CULTURAL CRITIQUE
AND CANON FORMATION
1910-1937

A Study in Modernism and Cultural Memory

Ian Kenneth Patterson
King's College

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This thesis argues that one of the tasks of literary history is to identify and challenge the processes by which writers who were once highly valued come to be forgotten and excluded from the canon. I investigate the work and cultural milieu of three such writers: Douglas Goldring, John Rodker and Mary Butts. The first chapter sets the terms of the argument, and presents the grounds for a reconfiguration of the conventional historical view of modernism. The second examines the early work of Douglas Goldring: his achievements as editor of The Tramp are related to its cultural and historical situation; I then turn to the history of conscientious objection in the First World War in order to explore the politics of his 1917 novel The Fortune, and to provide historical material necessary for the later reading of Rodker's Memoirs of Other Fronts. This leads on to a discussion of some of his subsequent political novels and plays. In the third and fourth chapters, I analyse the work of John Rodker, from his adolescence in the East End of London to his maturity, first in relation to modernist dance and theatrical experiments in London during the first war, and later to avant-garde writing in England and France in the 1920s, particularly as it draws upon psycho-analysis. The fifth chapter examines the novels of Mary Butts, particularly Ashe of Rings, which is read as a war-novel, but one which makes constructive use of her interest in the occult. What this category meant during that period is also investigated, which allows me to formulate a broader argument that situates her work within a tradition that takes fantasy seriously, while remaining critical of the conceptual framework of psycho-analysis. I follow this up by showing the later importance of unconscious anti-semitism to her capacity to elaborate an ecological nationalism. The final chapter examines anti-semitism and satire in the relationship between Rodker and Wyndham Lewis, and offers a further explanatory justification for the argument of the thesis.
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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

This dissertation does not exceed the regulation length, including the footnotes and references, but excluding the bibliography.

[Signature]
Chapter 1 The Landscape Of Modernism

Any fact is, in a sense, 'significant'. Any fact may be 'symptomatic', but certain facts give one a sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law.1

Literary history should continually question the institutional memory of the discipline.2

The most intricate presence

In recent years the large increase in the number of studies devoted to aspects of modernism has convincingly demonstrated that it was a much more complex and pluralistic phenomenon than used commonly to be supposed; its development in Britain, as elsewhere, is coming to be seen as a continuous process of interaction between painting, sculpture, music, literature, theatre, dance, and political, intellectual and social movements—and different ways of theorising them—rather than as separate manifestations at the level of art of experiences of modernity. Yet the generally accepted view of literary modernism in its relations to a broader historical culture still has a tendency to underestimate the importance of the broader, synchronic literary culture, let alone the more diffuse experience of modernity as it affected the common life of the early twentieth century. Given the degree of contingency and ideological parti pris surrounding a successful writer's reception and reputation, surprisingly few questions have been asked about the intellectual and social milieux in which it developed and more particularly about the nature and consequences of judgements of value made within those milieux; and while the grounds of those judgements are not in any proper sense recoverable, there is the possibility at least of reconsidering the works between which the judgements were made, rather than regarding the process as closed. The limitation inherent in viewing this process as one, say, of the 'relations [of canonical texts] to the intellectual contexts of their own time and ours'3 is that the canon tends to define, or at least delineate, the context; whereas a reassessment of the parallel existence of a

1 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', New Age, 10, 6 (7 December, 1911), 130. This essay was published in 12 instalments between 30 November 1911 and 22 February 1912. It was reprinted, in an incomplete form, in Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. by William Cookson (Faber, 1973), pp. 21-43.
plurality of intellectual, artistic, political and cultural formations and their interactions may lead us to take a different view of the canonical figures as a few survivors from a much more populous endeavour. The history of modernism is no exception to this, despite the considerable work of recovery that has taken place in the last two decades, notably by feminist critics and literary historians, and the defining terms continue to be derived from the perceived virtues of the canonical figures of the movement, with the result that those writers who have not been granted canonical status are relegated to positions of minority without regard to what may have their different contexts, agendas and designs. If we are to envisage a more accurate and more explanatory account of modernism, we shall need to recognise a broader range of cultural and counter-cultural experiments cutting across the arts and politics and involving a variety of practices rooted in responses—enthusiastic or hostile—to modernity, as indexed by such factors as population increase and the growth of cities, immigration, suburbanization, new forms of leisure, war and pacifism, new forms of politics and representation, and new relations between the sexes. We need in short to attend to a broader range of cultural activities as constituent of modernism, and to situate as yet insufficiently regarded figures within those contexts. If we can do this, we will be in a better position to understand how our canonical version of modernism arose, and what cultural functions it fulfills. Attractive though the ideals of precision, efficiency and good management are, that Pound appealed to in his advocacy of a 'method of Luminous Detail' as long ago as 1911, they have been taken too much at their face value as they have been incorporated into academic discourse. As Bruce Robbins puts it, 'if [modernism] has found a strong institutional base in university departments of literature, it is in part because, creating the taste by which it could be enjoyed, it helped form the modes of reading responsible for canonizing it;' and this process of canonization itself, of course, has entailed exclusions.

To the extent that the conventionally accepted map of modernism is a system, and that a system derives its identity from what it excludes—its waste, so to speak—any attempt to understand it requires that we examine the unincorporated, the waste, the rubbish, as a basis for redrawing the map. This is not necessarily to advocate adoption of the New Historicist technique of Baudelaire's chiffonier.

4 Pound, 'Osiris'.
gather[ing] the day's refuse in the capital city. Everything the big
city threw away, everything it lost, everything it despised [...] he
catalogues and collects

(although the bibliographic, biographical and historical research involved in this
should not be underestimated), so much as to call for an examination of the
reasons why so much has been thrown away, or never collected, from the output
of the little magazines and small presses, even from the major publishers, of
modernism. 'Rubbish is pertinent; essential; the most intricate presence in our
entire culture.' When Pound described his pleasure on reading the manuscript
of Ulysses, it was partly in terms of its economic function:

The katharsis of 'Ulysses', the joyous satisfaction as the first
chapters rolled into Holland Place, was to feel that here was the
JOB DONE and finished, the diagnosis and cure was here. The
sticky, molasses-covered filth of current print, all the fuggs, all the
foetors, the whole boil of the European mind, had been lanced.

It was the 'monumental [...] summary of a period', a synecdochic literature that
hyperbolically turned everything else into rubbish. But there is every reason to
suppose that Pound's agenda, not least his characterization of that period as 'the
age of usury', requires revision, and that his kill or cure approach left too much
obscured and unrecognisable. Pound's Law, the extension of insight into
sequence and sequence into law, was always, in fact, a tactic rather than a law;
diagnosis and cure need constant renewal, just as Pound argued that his
ideogrammic method was designed to present 'one facet and then another until at
some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader’s mind,
onto a part that will register', and the relatively uncontested incorporation of
canonical texts into the genealogy of literature has had a distorting effect on our
understanding of the history of modernism. Just as Baudelaire's ragpicker turns
out to have been gathering the raw materials for fine book production after all,
Pound's creation of cultural monuments has overshadowed his insistence on
understanding a culture, with all the contradictions there may be within it and
within our reading of it.

6 Cited in Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. by
8 Ezra Pound, Guide to Kulchur (Faber, 1938), p. 96.
9 See Jerome McGann, Black Riders. The Visible Language of Modernism (Princeton, New Jersey:
10 Helga Geyer-Ryan makes a comparable point about rewriting history: 'the witnesses of [this] other history are continually disappearing. They are only to be found in what the dominant process of history has secreted as waste, as the superseded and outmoded which can thus, by
Cary Nelson has argued that 'there are no innocent, undetermined lapses of
cultural memory' and, although misfortune and other contingencies may also
be determinant, the judgements of cultural value examined in the chapters that
follow seem to bear out that contention. To label a book scandalous, trivial or
inaccessible when it is published has often proved an effective barrier to its being
reconsidered long after the grounds for such short-term moralising have
vanished. The combination, for example, in John Rodker's anonymously
published *Memoirs of Other Fronts* of his harrowing account of his experience as
a pacifist during the First World War and the explicit description of his bowel
movements certainly counted against the book in some of its reviews, and
contributed to its absence from our reading-lists, while the label Douglas
Goldring acquired, of being a 'propaganda novelist' neatly encodes an aesthetic
of exclusion from 'serious literature' (rather as some American veterans of the
Abraham Lincoln Brigade were denied the right to join up in the Second World
War on the grounds that their participation in the Spanish Civil War made them
'premature anti-fascists'). Patterns of publishing, patronage, choice of subject
matter, ideology, style, and personal circumstances also have a part to play in
this history, as I hope to make clear in the chapters that follow.

It is easy to forget how little modernist writing was published in England during
the war; with the exception of *The Egoist*, it was magazines from New York and
Chicago, and their backers and patrons, who—very largely through Pound's
efforts—provided the English modernist writers with some kind of public forum.
For some, like Rodker, it was also a significant source of income, as his
correspondence with Harriet Monroe shows: the first payment he received, in
1914, enabled him to finance the production of his first book; later delays in
publishing his poems, or rejection of them, caused real hardship. After the war,
with Rodker as Foreign Editor, the New York-based *Little Review* continued to be
one of the main sites of publication; prose pieces by Rodker, and the opening

definition, have no function within the advancing capitalist order. Once free of its use-value, this
waste has once again the potential to indicate a counter-factual history. 'Counterfactual
11 '[N]o texts are merely erased from our memory in a neutral and non-ideological fashion [...] both what we remember and what we forget are at once interested and overdetermined. Properly speaking, an absolute distinction between full recall and mere forgetfulness is impossible, since they are inextricably linked to each other. It is the collaboration between literary history and canon formation that makes this whole process of cultural recollection and forgetfulness seem seamless and uncontradictory.' Nelson, *Repression and Recovery*, p. 52.
12 For discussion of this book, see Chapters 2 and 4 below.
13 He wrote in October 1915, 'I notice that most of your other contributors appear to be making
decent livings as lawyers, school teachers & what not, by anything in fact but poetry & I should
imagine printing and payment cannot mean so much to them—I'm really very hard up.'
sections of Mary Butts's first novel \textit{Ashe of Rings}, found an immediate readership among an international avant-garde which, while doing little for their chances of book publication in the English market, paved the way to the international magazines and small presses of the nineteen twenties, particularly ones like Ford's \textit{transatlantic review}, Elliot Paul's \textit{transition}, Robert McAlmon's Contact Editions, Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, Caresse Crosby's Black Sun Press and Edward Titus's Black Manikin Press in Paris, and Pound's \textit{Exile}, all of which published (or in the case of Caresse Crosby declined to publish) Rodker and Butts. Rodker's own role as a small-press publisher and a publisher of important limited-edition books is significant enough to warrant a chapter, even a book, to itself: unfortunately it falls outside the scope of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{14} Like many other writers, Mary Butts became an expatriate after the war; she left England for Paris in the early nineteen twenties, and remained there for most of the following decade. Rodker too was frequently there, known to many of the French poets, and publishing three of his books first in French translation (one of which was never issued in English). In this they were typical of their generation, reliant to a greater or lesser extent on the patronage, derived from late nineteenth-century American capital, that enabled the presses, and the art market, to operate. An important consequence of the 1929 Crash and the subsequent depression, which put an abrupt end to most of these publishing activities and sent the exiles (or tourists) back to their home countries, was that many of the writers had no sales records, no market reputations, with which to persuade English publishers to take on their books. In addition, English publishing in the early thirties underwent the worst slump in its history. Even Pound could not persuade Eliot at Faber to accept much of his new work, when Auden and Spender were selling so much better than he had ever done. Mary Butts was fortunate that the firm of Wishart, under the management of Cecil Rickword, an old friend, was prepared to issue small editions of her books, a policy continued after Cecil's death in an accident by his brother Edgell, thanks to some persuasion from Nancy Cunard (who herself had to pay for Wishart's publication of her \textit{Negro Anthology}).\textsuperscript{15} Rodker's \textit{Memoirs of Other Fronts} was turned down at proof stage by Desmond Harmsworth, and although Putnams took it on instead at the last minute, they

\textsuperscript{14} See Lawrence Rainey's comment that, although useful work has been done on the Dun Emer Press, and Elkin Mathews, 'no comparable study exists for John Rodker' (Lawrence S. Rainey, 'Canon, Gender, and Text: The Case of H. D.', in \textit{Representing Modernist Texts: editing as interpretation}, ed. by George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 99-123 (105n). For a provisional listing of Rodker's publishing activities, see my bibliography.

\textsuperscript{15} Information from the late Vivien Morton, in conversation. Edgell Rickword had already published Mary Butts's story 'The Later Life of Theseus, King of Athens' in his \textit{Calendar of Modern Letters} in June 1925, and her study of Aldous Huxley appeared in the second volume of his \textit{Scrutinies} (Wishart, 1931).
declined to publicise it, or to commission his next book, already half-written, or to give him an advance on it. 16

Market factors such as these weigh heavily in a consideration of the reasons why the work of these writers has been lost to us; but underlying the operations of the market are the publishers' ideological positions and the choices they make about what their readerships may be assumed to want. The relative inaccessibility of serious prose writing to a large audience fed the publishers' determination to have as little to do with it as possible and helped to establish the fiction that it was the province of a small number of practitioners whose work could be taken to subsume the whole of the old avant-garde.

In the following chapters I want to re-examine something of the milieux and the substance of some of these works, touching en route on Georgian poetry, the struggle for Irish independence, socialism, pacifism, Rodker's Jewishness and an answering anti-semitism, psycho-analysis, dance, magic, tramps, conspiracy theories and drugs. In the process I hope I shall expand the space of early English modernism, not to pull down the monuments but to resurrect the city in which they stood, and its rural hinterland.

The dominance of the Left and the Market during the nineteen thirties (terms which effected a considerable rapprochement during the heyday of the Popular Front, between 1934 and 1940), coupled with the hegemony of Leavism and the New Criticism in universities in the post-war period, resulted in a distortion of later perceptions of modernist writing and formal experimentation, so that the notion of left-wing modernism became—and to some extent remains—an almost self-contradictory category. But such a strand existed: Rodker's work, with its incorporation of psycho-analysis, is exemplary here, and Goldring's social satires are an important element in the cultural map of the years immediately following the end of the first World War. The cultural critique implicit in modernism was more complicated and more unsettling, particularly in relation to questions of social identity and the self, than its revision in the work of Auden and later writers could be; and although its manifestations are sometimes profoundly contradictory, as in their implicit or explicit anti-semitism, for example, they nonetheless pursued their logics in ways that the subsequent generation shied away from. Thus Mary Butts moves from an avowedly socialist perspective to a position of radical conservatism, but does so through a committed exploration of her chosen literary forms such that her novels remain a valuable testimony of

16 HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 21m.
literary modernism, as well as documenting the complexities of the cultural cross-currents of the period.

Strangers to the canon
The eponymous subject of Georg Simmel's essay 'The Stranger' is famously discussed not as the paradigmatic wanderer (such as the tramp) who comes today and goes tomorrow, but as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow, a potential wanderer who does not move on, but whose qualities can never be derived from the society he inhabits. By pointing to a condition of unease and difference within the body of society, this figure serves to focus attention on the psychological, social, civic and political subject as it attempts, through writing, to achieve a stable identity by means of an imaginative critique of forces that are perceived to threaten it. The three writers I am concerned with in the chapters that follow have become strangers to the modernist canon; my argument will be that their absence from our cultural memory is symptomatic of erasure rather than some mere caravanserai of ephemerality.

I have chosen these three writers—Goldring, Rodker and Mary Butts—because their paths intersected significantly, while at the same time they are writers of very different kinds, offering substantial bodies of work that amply repay attention. All were centrally involved in key moments of English modernism. All were profoundly marked by the First World War, and wrote some of their best work in response to that experience. And all have been more or less expunged from available accounts of the development of English writing between 1910 and 1937. Typically they also had to contend with money problems all their lives, were deeply uncertain about their social positions, and were, much of the time, profoundly at odds with the national culture in which they found themselves. Goldring fought all his life for the establishment of a true cultural democracy, rejecting whatever was based on the compromises of political expediency, campaigning for the protection of London's architectural heritage and for an ideal England he never found. Rodker was always the stranger, a child of Jewish alien immigrants, at home nowhere—writing that 'In Paris I feel English, in London a foreigner'—the occasional butt of satirists and demonisers who found in him a way of representing their anxieties about a cultural and historical

18 One of the most striking examples of this is Bonnie Kime Scott's The Gender of Modernism, which makes no mention of Mary Butts despite the fact that the image chosen for the book's cover (and also reproduced in the text), the fly-leaf of the copy of Robert McAlmon's Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers dedicated to Sylvia Beach and signed by all the contributors, features her signature prominently displayed in the centre.
19 Memoirs of Other Fronts, p. 16.
problematic in which they, in turn, could not feel at home. Mary Butts, too, was a stranger, a psychological exile from a world she had lost, an expatriate from an imaginary England, and her writing is an attempt to reconstruct what she believes to be her cultural inheritance.

The figure of Rodker flits, hardly noticed in the history of the period, through the margins of modernism, through the correspondence of Pound, Joyce, Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Nancy Cunard, the columns of little magazines, bibliographies and biographies, but has left little trace. Poet, novelist, translator, publisher, critic and entrepreneur, he contributed to *The New Age, The Egoist, The Little Review, Ecrits Nouveaux, The Tyro, transition*, and many other magazines. Apart from his novels and poems, he translated a large number of French writers, including Lautréamont and Barbusse, and the psycho-analyst Marie Bonaparte. He was the first person to translate Sartre into English. He wrote on Joyce, and was responsible for publishing the second edition of *Ulysses*. He published Eliot's *Ara Vos Prec*, Pound's *Fourth Canto*, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley and *A Draft of the Cantos 17–27*, and Wyndham Lewis's portfolio *Fifteen Drawings*, as well as books by Gertrude Stein, Le Corbusier and Freud. Reviewing William Carlos Williams in *The Dial* in 1928, Pound compared Rodker's *Adolphe 1920* to *The Great American Novel* as 'the only other [offspring from *Ulysses*] I have seen possessing any value'. The achievement of *Adolphe 1920* was a remarkable one; the way he uses Benjamin Constant's text is comparable in subtlety to Joyce's use of the *Odyssey*, but whereas Joyce exploits his epic framework and stylistic resources to give historical depth as well as formal structure to his novel, Rodker ignores the referential element in his master-text, taking instead qualities intrinsic to the earlier text, especially the interpenetration of internal and external space within a narrative of introspection, as pointers to an understanding of his own procedures.

Why texts such as these should now be absent from our map of modernism is one of the central questions in the problematic this dissertation sets out to examine. I also want to suggest that his reception and his achievement were distorted in the 1930s by a culturally pervasive anti-semitism, as will become clear in relation to Mary Butts and Wyndham Lewis in particular. There is an irony in the fact that we are not at home with any of these writers today, when the issues imbricated in their writing are so germane to ideological and aesthetic

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20 Even Goldring, elsewhere deeply critical of anti-semitism, is guilty of anti-semitic portraits in his early novels; and in his mild satire on the literary scene 'A Triumphal Ode. Written on the occasion of the grand MARCH PAST of British Poets and Men of Letters which took place under the Auspices of the League of National and Civic Idiocy on VICTORY DAY, July 19th, 1919', felt compelled to instance 'the Mile End Yidds in velvet coats' (*Streets and other verses* (London: Selwyn & Blount; New York, Thomas Seltzer, [1921]), p. 75).
questions of contemporary salience, involving psycho-analytic perspectives, autobiography, racism, ecology and nationalism. Conversely, though, the presence of these questions in our culture is what makes possible the process of re-description of elements currently absent from our memory of modernism in England. This is the problematic this thesis sets out to elucidate.
When he published a volume of critical essays in 1920 under the title *Reputations*, Douglas Goldring was still in the process of making one for himself, and well understood the importance of integrating it as far as possible with both 'the author's artistic conscience [...] and the market.' Reputation is one of the few means of validating a non-verifiable discourse like literary quality, but as Goldring knew from his own experience it was hard to divert that juggernaut from its track once it was set in motion; the reputation he already had, outside modernist circles, was as a 'subversive' writer and a pacifist. With no patron or any other source of income except his writing, he could not afford to cut himself off from the literary market, as so many modernist writers did, either from choice or necessity. Yet he was writing against the ideological grain of a general readership and had no easy means of reaching a new audience. Modern political subject matter in a relatively traditional novel form left him without a sufficient command of the market to make a living: for that he had to rely on travel writing. The trilogy of novels he wrote in the early twenties confirmed this reputation, despite their not being concerned with politics but with questions of authenticity in social behaviour. The unsettling honesty of their mild social satire reinforced his 'propaganda novelist' label, and they did not sell well. Nor was he readily acceptable to what Ethel Mannin called 'the highbrows', 'because he writes with apparent lightness of things about which he is dead serious.'

**Goldring: a Georgian in the city**

Goldring's literary career began in 1907 when he left Oxford prematurely, his family being no longer in a position to support him, and started work in London on *Country Life*, to which he had contributed some poems as an undergraduate, becoming assistant editor after a year. In the autumn of 1908 he also took on the job of assisting Ford Madox Ford with the editorship of the *English Review*. When Ford had to relinquish his post in December 1909, after editing thirteen issues, Goldring had to find some other means of support; he also wanted to show that a magazine could survive that, like *The English Review*, combined the best of contemporary writing with a political consciousness. His politics were unformed, but were already fiercely anti-Conservative, and opposed to the fuggy clubman

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3 The main source of biographical information is Goldring himself, particularly *Odd Man Out. The autobiography of a "Propaganda Novelist"* (Chapman and Hall, 1935). Where no reference is given for biographical information, it should be assumed to originate from there, or from his other autobiographical writings, which are listed in the bibliography.
atmosphere of government and the professions, from which he had escaped. The result was a short-lived magazine called *The Tramp*, which attempted to capitalise on the new interest in exploring the English countryside, while at the same time extending its associations with a Bohemian ideology into a more avant-garde engagement with art and literature.

In the forty years between the 1871 census and the launch of *The Tramp* the relative balance between rural and urban populations changed irrevocably. The decade after 1871 saw the first absolute decline in the rural population since census records began and by 1911 more than half of the population of England and Wales lived in towns of over 100,000 inhabitants; by 1914 the percentage of the British population living in rural areas and small towns had shrunk to one-eighth. The Town Planning Act of 1909 marked a watershed in this process. The 1911 census recorded that many working-class as well as middle-class people, particularly in London, were positively opting to bring up their children in the suburbs [...] As rural England declined in productive importance, it was beginning to acquire a new role as the dormitory, nursery, refuge and recreation-ground of urban civilisation. At the same time, it was acquiring a new role in the ideology of the nation; as more and more of the population were subsumed into the new 'urban type', with its connotations in late Victorian and Edwardian sociology of urban degeneration and racial decay, the defining characteristics of 'England', particularly as imagined by expatriate servants of Empire, were drawn from a sentimentalised landscape and rural community which increasingly had little basis in reality.

When the first issue of *The Tramp* appeared in March 1910, it announced its filiations with a prefatory quotation from Walt Whitman beginning 'Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road.' The title he had originally wanted to use, *The Open Road*, indicates the tradition in which Goldring then situated himself. 'I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all free poems also,' Whitman had written in *Song of the Open Road*, and that notion of a regenerative subjectivity fed by the influence of neo-primitive exploration joins with other exilic fantasies of urban life to form a strong proto-modernist current in the magazine. Goldring had learned quickly from his apprenticeship on *Country Life* that there was a market, or at least a widespread interest, in the new romanticization of the countryside; it also coincided with the increased advocacy of the psychological and somatic benefits of escaping from the degenerative atmosphere of the crowded city, and with the use in painting and in literature of a trope of the open road as a figure for an anti-capitalist freedom of the sort

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espoused by Whitman, Jack London and Augustus John. As Lisa Tickner puts it, '[t]he cult of the open road seemed to offer a last resistance to timetables, frontiers, passports, by-laws and bourgeois domesticity.' It also offered a very real escape from the pressures of urban life: the 1911 journal kept by the young Whitechapel poet Joseph Leftwich describes a number of tramping expeditions he undertook with Rodker and Winsten to the nearest open country, whether in Essex or Kent, including one all-night tramp which left them sleepless, cold, hungry and wet. This did nothing to dampen their enthusiasm for the idea, however: the tramp remained a figure of the bohemian, an alternative artist. 'They are a curious people these tramps. Some of them are the dregs of humanity—others of fertility. We met one of these tonight. He does not believe in effort, believes nothing worth while [...] they are people who will not fit in with the laws of civilisation. [...] The real tramp relishes his life, is proud of it, and somehow always manages to find his means of livelihood. They are idlers with a philosophy most of them.' (JL: 3 August, 1911). And Dr Harry Roberts, a well-known figure in the East End as a socialist doctor and philanthropist (and also known to Rodker), wrote a book called *The Tramp's Handbook* (1903) and contributed an article on 'The Art of Vagabondage' to the first number of *The Tramp*, which included the claim that 'The vagabond [...] alone has any real familiarity with Nature by night. Indeed it is only the tramp who is able to realise the meaning of Maeterlinck's statement that we all live in the sublime.' This figure of the 'literary vagabond' (as a reviewer in *The Scotsman* put it) was represented in the first number by contributions from Holbrook Jackson, W. H. Davies, Arthur Ransome and Goldring himself. Other contributors to the magazine who belong in this tradition included Jack London and Edward Thomas, but there was also a marked emphasis on a new urban vagabondage. Alongside the figure of the tramp (whose apotheosis we see in the films of Charlie Chaplin) this pantheon includes gypsies, circus artistes, figures from the *Commedia dell'arte* such as Pierrot and Columbine, and the 'Saltimbanques' of Picasso's and Wyndham Lewis's paintings. (In the context of the city, there is also a generic link with Pierrot and his moonlit world, but this involves us in artifice of a different sort.) Wyndham Lewis regularly appeared in *The Tramp*, publishing several of the pieces which, rewritten, were included in *The Wild Body* (1927), such as 'Le Père François (A Full-Length Portrait of a Tramp)', as well as his
poem 'Grignolle (Brittany)'; Goldring (under a variety of pseudonyms) provided poems, short stories, travel pieces, vignettes, reviews and a series of 'Rambles in London' and an 'Introduction to the Study of London'. His was also the first journal to publish texts by Marinetti, 'Futurist Venice' and extracts from the 'Declaration of Futurism,' which he presented with a brief introductory article in the August 1910 issue. Other contributions included detective stories by Ford Madox Ford, poems by F. S. Flint, and some of the earliest translations of stories by Chekhov.

It is evident from this brief résumé that the magazine was addressing at least two audiences: it cannot be assumed that those who wanted to read Lewis or Marinetti necessarily also wanted to know about Elizabethan Hitchin, or the best way to make an authentic gypsy tent out of branches. Yet the overlap, or juxtaposition, points to a complex of interactions that is missed by confident separations between Georgians and Imagists, modernists, symbolists and social reformers.

There is something worth resurrection from the kind of picture of this milieu provided by Clifford Bax, a friend of Mary Butts and of Pound:

the representative young people of that period [...] enrolled themselves in the Fabian Society; and although they were amused by The Academy, which, under the editorship of Lord Alfred Douglas, contained every week a vitriolic attack upon some person, group, nation, or continent, their subscriptions went to The New Age. Swiss pastors and earnest Americans had preached for some years the cult of the Simple Life. My contemporaries derided the earnestness and adopted the cult. They did not become vegetarians, but they made up mixed parties, each person carrying a toothbrush for luggage, and went camping in the country. They talked of 'the open road,'—perhaps, even, of 'the wind on the heath'; and their talk resulted in the wide success of Gerald Gould's first book. They idealised the gipsy and the tramp; and their sophisticated enthusiasm enabled 'the super-tramp' to find himself famous in a week.
Economics, free love, and the open road,—this trinity might have stood for their motto. Here and there, too, were persons, a little older, who carried onwards the frayed banner of the Arts and Crafts movement; wore sandals and homespuns; bought chairs that were plaited by English 'peasants'; and ate out of unglazed pottery. Mr. Penty was hopefully exhorting the world to renounce machinery. The New Age resounded with the name of Nietzsche, throbbed with discussions of prostitution, extolled H. G. Wells as though he were the first man to have uttered wisdom, and seemingly would have decreed divine honours to Bernard Shaw if its readers had believed in anything divine. So extreme was the
admiration of Wells and Shaw by the girls and men whom I met that, of necessity, the latter declared religion to be amusing and romance absurd. Yeats, it is true, was still a figure not without honour. Presumably the sheer beauty of his work extracted from them a subdued applause. Indeed among slightly outmoded persons, his influence had left a noisome sentimentality. 'Do you know,' said a novelist at a tea-party, 'I saw the most wonderful fairy this afternoon' and the fairy would turn out to have been a leaf on the road, or a frog. For the most part our young men were strenuous advocates of No Nonsense. Inspired by Shaw, they laid down linoleum in their minds, abolishing both dust and beauty. They championed, though they might not worship, an Aphrodite in tweeds and brogues. They were conscious of no horizon to thought, and they acknowledged no mystery. They looked away from death. They wanted to be matter-of-fact, they too, and paradoxical and pugnacious. To a large extent they succeeded; and so formidable were their wits and voices that it seemed pretentious and futile to oppose them. I recognized early that I could find no place in their ranks. [...] 'The only truth,' wrote some one of that time, 'is that there is no truth,'—and straightway I felt that, if this were so, men would do well to cease writing. I plunged into theosophical literature. It seemed like a map in a maze.9

This blurred composite, for all its self-serving telos, does indicate the degree to which the intellectual conjuncture represented by *The Tramp* also included a variety of cultural critique more nuanced than later modernist repudiations of it allow. In *BLAST* the ideology of the open road is implicitly damned for 'bowing the knee to wild Mother Nature, her feminine contours, Unimaginative insult to MAN', blessing in contrast 'the vast planetary abstract of the ocean' and the paramount creation of man, the machine. The misogyny, however aesthetically tactical, does not resolve the contradictions inherent in this aggressive sexualisation of the new urban primitivism; both Lewis and Mary Butts rely, in their different ways, on anthropological research for their redefinition of the energies at the heart of their work,10 as I make clear in Chapter 6; and the phenomenology of the city is considerably more various than can be revealed in figurations of the mechanical. Ford Madox Ford, for instance, offered the following piece of advice to young poets in 1909: a revival in the capacity of poetry to stir the public, to 'irritate the lethargic beast'

will come when some young poets get it into their heads to come out of their book-closets and take, as it were, a walk down Fleet

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10 As did Gaudier-Brzeska: 'That [modern] sculpture has no relation to classic Greek, but that it is continuing the tradition of the barbaric peoples of the earth (for whom we have sympathy and admiration) I hope to have made clear.' Letter in *The Egoist*, 6, 1, (16 March, 1914), 118.
Street, or a ride on the top of a 'bus from Shepherd's Bush to Poplar.¹¹

Ford himself followed this advice to good purpose in poems like 'Finchley Road' and 'The Three-ten', and views from trains and the tops of buses, and tube journeys, figure in poems by Aldington, Pound, Flint, John Gould Fletcher and others in the Imagist mould. But one of the first poets to use verse as a medium for registering the permeability of the urban environment rather than the pathos or interest of its disjunct curiosities was Goldring in his poems of urban location. Streets (1912) and In the Town: a Book of London Verses (1916) use a variety of approaches to capture the human character of the newly defined 'urban villages' that with the rapid recent growth in London's population were acquiring distinct class and social characteristics, qualities he notes also in his articles about urban tramping. Poems like 'Maisonettes (Harrow Road)' ('The houses in Windermere Street are "let off in floors", /Which perhaps is the reason it always seems so to "swarm"'), or 'Living-In (Brixton Rise),' unadventurous but skilled in their formal structure, suggest an alertness to the human presence in the city and to the ways the city's development shapes that human presence.

These were some of the currents that went into the creation of The Tramp. But despite Goldring's advocacy of the city and his openness to aspects of the nascent avant-garde, its focus was primarily on 'the open road'. And here the magazine, for all its implicit rhetoric of authenticity in opposition to the sentimental ideologisation of the land, necessarily also advocated a kind of tourism, given that few of its readers were likely either to take up tramping as a full-time occupation or to immerse themselves entirely in rural idiocy. Numerous articles on ancient places, historic towns and unremarked buildings evince the incorporation of this anti-tourism into an amateur ethnography that plays its part in destroying what it seeks. Indeed if Dean MacCannell is right to describe the Tourist as 'one of the best models available for modern man in general' then The Tramp is an excellent example of the contradictions of modernism and of the democracy of the period, in which a nostalgia for an ontologically rooted sense of community and use-value nourishes a forward-looking, utopian quest for the return of the past in the future.¹² In the event, the difficulty of sustaining a market for a magazine that attempted to marry a rejection of the world of capitalist commodity consumption and some notice of the beginnings of the avant-garde with a largely urban and suburban readership bent on consuming travel writing and reviews of middle-brow fiction and poetry, proved too much

¹² For a thoughtful overview of the literature on tourism, see John Frow, 'Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia', October, 57 (Summer 1991), 123-51.
for Goldring, and, after twelve issues, the magazine folded under the weight of its debts.

Goldring is remembered now, when he is remembered at all, as the author of *South Lodge* and *The Nineteen Twenties*, sources of biographical information about Ford Madox Ford, Violet Hunt, and their circle, and the writers of the 1920s. But his fiction, now long out of print, was taken seriously at the time by Pound, Eliot, Ford, Mary Butts, Barbusse, and Ethel Mannin, among many others. Writing to John Quinn on 9 September, 1916, Pound said: 'I know of just four men who can write fiction that interests me: Joyce, Lewis, Lawrence and, by courtesy, Goldring.'

It is the turn taken by his fiction under the influence of his response to four crucial events during the war years that I want to turn to next, to look at the ways he tried to incorporate pacifism in the First World War, the Irish uprising of Easter 1916, the campaign for women's suffrage, and the Russian Revolution, into the fabric of his novels. How far do they carry forward the ideals of *The Tramp*? And how representative are they of a socially committed optimism that might challenge the representation of the post-war period as a 'waste land'?

**Conscription and liberty**

Whatever fosters militarism makes for barbarism; whatever fosters peace makes for civilisation [...] Just in proportion as military activity is great does the coercive regime more pervade the whole society. Hence, to oppose militancy is to oppose return towards despotism.

How far are we justified in taking the metaphor of the Waste Land, as well as our reading of the poem itself, as 'an index of the cultural insolvency of Europe after World War I'? Should Eliot's search for cultural authority and human identity represent and colour the whole context of the literary production of the post-war period? The lexicon of the economic balance-sheet, which tends to suggest an arithmetical account of cultural history, is by its nature likely to exclude alternative rhetorics and writers who regarded the post-war world as pregnant with possibility, especially, perhaps, those who wanted radical social change from the left. The collapse of the old liberal fictions, the formation of the Communist International, the achievement of Irish Home Rule and women's suffrage, all provided at least the hope of new freedoms for vast numbers of people. Cultural memory is an active process, and I want to suggest that there is

a more active relationship between the establishment of the post-war literary
canon and the works of those writers who became its 'victims' than is sometimes
assumed, looking first at some of those who were criminalised, literally or
literarily, for their critique of the war and the role of the State in it and after it. It
may be that some of Eliot's terms, including the metaphor of the Waste Land,
carry a more interventionist charge; and his description of contemporary
history as an 'immense panorama of futility and anarchy' in which 'the world of
war and the world after had become mirrors of each other' may be thought to
demonstrate a preference for spatial models of history in which the future can
only be found in the past. The coexistence of the spatialisation of time and a
quasi-theological view of artistic creation was what enabled him in 'Tradition
and the Individual Talent' to elaborate his theory of the poet's impersonality as
his peculiar version of self-sacrifice. Yet it is also true that the rhetoric of that
essay might be seen as trammelled in the discourse of the war that has just
ended, with terms like 'extinction of personality', 'depersonalisation' and 'self-
sacrifice' carrying an echo of debates whose scope was far broader than Eliot's
purpose in that essay: the merging, or submerging, of an individual in a
crowd—whether army, mob or patriotic crowd—and the frequency with which
personalities were permanently extinguished in the vast conflict that had just
ended, had given a topical sharpness (or in too many cases bluntness) to the

16 Ross, by contrast, argues that no 'fresh socio-historical reading of the poem's conditions of
production' is possible in the wake of our learning to read 'History as a text', and that we
therefore need to examine the way in which the poem articulates its vision of 'the 'failure'' of
History' (op. cit., pp. 39-40). But the text of History is multivocal as well as polysemic.
17 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth,' The Dial 75 (November, 1923), 480-483. Michael North, in The
Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound (Cambridge University Press, 1991), discusses
historicity in Eliot's writing of this period as an attack on liberalism and individualism in the
same mould as Lukace's in 'History and Class Consciousness', but does so at a level of abstraction
from historical events which enables his claims for its 'fungibility' in left and right-wing critiques
to be self-fulfilling (see particularly the Introduction and Chapter 2). The fact that there were
indeed those on the left in the nineteen twenties, like Edgell Rickword, A. L. Morton or Stephen
Spender, who nursed hopes of Eliot's declaring in favour of communism, indicates the existence
of widely differing vantage-points for the reception of Eliot's work, rather than the fungibility of
its critique.
18 As Jameson has pointed out, 'the intellectual authority of the culture critique depends on the
repression of [the middle class's post-war] concrete social situation, and on the projection of its
anxieties into some more timeless realm of moral judgement.' (Fredric Jameson, Fables of
Aggression. Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (California and London: University of
California Press, 1979), p. 129.) Seen in this context, the choice of The Criterion as the name of
Eliot's periodical is of course a defensive one.
19 'The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.'
('Tradition and the Individual Talent [I],' The Egoist, 6, 4 (September 1919), 55; reprinted in The
Sacred Wood, Essays on Poetry and Criticism (Methuen, 1920), p. 53.) This desired invisibility could
be contrasted with, say, a desire for continual self-invention.
20 For the best discussion of Eliot's use of these terms see Maud Ellmann, The Poetics of
Impersonality. T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), pp. 36-40. By stressing the
difference between the 'humanist and anti-humanist alternatives' of self-sacrifice and
depersonalization, though, Ellmann underplays their echo of two sides of the same war-time
coin.
meaning of issues such as individual liberty, the subject and subjection, the powers of the State, and the individuals right to dissent, and to refuse to be submerged or extinguished. The issue that focussed these most intensely was the introduction of conscription in January 1916, an event which might be figured as the crisis of the crisis of liberalism.

All armies since the mid-seventeenth century had been, in theory at least, volunteer armies, and for the first twelve months of the First World War Asquith, the Liberal prime minister, attempted to maintain that tradition, despite serious opposition from a number of quarters, including the National Service League, Lord Northcliffe, Lord Milner and Conservative members of the Coalition Cabinet. This opposition was to some extent balanced by the hostility to conscription expressed by the trade unions and by political and religious organisations, including those members of the Liberal Party, both in Parliament and outside, who still believed that voluntary recruitment would be adequate. Asquith's policy held until the end of 1915, but months before that it was clear to him, and to the government, that conscription would have to come eventually: he merely held out against it as long as he could, with the result that when it was introduced (Asquith introduced the Military Service Bill on 5 January 1916, and it became law three weeks later, on 27 January) neither the army nor the civil authorities was adequately prepared to implement it, a fault which was exacerbated by ambiguities in the drafting of the grounds on which exemption from military service might be granted. The introduction of legislation directly disposing of men's lives and liberty caused a considerable degree of unrest, although the initial rejection of conscription by the special Congress of Labour, called on 6 January, despite being carried by a very large majority, was soon diplomatically defused; once the Bill had become law, the only choice was between support for it and compliance with its provisions as part of a broader support for the war in general, and illegal opposition to it, and conscientious

21 The most detailed account of the parliamentary politics involved in the debate is to be found in R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18 (Macmillan, 1987); the authors take no account of conscientious objection, however, nor of other forms of extra-parliamentary opposition. For a thorough and well-judged overview of this, see John Rae, Conscience and Politics. The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service 1916-1919 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). The mostly lively account remains the earliest, John W. Graham's Conscription and Conscience: a history 1916-1919 (George Allen & Unwin, 1922).

22 The National Service League was founded in February 1902, shortly before the end of the Boer War, with the aim of introducing compulsory military service. Its leading members included well-known imperialists like Lord Curzon and Lord Roberts of Kandahar. For an account of the League's history and activities, see Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict (Sheppard Press, 1949), pp. 36-50.

23 It is not always noted that many of those who volunteered for war service did not do so until the certainty of conscription made it necessary.

24 Rae, pp. 117-130, provides the fullest account of the difficulties caused by these ambiguities.
objection to military service on the part of individuals who were sufficiently strongly motivated to sustain the obloquy that course entailed. Liberals, socialists and libertarians, notably the I. L. P. and the Union of Democratic Control (U. D. C.), had already challenged the extension of State power represented by the Defence of the Realm Act (D. O. R. A.), the Munitions Act and similar legislation, arguing that it was a symptom of 'Prussianism' and thus another indication of the illogicality and unnecessity of the war. The repression intensified in the first months of 1916 and the tentacles of state censorship began to extend into areas of artistic production for the first time, and police and Army officers 'became the agents of state censorship and controllers of the arts.'

The most active organisers of dissent and opposition were the No-Conscription Fellowship (N-C. F), the National Council Against Conscription (which changed its name to the National Council for Civil Liberties when the Military Service Act became law) and the U. D. C., one of whose most influential propagandists was Bertrand Russell. In November 1916 the Nation called him 'the ablest and most unpopular figure in contemporary England.' His insistent exposure of the injustices perpetrated by the Tribunals which adjudged claims for exemption from military service on conscientious grounds helped to keep them in the forefront of the reasons for dissent, while his writings provided intellectual fuel for the arguments for pacifism, and provoked others, from Lloyd George to T. E. Hulme into denunciations of him.

All this has been well documented, and is here intended merely to stand as preamble to an account of some of the writing these events and debates stimulated. Samuel Hynes has argued that the chief consequence of this change

25 Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined. The First World War and English Culture (Bodley Head, 1990), pp. 146ff.
26 Russell wrote War—The Offspring of Fear for the U. D. C., Justice in War Time and The Policy of the Entente 1904-1914 for the I. L. P. and pamphlets for the N-C. F., as well as contributing frequent articles to the press, including The Tribunal and the Labour Leader. Much in demand as a speaker, he was repeatedly subject to restrictions on his movement, and twice prosecuted, once for drafting a pamphlet, for which he was fined £100 (Rex v. Bertrand Russell, the verbatim report of those proceedings published by the N-C. F., was seized by the police and the stock destroyed), and once for suggesting, in an article in The Tribunal, that the U. S. army might be used for strike-breaking, for which he was sentenced to six months in prison. The combination of his rationalism, his reputation as a philosopher, his social position, and the absurdity of government policy made him a particularly effective focus for anti-war propaganda, and more significantly for opposition to State repression.
28 Hulme's attacks on Russell and pacifism were printed in The Cambridge Magazine between January and March, 1916. A. R. Jones calls them 'as intolerant and arrogant as anything he ever wrote.' (A. R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme (Gollancz, 1960), p.125.)
29 The most detailed account of Russell's involvement is in Jo Vellacott, Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).
in the intellectual climate in 1916 was an attempt to represent 'the new ugliness that the war imposed', a process he locates in the writing of serving soldiers, the plays of Miles Malleson and the poems of Sassoon and Graves. He underestimates the importance of the struggle against the military State, and makes no mention of a writer like Gilbert Cannan, who succeeded B. N. Langdon-Davies as secretary of the N. C. C. L. in April 1916, and who wrote a series of novels involving this milieu in which one of the central characters, Melian Stokes, is a fictionalised portrait of Russell (another novel, Time and Eternity, features Miles Malleson in the guise of a character called Chinnery), or of Goldring, whose novel The Fortune was the first, and most successful, attempt to dramatise the position of the C. O.

After the collapse of The Tramp, in March 1911, Goldring published travel books, a second collection of poems, and one novel before the outbreak of war. He volunteered for the army at once, and was commissioned in October 1914, but soon afterwards became seriously ill, and was granted medical exemption. He wrote two novels and started a publishing firm (Selwyn & Blount) which however was soon taken over by a friend; and early in 1915 he was involved with Ezra Pound in a scheme for new magazine to be backed by John Quinn. Pound hoped that Ford would be able to take on the same sort of editorial role he had fulfilled on the English Review when he was eventually demobbed, with Goldring as assistant: 'With Hueffer [i.e. Ford] away I should still be assisted by Goldring,' he wrote to Quinn, 'Goldring is clever, he knows the publishing ropes, he is competent for all sorts of jobs about a paper, he has written good short stories and a few nice poems [...] An article by him would always be good, readable, enlightened, but his signature does not and never would add any weight to it.' Pound was reluctant to launch the magazine with Goldring alone, though, conscious of the need for big names to get it off the ground, and in the end it

30 Hynes, esp. pp. 152-159.
31 For more details of the N. C. C. L., see below, Chapter 5.
32 Gilbert Cannan, Pugs and Peacocks (Hutchinson, [1921]), Sembal (Hutchinson, [1922]), House of Prophecy (Hutchinson, [1924]); Douglas Goldring, The Fortune (Dublin: Maunsell, 1917.) In a 'Note' appended to the first of his three novels, Cannan wrote: 'This book is the first of a series dealing with the chaos revealed by the War of 1914 and the Peace of 1919, not from any political or sociological point of view, but to discover the light thrown upon human nature by abnormal events and conditions.'
33 These stories have proved almost impossible to identify. Some early ones appear under pseudonyms in The Tramp, but a letter from Pound to H. L. Mencken, written on 2 May 1915, says 'I am sending you an unbound vol. of some stories by Goldring; they were published under another name and had a fair bit of notice [...] The problem before the house is HOW MUCH do you pay? Goldring says the stories take him a hell of a time to write' (The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. by D. D. Paige (Faber and Faber, 1951), p.103). This was not the first time Pound acted as Goldring's agent; he had placed some poems in Poetry the year before (Paige, p. 79). I have not identified either the stories or the pseudonym, unless these are all stories from The Tramp.
came to nothing. He was at pains a month or two later to reassure Quinn (or possibly himself) that Goldring, though not in the army, hadn't 'funked', an indication of the extent to which pressure to enlist was building up. Goldring, meanwhile, was becoming increasingly critical of the war, and by the end of the year was ostracised by most of the people he knew socially. 'It would be impossible to convey to readers of a younger generation, even to those who are prominent "Peace time" pacifists, what it was like to belong to the minority from 1915 onwards,' he wrote. Goldring was the only professional novelist to denounce the war and register an absolute objection to having anything to do with it, and in this he was isolated until, early in 1916, he met other socialist pacifists, such as Miles Malleson and the circle who gathered at his flat off Russell Square, which included Gilbert Cannan, Eva Gore-Booth and John Rodker. His third novel, Margot’s Progress, was published in May 1916, and rapidly sold out, despite the denunciation of the war in its closing pages. Yet although this is powerfully worded, it is subordinate to the romantic interest of the plot: Margot rejects the war as the product of 'old-fashioned patriotism' and 'effete aristocrats' for whom the war is 'like a more dangerous kind of sport'.

Life itself has been my war; and so it is for everyone with anything it them, except these beastly aristocrats. I'd start a revolution tomorrow...if I could. There are millions more poor people than rich in the world, and the poor don't want to fight.

Margot and her lover Godfrey are presented as sane figures in world gone mad. The novel ends on a note that exploits and reverses the propagandist enthusiasm of 1914, in which the war was welcomed as a purifying agent, a purgative for the corrupt hedonism of Edwardian civilisation; here the war is seen as purging the

34 Materer, p. 32 (11 August 1915).
35 Materer, p. 56.
36 Odd Man Out, p. 141. The Earl of Denbigh's remarks in the House of Lords in April 1918, though later, give some indication of the strength of feeling: 'I regard [C. O.] as people for whom I have the greatest possible contempt [...] the C. O.] is a cur or a crank, and I look upon him as a new form of lunatic.' (30 April, 1918). In the House of Commons, they were regularly called 'cowards and shirkers', 'pro-Hun and anti-British', 'blacklegs from the national union' and recommended for shooting. (The C. O.'s Hansard.) The press, of course, was frequently vitriolic in its condemnations of pacifism, as were the Local Tribunals. See Thomas C. Kennedy, 'Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919,' Journal of British Studies, 12 (May 1973), 105-119, and We Did Not Fight: 1914-18 Experiences of War Resisters, ed. by Julian Bell (Cobden-Sanderson, 1935). For a contemporary catalogue of the persecution and maltreatment (and in some cases death) suffered by C. Os see Mrs. Henry Hobhouse, 'An Appeal Unto Caesari, introduction by Professor Gilbert Murray (George Allen & Unwin, 1917); and see also David Boulton, Objection Overruled (MacGibbon and Kee, 1967).
37 Lawrence, for example, relying on his health exemption.
38 Cannan, although a C. O., was prepared to agree to do work of national importance.
39 Such as Edmund Gosse's much quoted metaphor: 'War is the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood is the Condy's Fluid that cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect.' 'War and Literature', Edinburgh Review, 220 (October 1914), 313.
world of a different corruption, the corruption of the older generation, of militarism, patriotism, nationalism and class-oppression, by which Margot has been seduced in the course of the novel, and opening the way for personal freedom.

This war would open wide the windows, letting out the overheated, foul, vice-laden atmosphere, letting in the clean, fresh winds [...] Into this new world his unconquerable Margot would come into her own.'

By this stage of the war, however, raw materials were in short supply and there was no paper available for a second edition; what might have become a major commercial success disappeared from public view until it was finally reprinted in 1924. Goldring was already at work on another novel, but one which would, as he put it 'hold up a mirror to my times.' Self-critically aware that plots were not his 'strong suit', and that he would 'never make a stylist of such a kind as to satisfy [his] own exacting taste', he began a fictionalised documentary chronicle of his personal experience of the war. By this time, the Military Service Act had come into force, and he was summoned to appear before a Tribunal, where he claimed total exemption from the war; he was granted exemption from combatant service, but ordered to do work of national importance. This he refused to do, and before he could be arrested he managed to travel to Dublin in the guise of a journalist, to investigate the Easter Rising and its aftermath, armed with a bunch of introductions to literary figures from Eva Gore-Booth.

From then until 1918 he was able to look at England from a vantage point that gave him a privileged insight into the contradictions of British imperialism, which he recorded, along with his conversion to the international socialist cause, in a series of 'letters from exile' published in German translation after the war.40

Ireland, I blush to admit it, has taught me more about England than about itself [...] Two years in the enlightened intellectual atmosphere of Dublin have unfitted me for a return to my own country. I hate the British Empire more than I ever believed it possible to hate anything [...] I want to see England small and content [...] Only an uprising of the people—the true people—after the manner of the Russian Revolution can rescue Europe from utter ruin.41

Goldring remained in Dublin until January 1919, during which time he published a hastily-written novel, Polly, two books about Ireland, a number of articles on

40 Douglas Goldring, Briefe aus der Verbannung (Munich: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1920).
41 Briefe: Letters 14, 18, 22 (my translation).
different subjects, and his socialist-pacifist autobiographical chronicle, *The Fortune*.

It had been rejected, unsurprisingly, by all his London publishers and finally saw the light of day in September 1917 under the Dublin imprint of Maunsel & Co. Earlier in the year Maunsel had published a book of his entitled *Dublin: Explorations and Reflections* in which he attempted to address two audiences; to give English readers an objective account of events in Ireland, and to communicate the sympathy of at least some English people for the Irish struggle for self-determination, which he had come to know something about in London, through his contact with the war-resisters. (He was not however an enthusiastic nationalist: in *Briefe* he writes that 'the nationalistic delusion of all exploited peoples will have to be overcome before an international outlook can become possible.') In *The Fortune*, which requires a slightly protracted examination, it is the twin strands of conscientious objection and the Irish question which act as focal points for his argument against war.

In structure and prose style the novel is conventional; reviewing it in *The Little Review*, in fact, John Rodker felt impelled to point out that, for all its sympathetic treatment of its subject matter, it was 'not prose in the modern sense of the word. It is a well-written, highly interesting story.' The power of Goldring's writing at its best comes from its assumption of moral integrity, from a belief that society should be conducted, and conduct itself, in accordance with liberal ethical principles, and his novels use satire and sentiment to depict the consequences of institutional and individual hypocrisy. In *The Fortune*, which begins with a leisurely account of the Goldring character's intellectual development in order to establish the narrative's moral credentials, this is a considerable weakness, as Eliot noticed in his review of the book, where he described the first section as 'not unintelligent, but it is unimportant, and it is not literary art.' After all the conventional exposition is in place, however, on the eve of the war, the novel

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42 As a result of this, however, only 'three or four hundred copies' were sent to England, many of them for review; so although the book was widely and favourably noticed, it had little sale. A New York edition was published in 1919 (and reviewed in *The Dial*, 68, 4, (April, 1920), 537 as 'recommended by Romain Rolland' and the work of 'a great talent' and 'a free spirit') and a German translation was published in Zürich in 1920. It was described in *Clarté* on 29 November 1919 as 'un succès considérable en Angleterre et en Amérique'.

43 Southern Ireland was exempt from the provisions of the Military Service Act, a decision which aroused a great deal of anger and resentment among 'patriots' in the English press, and resulted in a degree of convergence between those who opposed the war and those who supported the Irish struggle, like Eva Gore-Booth. The extremity of the military and political response to the Easter Rising demonstrated the English government's readiness to use 'Prussian' tactics against domestic dissent.


changes pace and tone. It is only with the advent of the war that the novel gets moving, through the dramatization of the attitudes to it of the three central characters: Harold (the protagonist), his wife Peter, and the cynical James Murdoch, whose detached intelligence is the mouthpiece for Goldring’s own position of hindsight. The war causes them to look at each other with a more critical edge, James arguing that the war is 'an abomination' (p. 182).\textsuperscript{46} Harold convinced that the war is just, and that Britain’s role as the defender of small nations is one he must play a part in. James returns to Ireland, having failed to persuade Harold not to side with the more obviously militarist friends of his wife’s family. His parting words are prophetic.

’[Y]ou may find you are under the wrong flag when it’s too late to change -- and that’s a bad fate for any man....’
'I can’t imagine myself growing a pro-German. '
'No, but you may find yourself forced to become an English Junker!’
(p. 209)

But Harold, despite some pangs at parting from his friend, puts his business affairs in order and enlists in the O. T. C., dividing his brain into ‘two compartments’, one for his ‘Kultur’ and the other for his military enthusiasm.

James’s final words to him, by post, in response to Harold’s statement of faith in the British cause, tell him (ironically, as it turns out), ‘If you really think Britain the guardian angel of nationalism, you had better come to Dublin’ (p. 221). From this point on, the novel, now fully into its stride, becomes a tragic satire. Peter’s aunt, an Irish catholic \textit{grande dame} of socialist, pacifist and nationalist inclination, who shocks Peter’s unthinkingly conformist friend Gwen (through whose eyes we first see her), regards the war as ‘criminal madness, prompted by terror and cupidity’ (p. 223). She is a friend of James Murdoch, which makes her all the more outrageous in Gwen’s eyes. She ‘always thought there was something uncanny about [his domination of Harold]. It was an obsession, wasn’t it? It’s my belief the man used \textit{hypnotic influence}’ (p. 224). Peter begins to detach herself from the general view, as she watches the pompous pronouncements of men like Colonel Watson, who attributes the difficulties now being encountered by the forces in France to the idleness of the ‘labouring classes’, and advocates the court-martialling and shooting of strike leaders. She goes to visit her aunt, who puts forward an eloquent defence of the C. O.’s position, and deepens her awareness of their courage (pp. 243-4), but does not shake her basic conviction that they are wrong. Harold meanwhile has been sent to the front, and rapidly loses his naive belief in the decency of the war. ‘The freedom of mind and broad detached

\textsuperscript{46} Page references are to the second English edition, with a Preface by Aldous Huxley and an ‘Author’s introduction: After Fourteen Years’ (Desmond Harmsworth, [1931]).
outlook of the artist which he had achieved in his years of manhood […] had all
to be sacrificed' (pp. 249-50); he is repeatedly described as feeling 'hemmed in by
lies' (p. 262), and trapped in a machine in which he no longer believes and over
which he has no control. In a sustained tirade against those responsible for the
war, he attacks the pervasive and degrading influence of the ideal of the 'English
gentleman', and excoriates the society whose function it is to produce it (see e.g.
pp. 280-81). He is invalided home after being shot in the foot, an embittered
seeker after truth, aware finally that James was right, yet torn between the
symbolic poles of his friendship with James and his love for Peter (now the
mother of a child, named James), who is herself lacerated by her dislike of James
and her sense that he has corrupted her husband 'and made him disloyal'.

A climax is reached when James returns, voluntarily, from Ireland to claim
exemption before a Tribunal. He is rejected, and Harold decides to give evidence
on his behalf at the Appeal Tribunal, despite pleas from Peter. She, believing
herself to count for less in Harold's affections than James, is described as
'wounded in her pride of sex', as she experiences the first of a series of
realignments the novel suggests in her traditionalist view of woman's role as
dominant influence in her husband's life. Harold, though tortured by the division
of his loyalties, finds that 'the desire for truth, the loathing of lies, was more than
ever an obsession with him […] A pall of lies lay like a fog over the whole nation'
(p. 301), and he spends a morning at the Appeal Tribunal, increasingly horrified
at the maliciousness and stupidity of those supposedly dispensing justice, as a
series of distressing vignettes (taken from real cases) unfolds. James is denied
exemption, Harold's speech, and James's, being entirely ignored by the Tribunes;
James returns to Ireland, having done his duty by his friends, and having
expected no other outcome. Harold, though, is still in the army, and what had
seemed at first like a cushy staff job in the Curragh has become, we are now
aware, a more contradictory duty: he arrives in Dublin on Good Friday 1916 and,
after a weekend with James, drives into Dublin on the Monday, and gets caught
up (voluntarily, but needlessly) in the fighting. He is kept occupied for four days,
without a break, growing increasingly sick of the viciousness, brutality and
ignorant prejudice of his fellow officers.

In his brief military life, full as it had been of the horror and squalor
of war, he had never yet seen anything so uncomfortable as this […] The rebels hadn't a chance, but there was no denying their pluck
and gameness […] 'Shooting is too good for the swine,' Harker
snorted. His eyes were bloodshot (pp. 334-5).

For attempting to speak up for the Sinn Feiners as brave, if misguided, Harold is
taken to be a spy by his Sergeant, and later that night shot dead by his own men.
In the final chapter, set two months later, his widow Peter, who had arrived in Ireland with their son while Harold was fighting, comes to a consciousness of her own Irishness for the first time; she visits James, to whom this new and liberating awareness has now intellectually reconciled her, and hears an account of Harold’s death from a Sinn Feiner whom Harold had saved from being shot after he’d been taken prisoner. She and James agree that there is nothing to be gained by retributive vengeance against individuals: the system is to blame.

As soon as the men of the present day reconquer their own mental liberty, the whole thing will fall to pieces. Democracy will step forward unshackled -- like a youthful giant! (p. 350)

What emerges most forcefully from a reading of this novel is the culpability of the English upper-middle class and its ideology, a theme which Goldring returns to time and again in his writing. His standpoint is a liberal one: the values he advocates are individual ones, and his sense of collectivity is firmly grounded in a vision of an unproblematic consciousness of 'truth', achieved through the virtues of disinterestedness and social justice. Indeed the problem, as he sees it, lies in the difficulty of remaining uninvolved in social machinery over which the individual has no control. In this he echoes Gilbert Cannan, who used a similar formulation to describe the impotence of the individual conscience, in 1917.

Against the unmoved and inconscient proprietors of the parcels of his life, what appeal has the individual? He may appeal to Caesar, to the State, but the State is controlled by the merchant princes, who are controlled by the needs of their shareholders, and the individual may himself in all innocence be one of them, devoting the best part of his savings to the creation of a system which is crushing the life out of him.47

In *The Fortune*, James Murdoch, as an embodiment of this desired consciousness, is a scarcely characterised authority, the ideal political text of the novel, but is only so by virtue of not having any social involvement; he comments on events, is unaffected by their movement, whereas Harold achieves his enlightenment too late. There is perhaps implicit in this conjunction not so much a failure of the novel to construct a plausible reality as a recognition, at the level of the text, of Goldring’s inability to incorporate a revolutionary syndicalist attitude into his own identity. In that sense, the optimistic legacy of the next generation is detached from the present, a mere gesture that mimes the writing’s inability to absorb the new conditions in which the subject comes into being.

The way in which these problems are figured in the novel calls into play the same moral contradictions as conscientious objection did in the discourses of 1916. The authority of conscience, cast as the most subjective form of consciousness, must derive from some source outside the individual, rather than merely from the interiorised social norms and conventions of a nation, as the dominant discourse would have it. In that situation it must derive from the vision of an alternative social order. As Paul Connerton puts it, a social world 'is taken to be what it is because the rules that make it what it is are intersubjectively agreed. And language has become for us the archetypal model for all other forms of intersubjectivity, because language has its roots on the one hand in the nature of formal order and on the other hand in that common implicit consent that underlies the possibility of any communication at all. 48 Where that consent is absent, as it so often was in the Tribunals, and in arguments about the purpose of the war, no organic model of its workings can be operative. Appeals to 'truth' that are not grounded in an understanding of the structuring power of conflictual discourses are merely appeals to hope, to the projection of the idea of conscience in the other, in the ideal reader. Similarly, the ideal of a contract with the reader, mediated by the market, that structured the novel form Goldring is working with, is insufficient to bear the depth of the contradictions at work in Goldring's consciousness. By rejecting modernist experiment and relying on the existence of a sufficient number of decent readers to support the project by buying the book, Goldring is courting the failure the novel unconsciously represents. There is no new language in the novel, only the right to reclaim the old language for the new age. In that sense, its thrust is entirely referential and idealist, a consequence that is particularly visible in the presentation of Peter's 'new' consciousness as one still of motherhood. Her task is to save her child

from allying himself with the old order which had broken down and shown its rottenness and to make him [...] the new man, free in heart and mind and soul, ready for the new world which would be built up out of the débris of the old (p. 351).

Goldring's prose here, as at many other points in his writings before 1923, seems to involve an implicit rejection of avant-garde discourse, both artistic or literary and political, especially that associated with women's suffrage and suffragettes. In fact it is closer, in its rhetoric of disease, degeneration and incoherence, to the tone of the British press's response to the new art movements of the pre-war period and their characterisation of suffragettes as 'people of unstable mental

equilibrium.\textsuperscript{49} That his sympathies are ostensibly revolutionary and feminist is a mark of the contradictions at work here: he was present at the inception of \textit{BLAST}, for example, although his literary sympathies lay more with James Elroy Flecker than with Pound; nonetheless he published one of the earliest pieces of sympathetic criticism of Lewis's \textit{Tarr}.

He did what he could to put his revolutionary convictions into action after his return to England, working as secretary to the pacifist M. P. Joseph King, and becoming for a while deeply involved in post-war politics. He was secretary of the 'Fight the Famine Council', set up in January 1919 to campaign against the suffering caused by the blockade against the defeated powers, particularly among children. When this merged with the Save the Children Fund later in the year, Goldring went on to become secretary of the newly-formed \textit{Clarté} group, an offshoot of the French newspaper, started by Henri Barbusse in 1919. The title derived from his novel \textit{Clarté}, which followed the anti-war propaganda of \textit{Le Feu} with a call to every survivor of the war to work to prevent a resurgence of the injustice and madness that result in, and from, war, and both the newspaper and the group were designed to be an international organisation of intellectuals to achieve that end.\textsuperscript{50} Goldring and Robert Dell\textsuperscript{51} were organisers of the London group, which by December 1919 had distributed a manifesto, and recruited a number of prominent figures to its committee, including H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Israel Zangwill, Bertrand Russell, E. D. Morel (of the U. D. C.), Siegfried Sassoon, Aldous Huxley, Miles Malleson, and Osbert Sitwell. Goldring contributed a few reports to the newspaper on activity in England (an Oxford branch was also set up, consisting largely of students) during the first four months of 1920: after that he seems to have given up; subsequent reports are written by Francis Birrell.\textsuperscript{52} Apart from this secretarial role, Goldring was deeply involved in an attempt to establish a 'People's Theatre' on the model of those already operating in Hungary, Germany and France. He had two spurs to this: in his last months in Ireland he had written a 'revolutionary' drama, \textit{The Fight for Freedom}, which he wanted to get performed; and he had been much impressed by seeing D. H. Lawrence's \textit{The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd} in Altrincham in March

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{The Times}, 1 March, 1912; cited in Janet Lyons, 'Militant Discourse, Strange Bedfellows: Suffragettes and Vorticists before the War', \textit{Differences}, 4, 2 (1992), 100-133.

\textsuperscript{50} The most detailed account of Barbusse and the movement is V. Brett, \textit{Henri Barbusse; sa marche vers la clarté, son mouvement Clarté} (Prague: Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1963).

\textsuperscript{51} Robert Dell was the \textit{Manchester Guardian}'s Paris correspondent for many years. He organised a representative selection of modern French painting in Brighton in 1910, which was the earliest introduction of the post-expressionists to an English public, and was the author of \textit{Socialism and Personal Liberty} (Leonard Parsons, 1921).

\textsuperscript{52} See \textit{Clarté}, 27 December 1919, 10 January, 21 January, 6 March and 20 March, 1920.
1920. He offered to publish Lawrence's play *Touch and Go* as the first in a series of 'Plays for a People's Theatre' which he had persuaded the pacifist publisher C. W. Daniel to issue, and asked him to write a preface for it, which Lawrence did. As a result of delays, though, Goldring's play, with its preface, was the first to be published, and Lawrence lost his enthusiasm for the project, and momentarily broke off relations with him.

*The Fight for Freedom* is set in the first week of August 1918, a period he describes in the preface as one when the outlook for Democracy [...] was indeed horrifying [but when] in spite of the 'great lie barrage', there were plenty of signs, that the plain people all over Europe were waking up to a tardy realisation of the way in which their rulers had betrayed them.

The plot is melodramatic and conventional. Margaret Lambert is a woman in crisis: her 'whole outlook on things' has altered in the last eighteen months and she feels unable to continue with her engagement to Michael Henderson, an officer in the trenches, about to return for a week's leave; she is in love with the revolutionary, Oliver Beeching, a socialist-pacifist electrical engineer. Michael's brother Philip, a senior civil servant of moderate views, loves Margaret silently; and her Aunt Eleanor is a revolutionary and campaigner for women's suffrage.

When Margaret tells Michael that she no longer loves him, he drugs her and rapes her, after which her family is all the more insistent that she should marry him. Her aunt takes her side, and Michael's mask of contrition slips as he makes a long speech 'in a frenzy of rage' in which he makes it clear he has no love for her individually, only 'for her sex'. Margaret cannot brush the incident aside in the way her revolutionary aunt counsels her to do, and is told that her enthusiasm for social revolution is not based in a comparable degree of personal

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54 See his letters to Koteliansky dated 17 July 1919: 'I have a pleasant feeling about the People's Theatre -- but take nothing to heart these days'; and 8 February 1920: 'DG sent me his *Fight for Freedom*. A nice thing for my play to be following on the heels of such a shit: especially as, since I was purported to open the series, I have got a little "Preface" on "A People's Theatre". O crotte mondaine!' *The Quest for Rananim: D. H. Lawrence's Letters to S. S. Koteliansky, 1914-1930*, ed. by G. J. Zytaruk (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970), pp. 183, 203. Lawrence continued corresponding with Goldring, however.

freedom; she rejects Oliver when he speaks up for Michael on the grounds that soldiers have to endure terrible things, and that the truly guilty are the journalists, politicians and war profiteers who have made the war last two years longer than it need have done. Michael goes insane; Philip proposes to Margaret, and Aunt Eleanor and Oliver are left on stage.

**Eleanor:** Now that the test has come [Margaret's] courage will fail her. She will never be able to cross the rubicon with you — to welcome, with you, the new world which will be built on the ruins of the old. It's no good, Oliver. We're left alone together...we shall live to see the Revolution.

**Oliver:** You best of comrades! What else really matters? They clasp hands and sing the red flag.

The two contrasting positions on the role of women echo the debates of the war years. Writing in the *Cambridge Magazine* in 1916, an unnamed contributor (probably the editor, C. K. Ogden) cites Max Pemberton as writing elsewhere (obviously motivated by fears about the declining birth-rate as well as fantasies about the pleasures of sacrifice) that '[f]or some of us there is no more ennobling thought than that of the child-wife caught to a man's heart upon the threshold of the valley of death, and there held in that moment of ecstasy which shall never be forgotten,'56 a sentiment that was representative of its ideology in phrasing and substance. It bears out the contention of Helena Swanwick, suffragist and pacifist, that '[i]n military states, women must always, to a greater or less degree, be deprived of liberty, security, scope, and initiative,' and that 'if destructive force is to continue to dominate the world, then man must continue to dominate woman, to his and her lasting injury.'57 Aunt Eleanor accuses the representatives of Church and family of wanting 'the virtue of our girls' sacrificed on the altar of their 'false gods', as well as 'the blood of our boys'. But Margaret does not escape her criticism either. 'What good can [the social revolution] do you, if you can't free yourself first?' her aunt demands, in a paradoxical summary of the play's problematic. Women's freedom remains unaddressed, save by its circumstantial referents. Women can either be sexual or free; the socialist feminist is an 'aunt', an adrogynous figure unininvolved in what is elsewhere taken to be her sex's biological destiny. The play merely uses a conventional vision of feminity to attack militarism for its violation of the individual. Oliver's characterisation of Eleanor as the 'best of comrades' rings emptily after that. In the preface, Goldring describes Margaret as typical of the 'essential frivolity' of the English 'intelligentzia' and predicts that 'it is those who, when that red dawn really breaks for which they profess to be sighing, will be the first to cry out in alarm'.

But the play itself belies the rhetoric. If Margaret embodies the uncertainty Goldring feels about England, whose violation and reconstitution is the ground of his intellectual dynamic, there is also a degree of misogyny underlying his evocation of freedom.

Reviewing The Fight For Freedom in Clarté, 'Olivier' called it 'un drame d'une portée et d'une opulence précieuses,' and 'une oeuvre dont la traduction s'impose, pour l'honneur de notre internationalisme.' The play was translated into Hungarian and German, and successfully performed in Budapest at least (and possibly also in Berlin and Paris), but has never been staged in Britain. Goldring abandoned The People's Theatre Society after Harold Scott and the rest of the committee refused to stage Lawrence's Mrs. Holroyd. Perhaps in recompense for this, he dedicated his next novel, the last of his political novels, The Black Curtain, to Lawrence.

In this novel, Goldring attempts to address the problem he was unable to resolve in the two earlier works, uniting ideals within a single female character, a suffragette and a militant member of the Workers' Peace Federation, and introducing a professional Russian revolutionary to take the place of the syndicalists. The main male character, Philip, is a cipher for the author, turned down for active service because of his health, and with his outlook radically changed as a result of reading a paragraph in Galsworthy's The Patrician.

Ignorant of the facts, hypnotised by the words 'country' and 'patriotism'—in the grip of mob-instinct and inborn prejudice against the foreigner, helpless by reason of his patience, stoicism, good faith, and confidence in those above him; helpless by reason of his snobbery, mutual distrust, carelessness for the morrow, and lack of public spirit—in the face of war how impotent and to be pitied is the man in the street!

Looking back to the Boer War, he studies the 'lying, the cupidity, the corruption, the hideous vulgarity and cruelty displayed in England during those black years of a drunken and blustering Imperialism' (p. 130), and gradually, over a period

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58 Clarté (7 February, 1920), 4. I have not discovered a French translation, however.
59 The German text (which precedes the first English publication in November 1919) was published in Die weissen Blätter, a Berlin socialist periodical edited by René Schickele, the socialist-pacifist organiser of the Clarté group in Germany (and a playwright admired by Joyce), where it appeared alongside work by Ernst Bloch, Barbusse, Becher, Toller and other distinguished names (see the issues for May, June and July, 1919).
60 It seems to have gone largely unnoticed after its publication: Lawrence wrote from Naples on 3 January 1920, 'Why the devil did the reviewers ignore your play? Could you send me a copy? I might get the Times to come in, at this late hour.' (Cited in Odd Man Out, p. 258).
61 The novel had been published by Heinemann in 1911.
of months, comes to recognise that nothing has changed, and 'the plebs were guiltless [...] The few had betrayed and exploited the many' (p. 137). Through a series of encounters with characters at the margins of society, from Ivan Smirnoff the Russian revolutionary to Lord Midhurst, the improbable peer who reads Stirner's Der Einzige und sein Eigentum and quotes James Fintan Lalor on Irish freedom, Philip's new beliefs are strengthened. Conscription is about to be introduced, and he feels choked by 'the proximity of "patriots"' (p. 172) and identifies with the small group of artisans and discredited fanatics calling for peace. 'Who would look after the interests of the soldiers and their families when at last the war ended, except the "pacifists" and the Labour Party?' he asks himself. 'On both sides the more prosperous civilians were "combing out" the less prosperous to maintain the flow of sacrificial blood' (pp. 174-75).

The concern for the aftermath of war develops a concern for heritage and an idea of Englishness which is present in a more latent form in the earlier writing, and which becomes the dominant note in his later non-fiction. England 'has been submerged, but [...] has never sold its soul in bondage to the evil one' (p. 175), and its qualities are embodied in the heroine, Anne, just as Peter, in The Fortune, transmits the same decencies to her son (Irishness there representing Englishness; being, as it were, its guardian). Philip deliberately sets out in search of 'the real England', first as a war correspondent in France, where his copy is constantly censored, and then, returning to England after the Russian Revolution, as one of 'the rank and file of the revolutionary army' (p. 176). Towards the end of the novel, Anne, now married to Philip and pregnant, is arrested after organising a peace meeting in the last weeks of the war, refused bail although she is ill, and committed to prison. By using his former social contacts, Philip is able to arrange bail for her, but when he arrives at the prison (with Armistice celebrations in the streets outside) he finds Anne dying after giving premature birth to a stillborn child. Once more, the culturally overdetermined imperatives of melodramatic narrative closure win out over the political credo: the desired future denies the affective present; Anne has transgressed her womanhood and has to be sacrificed for an iconic new dawn. The only salvation the novel promises after this is a neo-imperialist vision of an anti-imperialist salvation, as the Russian and the Englishman contemplate the end of the night together.

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63 This is a quality he recognized in Gilbert Cannan's work. In his essay on 'Three Georgian Novelists' he wrote that 'his voice is an English voice, and he has it in him to render articulate much that is most truly and most deeply English in current thought', 'Three Georgian Novelists', III, The Egoist, (March-April 1919), 30; the essay is reprinted in Reputations (Chapman & Hall, 1920), pp. 39-63.
Again, utopian expressionism fails to mask the real moral focus of the novel, and functions as an anodyne diffusal of the violence which the enactment of its revelations might, in some other work, provoke. All three works are essentially liberal in their values, as in their textual procedures; they bespeak an ideal social system in which what Goldring takes already to exist as a community of language will be purged of misrepresentation by hypocritical, self-interested or corrupt appropriators of that language in a perfect lexical democracy.

The problematic enacted in this period of Goldring's work is the desire to persuade the reader, and thus society as a whole, to accept that the marginal experience of conscientious objectors, revolutionaries, feminists and nationalists is the guarantor of a social and linguistic tradition that needs to be reclaimed: nothing in his style leads him to question whether the behaviour demonstrated by the extremity of war might not be more deeply rooted in all of us, might be more than aberrant subservience to a warped social and economic ethic.64

Goldring thus rejects the view expressed by Lawrence in Kangaroo that 'the world was lost' at home in the winter of 1915-1916, when the 'integrity of London collapsed, and the genuine debasement began.'65 Lawrence was not a C. O., but refused to have anything to do with the war, particularly with any form of compulsion; he and Frieda (because she was German) were subjected to constant surveillance, although Lawrence himself was medically exempt. He argued that 'No man who has really consciously lived through this can believe again absolutely in democracy.'66 Goldring's case is the reverse. But what Lawrence, in his hatred and refusal of everything connected with war, registers most effectively is the extent to which all those who did not conform were the object of a hostile gaze, a humiliating surveillance, by the officers of Tribunals, in medical examinations, by the police and the army, and by ordinary, suspicious people. Goldring is not concerned with this aspect of the phenomenology of dissent; but it is a significant feature in the other text I want to look at here, John Rodker's Memoirs of Other Fronts.67

64 Indeed, it might be argued, as Leo Bersani does of Lawrence, that the struggle to imagine new styles of being is prejudiced from the very start by an attachment to old modes of expression. Leo Bersani, The Future of Astyanax (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976; Boyars, 1978), p. 184). My contention, though, is that Goldring is in fact less interested in 'new styles of being' than in a rediscovery of (possibly mythical) old styles of being in a new world; in social, not ontological, reform.

65 Kangaroo (Heinemann, [1923]; Phoenix Edition, 1955), Chapter 12, 'The Nightmare', p. 220. This chapter is an interpolation in the novel, based very closely on Lawrence's experiences during the war; the description immediately following, of London as 'a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors' echoes Mary Butts's words in Ashe of Rings (see below, Chapter 5).

66 Kangaroo, p. 220.

67 Memoirs of Other Fronts (Putnam, 1932) was published anonymously, after a lengthy compositional history. Its structure is complex, interweaving narratives derived from two separate periods of Rodker's post-war life in France and England with his experiences as an
As its title suggests, Rodker's book uses the distances of memory and displacement as a central formal strategy, an aspect perhaps intensified by anonymous publication. It is a narrative of the criminalisation of a man who is already a stranger in his own country, desperately uninvolved in the war, yet caught up in the crises it precipitated. The psychology of these circumstances predates the war, and is evidenced in his early poems about which he later wrote: 'when I wrote poetry, I was, as it were, hanging in the void, and these poems are my effort to establish contact,'68 but although this psychological interest is central to the later narrative, it is set within an introspective narrative of the psychological and cultural dynamics of war. The section I am concerned with here69 opens early in 1916, evoking a rather different atmosphere to those described by Lawrence or by Goldring, but focusing like them on the curiously displaced condition of life in London among those who had not been called up. From the illustrations of the dominant wartime ideological attitude already cited in this chapter, it is clear that men of military age who either would not or did not join the armed forces were regarded as in some sense not men; pacifism met with the same hostility as was revealed in misogyny and anti-semitism, and aroused comparable unconscious fears. (The conventionally romantic plotting of Goldring's novels might be read as a way of evading engagement with this.) This is the note on which Rodker begins.

Manhood, 'that mould which should have cohered us all was herded into barracks, into war' and so 'that period, like a man "gelded" carried on, aware its most central member lacked it, all its virility segregated, cut off, projected somewhere else' (p. 77). Rodker and those like him 'would not be involved [...] Instead we drank ourselves C3, drugged, fornicated, turned night into day, violently, desperately, anything to destroy ourselves rather than be involved' (p. 78). The discourse of Rodker's memory is psycho-analytically aware, emotion recollected in dereliction and reconstituted with a high degree of textual sophistication. Two strands coexist, the narrative and analysis of his relationship with 'Muriel',70 and the account of his imprisonments and escapes and his final term in Dartmoor Prison (euphemistically renamed the Princetown Work Centre by the parliamentary Bryce Committee) after being 'deemed to be a deserter'.

anarchist-socialist C. O. during the war. The central section, 'A C. O.'s War 1914-1925' was the first to be written, originating in a long poem of 1917-18. One section of it was published in Paris, in a French translation in 1926 (John Rodker, Dartmoor, trans. by Ludmila Savitsky (Paris: Simeon Kim, Editions du Sagittaire, 1926)). I return to a discussion of the book as a whole in Chapter 4.
69 It is the longest section of the book, pp. 77-212.
70 In fact Mary Butts, his first wife, who later shared a house with Douglas Goldring. See Chapter 5.
each illuminating the other, and one experience finally destroying the other. He escapes from prison six months before the end of the war, and goes back to Muriel. Once peace is declared, however, and he is officially discharged 'no longer an outcast, no longer in opposition', he is unable to abandon the need for antagonism and turns it against her. 'I had been passive after my one active refusal, and here too I was passive and I began to want her to be and consider her to be something that would shore me up' (p. 206).

This passivity is something absent in Goldring’s accounts, fuelled as they are with satirical and propagandist energy deriving from an unambiguous, if imprecise, sense of the injustice and madness of the war. Looking back in 1935, Rodker was sufficiently detached to recognise pacifism as 'a part, and a necessary part, of the institution of war [...] By refusing to fight "to save civilisation" we did something to help to preserve it; while they, fighting for civilisation, did their little towards breaking it up.'71 In *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, though, he is equally concerned to delineate the weariness, strangeness and absurdity of his position. When he is arrested in the late spring of 1917 he welcomes it 'as at last releasing [him] from a strain of isolation which must by then have been becoming unbearable' (p. 110), but his first night in a police cell is just as isolated, 'such a long way from the warm bed of my girl' (p. 112). It is between these two senses of isolation that the narrative dynamic operates. His Tribunal rejects his appeal and he is sent, as a deserter, to a regimental camp, where he 'wanted passionately to be equal with the men' but instead refuses to obey orders, drifts round the camp alone, a 'pariah', terrified, awaiting his court-martial. He sums up this state of mind as follows:

> as I say, I was alone, and it is painful, almost impossible to pit your will against a crowd's when you—and all your instincts—fear it will, and want it to fall on you, trample you into nothing (p. 117).

Clearly there is something more potent at work here than just a desire to conform, however complicated; some light may be cast on this intensity of feeling, and on the phenomenon of the C. O.s and their treatment in general, by an essay of Marie Bonaparte's (which Rodker was to translate twenty years later), in which she suggests, that

> the fact of being called up, dedicated to the dangers of war and death, have suddenly transformed the hitherto commonplace citizen into someone sacred: in receiving his call-up or reading the

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71 John Rodker, 'Twenty Years After', in *We Did Not Fight*, p. 285.
poster mobilising his group, the aura of the 'sacred' begins to invest him.\textsuperscript{72}

This sacralisation is equivalent to what Sanskrit texts call the entry into the sacrifice, in which the victim is both an offering and a messenger to the gods. It could thus be argued that those who refuse the sacrifice themselves become a ritual sacrifice, become scapegoats to be sacrificed on behalf of the 'innocent' sacrificial victims of the war. The rhetoric of the 'retired soldiers, tradesmen and professional men, all over age'\textsuperscript{73} who composed the Tribunals provides ample support for this view, as do the punishments imposed on the 'non-men' who came before them, who were, so to speak, castrated by the deprivations they were subjected to—solitary confinement, prohibition of speech and communication, inability to exercise their social function, and so on. And the C. O.s took on this role themselves, through their constant refusal to obey orders and, in the more extreme cases (Rodker included) by going on hunger-strike. It is in their acceptance of sacrifice that the C. O.s attest their brotherhood with those who fought, proclaim not their difference but their essential similarity with them; and it is this similarity which calls forth the persecution and sadistic mistreatment they received.

Even in the most closed cultures men believe they are free and open to the universal; their differential character makes the narrowest of cultural fields seem inexhaustible from within. Anything that compromises this illusion terrifies us and stirs up the immemorial tendency to persecution. This tendency always takes the same direction, it is embodied by the same stereotypes and always responds to the same threat. Despite what is said around us persecutors are never obsessed by difference but rather by its unutterable contrary, the lack of difference.\textsuperscript{74}

This lack of difference emerges clearly from Rodker's scrupulous and painful account of his time in prison. The self-analytical mode is a counterpart of the constant surveillance there, a microcosm of the war in which men die through doctors' neglect or, in one harrowing case, as a result of callous and brutal force-feeding. One achievement of his book is his refusal to see the war as something separate from our every-day living on the Home Front: I mean the family, the intense dynamic repercussions of the family, erupting at all points

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} Rodker, \textit{Memoirs of Other Fronts}, p. 111.
\item \textsuperscript{74} René Girard, \textit{The Scapegoat}, trans. by Yvonne Freccero (Athlone Press, 1986), p. 22.
\end{itemize}
in suppressed murder, rape and every root of every crime, and virtue too of course (p. 195).

and in his recognition that when war comes again, 'forgetting the horrors of the past, the horror we so acutely feel to-day, we will rush forth again [...] and I shall be a pacifist again and hate myself for it' (pp. 196-97).

Just as Rodker's autobiographical focus reflects the gaze of the State, so that he sees himself politically and historically—'turned into a woman, shut in a close cell [...] kept shut up in revenge because I would not take their risks, as women were till lately shut up in revenge' (p. 198)—as well as introspectively, so the distance of memory reaffirms the extent of his isolation. Under Lawrence's influence Goldring too, in his later novels, his 'years of chaos' trilogy as Ethel Mannin calls them,75 abandons the gesture towards collectivity that underwrites his 'Red Dawn' rhetoric of revolutionary utopianism: but both writers are permanently marked by their opposition to the State in 1916. Goldring eventually becomes a permanently unsettled left-wing, non-party, English tory anarchist, an anti-fascist defender of an England fast becoming imaginary in a world of international capitalism: the ideals of The Tramp continue through his life. The trajectory of Rodker's work forms the substance of the next two chapters.

75 Ethel Mannin, Confessions and Impressions, (Jarrold, 1932), p. 141.
Chapter 3  John Rodker

Mr. Rodker is up-to-the-minute, if anyone is; we feel sure that he knows all about hormones, W. H. R. Rivers, and the Mongol in our midst.¹

Whitechapel Jew

Writing the obituary of John Rodker for the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, Marie Bonaparte recalled meeting him for the first time, in 1939, 'in the house of Freud'.² The location (and the locution) are an appropriate point to begin a consideration of Rodker's distinctive contribution to the cultures of modernism, as he was the only member of the generation of early modernism whose trajectory led him to psycho-analysis, not only as an interested party, but as something integral to his writing practice. It is not only where he ended up that is unusual—his starting point was the overcrowded streets of Whitechapel, with limited secondary schooling, and work as a boy-clerk in the Civil Service from the age of fourteen. The itinerary that led from the East End to modernism and thence to psycho-analysis and an approach to writing informed by it will be the subject of this chapter.

Forty years earlier, in 1915, Alfred Kreymborg devoted an issue of his journal Others to 'The Choric School'—Rodker, Kathleen Dillon and Hester Sainsbury—to which Pound contributed an introduction in which he introduced Rodker as '[telling] me that he is 21 [and has] no history to speak of': the complexities of his upbringing would seem therefore to have been subsumed into an invented identity, at home in the avant-garde but forbidden to articulate his past.³ He springs fully-fledged ('21') into a presence within the transatlantic little-magazine culture of the war years, self-reliant but also vulnerable to attack from more socially secure figures, like Lewis or Aldington, in whose eyes his 'vulgarity' and lack of tradition render him shady and untrustworthy. Lewis indeed was to caricature him as Ratner in The Apes of God precisely as a 'highbrow sub-sheik of...
the slum [...] the eternal imitation person [...] whose ambition led him to burgle all the books of Western romance to steal their heroes' expensive outfits'. Rodker was not alone in this self-creation, though: others of his Whitechapel circle were doing the same thing. Of Isaac Rosenberg, Adam Phillips writes: 'Like all great self-inventors and visionaries, he wanted to create his own genealogy, to make his own connections; reinventing the past to make possible a new kind of future', and passed through the optic of Pound's sensibility, Rosenberg's work elicited the following comment. 'He has something in him, horribly rough but then "Stepney East" [...] we ought to have a real burglar [...] ma che!' For both Pound and Lewis, the connection between Rodker's and Rosenberg's class (and 'racial') origins and their uncertain command of literary tradition is figured as a disruption of property relations: both are 'burglars', rather than inheritors of their individual talents.

Nonetheless Pound in the article in Others commends Rodker's talent, as he was to do insistently, if intermittently, thereafter, claiming even that he started his magazine The Exile (1927-28) solely in order to publish Adolphe 1920. He clearly approved of his self-education and probably also of his relative freedom from the prejudices of any particular class origin; certainly his dealings with Rodker were never distorted by the kind of anti-semitism that Lewis displayed. In a letter to Margaret Anderson, for example, he defended his choice of some pieces by Rodker and Iris Barry for The Little Review:

I stake my critical position, or some part of it, on a belief that both of them will do something [...] Rodker has convinced me at last, that that he "has it in him" [...] He will go farther than Richard [Aldington], though I dont expect anyone to believe that statement for some time. He has more invention, more guts. His father did not have a library full of classics, but he will learn. He is in the midst of his tribulations.

He develops a parallel with Ford Madox Ford's discovery of D. H. Lawrence, adding that 'They are neither of them STUPID, blockheaded as Flint and Lawrence are stupid and blockhead[ed].' Nine months later, he writes 'J. R. is I

5 Adam Phillips, 'Isaac Rosenberg's English' in On Flirtation (Faber, 1994) p. 178.
7 Letter from Dorothy Pound to Rodker, 23 July 1946: "...Exile" by E.P. which you may remember was started chiefly to print yr Adolphe.' (HRHRC, Rodker Collection, Folder 15).
8 His 'tribulations', as the word must have been meant to suggest, involved his arrest by the military authorities, the rejection by the Tribunal of his plea of conscientious objection, and the string of subsequent periods of imprisonment and escape narrated in his Memoirs of Other Fronts.
think going to justify his existence. At any rate he is all "les jeunes" there are."9 Pound's comment on the absence of a library throws into sharp relief the different processes by which they achieved their education and their different relations to cultural capital; Rodker's silence about his past included an element of shame at the effort that his had cost him. But his silence also led him to an autobiographical and psychological mode of writing, markedly different from anything achieved by his contemporaries.

The skeletal outline of Rodker's early life that Marie Bonaparte provides in that obituary tells us a little more about the milieu from which he came. Born to immigrant parents in Manchester, on 18 September 1894, he was brought to London at the age of six, 'where he went to school and at the same time helped his father, who kept a corset shop in the East End. He left school at the age of fourteen, but his thirst for knowledge led him to attend evening classes, at which he learned French and German, as well as the rudiments of science.'10 He was one of a remarkable group of East End children of Jewish immigrants that included Rosenberg (born in Bristol11), Mark Gertler, Joseph Leftwich, Aaronson, Fineberg, and David Bomberg (born in Birmingham).12

The one detailed and reliable source for our knowledge of Rodker at this early period of his life is the diary that his close friend Joseph Leftwich kept for the year 1911.13 This invaluable record of an adolescent friendship between Leftwich, Winsten,14 Rodker and Rosenberg offers an intricately detailed account of the fabric of their lives and aspirations, as seen through the eyes of the self-consciously serious Leftwich. And the backdrop to it is a meticulous quotidian narrative of social and cultural exploration and uncertainty: although they occupy a social and family milieu that is almost entirely Jewish, this group of

9 Pound/The Little Review. The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence, ed. by Thomas L. Scott, Melvin J. Friedman, with the assistance of Jackson R. Bryer (Faber, 1989), pp. 62-4, 214; seventeen months earlier, Pound wrote to Alice Corbin Henderson, co-editor of the Little Review, in similar terms: "I wish Rodker wouldn't write about things being "frable", all these damn cockneys will do th[at] sort of thing, emphasis on a word with no lineage, a word that might just as well be twenty other words.' Here the elision between Rodker's lack of 'lineage' and that of his vocabulary makes the point even more unambiguously. (Ira B. Nadel, The Letters of Ezra Pound And Alice Corbin Henderson (Austin, Texas: HRHRC, 1993), p. 128 (letter dated 24 January 1916).
10 Bonaparte, op. cit., 200.
13 The original forms part of the Leftwich papers in the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; photocopies are deposited in Tower Hamlets Public Library and the Imperial War Museum. It fills 168 closely-written pages. (Subsequent references will be given in the text as JL and date of entry.)
14 Samuel Winsten, poet, journalist and Shawian commentator. Author of Chains (C.W. Daniel, 1920), a volume of poems deriving from his experiences as a Conscientious Objector during the First World War.
young men in their late teens use all their spare time to discover and absorb the secular cultures of early twentieth-century London: they write (essays, a collaborative novel, poems, plays) and they read, they go to the theatre and to concerts, they look at pictures, they read or discuss Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, Dostoevsky, Gorki, Chesterton, Rossetti, Keats, Shelley, Carlyle, Wells, Shaw, Shakespeare, Gray, Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson, Henley, Swinburne, Nordau, Birrel, and Lascelles Abercrombie. They also read periodicals, newspapers and the Left press—The Labour Leader, The Clarion, Justice. But the Jewish background is always there too, especially for Leftwich: for example, in November, Jimmy\(^{15}\) and Leftwich went to the Jewish Working Mens' Club in Alie Street to see an amateur performance of Ibsen's Ghosts in Yiddish; Leftwich enthused about the emotional intensity of the production: but his disapproving description of the largely uninterested audience is a far cry from Rodker's account of the audience for the Jewish Theatre two years later.

The theatre, perhaps even more than poetry, seems to have been the focus of their literary interest, at least for Rodker and Leftwich: and although for Rosenberg, as Leftwich notes, '[p]oetry is his obsession—not literature, but essentially distinctively poetry', he is also interested in poetic drama, 'with the drama only as the vehicle for poetic expression' (JL: 12 February). Appropriately enough, the first poem Leftwich writes, called 'Death', begins with the line 'Have you ever been to a theatre' (JL: 24 May). Rodker, like Rosenberg, was already writing poetry by the beginning of 1911, but by July that year he had also written a play, which Leftwich listened to with mixed feelings. It concerned 'a painter, his betrothed, her brother, her mother, and a woman of the street'; Leftwich comments: 'Jimmy introduces a lot of propagandist stuff into his dialogue—evil conditions in workshop which compel girls to go on the streets to earn livelihood' and reflects that 'Jimmy is developing very curious ideas lately on sex morality—He argues in favour of laxity [...] And he talks much about the New Art in the Theatre and in painting. I wonder where he has got all this from. It seems all so erotic, so hectic, so unballanced [sic]' (JL: 24 July).\(^{16}\)

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\(^{15}\) Rodker was usually known to his friends as Jimmy, sometimes as Johnny, although he continued to present himself publicly as John. He had also used the name Jack. (This not uncommon variety is one of the synecdochic aspects of Ratner's personality that Lewis makes play of in The Apes of God.)

\(^{16}\) Leftwich's anxiety about sexual 'laxity' is not merely adolescent priggishness. 'Fears about degeneracy and physical deterioration were the expression of an attempt to make sense of the mysterious and often terrifying phenomena of mass urban and industrial concentration and the apparent estrangement of large sectors of society from their 'natural' roots [...] In particular, venereal disease [...] became a focus for many psychological fears of the fin de siècle [...] Thus 'purity' and 'pollution'—and all the widely ramifying fears that followed from these concepts—were no mere anthropological abstractions: they were inexorable facts of everyday life in the encircling urban and industrial world.' Jose Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1914 (Penguin, 1994), p. 55.
Rodker was evidently reading widely in whatever literary and art periodicals he could get hold of, but he must also have talked with David Bomberg and Mark Gertler, who had a studio in Commercial Street where they would gather to discuss painting. According to Leftwich, Bomberg was 'becoming very "blasty"—pugnacious is too mild a word. He wanted to dynamite the whole of English painting.' Leftwich's mildly censorious comments about Rodker's enthusiasms was written a couple of weeks before a Y. S. L. meeting at which Frank Rutter, author of a recent book entitled *Revolution in Art*, was to address them on the subject of 'Art and Socialism'. In the event, however, he talked about the New Art Club instead, and the audience of nine was ostentatiously uninterested, much to the distress of Rodker who, as Secretary and organiser of the Stepney Y. S. L., was in the chair (JL: 4 August). Embarrassing though this may have been however it hardly qualifies as 'erotic' or 'unbalanced', terms which reflect a contemporary imbrication of sexuality and the practices of avant-garde art, more deeply rooted than the apparent rationality of Ibsenism and Fabianism.

Leftwich's anxiety over Rodker's 'morbid' and 'macabre' interest in sexuality also reflects his own more equable relation with his parents and the legacy of Judaism. His family and its circle were more exclusively Jewish than was Rodker's (which seems to have been effectively non-observant), so much so that they had difficulty finding four English witnesses to his father's naturalisation papers, and although he occasionally skived off synagogue, his sense of his own identity was primarily and unquestioningly Jewish. They were all aware of the anti-semitism that pervaded English culture, but as Leftwich pondered the recent anti-Jewish riots in South Wales (blamed by *The Times* on 'Jewish profiteers') his response was to move away from revolutionary socialism towards Zionism: 'There is plenty of anti-Jewish feeling in England. Even Socialism is no cure—Hyndman and Blatchford and Quelch and Victor Fisher are all anti-Semites. So are all the non-Jewish members of the Stepney Socialist Club' (JL: 29 August). Rodker meanwhile was firmly ensconced in the Y. S. L. and using it as a platform for his recently-acquired ideas about the New Art. This division in their approaches became completely clear by 1915, as can be seen from poems by Leftwich such as 'In the Street' and 'The Jew (I)' in which his sense of his own identity is placed unequivocally within a Jewish tradition. By 1917 he was

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18 Young Socialist League.
19 This is a persistent theme throughout the year of the diary. On 12 January Leftwich writes: 'Mrs.Weinstein [Winsten] is upset about the Sidney Street affair. The press has been agitating that the members of the band were Jews, and that all Jews should therefore be expelled from England. She is afraid of being sent back to Russia.'
writing in *The New Age* that 'Assimilation means being eaten up, being swallowed up by another organism; it means self-extinction.'

Rodker's commitment to the Y. S. L. was less wavering than Leftwich's. It was Lazarus Aaronson who 'converted' him to socialism, but it was Joe Fineberg who was the most politically active of Rodker's friends, and who encouraged him to stand for offices such as Secretary of the local branch, or Vice-Chairman of the London District Y. S. L., responsibilities that Rodker took seriously. Fineberg was older than Rodker by some seven or eight years and already a politically experienced member of the S. D. F. (Leftwich describes him addressing an open-air meeting outside his front door). He was Secretary of the Stepney and Whitechapel Branch and in that capacity wrote a letter of protest to *Justice*, complaining about anti-semitism in the Party. Rodker's step-mother was also 'a suffragette heart and soul' (JL: 4 March), which suggests that politics were discussed at home, as well as with his friends. 1911 was a high-point of the pre-war years of mass strikes and radicalism which 'challenged the legitimacy of the British state', much of the social life of the young people in the diary already involved either the Socialist Club in Jubilee Street or participation in meetings, discussions and lectures of one sort or another, but 1911 brought the additional excitements of the Sidney Street siege, the Bethnal Green by-election (with rival open-air meetings, suffrage vans, and Chesterton and Belloc campaigning alongside Rodker and the rest for the socialist candidate, in the hope of defeating

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20 Joseph Leftwich, *Along the Years. Poems: 1911-1937* (Anscombe, 1937), pp. 61, 63. He did not abandon socialism completely though; and his poems were first printed in Fenner Brockway's *Labour Leader* in the early part of the war.

21 Leftwich, 'Jews and Assimilation', *The New Age* 21, 8 (21 June, 1917) 177-78.

22 JL: 19 January; Aaronson went on to publish three volumes of poems: *Christ in the Synagogue* (Gollancz, 1930), and *Poems* (Gollancz, 1933), *The Homeward Journey and Other Poems* (Christophers, 1946). For a perceptive discussion of his poems in relation to Rosenberg's and Abrahams', see Edouard Roditi, 'Judaism and Poetry', *The Jewish Review*, 1, 3 (September-December 1932), 39-50.

23 Brought to England from Poland at the age of eighteen months, Fineberg worked in the tailoring industry. He was elected to the Executive of the British Socialist Party in 1914 as an opponent of the war, and worked for a while, after the Russian Revolution, as secretary to Maxim Litvinov (see below, note 32) when he was unofficial Soviet representative in Britain. After his return to Russia in 1918, Fineberg was involved in the foundation of the Communist International. (See Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 32, 82 and 328n.)

24 Jose Harris, *Private Lives*, p. 55.

25 Next door to Rodker's house, this club had been set up by a committee headed by Rudolf Rocker in 1906. It contained meetings rooms, classrooms, a library, and a hall; the printing works for the Anarchist paper *Arbayer Fraynd* were next door. 'Anyone could use our library and reading room, or join our educational classes, without being asked for a membership card.' (Rudolf Rocker, *The London Years*, trans. by Joseph Leftwich (Anscombe, 1956)); 'Much of the cultural activity [...] centred on the stage.' Rocker often lectured, on one occasion, for example, giving a commentary on Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* (William J. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals, 1875-1914* (Duckworth, 1975), p. 265.)
Masterman), and a transport strike that came close to being a General Strike in August, with troops billeted in Victoria Park.

One of Rodker's enduring concerns is with his status as a subject and the apparent futility of his search for full human citizenship, and this too has its roots in his experience of growing up in Whitechapel. The differing, even fragmented, positions of these young Whitechapel intellectuals accurately mirrors the weakness of orthodox Jewish community in the East End by the pre-war years, with education again being close to the heart of cultural change. 'In London, in comparison to the legal powers and financial resources available to day schools, which aimed to turn the immigrants' children into "good English subjects", the resources of the Jewish synagogues and educational ventures were puny.' But as David Feldman demonstrates, 1911 was a significant year for yet another reason, as it saw the granting of National Insurance to immigrant aliens who were members of approved benefit societies. The importance of this lay in the extension of the concept of citizenship which it conceded, which, Feldman argues, 'was due to their appropriation of an image of the national community which suggested that aliens were, de facto, citizens.' Culturally, though, a profound uncertainty remained, which must have made the literary and theatrical avant-garde, with its violently oppositional stance to the status quo, attractive groups to identify with. Thus through his friendship with Bomberg, his interest in Symbolism and French poetry, enthusiasm for Futurism, and his connections with dance and the theatre, he tried to stake out the ground of a new identity, a project that was to be further complicated by his refusal, in 1916, to have anything to do with the conduct of the war.

A significant presence in North and East London during the years when Rodker was looking for ways out of Whitechapel was the network of artists, politicians and intellectuals around Dr. David Eder, which constituted something like a more radical Bloomsbury Group. Eder was a pioneering doctor, psycho-analyst, socialist and Zionist, who died in 1936, aged seventy. He travelled extensively for years before settling down to a medical career in London in 1905. As a student he had been secretary of the Bloomsbury branch of William Morris's Socialist League; he had been in South Africa, had been involved in revolution in the Andes, and travelled three thousand miles up the Amazon: now he became a founder member of the London Labour Party, and continued the work he had begun earlier, in the I. L. P., on child health and school hygiene, starting the first

27 See his 'The "New" Movement in Art,' The Dial Monthly, 1, 5 (May 1914), 184-188.
School Clinic in Devon Road, Poplar. When the London Psycho-Analytical Society was founded in 1913, with Ernest Jones as President, Eder was its first Secretary. His interest in Zionism and his family connections (his cousin was Israel Zangwill) strengthened his connections with the immigrant community in Whitechapel and the East End, and he regularly encouraged young Jewish writers and artists, as Rosenberg, for example, records in a letter of 1912. He was a regular contributor to A. R. Orage's *New Age*, and a leading member of the Fabian Society, and his salon in the years before the war included established figures like Shaw, Orage and Wells alongside younger figures such as Dr. Harry Roberts, Dorothy Richardson, F. S. Flint, and the historian Lewis Namier (at this point at the L. S. E.). His wife, Edith, a former lover of H. G. Wells, had previously been married to Leslie Haden-Guest, of the L. C. C. (later a Labour M. P.), and was the sister of Barbara Low, another of the earliest advocates of psycho-analysis in Britain. Their niece Ivy Low married another member of the Eder circle, the Russian revolutionary Maxim Litvinov, who lived in London for ten years, from 1908 to 1918. It was through Ivy, a novelist, that both Eder and Barbara Low met D. H. Lawrence, who became briefly interested in Zionism and discussed psycho-analysis with both of them (although he characterised her as 'a chattering Jewish magpie').

Rodker certainly knew Barbara Low by 1914, when he inscribed a copy of his *Poems* to her, and may well have met her earlier, through Eder. (She became his analyst some time in the late 1920s and remained a life-long friend and a collaborator on the Imago Press.) Several factors may have prompted Rodker's

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28 Eder probably met Rosenberg at another important meeting place, the studio of the artist J.H.Amschewitz. See *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg*, ed. by Ian Parsons, with a foreword by Siegfried Sassoon (Chatto & Windus, 1979), pp. 184, 187. For details about Amschewitz, see p. 44n. Another patron of Rosenberg's was the portrait painter Solomon J. Solomon, who painted among others Louis Montagu, second Baron Swaythling, cousin of Carmel Haden-Guest (see below note 30). See Ivor Montagu, *The Youngest Son: autobiographical sketches* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), plate [2]. Another connection comes through the Whitechapel M. P. Stuart Samuel, who was Samuel Montagu's nephew.

29 See Chapter 2.

30 Haden-Guest's second wife, Carmel, née Montagu, was another generous Jewish patron and activist; her first novel, *Children of the Fog*, is set in the Southwark slums.

31 Low was a founder member of the British Psycho-analytic Society, and until Melanie Klein arrived in England in 1926, she and Eder were the only Jewish members. (See *The Freud/Klein Controversies 1941-45*, ed. by Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner (London; New York: Tavistock, Routledge, 1991), p. xvii.)

32 Litvinov probably first met Eder through a Charlotte Street connection: Eder's consulting rooms in Charlotte Street were next door to the building occupied by the Herzen Club of Russian political exiles, many of whom he treated free of charge. Other Russian exiles in the Eder circle included Maisky, Chicherin and Rothstein. See John Carswell, *The Exile. A Life of Ivy Litvinov* (Faber, 1983), p. 46 and note, 63, 67. 'Ivy's first young man' was Edmund Kapp, who contributed occasional caricatures and poems to *The Egoist* (Carswell p. 69).

33 Carswell, p. 76.

34 Copy now in HRHRC, Austin, Texas.
early interest in the new discipline of psycho-analysis: his own character, as Leftwich notes frequently in his Diary, appeared variously 'morbid' (JL: 12Feb), 'hypersensitive' (JL: 15 May) and liable to 'malaise' (JL: 13 April), and his introspection reflected his dual interests in biology and literature; his brother was in an asylum for the care of the 'feeble-minded' (JL: 5 July); and he was deeply interested in the relations between mental states and action. He may also have read Eder's 1912 articles in the *Daily Herald* fulminating against the lack of understanding of the mind in England, citing as two of the very few exceptions Bernard Hart and Ernst Jones:35 certainly he is likely to have heard the same from Eder himself.36 Rodker probably saw Barbara Low from time to time during the war, as she was working at Hackney Downs School from 1914 until 1918, while Mary Butts was working for the L. C. C. Children's Care Committee in Hackney, subsequent to taking a course in social welfare at the L. S. E.37 Through Eder's circle, the L. S. E. and the Fabian Society, together with the L. C. C., provided a ramifying network of potential contacts for anybody from the East End who had talent and ambition and succeeded in attracting somebody's attention;38 and central to the self-education so integral to this process—and so different from the background of adherents of the Bloomsbury Group—were the various institutions of post-school education whose doors were open to working-class school-leavers: Bromley Institute (where Rodker studied botany after work in the evenings), Birkbeck College (where Rosenberg went to evening classes in art), Toynbee Hall and St. George's in the East Library, with their regular lectures and concerts, Whitechapel Public Library, and so on. Some were fortunate enough to win scholarships to institutions like the Imperial College of Science or the Slade; others, like Rodker himself, passed the matriculation exam for Imperial College but were not placed sufficiently high in the list to be awarded a scholarship, and were unable to afford to take up the place. The Eder network, and the contacts in the literary and artistic avant-garde it helped him make, was Rodker's higher education.

36 It is important to bear in mind how much of an avant-garde interest psycho-analysis was at this time: in 1911, for example, Eder read a paper to the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association 'describing in simple language the treatment of a case of hysteria and obsession by Freud’s psycho-analytic method [...] the first public contribution to clinical psycho-analysis made in this country. When Dr. Eder had finished speaking, the Chairman and the entire audience [...] rose and stalked out without a word' (Edward Glover, 'Eder as Psycho-analyst', in Hobman, p. 89).
38 A further point of inter-connection was provided by Mrs. Percy Harris, wife of the deputy Chairman of the L. C. C., who was an art patron and a friend of Hueffer and Wyndham Lewis.
The first visible fruit of this association was his poem 'After Reading "Dorian Gray"', which was printed in The New Age:39 but whatever encouragement he may have received from Orage at that period had been exhausted by the time he published Poems two years later, which Orage trashed in an intemperate review. 'It is to be hoped that the war will put an end to "Imagism" in poetry and all such nonsense,' he wrote, describing Rodker's work as 'not only rubbish, but rubbish without hope' and expressing the hope that 'from master to the last disciple [the Imagists] may all perish in the war.'40 But by then Rodker had moved from Orage's sphere of influence via Harold Monro's Poetry and Drama (where Goldring also published in 1913) and Raymond Drey's The Manchester Playgoer41 to outlets more or less controlled by Pound—Harriet Monroe's Poetry, and The Egoist.

Poems was to have been a joint publication between Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop and Rodker himself, but some disagreement seems to have occurred at the proof stage, and when the book appeared it was with the legend 'To be had of the Author, 1 Osborn Street Whitechapel'. (This at least left Monro free to give the book an indifferent review, as he did in Poetry & Drama,42 comparing the book to 'a thin screech.') The poems share the influence of French (and English) Symbolism, the poetry of urban life, with its emphasis on the modern urban sensibility, 'nervous, exacerbated, [which] reacts intensely to slight stimuli'43; the affinity with Imagism is more tenuous, the emphasis falling, even in the most sparse and objective poems like 'Under the Trees, III', on the poet's emotional state, and his transactions with others. A comparison between F. S. Flint's 'Beggar' 44 and Rodker's 'In the Strand', for example, shows Flint using the spectacle of the old man 'shivering in threadbare clothes', his forlorn piping 'wrought magically' into an exemplary transcendent pattern; by contrast, Rodker's poem in its entirety reads:

Desperate and disdainful showed his wares,...
Stupid things,...laces, studs,...
I bought...his look...and this verse.

39 The New Age, 11, 1 (7 November, 1912), 20.
40 Pseudonymous review in The New Age, 15, 23 (8 Oct. 1914), 549.
41 His poem 'The Mercury Vapour Lamps' appeared (alongside a story by Gwen John) in the July 1914 issue (2, 1). This may indicate some continuing connections with the city of his birth, but as the magazine also published articles by and about Edward Gordon Craig (see below), it may also indicate his immersion in the world of experimental theatre.
42 Poetry & Drama, 8 (December, 1914), 383.
44 Cadences (The Poetry Bookshop, 1915); reprinted in Imagist Poetry, ed. by Peter Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 76.
The thrust of the adjectives is dramatic and affective, so that the poem, with its silent ellipses creating unsettling syntactic ambiguities, encapsulates the dialectic of the moment, emphasising the emotional quality of a social consciousness. Other poems explore more fervently the subjective quality of his reactions to, variously, a gas flame, the music hall, mercury vapour lamps, a vibro-massage, and the ephemeral impressions of a London night. Often the vocabulary is thickened with self-consciously physiological responses to these stimuli as correlative figures of emotional experience, setting up an internal dialogue between the shifting and unreliable 'objective' symptoms and their 'subjective' narratives, recalling contemporary accounts of neurasthenia. In her review of the book in Poetry, Alice Corbin Henderson was puzzled by precisely these effects:

It is futuristic—I use the word to describe a certain mingling of the subjective and objective, to which one must submit oneself to get the value of the poems. In other words, the reader must attempt to place himself in the same subjective attitude, and indulge in the same white heat of concentration upon which the ephemera of the objective world will burst with an importance which is quite disproportionate to the normal sense. A painter would detect here many variations of the after image—not necessarily visual however. It is the instability of Mr. Rodker’s image that I find confusing.

This leads her, tellingly, to describe the book’s cover design by David Bomberg as 'a tasteful spray of ganglia', whereas it is in fact a version of a watercolour and chalk drawing called 'The Dancer', which points to a further dimension of both Rodker’s and Bomberg’s interests at this period, stimulated by their amorous interest in the dancer Sonia Cohen, one of their Whitechapel circle. Recalling that period many years later, Sonia Cohen said:

45 Anson Rabinbach has argued that 'the relationship between neurasthenia and modernity [...] was transformed during three decades of debate [in Europe], ultimately revealing [...] that neurasthenia could also account for the triumph of modernity.' Of all disorders, it was the one 'least dependent on heredity', a consequence of 'the social pressures of modern life [...] taking' the form of 'stig mata' that appeared to be physiological—headache, rachialgia, neuromuscular asthenia, dyspepsia, insomnia and sensitivity of the skin—yet for which no organic cures or "lesions" could be found. ('Neurasthenia and Modernity', Zone, 6: Incorporations, ed. by Jonathan Crary and Sarf ord Kwinter, (New York: Zone, 1992), 178-89.) It is noteworthy that all six of these symptoms are attributed by Wyndham Lewis to Julius Ratner in The Apes of God, the thinly-veiled portrait of Rodker.

46 Poetry, 6, 3 (June 1915), 153-156. The book was reviewed alongside new volumes from Ford Madox Hueffer and Maurice Hewlett.

47 For a discussion of this painting and the cover design of Poems see Cork, Bomberg pp. 96-100. (He mistakenly describes the book as published in an edition of 50 copies. This was the limitation of the cloth-bound signed edition.)

48 There are several mentions of her in Joseph Leftwich’s Diary; other sources are the unpublished interviews with her (now Sonia Cohen Joslen) conducted by Joseph Cohen for Journey to the Trenches and by Richard Cork for David Bomberg. Rosenberg, who was also in love
I always enjoyed dancing at this period. And in 1913, when I went down to Southborne to join a summer school dancing out-of-doors on the cliffs with Margaret Morris, Bomberg followed me down there with a few friends. He was in love with me at the time, and thought it a great lark to watch us all cavorting around at this open-air camp. The Dancer watercolours came out of his interest in all this, and I think you can see the bodies' movements clearly in the designs.\(^{49}\)

The event being described here was not nearly as scatty as it sounds. Margaret Morris had been developing her own style of free dance for some years; she derived her inspiration from Isadora Duncan, and developed a style of dance similar to the contemporary continental innovations of Dalcroze and Laban—like Laban, too, she invented a new system of notation for dance movements\(^{50}\)—and as well as running a small but growing dance school, she danced in the popular London production of Maeterlinck's *Bluebird* in 1911 (which Leftwich, Rodker and others went to see).\(^{51}\) In October and November 1912, she presented a programme of dance and drama at the Court Theatre, composed of Galsworthy's 'Little Dream', a ballet written for her by Pound's friend Maurice Hewlett, and a number of original dances,\(^{52}\) and this created widespread interest in her work and resulted in the rapid growth of her school, which moved to larger premises in Chelsea that included a small theatre. Her dancers were almost all young women and girls,\(^{53}\) and among them, in 1913, was Sonia Cohen. Having seen some of her work in the theatre, the composer Rutland Boughton had become enthusiastic about Margaret Morris's free dance techniques and her associated theories of creativity, and invited her to co-operate in his Summer School at

with her, painted her portrait in 1915 (by which time she had taken the name Sonia Rodker). See *Collected Works*, Plate XV.

\(^{49}\) Quoted in Cork, *Bomberg*, p. 96.

\(^{50}\) See Margaret Morris, *The Notation of Movement. Text, Drawings and Diagrams*, with an introduction by H. Levy, *Psyche Miniatures Series* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1928), pp. 7-12, for an account the development of this system.

\(^{51}\) When they tried to see his *Sister Beatrice*, there were no tickets left, so they 'walk[ed] up and down the streets discussing Maeterlinck and the nature of consciousness' ([L]: 11 February).


\(^{53}\) She did have one or two male pupils, such as the King's College graduate and classical scholar Gerald Warre-Cornish, who was also a writer and campaigner for women's suffrage; Rodker may well have heard him speaking at the Stepney Labour League. And in 1916 she took on Rupert Doone as a pupil. (Doone left after a while to join the ballet classes run by Serafima Astafieva (T. S. Eliot's 'Grishkin'), but retained his interest in modern dance, later moving to Paris and becoming Cocteau's lover and, in 1927, turning down an invitation to become a teacher at the Central Laban School in Germany. He is best known for his staging of verse plays, including those by Eliot and Auden, at The Group Theatre in the 1930s. (See Michael Sidnell, *Dances of Death. The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (Faber, 1984), pp. 42-44.) Serafim Astafieva was a friend of Pound's; Rodker's chief regret about being arrested in 1917, he wrote to Pound, was that he would not be able to meet her as had been arranged (Rodker to Pound, letter cited below, note 103).
Bournemouth in 1913, where her main task was to provide 'dancing scenery' for his opera, 'The Birth of Arthur'.

The combination of flimsily-clad female bodies and unrestrained but very formalised movement seems to have touched Bomberg's imagination. Like many others in London he was also an enthusiast for Diaghilev's Russian Ballet (although the whole thrust of the Russian Ballet was away from the simplicity of Modern Dance); at all events, Cork describes the resultant watercolours as having 'unusual looseness [...] buoyancy [...] a tenderness and delicacy he had never achieved before', and the drawing he did for Rodker's book demonstrates the same qualities, in monochrome. The arcs and spirals of the dancing figure make only the slightest gesture towards representation, but it is not impossible to imagine one of Margaret Morris's poised dance-postures as an underlying referent. Both the book's cover design and Rodker's poems raise questions about the body's solidity both as phenomenologically experienced and as represented; dancing clearly stresses the most extreme and relaxed traceries of motion, thus allowing the representing artist to block in areas of air delineated dynamically instead of dealing with the literally material body, a procedure echoed in Rodker's unsettling of the relationship between psyche and soma in his poems, and his use of the latter to explore psychological states. It was this aspect of the poems that struck the anonymous reviewer in _The Quest_, who devoted a two and a half page review to the final poem in the book, which he saw as 'the picture of a human soul consciously experiencing its own disintegration'. Taking his cue from Bergson, he argued that

> [t]he vital philosophy that is just now on the rising crest for the oncoming generation is a philosophy of Individualism. The young soul feels it must at all costs seek and establish its own identity. Naturally it follows then that the reverse of maintaining its own identity and becoming submerged into undifferentiated life constitutes for it a hell, every whit as horrible as the abode of punishment that figures in the scheme of the old religions.

The reviewer discusses the relation between mind and body in terms of a new place for the soul in democratic identity, where the 'soul' is implicitly defined as 'self-consciousness'. The conclusion merits quotation in full.

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54 Morris, _My Life in Movement_, p. 31.
55 He published a series of lithographs celebrating it: _Russian Ballet_ (The Bomb Shop, 1919). He may have been among 'The turbulent and undisciplined host of art students—The rigorous deputation from 'Slade' [...] With arms exalted, with fore-arms Crossed in great futuristic Xs' who 'beheld the splendid Cleopatra' in Ezra Pound's 'Les Millwin' (first published in _Poetry_, 3, 2 (November 1913), 56).
56 Cork, _Bomberg_, p. 97.
These poems have received slight notices in some of the papers, but all in rather a snappy, ill-natured tone, aroused, I suppose, by their novelty of method and ideas, the drift of which is not at first apparent. All genuine novelty demands a certain readjustment of outlook, and readjustment demands effort, and effort is, well—always annoying. But new departures in Art should not be overlooked. They have a vital concern for those really interested and anxious for the real progress of mankind. For instance, it is dawning on us now that this progress cannot be effected on external mechanical lines. The sociology of the future will more likely than not be a branch of psychology, to which the direct understanding of emotion is the first key. If Mr. Rodker has made us feel for ourselves what the hell of the modern mind is and what it is like to be there, surely he has gone a good way to banishing forever any attempts to coerce submissive citizens into the Ideal State. When you know what it is like to be thwarted in finding your own identity, you become more and more reluctant to treat men like so many similar sheep. I would suggest a brief sojourn in John Rodker's Hell as a salutary cure for the domineering mind, who will however, I am sure, be cunning enough to avoid it.57

This aspect of Rodker's writing is in sharp contrast to the aggressive separation of mind and body in Wyndham Lewis's work, a separation that underlies his procedures in The Wild Body and remains a crucial component of his prose style,58 and the thrust of his hostile depiction of Rodker in The Apes of God. The Bergsonian theory of laughter that lies behind Lewis's vision of the human body is based on a separation between the intellect's perception of the mechanization of life and the intuition's direct grasp of its flow. Thus any bodily movement can only be intellectually apprehended as an infinite sequence of disconnected positions, endless deferrals of completed movement. Lewis's prose puppets are part of a very different project from Rodker's human marionettes in 'Theatre Muet' and 'Dutch Dolls', whose dramas are depicted as a dance of the psyche.

Rodker's poems register less interest in the dance itself, although Sonia Cohen moved into his flat in Osborn Street in November 1913, where they lived as man and wife, and had a daughter; but his interest in the theatre was growing. They returned to Rutland Boughton's and Margaret Morris's Festival—a festival of 'Music, Dance and Mystic Drama'—in 1914, at Glastonbury, and there Rodker produced an impromptu scene based on Alice in Wonderland, and a performance

57 'H. P.' , 'The Hell of a Modern Poet', The Quest, 5 (Autumn 1915), 373-5. (For some discussion of this journal, see below, Chapter 5.)
of W. W. Gibson's *The Night Shift*. He also met a young poet and dancer called Kathleen Dillon who was to collaborate with him in further experimental ventures into the theatrical presentation of poetic texts. It was the influence of 'mystic' drama more than anything else, I think, that led to him writing poems like the one that appealed to 'H. P.', 'The Descent into Hell', with its instruction to the reader that '[t]his poem should be read many times in order that the time-sense may become so essential a part of the poem as not to interfere with the sequence of the lines.' Time in the poem, so far as it is measurable, comes in units of a million years, in the course of which the poet figures his return to a darkness from which he was woven, while rendering any sense of his identity and time increasingly uncertain. The poem's conceptual framework, as we have seen, is a kind of psychological post-Symbolist staging.

The dramatic element in these poems did not go unnoticed. In an article on 'Art and Drama. The Theatre and Armageddon' the critic Huntly Carter concluded his attack on the commercial theatre by suggesting that the collapse of 'domestic and discussion plays' which he foresees will clear the way for 'the right sort of motion play.' He continues

I have lately read two of the latter—one by John Rodker, the other by Miss A. D. Defries—which raise my hope very high indeed. Mr. Rodker's qualifications for a motion-playwright may be found in his book of poems. Anyone who reads the 'Descent into Hell' must admit that it reveals a remarkable sense of the dramatic value of time and silence. A few words rise from the abyss. They sink again as eternal happenings become too deep for words. This way lies the exclusion of words, altogether.  

To make sense of what Carter means by 'motion-playwright', and to follow up his prescient remark about 'the exclusion of words', we need to look more closely at the conditions of Rodker's engagement with the theatre, its context, and the work that it gave rise to.

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59 Wilfred Gibson's dramatic and narrative poems, with their poignant vignettes of working-class life, may well have appealed to Rodker, despite their different stylistic approaches. 'He is usually simple in expression and uses the most tangy idiomatic speech with complete justification [in his] picturesque presentation of the commonplace and often ugly details of modern life' (R. L. Mégroz, *Modern English Poetry 1882-1932* (Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), p. 229. The cast for the Gibson piece was provided by 'members of Margaret Morris's Company of the Criterion and Court Theatre, London'. Other plays performed during the festival included scenes from Euripides and extracts from Wagner, Lady Gregory's *The Travelling Man* and an Arthurian opera by Vincent Thomas called *The Quest of the Grail* (Michael Hurd, *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 75, and Appendix C, pp. 365-66).

60 *The Egoist*, I, 22 (16 November 1914), 431.
It is clear from Leftwich's diary that whenever the group of friends could scrape together enough money, they would go to the theatre: it was an intrinsic part of their lives. Rodker's step-mother, too, was an enthusiast. 'She is very fond of musical comedy. She has hardly missed one of them' (JL: 4 February). It is not surprising that Rodker's first extended piece of writing should have been a play, and one with a social message. It must have been a useful form for sorting out the contradictory ideas that peopled his adolescent mind. Furthermore, the theatre was the one literary genre that promised an audience and often provided one drawn from a variety of class backgrounds. By 1914, however, his notion of the theatrical had been transformed, and for a few years his poetry was written within the context of, and for performance on, the avant-garde stage: the tradition of mime-drama, Laforgue's isolated Pierrots, modern dance, and Edward Craig's vision of a theatre of screens and marionettes all meet in his work, which necessitates approaching it circuitously, via some consideration of Craig.

Gordon Craig

Craig's influence is ubiquitous, certainly [...] festooned from point to point around Europe.61

Craig was the most innovative figure in the avant-garde theatre in England in the first two decades of this century.62 After an early career as an actor with Henry Irving, he became increasingly dissatisfied with the grandiose naturalism of mainstream European theatre and devoted himself to direction and stage design, attempting to recreate a theatre of simplicity and beauty based on movement, dance, light and colour, and a suggestive symbolism.63 His early productions stressed the unity of the effects he combined, all of which were subservient to the atmosphere they created, designed to act directly on the sensibilities of the audience. Yet despite the favourable response his productions aroused in some quarters,64 they were not commercially successful. Thereafter his theatrical work

61 Max Beerbohm, 'Tribute to Craig', in Craig et al., A Living Theatre. The Gordon Craig School; The Arena Goldoni; The Mask (Florence, 1913), p. 61. Pound received a copy of this: 'Craig has sent an orange coloured pamphlet from Florence proclaiming his greatness,' he wrote to Dorothy Shakespear (Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear. Their Letters: 1909-1914, ed. by Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (New York: New Directions, 1984), p. 238).
63 'Mr Craig aims at taking us beyond reality; he replaces the pattern of the thing itself by the pattern which that thing evokes in his mind [...] The eye loses itself among these severe, precise and yet mysterious lines and surfaces; the mind is easily at home in them.' (Arthur Symons, Studies in Seven Arts (Constable, 1906), pp. 352-53; cited in Denis Bablet, The Art of Edward Gordon Craig, trans. by Daphne Woodward (Methuen, 1966), p. 51.
64 Yeats, for example, found in Craig's work the inspiration for his attempts to create a verse drama. He used Craig's screens for productions at the Abbey Theatre in 1911, and in 1913 wrote
was out of England, most famously a production of Hamlet for Stanislavsky at the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1912, which Bablet calls 'one of the most famous and passionately discussed productions in the history of the modern stage.' In 1905 he published his first and influential essay *The Art of the Theatre,* in which he set out his principles for the new theatre; he also began to make notes on the acting style represented by his concept of the 'über-marionette' and to lay plans for 'a periodical that would help to spread his ideas and to lead the campaign for transforming the theatre.'

Most of all, he was inspired by the improvised movements of the dancer Isadora Duncan. He began dreaming of a new theatre art that, like her dancing, would express ideas in time and space. No longer would scenery be a mere background to the stage action. By becoming three-dimensional, as flexible, and as interesting in itself as the body of a trained dancer, and by changing shape before the eyes of the audience, it would provide a new kind of theatrical experience.

Experiments with screens and miniature puppets led him to a new concept of acting, which he outlined in the second issue of his magazine, *The Mask,* in an article entitled 'The Actor and the Über-Marionette.' It is in this figure of the actor as marionette that Craig's theories of impersonality find their most intense expression.

In it, he argues the case against the ordinary human actor of the realist stage as too involved in superficialities of expression and his or her own personality to subdue his presence with full formality to the expressive idea of the stage character. Both masks and the long tradition of marionette-dramas suggest an alternative, which Craig takes a stage further into the idea of the actor-as-marionette, the Nietzschean-sounding über-marionette. The essay concludes with a description of what he sees as the waste land of contemporary theatre, and the importance of impersonality in an art that is to reduce chaos to an order

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69 First printed in *The Mask,* 1, 2 (April 1908); reprinted in *On the Art of the Theatre,* (Heinemann, 1911), pp. 54-94.
inspired by primitive art and myth (ideas that in different forms were to resonate through the next two decades).\footnote{Most famously in T. S. Eliot's use of Hesse's \textit{Blick ins Chaos} in \textit{The Waste Land}, and in his essay on 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth'.}

Weeds, they say, grow quickly, and that wilderness of weeds, the modern theatre, soon sprang up [...] With the fading of the puppet and the advance of these women who exhibited themselves on the stage in his place, came that darker spirit which is called Chaos, and in its wake the triumph of the riotous personality. Do you see, then, what has made me love and learn to value that which to-day we call the 'puppet' and to detest that which we call 'life' in art? I pray earnestly for the return of the image—the über-marionette to the Theatre; and when he comes again and is but seen, he will be loved so well that once more will it be possible for the people to return to their ancient joy in ceremonies—once more will Creation be celebrated—homage rendered to existence—and divine and happy intercession made to Death.\footnote{Delivered on 22 January, 1914; printed in \textit{Speculations. Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art}, ed. by Herbert Read (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1924), pp. 73-109.}

Published more than five years before T. E. Hulme gave his lecture to the Quest Society on 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy,'\footnote{Delivered on 22 January, 1914; printed in \textit{Speculations. Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art}, ed. by Herbert Read (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1924), pp. 73-109.} and in the same year as Worringer's \textit{Abstraktion und Einfühlung}, Craig's essay argued for a tradition of artistic control and impersonality deriving from Egyptian art.

How stern the law was, and how little the artist of that day permitted himself to make an exhibition of his personal feelings, can be discovered by looking at any example of Egyptian art. Look at any limb ever carved by the Egyptians, search into all those carved eyes, they will deny you until the crack of doom. Their attitude is so silent that it is death-like. Yet tenderness is there, and charm is there; prettiness is even there side by side with the force; and love bathes each single work; but gush, emotion, swaggering personality of the artist?—not one single breath of it. Fierce doubts of hope?—not one hint of such a thing. Strenuous determination?—not a sign of it has escaped the artist; none of these confessions, stupidities. Nor pride, nor fear, nor the comic, nor any indication that the artist's mind or hand was for the thousandth part of a moment out of the command of the laws which ruled him.

The same qualities were to be found in India and Africa, whose forgotten masters imbued all their work with 'this sense of calm motion resembling death [...] this spirit [...] the essence of the perfect civilisation'; and now Craig's mission was to
restore them to the European stage. This involved the death of the actor, and an end to the project of emotional mimesis. 'The actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure—the Uber-marionette we may call him [...] a descendant of the stone images of the old temples [...] The über-marionette will not compete with life—rather it will go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in trance—it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit.'73

By freeing the actor from the burden of impersonation, and from the need to represent the superficial appearances of character, which were subject to the changeability of human ego and performance, the stylisation of the mask and the actor as marionette opened theatrical performance, in this neo-Symbolist theory at any rate, to a pure encounter with the spiritual roots of emotion.74

Craig returned to London from Florence, where he had been living since 1907, in 1911, and set about trying to establish a new theatre school, sending out a prospectus signed by William Rothenstein, himself, St. John Hutchinson and Gilbert Cannan.75 No school eventuated then, but between 19 September 1912 and 3 June 1913 a 'considerable number of meetings of what came to be called 'The Society of the Theatre affiliated to the Gordon Craig School for the Art of the Theatre' were held, and among those attending were P. G. Konody, A. M. Ludovici, John Cournos76 and Ezra Pound,77 all of whom were known to Rodker by 1914. In October 1912, The Mask devoted a whole issue to the marionette; and in July 1913 John Cournos wrote an article for Poetry & Drama entitled 'Gordon Craig and the Theatre of the Future'. This is the period of Rodker's first involvement with Rutland Boughton and Margaret Morris, both of whom were strong supporters of Craig, who wrote to Boughton at the end of that year full of enthusiasm about raising the necessary funds to stage his opera The Birth of Arthur.78

73 On the Art of the Theatre, pp. 81-85.
74 This is a process which Beynon describes as moving 'towards the extinction of the late-nineteenth-century star actor' (Beynon, p. 256). (The same principle may be paronomastically present in the title of Wyndham Lewis's (deliberately unstageable) play, Enemy of the Stars.)
75 See Arnold Rood, 'E. Gordon Craig, Director, School for the Art of the Theatre,' Theatre Research International, 8, 1 (Spring 1983), 1-17.
76 John Cournos's roman-a.-clé Babel (Heinemann, 1923), which is a thinly fictionalised account of early English modernism, contains a portrait of Craig in the figure of Sherwood Saville, 'the Maker of Masks'. There is also an unsympathetic characterisation of Rodker as 'Conrad Barron [...] This youth, who had virgins on his brain, was a sallow-faced, grey-eyed Pole-Czech, and [Cournos] did not take to him' (p. 217). I'm grateful to Dr. Fiona Green for bringing this novel to my attention.
77 Rood, p. 6.
78 Hurd, pp. 65-6. In an article in Musical Opinion, October 1916, Christine Walshe again presses the case for a collaboration between the two and the 'ideal opera-house' that would result (Hurd, p. 96). Craig was also a supporter of Margaret Morris: the prospectus she prepared for her school
That Craig's intellectual presence was a force in contemporary theoretical argument is also evident from a debate in *The Egoist* in the autumn of 1914 between Cournos and Huntly Carter, about the nature of unity and perception in Craig's staging. Cournos argues that 'the marriage of sight and hearing is the perfect union necessary for receiving complete dramatic impression,' while Carter's Bergsonism inclines him, as we have seen in his enthusiasm for Rodker, towards a more mystical drama of silence. In his *Egoist* column for 15 December, Carter continues his discussion of the crisis in the theatre, this time in terms of the Craig-inspired search for impersonality. 'For one thing, we want an impersonal actor. Reformers are busy inventing one. Hence the experiments in England with Space and the marionette.'

There were two sorts of experiment going on with marionettes. There were performances of plays written specifically for puppets, such as the one by Maeterlinck that Dorothy Shakespear went to see on 28 November 1913. She wrote to Pound that 'you and I and W. B. Y. could manage one beautifully. You two to read & us to pull, Craig cardboard scenery, W. B. Y. plays.' And there was the more ambitious proposal put forward by Rodker in an article in *The Egoist* under the title 'The Theatre'.

**Rodker and the theatre**

Rodker's only previous writing on the theatre was in a substantially different vein, an article on 'The Theatre in Whitechapel' written the previous year for *Poetry & Drama*, in which he describes the recent work of the Jewish Whitechapel Pavilion Theatre (presumably unknown to the readership of Monro's magazine), which he sees as 'for the moment the perfect theatre' where Strindberg, Tolstoy and Andreieff play to packed houses in productions necessarily bare of the 'elaborate over-staging and over-refined acting which make so largely for the emasculation of our own drama.' Interestingly, when Craig visited Moscow theatres in the spring of 1935,

what he admired most was King Lear at the Jewish State Theatre, produced, in a Yiddish translation, by Serge Yadlov [...] This he considered the most 'Shakespearean' production he had ever seen—a mixture of comedy and tragedy, melodramatic in its underlying

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79 'Gordon Craig and the Theatre of the Future', *Poetry and Drama*, 1, 5 (July 1913), 334-40 (p. 337).
80 *The Egoist*, I, 24 (15 December, 1914), 462.
81 Pound and Shakespear Letters, pp. 280, 282-83n.
tone and fantastic in its movements, highly coloured, yet as clear-cut and precise as a picture in black and white.83

In the melodramatic 'crudity' and 'strength' of Zola and Strindberg, Rodker sees an affinity with the 'Jewish temperament', the fatalism of an audience 'accustomed to continual persecution': so that 'the stage is only a mirror of life when an atmosphere of deep melancholy broods over the play'. Thus despite the role he adopts of interpreting one culture to another with which he purports now to identify, his emphasis on theatrical atmosphere rather than psychological narrative links his own deracinated past with his new enthusiasm for the implications of a Craigian staging for the developing evocations, in his own writing, of powerful psychological states.84

'The Theatre' begins with the claim that 'the theatre is the staging for emotion [...which] invariably translates itself into action [...] Words are a waste product of emotion and do not concern it.' The rationale for this abandonment of the literary is that words distract from the theatrical experience. 'No two senses may be concentrated without one losing somewhat in intensity.' This plea for an art of silence, although it may take its cue from Maeterlinck,85 needs to be contextualised not only against the modernist and Futurist attack on a verbose poetic practice, but also against the resurgence of emotive rhetoric that accompanied the outbreak of war. Words are seen as inadequate to represent and communicate the primitive, unconscious structures of emotional experience that underlie human behaviour; accidents of intellectual difference are to be expunged in a theatrical evocation of emotion that operates by arousing atavistic memories. This, Rodker argues, in the section of his essay headed 'The Evocation of Race Memories', is a new process.

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83 Bablet, p. 192.
84 There is an obvious comparison here with Bomberg's drawing Jewish Theatre, entered for a Slade competition in January 1913, and depicting a part of the audience at the Pavilion Theatre. As Richard Cork instructively notes, 'the intensely dramatic offerings staged there might well have helped inspire the rhetorical poses in Bomberg's paintings.' (Richard Cork, Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age (Gordon Fraser, 1976), vol. 1, Origins and Development, pp. 72-3).
85 'The secret of things which is just beyond the most subtle words, the secret of the expressive silences, has always been clearer to Maeterlinck than to most people; and, in his plays, he has elaborated an art of sensitive, taciturn, and at the same time highly ornamental simplicity, which has come nearer than any other art to being the voice of silence' (Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (William Heinemann [1899], 2nd edition 1908), p. 153). Reconsidering Gordon Craig's theoretical dialogues in 1955, Eliot wrote that '[i]t has seemed to me at moments [...] as if Craig's ideal for the drama was that of a kind of wordless ballet' and links this with the cinema (T. S. Eliot, 'Gordon Craig's Socratic Dialogues,' Drama, New Series 36 (Spring 1955), 16-21 (18-19)).
Art no longer attempts to elevate [...] With the old artists, too often [art] was merely a hitting of the same nail after it had impinged, thus driving it into a groove where the vibrations were deadened, instead of merely a first tap which would have called the whole of the receptive material to vibrate (the liberation of a complex).

This formulation echoes Pound's famous definition of the Image as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', where it is the 'presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art', but whereas Pound has appropriated the scientific terms employed by Bernard Hart and incorporated them into an aesthetics of 'the greatest works of art', Rodker's focus remains upon subjective experience, whatever the stimulus that occasions it.

Who knows why a leaf pittering along a starlit path fills one with a sense of impending tragedy which surpasses all the poignancy made by poets telling of great loves? An empty stage, quite dark; the rustling of a few leaves—I can think of nothing which could affect me more poignantly, more profoundly.

The connection between this presentation of emotion and the idea of race memories echoes a formulation by Samuel Butler, published two years earlier:

Memory is, as it were, the body of thought, and it is through memory that body and mind are linked together in rhythm or vibration; for body is such as it is by reason of the characteristics of the vibrations that are going on it, and memory is only due to the fact that the vibrations are of such characteristics as to catch on to and be caught on to by other vibrations that flow into them from without—no catch, no memory.


87 Pound cites 'the newer psychologists, such as Hart' as the source of the term 'complex', adding that 'we might not agree absolutely in our application' of it. Hart's book is one of the earliest in English to make use of Freud's hypotheses, describing him as 'probably the most original and fertile thinker who has yet entered the field of abnormal psychology'; he also cites Jung, Janet, Karl Pearson, Krafft-Ebing and Wilfred Trotter. See Bernard Hart, The Psychology of Insanity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), pp. vi-vii.

88 The Notebooks of Samuel Butler, selections arranged and ed. by Henry Festing Jones (A. C. Fifield, 1912), p. 58. Rodker's education in biology is pertinent here. Ian Bell has described the processes by which an anti-Darwinian tradition became available to Pound, via Hering, Samuel Butler, Louis Agassiz, Edward Carpenter, and Haeckel (Ian F.A. Bell, Critic as Scientist. The modernist poetics of Ezra Pound (Methuen, 1981), pp. 171-206). For Butler 'the notion of "continuity of vibrations [was] the key to memory and heredity"; Agassiz's theory of "recapitulation" provided a 'fundamental schema for the historicity of a notion of tradition seen as a form of "race-memory"'. The latter, derived ultimately from Cuvier and his reclassification of the fossil-record,
But perhaps the closest analogue for Rodker's formulation is to be found in Pound's article for the first issue of BLAST\(^89\) where under the sub-heading of 'The Turbine' he writes that

> All experience rushed into [the] vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us, RACE, RACE-MEMORY, instinct charging the PLACID, NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE [...] EVERY CONCEPT, EVERY EMOTION PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE VIVID CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOME PRIMARY FORM [...] Elaboration, expression of second intensities, of dispersedness belong to the secondary sort of artist.

The cultural eugenism inherent in the relation between energy, value and life in this passage tends to obscure the selectivity it implies for Pound's notion of cultural memory; the antithesis between concentrated attention and incoherence or dispersion is focussed not on the receiving subject but on the artist: the judgement of value is intrinsic to the process. Rodker is more specifically interested in the pathology of cognitive perception. The main thrust of Hart's account of insanity, for example, deals in terms of dissociation, and in this is true to the norms of late nineteenth-century psychologies, which regarded psychic behaviour as characterised by the ability to synthesisa variety of perceptions into a coherent experience or vision of the world; Rodker (perhaps initially for personal reasons: his brother was in a lunatic asylum, and the question of inherited instability may well have troubled him)\(^90\) was intensely interested in the boundaries between normality, morbidity and insanity.\(^91\) Indeed this is a allowed evolution to be seen as endlessly recapitulated, ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny, so that—at the social and psychological level—the primitive, for example, may provide explanatory access to our deeper emotions. In the light of Rodker's interest in Wilde, already noted, we may also recall his statement that 'the imagination [...] is simply concentrated race-experience.' (The Critic as Artist', cited in Bell, p. 193.) Haeckel was also one of Isadora Duncan's favourite writers, from whom she derived her theory of wave-movement (see Dance of the Future, cited in 'Your Isadora'. The love story of Isadora Duncan & Gordon Craig, ed. by Francis Steegmuller (Macmillan and the New York Public Library, 1974), p. 97n). There are obvious affinities between this scientific work and the conditions of reception of anthropological writers like Frazer and Jane Harrison, which I touch upon, in relation to Mary Butts, in Chapter 5.

\(^89\) 'Vortex, Pound', BLAST I (20 June 1914), 153-154.
\(^90\) JL: 5 July: 'My parents have been passing on to [Winsten's] that story Jimmy's aunt told them the other day that his brother was in a lunatic asylum.'
\(^91\) See, for example, his comments in the Translator's Preface to The Lays of Maldoror, in which he is concerned to defend Lautréamont against accusations of insanity; he follows Aldington's note appended to each instalment of his translations of passages in the Egoist, claiming that 'Stavrogine's "This feeling possessed me to the point of madness but never to the point of forgetting myself," is the key to Lautréamont's inspiration', and that 'the whole structure of this book belies his madness [...] This is most pointed in the last Canto which appears to be all loose ends; but one by one they are assembled and closely tied in a final knot.' (Lautréamont, The Lay of Maldoror, trans. by John Rodker, p. xviii).
complex of ideas much in evidence in the early receptions of modernist writing and painting, the apparent incoherence of which suggested parallels between dissociation, dysfunctionality and urban alienation. In this context, new subject positions were frequently a matter of urgent speculation: Rodker's presentation of the undistracted subject in the specimen drama he publishes with his manifesto, 'Fear', and in the genre of mime-drama more generally, continues his investigation not only into the sensation itself but also into more complicated articulations of subjectivity.

The drama he offers as 'the only form of drama which evades [the mistakes he has described] is that made by "Marionettes". That is, conventionalised figures which do not draw attention to their idiosyncracies; placed in a neutral environment which does not detract from the evocation of a pure emotion.' Rodker is clearly paraphrasing Craig here: that is, by late 1914 he has not only read Craig thoroughly (and perhaps put something of his ideas into practice at Glastonbury) but has forged a new context for them in the world of avant-garde poetry.

The stimulus to this was twofold: his interest in the 'New' Art and music, and his reading of French poetry, notably Verlaine, and more importantly, Laforgue. Apart from studying French at night school, Rodker had family connections with corset-makers in Paris, and may have spent some time there in 1912 or early 1913; at all events he was well enough read in French to be able to write, in the preface to his Collected Poems in 1930: 'I first came to poetry through that language (the foreign-ness already evocative and moving, which with its content satisfied my particular demand for what poetry ought to be). We may speculate that the 'foreign-ness' of French poetry provided a counterpart to his sense of belonging nowhere, of having 'no history to speak of'—indeed he writes elsewhere 'In Paris I feel English, in London a foreigner—and that the consequent emotional investment underlay both his adoption of certain stylistic elements from what he read and his commitment to translation, which is so often a process of appropriation, but one which can never be complete.

What did Laforgue have to offer? Certainly Rodker does not seem to have incorporated into his writing much of the ironic Laforgue that appealed to Eliot,

92 For evidence that he was at least competent in French by 1915 (when he and Rosenberg last met), see Rosenberg to Sonia Rodker, 'I wish Rodker were with me, the infernal lingo is a tragedy with me and he'd help me out' (September? 1916; Rosenberg, Collected Poems, p. 245).
94 Memoirs of Other Fronts (Putnams, 1932), p. 16.
or later to Pound,95 (although he translated Laforgue's playlet *Pierrot fumiste*, which although it begins farcically, uses mask, mime and ends in a scenario without dialogue)96 and the stylised figures of Harlequin, Columbine and Pierrot were so widely available and so often used, particularly in France, in the years between 1880 and 1920 as to constitute a figurative shorthand for a certain structure of gender relations, in which Pierrot's isolated Hamletic self-consciousness provides a focus for disconnected narrative moments.97 But the Laforgue described by Symons may have struck more than one chord with Rodker, first in his introductory remark that 'We know nothing about Laforgue which his work is not better able to tell us' and second in his comment that 'He sees what he calls *l'Inconscient* in every gesture, but he cannot see it without these gestures.'98 Although Laforgue's concept of the unconscious is far from the Freudian one, being derived from von Hartmann, the term itself may have excited Rodker, especially given Laforgue's treatment of sexuality. In Houston's words,

> [w]hat Hartmann's views on sexuality gave Laforgue was an elaborate theoretical justification, based on the Unconscious, for portraying awkwardness and maladjustment in the relations between the sexes. The failure of these rapports is not local, contingent, or remediable; it is inherent in the structure of the mind. Trivial misunderstandings are symbolic of the human condition.99

Rodker's interest in the structure of the mind, Laforguian as it may appear in some of the poems in 'Dutch Dolls', operates on an altogether more disturbing plane in the sequences of dramatic scenes and gestures that make up 'Theatre Muet', where his evocation of 'foreboding, distrust and fear'100 displaces

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96 See below, note 102. Pound sent the translation to *Drama* in Chicago, but it was not published, possibly because of difficulties over copyright. It does not seem to have survived.


100 See the tenth poem in the series.
subjective states into a stage atmosphere against which background the dramas are enacted (or sometimes left unacted, as in the tenth):

The woman stands uneasily just inside the door—waiting.  
The room is full of impending tragedy.  
Influences are in the room and in the next room.  
Tragedy becomes apparent in the woman’s pose.  
She waits.  
Nothing happens.  
With dramatic suddenness, her body droops—she cringes.  
(Nothing, nothing, NOTHING happens)....

In his article on 'The "New" Movement in Art' Rodker demonstrated his enthusiasm for 'Futurism' as an undifferentiated phenomenon that included not only Marinetti and Pratella, but also Wyndham Lewis ('editor of a journal, Blast, which is to be entirely devoted to "Futurism"'), Schönberg, and the London Group of painters, and which he clearly sees as a manifestation of a kind of Bergsonism. This 'new' art, in whatever branch, embodies 'the new vision of life as, perforce, we must live it; all being parts of some wonderful piece of machinery, social or more material'; he traces the 'attempt to render the arts interchangeable' back to Rimbaud, touches on colour music, and approvingly cites the narrative of Schönberg's 'Verklähte Nacht' ('the remarkable sextet—of which so much has been recently heard') and several times stresses the popularity of these works, the 'great attendances', the 'rapturous applause', and concludes that the public is reverting to intuition, 'for the "new" art is primarily a thing from which intellect must, as much as is possible, be excluded' in favour of appreciation of 'rhythm of line, harmony of conception, and striking colour'.

For all the article's claim to be informed about Futurism, in the light of our more ordered taxonomies it seems a remarkable hotch-potch. There is an obvious connection between Rodker's enthusiasm for the scenario of 'Verklähte Nacht' and his own mime-dramas; indeed the composer Peter Warlock told Delius, in a letter of 11 October 1916, that he had written music for Rodker's text 'Twilight':

In the drama of the present day, whether it is spoken or sung, the action must tend more and more to take place within the characters of the piece—in a word, it must be psychological, not physical [...] I propose to have no scenery [...] the stage must be free from disturbing elements [...] the interest must be centred entirely in the play and the music; and as regards the setting the imagination of the spectators must take an active part (this is, as far as I remember, Maeterlinck's idea [...] I have sketched out a little mime-drama—very short—about fifteen minutes—very intense, very grisly, a sort of prolonged strain. No one speaks, scarcely anyone moves; the
atmosphere is charged with emotion, but nothing happens in the theatrical sense. ¹⁰¹

But it is easy to forget the sense of contemporaneity this article invokes between an 1899 expressionist work and Marinetti's London performances in 1914. (The illustrations in the article are of works by Bomberg and Wadsworth, which adds weight to Lawrence Rainey's argument that the enormous publicity engendered by Marinetti's visits to London provided the spur to Pound's modernisation of himself by consciously inventing movements such as Imagism and Vorticism in belated imitation of, and in opposition to, Futurism.) ¹⁰²

Material from the two sequences related to this project, 'Theatre Muet' and 'Dutch Dolls', appeared sporadically in The Little Review and Others during the war years, reflecting the publishing difficulties Rodker was experiencing as a conscientious objector when he spent long periods in prison or on the run and in hiding. ¹⁰³ This makes it hard to date their composition with any accuracy, but it seems likely that all or most were written before the spring of 1916, and that 'Fear' was intended to be the first of the series. ¹⁰⁴ That the two sequences are linked may be deduced from Rodker's conclusion to 'The Theatre', where he outlines his vision for the project:

I want to take a theatre in London, using for the plays either human marionettes of the Dutch-doll type or naked humans, or to clothe them in a sort of cylindrical garment. ¹⁰⁵ The plays will be the completion of a cycle dealing with the primitive emotions, of which Fear is one, these being I think the simplest for the evocation of race-memories.

¹⁰¹ Cecil Gray, Peter Warlock. A Memoir of Philip Heseltine (Jonathan Cape [1934], 1938), pp. 132-134.
¹⁰³ In a letter to Pound from the Guard Room of a barracks near Aldershot (undated but probably June 1917), he apologises for his 'sudden disappearance' and explains that he has left his manuscript with Mary Butts 'if you want to draw on it.' He also says that he has just finished his translation of 'Pierrot-Fumiste', which he asks Pound to send to Hinckley of 'Drama' (Yale, Beinecke Library: EP YCAL mss Box 40, Folder 1497).
¹⁰⁴ See Rodker to Harriet Monroe, 7 October 1915: 'I have a second series of the Dutch Dolls of 8 poems.' (Poetry Papers, Box 20 Folder 2). While admitting that his arrangement of the 'Theatre Muet' poems is 'speculative as well as conjectural', as the poems were never published together as a series, Andrew Crozier makes a convincing case for it, and one which coincides with my own reading of the manuscript evidence. I have therefore adopted it. It should be borne in mind, however, that these are dramatic projects as much as poems. (See the textual notes to 'Theatre Muet' and 'Dutch Dolls' in John Rodker: Poems & Adolphe 1920, ed. with an introduction by Andrew Crozier (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), pp. 184-6.)
¹⁰⁵ This notion of a 'cylindrical garment' prefigures the designs of Hugo Ball and Oskar Schlemmer. See Denis Babelt, 'D'Edward Craig au Bauhaus' in Le Masque: Du rite au théâtre, ed. by Odette Asklan and Denis Babelt (Paris: C. N. R. S., 1985), pp. 209-217.
The location he suggests for this cycle of performances is the Margaret Morris theatre in Chelsea, near which he was by then living.

The texts themselves reveal a transition from sparse, evocative blueprints for mimed performance towards something more textually self-sufficient, in which the emotional timbre of the imagined scenario cannot easily be realised off the page. After presentations entitled, 'Fear', 'The Lunatic' and 'Twilight', 'Interior' concludes:

Three chairs become apparent
They are in a line—two kitchen chairs—
once white—dirty.
One—old—beautiful—
highly polished.
In the flickering light the three chairs grow
unutterably mournful.

The paradoxical use of 'unutterably' indicates the indispensability of the words as registering a response to the visual scene. The next two, 'The End of the World' and 'Hunger', take this tendency much further, using the idea of mute staging as a poetic device to extend the parameters of space and time within which the scene is set so far that they both intensify and dwarf the emotional isolation they depict. If the second one, 'Hunger', is a notional choreography, it requires the text either as as a programme note or as contemporaneous recitation:

The lambent sea-green flames that are the celestial quire
burn shrilly, striving...
They describe the circle which is Kosmos, swirling shrilly.
When they writhe it is outside three-dimensional space.
Forever they return in their orbits.

In the ninth, 'To S. E. R.', the audience is co-opted into participation, so moved by the weeping woman on the stage that they throw brickbats at her companion until he is stoned to death, and 'Outside the Theatre—weeping: fitful, intolerable—mounts from street to street and star to star in festoons of distinguished and unutterable melancholy.' And the eleventh piece in the sequence abandons the apparent objectivity of the earlier texts in favour of an authorial presence, 'I see the bowed head silhouetted on air' being the opening and closing line, so that any performance would, so far as I can imagine, require the presence of a speaker integral to whatever spectacle accompanied it. Not coincidentally, this comes closer than any of the other elements in the series to registering the presence of war, albeit in apocalyptically symbolic terms, as 'wrack of civilisation, murder, rape, vast conflagration' in which
Ten thousand young men are convulsed in death.  
Ten thousand howl to writhing women.  
They too are still.  
The head is bowed.  
Cold creeps from the stars. [...]  
Ice constrains earth powerfully and for ever.

There is no sense here that war engages us directly as agents or participants: but its presence heightens the sense of a subject isolated from the dominant conduct of its world, as indeed the war appeared to Rodker the socialist-pacifist writer, whose only ambition was to escape the attentions of the State and to continue to write. It is a vision of the war as seen from the point of view of a non-combatant, and one who knew that 'the institution [of war] is part and parcel of the human psyche' and that 'the pacifist is fighting too, but on another front.'

It is this civilian world of frenetic and sometimes desperate compulsions (also explored by Mary Butts in Ashe of Rings) that gives a further dimension to the actions of the marionettes, dwarfed as they are by the emotional timbre of their surroundings, something most powerfully demonstrated in the twelfth and last scenario of the series. Here the scene is 'Autumn and closely interwoven trees. Dead leaves in profusion. Behind is a long field with stooks of corn which mist is clotting.' The curtain falls and rises again on twilight and a woman beneath the trees. 'Evidently she is waiting.' The motifs of dead leaves, footsteps and anticipation, thematic to the series, are combined again, but this time in a landscape of shifting dimensions:

The trees multiply rapidly; she is in a dense thicket (clearing disappears); the mist rises.  
Steps are heard in the leaves—the trees dwindle; they become bushes.  
The sky grows darker but clearer—the evening star ascends.  
A man—and she rushes to meet him. Everything quickly blots out in curtain of black and yellow with spots and streaks that whirl excentrically as they embrace. This disappears as they draw apart.  
Trees gradually climb higher again and while they regard each other the landscape resumes its appearance as at the opening of the scene.  
They approach and seize each other. The swirl of colour again appears but with the original landscape diminished upon it. They separate.

106 John Rodker, 'Twenty Years After', in We Did Not Fight. 1914-18 Experiences of War-Resisters, ed. by Julian Bell (Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), p. 285. This piece is written from an informed psycho-analytical perspective, and as such benefits from hindsight; my argument is, though, that the central psychological perception is already present and explored in these poems.
They have become colossal in comparison with what is around them, but gradually as they are sucked into it the trees resume their normal size, the mist creeps out thickly...

It is evident he must go.
They embrace, and for a moment the trees seem to dwindle and then shoot up terrifically engulfing her. She cowers.
Rustling of leaves—his receding footsteps.

The instability of the landscape acts as a projection of the shifting psychological states, but the impersonality of the protagonists, intensified by their mechanism as marionettes, or by a human imitation of them, draws us, as we experience the primitive emotions thus evoked, to reconsider the relative parts played in emotional life by unconscious forces and by the forces of rationality or will. There is a limited atmospheric palette to these pieces: rustling leaves, fear, footsteps, waiting, twilight, darkness, silence, and cold are the effects most used, all to a greater or lesser degree in the service of the first—fear, the title of the first piece in the sequence.

**Nameless fear.**

What's left behind us for a heritage
For our young children? What but nameless fear?¹⁰⁷

Why did Rodker choose fear as his first illustration of primal emotion? What was the cultural position of fear in 1914? Three important elements can be identified as having a bearing on this question: the growth in interest, following the work of Sir James Frazer, in the primitive ritual bases of mythology and their continuance as a dynamic substrate of the psychology of 'civilised' man; the various fears, psychologically and somatically registered, induced by the new conditions of modern urban life; and, more locally to the years in question here, the fear provoked by the First World War.¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁸ There is an interesting echo of Rodker's text in a short poem written by Leftwich in 1916, also called 'Fear':
Through the night-hushed street,
Glistening with rain,
Like shadows resound
The tread of my feet.
A strange black dog
Runs at my side,
And a wind-blown leaf,
Withered and dried,
Like a footfall, moves
Through the night-hushed street.
Although the war was an obvious proximate cause of the presence of fear in various writings of this period, and might be taken as an entirely sufficient reason for its pervasiveness, a fascination with such atavistic emotions and their place in metaphysics, psychology and art is evident earlier, particularly in that reconsideration of the primitive found in the work of Frazer, of Jane Harrison and the Cambridge Ritualists, and in psychoanalysis. 'When the anthropology of anthropologists comes to be written,' A. M. Hocart wrote in 1934, 'future generations will have to explain why the first quarter of the twentieth century was so fascinated by fear, why that emotion was made to account for everything, for weddings, for funerals, for religion itself.'

Hocart was reviewing the second volume of Frazer's *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion*, and in the following sentence he makes explicit the connection between the revival of cultural interest in fear and the increase in its presence within the culture itself: 'They will doubtless notice that during the same period there was a great increase in nervous disorders in which fear is the chief element, and they may conclude that there is a link between the two phenomena.' He is critical of Frazer for his contention that 'modern peoples [uphold] the norms of their society for utterly irrational reasons, no less than savages,' a view which he himself was unwilling (or afraid) to accept, but for which there was already ample support in Rodker's intellectual milieu at the beginning of the war.

Hocart's stress on ceremonial is in keeping both with with the theatrical context in which Craig and Rodker were working, and with the approach of classicists and anthropologists. In the opening pages of her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Jane Harrison challenges Ruskin's characterization of 'the genius of the Greeks', that 'there is no dread in their hearts; pensiveness, amazement, often deepest grief and desolation, but terror never', arguing instead that there was a primitive fear of the occult that lay at the 'very root and base of Greek religion' and that this can be deduced from 'certain facts of ritual'. The relation between these rituals, and the rituals of more 'primitive' peoples, and art is the subject of her most popular book, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, in which she traces the origins of art in choric dance and endorses the renewed relevance of such rituals for the Futurists (although not surprisingly she is not prepared to 'go all lengths, to "burn all museums"'). 'The emotion to be expressed is the emotion of today, or

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111 (Williams & Norgate, 1913). The book was enthusiastically reviewed by Craig in *The Mask* in 1914. For an entirely contrary view of it, see my discussion of Wyndham Lewis's critique in Chapter 6.
still better to-morrow. The mimetic dance arose not only nor chiefly out of reflection on the past; but out of either immediate joy or imminent fear or insistent hope for the future.\(^{112}\) Bablet has argued in relation to the use of masks in Craig's and Schlemmer's productions that

[i]l faut [...] chercher à comprendre l'émergence du masque dans une civilisation à un moment donné [...] Est-ce parce que l'homme en passant le masque croit se donner des pouvoirs nouveaux, est-ce pour lui le moyen, dans un effort de dénaturalisation et d'abstraction, de dominer ses angoisses et ses peurs?\(^{113}\)

But the ritual element in these performance texts of Rodker's is his means not of domination but of access to the instinctual life, the erotic and the demonic within us: that of which we live in terror. One of the unconscious achievements of Frazer's *Golden Bough* was to 'allow the implicit sexual motive of anthropology to emerge',\(^{114}\) and Rodker's knowledge of psycho-analysis, limited as it is likely to have been to the role of the unconscious, the operation of repression, and the interpretation of dreams, is still able to take him beyond the merely ritual to the impulses underlying it.

Hocart was not the only scholar to wish that Frazer and Harrison had not subverted the image of the placid rationality of the Greeks, and their assumed descendants in the political and administrative ruling class. Harry C. Payne quotes the conservative scholar Paul Shorey claiming, in the 1920s, that

Professor Murray has done much harm by helping to substitute in the minds of an entire generation for Arnold's and Jebb's conception of the serene rationality of the classics the corybantic Hellenism of Miss Harrison and Isadora Duncan [...] the higher vaudeville Hellenism of Mr. Vachel Lindsay, the anthropological Hellenism of Sir James Frazer, the irrational, semi-sentimental Polynesian, free-verse and sex-freedom Hellenism of all the gushful geysers of 'rapturous rubbish' about the Greek Spirit.\(^{115}\)

It was the 'corybantic Hellenism of Miss Harrison and Isadora Duncan' that found its expression in the immediate context of the performance of Rodker's poems, a largely feminine milieu that called itself 'The Choric School', and which was the creation of two of Margaret Morris's dancers, at least one of whom—

\(^{112}\) *Art and Ritual*, p. 236

\(^{113}\) Bablet, 'D'Edward Gordon Craig au Bauhaus', p. 146.


Kathleen Dillon—Rodker had met at Glastonbury in 1914. (Kathleen Dillon, to whom Rodker addressed several poems, was painted by J. D. Fergusson ('Rose Rhythm: Kathleen Dillon, 1916'), and Fergusson described his impressions of her in powerful terms which, in their insistence on the idea of waves, recall Isadora Duncan and her readings of Haeckel, as well as the more familiar Bergsonian and ethereal ones.)

The other was Hester Sainsbury, who met him at about the same time, or perhaps earlier. At all events their meeting led to his involvement with the experiments they were making with poetry and dance which took place under the auspices of their Clarissa Club in a house at 71 Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea. (In November 1914, Rodker inscribed one of the 50 special copies of his Poems to the Club for its library.) Apart from occasional short mentions in reviews by Huntly Carter and Mark Perugini, there are only two contemporary accounts of their performances: one, by Pound, was written to introduce a special issue of Alfred Kreymborg's magazine Others devoted to the work of the Choric School and featuring poems by Dillon, Sainsbury and Rodker; the other was an article by Rodker himself in The Drama, the Chicago magazine to which he subsequently asked Pound to send his translation of Pierrot Fumiste.

The origins of the Choric School lie in the kind of theatre envisaged by Hester Sainsbury and her co-founders of the Clarissa Club. 'For many years she had been writing plays, poems and marionette-pieces, but the chances of production were infrequent [...] until a short while ago' [when she acquired a wealthy

116 See Margaret Morris, The Art of J. D. Fergusson, p. 103.
117 In a letter of condolence to Marianne Rodker after Rodker's death in 1955, Hester Sainsbury wrote: 'He was 19 when Evelyn and I first knew him.' (HRHRC, John Rodker archive, Folder 20B).
118 This copy is now in Cambridge University Library.
119 Any interest Pound may have evinced in modern dance was not informed by a practical aptitude in that direction: Brigid Patmore wrote that 'Ezra danced according to no rules I understood. New steps one may invent, but surely the music sets time and rhythm. But for Ezra, no; with extremely odd steps he moved, to unearthly beats. One couldn't face it. Easier to waltz with a robot [...] Sweet faithful Dorothy said innocently: "Ezra has a wonderful sense of rhythm." Yes, indeed.' (My Friends When Young. The Memoirs of Brigid Patmore, ed. by Derek Patmore (Heinemann, 1968), p. 110). Stella Bowen and Phyllis Reid may have been responsible for this: '[Ezra] desired us to teach him to dance, and quickly evolved a highly personal and very violent style, which involved a great deal of springing up and down, as well as swaying from side to side, which caused him the greatest satisfaction although I am bound to say that it reflected little credit on his teachers!' (Bowen, Drawn from Life, p. 48).
120 Ezra Pound, 'Foreword to the Choric School', Others, 1, 4 (October 1915), 53-54; Rodker, 'The Choric School', The Drama, (August, 1916), 436-445. Pound's interest in the oral performance of poetry was stimulated both by Yeats and by the vogue for poets reading their own work which began with the readings organised by Harold Monro at the Poetry Bookshop from 1913 onwards. For a suggestive account of the full context of these, see Mark Morrisson, 'Performing the Pure Voice: Elocution, Verse Recitation, and Modernist Poetry in Prewar London', Modernism/modernity, 3, 3 (September 1996), 25-50; see in particular p. 43 for Pound's 1920 comments on the effect of oral delivery on the composition of his poems.
patron], writes Rodker, and goes on to quote a description by the ballet critic Mark Perugini of a verse play called *A Phantasy in Black and White*:

[as interesting in many ways in its moral aim as *Everyman*, the play gained in artistic impressiveness from the very fact that it was in black and white [...] There was something suggestive of Dürer, of Holbein's 'Dance of Death', of Maeterlinckian simplicity and atmosphere.

The comparison that recurs is with marionettes, which are seen as a device for evading the realistic personal expressiveness of more conventional drama. *Encore*, 'the magazine of music-hall professionals', quoted Hester Sainsbury as aiming at a purely conventional method of representation both in acting and dancing, because I think it is the only way of getting the basic emotion or idea expressed without the impure interruption of realism or the equally destructive element of the personality of the performer herself.

Nor did there need to be any musical accompaniment: 'A dance can be equally successful with metre used as time and words as melody.' The same writer describes a performance that sounds very much as if it might have been Rodker's 'Dutch Dolls':

> every spoken phrase was accompanied by dancing movement—yet though they at first struck the observer as jerky and odd [...] one might express the action as marionette-like but with the dolls speaking.

The outlook appears to share much with Craig's, but the Rodker argues that the stress on 'natural and instinctive rhythm' is in contrast to Craig's more 'calculated [...] geometrical rhythm'. This may reflect the influence of Margaret Morris, whose insistence on rhythm as a guiding principle in her dance had been given renewed impetus by her association with J. D. Fergusson from 1913 onwards, 'when studying painting of the modern movement in Paris'. According to Rodker, it was the teenaged Kathleen Dillon who 'introduced [...] modernity and [...] strenuousness' into the Clarissa Club's performances through her production of

121 Rodker, 'The Choric School', 436.
a cubist dance. First of all she painted a cubist back-cloth. Then she made a cubist dress. Then she tried to transfer the two-dimensioned back-cloth into the three dimensions of solid things by dancing out the design.

After this, 'the name Clarissa would no longer do,' so they called it the Choric School, a name that, with its suggestions of ritual and dance as well as the impersonal presence of the Chorus in Greek drama, brought together Sainsbury's, Dillon's, and Rodker's interests in a single focus.

In his article, Pound describes a performance by the School at the Poets' Club, which 'had about it an aroma, sensuous and naively sophisticated fitted to "cause admiratio" to my more scholarly and puritanical mind', which saw in a spontaneous, unresearched association of dance and poetry 'a possibility of reanimating our verse', as the dance songs of Provence had influenced 'our European metric and poetry'. Commenting on Kathleen Dillon's 'Leaf' he continued by emphasising the integrity of this association. 'In dance poems the "whole art" is the words with the dancing, and in such poems isolated words are perforce incomplete.' Most interestingly, however, he begins the piece by talking about Rodker's poetry, explaining that he 'could not make much of his cadence' until he saw the Choric School perform. 'I then understood the curious breaks and pauses, the elaborate systems of dots and dashes with which this group is wont to adorn its verses.' The cadence of Rodker's verse, that is, is somatically referential, it encodes a form of dance and requires a gestural, performative dimension. In this the Choric School was unique in England, although similar experiments were taking place elsewhere in Europe, the most notable of which began to take place some months later at the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich (which opened on 15 February 1916), when Mary Wigman danced her 'Ghost

124 It is significant that it appeared in Others. Alfred Kreymborg, who edited the magazine, started writing mime-dramas and verse plays shortly after this issue appeared, which he eventually performed with actual puppets operated by his wife. (For an account of these performances, and the earlier performances of some of the poem-mimes staged by the Provincetown Players, including William Carlos Williams and Mina Loy, see Troubadour. An American Autobiography (New York: [1925]; Sagamore Press, 1957), pp. 245-257. In the Preface to Plays for Poem-Mimes (New York: The Other Press, 1918), Kreymborg suggests the plays might be defined as 'pantomime acting or dancing of folk or automatons to an accompaniment of rhythmic lines, in place of music. In view of the fact that in all these experiments the characters speak [...] little more than a semi-dance of gesture can be added by them to the delivery of their lines, but free dancing might be indulged during the interlude of silence' (p. 6). By 1923, when the English edition of what were now called 'Puppet Plays' appeared with a preface by Gordon Craig, his preference for 'wooden actors' over humans had become unequivocal. (Kreymborg, Puppet Plays (Martin Secker, [1923]).

125 Ezra Pound, Others, I, 4.
Dances' to texts by Nietzsche, and Sophie Taueber danced to an accompaniment of poetry.\textsuperscript{126}

Rodker also directed plays in London, as well as at Glastonbury. The performance of one in particular drew praise from Huntly Carter—his direction of Michio Ito at the Margaret Morris Theatre in January 1916. The Japanese dancer Ito had arrived in London from Germany after the outbreak of war in August 1914, and had soon come to know Augustus John, Epstein and Pound, and performed regularly at fashionable salons. Pound and Yeats took him up eagerly in the belief that he had been trained in the Noh theatre, in translations and adaptations of which they were both deeply involved; in fact he had not seen a Noh production since he was seven. The reason his dancing appealed so immediately to the audience for experimental drama in 1916 was because he had only begun to study dance seriously after seeing Nijinsky perform with the Ballet Russe in Paris in 1911: his influences were the same as everybody else's—Maeterlinck, Debussy, the Russian Ballet, modern dance, Craig and Rheinhardt; he had also spent three years at the Dalcroze Institute of Dance in Dresden, only leaving for England at the outbreak of war. There he remained penniless even after being taken up by John and the others: his career only took off when he was persuaded to dance at a party of Lady Ottoline Morrell's. He is best remembered for his creation of the part of the hawk (The Guardian of the Well) in Yeats's Noh-influenced play, \textit{At The Hawk's Well} (the first of his four 'plays for dancers'), which received its first, private, performance in Lady Cunard's drawing room on 2 April 1916, and was then given a more public performance for charity two days later, in front of three hundred people, in the drawing room of Lady Islington; this performance is perhaps the best documented record of Ito's dancing before he went to America in the autumn of 1916.\textsuperscript{127} He later wrote in his journal that 'the ideas of European stage-artists of that time such as Gordon Craig and Max Rheinhardt were really nothing but Noh,'\textsuperscript{128} a confluence of approaches and influences which Yeats, Pound and Rodker all benefitted from, in different ways. In the light of what we have already learned about Rodker's interests and his theatrical milieu, it is no surprise to learn that the quality Huntly Carter singled out in his description of Rodker's production was Ito's 'amazing evocative


\textsuperscript{127} The fullest account of Ito's dancing is in Helen Caldwell, \textit{Michio Ito: The Dancer and his Dances} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); however, she deliberately has little to say about historical context. For an account of \textit{At the Hawk's Well}, see pp. 48-50 and the photographs on pp. 46 and 47.

dancing [which] resembles a living marionette. The spirit of dance seems to take all conscious power from him and to actuate him with its own vivid and spontaneous movements. 129 (It is possible that Ito's performance at the Margaret Morris Theatre was based on texts by Rodker: certainly there was a piece called 'Marionettes' in his repertoire when he arrived in New York, which he performed as part of a programme at the Comedy Theatre on 6 December 1916.) 130

Pound himself had been translating 'dance-poems' from Japanese for Ito to dance to in the autumn of 1915, as well as working with Yeats on Noh plays and comedies. 131 Yeats's search for a workable poetic drama was famously reinvigorated by the Noh. Rodker's plays and dialogue poems provide some of the context and stimulus that made their work possible. Pound's own experiences were less happy than Yeats's or Rodker's, and by November 1918 he was pessimistic about the possibility of establishing what he calls 'an interesting "theatre" in our time'. 132 (The immediate context for Pound's observation here was the impossibility of staging a rather different project, Joyce's Exiles, which was finally, and unsuccessfully, premiered in Munich in August 1919.) The main lesson for him was the epiphanic stillness of certain images that compressed narrative to the point of resonant stasis, as in the 'wet leaf that clings to the threshold' in his 'Liu Ch'e', which is recalled in 'the rustling of wither'd hazel leaves' in the opening lines of Yeats's At the Hawk's Well. The dead or falling leaf, more than any other motif, seems to recur in poems written in London during these years. In his review of Des Imagistes, Ford Madox Ford had cited several poems featuring dry leaves; he also quoted Pound's 'Liu Ch'e' and went on to say that

in vers libre [...] I really think that a new form has been found [...] for the narrative of emotion. Mr Pound's poem [...] is in reality a tiny novel [...] the immediate interest of vers libre is that [...] it is in its unit an expression of the author's brain-wave. 133

And Pound, revising his essay on Vorticism for inclusion in Gaudier-Brzeska, talking about the process that led him the final formulation of 'In a Station of the Metro', wrote in a footnote: 'Mr Flint and Mr Rodker have made longer poems depending on a similar presentation of matter' and, in another footnote added,

130 Caldwell, Appendix 4. But there was also a dance called 'Les Marionettes' which Margaret Morris composed to music by Eugene Goossens (see Margaret Morris Dancing, plate XIV).
131 Longenbach, Stone Cottage, pp. 201-02.
132 Pound/Joyce. The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce, ed. by Forrest Read (Faber, 1968), p. 141.
133 The Outlook, 33 (9 May, 1914), 636, 653.
I am often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the hokko, evolved also the Noh plays. In the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image, enforced by movement and music. I can see nothing against a long vorticist poem.134

Whether or not 'Theatre Muet' may be regarded as a prototype of the long vorticist poem, 'its unity [...] enforced by movement', Rodker's subsequent pieces of extended writing took the form of prose, with one exception: the avowedly autobiographical A C.O.'s Biography, a seven-page poem which remained unpublished,135 and was mostly incorporated into or superseded by first Dartmoor and later Memoirs of Other Fronts.

Prose writer.
In letters to Harriet Monroe in 1915 and 1916, Rodker makes a distinction between his 'plays' and his 'poems'; in a series of prose pieces published in The Little Review in 1917 and 1918 he attempts to bring the two elements, of atmospheric action and sexual dialogue, together. His first novel, The Switchback was completed by early 1917 but probably has its roots as far back as 1911 or 1912, and is set in an impoverished London, a world in which emotional uncertainty, urban anomie and a lack of serious telos are projected on to a tale of marital infidelity and inconsequential suicide. It was in Pound's hands when Rodker was arrested, but it never found an English publisher: it was eventually published in a French translation by Ludmila Savitzky (who had recently translated Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man) in 1923, with a very laudatory and well-informed preface by Edmond Jaloux, which situated Rodker alongside Lewis, Joyce and Ben Hecht at the forefront of the modern Anglo-American novel.136 At one point in it, he writes as follows of the central, male character:

Tous ses grands elans se depensent pour rien; la haine, la rancune se melent sans cesse a sa tendresse; a tout moment, a travers la faible couche de civilisation, on voit renaitre le fond de peur, d'angoisse, de cruauté, de superstition, de jugements eronés, d'impulsions folles, sur lequel est bâtie la chancelante créature humaine; par le perpetuel retour aux troubles origines, il arrive a faire des portraits humains assez complets; il est assez bien de son

135 Two passages from it were published in a revised form as 'Two Prison Poems' in his Collected Poems 1912-1925 (Paris: The Hours Press, 1930). The poem was published for the first time in Crozier, John Rodker: Poems and Adolphe 1920.
temps, le temps de Freud et de Sir James Frazer. Il se demande à ce moment 'si réellement elle l’aimait, ou s’il n’était qu’un mannequin pour son désir d’être aimée'. Ce mot est significatif: Rodker estime le plus souvent que nous sommes les uns pour les autres des mannequins qui nous permettent d’extérioriser et d’éprouver nos propres emotions. Mais le mannequin pleure pour son compte; Frank souffre, fait souffrir Anne et Marjorie et souffre de leur souffrance, puis s’en irrité ou s’en console pour un rien. Toute cette étude des infiniments petits de la conscience nous rappelle aussi que John Rodker est un contemporain de Proust.137

Mannequins, lay figures, marionettes or dutch dolls, the incorporation of a phenomenology of the body as the site for exploration of the mind remains pervasive in Rodker’s work, as Jaloux’s contemporary reading attests. But in remaining closer to ritual than to myth, Rodker is also mapping out a path in which novelistic action is seen through the optic of psychology, rather than through the Joycean device of the ironising counter-point of Ulyssian epic.

In the spring of 1919, Rodker took over from Pound as foreign editor of The Little Review, to which he had already contributed several reviews of poetry, a piece on Henry James and a discussion of Joyce’s Exiles. The latter is worth pausing on for the evidence it offers of the extent to which the psychological was now the commanding frame of reference for him: his experiences of politics during the war have reinforced his belief in the irreducible complexity of the subject:

Everyone talks of individual freedom,—(Stirner is a name to conjure with, though unread),—identifying it in some obscure way with Women’s Suffrage. But the issues are psychological and no spread of popular education will simplify them.138

His interest is in the borderline at which will and instinct come into conflict with each other:

Interaction of thought and will is carried so close to this borderline that the reader fears continually lest he miss any implication. Analysis digs continually deeper. At a certain moment it is lost. Mind will go no further.

This is the conceptual framework within which he is situating the problem of identity, and it is this that will dominate his writing in the years to come. A short piece, ‘Chanson on Petit Hypertrophique,’ appeared in the magazine in the summer of 1920; it was evidently stimulated by Laforgue’s poem ‘La chanson du

137 Montagnes Russes, p. xxvi. (My italics. The phrase of Rodker’s which Jaloux renders as ‘mannequin’ is ‘lay figure’.)
petit hypertrophique’, and explores, through the evocation of a feverish, dream-like (or ether-induced) state of mind in which physical and mental sensations fade into each other, repressed memories of his mother.\textsuperscript{139} This signals the increasingly autobiographical approach that began with 'A C. O.'s Biography' and which reaches its fruition in \textit{Adolphe 1920}, the unpublished \textit{Trains}, and \textit{Memoirs of Other Fronts}.

It was as a contributing editor to \textit{The Little Review} that Rodker established his literary credentials, and was able to make the contacts, both in England and France, that sustained his work for the next decade and a half.

\textsuperscript{139} \textit{The Little Review}, 7-8, 2 (June-August 1922), 16-17. Rodker's mother seems to have disappeared from his life when he was six or seven years old. She may have been an alcoholic. He spent his later childhood and adolescence with his father and step-mother.
Chapter 4 John Rodker: later work

John Rodker [...] est au confluent de deux littératures [...] il pourrait bien se trouver un précurseur de cette nouvelle littérature européenne qui me paraît fatale.¹

Rodker: a European writer

By the early 1920s Rodker was deeply read both in contemporary French poetry and in that of the previous three quarters of a century, and was spending much of his time in Paris. He was a friend of André Spire, Edmond Jaloux and other Paris poets in the circle round Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach, some of whom he may already have met when he was in Paris in 1912 or 1913.² His interest in Verlaine and Laforgue has already been commented on; and his interest in marionettes as figures in the drama of his wartime poems was one he shared with Symbolist writers and painters in Paris in the 1890s and later.³ He had also become deeply interested in Lautréamont's *Les chants de Maldoror*, a complete translation of which he published in 1924; although he was probably attracted initially by the self-consciously shocking and exaggerated Symbolist self-disgust and excess of that text, it was in the longer run Lautréamont's syntactical and stylistic procedures that engaged him, and which provided him with a new model to exploit in his writing of *Adolphe 1920*.

After the publication of his second volume of poems, *Hymns*, in 1920, Rodker published little of his own work in England until the end of the decade: a couple of poems (in *Fanfare* and in the second issue of *The Tyro*), and *The Future of Futurism*. *Adolphe 1920* was written between 25 December 1925 and 26 May 1926, but not published in England until 1929: however his work was widely published in American and expatriate magazines, and in French and Italian translation. His second novel, *Heat*, was reluctantly turned down by Harold Loeb, the editor of *Broom*, on the grounds that it would certainly be suppressed if he published it, and the manuscript was subsequently lost; but his first, *The Switchback*, as we have seen, was published in French translation in 1923.⁴

² Among the books from his library preserved in HRHRC are affectionate presentation inscriptions from Cocteau, Max Ernst and Paul Eluard (who wrote in the copy of *Les malheurs des immortels* they inscribed to him: 'Never smoke: it is injurious to the health'), Jouve, and Henry de Montherlant.
³ For a fuller account of the cultural context of this interest in marionettes and marionette drama, see my article, 'Are We Not Strange Creatures? Marionettes and the Theatre of the Psyche' in *The Objects of Modernism: Modernity, History and Material Culture*, ed. by Geoffrey Gilbert and Trudi Tate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
Savitzky became a close friend and translated a number of his works during the 1920s: *Dartmoor*, later incorporated into *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, was published in French in 1926, having been first published in serial form in *Ecrits nouveaux*; and *Adolphe 1920*, which Pound serialized in the first three issues of his magazine *Exile* between 1927 and 1928, was simultaneously serialised, again in Savitzky's translation, in *La revue européenne* between 1927 and 1929.5 When the Aquila Press (directed by Win Henderson, who had worked with Rodker on his Ovid Press) finally brought out the English text in an edition of 850 (50 of which were hors commerce) in 1929, the press went bankrupt almost immediately afterwards, hindering proper distribution of the novel. During this period Rodker also wrote an opera, *Orpheus & Eurydice*, one full-length play intended for the commercial theatre,6 and two shorter plays, several poems and short stories, some at least of *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, an autobiographical narrative *Trains* (published in full in French translation in 1929, and in English only in part four years later, under the title 'Memories')7 and a number of reviews, 'London Letters', and articles for American, French and Italian journals, including the essay on Joyce's 'work in progress' first published in *transition*, later included in the *Exagmination*.8 He made a precarious living as a publisher of private press and limited edition books, many of sexological or occult interest, as well as important modernist works by Le Corbusier, Valéry and others, and the

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5 This journal, the editors of which included Jaloux, Larbaud, and Julien Green, was successful in maintaining an international perspective on developments in the arts, especially writing. As well as Rodker, it was publishing at the same time work by Virginia Woolf ('Le signe sur le mur'), Joyce, Rilke and Robert McAlmon, as well as by Russian, German and Central European prose writers and poets. The focus is very much on the internationalism of the new movements in Europe, and there are a number of articles discussing issues such as stream-of-consciousness prose.

6 Although (as far as I can discover) it was never produced, the play was a serious one, and taken seriously. Rodker evidently sent it to a theatrical agency (the Elizabeth Marbury agency), as he received a letter dated 8 Dec. 1926, from an agency reader named Wallis Peacock. Your play "ANY HUSBAND" came under my notice a little while ago, and I read it on behalf of Sir Barry Jackson. If you have not done anything with the play and would care to let me have it, I would like to try it in one or two quarters. It is not a play that would attract an ordinary commercial management, but I might be able to do something with it elsewhere. I thought very highly of the play myself.' (HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 21f).

7 'Trains', trans. by Ludmila Savitzky, *La revue européenne*, N.S., 3 (1929), 1882-1907; 'Memories', *New English Weekly* (May 11, May 18, 1933), 82-3, 107-8. (The manuscript was submitted to Caresse Crosby for publication by her Black Sun Press, but she declined it.)

monumental edition of Pound’s *A Draft of the Cantos* 17-27.9

One obvious consequence of this was that his reputation as a prose writer, and even as a poet, was higher in France than it was in England, where he continued to be little known outside his immediate circles. The frustrations inherent in this situation were neatly pointed out by Ford Madox Ford, in a letter to Rodker congratulating him on *Montagnes Russes*, which he described as

an admirable piece of work, with amazing flashes of psychological projections: in fact, of its genre, it is so complete that there is very little to say about it to the Author: who probably himself knows all about it that there is to say & doesn’t want *my* comments. I don’t know why you can’t publish it in England or in English; if you can’t it’s one more to the account of the scandals of lugubrious Albion. It obviously loses a good deal in French: the translation is not *very* good: it’s what one calls adequate—which means that the whole book is numbed off & seems to be looking at vividness through a veil. You might almost as well, in fact, call it *Ombres Chinoises*. Anyway, I do congratulate you &, for what my own encouragement is worth, want to encourage you to go on. There’s really the whole field of that type of work open to you in England—I don’t see why you shouldn’t cultivate it. You won’t get much praise & still less cash: but if you can carry on at the level of *Montagnes Russes* you can have the conviction that you’re erecting a good solid monument to Unknown Pacifists. That’s as much as one has really any right to hope for—and you ought to feel proud of having the chance.10

With the departure of Pound, Mary Butts and Ford to Paris, Yeats to Ireland, and the death of other friends, like Rosenberg, in the war, Rodker’s intellectual centre of gravity moved from London to Paris, although his business enterprises were

9 The opera was written, or finished, in Cornwall in 1921, and it seems probable that the music for it was to have been composed by Eugene Goossens. In many ways it continues the interests revealed in the ‘Theatre Muet’ sequence. In a stage direction for Act I Rodker writes that ‘Orpheus is the only character who is ever actual. The others are more or less misty according to their reality.’ I imagine that staging it would have presented some intractable problems. (*Orpheus and Eurydice*. An opera in four acts. Autograph manuscript draft and corrected typescript, HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 211). On Rodker’s edition of *The Cantos* 17-27, see Donald Gallup, *Ezra Pound: A Bibliography* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 43-4; also Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 130-37, and *Black Riders. The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 79. For a provisional listing of Rodker’s writings, and his activity as a publisher, see Part 1 of my bibliography.

10 Letter dated 31 July 1923 (HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 5). The reference to ‘Unknown Pacifists’ suggests that Ford had also read ‘Dartmoor’. There is an implicit contradiction between Ford’s comment about the kind of reception the work was likely to have and his description of it as a ‘good solid monument’ which is entirely germane to the problematic under discussion: Ford’s assumption seems to be that the value of good writing is unassailable, and more particularly that Rodker’s own cenotaph for pacifists will thereby constitute an act of memory regardless of the vagaries of its reception.
firmly rooted in London. He felt at home, though, in neither city, rootlessness indeed being an aspect of his sense of himself which he never fully overcame. He travelled extensively during the twenties, thinking at one stage of settling in New York where he had publishing contacts, and in the thirties, when he ran an Anglo-Soviet literary agency, he made several visits to the Soviet Union (where he encountered some old friends from his pre-war socialist activities, and where his daughter Joan was now living). His experiences during the war left him with little continuing appetite for, or belief in the efficacy of, political activity, but he did help Ford and the Coles run a campaign in the British press against the Black-and-Tans in the autumn of 1920. In one important respect, though, he kept a presence in England, and that was through his interest in psycho-analysis, and the analysis he undertook with Barbara Low. It was this, as it informed his writing, that led Jaloux to describe him as a 'precursor of a new European writing', a characterization which Rodker himself echoed on a number of subsequent occasions, as when, writing to Ludmila Savitzky's daughter, Marianne (many years later to become his third wife), he said, 'Adolphe is out [...] I feel extremely like a French author.' Despite the inadequacies of French translation, then, and the difficulty of finding publishers or producers for his work in 'lugubrious Albion', Rodker continued to occupy a position at the forefront of the avant-garde of new writing. Pound, as we have seen, took Adolphe 1920 to be the first substantial manifestation of Rodker's real abilities, the fulfilment of the hopes he had reiterated in correspondence with Margaret Anderson and Alice Henderson (among others) a decade earlier. And Jaloux, stressing the need to read Rodker's prose as the product of a poet, sees his profound involvement in the exploration of psychological states as building on two different sorts of foundations; the first is the psychological impressionism of women writers such as May Sinclair, Katherine Mansfield, Clemence Dane, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, 'qui n'est pas sans rapports avec celui de Proust'; the second is the experience of the war, without

11 He wrote to David Bomberg that he'd seen 'Bram and Joe [...] and Liza [...] I also saw Dobbin and he swore he would write to you.' Among other positions, Rodker was 'British Empire Representative, Press & Publisher Literary Service, Moscow, U. S. S. R.' (Letter dated June 1935. Details of Rodker's Agency from the letter-head of a letter dated 3 July 1936. Tate Gallery, Bomberg Correspondence).
12 '[Ford] was directing, with the co-operation of ourselves and Johnny Rodker, a propaganda campaign against the Black-and-Tans and the British occupation of Ireland, which had certainly nothing phoney about it.' (Margaret Cole, Growing Up Into Revolution (Longman, Green & Co, 1949), p. 83. The ground of his pessimism about social action is elaborated in later writings such as Memoirs of Other Fronts and his essay 'Twenty Years After', but its origins in his view of individual psychology can be seen in his essay on Joyce's Exiles, cited at the end of Chapter 3.
13 It has not been possible to establish the dates of his analysis, but it seems plausible to suggest that it extended from the late 1920s to 1932 or 1933.
14 Letter dated 1 Nov. 1927 (HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 17a).
which, he claims, neither Rodker's novel nor *Hymns* would have been possible. Thus he sets him in his context as a member of

le groupe des tout derniers venus, des plus avancés, avec, à leur tête, James Joyce [...] Ben Hecht [...] Wyndham Lewis [...] peut-être [...] David Garnett [...] C'est à ce groupe qu'appartient John Rodker [...] Pour bien le juger et voir sa place dans notre temps, il faut connaître sa poésie; elle a son rôle dans *ce grand mouvement européen* qui, inquiet et tourmenté par une nouveauté possible, essaie, par-delà les bornes fixes de la logique, de découvrir des aspects inédits du lyrisme dans les terres inconnues, si riches encore et si inexploitées de l'âme humaine. [Two poems follow, one translated by Jaloux, one by Léon Bazalgette, with commentary.] Je disais tantôt que la poésie moderne cherchait à s'affranchir de la logique; c'est une erreur; elle tend à remplacer la logique scolastique qui naît d'une succession progressive et souvent arbitraire des raisonnements purs par une logique nouvelle, née du rapprochement involontaire des images et des sensations, une logique psychologique [...] Rarement l'état de tristesse, d'idéalisme blessé, de confiance détruite dans lequel la guerre a plongé les âmes jeunes, a été exprimé avec plus de véhémence, de désespoir sincère, de fureur destructrice. [...] à tout moment, à travers la faible couche de la civilisation, on voit renaître le fond de peur, d'angoisse, de cruauté, de superstition, de jugements erronés, d'impulsions folles, sur lequel est bâtie la chancelante créature humaine [...] Il est assez bien de son temps, le temps de Freud et de Sir James Frazer [...] Cette veulerie, cette indécision des héros sont absolument nouvelle, et sans doute, sans la guerre, ce livre eût-il été impossible. 16

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17 The complex patterns of belief and behaviours that associated rats with dirt, sexuality and the
the Pound circle involved Rodker in downplaying, ignoring, forgetting or disowning his Jewishness: that he could have published the poems in *Ara Vos Prec*, for example, without complaint suggests at least a degree of complexity in his own insertion into this milieu, with its implicitly and explicitly anti-semitic heritage. And when Eliot wrote to Quinn in March 1923 complaining about the New York publisher Horace Liveright, 'he commented that he was sick of what he called Jew publishers and asked whether Quinn couldn't find a decent Christian one'; it is improbable that Rodker, whose edition of *Ara Vos Prec* had been remaindered to Harold Monro late in 1921, would have been exempted from Eliot's opprobrium; indeed he seems more likely to have inspired it than either Leonard Woolf or Liveright himself. This may be an additional reason for the distance Rodker set up between himself and Eliot and Lewis after 1920, and his growing advocacy of Joyce's writing; he consistently placed him at the forefront of 'English' writers in the articles he wrote for the foreign press (as for example in the article on 'La letteratura inglese del nostro tempo' which appeared in the Italian review, *Convegno*, where he associated Joyce with Pound, Eliot and Aldington, and called Joyce 'forse il più personale e potente del gruppo, ardito costruttore di miti e di movenze sintattiche.') That he does so indicates also his own turn away from writing poetry in favour of the development of his imaginative investigations in prose writing.

**Lautréamont, and Joyce**

Andrew Crozier has argued convincingly that Rodker's experience of translating *The Lay of Maldoror* was what enabled him both to move beyond the reactive satirical stance of *Hymns* and to achieve the 'phrasally dispersed prose, through which images rapidly pass and return' of *Adolphe 1920*. Whether he first encountered Lautréamont's work in French or in English is impossible to determine, but there were certainly opportunities for reading at least most of the first canto in English, in a translation by Richard Aldington, in *The Egoist* as early as 1914. This was preceded by Aldington's translation of the article by Rémy de working class are interestingly detailed in Christopher Herbert, 'Rat Worship and Taboo in Mayhew's London', *Representations*, 23 (Summer 1988), 1-24. I return to this point in Chapter 6. For an exposition of the tradition of anti-semitic identification of Jews with rats, see Anthony Julius's reading of Eliot's 'Burbank...' (first published in *Ara Vos Prec*) in *T. S. Eliot, anti-Semitism, and literary form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 102-3.

21 Joyce himself particularly noted this; see his postcard to Carlo Linati in *The Letters of James Joyce*, ed. by Stuart Gilbert and Richard Ellmann, 3 vols (Faber 1957-66), vol. 3, p. 47.
23 See the discussion of the English reception of Lautréamont in Roland-François Lack,
Gourmont which Rodker re-translated and used as the introduction to his own edition of the work. In the francophone world, Paul Fort and Maurice Maeterlinck, both of whose work Rodker knew well, were both early propagandists for the *Chants de Maldoror*. It may be, too, that Rodker felt some sympathy with a writer who was self-published, unreviewed, and whose work went unrecognised for so long. At all events, he not only translated and published the book, he continued to revise his translation until the early 1930s, going so far as to write a new introduction for the publication of his revised translation, which however never materialised. 24 He also translated one section, if not more, of Lautréamont’s *Poesies*, a long extract from the first of which appears, unattributed, in *The Future of Futurism* (pp. 67-70). What attracted him to Lautréamont? Partly, I think, the poetic nature of the text, its sheer lack of interpretability except in its own terms and in terms of its own structure, what Marcelin Pleynet calls the unreadability of ‘un texte qui déçoit toute tentative d’extension ou de réduction à l’un quelconque de ses signifiés;’ 25 partly the problematic nature of the relationship between the reader and the subject in the text, something which is established in the first line of Canto 1, and which shifts its field of operation from the autobiographical to the fictional; and partly the way in which the enormity of the author’s fantasies enlists the fantasmagoric for their embodiment. We might also note the oneiric quality of the prose, including its incorporation of the work of other authors, as if the text is dreaming its precursors. And at the conclusion of the litany of ‘the junk of literature’, the passage from *Poesies* that Rodker cites in *The Future of Futurism*, we read that ‘it is

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24 His translation was published in 1924; previous to that, four extracts had appeared in *Broom: an international magazine of the arts* between August and December, 1922. For his re-workings of the translation, see the heavily corrected, disbound copy, marked ‘Corrected. J. R. 25/4/32’ (HRHRC, Rodker Archive), which also contains a manuscript draft and proof sheets of the Preface; see also the extract of the revised translation published in *transition* 8 (Oct. 1927), 105-14. (I also own a copy of the book which contains several pages much corrected in Rodker’s hand.) It is clear from this that Rodker was not only aware of the errors and weaknesses of the original translation, but that he continued to regard the work as sufficiently important for it to be worth the effort of improving. 25 Marcelin Pleynet, ‘Les Chants de Maldoror et de Lautréamont’, *Tel Quel*, 26 (Summer 1966), 42-59, (43).
time to react now against what shocks and overwhelms us', a project which both *Adolphe 1920* and *Memoirs of Other Fronts* continue.

The other significant feature of this developmental process, I would argue, is his involvement with writers whose main interest was in the presentation of mental life, primarily through experiments with stream-of-consciousness prose; to use Rodker's own formulation, 'we have reached a degree of consciousness where we find it no longer adequate to use words as we use them in speech, for we recognise speech to be only the superficial movement of profounder currents.'

This question of what Rodker (in *The Future of Futurism*) referred to as an 'exacerbated sensibility', and its possible implications for the future, occupied him throughout the 1920s. He continues his essay on Joyce with the claim that an author completely aware [...] of the forces he is using and anxious to produce the most naturalistic picture of an individual, and of the repressions, complications, forces which direct that individual before they express themselves in words, must have recourse to all the hybrid formless onomatopoeic and conventional sounds in which feeling clothes itself.

The argument here is one that concerns the epistemology of the new writing, especially in its incorporation of 'poetic' aspects into a prose structure. The pre-linguistic forces that shape the subject, as his footnote reference to Ogden and Richards's *The Meaning of Meaning* makes clear, are somatic or physiological as well as psychological in origin; in Joyce's work they are embodied in the '[p]uns, klang words and mantrams' which operate as screens for those infantile 'vengeful and iconoclastic impulses driven underground by fear' and which retain their primitive vitality. Rodker thus redescribes these words (the 'magic words' of Ogden and Richards) in psychological, rather than anthropological terms, at the same time pointing to the way such revitalisation of language can reassert the accumulated history of 'our emotional inheritance' through a philologically and etymologically aware virtuosity, rendering the unconscious conscious.

Rodker's own central concerns as a writer are clearly in evidence here, particularly the attempt that lies at the heart of *Adolphe 1920* to portray the life of the feelings as it is registered in a consciousness of the body and the immediate contexts of that body's event-horizons, so that subjective identity is established as a projection of the physiological self on to the screen of the skin and thence on to the screen of a series of events in relation to which he behaves as a writing spectator. He concludes his essay on Joyce's 'Work in Progress' by drawing the

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26 'The Word Structure of Work in Progress', *transition*, 14 (Fall, 1928), 229-32, (reprinted, as 'Joyce and his Dynamic', in *Our Exagmination*).
reader's attention to the homology between its timelessness and the timelessness of the unconscious, in which 'events, people make their own relevant conjunctions. Events are people too, a whole cosmography of them.' In reference to his own work, we might reverse that formulation and say that people are also events, the stream of the narrator's consciousness of them constituting the frame of his identity, without any need to establish priorities between the interior and external worlds.27

I have already adduced Pound's belief that Rodker's novel was an advance on Joyce (an opinion echoed by Basil Bunting: 'John Rodker has added something to the repertoire of English prose in his "Adolphe"').28 What then are the qualities of his prose? First, and centrally, there is his evocation of different layers of consciousness in a practice which owes something to Joyce, but which largely eschews the bric-à-brac of Ulysses. In his exhilarating discussion of the origin and development of stream-of-consciousness writing, Franco Moretti makes several important points about its development: having identified and discussed a considerable number of experiments in the form from Tolstoy and Dujardin to Schnitzler, Woolf, Mann, Broch, Faulkner and Joyce, he argues that this proliferation was the result of a crisis in the unity of the subject at the turn of the century which necessitated finding 'a language for the divided Self.'29 The problem he sets himself to explain is why so many of the writers involved in this experimentation came to be forgotten in the 'bloodbath' that is the 'Malthusian aspect of canon formation.' It is not the narrow audience of 'super-readers' that interests him, but the possibility that Joyce's use of stream of consciousness in Ulysses was 'able to solve problems [by] constructing a new perceptual and symbolic horizon' (p. 178; italics in original). He distinguishes the two varieties on the basis of their function; whereas in all other writers the technique served an ancillary function, either ancillary to the plot in making its cruces more dramatic, or ancillary to vision, as an epiphanic lyricism rendering an arcane significance visible, in Ulysses it is 'a technique of the meaningless', strictly banal. 'It does not seek ennoblement, so avoids adulteration' (p. 180). Moretti's enthusiasm for a Darwinian model of literary survival, and his focus on the epic, leads him, despite his insistence on a 'Big Bang' theory of modernism in which a plethora of

27 Further evidence of Rodker's support and enthusiasm for Joyce is to be seen in his letter to Pound, dated 2 Nov. 1926, in which he says 'I wrote to Joyce the other day, saying I would like to publish his new book.' (Yale: Beinecke Library, EP YCAL mss, Box 40, Folder 1497.)
29 Franco Moretti, Modern Epic. The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez, trans. by Quintin Hoare (Verso, 1996), p. 177. Subsequent page references are given in the text. (We may note the association between a certain kind of writing and a divided or split self which Lewis takes to be characteristic of Rodker; see below, and note 41.)
contradictory or incompatible experiments coexist in a variety too great to be effectively subsumed under the one categorial heading, and the consequent need to rethink the concept of modernism as a plurality, to emphasise the polyphony of *Ulysses*, and Joyce's later writing, over the exploration of psychic realities it makes possible. But it is precisely Rodker's dominant interest in the latter that gives *Adolphe 1920* and *Memoirs of Other Fronts* a value beyond the merely experimental: Moretti argues that polyphony operated as a counter to the reduction of complexity represented by the new primitivism and interest in myth, and Eliot's 'mythic method', which posed a temptation to accept totalitarian solutions. The desire to 'tame polyphony', he suggests, 'in Europe, in the twenties and thirties [...] cannot fail to evoke a political reaction.' But, he continues, this remains at the level of temptation:

'It is not that literature cannot be fascist. It can very well be fascist, and indeed has been. But it is harder for that to happen in the case of world texts. Culturally impure, transnational, with no longer any sense of the 'enemy', hypereducated, indulgent towards consumption, enamoured of eccentricities and experiments: hard to make reactionary works, with such ingredients. Hard, above all, to do so with *fragments*. [...] So a compromise formation eventually imposes itself—of which *The Waste Land* is the best example—in which the polyphonic complexity of modernism is not abolished, but precisely 'controlled and ordered'. On the surface—clearly visible—fragments: dissonant, opaque, polyphonic, intertextual. But underneath this mosaic, as its secret filigree, a collection of colossal commonplaces: 'the metropolis as hell', 'the destructiveness of romantic love', 'the sterility of the modern world'. (pp. 227-29)

The great modernist works, he concludes, offer 'the allegory of a heterogeneous—but forcibly unified—reality', and in that consists their truth. But for all its persuasiveness, and the many insights it gives us into the nature of the works he discusses, Moretti's teleology here is essentially a defensive one, based on a circularity: the canonical works of high modernism—*Ulysses, The Waste Land*, and *The Cantos*—justify their canonicity, and the latter two are defended from charges of complicity with fascism, on the same grounds. If we turn aside from Moretti's project, which is to make certain large claims for a homology between the epic form and the capitalist world-system, and look again at other ways in which those three 'colossal commonplaces' were confronted and explored, we may find that Rodker's work, precisely because of its absence of belief in social form and political power, offers an alternative strategy both for anti-fascism and for the future of writing, which Moretti's model has to exclude.

When *Adolphe 1920* was reviewed in *The Criterion*, the reviewer concentrated on the differences between Rodker's novel and that of Benjamin Constant, a
comparison on which the title would seem to insist. This is an obvious approach, and one that I shall also take, but it is important to note one or two caveats at the outset. The first is that Rodker himself was unsure about the title. In his letter to Pound, dated 22 November 1926 (cited above), he explained that the novel 'will eventually be called "The Meeting", comparisons being odious'; it may therefore well have been Pound, its first publisher, who persuaded him to retain the allusion to Constant. The second is that the form of the title is also an echo of Jouve's *Paulina* 1880, another work with a focus on the experimental presentation of psychological states that uses stream-of-consciousness techniques. Jouve was a writer well-known to Rodker, and profoundly interested in psycho-analysis; his 1931 novel *Vagadu*, which Rodker translated in the early 1930s, was based on the case-history of one of his wife's psycho-analytic patients, and his poems, particularly the long sequence *Sueur de sang*, the first section of which Rodker also translated, examine suffering through the dual optics of religion (especially in relation to original sin) and psycho-analysis. It is clear from the correspondence between the two men that Rodker regarded his work extremely highly, and he went to great lengths to attempt to secure publication of his translation of both *Sueur de sang* and *Vagadu*; his original plan, before his publishing houses temporarily collapsed under the weight of £5,000 of debt, was to publish it himself; he then offered it to Leonard Woolf at the Hogarth Press, who was not enthusiastic, after which it was rejected by Heinemann.) And finally Andrew Crozier argues that the novel itself 'owes

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30 *The Criterion*, 10, 39 (Jan. 1931), 333-336. The review was by Clere Parsons but it struck Rodker as so perceptive that he asked Pound if he had written it under a pseudonym (undated letter to Pound, Yale: Beinecke Library, EP YCAL mss, Box 40, Folder 1498). It was this review, too, which perceptively noted that Lautréamont was the 'major formative influence upon Mr. Rodker's style'.


32 In fact as late as 1949 he was trying to interest *Poetry London* in publishing 'Blood Sweat'; this attempt was probably given impetus by the magazine's publishing a few translations from *Sueur de Sang* by David Gascoyne in the autumn of 1947 (see Colin T. Benford, *David Gascoyne: a bibliography of his works* (1929-1985) (Isle of Wight: Heritage Books, [1988])).

33 Heinemann returned the manuscript as he felt 'we should have little success with the book on our list'; Leonard Woolf rejected it saying that 'it is an interesting book, but I am afraid that it doesn't really quite suit us at the moment' (HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 21s). Rodker may also have known the article Jouve wrote with his wife, Dr. Blanche Reverchon-Jouve, 'Moments d'une Psychanalyse' (*Nouvelle Revue Française*, 234 (March 1933), 353-85), in which Jouve stresses the object-like nature and force of the unconscious: 'l'expérience de l'analyse, pratiquée selon la méthode de Freud, nous offre une moisson à peu près inépuisable de faits dans lesquels apparaît, avec la solidité d'une chose cet inconnu hétérogène à notre conscience.' Jouve was a long-standing friend of Ludmila Savitzky and her husband, but Rodker probably came to know him only in 1928 or 1929. The earliest of the twelve presentation copies of Jouve's work preserved in the Rodker Archive is dated January 1929, and the inscription in it suggests that Jouve reciprocated Rodker's interest in his work: 'Pour John Rodker (et un peu comme ses Montagnes russes') avec sympathie.' On Jouve, see the not entirely sympathetic account in Margaret Callander, *The Poetry of Pierre Jean Jouve* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965). Her dismissal of *Vagadu* is comparable to the terms in which Rodker's own novels were
little to its textual analogue [...] Dick and Angela, the modern Adolphe and Ellénore, do not exist by virtue of any overdetermining history or sociology, still less are they types produced to mount the comic ironies and the pathos of romantic love.'34 Nonetheless the title demands some investigation.

**Why Adolphe?**

Once the novel was published under its title, the connection between the two was more than just an allusion. That Rodker thought of his work as in some sense adjunct to Constant's is suggested by a light-hearted comment he made in a letter to Marianne in 1950: 'Last night [...] I listened to Lord David Cecil on the radio on Adolphe. Et pas un mot sur Adolphe 1920. Quelle honte!'35 And anyway it is clear that the principle intention is to set up, even were it only implicitly, the same kind of textual parallel as exists between *Ulysses* and the *Odyssey*, save that where Joyce exploits his epic framework and stylistic resources to give historical depth as well as formal structure to his novel, Rodker ignores the contextual and referential elements of his master-text, instead establishing a counterpoint to qualities intrinsic to it; not, indeed, the mere pathos of romantic love, but certainly psychological questions concerning love, freedom and compulsion within a narrative of introspection. In addition to this, there are certain emotional resonances between the two texts. Although Constant's own name is absent from Rodker's title and text, the idea of constancy (recalling Constant's own paradoxical reflection, 'sola inconstantia constans') is pivotal in the novel. Like Constant's hero, the narrator of *Adolphe 1920* is not only rootless, but indifferent to geographical location except as a reflex of an emotional state ('I don't mind [...] whether I am here or elsewhere', Constant's stranger tells the 'publisher' in the framing narrative, while Dick is as restless in his unnamed location as the travelling fair or the jazz and dance troupe that form the backdrops to the narrative).36 And in the unpublished Preface to the second French edition, Constant wrote of his wish 'to represent in Adolphe one of the chief moral diseases of our age, that fatigue, that uncertainty, that lack of strength, that perpetual analysis which undermines with its reservations all feelings as soon as they are born.'37

That combination of fatigue and self-alienated analysis establishes a parallel with

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34 Introduction, p. xx.
the pre-eminent disease of urban modernity, the neurasthenic 'aboulia' of which Eliot and Rodker both complained, which is sufficient on its own to indicate what Pound called 'the persistence of type' between the two novels.\textsuperscript{38} The indications of neurasthenia, as described by Freud, included physical fatigue of 'nervous' origin: headaches, digestive troubles, constipation, diminished sexual activity, and similar disorders.\textsuperscript{39} These form a constant and conscious theme in Rodker's writing in the twenties and thirties. If we wanted further reasons for Rodker's choice of this parallel for his psychological investigations, Clere Parsons cites Sainte-Beuve's description of \textit{Adolphe} as 'ce roman tout psychologique' and Todorov quotes Jean Hytier to the effect that '[t]he name Constant should figure in psychology textbooks.\textsuperscript{40} In his journals and correspondence Constant frequently described 'the dualistic sensation of watching himself from the outside, feeling split between an indifferent and a frantically emotional self,'\textsuperscript{41} whereas Rodker is more completely implicated in his self-observation. The very fact of introspection, however, is enough for Lewis in the overdetermined caricature in \textit{The Apes of God}, to characterise him as 'the split-man' and ruthlessly to parody the psychological aspect of his writing as a form of self-delusion.\textsuperscript{42} Lastly, Rodker and Constant both shared an awareness of the importance of intellectual doubt and moral uncertainty, and both knew that the experience of individual freedom and political liberty was in many ways a complex, contraverted, and unhappy state. It is thus fairly clear that there is more than a merely casual reason for Rodker's choice of a title and, indeed, I would suggest that what I take to be a quality central to Constant's thought, as described by Maurice Blanchot in his essay on \textit{Adolphe}, is the ground on which Rodker's achievement is raised.

\textit{Le drame de Constant est en apparence fort banal, et d'ailleurs, en réalité, il est banal. Mais ce qui le rend unique, c'est qu'en même temps qu'il le subit, il nous donne les moyens de le comprendre, nous en découvre le vrai sens et la véritable étendue [...] Constant

\textsuperscript{38} '[I]t seems to me that the present "Adolphe" may well take its place besides its 18th century homonym. At least those who know the one volume will find increased interest in the other; a study in the persistence of type.' (Ezra Pound, \textit{Exile} 1 (Spring 1927), 88-9).

\textsuperscript{39} Freud, 'On Narcissism: an introduction', \textit{Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud}, translated under the general editorship of James Strachey, 24 vols., (Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1953-74), vol. 14, pp. 73-102; see also Joyce McDougall, \textit{Theatres of the Body: a psychoanalytical approach to psychosomatic illness} (Free Association Books, 1989), passim. This central concern with spiritual fatigue is something Rodker would, of course, have encountered in Laforgue, where, as Jean-Louis Chrétien has pointed out, it is almost coterminal with subjectivity itself. 'Ce qui l'ennuie est la même chose que ce qui le distrait: il se fatigue d'emplir son vide de ce qui n'est pas lui-même, et ce vide même fait qu'il n'a pas la choix.' (Jean-Louis Chrétien, \textit{De la fatigue} (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1996), p. 110.)


\textsuperscript{41} Fontana, \textit{Benjamin Constant}, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{42} For an analysis of Lewis's satirisation of Rodker, see Chapter 6.
est un exemple saisissant du paradoxe qu'il y a au fond de tous rapports humains, lorsque ceux-ci se donnent pour objet le manque qui les constitue [...] Le principe de tous ces mouvements, c'est le sentiment de la distance qui le sépare des autres. Il sait et il sent que cette distance est à la fois la condition et l'objet de ses rapports avec le monde. Il doit être éloigné du monde s'il veut s'en rapprocher, et il ne peut communiquer avec lui que s'il devient maître de ce vide.43

By his focus on the phenomenology of desire, and this constitutive lack at its heart, Rodker, in turn, is able to jettison all the contextual paraphernalia of the conventional novel. The diurnal narrative framework of Adolphe 1920 is simply that: it opens as the narrator wakes and concludes as he falls asleep. In between he wanders round a visiting fair, makes an assignation with a showwoman and her boa-constrictor, eats, is pursued by two of his lovers, and gets drunk in a bar watching a jazz band and a troupe of dancers. Much of the narrative takes place in and around the tents, booths, cages and stalls of the fair, and these are presented textually as simultaneously events in the world and in the narrator's consciousness; but the fairground itself, like the circus, is also a literary convention and trope with a history of its own, and Rodker's awareness of this ambivalence is what allows his phenomenological consciousness to mediate the two and to foreground this mediation, so that neither subjective appropriation of imagery nor fallacies of externalized expression can dominate the reader's interpretative strategy.

Whereas Constant's narrative is doubly framed in a series of extra-textual devices, Rodker's novel has no such distancing tropes. Instead the framing context of the narrator's day is provided by the visit of a travelling circus to a small provincial town in the south west of France, a device which allows Rodker to draw on its accumulated literary and artistic associations and to extend his interest in the literary figures of the commedia into a new synthesis, creating a new theatre of the psyche as poetic prose fiction. The town is never named, any more than the circumstances of the central figure are described: from the outset, when the protagonist, identified in the text simply as Dick, wakens violently from the pupa of sleep and dream into the penumbral noises of the arriving circus, we are drawn into a phenomenology in which both these rootless travellers and the hero's errant subjectivity are imbricated.

Let him move off. He will meet that circus at Brives, Rocamadour, Figeac, Rodez, or else the bills announcing it, until by accident on some waste heath, he caught the flying Banvards come

How like a fish this woman in mid-air
Swims, teeth clenched upon a wire,
Taut body a new moon, hands that respire...

Himself. His wind-beaten, half-legible placard still flapped on the walls of Claire, the city of Anne, the capital of Marjorie, the wide empty street of Angela. Let him turn out his lions, monkeys, blow his fanfare... What then? (p. 7)

This is more than just a metaphor, his emotional life as a circus; his interior world is not differentiated from the external one, nor temporal sequence from the spatial sites of his own performance. The 'half-legible placard' (his use of the French term, rather than the English 'poster', itself hovering somewhere between the two languages) points to the essentially textual nature of this presentation, suggesting that the performance of consciousness in writing is the focus of reference, rather than any term outside it being granted ontological or epistemological priority.

Like the world of Pierrot and Columbine, Rodker's interest in which we saw in the previous chapter, and in fact closely intertwined with it, the figure of travelling fairs or circuses was one which fascinated writers and painters—particularly French writers and painters—throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The use of the clown or pierrot as an analogue of the poet gave way, to some extent, as the century progressed, to the figure of the whole circus as a multivocal company and arena. It has been convincingly suggested that as a metacultural phenomenon the circus and fair represented the site of a perceptual vertigo which enabled the development of new forms of painting and writing in response to the fragmentation and complexity of modern experience. Rodker makes extensive use of the cultural resonance of this literary and artistic tradition in *Adolphe* 1920, as well extending it into new forms: the text contains a fairground menagerie and aquarium, a grotesque medical display of 'pickled horrors in jars', a boxing booth, roundabouts, flying boats, trapeze artists, penny gaffes, acrobatics, a giant racer, waxworks, clowns, midgets, and wrestlers, all surrounded by a perceptual miasma of smells and noises—music from loudspeakers and barrel-organs, beating drums, blaring cymbals, mechanical pianos, animal howls, the smells from animal cages and from food stalls, frying

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44 The three lines of verse are a re-working of the opening lines of Rodker's unpublished poem, 'The Flying Banvards', printed in Crozier, *John Rodker*, p. 127.

45 The classic account is Starobinski, *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque*, but see also Jones, *Sad Clowns and pale Pierrots*.

potatoes, mussels, garlic, urine and vanilla—and paraffin flares, artificial light, the visual display of foodstuffs like nougat, ice cream, fritters, marzipan, joint sausages and offal, and always the 'dark swirling flood' of jostling crowds.

Two episodes help us plot a path between this battery of sensation and Dick's reflections. The first recounts his experience of the penny-gaffes, or what-the-b Butler-saw machines: fortified by eating, he allows himself to be swept along by the streaming crowd, then,

afraid suddenly, he clutched a nearby stanchion. That man-eating one leg stood sombre, with dark square eyes staring from its breast, waiting dumbly to be taken to others of its clan sunk like buoys throughout the street. He slipped a penny into it. A warm light moistened its eyes, lit up its chest. He put his eyes on its eyes, his heart on its heart, listening deeply, anxiously; forgetting the fair, his fellows reading other hearts round him. But the excitement of beating air thrilled him, and the prospect of some approaching revelation made delay unendurable. It began to mutter. Where its heart was, a woman rose from a chair, smiled, patted down her elaborate hair, unhooked a shoulder-of-mutton blouse, a petticoat or two, stood self-consciously for a minute in lace-edged drawers, laced boots and black stockings, smiling a timid 1890 smile. Wondering, fearful of losing it, he thought he couldn't bear her smile to fade, yet suddenly the eyes were dark, and he was with his thoughts. She too in that darkness, from which for a moment he had called her. A coin brought her back: as though gratefully she shily reappeared, went through all her senseless gestures, smiled and smiled. And darkness again, heavy, inevitable. That room, that sofa, filled his brain with warm shapes and comforting light, and the woman moved amicably through it (pp. 18-19).

Leaving aside the sexual politics of this voyeurism, I want to note simply the figure of this primitive cinema and the reciprocal nature of its representation. Both the description of the machine as a 'man-eating one-leg', which assimilates it to the world of freaks on show elsewhere in the fair, and the transfer of affect to the woman's image, are developed in later paragraphs: the machines become 'anthropophagi' with 'a woman for a heart', while the dreamlike experience of desire, the 'secret lure for which no pain disease damnation were too much to pay' is cut short as the viewer's 'starting eyes touched glass'. This play on the idea of projection is echoed in the scene (pp. 68-9) in which he watches a film projected on to a sheet.

A pale watery light from the sheet flooded the tent, and a throbbing pole of light turning upon itself pushed at it through the air. Greasy black, dry grey, chocolate sepia moved deliberately on the screen,
found shape, took on life. That flicker of shadow on deeper shadow was a substitute for his thoughts, moving in him with strange shapes. Out of the screen a face swam up to him, at first remote, small, its surface matt; coming closer, growing larger, the skin of a cheek immensely magnified into rough crevices of powder, the corners of the eye vast fields of pulp dribbling a heart-breaking revolting moisture [...] The face swam nearer; the eyes grew more glassy, expressionless, drifting like clouds over him, sucking him into a white frozen lake of grief. Like a ghost the face grew larger till it passed through and beyond him, moving onward with blind eyes, groping to some light of which he could not be aware. He saw them come up to him, for a moment lie wonderingly on his own, impalpably vanish.

The mimetic account of the brain's decoding the film's imitation of life is transformed into Dick's vision's paradoxical encounter with blind eyes which rest questioningly for an instant on his own, in a monstrously distorted visual echo of his encounters with Angela and Monica. In both these extracts there is the same substitution of his thoughts by the film-image, the same cannibalistic characterisation of the mechanical illusion. Both scenes are echoed (or prefigured) by the reiterated description of the showwoman's eyes as 'filmy', both seeing and not seeing. But the central feature that these scenes share, and which adumbrates what I have already described as one of the main stylistic procedures of the novel, is the foregrounding of the cinematic in order to figure the projection of the narrator's psychic and somatic states on to the screen-threshold of his own being, his skin, and on to his physical surroundings. His own thoughts also sometimes take the form of film, as when he sees Angela 'projected upon innumerable sunlit squares, lamplit shining streets, hurrying, seeking, frantic. Behind, protesting, a man or himself. Yet she had left that frame, come back to him' (pp. 96-7). Yet the textual reality accorded her is not free of the film frame, the present moment is never disentangled from memory; in the paragraphs that follow, Dick and Angela, temporarily happy, wander through the dismantled marquees: 'The heath was waste, the sky empty, lowering. Vaguely he dreamed of an immense luminous face upon his own, growing larger against the sky' (p. 98). The reference back to the film projected in the tent is typical of the way Rodker creates a recurrent structure of phrases and images to build up a sense of a textual consciousness shot through with memories, and memories of dreams and things read, in which time is the perpetual, if shifting, present of mental life.

The envelope that our skin is, the container of bodily sensations, both for themselves and as analogues of psychological states, is at once protection and threshold, something that registers sensation from inside and outside. In this text it is also the screen on to which the phenomenologically perceived world of Dick's experience is projected. He variously feels dissolution, exposure and nausea.

He breathed again but his mind was gray, his being gray and continually he thought, the hour turned hodd~n gray. His skin pricked, it had swollen, touched his clothes at all points. That exposed too much, made him shiver, the crowd was no protection. [...] He thought he would begin to drink. That tightened his mouth and throat in a spasm of nausea, then he felt warmer [...] Glassily the street reflected itself in him, unseeing he walked through it. His body shrank again, his clothes lapped him more comfortably round. An interior gaiety filled him and bubbling over, insalivated, made gay and digestible whatever he might look at. (pp. 45-7)

The process of digestion, of sights, memories and emotions as much as of food and drink, causes his sense of his body to swell and shrink, become hot and cold, and metamorphose into the objects of his perception (as in the scene where he watches crayfish in a tank). It is also the process of writing itself, enabling Rodker to rise beyond the limitations of subjective expression in an intricately patterned prose in which the accumulation of interwoven motifs establishes a complex presentation of the narrator's identity through the interpenetration of outside and inside, past and present. Reflecting on his betrayal by Angela and his own self-delusion, Dick's thoughts take the following form:

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48 I use the term 'phenomenologically' both in the sense that Merleau-Ponty uses it in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, and to indicate what I think is a constructive comparison between innovative writing and post-Husserlian philosophy in the immediately post-war years. It is a commonplace to draw parallels between Bergson and modernist practice, especially stream-of-consciousness techniques; less remarked has been the analogy with Heidegger. Both start from the claim that the world cannot be separated from our mental structures, but Heidegger's stress on constraint and angst and the consequent struggle towards an authentic identity in the knowledge of the nothingness at the heart of the subject is suggestively close to Rodker's practice in *Adolphe* 1920. Kisiel's description of Heidegger's first post-war seminar seems particularly pregnant here. In Kisiel's words, Heidegger attempted to construct 'a radicalized phenomenology [in which] the subject matter is not an object at all but the already meaningful "stream of life" in which each of us is already caught up. How to approach this topic without "stilling the stream" [...] how to articulate this non-objectifiable "something" (Es) which contextualizes (Es wellet) and temporalizes (Es er-eignet sich) each of us? With this response to the double question of the accessibility and expressibility of the immediate situation of the individual, traditionally regarded as ineffable, Heidegger has in fact named his lifetime topic.' (*The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 8-9; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). See also Richard Lehan, 'Bergson and the discourse of the moderns' in *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*, ed. by Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 306-29; esp. pp. 325-7.
Like a funnel she had hung over him, sheltering him, piously collecting all his exhalations. That he had thought to be love. But it was because she was empty and lest air should crush her. He might tell her she had deceived him. It was bitterly cold without the protecting funnel for his fermentation blew him out, there was too much skin, he was too exposed. (p. 59)

Whereas Joyce's Shem the Penman constructs a homology between skin and manuscript, the words in which he writes himself creating an ineradicable screen of personal history around himself, Rodker's narrative establishes skin as a permeable screen through which he suffers both the contingent world and his own identity, neither fully differentiated from the other.49 The opening paragraph of the novel already posits this.

What had slit up his sleep? His eyes opened but his mind closed again. Piercing sweet the dawn star pierced him, his bowels shivering round it. On swooning mist and the far billowing of a lugubrious howl he swayed, till falling nearer, high bursting bubbles pulled him from his sleep. Morning lies round him. Behind the inn a bugle, in a far land heard before. A tent. A child skips, a trumpet to its mouth; a Moor throws up a ball. His soul fled after her through the cold light; snow falls, whirling... (p. 5)

The inaugural question already establishes a certain framework: sleep as a containing envelope, a state of pleasant, dreaming equilibrium, a defence against the strains of wakefulness, is 'slit up'. The penetrative violence of the phrase, like a caesarian birth into consciousness, is heightened by the alliteration and the brevity of the interrogative, and by the association with theft, the dawn star as both cutpurse and ravisher. The pluperfect tense already draws on the resources of memory in order to evoke a present mental state, and the unstable tense

49 Shem 'wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body, till by its corrosive sublimation one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history (thereby, he said, reflecting his own individual person life unlivable, transaccidentatated through the slow fires of consciousness into a dividual chaos, perilous, potent, common to allflesh, human only, mortal) but with each word that would not pass away the squidself which he had squirtscreened from the crystalline world waned chagreenold and doriangrayer in its dudhud.' James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Faber, 1939), pp. 185-6. In connection with Joyce, Rodker and film, it is interesting to note Pound's enthusiasm for the 'Grossstadt Symphony'. Describing it as an "abstract" or Gestalt film he continues, 'we have at last a film that will take serious criticism: one that is in the movement, and that should flatten out the opposition (to Joyce, to me, to Rodker's Adolphe) with steam-rolling ease and commodity [...] It would be simple snobism not to accept the cinema [...] as being, on parity with the printed page, L'histoire morale contemporaine.' (Exile, 4 (Autumn 1928), 114-15.) Rodker, as we learn from Joseph Leftwich's 1911 *Journal*, was a devotee of the silent cinema (which may indeed have been an influence on his 'Theatre Muet'); and Vanna Ashe, in Mary Butts's first novel, is a screenwriter and actor, and writes a crude film version of her life in order to evoke a reaction from her mother and step-father, in an episode that echoes the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet* (see below, Chapter 5).
structure of the paragraph as a whole, with its half-remembered quotations and incursions of verse rhythms, suggests that waking brings no escape from the projections and introjections that characterise the texture of dream. 'His eyes opened but the mind closed again': an intermediate state is evoked between sleep and wakefulness, both alternation and repetition. The dawn star 'pierces' him, sweetly, and the alliterative cradling continues into the next sentence. The half-echo of Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' invokes the legacy of infancy in mental life: a landscape of fragmented verbal memories is slowly pulled together and metamorphosed into a contemporary world on the 'far billowing of a lugubrious howl' that emanates from the menagerie of caged beasts, itself evocative of Lautréamont's miscegenated array of animal suffering and ferocity, but which also embodies some pre-linguistic expression of solitary misery. The cacophonous polyphony that haunts the text from the fairground to the jazzband and the final remembered howl of the mistral 'among age-old ruins' (p. 130) shifts by synaesthetic metonymy into tactile, visual, gustatory and olfactory experience as well. 'In one movement all put coruscating tubes to their monstrous lips [...] A loud bray of music began to paw them, the limes revolved rapidly, plum, orange, green, blue, and small brilliant lights continued to buzz off the heads, eyeballs and instruments like a swarm of bluebottles round a dunghill.' (p. 102) Again, the perceptual polyphony is registered as the textual phenomenology of Dick's consciousness.

Into it and through it move, vanish, reappear, implore, cling, and upbraid the figures of Angela and Monica, about whom we are told little except parenthetical information about their present and past emotional relationships with the narrator. By the end of the novel nothing has been resolved, despite Angela's last statement that she has 'come back'. The narrative concludes on a vision of her as one of the mummified figures in a Bordeaux crypt, an image which has recurred periodically in the course of the text. But as Dick falls asleep in the final sentence 'for a long time he saw her vacillating in light and in dark receding always', her ungraspable figure, the space before the final phrase, and the absence of a concluding full stop, leave their relationship as open as the future. The absence of context leaves Angela and Monica as firmly in the realm of the contingent as everything else in the novel.

50 In his discussion of Faust and polyphony, Moretti cites Mahler's response to the jumbled musics and noises of a fairground, as part of his argument that Goethe's unstageable requirement for 'immense stages crammed full of yelling extras' in fact looked forward to a literature that could encompass a world-system of polyphonous elements. 'It did not need more space, but a parallel space. Like that of radio, in fact—or even, as we shall see, that of stream-of-consciousness.' (Moretti, Modern Epic, pp. 58, 60.)

51 The text thus resists, more strongly than the later anonymously published Memoirs of Other Fronts, a biographical reading, although there is clear evidence that its origin lies in Rodker's relationship with Nancy Cunard, which probably began in 1923 and ended (she left him for Louis
If Rodker's project in *Adolphe 1920* is to be seen, as I believe it should, as a revision or extension of modernist experimentation in the light of psycho-analysis, it invites comparison with the work of another of Pound's associates, Adrian Stokes, the Kleinian inflection of whose work in the *Stones of Rimini* and in *Colour and Form* must have exasperated Pound as much as Rodker's Freudianism did. (In a letter to Rodker dated 24 June 1936, Pound asked if he was 'Completly [sic] sunk by yr god damn Freud?') Stokes's focus is of course upon painting, upon the experience of vision and space, but the following passage from *Colour and Form* might almost be describing the kind of writing Rodker is attempting in *Adolphe 1920*:

We find today new connexions between so-called subjective and so-called objective phenomena. A single illustration will suffice. A man sits in a calm summer night: he gazes at the moon, a mind at peace with infinity. His thought reaches out, mingles with the thin transparent cloud that the moon passes from her. Gazing into the sky, this man is also gazing in fantasy inside his own physical body, yes, at those physical constellations, those objects or figures all of us imagine inside us, figures both loving and hateful that we would have at peace. Outer space can afford us image of the wished-for certainty and freedom.

The context of this is, of course, theoretical and interpretative, as well as offering a greater degree of resolution than Rodker's work does, but it suggests another context of modernism in which to set Rodker's work. His tireless advocacy of Bomberg's painting, for example, and his early involvement with Gaudier-Brzeska, Wadsworth and Lewis, point to a centrality of the visual in his aesthetic whose cinematic analogy is present throughout the text of *Adolphe 1920*.54
Rodker's novel was not widely reviewed, and made little impact either on its serial publication or when the Aquila Press edition appeared. An anonymous review of the first issue of Exile in the *New York Times* (8 May 1927) described it as 'apparently an attempt to put a nightmare into words', and the *New York Evening Post* the same week found 'passages of brilliant distinguished prose'. Hugh l'Anson Faussett, in the *Manchester Guardian* focussed on Rodker's prose style, comparing it with Schnitzler's, saying that Rodker 'translates fact into the terms of dream' and that the book is 'subtle and interesting'.55 (The only other review, Clere Parsons's in *The Criterion* has already been noted.) This relative incomprehension also greeted the first English publication of Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives*, which Rodker issued from his own press in 1927. Although not stylistically similar, there are sufficient points of comparison between Stein's cinematic 'continuous present' (or 'prolonged present' as she calls it in *Composition as Explanation*) and Rodker's experiments in temporality in the presentation of psychological character for her influence to be noted here.56 One further indication of her influence is to be seen in Rodker's enthusiastic endorsement of the extraordinarily interesting (and still entirely unknown) writing of Erica Cotterill, whose *Form of Diary* he published in 1939. Among his papers is the draft of what may have been intended as an introduction to that book, or perhaps as an article for independent publication, headed 'An English Gertrude Stein', in which he writes:

In these 'Accounts' incident as we know it is ignored: reality irrupts into them in the form of psychological conflict only, the background is left vague. Everything is concentrated on the writer's love-life in its widest sense, and consequently we are presented with a psycho-sexual document of real importance. On that level, desires, images, repressions assume intense dramatic colouring [...] What gives the work its quality is the degree to which these things are isolated, the attempt through emotion, to discover the how and correspondence in HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 3, and Tate Gallery Archives, Bomberg Correspondence. Bomberg's portrait of Rodker is reproduced on the cover of Crozier *John Rodker*. 55 *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Nov. 1929. (He was presumably thinking of the experiments with stream-of-consciousness writing in *Fräulein Else or Leutnant Gustl*.)

why, and the life-and-death necessity for finding an issue. [...] In prose extremely articulate is suspended a whole system of 'totem and taboo': the need to resolve it, reconcile it with the life of every day excites the author to the limit of her feeling capacity, and we, by contagion, respond. 57

The parallel with his own interests in *Adolphe 1920* are evident in this description, and the title suggests by implication that he found aspects of Gertrude Stein's writing relevant to his own. By the time *Adolphe 1920* came out, though, he was involved in two other projects. He wrote to Pound 'I finished a long novel two or three months ago, slow, tedious and elaborate, with which I hoped to have some popular success, but it seems I haven't quite got the knack. In the meantime I go on with the autobiography which gets exceedingly stuck from time to time, but will, when it is finished, be pretty good, I think.' 58

The autobiography, *Trains*, ended up as a 20,000 word account, largely of his childhood, but linked with moments of particular significance from his adult life, such as gambling at Monte Carlo, or travelling. As an exploration of the sources of his sense of shame and guilt, it owes a lot to his experience of psycho-analysis, and contains memories of childhood sexual encounters which probably made Caresse Crosby and other publishers reluctant to risk obscenity charges by publishing it. 59 In style it moves away from the experiments begun in *Adolphe 1920*, ranging more discursively through personal memory, and using repeated motifs in a more deliberative way than the earlier text. In some respects, though, it is more ambitious, shifting between registers and styles, moving between a figured, associative writing and plain explication, and using a more complex time-scheme. It is perhaps the first attempt to present the insights of Freudian theory in an account of the growth of an individual which gives full weight to childhood sexuality and epistemophilia, incorporating them obliquely but coherently into a personal history. That commitment to a writing that overcomes taboos, not dwelling on social or individual prohibition to impress the reader but carefully working through any conditioned affective responses of disgust or lubricity, allows Rodker to invent a properly psycho-analytical prose in which repressions are removed and previously inhibited or censored memories can occupy the page with dignity.

57 'An English Gertrude Stein', unpublished manuscript essay on the work of Erica Cotterill (HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 21u).
58 Letter dated 6 March 1930. Nancy Cunard's edition of his collected poems was not selling well either, as he told Pound in another letter on 24 October the same year. 'Nancy's edition of the collected works of well known London publisher has sold just 8 copies [...] the very worst slump in bookselling I have known.' (Yale: Beinecke Library, EP YCAL mss, Box 40, Folder 1498).
59 There is no overt evidence for this. Her response to Rodker was simply that *Trains* 'interests me tremendously, but I find that I cannot possibly publish it at present.' (Letter dated 14 Aug. 1930. HRHRC, John Rodker Archive, Folder 21k.)
To a certain degree, the explicitly autobiographical focus of *Trains* is less successful than the poetic fiction of *Adolphe 1920* or the fictionalised autobiography of *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, which presents a much broader range of material to the reader. Where *Adolphe 1920* restricted its external time-scheme to a single day, allowing the past an existence only through the elaboration of memory within psychic and somatic states, and where *Trains* used a more Proustian technique to release the lasting power of childhood experience, reintegrated into reflection on the adult writer's taboos and resistances so as to establish continuities of relational identity, *Memoirs of Other Fronts* looks outward as well, locating its protagonist's psychological and social struggles within a larger historical context, and confronting the same crisis of civilisation as Douglas Goldring and Mary Butts. It covers the period from 1916 to 1928 in three sections, which are not arranged chronologically but interwoven, so that the earliest period is set between the second and third. It is a war novel, but one that takes as its starting-point what the dust-jacket blurb described as 'the war of a personality against itself and against society’s invasion of that self', and as such takes place on three fronts—social, national, and domestic. Written confidently within a perspective that extends the insights of a personal psycho-analysis into the world, it casts autobiographical incident as a story to be written from the standpoint of learned experience, in which he has come to acknowledge as part of himself those aspects of his personality which he had tried to escape, the narrative of which is enfolded into its contexts. Near the beginning of the book, he stresses his both the alienation concomitant upon his immigrant Jewishness, and his acceptance of it:

> [It is only now, well on in life, I realise how much of a foreigner I am, how much of one I always was. And even if I still wished to avoid acknowledging it, I could not any longer get away from the testimony of my face and form. It is as though the very fibres that composed me, tired at last of the incessant struggle with the thing I longed to be, at last in intense consciousness of what it was I strove to suppress, stressed only that side of me, piling on me in two decades the atavisms of centuries, releasing me at last from the harsh bonds of ideal behaviour, propriety, that adolescence forced upon me and which finally too much circumscribed me. [...] Instinctively my life fell among strangers and if I met others it was to what was foreign in them that I turned. How else should I have noticed them?]

60 The second, wartime, section, which has already received some discussion in Chapter 2, incorporates the earlier text *Dartmoor*, with some revisions, as its fourth part (pp. 149-192).

61 *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (Putnam, 1932), p. 16. Subsequent references will be given as page numbers in the text.
This theme recurs as an organising topic throughout the text, returning finally in the last paragraph, by which time the narrator has earned the right to envisage a future in which things might be different, and in which an acceptance of difference might make possible a more constructive relationship between people. The first section recounts the narrator's love affair with a woman he calls Olivia (based on Nancy Cunard), an affair that is mutually destructive, both necessary and intolerable; as it is anatomised in the light of the inadequacy of the personal destinies that launched it, in which they met through 'the violence of their need to be completed' (p. 19), it is fear that lies at the root of their love, and negates any illusory attempt he may feel from time to time to elevate the affair to the realm of fairy-tale. The second section takes us back into the 'charmed world' of non-combatants in 1916, when, again, they were '[s]trangers, too strange even to be dragged into their war, or to be interned even, or receive such honours as are meted to the feared foe: segregation, prison, and protection' (p. 78), and then through the relationship with Muriel (Mary Butts), and the difficulty of sustaining it through the months of imprisonment. The analysis, while autobiographical, is also the anatomy of an epoch, exploring the extremities of survival and self-preservation in a deranged social world, with a psychological honesty so bleak as to offer nothing but hope in its wake.

Discussing the distance he experienced then between knowledge of the war and what he felt about it, he again finds fear at the heart of it, 'a passion of fear, terror of being involved, and anger with it. So I think now this refusal to think then, shows how frightened I was' (p. 193). He suggests that his own determination to cling to life was a form of 'survival of the fittest', while 'those who let themselves be killed [had] a maladjustment, organ deficiency, somewhere' (p. 194). He extends this argument into the present, the family as the root of all crime and virtue, as illustrated in Barbusse's L’enfer, arguing that the apparent pacifism prevalent in the middle of the inter-war period was nothing but 'a new way of living that life again, apotheosis of blood, of guts, of every heroic martial virtue. [...] And yes, we love it, we love the gaping abdomens that spill out their intestines, the bloody waste of limbs, all the destruction' (p. 195). In this perspective, war is simply State-sanctioned permission 'to wreak the carnage in our hearts', temporarily appeased by armchair readings in Good-bye to All That or All Quiet on the Western Front, but ready to break out again at any time.62 The implications of this for Rodker's sense of his own masculinity have already been discussed. As he puts it,

62 The primary psycho-analytic influence on his formulation here is his friend Edward Glover, with whose work on War, Sadism and Pacifism (George Allen & Unwin, 1933) Rodker maintained a close engagement. (It was Edward Glover who would give the address at Rodker's funeral, and write his obituary for The Times.)
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Discussing the distance he experienced then between knowledge of the war and what he felt about it, he again finds fear at the heart of it, 'a passion of fear, terror of being involved, and anger with it. So I think now this refusal to think then, shows how frightened I was' (p. 193). He suggests that his own determination to cling to life was a form of 'survival of the fittest', while 'those who let themselves be killed [had] a maladjustment, organ deficiency, somewhere' (p. 194). He extends this argument into the present, the family as the root of all crime and virtue, as illustrated in Barbusse's L'enfer, arguing that the apparent pacifism prevalent in the middle of the inter-war period was nothing but 'a new way of living that life again, apotheosis of blood, of guts, of every heroic martial virtue. [...] And yes, we love it, we love the gaping abdomens that spill out their intestines, the bloody waste of limbs, all the destruction' (p. 195). In this perspective, war is simply State-sanctioned permission 'to wreak the carnage in our hearts', temporarily appeased by armchair readings in Good-bye to All That or All Quiet on the Western Front, but ready to break out again at any time.62 The implications of this for Rodker's sense of his own masculinity have already been discussed. As he puts it,  

62 The primary psycho-analytic influence on his formulation here is his friend Edward Glover, with whose work on War, Sadism and Pacifism (George Allen & Unwin, 1933) Rodker maintained a close engagement. (It was Edward Glover who would give the address at Rodker's funeral, and write his obituary for The Times.)
Because I have always wanted to make more than to destroy, or that is how I see myself, I preferred for then to be turned into a woman, shut in a close cell, with sewing, or in the workshops picking oakum, kept shut up in revenge because I would not take their risks, as women were till lately shut up in revenge. [And] I lived in peace and content with the woman I wanted to live with (though perhaps not so much at peace and content as if I had more truly been exercising what was masculine in me, I mean dealing out war, death and destruction. Then I should perhaps have known more how to impose myself, and I think the chances are this is what would have happened. (p. 199)

Psychological, domestic and social life are integrated in this explanation, which helps provide an explanation for the mutual failure of the relationship with Olivia, and looks forward to the aftermath of the failure of his relationship with Muriel which forms the focus of the third section of the book, through an account of its legacy for their daughter, who (like Olivia, Muriel, Lawton and others) is a child cast out, deserted by first one parent, then by the other. [...] Dragged round always they had been, and I too had been dragged round, so my life was as theirs, and somehow I found them out, without seeking, because already I knew them, deeply I knew them and they knew me. And we met and parted and met again and always it was another me they met, another them, and it was the same for me too. And deepest, most important to each was himself always in his own image, and we were no good to anybody; and now it makes me sad to realise it, least of all to ourselves. (p. 262)

The recurrence of the words 'drag' and 'dragging' (also a feature of the other two texts I have been discussing) reminds us of the deep current of forms of reluctance that runs through the book, an analogue of psychological resistance and inertia which is also figured as retention and constipation in its third section and which finds its release through the psychoanalytic understanding that motivates the whole text as well as in the final cleansing bowel movement that figures his achieved capacity to accept the loss of his daughter Marie in a spirit of resigned hopefulness.

This is, as Crozier puts it, 'to be read as a new form of hope invested in the human understanding achieved by psychoanalysis' and is 'embodied in the very structure of the narrative'. It is Rodker's major achievement, one that sets him apart from his associates, the 'men of 1914', and one that should set him at the centre of European modernism.

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Chapter 5 - Mary Butts

We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense. As Hellenic man at times sacrificed to Aphrodite and at other times to Apollo, and, above all, as everybody sacrificed to the gods of his city, so do we still nowadays, only the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity. Fate [...] holds sway over these gods and their struggles [...] Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another. What is hard for modern man, and especially for the younger generation is to measure up to workaday existence [...] it is weakness not to be able to countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times.1

'The war in another aspect'

Like Pound, whose concern for the purity of poetic language was motivated by his awareness that language was the medium of law, of the sustentation and regulation of the social world,2 Mary Butts was also driven by her conviction that the modern world required a renewal of the connection between the ethical and metaphysical realms. Working in a mental landscape deeply influenced by her classical education, inflected by her later readings of Jane Harrison and James Frazer, she attempts a triangulation of the soul, power and the sacred in which the secular arrogation of the second is challenged by the continuing presence of a timeless past capable of irruption into the ethical life of the modern world. At the same time, the surface of her writing enables her, at least in her earlier works, to ironise the different forms of modern consciousness upon which these irruptions may impinge.


2 'The governor and legislator cannot act effectively or frame his laws, without words, and the solidity and validity of these words is in the care of the damned and despised literati. When their work [...] the application of word to thing goes rotten [...] the whole machinery of social and of individual thought and order goes to pot.' (Ezra Pound, How to Read (Desmond Harmsworth, 1931), pp. 17-18). This pamphlet was published in the same series as Mary Butts's Traps for Unbelievers. On the relation of Pound's ethos to metaphysics see Herbert Schneidau, Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1969), esp. pp. 118ff., and Jean-Michel Rabaté, Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986), esp. pp. 287-98. On his view of the poet's social responsibility see Frank Lentricchia, Modernist Quartet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 180-206.
Mary Butts was born in 1890 near Poole and died in March 1937 in a Penzance hospital. She went to Westfield College, and the L. S. E., and subsequently worked for the L. C. C. Children’s Care Committee in Hackney during the first part of the war. A friend of Ford Madox Ford, Yeats, Douglas Goldring, Roger Fry, Nina Hamnett, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Nancy Cunard, H. D., Philip Heseltine, Aleister Crowley and many others, she published her first work in the *Egoist* and *The Little Review* towards the end of war, contributing stories, poems, essays and reviews in the nineteen twenties to Ford’s *transatlantic review*, *The Dial, The Calendar of Modern Letters, Pagany, Seed, Larus, Hound & Horn, Soma, The London Mercury, Life and Letters Today, The New Statesman* and other magazines, and in the thirties reviewing regularly for *The Bookman, The Observer, Time and Tide, John O’London’s Weekly* and occasionally elsewhere. Her first book, *Speed the Plough*, a collection of short stories, was published in both Britain and the States in 1923; in 1925 Robert McAlmon published her first novel, *Ashe of Rings*, in his Contact Editions; a sequence called *Imaginary Letters*, with illustrations by Jean Cocteau, appeared from Edward Titus’s Black Manikin Press in 1928, the same year as her second novel, *Armed with Madness*, came out from Wishart. A second collection of stories, *Several Occasions*, was published by Wishart in 1932, as were her third novel, *Death of Felicity Taverner*, and two essays, *Traps for Unbelievers* and *Warning to Hikers*. Two historical novels followed, *The Macedonian* in 1933 and *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* in 1935. Her autobiography, *The Crystal Cabinet*, was published some months after her death in 1937, and a final collection of stories was put together and published by Bryher the following year. In addition to this, and to the quantity of published essays and reviews, there are about one hundred poems, many unpublished, and several drafts and uncompleted works, including a novel about St. Julian the Apostate which she had almost completed when she died. For most of her writing life she was close to the heart of modernism in her network of friends, in the places she published, and in her concerns. She helped John Rodker, to whom she was briefly married, publish early books by Eliot, Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska and Wyndham Lewis. In Paris where she lived for most of the time between 1922 and 1930 she was a close friend of Cedric Morris, Jean Cocteau, Christopher Wood, Virgil Thompson and many others. During her lifetime her work was highly regarded by many; when she died Eliot was planning to publish a collection of her stories at Faber and Faber. In the years after her death, however, her work fell rapidly into neglect, and until very recently has been out of print and uncommented. Although her presence among the ‘writers of the Left Bank’ has sometimes been noted, her writing itself has not received attention.

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3 For full details of her literary output, see bibliography.
There are clearly numerous and complicated reasons for such a complete eclipse of a writer who once had a major reputation: the poetic nature of her prose, the stylized rural setting of her three non-historical novels and a number of her short stories, and her interest in the occult are the ones I want to explore in this chapter, as well as tracking some of the contradictions in her attitude to her society. In fact a number of the features of her novels—stylisation of human relationships, an ambiguously knowing quest or romance narrative, and an echoic sense of form—might suggest their genre to be modernist pastoral, so long as this wasn't taken to diminish their critical purchase on the contemporary world.

Two major factors influenced her formation as a writer: her association with Ford, Yeats, Pound and their modernist circles during the period from 1915 to 1920—her first appearances in print were in *The Egoist, The Little Review, The Dial* and *the transatlantic review*—and her experience of the First World War. This latter was, like Goldring's and Rodker's, oppositional; her first published novel, *Ashe of Rings*, was drafted between 1916 and 1919, during much of which time she was working for the N. C. C. in their London office off Fleet Street, providing information and support for Conscientious Objectors, attending Tribunals, and corresponding with imprisoned C. O.s. Here she came into contact with people like James Strachey (who had known Rodker for some time by then), Lytton Strachey, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, G. D. H. Cole, Raymond and Margaret Postgate, Gilbert Cannan and Bernard Langdon-Davies, and a vast amount of material about the most horrific aspects of the war, some of which found its way into her early fiction. Her first success came with 'Speed the Plough', a story about shell-shock, while an earlier unpublished story, 'Making of a C. O.', was rejected in October 1916; four days later she noted in her journal that she was contemplating writing 'a study in growing madness of a tortured world. The war in another aspect.' This became her first novel, *Ashe of Rings*. In her autobiography, *The Crystal Cabinet*, she claimed never to have been an 'absolute' pacifist, but to have been motivated by a search for justice and a need for 'high civic duty'.

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4 I discuss the implications of the rural location of her work in greater detail in 'The Green World: Landscape and Still Life in the Writings of Mary Butts,' unpublished paper delivered at a conference on 'Feminism and Sexual Difference', London and Falmouth, 1995.

5 See above, Chapter 2.

6 Nathalie Blondel, *The Biography of Mary Butts*, (forthcoming, Kingston, N. Y.: McPherson, 1997), chapters 1 and 3. I am grateful to Nathalie Blondel for allowing me to read a draft of her biography in typescript; in subsequent references it is cited as 'Blonde1'.

7 'We were both of us conscientious objectors in the Kaiser war; and at that time I saw quite a lot of him (though I had met him even earlier than that)', James Strachey, letter (of condolence) to Marianne Rodker dated 17 December, 1955 (HRHRC, John Rodker archive, Folder 20b).

8 Cited in Blondel, p. 30.
To a nation driven past reflection we did perhaps stammer a reminder that, in no matter what crisis, society is based upon certain liberties and certain contracts between the individual and the state, which the state no less than the individual ignores to its peril.

The 'civic duty' lay in historical continuity, in 'our appeal to the ancient sanctions hated by a people at war, yet, if once lost, the meaning has gone out of victory'; she thus, paradoxically, 'felt [herself] part of the body of the state.' At the same time, the N. C. C. L. failed

proximately as well as absolutely and more than it need, because there was something its members did not know [...] Something I did not yet know, but I should; something I carried about within me, as yet unhatched; the egg whose hatching would be my life's significance. 9

If, as she claimed in this retrospective account of her war-years, the conditions for the success of the N. C. C. L. were not yet sufficiently present on earth, and that the egg she carried, Leda-like, within her would hatch and illuminate this historical problematic, we are enjoined to read her work as motivated by a politics which, however mystified and obscured, is concerned with ethics and the State. That she chooses to do this obliquely, through types of pastoral that draw on genre fiction for their narrative form, is entirely appropriate to her project, which is to redescribe the disenchanted world in such a way as to restore the affective powers of 'the old gods' to the 'impersonal forces' that Weber, in his lecture, was subjecting to the light of rational analysis.

By focussing in this chapter on her first and third novels, while drawing on other pieces of writing for further contextualisation, I shall show how her particular strand of modernism contributes to the constellation of ideas I am exploring, and at the same time colludes in its own failure to achieve canonicity by the insistent contradictoriness of its surface, at once exact in the delineation of feeling and observation and vague or too vehement in her presentation of the text's intellectual coherence. 10 By contrasting the two novels, I want to suggest some of the ways in which her figuring of the sources of form leads her into a scapegoating politics that runs counter to her avowed intentions.

10 This is an aspect of her writing that Marianne Moore brings out in a very perceptive review of Armed With Madness, the greater part of which consists in quotations from the novel juxtaposed to brilliant effect ('A House-Party', The Dial, 85 (1928), 258-60; reprinted in The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore, ed. by Patricia C. Willis (Faber, 1987), pp. 146-8).
**Ashe of Rings and the war**

The central problem Mary Butts's first novel confronts is how to account for the violence and destructiveness of war. *Ashe of Rings* is a war novel in the sense described by Wyndham Lewis, in that it is 'interested [...] in the things that cause war, [...] the people who profit by it, [and] in the ultimate human destinies involved in it.' The complex of its central ideas owes a great deal to the apocalyptic sense of potential defeat that haunted many writers in 1917 when it seemed that the war might never end and that meaningless catastrophe was imminent, and the importance accorded in this perspective to the sacred, to sacrifice and redemption, as well as to an implicit anti-capitalism, allows us to read the text with an awareness of the extensive range of non-synchronous identifications that permeates much modernist writing of the period. This complex of ideas is given another unusual twist by a narrative that reverses the conventional triangulation of desire between the central characters, with the painter, Serge, as the object that mediates the relationship of the two women, Van and Judy.

Reassessing it on the eve of its first publication in England in 1933, she wrote: 'Some very curious things went on, in London and elsewhere, about that time; a tension of life and a sense of living in at least two worlds at once,' and described the novel as 'a fairy story, a War-fairy-tale, occasioned by the way life was presented to the imaginative children of my generation'. This generic

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12 See Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning. The Great War in European cultural memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), especially Chapters 6 and 7. Winter is primarily concerned with the revival of an eschatological tradition in art and literature of the period, but demonstrates how widespread was the concern to find, or rediscover, a notion of the sacred in order to give shape to a sense of loss and bewilderment.

13 The term 'non-synchronism' derives from Ernst Bloch's 'Ungleichzeitigkeit', as he deploys it in his essay 'Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics' (trans. by Mark Ritter, *New German Critique*, 11 (Spring 1977), 22-38). First written in 1932, Bloch's essay attempts to account for the different ideological stratifications that compose any given present, with particular reference to the appeal of National Socialism. 'Not all people exist in the same Now [...] Rather they carry earlier things with them, things which are intricately interconnected [...] Times older than the present continue to effect older strata; here it is easy to return or dream one's way back to older times.' (p. 22 (translation modified)).

14 That they are identifications rather than allusions, juxtapositions or digressions does of course also point up differences between Mary Butts and some other modernists, suggesting a closer kinship with Yeats or Eliot than with Pound or Joyce. This is rendered more complicated however by other aspects of her writing, notably her idiosyncratic use of interior monologue.

15 The first section was serialised in *The Little Review* in 1920; the whole text, revised, appeared from McAlmon's Contact Editions in Paris in 1925, and shortly afterwards in New York (A. & C. Boni, 1926). The text was revised again for its first English publication in 1933. The revisions are consistently concerned with removing the text's elisions, ambiguities and idiosyncracies: the final version, though still strikingly characteristic, loses some of the extreme condensation of the original.

characterisation is exact so far as the narrative, and especially its resolution, is concerned, and yet it also directs our attention to another implication of the term. The ending of the novel as originally planned was less optimistic, and Mary Butts, in her afterword, described the published ending as improbable, 'not necessarily [...] the true end', but decided it was impossible, and undesirable, to alter it retrospectively. The sacrifice of verisimilitude this entailed is compensated by the aesthetic function of the 'War-fairy-tale', which works partly as a critique of the possibilities of narrative representation at her disposal. The war itself was a sort of fairy-tale, it might not be too exaggerated to claim, in that the claims for its legitimation had a great deal more to with phantasies of national identity (themselves grounded in sentimental misrecognitions of sexuality) than with any of the political realities of imperialism that actually underlay the conflict, and once given narrative and explanatory form by the ideological agencies of the State, they continue their existence as components of the outlook and attitudes of actual individuals. It is significant in this connection that Judy Marston, 'a cruel female principle with a flick of sentimental humanity',\(^\text{17}\) works as a journalist, and disseminates the crude propagandist stereotypes with a malicious relish. By contrast, the home-fires that the novel is designed to keep burning are far removed from the ideal of domesticity propagated by the contemporary song: the 'ancient sanctions' which Mary Butts struggled to maintain through her work for the N. C. C. L. rest on an ontological vision given a new cultural force by her chosen mode of presentation, even though its mediation through myth and magic may at first sight appear anachronistic.

This 'sense of living in at least two worlds at once' provides the double focus that is largely responsible for the achievement of the novel. Of the two worlds, one is phenomenal, a social world of scarcity and anxiety, whose inhabitants are cold and never have enough to eat, the world of artists, bohemians and war resisters in 1917 London and Dorset; the other noumenal, metaphysical, the world of warring powers, of Weber's 'warring gods', of 'the panic that was all over the earth' (p. 218), seen not in the direct form of military hostilities but as it affected the lives of men and women on what Rodker was to call 'other fronts'. Yet they are not separate, there are no mysterious doors into a parallel world; they abut directly on to each other, interpenetrate each other, operating within the text as unproblematised explanatory resources.

\(^{17}\) Ashe of Rings, p. 117. (Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the novel are taken from the first edition. Subsequent references are given as page numbers in the text.)
It may be useful at this point to offer a brief summary of the novel. *Ashe of Rings* is divided into three sections; the first five chapters of the first are set in 1892, and it then moves forward to show vignettes of Vanna Ashe's childhood in 1897 (Chapter 6), 1899 (Chapters 7-10) and 1905-6 (in a coda to Chapter 11). The remaining sections, constituting more than three-quarters of the book, are set in the winter and spring of 1917, in 'the year before the end of the war, when there was very little to eat; and along with the strengthless food and the noises at night, friendship had lost its generosity and passion turned à rebours.' (p. 75)

The novel opens with Van's father, Anthony Ashe, returning from Russia and the Far East, late in his life, to choose a wife who will give him an heir to Rings, the family house. He is a widower whose only son has died. Through the house, the family has for centuries been the guardian of the prehistoric earthworks on the chalk hills above it, a site once used 'as a place for holy and magical ceremonies' (p. 4). His belief in pagan and occult powers, shared by the family butler Clavel, is not shared by the woman he marries, who dislikes the ancient house and sets her own superficial and conventional bourgeois Christian piety and materialism to work against it. Their daughter, Elizabeth Vanna Ashe, the novel's protagonist, is brought up by her father to take his place, taught the classics and inducted into the family mysteries. Even as a child, Van is marked out as different, wanting 'the world to be good', so that her tutor complains that she must learn that 'there is life outside good things and bad [...] You must learn to take it easily. You'll drive us all mad and yourself.' To which she replies: 'Can't take it easily. There is a beast tearing inside me' (pp. 60-1).

This introductory section presents Van both in the specific formative context of the events of her childhood and as the inheritor of the memories, duties and perils of her 'race'. The interpenetration of the two provide the dynamic of her action through the rest of the novel, which is essentially a struggle for possession of the soul of Rings between Van (and later her brother Valentine) and her mother and Van's former friend Judy Marston, 'a poor gentlewomen at work as a journalist'. A Russian painter, Serge Sarantchoff, 'very poor', who had been imprisoned in his own country for political opposition, then exiled, and more recently imprisoned again as a war-resister, moves between Judy and Van and back again, a rationalistic, weak, self-interested figure, unable to understand the mysticism of Rings and yet, as an adventurer of sorts, possessed of sufficient qualities for Van to be attracted to him and to think him worth trying to save. The second section is set in London and is principally concerned to establish the grounds of hostility between Judy, Serge and Van, and to develop and elaborate our sense of their histories, attitudes, characters and consciousness, both as
affected by the war and as embodying within themselves another dimension of war. There is a scene where Judy breaks off her relationship with Serge in which she becomes, almost unwillingly, the jingo journalist:

'Serge... I think our affair has come to an end.' Excellent opening. She lay back.
'Why exactly now? Perhaps you are right.'
'We do not seem to be winning this war. To people on the losing side, you are a luxury. Your dear Germans torture our prisoners. If I could I would send you over there. I'd hand you over to a Prussian officer. It's discipline you want.' [...]
'I'll go to Ireland.'
'Go and squeal with those cowards. You'll find a change there, now we've shown them what their rebellion's worth.' The sob squeezed out of him affected her sensually. She got up and looked down at him and at his unsteady mouth. The woman that is the reward of the warrior. Silly. Why do I do this?' He thought: Why do I endure this? Then he said: 'I am quite strong enough to rape you.'
'You foul brute. You German. I tell you I've got a revolver.' Good for him. Why doesn't he? I should have done it long ago. Why do we treat each other like this? He said: 'It is women like you who instigate wars and extol them.' (pp. 105-6)

This provides some indication of the extent to which the novel, particularly in this central section, examines often in the minutest detail the connections between love and war, using political positions to delineate social or existential ones. In the interior monologue that constitutes the greater part of the subsequent chapter, Serge thinks of Judy as having 'called up the deathless evil' that is 'riding his back'. 'You came with the war—you are inside me, playing its infernal tunes. You are the war's smallest doll. You are the war' (p. 109). Similarly Van, recounting her history to her brother, from the time she left Oxford to the present, explains how:

[t]wice she had been caught up in the terror of the world, and almost destroyed by it. First in the war, and within that, burning wheel within burning wheel, in the anguish of the Irish rebellion. While these were breaking her heart, she had met Judy, and learned that the passion in great events could be repeated, in miniature, in persons. (p. 224)

Judy takes up with Peter Amburton, cousin of Van's stepfather, invalided home from France and described by Judy as 'a shell-shocked lump of carrion' (p. 154); easily persuaded by Judy of the degeneracy of Van and Serge, he confronts them later in the novel, saying 'We're going to clear you out of the world. That's what the war's been for.' Van's level response, that that was 'one way of looking at it,'
does not exclude our understanding that it is really Judy's way, that she (like the press on a national scale) has poisoned Amburton's confused mind; and Van, Valentine and Serge face them down, so that Van says; 'If we save ourselves, we save the world, and its peoples. Don't you know we bear up the pillars of it?' and her brother adds, 'We shall do it again. Every time we do it, the world comes more into peace' (pp. 213, 216). The war, in short, represents the modality of the destructive element in human and civic relations. Mary Butts situates it not merely as military or mechanical, nor simply as irrational or evil, but as a crisis, a 'vortex' in the nature of civilisation. Towards the end of the novel, Valentine describes Judy as having 'started this'. Correcting him, Van responds that she had '[c]onducted it. God knows where it came from.' (p. 298) This is made clear in the context of the third section of the book, which takes place at Rings, and moves to its climax in a ritual scene at the sacred site itself, when Judy uses the power of the place to draw Van to it so that Peter can rape her and drive her away from Rings. This intention is defeated when Van, stripped to her shift, lies on the white stone, almost invisible in the moonlight, and protected by her (chaste) surrender to the spirit of Rings, succeeds by her silence in sending Peter 'crashing back' into the bushes in terror (p. 250). Subsequently Judy leaves Peter and goes back to London, but the fairy-tale ending which Mary Butts offers, not without irony, at the opening of Chapter 13 of this section is marred by the recalcitrance of Serge, who refuses to return Van's love, preferring to continue living his damaged and resentful life with or without Judy in London. Nonetheless, Van's mother Melitta has come to recognise and accept the power of Rings, and has realised the true history of her life so far, that she 'married without love, and suffered and was corrupted by my own good, that I did not understand; spoilt my second love through fear; drove away my children.' Reconciled with her children, she becomes the token of a transcended Family Romance as Van determines not to allow her 'insulted childhood, [her] exile, the aptness now for sorrow which will be characteristic of [her]' to govern her future—'That would be Serge's line of country; to make pain valid for ever and unforgivable.' (p. 271)

This redemptive note, and the sacrifices, figurative and literal, that underlie it, is characteristic of the novel's political strategy. Van sees Serge as standing in need of redemption. As an artist his ethical vision is impossibly compromised by his love for Judy, which is based on a reciprocal recognition of weakness. Judy's scarcely metaphorised vampirism has been responsible for his moral depletion. It is Van's weakness to misrecognise Serge's potential for change, and to imagine

18 On the war as a purgative, see above, Chapter 2, and Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined, pp. 12-19.
19 The parallel with Milton's Comus is noticeable, though not made explicit. Elsewhere in her work Mary Butts quotes frequently from it.
him for a time equipped to share her vision of the future of Rings. All three are portrayed as weak in one way or another: Van and Judy first as women, then as lovers of Serge, then as subject to the challenge of forces larger than themselves. Serge is weak in his incapacity to throw off materialist calculation and commit himself. He is weak because he is damaged, first by his political suffering in Russia, then by his unfreedom as a non-person on the run from the authorities—in this respect only the end of the war will free him (see pp. 196-7), and finally by Judy. '[S]he has drawn your blood, and blood is the life. Mix it and you mix souls. She's opened a vein in you, a leak in the body of the world's peace [...] The infernal powers are loose in a place of evocation.' At the same time both Judy and Van have embraced the war, Judy who 'get[s] spirit-nourishing food out of the ruin of so much life' (p. 196) and Van who '[w]hen the war came [...] said—"Don't let me escape it, whatever it is."

I saw the cross of Ashe.' Serge, by contrast, as Van observes, has 'had it both ways; war and its refusal' (p. 198). And although we are clearly aware of Van's resourcefulness, integrity and ability to overcome weakness, and of the ethicality of Serge's refusal to be a combatant, Mary Butts ensures that we are also continually aware of their consciousness of others' perception of them as 'vicious', and Judy's 'conviction [...] that we are lying and evil spirits' (p. 198).

It is not, therefore, any property specific to the war, but the way it intensifies existing conflict, that is the novel's context. The time is, so to speak, out of joint and it is Van's task to put it right, by ensuring the continuity of Rings. As Clavel puts it, in answer to the question, "'You mean that the war may not have ruined everything?'" put to him by Serge towards the end of the novel, "'We have tried to reverse its operations'" (p. 294). It is in this juncture that the 'vortex', in Serge's words, between 'extreme life—that's you—and extreme anti-life—if that is Judy' operates. It is focussed on the 'precinct' (the Classical reference is overt) of the Rings, which Van and her brother struggle to find a new way of describing, appropriate to their generation:

'O our father thought of them as lovely ladies; bacchantes, oreads, dryads; or so I take it.'

20 While the use of the term 'vortex' probably owes something to Pound and Lewis and their propagandist arguments for Vorticism in the first issue of Blast, it has here been transferred to the external context of the forces at work within the narrative, rather than standing as a descriptive aesthetic term. There may nonetheless be a case for arguing that Ashe of Rings is a vorticist novel, and that Rings itself is a Vortex, in Lewis's words 'a great silent place where all the energy is concentrated' (Violet Hunt, I Have This To Say: The Story of my Flurried Years (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926), p. 211; cited in William C. Wees, Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde (Toronto and Manchester: Toronto University Press, 1972), p. 161). See especially Ashe of Rings, pp. 222-3.
'That is how they thought in the nineties. It is no good for us [...] I feel power, movement, a pattern [...] It is magic, whatever magic is; and magic is not a métier.'

'Our father got out of it by making myths?'

'We can't. All the same, I know when that place of earth-works and trees, a place to picnic in and archeologise about, turns into a place of more than animal life, real by itself, without any reference to us. And there I stop; and when I see further, I can't tell it. There aren't any words, or shapes, or sounds, or gestures to tell it by, not directly.'

'Art?' said Valentine.

'Art's there to be art, not patently to tell secrets about something else.' (p. 222)

This Eleusinian site is evoked as expressly beyond the reach of the aesthetic, while at the same time functioning within the narrative as its vortical centre, recalling those who will attend to its presence to a redefinition of the aesthetic; not, as it was in the eighteen nineties, as a separate realm of personal, affective mythography, but as a cultural category inseparable from the ethical and civic discourses on which the war is exerting such severe pressure. As such it is an attempt to 'countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times', as Weber puts it. The ethical terms deployed in the text are, as we have seen, focussed on duty, and duty takes two forms: the evidently selfish and destructive form of bourgeois conventionality, incorporated into the mass-ideology of war, as displayed by Judy, Morice Amburton and Melitta Ashe, all of whom accept the distortions imposed by the exigencies of conflict on broader notions of the liberty of the subject; and the acceptance of a duty of suffering required for the upholding of an older tradition, a duty figured analogically as crucifixion. Serge has been 'crucified' for his non-combatant status, and Van has to shoulder 'the cross of Rings' as her inherited duty to the principles sustaining civic contract. This latter can be viewed, in Habermas's phrase, as the outcome of a 'myth of origin'. 'The myth of origin involves the double meaning of "springing from": a shudder at being uprooted and a sigh of relief at escaping':21 a pattern echoed in the dialectic of Ashe of Rings. Van 'springs from' Rings, as the first section of the novel is designed to show, is brought up to inherit the legacy of the Elizabethan

21 Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, trans. by Frederick Lawrence (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), p. 108. Habermas is here discussing Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment, in which they argue that the process of Enlightenment is a repression of the mythic, rather than a transcendence of it, and that the drive to subordinate and dominate Nature entails concomitant, alienating damage to the subject. In so doing, they are re-working Weber's argument about the return of the disenchanted gods as the depersonalised forces in play in the modern world. Just as Weber's lecture on 'Science as a Vocation' cited earlier, draws much of its force from its wartime context, being exactly contemporary with the first draft of Ashe of Rings, so Horkheimer and Adorno, writing about the return of irrationality in the form of National Socialism, are influenced by writing during the Second World War. There is a striking similarity of register between their work and Mary Butts's in the shared engagement with demonic forces, ritual, sacrifice, mana, and power.
priestess of Rings, Ursula Ashe, as prepared for her by her father; she then escapes, in Section 2, to Bohemian life in war-time London, living without regard to the conventions of bourgeois society, working in the new, mechanical medium of film: and then, as a consequence of her recognition of the urgency of engaging with the forces released by the war, returning to take up the sacrificial burden of her genealogical origins in Section 3, a priestess without a cult.

The narrative outcome of the novel thus relies on versions of sacrifice that are counterposed to the dominant ideology of sacrificial slaughter represented by the war, and the concomitant self-sacrifices of the home front, the former seen as a culminating element within the post-Enlightenment process of materialistic disenchantment of the relationship between Man and Nature. It is here that the evasion of a tragic or partly tragic ending, and its replacement with a redemptive, fairy-tale conclusion marks an inability to think through the logic of the novel form at the same level as the logic of its cultural critique. Mary Butts veers away from a final confrontation with the forces of alienated rationality in favour of an organicist fantasy which roots the political and ethical dimension of the novel in an imagined continuity of family and land-tenure, failing in the last analysis to 'measure up to workaday existence', and foreshadows her later use of a mythicised landscape to stand in for a notion of citizenship based on the nation, on historical and cultural identity, rather than on natural right. This failure, if that's what it is, is more symptomatic of her attempt to work simultaneously in the 'mythical' and 'narrative' methods than of a desire to evade a more rigorous ending, as her 1933 afterword makes clear, and as such is indicative of the intransigence of that project itself. Yet while the text's narrative vortex seeks to evade the aesthetic, the whole narrative is presented through a prose style whose lyric function serves to keep the reader aware of an aesthetic dimension that gives access to the other world represented by the Rings. But before I develop this point, I want to make a detour into the cultural context of the narrative itself.

22 Carrington wrote a rather shocked account in her diary of a party in 1916 at which Rodker was present, and which may perhaps be regarded as representative of the period. 'Seldom have I seen such a debauche of white arms and bosoms. It was indeed a sight to see—everyone trying to outtrival their companions in viciousness. Beauty was absent. It was no wonder that the female element turned to their own species for les embrasures [sic]. When the males consisted of Horace Cole, Boris [Anrep], the Armenian [John] Rodker, & even more degraded specimens. You should have seen the little miss who came to Garsington last summer, to teach those children dancing!' (Carrington: letters and extracts from her diaries, ed. by David Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). It is not impossible that the 'little miss' was Kathleen Dillon.

23 See T. S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order and Myth': 'In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him [...] It is a method already adumbrated by Mr Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious [...] Psychology [...] ethnology, and The Golden Bough have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step forward to making the modern world possible for art' (p. 483, my italics).
Whatever magic is
The sense of the 'growing madness of a tortured world' that was the germ of *Ashe of Rings* points to a reading of the novel as a search for sanity. But it must also by now be clear that this quest was not a simple matter for Mary Butts, any more than for the contemporary reader. We cannot substitute terms like reason and irrationality for sanity and madness, as it is the evacuation of the irrational from the subject that opens the way for the irrationality of self-interest that characterises one aspect of the madness of the world at war. If, as Horkheimer and Adorno put it, 'Enlightenment is mythic fear turned rational' more investigation is required into the inter-relationship of the terms than can be provided by the mere application of common sense.

The upsurge of interest in the occult, the unknown, the primitive and the unconscious that occurred in the years before and during the war provides a background to the development of the 'mythic method' in modernism, and especially to what Mary Butts described as the 'sense of living in two worlds at once'. One aspect of Mary Butts's approach to this is to view the world in terms of the correspondence theory that descends from the Renaissance via Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg and Joseph de Maistre to Baudelaire, Eliphas Lévi and the Symbolists, and to Yeats, the essence of which was a belief in a system of metaphysical analogies between the material and spiritual worlds traced back to an Adamic language of names whose power linked the two realms. The revival of interest in this tradition of magic and the occult, which found expression in the Golden Dawn, Theosophy and similar movements, as well as the more sinisterly purposive experiments of Mary Butts's friend Aleister Crowley, enjoyed a widespread currency in the first two decades of this century. Often coupled

with the use of hallucinatory drugs such as ether, cocaine and opium, they stimulated experiments into states of mind, dreams, imagination, religion and power that parallel and interact with the development of scientific discourses like ethnology and psycho-analysis. As a regular attender (with Rodker) at Yeats's evening gatherings, Mary Butts would have met numerous others who shared her interests, including G. R. S. Mead, a former secretary of Madame Blavatsky and a writer on gnostic and hermetic subjects.

A useful way of approaching this whole constellation of ideas is to look at the miscellaneous but related contents of a magazine like Mead's journal The Quest, organ of the eponymous Society, founded in 1909 to 'promote investigation and comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science, on the basis of experience' and to 'encourage the expression of the ideal in beautiful forms'. In its first ten years the journal printed articles on a wide range of topics, including spiritualism, clairvoyance, Platonism, Taoism, Zarathustra, Swedenborg, telepathy, Buddhism, Bergson, psycho-analysis, myth, anthropology, folklore, the grail legend, Pan, Shakespeare, Vaihinger, mysticism and gnosticism, as well as poems, fiction and reviews. Among its contributors were Ezra Pound, Yeats, T. E. Hulme, Huntly Carter, Jessie L. Weston, Tagore, Algernon Blackwood, A. E. Waite and Mead himself. The war intensified the already considerable interest in issues concerning the unaccountable or the mysterious, prompting a series of articles on spiritual regeneration, national destiny and unseen powers, and creating a context in which allegorical readings of myth and legend took on a new contemporary resonance. One theme that surfaces time and again in contributions to the journal is the need to recognise the limitations of 'rationalistic science' and rediscover the 'under-workings of the inner life of man' and 'the soul of nature'. Myths, wrote Mead,

must have their raison-d'être deep down in some fundamental necessity of human nature, and pertain to an activity of the mind that will not easily consent to be condemned to sterility and atrophy by the tribunal of a purely soulless science. In spite of the present strict taboo upon it, imagination will doubtless persist in perfecting itself in its own way. Indeed it may be that, by the natural reaction against the present horrid carnival of war's foul ugliness, which is but an outer symptom of the inner unloveliness of the soul of our civilisation, we are even now at the beginning of a

27 Mary Butts developed an opium addiction during the early 1920s which she never overcame. She was also an occasional user of heroin, and would fall back on alcohol if other supplies failed. This addiction was indirectly responsible for her death. See Blondel.
happier age when the soul will once more come into its own in the
hearts and minds of men, and imagination inaugurate a fairer order
of aesthetic development complementary to the progressive
achievements of the positive sciences.28

This is familiar territory, and situating the war as symptomatic of a crisis in
‘civilisation’ has its roots in the deeply conflicted fears and desires of late
nineteenth-century European urban society. The theorists of modernity are all
cconcerned to locate and explain this crisis in one way or another.29 At the same
time, investigations into other more ‘primitive’ cultures led both to a sense of
contrast and loss and, under the influence of evolutionary theory, to a belief that
their less civilised natures still lurked within the modern human psyche as ‘racial
memories’. Vincent Crapanzano, drawing on the work of Eugen Weber, locates
the development of a fascination with the primitive in this phylogenetic context,
arguing that the influence of evolutionary theory enabled a rapprochement
between the dissatisfaction evident in attitudes to social reality and the growing
interest in non-European peoples:

‘The apparent collapse of established ideals, the reaction against
scientific materialism and rational explanations,’ Eugen Weber
writes in France: Fin de Siècle, ‘encouraged interest in mystery and
the supernatural, appreciation of faith for the sake of faith—and of
the sensations faith can spur’ (p32). It produced a fascination with
the esoteric, spiritualism, mysticism, magic, and the Satanic. A loss
of faith in an objective reality, the knowledge that no experience is
ultimate, that everything finally is deception, Weber goes on to
argue, led ‘to a falling back upon imagination, which alone cannot
let us down; to the decision, since illusion fulfilled must end in
disillusion, to avoid fulfillment and concentrate on the safer realms
of illusion’ (p. 143). Such a conviction and the play that ensued
were of course not without their critics, who sought sociological,
psychological, or physiological explanations for the decadent—the
anomic—conditions in which they found themselves.30

28 G. R. S. Mead, ‘Psychoanalysis and the Symbolism of Myths and Mysticism’, The Quest, 9, 3
(April 1918), 460-87 (pp. 464-5).
29 Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel, Durkheim, Weber, Kracauer, Adorno and Benjamin wrote
eloquently on the ways in which the new commodity culture and the increasingly frenetic speed
of modern urban life disrupted and dislocated inherited notions of ‘community’ and ‘tradition’;
for the purposes of this chapter, however, I restrict my discussion of this aspect of modernity to
the references I have already made to Weber and Adorno, and to the later discussion of Benjamin.
Thought of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss’, Prehistories of the Future. The Primitivist Project
and the Culture of Modernism, ed. by Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford: Stanford
University Press, 1995), pp. 95-113 (p. 96). For a non-historical investigation of a similar
problematic, see Christine Brooke-Rose, A Rhetoric of the Unreal. Studies in narrative and structure,
especially of the fantastic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). It was precisely Rodker’s
insistence on rationalistic psychological and physiological explanations that led to his growing
differences with Mary Butts over these issues.
Out of this late nineteenth-century, essentially Symbolist conjuncture developed that degree of incorporation of theories of primitive mentality into contemporary explorations of the psyche that we find in the work of Picasso, Mauss, Frazer, Eliot and many others, with their frequently reiterated conviction of the synchronous existence of the primitive and the civilised. 31 This is the context in which the English modernists encountered the work of Freud, and the idea of the unconscious, and it is also the context of the rejection by many of them of what they saw as the limiting function of an explanation that foregrounded sexuality. As Adam Phillips puts it, 'It is clear that 'sexuality' and the 'unconscious' were the new, the scientifically prestigious words for the occult: for that which is beyond our capacity for knowledge, for the weird, unaccountable effects people have on each other.' 32

Mead, in his article in The Quest, cites Maurice Nicoll's account of Freud's view of the unconscious:

For him all morality is acquired and is imposed from without upon the individual. There is no help to be sought from within, for the unconscious is like a Zoo in the midst of a great city full of caged beasts. 33

The topographical metaphor in which the psyche is a civilised city containing at its heart the 'caged beasts' of primitive impulse is of course a distorting one, in which both a profound fear of the animals and a strong taxonomic sense of their necessary generic alterity are clearly evident, and Mead rejects it, in favour of a more aestheticised view of the modes of access to the unconscious, but one which is also social or collective. Contrasting 'the Freudian School' with Jung's Zürich School, he turns to the symbolism of myths and mysticism and argues against what he sees as Freud's disparagement of their significance:

The fundamental characteristics of dream-thought and dream-structure [...] are [...] to be found in all those constructs of human phantasy which appear in the perennially fascinating imaginative products enshrined in fairy-tales and fables, in magical stories and myths, in mystic parables, allegories and visions. In brief, there is a psychical world of sensuous imagery, a plastic subjective ambient

of the individual and of the race in which with marvellous adaptability the life-play of our emotions is immediately pictured and dramatised for us, and that too mostly without any conscious effort on our part—a world of psychical appearances which in their own turn react upon and change the emotional play, not only of the life of which we are conscious, but also of the deeper movements hidden within our unconscious selves. Our life thus psychically evolves itself and rises to progressive grades of complexity and refinement. In the temporal order of appearance, this vast sensuous, largely personal, image-world of phantasy and magic, of romance and poetry, is older in us, more ancient and archaic, or rather more original, than the conceptual world of our intellectual development, which is being perfected by an ever increasingly prosaic reaction to the abstracted or depersonalized world of sheer material fact. But its being older—or should we say younger?—does not necessarily mean that is outgrown or even that it ought to be outgrown as no longer of service to the race.34

This shares the attitude to the mind, matter and the world exemplified by Agassiz and his followers such as Butler and Havelock Ellis in which 'race-memory' is the accumulation of generational recapitulation,35 while the specific focus on forms of story and 'the image-world of phantasy and magic, of romance and poetry' is closer to the way Mary Butts approaches these issues.36 It also looks forward to Eliot's claims that 'the prelogical mentality persists in civilised man, but becomes available only to or through the poet' and that 'one might say

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34 Mead, 'Psychoanalysis and the Symbolism of Myths and Mysticism', 460-1. As well as endorsing Jung's recent work and the grounds of his break with Freud, Mead cites approvingly works by Franz Riklin, Karl Abraham, Otto Rank and Alphonse Maeder. He mentions with particular enthusiasm Herbert Silberer's Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik, which promises a 'strikingly new and most hopeful departure' (p. 485). He was able to consult the works of Riklin and Silberer (otherwise unavailable as a result of the war with Germany) because David Eder lent him his copies: Eder was now Jung's translator, and his influence is visible in Mead's paper. Freud, of course, was defensively hostile to much of this work, as emerges from his correspondence with Ferenczi, who was himself involved in investigations of 'occult' phenomena in the immediately pre-war period, and frequently enjoined by Freud to keep this aspect of his research secret. In November 1911 he concluded a letter to Freud with the words: 'H. Silberer is already knocking on the doors of occultism—let us hope not so loudly that I have to announce my presence.' See The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, vol. 1, 1908-1914, ed. by Eva Brabant, Ernst Falzaeder and Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch under the supervision of André Haynal, trans. by Peter T. Hoffer, introduction by André Haynal (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 316 and passim; and see also the review by Adam Phillips in London Review of Books. Phillips notes that Ferenczi, in his work on occultism, 'was trying to keep alive something he saw as integral to the psychoanalytic project—something which might be called, say, inexplicable human powers—and that Freud, in his view, was too keen to disavow.'


36 And see, for example, her description of '[t]he cycles of antique story-telling into which man's consciousness has passed' as 'a hidden source of [...] power' (The Crystal Cabinet, pp. 19-20).
that the poet is older than other human beings' (but with the proviso that Mary Butts is not so interested in assimilating magical practices into poetry, preferring rather to maintain their independent existence and usefulness). 37

In this respect, Mary Butts is closer to archaism than primitivism. 'The archaist's image of nature is shot through with violence and turbulence.' 38 Unlike Eliot, who sees the tribal Bororo as 'capable of a state of mind into which we cannot put ourselves', (and unlike Freud, who in Totem and Taboo claims that art is the only survival of the savage's 'omnipotence of thoughts'), she posits the continued possibility of the mystical mentality, in which it is not only possible to think ourselves in two worlds at once, but actually inevitable. 39 It is from this belief in the efficacy of magic that she constructs her idea of the power of nature, of sites of power in the natural landscape, which works to mask her more selfish interest in fending off the incursions of a democratically-legitimated urban population into a landscape symbolic of an older, apparently timeless, order. As land, rather than landscape, 40 it is subject to ownership and working or protection which allows such change as occurs to take place only over the longue durée; there is a naturalised eugenic attitude underlying this view. And as land it can exist simultaneously in the present and, not in the past but in some other equally present daemonic dimension of mana and tabu. The counterpart of this use of primitivism to provide new foundations for a 'natural' aristocracy is to be found in Yeats's poetic: he regarded the worlds of imagination and nature as correspondent, rather than merely analogical or parallel, and from that standpoint was able to make his claim that

Three types of men have made all beautiful things, Aristocracies have made beautiful manners, because their place in the world puts them above the fear of life, and the countrymen have made beautiful stories and beliefs, because they have nothing to lose and so do not fear, and the artists have made all the rest [...] All these look backward to a long tradition for, being without fear, they have held to whatever pleased them. The others, being always anxious, have come to possess little that is good in itself, and are always changing from thing to thing, for whatever they do or have must be a means to something else, and they have so little belief that

37 T. S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (Faber, 1933), pp. 148n; 155.
39 Both citations are taken from Manganaro, 396-7.
40 It is as landscape, as consumable ocularity, that it exists for the hikers and weekenders who cross its surface in search of 'some [...] scene never disclosed' (like Hart Crane's cinema-goers in 'To Brooklyn Bridge'); this is the form in which the enchantment of urban modernity threatens even the pastoral retreat from its clutches. See Warning to Hikers, esp. pp. 17 and 27; and the discussion of Walter Benjamin below.
anything can be an end in itself that they cannot understand you if you say, 'All the most valuable things are useless' [...] At all times they fear and even hate the things that have worth in themselves, for that worth may suddenly, as it were, consume their Book of Life, where the world is represented by ciphers and symbols [...] If we would find a company of our own way of thinking, we must go backward to turreted walls, to Courts, to high rocky places.41

Mary Butts shares this vision of a neo-feudal artistic ethos and, while refusing the rejection of the contemporary world, uses the same pre- (or anti-) capitalist metaphysic as a trope to justify her imaginary pastoral society. Yeats's figure of instrumental consumption as the condition of all those caught up in the cycles of commodity capitalism articulates a set of concerns shared by figures as diverse as William Morris and Walter Benjamin: and, as we shall see, the critical formulations of the latter, especially in the _Passagen-Werk_, represent another product of the project of cultural investigation I am sketching here, and one which by its different approach and configuration as well as by its shared interests casts a revealing light on Mary Butts's work.

Where Weber's rationalist argument stressed the disenchantment of the modern world (though, as I have implied, his use of mythic terms actually suggests the continuing power of those imaginary forms), Benjamin's critique is founded on the claim that the commodity form instituted a 'reactivation of mythic powers', with the result that the development of the urban-industrial world was accompanied by a re-enchantment at an unconscious 'dream' level.42

Hence Benjamin's _Arcades_ project was to practice a dialectics of seeing that would enable people to wake up from that dream. In the modern city, as in the _Ur-forests_ of another era, the 'threatening and alluring face' of myth was everywhere alive. It peered out of wall-posters advertising 'toothpaste for giants'. It whispered its presence in the most rationalized urban plans that, 'with their uniform streets and endless rows of buildings, have realized the dreamed-of architecture of the ancients: the labyrinth.'43

41 W. B. Yeats, 'Poetry and Tradition' [1907], in _Essays and Introductions_ (Macmillan, 1961), pp. 246-60 (pp. 251-2). Cf Ezra Pound, 'The aristocracy of entail and of title has decayed, the aristocracy of commerce is decaying, the aristocracy of the arts is ready again for its service.' ('The New Sculpture', _The Egoist_, 1, 4 (16 Feb. 1914), 67-8.)
The process of becoming conscious of the repressed mythic dimension in modern life is one that Benjamin regards as a prerequisite for the critique of social being. In opposition to the surrealists' wilful immersion in the illusions of mass existence (as represented for example by Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris*), he focusses on the 'dialectical fairy-scene' of waking up from 'the collective dream of the commodity phantasmagoria.' He uses the idea of the fairy-tale to bring together the experience of childhood and the 'dream collective' of capitalism; just as nineteenth-century consumers sank into the collective dream state of contemplating (but not possessing) the products of their labour represented to them in arcades, advertising and fashion, so these in turn become the fantasy presented to the childhood experience of the new generation, which itself 'has much in common with dream experience'. There is thus a doubling of childhood between the childhood of an epoch and that of a generation, and its individual instances. 'The world of the modern city,' Buck-Morss continues, 'appears in these writings as a mythic and magical one in which the child Benjamin "discovers the old anew," and the adult Benjamin recognizes it as a rediscovery of the old. The impulses of the unconscious are thus formed as a result of concrete, historical experiences, and are not (as with Jung's archetypes) biologically inherited.'44 Both Mary Butts and Benjamin foreground the fairy-tale form as an appropriate response to the problem of thinking about the modern world: it is 'the way life was presented to the imaginative children of my generation',45 as she wrote in 1933, at almost the same time as Benjamin was drafting his notes; the traditional transmission and use of fairy-tales as part of the child-rearing process disappeared with the advent of modernity, and both Butts and Benjamin, in their different ways, saw the liberational potential inherent in the symbolic powers thus freed from the conservative task of binding each generation to the preceding one. But whereas Mary Butts is in agreement with Benjamin when he says 'We must wake up from the world of our parents', she attempts to locate her 'new form of society' within the embrace of the mythic, rather than in an awakened transcendence of it.

Benjamin's work on these issues was stimulated partly by his own interest in the occult,46 and in the imagined communities of Fourier, as well as by his reading in

44 Buck-Morss, p. 328.
45 See above, n. 6.
46 Particularly in the tradition alluded to at the opening of this section, that of Joseph de Maistre and Eliphas Lévi, whose works he knew well from his study of Baudelaire. (Mary Butts was reading extensively in Lévi, Jung and Freud in 1918 and 1919.) Benjamin's formulation of the meaning of *correspondances* in 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' bears striking resemblances to Mary Butts's approach: 'The important thing is that the *correspondances* record a concept of experience which includes ritual elements. Only by appropriating these elements was Baudelaire able to fathom the full meaning of the breakdown which he, a modern man, was witnessing [...] If there really is a secret architecture in *Les fleurs du mal*... the cycle of poems that opens the volume
Marx and Freud. His concept of a historically specific (and class-inflected) collective unconscious as an escape from the prison of biology looks forward to Carlo Ginzburg’s criticism of both Freud and Jung in his essay on ‘Freud, the Wolf-man, and the Werewolves’ in which he discusses the inadequacies and lacunae entailed in Freud’s model of phylogenesis and argues persuasively that a major opportunity for the serious investigation of what I have been calling the ‘occult’ was lost during the acrimonious division in the international psychoanalytic movement between Freud and Jung.

‘[Freud’s interpretation] rests (just like Jung’s theories of the collective unconscious) on an absolutely undemonstrated hypothesis of Lamarckian character: namely, that the psychological and cultural experiences lived by progenitors are part of our cultural baggage [...] For Freud the theory of neurosis includes the myth; for Jung it was just the opposite. Jung’s fuzzy-mindedness and lack of rigor caused the failure of a project that, on this point, was potentially much more fruitful than Freud’s. The archetypes identified by Jung were the consequence of a superficial intuition (and superficially ethnocentric); his theory of the collective unconscious aggravated Freud’s already unacceptable Lamarckianism. Jung’s responses to the problem of myth constitute, in a final analysis, the loss of a wonderful opportunity.47

What Ginzburg is arguing for, and what is missing in Freud’s analysis of the mythic element in the Wolf-man’s dream, are the historical circumstances of the transmission of these folkloristic elements, the independent cultural presence of the elements that re-surface in the dream. ‘The go-betweens are historical, identifiable, or plausibly conjectural,’ he continues, ’men, women, books, and archival documents [...] We could ask, in a brutal simplification of the problem, are we the ones who think up myths, or is it myths who think us up?’ This is a question that applies equally to the use of myths and folklore in fiction, the various modes of subsistence of different types of stories in culture. The ambiguity Ginzburg locates here in relation to the inner and outer, the particular and the universal, agency and essence, particularly as expressed in discussion of myth, ‘vision’ and different types of knowledge, is the problematic that surfaces in many modernist works of the period between 1911 and 1925, often operating, as in Benjamin’s work, though even less systematically, to reflect or refract the difficult conceptual relations between consciousness and unconsciousness in modern life; we have seen it in Pound’s thinking, and we might equally adduce

probably is devoted to something irretrievably lost [...] What Baudelaire meant by correspondances may be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. This is possible only within the realm of the ritual’ (Charles Baudelaire, pp. 139-40). ‘Something irretrievably lost’ remains at the centre of all Mary Butts’s major work, (see below).

writings by Yeats or Lawrence or Eliot or H. D. It is out of this moment of intense investigation into a wide range of questions linked together by the idea of 'the occult' that Mary Butts's work, like Walter Benjamin's, emerges: and it is in part the failure of the traditions represented by Freud and Jung to continue that work that has led, until very recently, to its invisibility within the canons of modernism.

**Women, anxiety, and style**

When *Ashe of Rings* was offered to the Hogarth Press, it was rejected. Virginia Woolf described the novel in a letter to Katherine Arnold-Forster as 'an indecent book, about the Greeks and the Downs'. This dismissive (and rather priggish) remark may indicate a degree of distraction—Woolf was reading the not entirely favourable reviews of her own war novel, *Jacob's Room*, at the time, (as is clear from the letter, and the resigned tone in which she writes 'and now I must go and talk to Miss Mary Butts about her novel')—but it had considerable consequences for Mary Butts's reputation, as it was another six years before she found an English publisher for her novels (though Chapman & Hall brought out her collection of stories, *Speed the Plough*, the following year). It did not, however, represent the general response of women writers to the book. May Sinclair was very enthusiastic about it when she read it 'with extraordinary fascination' in manuscript, as were Stella Bowen, Violet Hunt, Anna Wickham and Ethel Colburn Mayne, recognising it perhaps as a contribution to the literature of emancipated womanhood. Although reluctant to call herself a feminist, Mary Butts was committed to her independence, as two entries in her diary for 1918 demonstrate: 'If men will not solve our problems for us—they must leave us free to do it for ourselves' (21.9.18); 'There's more divine life in me than any man I've known' (10.12.18). And in 1920 she described her excitement at re-reading Jane

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49 Blondel, 3, p. 61.

50 Cited in Blondel, 3, pp. 50, 55. The cast of her feminism may best be described through an excerpt from Wilma Meikle's *Towards a Sane Feminism* (Grant Richards, 1916), a book she read and commented on with enthusiastic approval. 'The hetairae have done service by insisting on the need of sexual freedom for woman and trampling on their elders' squalid belief in sexual sacrifice. But the young suffragists of the Centre were doing a greater benefit by attempting to balance the fiercest claims of the body with the mind's ultimately stronger hunger for romance, insisting at the same time that there is in civilised humanity a social conscience which refuses to love any excuse for existence unless it is the motive power of work. And this is the problem, the fundamental, ultimate problem of sex, which will face the world again, but with a far more pressing insistence, when peace lets loose anew the clamouring forces of feminism' (p. 97).
Harrison, 'the profoundest study of my adolescence' when the Bacchae and the
mystery cults had given her her 'formulae' and her 'words of power'. 'It all reels
off before me in plain script (all the more because it was written by a woman...).'

Ashe of Rings takes up this theme in a number of ways, not only in the
presentation of Vanna as a sort of priestess setting the world to rights, but also in
the delineation of sexual difference. At one point Serge ponders the problem:
'What do girls think about? They do all we do, and still we ask that' (p. 128), a
question that is put into play in one form or another at several points in the
novel. It is also a question that helps situate the connection between mystical
perception and sex, as the following exchange makes clear: Vera, Van's aunt, is
speaking to Van's tutor, whom she is about to marry, about her sense of the
significance of Rings and the role she thinks Van will be called upon to play, a
topic which the tutor says is 'all too near the madhouse'. She tries to explain what
is weighing on her mind:

'I mean that we are spectators of a situation which is the mask for
another situation, that existed perhaps some remote age, or in a
world that is outside time.'

He stared at her. 'There I don't understand. The masculine brain is
not formed for such speculation.' (p. 58)

That the feminine brain, on the other hand, may be formed for such speculation
is a constant theme in Mary Butts's writings; her much reiterated figure of the
knight's move in chess, standing for an illogic that leads from one world to the
other in writing, is only the commonest form of this: '[l]anguage wasn't invented
to deal with [mystical experience]; so it mostly gets out by indirections,
obliquely, something like the knight's move in chess.'

Twenty years later Mary Butts's attitude was unchanged, though its inflection was perhaps more
conservative: 'When the last comes to the last, in the woman is the race.' (Crystal Cabinet, p. 171.)
51 Cited in Blondel, 3, p. 68. In a view of the world dominated by a correspondence theory of
analogy, in which, according to Lévy-Bruhl there is 'no sign that is not more than a sign', words
take on a comparable significance. '[T]he mere fact of uttering them [...] may establish or destroy
important and formidable participations. There is a magic influence in the world and therefore
precaution is necessary' (cited in Manganaro, 'Beating a Drum', 405). Although Mary Butts is
referring primarily here to non-literary utterances, the frequent occurrence in her writings of
holophrastic quotation and incantatory repetition of names may safely be taken as a reflection of
the same process.
52 Letter to Hugh Ross Williamson, dated 15 October, 1932 (HRHRC, Mary Butts
correspondence.) The context of the metaphor as it appears in Ashe of Rings is supplied by Van's
father, as he tries to explain the insufficiency of Christianity to his uncomprehending young wife:
'Little Melitta, Christianity is a way, a set of symbols, in part to explain, and to make men endure
the unutterable pain that is the world. There are other sets, like chessmen. But only one game.'
(Ashe of Rings, p. 25.) For other examples, see Several Occasions p. 62; and her essay 'Ghoulies and
Ghosties', ii, 433; iv, 14. The fullest explanation of this figure is the one she gives in her Journal for
July 1929: 'The correct analogy is in chess the knight's move, more perhaps than a mere analogy.
The implications of that motion of a piece of wood or ivory across a given number of squares and
its effect on a given number of other carved pieces, different in name, shape, and power, are to be
If we look at Vanna as a woman taking on the challenge of solving not only her own domestic and family problems but also the problem of the war, we can detect a double anxiety that structures the narrative and that is closely linked to the doubling of the mundane with the animating principles of this obliquely perceived second world; there is an anxiety about identity, inheritance and family position (which incorporates a classic Family Romance phantasy in which Van disqualifies her brother from inheritance by imagining him illegitimate), and this is closely paralleled by anxiety about the source of death and the war.53 If the war is indeed a 'madness', as she wrote, then perhaps it may be helpful to consider the deep ambivalence between its psychological and social manifestations, especially in relation to explanations of its origin. Is it, and its concomitant violence, in the end a consequence of the Freudian death drive, in which case intra-subjective and also phylogenetic, or is it imposed from outside the subjective realm? This dichotomy, as Jacqueline Rose has noted, also recapitulates the opposition between private and public,54 which itself structures anxieties about the position and role of women in the novel, and which resurfaces in her later writings as an interest in the permeability of the boundaries of sexual difference.55 Rose cites Shoshana Felman to the effect that the term madness is so commonly used in our culture to indicate both external and internal conditions that it has come to designate a profound ambiguity about the boundaries separating inside and outside, such that a 'discourse that speaks of madness can henceforth no longer know whether it is inside or outside [...] the madness of which it speaks.'56 That the absence of definitive discursive frameworks is pre-eminently the terrain of anxiety is suggested by Rose's subsequent citation from Samuel Weber's Legend of Freud, which I want to supplement with another sentence from the same writer: 'Anxiety is perhaps what one feels when the world reveals itself to be caught up in the space between two frames.'57 If this is true then the dual anxieties in Ashe of Rings are deeply implicated in the rhetoric of the text, in which the space between frames, and the 'sense of living in at least two worlds at once', are constantly being negotiated,

extended over a number of events caused by man and nature, in infinite, not arbitrary relation. This has to be translated back into a number of gramma. 'Scratches' on paper, one of whose ends is to form a base of that 'science of mysticism' J. W. N. Sullivan has considered impossible. The problem is in part the artist's, to express an unknown in terms of the known. And so, my scratches, chiefly arbitrary and some questionable by the weight of memories and associations they drag with them, out of the lost ages of the world and through our histories—they will have to do.' Cited in Blondel, Chapter 5.

56 Rose, p. 99.
and in which the devices of lyric and stream of consciousness are both deployed in the process. (This is at the heart of Edwin Muir's dislike of the book; he took exception to what he saw as an absence of realism in her portrayal of character, and took the novel's stylistic homogeneity to be expressive of Mary Butts's attempt to try 'to express the the age instead of herself [so that] the Zeit Geist is not immanent in her, and has to be treated as subject-matter rather than expressed as content,' whereas the whole purpose of evoking a wartime world in which people were necessarily living in more than one world at once is achieved by her use of a unified style in association with a post-Joycean use of interior monologue.)

The issue of what it is to be a woman recurs throughout the novel's diegesis. Vanna's Bohemian self-sufficiency has to struggle against her mother's traditionalist view of a woman's place, and against Judy's vicious materialism. Vanna, classically educated at school and at Oxford, and earns her living as a writer and actor in the new medium of the cinema and, as Judy sees her, she had been thrown out of a great house to live in cafés and cinema-studios, and exploit her curls and her laugh, and involute her mind with odd learnings, and brood intolerable revenges for intolerable wrongs [...] A Kirchner girl in boy's clothes, she had seen her intrigue a man to have the run of his library. (pp. 80-1)

(There is a self-conscious irony in the ambivalent depiction of herself as 'a Kirchner girl in boy's clothes' using her sexuality to ends more usually associated with men than women.) Her mother is responsible for her eviction from the house she was to have inherited from her father ('her house had lost her so much as she had lost it' (p. 80)) while Judy initiates devious schemes to prevent her repossessing it. The issue at the heart of the narrative is one of succession and inheritance, but it is not only, or indeed principally, her material heritage that is at stake: Vanna is also successor to a culture, a vision and a hermetic aristocracy on whose continuance the possibility of social order depends. The action is therefore polarised between the properly continued occupation of Rings—"I tell you there's such virtue in the place that it might give coherence to a new form of society" (p. 138)—and Judy's machinations—"when you touch the property sense in Judy, you touch something as large as the world and as bad as the war' (pp. 136-7).

58 Edwin Muir, 'Ashe of Rings', The Calendar of Modern Letters, 1, 6 (1925), 476-8.
59 'Kirchner girls' were rather kitsch illustrations, by an artist called Kirchner, of idealised but sexually attractive women which adorned the pages of magazines, especially the Sketch, during the First World War, and were particularly popular as pin-ups in the trenches.
The concern with property, houses and the attitude of their owners towards them, as well as, more generally but of equal importance, the attitude to the ownership of land, is a recurrent one in fiction of the period. Here it is specifically linked to the right of a woman to claim her inheritance and to institute new social relations around the re-animated sacred site thus preserved. The property is thereby presented as the prerogative of those who truly understand its virtue and the significance of temporal continuity and guardianship, directing the full weight of the consequent narrative affect against its vulgar appropriators. The full meaning of 'property' is thus extended back into its etymological complexity and a slippage effected between 'a piece of land owned', 'the right (esp. the exclusive right) to the possession [...] of anything', 'an attribute or quality belonging to a thing or person: in earlier use sometimes an essential, special, or distinctive quality', and 'the quality of being proper or suitable'; Judy's 'property sense', like that of Kralin in Death of Felicity Taverner, is thus presented as both impoverished and the product of a materialist, even sacrilegious, view of the world, and one which is integrally connected with the forces at work in pushing the world into a war, in which 'some essential oil had gone, a minute secretion, infinitely slow to replace, and without which anything evil between human beings seemed possible' (p. 75).

But at the same time as she is weaving patterns of occult significance about a fictionalised version of her ancestral home, Mary Butts is hypostasising her childhood space, turning what should have become history into local geography, which in its turn is endowed with power to correct the course of that larger History that manifested itself as war. The fairy-tale return to childhood is explicit in the last sentences of the novel, where the air in her bedroom 'was in suspense, like the veil over a cradle.'

60 See such writers as Henry James (The Spoils of Poynton), E.M.Forster (Howard's End), Ford Madox Ford (Parade's End), Wells (Tono-Bungay), Galsworthy, and others; it is a familiar theme in Edwardian fiction, reflecting the crises in the old patterns of land ownership and the balance between country and city, that I discussed in Chapter 2, and it continues, in different forms, in the work of such writers as Ivy Compton-Burnett and Evelyn Waugh. Compton-Burnett, however, uses the country-house as an ironised trope of social dislocation, and Waugh as the locus of a self-regardingly sentimental pathos. For a perceptive discussion of the class-derived attitudes implicit in these positions, see Alison Light, Forever England. Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars (Routledge, 1991), pp. 32-38.


62 Mary Butts's most explicit statement of these beliefs, in a somewhat less mystical form, is to be found in her 1932 pamphlet, Warning to Hikers.

63 In one sense, of course, this is an appropriate, even liberating, autobiographical approach to psychological history, as Didier Anzieu has shown. J'ai longtemps considéré le récit de ma vie comme une histoire se développant dans le temps. L'histoire d'une série de drames qui a pour origine la maison de mon enfance. Mais je m'aperçois que je n'ai point évoqué la géographie de cette maison, son emplacement, son organisation, son entourage. J'ai parlé de moi en termes chronologiques, je n'ai rien dit de mon vécu en espace. Soudain, cet espace se dessine, jusque-là caché et cependant présent en filigrane, espace géographique repris par la suite en espace mental.
end of her labours, Vanna achieves the fairy-tale ending of a war that was also a war with her mother ('Mothers ought not to be like that; not with a war on[ ...] she's not a bad sort, but the bad power uses her [...] If one of us had the strength of mind to go into her room and kill her. Then I should forgive her, and that would be ease of mind. Oh, dear, working up to classical tragedy point') (pp. 240-1). The elision between the narrative and Van's reflection on the (literary) form her thoughts are taking can serve as a bridge to return us to the rhetorical surface of this, her most experimentally written text, so that we can look at the procedures by means of which it negotiates the passage between the different conceptual worlds it inhabits, as a way of dealing with the 'madness' of the war.

The lyric and the novel
Mary Butts writes a prose which is at once highly figured and delicately exact. The opening paragraph of Ashe of Rings is typical:

Rings lay in a cup of turf. A thin spring sun painted its stones white. Two rollers of chalk down hung over it; midway between their crest and the sea, the house crouched like a dragon on a saucer of jade.

The presence of the sea in the image of chalk 'rollers' suggests the islanding of Rings which is made explicit in the following paragraph's description of the rocky cove where 'Rings ended and the world began', while the separation of cup and saucerforegrounds the specific qualities of the objects while at the same time transfiguring their merely domestic resonance, first through turf, then through jade. The latter's hint of disseurship echoes the sun's painting of the stones, as if the house were more than just artifactual, an impression continued by the animating verbs 'painted', 'hung', and 'crouched'. The syntactical economy is a hall-mark, registering the influence of Imagism, which is also visible in the compression of her description: consider the following brief extracts from the account of a planned adulterous rendezvous: 'Dogless, on scaifed feet, he waited for her to come and melt before him like a neglected ice.' (p. 42). 'They went into a wood. A bee was attacking a fox-glove. She looked away' (p. 43). The impatient movements of the feet implied by 'scaifed', the secret purpose implicit in a country landowner's going for a walk without his dogs, and the guilty aversion

[...L] e temps me pesait, l'espace me délivrait.' Didier Anzieu, Créer Détruire (Paris: Dunod, 1996), p.1. It is not that the opposition between time and space is necessarily useful, or indeed self-evident (in, for example, the way Wyndham Lewis takes it to be in Time and Western Man), but rather that Mary Butts is trying to maintain a historical moment, presented as if it were the representation of a timeless ethos, through the validation of a private space. Feminism and magic seem to be pulling in opposite directions here. (For an extremely acute account of this problematic in modernism and in our contemporary readings of it, see Andrew Hewitt, Fascist Modernism. Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 34-8.)
of the woman's eyes from the bee's phallic penetration of the flower, all carry a powerful narrative and affective charge with extreme precision. Close observation of detail sketches in a whole world, as when for the first time Van pauses outside the house where Serge lodges:

She looked at the bell-knobs, labelled, erased and labelled again. Mons. Duvanel, Picture Restorer. Two knocks. Mlle. Florence—bell does not ring. Knock loudly. Schiemann & Hamburger—very faded, scored with an obscenity. Joseph Smith. Universal Films. Bad firm that. Serge Sarantchoff. She loved him then. She had not known it till she read his name [...] The carved lintel was upheld by cupids. (pp. 118-19)

Apart from the exact delineation of a social milieu, this also incorporates Van's attitude to the war, in the implied pity for the Germans made a target of hatred because of their names, and a reminder of her professional work in the cinema, as well as the slightly ironised presence of the architectural cupids. Dialogue in the novel is seldom attributed, and the shifts in and out of interior monologue that run throughout the text are not always clearly marked, any more than the snatches of quotation, sometimes authorial, sometimes interior to the subjectivity of the characters, that haunt the text, echoes of lyric poems, popular songs, biblical phrases.

Her economy of presentation may appear to border on the exiguous, but uses the resources of verse to encompass the patterns of significance with which she imbues her subject. When she describes Judy as 'a black rod tied at the top with a bunch of small flames' (p. 111) or says of Van, 'She came into breakfast like a pale glass cup with a nasturtium in it' (p. 201), not only does the figure form part of a larger pattern of association, it also calls on a lyric tradition reminiscent of Browning's 'One lyric woman, in her crocus vest/Woven of sea wools', and this in turn points to a larger use of lyric in the novel.

The tendency in Mary Butts's writing towards lyric is part of its capacity to establish the way in which her characters inhabit more than one world at once, a process which, even at the moments of greatest narrative intensity, draws on non-constative syntax, phrasal sentences and discontinuities, as well as quotation.

In the flat, she went down on her knees, lighting a great fire. 
*Cook Maria.*

*Kerosene.* I shan't be an angel yet.

'You are an angel now.' She made a face at him.

64 Robert Browning, 'Cleon', 15-16.
So that was the revenge. To laugh at him. He would not have that. She should hear his confession. Too much playing for the cinema must be bad for the carnal passions. Fun to stir up her rage, a puppet-play after a reeking death. *Turn ye to me.* She must know everything, believe, pity, or she would be no good to him. *Turn ye to me.*

Time that had streamed past them, stopped and waited for them. Begin again. Be loved for ever. Van lay in time’s arms. Life in time. Life in eternity. She had told him. The double life...

'Bacon, and eggs to hide the bacon, and new broad beans.' (p. 169)

One of the functions of the interplay between authorial voice and the presentation of other consciousnesses in the text (a practice which makes few concessions to their differentiation by mimetic realism) is the creation of this lyric space, in which the simple utterance of resonant phrases has the sort of effect described by Northrop Frye, when he writes that, in the lyric, ‘we turn away from our ordinary continuous experience in space or time, or rather from a verbal mimesis of it’ to a verbal resonance which is ‘psychologically close to magic, an invoking of names of specific and trusted power.’ He continues:

At other times the resonance is not allusive but, more vaguely, or at least indefinably, an evoking of some kind of mysterious world that seems to be concealed within ordinary time and space. Verbal magic of this kind has a curious power of summoning, like the proverbial Sirens’ song [...] It is very common for a single line to possess this quality of resonant and summoning magic.

This is exactly the function that the interwoven strands of quotation perform within a Butts text. Frye goes on to describe the lyric as

the entrance to another world of experience [...] one of magic and mystery, one that we must soon leave if we are to retain our reputations as sober citizens of the ordinary one. But there is still a residual sense that something inexhaustible lies behind it [...] Mallarmé and Rilke have said that the end and aim of lyric poetry is praise [...] They were talking about] an earthly paradise we stumble on accidentally, like the castle of the Grail, a paradise we

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65 The relation between quotation and other voices in the text is illuminated by André Topia’s discussion of ‘Intertextuality in *Ulysses*’ (in *Post-Structuralist Joyce. Essays from the French*, ed. by Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 103-25); his use of Bakhtin’s distinction between ‘stylisation’ and parody, in particular, may make a contribution to understanding the way in which the apparent polyphony of different consciousnesses and quotations is in fact subject to the author’s authority. On the use of lyric, and lyric epiphanism, in stream-of-consciousness writing, see Moretti, *Modern Epic*, esp. p. 179.
can bring to life for ourselves if we ask the right question, which is, according to Chrétien de Troyes: "Who is served by all this?" 66

The reference to the Grail legend is fortuitously pertinent, as will become clearer in my brief discussion of her second novel, *Armed With Madness*, and the confluence of the kinds of studies of myth and legend discussed earlier with psychoanalytic and anthropological studies of dream points up the similarities in Frye's account between lyric and dream, so that we can see Mary Butts using the lyric in this novel as both evocation and investigation. In a retrospective review of her work in 1937, Bryher perceptively noted the presence of some painful thing powerfully repressed in her writing, 'She never wrote of it, only [...] sometimes the feel of it is in the frightening undertone of a dream. Much is left on the sand. Hooks, pebbles, shells, fish, often in the wrong places.' She associates this with a quality in her writing which she describes as 'a new to literature sense of the psychological nuance of emotions exaggerated or created by the war', and with 'some missing word [...] that will unlock the gate, explain, make a new realm possible.67 As in a dream, it is this absent, repressed material that gives power to the forms the narrative takes, while the snatches of lyric quotation and the recurrent lyrical turns of the prose create a sense of some other place or world, neither fully remembered nor disclosed, but enclosing and engendering resistance to the menace of death let loose by the war.

A succinct illustration of her attitude to writing is to be found in her short prose piece, 'Magic',68 a fictionalised meditation on form, mixing narrative description, analysis and interior monologue, and based on a woman's experience of having her portrait painted. The stimulus for the story is likely to have been her temporary emotional involvement with Roger Fry, who painted her in December 1918, and her idiosyncratic assimilation of his aesthetics, which she had been familiar with since the days of the Omega Workshop.69 That she was thinking about the relations between form in painting and writing is clear from the entry in her journal in the same month: 'If a painting is not meant to be literary, then writing should not be literary either.'70

68 Mary Butts, 'Magic', *The Little Review*, 7 (July-August 1920), 3-6.
The story attempts both to explain and find a parallel to the painterly aesthetic and to work this through at the level of the writing itself. Early in the piece, she reflects on the painter's task:

Painters are not concerned with youth or age. They are not finally interested in your phenomena extended in time and space. They use it [sic] to present appearance in reality. Reality swallows phenomena and puffs them out in patterns discerned in the arrangement of antitheses. A good painter is free of the pain of opposites. He leads out the arrangement in reality by hand or claw. He was examining her pattern.

This recension of the theoretical position Fry outlines in his writings, such as 'An Essay in Aesthetics', set alongside the traditional view of art's conferral of immortality by means of a remembered line of Ronsard's, offers a familiar modernist account of art's capacity to transcend the thronging world of social contingency and gratify the more sophisticated organs of pleasure by means of form. But Mary Butts is not satisfied with this as an epistemology. For her, as we have seen, form must be readable in terms of a significance beyond the merely formal, 'quod superius sicut inferius est', and the shift between the two modes of perception is the axis on which the story turns. As she sits for her portrait she fixes her eyes on a nail in the wall, until 'the shelf above it slid, and the books became an arbitrary prism. She stepped out of her body. Immediately in place of his leaning shoulders, a black rock appeared, a granite bubble, and over it trembled the black star.' The relationship between painter and subject is then explored through a symbolised, displaced eroticism out which imagined encounter comes a 'formula' the expression of which has to be stylistically improved and 'trimmed' into a linguistic form appropriate to its meaning. The phrase as it first comes into her head is 'Into the darkness at the roots of the mountain' and this phrase 'followed her about the town', its jaunty rhythm singing inside her head. The process of refining it involves 'training her ear out of its predecessor', abandoning the 'abominable sing-song', and following the example of the painter by cancelling it out. 'A way of speaking that is good enough for the emotions is not good enough for the plainest writing. A great painter was at work on her. A mountain has roots.' This prosodic demonstration takes us close to the heart of her concept of literary form; but it is paralleled by another imagined transformation as she becomes a bird. 'The rock was heeling over onto her, it had put out arms. She would lie under it spatchcocked till she turned fossil. Let him go.' So the erotic element in the encounter is displaced into this imagined revelatory form, always tied to her fixed gaze at the nail, figured as a series of spiritual journeys that develop during the days she spends being

71 In Roger Fry, Vision and Design (Chatto & Windus, 1920), pp. 11-25; see esp. pp. 24-25.
painted. As he explores her image, transmuting it into significant form, so she observes him. 'Under the form of a rock she had seen him naked, a pure-shape among the basis of the hills. In bird-shape she had freed herself of his contact.' Where she departs from Fry's aesthetic is in her conclusion, in which the epistemological qualities of form are extended into an awareness of 'power', through her arrival at the proper expression of her 'formula'.

Behind their signatures was the source of signatures, the life which is all life and no death, where he and his drawing moved, were mixed, and poured out. There appeared the figure of a triangle, the base given in the world. From one known she was to complete this figure of divine geometry. She had seen a black star. Quod superius, sicut inferius est, and this morning it had remained obstinately a nail.

The title, 'Magic', points to the way Mary Butts assimilates Fry's formalism into her occultism through the doctrine of signatures, while her focus on the economy of style required to transmute the ordinary language of thought and perception into a 'formula' of power recalls her lyric precision in evoking the spiritual forces underlying human behaviour in Ashe of Rings.72 This is a project that concerned her all her writing life. By titling her autobiography The Crystal Cabinet after the poem by Blake, she lays claim both to a kinship of perception and a shared tragic vision: the cabinet 'opens into a World/ And a little lovely Moony Night', but when 'I strove to seize the inmost Form/ With ardor fierce' the cabinet bursts and the speaker becomes 'like a Weeping Babe [...] in the outward air again'.73 Like the painter, she has to 'cross the threshold of the senses'; but until she has reshaped the phrase into the formula, she will repeat 'the external forms'. The idea of the 'inmost form' necessitates its extra-textual validation, drawn from her explorations of 'the abyss [...] and] the starry sky.'

It is not, I think, fanciful to read 'Magic' as a response to, even a rewriting of, Virginia Woolf’s 'The Mark on the Wall', one which takes issue with its presentation of the nature of the aesthetic.74 The comparison between the two pieces helps to clarify some major differences between the two writers. Woolf’s story dramatises the writer’s consciousness as she meditates on a mark on the

72 Roger Fry was an enthusiastic reader of Ashe of Rings, and may well have seen it as embodying the ideal he described in a letter to Gordon Bottomley: 'I think it's a real disaster that we have both a poetic and a prose diction. When both are alike the poetry has to be entirely in the stuff itself and can't be overlaid as an ornamental gesture.' (Unpublished letter dated 16 Jan. 1916, quoted in Ulysses [Bookshop] Catalogue 33, p. 24.)
wall from her place in an armchair on a January afternoon in 1917. For much of the time it appears to be a nail, although in the final sentence it is revealed, almost anagramatically, as a snail. As the narrator ruminates associatively on the possibilities suggested by the mark, and on the small narrative vignettes suggested by these possibilities, she also longs for a point beyond life in which a renewal of pre-oedipal perception articulates a version of Fry's formalist world of 'nothing but spaces of light and dark', a state of being in which consciousness is removed from the burden of the rush of incoherent perceptions characteristic of modern life, as well as from a male-dominated social order symbolised by Whitaker's Table of Precedency. The prose itself is organised by repetition, return, and word association, and couched in a self-reflexive, relaxed, meandering, discursive sentence structure. Lyndsey Stonebridge, in her illuminating discussion of the story, argues for a reading of it as a critique of Fry, in which moments which 'express a desire for an alternative mode of being [...] also re-formulate formalism's ideal state where the mind is liberated from the cacophony of everyday experience,' while the story itself dramatises the impossibility of transcending them. Thus 'aesthetic contemplation, the search for pure significance, is diagnosed as a kind of "protection against stimuli"; an effect of the way in which modern consciousness can only live at one remove from experience.'75 'Magic' on the other hand takes the contemplation of its mark on the wall not as an ironised evasion of the real but as the writer's mode of access to a 'divine geometry' underpinning the aesthetic; in this optic, it is her capacity adequately to reshape the language in which her experience is embodied that enables her to make use of the aesthetic to join the material and transcendent worlds through a single consciousness. The star may remain 'obstinately a nail', but its nailness is not open to question. Virginia Woolf determinedly historicises her text by framing it with the opening date, time and location and a closing reference to the war, in which 'Nothing ever happens': Mary Butts describes a specific location, but moves out from it into an imaginary world which has only the power of the text to support its gesture towards other states of consciousness. While both texts respond to Fry's aesthetics and question its limits, they seek the origins of value in widely differing spheres. Woolf is overwhelmed by the infinite multiplication of contingencies and reels back in the face of the impossibility of comprehending and describing their interdependencies, so that even the mark itself, despite its 'satisfying sense of reality', has no perceived individual properties, mutating instead from one stimulus into another, until coming to rest in its final bathetic actuality, its imperceptible movement an ironic contrast to the velocity of experiential life. Mary Butts, by contrast, offers a lyric

epistemology of form that reaches back into a pre-modern cosmology to evade the shadow of death in an aesthetic that relocates value in the power of the occult.

Symbols and surface
'Magic' is uncharacteristically programmatic, and was never reprinted. What is explicit in it is put to work implicitly in her subsequent stories, many of which continue the work of exploring the mental and spiritual worlds of damaged or traumatised men and women. When her first volume of stories, *Speed the Plough*, was published in 1923, Glenway Westcott began his review of it for *The Dial* with the claim that it could 'be likened only to masterwork: Dubliners or Mr Lawrence's England, My England.' In his careful and measured justification of this claim, Westcott enunciated the most accurate delineation of the qualities of Mary Butts's prose I have found: he notes her intellect, dispassionate observation, serenity and 'fierce passions', expressed in a prose which has

a minimum of linear fluency [combined] with a maximum of swift continuity in emotion [...] This prose is not something stretched between one mind another, a mere telephone wire; it has weight and substance, "definitely an object of whatever shape lying upon the paper" (Dr Williams). [...] The rhythm is subtle, short fluent jets retarded by spondaic forms [...] It keeps the intellect nervous and watchful.

The central claim of the review is that

her work is an irresponsible evocation; the first and strangest resource of the human intellect, and, in our literature, longest in abeyance. Of all forms of utterance, narrative, the description of a mobile cluster of experiences, is the least easily comprehensible; the contrary only appears to be true because debased romancers have too long imitated a redundant theatre.76

By irresponsibility, Westcott means a 'refusal to employ any modern convenience of interpretation or terminology' so that the form of the narrative operates like memory, incorporating the events depicting without turning them into 'theory or proposal'. Memory itself is then seen as the key to the stories, their 'identifiable soul', and the presence in them of the exactly observed 'sense of ploughs, blades,

and blood [...] a golden bough [and] a dark grail' as extending 'racial memory' and bringing it up-to-date.77

Once again, the same terms recur: a post-imagist convergence of observation and detachment, with an economy of language, creating a new account of the presence of old forces. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this is the title story of the collection, in which shell-shock is anatomised through the presentation of a conflict between urban and rural sensibilities and their mutual misrecognitions.78 A soldier lies in bed, convalescent, 'without memory, without hope' (p. 11), spending his days flicking over the pages of a copy of the Sketch, gazing at the Kirchner girls illustrated in it, aware only of the distressing contrast between the painted mannequins and the entirely functional women of the hospital. 'Coquetterie, mannequin, lingerie, and all one could say in English was underwear' (p. 11). In his daydreams, femininity and delicate materials are elided as crêpe georgette becomes Georgette, who 'would wear [...] beautiful things with names [...] velours and organdie, and that faint windy stuff aerophane,' while the starched and crackling presence of the matron '[makes] him writhe like the remembered scream of metal on metal' (pp. 11-12). In order to survive he develops a fantasy world, 'a ritual and a litany' in which he undresses and dresses the Kirchner girls, to whom he has given exotic names, in 'immaculate fabrics. While he did that he could not speak to them because his mouth would be barred with pins' (p. 14). (The simple absence of mediating commentary between the medical perception of his silence and his own reason for it is typical; and as the gap between his protective fantasy-shell and the doctors' puzzlement widens, so does the story's scope.) Like many other shell-shock cases, he is sent to work on a farm, and at first is delighted by the unfamiliar surface appearance of his new world, described in terms reminiscent of his imagined cloths—'sheen', 'expanse of sky [...] luminous', 'embroidery that a bare tree makes against the sky, the iridescent scum on a village pond,' all of which work as an 'assurance of his realities'; the sight of straw and thin ice in a frosty dawn makes him pause: "Diamanté," he said at last, "that's it" (pp. 16-17). Against this, actual animal life sickens him, and the discovery that he is a 'born milkman', and therefore has to come into direct contact with 'twenty female animals [...] huge buttocks shifting uneasily [...] milk squirting' further reveals the nature of his psychic fears, as he dimly realises 'that this was where most life started' and swerves away from recognising the possibility that 'all the Kirchner tribe' shared some essential

77 Westcott, ibid.
78 The story was first published as 'Speed the Plow' in The Dial, 71 (Oct. 1921); reprinted in Speed the Plough and Other Stories (Chapman & Hall, 1923). It was also anthologised in Georgian Stories 1922 (Chapman & Hall, 1922) and in Stories from The Dial (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923). Subsequent references are given after quotations in the text.
qualities with the cows, preferring to continue to believe in a womanhood assimilable to 'little bits of fluff' (pp. 18-19). He dreams of London women, especially 'plumed and violent' music-hall performers; and a glimpse of a London actress in the village pub allows him to formalise his thoughts, and he resolves to return to the city. Throughout the story he is more or less silent, but at this moment he bursts into song, prompted by the sight of ducks sliding into the point in the late twilight. The eight-line song, given in full, is a comic, music-hall number sung by Lee White, and articulates his pre-eminently urban vision in sharp contrast with Mary Butts's elegant prose evocation of the ducks. The concluding scene finds him, a month later, on his knees fitting a length of brocade to a 'lovely girl'. If any further exposition were necessary, Mary Butts gives it in a descriptive phrase, the brocade 'pliant between his fingers as the teats of a cow', and in his silent enthusiasm for the woman's final piqued remark at the absence of lace: 'When the war starts interfering with my clothes [...] the war goes under' (p. 26).

Two factors persuaded the officials to send him to the country, the obvious strength of his body (in fact the consequence of soldiering), and the sentimentalised view of the rural idyll of 'life at the plough's tail' propagated by the expensively dressed hospital visitor. The irony lies in their misunderstanding of the workings of his shell-shocked mind. 'For years his nerves would rise and quiver and knot themselves, and project loathsome images' (p. 12), a fear that is reawakened by the live power and sexuality of the farm, and 'even those girls they call the squire's daughters', all of which strikes him as somehow 'dirty, like a man being sick' (p. 20). His defence is the city and its 'civilisation' which he vaguely apprehends through his conviction that '[t]here's a lot of use in shows' (p. 21), an embrace of dreamlike theatricality which subsists on the memory of textures and surfaces on to which sexuality, and his repressed memories of the war, can be displaced. It is the strength of the writing to present this without explanation or interpretation, focussing on shimmering surfaces, and using the resources of the man's semi-inarticulate thought to construct our understanding of his traumatised memory. It would be beside the point to enlarge on the implicit associations of war, aggressivity, sexuality and dirtiness, or on the place of sublimation in the psyche of a man whose sense of masculinity has been irretrievably damaged by his experience in the trenches, although the alterations wrought by the war on gender roles is an issue Mary Butts returns to often in her post-war fiction. The texture of the story's prose itself posits the explanation in its aesthetic.
That the land, blithely regarded as curative by the doctors and the 'expensive woman', far from being a pacific idyll, is implicated in the very turmoil of sexuality and nourishment that underlies the complexities of war and aggression, is another theme Mary Butts returns to throughout her writing. In the stories in her first volume she marks out her territory, in which this fatalistic, tragic vision, as present in the city as in the country, observes fragments of the lives of war-damaged men and women playing out small, resonant dramas. 'Wetted at dusk, the streets' patina of filth gleamed like stale fish, and out of the crests of the houses came noises of weeping that never was, and never could be comforted.'

The absence of comfort, like the disintegration of social coherence she describes with increasing bitterness, and like the problematisation of value itself, in its many and varied manifestations, is frequently presented in her work as the consequence of loss. It pervades the stories even as they explore ways of accounting for it: Freud, Frazer, Crowleyan magic, surrealism, rationalism, all are examined, directly or obliquely, and rejected. In the two Taverner novels, *Armed With Madness* and *Death of Felicity Taverner*, she turns to a highly sophisticated version of genre fiction in a more sustained presentation of the implications of such a loss for contemporary society. *Armed With Madness* is a modern version of the Grail legend; the American visitor, Carston, at one point discusses the group of characters whose lives are the focus of the novel with the elderly father of one of them:

>'If you were to ask me, I should say that they were looking for something. Miss Taverner told me one day that what they wanted had been lost out of the world.'
>'When and what?' said the old man.
>'I don't quite get their dates. Might have been any time, the Middle Ages, or the day before yesterday—a thing that's been lost—'
>'There was only one thing lost of a symbolic value in the Middle Ages,' said the old man.

It is not the quest for the grail itself that structures the novel: a grail-like cup has been fished out of an old well soon after the beginning of the book, and the narrative circles around the ways its possible identity affects the different characters and exacerbates the tensions and attractions between them, a process set quite explicitly in motion in Chapter 6, when they play the 'Freud game' of free association with the phrase 'the cup of the Sanc-grail'.

79 'In Bayswater', *Speed the Plough*, p. 32.
80 *Armed With Madness* (Wishart, 1928), pp. 37-45. Subsequent page references are given after quotations in the text.
cultural tradition and a capacity to transcend the immediate circumstances of involvement in other people's desires. In this, of course, it echoes the crux of the grail-legend itself, especially in the prominence given to it by the analyses in Jessie L. Weston's account, where the regeneration of the Waste Land is dependent on the quester's asking the right question. In modern terms, the land is waste because of the inadequacy of the rulers, and because nobody asks the question. So there is war, and its aftermath, a situation which will not improve until the question is asked. It is, the novel suggests, impossible directly to address the question of what has been lost; instead Mary Butts gives a modern slant to the old question, who is served by all this? By calling into question the relationship between belief, sign, and authenticity, and by observing the way the 'grail' affects the characters' behaviour, we are brought to a recognition of what Mary Butts thinks of as lost. By the end of the novel, the grail has been revealed as a Cairo ashtray, yet its narrative efficacy is not thereby reduced. The old man, Picus's father, explains:

'It seems to me that you are having something like a ritual. A find, illumination, doubt and division, collective and then dispersed. A land enchanted and disenchantcd with the rapidity of a cinema. Adventures. Danger and awe and love. [...] Our virtues we keep to serve these emergencies.' (p.193)

In both prose style and use of its structuring materials, Armed With Madness is more accessible and more ironised than Ashe of Rings, but it shares a number of features with the earlier novel: frequent intercut quotation (now as often from popular songs as from remembered poetry), economy and precision of writing, significant classical allusion, a sacred site in South-Western England, and an insistence of the ethical virtue of 'sophrosyne', moderation and restraint, in any attempt to counter the emptiness of the modern world and rediscover its lost heart. Additionally Armed With Madness has a certain playfulness, as the use of the grail-legend implies, illustrated for example by the scene between Scylla, Philip and Lydia in which the impossibility of mutual comprehension is extended into the form itself which, in Mary Butts's words, 'can be as well represented operatically' (pp. 163-5). This is preceded by Scylla's diegetically recursive reflection that 'she didn't want Lydia if she could not tell her the story of the cup [...] Without that story her summer in the South was no story' (pp. 161-2).

82 For its exact location, and an informed discussion of the use Mary Butts makes of it, see Patrick Wright, The Village that Died for England (Cape, 1995), pp. 84-9.
Ian Bell argues that Pound had to struggle 'to maintain for the modern world the value of mystical perception' and in the process turned to analogies from science in order to construct 'a language to think in'; Mary Butts is also constructing a language to think in, but one that takes occult phenomena to be an integral feature of everyday life, even in their apparent absence. In Ashe of Rings, for example, Van explains her approach to the world to Serge, who complains:

'Your theory lets us in for the old bogies.'
'They were the symbols for a correspondance in the mind of those who believed in them. I am trying to explain Judy. If you can do it better, tell me.'
'I think that she is hysterical, and mad about men and money and position.'
'Is that all? But what does it explain? My theory fits the facts as I see them.' (p. 197)

Her argument is that explanations provided by psycho-analysis and other scientistic discourses fail to account adequately for the meaning of behaviour. But as will, I hope, become clear from the account of her third novel, her reliance on the occult becomes increasingly defensive, to the extent that an undercurrent of something approaching paranoia is detectable in her later work. In the last decade of her life, she developed an urgent desire to identify and incarnate, rather than to understand, the nature of the forces at work in the cultural world; in Paris in 1929, she began a long (unpublished) essay which she called 'View of the Present State of Civilisation in the West', in which she tried to set out in full detail her sense of the crisis of western civilisation. After her return to England she frequently wrote reviews in which she could expound her attitudes, as for instance in her response to two books by Dmitri Merezhkovsky, in 1933, where, talking about the Russian Revolution, she says

I think, though, that most of us have asked ourselves the question: 'What is behind it all?' Inquiries that in some places can lead to very curious answers. Merezhkovsky makes it quite clear that the War, the decline of Christianity and the Russian Revolution are three phenomena that must be taken together, three 'signatures' of a reality whose full understanding is for very few men. [...] It is good sport to have fun with the Number of the Beast, but whoever wrote the Book of Revelation had some such world catastrophe as our own in his mind.83

At the same time as she is elaborating this theory, she is insisting on a proper imaginative recognition of the place of ritual in the lives of earlier peoples. Even Harrison and Frazer, she complains, remove the rites they describe from 'the

83 'A Russian Prophet', Time and Tide, 14, 41 (14 October 1933), 1228-30.
spiritual life-blood of a people,' and Eliot, despite his shared interest in the Grail, the Waste Land, and the Sacred Wood, is upbraided because 'he does not love people or things enough.' He is 'one of the Guardians of the Sanc Grail [but] mayn't he be archaising the job?' she wonders, 'Spiritual realities are not "precious."' The animism she drew on fifteen years earlier is now bent towards the justification of a more authoritarian stance, in which the artist's privileged vision is the guarantor of social value and meaning. In her extended essay on ghost stories, written in the late 1920s in Paris, but not revised and published until 1933, she wrote:

The 'common business' of ghost stories is 'to make our flesh creep.' And by that we mean, not simple horror or terror at a new and generally evil world, usually invisible but interlocked with ours; we mean also a stirring, a touching of nerves not usually sensitive, an awakening to more than fear—but to something like awareness and conviction or even memory. A touching of nerves inherited from our savage ancestors? Well, that is one explanation, drawn from the lately discovered fact that, like savages to-day, our forefathers thought 'animistically', endowed everything that lives with life, like or unlike his own. (All artists still do.)

There is growing evidence for this attitude in the stories she wrote during her last years in Paris, such as 'Mappa Mundi' (published in Last Stories). The emphasis, always present but now less cathedted, on mana and tabu foregrounds fear: words like 'warning', 'menace' and 'threat' appear often enough in connection with them for it to be possible to regard the whole constellation of their presences as a trope for psychological states, if not for ontological ones. Without an awareness of and perhaps the experience of such fear there can be no ground for the hierarchised ethical order that Mary Butts's novels and essays lay claim to; the anti-Enlightenment, authoritarian cultural critique that they embody reaches back into her interest in the occult, and in the doctrine of correspondences, while at the same time displaying an ambiguously held allegiance to a more liberal tradition of organicist critique in the tradition of Ruskin and William Morris. It is her determination to follow through the implications of this contradictory position that makes her third novel such a valuable work. In Death of Felicity Taverner she turns to something like the format of a detective story (though without a body, or any detection) to allegorise, and thereby explore, her fantasy of revenge on those responsible for the loss of felicity from the western world.

84 'A Russian Prophet'; letter to Hugh Ross Williamson, dated 29 Sept. 1932 (HRHRC, Mary Butts Correspondence).
85 'Ghosties and Ghoulies'. Uses of the Supernatural in English Fiction', The Bookman 83, 496 (January 1933), 386-9; 497 (February 1933), 433-5; 498 (March 1933), 493-4; 84, 499 (April 1933), 12-14.
'The worst is coming to the worst with our civilisation'

In her last year in Paris, Mary Butts started writing a novel that would account for what she called 'the Waste Land of our time', a world in which the quest for the renewal of 'a whole civilisation [...] like English liberalism being born again' is set against the encroaching amorphism of socialist democracy. But a new, half-hidden note is struck in the text as well, in a vein of anti-semitism that animates the explanatory model within the narrative, and which is partly based on her sense of her former husband, John Rodker. In another letter to Hugh Ross Williamson in which she discussed the autobiographical element in the novel, she made it clear that many of the characters (though not, she claims, the plot) are drawn from life; when it comes to the question of a portrayal of Rodker in the guise of Kralin, though, she makes this revealing disclaimer:

Kralin—no, it isn't poor John. He gave me one or two ideas, I admit; but it really grew from some evil Jews in Paris. Poor old thing! He'd never hold to any course long enough to do that! He's racked with fears & sometimes with spite. I don't want it said that it's him—tho' it will be.

The conflation in Kralin of Rodker and 'evil Jews' points precisely to her vision of the extent to which being a Jew is a 'racial' state, one in which Jews are animated by transpersonal forces which constitute their ontological truth. This is the same attitude as Eliot expressed a few months later in his remark that 'reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable'. But although Mary Butts had 'always felt that between [Eliot and herself] there is a link of some kind, far more significant than our distant & rather irritable personal relations' she now finds him, as we have seen, insufficiently in touch with (or in informed opposition to) the modern world. It is not new for her to create characters whose actions demonstrate their subjugation to larger forces: Judy in Ashe of Rings 'conducted' the train of events in the story. 'God knows where it came from' (p. 270). What is new is the isolation of racial characteristics as explanatory. The authority of Jessie Weston, in particular, sanctions an association between a desired return to Aryan roots and the crucial significance of asking the right questions in the course of the quest, a pattern that is repeated in the half-subliminal detective-story narrative structure of the text, in which the parallel mysteries of Felicity's death and Kralin's plans provoke questions that

86 HRHRC, Mary Butts Correspondence, undated letter [1932].
87 HRHRC, Mary Butts Correspondence, letter to Hugh Ross Williamson dated 2 November, [1932].
lead to the inculpation of the Asiatic-Russian (as opposed to White, Slavic-Russian) soul, in its figuration as the Jew.\textsuperscript{89}

This is not the first or only time Rodker appears in autobiography or fiction as somebody whose Jewishness is intrinsically the cause of his unacceptability. Two brief examples may illustrate this. He is awarded the following brief mention in Aleister Crowley's 'autohagiography':

In a previous spasm [Mary Butts] had rushed to the registrar the most nauseating colopter that ever came under my microscope. It was a Whitechapel Jew who proclaimed himself a poet on the strength of a few ungrammatical and incoherent ramblings, strung together and chopped at irregular intervals into lines. He used to hang about in studios in the hope of cadging cigarettes and drinks. He even got into mine on one occasion, owing to a defect in the draught excluder. Luckily the plumbing was perfect. One tug on the chain, a gush and a squeal, and I saw him no more. But somehow he squirmed out of the sewers and, as I said, obtained the official position, louse pediculosis, with Mary Butts.\textsuperscript{90}

It would probably be wrong to expect anything more generous from Crowley, but, as we saw in Chapter 3 (and as I explain in more detail in Chapter 6) a subtler cultural denigration awaited him at the hands of Wyndham Lewis, who transformed him into Julius Ratner, the 'split-man' of\textit{ The Apes of God}, where he is again introduced with the conjunction of Whitechapel and Jew. Lewis continues the introduction like this:

This highbrow-sub-sheik of the slum had been the triste-est Tristan tricked out in the dirtiest second-hand operatic wardrobe—the shoddiest Don Giovanni—the most ludicrous Young Lochinvar—the most squalid Sorel, he had been the most unprepossessing sham Ratnerskolnikoff without the glamour of poverty of the Russian (because of his healthy business sense)—he had been the Judas without the kiss (for no fairly intelligent Christ would ever trust him) with a grim apocryphal lech for a Magdalen—he was the Childe Harold without the Byron collar, and worse, sans genius—the Childe Roland without the Dark Tower, or corpse-like Adolphe, a Manfred or a Zara, risen again, but who could only half-live—the

\textsuperscript{89} See Hermann Hesse, \textit{In Sight of Chaos}, trans. by Stephen Hudson [i.e. Sidney Schiff] (Zürich: Verlag Seldwyla, 1923), for an account of his vision of the Asiatic, Dostoevskian Ideal as 'the rejection of every strongly-held Ethic and Moral in favour of a comprehensive Laissez-faire [...] the new and dangerous faith' (p. 14); and see Dmitri Merezhkovsky, \textit{The Secret of the West}, trans. by John Cournos (Jonathan Cape, 1933) for a portrayal of White Russian exiles as 'human beings with flayed skins [...] the most sensitive barometers of European war weather, the most competent evaluators of European words about peace' (p. 14); and see above for Mary Butts's comments on the latter.

eternal imitation-person in a word, whose ambition led him to burgle all the books of Western romance to steal their heroes' expensive outfits for his musty shop.\textsuperscript{91}

Beneath the comic bravura of this paratactic literary cumulus lie the familiar stereotypes of anti-semitism: impersonation, inauthenticity, deviousness, business acumen, sexual appetite—aspects which are developed at length as the satire continues. The same elements recombined with nihilism and destructiveness surface in \textit{Death of Felicity Taverner} where, as we have seen, he is the original of the Jewish Bolshevik agent Nick Kralin. As a preface to its analysis, though, an excursus is required into the ideology of anti-semitism in English culture.

Two distinct elements are central to its development in England during the first three decades of this century: anti-alienism and anti-Bolshevism. In the wake of the pogroms that began in the Tsarist Empire in 1881, over two million Jews from Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Bessarabia and Poland fled into exile. The hundred thousand or so who arrived in England (among whom were Rodker's parents) constituted 'the largest immigrant group to come to the United Kingdom before the Second World War'.\textsuperscript{92} Their presence aroused anti-alien and anti-semitic sentiments which have been extensively documented and which focussed on familiar political and cultural issues to do with assimilation, language, employment, and overcrowding, fuelling the stereotypical and, to some extent, contradictory images of the verminous, Yiddish-speaking, workshy, destitute alien and the slippery, oily, hypocritical Jewish businessman, financier or landlord. But the major impetus to the development of post-War anti-semitism came from the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Red Scare which followed it and created the myth of the Jewish-Bolshevik menace. As Sharman Kadish has shown, the campaign against 'Jewish Bolshevism' involved institutions at the heart of the British State, most notably the Foreign Office and \textit{The Times}, along with the \textit{Morning Post}, and coincided with British military and diplomatic intervention in the Russian Civil War.\textsuperscript{93} General Denikin's White Russian forces instigated hundreds of pogroms in the Ukraine, resulting in the deaths of over 100,000 Jews. The British government's response to these (which may or may not have been assisted by the Expeditionary Force) was twofold: they underplayed or discounted reports of the atrocities, and at the same time disseminated

\textsuperscript{91} Wyndham Lewis, \textit{The Apes of God} (Arthur Press, 1930), pp. 143-44.


counter-reports of Bolshevik atrocities, claiming in some instances that the Bolsheviks were Jews in the pay of the Germans. Indeed they went further, producing anti-semitic propaganda to boost the moral of British troops and to subvert the Red Army with claims that the Bolshevik leaders were 'Jewish provocators'. Robert Wilton, the Times correspondent in St. Petersburg, was one of the most vociferous propagandist of this view, identifying 'the devil of class hatred' as a Jewish decoction, 'a noisome malady that has come to afflict mankind from the Near and farther East'. In 1920 he wrote:

The Germans knew what they were doing when they sent Lenin's pack of Jews into Russia. They chose them as agents of destruction. Why? Because the Jews were not Russians and to them the destruction of Russia was all in the way of business, revolutionary or financial. The whole record of Bolshevism in Russia is indelibly impressed with the stamp of alien invasion.

He also reported the Bolsheviks as having set up a statue to Judas Iscariot in Moscow. 'Such,' writes Norman Cohn, 'was the source on which the most authoritative of British newspapers chiefly depended for its understanding of the Russian Revolution.'

It is clear from a mass of this kind of writing that pre-Revolutionary Russia was being represented as an equivalent of an England where, in Perry Anderson's words, 'the great industrial upsurge after the armistice [...] had seemed at moments to threaten the very basis of the social order'. Time and again the propaganda accent falls on notions of conspiracy and betrayal, and a violent discourse of destruction and violation is linked with claims of secret societies, racial domination and mystical ends (themselves drawing on, and sometimes overlapping with, theories of the occult) to construct narratives that played on profound anxieties while providing the same kind of thrilling explanations of them as were to be found in contemporary popular novels of espionage, imperialism and crime, reinforcing a conservative consensual ideology.

The *locus classicus* of such propaganda is, of course, the spurious *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, headlined on the front cover of the first English translation in 1920 'The Jewish Peril'. A few months after this implausible document appeared, *The Times* ran an article under the same heading in which, while purporting to speculate on its authenticity, the author drew explicit parallels

94 Kadish, p. 19.
96 Cohn, p. 166.
97 (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1920). For a full account of the *Protocols*, see Cohn.
between the secret Jewish societies who were plotting to take over the world and the Bolshevik government in Moscow. 'Have we been struggling these tragic years to blow up and extirpate the secret organisation of German world domination only to find beneath it another, more dangerous because more secret?' The article even went so far as to refer to the Bolshevik leadership as representatives of 'the Jewish World Government' in Moscow.98 Further articles in The Times, the Spectator, the Morning Post and elsewhere make it quite clear that in influential quarters the Revolution, not to mention the short-lived uprisings in Germany and Hungary, was regarded as adequate proof of the Protocols' validity.99 And as the myth took hold, it was turned back more explicitly on to Britain, and the spectre of alien subversion was perceived in all forms of working-class and labour activity, from the development of the Labour Party, to pacifism, Irish nationalism, trade union militancy, and army mutinies and police strikes. Aliens and immigrants were ipso facto subversive, owing allegiance to secret pacts and ties of blood. The East End of London, particularly Whitechapel, was repeatedly attacked as a hotbed of foreign revolutionaries.100

The most baroque manifestation of this paranoid vision is to be found in the writings of Nesta Webster, who started her adult life as a novelist, but found her vocation in a popular series of pseudo-historical books, pamphlets, and articles in which she traced the International Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy back to eighteenth-century illuminism, freemasonry and satanism.101 A brief excerpt from a talk she gave in 1922 to the Royal United Service Institution should be enough to convey something of her outlook:

We are asked to believe that Illuminism died out in 1786. But Illuminism exists now. [...] It [...] continued under various forms all through the nineteenth century [...] Secret Societies here are propagating the doctrines I have referred to [...] I do not know if everyone here is aware that Satanism is practised in England [...] As long as you treat only the surface, then you can do no harm to the conspiracy. You must get to the bottom; you must find out what is poisoning the blood [...] We are asleep and the worms are at work, and the great structure of British Christian civilisation is being undermined whilst we sleep.102

98 Kadish, pp. 31-2.
99 The Morning Post ran series of no less than eighteen articles 'expounding the full myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy.' See Cohn, p. 169.
100 See Fishman, East End Jewish Radicals, and Kadish, pp. 184-241.
101 It might be interesting to note, in this connection that, like Aleister Crowley, she was brought up in the joyless atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren.
Such strands as these draw on an attitude not completely dissimilar to that of Mary Butts, with her serious interest in magic (though not in Satanism). But it is a far cry from her outlook during the war years, when her work for the N. C. C. L. was the outcome of her belief that 'men did not necessarily become monsters because they were of foreign blood'. Looking back on those days twenty years later in *The Crystal Cabinet*, though, she re-writes that history, putting the issue of her own agency into question, adding: 'One regrets to think that Tepitcherin [sic] made use of us as one condescending to the use of a contemptible bourgeois tool.'

By this time, she was prepared to believe that her actions had been, unknown to her, in thrall to a different power. This question of agency becomes increasingly important in her books, concerned as they are with the incapacity of European culture and an apotheosised England to defend itself from defilement without the intervention of unpredictable and invisible forces; this is an animism that takes literally the metaphor of the Waste Land, constituting a literary counterpart to the right-wing ecological movements of Rolf Gardiner and the Springhead Ring, and recalling Viscount Lymington's even more literal and organicist auto-regeneration of the Waste Land through his 'compost and lavatory school' of agriculture. And while the roots of her position lie in her enthusiasm for Weston, Frazer, and the Cambridge Ritualists, as well as in her involvement in Crowleyan magic, it is the failure of that period's investigation of the occult to prevent what she regarded as the catastrophic divorce between religion and science that led to her growing reliance on explanations based on conscious but secret forces at work in the world, rather than collective products of individual unconsciousness. In 1901, Yeats had written of 'that belief in magic which has set me all but unwilling among those lean and fierce minds who are at war with their time,' and war with her time traverses and underpins all Mary Butts's texts, despite their evident and extensive awareness of contemporary

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103 *The Crystal Cabinet*, p. 94. For an account of her work in Hackney, see Stella Benson, *Drawn from Life*, pp. 39-41. (Chicherin, during his years in London, was another member of Eder's circle.)

104 See *Springing from the Ground. An Anthology of the Writings of Rolf Gardiner*, ed. by Andrew Best (Springhead: the Trustees of the Estate of the late H. Rolf Gardiner, 1972). As a Cambridge undergraduate and graduate in the early 1920s Gardiner edited the magazine *Youth*, in which literary experiment and an organicist vision of agriculture and rural land-use appeared side by side, in an ostensibly left-wing, even revolutionary, perspective: reviewing its final issue, however, Eliot wrote presciently that 'after one has eliminated all the silliness, there remains something that must be recognised. In the most boisterous storm, the ear of the practised sailor can distinguish, and at a surprising distance, the peculiar note of breakers on a reef. This note is not "the great middle-class liberalism" or the great lower-middle-class socialism; it is of authority, of dogmatism not tolerance, of the extremity and never of the mean' ('Commentary', *Criterion*, 3, 9 (Oct. 1924), 3-4). The full story of the association between right-wing 'folk', 'völkisch', and ecological movements between the wars awaits his historian, but see Patrick Wright, *The Village that Died for England*, and Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century: a history* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989), esp. Chapter 9, 'The Chill of the Forests', pp. 177-194.

work in psychology, anthropology and social theory, as she elaborates a complex imagined universe of mythical powers which in turn reveals larger contradictions in her idea of England, and of value more generally, and where it inheres. It certainly fuels her distrust of rationalism, and the long Enlightenment tradition that saw nature as a rational garden, a site of infinite improvement.

Writing in her journal in May 1927, under the Cocteau-derived but resonant heading of 'Un Rappel à l'ordre', she summed up her plans for the future as follows:

I want to show people beauty—soundness [...] I begin to understand several things labelled bolshevism, surrealisme, eccentricities of pederasty, the Paris Daily Mail, my husband [John Rodker...] the decline of good will, charity, friendship, the bankruptcy of religion.

What apart from the specific work of writing is what interests me?

Nothing but spiritual development, the soul living at its fullest capacity. That is the lever, the new synthesis, or vision or faith. I have not got it yet, but I am beginning to know what is wrong with the times. And many of the things we do are not wrong—pederasty and jazz and opium and research.106

Her short book, Traps for Unbelievers, with its characteristic hint of menace in the title, demonstrates the seriousness and attention with which she analysed the collapse of religion as a bearer and legitimator of meaning, and the inadequacy of science to replace it. Typically also she can see no way forward but back, through the privileged sensibility of the few who still care for 'sophrosyne'—the self-control, temperance, and chastity that springs from contact with the earth and the powers of nature, things invisible to the sentimental ocular vision of suburban pastoralism.

The mediatary figure in Death of Felicity Taverner is the White Russian, Boris Polderatsky, who makes his first appearance in her writing in Imaginary Letters.107 Published in a limited edition in Paris, with illustrations by Jean Cocteau, this is a series of letters addressed to the imagined mother of a homosexual White Russian exile, whose tortured and dependent relationship with the writer stimulates digressive meditations on his irresponsibility, his damaged state and the broader contemporary mentality of which it is symptomatic. A dispossessed aristocrat, Boris is a falling star, attractive, selfish, petulant, drunk, lascivious and self-hating, always failing to live up to trust, yet

106 Mary Butts, 'Selections from the Journal', 171.
never entirely abandoned by some mysterious grace. Butts is fascinated by the
downfall of the Russian civilisation, as she is by her belief that pain is the central
experience of the generation that survived the war. She reads Bertrand Russell on
the Russian revolution, and finds his enthusiasm for 'american efficiency' an
inadequate explanation of how 'Marx’s economic determinism [was] swallowed
in exchange for your rich, magical rituals.' How ever many the benefits of social
reform, there will still be a vacancy at the heart of society. She is thus able to find
support for her own theories of secret societies and unseen forces at work behind
the establishment of the Soviet Union, and their expansionist ambitions, and
concludes that 'cheap fiction about hidden hands may correct the theories of the
great mathematician.'

Boris reappears in Armed with Madness, to which Felicity Taverner is a sequel,
occupying a comparable structural role, the essence of which is that for all his
faults he, like his beleagured English hosts, retains an involuntary sense of mana
and tabu, of the 'unknown categories' of which the urbanised world, pre-
eminently the Bolshevised one, has been dispossessed. He is mediatory because
he straddles two worlds, but having been violently dispossessed of the one he
was born into, the memory of it still haunts him, despite his attempts to forget.
'For the life he had learned to live [characterised as one in which he has to forget
memory] towns were essential and the country a menace, crouched waiting at
the end of every pavement and every street.' 'Memory for him was no mother of
the muses, but a machine-gun for which he was target, each shot of its endless
firebelt telling on his bound body.'

Mary Butts spent most of the 1920s out of England, mostly in Paris and
Villefranche, with shorter stays in Germany and Italy. Her exile nourished her
sense of the land, her privileged childhood's rural Dorset, which was already
vanishing as she left it for London before the First World War, and her drug-
induced hallucinations fed the shift in her outlook from social reconstruction to
spiritual and national reclamation. The psychic dynamics of her relationship with
Salterns, the house she grew up in, and with her ancestry, and her mother,
continued to inform her writing. And it is that sense of a timeless, cyclical pattern
of land-holding that she pits against her vision of the democratic world, in
which, as she put it in her answers to a questionnaire sent out by The Little Review

108 Imaginary Letters, pp. 39-40. It is symptomatic that she is prepared to accept the evidence of
'cheap fiction' as a more accurate register of social forces than the materialism of a rationalist,
despite her belief in an intellectual elite. (The sort of cheap fiction she had in mind is legion in the
period, from Bulldog Drummond to Edgar Wallace, but as an illustration of the genre one could
cite Agatha Christie's early novel The Secret Adversary, in which the forces of good are up against
not only the Bolsheviks but 'the secret hand behind the Bolsheviks'.)
109 Death of Felicity Taverner, p. 191.
in 1929, 'the worst is coming to the worst with our civilisation'. There is something, a secret, that has to be defended from the voyeuristic tide of mass democracy, and, in turn, something equally secret is at work behind that tide, a 'hidden hand' invisibly controlling the process of desecration.

Death of Felicity Taverner deals with the conflict between these two secret powers. It also effects a reversal of the usual pattern of that most familiar fantasia on the theme of secrets, the detective story, in that instead of bringing all secrets into the open, it ends with a revenge murder that will remain a secret, a sacrificial death which wards off the threat of sterility that menaces the land. The novel can be briefly summarised: Felicity Taverner (who is modelled somewhat on Mary Butts herself) has been living in France, and has died in circumstances which make it unclear whether her death was accidental, suicide or murder. She is mourned by her cousin, Scylla Taverner, married to Picus Tracy, and by Scylla's younger brother Felix. Boris appears uninvited from France, and precipitates conversation and reflection about Felicity. The Taverners own two houses in the small valley beside the sea which is the book's setting: Scylla, the low ancient stone house, Felicity, an eighteenth-century house further up the valley. At her death its ownership has passed to her brother Adrian who, with his mother, has rented a house ten miles away. Felicity’s house has been rented by her husband, the Russian Jew Nicholas Kralin, described as 'a wolf that tried to turn house-dog, and became neither wolf nor dog.' Kralin, who has an interest in psycho-analysis, wants to publish certain private letters and journals of Felicity's—in a subscription edition—for the light they will throw on erotic behaviour. He offers not to do so if he can buy the house, as part of his plan to buy up all the available land around the village and turn the place into a seaside resort, with bungalows, petrol-pumps, cinemas and golf-links. Boris strikes up a friendship with Adrian, who is presumed also to be gay, partly for his own purposes and partly to keep an eye on what is going on. He learns that one of the matters discussed in Felicity's correspondence is Adrian's illegitimacy, hitherto unknown to any of them. Boris comes to see Kralin, the Bolshevik Jew agent of Red Russia, as symbolically responsible for the death of his own sister in the aftermath of the Revolution, and is thus drawn into an understanding of the Taverners' atavistic hostility to the destruction of their country. He lures Kralin to a tidebound cave, stuns him, takes the key to his safe and leaves him to drown. The papers are retrieved, the land reprieved, and it is understood the murder will go undetected.

This melodramatic summary suggests a cheap proto-fascist pastoral, and does no justice to the remarkable textual procedures that generate this fiercely imagined investigation of possibilities and contradictions. The text, as usual, is shot through with quotation, the function of which is to both to underscore the aesthetic values of the Taverners' world and to suggest an earlier time when the spirits of pastoral represented credible powers, and when metaphor was read as literal. The most frequently cited is Milton's 'Comus', interpreted through a Frazerian and occultist vision which transforms it into an arcane text; 'Lycidas', too, with its political resonances, becomes not only a lament for the loss of Felicity from the world (the allegory in her name is made explicit at one point), but also a reassurance that she has been metamorphosed into the place they are defending ('the hills were her body laid down'). Furthermore, it is no accident that the plot hinges on Kralin's threatened publication, for their psychological and pathological interest, of Felicity's personal letters and journals, a private writing, vulnerable and unwitnessed, whose fate in being published would be as much a violation of her as Kralin's plans for the area would be a violation of the land. This formulation encodes Mary Butts's own contradictory feelings about her text and its access to forces beyond her powers to understand, which she figured as occult. In her autobiography she wrote: 'I could make words do things. But words could do things to me. Words could make me use them.'

Her position in language is simultaneously one of agent and victim—in Patrick Wright's phrase, Mary Butts's writings are 'documents of defeat [...] but they also show that the flight from all forms of social rationality that they trace can be neither successful nor innocent.' The sense of compulsion that can be detected behind them is intrinsic to her reading of the state of English social and political culture: they are memorials to an imagined world which stands against a society of undifferentiated indifference in which the very project of meaning appears to be not only impoverished but largely absent.

It is in the perspective of this crisis of value that her version of pre-war anti-semitism becomes most pertinent, and its contradictions most revealing. Kralin is not merely a representative of some demonised Jewish capitalism, or of some hidden subversive conspiracy: he also embodies something Protean, shapeless and limitlessly self-interested, a kind of Other which can never be incorporated into the Buttsian self, and which the text—but only the text—stands as a buttress against. He is a product of the nihilistic, psychologising, post-war world, with its removal of the taboos which give meaning to mana (to use Butts's anthropological terms once again) so that the space once occupied by religion or magic is left

111 The Crystal Cabinet (Carcanet, 1988), p. 120.
dangerously unfilled. The means by which modern society has assisted in the removal of these taboos in his case is also relevant (and relevant to Mary Butts's view of Rodker). 'He has been psycho-analysed out of any pleasure in anything,' says Scylla. Felicity ran away from him shortly after their marriage after 'she had discovered some frightful secret. Called it the Grey Thing. [...] If you asked him the meaning of meaning he'd answer "no meaning at all" [...] That man is sure that he has the inside dope on the ultimate senselessness of everything. And is content.' Boris adds: Suppose that what you call "the grey thing" is the same power that made our revolution distinct from other revolutions. For it is' (p.24). The same theme recurs in a later description of Kralin, described as

a man whose interests were all cerebral, in the abstractions we have made for our convenience out of life [...] A man who, though conventionally respectful of other men's freedom, had a pleasure, the only pleasure which ran in him too strong to be denied, to thwart it, to see its not-fulfilment, to bring it to his Nothing. [...] Not-Being, Un-Meaning, Un-Doing, not with war or fury, but—find the linch-pin, the key-stone. Take it out softly and the arch will crumble, the wheel fall out. (pp. 104-6)

The deracinated urbanism which Butts sees in Kralin, and in mass-production, vulgarisation, the lack of care for beauty in small things, is perceived by Boris to be something more. Kralin is a man 'with no known history behind him'; what Pound regarded as a cultural aspect of Rodker's writing (he has 'no history to speak of' and 'his father did not have a library full of classics')113 has been transformed into a threat to 'european civilisation' that stems from Kralin's lack of inherited tradition and his alien deracination. '[T]here are people in the world with nothing to lose [...] a nothing which includes an indifference to their inner selves—they are free to make things happen [...] with often an odd preference for the secret [...] anything is possible to persons whose isolation and liberty have freed them from common inhibitions' (p. 204). The threat is made entirely explicit in Scylla's accusation that Kralin 'would sell the body of our land to the Jews' (p. 245), in which the Judas myth, blood-libel, and human sacrifice combine to offer a justification for murdering him in the name of England.

His Jewishness is therefore, as so often, a reductive scapegoating. A powerful autobiographical charge, coupled with an available political ideology, draws him into a web of fictions which mark Mary Butts's panic inability to think the possibility of nationlessness without recourse to stereotypes. The paradigm of an absence of national identity is transformed into the agency responsible for the destruction of a national inheritance. The essence of his mythic personality is its

113 See Chapter 3, notes 1 and 8.
abstraction, in which actual contradictions are diffused. Kralin represents, through his property speculation, both the secret power of finance in which monetary transactions have become invisible and the power of capital which enables and necessitates urban expansion, while through his name, with its double suggestion of crawling and Stalin, he evokes the proletarianised mass-democracy spreading across Europe in the wake of the Russian Revolution. And in his slightly overweight, urbane, presence he is both charming and repulsive, fundamentally duplicitous and exploitative, as in his sideline of manufacturing pornographic icons to export to Russia to subvert religion. In his figure, the mythical figure of the Bolshevik-Jew, Mary Butts can combine all the forces she imagines threaten European civilisation. His death by water is a ritual purgation of history in the name of an aristocratic continuity sanctioned by myth. But typically it has to be Boris, the White Russian, who does the act, and preserves the ethical chastity, the sophrosyne, of the Taverners and Tracys, who nonetheless need his capacity for defensive violence because their very ethicality renders them vulnerable to the attack from the forces of materialism that surround them. As his understanding of Kralin takes shape in his mind, Boris's thoughts take on the form of a litany, each short paragraph beginning 'If Kralin is that kind of man...'

'If Kralin is that kind of man, he is not among [the] fanatics. He is serving his own end as well. And having a cause and himself, himself and a cause, his power will be doubled. If Kralin is that kind of man, where is this to end? What is the plan behind the plan? The plan they have behind the plan in Russia also? [...] If Kralin is that kind of man, I am face to face with a man who has destroyed my Russia.' (p. 207)

In *Death of Felicity Taverner* there is nothing arbitrary about the creation of Kralin. The anti-semitism is intrinsic to the cultural critique. Unable either to acquiesce in the social and political changes she sees around her, or to give her allegiance or intellectual support to any of the available counter-movements, Mary Butts is forced to follow the logic of her refusals to their extreme. Convinced that value and meaning are being lost to the world, she is forced back on to a constructed notion of ancestral memory which is itself as much a part of the processes of modernity as the urban sentimentalisation of the land she so much despised. To be English, in that perspective, is to have occult access, by genetics and ontology, to sources of virtue inaccessible to strangers and rapidly falling out of the reach of those in the towns and suburbs. Nature, from this animist viewpoint, is indifferent to the varieties of life that inhabit it, unmoved by ideas of justice or equality, changeable, powerful and potentially dangerous. And the removal of Kralin is therefore nothing but nature reasserting itself, and reasserting the
greater power of its impersonal, but by no means disinterested, secrets. In this respect, of course, 'nature' is another way of expressing the id and the human unconscious; and had Mary Butts been able to persist in her studies of the occult without rejecting the discoveries of Freud, she might have been able to resist transferring the occult on to the natural world as a projection of her sense of deracination in modern capitalist society.114

In the next chapter, I take up the question of the cultural reception of both Butts's and Rodker's work in post-war England. I don't want to appear to be arguing here for any kind of direct homology between the ritual removal of Kralin and Rodker's disappearance from the literary scene in the 1930s, or from our cultural memory.115 Yet Mary Butts's novel does begin to reveal a constellation of attitudes, conscious and unconscious, that went into the construction of the culture of that decade and, ironically, made it inimical to the reception of the kind of work they were both writing. Rodker's psycho-analytically informed version of modernism was, literally, out of place in the publishing world of the thirties; indeed his last published piece, the essay 'Twenty Years After' which he contributed to *We Did Not Fight*, was singled out for censorious comment in one of the reviews (it was the last review Rodker received in his lifetime, apart from incidental praise for the quality of his translations): 'This book should be read [...] With one exception, a muddle-headed, lazy accumulation of sentences called "Twenty Years After", every single essay is important.'116 The reviewer's animus must have been directed at the older Rodker's uneasiness about pacifism set it in the context of the aggressive impulses within all of us, for the writing is clear and elegant, a reflective coda to *Memoirs of Other Fronts*. But the reviewer's uncomprehending sentence reads as a chilling dismissal of all he had achieved in the previous two decades.

114 A psychoanalytic interpretation of Butts's novels might want to relate the sense of something lost (which I discussed above in connection with *Armed With Madness*) to Freud's concept of an original pre-ontological lack, and relate this to the double sense of the uncanny as containing at least two secrets, the 'family' secret and the alien secret which bars access to the first while duplicating it in a different framework. The relation of the occult to the secret would then be seen as closely connected with questions of sexual identity and inheritance.

115 Rodker contributed reviews to such papers as *The Spectator* and *The New English Weekly* early in the decade, but otherwise was known in literary circles primarily as a translator, agent and publisher. John Lehmann, who commissioned a number of translations from him, for example, was apparently unaware of Rodker's own work.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: Wyndham Lewis, and Reputation

Fantasy alone, today consigned to the realm of the unconscious and proscribed from knowledge as a childish, injudicious rudiment, can establish that relation between objects which is the irrevocable source of all judgement: should fantasy be driven out, judgement too, the real act of knowledge, is exorcised.¹

Ratner, degeneration, and satire
In this final chapter, I want first to show how the relationship between Wyndham Lewis and John Rodker enacts a significant argument within English modernism, which was not resolved so much as abandoned, and later ignored; and also to suggest that the fate of the issues and writers I have discussed in the earlier chapters can usefully be seen in the light of this failure to resolve the argument, and its own relation to a changing historical context.

Lewis's denigration of Rodker in The Apes of God² was preceded by a less personalised but nonetheless pointed attack in The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator, which although published a year later, was originally written some years earlier. The shorter of the two essays that compose the book, 'The Dithyrambic Spectator', was written in 1924 and first published under the subtitle 'An Essay on the Origins and Survivals of Art', in The Calendar of Modern Letters in 1925; the longer section first appeared in Lewis's magazine The Enemy, in 1929.³ Both are concerned to criticise and lampoon a current in contemporary art which he sees as subverting the process of civilisation by embracing a sentimental return to primitivism: the two principle targets are transition and the writing and political pronouncements associated with it, and Jane Harrison's 'unintelligent, doctrinaire, and political' account of the origins of art in Ancient Art and Ritual. Rodker, as we have seen, is deeply involved in the former; and

² Perverse though it seems, for many years critics took Ratner to be a representation of Joyce, solely as far as I can see because of the word 'epiphany' in the parody of Adolphe 1920 (pp. 156-8). Even the latest account of the novel attributes many of the aspects of Rodker which Lewis is attacking to other writers (see Mark Merrino, The Poetics of Mockery: Wyndham Lewis's 'Apes of God' and the Popularization of Modernism, M. H. R. A. Texts and Dissertations, vol. 40 (Leeds: W. S. Maney, for the M. H. R. A., 1995), p. 62. Paul Edwards correctly identifies Rodker in his edition of the book (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981); additional confirmation is provided by Rodker's own copy of the book (in my possession), in which Marianne Rodker has written 'Split-Man = Rodker' on the front free endpaper.
Mary Butts, by implication, is involved in the latter attack.4

The basic proposition underlying Lewis's argument in both essays is that the crisis threatening European civilisation, as manifested in contemporary art, is degenerational. It forms part of the larger argument of Time and Western Man, The Art of Being Ruled, and Paleface, which claims that democracy, popular culture, jazz, feminism, homosexuality, and psycho-analysis are elements of contemporary life that weaken the intellectual, artistic and social progress of the last several hundred years. In particular, he takes issue with the canonically modernist belief, enshrined in the pages of transition, that formal innovation is socially revolutionary. His almost pathological oppositionalism leads him to adduce an eclectic range of scholarship and polemic in support of his case, but the enormous range of his reading is seldom matched by an awareness of the contexts and affiliations of his authorities; instead, he prefers to rely on the quotation of long extracts as the expression of contrary views. Thus in 'The Dithyrambic Spectator' he stages a confrontation between Jane Harrison and the diffusionist argument of Elliot Smith in order to advance his theory of the origin and present function of art and to contest the consequences of a purely Bergsonian notion of 'vitalism' in which art is returned to its social function as ritual action, and its spectators to the role of participants (which Lewis assimilates to his bête noire, a vision of art as entirely the province of amateurs who destroy the professional competence, and professional income, of the artist and supplant art's rigorous seriousness and originality with a series of vapid formal imitations which in turn spawn amateur critics to sustain this rival economy).

Elliot Smith's argument was that art originated in mummification, that the statue evolved out of the corpse, and that it spread as a consequence of the diffusion of Egyptian (or 'archaic') civilisation. The focus on death suits Lewis's belief that art does not deal with the débris of daily life.

Great art is, for the hurried and unexacting standards of this quick unconscious life, a useless instrument. Such life itself resembles a railway station, or railway carriage, the things of which it is specifically composed made for its hurried uses, left on the seat when the train is left, and swept up as rubbish at the terminus. (pp. 180-81)

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4 I have touched on Jane Harrison's importance for Mary Butts above: her attitude to the Greek world, her anthropological knowledge, her sense of the sacred, her understanding of ritual and sacrifice, all draw extensively on her reading of Harrison and the other Ritualists. In addition, she uses names, myths and explanations taken from Themis in the depiction of her characters, notably Picus. Rodker's early association with Margaret Morris and dance may also be subsumed into Harrison's association between art and Choral Dance in Ancient Art and Ritual.
Hence also his hostility to stream-of-consciousness prose. Serious art requires permanently serious matter, and in this Lewis shares the diffusionist attitude to culture, which assumed that 'degeneration was a recurring element in human history' and that 'at all times and places, societies had suffered cultural decline because the individual personality was vulnerable to regression.\(^5\)

It is regression of this sort that Lewis sees at work in the programme of transition, and which he makes the link between the two essays, as a bridge or mode of 'transition' back to a resurgence of primitive life, viewed not only as artistic but as cultural in the fullest sense: 'balkanization' and 'growing savagery', 'a preparation for endless faction and clan fights and broils, and a condition of permanent internecine war', heralded by the 'transitionnal carmagnole' of amateurism in the arts (p. 157). On these grounds he attacks the enterprise represented by the magazine, focussing on a polemic with its editors, but not overlooking Stein and Joyce.

Stein, the chief contributor to Transition, appears to me original. Perhaps she is 'an original' rather than 'original.' I defend my choice of her as an enemy at all times and in all places. As to the unimportance of those I have chosen for attack, especially as that regards the present 'bunch,' the transitional 'diabolists.' Well, in themselves, most of these 'enemies' are, I agree, of the most perfect unimportance. But they are rather ideas than people. Paul and Jolas are names of notions, associated with other (and far more powerful) notions.\(^6\)

Rodker, though not directly named in the essay, is alluded to in a number of ways; and while Lewis may be attacking him, like the editors, as an idea rather than as an individual, this not does preclude some insulting personal comments. The 'diabolism' of which he accuses the magazine is compounded of enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution, Romantic nihilism, surrealism and a popularisation that blurs the distinction between art and life and between artist and audience. He approaches it through a hostile reading of Lautréamont as a 'Communist

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\(^5\) Kuklick, The Savage Within, p. 127. Lewis's response is perhaps the least sympathetic to enthusiasm for primitivism, but his belief in the applicability of anthropological theories to contemporary society was shared by Eliot and others. 'The psychologist Sir Henry Head, who was associated with the diffusionist position, explained the physiopsychological economy of the person to Roger Fry, whose explanation of the character of prehistoric and primitive art—that it attests to the mental habits of people whose way of life develops their sensory skills at the expense of their intellectual ones—is recognizably derived from the same scheme that informed Rivers's account of the culture of the Torres Straits islanders. T. S. Eliot applied Rivers's interpretation of Melanesian society to his own, arguing that in Britain as well as Melanesia an assault on traditional values was leading to extinction of the will to live.' (Kuklick, p. 180 and n.113).

\(^6\) Lewis, Diabolical Principle, pp. vi, ix-x.
prose-poet', cited in Rodker's translation. His central thesis, extending his critique of Lautréamont to the surrealists, is that the 'merging of the dream-condition and the waking-condition (of the external and the internal) must result in a logical emulsion of the forms and perspectives of life as we know them' and that this, translated into art, 'will approximate most closely to the art of the child' (p. 65). I do not want to rehearse the argument here, only to note the place of Lautréamont in it, and to examine a remark Lewis makes in passing. Complaining that it seems 'impossible' that such work as Maldoror should be 'seriously presented as the exemplar of the best or newest', he goes on disingenuously to suggest that it is on a par with pornography, in order to explain its translation by 'Roth or some similar person (actually the above translation is by a gentleman rather similar to Roth)'. The Roth in question, Samuel Roth, was a somewhat shady New York Jewish publisher who pirated Eliot, Joyce and others for his own benefit, and who was attacked in open letters in the press, including in transition, which were decidedly anti-semitic in tone. By associating Rodker with Roth, Lewis makes him out to be no more than a parasite and a pornographer, whereas his publishing business was in fact a great deal more serious, however angled towards the erotic and satanic. Rodker's own writing and its stylistic experimentation is thus damned by association with an elision between Lautréamont and pornography. Of course Lewis's argument in the essay is a substantial one, and deserves serious consideration: my intention here is to draw attention to a vitiating element in its generation and expression and to suggest that, for all his professions of impartiality, it draws some of its force from personal and racial animosity. In the figure of Rodker, presented as the degenerate Ratner, he finds an enemy that unites his hostility to transition, Stein, Lautréamont, Joyce and Jews.

Julius Ratner, in The Apes of God, is an anti-semitic portrait, and Lewis plays on both elements of his name throughout the text as a constant reminder of this. He is variously called 'Joo', 'Jimmiejulius', 'Jimmie', 'Jujubejimjim', and 'J. Ratner' to stress the 'split' aspects of his personality, a 'lowly Whitechapel Ape in Excelsis', a Jew whose literary aspirations are to be seen as comically inappropriate, as his atavistic nature as a 'literary book-merchant' makes clear (he even, in Lewis's relentless pun, uses a 'Juventa' typewriter to vent his 'obscene diarrhoea of ill-assorted vocables') (pp. 150-51; 155). His dissembled but

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7 This recalls Aldington's patronising ridicule of Nancy Cunard, in the fictional figure of Constance Lechdale, as a woman who 'abused the bohemian conventions of irregularity and coherence. It's a fatal thing to take literature and art too seriously if you lack judgment. Lautréamont and Dostoievsky, Joyce and Brancusi, Dada and jazz—what an extraordinary potion she had brewed from them! And what an intoxication of unhappy extravagances resulted!' Richard Aldington, 'Now She Lies There', Soft Answers: an Elegy (Chatto & Windus, [1932] 1934), pp. 68-9; cited in Lack, p. 76.
inescapable racial destiny reveals itself in the glass each morning, his self 'a sort of ape-like hideous alien [...] a rat caught in its own rat trap [...] yet attached to the fortunes of the ratself,' perceived with a 'feminine eye' (p. 154). Sitting beside the six-foot, 'nobly-proportioned' greek god-like figure of Siegfried Victor, Ratner 'with his craven smirk, his self-torturing mind—half-bald lizard's stony head, that saurian skin, squalid stature—he was a rat beside this empty aloof lion of a person: Poor pre-War Jew of the People' (p. 165). His yellow teeth, gluey eyes, bad, 'swarthy' skin, sluggish bowels, guttural voice, litany of complexes and self-disgust add to the picture, implicitly damning both psycho-analysis and introverted prose and verse with the same slur. He is several times referred to with heavy irony as 'gentlemanly', to reinforce the battery of accusations of inauthenticity levelled at the 'sham-experimental, second-rate literary cabotinage' (p. 160) displayed in a parody of Adolphe 1920 (pp. 156-8). The fantasy of a decaying body inside a pustular, yellow skin bespeaks a vision of impurity that threatens the existence of a taxonomic order: in this, and in his insistence on Ratner's exploitative yet unconvinced sexual predation, the excremental nature of his writing, and his association with forgery and duplicity, Lewis's anti-semitism is depressingly unoriginal.

In its stylistic presentation, on the other hand, it is not: an ambivalent authorial stance is intrinsic to the satire, so that explosions of disgust and laughter co-exist in a high carnivalesque rhetoric in which Lewis's own psychological vulnerabilities are closer to the surface than is often recognised.

With typical generosity, Rodker recognised a degree of psychological insight in Lewis's depiction of him; he also saw the self-exposure at work in it. He was unable to forgive the racist scapegoating, but he devoted a great deal of attention to trying to understand the sheer intensity of hatred involved in a characterisation which he realised was a projection of Lewis's own unconscious. His personal relationship with Lewis could not, of course, be sustained, as he told Pound: 'I kept up with our friend Lewis as long as I could but what's the good? Stones and ammunition for half wits.' But he could see that The Apes of God set a period to the first great wave of modernism, and he wanted to counter

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8 The novel itself is described as 'telling of an impossibly juvenile-minded and even sickeningly sensitive Lothario's most grim attachments (only a decade gone) to unworthy girls—when the Peace was young, and Joo was not plain Joo but juvenile-Joo you were to understand and get-away-closer was the proud refrain, upon the Rummelplatz of Easy Money, astride the post-war pigs-in-clover, galloping round the jazz-organ at the heart of the blood-drab Circus of the bloody Peace.' (Apes of God, p. 148)


10 Yale: Beinecke Library, EP YCAL mss Box 40, folder 1498.
Lewis's attempt to define its characteristics with a work of his own that would offer an alternative construction and assessment of the period between 1919 and 1931. My warrant for this claim is the unfinished novel, variously titled *An Ape of Genius* and *Heroes of Our Time*, that I discovered in the Rodker Archive in HRHRC. In it, in a final settling of accounts, Wyndham Lewis figures as the writer and painter Disraeli, a half-Jewish anti-semite whose feelings of inadequacy and frustration are directed against everybody he comes into contact with, the women he can never commit himself to, and the (off-stage) intellectual figures he is unable to rival in greatness—Joyce and Freud.

The novel is explicitly a response to *The Apes of God*, and references to rats and Ratner leave no doubt about Rodker's awareness of Lewis's satire. Most interesting for the purposes of this discussion, though, is Chapter 8, in which Rodker, as author, replies to an interlocutor's question about his use of satire as a retaliatory measure by explaining at length the nature of his reaction to Lewis's satire, and justifies his own use of the same device.

And when he turned on me, from the first I saw how close to me he'd thought me. Living with me for weeks, for months. I never absent from his thoughts. Yes! he me enwombed, and fed with rich store of thoughts, and every aliment of every clime, ranging the world over to bring me whole to birth, in image of himself, giantling worthy of him. O fecundating womb—salute across the roaring city! Yes I am in his debt, considerably in his debt, and it does not irk me to acknowledge it. All Hail! Disraeli! [...] Whoever did me more proud? No one had looked at me till then! Not one had wanted, or had seen, the giantling he saw. But why then repay him in his own coin? Confess there's love in that. Well, you can't just shrug your shoulders and turn away, saying 'silly bastard, what's he fussing about,' or 'he's going off his rocker,' though his symptoms may be perceived by you with much objective justification as likely to end that way. There's too much of oneself in him, and that one cannot turn from. And why reject his offer because it's made to stink to high heaven [...] Do I have to pretend to be unmoved by attacks directed with much ingenuity and unerring instinctive aim? What is an opponent if he is not

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11 HRHRC, Rodker Archive, Folder 21m. The manuscripts and typescripts are disorganised, in fact are mingled with the drafts of *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, and it is not easy to ascribe the correct order to the sections; nonetheless it is very clear that the novel describes Rodker's involvement in modernist literary and social circles in London in the three years following the end of the war, and that the central figure is based on Wyndham Lewis. Included with the drafts are some pages of notes and diagrams in which fictional and real names are indiscriminately used; it is evident from these that some episodes were either never written, or have not survived: the extant drafts account for some 22,500 words. Rodker hoped to persuade his publisher, Putnam, to give him an advance to complete the novel, described as a 'new book which will study the intellectual and physical manifestations of the literary group to which [he] belonged until it fell apart', but they declined because of 'the present trade depression.' (Letter from C. Huntingdon of Putnam & Co., dated 20 July 1932 (HRHRC, Rodker Archive, Folder 21m)).
worth my salt: and surely love has many ways in which to attack. I was excited and to a high degree, as I was meant to be. [...] In short, however I wasn't liking being loved that way.

Either he was indifferent to me, as he was not; or he answered to something already in me which must respond to such an attack—unerringly—admire here the artist's power, he shoots a bull's eye nearly every time. He knows you so, something in him knows, it's the same place in him in me that knows.

By turning Lewis's anti-semitism into self-loathing, Rodker leaves him to destroy himself in the text. But, remaining unpublished, this appropriate revenge never transcended the therapeutic. Ratner was Rodker's epitaph. The animus directed at him encompassed not only his own writing, but aspects of early modernism associated with him: notably his rejection of the anti-feminism characteristic of the Boys of 1914, with their hatred of slither and slop and interiority. Rodker did not share Pound's and Lewis's fear of contamination by women writers; in the Choric School he was associated predominantly with women, as he continued to be in other contexts, particularly in his contacts with psycho-analysis; and we have seen his own account of the way his resistance to the war refigured his sense of his own masculinity. His attempt to return to what the social authority of the culture repressed—the rhythmic, the unconscious, the sexual, the feminine—elicited the abjection of Lewis's fantasy as much as the neglect that, independently, accompanied it. 12

Fantasy, judgement and the war

Wyndham Lewis maintained that he was 'one of the only' writers to respond seriously to the First World War and the Russian Revolution. 13 Even allowing for the hyperbole of his attack on Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul, this was hardly a justifiable claim, even in 1929. All the same, it is significant that he makes this the ground of his attack in The Diabolical Principle. What is too often neglected in accounts of modernism is the complexity and multiplicity of responses to that catastrophic experience, and the extent of the different arguments put forward in pursuit of the assurance of continued peace. Debates about the role and nature of the State, the place of the artist and of art within the social order, individual psychology and the forces that determine it and affect social behaviour, tradition, revolution, change and stability, are all implicated in these arguments. And when such political issues are refracted in imaginative literature, their complexity is

12 See Kristeva on Céline: 'Do not all attempts, in our own cultural sphere at least, at escaping from the Judeo-Christian compound by means of a unilateral call to return to what it has repressed (rhythm, drive, the feminine, etc.), converge on the same Célinian anti-Semitic fantasy? And this is because [...] the writings of the chosen people have selected a place, in the most determined manner, on that untenable crest of manness seen as symbolic fact—which constitutes abjection.' (Powers of Horror, p. 180).
magnified even further, as Fredric Jameson has demonstrated in his reading of the concluding pages of Lewis's The Revenge for Love. The task of literary history is to recover as full a sense of all the constituents of these debates as possible, and thereby to resist an unquestioning acceptance of the loss of important sections of our literary heritage. I have tried to show how some of the literature of English modernism was as deeply inflected by its authors' opposition to the First World War as Lewis's was by his participation in it, to rescue it from undeserved obscurity, and to place it within contexts that extend our understanding of that political complexity, one aspect of which has been the occlusion of these authors themselves.

The realm of competing judgements that constitute the criteria of canonicity is part of the process of history, and its history needs to be written and re-written as our vantage shifts and the political forces at work in it emerge into a clearer light. One illustration of this is the importance of fantasy in the account of Mary Butts's writing in Chapter 5. Just as the history of English psycho-analysis is finally coming to be seen as an intrinsic element in the development of English modernism, so fantasy, both as a psycho-analytic concept and category and as a literary genre, must take its place in the same constellation. That war and fantasy are profoundly intertwined needs no argument here: the importance of fantasy in the First World War, whether in terms of notions of masculinity and honour, or in relation to propaganda, or in terms of the psychology of aggression or the elaboration of the death drive in advanced capitalist societies, has attracted increased attention in recent years. The place of fantasy in critique of the war, and in critique of the fantasies engendered by war, has been less noticed, and my analysis of Mary Butts's Ashe of Rings and the importance of investigations of the 'occult' in the cultural milieu out of which it was written has, I hope, demonstrated the fruitfulness of this line of approach. My suggestion of an affinity between her work and that of Walter Benjamin in this respect does not preclude an awareness of the divergence between them in the 1930s, still less of the difference in their engagements with the political (although there may be a more authoritarian strain in some of Benjamin's later work than is commonly supposed); but the importance of fantasy in her subsequent novels is certainly not diminished by its involvement in a less humanitarian, less liberal vision of the political world.

14 ' [...] this private inner game of theoretical "convictions" and polemics against imaginary conceptual antagonists and mythic counterpositions of the monad's projection of its own shadow sign systems upon the historical struggles of living people, of passionate private languages and private religions, which, entering the field of force of the real social world, take on a murderous and wholly unsuspected power.' (Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression, p. 177.)

15 See Rose, Why War, Chapter 1.
Similarly, the anti-establishment satire that underlies Goldring's revolutionary-pacifist writings as much as his 1920s novels of cultural critique, is rooted in a politics that has been excised from literary history, and needs to be reinstated. His 1923 novel, *Nobody Knows*, ought to be read against Eliot's *The Waste Land*, not because it is a text of comparable aesthetic value, but in order to show that there were alternative strategies of response to a common political and cultural situation.

**Conclusion: cultural critique and canon formation**

Cultural critique is a category that invites accusations of imprecision and inclusiveness. After all, there is little in the way of literature that cannot be incorporated into it in one guise or another. But my purpose in using it has been to stress its most controversial aspect, oppositional critique and satire, within a broader modernist context which foregrounded the critique of the cultural context in which it operated as part of its writing practice. The reception of the works I have been discussing is inseparable from the attitudes of the dominant culture in response to which they were produced. The attitude to conscientious objection in 1917, for instance, meant that Goldring's *The Fortune* was effectively censored; its publication in Dublin denied it any substantial English circulation, and when it was re-issued fourteen years later, it was regarded as a historical curiosity. When Rodker's *Memoirs of other Fronts* was published in 1932, many of the reviews were unable to assimilate the combination of its subject matter and its modernist prose: Gerald Gould in *The Observer* deplored the 'perversity' of its structure and its writing, saying that the author would 'only have his own cleverness to blame' if the subject matter did not secure an audience; L. P. Hartley noted its 'literary merit of a high order' but saw it as 'the work of an unbalanced and hysterical mind;,' while 'G. M. H.' in *G. K.'s Weekly* talked roundly of 'the reactions of a sex-maniac', 'cowardice' and the 'farmyard midden'. Many reviewers used the term 'modern' to describe their distaste for the book's content, while deploying words like 'genius', 'sincerity' and 'technical excellence' to disguise their inability to assign it a place in contemporary literary production. An anonymous reviewer in the *Yorkshire Post* noted his 1930 *Collected Poems* as the work of 'a minor, but persistent, "Left Winger"'.

The recovery of these works for a readership less burdened by such overdetermining difficulties allows us to reinstate both the works themselves and their cultural contexts as part of the history of English modernism. Their valorisation is necessarily more provisional, but I have argued that they deserve to read seriously, and that our cultural memory is enriched in the process.

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A complete explanation of the circumstances surrounding the fate of the writings I have been examining would require a more detailed account of the shifts in the national and international political cultures of the thirties than is possible here. It would also need to look at the increasingly demanding nature of Rodker's involvement with publishing and translating, partly in response to the incapacitating level of debt he had been drawn into (almost £100,000 at current prices), and his work for psycho-analysis in the publications of the Imago Press. Similar contingencies affected the output of Goldring and Mary Butts. But it is clear that, in broad outline, the reputations of these three writers have suffered from the perpetuation, implicit or explicit, of inadequate judgements of their work made in contexts which we can now perceive with greater clarity to have been unable to respond adequately to that work, precisely because of the acuteness and pertinence of its critique. Until recently, the knowledge of their writing has been restricted to a small number of enthusiasts, or adherents to the Poundian tradition. The revival of interest in their work, and the re-publication of collections by Rodker and Mary Butts, is an indication of a wider cultural movement of which this thesis is a part, a shift in the dialectic of cultural memory and literary history in which the present constellation of ideas is re-creating the conditions for a reassessment of their contributions to English modernism.

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17 This was not finally discharged until after the war.
18 I have not included the Imago Press in my bibliographic listing, partly because it was a larger enterprise in which Rodker was one of three directors (with Ernst Freud and Barbara Low), and partly because it continued after his death, until it was finally sold in 1964. Rodker was also involved in an attempt to buy the Hogarth Press in 1937: Virginia Woolf was reluctant to accept his 'stingy' offer because 'he is a communist' (The Diaries of Virginia Woolf, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols. (Hogarth Press, 1977-84), vol. 5, pp. 105-106; see also p. 121).
19 Pound continued to recommend Mary Butts to young writers from his incarcerated position in St. Elizabeth's in the 1950s. Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan were enthusiastic readers of her work, as was (and is) Robin Blaser. Charles Olson describes Pound jotting down the title of Death of Felicity Taverner for him to recommend to James Laughlin of New Directions (Charles Olson, Charles Olson & Ezra Pound. An Encounter at St. Elizabeth's, ed. by Catherine Seelye (New York: Grossman, 1975), p. 48.)
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* published pseudonymously, by 'An Englishman'.

5 Periodicals to which Goldring contributed

* Country Life. Sub-editor. Occasional contributor, including poems.


* The Tramp, ed. by Douglas Goldring, 1, 1–2, 6 (Adelphi Press, March 1910–March 1911)
  Goldring contributed numerous pieces to this periodical, some under his own name or initial, others pseudonymously as 'John Mitten', 'Cyril Mortimer', 'James Harford', and 'X'; he may have used other pseudonyms, but only these can be unequivocally shown to be his at present.

* The Egoist

* Coterie

* Clarté (Paris)

* The Sunday Tribune (New York)

* L'Art libre (Brussels)

* Die weissen Blätter (Berlin)

* Poetry and Drama

* Art & Letters

* The Chapbook

* The Dial
6 Publishing
Goldring had an interest in several publishing firms between 1912 and 1917, (eg. Max Goschen, and Selwyn & Blount) and in that capacity was responsible for publishing, among others, James Elroy Flecker’s poems and Ford Madox Ford’s Poems, and for distributing (and possibly publishing as the 'Cube Press') Wyndham Lewis’s Timon of Athens.
JOHN RODKER

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