Utopia

European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies

Etudes sur l'avant-garde
et le modernisme en Europe

Studien zur europäischen
Avantgarde und Moderne

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Edited by Sascha Bru and David Ayers

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Utopia

The Avant-Garde, Modernism
and (Im)possible Life

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DE GRUYTER

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The avant-garde and modernism take centre-stage within European academia today. The experimental literatures and arts in Europe between ca. 1850 and 1950, and their aftermath, figure prominently on curricula, while modernism and avant-garde studies have come to form distinct yet interlocking disciplines within the humanities in recent years. These disciplines take on various guises on the continent. Within French and German academia, "modernism" remains a term rather alien – "die Moderne" and "modernité" coming perhaps the closest to what is meant by "modernism" within the English context. Here, indeed, modernism has acquired a firm place in research, signaling above all a period in modern poetics and aesthetics, roughly between 1850 and 1950, during which a revolt against prevalent traditions in art, literature and culture took shape. Similarly, the term "avant-garde" comes with an array of often conflicting connotations. For some, the avant-garde marks the most radically experimental arts and literatures in modernism from the 19th Century onward – the early 20th-Century vanguard movements of Futurism, Expressionism, Dada and Surrealism, among others, coinciding with the avant-garde's most "heroic" phase. For others, the avant-garde belongs to a cultural or conceptual order differing altogether from that of modernism – the vanguard exploits from the 1950s onward marking that avant-garde arts and literatures can also perfectly abide outside modernism.

European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, *far from aiming to reduce the complexity of various European research traditions, aspires to embrace the wide linguistic, terminological and methodological variety within both fields. Publishing an anthology of essays in English, French and German every two years, the series aims to compare and relate French, German and British, but also Northern and Southern as well as Central and Eastern European findings in avant-garde and modernism studies.*

Collecting essays stemming in large part from the biennial conferences of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies (EAM), books in this series do not claim to exhaustiveness. Rather, they aim to raise questions, to provide partial answers, to fill lacunae in the research, and to stir debate about the European avant-garde and modernism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and into the 21st. The series attaches great value to interdisciplinary and intermedial research on experimental aesthetics and poetics, and intends to encourage an interest in the cultural dimensions and contexts of the avant-garde and modernism in Europe.

L'avant-garde et le modernisme occupent actuellement une place majeure dans les universités européennes. Les arts et les littératures expérimentaux en Europe de 1850 à 1950 et au-delà font partie intégrante des programmes universitaires, tandis que les recherches sur l'avant-garde et le modernisme sont devenues, à l'intérieur des sciences humaines, des disciplines à part entière mais solidaires l'une de l'autre. Ces disciplines varient néanmoins à travers le continent. Dans les universités françaises et allemandes, la notion de « modernisme » reste plutôt étrangère : les notions de « modernité » et de « die Moderne » s'utilisent sans doute davantage pour ce que désigne la notion de « modernism » dans le contexte anglophone. Dans la recherche anglophone, en effet, la notion de « modernism » a acquis une certaine stabilité : elle désigne avant tout une période de la modernité poétique et esthétique, approximativement entre 1850 et 1950, au cours de laquelle a pris forme une révolte contre les traditions artistiques, littéraires et culturelles prédominantes. De la même façon, la notion d' « avant-garde » prend des connotations divergentes, souvent conflictuelles. Pour certains, l' « avant-garde » désigne les arts et les littératures les plus radicalement expérimentaux qui se développent à l'intérieur du modernisme à partir du XIXe siècle. Dans ce cas, les mouvements avant-gardistes du début du XXe siècle – dont le futurisme, l'expressionisme, le dadaïsme et le surréalisme – correspondent à la phase avant-gardiste la plus « héroïque ». Pour d'autres, l'avant-garde appartient à un ordre culturel et conceptuel entièrement différent du modernisme. Dans cette perspective, l'avant-garde survit au modernisme, comme en témoigne la permanence d'une sensibilité avant-gardiste après 1950.

Loin de vouloir réduire la complexité et la variété des traditions de recherche européennes, la collection *Études sur l'avant-garde et le modernisme en Europe* vise à embrasser la grande diversité linguistique, terminologique et méthodologique à l'intérieur de ces deux domaines de recherche. Par la publication d'un volume d'essais en anglais, en français et en allemand tous les deux ans, la collection souhaite comparer et mettre en rapport les résultats issus des traditions de recherche française, anglaise et allemande, mais également d'Europe nordique et méridionale, centrale et orientale. La collection rassemble les travaux les plus novateurs et les plus stimulants de la recherche actuelle et se consacre à l'étude de l'avant-garde et du modernisme européens au cours des XIXe et XXe siècles.

Le premier objectif de cette collection est de rassembler une sélection des textes présentés lors des rencontres bisannuelles du Réseau européen de recherche sur l'avant-garde et le modernisme (EAM). En ce sens, son ambition est moins d'épuiser un sujet que de soulever les questions, de suggérer quelques réponses provisoires, de combler certaines lacunes dans la recherche et, plus généralement, de maintenir vivant le débat sur l'avant-garde et le modernisme européens au cours des XIXe, XXe et XXIe siècles. La collection attache beaucoup

d'importance à la recherche interdisciplinaire et intermédiale sur les esthétiques et les poétiques expérimentales et se propose de stimuler l'intérêt pour les dimensions culturelles et contextuelles de l'avant-garde et du modernisme en Europe.

Forschungsinitiativen zum Thema Avantgarde und Moderne nehmen in der europäischen Forschungslandschaft weiterhin zu. Die experimentellen Literaturen und die Künste in Europa zwischen ca. 1850 und 1950 und ihre Nachwirkungen sind als Lehr- und Forschungsbereiche an den europäischen Forschungsinstitutionen und in den Lehrplänen heutzutage nicht mehr wegzudenken. Avantgarde und Moderne haben sich in den letzten Jahrzehnten zu unterschiedlichen, aber mehrfach miteinander verzahnten Forschungsgebieten entwickelt. Innerhalb der französischen und deutschen akademischen Welt bleibt der Sammelbegriff „modernism" weniger geläufig – „die (klassische) Moderne" und „modernité" fungieren hier als nahe liegende Äquivalente zu demjenigen, was im internationalen Kontext als eine zeitliche und räumliche Ko-Okkurenz künstlerischer Ausdrucksformen und ästhetischer Theorien namhaft gemacht werden kann, die ungefähr zwischen 1850 und 1950 angesiedelt werden kann. Auf ähnliche Weise entfaltet die Bezeichnung „Avantgarde" eine Reihe häufig widersprüchlicher Konnotationen. Für manche kennzeichnet die Avantgarde den radikalsten experimentellen Bruch der Künste und Literaturen mit den Darstellungs- und Erzählkonventionen des 19. Jahrhunderts: im frühen 20. Jahrhundert zeugen davon Avantgardebewegungen wie Futurismus, Expressionismus, Dada und Surrealismus, Strömungen, die als die „heroische" Phase der Avantgarde bezeichnet werden können. Ab den fünfziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts kommt diese Avantgarde weitgehend ohne modernistische Begleiterscheinung aus. Für andere gehört die Avantgarde zu einem kulturellen Umfeld, das sich, durchaus im Bunde mit der Klassischen Moderne, der Erneuerung ästhetischer Konventionen verschreibt.

Die Buchreihe Studien zur europäischen Avantgarde und Moderne *möchte der Kompliziertheit der unterschiedlichen europäischen Forschungstraditionen gerecht werden und strebt danach, die breite linguistische, terminologische und methodologische Vielfalt abzudecken. Anhand einer zweijährlichen Sammlung von Beiträgen in englischer, französischer und deutscher Sprache möchte die Reihe nicht nur die französisch-, deutsch- und englischsprachigen, sondern auch die nord-, süd-, zentral- und osteuropäischen Ergebnisse der Avantgarde- und Moderne-Forschung einbeziehen.*

Die Aufsatzsammlungen der Reihe, die größtenteils aus Beiträgen von den zweijährlichen Konferenzen des Europäischen Netzwerks für Studien zu Avant-Garde und Moderne (EAM) bestehen, erheben keinen Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit. Ihr Ziel ist es vielmehr, Fragen zu stellen, einige Antworten vorzuschlagen, Forschungslücken

zu schließen und Debatten über die europäische Avantgarde und die Moderne im 19., 20. und 21. Jahrhundert auszulösen. Die Studien zur europäischen Avantgarde und Moderne legen viel Wert auf die interdisziplinäre und intermediale Erforschung experimenteller Ästhetiken/Poetiken und setzen es sich zum Ziel, das Interesse an den kulturellen Zusammenhängen und Kontexten der Avantgarde und der Moderne in Europa anzuregen.

Canterbury & Leuven 2015   David Ayers and Sascha Bru

Previous books in this series:

Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism, and the Fate of a Continent, ed. by Sascha Bru, Jan Baetens, Benedikt Hjartarson, Peter Nicholls, Tania Ørum and Hubert van den Berg (2009).

Regarding the Popular: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and High and Low Culture, ed. by Sascha Bru, Laurence van Nuijs, Benedikt Hjartarson, Peter Nicholls, Tania Ørum and Hubert van den Berg (2011).

The Aesthetics of Matter: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange, ed. by Sarah Posman, Anne Reverseau, David Ayers, Sascha Bru and Benedikt Hjartarson (2013).

Introduction

David Ayers and Benedikt Hjartarson

New People of a New Life

Modernism, the Avant-Garde and the Aesthetics of Utopia

An early manifesto of the Russian Cubo-Futurists, dating from 1913, concludes by proclaiming that "We are the new people of a new life".[1] Whether one chooses to read the proclamation as a glimpse into a time yet to come or as a statement about the contemporary era and its radical break with the past, it can be seen as an emblematic expression of the historical avant-garde and its inherently utopian project. In their manifestoes and other programmatic writings the avant-garde movements presented their visions of a new life, a new society and a new man that marked a definitive break with the past, launching the readers into a utopian space of hitherto unknown life forms and experiences. Not least on the basis of the blueprints for a new order of life presented in the manifestoes, the avant-garde is traditionally seen as being inherently linked with utopian visions, which in their own turn often trigger a critique of the avant-garde or declarations about the (inevitable) failure of its project.

The utopianism of the avant-garde clearly differs from earlier visions of utopia that were based on notions of continuity and progress. As one commentator has argued, the advent of the avant-garde signified that the "time had come for a relentless antagonism between the future and the past; the new, a value in and of itself, could come forth in all its radical purity only from the destruction of the old, in a violent break that would separate the old world from the one that was clamouring to be born".[2] Yet the antagonistic notion of utopia, which consists in the contemporary era's break with the past or the future's break with the present situation, was only the latest manifestation of a temporalised concept of utopia that can be traced back to the 18th Century, as history was - following the historian Reinhart Koselleck - no longer seen to "take[] place in time, but through time" and time was "metaphorically dynamized into a force

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1 David Burliuk et al., "From *A Trap for Judges, 2*", in: Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle (eds and trans.), *Russian Futurism through Its Manifestoes, 1912–1928*, Ithaca and London 1988, 53–54, here 54.

2 Roland Schaer, "Utopia and Twentieth-Century Avant-Gardes", in: Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (eds), *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, New York and Oxford 2000, 278–289, here 279.

of history itself ".[3] The important shift in the understanding of temporality in the 18th Century consists in the fact that the future is no longer seen as an empty or neutral space for the unfolding of time, but rather as an open site for utopian projects. In the political field such projects were often related to the creation of a new revolutionary or totalitarian state, whereas in the aesthetic context they were often linked with visions of a new social order rooted in the aesthetic imagination and with the role of the artist as a visionary. Early examples of these different kinds of projects in the late 18th Century can be seen on the one hand in attempts to create a new revolutionary culture in the wake of the French revolution and on the other hand in Schiller's view on the aesthetic education of man, where the realm of "free play" originating in the aesthetic imagination came to serve as the harbinger of a utopian order.[4]

The shift to the modern conception of history as progression or at least processual unfolding generated a shift in location of Utopia suggested by Thomas More's classic text of 1516. While More's *Utopia* and other similar Early Modern writings offer a kind of thought experiment designed to cast an ethical light on existing social practices, and to provide a source of philosophical reflection on human nature by way of a kind of estrangement-effect, there is no suggestion that these "utopias" might ever be brought into existence, even though it is the encounter with the New World which is one of the triggers for More's engagement with radical social difference (*Utopia* is hazily set in the New World). There is already a stark difference between More's Utopia, then, and the kind of utopian and socialist activity of Robert Owen, whose theories of utopian community were partly realised at the mill he directed in New Lanark in Scotland, and perhaps in greater intensity at his short-lived New Harmony community in Indiana. Owen's projects may have foundered on economic realities as well as on the limitations of human nature, but he offered a clear example of the socialist utopia not as an abstract ideal but as a project realisable within a localised and bounded community. Yet for Friedrich Engels, writing in 1880, Owen's accomplishment had merely served to create a proliferation of discourses about socialism in which each individual Saint-Simon or Proudhon offered no more than a "mish-mash" of ideas about what the future society must look like. Utopian socialism was one thing: scientific socialism another, and now that it was possible to grasp the nature of social forces

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3 Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al., Stanford, CA 2002, 165.

4 See: Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1984; Friedrich Schiller, Ü*ber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, Stuttgart 1965.

and steer them by will, utopian socialism could be displaced by scientific socialism, with its central emphasis on the proletariat as the subject of history and the socialisation of production as the single act from which human emancipation would follow.[5] Marx and Engels argued for a socialism which would be "scientific", according to their own supposedly materialist version of Hegel's theory of history as a progression towards human emancipation. The future society was no longer a matter for utopian speculation, and indeed it could no longer be mapped at all as its reality would depend on a transformation of human possibility that could not even be imagined from the position of the present.

There is a shift then in the notion of the utopian from More's thought-experiment, which was never intended as a model and presented elements that probably the author did not intend to advocate, via the actually-realised, community-based, utopian socialist experiments of Owen, to the rejection of all utopian speculation in the light of a theory of history which predicted an emancipated future as the inevitable goal of history. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was not so much a confirmation of the Marxist theory of history, as its Bolshevik leaders believed it to be, but the first manifestation of a new reality – that the state itself could aspire to direct not just questions of economy and foreign policy, but all aspects of everyday life. Where once the creation of utopian communities had been the preserve of entrepreneurial individuals such as Owen, now the state had become the agent of change, a lesson which the Soviet state aimed to take to the rest of Europe and then the world, and also a lesson which other states quickly learned as they began, for example, to create state broadcasting companies such as the BBC, with the specific goal of bringing a controlled administrative power to bear on culture itself.

If the state could focus such resources on the administration of the imagination itself, what would be the role of art in general, and what would be art's role in anticipating the future? This question was especially acute for Russian artists and writers in the 1920s, although their particular dilemma was only the most polarised realisation of the question of artistic freedom and the role of art in the imagination of the future. If David Burlyuk and his Cubo-Futurist colleagues had brashly asserted in 1913 that they were "the new people of a new life", the 1920s posed for them questions that they had not anticipated, as the Soviet state itself became the bearer of the project of creating a "new man", and as Trotskii switched his attention from war to culture in *Literature and Revolution* (Literatura

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5 First published in French translation in 1880 as *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique*. The quotation is from: Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, trans. Aveling [uncredited], Moscow 1978, 49.

i revolyutsiya, 1924), where he resolved that the state must allow artists "complete freedom of self-determination" only "after putting before them the categorical standard of being for or against the Revolution".[6] Trotskii asserted that the art of the present, transitional period could not anticipate a future which was better imagined by the party than by artists, and could not properly be imagined by anyone at all.

The Soviet state explicitly asked questions about the nature of artistic freedom and the role of imagination in creating the new utopia, but all advanced countries began to feel the impact of what was often thought to be an increasingly standardised culture led by the technologies of radio, sound recording and cinema. It was the sense of political and social closure that led Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno to develop the seeds laid by Ernst Bloch in *Geist der Utopie* (The Spirit of Utopia, 1923) where, as Tyrus Miller explains, Bloch extended the notion of utopia "to encompass a philosophy of history and religion centered on collective anticipation and hope, a hermeneutics for interpreting works of art and culture as bearers of a future-oriented 'utopian function', and even a speculative ontology involving the unfinished nature of the present and the patency of the future in anterior times".[7] Bloch's rich reconceptualisation of the concept of utopia was revisited over decades by Adorno, who many times reformulated the notion that art must somehow allow utopian hope without suggesting any accommodation to the present:

> At the center of contemporary antinomies is that art must be and wants to be utopia, and the more utopia is blocked by the real functional order, the more this is true; yet at the same time art may not be utopia in order not to betray it by providing semblance and consolation. If the utopia of art were fulfilled, it would be art's temporal end.[8]

Adorno's formulation brings forth the inherent paradox of aesthetic visions of the utopian: on the one hand the autonomous field of the aesthetic generates a critical view on the present by providing a glimpse into a utopian future or expressing "the dream of a world in which things would be different";[9] on the other hand it runs the risk of "providing semblance and consolation" because it originates in the same social structures that it allegedly explores from the outside. Whereas

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6 Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, trans. Rose Strunsky, London 1925, 14.

7 Tyrus Miller, *Modernism and the Frankfurt School*, Edinburgh 2014, 21.

8 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, Minneapolis 1997, 32.

9 Theodor W. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society", in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, New York 1991, 37–54, here 40.

Adorno's notion of negativity provides us with a useful tool to describe modernism's emphasis on aesthetic autonomy and its blissful moments of critical illumination, his remarks on the antinomies of the aesthetic also point toward the ambivalent character of the avant-garde project. The activities of the historical avant-garde movements were not only linked to notions of utopia in their presentation of the new life to come, its project was often driven by a praxis-oriented notion of utopianism, which aimed at the construction of a new society, a new culture and a new humanity. In many ways the avant-garde was less engaged in the search for utopia than in its practical construction, although this task was inherently linked to aesthetic experiments and investigations. This involves a perspective on utopia that sees it less in terms of a model of the new order of life than as a driving force for subversive activities directed against the existing social reality. In this sense one could refer to a utopian impulse functioning as the driving force of the avant-garde project, whereas this impulse is seen less in terms of Ernst Bloch's notion of utopia as an impulse "governing everything future-oriented in life and culture",[10] but rather as the basis of concrete actions and a new aesthetic and cultural praxis.

Ideology and Aesthetics

In his reflections on Karl Mannheim's view on the links between utopia and ideology Paul Ricoeur has claimed that "the only way to get out of the circularity in which ideologies engulf us is to assume a utopia, declare it, and judge an ideology on this basis. Because the absolute onlooker is impossible, then it is someone within the process itself who takes the responsibility for judgment".[11] In the context of the avant-garde, this notion of the utopian moment as a negation of ideology is often linked with ideas of a new cultural order rooted in a genuine aesthetic experience. If the avant-garde project can be described as driven by a "utopian impulse", this impulse was often linked with Romantic notions of the emancipating powers of the aesthetic imagination.

In his article in the first section of this book Erik Bachman discusses the notion of utopia in Georg Lukács' *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (The Specificity

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10 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, London and New York 2005, 2.

11 Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, New York 1986, 172–173.

of the Aesthetic), which deals with the utopian potential of art in its "capacity to evoke a human totality out of the scattered reified fragments that make up the life-world of the everyday". This is a quite anti-romantic vision of the manner in which the mimetic power of art can call forth political action in its recipients. In Lukács' vision, art works are not utopian at all, but have their function in the slow formation of the habits of the new man. Lukács' social pragmatics have their counter in the spirit of the avant-garde which he so frequently denounced. This is nowhere better seen than in that primitivist strain of the avant-garde exposed by Elza Adamowicz in her discussion of the role of Mexico in the imaginary of French Surrealism. The Surrealist image of Mexico had little to do with the actual geographical location, history or traditions of the country, and in the writings of the Surrealists "Mexico" served primarily as a utopian space that presented a counter-model of Western rationalism and bourgeois culture, loaded with mythical and revolutionary energy, yet perversely over-writing the real people and politics of the country, as acidly noted by Frida Kahlo.

If the Russian Revolution played a key role in leading to a utopian turn in the early 20th Century, a second important factor was World War I, which not only marked the end of utopian notions of cultural progress but also triggered new utopian visions. Various visions of utopia arising from the Great War are discussed by Brolsma, Lobbes, Demoor, Posman and Van Dijck. Whereas Brolsma and Lobbes explore the complex links between nationalism and utopian notions of internationalism that were meant to build bridges between the nations of Europe and lead to cultural regeneration, Demoor, Posman and Van Dijck discuss the modernist response to the war in the broader context of World War I literature.

Following the end of World War II the implicit utopianism of the historical avant-garde movements enters a phase of ideological critique. The most powerful critical responses to the naïve utopianism of earlier avant-garde movements in the context of the neo-avant-garde were presented by the French Situationists. A symptomatic expression of this criticism can be found in Guy Debord's *La Sociéte du Spectacle* (1967), in which he describes art as "at once an art of change and a pure expression of the impossibility of change", further declaring: "The more grandiose its demands, the further from its grasp is true self-realization".[12] In Situationism, the critique of earlier avant-garde utopianism and its affirmative function, however, marks less a disillusioned break with utopian thought than a rethinking of utopia, not as a goal but as a driving force of cultural, ideological and social subversion – as Constant declared: "Artists are no longer trying to

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escape the reality of social life, but they want to change this reality".[13] Sam Cooper discusses the role of utopia in Situationism, seeing the movement's ambivalence less as a clear break with earlier avant-garde models than as a continuity of avant-garde projects of cultural renewal, which from the beginning were haunted by anxieties about their own failure and inevitable disappearance. Barrett Watten addresses the question of avant-garde utopianism in the contemporary period in his discussion of Language writing and its exploration of ways to foster utopian hope by means of the radicalisation of aesthetic form.

Rationalism and Redemption

Writing on the evolution of the human species in the late 19th Century, the Russian author and one of the forerunners of Russian Cosmism, Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin, declared:

> A person flying horizontally on a bicycle – this is already motion toward the form of the angel, the highest human. Through the invention of these machines of horizontal flight, mankind moves closer to an angelic state, or toward *ideal humanity*. Every thinking human being can understand that the bicycle represents precisely those mechanical wings, the starting point or kernel of the future *organic* wings, by means of which humanity will undoubtedly break the fetters confining it to the telluric world, and humanity will escape by means of mechanical inventions into the solar world around it.[14]

The quotation presents a curious syncretic mixture of different utopian visions stemming from mechanics, esotericism, science and the world of everyday life. It is less a peculiar case of the esoteric imagination, which is often seen as specific to the Russian tradition, than a characteristic trait of modernist and avant-garde tradition. It has often been noted that the utopian visions of the historical avant-garde were "rooted in the apparently endless possibilities that early twentieth-century science and technology had opened up".[15] Yet the avant-garde interest in science was not limited to ground-breaking discoveries or technical

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13 Quoted in: David Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism*, Edinburgh 2005, 218.

14 Quoted in: George M. Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, Oxford 2012, 19.

15 Christina Lodder, "Searching for Utopia", in: Christopher Wilk (ed.), *Modernism: Designing a New World, 1914–1939*, London 2006, 23–40, here 31.

innovations, but frequently embraced the theories, concepts and ideas of popular science or even pseudo-science.[16]

Fae Brauer's analysis of the "magnetic modernism" and the "Anarcho-cosmic Utopias" of František Kupka focuses on the links between the artist's Anarchist views, his involvement in the Theosophical movement and scientific theories of magnetism and vibration that were circulating in the early 20th Century. As Brauer argues, esoteric theories of spiritual evolution played a key role in Kupka's understanding of the emancipatory role of the artist in raising the revolutionary consciousness of the people and leading it to the promised land of spiritual and Anarchist utopia. Related currents are dealt with in the works of the number of Russian artists discussed by Baschmakoff, who focuses on various manifestations of the "quest for a perception which would penetrate materiality", which were linked with scientific and esoteric theories of perception. As Petrushanskaya-Averbakh's article shows, such utopian concepts took on a different form in discussions of sound and music in Russia in the early 20th Century.

Esoteric currents were an integral part of the utopian imagination of the early 20th Century and often served as counter-models of a rational order that was seen to have led humanity into an impasse. Sami Sjöberg analyses the impact of Jewish spiritualism and messianism on revolutionary politics and progressive modes of poetic expression in the early 20th Century, the idea of an "inner utopia" playing an important role in shaping a new revolutionary ethos with its specific view on the merging of art and life. Jrade's article on the "utopian poetics" of Juan Gelman follows a related line and traces the links to the tradition of mysticism in the poet's search for a utopian era that would mark the end of political repression and trauma. The Austrian magazine *Der Brenner*, discussed by Ender and Fürhapter, presents an interesting case of vitalist and religiously inspired visions of the "new man", which are driven by an expressionist ethos that manifests itself in apocalyptic and redemptive visions of a new spiritual and cultural era.

Bruno Marques' analysis of the works of Pedro Cabrita Reis casts light on the continued impact of mythical and mystic traditions on the aesthetic practices of modernism. Marques explores the important role of archaic visions in the contemporary artist's "demiurgic projects", which present a counter-model con-

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16 On the notion of pseudo-science and on the links between esotericism, Enlightenment and modern science, see for example: Dirk Rupnow et al. (eds), *Pseudowissenschaft. Konzeptionen von Nichtwissenschaftlichkeit in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2008; Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, Renko Geffarth and Markus Meumann (eds), *Aufklärung und Esoterik. Wege in die Moderne*, Berlin and Boston 2013.

testing the teleology of progress and positioning man in the world from a poetic and mythological viewpoint. Dittrich's article on the "ethnographic" works of Hannah Höch, on the other hand, focuses on the critical reflections on the primitivist current of the avant-garde and explores the medial reflection of the West's encounter with the Other in the artist's photomontages. As Dittrich argues, the historical avant-garde's engagement with the utopian image of the Other also had its critical potential, stressing the historicity of those traditionally located in a free-floating utopian space that served as a negative reflection of the Western cult of rationality.

Experimentation and Urban Space

Visions of the urban play a key role in avant-garde utopianism, from Walter Benjamin's melancholy focus on the coded utopian potentials of the city to successive waves of architectural idealism. Kate Armond shows how glass and crystal were the materials which allowed the architects of the Crystal Chain group to renegotiate the boundaries between humanity, buildings, and natural environment, and makes connections with Ernst Bloch's utopianism and Ernst Haeckel's notion of the "crystal soul", to discover an avant-garde frustrated with the liberalism and rationalism, and in search of dramatic change. By contrast, Irina Marchesini presents Konstantin Vaginov's remembered and imagined St. Petersburg as the utopian negation of the realities of Soviet Leningrad, with the art of the collector providing the (Benjaminian) means to keep the mythified past within reach. Kate Kangaslahti explores the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* in Paris, where the murals of Robert and Sonia Delaunay celebrated the future of leisure promised by the development of air and rail travel, an ideal of technology shortly to be interrupted by war. Éva Forgács unpacks the architecture and art of post-communist Hungary in an examination of László Rajk and the Na-Ne Gallery, articulating the moment in which the once ideal vocabulary of Constructivism was provocatively dissected and interrogated for its legacy of an idealism which had not survived actually-existing Communism. Konstantina Drakopoulou brings the question of the code of urban environments bang up-to-date in her analysis of guerrilla art in the streets of Athens in the wake of the economic downturn in Greece.

Communities and Education

Utopian visions might be realised equally by states or by small communities set apart from the wider society. Annebella Pollen shows how the Kibbo Kift, an English outdoor organisation, attempted to model and anticipate the future, while at the same time evoking a pre-modern existence, with its calls for world peace and practices of handicraft and camping. Education was key to the formation of a new society. Sarah Archino explores the anarchistic approach to children and art in New York focalised on the Ferrer Center and Alfred Stieglitz's 291. A quite different approach to education was set in motion by the Italian Fascist government under its education minister Giovanni Gentile, as Sylvia Hakopian shows in a detailed examination of the objectives of the committee which controlled the production and circulation of children's textbooks. If fascism sought to offer a certain vision of the future and a definite model, the radical uncertainty of a world in which technological and scientific change had made societal change the norm rather then the exception was given polyvocal realisation in C.K Ogden's book series, "To-day and To-morrow". Max Saunders outlines how Ogden in effect crowd-sourced a vision of potential futures by commissioning essays from more than a hundred leading scientists and thinkers, in doing so claiming a key role for the overlooked genre of expository prose. The Russian Revolution was of course at the forefront of the collective utopian imaginary, and the artists of the early Soviet state were called on to realise the still-embryonic communist future. Russian avant-gardists who became exiles in the wake of the revolution found themselves differently situated, without any kind of state or cultural support. Dmitrii Tokarev explores the Parisian exile of Il'ya Zdanevich and Boris Poplavskii, and asks what could happen to the utopian project of a peculiarly Russian linguistic liberation in a French linguistic context where its particular strategies could not be easily communicated.

Sexuality and Desire

Psychoanalysis may in its origins have had a socially conservative dimension, but its radical insights laid the ground for new psychologies of liberation. Wilhelm Reich advocated a new human freedom based on liberated sexuality, in contrast to Freud's view that civilisation was of necessity based on sexual repression. Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam sets Reich in the context of the interest of his

contemporaries in child sexuality and explores his legacy in the work of Danish surrealist, Bjerke-Petersen. In her analysis of another great theorist of desire, Georges Bataille, Claire Lozier endorses Derrida's claim that we should prefer the 'im-possible' to the utopian, since the impossible haunts the possible and gives its desire to social desire and action. Lozier finds in Bataille's *Histoire de l'œil* a utopian impossibility which grounds a new possibility of being-together in the erotic. Imre József Balázs turns to the Bucharest surrealist group and shows how Luca and Trost fastened on Breton's advocacy of compulsive love and amplified it into a Freudianised version of Marxism aimed at the eroticisation of the proletariat, with a nod to Reich but with a more colourful literary quality. Luca and Trost, not least in Luca's postulation of a non-oedipal android, form a link to Deleuze and Guattari's *L'Anti-Œdipe* and are remarkable for their framing of a psychocorporeal strategy to counter the communist "new man".

The foundation of the new society in the body was not merely a textual exercise as far as the practitioners of nudism have been concerned. Per Stounbjerg picks up the discussion of Danish surrealism, focussing on Jens August Schade, whose eroticism paralleled the interests in sex of his contemporaries the original French Surrealists. When Schade's work arrived in France in translation in the 1950s, it inspired a new nudist movement, Schadism, which in its emphasis on openness to contact and the accidental encounter proved influential in the Situationist circles which similarly celebrated the *dérive*, while Schadists put into practice some of the ideas which for Schade himself had been merely textual play.

Bodily collectives have their correlative in the melancholy, isolated body. An exile from Russia who eventually returned, Aleksandr Vertinskii, was the author and performer of the famous "doleful ditties", who performed his solo show as Pierrot. Riku Toivola shows how Vertinskii's performances presented exile and alienation in the image of vagrancy, vagabondage, and forever unrealised yearning. This volume concludes though not with the desire of liberation or the yearning for a lost comfort, but with Jun Tanaka's account of Gilbert Clavel's little-known *An Institute for Suicide*, an ironic vision of state-administered suicide in a text which blends the preoccupations of decadence and surrealism in a dystopian vision of the convergence of the nihilistic service-state and the individual death-drive.

Ideology and Aesthetics

Sam Cooper

"Enemies of Utopia for the sake of its realisation"

Futurism, Surrealism, Situationism, and the Problem of Utopia

"Marx and Engels", wrote Adorno in *Negative Dialektik* (Negative Dialectics, 1966), "were enemies of Utopia for the sake of its realisation".[1] At roughly the same historical moment, the Situationist International made a similar assessment of its own programme. When asked whether its various positions on art and politics were utopian, it dismissed the charge. It did not deny that its ambitions were to imagine and even attempt to prefigure radical changes to the organisation of production and of social life, but it insisted: "Everything we deal with is realisable".[2]

In both of these instances, there is perceived to be a danger in the admission of utopianism. To represent a specific and distinct utopia is somehow to hamper the possible realisation of such a thing. For Adorno as for the Situationists, dialectical approaches are necessary, rather than any more affirmative version of utopian thought. To understand the Situationists' method, I want to cast utopia as a problem within the avant-garde tradition that the group claimed to culminate. From the Futurists onwards, utopia was both necessary and impossible: necessary because the current organisation of social life was no longer tenable; impossible because the same conditions that necessitated utopia worked always to foreclose any effort towards its realisation.

More specifically, I will argue that the relation of the historical avant-garde tradition to utopia must be considered alongside its relation to the process that makes utopia impossible – co-optation, or to use a Situationist term, *récupération*. If utopia stands for the possibility of imagining other worlds, *récupération* stands for the dogged self-preservation of this one. I will explore how the relation between utopia and *récupération* was discursively formulated across the earliest Futurist, Surrealist, and Situationist manifestos, and will argue that these enemies of utopia surreptitiously gestured towards utopia at the same moment as they declared it to be impossible. I will end with some suggestions

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1 Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton, London and New York 1973, 322.

2 Situationist International, "Questionnaire", in: Ken Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley 2006, 178–183, here 180. Originally published in: *Internationale Situationniste*, 1964, no. 9.

drawn from contemporary avant-garde theory about how to think the two phenomena dialectically, which is to demand that avant-garde historiography be reconsidered.

Anxieties of Co-optation in the Futurist and Surrealist Manifestos

As critics like Kenneth Burke, Marjorie Perloff, and Martin Puchner have demonstrated, the avant-garde manifesto is an intrinsically *literary* genre. It is also, I want to suggest, a disarmingly anxious genre. This suggestion may come as a surprise, not least because anxiety seems so far from the "violence and precision" that Perloff identifies in one of the genre's foundational texts, F.T. Marinetti's first Futurist manifesto (1909).[3] However, I am not the first to recognise that avant-garde manifestos often betray their authors' anxieties. Five years after Marinetti's manifesto was published on the front page of *Le Figaro*, the French newspaper's editors published Ricciotto Canudo's manifesto for an "Art Cérébriste". Canudo's text retains interest mostly as a bookend to the explosive first five years of Futurist manifesto-writing; Cerebrism never really took off. However, *Le Figaro*'s editors, perhaps now familiar with the conventions as well as the clichés of the genre, added their own preface: "Here is a manifesto in which several young artists, desirous of expressing a new way of thinking and an anxiety that is yet to be felt, have put their hopes and ambitions into words". The editors declare themselves uninterested in Cerebrist Art itself, but are drawn instead to the act of its articulation and, specifically, to the anxiety that accompanies that articulation. "All anxieties are interesting", they write, "Often they are fruitless, but sometimes they herald and pave the way for great progress".[4]

As I hope to demonstrate, Canudo was not alone in exhibiting an anxiety at the same moment as he announced his new programme. Such anxieties pervade historical avant-garde manifestos, and serve to defer the utopias that the texts simultaneously herald. At the same moment as they describe the contours of a utopian vision, these manifestos also push it away. Utopia recedes into the future.

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3 Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre and the Language of Rupture*, Chicago 1986, 80–115.
4 Ricciotto Canudo, "Cerebrist Art", trans. Emily Haves, in: Alex Danchev (ed.), *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, London 2011, 67–70, here 67. Original publication: "L'Art Cérébriste", *Le Figaro*, 9 February 1914, 1–2.

Similarly, at the same moment as they announce the arrival of their respective avant-garde groups, such manifestos question the very possibility of forming such groups. The manifestos doubt what they do as they do it.

Marinetti's first Futurist manifesto sets the precedent and the clearest example of this combination of exclamatory bluster and pervasive anxiety. The latter is most apparent in relation to Marinetti's historical consciousness. Puchner argues that manifestos often enact their own "revolutionary historiography" – a convention inherited from 19th-Century political manifestos, not least Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848). "Many studies of the avant-garde", Puchner explains,

> repeat the history of successions and ruptures fabricated by manifestos: symbolism broke with naturalism; futurism, with symbolism; vorticism, with futurism; dadaism, with futurism; surrealism, with dadaism; situationism, with surrealism; and so on ad infinitum. The avant-garde history of succession and rupture seems inevitable in hindsight, but it must be recognized as a specific effect of the manifesto.[5]

Puchner places Marinetti's text at the fulcrum between a tradition of political manifestoing and another of artistic manifestoing. Marinetti's commitment to "the project of a revolution", rather than to the genre's "socialist heritage", gives his text particular significance in the effort to discern the type of historical consciousness bound into the manifesto genre.[6]

The utopia that Marinetti's manifesto anticipates is deferred, however; its historical realisation is displaced by the avant-gardists whom Marinetti already imagines will succeed him. The wild ecstasy of his announcement of the Futurist programme is balanced by his admission of the movement's limited shelf life. Mere paragraphs after he announces the birth of Futurism, the moment when he feels his heart "pierced by the red hot sword of joy", Marinetti gathers himself, and confronts the two conditions that he recognises will soon kill off his movement. The first is institutional co-optation. "For too long", he writes, "Italy has been a marketplace for junk dealers. We want our country free from the endless number of museums that everywhere cover her like countless graveyards". In a moment of disarming *sprezzatura*, given the text's sequential movement from narrative to listed proclamations to prophecy, Marinetti pauses to make a supposedly unforeseen association: "Museums, graveyards!... They're the same thing, really, because of their grim profusion of corpses that no-one

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5 Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*, Princeton 2006, 71.
6 Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 79.

remembers".[7] For Marinetti, neither museums nor graveyards are places of veneration; they are where dead things are put. His challenge is to present Futurism's vitality in such a way that does not facilitate its eventual consignment to the museum: "we, the powerful young Futurists, don't want to have anything to do with it, the past!"[8]

The danger of institutional co-optation, recognised by Marinetti, would come to occupy a central place in avant-garde discourse. As Perloff reflects, "canonicity is almost invariably the enemy of the avant-garde".[9] Indeed, the hostility of most avant-garde movements towards the institutions of bourgeois society frequently betrays the movements' awareness of their vulnerable relation to those institutions. The accusation of having been co-opted soon became a familiar gesture within the avant-garde tradition's fierce sectarianism. As early as 1914, for example, the Russian Futurist Natalia Goncharova wrote to Marinetti to denounce Italian Futurism as a "new academicism".[10]

Academic and art-world criticism on the avant-garde, likewise, has obsessively focussed on the problem of co-optation, and has inherited the anxieties found in the avant-garde's inaugural texts. Paul Mann's *Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (1991), for example, is both a product and a critique of aporetic debates about co-optation, with its proudly pessimistic conclusion that the avant-garde tradition has served primarily to generate discourse about itself, and because bourgeois society is itself a discursive economy, the tradition has facilitated its own reconciliation with the institutions it ostensibly rejects. "The avant-garde's historical agony", writes Mann, "is grounded in the brutal paradox of an opposition that sustains what it opposes precisely by opposing it".[11]

The other condition that Marinetti believes will kill off Futurism, even at the moment of its birth, is generational change. In a passage that is difficult to read without some degree of bathos, Marinetti declares that Futurism might be young but its representatives aren't: "The oldest among us are thirty: so we have at least ten years in which to complete our task. When we reach forty, other, younger, and more courageous men will very likely toss us into the trash can, like useless manuscripts. And that's what we want!"[12]

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7 F.T. Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism" [1909], trans. Doug Thompson, in: Danchev (ed.), *100 Artists' Manifestos*, 1–8, here 6.

8 Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism", 7.

9 Marjorie Perloff, *Poetic License*, Evanston 1990, 34.

10 Natalia Goncharova, "Letter to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1914)", in: John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt (eds), *Amazons of the Avant-Garde*, New York 1999, 314.

11 Paul Mann, *Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis 1991, 11.

12 Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism", 7.

Marinetti's addendum is crucial, blurted out as though he realises that he has displayed a weakness and desperately grasps to reclaim it as a strength. To be tossed into the trash can is "what we want": Marinetti predicts the end of Futurism even as he announces its beginning. He chooses not to imagine the fullest realisation of Futurism, but its replacement with something else. Indeed, he even wills the future obsolescence of Futurism: its impermanence, the recognition that it will quite soon be superseded, is the very proof of its authenticity. Marinetti imagines his generation of Futurists hunted and killed by a younger generation, "driven by a hatred made all the more implacable because their hearts overflow with love and admiration for us".[13] This is an instance of *aufheben*, as the violent generational overthrow cuts off the promise of Futurism and continues it. The possibility of Futurism is realised and foreclosed at the same moment, and the Futurist utopia is deferred.

By the time of André Breton's first Surrealist manifesto (1924), the specific problem of institutional co-optation bore with greater weight on avant-garde theory and practice. Breton's response to the threat of institutional co-optation was different to Marinetti's response to the inevitability of generational co-optation. While Marinetti welcomes the future obsolescence of his movement as a form of dialectical continuity, Breton performatively overstates the incommensurability of his movement with the culture into which it is announced. At the end of the first manifesto, Breton writes, "Surrealism, such as I conceive of it asserts our complete *nonconformism* clearly enough so that there can be no question of translating it, at the trial of the real world, as evidence for the defence".[14] Ostensibly, Breton argues that Surrealism is *so* radical, *so* fundamentally incompatible with bourgeois society, that it cannot be reconciled with and co-opted by the institutions of that society. The degree of overstatement, however, belies his anxiety rather than his confidence.

Breton makes efforts in his manifesto to insulate Surrealism against its institutional co-optation. He too defers utopia: his manifesto refuses to directly represent the Surrealist vision, but nonetheless maintains its presence throughout. Curiously, to make this deferral, Breton makes recourse to Romantic and Gothic aesthetics, particularly as they appear in English literature. Not long after he presents his Freudian account of Surrealism's dialectical composition – "the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into an absolute reality, a surreality" – Breton presents "the imagination"

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13 Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism", 7.
14 André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)", in: *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor 2010, 3–47, here 47.

and "the marvellous" as Surrealism's central tenets.[15] "Imagination alone offers me some sense of what can be", he writes, though its fullest realisation is obscured by the "reign of logic" and the "absolute rationalism that is still in vogue".[16] His distinction between a beleaguered imagination and an overbearing rationality is, of course, central to the versions of Romanticism offered by Wordsworth, Blake, and De Quincey, each of whom frequently reappears in later iterations of Surrealist practice, particularly its Anglicised variants. Herbert Read's *Surrealism* (1936), for example, one of the first English accounts of the movement, presents Surrealism as a continuation of literary Romanticism.[17]

Like "the imagination", "the marvellous" is latent to modern society but its realisation is obstructed. Breton notes "the hate of the marvellous which rages in certain men", but insists that "the marvellous is always beautiful, anything marvellous is beautiful, in fact only the marvellous is beautiful".[18] He demonstrates the marvellous by way of Matthew Gregory Lewis' Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796), whose characters are stirred by a "passion for eternity", and which "exercises an exalting effect only upon that part of the mind which aspires to leave the earth".[19] Breton's use of Romantic and Gothic literary motifs lends the Surrealist utopia a sublime aspect: transcendent and terrifying by turns; present in the text by way of empty signifiers like "the marvellous" but also absent, exceeding and escaping representation. Thought that leaves the earth – true utopianism – becomes necessary *and* impossible in Breton's first manifesto.

Peter Nicholls offers a similar account of the paradoxical status of utopia in Breton's Surrealism. Nicholls focuses on automatic writing, the practice of free-associative writing without conscious design that,

> purports to provide an unmediated experience [...] of the unified self, the self in its waking *and* dreaming life. Only in restoring the integral connection of consciousness to the unconscious can experience become whole again. Yet at the same time, the medium of this connection is language, a system of signs whose very mode of operation entails a certain *negation* and separation.[20]

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15 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism", 14.

16 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism", 5, 9.

17 I have written more extensively on the connections between French and English Romanticisms and Surrealisms in: "The Peculiar Romanticism of the English Situationists", *Cambridge Quarterly*, 42, 2003, no. 1, 20–37.

18 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism", 14.

19 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism", 15.

20 Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, Basingstoke 2009, 307.

The Surrealist utopia, or the realised imagination, involves the unification of conscious and unconscious states, but the Surrealists' conceptualisation, articulation, and communication of that utopia necessitates the use of language that simultaneously binds the project to consciousness. To represent utopia, therefore, would be to foreclose its realisation. The possibility of utopia remains immanent, but unrealised and obscured. As Henri Lefebvre wrote, in a different context but in the face of the same paradox, "the space that contains the realized preconditions of another life is the same one as prohibits what those preconditions make possible".[21] Bourgeois society produces Surrealism as its antithesis, through its suppression of the imagination and the marvellous, but instead of allowing for a dialectical encounter, bourgeois society co-opts Surrealism, which it remakes in its own image. As Breton concludes: "Existence is elsewhere".[22]

Situationist Reassessments

The Surrealists' response to the paradox of language as medium of and obstacle to utopian thinking, Nicholls argues, was to celebrate the "negating power of language". They recognised that the capacity of language to destroy the thing it names reflects its status as "the very medium of a desire which (according to Hegel) expresses itself as a force of negation". "Now we can see", Nicholls continues, "how Surrealism offers itself as the summation of one major strand of avant-garde activity, as it strives at once to cancel and to preserve the Dada moment of pure negation, its lyric pursuit of the marvellous always shadowed by the death which makes it possible".[23]

The Situationist International (SI) was also expressly conscious of its place in an avant-garde tradition preceded by Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism. It was what Joshua Clover has recently called a "genealogical avant-garde", whose claims are made "largely by reference to previous avant-gardes".[24] The SI was founded, in 1957, as the unification of a number of avant-garde groups of varying obscurity. In advance of the founding congress held in the Italian village of Cosio

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21 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford 1991, 189–190.

22 Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism", 47.

23 Nicholls, *Modernisms*, 308.

24 Joshua Clover, "The Genealogical Avant-Garde", in: *Lana Turner Journal*, 2014, no. 7 – available at: http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/print-issue-7-contents/the-genealogical-avant-garde (accessed 11 February 2015).

d'Arroscia, Guy Debord produced a pamphlet titled "Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale" (Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organisation and Action, 1957). Like the young men whom Marinetti imagined would denounce Futurism, Debord is emphatic that each avant-garde movement preceding his own had been absolutely and irretrievably co-opted.[25] The "puerile technological optimism" of Marinetti's movement, Debord writes, "vanished with the period of bourgeois euphoria that had sustained it". Dada's "almost immediate dissolution", Debord continues, "was an inevitable result of its purely negative definition". Surrealism, too, had facilitated its own undoing. Its single-minded belief in the unconscious had been undone because it became commonly known "that the unconscious imagination is poor, that automatic writing is monstrous and that the whole ostentatious genre of would-be 'strange' and 'shocking' surrealistic creations has ceased to be very surprising".[26] In the following year, an anonymous article in the first issue of the SI's journal continued the assault on Surrealism, which had been "recovered and utilised by the repressive world that the surrealists had fought".[27] "Nothing", the article declares, "constitutes such a clear return of the subversive discoveries of Surrealism than the exploitation of automatic writing [into] 'brainstorming'".[28]

The task of a new avant-garde, Debord's "Rapport" argues, must be an expressly anti-capitalist one. It "must abolish not only the exploitation of humanity, but also the passions, compensations and habits which that exploitation has engendered". As the positive complement to this project of negation, a new avant-garde must also "find the first elements of a more advanced construction of the environment and new conditions of behaviour".[29] To meet these challenges, the SI was to pursue the "constructed situation", which Debord defines as "the concrete construction of momentary ambiences of life and their transformation into

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25 Debord was only just younger than Marinetti at the moments when their respective texts were published: in 1909, Marinetti was 32; in 1957, Debord was 25.

26 Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action", in: Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, 25–43, here 27–29.

27 Situationist International, "The Bitter Victory of Surrealism", trans. Reuben Keehan, *Situationist International Online*, http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/bitter.html (accessed 11 February 2015). Originally published in: *Internationale Situationniste*, 1958, no. 1.

28 Situationist International, "The Bitter Victory of Surrealism".

29 Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations", 36.

a superior passional quality".[30] Yet even in this founding document, the problem of co-optation looms large. Debord discusses how modern capitalism always develops new forms of co-optation, which range from socio-economic strategies such as statist intervention in the economy, to "confusionist" strategies such as the trivialisation of potentially dangerous ideas – this is how automatic writing became mere "brainstorming". The constitution of the SI was itself a response to the problem of co-optation, an effort to resist it, if only temporarily. The group's programme, Debord writes, is "essentially transitory". The situations that it constructs will be "ephemeral, without a future. Passageways. Our only concern is real life; we care nothing about the permanence of art or of anything else. Eternity is the grossest idea a person can conceive of in connection with his acts".[31]

The Situationists' "Manifesto" finally appeared in 1960 in the fourth issue of the group's journal. The anonymous text is clearly indebted to Marinetti and Breton's first manifestos, particularly in its structure, whereby a narrative is followed by a more systematic outline of the new group's principles, followed in turn by speculations on the new group's likely successes and limitations. However, the text is also insistent on the SI's singularity, not just in its particular political-aesthetic programme, but also in its historical consciousness.

On the one hand, the Situationists' "Manifesto" contains the group's most recognisably utopian ambitions. The text argues that the automation of production and the socialisation of "vital goods" will reduce the amount of time spent at work, so the SI's first task will be the ludic and free construction of a life not separated into work time and leisure time. Prior to that moment, the SI's most urgent objective will be the seizure of UNESCO to fight against the bureaucratisation of art and culture.[32]

On the other hand, the manifesto insists upon the SI's essential difference from the avant-garde groups that precede it; in fact, the SI will abolish the tradition from which it emerges. It "will inaugurate what will historically be the last of the crafts", and as such will be "anti-specialist". When the SI's utopia is realised, "[e]veryone will be a Situationist".[33] This formulation actually repeats one from Debord's "Rapport", which predicts that in a classless society "there will no longer be 'painters', but only Situationists who, among other things, sometimes

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30 Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations", 38.

31 Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations", 41.

32 Situationist International, "Situationist Manifesto", trans. Fabian Thomsett, *Situationist International Online*, http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html (accessed 11 February 2015). Originally published under the title "Manifeste" in: *Internationale Situationniste*, 1960, no. 4.

33 Situationist International, "Situationist Manifesto".

paint".[34] Debord's vision is itself indebted to Marx and Engels' account of the possibility, in a communist society that does away with the capitalist division of labour, that an individual could "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner [...] without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic".[35] Like those of the Futurists and the Surrealists, the Situationists' manifesto ends on the theme of judgement: "To those who don't understand us properly, we say with irreducible scorn: "The Situationists of which you believe yourselves perhaps to be the judges, will one day judge you".[36]

In 1967, Debord restated the Situationists' relation to the historical avant-garde tradition:

> Dadaism sought to *abolish art without realizing it*; Surrealism sought to *realize art without abolishing it*. The critical position since developed by the *Situationists* has shown that the abolition and realization of art are inseparable aspects of a single *transcendence of art*.[37]

As such, the SI presented itself as the culmination of the historical avant-garde tradition that, as Peter Bürger later described, sought "the destruction of art as an institution set off from the praxis of life".[38] Importantly, the Situationists do not abandon or renounce their precursors; the avant-garde tradition remains potent despite the successive co-optation of each of its manifestations. The Situationists share Marinetti's position that the eventual obsolescence of avant-garde movements proves their authenticity: about Surrealism, Debord writes that what is important "is not whether it is completely or relatively right, but whether it succeeds in catalysing for a certain time the desires of an era".[39] The SI's response to the history of co-optation recognises, to borrow a phrase from Tom Bunyard, what is relevant in the tradition's obsolescence.[40]

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34 Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations", 42.

35 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. C.J. Arthur, London 1996, 54.

36 Situationist International, "Situationist Manifesto".

37 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb, London 2006, 106.

38 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, Minneapolis 1984, 83.

39 Situationist International, "Situationist Manifesto".

40 In light of the purchase by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France of Debord's archive in 2011, the surest sign of his posthumous co-optation, Bunyard argues that the most vital aspects of Debord's work might be those which have been co-opted, precisely because revolutionary strategy must emerge from and respond to specific historical conditions. Once those conditions pass, it is inevitable that the strategy will need to be superseded. Tom Bunyard, "Relevance in Obsolescence: Récupération and Temporality in the Work of Guy Debord and the Situationist International", in: *Fungiculture*, 2014, no. 1 – available at: http://www.fufufo.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Relevance-in-Obsolescence.pdf (accessed 11 February 2015).

Récupération

I want to identify a particular debate that arises from the SI's historical consciousness, which has been pursued by some of the group's more recent descendants, and which might offer a means of conceptualising the possibility of utopian thinking and the process of co-optation not as irreconcilable opposites in the avant-garde tradition, but as dialectical counterparts. Utopian thinking might not represent a paradox, as in the Surrealist problem of language, but a dialectical challenge. Through the avant-garde tradition, the threat of co-optation might, in fact, have served to encourage the preservation and protection of utopian thinking. To explore these suggestions, I shall first substitute the vague term co-optation for the Situationists' preferred term, *récupération*.

Although *récupération* is a familiar term in the discussion of late modernist aesthetics, politics, and the SI, it only appears in the group's later texts. *Récupération* has been anachronistically applied to the SI's earlier texts by translators in place of words like *recouvert* and *retournement*. Unlike many of the SI's other key terms, *récupération* was never given a pastiche dictionary definition, nor was it as insistently circumnavigated as the titular concept of Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* (Society of the Spectacle). Some translators stick with "co-optation", but this loses the black-humoured connotation of healing. More specifically – and this is why I think the Situationists chose this term rather than an existing discourse of, for example, reification – *récupération* tends to relate specifically to aesthetic experience and its reclamation by capitalist society.

Because the Situationists chose to represent contemporary capitalism by way of a visual metaphor, the spectacle, *récupération* might also be understood in visual terms. However, neither the spectacle nor *récupération* is limited to visual fields: the spectacle "is not a collection of images" but "a relation between people that is mediated by images".[41] With tactical hyperbole, the Situationists maintained that the spectacle, as the dominant order of things, claimed *all* aesthetic experience as its own. As Debord and Pierre Canjuers gloomily considered in 1960, even the most antagonistic art might ultimately reinforce the spectacle's power, but that doesn't entirely negate art's potency:

> At one pole, art is purely and simply recuperated [récupéré] by capitalism as a means of conditioning the population. At the other pole, capitalism grants art a perpetual privileged concession: that of pure creative activity – an isolated creativity which serves as an alibi for the alienation of all other activities.[42]

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41 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 7.
42 Guy Debord and Pierre Canjuers, "Preliminaries Toward Defining a Unitary Revolutionary Program (1960)", in: Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, 387–393, here 391.

Thus, art retained a privileged and necessary status. The Situationists were stuck with it just as the Surrealists were stuck with language, despite their shared recognition that the medium through which their utopias might be thought was precisely what betrayed their realisations. As Attila Kotányi put it, at the SI's fifth conference the next year,

> We are against the dominant conditions of artistic inauthenticity. I don't mean that anyone should stop painting, writing, etc. I don't mean that has no value. I don't mean that we can continue to exist without doing that. But at the same time we know that such works will be invaded [envahi] by society and used against us.[43]

Kotányi clearly articulates an anxiety of *récupération*: he concedes that the Situationists must *do* art, but also that art – under the conditions of the spectacle – will *undo* the Situationists. *Récupération* makes the Situationist project necessary and impossible.

Kotányi's comments were made in a debate about the role of art in the SI's practice, the outcome of which was that the group expelled its so-called "artistic" members. The group's practice is normally periodised into an early "artistic" phase and a later theory-oriented phase, when art was deemed rather too vulnerable to *récupération*. A similar shift has been recognised in avant-garde practice beyond the SI: Jonathan Eburne and Rita Felski, for example, argue that different schools of critical theory adopted, from the 1960s onwards, an avant-gardist *sensibility* once an avant-garde practice based on aesthetic production no longer seemed feasible: "The oppositional energies of the avant-garde find their continuation and completion elsewhere – not in the bad-faith gestures of a newly commodified neo-avant-garde, but in the practice of radical critique itself. Theory, in other words, shoulders the antinomian and anti-institutional role previously assigned to radical art".[44] The Situationists' own theoretical turn is normally understood as a turn to negation, iconoclasm, and even iconophobia; its representative practice is *détournement*, an essentially disruptive act, rather than the SI's earlier attention to the *dérive*, an essentially creative act.

However, I want to suggest that throughout the SI's oeuvre the group maintains the possibility of utopian thought and even suggests some of its content – this is what I mean when I propose, above, that these avant-gardes surreptitiously

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43 Situationist International, "The Fifth SI Conference in Göteborg", in: Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, 114–117, here 115. Originally published in: *Internationale Situationniste* 1962, no. 7.

44 Jonathan Eburne and Rita Felski, "Introduction", in: *New Literary History*, 41, 2010, no. 4, v–xv, here vii.

gesture towards utopia at the same moment as they declare it to be impossible. Like Breton's association of the Surrealist vision with the Romantic Sublime, which exceeds representation and must be substituted for empty signifiers, the Situationist utopia is not articulated programmatically, but it appears obliquely through a discourse of immediacy, directness, and unification. As early as the Situationists' "Manifesto", the group decree that a "realised Situationist culture" would introduce "total participation", the "directly lived moment", "complete communication".[45] It is no coincidence that Jacques Rancière accuses the SI of clinging to a "Romantic vision of truth as non-separation".[46]

Similarly, Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* begins, "All that was directly lived has receded into a representation".[47] This opening gambit to Debord's most comprehensive account of his thinking has the advantage of adding a temporal dimension to the related problems of utopia and *récupération*. The preconditions of a Situationist utopia, the experience of a life "directly lived", have existed before now, but the emergence of the spectacle has obscured them. I am reminded again of Lefebvre's verdict, "the space that contains the realized preconditions of another life is the same one as prohibits what those preconditions make possible". Geoffrey G. O'Brien has recently observed that "'Avant' makes a certain kind of sense only as a fantasized temporality; avant-gardes have usually described themselves less as militia and more as time travellers, or as the latter then the former".[48] O'Brien compares the avant-gardist to Adorno's description of the lyric speaker, in "Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft" (On Lyric Poetry and Society), as having returned to the "blind present" from "a fully realized 'humanity' [...] to bestow angry gifts of analysis and judgement".[49] When he locates the not-irretrievable preconditions of a Situationist utopia in a pre-spectacular past, Debord also acts as a time-traveller, though one who moves in the opposite direction to O'Brien's.

Récupération, too, has been conceived as a temporal problem throughout the avant-garde tradition. Marinetti foresaw how younger generations would consign Futurism to the museum; Breton considered how he would be judged in the future; the Situationists judged that Surrealism might once have been revolutionary, but its status had changed. Kotányi, most clearly, depicts *récupéra-*

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45 Situationist International, "Situationist Manifesto".

46 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London 2009, 6.

47 "Tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans une représentation". Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 7.

48 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 189–190.

49 Geoffrey G. O'Brien, "CHORD", in: *Lana Turner Journal*, 2014, no. 7 – available at: http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/print-issue-7-contents/chord-obrien (accessed 11 February 2015).

tion as something that happens in time: the spectacle will soon invade the SI's works. The SI never resolved the problem of *récupération*. When it auto-dissolved in 1972, Debord justified the decision as necessary to prevent the SI's organisational presence from impeding the development of a wider-reaching Situationist consciousness.[50] Debord's demand in 1991 that all his work be removed from publication and pulped can also be understood as an effort to evade *récupération*.

Post-Situationist Reassessments

I want, finally, to turn to a lineage of post-Situationist thought that has taken up the problem of *récupération* in explicitly temporal terms, and which offers a means to rethink the relationship between utopia and *récupération* in the avant-garde tradition. This lineage is represented by the French group *Théorie Communiste* (TC), an example of Eburne and Felski's transposition of avant-garde activity into theoretical practice, and a part of the "communisation" current in contemporary left thought. Specifically, TC has allied the Situationists' understanding of *récupération* with Marx's discussion of the subsumption of labour by capital.

TC take from Marx two types of subsumption: formal subsumption, which is when capital engulfs an existing labour process, in a manner equivalent to how absolute surplus value is obtained by doing *more of what already happens*, such as lengthening the working day; and real subsumption, which is when capital adapts and remodels a labour process *in its own image*, in a manner equivalent to how new technologies are developed to make the extraction of relative surplus value increasingly efficient.[51]

TC use subsumption to periodise capitalist history: formal subsumption precedes real subsumption; a labour process is engulfed, then adapted. TC regard the 19th and early 20th Century as a period of "classical" class struggle when labour attempted to assert its self-identity in distinction to capital, principally through political organisation, unionisation, and the founding of the welfare state, all of which TC group under the term "programmatism". As the 20th Century progressed, programmatism was formally subsumed by capital, so that the antagonism between labour and capital was made internal to capital and reconciled.

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50 Situationist International, *The Real Split in the International*, trans. John McHale, London 2003.

51 The first two issues of the journal *EndNotes* (2008, 2010) offer translations and histories of TC. This account is drawn primarily from: "The History of Subsumption", *EndNotes*, 2010, no. 2, 130–153.

Labour's self-reproduction thus became capital's self-reproduction, which completed the *real* subsumption of labour. Though TC argue that the real subsumption of labour has accelerated since 1968, they point to the emergence of new forms of resistance, characterised by the proletariat's *self-negation*. That self-negation, and the refusal to predict utopian alternatives to capitalism, is the crux of communisation – a project which Roland Simon, of TC, claims that the Situationists anticipated: they were, he says, "among the first to be able to speak of revolution as the abolition of all classes".[52]

TC's periodisation of subsumption is roughly equivalent to the account of *récupération* that I have drawn from Marinetti, Breton, and in particular the SI: subsumption and *récupération* as processes that happen in time, once and for all; the response, though imperfect, is to turn to negation. However, the EndNotes collective, an Anglo-American equivalent to TC, have recently offered a critique of the latter's account of history, to question whether we can observe a causal movement from the formal to the real subsumption of labour. EndNotes suggest instead a non-linear, perhaps cyclical, movement between the two, because real subsumption can facilitate further formal subsumption elsewhere. Importantly, they argue that "[al]though formal subsumption may well precede real subsumption temporally in the case of any given capital, real subsumption is inherent to the concept of capital from the outset".[53]

I want to suggest that EndNotes's account can be transposed onto *récupération*. Perhaps it is not something that happens in time, but it is the dialectical counterpart to the utopian aspirations of avant-garde practice. To consider *récupération* in ontological rather than teleological terms casts the anxiety of the manifestos in a different light. *Récupération* becomes something that is constructed discursively as the necessary antithesis to utopia; both might be thought exercises rather than real possibilities. After all, despite its prevalence in avant-garde discourse, *récupération* remains abstract and indistinct. How might it be quantified? Is it irreversible? Does *récupération*, in relation to aesthetic objects, not confine texts and their afterlives to singular, fixed meanings, and ignore the variety and indeterminacy of aesthetic experience?

These suggestions might serve to destabilise the verdict that the avant-garde tradition of the 20th Century was recuperated, first in its parts and subsequently as a whole. We might begin to rethink avant-garde historiography beyond the

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52 "Interview with Roland Simon", in: *riff-raff*, 2005, no. 8 – available at: http://www.riff-raff.se/en/8/interview_roland.php (accessed 11 February 2015).

53 EndNotes, "The History of Subsumption", 150 (drawing on: Chris Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital*, Leiden 2002, 76).

version offered by the manifestos, and approach *récupération* not as a historical inevitability but a discursive formation that accompanies and works dialectically to sustain the avant-garde's utopian ambitions. We are yet to become Situationists, but we may be enemies of utopia for the sake of its realisation.

Cedric Van Dijck, Sarah Posman, Marysa Demoor
World War I, Modernism and Minor Utopias

In recent years, both modernism studies and utopia studies have drastically expanded in scope. Under the impulse of the "New Modernist Studies", critics have been exploring a wide array of texts, produced in roughly the first half of the 20th Century, which, in some cases, share very little with such icons of British modernism as *The Waste Land*, *Jacob's Room* or *Ulysses*. Of interest to the re-invigorated field of modernism studies have been a keen awareness of those figures operating in the margins of modernist networks, popular and ephemeral publications and the notion of the everyday. An important impulse to the field has come from periodical studies and the focus on modernist magazines has proven one of the most fruitful "expansions". Especially in order to understand early modernist writing, work that bridges the late 19th Century and modernism's key year 1922, magazines such as *The English Review*, *The Egoist*, *Rhythm* and *Blast* have proven invaluable. In parallel, utopia studies have opened up from a focus on the genre of the literary utopia to what Ernst Bloch has called "the utopian impulse", which enables a connection between a diverse constellation of genres and experiences.[1]

In contrast to the wariness with the totalitarian implications of utopian projects after World War II, the reception of the work of Ernst Bloch and Karl Mannheim in the 1980s made it possible to reengage with the concept of utopia. Bloch's concept of the utopian impulse, which refers to the desire to configure a better world rather than to a concrete plan for a better future, and Mannheim's grappling with the problem of the relationship between ideology and reality, have spurred critics to look into the concrete surroundings in which utopian impulses come about and to which they respond. In modernism studies, this has led to a renewed attention to the spectre of political energies that informed literary projects of the early 20th Century. Nathan Waddell's *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900–1920* (2012) and Rosalyn Gregory's and Benjamin Kohlmann's *Utopian Spaces of Modernism: British Literature and Culture, 1885–1945* (2012), for example, cover a differentiated terrain of utopian pulsations. Both address the question of how various modernist writers experimented with the discourse of utopianism, in ways that enable them to scrutinise the here-and-now. These writers' utopian texts, Waddell explains quoting Bloch,

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1 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, Oxford 1986.

are "transcendent without transcendence".[2] They invest in change, in breaking with the present situation, yet without a clearly defined goal in mind. For Gregory and Kohlmann "minor" utopias, a concept Jay Winter introduces in his chapter in their volume, refer to "imaginings of liberation usually [...] on a smaller scale, transforming some but not all of the world, and lacking the grandiose pretensions or the almost unimaginable hubris and cruelties of the 'major' utopian projects".[3]

This chapter elaborates on the notion of the minor utopia in relation to the dreams of a better future, published by soldiers or military personnel in World War I military magazines, and to the constellations or enclaves in which these magazines were created – constellations, we show, that enabled modernist work to develop. Curiously, the expansive drive of the New Modernist Studies has not yet led to a full-scale reconsideration of World War I writings. Of course magazines published by soldiers differ from modernist magazines in that they function as part of the military system, lacking the autonomy claimed by modernist projects. The current scholarly interest in the institutional entanglements of those modernist projects, however, calls for a reconsideration of the non-modernist status of those publications. Conversely, scholars of World War I rarely enter into conversation with modernism studies, old or new. In the field of World War I studies, Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) and Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995) highlight the discrepancy between modernist and wartime writing. Fussell notes that the "roster of major innovative talents who were not involved with the war is long and impressive".[4] By contrast, the writers who were moved "to recall in literary form the war they had actually experienced" are considered "lesser talents, always more traditional and technically prudent".[5] For Winter, the war did not lead to modernist expression. By his account "the Great War reinforced romantic tendencies" in poetry and encouraged "traditional elements".[6] And yet, in a very obvious sense, the war is what links both fields. Especially in a British literary context, World War I counts as the event that ushered in modernism; expatriates Pound and Eliot rose to the forefront of the literary scene after the war, making

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2 Nathan Waddell, *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900–1920*, Basingstoke 2012, 9.

3 Jay Winter, "Minor Utopias and the British Literary Temperament, 1880–1945", in: Rosalyn Gregory and Benjamin Kohlmann (eds), *Utopian Spaces of Modernism: British Literature and Culture, 1885–1945*, Basingstoke 2012, 71–84, here 73.

4 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford 1977, 314–315.

5 Fussell, *Modern Memory*, 315.

6 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge 2014, 221.

the break with Edwardian and Georgian poetry official. Scholars, however, have tended to focus on the ways in which canonical modernist authors have dealt with the traumatic memory of the war rather than, as Vincent Sherry argues we should, with the material reality of the war years. Put bluntly, the war, for modernism studies, is what led to Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), which captures the horror of the war years as an impersonal interval in its "Time Passes" section, and to David Jones' redemptive musing on heroism in his meditation on the notion of an interval, *In Parenthesis* (1937). Only recently have critics started to concentrate on modernism in relation to the political, cultural and aesthetic contexts of wartime Britain. Mark Larabee's *Front Lines of Modernism: Remapping the Great War in British Fiction* (2011) and Paul Jackson's *Great War Modernisms and The New Age Magazine* (2012) are good examples of the ways in which critics have started to respond to Sherry's diagnosis that modernism studies suffers a "dearth of commentary on the modernist war – as a *historical* subject, as an event reconstructed from its record in contemporary political and intellectual culture".[7]

Modernism and Military Magazines?

In *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (1999), Robert Pippin quotes Nietzsche's summary of the modernist time sense: "some massive, traumatic event, the 'great event' of modern times has occurred. Some possibility of going on as we had before has come to some sort of end".[8] In 1914 this amorphous trauma turned real and writers, both highbrow London intellectuals and soldiers at the front, responded to it. Sherry's *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003) looks into the London literary and intellectual circles of the war period, but the literary context of the trenches and military units, with which those modernists who served such as T.E. Hulme, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis and David Jones would have been familiar, is still largely unexplored. This chapter argues that the understanding of time, as expressed in the literary contributions to military magazines, is where modernist experiment and wartime writing meet – without, that is, subscribing to the same agenda. The grappling with the here-and-now in these texts, with the moment of war, constitutes the starting point for minor utopian reconfigurations.

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7 Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*, New York 2003, 7.
8 Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, Oxford 1999, 78.

Modernist writers considered themselves freed from a determinist Hegelian historical scheme, but they did not sever ties with the past per se. As is well known, the sense of freedom, the ability to pick and choose from history and a variety of aesthetic and intellectual traditions, is at the heart of such modernist masterpieces as Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *Cantos*. The clarion call to "make it new", informed by a Bergsonist understanding of time that highlights tapping past energies in order to invent new constellations, leads to autonomy: artist and art are unbound. The modernist sense of literary autonomy goes hand in hand with a sense of urgency and contrariness. Modernist writers are famously writers of "the moment". Unmoored from a past, they explore alternative aesthetic, psychological and social formations, different from the 19th-Century frameworks they had grown up in, without investing in a "beyond". The flipside of autonomy is the sense of alienation and the painful awareness that "now" is all there is. This is what many soldiers in the trenches experienced. Of course the military regime imposed a very strict routine, but on a more existential level these soldiers were living Nietzsche's projected traumatic event, acutely experiencing that the "possibility of going on as we had before has come to some sort of end". In the magazines they published while in service they often turned to literature to deal with that experience. While, as Winter points out, these compositions are riddled with traditional elements and romantic echoes, it does not imply that, contrary to the modernists, these authors continued to work in accordance with older literary models. Their literary frame of reference may predominantly have been that of a popular romanticism, but their confrontation with a radically new configuration of life and death asks for a more nuanced reading of the ways in which they understood time and temporality.

A piece that exemplifies the extent to which time was an issue for soldiers fighting in the war is "Our Dying Speech", published in *The Gasper*, the magazine of the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Royal Fusiliers that ran from September 1915 to September 1916. "Our Dying Speech" was published in the November 1915 issue. This is how it opens: "We are somewhat in the position of the Pirate Chief in 'Peter Pan', who, fearing that, when he died, time might not allow the making of his dying speech, would make it *now*".[9] The Peter Pan reference may take us into the domain of popular culture, but the narrative gesture of voicing a conclusion, not at the actual end of one's life, points to a radically fractured experience. Death, here, is not so much a distant Other or glorious conclusion, as an ever-present twin. The destructive shock of World War I showed that the increasing control over, and regularisation of life processes, which Michel Foucault situates as starting in the 18th Century and which had catalysed the 19th-Century ideal of progress,

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9 Editorial, "Our Dying Speech", in: *The Gasper* 1, 1916, no. 9, 1.

were not able to keep the threat of random death at bay. Quite to the contrary, biopolitical measures taken during the war – which we take here to include the use of yperite as chemical warfare agent enabling mass destruction, as well as the mobilisation of bodies on an unseen scale – positioned death at the very heart of life. Wilfred Owen's phrase "these who die as cattle" has become part of our collective memory, and numerous critical journalists, as well as soldiers writing about the conditions in the trenches, tended to describe the circumstances as bestial. Such a return of the human being to an animal state, for Foucault, implies a radical encounter with death since "[t]he animal appears as the bearer of that death to which it is, at the same time, subjected; it contains a perpetual devouring of life by life, […] containing within itself a nucleus of anti-nature".[10] As Alan Warren Friedman has argued, a narrative struggle with death is a constant in modernist fiction. Where Victorian death comes with stable rituals, and, however unexpected, is given a place in a meaningful chronology, modernist death is all over the place.[11] In modernist fiction, Friedman argues, death is elided, refracted through memory, or presented as a material fact. Modernism's fascination with a time that is out of joint is, in many ways, a response to the destructive encounter with death that was World War I. While soldiers on the frontline did not have the rhetorical skills or the time to elaborate on the mechanisms of this radical experience of death as a narrative problem, they did address it.

"Our Dying Speech", furthermore, is a bold critique of British war policy, with the soldiers refusing to relinquish their right to speak as citizens:

> Lord Kitchener, in the early days of the War, said that, as a soldier, he had no politics. Should the same apply throughout the Services – even to the immense number of temporary soldiers that constitutes half the electorate? As soldiers we are manifestly and totally debarred from criticizing the orders of our superiors. Nor have we any desire or occasion to do so. But we do feel that *as citizens* we have, and should exercise, our right to criticize the War policy of our Government. The Yellow Press and the Cocoa Press make their conflicting voices heard in the land, but the tongue of neither speaks the thought of the country. And what the *Army* thinks of the conduct of the War no paper knows or cares […].
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> Everyone now knows that the Dardanelles Expedition ought to have been begun two months earlier than it was, or not at all. […] It is the Home Government we blame. One hundred thousand casualties make a costly blunder. […] What German armies can do *we* can do: what German officers can do *our* officers can do: but at present military matters are merely manipulated by a Council of inexperienced civilians, which we accept as a Government.[12]

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10 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York 1973, 273.

11 Alan Warren Friedman, *Fictional Death and the Modernist Enterprise*, New York 1995, 18.

12 Editorial, "Our Dying Speech", 1.

Soldiers at the front were writing from a paradoxical situation. On the one hand they were at the heart of the conflict, fighting for Britain, yet on the other hand they found themselves on the outside: they felt unrepresented, both politically and in the public sphere. In this sense, the soldiers writing for these magazines shared with the modernist authors whom Sherry focuses on a deep mistrust of the mainstream press. As Graham Seal notes in his study *The Soldiers' Press*:

> Very little official propaganda [...] appeared in trench journals, though reactions to it featured aplenty in the deep mistrust of and antipathy to the mainstream press. So pernicious and notorious did British mainstream propaganda and press reports become that the phrase "Can't believe a word you read" became a catch-cry among troops at the front and was reflected in trench commentary, verse and illustration.[13]

Soldiers used magazines and gazettes to make themselves heard and to imagine alternatives. Quite often, these alternatives took the form of a utopian projection or a dream. The fascinating aspect of these "dream" projects in trench journals and unit magazines is not that they are traditional pieces coming out of the core of the modernist schism between old world and new, but that, in line with modernist experiment, they complicate our understanding of belonging (tradition or "inside") and rupture ("outside").

Utopia Inside Out

In his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* Paul Ricoeur draws on Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* (1929, translated 1936) to argue for an ongoing dialectic between ideology and utopia, with the former standing for shared context, or tradition, and the latter for rupture. Ricoeur's understanding of ideology and utopia is important in the context of modernism studies because it modifies our understanding of the utopian "make it new" impulse aimed against a beguiling ideology that distorts reality. That is the scheme we find in theoretical frameworks that have left their mark on modernism: we find it in Marx's opposition between practice or science versus ideology, in Bergson's understanding of a true sense of time that would set people free, and in Freud's theories of the unconscious. For Ricoeur, the (Marxist) model that sets ideology in opposition to reality is inadequate, because reality is symbolically mediated from the beginning. Ricoeur

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13 Graham Seal, *The Soldiers' Press: Trench Journals in the First World War*, Basingstoke 2013, 132.

admires Mannheim for grappling with exactly this problem.[14] He takes both ideology and utopia to be the driving forces of reality. A model that sets utopia in opposition to reality is inadequate because reality is not a given to be discovered but always in the making, with conflicting forces operating on it. Ideology serves as the integrative force in this processual reality and the utopian impulse is what makes possible change and rupture: "The intention of the utopia is to change – to shatter – the present order".[15] On the whole, Ricoeur's dialectic serves integration more than revolution, with utopia, or the possibility to imagine an elsewhere, as a cure for the pathology of ideological thinking, "which has its blindness and narrowness precisely in its inability to conceive of a nowhere".[16]

Because it is focused on the ways in which ideology and utopia interact, Ricoeur's scheme would seem an apposite vantage from which to consider utopian contributions to World War I magazines, which were part of the ideological war machinery. The utopian projections of the soldiers in the magazines, however, complicate Ricoeur's outline in which a utopian vision formulated in tension with a present collective constellation (ideology) makes it possible to revamp that constellation. This movement is what we find in a classic 19th-Century utopian text such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000–1887*, which, from the mind of a 19th-Century dreamer, pictures the transformed world of the future, the year 2000, and thus urges contemporary readers to engage in collective future-building. Texts such as "The Ideal Army" (*Gasper*, October 1915) or "Utopia", published in October 1917 in *The Gazette of the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth*, complicate this movement because they set out from an enclave, which they seek to secure as enclave. They do not, in other words, voluntaristically call for a better future. For example, the writer of "The Ideal Army" does not picture an escape from the Army per se. He keeps the Army formation but transports it to a Biblical land of Cockaigne, where there are no Army rules:

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14 George Taylor summarises Mannheim's paradox: "One of Mannheim's real achievements is that he expands the concept of ideology to the point where it encompasses even the one asserting it. The viewpoint of the absolute onlooker, the one uninvolved in the social game, is impossible, says Mannheim. As Ricoeur puts it, 'To call something ideological is never merely a theoretical judgment but rather implies a certain practice and a view on reality that this practice gives us' (lecture 10). Any perspective expressed is in some sense ideological. The circularity of ideology is Mannheim's paradox [...]". George Taylor, "Editor's Introduction", in: Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, New York 1986, ix–xxxvi, here xv.

15 Taylor, "Editor's Introduction", xxi.

16 Ricoeur, *Lectures*, 17.

'Twas in a vision fair, some adumbration
Of Paradise came faintly to my sight,
And I beheld the absolute negation
Of Army methods now considered right.
In this, my dream, I saw a camp enchanted,
Where orders never seemed to be obeyed,
Where rifles were in all directions slanted
By Tommies unashamed and unafraid.
Fatigue machines I saw there, automatic,
An endless string that pulled your rifle through,
With, if your shooting chanced to be erratic,
Oceans of oil and miles of four-by-two.
The packs were all suspended from the shoulders
And held aloft by little gas balloons,
While buttons, to the joy of us beholders,
Were black; and there were many other boons.[17]

Not directly involved with military action but very much a part of the war machinery, the author of "Utopia" projects migration plans for the Third London General Hospital. She does not dissolve the hospital but has it transported to a pastoral setting:

> There is a corner in Sussex to which I should like to transplant the Third and all that therein is from April to October. It is a jewel of a village set in the perfect matchless setting of the Downs, and the site where the Hospital should miraculously appear is by a river that winds down to a tiny haven where the great white ships might transfer their precious burden to barges to take them "home" [...][18]

In a sense, these writers' utopian visions are concerned with keeping their present situation intact rather than with projecting a way out that would lead to large-scale reform. They want for the horrors of the war to go away, but they do not want to get out of the community they find themselves in. At this point it is worth pointing out that the original *Utopia*, More's foundational text, also concerns an isolated community, an island separated from the mainland when the founder causes a great trench to be dug. Fredric Jameson underscores the radical secession of More's island – a quality that sets it apart from Bellamy's world state. "The Machiavellian ruthlessness of Utopian foreign policy [...]", Jameson reminds us, "rebukes all Christian notions of universal brotherhood and natural law and

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17 Strozzi, "The Ideal Army", in: *The Gasper* 1, 1915, no. 71, 3.
18 Eve, "Utopia", in: *The Gazette of the 3ʳᵈ London General Hospital, Wandsworth*, 3, 1917, no. 1, 19.

decrees the foundational difference between them and us, foe and friend, in a peremptory manner worthy of Carl Schmitt".[19] Small-scale community feeling, it appears, are part of utopia's origins. While the utopian projections we encounter in the trench journals and unit magazines share with More's utopian blueprint a division between "us" (the unit, the hospital) and "they" (society at large), they operate differently from More's model.

The writers of these texts start from a moment and a place that is outside of social space and everyday life yet that, at the same time, constitutes a regularised interval: they're soldiers and nurses working for their country, heroes, not rebels. It is this situation – the situation of being outside and yet belonging, of an outsider's utopian enclave created by an ideological machinery rather than utopia as a healthy counter-force in ideological practice (as in Ricoeur's model) – that gets explored in the contributions to the magazines. These writers do not seek to break with a given situation and dramatically build a new life. Rather, we can read them as wanting to prolong a non-situation: the feelings of community and outsider-experience are genuine, but they are also ideologically sanctioned as the morale that helps the overall war apparatus function, and thus not on the "outside" at all. In addition, those feelings are fractured by the pervasive presence of loss and death, they are intervals for breathing, not spaces one can build a life in. In line with the modernist minor utopias Gregory and Kohlmann outline, these texts relinquish totalitarian ambitions.[20] In fact "The Ideal Army" and "Utopia", caught between outsider utopian desire and military ideology, seem to foster little ambitions whatsoever, which sets them apart from the imaginative modernist energy at work in the texts that are the subject of *Utopian Spaces of Modernism*. And yet, it is precisely the complex outsider/insider dynamic of those World War I constellations that also made it possible for budding modernist projects to develop during the war.

The situation of being outside and yet belonging that we find, on a micro level, in World War I trench journals and unit magazines is related, on a macro level, to the situation of the state of exception, that borderline situation at the intersection of the legal and the political when legislative organs suspend democracy because of an extreme situation (war, insurrection, resistance). World War I played a decisive role in the generalisation of such a state of exception, which has become a much-discussed concept for political situations of the 20th and 21st Centuries. Concerning the British situation, Giorgio Agamben reminds us that

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19 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, New York 2005, 5.
20 Gregory and Kohlmann, *Utopian Spaces of Modernism*, 7.

immediately after war was declared, the government asked parliament to approve a series of emergency measures that had been prepared by the relevant ministers, and they were passed virtually without discussion. The most important of these acts was the Defence of the Realm Act of August 4, 1914, known as DORA, which not only granted the government quite vast powers to regulate the wartime economy, but also provided for serious limitations on the fundamental rights of the citizens (in particular, granting military tribunals jurisdiction over civilians).[21]

The state of exception, Agamben shows, problematises a logic of inside and outside. "How", he asks, "can an anomie be inscribed within the juridical order?"[22] He argues that the state of exception "concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur [...]. *Being-outside, and yet belonging*: this is the topological structure of the state of exception".[23]

Christopher R.W. Nevinson and *The Gazette of the 3rd*: Minor Utopian Entanglements

The state of exception has been taken as a fruitful paradigm for modernist studies: the suspension of democracy created space for individual vanguard writers to think about and experiment with political alternatives in their work.[24] What has not been explored, however, is how the particular constellations of a military magazine and unit, as regulated "outsides", in some cases became the environment for modernist experiment to develop. The futurist war drawings that Christopher Nevinson published in the *Gazette of the Third London General Hospital* show that this, too, is possible. Unlike "Utopia" and "The Ideal Army", these drawings are minor utopian visions that counter the ruling army ideology, not in the least through their radical forms, from within a paradoxically ideological enclave position. Before the war, Nevinson's work was utopian in a much clearer sense. With the publication of the futurist manifesto "Vital English Art", which the artist devised together with his Italian brother-in-arms Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the

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21 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell, Chicago 2005, 18–19.

22 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 23.

23 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 23, 35.

24 For a detailed discussion of the ways in which avant-garde authors have employed literature to envision and experiment with political possibilities, see for example: Sascha Bru, *Democracy, Law and the Modernist Avant-Garde*, Edinburgh 2009.

English public was given "the signal for battle".[25] "Vital English Art" presented the readers of *The Observer*, in which it first appeared, with a totalitarian vision: it wanted to "break away violently" from tradition, from "the pretty-pretty, the commonplace".[26] Hailed with much rhetorical violence, that clean break in art made room for a new world to be designed. In futurist projects the English public could already find the first utopian blueprints for this reinvention. Almost as soon as war broke out, Nevinson enlisted in the army and, after a few months spent as a Red Cross ambulance driver in northern France, he joined the military hospital in Wandsworth as an R.A.M.C. orderly. Yet for Nevinson as for most futurists, the collision with the reality of warfare proved in many ways to be anti-climactic. What remained of the programmatic cult of violence, machines and speed was a "sense of broken promises and shattered ideals – both political and aesthetic".[27] What would happen to the futurist aesthetic? And more importantly for us here, in light of all this horror, could futurist forms still celebrate utopian visions? The ten little-known drawings that Nevinson published or reproduced in the hospital magazine between October 1915 and July 1919, we argue here, bear the mark of his artistic struggle (see figs 1–3).

In his introductory essay to *Modern War Paintings* (1917) the critic P.G. Konody suggests we think of Nevinson's war art as a "modified Futurism" that offered a "compromise between the purely representational and a carefully thought-out geometric".[28] Indeed, as these drawings come to mirror reality more closely and become less radically futurist in form, they grow darker and harsher at the same time, for now they incorporate the horrific reality of warfare. To avoid the "pitfalls" of committing exclusively either to abstraction or to verisimilitude is, as Osbert Sitwell wrote of "England's only Futurist", to give in art "the whole business of warfare".[29] We can discern a similar balancing act in the work of

25 The publication itself was not entirely uncontroversial: Lewis and other signatories sent a letter to *The Observer* dissociating themselves from futurism, and disrupted one of Marinetti's performance-lectures at the Doré Galleries. See: Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908–1922*, Cambridge 1986, 124.

26 Filippo T. Marinetti and Christopher R.W. Nevinson, "Vital English Art", in: Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman, *Futurism: An Anthology*, London and New Haven 2009, 196–198.

27 Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*, Princeton 2009, 234.

28 Christopher R.W. Nevinson, *Modern War Paintings by C.R.W. Nevinson*, with an essay by P.G. Konody, London 1917, 20.

29 Osbert Sitwell, "Introduction", in: Albert Rutherston (ed.), *Contemporary British Artists: C.R.W Nevinson*, London 1925, 1–31, here 24.