*, 129)

Jesus’ use of the term ‘friends’ occurs three times in a brief speech in John 15:13-17: ‘No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father.’ Jesus emphasises friendship with the attributes of sacrifice and trust, but now Apollinaire is in a place of shame and contempt:

Une ange a exterminé pendant que je dormais
Les agneaux les pasteurs des tristes bergeries
De faux centurions emportaient le vinaigre (*CEP*, 129)

Apollinaire once again brings the reader the image of the shepherd and the flock, but the shepherds fail to protect their flocks. Apollinaire’s poetic reverie is likened to a sleep while the angel exterminates the flock. The last line above is a clear reference to Centurions giving Jesus wine mixed with gall (Matt. 27:34) or sour wine (Luk. 23:36) as a form of mockery. Apollinaire feels shame not in the promises he has made regarding the power of art, but his inability to truly fulfil those promises in the real world: ‘His failure was a failure not of weakness, but of excessive

²⁶ Didier Alexandre, “‘J’ai fabriqué un dieu, un faux dieu, un vrai joli faux dieu’: L’Écriture du sacré dans *Alcools*”, in *Guillaume Apollinaire: Alcools*, ed. Michel Murat (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1996), 113.

strength, a feeling of plenitude which in the final version of 'Les Fiançailles' will be expressed by the line: "Je buvais à pleins verres les étoiles".²⁷

The sense of community given in the first two sections is essential for Apollinaire's belief in the ability of art to renew the world. Bromley argues that apocalyptic thought is always to some extent social in order to justify the marginalisation of that thought: "The [apocalyptic] community they create is specifically constructed, both to be part of an order that does not yet exist and to be distanced from the existing social order."²⁸ Without the 'fiancés parjures' or the 'dernières venues', the poet is living a life in the order of the *as yet*, but lacks the social support to justify his marginality. It is his ability to convince his friends to accept the falsehood of art that allows them to act as though living in the next world. That is why Apollinaire's first stanzas strike the same notes of love and friendship as the Gospel of John. Where Jesus makes the distinction between servants and friends (15:15) is that both Jesus and his disciples are working with the same knowledge and beliefs: love's salvific potential (in the gospel) or its creative potential (in the poem). Curiously, Bourdieu also characterises this eschatological worldview of art, two mutually exclusive universes that succeed one another, as divided by the idea of love. In order to truly succeed 'dans l'au-delà', 'on y a intérêt au désintéressement: l'amour de l'art est un amour fou [...] C'est à travers l'homologie entre les formes de l'art et les formes de l'amour que la loi de l'incompatibilité entre les univers s'accomplit.'²⁹ By the second section of 'Les Fiançailles', it seems that love and friendship have been lost and the poet is left to find a new form to replace 'l'ancien jeu des vers' (*CEP*, 132).

An early draft of 'Les Fiançailles' addressed the apocalyptic sense more explicitly than the version published in 1908. The following stanza is similar to lines 7-9 in section III of the final version, though with an extra line underscoring the capacity for renewal, and a slight adjustment to the final line. Apollinaire writes in the early draft:

Jadis les morts sont revenus pour m'adorer
 Car ma vie avait le pouvoir de faire renaître tout l'univers
 Et j'espérais la fin du monde
 Mais la mienne arrive en sifflant pareille à l'ouragan glacé (*CEP*, 1059)³⁰

²⁷ L. C. Breunig, 'Apollinaire's "Les Fiançailles"', in *Essays in French Literature*, no. 3 (November 1966), 17.

²⁸ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 39.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 45.

³⁰ This draft was originally published in *Guillaume Apollinaire: Textes inédits* (1952), but was later included in the complete works in the notes to 'Les Fiançailles' (see *CEP*, 1059).

The second of these lines was eventually removed, but it clearly pairs the final apocalyptic cataclysm with a renewal – a rebirth, even – of the entire universe. The dead once returned to adore Apollinaire because his life had the power to make the world anew, perhaps even to bring them back to life.³¹ The dead likely have a dual point of reference: they represent the poet's past and memory, which is reiterated in the second line of part 4: 'Les cadavres de mes jours' (*CEP*, 131); on the other hand, they represent 'l'ancien jeu des vers', closely associated with Apollinaire's youthful adherence to the Symbolist aesthetic.³² In this sense, the poet believed that he could somehow renovate the old aesthetic, a hope characterised as no less than an apocalyptic change in the world. What Apollinaire expects is an overall, world-historical end ('*tout l'univers*', '*la fin du monde*'), but it finally comes down to '*la mienne*' – his end, his life, his world. Secondly it seems to have been far less spectacular than expected. The early draft presents this end as '*sifflant pareille à l'ouragan glacé*', adding the feeling of a chill to what apparently ought to have been a more vibrant, fecund rebirth. Relative to the frequent images of fire as a symbol of poetic inspiration in Apollinaire's work, the image of ice is something of a rarity and so likely connotes a lack of inspiration. The expected end is never quite the final end; Apollinaire's words '*se sont changés en étoiles*' (*CEP*, 130), a Symbolist image of traditional inspiration but in this context, it also signifies distance and abortive ambition as it is accompanied by an image of Icarus.³³ Both the deadness and distance of the Symbolist verse creates an anti-climactic experience. Breunig suggests that 'Les Fiançailles' roughly follows a 'Christian progression' from innocence to salvation, with an intermediate state of sin and confession³⁴; if this is the case, then his disappointment in the '*fin du monde*' is only a temporary setback and salvation is always a possibility.

Accordingly, the ninth and final section of 'Les Fiançailles' provides a stark contrast to the hollowness of the apocalypse in section III above. Whereas in section III, the poet is subjected to an end like the hurricane's whistling (or icy whistling in the early draft), section IX finds the poet burning ('*brûle*') among flaming contemporaries.³⁵ Perhaps the first line, '*Templiers flamboyants je brûle parmi vous*', is a reference to the avant-garde community, also suffering for their efforts to modernise their aesthetics.³⁶ Historically, the Templars were burned at the stake in the 14th century for the crime of heresy, fitting the self-understanding of the avant-garde as martyrs.³⁷ The second line of section IX begins with '*Prophétisons ensemble*', suggesting, when

³¹ Greet, *Alcools*, 270-271.

³² Harrow, 'Les Fiançailles', 123-124.

³³ *Ibid.*, 124; in a similar vein, Greet describes the stars in this line as 'elusive poems' (Greet, *Alcools*, 270).

³⁴ Breunig, 'Apollinaire's "Les Fiançailles"', 21.

³⁵ *CEP*, 136.

³⁶ Breunig, 'Apollinaire's "Les Fiançailles"', 26.

³⁷ Greet, *Alcools*, 276.

compared with the apparent disappointment of section III, that the apocalyptic change can only truly occur when the group identifies itself with the collective effort of being modern, but at this point, Apollinaire's loneliness is a sign of courage rather than impotence. '[T]es enfants galants', another elusive community suggesting a prophetic or avant-garde group, in line 11 build 'le nid de mon courage' (*CEP*, 136), returning the image to the state of innocence in which the reader finds the 'pigeon' of the first section, as does line 10, 'Le soleil et l'amour dansaient dans le village' recalling the villages of section I. At this point, Apollinaire presents a second bird from the 'pigeon':

Je mire de ma mort la gloire et le malheur
Comme si je visais l'oiseau de la quintaine

Incertitude oiseau feint peint quand vous tombiez (*CEP*, 136)

This second bird strongly suggests artistic achievement, aimed at like a target ('quintaine'), but that aim is always slightly uncertain. Like the 'pigeon' of section I that 'semblait le Paraclet', there is a falseness ('oiseau feint peint') to this bird – it is both the salvation of the artist, the ability to fundamentally change his world, and simultaneously mere artifice.

Apollinaire's apocalypticism is also expressed in the formal connections of these two sections as well as the thematic connections. The form of section IX is almost identical to section I (with the exception of the absent fourth line of section I). Apollinaire writes the lines of both sections as alexandrines in contrast to the freer lines of the seven central sections. The free-verse of the central sections, where the apocalyptic hopes end in disappointment, finally gives way to the traditional alexandrine metre. This is striking given the reference to poetry in section V – right in the midst of the poet's disappointment and isolation:

Pardonnez-moi mon ignorance
Pardonnez-moi de ne plus connaître l'ancien jeu des vers
[...]
Je médite divinement
Et je souris des êtres que je n'ai pas créés
Mais si le temps venait où l'ombre enfin solide
Se multipliait en réalisant la diversité formelle de mon amour
J'admèrerais mon ouvrage (*CEP*, 132)

This stanza bears the most explicit connection to the status of poetry and poetic form that Apollinaire confronts. He claims to have forgotten the 'ancien jeu des vers', but as the beginning and end of this poem demonstrates, that's only true within the context of this poem, perhaps even this section. The breakdown of verse, in favour of something new, is always somewhat contingent on the sensibility of the poet. He meditates 'divinement', seeing himself in the guise of godly creator, but only in reference to the beings he did *not* create. Always keeping the eschatology

closely allied with a sense of new creation, Apollinaire concludes the stanza by looking to a time when 'l'ombre enfin solide' finds expression in *formal* diversity, meaning that a true change in poetry will occur whereas at present, that change has only been intimated by the signs and images such as those found in section I, the 'pigeon' that seems like the Paraclete, the 'citrons' that are also 'cœurs'. The poet returns to his formal origins, but with a newfound confidence that poetry represents an apocalyptic hope. This hope comes at the risk of losing the world one knew and of loneliness; but with courage and love, poetry can point the way to the revelation of the world beyond.

Destruction, Communion, Creation

It was not a great leap for Apollinaire to shift from 'mes amis' to broader societies, cities, and countries. As 'Les Fiançailles' demonstrates, there is tension between the poet's voice and vision and the attitudes and organisations that make up the society the poet finds himself in. However, this is not a question of the poet as a kind of politician, seeking to goad society into organising or structuring itself in a particular way: Apollinaire's thought is largely apolitical (he once stated that 'je tiens la politique pour haïssable, mensongère, stérile et néfaste'³⁸) in contrast with, say, Pound's occasional polemics against politics and politicians in 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' (to say nothing of Pound's later poetry of political-economy in the *Cantos*). Apollinaire's feeling that science and technology had thrust western civilization into a new epoch brought him to the conclusion that art and poetry – rather than any particular social or political arrangement – must reflect and consummate the radical break between the past and the future. Furthermore, art was radically opposed to the idea that the new epoch could be brought about gradually or rationally; it was a wrenching and violent break that Apollinaire often characterised as bloodletting. In this respect, the title of Apollinaire's final poem in *Alcools*, 'Vendémiaire' recalls the first month of the French revolutionary calendar, and is likely an allusion to the French Revolution's frequent use of the guillotine on the nobility, as well as its resetting of the calendar to year one. Related to the word for a grape harvest, 'la vendange' (the calendar started over each autumn), he implies that the harvesting and necessary death of the old world (the grapes and the vines being harvested) is the 'wine' of the new era – a concept implicitly drawn from Revelation 14: 'So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God.' (Rev. 14:19).

³⁸ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres complètes de Guillaume Apollinaire*, 4 vols., ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: André Balland et Jacques Lecat, 1966), 4: 712.

The poem was likely written around 1909³⁹ in the context of Apollinaire's association with Romain, whom he had met while they worked together at the journal *La Phalange*.⁴⁰ In that year, Romain cited Apollinaire's 'Cortège' (entitled 'Brumaire' at the time, after the second month of the French revolutionary calendar) as an example of the aesthetic of Unanimism.⁴¹ 'Cortège' and 'Vendémiaire' describe the poet finding himself deeply connected to the multiplicity of life, extending his conscience to every facet of the modern world. The emphasis on European cities, with Paris at the centre, recalls Romain's Unanimist vision of urban life, where 'the modern city [is] a living, positive entity into which the poet's individuality may be merged'.⁴² In 'Vendémiaire', Paris is eager for the creative developments of writers and artists from around the world, and in the following lines the towns of Brittany, Rennes, Quimper, and Vannes, offer themselves up to Paris, saying:

Ces grappes de nos sens qu'enfanta le soleil
Se sacrifient pour te désaltérer trop avide merveille
Nous t'apportons tous les cerveaux les cimetières les murailles (*CEP*, 149-150)

The image of the grapes recalls Revelation 14's two harvests: the harvest of grain (vv. 14-16), and the harvest of grapes (vv. 17-20). Because the grain harvest lacks the expected separation of the wheat from the chaff, Brian K. Blount speculates that it 'offer[s] a fully salvific image of universal ingathering'⁴³ Although the reference in 'Vendémiaire' is clearly of a grape harvest rather than grain harvest, this idea of the 'universal ingathering' and self-sacrifice carries throughout the poem to the end, where Apollinaire states:

Tout cela tout cela changé en ce vin pur
Dont Paris avait soif
Me fut alors présenté (*CEP*, 153)

The wine is the conglomeration of the cities and cultures of Europe offered up to Paris, and more specifically, the poet himself. It might then follow that what comes of this conglomeration is a jumble, an adulteration of cultures and nationalities. However, this result is 'pur', everything has been transformed in the insatiable thirst of Paris and the poet. The next lines give some detail as to what has been included in this 'vin pur':

Actions belles journées sommeils terribles

³⁹ Rees, *Alcools*, 177.

⁴⁰ Davies, *Apollinaire*, 176.

⁴¹ According to Davies, Apollinaire had conceived of the idea of writing a series of poems based on the French revolutionary calendar, but he does not seem to have gotten further than these two poems (*Ibid.*).

⁴² Boak, *Jules Romain*, 30.

⁴³ Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 279.

Végétation Accouplements musiques éternelles
 Mouvements Adorations douleur divine
 Mondes qui vous rassemblez et qui nous ressemblez (*CEP*, 153)

The mundane and quotidian is placed alongside the transcendence and abstraction of ‘musique éternelle’ and ‘douleur divine’. This suggests that the collapse of the supernatural and terrestrial spheres – a common trope in apocalyptic thought – is achieved within the figure of the poet and the space of the poem, and that from this collapse an entirely new aesthetic is born. The new aesthetic expressed in these lines is conceived as the discovery of being in the place and moment of an historical nexus, but it resolves upon the individuals who are marked by this nexus, which produces entire ‘Mondes qui vous rassemblez et qui nous ressemblez’.

The eschatological mood of impending doom or catastrophe is also expressed in the imagery of the sacrifice of the cities. The image is of quenching an insatiable thirst:

J’ai soif villes de France et d’Europe et du monde
 Venez toutes couler dans ma gorge profonde (*CEP*, 149)

The sense is both that of a community feast or drinking a toast, or that of a religious or supernatural belief in which the sacrifice is consumed in order to gain its powers. Weber himself noted the connection between sacrifice and communal feast, stating that religious sacrifice is ‘intended as a *communio*, a ceremony of eating together which serves to produce a fraternal community between the sacrificers and the god.’⁴⁴ The apocalyptic community is formed by creating a common stake in its formation by the sacrifice, and Apollinaire imagines the cities of Europe collectively involved in the project of the future. As the poem progresses the sense of communion develops into a chaos where the distinctions between individual and community, distance and proximity, are collapsed:

Les villes répondaient maintenant par centaines
 Je ne distinguais plus leurs paroles lointaines
 [...]
 L’univers tout entier concentré dans ce vin (*CEP*, 153)

The individual contributions of the cities become indistinguishable in the common fund of the sacrifice. And when Apollinaire writes that ‘L’univers tout entier’ has been ‘concentré dans ce vin’ this sacrifice is given world-historical dimensions.

But the image of the sacrifice that accompanies so many of the responses of the cities implies that what the avant-garde has gained in Paris is a loss for the cities themselves. In stanza

⁴⁴ Weber, *Sociology*, 26.

21, the German cities, represented by the Moselle and Rhine rivers, and the city of Coblenz, add their contributions. In stanza 22, the sense of violence is more palpable:

Mes grappes d'hommes forts saignent dans le pressoir
 Tu boiras à long traits tout le sang de l'Europe
 Parce que tu es beau et que seul tu es noble
 Parce que c'est dans toi que Dieu peut devenir (*ŒP*, 152)

There seems to be a conflict between Germany and France, but since the poem was first published in 1912, Apollinaire is likely referring to the history of French and German/Prussian conflict in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ However, Apollinaire still views Paris as the cultural capital, and though the Rhine and Moselle provide the German contribution, the imagery suggests both a natural coming-together and conflict:

Mais nous liquides mains jointes pour la prière
 Nous menons vers le sel les eaux aventurières
 Et la ville entre nous comme entre des ciseaux
 [...]
 Troublant dans leur sommeil les filles de Coblenz (*ŒP*, 153)

The two rivers, the French-originating Moselle and the German-originating Rhine, come together like scissors, with Coblenz, and its history of both French and German/Prussian contention, between them. Rather than referring to a particular historical conflict, the images imply that France and Germany are necessary antagonists. Their respective contributions are both entirely essential but mutually destructive. However, the statement that the 'filles de Coblenz' are only slightly disturbed by the waters suggests that this conflict is both a recollection of the past and premonition of the future because, at the moment, it is only playing out on the level of the poem itself.

The following stanza underscores the battle imagery, where more cities respond 'par centaines' (*ŒP*, 153), but it is significant that the images are primarily in the imagination of the poet:

Tous les fiers trépassés qui sont un sous mon front
 L'éclair qui luit ainsi qu'une pensée naissante (*ŒP*, 153)

The catastrophe that accompanies the apocalyptic event is both a reference to the past history of France and Europe, but also the absolute destruction that accompanies what Greet describes as the 'unanimist terms'⁴⁶ of the 'pure wine' that Paris drinks. The living traditions of the cities that

⁴⁵ Greet, *Alcools*, 285.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

contribute to Paris's pre-eminence among them are stripped of meaning in the conflict with modernity:

Des kilos de papier tordus comme des flammes
 Et ceux-là qui sauront blanchir nos ossements
 Les bons vers immortels qui s'ennuient patiemment
 Des armées rangées en bataille
 Des forêts de crucifix et mes demeures lacustres
 Au bord des yeux de celle que j'aime tant (*CEP*, 153)

Like soldiers, the 'bons vers immortels', without being deployed for action have lost their sense of purpose; that is to say that cultural tradition can only mean something when it comes into conflict with alternative traditions. The next line imagines the 'bons vers immortels' as a forest of crucifixes and idyllic abodes by a lake. The former image carries through the sense of martyrdom initially intimated in the previous line of soldiers ready for battle, but the latter image suggests peacefulness. The sequence of these images then might be read as moving from action, to sacrifice, to rest or even paradise. This brief sequence is capped, in a somewhat Surrealist move, by the 'demeures lacustres' being on the edge of the eyes of a loved one. Recalling the status of love in 'Les Fiançailles', as the force of creative power, the 'bons vers immortels' move from being inert to active and renewed.

Stanzas 11 and 12 are more overtly religious, such as when Apollinaire compares the cities' sacrifices to the Catholic communion. For example, the South speaks to Paris:

Partagez-vous nos corps comme on rompt des hosties (*CEP*, 151)

Lyon replies to Paris with an offer of divine words, but with the caveat of potential religious conflict:

Toujours le même culte de sa mort renaissant
 Divise ici les saints et fait pleuvoir le sang
 Heureuse pluie ô gouttes tièdes ô douleur (*CEP*, 150)

Apollinaire again draws from European history and religion to establish a framework for thinking about the artistic activity of the renewal of the world. These verses allude to the religious conflicts that occurred in Lyon as far back as the 16th century, when the Protestants violently seized the city.⁴⁷ The martyrs of these wars of religion die in the name of 'sa mort', – in the same way that the cities of the poem seem to happily give themselves up to Paris. The last verse mingles the joy of the blessing that is the 'gouttes tièdes' of blood raining down with 'ô douleur', that is, the sorrow of the death. Finally, Rome's contribution, being the seat of Catholicism, is most explicit

⁴⁷ Ibid., 283.

about the connection between the communion and the blood. Rome states that the branches of the cross and fleur-de-lys

Macèrent dans le vin que je t'offre et qui a
La saveur du sang pur [...] (*CEP*, 152)

which recalls the wine of the communion as the transubstantiation into the blood of Christ, itself being a connotation of the radical – even eschatological – change from one state to another.

The communion with the blood of Christ is preceded by war, violence, and destruction that ends the world as it has been known:

Une couronne du trirègne est tombée sur les dalles
Les hiérarques la foulent sous leurs sandales
O splendeur démocratique qui pâlit
[...]
Une foule de rois ennemis et cruels
Ayant soif comme toi dans la vigne éternelle
Sortiront de la terre et viendront dans les airs
Pour boire de mon vin par deux fois millénaire (*CEP*, 152)

The first three lines of this stanza suggest a downfall of earthly authorities: the ‘couronne du trirègne’ is identified by Rees as the crown of the Pope⁴⁸, the ‘hiérarques’ in sandals may be European religious leaders or monarchies, and even secular democracy fades away, killed by the ‘rois ennemis et cruels’. The final four lines recall the return of the dead, as well as Christian beliefs about a gathering of faithful in the sky.⁴⁹ The final line maintains an important ambiguity for Apollinaire: on one hand, the ‘vin par deux fois millénaire’ is an obvious reference to the communion of Jesus’ blood; however, because these ‘rois’ come ‘pour boire’ the wine of the speaker, there is the suggestion of a new two-thousand-year cycle. The ‘vigne éternelle’ and the wine are the presentation of something simultaneously traditional and entirely novel.

In ‘Les Fiançailles’ and ‘Vendémiare’ Apollinaire blends time and space, objectivity and subjectivity, as a way to disintegrate reality and intimate how a new creation might be thought about. He suggests that no new creation can ever be realised without a sacrifice. But just as in ‘Les Fiançailles’, ‘Vendémiare’ explores the nexus of the past, present, and future in a largely free-verse form, only to revert back to the traditional alexandrine in a subtle acknowledgement that while the poem can provide a framework for how the apocalypse might be thought through, it is not the thing itself. The final three stanzas read:

Ecoutez-moi je suis le gosier de Paris
Et je boirai encore s'il me plaît l'univers

Ecoutez mes chants d'universelle ivrognerie

⁴⁸ Rees, *Alcools*, 178.

⁴⁹ See 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Et la nuit de septembre s'achevait lentement
 Les feux rouges des ponts s'éteignaient dans la Seine
 Les étoiles mouraient le jour naissait à peine (*ŒP*, 154)

The third standalone line plays with the alexandrine to some extent, as Apollinaire sings his song drunkenly, like Rimbaud's 'Le Bateau ivre' (1883), as a 5/8 division of syllables rather than the standard 6/6. It is a similar technique to one he uses in 'Le Voyageur' (1912) by breaking up the free-verse with four perfect quatrains near the end of the poem: 'ces quatre quatrains d'alexandrins parfaitement rythmés et régulièrement rimés font scandale, qui changent soudain l'allure et le ton improvisé [...]: ils lui imposent une autre dimension'.⁵⁰ But the final three verses shift back into a traditional metre as the poet ends with an image of the new day just beginning to dawn; but the standalone line, with its suggestion of the 'universelle', connotes a reality that is radically separated from this world. The implication, as in 'Les Fiançailles', is that the new world still lies in the future, and that the avant-garde should not receive it too easily. Tradition – represented by traditional verse – is the foundation by which people live their lives, and the avant-garde poet would do well to recognise that; but the bloodletting of the past is also the way in which the avant-gardist distils the transcendent beauty, vitality, or the energy that gave tradition its value in the first place.

Apocalypse and World War I

'Vendémiaire' constitutes something of a prophecy in terms of Apollinaire's understanding of cultural progress necessitating conflict and even bloodshed. Furthermore, the imagery of sacrifice pertains to the pervasive feeling that all dominant institutions, political or cultural, are corrupt and must be opposed – the bloodletting is as much of the 'old order' as of the advocates of the new. This opposition might take the form of pacifism, as in the teachings of Jesus, or violent action as both 'derive their energy from a negative relation to institutions in the existing social order. This means more than simply separation; it entails rejection of and resistance to established institutions.'⁵¹ Weber, for example, does not exclude the use of violence and war by as an expression of eschatological expectations – especially when they entail 'a revolution in behalf of the faith'.⁵² Revelation 19 recasts Jesus as the conquering warrior Christ whose eyes burn like fire and whose robes are soaked in blood. Whether preaching a pacifistic denial of temporal institutions or active engagement in the conflict, conflict between Good and Evil or Order and Chaos is an indispensable feature of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic sects polemically stand as those who live on the side of Order and Righteousness, those who live in and for the *To Come*.

⁵⁰ Jean Burgos, 'Une Poétique de la Rupture', in *Guillaume Apollinaire: Alcools*, ed. Michel Murat (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1996), 69.

⁵¹ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 38-39.

⁵² Weber, *Sociology*, 229-230.

Likewise, 'avant-garde', a phrase derived from military technology, suggests a group of comrades in a violent struggle, isolated within enemy territory. In this light, World War I provided a catalyst for the avant-garde project of radical modernisation and renewal.

'La Petite auto' (1918) presents the sense of imminent conflict felt by the poet even before war had been declared.⁵³ The poem's inspiration came from a road-trip to Deauville at the end of July 1914 that Apollinaire took with his friend, the artist André Rouveyre (1879-1962), just as France was preparing for war with Germany. Despite the deep sense of premonition in the poem, war-fever had been building for some time and the announcement of the draft came as no surprise and Apollinaire and Rouveyre immediately return to Paris. Without explicitly naming the belligerents in 'La Petite auto', a conflict against German culture⁵⁴ makes itself felt in the following lines, alluding to the German invasion of Belgium:

Avec les forêts les villages heureux de la Belgique
Francorchamps avec l'Eau Rouge et les pouhons
Région par où se font toujours les invasions (*CEP*, 207)

The references to aerial conflict and 'L'homme y combat contre l'homme' a few lines later, continue the theme of battle, and suggest an equivalence of power between the combatants. This is a different apocalyptic vision than we find in Apollinaire's pre-war poetry, where the conflicts and contradictions in the poet (self/other, transcendence/immanence, change/stasis) resolve themselves in an imaginative and unutterable cataclysm; here, the conflicts are *emerging* as real-world issues and being simultaneously inscribed into poetic experience. Jean Burgos describes this process as 'le passage d'une réalité référentielle à une réalité fabriquée par l'écriture à grands coups de ruptures', although the process in this particular poem might not be as one-way.⁵⁵ In 'La Petite auto', the conflict is still presented in terms of grand myth as opposed to Apollinaire's more propagandistic poems written in the midst of his time on the front, where he regularly praised France or vilified Germany. Here, there is continuity between the idea of conflict as a poetic

⁵³ This poem, first published in *Calligrammes* in 1918, presents an event that occurred prior to Apollinaire's enlistment in the French army in December 1914. However, the first draft of the poem was not likely completed until several months after Apollinaire's enlistment (see Greet and Lockerbie, *Calligrammes*, 403).

⁵⁴ J. G. Clark notes that Apollinaire's anti-German attitude during the war was as much cultural as military: 'Et son patriotisme s'exprime surtout sur le plan culturel, même quand il s'agit de vilipender l'ennemi de 1870, l'Empire d'Allemagne, dont il méprise le luxe bon marché, l'art industrialisé, le pauvre modernisme qui ne respecte aucune tradition, les faux tableaux de maître, les vains efforts pour se libérer de l'influence française.' (J. G. Clark, 'La Poésie, la politique et la guerre: autour de 'La Petite Auto', 'Chant de l'honneur' et *Couleur du Temps*', in *Guillaume Apollinaire* 13, edited by Michel Décaudin (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1976), 11).

⁵⁵ Burgos, 'Une Poétique', 76-77.

moment of the death and rebirth of a new, imaginative world, and actually seeing that conflict manifest outwith the will and imagination of the poet.

One effect of this emergence was not a simple aestheticisation of war, but war as an allegory of an apocalyptically transitional experience, revealing the indescribable future in its own poeticised ways. Apollinaire discerns a meaning in the mundane coincidences of life. Amidst the chaos of the war, Apollinaire perceives an order in the continued repetition of the number three. Lines 4 and 5 read:

Avec son chauffeur nous étions trois

Nous dûmes adieu à toute une époque (*CEP*, 207)

Apollinaire, Rouveyre, and their driver create a group of three that are fortuitously thrown together to witness the end of an epoch, but it is not immediately apparent why Apollinaire states the obvious, that ‘nous étions trois’. One possible interpretation is his fascination with the traditional three Magi in the gospel of Matthew, who present gifts to the infant Jesus and bear witness to the birth of the messiah. In his short tale ‘La Rose de Hildesheim ou Les Trésors des Rois Mages’, Apollinaire (who correctly notes that Matthew says nothing ‘quant au nombre et quant à la condition des pieux personnages’⁵⁶) focuses on their possession of gold as a form of glory as well as a symbol of love, the latter of which, as seen in ‘Les Fiançailles’, is a symbol of creative power. The travellers of ‘La Petite auto’ might then be seen as three magi bearing witness to the birth of a new epoch and, as alluded to in the final verse, the birth of a new poet. And as Apollinaire and Rouveyre were artists, it might be concluded that the poem presents them as ‘chosen’ by their creative powers to present the events of the war in a grander, mythological light.

The number three occurs again in the visual, calligrammatic section, where the image of a large man seated at the back of the car (probably the stoutly-built Apollinaire) reads ‘O départ sombre où mouraient nos 3 phares’ and the bottom edge of the road reads ‘et 3 fois nous nous arrê tâmes pour changer un pneu qui avait éclaté’ (*CEP*, 208). Unlike the correlation of the three travellers and the Magi, an external referent to the double-mention of the number three in these lines is obscure; rather, they might be better understood as an incitement to presentiment, when a symbol’s recurrence signals a meaning of potentially supernatural significance without revealing precisely what that significance is. Recalling the original meaning of the Greek word *apokalypsis* as a revelation of the meaning of history, apocalypse often assumes a gradual or progressive unveiling of the signs’ or texts’ meanings over time.⁵⁷ For example, the relationship between knowledge and the eschatological future is expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:12: ‘For now we see in a mirror, dimly,

⁵⁶ *CEPCI*, 160.

⁵⁷ Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 119-120.

but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.' As David H. Gill writes, 'the word *ainigma* [translated here as 'dimly'] has a positive as well as a negative signification, that is, as well as meaning "riddle" or "dark saying" or "something which baffles," it may also mean simply "an underlying truth," "a truth clothed in the language of imagery."⁵⁸ Given Apollinaire's occasional fascination with various sorts of spiritualist practices and astrology (expressed most explicitly in the poem 'Sur les prophéties' (1914)), it seems likely that the recurrence of the number three is not so much to engender an identification with a particular legend or myth - such as the three magi or the holy trinity - but to assert a divine provenance in the course of history, as well as an almost occult or prophetic perception on the part of the poet. The recurrence of the number three is that coincidence that *must be* more than coincidence. As Weber states, 'To the prophet, both the life of man and the world, both social and cosmic events, have a certain systematic and coherent meaning.'⁵⁹ The avant-garde attitude would simultaneously deny the 'systematic and coherent meaning' of the dominant world-view and assert the emergence (however partial) of a new worldview. It is this meaning that gives the figure of the prophet their appeal, and Apollinaire may be asserting his own ability as a poet to bestow events with cosmic importance. He brings the sign into the status of mystery or portent, showing a fragment that implies a whole. As in 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 ('For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.),' 'the tone of apocalyptic is followed by its implications for the understanding of the present: the character of the present is – in relation to the future wholeness – broken.'⁶⁰

This refusal to say what the war means is in part due to the problem of being able to comprehend the war from the individual standpoint. J. G. Clark writes of Apollinaire's experience, in contrast to the apotheosised centrality of the poet in 'Vendémiaire', as defined by its partiality and fragmentary understanding: 'Et sauf dans la mesure où la guerre est partout la guerre, elle ne peut être connue dans sa totalité, tant elle est vaste et complexe; le poète ne peut tout embrasser d'un coup d'œil omniscient, il ne peut être omniprésent.'⁶¹ The lacunae of immediate experience are filled-in by the totality of myth and fantasy. Monsters stir in the depths of the ocean, men ascend higher than eagles and, in another nod to Apollinaire's favoured myth of Icarus, fall quickly and violently back to earth. It is not enough to simply describe the new condition of war.

⁵⁸ David H. Gill, 'Through a Glass Darkly: A note on 1 Corinthians 13,12', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25:4 (October 1963), 427.

⁵⁹ Weber, *Sociology*, 59.

⁶⁰ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 225-226.

⁶¹ Clark, 'La Poésie, la politique', 17-18.

mechanised, aerial, accelerated. The poet envisions forces of nature in terms suggestive of instruments of war:

Des géants furieux se dressaient sur l'Europe
 Les aigles quittaient leur aire attendant le soleil
 Les poissons voraces montaient des abîmes (*CEP*, 207)

Could 'géants furieux' or 'aigles' be tanks and airplanes? Perhaps not in such a direct, one-to-one manner, but, the images certainly allude to a primordial movement of events. Apollinaire elevates the novelties of the war into a timeless order where that which is old is new again and that which eternal is reborn. The instruments of modern warfare are no longer *just* tanks, planes, and submarines but elements in an eternal drama.

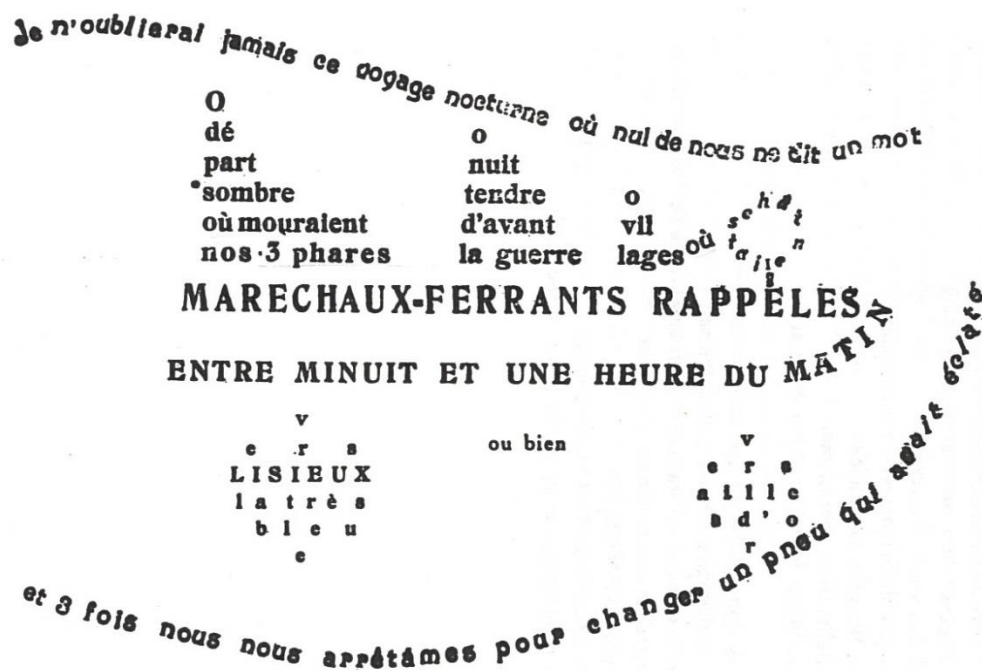
But it is notable that although these mythic creatures/war machines have made an appearance, they seem to be in a place of tension and suspension. In each line, Apollinaire writes in the indefinite past ('se dressaient', 'quittaient', 'montaient') as if he were witnessing their appearance but nothing more. These creatures exist in an eerie state of suspension: the giants are 'furieux' but do not battle and the fish are 'vorace' but do not eat. Exactly what the eagles might do when the sun finally appears is not exactly stated, but by the end of the poem it is clear that the morning sun is the signal for a new era. By refraining from showing the creatures in these lines act, Apollinaire further develops the sense of timelessness in this moment. It is a moment where, externally at least, very little is actually happening; but on the other hand, it is a moment incredibly pregnant with the possibilities of the future.

The individual moments of Apollinaire's experience and memory have been fixed to a different cosmological time, and the frequent references to time in 'La Petite auto' betray Apollinaire's heightened sense of the coming of the new and of the passing of history. The journey from Deauville begins 'un peu avant minuit' (*CEP*, 207) and ends 'après avoir passé l'après-midi' (*CEP*, 208) just at the moment when the draft is being posted in Paris. The fortuitous time of arrival leads Apollinaire to suggest that a new era has arrived, and that he and his party have arrived in Paris with it. Further references to time are found in the calligramme (fig. 1); in the base of the car, just above the wheels, we read 'entre minuit et une heure du matin', and the middle figure in the car reads 'O nuit tendre d'avant la guerre'. The wheels of the car, while not specifically referring to any particular hour, do suggest the dawn with their colours: the left wheel reading 'Vers Lisieux la très bleue' and the right reading 'Versailles d'or' (*CEP*, 208). These chronological references to time, from the 'un peu avant minuit' to 'l'après-midi' imply that the passing of the night was itself a kind of apocalyptic moment, a period of tribulation the other side of which constitutes a new man:

Et bien qu'étant déjà tous deux des hommes mûrs

Nous venions cependant de naître (*CEP*, 208)

The shift from ‘mûrs’ to ‘naître’ clearly reverses the order of a person’s life, but within the cosmic vision of the poet, it is a naturalised progression from the old to the new. Calling up instances of time insinuates the poet into an ‘objectified’ narrative that he has created by taking fragments of external reality and reimagining them in a myth of recreation.



(fig. 1)

If the apocalyptic sensibility of *Alcools*, relative to *Calligrammes*, has a more subdued sense of conflict, both are forthright about the apocalyptic moment being something that cannot truly be described, as being on the far side of ‘la frontière du pensé et de l’impensé, du possible et de l’impossible, du pensable et de l’impensable’⁶² and, by extension, the sayable and the un-sayable. Malcolm Bull examines the way in which apocalypse is shown to ‘describe a process in which undifferentiated chaos is the prelude to a new order [...] The undifferentiated returns, that which was excluded was reincluded, and a new order is created’.⁶³ Working along sociological lines, Bromley states that apocalyptic ‘challenges official interpretations of reality [...] and promotes de-

⁶² Bourdieu, ‘Genèse et structure’, 331.

⁶³ Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 79.

differentiation.⁶⁴ And returning to a more ‘primordial’ or ‘elemental’ language became a concern for a number of avant-gardists; Marinetti’s advice in the ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ (1912) to use verbs only in the infinitive and abolish adjectives and adverbs was meant to update language by paradoxically stripping art of the ‘fatal corrosion of time’ and replace psychology with ‘the lyrical obsession with matter’.⁶⁵ Poets like Mallarmé, whose poetry tended toward a prelapsarian ideal of a pure language, ‘attempt[ed] to restore it to its full *efficacy* on the presumption that the uttered word has power to create a void around itself, to reject all vision coming from the world of the senses and to evoke – as music does [...] the idea itself, pure as on the first day of the Creation, solitary, divinely useless.’⁶⁶ Unlike Mallarmé, Apollinaire and Marinetti do not seek poetic language in a mystical Absolute, but in an alienated world of the rationalised body and technology newly re-inscribed with the vitality of intuition and creativity.

In ‘La Victoire’ (1917), the penultimate poem of *Calligrammes*, Apollinaire asserts language as the very thing that will be renewed in the apocalyptic moment. Whether coming to terms with the past in order to critically address the future (Apollinaire) or simply abolishing all tradition (Marinetti), poetic language in particular carries the weight of the past while simultaneously seeking a more modern or ‘truer’ language. This goal is never achieved in the here-and-now but resembles a utopian state of language lying just beyond the horizon of the future, as Apollinaire writes in the future tense:

O bouches l’homme est à la recherche d’un nouveau langage
 Auquel le grammairien d’aucune langue n’aura rien à dire (*CEP*, 310)

As the lines above note, the new language is definitively not a return to the past, but something utterly new, beyond meaning, beyond analysis. Furthermore, as the following lines imply, it is an almost bodily language, as if Apollinaire recognises a current disconnect between what somebody says, and what somebody communicates by physically doing. This reformulation of language follows Harrow’s observation of ‘the broader diachronic shift from romantico-symbolist valorizations of literariness, immateriality, and ideality to fresh, “hard” language more *transparently* communicative of external reality.’⁶⁷ Apollinaire pushes this shift to an extreme, positing complete congruence between physical, material reality and the language used to represent it. This would imply that after the apocalyptic moment, word and action would be entirely

⁶⁴ Bromley, ‘Constructing Apocalypticism’, 38.

⁶⁵ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, edited by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 121-122.

⁶⁶ Raymond, *From Baudelaire*, 19-20.

⁶⁷ Harrow, *The Material*, 73.

indistinguishable. After repeating three times in line 32 the desire for ‘nouveaux sons’, he implores the reader:

Laissez pétiller un son nasal et continu
Faites claquer votre langue
Servez-vous du bruit sourd de celui qui mange sans civilité
Le raclement aspiré du crachement ferait aussi une belle consonne

Les divers pets labiaux rendraient aussi vos discours claironnants
Habituez-vous à roter à volonté (*ŒP*, 310)

This new language becomes more elemental and eschews politeness and decorum. These verses are followed by a sense of returning the mental to the physical. In this way, Apollinaire circumvents the distinction between the material and ideal.

However, this is not a purifying vision of the apocalypse, as in Daniel 12:10 (‘Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined’), where all are made the same. Rather, it is the imposition of an irrevocable difference, ‘resistance to the aversive effects of material modernity, that is, to the imposition of a rationalized city-space in which difference and ambiguity [...] have been factored out.’⁶⁸ Although there are no direct references to the war, which was still going on even though Apollinaire had been removed from combat after receiving a head wound, conflict is still very much integral to the context of ‘La Victoire’. But the anticipation of this victory is tempered by an awareness of loss. The loss of wonder at what is new and novel is, for Apollinaire, something to fear:

Crains qu’un jour un train ne t’émeuve
Plus
Regarde-le plus vite pour toi
Ces chemins de fer qui circulent
Sortiront bientôt de la vie
Ils seront beaux et ridicules (*ŒP*, 310)

In contrast to ‘La Petite auto’, where the instruments of modern technology are almost mythologised, or to ‘Guerre’ (1916) where the modern world was to help man conquer the land, sea, and air, Apollinaire projects the state of the currently ‘modern’ into a future where it has become antiquated, even quaint. In ‘Guerre’, Apollinaire writes:

Ne pleurez donc pas sur les horreurs de la guerre
Avant elle nous n’avions que la surface
De la terre et des mers
Après elle nous aurons les abîmes
Le sous-sol et l’espace aviatique (*ŒP*, 228)

⁶⁸ Ibid., 75.

The poet places himself between the ‘Avant’ and ‘Après’, speaking from a place of contemporary conflict. But then moves on to say:

Après après
 Nous prendrons toutes les joies
 Des vainqueurs qui se délassent (*CEP*, 228)

These lines surely conflate the idea of the modern, of commanding greater expanses, with the patriotism of winning the war against the Germans and being at ease. ‘La Victoire’ does not rely upon the promise of peace, asserting that the dynamism of the ‘modern’ has been replaced – is always being replaced – by a newer, unknown ‘modern’. Lines 13-15 state:

Je me souviens de toi ville des météores
 Ils fleurissaient en l’air pendant ces nuits où rien ne dort
 Jardins de la lumière où j’ai cueilli des bouquets (*CEP*, 309)

The ‘ville des météores’ may refer to Apollinaire’s recent experience in the trenches, where the evenings were often filled with gunfire and explosions, or to pre-war Paris – a nostalgic reflection on his former life.⁶⁹ The point is that, whether in pre-war Paris or the trenches, ‘rien ne dort’. It may also refer to Apollinaire’s friends and acquaintances in the avant-garde, so many of whom came from outside France to ‘make an impact’. But the context of memory in these lines suggests that these images are recalled only to heighten the awareness of the necessity to look forward.

As the apocalyptic moment represents a nexus between past and future, Apollinaire accordingly closes ‘La Victoire’ with a few references to ‘tomorrow’:

Quelle oasis de bras m’accueillera demain
 Connais-tu cette joie de voir des choses neuves (*CEP*, 311)

The former line recalls Apollinaire’s avant-garde associations, which were never as tightly formed as other avant-garde movements, such as Futurism or Surrealism. The latter line may even suggest that a sectarian adherence to one or another movement was not in Apollinaire’s nature, and that progress for him really meant that one must constantly look for new movements and artists. In lines 17-20, Apollinaire even coyly mocks the idea of an institutional avant-garde:

On imagine difficilement
 A quel point le succès rend les gens stupides et tranquilles

A l’institut des jeunes aveugles on a demandé
 N’avez-vous point de jeune aveugle ailé (*CEP*, 309)

⁶⁹ Greet and Lockerbie, *Calligrammes*, 501.

Greet and Lockerbie suggest that these lines are a satiric criticism of the cynical and materialistic concerns – the phrase ‘l’institut’ ‘smacks of commercialism’ – of artistic and poetic inspiration.⁷⁰ Inevitable associations with blind poets and prophets, such as Homer and Tiresias, are turned on their head by the notion that these poets have formed an ‘institute’ and line 5 sees these blind poets narcissistically ‘se miraient sous la pluie aux reflets du trottoir’ (*ŒP*, 308).

If Apollinaire was jaded about the proliferation of avant-garde groups after his time in World War I, this does not mean that he did not necessarily find the community that he was looking for; it might be that his sympathies were much more aligned to his fellow soldiers. ‘A Nîmes’ (1917), dated December 1914 when Apollinaire enlisted, is filled with nostalgia for Paris, but includes lines such as:

Les 3 servants assis dodelinent leurs fronts
 Où brillent leurs yeux clairs comme mes éperons
 [...]
 J’admire la gaiété de ce détachement
 Qui va rejoindre au front notre beau régiment (*ŒP*, 211)

The fairly traditional verse suggests that Apollinaire does not feel these fellow soldiers to be akin to a new avant-garde, but when he writes in ‘La Jolie rousse’, ‘Pitié pour nous qui combattons toujours aux frontières’ (*ŒP*, 314), the echo of the war is certainly apparent, which signals a possible shift in his thinking: the soldiers and artistic avant-garde are doing the same thing in participating in the construction of a radically new reality. The bulk of *Calligrammes* was written during the war, and while there are poems in *Alcools* that are clearly looking for an ideal, unreachable artistic community, in *Calligrammes* there are names that are largely lacking in the earlier collection. ‘La Petite auto’ names André Rouveyre, who is directly addressed in several other poems in the collection; *Calligrammes* is dedicated to René Dalize, who was killed in combat in May 1917, who (aside from an appearance in ‘Zone’) is also named in the elegiac ‘La Colombe Poignardée et le Jet d’Eau’ (1918) alongside André Billy, Georges Braque, Max Jacob, André Derain and others (fig. 2).

Apollinaire never found himself with a single group of writers and artists whom he could call his own. But he may have found something close to it in the comradeship of the trenches – a comradeship that entailed the loss of life. But even if the war caused him to reflect on his apocalyptic beliefs and the consequences of a real-world cataclysm such as he was witnessing, it did not suppress them entirely. World War I prompted Apollinaire to envision a new universe where the contradictions and binaries that structured the world were absorbed into one another. The poems of *Alcools* focus on how the apocalyptic moment resolves itself in the person and

⁷⁰ Ibid.

vision of the poet, whereas *Calligrammes* expands that vision, leaving the poet as a visionary in a world that cannot be fully contained within him as in the previous poems. From this point on, the skies will be resolved with the seas, the ideal with the material, the past with the future. But the recognition of this moment, where every undifferentiation is revealed, is in the end, indescribable. Therefore, the loss suffered by those cultural innovators – who for Apollinaire certainly included the soldiers in the war – was all the more poignant precisely because neither the losses nor the gains could ever be fully articulated.

Douces figures posées **C**hères lèvres fleuries
 MIA MAREYE
 YETTE LORIE
 ANNIE et toi MARIE
 où êtes-
 vous ô
 jeunes filles
 MAIS
 près d'un
 jet d'eau qui
 pleure et qui prie
 cette colombe s'extasie

Tous les souvenirs de nos jours ?
 O mes amis partis en guerre où sont Raynal Billy Dalize
 Jaillissent vers le firmament où sont les noms si mélancoliques
 Et vos regards en l'eau dormante dont les pas dans une église
 Meurent mélancoliquement où est Cremnitz qui s'engagea
 Où sont-ils Braque et Max Jacob peut-être sont-ils morts déjà
 Derain aux yeux gris comme la mer De souvenirs mon âme est pleine
 Le soir tombe **O** sanglante mer
 Jardins où saigne abondamment le laurier rose fleur guerrière

(fig. 2)

Chapter 3: Marinetti and Prophecy

F. T. Marinetti, perhaps more than any avant-gardist before André Breton (1896-1966) and the Surrealists, was as dedicated to avant-garde sectarianism as to building a full scale social movement. Eventually, this effort led him to support Mussolini and the fascists after World War I – a support he largely maintained until his death – but the early years of Futurism were filled with the possibility of uniting humanity with the emergent technology and machinery of the day in a cultural, mental, and spiritual revolution. To this end, he too understood his craft as a form of prophecy, and he would be the beacon on the hill or in the sky. The prophecy of Futurism contained a series of recurring elements: technology and speed as an experience of the sublime; aggressiveness, often towards women or femininity; Italian nationalism; anti-parliamentarian and anti-democratic attitudes; love of war. Another trait that occurs frequently is anti-Catholicism; the Futurists were eager to overthrow moral and social conventions, and the church, as the traditional guarantor of such conventions, became an obvious target. Many of these positions were unpopular by design and establish a particular rapport of us-and-them to the broader population.

Marinetti's 1912 *Le Monoplan du pape: roman politique en vers libres* is not as distinctly poetic as Marinetti's earlier, pre-Futurist or Symbolist works such as *La Conquête des étoiles* (1902), *Destruction* (1904), or *La Ville Charnelle* (1908), nor as visually and acoustically inventive as *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914). However, *Monoplan* holds a unique place in Marinetti's oeuvre. It was the last work he wrote originally in French, which had been his normal practice for almost all his major works, where he wrote and published in French, translating the piece into Italian later. Other than the manifestos, *Monoplan* is also perhaps the most explicitly political of Marinetti's creative works. In the story, the Pilot,¹ from whose perspective the work is told, kidnaps the Pope, engages in parliamentary debate, and leads a successful attack on the Austrian navy – all interspersed with a series of bizarre visions reminiscent of those found in the biblical books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or Revelation. It is filled with vulgarity, misogyny, and blasphemy, but is also written in a tone of near-religious ecstasy and enthusiasm. This tone was partly inspired by Marinetti's experience as a correspondent for the French newspaper *L'Intransigeant* during the Italo-Turkish war, where the book was written and completed in November of 1911. It was published in French the following January and an Italian translation followed in 1914, where the subtitle was changed from 'Roman politique' to 'Romanzo profetico' – prophetic novel.

¹ I refer to the central character of *Monoplan* as the 'Pilot', but Marinetti himself never uses either 'pilote' or 'aviateur' in reference to this character. Indeed, Marinetti never names this character, other than with the use of personal pronouns ('je' or 'moi') or references to personal attributes or characteristics ('mon cœur-moteur', 'mes ailes'), leaving open the possibility that the central character is, in fact, F. T. Marinetti.

Despite its billing as a novel, the free-verse that fills nearly 350 pages of the original (and only) French edition, is more representative of a direct voice, unreflective and immediate, rather than discursive prose. This is the voice that relates what the speaker is experiencing as he is experiencing it, that gives as much weight to subjective impressions as to the objective world, and refuses to draw a sharp line between the internal and external experience. The biblical prophets speak from a position of direct contact with God, a force as seemingly objective as the institutions of priesthood or monarchy those prophets often compete with, and therefore claim for themselves a greater level of authority. Weber understood that this voice, this doctrine unencumbered by the rationality and routine of the institution, is subtended by a wellspring of personal *charisma*, social authority marked by pure individuality and a countervailing movement against the institutionalising and bureaucratising trends of modernity. 'L'action charismatique du prophète s'exerce fondamentalement par la vertu de la parole prophétique, extraordinaire et discontinue', writes Bourdieu.² For him, *charisma* is evidence of a position of autonomy or 'discontinuity' vis-à-vis the institutions that guarantee material or symbolic benefits such as religious grace or cultural distinction. Among all literary forms, poetry and poets might be considered the most autonomous and avant-garde poets as they often required substantial personal freedom from material necessity in the form of other sources of income (as in the case of Apollinaire's journalism or Pound's appeals to wealthy patrons) or inherited fortune (as in the case of Marinetti) in order to pursue their work. Through this freedom from necessity, poets can aspire to 'higher' ideals, objectified in the avant-garde forms and contemporary themes of their works. And those ideals can be structured to work against the grain of the poet's own existence: a well-moneyed poet, such as Marinetti, can develop a system of values that militates against any relations between literature and economics or against the connection between poet and society. It is in this way that Bourdieu drew a line from the discontinuity of prophecy to that of modern poetry; and Marinetti perhaps embodied this wilful and charismatic break more than any of his contemporaries.

Prophecy and Propaganda

By 1909, with the publication of the *Manifeste et fondation du futurisme* on the front page of *Le Figaro*, Marinetti declared his intention to act not only as an artist, but as a proliferator and propagandist of the new movement of Italian painters and poets. Fittingly, his most powerful artistic legacy was Futurism's dissemination. The numerous³ manifestos that he and his fellow

² Bourdieu, 'Une Interprétation', 12.

³ A precise enumeration of the futurist manifestos is probably impossible, because while Marinetti described a particular *tone* and *technique* for manifestos, not all of the wide variety of works deemed such are actually described with the word 'manifesto'. For example, when

Futurists published blended poetry and polemic, visual art and politics, typographical experiments and mathematical notations. The Futurist *soirées* of the pre-war years consisted of early performance art, music, and theatrical readings of the manifestos. But if the intent of the manifesto form was to enumerate specific principles for the new literature, painting, music, theatre, film, dance, cooking, and any other aspect of art and life that the Futurists set their sights on, it is necessary to question to what extent the actual artistic and cultural works embodied those principles. The techniques and principles of the manifestos were often more aspirational than practical.

Perhaps as the modern prophetic mode *par excellence*, the manifestos were an instance of proclaiming the *what could be* against any reasonable expectations. For example, *Monoplan* was the first in Futurist poetry of what was later called *aeropoesia*.⁴ In 1931, Marinetti published the *Manifesto dell'aeropoesia* that contained an extensive list of 22 prescribed techniques for *aeropoesia*, but *Monoplan's* correlation with this list is spotty at best. In this work, Marinetti extensively employs points #3 ('evoke clouds, fog, and other atmospheric phenomena') and #8 ('evoke independence'), occasionally employs point #10 ('employ terms borrowed from art and especially music'), and almost never employs points #6 ('avoid terrestrial images') and #12 ('avoid being bombastic'). Point #12 in particular seems so contrary to the general character of Futurism that it almost undermines the seriousness of the list. But this is not unusual in Marinetti's manifestos.⁵ The same year he published *Monoplan*, Marinetti also published the 'Manifeste technique de la littérature futuriste' which famously calls for the suppression of the analogical terms 'like' or 'as', the abolition of adjectives and adverbs, and the exclusive use of the verbal infinitive – none of which *Monoplan* actually does.⁶ And the first Futurist manifesto of 1909 reflects his late-Symbolist poetry of 1902-1908, so Marjorie Perloff's statement that 'The 1909 manifesto reflects Marinetti's

Marinetti's allegorical conquest narrative, 'Tuons le Clair de Lune!', was first published in 1909, it lacked both an explicit description as a 'manifesto' and the stated principles or theses common to the futurist manifestos. Yet, when the same text was included in *Le Futurisme* in 1911, Marinetti subtitled it as the 'Second Manifeste futuriste'. Nevertheless, Marjorie Perloff figures around 50 manifestos published during futurism's early period of 1909-1915 (Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 90).

⁴ This retroactive identification of *Monoplan* with *aeropoesia* is explicitly made in the 1929 treatise on painting, the *Manifesto dell'aeropittura*, although it mistakenly states the publication of *Monoplan* as 1908. This mistake might have been due to Marinetti's co-authors of the manifesto confusing the publication of *Monoplan* with his earlier poetic work *La Ville charnelle*, which was indeed published in 1908 (Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 283.).

⁵ Quoted in Willard Bohn, "The Poetics of Flight: Futurist 'Aeropoesia'". *MLN* 121:1 (Jan. 2006), 23.

⁶ The 1914 Italian translation, on the other hand, comes closer to embodying the innovations Marinetti sets out in the manifesto (De Paulis-Dalembert, 'La Reecriture', 24-26.).

program for the future rather than his own poetic practice⁷ can be potentially extended to all his manifestos on poetry: the enumerated principles were always subordinate to the broader idea and form of the manifesto, which was to promote an absolute adherence to the future. Marinetti as propagandist of the new art, advocate of the new culture or new nation, revelator of the new man, are the features of the prophetic stance of the avant-garde poet and artist, but from two different angles: the poetry looks to the future from the present, the manifesto looks back from an unrealised and unrealisable future.

Martin Puchner (explicitly drawing from Perloff) argues that Marinetti increasingly intended to create ‘a poetics that aspired to the condition of the manifesto’⁸, a poetics that agitated, through tone and subject-matter, for the impossible future. The ‘manifesto-like features’ of sharp insults and direct confrontations were eventually written into this new poetry, ‘forging a poetry celebrating aggression, assertiveness, and confidence, a poetics of the name, the label, and the noun.’⁹ What Puchner does not cite in his description of ‘manifesto-like features’ is the list of enumerated principles. In his analysis these are a secondary concern, the specific ‘demands’ being subordinate to the tone and target of the manifesto. For example, the ‘second’ Futurist manifesto, ‘Tuons le Clair de Lune!’ (1909), aggressively assaults the ideals of Romanticism as represented by the image of the soporific moon, but it does not list any demands or principles. The demands of the manifesto are contingent, even capricious, responding to particular styles and movements as if each one is, at that moment, the only horizon Futurism must breach.

What this means from the position of the artist is that the manifesto is a strategy to disrupt the values that reproduce the artistic ‘establishment’ as much through form as through content. In that way, there is a parallel with biblical prophecy’s use of poetry in addressing specific historical circumstances insofar as prophetic poetry ‘tends to lift the utterances to a second power of signification, aligning statements that are addressed to a concrete historical situation with an archetypal horizon.’¹⁰ The ‘archetypal horizon’ of the manifesto then is only defined by its unthinkability and discontinuity from the standpoint of the present. A poetics that identifies a target and denounces it as impotent can pry open a space for itself, accomplishing exactly where the manifesto already claims to have succeeded in having ‘no other content than the aim of distinguishing themselves from what already exists.’¹¹ But behind this analysis is Weber’s terminology of ‘routinisation’ and ‘de-routinisation’, i.e., processes that favour or disfavour,

⁷ Perloff, *Futurist Moment*, 84.

⁸ Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 74.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 182.

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 58-59; originally published in English.

respectively, the order of everyday life by rules of technical efficiency, economic rationality, bureaucratic consistency, or even tradition.¹² Routinisation is itself the mark of the expected and the banal, it is a future foreseen as the very pattern of the present. A position that names, asserts, and demands is part of a larger struggle ‘in conservation, that is, routine and routinisation, or in subversion, that is, a return to sources, to an original purity, to heretical criticism and so forth.’¹³ Marinetti’s poetics and manifestos do not merely describe a new future, but declaim a prophetic, de-routinised impossible future against the apparent future of what *will be*.

One of Marinetti’s innovations for the manifesto was the opening narration, which sought to inscribe the movement into a self-authored drama between the future and the Ideal – the latter being Marinetti’s description of the decadent nostalgia of his Symbolist predecessors. The *Manifeste et fondation du futurisme*, for example, begins with a long narration of the Futurists in the city reaching a point in which they witness the birth of the new era: ‘Allons, dis-je mes amis! Partons! Enfin la mythologie et l’Idéal mystique sont surpassés. [...] Voilà bien le premier soleil levant sur la terre!... Rien n’égale la splendeur de son épée rouge qui s’escrime, pour la première fois, dans nos ténèbres millénaires.’¹⁴ Frequently, the narration involves the Futurists escaping their confinement in nostalgia and going forth. ‘Tuons le Clair de Lune!’ is entirely an allegorical narrative recounting the Futurist poets’ flight from the city of Paralysis to attack the city of Gout ‘Nous sortions de la ville, d’un pas souple et précis qui voulait danser et cherchait des obstacles. [...] – Lâches! Lâches!... criai-je en me retournant vers les habitant de Paralyisie, qui s’amonceaient en contre-bas, masse de boulets irrités pour nos canons futurs...’¹⁵ In this way, we find a marked distinction between Marinetti’s manifestos and, for example, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*. While the latter was written in 1848, in the midst of revolutionary upheavals in Europe, the former narrates a conflict that is entirely internal to the narrator *as if* it were an objective event. If Marx and Engels’ confidence in the *Manifesto* can be justified by their presence in historical upheavals, Marinetti’s manifestos thrive on their unjustifiable confidence.

Tatiana Cescutti refers to this mode of address as an explicitly prophetic voice in her study of Marinetti’s *La Conquête des étoiles: poème épique* (1902).¹⁶ In this highly allegorical work, the poet sets himself up as a witness of a battle between the stars, representing the Ideal or transcendent, and the insurgent ocean, representing fallen matter, ending in an overthrow of the dichotomy separating the two.¹⁷ In the same way that biblical prophets re-narrate and re-describe

¹² See H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ‘Introduction: The Man and His Work’, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1948), 51-52.

¹³ Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, 183.

¹⁴ F. T. Marinetti, *Le Futurisme* (Paris: E. Sansot & Cie., 1911), 142-143.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

¹⁶ See especially Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 45-59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

the political or national dilemma (i.e., Israel's defeat at the hands of Assyrian or Babylonian empires) into one of a spiritual dilemma of Israel's relationship to God, the poet achieves the prophetic voice by dramatising his or her own viewpoint and context from the 'archetypal horizon' a history of divine salvation. This prophetic position operates – to use Bourdieu's terminology – by misrecognising the stakes of the struggle: it is not about artistic recognition and consecration against the Symbolist or any other modernist tradition, but about a 'pure' interest in being modern.

In *Monoplan*, the 'je narrant'¹⁸ takes the form of the Pilot describing the struggle against the confines of his daily life:

Horreur de ma chambre à six cloisons comme une bière!
 Horreur de la terre! Terre, gluaux sinistre
 à mes pattes d'oiseau!... Besoin de m'évader!
 Ivresse de monter!... Mon monoplan! Mon monoplan!

Dans la brèche des murailles brusquement éclatées
 mon monoplan aux grandes ailes flaire le ciel.
 Devant moi le fracas de l'acier
 déchire la lumière, et la fièvre cérébrale
 de mon hélice épanouit son ronflement. (*MP*, 7)

From the very start, the 'je narrant' of the Pilot inscribes itself into a context of a larger drama. The technique adopted by Marinetti is to speak as one with a kind of extraordinary vision, allowing him to create an allegory of the Futurist ethos. As Cescutti states of the narrator of *Conquête*, 'le "je narrant" souligne, dès les premiers vers, l'investiture extraordinaire qu'il s'accorde lui-même'.¹⁹ The Pilot's vision enlivens the flight even beyond what might be expected from an airplane, and casts it as the inauguration of a number of conflicts between freedom and civilization, reality and sensation, and life and death. The comparison of the bedroom with a casket suggests that the Pilot is not only stifled, but is in a conflict with death itself. In fact, he adopts something of a resurrection narrative – the Pilot starts at the point of death only to leap out of his own casket, a narrative that certainly bears an association with the resurrected Christ. Rather, what Marinetti seems to be dramatising is more broadly cultural, the Pilot as symbol of the Futurist ethos or the Italian nation. The Futurist, in the first manifesto, is placed in a dark – even musty – setting at the very beginning, only to break out upon hearing the sound of a car. If these Futurists are to be thought of as representatives of a 'new' Italy, then both the manifesto and *Monoplan* can be seen as being driven by resurgent imperial aspirations and industrial development. Both senses – the Futurist ethos and Italian nationalism – are possible given *Monoplan's* explicit description as a

¹⁸ Ibid., 45.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Futurist work and its vociferous Italian nationalism, but the point is that, abetted by modern technology, a new life for artist and nation is possible. However, as I will show throughout this and the following chapters, this reclaiming of life is generally attended by a cavalier attitude towards death.

The ‘je narrant’ then dramatises the tone and form of the manifesto from the ‘archetypal horizon’ of Futurism as world-historical movement or (imperial) Italy as sublime experience. But the manifesto, existing in the future anterior, is in need of an act of revelation precisely because it speaks of the *will have been*.²⁰ And like the manifesto, Marinetti agonistically positions the Pilot of *Monoplan* against his present context. The ‘horreur’ of the bedroom, the ‘gluau’ of the earth, the improbably exploded wall: these are a simultaneous comprehension and denial of the Pilot’s inability to break beyond himself. Similarly, the aggressive rhetoric and stylistic extravagances of the manifesto agonise against the manifesto as *mere* manifesto, constituting its ‘theatricality’: ‘Saying that the manifesto is theatrical means that its speech acts occur in an unauthorized and unauthorizing context [...] However, the manifesto does not rest comfortably in this unauthorized space; indeed, it tries to exorcise its own theatricality by borrowing from an authority it will have obtained in the future.’²¹ The first line, placing the Pilot in his bedroom, which intimates that everything subsequent may actually be a dream, is an act of the ‘je narrant’, where the Pilot simply dramatises the experience rather than questioning its validity. What is embedded in the dramatisation is the struggle against the distinction between dream and reality itself. The Pilot asserts not so much the achievement of flight (which had been accomplished almost a decade prior in any case), but the possibility of a new, completely unknown freedom and power to make dream reality by claiming to have achieved that reality already.

The manifesto’s lack of correspondence to reality is no barrier to its message and, in fact, engenders its prophetic nature, for the manifesto is itself the definitive form of faith in its own future realisation. The Futurist manifesto was a stand against the predictable, ordered, designed rationality Marinetti (as well as Weber) felt was the product of industry, commerce, or bureaucracy. Futurism, rather, asserts irrationality or non-rationality as a possible achievement for technology. In *Conquête*, the poet takes on the role of prophet experiencing a series of bizarre,

²⁰ Puchner contrasts the manifesto to other political tracts such as the American Declaration of Independence or French Declaration of the Rights of Man: “These rights, no matter how radical, are not presented as being created, enacted, constituted, or made, and consequently their declaration is not something that is in need of a *poesis*. All that is required is an innocuous mention of rights whose natural authority rests solely in themselves. Nature does not need to be revealed; it is not in need of a manifesto.” (Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 19.)

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

waking visions, and ‘La vision de *La Conquête des Étoiles* est tout d’abord le produit d’un rêve qui, de par sa nature irrationnelle, assure le lien avec un univers invisible au-delà du réel.’²² Likewise, the irrationality of the Pilot’s vision becomes a key tool in *Monoplan* to assert the *could be*. But more than that, it becomes the means to challenge the routinised present and, therefore, the routinised or predictable future. Several sections in *Monoplan* defy rationality as a standard of ‘order’ in which a hierarchy of values predominates. As a dream of flight, *Monoplan* dramatises the achievement of height and speed as the defeat of the ‘order’, or more particularly ‘measurement’, that grounds the idea of rationality in the first place. In this sense, Marinetti states in *Le Futurisme* that ‘Au déterminisme sceptique et pessimiste, nous opposons en conséquence le culte de l’intuition créative, la liberté de l’inspiration et l’optimisme artificiel.’²³

Chapter 10, entitled ‘Les Licous du Temps et de l’Espace’, describes the Pilot escaping the most basic structures of the human condition: the spatial and temporal limits of corporeal existence. The escape is the product of the poetic act, especially in visualising and narrating the new reality as if it is manifesting itself before the Pilot as he speaks. This chapter contains one of several visionary interludes, and it strongly foregrounds the potential of the Futurist aesthetic in the sense of Rimbaud’s famous ‘dérèglement de tous les sens’²⁴ as a form of mechanised power. While the Pilot watches the preparations for war against Austria, he begins to feel himself capable of confronting, and breaking out of, the restrictive weight of time and space. After describing the army moving towards the front, the Pilot comes to a certain kind of cusp or point of no return:

Je passe en ce moment le seuil
du terrible Palais du Mauvais Temps!... (MP, 245)

The Pilot must fly through the tribulation of the storm (an image that recalls high Romanticism, despite Marinetti’s antipathy towards it) – crossing its ‘seuil’. The description of the Palace is strongly religious, containing allusions to a priestly intercession with God:

Palais majestueux du Mauvais Temps
dont les murs gris qui fuient
se voilent çà et là de la fumée sinistre
d’invisibles encensoirs!... (MP, 245)

References to veiling (‘se voilent’) and incense (‘la fumée sinistre’, ‘encensoirs’) not only suggest the mystical or occult connections found at the beginning of the first Futurist manifesto, but recalls no less than the Jerusalem Temple itself. For instance, Hebrews 9:3-4 describes an ‘earthly sanctuary’ (9:1) similar to the desert tabernacle of Exodus, after which the Temple was modelled:

²² Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 49-50.

²³ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 91.

²⁴ Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*, trans. Wallace Fowlie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 376.

'Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies. In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant'.²⁵ In particular, the Pilot's visual awareness – normally so wide-ranging in *Monoplan* – is obscured in the Palace. The walls are 'gris' and though they do not block the Pilot's movement, they enclose his view of the earth or horizon. Even though he is flying, within the Palace the Pilot experiences a kind of isolation. The walls are further obscured by the 'fumée sinistre' coming from the incense. However, within the Jerusalem Temple or desert tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, blocked from view by a curtain, is precisely where the High Priest would encounter God – a visual encounter that placed ordinary individuals at mortal risk (see Isa. 6:5).

That Weber and Bourdieu typically place the prophetic in opposition to the priestly sphere does not present a contradiction with regard to the 'prophetic' Pilot entering the 'priestly' space of the 'Palais' or temple. As with biblical prophets such as Amos, criticism of the functionaries of the temple cult (see Am. 5:21-24) is not necessarily a rejection of the temple itself, but of the hypocrisies of the priesthood. Isaiah and Ezekiel are strongly associated with the temple, the latter in particular as a prophet of the temple's *re-establishment* after its destruction in 587 BCE. The 'Palais du Mauvais Temps' can also be understood as a radical re-establishing of the temple or re-purposing of its image as air, smoke, or cloud in an anticipation of Futurist *aeropoésia's* requirement to evoke atmospheric phenomena. When compared to Marinetti's damp and sordid description of the Vatican (examined below), the 'Palais du Mauvais Temps' can be understood as a similar Futurist scandalising of the Judeo-Christian tradition, appropriating the image, stripping it of its sanctity, and positioning it for the new movement.

Furthermore, the danger presented to the Pilot by flying into a storm contrasts to the complacent mouldering of the figures encountered in the Vatican scene. It is in this midst of danger that the Pilot makes a supplication to the storm to assist Italy, which has the effect of waking up his plane as well:

Je glisse avec angoisse
 sur tes profonds tapis de brume violette,
 en suppliant tes fantômes armés d'éclairs
 d'être propice à l'Italie!...
 Tiens! Tiens! L'orage a réveillé mon moteur! (*MP*, 245-246)

He begs the phantoms, that is, beings that exist to a certain extent only as constructions of faith, for their aid in battle. Although, what might constitute a 'fantômes' to a Futurist would necessarily be different from that of the religious thought he seeks to supplant. For the latter, 'fantômes'

²⁵ The King James translation is even closer to Marinetti's description of the 'Palais du Mauvais Temps': 'And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant'.

would exist more along the lines of a representation of the past, such as a ghost; but for the Futurist, the armed ‘fantômes’ represent a future possibility, not part of any tradition or nostalgia, but part of the chaotic natural forces (such as Mount Etna) that drive change. But whether or not the Pilot can actually see the object of his pursuit is in question. The relationship of vision, supplication, and the Temple might be explicated with reference to the book of Jonah, where, lying in the belly of the fish, the prophet’s prayer makes explicit reference to the Temple and sight:

Then I said, “I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again
upon your holy temple? [”] (Jon. 2.4)

Salvation, for Jonah, is directly tied to the ability of God and Jonah to actually see each other. Furthermore, when Jonah’s prayer reaches God, it is through the Temple:

I remembered the Lord;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple. (2.7)

Both Jonah and the Pilot are in positions of danger: Jonah under the sea, and the Pilot in the midst of a storm. And, in fact, a storm caused by God (1.4) results in Jonah being swallowed by the fish. Not seeing the Temple or God is, for Jonah, both an undermining of his faith and an occasion for reaffirming that faith, whereas the Pilot’s inability to see presents a similar occasion for strengthened faith. The Pilot’s authority, like the manifesto, is taken from precisely what cannot, and perhaps should not, be seen directly. But Marinetti makes a series of reversals on this supplication motif necessary to maintain the scandal of Futurism. Whereas Jonah speaks from the depths (‘out of the belly of Sheol I cried’ (2.2)), looking definitively upwards, the Pilot is already at the height of the divinity he seeks. Perhaps, then, the ambiguity of the word ‘Temps’ in the ‘Palais du Mauvais Temps’, between ‘weather’ and ‘time’, becomes a little more apparent. If understood as ‘time’, then the ‘Palais du Mauvais Temps’ could also refer to an unsanctioned time or future.

Marinetti, then, sees the true vision of the modern, Futurist poet as the potential for escaping a singular space and perspective. Technology has opened up spatial and temporal vistas, abetting the vision of the poet in penetrating what typically cannot be seen. In one of the few moments when he refers to himself as an artist or poet the Pilot states:

Je suis l’artiste, l’être nombreux et fourmillant,
la rixe pullulante,
la soirée de première,
la salle comble où tout est pris (*MP*, 254)

The poet imagines himself as a multiplicity, as was common in much of the pre-war avant-garde – the artist as a dynamic and uncontrollable collection. He is the show (*‘la rixe pullulante’*) as well as the spectator (*‘la salle comble’*), creator as well as the work. But the following three lines open up the idea of spectacle: the boxing match, the opening night, the full-house. The vision of the Pilot or artist is as much about seeing and asserting what is fabricated, imagined, or staged as an oppositional moment to that which is expected through rationality or routine, especially if the artist is the summation of that oppositional moment.

Whether or not the *‘Palais du Mauvais Temps’* is understood as the *‘Palace of Bad Time’* or the *‘Palace of Ill Weather’*, the effort to defeat or triumph over *‘temps’* is a key theme of *Monoplan*. The Pilot turns his discontent away from himself and against the *‘licous des temps et de l’espace’*:

O Temps, je te conspue, ô toi le plus haï
 et le plus redoutable de tous nos ennemis!
 Je sais que ma vitesse et ma fièvre t’irritent!...
 C’est pourquoi j’accélère le pouls de mon moteur. (MP, 261)

In the 1916 manifesto entitled *La nouvelle religion-morale de la vitesse*, Marinetti explicitly proclaims the apotheosis of speed, insisting that the synthesis of forces he associates with speed is pure, whereas slowness is impure or unclean. This almost spiritual division of speed and slowness is taken to an extreme conclusion: *‘L’ivresse des grandes vitesses en auto est l’ivresse de se sentir fondu avec l’unique divinité.’*²⁶ The Pilot condemns time itself, equating it almost entirely with slowness and the decay and slackening of life. He taunts it with the speed and acceleration of his motor in the manner of a defiant young man, as if to suggest that he thinks he actually can outrun time. And in a moment when he feels more at one with his plane, the Pilot refers to the motor’s *‘pouls’*, in a comparison to a heartbeat: as he rises, he can *‘doubler ma montre’* (MP, 262). Marinetti employs the cliché of time as a devourer, but just as soon as he establishes the image, he dismisses it:

O Temps rapace!
 Tu prétends dévorer tout le temps qui me reste!
 Fi des journées solaires, chronomètres faussés! (MP, 262)

The measurements of time are false and deceptive, instruments of the idea of Time as a great Conqueror Worm eating away at the finite time of an individual’s life. Rather, time is to be understood as lived experience, as *‘le temps qui me reste’*, echoing the influence of a line of

²⁶ F. T. Marinetti, *‘La Nouvelle religion-morale de la vitesse’*, in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L’Age d’homme, 1973), 368.

philosophy, developed by such men as Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Georges Sorel (1847-1922), that influenced Marinetti. Walter Adamson states that: ‘In his *Reflections on Violence*, which appeared in 1908 and which Marinetti very likely read,’ Sorel developed a notion of myth that ‘drew upon Bergson’s notion of intuition, which points us to a “self” that knows in time as lived duration, that lives, as it were, internal to the world. [...] The contrast term [to myth] is intellect, which views the world from the outside, inspects it, dissects it, analyzes it, describes it.’²⁷ Upon denouncing the rational, intellectual descriptions and dissections of time, the Pilot begins to understand it as malleable, for it exists through him and his actions:

Je puis doubler ma montre en montant dans le ciel,
 toujours plus haut afin que le soleil
 frappe encore mes regards de son heure élastique... (MP, 262)

A key point of the Futurist aesthetic’s embrace of the machine age is expressed in these lines; the speed, the perspective, or the distance that can be achieved through the merging of the airplane, the train, or the car with the human will simply obviate the structures of time. Marinetti (writing in the third-person) himself made this point nearly three decades later in the manifesto entitled *La matematica futurista immaginativa qualitativa* (1941): ‘Thirty years ago in Marinetti’s poem *The Pope’s Airplane* one finds longer and shorter kilometers and longer and shorter hours’.²⁸ It is notable that the title of this manifesto uses the term ‘qualitative’ rather than ‘quantitative’, for if time, space, or mathematics are *qualities* rather than discrete units of measurement, then the quality of time itself becomes amendable and changeable according to the life that lives in it.

One cannot read *Monoplan* without being struck by Marinetti’s obsession with rising and falling, moving back and forth, and side to side. As the quotation above indicates, space is also distorted and malleable from the viewpoint of the Pilot in his cockpit, seen through the paradigm of decay and disease: ‘Espace, vieux vautour podagreux’ (MP, 266). But after his initial disgust, the Pilot comes to realise that the strictures of space are only limited to his visual field, that is, what exactly he can see from his vantage point in the sky:

Espace! tu m’as mis autour du cou,
 comme un licou,
 cet horizon changeant
 hérissé de montagnes, de plaines
 et de villes chevelues!... (MP, 267)

²⁷ Walter L. Adamson, “How Avant-Gardes End – and Begin: Italian Futurism in Historical Perspective”, *New Literary History* 41 (2010), 860.

²⁸ F. T. Marinetti, et al., ‘Qualitative Imaginative Futurist Mathematics’, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, edited by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 298.

The horizon itself is compared to a collar around the neck, and no matter how high the Pilot goes – thus increasing his visual field – there is still always that spatial limit that is consubstantial with the limit of his sight. But through the increased freedom of movement, the Pilot feels an increased control over space:

Espace, je t'oblige en volant
à me mettre autour du cou
sans répit, sans repos, à chaque instant
un nouvel horizon! (MP, 270)

Flight gives the Pilot a sense of freedom and control over space – through flight, he creates, or forces space to create, a new horizon at every moment. Space begins to lose its ability to confine the Pilot or define his physical limitations, but perhaps never completely. The next lines read:

Licous toujours divers et de plus en plus sombres!
C'est bien la Voie Lactée
qui m'embellit en cet instant,
collier de chien fulgide (MP, 270-271)

As the Pilot ascends higher and higher he escapes one horizon only to find another one, each 'licou' containing a wider view but never providing true liberation. As the Pilot approaches outer space he begins to comprehend the darkness until he recognises the circular shape of the Milky Way galaxy. Cescutti notes that in Marinetti's early poetry, an attention to vertical movement is often discernible as a kind of movement towards revelation. Of the chapter in *La Conquête des étoiles* called 'La Montagne fatidique', she writes that 'Au pied de la "montagne fatidique" [...] l'objet de la quête se précise comme l'hypothèse d'une révélation'.²⁹ As the Pilot ascends to greater heights, the revelation becomes simultaneously more apparent and more obscure ('sombre', 'fulgide'), the latter characteristic leading him to still see it as a collar ('collier de chien'). Space becomes vaster, but never fully transcended.

There is a striking definition of infinity in Marinetti's memoirs of the Futurist era, that he attributes to the 'Futurist aviator' Fedele Azari: 'a sphere whose center is nowhere and whose circumference is everywhere'.³⁰ Near the end of the chapter, the Pilot switches into the future-tense, predicting what has not happened, but can or will in days to come. In this mode, he states:

Vous serez forcément devancés, Temps, Espace!
Espace, tu perdras chaque fois
un peu de ton ami, le Temps...
Mon licou est au moins cent fois plus large
que celui de ce train dépassé!...

²⁹ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 32.

³⁰ F. T. Marinetti, *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1972), 269.

Tu devras dans une heure allonger
à l'infini
la laisse dont tu me tiens encore!... (MP, 271)

As a matter of sheer faith – in the strongest sense of the word, as radical belief haunted by doubt – the Pilot insists that time and space will always be beaten. What is more, the close relationship between time and space, that is, the necessity to *take* time in order to *cross* space, will itself be severed with ever greater achievements of speed. This is essentially the outlook of both the manifesto and the prophetic vision. The former proclaims the impossible, asserting as fact what the basic laws of physics deny. Similarly, the prophetic position is at its strongest when the prophet's faith seems most definitively unjustified: it is, alas, when Jonah is in the belly of the fish that his prayer to God is uttered.

Within the vision of the poet, time and space are pushed beyond the routine structures by which they are measured. They achieve an infinity defined by the lived experience of the poet, becoming, through the act of writing or narrating, the overtaking of space and time, or even the creation of a new space and new time. Such is the task of the avant-garde in Bourdieu's analysis – to create the possibility of a new position in the artistic field, break with the limitations imposed and maintained by the current state of the field. Bourdieu writes that establishing one's artistic viewpoint, to 'make one's name' means '*faire exister une nouvelle position au-delà des positions occupées, en avant de ces positions, en avant-garde*. Introduire la différence, c'est produire [sic] le temps.'³¹ It is clear that Bourdieu's analysis refers to a *social* sense of space and time, but how clear is it that Marinetti's Pilot sees time and space in the purely physical or psychological sense? It does seem that the break to a new position is allegorically inscribed in this chapter and throughout *Monoplan*. If Marinetti adopts the prophetic pose, then is he not intending to persuade as well as convey?

Futurist Doctrines

If prophecy is a rhetorical mode in which the prophet engages in a 'calling to' (alongside of a 'being called'), Marinetti goes so far as to actually name the objects of the call, who are to join him in the Futurist project. Futurism as a cultural practice that ought to be taken up by others is the intent of the prophetic mode of discourse. Maria Pia De Paulis-Dalembert writes of the manifestos that 'C'est dans l'optique d'un dialogue réel avec le public que le manifeste accentue son caractère déclamatoire.'³² Engaging contemporary politics, referring to specific Italian cities, challenging Italian culture and religion – these references add a level of 'realism' or 'reality' to the

³¹ Pierre Bourdieu, 'La Production de la croyance: contribution à une économie des biens symboliques', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 13 (February 1977), 39.

³² De Paulis-Dalembert, 'La Reécriture', 27.

manifesto. While the manifesto speaks in the mode of the prophetic or the impossible, it is not a genre of fantasy. The frameworks of discourse must be acknowledged before they can be exploded. This declamatory mode of discourse engages the reader or listener, challenging them to take sides in Futurism's agenda of condemning 'passéisme' – the Futurists' epithet for anybody deemed their enemies, be they academic, Austrian, Symbolist, or Catholic – and promoting the new age.

One notable feature of *Monoplan* is that the title page of the original 1912 edition lists the author as 'F. T. Marinetti: Futuriste'. Marinetti did not take this appellation of Futurist-as-author in either the first publication of *Mafarka le Futuriste* in 1909 or *Le Futurisme* in 1911, both published after the first Futurist manifesto. This is significant because the appellation of 'Futurist' is the clearest way Marinetti expresses a sense of camaraderie throughout the work: a Futurist is not merely one who embraces the ethos of Futurism, but one who achieves an affinity with the author that transcends conventional relationships such as politics, family, or religion (though not necessarily nationality). Just as his manifestos confront his passéist enemies, Marinetti is hardly shy about declaring his friends and allies, occasionally named 'Futurist' like himself. The narrator of *Monoplan* calls to his side Sicily, the city of Trieste, students, and the military.

Cities and regions of Italy in particular are cited for their traits that Futurists and, later, their fascist counterparts, found appealing: aggression, technology, nationalism. Before flying into Mt Etna, the Pilot salutes the Sicilians as his first Futurist comrades:

Siciliens! vous qui luttez depuis les temps brumeux
 nuit et jour, corps à corps avec la rage des volcans
 j'aime vos âmes qui flamboient
 comme les fous prolongements du feu central,
 et vous me ressemblez, Sarrazins d'Italie,
 au nez puissant et recourbé sur la proie que l'on mâche
 avec de belles dents futuristes!... (*MP*, 24)

The Sicilians are aggressive, even predatory, organically connected to the power of the volcano. Their character extends back to 'le temps brumeux', suggesting a primordial, perhaps even mythic nature. To the extent that the Sicilians are an inspired people (as Marinetti clearly sees himself), their inspiration emanates from their 'âmes qui flamboient'. Milan receives a similar treatment in terms of its culture and, especially, its industry, but not, as with Sicily, in terms of any particular attributes of the Milanese; in fact, Milan seems to be Futurist in spite of itself – an ambivalence that Marinetti captured in the title of one of his posthumously published memoirs, *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista* – a title that invokes the dual nature of the city.³³ The first mention of Milan

³³ Originally published posthumously as *La Grande Milano tradizionale e futurista, Una Sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto* (1969). Milan also receives a privileged place in the futurist hagiography for a number of events in the movement's history. After leaving his birthplace of Alexandria,

is a reference to its factories, the first thing the Pilot sees over the horizon as he flies towards the city:

comme des trompes soulevées d'éléphants,
les puissantes cheminées milanaïses!... (MP, 155)

But upon reaching Milan, the Pilot finds competing factions of politicians, students, and activists, divided over the question of Italy going to war with Austria. Concluding his call to Milan, he has decided to shake it awake:

O Dôme de Milan, je viens de t'effrayer
[...]
Je suis, dis-tu, un Milanais qui va trop vite...
Car c'est bien ta tendresse épouvantée
qui colore de jaune et de rouge et de noir
et de vert et de blanc
la peau transparente de tes vitraux caméléons.
C'est bien moi qui t'agace chaque soir, en lançant
le boulet de mon cœur plus haut que ta madone!... (MP, 233-234)

The 'Dôme de Milan' (or *Duomo di Milano*) is the largest cathedral in Italy. This is another instance of Marinetti characterising Futurism not specifically as an artistic movement, but as a 'spiritual' movement that might supplant religion – a dedication to an idea or practice that maintains not only aesthetic, but moral value. The Pilot's Futurist principles are contrasted to Milan's, which are indulgent and tender, but also lack conviction and even reeks of a certain cynicism. In describing stained glass of the 'Dôme de Milan' one line ends in 'noir', the very next ends in 'blanc', suggesting that religion is one thing at one moment, and then the very opposite at the next moment. Ultimately it is transparent and chameleon-like, adopting positions that suit it at whatever is the most opportune moment. This, of course, recalls the common biblical motif, repeated by the prophets, of wandering, signifying a people without integrity: 'Thus says the Lord concerning this people: Truly they have loved to wander' (Jer. 14:10).

Yet, out of this milieu of opportunism and fear, Futurism finds the fertile soil of struggle. It is, again, within the moment or place of the least likelihood – Jeremiah imprisoned in the cistern, Jonah in the belly of the fish, Daniel in the lion's den – that the prophet finds the expression of faith. In the manner of an alarm clock waking a startled sleeper, the birth of Futurism is announced in Milan:

Marinetti's family settled in Milan where he attended law school at the same time as he began to establish himself in Paris as a poet. In 1905, he founded *Poesia* in Milan with a group of poets that would later become the early futurists. And aside from being the place of the trial of *Mafarka le Futuriste*, Marinetti cites it as the place of the second futurist soirée (Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 5).

Il faut sonner encore... “Réveillez-vous! Courez!
 La terre nous enfante!
 C’est nous, les nouveaux-nés!... Milan accouchera
 d’un nouveau futuriste!” (MP, 231)

It is as if, in the heart of decadence and passéism, the Futurist moment is most ripe. What possible justification does Marinetti have in his belief that Milan is gestating the ‘nouveaux-nés’ Futurists – especially given the frequent descriptions of a sclerotic political class and a culture defined by cowardice and passéism? But like many of the salvation prophecies of biblical prophets, which come from a place of complete despondence and political defeat, Marinetti emphasises his own powers as a prophet by embedding his predictions and visions in the most apparently unlikely context.

Finally the first location mentioned in *Monoplan* is potentially the most politically pertinent. Although it lacks the appellation of ‘Futurist’, the dedication of this novel-in-verse is to the city of Trieste: ‘A Trieste notre belle poudrière!’ (Marinetti also used this phrase for the title of a chapter in *Le Futurisme*³⁴). Prior to 1918, Trieste was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but, sharing the North-eastern border with Italy, it was still strongly influenced by Italian culture. The city was a rallying-point for irredentism, an Italian nationalist movement that advocated the forcible recovery of formerly Italian areas from Austria. Trieste was also the site of the first Futurist soirée, and several thereafter. The dedication is clearly a reference to these anarchic evenings that were so important for Futurism’s myth of itself. In choosing Trieste – especially in a work whose political leanings are so explicit – Marinetti blurs the distinction between Futurism and Italian nationalism and, more broadly, between art and politics, setting the stage for an aesthetic that would later be strongly associated with fascism.

Weber distinguished the prophet from other kinds of charismatic leaders by the presence of a *doctrine*, a specific idea or message used as a yardstick to judge the behaviour of people and the events of history.³⁵ Futurism developed its own doctrine perhaps more thoroughly than any other avant-garde movement, stating its aims as a total attack on any cultural or institutional injunctions on the individual or society that derive their force from the status of ‘tradition’ or ‘the past’. Complementary to this effort, Futurism hails its allies and names its enemies. In *Le Futurisme*, Marinetti states that he and his fellow Futurists will use any means necessary ‘pour fendre et culbuter l’innombrable cohue de nos ennemis: les Passéistes’.³⁶ This rhetoric is not simply an isolated *cri de cœur*, but an attempt at social mobilisation. In a much more political sense than Weber, Bourdieu understands the prophetic doctrine as a persuasive action: ‘Le pouvoir du

³⁴ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 49.

³⁵ Weber, *Sociology*, 47.

³⁶ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 2.

prophète a pour fondement la force du groupe qu'il mobilise par son aptitude à *symboliser* dans une conduite exemplaire et/ou dans un discours (quasi) systématique les intérêts proprement religieux de laïcs occupant une position déterminée dans la structure sociale.³⁷ It is questionable that Marinetti is interested in giving symbolic expression to 'intérêts proprement religieux', and the next section examines exactly which interests are at stake.

Another target for the Pilot's (and Marinetti's) disgust is one more prominent means of routinising, calculating, and measuring. Money and its pursuit were and still are often viewed in the artistic sphere, especially in avant-gardism, as cynical and even dishonest. Therefore we can see why economic and financial interests are singled out and disparaged in *Monoplar*. to establish, in Bourdieu's words, Marinetti's 'intérêt désintéressé'.³⁸ Bourdieu's 'unconsecrated' artist – that is, an artist not recognised by the dominant cultural institutions – establishes his sincerity through his lack of interest in material gain, through his belief in having something to convey that is 'genuine'.

The Milanese population's apparent lack of principle is particularly evident, in the Pilot's discourse, in the realm of politics and finance. In chapter 6, entitled 'Les Mouchérons politiques', the Pilot's question to the politicians assumes that the parliament has been irreparably corrupted by a base desire for profit:

Pourquoi vous prêtez-vous ainsi
aux intérêts retors des financiers
qui vous trépanent le crâne
avec leurs froides menaces
et leurs doutes aiguisés? (*MP*, 136)

He even borders on anti-Semitic conspiracy, accusing the politicians of being controlled by the Rothschild family:

Ce grandissant murmure nasillard
c'est la voix de Rothschild (*MP*, 136)

The Jewish Rothschilds, of course, were connected to the sphere of finance, which includes a nationalist element to Marinetti's critique. Jews, lacking a national homeland at this time, could not supposedly appreciate the need for war. Furthermore, the connection of Judaism with international or transnational capital recalls many right-wing anti-capitalist discourses that view capitalism as a particularly Jewish phenomenon. Opposition to the war is viewed as a cynical calculation of profits infecting the will of the political body and even, perhaps, the spiritual life of

³⁷ Bourdieu, 'Une Interprétation', 14.

³⁸ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 300.

Italy. Decisions are made and life is ordered in the context of financial risk and reward, monetary value, and capital accumulation. In the previous chapter, he refers to the Vatican as a ‘vieil agent de change à la Bourse des âmes’ (*MP*, 128), suggesting even that religion has been corrupted by the calculus of profit. And indeed, the criticism strongly recalls Jesus’ overturning of money-changers’ tables in the temple. By contrast, the students (a group perennially light in economic capital) laud the social outcasts as being freed from the order of money:

Voici les courtisanes et les grues loqueteuses,
 les gentilles tapettes, les repris de justice,
 ex-assassins, ex-voleurs, mendiants brevetés
 et pouilleux de toute sorte.
 [...]
 La révolte, la lutte et le guet patient,
 la guerre cauteleuse et l’assaut corps à corps,
 voilà bien leurs métiers. Ils n’ont plus rien à perdre!
 D’où leur complet désintéressement. (*MP*, 139-140)

Marinetti’s use of the terms ‘intérêts’ and ‘désintéressement’ both have distinctly financial connotations. ‘Intérêts retors’ is the order of the world of bankers, clerks, and Rothschilds – not the order of the world of the ‘true’ artist or Futurist, or ‘true’ Italian. And when the world is ordered along the lines of economic rationality, human beings are in a sense reduced to their monetary relations with each other. In this regard, Adamson writes that ‘Modern capitalism commodifies time, a fact readily apparent in the world of wage labor where labor time is traded for money, but also in “leisure time” and a more general cultural sense that modern life means life lived at increasingly high speeds. Marinetti’s reduction of modernity to *velocità* or speed is emblematic here.’³⁹ Once again, time and how it is measured, spent and, in this case, bought, forms a fundamental aspect of the Futurist criticism of daily life and apotheosis of speed. Speed, and the freedom that speed grants, as achieved by technology, becomes a fundamental part of the Futurist doctrine insofar as it is speed for its own sake, rather than speed for the sake of greater levels of material production and consumption.

Opposed to finance and politics, Marinetti presents aesthetics, speed, and flight. In the first chapter, ‘En volant sur le cœur d’Italie’, he compares flight to the writing of poetry itself – in fact, a ‘clearer’, more ‘definitive’ form of poetry:

Les rats peuvent gaiement ronger nos manuscrits,
 car nos moteurs écrivent en plein ciel
 les strophes claires d’acier et d’or définitives! (*MP*, 25)

The winds fight against him and he is able to stay in flight through a manipulation of the mechanics of the airplane – manoeuvring the wings, pumping the gas. The will of the Pilot,

³⁹ Adamson, ‘How Avant-Gardes End’, 867.

working in conjunction with the machinery, allows the Futurist heart to escape the confines of its cage:

Enfin mon cœur, mon grand cœur futuriste
a vaincu sa rude bataille millénaire
contre les barreaux du thorax (*MP*, 20)

Mon cœur-moteur m'entraîne avec l'élan
de trois cent fox-terriers tenus en laisse. (*MP*, 67)

The image of the heart physically guiding, even dragging, the speaker through the air certainly serves as an image of the potential for the speaker's sheer will; but more importantly, what it shows is the poet's credibility based on a sincere belief in art and speed as values in themselves. It is an image associated with death in that the Pilot could not survive in such a state, yet, like the Catholic image of the sacred heart visually placed outside of the chest of Christ, it recalls life after resurrection. Marinetti, casting himself as disinterested in material wealth or political power (at least prior to his involvement with fascism), implicitly and polemically casts rivals in the positions of traditional, consecrated art as sclerotic, or rivals in the position of 'popular' art as cynical. Marinetti, on the other hand, is guided by something 'purer': his heart, his belief in the dynamic potential of the individual, his genuine embrace in his own death and of the openness of the future.

Therefore, much of the conflict in *Monoplan* rests in the implicit contrast between the apparently mercenary values of bourgeois culture, which restrict time and space and confine the bourgeoisie to this life, and Futurist values, which give the Futurist power over such concepts and, moreover, power over the self. In the chapter 'Les Licous du temps et de l'espace' the danger of the storm that the Pilot flies through provides a jolt of energy to the mechanics of the airplane, which seem to behave according to its own will. Whereas the Pilot feels anxiety, the motor is revived, pulling the plane away from the depths of the fog:

Tiens! Tiens! L'orage a réveillé mon moteur!
Cent, mille, dix mille kilomètres... (*MP*, 246)

It is as if where one aspect of the Pilot has lost his nerve, another aspect has found its will. Like Apollinaire in poems such as 'Cortège' or 'Vendémiaire', the Pilot (and, by extension, the poet) is seeking a kind of unity of identity within a fragmented body or consciousness. Whereas Rainey describes *Monoplan* as 'the adventure of a human flying machine',⁴⁰ this description does not entirely take account of the occasional divisions between the speaking Pilot and the plane, the 'angoisse' of the former and the awakening of the latter. Marinetti understands the Pilot as a kind

⁴⁰ Rainey, et al., *Futurism: An Anthology*, 562n2.

of multiplicity, where unity between the person and technology is something to be achieved. Through most of the poem, the exact point where the body of the Pilot begins and the mechanics of the plane end is ambiguous, but a subtle distinction is made. For example, clearly the Pilot cries out at one point, 'Je suis fondu avec mon monoplan' (MP, 20), but the fact that a conceptual distinction between 'Je' and 'mon monoplan' is asserted suggests that a true identity between the two has not yet been achieved. Indeed, the word 'monoplan', used by Marinetti rather than 'aéroplane' or 'avion', does describe a singular level, an identification, but it is only at the end of *Monoplan*, where the Pilot's body transforms into a weapon, examined in greater detail in the following chapter, that it might be said that he has reached that level.

This separation between the Pilot as prophetic figure, and airplane as an aspirational, Futurist principle, is evident when the Pilot refers to singular, isolated parts of his body in technological or Futurist terms. He identifies his own heart with Futurism and the machine in fairly quick succession at the beginning of *Monoplan*: 'mon grand cœur futuriste' (MP, 20) and 'forte hélice de mon cœur monoplan' (MP, 21). Elsewhere, the Pilot frequently refers to his 'cœur-moteur' (MP, 67, 70, 73, 197). Furthermore, the 'cœur futuriste' is counterpoised against the Pilot's own chest, which is described as 'les barreaux du thorax' (MP, 20). The metaphor of the heart, as the physical embodiment of the ideal, bears a relationship to biblical prophetic literature in the structure of the metaphor, but also in the dynamics of a divided body. In particular, a prophecy of Ezekiel speaks of a spiritual heart transplant on the people of Israel: 'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh' (11:19; see also 18:31; 36:26). The heart in Ezekiel, but also in Marinetti, suggests 'the locus of the moral will' as well as 'the symbol of inner reality as distinct from mere outward appearance.'⁴¹ The 'cœur-moteur' is a truer rendering of the reality of the Pilot's character than any other aspect of his body. But the surgical metaphor in Ezekiel, however, is altered in two ways by Marinetti. First, while Ezekiel is clearly looking towards a future condition ('I *will give* them one heart'), the Pilot speaks of the 'cœur futuriste' or the 'cœur-moteur' as essentially *a fait accompli*. This stance recalls Puchner's observation that the manifesto form, in the context of the avant-garde, is designed to draw its authority from an unrealised future. The advances of technology, the image asserts, has reached a point where the 'heart' of the human and the motor, as 'heart' of the airplane or automobile, no longer need be distinguished. The second way in which Marinetti re-characterises the heart metaphor is through the different emphasis on the material of the organ. Whereas Ezekiel replaces a 'stone' heart for a 'flesh' heart, Marinetti replaces 'flesh' for either the idea of Futurism, or for the machinery itself. Ezekiel's metaphor refers to 'that which is unconscious, immobile, and so unresponsive to God' being replaced by 'that which is tender,

⁴¹ Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 115.

yielding, and responsive.⁴² Given that Marinetti once claimed that Futurists ought to think with 'la sensibilité et les instincts des métaux, des pierres et du bois',⁴³ it seems that the tenderness and responsiveness were precisely the types of attributes that a 'cœur-moteur' was meant to preclude. Futurism was specifically not meant to return the population to God, as in Ezekiel, but to reinvent itself in terms of a new religion of technology and speed.

In a chapter in *Le Futurisme* entitled 'L'homme multiplié et le règne de la machine', Marinetti envisions a time when man will extend his will like 'un immense bras, le Rêve et le Désir, qui sont aujourd'hui de vains mots, régneront souverainement sur l'espace et sur le temps domptés.'⁴⁴ Though the will is Dream and Desire, this man is 'inhumain et mécanique', having merged with the machine. But as chapter 10 demonstrates, the erasure of difference between the plane and the Pilot is never quite complete, for at this moment, an antagonism arises between the Pilot and the motor. After the Pilot laments his loneliness as a poet (the only time he actually alludes to himself as such), the motor takes up its own discourse:

MON MOTEUR

Tais-toi donc, imbécile! Veux-tu mieux respirer?...
Tu n'as qu'à sortir de ce Moi empesté
où tu t'ennuies lugubrement (*MP*, 255)

The motor understands, but dismisses, the Pilot's sense of constriction within the physical space of the body, and the time that the body experiences as a fading life. The Pilot, in a moment that recalls a certain 'crisis of faith', laments time as a form of slow loss, in contrast to the motor, that only knows speed:

Nous ne serons jamais les gavroches sans cœur
et sans mémoire,
qui crachent de très haut sur les balcons à femmes,
volant à tire-d'aile hors de l'histoire et de l'anatomie (*MP*, 253)

The reference to the heart and memory suggests the strictures of the individual experience increasing over time. Habits, cares, and traditions become weights around the neck of the Pilot, who wishes to fly outside of 'l'histoire et de l'anatomie'. The motor, on the other hand, claims that neither history nor anatomy have to be constraints, if only the Pilot can somehow escape the construct of the Me.

This is what Bourdieu termed 'the economic world reversed',⁴⁵ the investment of the symbolic capital of disinterestedness and sincerity. The image of the heart externalises and

⁴² Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1994), 165.

⁴³ F. T. Marinetti, 'Manifeste technique de la littérature futuriste', in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1973), 135.

⁴⁴ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 74.

⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, 29.

objectifies a conviction that is no longer tied to the subjectivity or psychology of the poet's I. It is the prophet who speaks not for the king or the priesthood, but for God himself, although in the case of Futurism or *Monoplan*, Marinetti or the Pilot blurs the distinction between prophet and God as Futurism is intended to express a religious sensibility without appeal to any God. In this manner, Bourdieu's prophet articulates a doctrine 'au niveau du discours ou de la conduite exemplaire des représentations, des sentiments et des aspirations qui lui préexistaient mais à l'état implicite, semi-conscient ou inconscient'.⁴⁶ The prophet, conditioned by his milieu, articulates in turn the latent concerns of his audience. The question is then how Marinetti's own artistic and literary practice articulates these latent concerns.

In *La Nouvelle religion-morale de la vitesse* Marinetti attempts one of the more direct attacks on Christianity. He claims that Christianity's usefulness has run its course and lacks any real purpose: 'La morale chrétienne a développé la vie intérieure de l'homme, mais elle n'a plus raison d'être aujourd'hui, puisqu'elle s'est vidée de tout le Divin.'⁴⁷ Marinetti uses the word 'le Divin' rather than 'Dieu' because Futurism is meant to *restore* a sense of divinity that Christianity once had, without appealing to Christianity's dedication to an external being. This idea is not unique to Marinetti and, as will also be shown in the sections on Pound, was a common sentiment among modernist thinkers. Such sentiments, though, could easily be read in his attitude towards the Catholic church and the Pope in *Monoplan*.⁴⁸ Here, at some of his most virulent, he characterises the church as a swamp and its pontiff as an absurd seal:

C'est dans les vastes marécages du Vatican,
que je vais dénicher le grand Phoque verni
de candeur ivoirine et de lumière,
la pape! (*MP*, 114)

The atmosphere of the Vatican is stifling to the Pilot, who is accustomed to flying 'en plein air':

Atmosphère empestée! C'est ton haleine,
ô vieux phoque asthmatique, car tu respirez
à grand'peine hors de l'eau purulente!... (*MP*, 115)

⁴⁶ Bourdieu, 'Le Marché', 15.

⁴⁷ Marinetti, 'Nouvelle religion', 366.

⁴⁸ Aside from its retrograde and decadent character that Marinetti finds objectionable, he did have another, more immediately political, issue with the Catholic Church. Austria, being predominantly Catholic, was an ally of the Vatican. The latter opposed war against the Austro-Hungarian empire, setting it at odds with Italian irredentism.

Roughly at the middle of the chapter, the Pilot loses patience, dives into the centre of the Vatican, and snatches the Pope with hooks lowered from a spring-loaded crane, as if on a fishing expedition:

C'est bien simple, voyez, le piège se referme,
 et je tire, oh lentement je tire,
 ce lourd, très lourd ballot de chapelets,
 de crucifix, de scapulaires...
 Un pape, un vrai pape, le Saint-Pontife lui-même! (*MP*, 119)

But despite the Pilot's obvious disdain for the church, he recognises that there is something very enticing about the religion, for this action of kidnapping the Pope is bracketed by two sections where the Pilot experiences a sense of seduction in his encounters with spirituality. The first section is his encounter with the clouds that guard the Vatican; the second, after his escape, he sees a vision of his own youthful memories of religious life. As he flies over Rome, the Pilot has a vision of the clouds before the holy city. Some represent sexual allure, others represent romantic and religious sentimentality, suggesting that Rome, yoked under the church, lacks the drive or ingenuity of Futurism. The first clouds he encounters bear the resemblance of a young religious child, followed by another, more ominous figure that recalls an overbearing priest:

Qu'a-t-il donc à se presser ainsi,
 ce nuage élégant, svelte et blond enfant de cœur,
 soutane rouge et blanc surplis?
 [...]
 ce grand nuage noir, bedonnant et solennel
 qui sème dans la brise ses faux airs bénisseurs
 et son sourire doucereux.
 Ce n'est plus qu'une lourde idole obèse (*MP*, 109)

Clouds, in Marinetti's earlier works, were associated with immaterialism and spirituality. For example, in *La Conquête des Étoiles*, Cescutti points out that the cloud is 'l'archétype biblique de l'oubli et de l'abandon de toute attache matérielle ou humain'.⁴⁹ For example, Isaiah uses the image of a cloud as a symbol of the forgetting of sins and returning to God after a period of wandering:

I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud,
 and your sins like mist;
 return to me, for I have redeemed you. (Isa. 44:22)

Like clouds, religious sensibility is seductive and beautiful but unstable. But the sympathy that the Pilot shows for the first cloud in the image of an 'enfant de cœur' (*MP*, 109) suggests something deep, if a bit naïve, about youthful predilections towards religion.

⁴⁹ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 52.

After capturing the Pope and struggling to escape, the Pilot is confronted with another wave of sentiment: that of his own memories of youth. Three times in this section he repeats the phrase 'Je ne suis plus l'adolescent', recalling the intimate relationship between sensuality and piety. He relates his memories of being a proudly pious young man, enamoured of the symbolism and ritual of the church:

Je ne suis plus l'adolescent tout fier de sa piété
 qui s'agenouillait sensuellement
 pour prier au hasard les chauds parfums errants,
 le reposoir en feu, la Madone élégante
 et bien moulée dans sa robe de plâtre (MP, 123)

But he also expresses a certain level of regret at his youthful self-denial, lost in 'l'odeur de l'encens et des hosties sucrées' (MP, 122). While sensual pleasure is frustrated by spiritual duty for the young Pilot, spiritual desire is no less frustrated by the physical body. The final stanza relates this vision shifting from the ethereal and unattainable to the carnal:

Je ne suis plus l'adolescent au cœur flottant,
 aux mains inquiètes, qui pleurait de n'avoir
 qu'un corps acide à donner à personne,
 à Jésus-Christ, à la langue éclatante
 des cierges que torture la folie de monter,
 à la fureur caressante des roses (MP, 124)

His adolescent body is 'acide', corrosive, or impure – a view reflecting the asceticism and self-denial of the body. So the pious desire of the young Pilot turns to religious objects: the tongues of flame, the furious caresses of roses. The implication, from the perspective of the adult Pilot, is that only with the advent of technology can such desire can be consummated.

It is here that an ambivalent relationship to youth emerges rather than the more common, full-throated alliance that the Futurists felt they had with students and the young. Clearly it was the youthfulness of the young poet that caused the Pilot to 'fall prey' to the sentimentality of Catholicism. But he also sees adolescence as being a source of energy that is so important to Futurist thought. The Pilot implicitly contrasts his own stifled adolescence to the nationalism and enthusiasm of the students encountered later in *Monoplan*. Students in particular formed a core constituency for the Futurists, and Marinetti's *Le Futurisme* was dedicated to the students of Paris, said to be allies in the avant-garde struggle in Italy. Furthermore, Marinetti makes the bold claim that 'j'ai l'orgueil de déclarer ici que tous les étudiants d'Italie sont aujourd'hui avec nous.'⁵⁰ And, finally, in *Monoplan*, it is the students who are most fervently and vocally in favour of war with Austria. Clearly, it is not the youthful inclination to religion that Marinetti finds problematic, but

⁵⁰ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 3.

the apparently decadent emptiness of the church, where youthful spirituality is smothered in its crib. In this sense, the Futurist adoration of youth is placed in contrast to ‘the “criminal” connection between an art of museums and religious belief’ which was ‘doubly to be rejected because it fostered unquestioning veneration for timeworn dogmas and habits [...], and because it induced passive forms of contemplation.’⁵¹

Adopting many of the structures and motifs of biblical myths, but scandalising them by inflecting them with Futurist, anti-traditionalist or anti-Christian sentiments, was a way for Marinetti to locate the sublime experiences of religion in Futurism itself. This may seem like a counter-intuitive move, but it follows much of the history of art and literature, as potential replacements for religion, since the nineteenth century. As Adamson explains, many in Italy in particular were ‘heavily inspired by European, especially French, avant-garde modernism, that is, by counter-cultural movements arising after 1900 which aimed at “cultural regeneration” through the transformative power of art and a secular-religious quest for ‘new values’.⁵² In the extremes of modernist art and literature, the fields of art and religion overlapped, and artists like Marinetti played at being prophets, not only of a new art, but of a new kind of spirituality. Only after the war would this stance lend itself to the politics of fascism, for as Adamson also notes, ‘what is at stake in fascism is a religious problem: the need somehow to respond to the secularization of Western societies since the eighteenth century.’⁵³

In this way, Futurism and fascism were parallel solutions, particularly in Italy, to the problem of secularisation in Europe: both proposed modernity and Italy as a spiritual principle. Marinetti hoped to become something of a Joshua, leading the Italians into the conquest of the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 3:28, God states that Moses should ‘charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of the land that you will see.’ The title of the final chapter of *Monoplan* is ‘La Bataille de Monfalcone ou le tombeau des papes’, which encapsulates both the supplanting of Christianity as well as the sense of leading Italy into the Promised Land. A shipping and manufacturing port near Trieste, Monfalcone was one of the flashpoints for Italian irredentism as it was controlled by Austria. Marinetti was, at least regarding this city, ‘profetico’: it was captured by Italy during World War I in 1915, and in 1916 the Futurist architect Antonio Sant’Elia was killed there in a battle against Austria.

⁵¹ Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 233.

⁵² Walter L. Adamson, ‘Fascism and Culture: Avant-Gardes and Secular Religion in the Italian Case’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 24:3 (July 1989), 421.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 415.

Chapter 4: Marinetti and Apocalypse

Marinetti personally witnessed three wars in his lifetime: both World Wars and the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912 in Libya. It was in the latter that he worked as a correspondent for the French newspaper *L'Intransigeant*. His rather partisan account of the war, taken almost entirely from the perspective of Italian troops, was published the following year as *La Bataille de Tripoli (26 octobre 1911): vécue et chantée* (1912). In between the periodic encomiums to Italian troops, the reporting is almost exclusively concerned with the sensations of war as an aesthetic experience. Marinetti describes a series of visual revelations, confusions of sounds, or rapid changes of mood – all within a hallucinatory space of physical extremities. The war is described in artistic terms such as music, dance, and theatre. For example, Marinetti speaks of canon fire reciting ‘toute sa poésie, par cœur’.¹ But what is left out of the account is perhaps more telling still: there are no discussions of any kind of context for the war. Political decisions to go to war, national histories that might throw these nations into the conflict, demographic or social tensions contributing to the battle – all of these are ignored in favour of the immediate sensory experience of the battle.

The practice of characterising warfare as a distinctively *theatrical* event was popularised by Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) in *On War (Vom Kriege, 1832)* where he envisioned a ‘theatre of war’ (*Kriegstheater* or *Kriegsraum*) in which the military battles take place. Clausewitz emphasised the theatre of war’s general independence from other points in the overall area of warfare. This point was not to say that everything outside of the theatre of war existed in isolated ignorance, but to describe how areas where military operations took place could be effectively distinguished from areas of command, supply, politics, or civilian interests. The theatre of war is ‘strictly speaking, a sector of the total war area which has protected boundaries and so a certain degree of independence. [...] A sector of this kind is not just a part of the whole, but a subordinate entity in itself – depending on the extent to which changes occurring elsewhere in the war area affect it not directly but only indirectly.’² Regardless of its relevance to contemporary warfare, the term itself describes the sense of the battle as a place set apart from everyday life, a space where roles are assumed and dramas are enacted. Like the theatre of entertainment, the theatre of war offered the possibility of a space constructed in spite of, or in opposition to, the prevailing culture, where possibilities are played out between multiple antagonists. In their art and literature, the Futurists pushed for just such a space, but in *Monoplan*, Marinetti, drawing from his own experience of war,

¹ F. T. Marinetti, *La Bataille de Tripoli (26 Octobre 1911): vécue et chantée*, (Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di ‘Poesia’, 1912), 23.

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 280.

asserts the battlefield of modern warfare as the ultimate place where the destruction and new creation of the universe could take place.

The Theatre of Apocalypse

In what is perhaps the most Surreal section of *Monoplan*, the Pilot, tempting fate, flies into the volcanic Mount Etna on the island of Sicily to demonstrate his personal daring and mechanical virtuosity. The Pilot, wishing for an interlocutor that can match his own bravado, takes up a discourse with the volcano itself. The latter's speech asserts two recurrent themes of *Monoplan*: the embrace of destruction as a catalyst for change, and the future glory of Italy. The volcano then goes on to present a theatrical series of spectacles with its gas, ash, rocks, and lava. This is the first of several points where Marinetti begins to align aesthetics, theatre, and war. In the manifesto 'Le Théâtre Futuriste Synthétique' (1915), Marinetti draws Futurist theatre into the space of warfare through the peculiar equation of *war-equals-Futurism-equals-(avant-garde) theatre*.

War, which is intensified Futurism, demands that we march and not that we moulder in libraries and reading rooms. **Hence we think that the only way that Italy can be influenced today is through the theater.** [...] But what is needed is a **Futurist Theater**, one utterly opposed to the passéist theater that makes a monotonous and depressing procession across the sleepy stages of Italy.³

Futurist theatre was meant to replicate the 'fierce, overwhelming, and synthesizing velocity of the war',⁴ condensing whole dramas into a few moments, suspending logic, and reconfiguring place and time. The theatre was also a place of mutual experience between audience, actor, and writer without that experience being truly articulable because it was (or, at least, thought itself) so incredibly new. As a medium of novelty and velocity, Futurist theatre resisted theorisation or rationalisation – it could only be felt in a state Marinetti referred to as *physicofolie* or 'body-madness' whose closest analogue is the experience of war. In an earlier manifesto, entitled 'Le Music-Hall' (1913), he wrote:

Tandis que le théâtre actuel exalte la vie intérieure, la méditation professorale, la bibliothèque, le musée, les luttres monotones de la conscience, les dissections stupides des sentiments, bref: cette chose et ce mot immondes: "*psychologie*", le Music-hall exalte l'action, l'héroïsme, la vie au

³ F. T. Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra, 'The Futurist Synthetic Theatre', in *Futurism: An Anthology*, eds. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 204; see also F. T. Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra, 'Le Théâtre Futuriste Synthétique', in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), 256-260. This manifesto was first published in French in 1915. The Italian version, published shortly thereafter, contained a number of additions that were specifically directed towards Italian readers. This, and several other passages examined in this chapter which were not originally written or published in French, will be quoted in English translation.

⁴ Marinetti, et al., 'Synthetic Theatre', 204 (Passage absent in the French).

grand air, l'adresse, l'autorité de l'instinct et de l'intuition. A la psychologie il oppose ce que j'appelle la *physicofolie*.⁵

Like war, the Futurist theatre folded the individual into a blindly transformative experience where he or she responded, both cerebrally as well as intuitively through the body, to a universe inverted by speed and power. 'Le Théâtre futuriste synthétique' states, in this sense, that: 'Il faut porter sur la scène toutes les découvertes et toutes les recherches [...] que le génie artistique et la science font chaque jour dans les zones mystérieuses du subconscient, parmi les forces encore mal définies, dans l'abstraction pure, dans le cérébralisme pur, la fantaisie pure, le record et la folie physique du Music-hall et des cirques.'⁶ What Marinetti makes clear in these manifestos is that Futurist theatre served an edifying, as well as aesthetic, function in that it was meant to prepare the nation for the purifying velocity of war.

Upon entering the volcano, the Pilot describes the bizarre scene before him, completely unlike any volcano we might have expected, and immediately informs the reader that we are in the realm of the theatrical. In this particular section the predominating metaphors are of the stage, the spectacle, the audience, and the actor. The first use of the term 'théâtre' is shortly after the Pilot enters the volcano and visualises it as a space for the re-enactment of a creation drama:

Voilà que le rauque entonnoir de ta gorge
m'apparaît comme un théâtre incendié
d'une ampleur incalculable,
où furent conviés tous les peuples de la terre. (*MP*, 33)

Here, Marinetti engages with the physical properties of the volcano, describing them in terms of theatrical venues. The hollow, circular shape of the volcano's interior walls, for example, serves as an amphitheatre for the ensuing entertainment. Elsewhere Marinetti compares the interior base of the volcano, which is covered by a sea of fire, to the theatre's orchestra:

Dans le parterre du théâtre qui doit bien mesurer
plus de vingt kilomètres de diamètre,
se déploie largement une invitante mer de feu (*MP*, 34-35)

Alongside this theatre's physical space, the Pilot sees fire, rocks, fumes, and ashes transfigured into a host of 'players'. A section of chapter three entitled 'Les Théâtres volcaniques' opens with a cabaret of acrobats and performers:

Vous ne me voyez pas, belles flammes écuyères,
et vous, tisons, qui basculez
sur de très hauts trapèzes soudain mangés

⁵ F. T. Marinetti, 'Le Music-Hall', in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), 252.

⁶ Marinetti, et al., 'Théâtre Futuriste', 260.

par le tourbillon des acteurs survenants! (*MP*, 64)

The Pilot's relationship to these 'players' recalls the tension in the dynamic between writers, actors, and audience that Marinetti describes in his writings on Futurist theatre. He expresses little regard for these ephemeral showmen: the actors seem to arrive before their cue, the acrobatic embers have a poor facility for their craft, and the equestrian flames, curiously, do not see the Pilot. This seeming lack of skill at their craft contrasts the players to the Pilot's speed and control, and possibly to the skill of the Italian soldiers at the end of *Monoplan*. In this respect, the point about not being seen, but as the one who sees, establishes the Pilot as the visionary who receives the vision, relating the oracular experience of theatrical *spectacle*. In the manifesto 'La Volupté d'être sifflé' (1911) one of Marinetti's prescriptions for the theatre is 'soumettre les acteurs à l'autorité des écrivains, arracher les acteurs à la domination du public qui les pousse fatalement à la recherche de l'effet facile et les éloigne de toute recherche d'interprétation profonde.'⁷ There is an odd notion of freedom within domination: rather than being coerced by the whims and passions of an unthinking and unknowing audience, the actor must fully submit to the writer who is fully committed to the artistic project, allowing the actor his first taste of true artistic freedom. The fact that the Pilot can see while the players in this scene remain blind suggests that the writer is the dominant personality but that, unlike his role as 'phare' (*MP*, 319) for soldiers (an episode explored further below), he lacks here the necessary author-actor connection. The effect is to portray the actor as ideally subordinate to the 'seeing' Pilot in much the same way that the ascription of sight to a visionary in apocalyptic literature lends authority to the prophet. For example, the visions in the book of Revelation begin with John's vision, presented to him by the divine: 'After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."' (Rev. 4:1).⁸ Here we see a dual-layer of authority: on the literal level, the reader is dependent on John as the author of the vision, which is itself 'staged' or 'authored' by the voice like a trumpet, where both the reader and John – as the primary personage of Revelation – strive for an 'interprétation profonde'.

The previous chapter described how Martin Puchner defines the 'theatrical' as an action or speech that exceeds its contextual authorisation – that is, the situation or audience that can

⁷ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 109.

⁸ David E. Aune enumerates the number of times that John refers to his vision of events with some variant of the phrase 'I saw': a total of 42 times in the book (with 26 additional phrases referring to hearing), having 'the function of encouraging unconditional acceptance of the vision report at face value.' (David E. Aune, 'The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John', *Biblical Research* 26 (1981): 18).

verify the action or speech as 'legitimate' or 'authentic'. This is a mode or 'pose' of action and speech characterised by outsized confidence in its claims, a level of deliberate inaccessibility in its form, and even an *a priori* dismissal towards those who might balk at either its vulgarity or obscurity. This 'pose', in the avant-garde manifesto, had a natural affinity with the theatre, especially the variety theatre of the Futurist soirées: 'Many avant-garde manifestos, by contrast, with their over-the-top statements and shrill pronouncements, are at home in avant-garde cabarets and theaters, where they were indeed declaimed with frequency.'⁹ This definition of theatricality is hardly confined to the theatre and Puchner notes that 'various forms of theatricality, from the cabaret to street agitation, defined the various phases of Futurism.'¹⁰ Similarly, Marinetti's own understanding of theatricality was intended to break out of traditional theatre and so he championed technological innovations in film and music, dream logic, and the incorporation of the most contemporary social and political events into the autonomous space of the theatre. Marinetti writes in 'Le Théâtre futuriste synthétique' that Futurist theatre is meant to be 'autonome, ne ressemble qu'à elle-même, tout en tirant de la réalité les éléments qu'elle combine capricieusement.'¹¹ Futurist theatre was most at home in the cabaret, where the 'fourth wall' could be readily broken, the audience directly confronted, and the integrity of the aesthetic of bourgeois theatre challenged. But from there the Futurists moved on to 'promoting the theatricalisation of life, of which the theatricalisation of the arts would be one form.'¹² The 'theatricalisation of life' suggests that theatre and theatrical manifestos were more than just literary genres, but modes of existence, ways of embodying a life that is separated from this one by its own internal logic. Just as Bourdieu discusses the nineteenth-century French bohemians as 'séparés de toutes les autres catégories sociales par l'art de vivre',¹³ the theatricalisation of life suggests living in the present, but at the same time in a space apart.

The 'theatricalisation of life' resonates with *apocalypticism*, as a religious attitude toward life, insofar as the latter attempts to conform the life of the individual and the community to an ideal existence that will be realised in the future. John Collins locates this attitude and behaviour (what he calls the 'interpenetration of future expectation and present experience') in, among others, apocalyptic communities in ancient Judaism from about 200 BCE. In his discussion of the Dead Sea Scroll community, he describes its 'conviction of present participation in angelic life, coupled with the expectation of further fulfilment in the future', adhering to an ideal life that 'was

⁹ Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 5.

¹⁰ Martin Puchner, 'Screeching Voices: Avant-Garde Manifestos in the Cabaret', in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, Dietrich Scheunemann, ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 113-136; 124.

¹¹ Marinetti, et al., 'Théâtre Futuriste', 259.

¹² Puchner, 'Screeching Voices', 126.

¹³ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 86.

not entirely relegated to a future utopia. It was also something eternally present in the heavenly court. This belief inevitably opened the way for some form of mystic participation in the higher form of life'.¹⁴ The bizarre and fantastic images that confront the apocalyptic visionary – angels, gigantic beasts, heavenly courts, the boundaries of the universe – translated the cultural and political experiences of Jewish and Christian minorities into the mythical drama of divine creation and human redemption in which the elect actively participate. Where in reality there is the Persian or Greek empires, Daniel sees beasts from the sea, and participates through his revelation with the archangel Michael; where in reality there is Emperor Nero, John of Patmos sees the dragon but communes with the lamb of God. Frequently, these visions occur in another spatial arena that corresponds with the divine sphere, to which the apocalyptic community conforms its activity.¹⁵ This alternative plane of existence is further described by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: the 'symbolic universe' constructed by the revelation 'is a sheltering canopy' under which the 'empirical community is transported to a cosmic plane and made majestically independent of the vicissitudes of individual existence.'¹⁶ And indeed, this desire to be 'majestically independent' is echoed by the Futurist painter Fillia (1904-1936) regarding art having 'a spiritual function, to be a means of rendering images of a mysterious superhuman world. Man has a need to detach himself from the earth, to dream'.¹⁷

The theatricality of *Monoplan*, and the Futurist movement in general, suggests the assertion of another form of an idealised future life or symbolic universe, insulated from the languages and practices of everyday life. Biblical apocalyptic literature is constructed around what Aune refers to as hierarchies of communication, in which the central message 'is the core of a literary structure which is a surrogate for the cultic barriers which separate the profane from the sacred, the hidden from the revealed.'¹⁸ The plot and message of apocalyptic literature is therefore characterised by increasingly obscure communications between the general dramatis personae, between the God or angel and the protagonist visionary, and between the visionary and the contemporary interpreter or reader. Similarly, the 'théâtres volcaniques' in Marinetti's work establishes levels of communication in the way one might read a play-within-a-play. While the

¹⁴ John J. Collins, 'Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death', in *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses*, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 71-72.

¹⁵ For example, the book of Revelation is addressed to specific locales, but as Aune points out, 'John intentionally ignored local church officials since his role as a mediator of divine revelation transcended local community concerns' (Aune, 'Social Matrix', 25).

¹⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation', *Semeia* 36 (1986): 139-140.

¹⁷ Quoted in Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 265. While futurism's later developments are beyond the bounds of this study, Poggi describes how the movement's post-war attempts to align itself with fascism brought out much of the overtly mystical and spiritual attitudes, evident in the quotation above from 1931, that were repressed in the earliest phase of futurism.

¹⁸ David E. Aune, 'The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre', *Semeia* 36 (1986): 91.

dramatis personae of the volcano communicate in typically theatrical ways, the overriding voices of the scene are between the Pilot and volcano itself – the latter described, tellingly, as ‘le Volcan mon père’ (*MP*, 79). Immediately after the volcano concludes its discourse, the Pilot proclaims: ‘J’ai compris, j’ai compris ma mission!...’ (*MP*, 55). Other levels of communication can be deduced between the Pilot and his airplane, where the latter speaks something of an inner, contrarian voice, and, of course, between the Pilot-as-narrator and the reader.

Apocalyptic ‘hierarchies of communication’ are designed, therefore, to both obscure and privilege the worldview of the ‘elect’. Marinetti’s audience is really a tacit collusion of what he called in the 1920 pamphlet ‘Beyond Communism’, the ‘proletariat of gifted men’ who ‘will create the theatre free to all and the great Futurist Aero-Theater.’¹⁹ The use of theatrical metaphors only highlights how, like most apocalyptic literature (especially the book of Revelation), *Monoplan* is a work of self-conscious *staging* or construction of an event between an audience and visionary mediator. The process of *staging* in apocalyptic literature is particularly evident in the language of seeing and being shown. For example Enoch is specifically *presented* with a vision by the angels who lead him on his journey: ‘And they *took me (and) led (me) away* to a certain place in which those who were there were like a flaming fire; and whenever they wished, they appeared as human beings. And they *led me away* to a dark place and to a mountain whose summit reached heaven. And *I saw* the place of the luminaries and the treasuries of the stars and of the thunders’ (17:1-2).²⁰ The action of the angels taking and leading Enoch to the visions of which he is the spectator suggests a *staging* and *presentation*.

In *Monoplan*, the presence of the visions within the confines of the volcano suggests that the volcano itself or its subordinate ‘actors’ such as the ‘flammas écuyères’ are presenting the spectacle to the Pilot. But while the theatre-goers represented in the volcano receive a visual spectacle, the Pilot is privileged to its obscure meaning, such as when he says to his visions, ‘Je suis digne de vous!’. Shortly thereafter, when his vision of a grove of trees transforms into bayonets, he proclaims, ‘Je saisis le symbole’ as yet another call to war against Austria (*MP*, 61). In this, as in other writings, Marinetti is eager to distinguish between the bourgeois theatre-goer who is cynical and dull-witted, and the (Futurist) spectator who has genuine insight. In ‘La Volupté d’être sifflé’, he remarks that ‘nous enseignons aux auteurs le mépris du public et en particulier du public des premières représentations, dont voici la psychologie synthétisée: rivalités de chapeaux et de toilettes féminines, vanité d’une place coûteuse se transformant en orgueil’.²¹ In writing

¹⁹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Beyond Communism’, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, eds. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 262; originally published in Italian.

²⁰ Cited from George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, trans., *1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 38.

²¹ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 103-104.

about Futurist poetry or visual arts, Marinetti often treats the viewer or reader as a secondary concern; but in this manifesto, the author's relationship to the audience – even if that relationship is largely negative – is the first of eleven prescriptions for a Futurist theatre, highlighting its importance. Audiences are described as more inclined to regard theatre attendance as a tactic in bourgeois pursuits of distinction and ostentatious intellectualism. They attend the theatre not to *see* the spectacle, but to *be seen* at the spectacle. The audience is unreflective and capricious, and therefore lacks any real authority to judge a work:

Le public varie d'humeur et d'intelligence suivant les différents théâtres d'une ville, et les quatre saisons de l'année. Il est soumis aux événements politiques et sociaux, aux caprices de la mode, aux averses printanières, aux excès de la chaleur ou du froid, au dernier article lu dans l'après-midi. Il n'a malheureusement d'autre désir que celui de digérer agréablement au théâtre. Il est donc absolument incapable d'approuver, désapprouver, ou corriger une œuvre d'art.²²

The audience described above, being too passive or lacking the necessary Futurist outlook, could not, presumably, comprehend anything but the most apparent message of a work such as *Monoplan*. The Pilot's unusual vision of a theatre audience in the volcano watching the ensuing spectacle is an ample demonstration of this lack of direction:

On y voit s'y presser tout en gesticulant
plus d'un milliard de flammes
spectatrices enthousiastes
qui applaudissent et crient différemment
un milliard de jouissances. (*MP*, 33-34)

While this audience is certainly engaged in the proceedings, such activity – wild gesticulations, various points of applause and shouting – lacks any genuine coherence. Furthermore, the audience seems to have no sense of discrimination, reacting to whatever is in front of it without really understanding the meaning. This kind of direct confrontation of the audience was typical of Futurist soirées and other avant-garde theatre and cabaret events, where provocation became itself part of performance. In Futurist soirées, provocation was meant 'to exploit [the audience's] power in order to create a new more spontaneous and participatory style of performance' but in such a way as to stage 'the separateness, absence, and difference of the Futurists at every turn'.²³ The confrontation challenges the audience on the assumption that the majority will react with offence in the manner of a philistine public, such as in one of the only moments in *Monoplan* when the bourgeoisie are called out by name, precisely in connection with the theatre:

et l'on écoute le pied lent du bourgeois qui revient

²² Ibid., 104-105.

²³ Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 90-91.

du théâtre et ralentit sa patiente sottise... (MP, 230)

There are two kinds of spectators: one that participates in the spectacle because they understand the Futurist project, and one that participates because they are the spectacle.

Apocalyptic literature is designed to draw a line between those in the audience with ‘understanding’ and those without. This is often achieved with the use of language, primarily comprehensible and directed to the author’s community, veiled by a basic ‘naïve’ level of meaning. The book of Daniel, for instance, makes occasional reference to ‘the wise’ as the group that will eventually be redeemed by God: ‘The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by the sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. [...] Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end’ (Dan. 11:33, 35). That the author of Daniel is part of ‘the wise’ is possible, but the identification is equally intended to exclude anybody outside of the community in which the book was produced.²⁴ The book of Revelation took this technique even further in its references to the 144,000: ‘Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.’ (Rev. 14:1). Fiorenza has noted numerous possible explanations for the identity of this group; but the juxtaposition of this group against those who are ‘marked on the right hand or the forehead’ with ‘the name of the beast’ (Rev. 13:16-17) clearly sets them apart as members of the saved or elect.

Marinetti, however, is rarely so veiled. In many cases, he designates his Futurist allies by name and condemns whole nations, even certain Italian cities such as Venice,²⁵ with the appellation, ‘passéist’. The nature of apocalyptic literature, the manifesto form, and Marinetti’s understanding of theatre (and, by extension, his approach to avant-gardism as a whole) all bear a particular similarity: all three draw their legitimacy from an unrealised or unrealisable future. For example, Marinetti advises Futurist writers, in ‘La Volupté d’être sifflé’, to avoid instant fame: ‘Nous enseignons aussi l’horreur du succès immédiat qui couronne les œuvres médiocres et banales.’²⁶ Success itself is not condemned, but only that success that too easily conforms to audience expectations. The artwork’s legitimacy is deferred into the future, where it might be accepted by the broad public. Until then, ‘tout ce qui est immédiatement applaudi ne surpasse pas la moyenne des intelligences; c’est partant du médiocre, du banal, du revomi ou du trop bien digéré.’²⁷ The avant-garde group – in this case, the Futurists – then becomes a kind of gnostic

²⁴ John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 66.

²⁵ See F. T. Marinetti, ‘Discours Futuriste aux Venitiens’, in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclomations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1973), 112-114.

²⁶ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 105.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

élite, privileged with the understanding of the future's art today, but condemned to suffer the scorn of an unenlightened public.

The Pilot is a spectator, but a privileged one, standing in for the prophet or seer that is a fundamental feature of apocalyptic literature. This kind of visionary is given 'wisdom' to understand the events before him – not because he has a greater insight in his own right, but because he is given access to the voice of God. The second chapter of *Monoplan* is entitled 'Les Conseils du volcan', and while the majority of the speaking is done by the Pilot, it is the volcano's voice that dominates. In this scene, Marinetti makes a point of emphasising the voice and words of the volcano by giving setting-off its portion of dialogue with a heading as in a theatre script. Moreover, the Pilot is particularly pre-disposed to hear those words, stating before the volcano first speaks:

O Volcan, j'entends depuis longtemps
le roulement continu de ta voix turbulente
qui frémit dans la rauque cheminée de ta gorge.
Je m'oublie tellement à contempler
l'éruption de tes paroles chauffées à blanc
que je n'ai pas encore démêlé l'écheveau
fulgurant de ta pensée! (*MP*, 42-43)

In this state of awe, the Pilot is at first unable to understand the volcano's meaning, but can hear the voice. Nevertheless, he gains inspiration from the voice's power:

Oh! la maîtrise et l'inspiration
que le tonnerre éclatant de ta voix manifeste
sur les torrides parois de ton atelier!... (*MP*, 43)

In this sense, at least, mastery and inspiration are closer in character to 'body-madness': emotions or feelings that operate not on the level of rational thought or abstract reasoning, but at the level of instinct or intuition. The Pilot seems to find this acceptable even though it can hardly constitute an answer to his query, which is stated just after he enters the volcano:

Mets donc en branle tes muscles buccaux,
ouvre tes lèvres rocailleuses encroûtées de granits,
et crie-moi quelle est la destinée
et quels sont les devoirs qui s'imposent à ma race. (*MP*, 31)

The Pilot experiences the comprehension of the volcano's power before he gains any sort of articulated understanding the volcano's meaning. The voice of the volcano does not just reveal a discourse, but elicits an emotional, intuitive drive to go beyond the traditions holding the Italian race back. Of those traditions, *Monoplan* marks Romanticism and Catholicism as the most deserving of destruction.

Futurism against Romanticism

Another reference to the theatre is notable specifically in regard to one of Marinetti's tasks as a Futurist: establishing Futurism as the most relevant or cutting-edge movement of the avant-garde, in distinction to the nineteenth-century literary movements that he (perhaps unjustly) conflates with Romanticism. One of the episodes inside the volcano is entitled 'Les Réservoirs du romantisme', where the Pilot calls a group of unnamed Romantic poets:

Poètes romantiques, revenez donc en foule
retrouver sur les bords de ce fleuve
les plus fantastiques lanternes vénitiennes
que vous avez rêvées!
Elles sont enguirlandées de rose et maculées de sang...
Vous trouverez sur les bords de ce grand fleuve de fard
tout le fastueux bric-à-brac de votre rêve théâtral!... (MP, 73)

Several aspects of these lines recall the beginning of the first Futurist manifesto, where Marinetti sets the scene by describing an orientalist décor with overtones of hermeticism and mysticism: 'Nous avons veillé toute la nuit, mes amis et moi, sous des lampes de mosquée...' ²⁸ The Futurists have stayed up all night and are in the midst of a waking dream from which they will soon burst out into the light of day to bring forth the new movement. This scene by the river also elicits comparison with the opening of *Monoplan* insofar as the latter begins in the bedroom of the Pilot, as if he was asleep but is not definitively awake. The similarity in atmosphere of the manifesto's opening scene and that of the riverbank in the volcano, suggests that the former can be understood as beginning in the space of Romanticism. Indeed, this river scene has intriguing similarities to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772-1834) poem of high Romanticism, 'Kubla Khan' (written in 1797, but published in 1816). In the first instance, Coleridge's poem takes place 'Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / Through caverns measureless to man'. ²⁹ It is on the river in the cavern of Mount Etna that the Romantic poets dream and, indeed, Coleridge's poem is subtitled as 'A Vision in a Dream'. ³⁰ And like the Pilot, Kubla Khan hears 'Ancestral voices prophesying war!' ³¹ However, whereas Kubla Khan hears 'Ancestral voices', the volcano's voice is not so much ancestral – that is, based on tradition or conventions across generations – as primitive or primordial. This is coherent with the entire scene's evocation of chaotic or chthonic forces *against* the pressures of traditional or ancestral structures, such as the volcano's speech on the necessity of destruction (examined below). Furthermore, whereas Xanadu in Coleridge is 'A sunny pleasure-

²⁸ F. T. Marinetti, 'Fondation et Manifeste du Futurisme', in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), 85.

²⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, 2nd ed., ed. Elisabeth Schneider (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1971), 120-121.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

dome with caves of ice',³² this scene in *Monoplan* is in a cave of fire. These parallels and divergences suggest Romanticism as the place where Futurism begins, but certainly not where it ends. Romanticism is then associated, as is tradition, with a form of nostalgic reverie: pleasant and even entertaining (this scene involves yet another interlude of dance and theatre), but not involved in the world enough to constitute any real *action*. Romanticism and tradition are then associated with sensuality or a kind of fulfilment of nostalgic desire, but also associated with stasis.

But this scene, with its ornate Venetian lanterns and lavish odds-and-ends, is also theatrical. The reference to the 'rêve théâtral' is not meant to suggest that anything theatrical is overwrought and outmoded – indeed, Marinetti's views on Futurist theatre are intended to be anything but outmoded. Romanticism, rather, has theatricalised an interior life; it has given the poet a rich, exciting, sensual imagination but at the same time insulated that poet from the external world. The Futurists attempted to 'theatricalise' everyday life, announcing as they burst out into the day, 'Il faudra ébranler les portes de la vie pour en essayer les gonds et les verrous.'³³ Both sets of poets are also associated with the river, but in entirely different ways. The Romantic poets stand on a riverbank, only to find (four lines later) that it is a river of 'fard'. By contrast, the sound of a tramway in the manifesto is compared to the river Po in northern Italy: the tramway passes 'sursautant, bariolés de lumières, tels les hameaux en fête que le Pô débordé ébranle tout à coup et déracine, pour les entraîner, sur les cascades et les remous d'un déluge, jusqu'à la mer.'³⁴ The distinction is between the 'embellishment' of the Romantic river, emphasised by the words 'enguirlandées', 'fard', and 'maculées', and the violence of the Po/tramway. The sound of the train, like the rushing waters of the river Po, sweeps these symbols of Romantic nostalgia out to the chaos of the sea. Although the Pilot requests the entertainment and imagination the Romantic poets, it is as a prelude to his escape from the volcano, bringing that energy into the world. As the Pilot states in this section:

Car ce volcan est la synthèse
et la genèse de toute poésie. (*MP*, 73)

Given Marinetti's early, close relationship with Symbolism,³⁵ the dramatic terms of his rupture with the movement that mentored him is notable. Symbolism was, for him, Romanticism's 'swan-song' – not a fruitless effort, but one that had to be rejected in order to move forward. In *Le Futurisme* (1911), Marinetti wrote in a chapter entitled 'Nous renions nos maîtres les symbolistes, derniers amants de la lune' in which he expresses a deep, yet conflicted

³² Ibid.

³³ Marinetti, 'Fondation et Manifeste', 85.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Cescutti notes how Marinetti, prior to Futurism, presented himself as 'l'apôtre du symbolisme en Italie' (Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 13).

love for ‘les grands génies symbolistes: Edgar Poe, Baudelaire, Mallarmé et Verlaine.’³⁶ Marinetti accused them of the crime of searching into the ‘beyond’ for guidance, with a suspicion of technology and, most gravely, of seeking immortality:

Nos pères symbolistes avaient une passion que nous jugeons ridicule: la passion des choses éternelles, le désir du chef d’œuvre immortel et impérissable. Nous considérons au contraire que rien n’est aussi bas et mesquin que de penser à l’immortalité en créant une œuvre d’art, plus mesquin et plus bas que la conception calculée et usurière du Paradis chrétien, qui devrait récompenser au million pour cent nos vertus terrestres.³⁷

When he compares the desires of the Symbolists to Christianity, Marinetti effectively criticises the system of production and distinction that Bourdieu calls the game of ‘loser wins’: immediate material rewards for artistic production (money, favourable reviews, etc.) are foregone for a future recognition resembling the deferred salvation of religious grace.³⁸ For Marinetti, this symbolic struggle is simply another form of commerce – ‘calculée et usurière’. The pretence to immortality of which Marinetti accuses the Symbolists is simply another way of trading in the currency of nostalgia and tradition. Romantic and Symbolist practice is fundamentally oriented to a form of immortality analogous to a ‘Paradis chrétien’.

The iconic image of the Symbolists’ crime is the moonlight, which is the object of their affections. As Cescutti has demonstrated of Marinetti’s pre-Futurist works, the moon is an intensely ambiguous image of the confluence of life, death, and love, and Marinetti’s struggle with Romanticism reflects this ambiguity.³⁹ While Marinetti understood the central dilemma of Romanticism – the poet whose desire for the ‘Ideal’ confronts the limitations and mediocrity of everyday life – he sought to completely break with it. Cescutti writes:

Ce drame qui s’exprime en de multiples formes duelles discordantes (matière et esprit, Dieu et l’homme, fini et infini, contenu et forme, passé et futur) caractérisé toute la poésie depuis le romantisme. Il hantera Baudelaire, puis Rimbaud, Mallarmé, de même que la génération symboliste, *malades* d’un ‘Idéal’ également nommé ‘Infini’, ‘Absolu’, ou encore ‘Inconnu’. Marinetti exacerbe le dilemme baudelairien jusqu’à provoquer la rupture.⁴⁰

In pushing ‘la réflexion romantique à son paroxysme’,⁴¹ Marinetti sought to move, in a dialectical fashion, in and through the concept of the Ideal, antagonising it to the breaking point, in order to modernise it as Futurist velocity or technology.

³⁶ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 82.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

³⁸ ‘Le jeu de l’art est, du point de vue des affaires, un jeu “à qui perd gagne”. Dans ce monde économique renversé, on ne peut conquérir l’argent, [...] bref tous les symboles du succès *mondain*, succès dans le monde et succès en ce monde, sans compromettre son salut dans l’au-delà.’ (Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 45).

³⁹ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 352-353.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 246

Chapter eight, entitled ‘Côte à côte avec la lune’, deploys this image of the moon most frequently in a love scene – an uncharacteristically peaceful moment in a work otherwise saturated with energy and violence. The Pilot takes a brief respite from his agitation for war for a sexual interlude with a lover during the evening in a space full of nature and moonlight. The conscious use of the moon, as a symbol of the Romantic tradition, pre-dates Marinetti, even to include one of his rejected Symbolists, Verlaine, who wrote the parodic ‘A la manière de Paul Verlaine’ (1885):

C’est à cause du clair de la lune
 Que j’assume ce masque nocturne
 Et de Saturne penchant son urne
 Et de ces lunes l’une après l’une.⁴²

Poems such as ‘Tristesses de la Lune’ (1857) by Baudelaire or Verlaine’s ‘Clair de Lune’ (1867) represent for Marinetti ‘la thématique romantique du clair de lune qui diffusait autour de sa forme, à sa première apparition, une luminosité atténuée et diaphane, renvoyant aux tentations de la mélancolie et de la dissolution de l’être.’⁴³ In ‘Tuons le Clair de Lune!’, the Romantic moon is a seductive force, causing the soldiers who are attacking the city of Gout to momentarily lose their fighting spirit: ‘Mais lentement le sourire brillant et chaud de la Lune déborda hors des nuages craqués... Et comme elle apparaissait enfin toute ruisselante du lait grisant des acacias, les fous sentirent leur cœur se détacher de la poitrine et monter vers la surface de la nuit liquide...’⁴⁴ In the previous chapter, we saw how the image of the heart outside of the chest was one of Marinetti’s metaphors for the Futurist overcoming the limitations of his body; but here, the heart passively drifts upward as if floating on water while the Futurists are lulled into a sense of ease. The erotic or maternal spell cast by the moon is broken when the refrain of the manifesto – ‘Tuons le clair de lune!’ – is shouted; from there, the soldiers erect massive electrical lamps to block out the moonlight: ‘C’est ainsi que trois cents lunes électriques biffèrent de leurs rayons de craie éblouissante l’antique reine verte des amours.’⁴⁵ The Romantic Ideal of the moon is regarded as an inducement to calm and sexual pleasure, but also lethargy and enervation.

This ambiguity is brought to an extreme by the moon’s occasional characterisation as duplicitous: the volcano earlier states that ‘J’ai pour complice la lune mensongère’ (*MP*, 46). The volcano’s statement is, perhaps, a Futurist statement: the ideals of the moon, however unreliable

⁴² Paul Verlaine, *Œuvres Poétiques complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec and Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 503.

⁴³ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 357.

⁴⁴ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Tuons le Clair de Lune’, in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1973), 109.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

on their own, charged with the power of the volcano. But in this chapter, the Pilot fully confronts the moon's allure:

Avec un art infatigable, elle [the moon] s'efforce
d'embellir sans fin
l'arche du ciel (*MP*, 203)

The term 'embellir' again suggests the moon as something of a deceiver, making Heaven look nicer than it actually is. The Pilot invokes the sense of the 'rêve théâtral' of Romanticism or the dreamlike space at the opening of the first Futurist manifesto: ornate and artistic, but confined to its own dream. The preceding lines might even make this allusion more explicit:

Mon monoplan heureux partage mon plaisir,
tandis que je contemple à loisir
les soins minutieux
que met la lune à déployer,
jusqu'aux plus hautes frises du Zénith,
ses gazes de turquoise
pourdrées d'argent. (*MP*, 203)

Like the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, the upper levels are elaborately and delicately painted. And in that sense, the art of the moon is not unwelcome – the Pilot is even pleased to see it. But the suggestion is that all of this is only so much meticulous embroidery, an art that is lovely, but nonetheless nostalgic and sentimental.

In representing the Romantic tradition and its promises by the moon and by the act of love, Marinetti does not reject that tradition outright, but acknowledges its allure, perhaps even its necessity as a starting point for bringing the act of dreaming into the world. In the early manifestos, Marinetti is never shy about stating how important poets like Mallarmé and Verlaine were to him: they are 'pères' and 'grands génies'.⁴⁶ Bourdieu writes that 'L'amour de l'art, comme l'amour, même et surtout le plus fou, se sent fondé dans son objet',⁴⁷ so writing this chapter as a love-scene suggests that Marinetti also feels himself naturally inclined to or 'founded' in this tradition extending from Romanticism through Symbolism. Yet, an observation similar to Bourdieu's can be found even earlier made by Karl Marx: 'Production not only provides the material to satisfy a need, but it also provides the need for the material. [...] The need felt for the object is induced by the perception of the object. An *objet d'art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty [...]. Production accordingly produces not only an object for the

⁴⁶ Even after his apparent rejection of Symbolism, Marinetti occasionally worked to promote it in Italy, translating Mallarmé into Italian in 1916, and then re-writing and re-publishing those translations in 1929 (see Giuseppe Gazzola, 'Prolegomena on a New Edition of Marinetti's *Versi e prosè*', in *Futurismo: Impact and Legacy*, ed. Giuseppe Gazzola (Forum Italicum Publishing: Stonybrook, NY, 2011), 76-85).

⁴⁷ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 14.

subject, but also a subject for the object.⁴⁸ It is significant here that Marx resorts to the example of the *objet d'art*: cultural products create their own discourse in society, their own conceptual relationship to the world, their own *public* who intuitively understands that relationship. For Bourdieu, the seemingly 'natural' relationship between the artwork and its public disguises the similar social backgrounds and dispositions between the artist and his audience – a relationship particularly evident in the avant-garde, where artists are primarily producing for other avant-garde artists. The relationship makes it seem as if, like lovers, the artwork and the audience were 'meant for each other' because, at the level of socially conditioned tastes, perceptions, and habits encompassing the set of unconsciously held dispositions that Bourdieu calls the *habitus*⁴⁹ of the artist, they were. In this respect, he writes: 'L'habitus sollicite, interroge, fait parler l'objet qui, de son côté, semble solliciter, appeler, provoquer l'habitus [...]. [L]'expérience artistique est affaire de sens et de sentiment, et non de déchiffrement et de raisonnement'.⁵⁰

If this idea, of finding the subject (artist or public) located in the object (artistic work), demonstrates how Marinetti solicits the 'right' audience, his goal is to shift that audience to the new work of Futurism. Cast in the context of a love relationship, which is just that 'relation essentiellement obscure entre l'habitus et le monde' that 'passe sous silence les conditions sociales de possibilité de cette expérience',⁵¹ Marinetti and Futurism's relationship to the Romantic and Symbolist tradition becomes more pragmatic. The tradition is located and fulfilled by the initial surrender of the Pilot, who allows himself to experience the appeal of the relationship between the artist and the artistic ideal. But he then, at the height of the experience of love, enraptured by the lover's 'jardinier mignon' (*MP*, 208), the Pilot sees an image a bird 'aussie géant que moi' (*MP*, 208) destroy the garden and 'ravage[] ce paradis' (*MP*, 209) This vision brings him back to the task at hand:

Non, non, petite amie, je ne puis guère
te faire une visite sérieuse cette nuit..
Pardonne donc l'impolitesse involontaire.
Adieu, petite amie...

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, *On Literature and Art* (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1976), 129.

⁴⁹ David Swartz's definition of *habitus* is also relevant to a conception the historic avant-garde in that it understands the idea as dynamic and relational. This aspect of avant-gardism, as social strategy and as formal response to modernity, is, I think, important: 'habitus, which is akin to the idea of class subculture, refers to a set of relatively permanent and largely unconscious ideas about one's chances of success and how society works that are common to members of a social class or status group. These ideas or, more precisely, dispositions, lead individuals to act in such a way as to reproduce the prevailing structure of life chances and status distinctions.' (David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 197).

⁵⁰ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 440.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Je dois porter ailleurs ce gros pape enchaîné!... (MP, 209)

This is the crucial moment for the poet in particular and for Futurism in general: after finding oneself in the Romantic ideal, a relationship characterised as love, the Futurist rejects it in favour of the razing of paradise.

If, as Marx notes, ‘The need felt for the object is induced by the perception of the object’, then Collins’ analysis of apocalyptic literature demonstrates a similarity in that the subjective longing of the believer is objectified in the world after the apocalypse, giving the believer a sense of having ‘found’ what they were looking for in the first place. Collins states that ‘If the hope of the apocalypticist was to be elevated to a heavenly life, then any information about *the heavenly regions where such life is most fully lived* is relevant to that hope.’⁵² Collins suggests that apocalyptic sects conformed their lives to the idea of heaven that was presented to them in accordance to the demands of righteousness. The myths and legends confronting the apocalyptic communities solicited an alteration in behaviour, appreciation, and attitude in the community in much the same way that Marx and Bourdieu conceive of the aesthetic object soliciting a public. Apocalypticism, however, often understands that identification as the transcendence of death. The hope ‘is not primarily concerned with the end of anything. Rather it is concerned with the transcendence of death by the attainment of a higher, angelic form of life.’⁵³ As the Symbolists were derided by Marinetti for trading a ‘Paradis chrétien’ in the form of ‘les choses éternelles’, apocalyptic thought, in this sense loses itself in celestial virtues rather than the ‘vertues terrestres’ championed by Futurism. The Pilot finds himself (without entirely *losing* himself) in the ‘angelic’ atmosphere of the love scene:

Maison de mon amie, maison de Nazareth,
dans vos traîneaux flottants de nuages diaprés
qu'emporte l'attelage mélodieux des Anges!...
Tout est blanc, tout est blanc, loin du rut et du sang!
Plumage de tendresse... Cadences de velours...
Mon monoplan se mêle au chœur des Séraphins... (MP, 210-211)

Noting that the house is a ‘maison de Nazareth’ suggests that the lover is a model of the Virgin Mary. For example, the gospel of Luke describes how Mary’s conception occurred by way of an angel’s announcement while she resided in Nazareth (Luk. 1:26-27). This scene, then, recalls Mary’s ‘purity’ and willingness to give herself, in both an erotic and spiritual sense, to God. Setting one’s life to the pace and logic of another plane is precisely how Collins describes the concept of apocalypticism. Furthermore, by conforming one’s life to the realm of the divine, the believer comes to the conclusion that they have *already* transcended death. Thus, the act of finding oneself

⁵² Collins, ‘Apocalyptic Eschatology’, 74; emphasis added.

⁵³ Ibid., 78.

in the work of art or religious belief, the seamless and all-too-natural alignment of belief to the 'beyond', manifests as a kind of death to the exterior world, only to have that death transcended in the next world.

Throughout *Monoplan*, death is constantly transcended through heroism or technology rather than by a dedication to the divine or the aesthetic. For example, one of the other times Marinetti uses the phrase 'côte à côte' is during the battle with Austria. The Pilot says to his Italian comrades:

A bientôt le plaisir de mourir côte à côte,
ô rouges volontaires! (*MP*, 286)

As will be examined below, death in an act of heroism is the closest one might get to transcending it, but in the love scene, the explicitly Christian imagery counterintuitively relates to death being accepted for what it is. But this finality finds its counterpart in the sentimentalised hope of Romantic idealism. In one of the few references to Jesus in *Monoplan*, the Pilot refers to the death of Christ, but seems to reject any notion of martyrdom. Speaking to his 'amie', he states:

Pour la seconde fois, je forme en volant
une couronne d'épines épouvantable
sur ton beau front qui saigne!...
Allons donc! Il ne s'agit pas
de Christ et de Calvaire! (*MP*, 201-202)

'Calvaire' refers to the site of Christ's crucifixion, but also bears the connotation of an ordeal or suffering. The image of the 'couronne d'épines' is ambivalent: it is an image of suffering, but the description of it as 'épouvantable' undercuts the nobility of the sense of martyrdom – it is merely appalling. The reference to Christ, then, is not simply a rejection of Christian agony or martyrdom, but a rejection of the resurrection itself. From this perspective the embrace of death, with the caveat of a future resurrection, is not heroism because it ultimately reduces the stakes of the belief. Stating that this is specifically *not* a question of Christ on Calvary denies that a real transcendence of death can be achieved here. Rather, the entire atmosphere, from the lethargic meadows to the drunken odour of the hay, has a saccharine quality bordering on decay:

Mais quand je plonge, ton haleine m'embaume,
tes prairies indolentes
me lancent par bouffées
l'odeur ivre des foins et le parfum
de ta gorge inquiète, et la volupté
profonde de la terre... (*MP*, 202)

The sensual delights of the 'amie' ('ton haleine', 'ta gorge') are compared to drunkenness or lassitude. Sleep and death are both part of a state of inactivity, however luxurious. The imagery of the 'foin' and the 'volupté / profonde de la terre', however, is sumptuous to the point of

decomposition. Love is a kind of pleasure, but not the pleasure found in the strident and sharpening antagonism of battle; it is not the same sort of love found in the ‘*plaisir de mourir côte à côte*’ with the soldiers.

The comparison of Romanticism with Christianity reveals Marinetti’s ambivalence towards both insofar as he understands (and to some extent sympathises with) the longing for finding oneself in the other world of the artistic object; but he cannot concede what he sees as the loss of one’s engagement in the world. Again, Marinetti begins with Romantic and Christian structures and myths in order to move beyond them to an entirely new state: an aesthetic practice without the loss of oneself in ‘l’absolu’ or ‘l’idéal’, or a religious practice without the promise of divine grace or paradise. This comparison of art and religion is itself derived from nineteenth-century views of art, and as Walter Adamson states, ‘the modernist challenge to the modern institution of art typically involved a break with religion-of-art movements, and especially with their idea of withdrawing into an “aesthetic caste,” even if religiously infused understandings of art did not disappear in modernist culture.’⁵⁴ Though it saw itself as a kind of ‘aesthetic cast’, from the Futurist perspective religion and ‘religions-of-art’ retreated from modernity and therefore became abortive attempts at transcendence. For example, the focus on the transcendence of death in Marinetti is partially drawn from Mallarmé. Mallarmé claimed that in order for the poet to achieve something like an ideal, universal language, which was the (always failed) tendency of poetry, he had to begin with the self, but also transcend the self through the process of writing the poem. For example, in his essay ‘*Crise de vers*’ (1897), Mallarmé writes that ‘*L’œuvre pure implique la disparition élocutoire du poète*’.⁵⁵ Peter Dayan has argued that this constitutes a kind of death for the poet – not in the sense of oblivion, but more in the sense of one’s social, everyday self: ‘This death is not the death of the whole man, but merely of the individual, the “un tel” – leaving the “soi” intact. The poet abandons his everyday “élocutoire” manner of thought in favour of “le rêve”’.⁵⁶ Therefore, the poet has to be *from* the world, but cannot quite be *of* the world in the sense that he or she maintains the same sense of everyday perception. What the Futurist must do, however, is maintain the sense of ‘le rêve’ without drifting off to sleep. Marinetti’s suspicion of sleep led him to characterise the Romantic ‘rêve’ as a form of death; the point was to assert ‘le rêve’ in a waking state – otherwise, the poet or Futurist has not really transcended death. The character of Gazourmah, in *Mafarka le futuriste*, who is described as dreaming, but not sleeping, is representative of this goal: ‘Aussitôt, des rêves bariolés la peupleront, mais le sommeil ne pourra

⁵⁴ Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, 6.

⁵⁵ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, ed. Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 211.

⁵⁶ Peter Dayan, *Mallarmé’s ‘Divine Transposition’: Real and Apparent Sources of Literary Value* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 37.

s'asseoir sur ton front, haut plateau de ta vie.⁵⁷ The poet will lose his 'élocutoire' manner in favour of the dream, but the ideal to which religion and Romanticism aspire to, and fail at, will be fulfilled in Futurism, through technology, through 'body-madness', through the nation.

War and the Work of Art

Marinetti's reporting of the Italo-Turkish war is a paradigmatic example of what later came to be seen as the avant-garde and fascist aestheticisation of war, which approached war as an art in which all others were subsumed. The young Marinetti had inherited from his Symbolist peers a Romantic attitude toward the strictly defined literary genres, which is to say that the definitions of classical rhetoric – epic, lyric, and drama – were subject to doubt. Marinetti envisioned 'un vaste projet esthétique' that 'aspirait à un genre englobant qui, selon Hugo, devait être le "drame"'.⁵⁸ Marinetti first sought to align this new 'genre' to the pace and diversity of the modern city in works such as *Destruction* (1904) and *La Ville charnelle* (1908), and later described *Mafarka le futuriste*, in the preface, as 'à la fois un chant lyrique, une épopée, un roman d'aventures et un drame'⁵⁹ but the descriptions of modern warfare in *Monoplan's* final chapter and *La Bataille de Tripoli* suggest that, henceforth, the aesthetic model that would redefine and break down the formal distinctions in the arts would be found on the battlefield.

Marinetti's own account of the battle in *La Bataille de Tripoli* pushes itself forward through a total engagement of the senses. Much of the commentary is taken up by descriptions of the actual sounds that he hears at the front: 'Quand je levais la tête instinctivement, c'étaient bien des balles que j'entendais, mais des balles amoureuses dont le gazouillement idyllique se mêlait aux pépiements des moineux dans les branches. Jamais mon oreille ne fut aussi heureuse et attentive qu'à distinguer les oiseaux vrais des illusoire.'⁶⁰ The sounds are confusing but joyful, and Marinetti finds an insouciant pleasure in distinguishing the chirpings of birds from the whistling of bullets. The sounds of battle are described as a 'vaste symphonie'⁶¹ and Marinetti refers to the trenches as an 'orchestre'.⁶² In other sections the physical movements of war are seen in the light of dance and gymnastics. A confusing *melée* quickly becomes, in Marinetti's vision, the 'airs drôlatiques de derviches tourneurs.' Shortly thereafter, the flights of bombs are described as 'volants trapèzes de flammes gymnastes.'⁶³ Marinetti begins to see war as the aesthetic form in which all other aesthetic forms are contained. The references to music are particularly relevant, as Cescutti argues that

⁵⁷ F. T. Marinetti, *Mafarka le futuriste: Roman africain* (Paris: E. Sansot & Co., 1909), 281.

⁵⁸ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 244.

⁵⁹ Marinetti, *Mafarka*, vii.

⁶⁰ Marinetti, *Bataille*, 33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 41.

music recalls an influence extending as far back as Wagner, in which the orchestration of multiple voices influenced such poets as Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Verlaine who felt that it could 'libérer la poésie de la linéarité du langage.'⁶⁴ Whereas Wagner's catchword was *Gesamtkunstwerk* ('Total work of art'), in *Mafarka* Marinetti deploys a similar phrase at the very end: 'C'est ainsi que le grand espoir du monde, le grand rêve de la musique totale, se réalisait enfin dans le vol de Gazourmah... [...] Sublime espoir de la Poésie! Désir de fluidité!'⁶⁵ But in *La Bataille de Tripoli*, musical references are only one aesthetic among many. The Futurist innovation of Marinetti is to replace the abstract Ideal embodied in Romantic attitudes, with the all-too-real, mechanised frenzy and velocity of war.

War became the place in which the confused dynamics of time and space allowed for the blending of the senses themselves. In both *Monoplan* and *La Bataille de Tripoli*, Marinetti attempts to engage less obvious senses, such as taste and smell. In *Monoplan*, the smells are said to mix and synthesise in a revolution of the Pilot's blood:

Je hume avec ivresse l'odeur volumineuse
 et chargée de piment que répand la bataille.
 Odeur de laine chaude et de marrons brûlés.
 Odeur de graisses et d'huile, d'urine et d'excréments
 recuits par le soleil. Il s'y mêle de l'ail.
 [...]
 Puis tout se mêle, et la synthèse
 désordonnée des puanteurs naïves
 et des parfums mordants
 s'acharne dans ma tête et révolutionne
 mon sang!... (MP, 305-306)

Elsewhere, Marinetti describes the war preparations as a form of cooking. Here he imagines the preparations of military trains as in a busy kitchen:

Sous nos pieds cette gare est bien la plus étrange
 des cuisines surchauffées et fumantes,
 avec ces bleus frétillements de rails-anguilles
 entre les fours et les casseroles
 des locomotives rangées...
 Les clochettes électriques ont des bouillonnements
 intenses
 et des murmures de friture
 dans leurs pots de faïence... (MP, 244)

Similarly, *La Bataille de Tripoli* describes at one point the trenches as 'charcuteries'.⁶⁶ Rather than being a gratuitous diversion into the imagery of food, these sensations express a sense of power

⁶⁴ Cescutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 254n24.

⁶⁵ Marinetti, *Mafarka*, 305-306.

⁶⁶ Marinetti, *Bataille*, 48.

over the environment. For example, a later Futurist manifesto on food suggested the replacement of the traditional restaurant with an airplane cockpit; as the diner was taking in the view, he would 'eat villages, farms and fields speeding by.'⁶⁷ Aerial distances were also conceived in the image of eating in a section entitled 'Aeropoetic Futurist Dinner': 'In front of the diners, [...] the round altimeter announces: 3000 metres eaten. Near it the tachometer, its dinner companion, announces: 20,000 revolutions devoured. On the other side of the altimeter the speedometer announces: 200 kilometres digested.'⁶⁸ War itself becomes a place where the senses are not experienced as separate modes of perception, but a place where they merge into a total omniscience.

Through his experience in the Italo-Turkish war, Marinetti was certainly one of the first avant-gardists to experience war as a multiplicity of sensations, a hybridising of forms that constituted a truly eschatological change in the world and the self. In *Monoplan* the Pilot witnesses the space of the sea and the sky collapse into a single, unified space as the Pilot gets higher and higher:

Je monte encore plus haut, de gradin en gradin,
comme on gravit les marches d'un escalier géant.
Je ne vois plus la ligne ténue de l'horizon...
La mer bleue s'est haussée pour s'unir au ciel bleu (*MP*, 322)

Using the language of theatre ('gradin en gradin'), Marinetti evokes apocalyptic thought by merging distinct spaces such as the air and the sea. The image itself recalls the separation of ocean and sky found in the creation myth of Genesis: 'So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome' (Gen. 1:7). And yet, Marinetti essentially reverses the creation myth, re-establishing the pre-creation chaos where absolute possibility is the sovereign principle. Apocalypses are defined by the sense that all history is essentially contained in the eschatological moment itself and the compression of time and space into the single moment reveals not only the drama of history leading up to it, but the disintegration of forms that signal a new era. By reversing creation, Marinetti both lays out the history of Futurism and the machine as leading to the moment where creation itself can be conquered, and reveals an entirely new vision.

Apocalyptic literature is immediately known by its bizarre, hybrid creatures that defy the boundaries that separate the 'normal' or 'accepted' from the 'perverse' or 'impure'. For example, in 4 Ezra, the protagonist is confronted with a detailed vision of a birdlike creature composed of a changing number of wings and eyes (4 Ezra 11:1-35); Daniel's four hybrid beasts ascend out of the sea only to be slain by the chosen one (Dan. 7:1-8); the angel in Revelation 9 sounds a trumpet

⁶⁷ F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, trans. Suzanne Brill, ed. Lesley Chamberlain (London: Trefoil Publications, 1989), 122.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

that releases from the pit, ‘locusts [...] like horses arrayed for battle [...] their faces were like human faces; their hair like women’s hair, and their teeth like lion’s teeth; and they had scales like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots with horses rushing into battle; and they had tails like scorpions.’ (Rev. 9:7-10). The angel in Revelation chapter 10, who grants the message to the prophet, is clothed in cloud and has a face of light. His legs are pillars of fire, with his right foot on the sea and his left on the land (Rev. 10:1-2). The contradictory form of this angel, then, represents a kind of improbable collapsing together of the different states of creation. And Daniel 2 describes a statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay – an allegorical figure of the declining succession of empires (Dan. 2:32-33). Similarly, Gazourmah is described in *Mafarka le futuriste* as a winged-man made of wood⁶⁹ and metal.⁷⁰ If the form of apocalyptic literature and art is to intimate a future so radically different that it is un-representable, then contradiction and open-ended indeterminacy are paradoxically the most applicable representations.

Addressing this portrayal of contradiction, Bull argues that the form of apocalypse can be understood as ‘a revelation of the contradiction and indeterminacy excluded at the foundation of the world’.⁷¹ Apocalyptic thought structures itself on the de-structuring of the distinctions and oppositions that ordered the world thus far; it envisages an unmaking of the world in order to re-create the world over again. But along with the question of content, Collins also notes the hybrid *formal* character of apocalyptic works: ‘The question is complicated by the fact that some of these works are composite in character and have affinities with more than one genre. The book of Daniel, which juxtaposes tales in chaps. 1-6 and visions in chaps. 7-12, is an obvious example. [...] It would seem that Jewish apocalyptic writings that lack a common title and are often combined with other forms had not yet attained [...] generic self-consciousness’.⁷² While Marinetti and the avant-garde utilised such indeterminacy in art and literature as well – often with equally apocalyptic connotations. *Monoplan* is a long-form, even epic, poem that is described in the subtitle as a ‘roman’. Despite the lyric intensity of the work, the *narrative* dominates. Bourdieu, in his analysis of Flaubert’s *L’Education sentimentale*, makes the point that narrative allows for the revelation of social reality precisely because the form of fiction allows the author to disclaim any direct involvement with that reality. ‘La forme dans laquelle s’énonce l’objectivation littéraire est sans doute ce qui permet l’émergence du réel le plus profond, le mieux caché [...], parce qu’elle est le voile qui permet à l’auteur et au lecteur de le dissimuler et de se le dissimuler.’⁷³ If poetry

⁶⁹ Marinetti, *Mafarka*, 293.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 282.

⁷¹ Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 83.

⁷² John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 3.

⁷³ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 61.

allows for the direct communication of the singular experience of the poet, then narrative inscribes that experience into simultaneously existing social possibilities. Futurism is almost allegorised as 'le mieux caché', giving Marinetti's own experience the status of revelation. In this way, the indeterminacy of apocalyptic literature becomes as much political as aesthetic insofar as it relies on the lyrical orchestration of the Pilot's/poet's voice for the interpretation of *Monoplan* as a social experience.

The nature of those social possibilities is also contained in the subtitle: 'Roman politique', and of course *Monoplan*'s intent is as much national and nationalist as it is aesthetic and 'spiritual'. Weber defines politics as the distribution and influence of power,⁷⁴ and in that context, the polemics against the Catholic Church in *Monoplan* are not only an attack on Christian idealism, but also on the political power of the church itself. On the one hand, the monopoly on 'salvation' by the church would be replaced by Futurist machinery or materiality. In *Beyond Communism*, Marinetti writes that 'The proletariat of gifted men, collaborating in the growth of mechanized industrialism, [...] will be able to give every intelligent person the freedom to think, create, and enjoy the arts.'⁷⁵ On the other hand, the parliamentary scenes in *Monoplan* show a great variety of marginalised groups – from students, to homosexuals, to the poor – express themselves. The use of multiple voices in this scene tends towards an appreciation of polyphony, but of course they are not properly *orchestrated* in the sense that Marinetti envisages in the final chapter of *Monoplan* or *La Bataille de Tripoli*. Nonetheless, the polyphonic element, slowly being uniting under the banner of Italian nationalism, is a significant step towards the politics of Futurism. For example, Poggi describes Carlo Carrà's (1881-1966) 1914 Futurist collage 'Free-Word Painting—Patriotic Festival' (fig. 3), a wildly discordant picture of words and colours radiating out from the central words 'Italia' and 'Aviatore', as an expression of the variety of modern life anchored to the national and technological element: 'With the term *Italia* firmly anchored at its center, the nation appears as a centrifugally expanding force. The volatility and cacophony of modern life [...] are affirmed within this all-embracing, dynamic, but hierarchical structure.'⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 78.

⁷⁵ In Rainey, et al., *Futurism: An Anthology*, 263.

⁷⁶ Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 52.



(fig. 3)

The true orchestration of polyphony was articulated in Marinetti's *parole in libertà* ('words-in-freedom') as the lyrical form that would supersede *vers libre*.⁷⁷ Quoting Marinetti, Cescutti argues

⁷⁷ In a version of the manifesto 'Imagination sans fils et les mots en liberté' (1913), Marinetti condemns *vers libre* in terms suggesting that it is irreparably confined to the self of the poet,

that, ‘Sur le versant poétique, le “style orchestral, à la fois polychrome, polyphonique et polymorphe, *pouvant* embrasser la vie de la matière” actualise une dramatisation du langage qui sera à la base des “mots en liberté futuristes”’.⁷⁸ Once again, theatre imagery is used to assert a blending of genres and aesthetics in the battle scene:

dans cet amphithéâtre de montagnes.
Il nous faut traverser le parterre et monter
sous les feux convergents des loges foudroyantes
sur la scène invisible au rideau de fumée!... (MP, 300)

[...]

escalader la scène de ce théâtre de montagnes! (MP, 311)

Cesutti argues, regarding his 1905 play *Roi Bombance*, that Marinetti’s attention to the form of drama is to allow a multiple, open work in which various voices are allowed influence, describing it as a ‘véritable tentative de dramaturgie polyphonique, dressant une sorte de fresque multiple de la vie dynamique.’⁷⁹ But as discussed above, music was just as important as a means to demonstrate the merging of forms:

La campagne rayée de longs rangs militaires,
comme une lyre immense aux cordes polychromes,
vibre aux pizzicati de mille automobiles!... (MP, 289)

Sur les falaises, les violons enragés du vent
électrisent les boyaux miauteurs de la forêt,
en chantant plus haut que l’orchestre
formidable de la mer...
Le ronflement de mon moteur se plaît à moudre
cette arrachante polyphonie (MP, 339)

The question of polyphony, then, becomes a political one, where the erasure of the distinctions between genres is presented alongside the interweaving of voices into a polyphonic unity, and it is the martial, collective, united and yet polyphonic voice – such as Marinetti witnessed in the Italo-Turkish war – that is the new ideal to which Futurism should adhere.

If Futurism saw itself as an embattled, collective movement in a sea of decadence and philistinism, its aim was always to emerge as the vanguard of Italian nationalism. In the final battle, the reader gets the first sense of how the aesthetic of the hybrid, polyphonic voice provides the foundation for what could be described as a fascist aesthetic. Indeed, this chapter of *Monoplan*

stating that it is ‘imprisoned’ and involves ‘echo-play’ (In Rainey, et al., *Futurism: An Anthology*, 146).

⁷⁸ Cesutti, *Origines Mythiques*, 260.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Marinetti uses the word 'faisceau(x)', a word that would later become strongly associated with fascism.⁸⁰ The Pilot sees the collection of munitions, for example, as 'faisceaux':

chaque wagon ayant deux cents mètres de long,
et portant en faisceaux
des fusils, des tenailles
et des morceaux de fer plus grands que des maisons. (*MP*, 326)

But another usage of the term uses it in the sense of military units or groupings of combatants:

Je suis sur vous, inébranlable comme un phare,
dont la lentille souveraine
groupe les moindres feux épars de la détresse
et les mue en faisceaux de courage. (*MP*, 319)

In these lines, the Pilot sees a *melée* of soldiers as a scattered and disparate collection. Through the singularity of his superior sight, as 'un phare',⁸¹ the Pilot collects the soldiers into 'faisceaux' of courage. Along with the lines that also describe the munitions and materials as 'faisceaux', the word suggests something distinctly martial, even connoting weaponry itself. 'Faisceaux' is used, then, to discuss the machinery of war and the soldiers that the Pilot guides as part of that machinery. Marinetti has embraced the polyphony of individuals only to transform them with the machine-aesthetic that Futurism preached. But furthermore, this sort of politics became a form of death and rebirth radically distinct from that Marinetti militated against in Romanticism or Christianity. This was a death to the individual life that the soldier might have led before, and rebirth to the idea of Futurism or *Italia*.

However, the cycle of destruction and recreation, or death and rebirth, poses a problem for those Futurists who wanted to embrace the rejection of tradition, but also be the founders of entirely new artistic and cultural traditions. The cycle of destruction and creation was a 'natural', sometimes even 'maternal' force that 'must be opposed and displaced by both the machine and its symbolic ally, matter (physical substance/energy understood as inherently dynamic).'⁸² In this sense, the cycle of nature was closely connected the Romantic Ideal: a longing for immortality that one passively gives oneself to but does not control. Marinetti clearly sees military order and

⁸⁰ 'Faisceau' is the French counterpart to the Italian 'fascio', which would be adopted by Mussolini as the symbol and name of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*, the precursor to the Italian fascist party.

⁸¹ Ironically, even though Marinetti was, at this point in his life, resistant to acknowledging any influence from the French tradition of 19th century poetry, the image of the lighthouse as a form of moral or aesthetic guide was made famous by one Marinetti's 'grands génies symbolistes', Baudelaire, in his poem 'Les Phares' (1857).

⁸² Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 156.

mechanical aggression as a trait of Futurism; but, as argued above, he also sees war, armies, and machines as having aesthetic properties that speed-up and expand understandings of time and space, emphasise multiplicity, and dissolve distinctions – these soldiers experience something entirely new and become something entirely new not simply in the sense of having experienced war, but in the sense of having partaken in the ultimate Futurist aesthetic. Speaking of a group of soldiers, the Pilot states:

Mon vol plané m'entraîne dans le vallon inassouvi
qui vient de dévorer notre avant-garde rouge. (*MP*, 315)

Marinetti's use of 'avant-garde' draws upon the military origins of the term, aligning the martial connotation of the term with its association to extreme artistic modernism. It is also significant that they have been devoured by the valley in these lines. Like the Pilot, who took his own 'Orphic' journey into the heart of the earth in the episode of his flight into Mount Etna, the soldiers undergo a similar experience, presumably allowing them to emerge as the same kind of 'avant-garde' as the Futurist Pilot. If they are 'born-again', then they are born-again into the realm of art. The association with being 'swallowed' by the earth prepares these soldiers for a rebirth similar to that of the Pilot's.

To achieve this rebirth, the soldiers are martyred, but not simply in the physical sense. As they are now part of an aesthetic experience, an artistic work in the guise of war, they will lose their 'I'. As examined above, Marinetti, following Mallarmé and Symbolism, felt that the 'I' disappeared in the space of the artwork, but in *Monoplan*, that space shifts to the battlefield. In his 'Manifeste technique de la littérature futuriste', Marinetti writes, 'Détruire le 'Je' dans la littérature' only to replace him 'par matière, dont il faut atteindre l'essence à coups d'intuition'.⁸³ The literary 'I' was intellectualised and psychologised, and must die in order to realise itself as pure matter: 'Remplacer la psychologie de l'homme, désormais épuisée, par l'obsession lyrique de la matière.'⁸⁴ The point is to induce the new avant-gardist to give his life because he is nothing more nor less than matter; rather than humanise or anthropomorphise matter, the Futurist poet seeks to think with 'la sensibilité et les instincts des métaux, des pierres et du bois'.⁸⁵ Here is the complete inversion of the Romantic tradition as Marinetti sees it – the death of the 'I' not in the abstract, and therefore inert, Ideal, but in active matter. At the crucial point in the battle, the Pilot's body transforms into a living weapon and he announces the arrival of 'l'obus de mon corps!...' (*MP*, 346). By placing

⁸³ Marinetti, 'Manifeste Technique', 135.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

war in this artistic context, Marinetti replicates the sentiment of one lieutenant Franchini that he encountered in Libya, who ‘invita ses soldats à mourir’.⁸⁶

Returning briefly to the episode in Mount Etna, the re-absorption into matter, or the dissemination of the human consciousness into materiality, is part of a cycle of destruction and re-creation. What the Pilot sees in ‘le spectacle des spectacles’ (*MP*, 34) is no less than the repeated dissolution and creation of the world itself. He witnesses splitting crevasses and forming continents in the midst of a ‘mer de feu’⁸⁷ as a spectator in a theatrical event:

Des fleuves, des rivières
et des ruisseaux resplendissants
gorgés de lingots d'or, accourent à l'envi
pour la nourrir en ruisselant
hors des crevasses éloquentes
qui s'ouvrent de distance en distance
tout le long des gradins,
parmi l'ondoyante moisson
des flammes et des gaz spectateurs. (*MP*, 35)

The theatre stalls split open among the rivers and streams that cut down the spectators of gas and flame as they feed the sea of fire. But just as this space is being divided and broken down, it immediately begins to reform:

Et cette mer de feu se fige et s'empierre.
Par groupes de caillots et d'ilots cousus, fondus,
par rapides alluvions de rubis et d'agates,
un continent se forme, vermeil, éblouissant... (*MP*, 36)

This is the apocalyptic dismantling of the world as theatrical entertainment – and not just for Marinetti but for writers and artists all over Europe at this time. For example, in 1919 the poet Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961) wrote ‘La Fin du Monde filmée par l'Ange N.-D.’, a peculiar piece of poetry-for-the-screen written for the filmmaker Fernand Léger (1881-1955), who ultimately failed to produce it. In this piece, an angel at the top of Notre Dame Cathedral takes a camera and records the apocalypse and subsequent reformation of the world. Between the shock of World War I and the development of technologies such as photography and film, the apocalypse became something to watch or witness, preferably from the elevated position of the Pilot or angel. While not necessarily seeing the apocalypse as something specifically *of the theatre*, avant-gardists had become highly sensitive to its *theatricality* based often on a self-understanding of being ‘above’ or

⁸⁶ Marinetti, *Bataille*, 27.

⁸⁷ While the image of a sea or lake of fire is often associated more generally with hell, it has apocalyptic significance in the Bible being exclusively placed in the book of Revelation and as the *final* resting place for the wicked at the end of time (cf. Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). A slightly more positive version of the image occurs in Revelation 15:2, where a ‘sea of glass mixed with fire’ is the site where God is praised.

‘detached’ from the end of the world because, in a sense, they had already embraced the end through their own radical cultural practice.

However, Marinetti was not satisfied with a cycle of destruction and creation as a passive experience. Futurism was dedicated to asserting a form of control or orchestration over that cycle. In the first instance, this control was asserted by embracing the rejection of nostalgia and tradition. When the volcano finally speaks, it expounds upon its own nature as in destroying and rebuilding:

Je n'ai jamais dormi. Je travaille sans fin
pour enrichir l'espace de chefs-d'œuvres éphémères! (*MP*, 44)

It allies itself with eternity and warns against nostalgia, and ultimately its only exhortation seems to be a warning to those who might be attached to tradition:

Malheur à ceux qui veulent enraciner
leurs cœurs, leurs pieds et leurs maisons
avec un ladre espoir d'éternité! (*MP*, 47)

Gare à ceux qui s'endorment
en adorant la trace des ancêtres
sous les calmes feuillages de la Paix! (*MP*, 50)

While this does not really answer the Pilot's query about the ‘devoirs’ of his race (*MP*, 31), it is very much in line with the Futurist ethos. The very image of eternity – the volcano – warns against an adherence to tradition and eternity. In this sense, the volcano is practically echoing Marinetti when it states ‘j'émiette aussitôt dans l'horreur de durer’ (*MP*, 45). In the first Futurist manifesto, as well, Marinetti writes that ‘les plus âgés d'entre nous ont trente ans; nous avons donc au moins dix ans pour accomplir notre tâche. Quand nous aurons quarante ans, que de plus jeunes et plus vaillants que nous veuillent bien nous jeter au panier comme des manuscrits inutiles!...’⁸⁸ But when, after the volcano's discourse, the Pilot shouts, ‘J'ai compris, j'ai compris ma mission!...’ (*MP*, 55), he is aspiring to the same masculinised (recall that the volcano is called ‘père’) power of matter. Therefore, the other way in which Futurism asserted control over the cycle was through the aesthetic of machinery/matter. Poggi states that ‘Caught in this cyclic temporality, nature can never propel Marinetti into the future’, and so the velocity of the machine ‘allows Marinetti to confound the organic and the mechanical, the procreative and industrial, and thereby to seize for himself the illusory power of male autogenesis.’⁸⁹ When the volcano states, ‘Ma vie est la fusion perpétuelle de mes débris’ (*MP*, 44), it is embodying that same longing for autogenesis – the ability to create and re-create oneself irrespective of the cycles of time, biology, or even messianic

⁸⁸ Marinetti, ‘Manifeste et Fondation’, 88.

⁸⁹ Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 156.

religion. In this way, the Pilot wishes to jump from the cycle of nature to an order of existence in which he directs or controls his own death and rebirth.

At the end of *Monoplan*, the Pilot shouts, in a single line set off in its own stanza, ‘Détruire! Il faut détruire!... il faut sans fin détruire!...’ (MP, 346). This is not just an eschatological moment; it is that moment repeated over and over. Futurism sought to live within that moment between death and rebirth, or between destruction and new creation. That is to say, it is living in the apocalyptic moment in the same way that Collins describes the living practices of apocalyptic sects, as incipient (religious) communities who have ordered their lives according to an understanding of how the future will be, and so therefore live within the space between a dying world and a new world. But the theme of rebirth is prominent in Marinetti, for the poet, for art, for the Italian nation:

La vaste mer enceinte
s’ouvre péniblement sous le soleil nouveau-né
qui fait force de la tête... (MP, 281-282)

Tu fus rebaptisé par le sang des héros.
Quant à moi, j’en ruisselle!... Mes ailes
sont imbibées d’une aurore éternelle... (MP, 318)

The old traditions have died, only to be replaced by the new Futurist sun, as Marinetti wrote in the 1924 manifesto ‘Le Futurisme mondial’: ‘A un siècle de distance, face au grand soleil romantique de 1830 (qui ne fut, somme toute, qu’un soleil pour Chants du Crépuscule) voici la montée au zénith de gloire [...] du grand soleil futuriste.’⁹⁰ The messianic implications are quite apparent. Futurism will be the new Christianity and Marinetti/the Pilot, the new Pope. The final act of destroying the past is consummated when the Pilot releases his cargo, dropping the Pope as a bomb into the sea:

C’est bien ici pourtant
au beau milieu de ce grand lac italien
Adriatique,
que fut prédisposé depuis toujours
le grand tombeau mouvant du dernier de nos Papes!... (MP, 343)

Je suis léger libre et puissant!...
Je suis un italien délivré tout à coup
de son lest chrétien
et de ses lourdes entraves catholiques!... (MP, 344)

⁹⁰ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Le Futurisme Mondial’, in *Futurisme: Manifestes – Proclamations – Documents*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1973), 94.

By presenting the Futurist 'problem' as a religious or spiritual one, Marinetti raises the stakes for those involved. Futurism was not to be regarded as merely a political movement or artistic avant-garde (although it was both of those things), it was an occupation of the space of the higher spiritual Ideal that it claimed to overthrow in Romanticism or Catholicism with velocity and the machine.

Chapter 5: Pound and Prophecy

In 1905, Ezra Pound wrote in a letter to his mother concerning some formative influences on his poetry: 'I shall continue to study Dante and the Hebrew Prophets.'¹ Louis L. Martz argues that what captured Pound's imagination in his reading of the Hebrew Prophets (and Dante, for that matter) was the impulse of the prophets to mix searing criticism of their age with idealism and hope. In Martz's understanding of the definitive style of prophetic literature, which 'oscillates between denunciation and hope, between the abyss and the ideal, [...] held together by the prophetic voice',² and which he finds as the prevalent style in much of Pound's poetry, the prophet is able to provide an alternative history for the nation, to allow the nation to see itself in the light of the ideal that the prophet proclaims. In declaring this ideal, the prophet is alienated from political, economic, and cultural centres that maintain the status quo and, oftentimes, from the whole of the society itself. Therefore, Martz argues that the writers in his study (almost all expatriates who, along with Pound, include T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, H. D., and James Joyce) are prophets-in-exile: 'Wherever the location of the writer, "exile" describes a state of mind always searching for "home."' The meaning of this 'home' extends 'into the deepest recesses of the self, in search of abiding values that will redeem the troubled present.'³

Martz follows a general consensus in studies of biblical prophecy that regards prophets not primarily as foretellers of future events, but as social critics and reformers: 'The Hebrew prophet is a reformer: his mind is upon the present.'⁴ To the extent that prophets engage with the hopes and anxieties of the future, predictions are usually non-specific and broadly fall into general categories of condemnation or redemption, and are closely related to present situations and practices. The prophet's vocation as a social critic predisposes him or her to the oscillation of prophetic rhetoric that Martz describes: 'No words are too harsh for the biblical prophet to use in denouncing these "abominations" (Ezekiel's word); no words of promise are too idyllic for the prophet to use in his exhortations of redemption.'⁵ Pound's poetry also engages in this fluctuation from denunciation to hope. In speaking of the *Cantos*, Martz states that 'the term *prophetic poem* or *prophetic voice* will do, since violent denunciation of evil forms an essential part of the prophetic voice. Seeking the ideal for his people, the prophet reacts with fierce revulsion from what he sees as the corruption of his people [...] but always with the indestructible ideal in mind'.⁶

¹ Quoted in Martz, *Many Gods*, 44.

² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

³ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

The prophet's own voice balances or unifies the alternating sense of condemnation and redemption, and Martz emphasises that this voice lies at the nexus between the prophet's place in society and that which the prophet speaks for: God, truth, beauty, or even all these at once. Describing Walt Whitman's sense of prophecy, which is 'based upon the vistas of the biblical prophets', Martz states that, 'This prophet desires to speak for all Americans, diverse as they are: he desires to bind them all together by the power of his voice.'⁷ In order for the prophet to describe *possible* futures and *potential* histories in reference to the present, it is as if the prophet first must encompass society and history, in its vast multiplicity, within a single framework before expressing judgment on it based upon the singular ideal. While Martz uses this point to examine Pound's 'j'entendis des voix' of Canto 16,⁸ where Pound rapidly shifts between various voices 'heard' during World War I, it is possible to see a similar technique in Pound's early use of poetic personae, a technique that reached its height during his period in London. In the personae, Pound adopts the prophetic role of speaking 'on behalf of' that is fundamental to Martz's understanding of prophecy, without fully identifying with the chosen persona.

Based on this description of the prophet, Pound's interest in biting social critique and satire, founded upon his ideal of beauty, separates him from the prophetic figures of Apollinaire and Marinetti. The two latter poets are optimistic about the potential for the technical and cultural innovations of modernity to realise the broadest and most dynamic expressions of human intelligence and creativity, provided that artists – led by a select vanguard – appropriately embrace this future. Exactly how the future should be *appropriately* embraced is where they differ, being split between Apollinaire's balance between tradition and invention and Marinetti's anxiety-ridden rejection or transcendence of all traditions. Pound, on the other hand, deeply felt that modernity was a particular cultural 'vortex', a concentration of energies unique to the epoch,⁹ that could only be captured by the few intelligent artists and writers that were sufficiently critical of modernity.¹⁰ In 1914, Pound and the English painter and writer Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) would refer to these artists and writers as Vorticists and without them, modernity would inevitably emphasise, and even drive, social and national decline. On the question of nationhood in particular, Pound's situation was different from Apollinaire and Marinetti, who held nationalist sentiments for France and Italy, respectively. Pound was the consummate exile in regards to his native America and even

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ Ibid., 15-16.

⁹ Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis: Towards a Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 17.

¹⁰ Dasenbrock stresses that Vorticism was not detached from modernity, even though it often affected a certain aloofness toward the innovations that were occurring in Continental Europe: 'But it is important to understand that detachment for the Vorticists is not a synonym for indifference: to be in the still point [of the cultural vortex] is still to be in the world, engaged in analytical observation of it.' (Ibid., 59).

to his adopted home of London. America was, in Pound's view, a vulgar country and cultural wasteland, that he was only too happy to leave (which he did in 1908, at the age of 22). But London hardly fared better, filled with peevish, bourgeois morality and small-minded critics. Of the selection of poems that this study will examine, one of the few constants is Pound's pessimism and sense of loss, his feeling that the cultural values of modernity, whatever positive effect they might have, were inevitably supplanting traditions that emphasised artistic values (beauty, the sublime, the tragic), and that there was no place for a poet in a society that ignored private strength and passion in favor of assumed public rectitude and morality.¹¹ This is perhaps why writers such as Martin Puchner have favoured the term 'rearguard' to describe Pound and his London milieu:¹² Pound's relationship to the prophet is of the constant Jeremiah, an outcast surrounded by an ignorant public who mocked his calling as the advocate for a now-derided tradition. This chapter will examine Pound's relationship to prophecy in this light: first as the inheritor of a poetic tradition and how prophecy structures the expression and reception of that tradition; then, in the following section, how this tradition sets him apart from the surrounding society; finally, how this tradition is based upon a principle that Pound uses to judge the world around him.

The American Poet and the Prophetic Tradition

The figure of the poet, whether as Pound himself or one of his personae, is a figure alienated from contemporary society by his adherence to an ideal, to order, or to a calling that is radically separate from the contemporary society. But, crucially, Pound typically does not present himself as the originator of this order and a very early poem entitled 'Masks', published in Pound's first collection *A Lume Spento* (1908), suggests as much. The poem begins with a meditation on the reasons earlier poets might have adopted the personae, as Pound now does:

These tales of old disguisings, are they not
 Strange myths of souls that found themselves among
 Unwonted folk that spake an hostile tongue,
 Some soul from all the rest who'd not forgot
 The star-span acres of a former lot
 Where boundless mid the clouds his course he swung,
 Or carnate with his elder brothers sung
 Ere ballad-makers lisped of Camelot? (*CEP*, 34)

Pound writes of 'These tales of old disguisings', looking back onto poets who adopted the personae of a 'former lot'. This 'former lot' is also, in some sense, superior as suggested by the

¹¹ John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley: A Study in Composition* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1955), 15.

¹² Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 107.

description of their ‘star-span acres’ that are ‘boundless mid the clouds’. Furthermore, this ‘former lot’, at the end of the poem is shown distant from the earth, but at the same time, quietly considering it – perhaps even judging it – as they ‘Ponder in silence o’er the earth’s queynt devyse?’ (*CEP*, 34). Pound uses the words ‘tales’ and ‘myths’ to describe the custom of poets adopting the personae of older practitioners who are described in the poem as:

Old singers half-forgetful of their tunes,
 Old painters color-blind come back once more,
 Old poets skill-less in the wind-heart runes,
 Old wizards lacking in their wonder-lore (*CEP*, 34)

But rather than ‘tales’ or ‘myths’, this custom could be termed as ‘tradition’; or, perhaps more precisely, what Pound is describing is a tradition in the midst of being constructed. These ‘souls’ feel that their ideals are expressed by a tradition of beauty, music, or even magic, so they choose to cast their lot in with the singers, painters, poets, and wizards. Pound’s point is that tradition is not something passively existing in relation to the present, but is actively summoned – even relived – in relation to or open contention with the present. Tradition is not simply ‘the past’ – it is a particular understanding of the past embodied (‘carnate’) in active confrontation with the present. In this respect, Pound’s juxtaposition in the final two lines of the first stanza are apt: while the poet’s ‘elder brothers’ have ‘sung’, the current ‘ballad-makers lisp’d of Camelot’, elevating the tradition of the former over the life of the latter.

The temporal arrangement of the poem therefore speaks to how Pound conceives of his own relationship to the poetic tradition. Pound constructs ‘Masks’ as a conversation of three different eras. The ‘old’ singers, poets, painters, and wizards lie at the furthest point in the past and provide the basis for how the tradition is constructed. These past artists are then recalled by others who exist in their own times as outcasts. And finally, the speaker himself expresses sympathy with the poets who adopt the personae of the original founders of the tradition. In this sense, Pound understands himself as a member of the same tradition. By providing an answer to the implied question of who these poets are and why they adopt the personae provided by the tradition, this poem acts as a kind of apologia of the technique itself – a technique that Pound was engaging in during these years in his own poetry, when he adopted such personae as the medieval French poet, François Villon (1431-1463), or the twelfth-century troubadour, Bertran de Born.

Prophecy in biblical literature is intimately connected to the lineage or tradition of prophets set out in the book of Deuteronomy, where Moses himself is presented as that archetypal ‘mask’ that other prophets must wear. Here, the ‘appropriate’ criteria are laid out for identifying true prophets from false ones, which is to say that Deuteronomy establishes the way in which the Israelites might distinguish a prophet who truly serves God from a prophet whose interests are greed, false gods, or other nations. Simply (and tautologically) speaking, true prophets of God

speak the truth: 'If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true; it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously' (Deut. 18:22). Of even more importance, the model for the prophet of God is Moses himself, who claims that, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.' (Deut. 18:15). Throughout the Bible, prophets are described in terms clearly meant to cast them in the tradition of Moses, such as Elijah's ascent up Mount Horeb to receive the word of God (1 Kgs. 19:8) in the manner of Moses' ascent up the same mountain in his encounter with the burning bush (Ex. 3:1). The opening of the book of Jeremiah is also at pains to place the eponymous prophet within the Mosaic tradition. For example, both Jeremiah and Moses express a reluctance to accept the prophetic call (Jer. 1:6; Ex. 4:10); both are accompanied by the word of God (Jer. 1:8; Ex. 3:12); both focus on the imagery of the prophet's mouth as surrogate for God (Jer. 1:9; Ex. 4:12). The parallels confirm 'the impression that Jeremiah is being presented from the beginning of his career as a prophet after the manner of Moses.'¹³ Indeed, Jeremiah is the latest (perhaps final) manifestation of a tradition of prophets and liberation begun by Moses: 'From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day' (Jer. 7:25). And finally, his placement within the Mosaic tradition is further highlighted by his conflicts with rival prophets in language that echoes Deuteronomy 18:22: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.' (Jer. 23:16).

Pound's awareness of prophecy as a tradition which the prophet establishes by adopting the language and concerns, as well as recalling the events, of a notable forebear is evident in his relationship to his favoured poets. Hugh Witemeyer states that from the age of fifteen, Pound 'knew that he was to be a poet. Moreover, he was to be a national epic poet, *on the model* of Homer, Dante and Whitman.'¹⁴ Just as Moses provided the model for biblical prophets like Jeremiah, Pound looked to the canonised poets of ancient Greece, the Renaissance, and an emergent America. But his tradition was wider than even this, including an encyclopaedic array of poets from the medieval troubadour tradition, the Roman Empire, and 19th century England. Yet, when speaking specifically of the tradition as prophecy, Pound appealed to his closest American forebear, as in his essay of 1909, 'What I feel about Walt Whitman', where he writes, 'I honour

¹³ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 137.

¹⁴ Hugh Witemeyer, 'Early Poetry 1908-1920', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 43; emphasis added.

him for he prophesied me while I can only recognise him as a forebear of whom I ought to be proud.¹⁵

In Witemeyer's quotation above, Whitman is the last of three 'national epic poet[s]' and the only American of the trio. What Pound is referring to is the tradition of the national epic that he felt himself destined to write. The concerns of Whitman are Pound's concerns as well, but his phrase 'ought to be proud' complicates the matter. On the one hand, Pound is somewhat reluctant to claim Whitman as a forebear¹⁶ due to the latter's particular vulgarity, although he admits that, 'when I write of certain things I find myself using his rhythms.'¹⁷ On the other hand, Pound feels that he is somewhat constrained by temperament and birthplace against denying his place in the tradition: 'Personally I might be very glad to conceal my relationship to my spiritual father and brag about my more congenial ancestry – Dante, Shakespeare, Theocritus, Villon, but the descent is a bit difficult to establish.'¹⁸ This might betray a kind of churlishness on Pound's part, but it can also be understood as Pound accepting his 'destiny' as a member of the tradition. It is not incidental that Pound is in the tradition of Whitman but, *in spite of* his views on Whitman, Pound accepts his role as a national epic poet. There is a higher ideal to which Pound must attend, and if honouring Whitman is the way to attend to it, then so be it.

Pound writes in the same essay, 'It seems to me I should like to drive Whitman into the old world. I sledge, he drill – and to scourge America with all the old beauty. (For Beauty *is* an accusation)¹⁹ The aggressive tone and use of the word 'scourge' sharpens and elevates Pound's rhetoric, echoing, perhaps, the sentiment of Isaiah when describing God's anger as a scourge (Isa. 10:26).²⁰ It will be the 'old beauty' of the 'old world' that Pound will use to strike or 'sledge' his modern contemporaries, and this beauty will contain not just Whitman, but the entire tradition 'from Homer to Yeats, from Theocritus to Marcel Schwob.'²¹ But Pound distinguishes himself from Whitman, as well: 'This desire is because I am young and impatient, were I old and wise I should content myself in seeing and saying that these things will come. But now, since I am by no means sure it would be true prophecy, I am fain set my own hand to the labour.'²² Pound is likely engaging in bit of irony in these lines; he is surely aware that prophecy, in particular that of the

¹⁵ Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1973), 115.

¹⁶ In a poem entitled 'A Pact' (1913), Pound writes of Whitman, 'I have detested you long enough' (P 90).

¹⁷ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 115.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁰ The NRSV translates the Hebrew *shout* as 'whip', but the King James Bible translated it as 'scourge'.

²¹ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 116.

²² *Ibid.*

Hebrew prophets, was not content to simply render a dispassionate judgment – Hebrew prophecy was formed by the urgency of repentance and so designed to elicit immediate changes in behaviour. Pound felt that Whitman, the ‘old and wise’ poet, was too confident in America’s ability to naturally understand his message; Pound has significantly less faith in America, so he chooses a far more aggressive tactic, committing his ‘own hand to the labour.’ Similarly, Charles Willard describes Pound’s quarrel with Whitman as based on Pound’s perception of falseness and superficiality in Whitman’s optimism.²³ Finally, Pound accuses Whitman in *The Spirit of Romance* of ‘pretend[ing] to be conferring a philanthropic [sic] benefit on the race by recording his own self-complacency.’²⁴ While Whitman might have had the correct message, he was content with simply prophesying its future occurrence, whereas Pound, adopting his own language of prophecy, hopes to ‘scourge’ America with beauty.

In describing Whitman’s relationship to prophecy and America, Martz has an insight that informs not only Pound’s relationship to Whitman, but potentially his relationship to the use of personae in general: ‘A prophet is one who speaks for another.’²⁵ Whereas Whitman wanted to commune with America, to be the collective voice of America, Pound summoned the tradition to set himself against America. In 1913, Pound sent the manuscript of ‘From Chebar’ to Harriet Monroe (1860-1936), the founder of the long-running journal *Poetry*, and although not published at the time, the poem proclaims art and beauty as the higher ideal around which his life was ordered and the possibility of a new order based on that ideal. To be more specific, the arts are the medium or tradition through which the new order will be expressed:

The order does not end in the arts,
The order shall come and pass through them. (*CEP* 271)

‘From Chebar’ condemns other institutions as too sclerotic, lacking the dynamism of art to become the source of change in the world:

The state is too idle, the decrepit church is too idle,
The arts alone can transmit this.
They alone cling fast to the gods,
Even the sciences are a little below them. (*CEP* 271)

Political and spiritual orders are beyond hope; the arts, on the other hand, might recover what has been lost as ‘They alone cling fast to the gods’. The arts are, then, allies of the gods or mediums

²³ Charles B. Willard, ‘Ezra Pound’s Appraisal of Walt Whitman’, *Modern Language Notes* 72:1 (January 1957), 22-23.

²⁴ Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1952), 168.

²⁵ Martz, *Many Gods*, 7.

through which the gods are manifest. In a brief and enigmatic piece of writing, 'Religio or, The Child's Guide to Knowledge' (1918), Pound lays out this relationship between the beauty expressed in the arts, and the divine. Written in a question-and-answer format, he asks, 'When is a god manifest?', answering, 'When the states of mind take form.' Further along he asks, 'By what characteristic may we know the divine form?', answering, 'By beauty.'²⁶ And in the same essay, Pound refers at several points to the knowledge of the divine as a 'tradition'.

As an advocate for the arts, of beauty, or of the gods, the speaker in 'From Chebar' assumes the mantle of the one who speaks on behalf of those traditions. The next lines ally the speaker even more to the arts in a world that is flawed, dismissive of beauty, and afraid. This identification is made by attributing to the arts phrases that the speaker has already attributed to himself. Both the speaker and the arts (referred to as 'They') aspire to the highest ideal: 'I am "He who demands the perfect"' (line 39); 'They are "Those who demand the perfect"' (line 66). In order to proclaim this ideal, both the speaker and the arts represent a kind of fearlessness, never shying away from the evil or immoral aspects of life: 'I am not afraid of the dark, / I am he who is not afraid to look in the corners.' (lines 24-25); 'They are "Not afraid of the dark"' (line 67). And just as the speaker sees himself as both part of America and at the same time, transcending America, the arts also transcend time, seen as eternal and eternally present: 'I came with the earliest comers, / I will not go till the last.' (lines 41-42); 'They are after you and before you.' (line 68). Finally, the arts, as well as the speaker, set themselves apart from the common language, seeing it as cynical pandering: 'I do not join in the facile praises, / In the ever ready cries of enthusiasms.' (lines 35-36); 'They have not need of smooth speeches, / There are enough who are ready to please you.' (lines 69-70). The final six lines of the poem bring these disparate comparisons together in a final alliance between the speaker and the arts:

It is I, who demand our past,
And they who demand it.

It is I, who demand tomorrow,
And they who demand it.

It is we, who do not accede,
We do not please you with easy speeches. (CEP 271-272)

Pound is most explicit about his ambitions to the prophetic tradition in this poem's title, which is perhaps the closest he comes to referring to the Hebrew prophets directly.²⁷ The title refers to the book of Ezekiel, where the latter receives his first revelation from God while on the banks of the Chebar River: 'the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the

²⁶ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 47.

²⁷ Martz, *Many Gods*, 14.

land of the Chaldeans [Babylonians] by the river Chebar' (Ezek. 1:3). The location is significant for Pound, because the Chebar river was in Babylon, not Israel, as the book was composed after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, deported many of the Judean political and religious elite, Ezekiel among them. Ezekiel's famous vision of the winged creatures (Ezek. 1:1-28) occurs at this river, but even more pertinent to Pound's reference is Ezekiel 3:15: 'I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar. And I sat among them, stunned, for seven days.' Pound's recalling of Ezekiel's experience of prophesying from Babylon sets the speaker of 'From Chebar' in a place apart from his home, calling back to his home to reform itself, to aspire to the same ideal that the poet aspires to, and thereby open up the possibility – however remote – of homecoming or rapprochement.

The speaker's credibility is grounded in his self-presentation as one of the nation but simultaneously as one apart, as the quintessential voice of the American-in-exile or prophet-in-exile. Like Ezekiel, his 'prophecy' is a 'calling back' to the nation of his birth. Pound begins the poem with the lines:

Before you were, America!

I did not begin with you,
I do not end with you, America. (*CEP* 269)

The speaker of the poem transcends the nation, and the tone is confrontational, but the choice to write about his native country speaks to a deeper need to struggle with questions of national origin, how deeply engrained national character is in personal character, and to what extent the nation is the product of a few guiding lights. He refers to America as a 'vener', suggesting that his connection to it is somewhat superficial:

You are the present vener.
If my blood has flowed within you,
Are you not wrought from my people! (*CEP* 269)

These lines present the argument that the nation is the product of those who are also much more than the nation. In this respect, Witemeyer provides an important detail in Pound's early understanding of the poet's role in society: 'Pound followed the neo-classical ideal of the epic poet as a man of no less learning than imagination.' An ideal that 'emphasized a cosmopolitan internationalism of intellect and culture, a transcendence of provincial, monolingual perspectives, and an awareness of the best that has been thought and said (at any rate by Europeans).'²⁸ Pound therefore reverses the relationship of the individual to his nationality, which is to say that the speaker does not so much see himself as an American as he sees America 'wrought' from him and

²⁸ Witemeyer, 'Early Poetry', 44.

those like him. It takes the Walt Whitmans of the world (however few there might be) to truly create a nation, even if the nation might not exactly live up to the inspiration of its creator. And indeed, the use of the term ‘present veneer’ does suggest that America is something less than what its creators sought for it. But by making this reversal, Pound can ultimately transcend the ties of nationality, slipping out, one day, from that veneer.

The Prophet in Exile

Pound regularly excused himself from the judgment of his peers, whether critics or fellow poets; in his view, the only true ‘judges’ were long since dead. Poets such as Robert Browning (1812-1889), Villon, or Dante were the eyes through which he hoped to judge both himself and the world he lived in, prompting him to adopt, from an early age, the conceit of the poetic persona. Pound’s use of personae is described by Witemeyer as, ‘a vitalistic neo-Platonism, according to which *personae* are not so much impersonations as momentary reincarnations of the great souls of the past.’²⁹ These souls aspired to something more ‘true’ or more ‘pure’ than Pound saw in his contemporary society; but they also acted as surrogates for Pound’s own desire to aspire to the beautiful, the true, and the pure. Yet, the use of personae are an indication of Pound’s sense of exile and isolation, as indicated by an early critic of his 1909 publication of *Personae of Ezra Pound*, who writes that the collection is ‘the battle with the world of a fresh soul who feels himself strong but alone’.³⁰

Among the many personae that Pound adopted in his poetry, the troubadour, yearning for and accepting only the judgment of his lady, was one of the earliest and most prominent. In *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), Pound related troubadour love to the realm of the spiritually ascetic in a chapter entitled ‘Psychology and Troubadours’: ‘The “chivalric love,” was, as I understand it, an art, that is to say, a religion.’³¹ The equating of art and religion in this line reveals an important aspect of Pound’s thought. Chivalric love is not simply mediated via a particular literary or musical art-form – it was an art-form in itself, which sought to express its ideal through its practice or lived experience.³² What Pound found in the troubadours was a life lived according to the ethos expressed in his ‘Religio or, The Child’s Guide to Knowledge’: ‘By what characteristic may we know the divine form? By beauty.’ If, in Pound’s reasoning, the troubadour worshipped,

²⁹ Ibid., 45.

³⁰ Quoted in A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet, A Portrait of the Man and his Work: I: The Young Genius, 1885-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 92.

³¹ Pound, *Spirit of Romance*, 87. This chapter was originally published as a single essay in 1916, and later included in *The Spirit of Romance* when it was re-published in 1929.

³² A. David Moody’s biography of Pound substantiates this particular interest in the active life of the troubadours, stating that Pound ‘credited them with having really lived and loved what they sang’ (Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 21).

frequently from a great distance, the beauty of his love, then the expressions, descriptions, and entreaties made by the troubadour were attempts to make contact with the divine. In this sense, chivalric love was not so different from religion, as both ordered life, as a general goal, around the attainment of knowledge (whether intellectual, mystical, erotic, or so forth) of the divine. But like many religious practices, especially of the more ascetic sort, the consequence of the troubadour's quest for contact with his love was an inevitable break between himself and the everyday lives of the people around him. Pound's attraction to the troubadour tradition is therefore partly attributable to his understanding of them as exiles in their own country just as he felt like an exile in America.

To demonstrate further how Pound's use of personae gave him a perspective on society, and how personae compare to prophecy, I turn to an analysis of Pound's 1909 poem 'Marvail'. In this poem, Pound adopts the persona of the twelfth century troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil, speculating that Arnaut 'possessed a Poundian capacity for abuse',³³ hiding the truth of his life and his love. Arnaut travels to Beziers, where he initiates a romance with the wife of the Vicomte of Beziers³⁴:

The Vicomte of Beziers's not such a bad lot.
I made rimes to his lady this three year:
Vers and canzone, till that damn'd son of Aragon,
Alfonso³⁵ the half-bald, took to hanging
His helmet at Beziers. (*P* 21)

Alfonso arrives and, jealous of Arnaut, conspires to have him sent away. The latter is then condemned to work as a clerk and write poetry for his lost love. The current poem is written as a final witness:

As for will and testament I leave none,
Save this: 'Vers and canzone to the Countess of Beziers
In return for the first kiss she gave me.' (*P* 22)

In the end, Arnaut hides the poem inside a hole in the wall, perhaps hoping that some sympathetic soul in the future will find it and finally know the 'real' Arnaut.

'Marvail' then utilises presence and absence as a dialectical relationship, that is, though they negate each other, the more presence and absence are respectively emphasised, the more each counterpart becomes apparent through their radical exclusion. More than half of 'Marvail'

³³ K. K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae (1926)* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), 169.

³⁴ Ruthven identifies the Vicomte as Roger II Taillefer, whose wife was Azalais de Toulouse. (*Ibid.*)

³⁵ Pound's reference is to Alfonso IV of Aragon, but Ruthven points out that Arnaut de Mareuil was actually acquainted with Alfonso II. (*Ibid.*, 170)

is taken up with Arnaut lamenting the loss of his Countess Beziers, and in this sense, her absence makes her even more present than she was when Arnaut was at Beziers. The Countess' (absent) beauty becomes the sole animator of Arnaut's life. The operative image in the poem, after Arnaut is sent away, is a hole in the wall, where he places his poetry for some future revelation of who he 'really' is:

And if when I am dead
 They take the trouble to tear out this wall here,
 They'll know more of Arnaut of Marvoil
 Than half his canzoni say of him. (*P* 22)

The future revelation of the 'real' Arnaut is stated with a note of doubt – if 'they take the trouble'. While Pound did not see Arnaut as any sort of prophet, the idea that a poet's inner-life might never be known establishes a sense of exile for the troubadour. Furthermore, that Arnaut doubts his ability to speak for himself, either because of the circumstances of time or his inability to adequately render the Countess' beauty, renders all the more poignant that Pound, through the use of the persona speaks on Arnaut's behalf. Arnaut's absence and silence are doubled just as Pound's identity and presence is doubled, being both the writer Pound and prophet or mediator of Arnaut. This tactic implicitly draws from that of the book of Jeremiah, where the prophet is in hiding, he summons the scribe Baruch to prophesy in his place (Jer. 36:4-10) Baruch writes Jeremiah's words on a scroll and reads the scroll in the Temple, where the court officials become scared and tell Baruch to join Jeremiah in hiding: "Then the officials said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are."" (Jer. 36:19). The point is that poet/scribe bears a power equal to that of the original word. That both Baruch and Jeremiah must suffer exile and go into hiding, even though the former is not considered a prophet, confirms that the 'authority of the word does not fade as the scrolls pass from hand to hand.'³⁶ By its sheer difference from the values of the listening audience – either Pound's or Baruch's – the presence of Arnaut or Jeremiah is emphasised by the fact that their words are excluded. Even at a distance in space and time, Jeremiah's scroll has the force of an oracle, and indeed, when King Jehoiakim hears what is read on the scroll, he feels compelled to burn it (Jer. 36:23).

The sense of exile is furthered through the image of the hole that Arnaut uses to hide his poem. This image bears connotations of unfulfilled desire or want, emphasising the definitive lack, and sometimes the anticipated return, of the Lady in the life of the poet. Robert Casillo, employing the language of finance and credit, states that the ever-deferred consummation of the

³⁶ Pamela J. Scalise, 'Scrolling through Jeremiah: Written Documents as a Reader's Guide to the Book of Jeremiah', *Review and Expositor* 101 (Spring 2004), 215.

troubadour's love, 'credits [the Lady] with the highest spiritual and aesthetic powers, and hopes for the ultimate realization of his investment of time and emotion'.³⁷ The longer that Arnaut remains exiled from Beziers, the greater his emotional 'investment' in the Countess Beziers and the greater the 'spiritual and aesthetic' returns. By depositing – to extend Casillo's metaphor – the poem into the hole in the wall, Arnaut expresses the hope for a future – even a future beyond his own lifetime – in which he 'returns' from exile. The image of the hole occurs immediately after Arnaut speaks that he is not in the place where his desire resides:

And may I come speedily to Beziers
Whither my desire and my dream have preceded me.

O hole in the wall here! be thou my jongleur (*P 22*)

The juxtaposition of the two locations allows Pound to stretch Arnaut, figuratively speaking, across Southern France, from Arnaut's residence in Avignon to his Lady's in Beziers. Arnaut's 'desire' and 'dream' are in the latter location, whereas 'here' (Avignon) there only resides the hole, the lack, and the wind, which Pound includes in three separate instances relating to the hole in the wall:

O hole in the wall here! be thou my jongleur
As ne'er had I other, and when the wind blows

[...]

Wherefore, O hole in the wall here,
When the wind blows sigh thou for my sorrow

[...]

O hole in the wall here, be thou my jongleur,
And though thou sighest my sorrow in the wind (*P 22*)

There is a feeling of hollowness, in which the hole in the wall represents the space of unfilled desire, where the wind is the motion or sound of that unfulfilled desire. Arnaut states:

Sing thou the grace of the Lady of Beziers,
For even as thou art hollow before I fill thee with this parchment,
So is my heart hollow when she filleth not mine eyes,
And so were my mind hollow, did she not fill utterly my thought.

[...]

That I have not the Countess of Beziers

³⁷ Robert Casillo, 'Troubadour Love and Usury in Ezra Pound's Writings', *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 21:2 (Summer 1985), 131.

Close in my arms here. (P 22)

That Arnaut uses the phrase ‘So is my heart hollow’ is significant for the connection between this poem and Pound’s conception of prophetic exile, and merits greater examination.

In his analysis of Jeremiah’s use of heart-language, Timothy Polk connects the word to the construction of the self in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah frequently uses the word ‘heart’ (Hebrew: *leb*) to express the formation of the individual through a telos and orientation, constituted by the individual’s actions as expressions of their faith (or lack of faith) in God. Polk describes this heart-language as a metaphor ‘which in summary fashion characterizes the basic shape and direction of a person’s life.’³⁸ Polk appeals to Jeremiah 4:4, and its image of the uncircumcised heart, to describe how the individual with a particular telos is formed in the book:

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
remove the foreskins of your hearts,
O people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem

Jeremiah translates the literal act of circumcision as a practice of cultic purity into a metaphor of emotional fidelity to God. Polk writes: ‘The use of “heart” here in 4:4 focuses attention on the moral agency of human subjects. It is a way of addressing or representing people in their capacity as creatures profoundly responsible for what they do and who they are, and what they make of themselves. This is to bring to the fore yet again the teleological aspect of selfhood.’³⁹ The directionality of heart-language in Jeremiah is reinforced even further in the image of walking after the imagination of one’s own heart: ‘At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they *walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart*.’⁴⁰ (Jer. 3:17; emphasis added). Differing versions of this phrase occur a total of eight times in the book of Jeremiah, all with the intent of representing the heart as the essential emotional or religious direction of one’s life.

A lack of direction is also possible if not always, in terms of Jeremiah’s theology, a fortuitous option. Jeremiah 4:1, which serves as an opening for the circumcised heart of verse 4, contains the lines: ‘if you remove your abominations from my presence, / and do not waver’, suggesting that Israel lacks determination in its direction toward God. But, as Polk states,

³⁸ Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 26. The Hebrew *leb* is, in fact, so closely tied to this sense that lexicons typically list the word as the bodily organ, as well as a sense of understanding or self, amongst possible definitions.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁰ The King James translation is used here because while the Hebrew *leb* is most commonly translated as ‘heart’ in this verse, the NRSV has translated it as ‘will’, which maintains the metaphorical meaning at the cost of losing the Bible’s relationship between that meaning and the physical organ.

vacillation is not an option: ‘The verb suggests ‘wandering’ [*tāmūd*] between motion and action, indicating a confusion about one’s telos, an indecisiveness which precludes clear action and in which the self thereby forfeits definition and is truncated.’⁴¹ But as this verse only relates to the heart-language three verses later, Polk refers to Jeremiah 5:21 to emphasise the connection: ‘Hear this, O foolish and senseless [*w’eyn leb*, literally, ‘without heart’] people, / who have eyes, but do not see, / who have ears, but do not hear.’ The image of the heart is used as the locus for the senses of sight and hearing, and the means by which physical perceptions are ordered and directed. Perception of the physical or external world is possible, but without the heart, a sense of understanding or a perception of the divine, supernatural, or ‘true’ world is lacking: ‘By ignoring the heart and its resident powers, the self remains amorphous, undirected and in danger of dissolution.’⁴² Likewise, Arnaut’s lament about the heart is directly connected to its status as a medium between the rational senses and the beauty of the Countess:

For even as thou art hollow before I fill thee with this parchment,
So is my heart hollow when she filleth not mine eyes,
And so were my mind hollow, did she not fill utterly my thought. (P 22)

Pound, like Jeremiah, connects the image of the heart to the senses, to the perceptions and thoughts insofar as the hollow mind is a consequence (‘And so’) of the hollow heart. Without the physical sight of the Countess Beziere, and that sight’s connection to the heart, Arnaut has lost his sense of purpose, and when he does not think about her, he thinks about nothing at all. Since Arnaut’s heart is hollow, he lacks a telos which directs his life towards a goal (even if the actual achievement of that goal is itself indefinitely deferred) and becomes an ‘amorphous, undirected’ individual.

But Pound qualifies Arnaut’s statement about his hollow heart in an important way by stating that the feeling of hollowness is ‘before I fill thee with this parchment’. The act of filling the hole in the wall with the parchment provides Arnaut with, perhaps, a substitute, if not the thing itself. Pound resorts to the comparative ‘as’ a second time at the end of the poem when comparing the hole in the wall to the heart:

Keep yet my secret in thy breast here;
Even as I keep her image in my heart here. (P 23)

As the hole is hollow before Arnaut inserts the parchment, his heart is hollow; and as the poem is kept in the hole, Arnaut keeps the image of the Countess in his heart. By placing the ‘Vers and canzone’ into the hole for a future reader, Arnaut’s telos is re-established, his desire for the Countess is given a direction, regardless of the fact that he might never see the Countess again.

⁴¹ Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 39.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 49.

In this way, art and poetry, and its expression of beauty, are the means by which Arnaut seeks the ideal or divine that he locates in the Countess; if he cannot possess the Countess, then he can at least honour her through his poetry. This commitment to her, which he consecrates in the act of placing the poetry into the hole, maintains his identity and the direction of his life and saves him from the amorphousness of his life as a clerk in Avignon.

Yet Pound concludes the poem with an enigmatic phrase in Latin: '*Mibi pergamem deest*' (P 23), translated as 'I do not have the parchment'. If this line is Pound speaking (it is italicised in the text, unlike every other line in the poem), then it suggests that Pound himself has yet to find his own 'Countess'. He certainly has beauty in his mind as his telos, but that does not necessarily mean that he has discovered *his* particular aesthetic in the way that Arnaut or the other troubadours may have found theirs. The personae that provide Pound with his tradition are not meant to provide the framework for the modern world, but they do allow Pound to explore tendencies and devotions that are distinct from the modern world. Pound feels like an exile in the world, but that is not to say that he necessarily feels fully aligned with his personae. The personae are models of prophetic exile insofar as they cling to a vital ideal that sets them apart from their world, but the impetus or goal for that vital ideal is, for Pound, no longer relevant to his own world. The troubadour's Lady may be the embodiment of beauty for him, but Pound must find his own version of that beauty in modernity.

Pound's sense of exile is most apparent when he reflects on his contemporary society, constantly longing for kindred souls which were almost always lacking in the world around him. In fact, one reason he adopted his personae was as a way to commune with long-dead poets that he felt he had more in common with than his contemporaries. 'In Durance', an early poem from the 1909 publication of *Personae* (dated in the title as 1907), uses the term 'soul-kin' to describe those who 'feel / And have some breath for beauty and the arts'. (P 20) The 'breath for beauty and the arts' anticipates Pound's self-identification with the arts several years later in 'From Chebar', but 'In Durance' stresses how the poet's alignment with the tradition marginalises him in contemporary society. The poem begins with a lament for the lack of these kindred spirits:

I am homesick after mine own kind,
Oh I know that there are folk about me, friendly faces,
But I am homesick after mine own kind. (P 19-20)

The word 'homesick' further suggests Pound's self-understanding as an exile. If, as the title suggests, the poem was written in 1907, then Pound was still resident in America, a place filled with 'friendly faces'. As we can perhaps surmise from Pound's most famous short poem, 'In a Station of the the Metro', which characterises faces as 'apparitions' (P 111), 'friendly faces' are in Pound's view transient, superficial, perhaps even dishonest. They lack the credibility of a Dante or a Whitman or, for that matter, a Jeremiah, who read their worlds and their histories through

the lens of an ideal, whether theological or aesthetic. Pound sees these faces, but he does not see his 'soul-kin' in them.

'In *Durance*', to the extent that it locates any 'place' in which the poet's home might be, locates the poet's own heart as the place in which the poet's 'soul-kin' reside:

But reach me not and all my life's become
 One flame, that reaches not beyond
 My heart's own hearth,
 Or hides among the ashes there for thee.
 "Thee"? Oh, "Thee" is who cometh first
 Out of mine own soul-kin (*P 20*)

Once again, as in *'Marvail'*, Pound locates the vital drive within the heart. But that drive comes across as even more isolated than in *'Marvail'*, insofar as it 'reaches not beyond / my heart's own hearth'. Pound is incapable of connecting the vital force of his life to others, so feels himself exiled within his own time. However, the 'Thee' to which he refers, one of the 'soul-kin', connects with Pound in a way that he cannot with the faces around him.

Pound moves on from the heart to the soul, but the intention seems the same: to provide a telos for the individual based on a tradition that has now been lost. When Pound conjures up the 'soul-kin', they are from within himself and his time, as well as from a past age:

Well then, so call they, the swirlers out of the mist of my soul,
 They that come mewards, bearing old magic. (*P 20*)

Just as the flame hides in the ashes of his heart, the 'soul-kin' arise from 'the mist of my soul' while simultaneously coming 'mewards', as if from outside himself. Pound keeps these 'soul-kin' within himself, but they are not entirely of himself. Like the personae, they are, in a sense, a practical tool for gaining a particular perspective on the world, without requiring Pound to fully commit or identify with them. Nonetheless, they are figures of the past insofar as they 'come mewards, bearing old magic.' The tradition allows Pound to approach reality in a new manner with the 'old magic' that his 'soul-kin' have offered him. But it is a temporary magic, ecstatically experienced:

And yet my soul sings "Up!" and we are one.
 Yea thou, and Thou, and THOU, and all my kin
 To whom my breast and arms are ever warm (*P 21*)

For the most part, Pound remains in hiding, unable to genuinely connect to those around him based upon the ideal that guides his life:

My fellows, aye I know the glory
 Of th' unbounded ones, but ye, that hide
 As I hide most the while (*P 20*)

The glory, normally hidden away, cannot be expressed by the poet except in the language provided by the 'soul-kin'. But that language is necessarily elusive, concealed, and ultimately part of the past. Pound states in 'In Durance' that 'Beauty is most that, a "calling to the soul"' (P 20), but that call, like a prophetic call, is deeply personal, eliciting an overall direction for the life of the poet, but ultimately leaving him alone in the world.

From Judgment to Satire

Two aspects of Pound's identity as a poet in the modern world can be re-iterated: he understands himself to be the inheritor of a particular tradition that regards beauty and art as the measure by which he approaches society and history; and as an inheritor of this tradition, he is inevitably 'exiled' from society, having a fundamentally different 'heart' that sets him apart. But as examined in the example of Jeremiah and Moses, this tradition carries with it a credibility that allows the prophet (or poet) to judge his contemporary world from the place of exile. Pound's personae allowed him to view the world through the eyes of one whose active life was based on the ideal of beauty that he felt was lacking in the contemporary world. For example, what Pound presumably admires in Arnaut de Mareuil is the latter's ascetically inclined endurance, willing to suffer a kind of exile in Avignon for the sake of the Countess Beziers. In this respect, Weber has a suggestive note on court romance in his own discussion of religion and the rejection of the world, writing that, "The conception of the "lady" was constituted *solely and precisely by her judging function*."⁴³ Making specific reference to troubadours, Weber writes furthermore that, "Therewith began the "probation" of the man, *not before his equals* but in the face of the erotic interest of the "lady."⁴⁴ The troubadour displaces the judgment of his behaviour from the world (i.e., 'not before his equals) to his Lady, and in just this way do prophets acquire their authority to judge the world; it is not the prophet *per se* that is judging the world, but the prophet in the guise of the word of God. The prophet represents an ethic that is distinctly beyond this world, just as the troubadour views the world through his Lady's judgement and just as Pound views the world through the judgement of his personae. But this brings into focus an aspect of the prophetic attitude that Pound implicitly adhered to – the prophetic viewpoint is not a democratic viewpoint. Prophets judge the world based upon an ideal that is 'higher' than, and essentially inaccessible to, the general public. To the extent that biblical prophets formed discrete conventicles (Elijah, Elisha, and Jeremiah are the most prominent examples), it was to not to collectively determine the doctrine, but to extend the reach of a doctrine unilaterally determined by the prophet and the ideal to which

⁴³ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 346; emphasis added.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*; emphasis added.

he adhered. A brief examination of Pound's relationship to the avant-garde groups in England will demonstrate this viewpoint of the judgment of the singular prophet.

In 1912, he travelled to France where he met the poets around the Unanimist group as well as the journal *Mercure de France*, and felt that they were ahead of the English in waging a war 'against the reign of general stupidity',⁴⁵ demonstrating his general feeling regarding French avant-gardists and their English counterparts. And the following year, he wrote that English poetry was essentially a history of English poets learning their craft from the French.⁴⁶ He was convinced that the Unanimists were at the cutting edge of literature, not just in France but potentially in all of Europe, and he might very well have owned a copy of Apollinaire's *Alcools* (1913).⁴⁷ However, the most important avant-gardist to which Pound responded was not in France, but in Italy: Marinetti, who first began giving lectures on Futurism in London from 1910.⁴⁸ In fact, as Lawrence Rainey relates, on 19 March 1912, the evening of Marinetti's third and most successful lecture in London thus far, Pound gave his own lecture on Provençal poetry.⁴⁹ His lecture was intended for a small, erudite, and relatively wealthy audience. Marinetti, on the other hand, gave his lecture in a large auditorium, tickets were cheaply priced, and the lecture was widely advertised. The following day, the latter was prominently covered in the London press, whereas Pound's lecture received no mention. It was, in part, a response to Marinetti's ability to capture a wide audience that informed Pound's own avant-garde engagement with poets and artists: Imagism, with the poets F. S. Flint (1885-1960), H. D. (1886-1961), and Richard Aldington (1892-1962), and later Vorticism with Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska, along with various other sculptors, painters, and writers along the way.

The avant-garde collective, as Pound understood it, is best expressed in his relationship to Imagism,⁵⁰ which was not described as a 'movement' but a 'school': 'something more informal, more casual, more individualistic, the fortuitous outcome of "two or three young men agree[ing], more or less, to call certain things good."' ⁵¹ Rather than the meetings, collective manifestos, and sense that the movement would penetrate every aspect of daily life, Imagism is almost anarchist by comparison. However, this casual language obscures Pound's prominent role in deciding what

⁴⁵ Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 205.

⁴⁶ Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International*, 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁰ Pound preferred the French rendering of the term, 'Imagisme' and 'Imagistes', to maintain the connection with the avant-garde groups he and the other English Imagists had encountered in Paris in 1912 and 1913, but as soon as he parted ways with the Imagists, they reverted the name to the English spelling.

⁵¹ Quoted in Rainey, *Institutions*, 30.

‘certain things’ were allowed to be called ‘good’. Initially, he was the driving force behind what theory there was to the Imagist aesthetic and he refused significant input from the others in the group. He included writers, such as James Joyce (1882-1941) and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) in the 1914 anthology that founded the movement, *Des Imagistes*, despite their lack of interest in subscribing to the name or its otherwise loose tenets.⁵² He included in Imagism’s statement of principles the assertion that ‘Hellenism & vers libre have nothing to do’ with the aesthetic, despite the fact that Aldington’s and H.D.’s own poetry was deeply influence by both.⁵³ When the American poet, Amy Lowell (1874-1925), suggested that decisions in the group be made democratically, Pound balked: ‘He wasn’t going to waste his time, he told her, pretending that “a certain number of people” were his “critical and creative equals”. That would only lead to “dilution” of the essential principles, “floppy degeneration”, the end of *Imagisme*.’⁵⁴ If Pound wanted to attract people to a particular movement, he did not show it. For Pound, it seems, the theory was really about sitting at the feet of the master, absorbing his wisdom similar to the way he approached his personae. If he saw himself as a prophet, it was as a prophet against society. Pound ‘would speak of the unique *virtu* of the serious artist. Believing that “the life of the race is concentrated in a few individuals”, those rare truly original makers of reality, he was [...] opposed [...] to the democratic idea which would subject individual genius to a species of mob-rule.’⁵⁵ Pound believed that the aesthetic principles he promoted were, by definition, accessible only to a very few – anybody else was derided as a pretender. The approach to the world, judging it and its people based on a narrow and inaccessible ideal will be examined in two poems: ‘And Thus in Nineveh’, and a brief selection from ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’.

Like ‘From Chebar’, ‘And Thus in Nineveh’ alludes to the prophet separated from his home. First published in 1909 (the same year Pound published his essay on Whitman) in the original printing of *Personae*, the title recalls the book of Jonah, where the Bible relates one of the rare instances of a prophet’s message to repent being treated seriously by his public. After Jonah is sent by God to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh to pronounce doom upon it, his prophecy – in notable departure from much prophetic literature – is enthusiastically heeded: ‘Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.’ (Jon. 3:4-5). But the question raised by Pound’s poem is whether or not the people of Nineveh can be regarded as discerning enough to really understand true poetry or prophecy.

⁵² Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 223.

⁵³ Quoted in Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 222.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

Both poems are clearly satirical takes on the reception of the poet by a particular public. The irony occurs in how each poet is honoured in a way not necessarily befitting their place as an individual guided by beauty, so each poem throws into question the judgment of the public. The ‘good writers’ of ‘Salutation the Third’ are likely to have their graves defiled, while in ‘And Thus in Nineveh’, the poet whose grave is treated with respect is, at least in regard to the tradition of poets, not clearly presented as the most ‘subtle-souled’ or, perhaps, even the most talented. Pound saw himself as the condemned poet whose grave was defiled by mediocre critics in ‘Salutation the Third’, but it does not necessarily follow that the crowds who honour the grave of the speaker in ‘And Thus in Nineveh’ are any more discerning than those critics.

Like the volcanic audience in Marinetti’s *Monoplan*, who seem to cheer and applaud whatever is presented to them, the people of Nineveh demonstrate an enthusiasm that lacks any critical discrimination. Pound strikes a tone of ambivalence about ‘the custom’ as well as his place within it:

“Lo! this thing is not mine
Nor thine to hinder,
For the custom is full old[’]” (P 23)

The ‘custom’ is not exactly the poetic or prophetic tradition examined above, but rather something slightly more inert. Pound’s tradition, in its full force, exists in *living tension* with the world around it; on the other hand, this ‘custom’ of honouring poets that the city of Nineveh engages in, seems to render them more or less neutral. This ‘consecration’ safely tucks them away where they will not disturb the society itself:

And here in Nineveh have I beheld
Many a singer pass and take his place
In those dim halls where no man troubleth
His sleep or song. (P 23)

There is something obsequious about Nineveh, ready to praise everyone who ‘hath sung his songs’. The problem, as Pound understands it, is that every poet is rendered as good as the last or as good as the next, in a ‘custom’ that levels the strengths and weaknesses of each. Every time a poet is consecrated in the halls of Nineveh, the consecration itself means less and less. Because the citizens of Nineveh lack any real discernment, it is left to this poet to point out that the poets who have come before were superior to him. He ends by claiming:

It is not, Raana,⁵⁸ that my song rings highest

⁵⁸ Ruthven suggests that this name might refer to a Norse sea goddess, or perhaps a descendent of the biblical Noah (Ruthven, *Guide*, 37). Ultimately, the reference may simply be too obscure to precisely identify and is possibly inserted by Pound to allude to the pagan worship that would have been prevalent in Nineveh.

Or more sweet in tone than any, but that I
Am here a Poet, that doth drink of life
As lesser men drink of wine. (P 23)

Life, for this poet, is not about rendering inert the tradition through an uncritical praise of every singer who passes through society, but about resurrecting a vibrant, and even dangerous, tradition in order to criticise 'lesser men'.

In this way, the poet of 'And Thus in Nineveh' recalls Jonah's ambivalence about being so uncritically accepted by the people of Nineveh: 'But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is this not what I said in my own country?" That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing.' (Jon. 4:1-2). Jonah's attempt to flee from his call seems to have been founded in the possibility of the repentance of the people of Nineveh. In stating, 'for I knew that you are a gracious God,' Jonah is effectively saying, 'I knew that if Nineveh repented, then you would relent in your anger.' But it is not immediately clear why that would have prompted Jonah's flight, nor his anger at being heeded by Nineveh. A note of satire can be detected here: on the one hand, Israelite prophets are rarely heeded by their public; on the other hand, by showing how Nineveh has heeded the prophecy, it has shown itself to be somewhat more faithful to God than Israel. So Jonah has become complicit in the criticism of Israel, and from a place of exile. Yet, even more problematic (from Jonah's perspective), Israel has not been criticised out of his own mouth, but through the actions of pagans. This is just not the paradigm to which Israelite prophets (or readers) are accustomed.

Given Pound's predilection to satire, he surely must have been sensitive to the same elements of the book of Jonah. It has been widely recognised that, while not necessarily a complete satire, Jonah utilises various satiric elements.⁵⁹ For example, John C. Holbert points out that in Hebrew, Jonah son of Amittai, can be translated as 'dove, son of faithfulness',⁶⁰ a name that contrasts with Jonah's disobedience. This element parodies the well-known literary convention of prophets attempting to argue their way out of a prophetic calling: Moses forcefully questions his worthiness (Ex. 3:11); Jeremiah claims that he is 'only a boy' (Jer. 1:6). Rather than try to argue with God, Jonah, without a word, boards a ship and flees to Tarshish. Another example of satire is the extent to which the king of Nineveh repents after hearing Jonah's pronouncement of doom. While in Jonah 3:5, the people of Nineveh limit the act of repentance to humans, the king outdoes

⁵⁹ In fact, this characterisation of Jonah goes back some time, and Holbert points out that Thomas Paine (1737-1809) wrote in *The Age of Reason* (1794) that Jonah was satire. (Holbert, 'Deliverance', 76n7.)

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 63. Blenkinsopp, however, regards this name as a coercive translation (Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 241).

them by instructing the animals to participate in the ritual: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands.' (Jon. 3:7-8). It is not clear what evils the livestock might have committed so that they must repent, but the satiric exaggeration of repentance is apparent. Furthermore, Jonah's anger when Nineveh is spared from destruction seems to arise partly from the failure of God and Nineveh to adhere to the formula for biblical prophecy – the prophet is ignored, the people are punished. The true prophet, it seems, is Jeremiah imprisoned at the bottom of the cistern. But through the satiric images of Jonah's adventure, the author raises serious critiques of the entire institution of prophecy.⁶¹ Holbert argues that the book is meant to attack the 'prophetic hypocrisy' of those who 'claim great insight and unique callings, but who ultimately are found empty of substance, save their real anger at those who do not agree with them'.⁶² As noted above, to the extent that the book of Jonah demonstrates a moral reform in society, it is through the action of pagans rather than the Israelite prophet. David Marcus refers to Jonah as the 'anti-hero'⁶³ of the story, 'satirized for behavior thought to be unbecoming to a prophet.'⁶⁴ 'And Thus in Nineveh' does not satirise the speaker in this way. But what Pound does take from Jonah is the satirical attack on hypocrisy, often centred on the individual, but always with a wider target.

Writing to his father in 1926, Pound comments upon what any reader of his poetry at that point would have known – that he was often prone to writing in a heavily satiric style. In his letter, he writes 'Satire, my dear Homer, [...] SATIRE!!! Wotcher mean by satire?!? [...] what I am trying to give is the STATE of rascality and wangle.'⁶⁵ The emphasis on the state of things describes a key element in the aspect of Pound's satire and, perhaps, satire as a literary form. Although Pound, as we will see, is not shy about forming his attack around specific *kinds* of individuals, these individuals are symptomatic of more general corruptions of society. Robert Elliott explains the transition from the specific attack to the general lament of satire: 'The satirist *usually claims* that he does not attack institutions; he attacks perversions of institutions.'⁶⁶ So the satirist, for example, does not attack the church in general, but only corrupt clergy; he does not

⁶¹ Consequently, Jonah is generally regarded as a work of late prophetic literature, written by an author deeply knowledgeable of the history and conventions of the genre (See Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 241).

⁶² Holbert, 'Deliverance', 75.

⁶³ David Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 96.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Martz, *Many Gods*, 18.

⁶⁶ Robert Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 271; emphasis added.

attack the literary profession, only a discrete number of particularly cynical or ignorant critics. But ‘an attack by a powerful satirist on a local phenomenon seems to be capable of indefinite extension in the reader’s mind into an attack on the whole structure of which that phenomenon is a part.’⁶⁷ Pound’s attacks on individuals – whether critics, the bourgeoisie, or aesthetes such as himself – are always symptoms of a wider ‘STATE of rascality and wangle’.

Pound’s most important and sustained satire of his London years is certainly ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ (1920), a sequence of 18 poems divided into two sections. The first section recounts Pound’s relationships in London and his understanding of how English culture found itself in such a degenerate state; the second takes the perspective of Pound’s alter-ego, Mauberley, an aesthete who tries to live life according to his ideals, but who ultimately ends in obscurity. In perhaps the most satiric elements of the first section, Pound introduces a number of characters, the Jewish Brennbaum, the acquisitive Mr. Nixon, and the aristocratic Lady Valentine, who have come to cooperate, in their own ways, with the state of society.

Section VIII, ‘Brennbaum’, presenting a dandyish Jewish gentleman⁶⁸, reflects on the experience of exile and explicitly compares it to religious tradition. Brennbaum is portrayed as distinct from the modern world around him in both his dress and physical features:

The sky-like limpid eyes,
The circular infant’s face,
The stiffness from spats to collar (*P* 191)

There is something innocent about Brennbaum, described with ‘sky-like limpid eyes’ and ‘infant’s face’. In this sense, Brennbaum is a true aesthete, perhaps closest to Pound’s heart, seeing the world in its wealth of beauty. But Brennbaum, unlike Pound, does not wish to ‘scourge’ the world with that beauty. Instead, Brennbaum seems to use beauty to obscure his identity. Brennbaum, a Jew, is living in a state of hiding:

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty years,
Showed only when the daylight fell
Level across the face
Of Brennbaum “The Impeccable.” (*P* 191)

The tragedy of Brennbaum is the individual who ‘erases all his inherited traditions in the interests of elegant conformity and acceptance’.⁶⁹ Furthermore, by identifying Brennbaum as Jewish, Pound also perhaps marks him as irreparably separated from society. Beauty, in this case, is little more than a superficial and decadent aestheticism that masks what cannot, in the end, be truly

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Brennbaum was possibly based on an acquaintance of Pound’s named Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) who seems to have been mistaken as Jewish by Pound (Ruthven, *Guide*, 138).

⁶⁹ Espey, *Mauberley*, 15.

obscured. It is not the same beauty that Pound attempts to summon in poems such as ‘From Chebar’ or ‘Marvail’. It is not the beauty of the tradition, but beauty as an escape from tradition. In the end, Pound leaves this brief portrait back where Brennbaum started, as ‘The Impeccable’, that is, as one with little more than the accoutrements of a life lived according to aesthetic values. So while Pound might demonstrate a bit of sympathy with Brennbaum, he is ultimately critical of his apparent insincerity.

‘Mr. Nixon’, section IX of ‘Mauberley’, is a portrait of the writer cynically catering to the world of reviewers. Nixon gives the young Pound the advice to ‘Consider / Carefully the reviewer.’ (P 191). Of course, this contrasts severely with Pound’s estimation of reviewers in his *Blast* poems, as shown above with ‘Salutation the Third’. Nixon’s concern is not the production of beautiful art, much less of using art to influence the world in a moral or social way. His entire artistic practice was informed by his experience of living in poverty, and his effort to escape his penury:

I was as poor as you are;
When I began I got, of course,
Advance on royalties, fifty at first,” said Mr. Nixon,
“Follow me, and take a column,
Even if you have to work free.

Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred
I rose in eighteen months (P 191)

Nixon seems to assume that the poet’s real problem is a lack of money, rather than the search for a relevant aesthetic model for modern art or the ability to live by an ideal of beauty. Pound was certainly alive to the problem of making a living (and often solved it by writing columns he would rather have forgotten), but could not bring himself to treat most reviewers with anything more than complete contempt. Eventually, Mr. Nixon becomes very candid and announces the death of literature:

[“]The tip’s a good one, as for literature
It gives no man a sinecure.

And no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece.
And give up verse, my boy,
There’s nothing in it.” (P 192)

The final line above is repeated once more at the end of the poem. Nixon has no more regard for reviewers than does Pound – both see reviewers as philistines that cannot identify a masterpiece. Of course, Nixon’s understanding of how to identify great art is just as blinkered as the reviewers he mocks: he thinks artistic value is essentially reducible to the amount of money that it brings in. His advice is to ‘Butter reviewers’, meaning to coddle them, and states that he, ‘never mentioned

a man but with the view / Of selling my own works.' (P 192). Like 'And Thus in Nineveh', Pound here raises the question of the ability of people to judge the poet. These reviewers are operating with a fundamentally different, more mercenary, attitude toward art. Nixon even betrays his own ignorance because he states that, 'no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece', assuming that masterpieces can be understood by sight alone. By locating the judgment of the masterpiece in sight alone, rather than in the emotions, the intellect, or the heart, Nixon becomes a satire on a society that has neglected more transcendent forms of beauty or worth for money and 'style'.

Section XII, where Lady Valentine makes her appearance, satirises the salon culture of Edwardian London. There is a touch of T. S. Eliot's Prufrock in this poem, a disjointed hero, out of place in the elite culture that he finds himself in. The speaker is in a well-heeled environment, yet unsure of his place there:

[...] In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion (P 193)

Lady Valentine, also a poet, is, unlike Mr. Nixon, not interested in the 'literary effort' for economic gain. Rather, she is interested in garnering a kind of 'cultural capital', that is the ability to assert cultural authority not immediately tied to her economic and class position. The speaker, accordingly, refers to Lady Valentine's 'vocation' as:

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata
Where the lower and higher have ending (P 194)

In the reference to 'the lower and higher', there is an intentional ambiguity. On the one hand, the initial meaning likely refers to the social or class strata. Lady Valentine is certainly from aristocratic circles, but poetry is a 'means of blending' with other social classes: bourgeois, petit bourgeois, perhaps even working class. For these other classes 'the lower and higher have ending', meaning potentially that they lack the economic and cultural capital to cross class boundaries with the same ease that Lady Valentine does. On the other hand, the 'other strata' may be associated with elite and popular aesthetic forms. Poetry is also:

A hook to catch the Lady Jane's attention,
A modulation toward the theatre (P 194)

Poetry is used to make Lady Valentine 'of note' to other members of her class, but also allows Lady Valentine to extend a kind of judgment toward theatre, a typically more popular form of

artistic activity. On the other hand, Lady Valentine keeps herself separated and above those same classes and in this way, poetry and the ability to judge that it bestows mitigates the threat of the 'popular':

Also, in the case of revolution,
A possible friend and comforter. (*P* 194)

In these three brief portraits, what Pound is satirising, in the end, is not Lady Valentine or Mr. Nixon or Brennbaum, so much as he is lamenting the culture of Edwardian London that supports the mediocre and cynical. The ignorance of critics, the avarice of journalists, and the grandstanding of aristocrats are only specific manifestations of the degeneration of aesthetics itself. 'Maunderley' is then a poem about a society that has lost its impulse for living by artistic values: the values of beauty, of the sublime, of the tragic. As in 'And Thus in Nineveh', the entire culture has suffocated true beauty, and the poet is praised, but cynically, superficially, hypocritically, or ignorantly.

For Pound, living according to aesthetic values represented the possibility for a renaissance in English art and culture to which he felt, despite all obstacles, chosen to show the way. Yet, 'Maunderley' ultimately represents not a proclamation of hope, but the ultimate failure of the prophet to turn his people away from the path of decline. A tradition of beauty – from the troubadours to Whitman – is summoned up to declare what the society has lost. Because this tradition is so antithetical to the modern era, the poet finds himself in exile, but at the same time gains an ethos by which to judge his society. 'Maunderley' was Pound's final acceptance of the poet-in-exile, condemned and isolated for the beauty that was his ideal. For this reason, the poem has frequently been thought of as Pound's farewell letter to London: about six months after its publishing, Pound moved to Paris, leaving London for good.

Chapter 6: Pound and Apocalypse

When Pound was preaching a new aesthetic practice that could potentially renew the tradition of beauty, historical and political events were moving distinctly in the opposite direction. Pound felt confident enough to declare that the new era had arrived only after Mussolini's 'March on Rome' in 1922, which he marked as 'Year Zero' and dated subsequent letters and publications accordingly. But near the end of his time in London, his prophetic inclinations appeared to have failed. The theory that the failure of the prophet to justify his prophecy by reference to the social, political, or cultural institutions in his contemporary world frequently leads from a prophetic eschatology to an apocalyptic eschatology is prominent in biblical scholarship. Paul D. Hanson provides the schematic for this view in terms of Israelite prophecy, when the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the Davidic monarchy precluded any probable avenue for God's salvation. Therefore, visionary groups were lead to proclaim that salvation occurs precisely in the realm of the improbable. From this point on, 'The prophets no longer have the events of a nation's history into which they can translate the terms of Yahweh's cosmic will. Hence the successors of the prophets, the visionaries, continue to have visions, but they increasingly abdicate the other dimension of the prophetic office, the translation into historical events. At that point we enter the period of the transition from prophetic to apocalyptic eschatology.'¹ Following Gerhard von Rad's definition of eschatology, an eschatological belief looks outside of history to find confirmation of one's position. The break that is the eschatological moment 'goes so deep that the new state beyond it cannot be understood as the continuation of what went before. It is as if Israel and all her religious assets are thrown back to a point of vacuum, a vacuum which the prophets must first create by preaching judgment and sweeping away all false security, and then fill with their message of the new thing.'² But this definition of eschatology lies at the extreme end of the continuum laid-out by Hanson, where a more pragmatic prophetic eschatology, such as when Ezekiel predicts the rebuilding of the Temple (40-48), has failed to locate God's ultimate salvation within worldly institutions and sought after more visionary possibilities.³

By the beginning of the 1920s, Pound was convinced that the public's provincialism, the mercenary inclinations or cowardice of artists, and ultimately the war itself, definitively precluded a new English renaissance. The aesthetic practices he articulated in the Imagist or Vorticist groups might have been useful to individual artists. But he left London in 1921 partially due to his belief that those aesthetic practices had no influence on the public sphere. In 'Provincialism the Enemy',

¹ Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 16.

² Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 2: 115.

³ Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 72.

a series of articles he wrote in 1917 for *The New Age* (a magazine title that does not lack in apocalyptic pretention), Pound stated that, ‘the lords of the temporal world never will take an artist with any seriousness.’⁴ The emphasis on the ‘temporal world’ can be taken to mean that the appeal to any individuals or institutions of the ‘here-and-now’ is fruitless. I will initially explore Pound’s position as an abandonment of the hope that the ‘temporal world’ can be understood as the birthplace for the new era – an abandonment that took the form of deeply anti-political attitudes expressed in much of his poetry as well as his letters and critical writings. Nevertheless, Pound needed to maintain a sense of a possible future, which was not to be found in Christian messianism, and the second section will examine how Pound felt, as expressed by Octavio Paz, that in Christianity, ‘the future was mortal: the Last Judgment was to be the day of its abolition and the advent of an eternal present. The critical process of the modern age inverted the terms: the only eternity known to man was that of the future.’⁵ Pound sought to recover the forces of spiritual renewal represented in the dead pagan gods of Pan, Dionysus, or even in a masculinised version of Christ. But Pound’s major problem in conceiving a new millennium was not how to get out of history, but how to present history in a way that ran counter to its apparently inexorable degeneration. Pound’s solution, the subject of the final section, was to chart a middle-course between the visionary artist and the objective world to construct a point where beauty and history meet – a term he occasionally called the *phantastikon*.

Anti-Politics and Apocalyptic

The rejection of the public sphere as the site of the cultural renaissance that Pound sought is frequently expressed in his anti-political attitude. Pound showed serious distaste for politics in the sense defined by Weber: ‘striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.’⁶ In ‘Provincialism the Enemy’, Pound states, ‘Fundamentally, I do not care “politically”, I care for civilisation, and I do not care who collects the taxes, or who polices the thoroughfares.’⁷ The question of who collects taxes and *whose taxes are collected*, who polices the thoroughfares and *who is policed*, is fundamentally a question of power in Weber’s sense, but Pound declares himself agnostic on this question. This is hardly the attitude one finds in prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, or First Isaiah (chapters 1-39⁸). When Amos, for example, proclaims doom on those who ‘afflict the righteous, who take a

⁴ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 160.

⁵ Octavio Paz, *Children of the Mire: Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*, trans. Rachel Phillips (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 150.

⁶ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 78.

⁷ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 169.

⁸ Isaiah is typically separated into three general units in biblical scholarship: First Isaiah (1-39) is attributed to eponymous prophet of the eighth century BCE; Second Isaiah (40-55), writing

bribe, / and push aside the needy in the gate' (5:12), he is making a judgment about the political relationships prevalent in Israel. But a political judgment implies a political solution, and Amos goes on to state that there is a possibility, directly connected to the image of the gate in 5:12, for God to relent in his anger: 'establish justice in the gate; / it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, / will be gracious' (5:15). This particular attitude is not typically considered an eschatological expression because there is no great, final moment of salvation in which justice will finally reign, but rather an on-going struggle between divine punishment and salvation. Von Rad argues that from this distinctly un-eschatological view, history was the measure of Israel's relationship to the eternal covenant with God: 'No generation was exempted from that task; each one in succession was obliged to achieve this self-understanding in faith.'⁹

What concerned Pound was culture divorced from questions of power, where power is understood as a continual series of struggles and compromises between individuals and groups seeking to maximise their own interests. Pound's culture was presented as a question of aesthetics or beauty constructed as a tradition used, as noted in the previous chapter, as a 'scourge' against society. Similar sentiments could be found among Pound's cohorts in the avant-garde: for example, Wyndham Lewis, eschewing democratic politics in favour of individual artistic production, declared in *Blast* that 'the vortex is "nothing to do with 'the People'"'.¹⁰ He went on in that first issue to make an appeal to English Suffragettes that they take care not to mix art and politics because, 'political struggles of emancipation are questions of "votes" and not of "art", and *Blast* here signals a desire to keep art and politics [...] separate.'¹¹ Bruce Comens notes that for Pound, 'the ideal of representative government to some extent conflicts with Pound's conviction that the arts are not democratic.'¹² For Pound, politics, whether socialist or capitalist, democratic or authoritarian, are entirely of a second-order concern to civilizational or national culture. In 'Provincialism the Enemy', he lauds vibrant cosmopolitanism as mutually beneficial:

France and England have always been at their best when knit closest. Our literature is always in full bloom after contact with France. Chaucer, the Elizabethans, both build on French stock. Translations of Villon revived our poetry in the midst of the mid-Victorian desiccation.

Contrariwise, the best French prose, let us say the most 'typical', the vaunted Voltairian clarity is built on England, on Voltaire's admiration of English freedom and English writers.

pseudonymously, is dated to the mid-sixth century; Third Isaiah (56-66), also written pseudonymously, is dated after the return from the Babylonian exile in 539 BCE.

⁹ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:303.

¹⁰ Goldman, *Modernism*, 164.

¹¹ Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 115.

¹² Bruce Comens, *Apocalypse and After: Modern Strategy and Postmodern Tactics in Pound, Williams, and Zukofsky* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1995, 30.

And the disease of both England and America during the last century is due precisely to a stoppage of circulation.¹³

After the Napoleonic wars, Pound reasoned, this circulation had stopped, and England and America had languished ever since ‘in a dust-heap of bigotry’.¹⁴

Anti-political elements are part of the root of much apocalyptic literature because the goal of such literature is to project salvation into the realm of the divine. For example, John J. Collins’s description of ‘the wise’ (*maskîlîm*) in Daniel 10-12, who likely identified with the figure of Daniel himself (see Dan. 1:3), ‘are portrayed as activists, but they are not said to fight’ against the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215-163 BCE). ‘Their activism lies in making the masses understand. The understanding they convey is presumably the revelation contained in the book of Daniel. The thesis of the visions is that the true meaning of events is not publicly evident but is known to the wise, through revelations. *The real struggle is being fought out between the angelic princes.*’¹⁵ The ‘angelic princes’ are supernatural representatives of the nations at war, the archangel Michael, ‘one of the chief princes’ (10:13), fighting on behalf of Israel against the ‘princes’ of Persia and Greece (10:13, 20). This understanding of history, ‘that whatever happens on earth is a reflection of a celestial archetype’,¹⁶ was very common in the mythologies of the ancient Near East and provided apocalyptic writers with the means to characterise political and military struggles as mere representations of grander, cosmic battles that were often already pre-determined. From the perspective of ‘the wise’, the key to the struggle was not to participate politically or militarily, but to understand its cosmic importance and impart that understanding to others. The reward for understanding was the election of ‘the wise’ to a divine or quasi-divine status, ‘refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end’ (11:35). This form of political quietism is expressed in ‘the objective of the wise’ which ‘was to make others understand and to purify themselves. The battle could be left to Michael and his angels.’¹⁷ This reading of Daniel again bears similarity to Hanson’s thesis that prophecy, as opposed to apocalyptic literature,

insisted upon translating the vision received from Yahweh into the categories of politics and plain history, and thus resisted the temptation of escape from the real world to the cosmic realm offered by myth and ecstasy. But [...] developments in the political realm made such translation increasingly difficult, as little within plain history could be identified with divine action and the political realm took on the appearance of unmitigated evil. A sudden resurgence of myth began to offer the possibility of escape rejected by early prophecy, and the result of this development was the death of prophecy and the birth of apocalyptic eschatology.¹⁸

¹³ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 170.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 89; emphasis added.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁸ Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 282.

The day-to-day workings of the public sphere, in Pound, are quite antithetical to the interests of the true artist. He exists in the public sphere, but cannot engage it on its terms. ‘Mauberley’ begins with a reminder of how irreparably separated ‘E. P.’ is from the society of Edwardian London. Politics in particular are viewed with a jaundiced eye. In section VI of ‘Mauberley’, Pound begins with the line, ‘Gladstone was still respected’ (*P* 189) as a likely insult against the politician W. E. Gladstone (1809-1898) and, probably more broadly, a representation of bourgeois morality that stifled good art.¹⁹ An even more devastating critique is the line ‘home to old lies and new infamy’, an allusion to David Lloyd George’s statement as Prime Minister during World War I that the soldiers would return to ‘homes fit for heroes’.²⁰ The poet’s priorities are radically different from the cynicism informing the activity of, not just the wider public, but the literary class in particular:

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain “the sublime”
In the old sense. Wrong from the start— (*P* 185)

Using the musical imagery of pitch and harmony (‘out of key with his time’), E. P.’s life is lived on a fundamentally different wavelength in much the same way that his partial adherence to various personae set him apart from the world around him. The reference to ‘three years’ would be roughly the time when Pound attempted and failed to develop an aesthetic through Imagism and Vorticism that could instigate a new renaissance. This renaissance was not the full-throated embrace of modernity that characterised such movements as Futurism, but was an attention to ‘the dead art / Of poetry’, an effort to revive something out of the past that is lost, yet entirely necessary to create the future. The effort marks him off from the struggles of power within society, moreover, because while politics is a ‘striving to share power’ among living people, E. P. is attending to the efforts and art of the dead.

The effort ‘to maintain “the sublime” / In the old sense’ is an anachronistic affair, but the idea of resurrecting or resuscitating the dead has clearly apocalyptic connotations. Daniel 12:2 is an example where, at the moment when Israel is rescued by the archangel Michael, ‘Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake’. But what is important about Daniel in this section is the characterisation of the time just prior to the resurrection of the dead. It is a period of intense hardship, where Israel’s suffering is at its greatest point: ‘There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence.’ It is at this point where the nation seems to have reached the cusp of its apparent doom that it is saved. The

¹⁹ Ruthven, *Guide*, 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

moment at which time seems irreversibly terminal is the moment that it becomes reversible and transfigured. The stanza ends with Pound's judgement that E. P. was 'Wrong from the start—'; but are not all apocalyptic sentiments 'wrong from the start'? 'The wise' in Daniel, the unsung heroes of Daniel's time, are initially 'wrong from the start': 'The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder.' (11:33). As both Pound and the authors of Daniel felt, the beginning could only be truly understood by reference to the end. If anything, *apparent* beginnings or origins were an illusion or a deception. So the following stanza of 'Maunderley' immediately mitigates the harsh judgment that Pound places on his own work. Stating that he was 'Wrong from the start—', he reconsiders:

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born
In a half-savage country, out of date (P 185)

The 'half-savage country' refers to America, Pound's national and political *bête noire*. In a letter, dated 10 November 1917, that Pound had written to William Carlos Williams, Pound laments, using distinctly apocalyptic language, that the problem for the American artist was precisely America's politics: 'I thought the — — — millennium that we all idiotically look for and work for was to be when an American artist could stay at home without being dragged into civic campaigns, dilutions of controversy, etc., when he could stay in America without growing propagandist.'²¹ While it's not clear which 'millennium' Pound is referring to, the point is that the reference (perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek) regards the artist's divorce from politics as a millennial event. The fact of E. P.'s beginning, his birth 'In a half-savage country' identifies (like Pound's frequent touchstone, the *Odyssey*) a hero who has started from the point of the furthest remove from his true goal. He begins in a place filled with pettiness and cynicism, politics and propaganda, meant to emphasise the seeming impossibility of him ever reaching his 'millennium'.

Perhaps it then can be argued that Pound speaks from the standpoint that his 'out of date' agenda was not 'Wrong', but in fact enabled him to see what his contemporaries were inured to by re-imagining him with a different origin. His distance from the 'millennium', and his simultaneous closeness to it insofar that he alone understood its terms, allowed him to see the true deception of politics, and that modernity's potential was being stifled by its own emphasis on the transient and the superficial, by greed and by 'usury age-old and age-thick' (P 188). The line, 'His true Penelope was Flaubert' (P 185) provides a subtle hint as to what that goal is: to expose the world in its reality. Flaubert was seen by Pound 'as the painter of the *essential* reality of his

²¹ Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 180-181.

time.²² We are now back in the aesthetic of imagism, not giving so much a factually accurate portrait of the world, but describing the ‘truth’ of it. But the image that ‘The age demanded’ was neither beauty nor tradition but ‘a mould in plaster, / Made with no loss of time, / A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster / Or the “sculpture” of rhyme.’ (P 186). This final image, of the hastily put together as opposed to the carefully crafted, summarises Pound’s complaint: ‘the cut stone is associated with clarity of ideas, the modelled with muddle.’²³ Because the ‘age demanded’ arts ‘Made with no loss of time’, they lack the proper perspective of the beginning and ending, and will never understand the depths of deception that the arts must cut through.

Biblical apocalyptic literature concerns itself with the revelation of God’s (hidden) role in history, by revealing the illusion that is the world. The cosmic dualism found in many apocalypses, which regard the history of the temporal world as a reflection of events in the divine sphere, places heavy emphasis on the question of deceit or illusion and on the role of proper understanding and wisdom to see the ‘truth’ beyond. Pound also is deeply concerned for the status of truth and, for his part, stresses the problem of truth during the war:

Died some, pro patria,
 non “dulce” non “et decor”...
 walked eye-deep in hell
 believing in old men’s lies, then unbelieving
 came home, home to a lie,
 home to many deceits,
 home to old lies and new infamy;
 usury age-old and age-thick
 and liars in public places. (P 188)

The final line echoes Isaiah 59:14: ‘for truth stumbles in the public square’. As opposed to the private vision of the poet, the public sphere is the place of ‘civic campaigns’ and ‘dilutions of controversy’, where truth is most suppressed. The apocalyptic sections of Daniel again provide intriguing parallels. During the final battle described at the end of the book, the arch-enemy is identified largely through his practice of deception. He is said to ‘obtain the kingdom through intrigue’ (11:21). He then conspires with foreign kings, though not necessarily in good faith: ‘and after an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully’ (11:23); ‘The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies’ (11:27). The relationship between war and deception is as clear in Pound as it is in Daniel. When the arch-enemy finally gains power through

²² Michael Alexander, *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 117; emphasis added.

²³ Ruthven, *A Guide*, 130.

deception, he invades several parts of the ancient Near East in an imperialist war before 'he shall come to his end' (11:45) under unstated circumstances, finally freeing those he persecuted.

Pound, on the other hand, tells the story of war from the perspective of the dead soldiers. Echoing Wilfred Owen's characterisation of 'The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est / Pro patria mori', Pound sends his soldiers 'eye-deep in hell' for the sake of the old lie.²⁴ They were the ones who believed the lies and went to war and died due to those lies, but they return 'unbelieving'. The theme of descending into hell and returning with clarity of vision or supernatural power is widely attested in the myths of Orpheus and Odysseus, the Christian tradition of Christ's descent into hell prior to his resurrection, or Dante's journey into the heart of the Inferno before ascending to Paradise. After the soldiers make their own descent, they return to a country that is still steeped in lies and deceptions, though they are now apparently more perceptive about distinguishing between lies and truth.

Yet there is a sense that this group of the dead (like Pound, or like 'the wise') see themselves in the minority, so the question then is when exactly something resembling 'truth' can show itself in the world in general rather than to just this select few. In a commentary on James Joyce, Pound wrote that 'If Armageddon has taught us anything it should have taught us to abominate the half-truth, and the tellers of the half-truth, in literature.'²⁵ The soldiers, having braved the war and paid for the lies that started the war, having gone through 'hell and back', have reached the furthest point from truth and so presumably have nothing to lose by demanding that they not tolerate half-truths. Pound portrays them as lifting back the deceptions in a great revelation of truth:

fortitude as never before
 frankness as never before
 disillusion as never told in the old days,
 hysterias, trench confessions,
 laughter out of dead bellies. (P 188)

The experience of the war has something of a cleansing effect in terms of wiping away all of the falseness that led to it in the first place. Something new has indeed happened in these lines, signalled by the repeated phrase 'as never before'. There are no more illusions – only *dis*illusions, and ones so great that they were 'never told in the old days'. The 'unbelieving' soldiers make

²⁴ Pound may not have been alluding to Owen, as both poems were written and published at nearly the same time, but to the Roman poet Horace, from whom Owen also borrowed the title of his poem. While Ruthven does briefly compare 'Mauberley' with Owen, he does not state that Pound had read the latter when he was composing 'Mauberley' (Ruthven, *A Guide*, 132-133).

²⁵ Ezra Pound, *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 139.

confessions in the trenches and corpses laugh, again recalling the apocalyptic motif of the return of the dead. Pound also makes the point that this sort of revelation takes an uncommon level of courage, relating the word ‘fortitude’ to the plainspoken ‘frankness’, rather than to a more refined ‘honesty’ or ‘authenticity’. As noted above, ‘the wise’ in Daniel 11:33 must face suffering, must ‘fall by sword and flame’ before the revelation becomes known, just as these soldiers must walk ‘eye-deep in hell’. In Pound’s view, not only has Armageddon ‘taught us to abominate the half-truth’, but Armageddon is indeed required in order to reveal truth, suggesting again that truth can only be reached in the midst of the lie, that Paradise can only be reached via Hell.

But as this laughter comes out of *dead* bellies, these lines also display a sardonic humour regarding the politics of the war, and ultimately enter a vote of no-confidence in the political and cultural institutions that led to the war. If the biblical prophet claims that the life of the nation will be saved *if only* the political and cultural institutions behave within history according to God’s will (e.g., alignment towards social justice, proper methods of worship, acceptance or rejection of foreign domination), then analogously, E. P.’s pursuit of the poetry, of the ‘sublime’ in the ‘old sense’, is meant to create a more humane and creative world, rather than one that ends in the carnage of World War I. The Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics expressed Pound’s faith that England was on the cusp of a new renaissance, but by the end of the war, that faith had been disconfirmed by history. Therefore, these lines in ‘Mauberley’ demonstrate a ‘doubling-down’ that is itself the mark of apocalyptic. When Israelite prophecy was, ‘Confronted with the apparent injustice of God’ it ‘confessed God’s healing presence *in the face of everything*’.²⁶ In this sense, the laughter of the dead suggests an ambivalent form of mockery: on the one hand they may be mocking the belief that Pound ever thought that the history of the West could be anything other than decline and death; on the other hand, perhaps they are mocking death itself, looking beyond into a future whose door is reached by walking ‘eye-deep in hell’.

Pound’s ultimate abandonment of Imagism, Vorticism, and London are largely due to the failure of the poet and the aesthetic to influence history in the way a prophet hopes to do so. Rather than try to compete with the deception on its own terms, the poet simply asserts his higher ‘truth’ in the form of an unaccountable (in present terms) revelation. James L. Crenshaw writes that, ‘Once prophecy was shown to be incapable of bearing the burden of history, unable to validate itself in the present, and unwilling to deal with the problem of evil save in apodictic fashion, a void appeared in Israel’s soul. Neither apocalyptic [literature] nor wisdom [literature]’²⁷

²⁶ James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 105; emphasis added.

²⁷ Crenshaw is referring to the so-called ‘wisdom tradition’ in biblical literature, exemplified in the Old Testament by the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. This tradition, which was not exclusive to Israel, likely originated in ancient Near Eastern royal courts. It frequently attempts to ground moral and ethical decisions upon observation of the natural and social

suffered from the above weaknesses, and both rushed in to fill the vacancy.²⁸ Collins offers a brief discussion of the connection to be found between apocalyptic and wisdom literature. Collins writes,

apocalypses do indeed present a kind of wisdom insofar as they, first, offer an understanding of the structure of the universe and of history, and, second, see right understanding as the precondition of right action. This wisdom, however, is not the inductive kind that we find in Proverbs or Sirach, but is acquired through revelation. [...] There is also an analogy between the wisdom literature and some apocalypses on the level of the underlying questions, insofar as both are often concerned with theodicy or the problem of divine justice.²⁹

Furthermore, Collins states that while, for both wisdom literature and apocalyptic literature, wisdom is found ‘in the order of the universe, [...] for the apocalyptist this wisdom is hidden and is obscured by iniquity on earth.’³⁰ ‘The wise’, in this sense, are those élite few who have already received revelation. They see the new world that is to come, and must impart it to others, even if, however, as professed in Daniel 11:33, they shall initially fail at their task and suffer for it. Envisioning oneself as wise beyond your peers was a common theme among esoteric traditions, and as Leon Surette explains of the occult, ‘history is seen as a story of conflict between superior individuals of small number [...] and an oppressive inferior mass’.³¹

Referring to Ecclesiastes’ famous list of ‘times’ (Eccles. 3:1-8), von Rad argues that a basic precept of wisdom in ancient Israel was that time was not abstract, but determined by events, and that ‘the utmost degree of wisdom was necessary not to miss the times appointed for things and their discharge, and to recognise their mysterious *kairos*.’³² But what were the times that Pound and many of his contemporaries felt were upon them? There was a widespread belief that World War I was the ‘War to end all wars’ precisely because it would destroy ‘existing sociopolitical structures [...] forcing the creation of a new, greater structure to prevent any recurrence of war.’³³ But Pound went further with Imagism and Vorticism, often proclaiming it as a new thing in much broader terms: religious, psychic, and cultural. As Comens notes, Christianity in particular was a point of attack for Pound: ‘[T]he wartime imagery of hell, of Armageddon, and of an eventual perpetual peace was powerful enough to exert considerable influence’.³⁴ But rather than disavowing Christianity altogether, there is a tension with a ‘truer’ and more vital version of the

world, but its occasional emphasis on the inability of humans to truly know God’s plan, such as in the book of Job, especially in respect to His justice, has led numerous biblical scholars to speculate that the wisdom tradition is a root of later apocalyptic thought.

²⁸ Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 106.

²⁹ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

³¹ Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 38.

³² Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:101.

³³ Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, 16.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

religion that Pound had in mind. While his ‘intense dislike of Christianity no doubt [...] blind him to these elements of a mythic narrative that, as we will see, clearly draws on the Christian apocalyptic’³⁵ it was really the Christianity of his own day – effete, bourgeois, narrow-minded – that he sought to contrast with an energetic, even chauvinistic, version of Jesus that, to his mind, has nothing to do with the contemporary church, and everything to do with the apocalyptic tradition of death and rebirth that he associated with his own art. Imagism and Vorticism were, in his view, witness to a total breakdown of the structure of reality as Christianity conceived it, where a new epoch would emerge paradoxically through the recovery of a lost tradition.

‘Primitive’ Christianity

Appearing on 1 April 1914 in *The Egoist* magazine, an advertisement for the first issue of *Blast* proclaimed the birth of Vorticism as ‘The end of the Christian era’.³⁶ Pound and Lewis were not the first modernist poets to declare Christianity at an end. Yeats, it seems, believed that the ‘Christian era was coming to the end of its two-thousand year cycle’, but perhaps because he was a generation older, lacked some of the optimism of Pound, who ‘equated his own youth and the critical success of the modernists with the imminent arrival of a new age.’³⁷ While Pound was at times sympathetic to the ecstatic aspects he perceived in early Christianity, he held the view that the church had degenerated into hoary, self-serving dogmatics. In *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), Pound regarded early or primitive Christianity – that is, Christianity at the time of Jesus and immediately after – as an ‘ecstatic religion’ that was ‘neither dogma or propaganda of something called the *one truth* or the *universal truth*’³⁸ but clearly saw the contemporary church as having smothered that ecstasy. A few years later, in a letter to Harriet Monroe, Christianity had been described as ‘a bastard faith devised for the purpose of making good Roman citizens, or slaves, and which is *thoroughly different from that originally preached in Palestine. In this sense Christ is thoroughly dead.*’³⁹ In ‘Provincialism the Enemy’, he writes: ‘Religious dogma is a set of arbitrary, unprovable statements about the unknown. A clergy, any clergy, is an organised set of men using these arbitrary statements to further their own designs. There is no room for such among people of any enlightenment.’⁴⁰ He then cited the ‘holy Roman Church’ as one entity among several that try to straitjacket civilization into provincial obedience. But despite his harsh judgment of the Church, Pound saw in early or ‘primitive’ Christianity a religion whose ‘general object appear[ed] to be to

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁶ Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 256.

³⁷ Surette, *Birth of Modernism*, 69.

³⁸ Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Peter Owen, 1952), 95.

³⁹ Pound, *Letters*, 68; emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 160.

stimulate a sort of confidence in the life-force' before its rapid degeneration.⁴¹ The 'end of the Christian era' meant that 'the life-force' could be recovered once again by modernity, Vorticism in particular, and made relevant.

Poems such as 'L'Homme Moyen Sensuel' (1917) or 'Mœurs Contemporaines' (1918) are some of his most concerted efforts to skewer Christianity. The latter's relevant lines describe the enervating influence of religion on 'Mr. Hecatomb Styrax' and the people around him:

His ineptitudes
Have driven his wife from one religious excess to another.
She has abandoned the vicar
For he was lacking in vehemence;
She is now the high-priestess
Of a modern and ethical cult,
And even now Mr. Styrax
Does not believe in aesthetics. (P 176)

The men in these lines are shown as sexually impotent or inexperienced (earlier in the poem, Styrax is described as a virgin until the age of 28). Sexual performance is likely one of Styrax's 'ineptitudes', as it seems to result in his wife's abortive effort at adultery. Styrax is a cuckold, but his wife's attempt to couple with the vicar is no more successful because the latter is equally 'lacking in vehemence'. The phrase 'religious excess' suggests that Styrax's wife is seeking in religion an ecstasy possibly comparable to sex. There is a Dionysian fervour to her behaviour, concluding with her becoming 'the high-priestess / Of a modern and ethical cult'. Styrax's wife is the only active element in these lines, genuinely seeking some kind of purpose, a journey that concludes with her defining her own purpose as the leader of a cult. At the same time, Styrax remains quite passive, a trait that is connected with his unwillingness or inability to 'believe in aesthetics'. Pound, therefore, makes a connection between aesthetics, religious ecstasy, and fertility that is lost on contemporary Christian society.

As Jane Goldman explains, this was Pound's complaint about modern poetry: it had lost its masculinity and fertility, replaced by 'Christian asceticism'.⁴² For example, in section III of 'Mauberley', Pound writes:

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations (P 186)

Christ, in these lines, is an instance of the fertile vitality of Dionysus but is then pushed aside for the degeneracy of modern life. Pound longs for the excessive, ecstatic energies that characterised primitive Christianity and embraced the cycle of death and rebirth, 'a religion of ecstasy, *virtù*, and

⁴¹ Pound, *Spirit of Romance*, 95.

⁴² Goldman, *Modernism*, 180.

the life force'.⁴³ In a very brief piece entitled 'Statues of Gods' (1939), he laments that 'The only Christian festivals having any vitality are welded to sun festivals, the spring solstice, the Corpus and St. John's eve, registering the turn of the sun'.⁴⁴ These elements are worthwhile because they still retain a residue of paganism, but moreover, they register a sense of cyclical time that regenerates and renews the world at the moment of death, as opposed to the terminal time of Christianity.

In 'L'Homme Moyen Sensuel', the 'hero', Radway, has no clear purpose in life, and so adopts a highly bourgeois version of Christian socialising:

Also, he'd read of christian virtues in
That canting rag called *Everybody's Magazine*,
And heard a clergy that tries on more wheezes
Than e'er were heard of by Our Lord Ch J
So he "faced life" with rather mixed intentions,
He had attended country Christian Endeavour Conventions (P 259)

If 'christian virtues' (and perhaps Pound's un-capitalised 'christian' hints at the impotence of those virtues on offer) are explained in terms of an undifferentiated 'Everybody', then they could only be the most bland and mediocre platitudes. No mass-produced and sanitised virtues could ever respond to the individual's *virtù*. The quotation marks around the phrase 'faced life' signals an ironising of the idea that life can be based on the cant of magazines or the 'more wheezes / Than e'er were heard of by Our Lord Ch J'. The final insistence that even Christ would have found this version of Christianity peculiar and foreign recalls Pound's description of Jesus in 'Provincialism the Enemy': 'Christ's cross was not so much on Calvary as in His lamentable lack of foresight. Had He possessed this faculty we might imagine His having dictated to His disciples some such text as "Thou shalt not 'save' thy neighbour's soul by any patent panacea or kultur."⁴⁵ The result is a life of 'mixed intentions', where the individual lacks a clear goal and passively floats through the world in a wash of prescribed cultural panaceas.

The Christ of 'Ballad of the Goodly Fere' (1909) is, unlike Styrax or Radway, a more overtly masculine individual. Pound objected to a certain "cheap" conception of Jesus' and 'Ballad' is his answer with a 'vitalistic' protagonist'.⁴⁶ The poem is written from the perspective of the apostle Simon Zelotes, who begins his account with the question of whether Jesus is now to be replaced by the Church and death:

⁴³ Hugh Witemeyer, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 82.

⁴⁴ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 71.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 164. Pound's term 'kultur' was used polemically to describe provincial and even nationalistic cultures that enforce obedience and orthodoxy (see Pound, *Selected Prose*, 160).

⁴⁶ Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 81.

Ha' we lost the goodliest fere o' all
For the priest and the gallows tree? (P 31)

In contrast to the priest, a figure similar to the 'vicar [...] lacking in vehemence' of 'Mœurs Contemporaines', is a saviour who 'cow[s] a thousand men / on the hills of Galilee' (P 32), a 'mate of the wind and sea' (P 33) who shows 'how a brave man dies on the tree.' (P 32). His embrace of death is an essential part of his vigorous life, and is another contrast to Styrax and Radway, who, in avoiding danger and excitement, barely live to begin with. This Christ laughs at death in the same way the dead in 'Mauberley' laugh from the trenches:

Aye he sent us out through the crossed high spears
And the scorn of his laugh rang free,
"Why took ye not me when I walked about
Alone in the town?" says he. (P 31)

Christ provokes and mocks the soldiers who arrest him in contrast to the gentler saviour often found in the Gospels. For example, in Matthew 26:38, after going to Gethsemane with his disciples, Jesus expresses fear and sadness at his impending death: 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' In the following verse he asks God to 'let this cup pass from me'.⁴⁷ Pound's Christ, on the other hand, embraces death:

"I'll go to the feast," quo' our Goodly Fere,
"Though I go to the gallows tree." (P 32)

Witemeyer observes that this poem, being told from the perspective of Christ's apostle, is Pound's attempt to establish a greater level of authority than scripture through direct witness in order 'to create the illusion of a reliable and historically irrefutable first-hand witness.'⁴⁸ Simon Zelotes tacitly denies the Gospel version of Christ quoted above by asserting that his understanding of the character of Christ comes from his own experience. His denial of scripture – the lynchpin of Christian orthodoxy – is summed up in the following stanza:

They'll no' get him a' in a book I think
Though they write it cunningly;
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere
But aye loved the open sea. (P 32)

We see here how even though the Christ of this poem is a 'man of action', the priests who eventually take over his legacy are already attempting to contain that legacy in the unchangeable, un-dynamic prison of the text. This is contrary to the spirit of Christ: there is no ponderous

⁴⁷ The gospel of John (12.27) relates the same event in the opposite manner, where Jesus says, 'And what should I say?— "Father, save me from this hour?" No, for this reason that I have come to this hour.'

⁴⁸ Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 82.

intellectualism to him, nor peevisish moralising – only an idealised, masculine courage that ‘venerated the life force and the men who most embody it.’⁴⁹

As Paz notes, the problem with contemporary Christianity, from the avant-garde perspective, is that its vision of the apocalyptic moment maintains a definitive historical terminus. History ends in a utopian non-time, where suffering has been eradicated, but so has creativity and development, which find their source in struggle and dissatisfaction (especially the struggle of an élite few against a vulgar populace): ‘Christian eternity was the solution to all contradictions and anguish, the end of history and of time; our [modernist] future, though the repository of perfection, is neither resting-place nor end; on the contrary, it is a continuous beginning, a permanent movement forward.’⁵⁰ Pound finds this ‘utopic stagnation’ as nothing the artist ought to accept; to the extent that modern society (and here he cites socialism in particular) offers a well-served and well-ordered life, Pound balks: ‘The denuded or mechanised life lacks attraction. No intelligent man goes toward it with his eyes open – whether it means a mechanical simplification, or a mechanical complication.’⁵¹ What Pound wished to maintain was the apocalyptic sense of revealing an entirely, radically new epoch without the sense that revelation itself would become redundant. Pound’s attraction to his version of primitive Christianity, in which he saw both the advent of a new epoch and the continuation of a tradition of revelation, was driven by a desire to maintain the most vital aspects of tradition but, as he famously dictated, to ‘make it new’.

‘Pan is Dead’ was first published toward the end of 1912, in Pound’s collection *The Ripostes of Ezra Pound*, and one of several poems where Pound broaches the subject of the potential return to paganism. The poem is written as a dialogue between the speaker and a group of women who lament the death of their nature-god. Pound viewed the end of the pagan era as a paradigm shift to the Christian era (‘Christ follows Dionysus’); but, at the same time, due to his belief that the Christian era was coming (or indeed had come) to an end, Pound speculated on the possibility of resurrecting a somewhat paganised spirit. Surette provides a relevant note on the relationship between Christianity and paganism (via Pound’s occasional interest in the occult): by claiming that their traditions pre-dated Christianity, some occultists ‘attempt[ed] to *recover* older, pagan beliefs and practices from *within* Christianity.’⁵² Pound wishes to preserve something in Christianity that he sees as transcendent of all religion, that in fact does pre-date Christianity because it is, in a sense, the element of renewal in paganism that Christianity initially appropriated – the ‘confidence

⁴⁹ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁰ Paz, *Children of the Mire*, 30.

⁵¹ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 166.

⁵² Surette, *Birth of Modernism*, 49.

in the life-force' supposedly preached by Jesus – before inflecting it and obscuring it with the dogmatism of the church.

The opening of the poem is a reference to the account of the death of Pan in Plutarch's *Moralia*, which later traditions held to herald the birth of Christianity:⁵³

“Pan is dead. Great Pan is dead.
Ah! bow your heads, ye maidens all,
And weave ye him his coronal.” (P 67)

This was a common theme for several poets, including Apollinaire, who wrote the poem ‘Mort de Pan’ when he was an adolescent.⁵⁴ As A. David Moody explains, ‘Behind this stands Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s ‘The Dead Pan’, which celebrates the tradition that ‘at the hour of the Saviour’s agony, a cry of “Great Pan is dead”’ was heard, and the pagan mysteries were no more.’⁵⁵ The assertion is that the death and resurrection of Christ heralded the birth of Christianity, but at the same time signalled the death of paganism. This is the sort of paradigm-shift that eschatologies take as their conceptual starting point and logical endpoint. It creates, in the words of Frank Kermode in reference to that ‘apocalyptic poet’ W. B. Yeats, the fiction of ‘a time of transition, the last moment before a new annunciation, a new gyre.’⁵⁶ The death of the god does not create an absence of belief, but shifts the world from one system of belief to another. Responding to the speaker in ‘Pan is Dead’, the women insist that without Pan’s existence, and consequently his connection with nature, they simply are at a loss for *how* they might go about honouring the now-deceased god:

“There is no summer in the leaves,
And withered are the sedges;
How shall we weave a coronal,
Or gather floral pledges?” (P 68)

The problem with honouring Pan, from this perspective, is that the very terms by which he might be honoured have died along with him. Pan is a god of nature, so when he dies, presumably at the onset of Autumn, then ‘There is no summer in the leaves, / And withered are the sedges’, removing those materials used to honour him. The question directly asks how a former era might be honoured in the midst of the following era; but at the same time, it implicitly raises the problem of how to imagine the next age when we lack the language and discourse for that age, especially when the discourse of an age is embedded in the very ‘nature’ of the age. Moreover, the question

⁵³ Ruthven, *A Guide*, 190.

⁵⁴ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres Poétiques*, ed. Marcel Adéma and Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 707.

⁵⁵ Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, 177.

⁵⁶ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98.

parallels that of many biblical apocalyptic writers who searched the heavens for knowledge to determine ‘the great problems of their time’ and verged towards ‘teaching a great cosmological gnosis.’⁵⁷ For example, in Revelation 6:13-14, the End Times are signalled by the collapsing of the heavens at the close of the season: ‘the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by the gale. The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up’. Like the Pilot’s vision in *Monoplan* of the sea and sky collapsing together, there is the suggestion of a reversal of creation. If the sky and stars are the language used by the apocalypticist to glean the meaning of history, then the heavens vanishing ‘like a scroll rolling itself up’ suggests that this language is no longer relevant or the ‘scroll’ has been read to the end. Ultimately, the new age cannot be articulated or described in anything other than its own language and own relationships, which have yet to exist.

To suggest that Pan can be honoured or represented independently of nature is to suggest that nature and Pan are *analogous* to each other while somehow being independent of each other, which is not the case. Pan is both the objective representation of nature and the subjective experience of it. It is a relationship of identity: Pan is not *like* nature, Pan is nature through by means of an association that is fundamentally poetic. This identity was at the heart of Pound’s aesthetic, especially imagism. In the typical imagist poem, ‘In a Station of the Metro’, the ‘faces in the crowd’ are said to be ‘petals on a wet black bough’ (*P* 111), creating – even willing – an identity between the two. Speaking in terms of the imagist principles of this poem, Comens tellingly formulates the problem in terms of nature, stating that, ‘Pound discovered that the structure of the sentence, by miming *relations* in nature, could present, or re-enact, the structure of nature, beyond discursive capabilities.’⁵⁸ Imagist poetry, in Pound’s view, was capable of constructing that relationship of identity, if not explain it; and indeed, explaining it was precluded in the sense that it was a relationship ‘beyond discursive capabilities’. In his discussions of Imagism and Vorticism, Pound explains the concept of the ‘primary pigment’ in the arts as each art-form’s own exclusive way of expression: the image in poetry, the colour scheme in painting, the rendered sentence in prose, and so on. In ‘Pan is Dead’, as well as his discussion of the ‘primary pigment’, Pound makes the argument that what is expressed cannot be separated from the means of expression. Even if this renders the message more esoteric, this is still the *most truthful* expression of the world as the

⁵⁷ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:308.

⁵⁸ Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, 39; see also Dasenbrock, *Literary Vorticism*, 108: ‘For Pound, in contrast [to Lewis], the essence of any situation is a relation: for example, the faces in the crowd are related to petals [...]. [T]hese relations aim at the same analytic representation that the Vorticist artists wish to attain [...]. Pound, too, is active and exploratory, not simply passively receiving an aesthetic from Lewis and the other Vorticists.’

poet finds it, and he wrote in his biography of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska that ‘The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.’⁵⁹

The suggestion that returning to the language of Pan, as a kind of pre-discursive language of nature, might be similarly replicated in the modern era is expressed when Pound reverts to a language of Christianity to express the lament. If the reference to ‘our Lord’ is to be understood as potentially alluding to Christ as much as to Pan, then Pound would be suggesting a *return* to the animating principles of early Christianity without suggesting a return to Christianity itself. These principles are more vigorous and dynamic than the dogmatics of the contemporary church, and are more consonant with pagan religion:

“[...] How should he [death] show a reason,
That he has taken our Lord away
Upon such hollow season?” (P 68)

The ambiguity of the term ‘Lord’ is telling. By using the locution more common to Christianity, Pound is clearly alluding to the feeling that Christianity itself was that which has died, while at the same time asserting that this death was natural and provided an avenue to reimagine a new epoch. The Western world has entered a period of winter (‘withered are the sedges’). Witemeyer points to the ‘Frazerian motif’ of a god dying at the approach of Winter in reference to this poem, presumably to be reborn in the Spring,⁶⁰ and it is worth recalling that this motif of the seasonal cycle in apocalyptic thought can be found in the image of the ‘fig tree drop[ping] its winter fruit’ previously examined in Revelation 6:13. After the lament of the women that the summer has gone from the leaves, the speaker’s ‘hollow season’ is mitigated by the very fact that it is only a ‘season’, rather than an eternity.

The Phantastikon

Goldman defines apocalypse (in the sense of modernist art and literature) as ‘a non-linear, *revelatory response to image*, where a kind of instantaneous, epiphanic reading occurs in an intense moment of lyric aestheticism or subjective introspection.’ She goes on to state that ‘such aesthetic moments constitute an escape from the real, material world.’⁶¹ This sense of instantaneous epiphany is not a significant part of biblical apocalyptic literature, but Goldman’s emphasis on ‘lyric aestheticism’, where such aestheticism is perceived as a total and independent structure, is comparable to Collins’ view, described in chapter four, that apocalyptic thought is founded in the ‘mystic participation in the higher form of life’.⁶² In this final section, I will examine how art and

⁵⁹ Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (London: Laidlaw & Laidlaw, 1939), 102.

⁶⁰ Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 108.

⁶¹ Goldman, *Modernism*, 11; emphasis added.

⁶² Collins, ‘Transcendence of Death’, 72.

poetry became for Pound its own 'higher form of life', although an 'escape from the real, material world' did not necessarily mean an ignorance of this world. It did mean that the poetic content, necessarily drawn from this world, was shot through with the vital tradition that the modern world was effectively lacking, transforming that content into something entirely aesthetic, ideal, or new.

Pound's essay 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1911-1912) describes an aspect of art and poetry that he felt was fundamental: that every artwork tends toward an kind of absolute independence from the world, that 'every masterpiece contains its law within itself, self-sufficing to itself'.⁶³ An excellent poem or painting is not simply its own 'take on the world', it is its own self-contained, conceptual system. It may draw elements from the world in the same way that the language of Pan draws from nature, but inserted into the system that constitutes the totality of the artwork, those elements become integrated as constitutive parts of the aesthetic system. Importantly, Pound felt that the element of the world from which the poet drew achieved a kind of truth within the artwork that was not mimeticism: 'The primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE. The Vorticist will not allow the primary expression of any concept of emotion to drag itself out into mimicry.'⁶⁴ Rather, the image achieves its truth when it takes a step outside of the history or the temporal world from which it came and represents something original or 'primary'. The image, in this sense, becomes the starting point from which the poet can contemplate the revelation of something altogether new. Witemeyer takes this revelation of the image a step further and suggests that it is part of the poet's ability to create an 'imaginative "world"'.⁶⁵ Drawing from a quotation by Pound himself – 'The essential thing about a poet is that he build us his world.' – Witemeyer states that the faculty Pound called the *phantastikon* was the ability to see 'patches of the macrocosmos' reflected in the poet's consciousness.⁶⁶ From these 'patches', the poet can build 'different worlds out of what they see, out of what is reflected by the "filmy shell" of the consciousness.'⁶⁷ Pound's metaphor of the 'filmy shell' – an image of translucence – then describes a poet who has a view of the external world, but that consciousness itself provides a secondary reflection where certain aspects of the external world are obscured, highlighted, and overlaid with the poet's own self-image.

This world-building is not entirely the same as biblical apocalyptic literature, which typically understands revelation as the belief that conflict in this world is a reflection of an otherworldly conflict. As Pratt writes, Pound hoped to keep 'the poet's vision always in touch with the world of his senses, holding firmly to the principle that truth should be visible *in* things,

⁶³ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 25.

⁶⁴ Ezra Pound, 'Vortex. Pound.', in *Blast 1*, edited by Wyndham Lewis (Santa Barbara, Ca.: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), 154.

⁶⁵ Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 51

rather than invisible beyond them.’⁶⁸ Early in ‘Mauberley’, Pound highlights a predominant theme throughout the poem, the distinction between the truth of the world as the poet perceives it, and the daily deceptions the poet attempts to cut through. When he speaks of what the ‘age demanded’ he writes:

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze;
Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase! (P 186)

The tradition here is rejected by the public. Despite being a ‘paraphrase’, a form supposedly meant to cater to a broad public, the ‘age demanded’, nevertheless, another kind of mendacity. The ‘inward gaze’, on the other hand, is a hint of Romantic aestheticism, the poet searching his interior subjective world in order to find his truth, and these lines represent something of a criticism of that tradition of subjectively visualising another world as a sufficient break with the world. This is, as Comens explains, the Romantic understanding of apocalyptic at least as far back as William Blake: ‘the apocalypse consists in a perceptual revolution that can occur at any moment: the ordinary world dissolves in favour of a new, visionary reality, the equivalent of the millennium. In this view, it is only our perceptual inability that condemns us to live in a “fallen” world, for the (visionary) *real* world exists now, ahistorically.’⁶⁹ The ‘inward gaze’ recalls Goldman’s ‘intense moment of lyric aestheticism or subjective introspection’: it is a sensation of a world that exists outside of time and therefore does not rely upon history or society for any sort of legitimisation. However, the ‘inward gaze’ is ‘obscure’: while its imagination is apparent, it lacks connection to the external world and fails to find truth ‘*in* things’. Pound wished to draw out the truth from within history through a more visionary approach to it, but not to abandon history entirely in the sense of the Romantic or ‘inward gaze’. Pound hoped to assert an aesthetic that imposed the truth of history onto the world, expressed in the form of the image or ‘primary pigment’ of poetry. If the ‘inward gaze’ was, at least in isolation, an evasion of history, then Pound intended for Imagism and Vorticism to become a form of revelatory historiography of the ‘patches of the macrocosmos’ in modernity.

Pound’s criticism of a *purely* visionary aesthetics is brought to bear later in the poem, where he documents the failure of the pre-Raphaelites. He intended to show his own sympathy with the visionaries, with emphasis on their *sight* as poets and painters, without fully endorsing their position. The title of section VI is ‘Yeux Glauques’, referring to the bright, watery eyes

⁶⁸ William Pratt, ‘Ezra Pound and the Image’, in *Ezra Pound, The London Years: 1908-1920*, ed. Philip Grover, (New York: AMS Press, 1978), 22.

⁶⁹ Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, 35.

common to pre-Raphaelite paintings ('The Burne-Jones cartons / Have preserved her eyes'⁷⁰ (P 189)). There is an aqueous quality to this gaze, which sees something beyond the material existence of everyday life. But at the same time, this vision is represented as 'thin' and 'vacant', lacking substance to what is being seen:

Thin, like brook-water,
 With a vacant gaze.
 [...]

 The thin, clear gaze, the same
 Still darts out faun-like from the half-ruin'd face (P 189)

The visionary experience is certainly something that Pound feels sympathy for, but he does not seem to regard it as a 'perceptual revolution'. The reference to the faun is an allusion to Rimbaud's 'Tête de faune', a short and peculiar poem demonstrating the sudden, unexpected appearance of the truly magical in a scene of the otherwise mundane.⁷¹ Rimbaud writes that from out of dense foliage, 'Un faune effaré montre ses deux yeux' but then just as suddenly 'il a fui'.⁷² Pound's image suggests that, like poets such as Rimbaud, the pre-Raphaelites sought to uncover, however briefly, the truly magical. But the truly magical does not necessarily equate the 'true', and the image of the 'faun-like' gaze lacks substance and connection to the history or social world that the pre-Raphaelites find themselves in. It 'darts out from the half-ruin'd face' in that it exists in the baroque sensibilities of the pre-Raphaelites, who do not draw their inspiration from 'history' as a unified tradition, but from the fragmented remnants of the past. The vision of the pre-Raphaelites is paramount to revealing a greater 'truth'; but that 'truth' still resides in the purely imaginative without taking account of the concrete reality around it and without finding or constructing the tradition from within reality. Therefore, this section is critical of that visionary apocalypse of Romanticism, carried over to the pre-Raphaelites. As Comens explains, while Pound felt that the visionary transformation of the world was inadequate in itself, it was a necessary precondition for the 'the historical or literal apocalyptic'⁷³ that attempts to construct a historiography of God's relationship to Israel or, in the modernist sense, a tradition of beauty. Rather than excusing itself from history, the 'historical or literal apocalyptic' in biblical apocalyptic literature, accounts for the rise and fall of empires, or the persecution of God's people, as a fundamental part of a greater, cosmic reality between God and history. An example would be perhaps Daniel 2:34, when the statue representing the four world empires is struck and destroyed by a 'stone [...] cut out, not by human hands'. The statue, made from four materials, represents the historical succession of four

⁷⁰ A reference to Edward Burne-Jones's (1833-1898) 1884 painting 'Cophetua and the Beggar Maid'; Ruthven, *Guide*, 134.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes*, 70.

⁷³ Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, 42.

kingdoms, but that order is decimated by an entirely external and divine force. Daniel looks outside of history in order to gain a radically different understanding of history. Because the ‘apocalyptic basis common to the visionary and the ethical made the adoption of the historical apocalyptic a relatively easy, almost unobtrusive step’,⁷⁴ Pound was able to maintain aspects of the visionary while shifting, in his famous description of the epic, to a ‘poem including history.’⁷⁵

In 1917, Pound published ‘III Cantos’ in the magazine *Poetry* as a beginning to the epic that would become his primary project for the remainder of his life. The bulk of these three cantos were abandoned, save for a few sections that reappeared in *A Draft of XVI Cantos* (1924), but these first three, sometimes referred to as the ‘Ur-Cantos’, are often considered central for understanding the questions and concerns Pound dealt with in attempting a modern epic poem.⁷⁶ In the closing lines of Canto I, Pound uses the word *phantastikon*, in a section reflecting on the power of the poet’s imagination, the ability of the poet to build ‘my own phantastikon’ (P, 234) for himself:

And now it’s but truth and memory,
Dimmed only by the attritions of long time.
“But we forget not.”
 No, take it all for lies.
I have but smelt this life, a whiff of it—
The box of scented wood
Recalls cathedrals. And shall I claim (P 233-234)

The poet holds to a particular truth, a steadfast belief, but that truth is tied to memory which is fading in the poet’s own mind. A second voice chimes in asserting a platitude possibly in relation to honouring the war’s dead (the lines prior to this section describe a heroic battle): ‘we forget not.’ But the immediate response suggests that this is a lie, and recalls the recounting of lies in ‘Mauberley’. Pound proclaims that the only truth he can claim is that provided by his own senses, his own practice as a poet, and the tradition of poetry: ‘I have smelt but *this life*’. Those finer details of ‘this life’ provide the starting point for a new *phantastikon* examined below. ‘The box of scented wood’, a solid image of the concrete world, bears no obvious relation to cathedrals, let alone the history of Christianity, but that may be precisely the point: it is the consciousness of the poet that selects the association and creates the relation between the box of wood and cathedrals. Just as in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions Press, 2011), 46.

⁷⁶ See Goldman, *Modernism*, 136; Peter Liebrechts, “‘Bricks thought into being ex nihil’”: Ezra Pound and Creation’, in *Ezra Pound, Ends and Beginnings: Essays and Poems from the Ezra Pound International Conference, Venice, 2007*, eds., John Gery and William Pratt (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2011), 86.

phantastikon is Pound's retreat from either option, an attempt to 'steer a middle course between subjectivity and objectivity'.⁷⁸ The 'thing I see' can be, perhaps should be, confused with the 'actual gods behind me', giving the thing itself the power of creation. But the following question – 'Are they gods behind me?' – bears on the implications of the confusion: if one world can be created, then certainly there is no limit to the number of potential creations.

In the next lines, Pound shifts the ability of creation to the arts, exploring how artists construct themselves through their art, but in doing so construct new worlds around them. Furthermore, these lines address painting as well as writing, suggesting that the *phantastikon* is common across the arts. This was one of Pound's goals in formulating Vorticism, which Pound hoped would become, 'a designation that would be equally applicable to a certain basis for all the arts':⁷⁹

Oh, we have worlds enough, and brave *décors*,
And from these like we guess a soul for man
And build him full of aery populations.
Mantegna a sterner line, and the new world about us:
Barred lights, great flares, new form, Picasso or Lewis. (*P* 234)

With the phrase, 'Oh, we have worlds enough', Pound is possibly proposing the idea that perhaps there are too many worlds created by too many artists, not leaving enough room for the truly great *phantastikon*. The following image of 'brave *décors*' indeed does not suggest a deep respect for what seems like merely aesthetic accoutrements of the bourgeoisie. Nor does Pound express great confidence that such *décors* can demonstrate much of anything about the individual who possesses it. We are meant to merely 'guess' at the 'aery' and therefore possibly insubstantial 'populations' of the man's soul. But surely Pound does not consider Picasso or Lewis as mediocre souls; his reference to the Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506) contrasts the 'sterner line' with the 'aery populations', suggesting that Mantegna represents something more solid and substantial than the *décors*, that is, Mantegna's form is the basis for clearer *phantastikon* than are more superficial stylistic flourishes. Moreover, 'new form', suggested as attributes of Picasso and Lewis, would certainly be, coming from Pound, a genuine honour. Where Pound makes the key contrast is in the phrase, 'the new world about us'. From this perspective the 'new world', flowing from the 'sterner line' of Mantegna's art, is objective and now exists 'about us', rather than as 'aery populations' within the confines of the soul. As Liebrechts states, it is the 'struggle between the subjective and objective [...], between the "creatio ex nihilo" [creation from nothing] and the "ex nihilo, nihil fit," [nothing comes from nothing] that Pound faced' in this canto.⁸⁰ Therefore, these

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 93.

⁸⁰ Liebrechts, 'Bricks thought into being', 86.

lines propose the process by which the truly great artists impose subjective visionary experience onto the world as objective fact, compelling the world to conform to their vision rather than vice versa. In this sense, the question, ‘Are they gods behind me?’, is a legitimate one because Pound is never entirely certain which *phantastikons* are compelling enough to become ‘creatio ex nihilo’.

Pound, reflecting on the language of gods and cathedrals as a religious element, delves into a religious tradition that, as I have shown above, he often had very little regard for. In the Christian tradition, he felt that there was, at one time at least, the possibility of rebirth, renewal, and ‘creatio ex nihilo’, but apparently he now felt that it was left to poetry to take up the mantle of the creator god. Bourdieu describes how in many cases, the poet carries into his poetry ‘des concepts originellement élaborés dans la tradition *théologique*, notamment la conception de l’artiste comme “créateur” doté de cette faculté quasi divine qu’est l’“imagination” et capable de produire une “seconde nature”, un “second monde”, un monde *sui generis* et autonome’.⁸¹ Pound, as well, asserted that an artwork was its own ‘autonomous’ world in ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’, containing ‘its laws within itself, self-sufficing to itself’. In light of Bourdieu’s statement, Pound can be seen as the creator of the ‘second monde’, of the new world after the apocalypse. Isaiah 65:17 predicts a new creation that lies outside of history, one that would be so great that even the memory of the old world would fade:

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be
remembered
or come to mind.

And this new creation comes to pass in the final chapters of Revelation: ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away’ (Rev. 21:1). Pound likely had such ability in mind, but he believed that the arts could do this better than religion, because the arts had more vital traditions on which to draw and, furthermore, were numerous arts so we could always proclaim, ‘How many worlds we have!’ It seems that Pound still felt that poetry was its own world, irrespective of other arts. When he spoke of Vorticism as a basis for all the arts, he was not attempting to break down the barriers between the arts that a Futurist or Dadaist might have done, for he writes later that, ‘A painter must know much more about a sunset than a writer, if he is to put it on canvas. But when the poet speaks of “Dawn in russet mantle clad,” he presents something which the painter cannot present.’⁸² In this sense, the *phantastikon* of the poet is entirely separate from that of the painter or musician, and Pound sets up each artist as the potential creator

⁸¹ Bourdieu, *Les Règles*, 405.

⁸² Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 97.

of his own *phantastikon*, provided that that *phantastikon* was grounded in something transcendent in history: ‘change hath broken down / All things save Beauty alone.’ (P 195).

Surette states that Pound lived in an era where ‘to be pagan was to be antichristian, and to be antichristian was to be revolutionary.’⁸³ But this statement can be taken a step further, and it can be suggested that to be revolutionary is to be at least somewhat apocalyptic, where apocalyptic thought is grounded in the ability to imagine a separate world. This other world might speak *to* our world and *of* our world, but it never can be fully identified with our world. This practice of world-making is sometimes based on utopian thought or cosmic speculation, and it might have a variety of methods to get from here to the ‘beyond’, but it is always based on, as von Rad defines eschatology, a consummation of the historical process beyond the scope of the world’s history.⁸⁴ And yet, Pound does not take this process to mean a total abandonment of history or the social world, but rather seeks to propose an entirely different entrance into history. Certainly, more mundane forms of social engagement, such as politics, would not do; nor would religion – at least not in any orthodox sense of the term. In fact this entrance was, he felt, proposed by the past itself. Witemeyer notes that Pound saw the history of art as a ‘complete order’ that changes when something is added to it, but is, ‘eternally living and relevant because it exists in a timeless order.’⁸⁵ Apocalyptic writing is a way of casting back one’s eyes over history in light of the timeless order; it points out relationships in the world that cannot be understood except in terms of a new era that has yet to manifest itself. Pound was searching for a ‘more totalizing narrative, an Ur-narrative, [...] an apocalyptic narrative that could subsume all others.’⁸⁶ But the apocalyptic thinker is painfully and irreparably confined to this world, so his only hope is to convince, in spite of all the evidence, others to see the world he sees. In this sense, a correspondent commented on Pound’s work in the following way: ‘I see, you wish to give people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing.’⁸⁷ The two poems that this correspondent was referring to were described by Pound as ‘an objective reality’ and ‘a state of consciousness’,⁸⁸ a contradiction akin to his attempt to map a course between the Romantic, visionary apocalypse and the historical apocalypse. It was also this contradiction that Pound hoped to negotiate between tradition and modernity, attempting to express radical renewal in the context of the entirely transcendent.

⁸³ Surette, *Birth of Modernism*, 78.

⁸⁴ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:113-114.

⁸⁵ Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 4.

⁸⁶ Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, 32.

⁸⁷ Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 98.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* The poems were ‘The Return’ from *The Ripostes of Ezra Pound* (1912) and ‘Heather’ from *Lustra* (1916).

Conclusion

This study has explored a particular set of themes and images in a selection of poetry closely associated with the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. The themes and imagery of prophecy and apocalypse, accompanied by a variety of commentaries on religion, references to biblical literature, and Judeo-Christian symbolism, have served as a springboard for an examination of the relationships and tensions between poetry and religion. More specifically, as this study has attempted to demonstrate, prophecy and apocalypse can be understood, like the term ‘avant-garde’, as both social and literary phenomena, alternately used to describe a series of groupings and positions within the religious sphere, and the literary means by which those groups and positions express themselves. Furthermore, prophecy and apocalypse have been used as a means of highlighting the discourse of future insight and newness so prevalent in this era, as well as to cast into sharp relief the question of how tradition and the past should interact with the present and future – if at all.

The introduction has set a framework, employing the social theories of culture of Max Weber and of Pierre Bourdieu, as well as of biblical scholarship, which attempts to illuminate the continuity between aesthetic and social activity. This has been possible by formulating prophecy and apocalypse not necessarily as mutually exclusive, but as two related options for the poet-as-prophet to establish a particular level of separation from the world. This formulation has furthermore allowed for the possibility of using biblical literature as a methodological lens, with the assumption that the Bible is a major point of common reference for Western culture. A number of lines of inquiry have developed over the course of the study: the relative worth of tradition versus a modernised future, especially a future characterised by war or other forms of cultural upheaval; the possibility or desire for cultivating an audience for avant-garde work, and the individual poet’s relationship to that potential audience; the formal experiments of avant-gardism that might best represent or prefigure an ultimately unimaginable future; the possibility of establishing artistic values that have a social function or status analogous to those established by religious thought and practice; the implications of discreet avant-garde ‘isms’ for political thought.

Results

Prophecy

The prophet is understood as a figure set apart from general society and, more specifically, apart from the prevailing institutions and ideas of orthodoxy. This status as one set apart did not, in itself, necessitate a particular stance regarding tradition and newness: while many

prophets pointed the way forward to a radically new world, many others set themselves against dominant institutions by speaking for a tradition they felt had been lost or corrupted. Apollinaire presented himself and many of his contemporaries as heralds of the new, existing in a state of continual experiment, but did not necessarily reject the past or traditional artistic materials and ideas. Tradition could serve as a foundation upon which the new could be built, or as a guiding sensibility for the artist, but that did not negate the necessity for risk and experiment. Marinetti was not so sentimental, seeing tradition as a dead weight or mire in which all life slowly decomposed. For these reasons, his loathing of Catholicism and enthusiasm for war were born of the same desire to continually obliterate the past. Apollinaire wanted to build new traditions, but Marinetti was eager to represent change itself as the only (negative) tradition worth advocating. Finally, Pound's oft-repeated 'Make it new' (a phrase that served as the title for a 1934 book of essays¹) may obscure his own view of tradition. While Pound was certainly an advocate of formal experimentation and invention, he felt that the best art and literature expressed something constant, universal, or transcendent – an ideal of beauty he later called the vortex. The vocation of the poet-as-prophet was precisely to recover that ideal in every age, and Pound achieved that by paradoxically resurrecting the personae of past figures that he felt defiantly represented the same ideal in their own age.

However, the poet-as-prophet, whose vocation sets him or her apart from contemporary society, frequently experiences engagement with that society negatively. The poet in 'Zone' and 'Les Collines' undergoes a physical and moral descent in order to emerge with a new sense of the world or the self. This paradigm became a common theme to Apollinaire – so much so that he coined the term 'Orphism', referring to Orpheus' famous descent into the underworld – but was also demonstrated by Marinetti in *Monoplan's* descent into Mount Etna. In Apollinaire, the poet's-as-prophet's descent is envisioned as persecution or exile in the manner of Biblical figures such as Elijah (sent out into the wilderness; 1 Kgs. 17:2-5), Jeremiah (imprisoned in a cistern; Jer. 38), Daniel (thrown into the lion's den; Dan. 6:16-23), or even Jesus (sent out into the wilderness, tempted by the devil; Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). Marinetti places less emphasis than Apollinaire on persecution and more emphasis on heroism and so sends the pilot of *Monoplan* down into the volcanic Mount Etna, as well as into a hellish rendering of the Vatican. The descent into Mount Etna reflects the aesthetic experience of Orpheus' transformative contact with chthonic forces, which results in the Pilot emerging with a changed sense of the possibilities of his body and a mission for the Italian nation. On the other hand, the descent into the Vatican recalls the tradition of Christ's descent into, and harrowing of, hell for three days. Taking this stance, where both Christian and pagan themes are deployed by Futurism against Catholicism,

¹ Ezra Pound, *Make it New* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

Marinetti intends to show himself as the prophet of the new 'religion'. For Pound the representation of descent was conceived of as exile and, more specifically, national exile. As shown in 'From Chebar', Pound's relationship with America was presented in the terms of the prophet condemned to a foreign country because his own country is contemptuous of the values that he holds dear. The 'provincial' national character of America effectively defers any return, in which the prophet might assume his rightful place as national poet or prophet, to the far side of the cultural horizon, where a new renaissance awaits. But the task of drawing society into this new renaissance is so great for Pound that the poet-as-prophet is at risk of falling into solipsism, where he loses the ability to act, like Marinetti, as a 'scourge'.

In this sense, the original militant connotation of the term 'avant-garde' is highlighted because the aesthetics of Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound are always agitating against the public, challenging, daring, or defying its audience to criticise them. The demanding character of prophecy divides all audiences into those who reject the prophet (usually the majority) and those who become followers (a minority). By 'taking the bait', the public only confirms its philistinism to an avant-garde that could not but see itself as a kind of cultural élite. Apollinaire viewed the avant-garde as a contingent, ever-shifting community that dedicated itself to exploring the limits of aesthetics and culture. It represented ephemeral phalansteries of artists and writers dedicated to transcendent and transformative acts of charismatic activity. But at the same time, the avant-garde resisted the inevitable routinisation of charisma within institutions and across generations. In this sense, the avant-garde could take on something of a pedagogical function, where the experiments of the poet might serve as provocation to the broader, recalcitrant public to continually renovate its morals and habits. Marinetti's hostility to a general public was inflected by his enthusiasm for modern technology, and what began as criticism of any and all trappings of bourgeois life was eventually transformed by Marinetti's wartime experiences into a belief in a total fusion of daily life to aesthetics. Futurist audiences are promised the messianic birth of the multiplied man or the man-machine exemplified in the characters of Gazourmah in *Mafarka* and the Pilot in *Monoplan*, but only a few, a 'proletariat of gifted men'² would be able to perceive the full meaning of that promise for the time being. For Pound, the élite audience was not so much represented by his contemporaries in the Imagist and Vorticist movements, but the tradition he constructed that included towering figures such as Homer and Dante as well as a more obscure lineage (often chosen because of that obscurity) from medieval France, the Roman empire, or nineteenth-century England. By donning his personae, Pound appeals to this lineage for inspiration and guidance, but also confronts the contemporary world with this tradition. Artistic beauty is the pursuit of a select few throughout history who are destined to find themselves

² Rainey, et al., *Futurism: An Anthology*, 263.

marginalised by the rest of society, but the removal of the poet from society inserts the poet into the tradition or lineage of this élite.

Apocalypse

Therefore, the avant-garde constituted a way for its participants to practice a radical organisation of life completely discontinuous from their contemporaries through their art and literature, their manifestos, and their public exhibitions. Whether as a future hope or as an autonomous universe concurrently set against daily life, this sphere of avant-garde activity is presented as utterly unjustified by contemporary events, inconceivable in contemporary terms, and ultimately incompatible with the current state of the world. Apollinaire's apocalypticism develops through a sense of imperfect communion between individuals sharing, communicating, and driving each other to greater heights of progress. But poems such as 'La Jolie rousse' suggest that the ultimate manifestation or final perfection of this communion will always be deferred beyond the ever-receding horizon of an unknowable future. Until that time this form of intercourse was presented as early as Apollinaire's pre-war poetry, such as 'Vendémiaire', as having a destructive element: individuals and nations progressing and expanding along their distinctive lines will inevitably produce conflict. World War I enhanced this belief that a 'new era' could be envisioned in war, if not practically constructed through war, and poems such as 'La Petite auto' displaced any genuine foreboding and fear with an elated expectancy for the 'époque / Nouvelle' (*ŒP*, 208). Marinetti shared Apollinaire's fascination for the aesthetics of modern warfare, but his understanding of war as the world's 'hygiène'³ extended that fascination into a practical model of Futurist aesthetics emphasising aggression and speed. Apocalyptic thought tends to break down conceptual binaries, not least of which is the binary of destruction and creation. Marinetti's attempt to decompose artistic forms and genres into a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of music, poetry, drama, and epic conceives of the future as the increasing rapidity of constant change. If certain artists and groups of the avant-garde wished to live at the edge of modernity, Marinetti advocated (ironically from the comfortable vantage point of ample finances) a movement that lived on the edge of social stability itself, attempting to recreate the apocalyptic moment *ad infinitum*. Unlike Apollinaire and Marinetti, Pound had essentially no enthusiasm for war. After a supposed period of cultural decline, Pound considered World War I to be 'the last nail in the coffin' of Western civilization, and did not bother to disguise his fatalism when considering the prospects for the future of European and American culture. His answer to this decline was the *phantastikon* or related concepts: autonomous worlds contained entirely within the formal structures of works of art or poetry, but which nonetheless drew from history and society to construct a counter-ideal to the

³ Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, 53.

decadence of the early twentieth century. If there was to be any hope, it was in the ability of the artist to construct a separate history of beauty or the vortex in defiance of political or economic histories, just as biblical apocalyptic reads history as the story of God's salvation in the world.

Where religious thought had posited the divine or supernatural as the guiding force of history, these three avant-gardists substituted artistic creation, speed and technology, or the tradition of beauty. But the dynamic between the individual or community and the sublime experience had remained largely intact in the transfer from religion to 'religions' of art. For example, Apollinaire writes in 'Zone' of a younger version of himself deeply attracted to the rituals and symbols of Catholicism as a source of longing for transcendence and the desire to momentarily experience the self as consubstantial with the infinite expanse of divinity. The adult Apollinaire, more secular and individualist in his outlook, while not viewing his religious youth in a particularly negative light, understands poetry and art as the opportunity to experience the self as having been transfigured by an infinite expansiveness and as participant in the creation of another world – an experience that Apollinaire frequently represents as a form of death and rebirth. Marinetti was more overtly oriented towards the all-encompassing violence of war as a model for the aesthetic activity of destruction and creation. War, represented as a world unto itself by the comparisons with theatre, became a space of endless speed and change, throwing forms and figures together only to immediately break them apart again. War also provided opportunities for heroism by allowing humans to exceed their own bodies by way of a fusion with machines, and by an embrace of death as the only real avenue to a heroic life. Pound's views on early Christianity, as a source of creative, almost pagan, energy demonstrate his belief that art could perhaps fulfil the promises of Christianity that the modern church had broken. The energy of art was found in its ability to create new myths based on the ideal of beauty, and if that energy animated the early church, why then, Pound seemed to ask, could it not animate modern art as well?

Analysis

Religions of Art/Art and Religion

The avant-gardists examined in this study proposed art in the modern world as a better alternative for fulfilling those functions in society that are normally assigned to religion: hope for a better world that is not simply characterised by better policies and institutions, but by more moral and ethical people guided by an absolutely apparent 'truth'; overcoming of sin and death; understanding of the structure and meaning of the universe as the expression of a transcendent identity or purpose. But this stance required a significant amount of social autonomy from potentially dominant social institutions, and by placing avant-garde literature and art in opposition

to religion, these poets acknowledged religion's success in achieving the autonomy they desired for their own craft. This acknowledgement has been born out in this study's appeal to biblical literature and to the sociological theories of art and religion in Weber and Bourdieu. The Bible, particularly in the Judeo-Christian society of Western Europe, extends its reach over a diverse range of writings on historical, legal, and political questions, moral and ethical problems, and theological and cosmic speculation. In doing so, it carves out a space for a particular set of viewpoints – these questions and problems become specifically and, from this set of viewpoints, exclusively, *biblical* questions and problems. The European avant-garde forced itself into a space of contested values and asserted the viewpoints of aesthetics, experiment, heroism, and so forth, as those which could most effectively address the concerns of the modern world. In this way, biblical literature, especially prophetic and apocalyptic literature, acted as a blueprint for intellectual or artistic autonomy. If avant-gardists found the content of biblical literature problematic for contemporary life, the engagement with the Bible is nonetheless born of an effort to replicate its ability to become the source of its own authority.

The avant-garde's 'authority' is built through strategies of autonomy: the disinterest in monetary remuneration; the valorisation of marginality; and the dedication to formal experiment in artistic works. The journalistic work, inheritances, and patronages that Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound received allowed them to create a practical distance between their artistic creation and the social institutions they criticised; thereby presenting art and literature as endeavours they 'sacrificed' themselves for. But their sense of authority also comes from the fostering of an audience who is already partially attuned to the message of the avant-garde 'prophet'. The avant-garde attention to the *appropriate* audience – typically other avant-gardists – is an attempt to build a circle of legitimacy in which the poet-as-prophet articulates sensibilities and concerns that are already latent in their receptive audience, thus giving the avant-gardist the air of speaking prophetically. This mutual legitimation recalls Bourdieu's assertion that public discourse and private inspiration can sometimes be merely the same phenomena viewed from objective and subjective angles.⁴ However, because the message is always straddling the line between commitment and novelty, the desired audience is always somewhat deferred to the future. A *general public* for the avant-garde is always more of a hope than a reality. 'The wise', as they are described in the book of Daniel, are only given their proper due after the final revelation of God's role in history. Until then, they will live in a state of semi-exile and conform their views and practices to the world that is 'to come' rather than as it is. Likewise, the society that truly appreciates beauty and lives by the demands of art always exists in a state of impossibility, leaving the avant-garde to define itself in opposition to 'common' constructions or ideas of society.

⁴ Bourdieu, 'Genèse et Structure', 324.

Poetry and Charisma

Poets consistently asserted themselves as publicists, theorists, or leaders of the sectarian groupings that went by the names of Unanimism, Cubism, Futurism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dada, or Surrealism. Even when poetry was not the major artistic contribution of a particular movement, that movement was usually linked to the names of poets: Romain, Apollinaire, Breton, Marinetti, Mayakovsky, Pound, Tzara. This observation is not intended to diminish the contributions of artists working in other mediums, especially the visual arts, and the conversations between poets and other artists provided much of the material for the formal experimentation of the works examined in this study. Cubism, Futurism, and Vorticism, for example, will always be associated with the paintings of Picasso or Boccioni, or the sculptures of Gaudier-Brzeska, but Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound, as expositors, theoreticians, publicists – ‘prophets’ with the facility of language – ‘consecrated’ these visual artists as definitively modern. However, as this study has shown, their poetry consistently attempted to draw from those arts as well: Apollinaire experimented with visual and musical elements in his calligrammes; Marinetti attempted to incorporate musical and dramatic features into a poetic maelstrom meant to culminate in the representation of war; Pound’s concept of the vortex, as a basis for all of the arts, led him to consider within his poetry and critical writings the history of visual arts as well as poetry. The poet, from this perspective, not only incorporates all art within the aesthetics of poetry, but presides over the arts as their prophet. The doctrine, one of the defining traits of the prophet, clothes the poet in an air of authority, erudition, intuition, and commitment. The poet is not simply producing poetry, but writes in the mode of an implied demand or challenge to contemporary society to comprehend life aesthetically. A doctrine provided a layer of critical distance between the practice of poetry and the commentary on art, lifting the poet from the status of poet to that of intellectual. And indeed, Bourdieu’s sociology suggests that poets were well-positioned to adopt that role due to their relative lack of remuneration, and the difficulty of co-opting the institution of poetry into systems of economics, religion, or politics in the modern world. The autonomous position of poets allows them to embody aesthetic values more thoroughly than other literary endeavours and to speak from the place of those values.

However, from a more subjective vantage point, the ability of the poet-as-prophet to assert their doctrine is rooted in an aspect of their personality that takes the form of charisma. Charisma is that elusive character of genuine belief and absolute dedication effected by the bearer that seems to introduce a desire in the witness of charisma. From this point of view, the distinction between the prophet as a product of societal concerns, or as a sincere expression of deeply held personal convictions, is really no distinction at all but looks at the phenomenon from two separate

angles. Charisma is the short circuit between the prophet and the public that allows both to disavow the social, economic, political, or historical conditions that generate their affinity. This is why, at least at the beginnings of avant-garde movements, the ‘acolytes’ of a particular poet are almost always other poets and artists of a relatively comparable background – similar social standings and vocations instil common attitudes and outlooks.

But as this study has shown, genuine charisma resists stasis and therefore lets the poet achieve several things. Charisma allows the poet to adopt the position as leader of a movement without ever having to suffer a loss of identity within that movement. It does this by positioning the poet to appear at the leading edge of artistic developments where resisting institutional calcification is understood as a value in its own right. The poet can then always, as Pound states, ‘build us his world’⁵ and speak from beyond the horizon of thought that determines the possible and the impossible. In this world of the aesthetic, the binaries and oppositions that define social life break down, blend, and become confused. This is not simply meant to ‘create’ a new world, but to champion the act of creation itself – even at the risk of destruction. In each case, the changes in technology, communication, travel, and philosophy that characterised the modernist era became the driving force of much of the avant-garde language of destruction and creation. The only limits to this creation and destruction are the poet’s own understanding of the tradition itself as either a guiding principle or a lodestone that must be escaped.

By constantly striving to push the bounds of artistic autonomy and, at the same time, formal experiment, these avant-garde movements were always specifically looking to a world that could only exist in a state of impossibility; for if that world did exist, the *raison d’être* of these movements would evaporate. The transient nature of avant-garde movements, existing for very brief periods in which their personnel frequently changed, is understandable for movements dedicated to experiment and newness, where the development of institutional structures dedicated to preservation would occur at the cost of routinising or banalising the initial charismatic idea. The avant-garde, in this way, always exists on the back foot of its own demands: searching for an aesthetic that provided a constant source of revelation, expressed in this instance by Frye:

Metaphors of unity and integration take us only so far, because they are derived from the finiteness of the human mind. If we are to expand our vision into the genuinely infinite, that vision becomes decentralized. We follow a “way” or direction until we reach the state of innocence symbolized by the sheep in the twenty-third Psalm, where we are back to wandering, but where wandering no longer means being lost. There are two senses in which the word “imperfect” is used: in one sense it is that which falls short of perfection; in another it is that which is not finished but continuously active, as in the tense system of verbs in most languages. It is in the latter sense that “the imperfect is our paradise,” as Wallace Stevens says, a world

⁵ Quoted in Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 50.

that may change as much as our own, but where change is no longer dominated by the single direction toward nothingness and death.⁶

The Problem of Politics

Of course, paradise is relative to one's viewpoint in terms of what is lost and gain by the paradise, which is itself intimately connected to more mundane and political concerns such as 'who collects the taxes, or who polices the thoroughfares.'⁷ It is then worth briefly presenting some possible implications of avant-gardism, prophecy, and apocalypse for political thought. The selection of Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Pound was in part guided by certain similarities in their political views. Marinetti and Pound were well-known for being vocal and ardent supporters of Mussolini and Italian fascism. Apollinaire died before witnessing the rise of fascist politics, but it has been noted that in the last years of his life, his views began to shift towards a sharply nationalist tone. *L'Esprit Nouveau et les poètes* is often noted for its forthright expressions of French nationalism, and Apollinaire, in these years, expressed enthusiasm for individuals and groups of the French far-right, such as Charles Maurras (1868-1952) and the Action Française.⁸ This does not definitively portend how Apollinaire's political thought might have developed had he lived longer, and certainly his radical individualism and belief in the value of human creativity – strands of Apollinaire's thought that later fed Surrealism, which was largely aligned with the political left – might just as easily have put him at odds with later developments of fascism in 'full flower', such as a totalitarian state bureaucracy. Nonetheless, he was sympathetic to some of the trends that later became influential to fascist ideology: nationalist chauvinism, militarism and imperialism, anti-democratic politics. These similarities are not meant to suggest that prophetic and apocalyptic thought are inherently reactionary – they have been as often associated with the political left as well as the political right – but that it can provide particularly rich soil for such thought.

In the way that prophecy was always largely critical of the society from whence it came, avant-garde poetry becomes a distinctively *critical* poetry. The poet, like Whitman in America, Dante in Italy, or Homer in Ancient Greece, sometimes aspired to be the embodiment of a national ideal in much the same way that biblical prophets became the national voice of Israel. But this voice was not necessarily an expression of what the nation *was*, but what the nation *could be*. For in all of these poets, there is a distraught feeling that France, Italy, England, or America is simply not *being* what it could be or should be. Adamson states that 'Nationalism's ideal [...] was that of a retotalized social world in which divisions between the divine and human, rational and

⁶ Frye, *Great Code*, 168.

⁷ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 169.

⁸ Walter L. Adamson, 'Apollinaire's Politics: Modernism, Nationalism, and the Public Sphere in Avant-Garde Paris', *Modernism/Modernity* 6:3 (September 1999), 52.

emotional, public and private sides of life would be overcome',⁹ and indeed, the prophetic voice in these poets takes this disparity in the nation as given and often speaks of overcoming that disparity.

In this way, prophecy, insofar as it assumes a leadership role, raises the question of whether or not it predisposed Marinetti and Pound towards enthusiasm for Mussolini in the same way various avant-gardists developed a 'natural' affinity (as, for instance, in Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*) towards the acceptance or critique of each others' works. Furthermore, did the prophetic mode of the avant-gardists in this study become a way of processing a waning faith in the democratic tradition? Indeed, prophecy itself generally resists the compromise, deliberation, and negotiation so often necessary for functioning democratic politics. These poets were, in this sense, part of a broader post-Enlightenment tradition that saw democracy as blunting every extraordinary endeavour and conceding every genuine ideal, leaving in its wake banality and mediocrity. In 1932, Mussolini and the fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) wrote the manifesto 'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism', where they express similar sentiments: 'fascism is opposed to that form of democracy that equates a nation with the majority, reducing it to the lowest common denominator'.¹⁰ The 'conventional lie of political egalitarianism'¹¹ represented by democratic politics presumes, from this perspective, that all individuals have something in common that gives them the right to political participation on an equal footing with all other individuals. The poets in this study, however, fundamentally believed that artists could not be regarded in this way. Taken to an extreme, this perspective sees art and beauty as possible only to the extent that it has nothing in common with 'that mysterious divinity called *The People*'.¹²

This prophetic stance contained a number of contradictions that lend a tone of anxiety – even desperation – to much avant-garde writing. When Pound states of his poetry, 'I am by no means sure it would be true prophecy',¹³ he is expressing the contradiction that on the one hand, prophecies must be confirmed by an external source to be deemed 'true' and, on the other hand, there is no adequate source in the contemporary world to which the prophet could legitimately appeal to make that confirmation. In this way, apocalyptic thought provides a means by which the poet or prophet can work around the problem of legitimation. By projecting the final revelation of the prophecy's legitimacy into an impossible future, the poet or prophet becomes

⁹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰ Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, 'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism', in *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, ed. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, trans. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, Olivia E. Sears, and Maria G. Stampino (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 49.

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid., 62.

¹³ Pound, *Selected Prose*, 116.

the sole source of his or her own authority and, by virtue of their practice, the sole source of that future itself. Prophecy can then be translated into an expression of power, and the 'true' prophet is the one who can implement his or her vision against all odds. It is from this position that Pound proposes his own, admittedly artistic, solution to the above problem: 'I am fain set my own hand to the labour'. When prophecy is shifted to the realm of politics, it is not difficult to see how the poet, creating a new reality through aesthetics might be paralleled by the dictator creating a new reality through the force of the nation or the state as a practice as much cultural or 'spiritual' as it is political.

Apocalyptic thought also came with its own contradictions. Enlightenment and democratic traditions envisioned a rational, progressive, and self-perfecting of society. However, avant-garde modernism tended to feel that the supposed cultural decline of the democratic nation could only be solved by a cultural or historical rupture rather than a continuous process of rational development. But apocalyptic thought always ran the danger of replacing social and cultural decline with a utopian eternity where neither decline nor progress was conceivable. What these poets struggled for was a ruptural aesthetic that always prepared the ground for yet another rupture. The extent to which these poets and other avant-gardists were successful in this effort would require a study much broader in historical scope, likely incorporating subsequent developments from across the twentieth century, from Dada to Situationism. But the proximity of this aesthetic to nationalism and imperialism warrants comment. The expansionary efforts of nations like Italy and France were not viewed by these poets, or by fascists, in strictly pragmatic terms. In 'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism', Mussolini and Gentile write, 'Imperial power, as understood by fascist doctrine, is not only territorial, military, and commercial. It is also spiritual and moral.'¹⁴ The nation, then, always represents something that must transcend its own material and spiritual limits.

Recalling Adamson's quotation above, describing nationalism as the overcoming of 'divisions between the divine and human, rational and emotional, public and private', nationalism must always find new divisions in order to overcome them. Apocalyptic thought can therefore serve the ends of nationalism by always proposing a final, almost organic suturing of those divisions. For example, in 1917 Apollinaire wrote the poem 'Tristesse d'une Étoile', where he wrote of the relationship of the soldier to France:

Et je porte avec moi cette ardente souffrance
 Comme le ver luisant tient son corps enflammé
 Comme au cœur du soldat il palpète la France
 Et comme au cœur du lys le pollen parfumé (*CEP*, 308)

¹⁴ Mussolini and Gentile, 'Foundations and Doctrine', 60.

The 'ardente souffrance' is in reference to both Apollinaire's head wound and his poetic vocation, which he calls 'le secret malheur qui nourrit mon délire'. And it is this deep loss felt by the poet that is compared to the 'natural' relationship that the soldier feels to France. Apollinaire takes the image a step further by comparing France to the lily's pollen. France, in these lines, becomes an outward expansion, the creation of a new reality that never quite forecloses the possibility of further creation. In this way, there is a nationalist undertone to 'Tristesse', where France is no longer simply established, but is constantly growing and finding new borders to cross and new soil to fertilise. The relationship between the soldier and France is organic and the expansion of France is a 'natural' extension of that relationship. What makes this kind of thought apocalyptic is how Apollinaire transforms, through the poetic image, loss into growth and how he transforms the individual into the embodiment of an ideal.

The apocalyptic thought of the avant-gardists in this study, inflected with a distrust of politics and the assertion that aesthetics has assumed the place of spiritual or religious institutions, projected a world at some point in the future in which the 'proletariat of gifted men', to use Marinetti's phrase, would be as 'natural' a part of the world as was the soldier to France or Italy. If 'nationalist thinking was intensely aesthetic because it aimed to restore meaning to a sundered experiential life',¹⁵ then no better form of thought could restore such meaning and re-establish the relationship of daily experience to that meaning than apocalyptic thought, where the eschatological rupture is itself the creation of surprising forms of signification, more authentic relationships, and radical aesthetics.

¹⁵ Adamson, 'Apollinaire's Politics', 36.

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