

Gods and Goods: Psychoanalysis, Holism and Modernist Women

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Abstract

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of seismic shifts in scientific and cultural perceptions of what constitutes individual and social development. The expansion of industry and communication technologies, Darwinian and Lamarckian theories of evolution, changes in the conception of gender, class and sexual identity as well as the devastating effect of the two world wars left the modern citizen in the East and the West with few stable reference points to hold on to. These global trends resulted in two opposing tendencies in the scientific and artistic understanding of the mind. One sought to infuse the brain and body with trans-individual forces and eternal communities which transcend cultural and linguistic differences and resist the passage of time. The other looked to investigate the impact of society on individual psychic life and to employ this knowledge as the basis for psychologically founded social interventions. This thesis will explore the tension between these transcendentalist and materialist narratives in psychoanalysis, film and literature between the 1910s and the 1950s. In particular, I will focus on the work of the psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein and three literary authors: Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Annie Winifred Ellerman (Bryher) and Djuna Barnes. The psychological conceptions of these scientists and artists afford insight into how individual and social development was understood by authors who – as non-Western or homo/bisexual women – were excluded by dominant progress narratives. Their work thus sheds important light on the political implications of different models of the human mind that appeared in the modernist period. Chapter one outlines the political specificities of Spielrein's understanding of drives and unconscious symbolism as well as her journey towards a materialist approach to psychoanalysis. Chapter two shows how H.D. adapted Freud's idea of universal symbols to her feminist mythological system and how this narrative became a defence against the traumatic impact of war-time events. Chapter three explores Bryher's oscillation between the exclusive image of the pre-oedipal poet and the materialist psychology of her post-war fiction and her cinema articles. Chapter four gives voice to Djuna Barnes's subversion of psychoanalytic stories of progress that opposed pleasure to reality, myth/fiction to science and passion/sexuality to reason and cultural advancement.

Abbreviations

BPP: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

CC: *The Child's Conception of the World*

CD: *Civilisation and its Discontents*

CU: *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*

FR: *The Freud Reader*

JR: *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*

LT: *Language and Thought of the Child*

N: *Nightwood*

SS: *Sabina Spielrein: Sämtliche Schriften*

TF: *Tribute to Freud*

TL: *Thought and Language*

Introduction

In the autumn of 1938, after Sigmund Freud – like a number of Jewish intellectuals before him – had left his home in Vienna to settle in London, his former patient Hilda Doolittle sent him a cluster of gardenias accompanied by a card. In the context of her friendship with Freud, the flowers had a special meaning. Like the book she would compose six years later, in the autumn of 1944, they were “an offering”, belated words that “she could not speak” (*TF* 63) at the time of her analysis in 1933/1934. H.D.’s belated words point to an important aspect of her World-War-II writing, to its function as a sequel to her conversation with Freud, a case of auto-analysis after the Professor (as she called him) had joined the ranks of the “Gods” he kept on his writing table (*TF* 64). For it was these “Gods” to which the 1938 note referred. Freud’s famous collection of antique figurines had just arrived from Vienna. Knowing this, H.D. sent her gift of flowers “to greet the return of the Gods” (*TF* 63). Freud soon replied, saying that he wasn’t sure if the card read “Gods” or “goods”, but correctly guessing H.D. meant the former. This small anecdote is not only symbolic of a series of misunderstandings that occurred in H.D.’s relationship with her analyst, but also of a deeper tension between materialist and transcendental trends that permeated psychoanalysis, literature, film and politics in this period. For H.D., the figurines on Freud’s table were incarnations of eternal ideas. For Freud, they were representations of universal psychological conflicts, different from, though not unrelated to, the transcultural symbols H.D. discovered in the Freudian unconscious. Occasionally, or so H.D. believed, Freud’s materialist side would come to the fore. It was in these moments – when Freud decided to read “goods” – that problems in their communication arose and that H.D. disparagingly characterised Freud’s approach as “Jewish materialism” (cf. *TF* 70). H.D. was well aware that “a great many people read goods” in those days and “continued to do so” (*TF* 64). This did not merely imply discounting the transcendental side of Freud’s teaching. It also referred to the integration of psychoanalysis into the capitalist system, where “doctors charged exorbitant fees for prolonged and expensive treatments” (*TF* 84).¹ Both of these questions – the social role of psychoanalysis and the changing

¹ In line with contemporary ethnic prejudice, for H.D. the latter trend was associated with the “Jewish” side of Freudian analysis (see chapter two).

negotiation between its transcendental and materialist aspects – are crucial to the (hi)stories presented here. The following chapters will examine this negotiation in the work of one psychoanalyst – Sabina Spielrein – and three modernist women writers: H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) and Djuna Barnes, along with the immediate circle of artists and scientists with whom they collaborated.

The relationship of the four women with psychoanalysis varied in kind and intensity. In 1904-1905, Spielrein was a patient at the Burghölzli asylum in Switzerland (treated by Carl Jung and Eugen Bleuler). She was later to become a psychoanalyst herself. H.D. and Bryher were literary authors and film critics who were both at one point treated psychoanalytically: H.D. by Freud in the 1930s and Bryher by Hanns Sachs (one of Freud's closest associates) in the late 1920s. Bryher began her psychoanalytic training at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, but never became a certified analyst. Djuna Barnes was a literary author who was neither a psychoanalyst nor a psychoanalytic patient, but was clearly familiar with Freud's and Jung's theories. As the last chapter will show, her literary work presents one of the most original challenges to the philosophical tenets of Freudian and Jungian analysis in the modernist period. In order to comprehend the significance of these authors' interventions into the transcendentalist and materialist narratives in psychoanalysis, it is first necessary to say something about their pre-history.

In the 1840s and the 1850s, but also for decades afterwards, the medical sciences were dominated by mechanistic theories, which maintained that the human organism works like a complex machine or motor, where each part performs a discrete and specific function (cf. Rabinbach). On both sides of the political spectrum, mechanist sciences were closely intertwined with utilitarian ventures that sought to increase productivity and establish social control. In 1900s and the 1910s, US engineers began to implement Frederick Taylor's suggestion that the study of human motion and time management could significantly increase production rates in factories. In the Soviet Union of the 1920s, the same methods were advocated by Aleksei Gastev and his movement for the scientific organization of labour (cf. Olenina). The study of labour efficiency greatly relied on the scientific investigation of reflexes, championed by Ivan Pavlov (who coined the term conditioned reflex) and the neurologist Vladimir Bekhterev. By examining the mechanisms through which

ideas or actions became hardwired into the nervous system, Soviet scientists hoped to better both the physical and psychological disposition of their fellow citizens. Already in the 1890s, however, mechanist attempts to study human psychology were being disrupted by scientists who preferred a historical and holistic approach to the mind. In various ways, these scientists argued that processes in the human body could not be studied in isolation. One needed to take into account both the relation of the parts to the whole and the way in which the parts themselves were modified in the course of time. Yet, as Anne Harrington observes in her analysis of German holism, the opposition to mechanism was a politically and culturally varied phenomenon. Even in the 1920s and the 1930s, the oppositional movement still “knew itself best by emphasising what it was not” (xx). In this thesis, I will focus specifically on two types of holism that emerged in psychoanalysis, film, literature and politics in the first half of the twentieth century.

The first trend could broadly be called vitalist. It is crucial to stress, however, that the term “vitalism” is being used in its most general sense and that its legacies will be traced beyond the usual contexts. Vitalism is mostly taken to refer to seventeenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century philosophical and biological theories that looked to establish forces or (particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) chemical processes and compounds specific to living organisms that would differentiate them from inorganic nature.² Most sources do not describe works produced after 1930 as belonging to the vitalist tradition and the term is rarely employed in discussions on the history of psychoanalysis.³ Still, if we take vitalism to refer to any biological or psychological narrative that posited the existence of substances or energies that transcend the boundaries and interests of the individual organism, but simultaneously provide this organism with life, then vitalism indeed played an important role in the development of psychoanalysis,

² Cf. for instance Bechtel's and Richardson's definition of vitalism in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

³ The importance of vitalism in the artistic tradition is elaborated in Richard A. Lofthouse's *Vitalism in Modern Art 1900-1950*. Kirsty Martin stresses the importance of vitalism in the literary realm and the modernists' conception of the body and its sympathetic connections (24-27). Harrington discusses vitalist tendencies in science in German-speaking countries, but does not address vitalism in a psychoanalytic context. For a brief outline of the history of vitalism in the arts and sciences, with an implication of the continued importance of vitalist philosophies today, see Jackson Lears's article “Animal Spirits”.

particularly after World War I.⁴ The investigation of vitalist narratives in psychoanalytic history is called for not only because certain analysts discussed in this thesis (such as Carl Jung) relied on vitalist sources,⁵ but also because it enables us to look at an entire tradition of similar theories, stretching from antiquity and the early modern period to the twentieth century, to trace their transformations and legacies and to analyse the social conditions in which they appeared (or re-appeared). In the face of industrial advances and the separation of religion and science, the proponents of vitalist thought in literature, biology and medicine responded by resorting to holistic ideas which were formed before these divisions existed and, at the same time, by making them address the fundamental questions and needs that emerged in twentieth-century societies. In this sense – and in spite of their important differences – late Freud, Jung and early Spielrein could all be said to share a vitalist vision of drives and symbolism. Their theories crucially influenced H.D.'s and early Bryher's understanding of poetic and cinematic creation and communication, as they did Barnes's circular model of evolution and metempsychosis (transmigration). What is more, all these authors reached out to similar ideas from the periods just mentioned (H.D. looked back to antiquity and Romanticism, Bryher to antiquity and the early modern period, Barnes to Romanticism and early modern sources) when attempting to figure out the transcendental nature of the individual body in its relation to history, evolution and contemporary reality.

As a rule, vitalist narratives included a teleological explanation of individual and social development. When studying psychoanalytic teleology, however, we are inevitably faced with a contradiction: a number of psychoanalysts of the modernist period combined a vitalist definition of drives and the unconscious with notions of social progress which celebrated industrial growth and the suppression of religious worldviews by the empirical, scientific outlook. Though twentieth-century psychoanalysis possessed several competing definitions of individual and social development, there was one that repeatedly surfaced in the writings of analysts

⁴ Harrington mentions the influence of World War I in fuelling a vitalist turn the scientific realm (cf. 30-33); see chapter one.

⁵ Jung drew on the work of Edouard von Hartmann, Johannes Reinke and Hans Driesch, all of whom could be described as vitalists or neo-vitalists (cf. Addison 123-42; Noll 2-3).

whose political views were otherwise at odds with each other. This was the idea that society, like the human mind, progressed from a narcissistic, mythological worldview (dominated by the pleasure principle) towards a reality-oriented, scientific perspective (dominated by the reality principle). Individual progress proceeded from the egocentric phantasy-world of the child towards the objective, object-oriented perception of the adult. In the same manner, a society progressed from a narcissistic, mythological, religious culture towards the advances of science and industry. The theory of recapitulation⁶ merged the two histories into one, claiming that the child repeats crucial phases of evolutionary and social history, including ancient thought patterns and sexual habits, which become sub/unconscious in the adult.

In psychoanalysis these progress narratives appeared simultaneously with, and provided the context for, the idea of universal unconscious symbolism. If the child repeated the crucial stages of cultural history – beginning with the early narcissistic and mythological conceptions of the world – then remnants of such conceptions would necessarily be present in the sub/unconscious thought of the civilised adult and would resurface in dreams and certain forms of mental illness. The hypothesis occasioned a great interest in the study of philology, myths and folktales around the year 1910,⁷ as these were thought to represent the dream-world of modern society.⁸ The second vitalist element in psychoanalysis which will be explored in this thesis concerns the Freudian and Jungian transcendental understanding of drives. As will be explained in chapter one, both analysts

⁶ The term “recapitulation” refers to the notion that the child repeats the evolutionary stages of its animal ancestry and its human cultural predecessors. With respect to evolution, the notion was already present in Darwin’s writings (cf. Sulloway 238-77), but is most commonly associated with the name of the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who claimed that the embryo recapitulates previous evolutionary stages in the uterus. With respect to cultural and sexual development, certain sexologists associated the bisexual and homosexual tendencies discovered in ancient societies with the hypothesis of an original bisexuality. The polymorphous sexuality of childhood was seen to repeat these stages of cultural evolution (see chapters two and three).

⁷ Before Freud’s and Jung’s, psychoanalytic discussions of mythology and the universal significance of dream symbols included Franz Riklin’s *Wish Fulfilment and Symbolism in Fairy Tales* (1908), Otto Rank’s *Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909), Karl Abraham’s *Dreams and Myths* (1909) and Wilhelm Stekel’s *The Language of Dreams* (1911).

⁸ Cf. Freud’s explanation of universal symbolism in his two encyclopaedia articles from 1923: “It was later found that linguistic usage, mythology and folklore afford the most ample analogies to dream-symbols. Symbols [...] seem to be a fragment of extremely ancient inherited mental equipment. The use of a common symbolism extends far beyond the use of a common language.” (241) Although Freud was initially sceptical about universal symbols, by the publication of *Totem and Taboo* (1913) he had wholeheartedly accepted their existence (see chapter one).

understood the libido as a force that outlasts the individual body and is, at the same time, responsible for reproduction, the inheritance of ancestral memories, communal life and cultural progress. Unlike Jung, Freud would later (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920) couple the progressive pull of the libido with an isolating, regressive force he named the death drive, which the libido must constantly struggle to suppress. The binary notion of drives was incorporated into Freud's teleological view of social progress, which was now defined not only as the increased capacity for sublimation (resulting in an expansion of cultural activities), but also as the growing ability for the internalization of aggressive impulses (cf. "Why War").

Another important point that needs to be emphasised with respect to these progress narratives, as well as the related notions of drives and symbolism, is that they were universal. Thus, all individuals and societies inevitably needed to follow the same developmental patterns, with the reservation that some could occasionally regress to previous stages under certain circumstances. Equally, though universal symbols arose in concrete cultural conditions of the distant past, they were not altered in the course of time by the specific social experiences that followed. Finally, though the libido (in Jung's case) or the contention between the libido and the death drive (in Freud's) were ultimately thought to give rise to a whole palette of human relationships and social phenomena, they were universal energies, silently operating behind visible events, often initiating change, but unchangeable in themselves. Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis critically influenced how history and the human psyche were understood by the authors discussed here. Significantly, though, none of them simply accepted the terms which Freud and Jung prescribed for the achievement of personal and cultural growth. Instead, Spielrein's, H.D.'s, Bryher's and Barnes's writing promoted a wholesale rejection of progress narratives that privileged industry and empirical science over religion, myth and phantasy.

In the 1910s, Spielrein's drive theory operated with an instinct of destruction (the pre-cursor of Freud's death drive), but for her the destructive instinct was an integral part of the sexual drive. As the germ cells lost their "individuality" for the purpose of creating a new life, so every process of creation presupposed the destruction of previous entities (Covington and Wharton 186). Consequently, there was no need to suppress the destructive instinct through social or educational

measures (see chapter one). Around 1920, H.D. and Bryher decided to reverse the Freudian progress narrative. They pronounced collective unconscious symbols as the universal heritage of the human mind which would facilitate international understanding, perhaps even bring peace to a war-shattered world, and looked for them in dreams, literature and films. And since universal symbols originated in the early stages of social evolution, ancient cultures replaced the industrial world as the social ideal. Equally, pre-oedipal forms of sexuality (defined as the beginning of individual and social sexual development) were pronounced as closer to this utopian vision. Homosexual and bisexual individuals were therefore said to be more in touch with the language of the universal mind than their fellow humans (see chapters two and three). Djuna Barnes recognised the opposition between mythology/religion and science, as well as sexuality and reason, as part of the modern mind-set. In her works, she re-fashioned scientific terms and principles into emotionally intense, visual metaphors and fused them with religious and mythological imagery. In addition, by combining evolutionary, psychoanalytic and early modern religious narratives, she presented social evolution as a circle, in which pre-oedipal sexuality and proximity to one's animal ancestors figured both as the beginning and the end of the soul's journey (see chapter four). Why did these women feel the need for such interventions? This question brings us to one of our central topics: the political implications of teleologies of progress in psychoanalysis, modernist literature and film criticism.

Freud's and Jung's understanding of progress contained a common political issue: it described the psychological constitution of women, homosexuals and non-industrial societies as more narcissistic, and therefore less suited to progress, than that of the Western man (cf. *FR* 374; *Symbols of Transformation* 17-48; 123-147; see chapter one). All of the protagonists of this thesis were therefore excluded by Freud's and Jung's universal scheme, and not just because they were women. Apart from being one of the first female analysts, Sabina Spielrein's nationality (Russian) and her history as a hysterical patient diagnosed with masochistic tendencies were identity traits which both Freud and Jung associated with atavisms (see chapter one). H.D. and Djuna Barnes were bisexual, a sexual preference that, according to Freud, harked back to ancient times and pre-oedipal development (cf. "Female

Sexuality” 225). Bryher’s sexual and gender identity is still a subject of discussion. Today’s readers of her biographies would, due to her intense desire to become a man (present since early childhood),⁹ probably not hesitate to describe her as transgender. Yet one must take into account that, in the early twentieth century, scientific discourses on lesbianism and transsexuality were difficult to distinguish: a psychological identification with the opposite sex was thought to lie at the root of both. As Joanne Winning notes, quoting from Judith Halberstam, “lesbianism and transsexuality were conflated, both in the minds of theorists and of lesbians themselves, until the 1940s when medical and surgical advances made gender reassignment surgery and hormonal treatment possible” (xxx). For our purposes, the important thing is how the women in question defined and understood themselves. And in this sense (as will be shown in chapter three), it is certain that Bryher too linked her psychology with the pre-oedipal period. When all of this is taken into account, it will not come as a surprise that the universal narratives these women produced explicitly targeted those elements in Freud’s and Jung’s stories of progress that supported their implicit social hierarchy (i.e. positioned non-Western and homo/bisexual women as inferior). Yet, as we saw earlier, the specific ways in which Freud’s and Jung’s progress narratives were re-written in Spielrein’s psychoanalytic and H.D.’s, Bryher’s and Barnes’s artistic work were as different as they were similar.

In psycho-political terms, the four women could (at least at a certain point in their careers) be characterised as left-wing holists. All of them, but particularly H.D. and Barnes, were critical of industrial capitalism and mechanist science (a criticism typically found in artists who embraced vitalism).¹⁰ When it comes to their conceptions of individual and social progress, however, the situation becomes more varied. One might say that each of the authors discussed here adapted the story of universal progress to suit her own political purposes. By making the destructive instinct a component of the sexual drive, Spielrein prevented it from being linked to any specific group of people whose psychological constitution would be associated with the death drive’s regressive force (see chapter one). H.D. and Bryher did not only celebrate the poet’s regressive capacity (due to his/her privileged access to

⁹ Cf. *The Heart to Artemis* 17, 19, 24, 26, 33 etc.

¹⁰ Cf. *Lofthouse* 69, 96

universal unconscious symbols). For H.D., the psycho-physical constitution of the bisexual woman was best suited to this visionary activity (see chapter two). Due to her different gender identity, Bryher equated the poet's psyche with the gender ambiguity of childhood (see chapter three). Finally, Djuna Barnes presented members of the third sex as the first and final point in the soul's pre-determined series of incarnations (see chapter four). What do the political subtexts of these universal narratives tell us? First, there is the evident conclusion that their universal hypotheses were far from universal. The stories presented in the following chapters speak of the malleability of vitalist discourses and their mobilisation for a range of different, often opposing, political purposes. The second point has to do with the fact that what we are dealing with here are the psychological theories of those who felt themselves to be, in crucial respects, "outsiders".

Freud was not the only analyst who liked to stress psychoanalysis' position on the fringes of the social (and scientific) establishment due to its reputation as a "Jewish science" (cf. Frosh 63-91). Hanns Sachs once wrote to Bryher to complain about the desire for social recognition that appeared among some analysts in the 1930s.¹¹ According to Sachs, this was contrary to psychoanalysis' original mission: "[...] psychoanalysis and respectability are not to be reconciled. It is not accidental that psychoanalysis sprang up among Jews in anti-Semitic countries, i.e. among people who, being treated as outcasts, did not care much about respectability." (9 February, 1930)¹² The women in this volume were, in their turn, outsiders within the circle of psychoanalysts (and their supporters) and they had important things to say about the exclusive politics of certain psychoanalytic principles. What Spielrein's, Bryher's, H.D.'s and Barnes's interactions with psychoanalytic narratives show is that the best criticism of universal narratives often came from those left out by them. Yet, in the course of this conversation, it sometimes happened that the excluded responded by arguing for the privilege of their own group. But this is not the only story to be told in the pages to follow. Spielrein and Bryher eventually decided to

¹¹ By the time Sachs was writing his letter, psychoanalysis had to some extent become one of the accepted treatment methods. In the 1920s, psychoanalytic institutes were opened in a number of cities in Europe and the USA and psychoanalytic courses were being taught at universities (cf. Danto; see chapters two and three). Sachs's words therefore looked back to psychoanalysis' beginnings at the important moment of deciding what its wider social mission (and position) was going to be.

¹² "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1930", Bryher Papers

discard universal psychoanalytic narratives altogether, while Barnes and (to a lesser extent) H.D. combined them with a socially informed approach to individual psychology. This leads us to the second holistic trend in twentieth-century psychoanalysis, film and literature: materialist holism.

Materialist analysts looked to establish the ways in which individual psychology (and biology) was produced by social influences. The trend seems to have originated primarily among left-wing analysts and was often combined with a Marxist approach to social criticism. Although materialist holism sought to determine the social problems that needed to be addressed in order to influence the individual body and mind, it was not aimed at control like most mechanist initiatives (such as the labour efficiency studies mentioned above). The crucial distinction consisted in the treatment of individual psychology, which was, though in very different ways, a neglected aspect both in mechanism and vitalist holism. Mechanism looked at society primarily as a source of new stimuli or associations. It did not make much of the varying nature of individual bodies, nor did it consider the question of whether and how a different personal history could account for different ways of processing emotions and information. Due to its dependence on a teleological view of human life, history and evolution, vitalist holism was also less interested in the individual and demonstrated a clear preference for the collective, heritable and lasting aspect of the mind. We can discern this in the primacy that the protagonists of this thesis accorded to the universal unconscious (which they saw as this heritable, collective and durable aspect). In all four cases, it was the mind's collective dimension that was linked with the eternal and the transcendental, while the individual was, in Freud's words, but a "temporary and transient appendage to his quasi-immortal germ-plasm" ("Instincts" 124). These narratives were, of course, not unrelated to the position of the individual within contemporary political systems. As Spielrein and her Soviet collaborators as well as Bryher and her analyst observed, individual psychology was underrepresented both in the context of the Soviet focus on collective ideals and the capitalist system of work and entertainment (see chapters one and three). In order to restore the individual (in his/her relation to contemporary social circumstances) to their rightful place in psychological research within the

sciences and the arts, the Russian psychoanalyst and the British writer needed to renounce the universal narratives to which they had initially resorted.

By the early 1920s, Spielrein had given up the idea of a destructive drive. During her work in Geneva and Moscow, the idea of transcendental, universal drives would be replaced by the notion of socially conditioned reflexes (instincts). At this later stage of her career, Spielrein defined instincts as those experiences and thought patterns which had been repeated so often (sometimes in succeeding generations) that they became reflexive and automatic. There was thus no longer any differentiation between the underlying drives and their material manifestations, since all instincts originated in concrete socio-individual circumstances. In Spielrein's clinical practice too universal symbolism was superseded by the analysis of personal symbols via the free association method, the approach psychoanalysis had originally advocated (as noted earlier, the growing interest in universal unconscious symbols appeared in psychoanalysis around the year 1910). A return to beginnings was also felt in Spielrein's attempts to fuse psychoanalytic research with the findings of holistic neurology (see chapter one). Spielrein's neurological theories are reminiscent of Freud's early studies on aphasia (composed in the 1890s), particularly her criticism of the localizationist approach (the mechanist view that each part of the brain is responsible for a specific function) and her grounding of psychosomatic symptoms in the traumatic severing of the link between words and unconscious thoughts. This model abandoned the transcendental meaning accorded to the libido (and the death drive) in the theories Freud and Jung devised around the same time and replaced it with an investigation of social trauma and its manifestations on the individual body.

As chapter three will show, the approach developed by Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria influenced certain Russian filmmakers, including Sergei Eisenstein. Through the communication between Russian directors and European analysts and film critics on the pages of the international film journal *Close Up* (1927-1933), some of this materialist version of psychoanalysis travelled back to Europe. Meanwhile, the importance of society and its influence on the individual gained increasing visibility at psychoanalytic institutes in Geneva, Berlin and London. In the late 1920s, Bryher's film criticism and her literary work were profoundly influenced by these materialist trends. Around this time, she and Sachs embraced a psychoanalytic

approach that brought individual desire back into the focus of discussions about work and cinematic production. At the centre of their psychology they positioned the individual who looks to transform his/her surroundings in accordance with his/her complexes and desires. These transformative actions would condition the individual's experiences (relationships, professional choices etc.), which would in turn modify his/her complexes and so forth. Marx's theory of the human need to modify reality through work is here fused with the psychoanalytic study of complexes, based on the dynamic interaction between the individual body and its social environment. Significantly, it was just the faithful presentation of this dynamic interaction that Bryher and Sachs emphasised in German directors such as Georg Wilhelm Pabst (along with other representatives of New Objectivity)¹³ and Russian filmmakers like Abram Room, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Lev Kuleshov. Due to their emphasis on individual psychology and scathing social criticism (exposing issues such as the exploitation of women, prostitution, lack of housing and the social genesis of violence), Russian and German films praised by Bryher and Sachs in *Close Up* regularly came under attack both in Russia and in Europe. Evidently, the ways in which both political systems failed their individual citizens and were responsible for their psychological ailments were precisely the thing those in power wanted to repress.

As I have already indicated, the tension between mechanism, vitalist holism and materialist holism was as present in Europe and the USA as it was in the Soviet Union. The movement of this thesis, and its four protagonists, between these three geographical vantage points testifies to the global dissemination of mechanist, vitalist and materialist narratives as well as the socio-political trends (both global and culturally specific) that shaped them. The final three sections of chapter one outline the exchange between these three discourses on Russian territory. Spielrein's, Vygotsky's and Luria's materialist analysis was partly formed in response to the mechanist tendencies in neurology and the study of reflexes in the Soviet Union. The

¹³ New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) was a movement in German art, architecture and film that flourished in the 1920s. In film, its stress was on the objective representation of social issues such as post-war poverty, prostitution, imprisonment, addiction and the financial exploitation of the lower classes. It also included films that dealt with the everyday life of "the common man" and working-class collaboration. Apart from Pabst, significant directors included Ernő Metzner, Gerhart Lamprecht, Berthold Viertel, Robert Siodmak, Edgar Ulmer and Slatan Dudow.

interlude will provide a glimpse into the vitalist narratives of the poet Osip Mandelstam, Vygotsky's friend and compatriot, whose work shared significant similarities with European vitalists, including H.D. and T.S. Eliot. H.D.'s and Barnes's severe criticism of mechanism and empirical science as well as their vitalist interventions into recapitulation narratives and the understanding of the universal unconscious are an example of American responses to the same tension. Bryher's journey from a belief in eternal racial memories in her first novel *Development* (1920) to the predominantly materialist approach of her film criticism and her literary treatment of post-war society in *Civilians* (1927) and *Beowulf* (1948) is representative of the European interaction between vitalist and materialist holism. The position she and Sachs occupied in the disputes of European analysts, outlined in chapter three, provide a broader picture of vitalist and materialist trends in European psychoanalysis in the 1920s and the 1930s. It is of course important to stress the role of migration and the exchange of ideas between the three continents. All of the authors discussed here oscillated between at least two (sometimes all three) of the geographical locations mentioned.¹⁴ Globalisation thus had a great impact on their life and thought, but also lay in the background of the often surprisingly similar narratives that surfaced in different cultural circles and under different political regimes.

Mechanist trends in literature and science were a direct consequence of global mechanisation, the association of progress with an increase in industrialisation and the related subjugation of natural forces. Narratives containing such a perception of progress were present in Marxist philosophy,¹⁵ Freud's and Jung's psychoanalysis, mechanist science and various discourses that supported capitalist social structures. The responses to these narratives by those who, like the women in this volume, contested the primacy of industrial development and empirical

¹⁴ Spielrein was Russian, but spent a large part of her life in Europe (Switzerland and, briefly, Germany). H.D. left the USA in 1911 and primarily resided in Switzerland and the UK. Bryher (British) moved between the UK, Switzerland and Germany, visited the United States and also planned a research visit to the Soviet Union (for the purposes of updating her book on the Soviet cinema (*Film Problems* 13)), which never materialised. The largest part of Barnes's life was spent in New York and Paris.

¹⁵ In *The Communist Manifesto* (as well as later in *Capital*), Marx considered the globalisation triggered by the industrial revolution as the precondition of a global proletarian movement (cf. *Selected Writings* 142, 242, 245-250; 377, 572-73).

thought were related to the fact that they were adversely affected by mechanist teleologies. But their reactions were also conditioned by a series of global trends that shaped their personal realities and worldviews. These included shifting class and gender hierarchies, the crisis of religious systems, the increasing importance of Darwinian theories and their various social applications as well as the devastating effect of the two world wars.

As noted earlier, Spielrein, H.D., Bryher and Barnes were themselves directly affected by the modifications in contemporary definitions of gender roles and sexual identities. In addition, their personal correspondence and biographical work reveals the profound effect that the changing class relations had on their perception of their fellow human beings, as well as of their own social vocation. In 1920, H.D.'s and Bryher's understanding of the poet's psychological and biological constitution evidenced a very elitist perception of the "common wo/man" (see chapters two and three). Spielrein's early letters and diaries were equally imbued with the fear of becoming "one of the many" (qtd. in Launer 34) and the dream of being destined for a special purpose in life.¹⁶ In the later course of her career, Spielrein would still think of psychoanalysis as her "calling", but one that was no longer considered to be of divine origin (cf. Launer 276) or to single her out as endowed with special abilities. Following her training at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, where she worked with adolescents from poor backgrounds, Bryher also developed a psychological system that was much more egalitarian than the one found in her early work. H.D., on the other hand, persisted in her universal view of history and the socio-biological distinction between the bisexual female poet and the masses throughout her career (see chapter two). Finally, Djuna Barnes never considered herself as biologically superior, but expressed contempt for the masses who enjoyed the products of the capitalist entertainment industry, which she was determined to challenge in her work (cf. "High and Aloof"; Smorul; Loncraine).

In helping the four women to construct their relationship with history and the human mind, religious narratives were as important as gender and class relations. Vitalist theories were frequently devised by authors who were themselves religious

¹⁶ In the diary entry referred to above, Spielrein wrote: "For this is what robbed me of my night's rest, the thought that I might be only one of the many, that my achievements might not rise above the average and my 'higher calling' might be a ridiculous dream that I now have to pay for." (ibid.)

and rebelled against the contemporary division between religion and science, aiming instead to reinstate a holistic worldview that encompassed a religious, biological and sociological dimension. These authors commonly charged empirical science with soullessness and the inability to perceive the historical and transcendental dimension behind material reality. All of these traits can easily be recognised in the work of Jung, H.D. and Barnes. A more complicated case arises with the likes of Freud, who consciously defined himself as an empirical scientist, but whose theories reveal increasingly vitalist tendencies, particularly those formulated after World War I. The relationship between post-war reality and scientific vitalism has been observed in different ways by Anne Harrington (in connection to biology, neurology and psychology in Germany after World War I), Michal Shapira and Maud Ellmann (in connection to British psychoanalysis after World War II).¹⁷ This relationship will be explored in all of the chapters to follow. I will argue that, even in unreligious authors like Freud, years of global conflict conditioned an increase in vitalist holism, which was due to the capacity of such narratives to function as a defence mechanism in the face of surrounding traumatic events. The most exhaustive analysis of how this defence mechanism operated on a personal level can be found in the chapter on H.D., who – having lost nearly her entire family in World War I – was severely affected by war trauma.

Engagement with and interventions into evolutionary theories are a further common feature of the scientific and literary work produced by Spielrein, H.D., Bryher and Barnes between the 1910s and the 1950s. H.D.'s identification with early forms of marine life, such as the mollusc and the jelly-fish (see chapter two), and Barnes's claim that the soul passes from animal to human and back to animal forms (see chapter four) are an obvious challenge to the notions of progress associated with Darwinism. It is also not surprising that analysts and writers who embraced materialist holism (Spielrein, Bryher and, to a lesser extent, Barnes) preferred Lamarck's explanation of inheritance to the Darwinian model.¹⁸ The dynamic

¹⁷ Cf. *Re-enchanted Science; The War Inside* and "Vaccies Go Home". For a discussion of Ellmann's and Shapira's theories of the psychoanalytic internalization of war-related violence through the image of the destructive infant, see chapter three.

¹⁸ Lamarck believed in the inheritance of acquired characteristics and learned behaviours, whereas Darwin claimed that the variations in nature were chance events and that those who happened to be best adapted to the environment survived. In a certain sense, the Lamarckian analysts featured here

interplay of all of these global trends, the specific scientific and socio-cultural context and the personal history of the authors under discussion provides the methodological framework of this thesis.

If this method is reminiscent of the approach adopted by materialist holists (with their focus on the interaction between personal history and its social environment), this is by no means accidental. Holism is both the method and the subject of this volume. Apart from the four levels of analysis just outlined (personal history, immediate social context, scientific context and global trends), it is important to emphasise the chronological dimension of the chapters to follow. Each spans the development of the author's ideas over a roughly thirty-year period.¹⁹ In this way, it is easier to trace how (and why) certain factors gain significance or dim into the background in a particular context. It also lessens the possibility of confounding early ideas with later ones (as is often done, particularly in the case of Spielrein and Freud). This interpretative strategy has enabled me to address a number of issues which have so far been disregarded or only partially raised.

First, one could legitimately pose the question why the materialist approach of psychoanalysts and directors in Weimar Berlin did not have such a powerful effect on H.D. as it did on her partner (Bryher's and H.D.'s relationship lasted until H.D.'s death in 1961; the two often travelled together and moved in similar circles). The difference, I will argue, depended on personal history. For H.D., universal symbolism and the imagined capacity for regression into the sphere of an eternal ancestral community was a form of defence against the traumatic experience of World War I. Bryher, who suffered lesser losses, had no need for such defences. Apart from this, H.D. had stronger ties to religious beliefs (particularly the Moravian customs on the mother's side of her family) and the gender dynamics of her home environment played a decisive role in her aversion towards empirical scientists, which she could never quite overcome (see chapter two). All of these circumstances made her more inclined towards the universal and vitalist aspects within psychoanalysis than Bryher.

were similar to today's holistic scientists, who emphasise the interaction of the human genetic make-up with environmental factors (cf. Ridley; Mukherjee 410).

¹⁹ Due to Spielrein's tragic death (she was shot by an SS squad in 1942) and the unfavourable position of psychoanalysts in Stalin's Russia, the chronological span of the first chapter is the briefest (it begins in the early 1910s and ends in the early 1930s). The other three chapters explore H.D.'s, Bryher's and Barnes's work between the end of World War I and the years following World War II.

In the case of Djuna Barnes, the approach helps us to understand more about some of the confounding questions that keep resurfacing with respect to the political significance of her work: how one might interpret her specific appropriation of primitivist discourses, what she meant by presenting members of the third sex and pre-industrial characters as animalistic and whether her recognition of the “universal mind” (cf. *New York* 199) in these people was closer to a negative or a romanticised presentation. In order to respond to these questions, it is not sufficient simply to point to the circulation of certain narratives (on primitivism) in the New York or Paris of Barnes’s time, or in the artistic communities which she frequented, and then to search for examples of these in Barnes’s work. Rather, one needs to trace the shifting function of these narratives in the entire system of Barnes’s writing. To paraphrase the Barnesian psychoanalyst (*Nightwood’s* Doctor O’Connor), Barnes’s oeuvre – like everyone else’s – “has a narrative”, but it is a narrative that needs to be “found”.²⁰

A holistic approach to Spielrein’s and Bryher’s writing has made it possible to disentangle their views from the psychoanalytical and literary figures they loved, lived or worked with. In addition, it has proved useful in uncovering their original and so far unrecognised contribution to psychoanalysis, neurology, literature and film criticism. For today’s artists and scholars, Spielrein’s historical figure has several attractive features. She was one of the first women psychoanalysts. At a time like ours, when the issue of gender equality has again come to the focus of media attention, Spielrein serves as a valuable historical role model of the female scientist. In addition, there is the story of all the ways in which her originality was shunned by members of the male psychoanalytic establishment, one of whom was her doctor and lover. For filmmakers, playwrights and fans of historical gossip, there are the tantalising aspects of the Jung-Spielrein affair: whether their relationship was sexual, how important she was in Jung’s life, what role she played in the emotionally intense friendship between Freud and Jung and so forth. Paradoxically, it appears that one of the first women analysts could (even in feminist accounts) only be studied in relation to the two famous psychoanalytic men. This slanted perception of Spielrein’s

²⁰ In *Nightwood*, O’Connor famously tells Nora: “I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it.” (87)

work has led scholars to neglect the later part of her career (the studies she produced in Geneva and Moscow) and has resulted in significant misconceptions (or at least a very incomplete account) of her role in psychoanalytic history. The absence of a systematic study of Bryher's educational, cinematic and political ideas appears to have resulted from a similar oversight. Bryher's work has so far mostly been read in relation to H.D.'s. H.D.'s enduring interest in questions of gender and sexuality was investigated and discovered in the early work of her life-long companion. Consequently, Bryher's autobiographical fiction has received most critical attention. Though her cinematic texts are occasionally referenced (cf. *Tenth Muse* 319-404), they are rarely regarded separately from H.D.'s. As a result, critics have failed to recognise the value (and the psychoanalytic and philosophical sources) of Bryher's and Sachs's psychology of spectatorship or to accord Bryher's *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929) – the first study of Soviet film in the English language – the position it deserves in film history.

It remains to say a few words about the role of psychoanalysis in this thesis. Importantly, what follows is not a psychoanalytic study of literary texts, at least not as it is commonly understood. Rather, focusing on the tension between mechanism, vitalist holism and materialist holism, I will trace narratives shared by psychoanalysis, modernist film and literature and explain the personal, social and political role they played in each context. Thus, all three fields (psychoanalysis, literature and film) will be accorded equal value, without a hierarchical relationship being established between them (as would be the case if one served as an interpretative tool and the other as its object). At certain points, however, my interpretative method does begin to resemble that of psychoanalysis. This is particularly true towards the end of chapters one and two, which deal with the repressed personal subtext of scientific texts and the role of vitalist narratives as modes of defence in traumatic situations. Significantly, though, this is the (materialist) type of analysis that studies personal symbols and images in socio-cultural context, not one that believes it can recognise universal types or psychological structures in all literary texts. The first chapter, on Sabina Spielrein, will offer an insight into the relationship between mechanism, vitalism and materialism in European and Soviet psychoanalysis and will serve as a conceptual and chronological introduction into chapters two and three, which deal

with H.D.'s and Bryher's appropriations and transformations of these narratives in their literary and cinematic work. The final chapter, on Djuna Barnes, will round up the discussion by presenting the most complete subversion of Freudian and Jungian ideas of progress and subjectivity (introduced in chapter one).

From Destruction to Society: Sabina Spielrein and the Causes of Coming into Being

The word “forgotten” appears surprisingly often in narratives on the life and work of Sabina Spielrein. After World War II, her psychoanalytic studies faded into obscurity. It was only with the publication of the Freud-Jung correspondence (1974) that scholars began to take interest in Spielrein’s historical role as a mediator between the two analytic rivals. Three years later, a carton with her letters and diaries was found in the basement of Palais Wilson, the building which had formerly housed the Rousseau Institute, where Spielrein worked until 1923. The first person to publish a selection of these papers was the Jungian analyst Aldo Carotenuto (cf. *A Secret Symmetry*). Carotenuto’s preoccupation with Spielrein’s early work, where the influence of Jung is still strongly felt, has persisted in a number of subsequent publications as well as in popular renditions of Spielrein’s life. The most prominent of these is perhaps John Kerr’s *A Most Dangerous Method* (1994),¹ where a vivid historical account of the Jung-Spielrein-Freud triangle is presented as a significant chapter in the early history of psychoanalysis. Since then, the turbulent relationship between Spielrein, Jung and Freud has inspired one documentary, two theatre plays and two films, the most famous one being David Cronenberg’s *A Dangerous Method* (2011). It is understandable that Spielrein’s life should prove compelling to artists and culture critics: she was one of the first women to become involved in psychoanalysis and definitely the first female patient to do so. Her Russian-Jewish identity corroborates her minority position, which speaks to our own concerns around gender, religion and nationality. Unfortunately, this conception also slanted the reading of Spielrein’s scientific career in a particular direction. Thus, even when her role as a “forgotten” psychoanalytic pioneer was acknowledged in a volume edited by Coline Covington in 2003, the focus on Spielrein’s early studies and the Freud-Jung story remained looming in the background.

Much like Carotenuto, recent psychoanalytic accounts emphasize the importance of Spielrein’s 1912 paper “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being”, in which she introduced the notion of a destructive component of sexuality

¹ In 2011 the revised edition was published under the title *A Dangerous Method*.

that served as a precursor to Freud's death drive. Indeed, Freud himself acknowledged this influence by pointing to Spielrein's destruction essay in a footnote (*BPP* 54). In addition, Spielrein's work in child psychology is often associated with Melanie Klein. A combination of ideas from the 1912 essay and the paper "The Origin of the Child's Words 'Papa' and 'Mama'", written much later, in 1922, are generally linked to oral sadism and Klein's concept of the "good" and "bad" breast (Launer 285; Covington 227-231; Wharton 249). It is important to note, however, that, even if Spielrein did influence Klein, their psychoanalytic standpoints were different. In the 1922 publication there is no mention of a destructive element in the child's psyche. Evidently, the historical parallels established so far are the result of the extensive focus on the initial sequence of Spielrein's career as well as the lack of differentiation between her earlier and later theories.

Although Spielrein's German biography (Richebächer 2005) as well as John Launer's (2015) and Angela Sells' (2017) more recent accounts try to alleviate this inclination by including brief chapters on her activities in Geneva, Moscow and Rostov on Don, their illustration of the significance of Spielrein's work with Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria remains sketchy.² A small number of researchers such as Marie Santiago-Delefosse (2002) and Fernando Vidal (2001) have produced a comparison of Spielrein's and Piaget's views on child thought. Santiago-Delefosse's article also provides valuable insight into the similarities between Spielrein's and Vygotsky's engagement with the affective and social components of language (729-744). However, the few existing studies on Spielrein's psychological career after 1920 still combine her initial Jungian approach with the views she adopted in Geneva (cf. Vidal). And while there are certainly continuing preoccupations in Spielrein's work (child psychology, verbal and non-verbal symbolism, the relationship between conscious and subliminal thought), it is important to keep track of the changes in her attitude as her psychological investigations branched out. Other studies (like Santiago-Delefosse's) examine a relatively small number of texts within a limited time-frame and thus produce an accurate account of a specific point in Spielrein's career, but fail to assess the ways

² This is partly due to the scarcity of archival material, particularly as concerns Spielrein's time in the Soviet Union.

in which her ideas were transformed and the social and professional circumstances that accompanied this transformation. In contrast to the existing publications, this chapter will adopt a holistic approach to Spielrein's psychoanalytic journey, investigating her entire career in its (currently neglected) socio-political context. Focusing specifically on her understanding of instincts, unconscious symbolism and the interplay of biological and social factors, I will show how Spielrein's psychoanalytic position developed from universal symbolism and dialectical drive theory towards a sociogenic approach to individual psychology.

Significantly, this scientific path was opposed to the changes that took place in Freud's and Jung's scientific methodology. In both of Spielrein's male counterparts, one can trace a gradual exclusion of individual symbolism and contemporary social factors in favour of phylogenetically conditioned sexual symbols, accompanied by a vitalist conception of drives (dialectical in Freud's case, monistic in Jung's). Although one of the primary intentions of this chapter is to shift the focus away from Spielrein's personal and professional entanglements with Jung and Freud, the first part will still provide insight into the political ramifications of their ideas of social progress in order to contrast them with Spielrein's and to outline the beginnings of her psychoanalytic development. Even in 1912, Spielrein's social identity (female, Jewish, Russian, ex-patient) conditioned a crucial political difference with respect to Jung's and Freud's narratives of social evolution. In spite of her initial reliance on recapitulation, Spielrein's theory of drives and unconscious processes was more egalitarian. It included a reversal of Freudian and Jungian evolutionary hierarchies, giving prominence to the emotional and the subliminal and thus doing away with the negative associations between certain social groups (women, homosexuals, "primitive" societies) and regressive psychology.

A further step in Spielrein's political and psychological thought was achieved through her renunciation of the death drive (paradoxically, one could say that Spielrein discarded the death drive before Freud "discovered" it). But it was only in the course of her work with Jean Piaget in Geneva (1920-1923) that she gradually relinquished the narrative of cultural recapitulation in favour of a social and neurologically founded model. The trend continued following Spielrein's return to the Soviet Union (1923), where she closely collaborated with Lev Vygotsky and

Alexander Luria. Luria and Vygotsky turned Spielrein's psychoanalytic theories into the foundation of a dynamic, holistic, materialist psychology which not only managed to fuse the findings of Freud, Marx and Pavlov, but also to identify and eliminate the final vestiges of the psychoanalytic progress narrative that opposed pleasure to reality, egocentrism/narcissism to social maturity and the mythological to the scientific mind. In liberating Spielrein from the Freud-Jung paradigm, this chapter intends not only to correct some of the common misconceptions with regard to her work as a psychoanalyst and to acknowledge her wide-ranging role in the history of science, but also to disclose the outlines of a largely forgotten chapter in the history of psychoanalysis, psychology and neurology.

Symbolism: "a Dangerous Method"

In Spielrein's career, the tension between the universal and the socio-individual was most intensely present in the 1910s, during her collaboration with Jung and Freud. Contrasting the political implications of Spielrein's, Freud's and Jung's understanding of drives and the unconscious in relation to social reality is a crucial step in re-positioning Spielrein with respect to her two psychoanalytic mentors. It will also set the stage for a wider discussion of the politics of psychoanalysis in Western and Eastern Europe.

When Freud and Jung parted ways, they disagreed on the question of drives. Yet with respect to the historical and vitalist trend in psychoanalysis, their scientific trajectories were highly compatible. In *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, John Forrester traces the changes in Freud's and Jung's methods of symbol interpretation, specifically concerning the role of universal (phylogenetic) and individual, socially conditioned symbols. In both psychologists, one can observe a gradual turn "from the contemporary system of meaning towards the archaic and the historical" (122). Around the time of his first meeting with Freud (1906), Jung was still engaged in his association experiments. The experiments yielded the discovery of so-called complexes, thematically and affectively organised sets of unconscious ideas. The test results provided the analyst with preliminary insight into the patient's repressed thoughts and served as a point of orientation in the bewildering train of associations and memories that came up in the consulting room ("Psychoanalysis and Association" 289-90). As a rule, the association experiment was followed by an

interview that focused on the patient's dreams and the complexes uncovered through the experimental procedure (cf. Kerr 106-107; "Association, Dream and Hysterical Symptom" 353-438). In these conversations, Jung made use of Freud's free association method. Particularly in the early days, psychoanalytic free association was inherently tied to the patient's personal history. Without the patient's associations, the analyst was unable to make out anything on his/her own. In Freud's early work too free association was defined as the most reliable route to the patient's unconscious, with philological and mythological parallels cautiously offered as a last resort.³ Though Freud and Jung cherished an interest in philology and mythology from the beginning of their careers, a turning point in this context seems to have occurred around 1910.

Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century studies in philology and mythology demonstrated the existence of a number of core myths that appear in different cultures. These core narratives were shown to resemble the linguistic connections between word roots in recently identified language families. In psychoanalysis, linguistic roots were first studied in the context of dream interpretation. Yet it was only gradually that patients were assumed to unconsciously possess the knowledge of historical linguistic analogies that they could employ in the formation of dream symbols. This assumption went hand in hand with psychoanalysts' increasing reliance on recapitulation theory, as did their identification of universal psychological structures. As childhood behaviour, dream imagery and neurotic symptoms became more closely aligned with the reactivation of historical experiences and modes of thought, the possibility was established that one might locate original and universal psychological structures behind the common patterns and word roots revealed by folklore and philology. Freud's explicit formulation of the Oedipus complex in 1909 was one of the outcomes (cf. Kerr 249; Forrester 95).⁴ His elaborate association of the oedipal narrative (and the neuroses more generally) with primal history in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) was a further step along phylogenetic lines. As a consequence,

³ See for example the section on typical dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) (259-95). The first footnote in this section, added in 1925, best illustrates the change that occurred in Freud's methodology in the meantime.

⁴ The term first appears in Freud's article "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (1910).

individual history and the psychological influence of contemporary society got pushed back into the background.⁵

The link between recapitulation theory, universal symbolism and universal psychological structures is also emphasised in *A Most Dangerous Method*. Readers of Kerr's book (and, even more so, viewers of David Cronenberg's 2011 film) could easily interpret the title as a reference to the perils of psychoanalytic transference in the doctor-patient relationship. Yet the title was actually taken from a letter by William James, who, after stressing the scientific contributions of psychoanalysis, issued a warning about the inflexibility of Freud's position and singled out symbolism as "a most dangerous method" (qtd. in Kerr 245). What James had in mind was the difficulty in empirically testing the rightness of the mutual interpretation the patient and the analyst come up with via the free association method. Since the meaning of each symptom/symbol⁶ only became clear in the context of each individual narrative, it was impossible to obtain the simple equation between a symptom/symbol and its cause that the medical sciences held in high regard. Psychoanalysis had, from its inception, maintained a holistic approach to the mind. Early childhood experience determined adult psychological mechanisms in a way that encompassed a number of factors, including instincts, the familial and social environment. In such a dynamic approach it was difficult to offer a general, step-by-step methodology.⁷ Naturally, a method that greatly relied on the clinical experience of the analyst and the patient's emotions as guarantees of success raised many a suspicious eyebrow in the realms of mechanist science.

Of the three scientists discussed here, Jung was the one in whom the complex interaction of social structures and the individual mind produced the greatest apprehension. In the fourth edition of *Symbols of Transformation*, published

⁵ In 1912, both Freud and Jung still allowed for a high significance of individual symbols (Jung noted that "one cannot recount the dream without having to tell the history of half a lifetime" (*Symbols of Transformation* 22)). However, Jung's confident statement at the beginning of *Symbols* that it was "imperative" to broaden the analysis of individual problems "by a comparative study of historical material" (20) was indicative of a wider trend in psychoanalytic investigations.

⁶ In the psychoanalytic treatment of neuroses, symptoms had a symbolic meaning. Hysterical symptoms, for instance, arose from the subject's inability to transfer a traumatic experience into verbal consciousness. The repressed ideas were then expressed directly on the body. Symptoms were thus, quite literally, physical symbols (cf. Forrester 20).

⁷ Kerr gives a detailed overview of Freud's difficulties in presenting his therapeutic methods to the medical establishment (105-29; 158-93; 235-63).

in 1952, he would explicitly define his 1912 work as an attempt to “free medical psychology from the subjective and personalistic bias that characterised its outlook at the time” (37). Aiming his criticism specifically at Freud and Adler, Jung explained that this “personalism [...] left no room for objective, impersonal facts” (ibid.). The link between objectivity and impersonality signals the precarious position of personal history in vitalist and mechanist discourses. Both sought to eliminate the details that were inherently connected to the patient’s personal, social or cultural background, the variations that resisted being reduced to a series of conditioned responses or to embodiments of universal principles. In Freud’s clinical practice, the analysis of individual symbols continued to play an important role, but as time progressed his developmental theories moved ever closer to Jung’s phylogenetic model.

The social causes of this turn towards universal history (at the expense of the individual and the social) were varied and will be discussed in detail throughout the following chapters. Apart from mythological, ethnological and philological researches, they included the rapid spread of Darwinian theories, the crisis of religious worldviews, the rise of global communication technologies, changes in the social dynamics of class, race and gender as well as the psychological impact of the two world wars. In the face of these changes, universal mental structures grounded in a universal history offered a simplicity and stability that was in sharp contrast to the anxiety-provoking insecurity of everyday life and shifting political systems. Still, eliding the social often contains political implications, especially when coupled with narratives of cultural evolution. For both Jung and Freud, there was also a political stake involved in their respective appropriations of the historical, phylogenetic narrative. If individual symbolism sometimes risked incorporating the analyst’s interpretative bias, universal symbolism encompassed a whole array of other dangers.

Jung’s Social Evolution

In 1912, Jung’s genetic model of human development was founded on two principles: the desexualisation of the libido, followed by its employment for non-sexual purposes, and a gradual renunciation of original egocentrism. In the first

edition of *Symbols of Transformation*,⁸ the study that would precipitate his split with Freud, Jung presented both mechanisms as the psychological bedrock of civilizational progress as well as the basis of a socio-biological hierarchy. Adopting a clearly evolutionary framework, he allowed for two types of thought in the contemporary Western individual. Directed thought is logical, narrative and verbal. It predominates in social communication and abstract reasoning. Undirected thought, on the other hand, is visual, associative and symbolical. It gains the upper hand in dreams, mental illness (particularly psychosis) and is the primary mode of thought in children and “primitive” cultures. This type of thinking is egocentric and is chiefly oriented towards the attainment of pleasure, often at the cost of significantly distorting one’s perception of reality. Jung was explicit about the values of directed thought and the backward nature of its evolutionary predecessor. It is to “the tremendous work of education which past centuries have devoted to directed thinking” that contemporary subjects owe “that readjustment of the human mind” that produced “our modern empiricism and technics” (30). While it would be misleading to claim that previous societies had no directed thought at all, in Jung’s work its capacity and frequency is estimated as much lower than that of the civilised man.

This conclusion links on to an elaboration of the first condition of cultural progress, “the mobility and disposability of psychic [libidinal] energy” (ibid.). Ancient societies were unable to divert the libido from its original occupations. Instead of inventing science, they came up with an intricate mythological system, comparable to the dream-world of the modern man. The relationship between science and mythology is therefore defined in oppositional terms and related to the contrast between the reality and pleasure principle. Consequently, mythology is also aligned with undirected thought. In terms of the organism’s adaptation to the environment, undirected thought is “unproductive” (32). It seeks to assimilate reality into its fantastic world-view. On the other hand, verbal or directed thought, which predominates in the scientific realm, “produces innovation and adaptation, copies reality and tries to act upon it” (ibid.). Jung thus added a fourth pair of opposites to the established antitheses between pleasure and reality, undirected and directed

⁸ The original publication was called *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido (Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido)*. The first English translation appeared in 1916 under the title *Psychology of the Unconscious*.

thought and mythology and science. In relation to his/her environment, the individual can be guided by two processes, assimilation or imitation. While assimilation tries to adapt the environment to the narcissistic perspective of the organism, imitation looks to alter the individual thought process to fit external reality. The direct link between imitation and adaptation tips Jung's historical account into an evolutionary hierarchy. By stepping out of his egocentric perception, the modern scientist was able to reach a new level of adaptation and gain an evolutionary advantage over his predecessors.

In Jung's system, the capacity to renounce egocentrism was directly linked to the level of sublimation. In simple organisms, explained Jung, a large portion of libidinal energy was used for the production of ova and spermatozoa. As the number of offspring decreased, new species needed to be better adapted to their environment to ensure survival. A part of their libidinal energy was thus desexualised and used for other purposes (141). In the history of mankind, the desexualised and diverted libido was responsible for the invention of language, art, culture, science and directed thought. Significantly, Jung considered the invention of language and the use of fire (as the first instrument of culture) as the result of the sublimation of autoerotic energy: the phallic hand becomes the fire-producing agent whereas the first words are defined as an "elaboration of the mating call" (164). Conscious or verbal (directed) thought requires a subject attentive to objects in the outside world. The decrease in sexual libido (specifically autoerotic libido) is thus equated with an increased reality function, the development of language and conscious reasoning. And it also constitutes the criterion for determining a community's developmental stage.

According to Jung, redirecting the libido from its original object requires both effort and training. In a description of "primitive" rituals, in which he observed initial attempts to redirect libidinal energy, he noted the energetic and often strenuous nature of these activities. This, claimed Jung, was in marked contrast to the "notorious laziness" of "primitive" societies (158). If we connect Jung's statement with the allegedly effortless (or less laborious) nature of undirected thought (cf. 38), the link he draws between egocentrism, effortless pleasure and non-Western or ancient societies becomes clear. For him, Western societies were more advanced because they had, throughout the generations, been willing to limit their pleasure in

the service of scientific and technological ventures. Moreover, Jung was convinced that this redirection of sexual energies was still going on. In a footnote he referred to Malthusianism as “an artificial extension of this natural process” (141). The fleeting comment speaks volumes about Jung’s socio-political views. Originally, Malthusianism refers to the late-eighteenth-century economic theory of Thomas Robert Malthus, which claimed that the growth of population is exponential, while the growth of food supply is linear. Whenever population growth exceeds food supply, various catastrophes – such as starvation, war or disease – occur. To prevent this, Malthus recommended a series of preventive “checks”, including abstinence as well as restricting marriage among the poor and “defective”. Evidently, these theories fit well with early-twentieth-century eugenic thought and, in this case, Jung’s depiction of social evolution steers dangerously close to an advocacy of eugenic policies.⁹ His relegating of current socioeconomic questions to a footnote is in line with his universalist perception of history. In this scheme, cultural phenomena such as ancient mythology or modern science and industry are merely manifestations of a universal psycho-evolutional process (sublimation and adaptation), just as, in Jung’s later work, individual life-events will pose as the material manifestation of archetypes.

Freud’s Dialectics

Freud’s binary drive theory originated around the time of his phylogenetic turn. In his early work, Freud’s understanding of instincts was far more flexible, though the distinction between sexuality and other types of instinct (nourishment, self-preservation etc.) was already laid down (cf. “Three Essays” 167-170). According to Freud, the libido, or the sexual drive, simultaneously serves a sexual and a cultural function: it is primarily through the sublimation of libidinal attachments that artistic and scientific achievements are made possible. This part of Freud’s theory was compatible with Jung’s. Disputes arose when Jung wished to do away with other

⁹ This was a further point of contention between Jung and Freud. As is well known, Freud’s psychoanalysis was partly formed in response to medical views endorsing degeneration theory (cf. Frosh; Kerr 33, 94, 341). Consequently, Freud always insisted on sexuality as the main social factor in the genesis of neuroses, downplayed the role of heredity (though he occasionally indicated an inborn predisposition as one of the possible factors in his case histories) and eschewed discussions of racial differences. Of course, Freud’s Jewish identity played a large part in his sensitivity to these matters.

drives altogether, claiming that, historically, there was only one kind of libidinal energy which could be transformed to perform a number of functions in the organism (*Symbols* 137; *FR* 360-365; *CD* 117-18). Essentially, Jung replaced Freud's dualistic system with a monistic one.

Freud replied in an article that introduced the concept of narcissism (1914), rejecting Jung's hypothesis and stressing that his own distinction between ego- and libidinal drives was, first and foremost, of biological origin.¹⁰ Yet the biological image he provided in support of his argument reveals a great deal about the nature of his dualism:

The individual does carry on a twofold existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other as a link in a chain, which he serves against his will, or at least involuntarily. The individual himself regards sexuality as one of his own ends; whereas from another point of view he is an appendage of his germ-plasm, at whose disposal he puts his energies in return for a bonus of pleasure. He is a mortal vehicle of a possibly immortal substance (*FR* 362).¹¹

The mystical undertones in Freud's image indicate the proximity of his ideas to vitalist concepts. Indeed, his reference to biological theories of the different chemical nature of germ-cells and the potential immortality of the protozoa (Freud referred first to the immunological studies of Paul Ehrlich and then, famously, to August Weismann's theories in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) can easily be described as instances of biological vitalism ("Instincts" 124; *FR* 174-176).¹² Though the sexual function always enjoyed a privileged position in Freud's work, "On Narcissism" constitutes the first attempt to explicitly endow sexuality with a different nature from any other type of instinct, since other instincts are primarily oriented towards satisfying individual interests. The sexual function then is the only function ensuring the life of the species *before* – or even at the expense of – the individual. The essay also points to a value-laden dialectics of drives that was beginning to emerge in his work. While the meaning of the libido revolves around culture, progress and life, in Freud's late writings egocentric drives connote pleasure, but often stall development

¹⁰ In "On Narcissism" Freud distinguished between a general "ego-interest", "ego-libido" and "object-libido" (*FR* 360-368).

¹¹ The same image appears in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915) (124), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917) (412), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) (45) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923) (46).

¹² This refers to the specific claims by Weismann and Ehrlich Freud makes use of rather than to the entirety of their work.

(cf. *CD* 61). With the introduction of the death drive – a regressive power working in opposition to the progressive pull of sexuality – Freud’s perception of the libido as a self-transcending life-force came out even more prominently. Freud’s and Jung’s reverence for the universal unconscious indicates their preference for the timeless, collective sphere (as opposed to individual existence), also visible in their transcendental conception of drives (whether dialectical or monistic). Though the preference appears earlier and is more pronounced in Jung’s work, Freud certainly moved in a similar direction following their split.

In his seminal book on the relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and contemporary biology, Frank J. Sulloway points out the connection between Freud’s increasing reliance on the recapitulation narrative, the introduction of the death drive and the gradual decline in the importance of environmental influences in Freudian theory (393-419). Initially, Freud’s explanation of nervous illness was founded on childhood sexual trauma. This was followed by the fixation-frustration-regression model. A memorable event from a person’s childhood caused them to cling to an early (pre-genital) stage of development. In adult life, traumatic or similar experiences could precipitate a regression to the previous manner of functioning. In this model, there were two factors directly linked to the person’s familial and social surroundings: the childhood experience and the frustrating circumstances of adult life. As Freud’s developmental scheme became more fixed, however, and more grounded in recapitulation, he began to argue that the child would follow a certain pre-determined biological trail in spite of what was going on around him/her (cf. “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” 173). The “automatic consequences of Freud’s biogenetic law” (Sulloway 399) were in conflict with his previous model. If, in normal circumstances, reaction formation prevented a regression to earlier stages of development once their time has passed, why did some individuals still regress? Traumatic experience or unbearable circumstances appeared to be the only viable explanation, until the introduction of an organic regressive force. Recapitulation itself was now presented as the consequence of a regressive tendency that looked to restore or maintain the organic status quo (the death drive) (cf. *BPP* 37).

The gradual restriction of the role of social and individual experience in the genesis of nervous illness can best be explained by looking at the changes in how

violence and self-harm were accounted for in Freudian theory. Before he came up with the notion of the death drive, Freud interpreted violent behaviour by resorting to external causes. The death drive instigated a need for violence – a quantity of violent energy – into the very heart of individual psychic life. One should not mistake the Freudian death drive for the biological capacity of every human being to resort to aggression in certain situations. In the latter explanation, aggression is elicited by environmental triggers. In the Freudian scheme, a certain amount of violence is present in the person's system *to begin with* and needs to be disposed of: "The organism preserves his own life by destroying an extraneous one." ("Why War?" 211) This form of natural sadism was coupled with the introduction of primary masochism. While, in 1915, Freud still explicitly denied its existence and defined masochism as sadism turned inwards (due to social obstacles) ("Instincts" 127), in 1920 he revised this view to allow for the possibility of an original type of masochism (*BPP* 53; "Economic Problem" 164).

The unwillingness to confront the social causes of violence was itself due to social factors, one of which was the recent experience of global industrial warfare. In *Reenchanted Science*, Anne Harrington points to the significance of World War I in motivating a turn to vitalist trends in the scientific realm (cf. 30-33). Michal Shapira adopts a similar approach in his analysis of the relationship between Kleinian psychoanalysis and its World-War-II setting (cf. *War Inside* 87-111). In both cases, one can witness a turn inwards in the attempt to pinpoint the causes of human suffering and/or violent behaviour. Of course, the two stages of this "inward turn" were not unrelated. Kleinian theory built directly onto Freud's notion of the death drive and, in many ways, pushed his emphasis of universal relations (at the expense of the specific and the social) to the extreme. To paraphrase Shapira, one might say that, at a certain stage in their careers, both Freud and Klein "looked to the war to look away from it and into the self" (90).

The death drive played a central role regarding another political aspect of Freudian theory. In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), the existence of the death drive was heralded as the primary reason for the predicted breakdown of the Marxist project (112-14). Freud was quick to reject the claim that the abolition of private property would put an end to war. If material goods were equally shared by all

members of the community, he speculated, a potential source of animosity would still lurk in the field of sexual relationships. If one removed this obstacle too and allowed total sexual freedom, one could not “easily foresee what new paths the development of civilization could take” (113). One thing, however, remained certain: “This indestructible feature of human nature [the death drive] will follow it there.” (ibid.) If analysed in detail, the line of Freud’s argument reveals interesting anxieties (and defences).

While a fairer distribution of material goods is favourably regarded by Freud, the primary source of violence is proclaimed to reside in human nature rather than economic relations. The narrative of the progressive removal of social restrictions therefore moves on to the sexual sphere. This is the first difficult point. Freud was visibly uncomfortable about the prospect of eliminating all sexual boundaries. For apart from endangering the family, “the germ-cell of civilization” (ibid.),¹³ total sexual freedom would pose significant problems within the psychoanalytic account of social progress. Like Jung, Freud believed cultural accomplishments were only possible by means of sublimation, a redirection of a certain amount of sexual energy (cf. *CD* 96; “Civilised Morality” 185-96). Without culturally induced repression, sublimation would be robbed of one of its driving forces. The notion of the death drive thus contributed to Freud’s resolution in two ways: it made the social repression of instincts even more necessary (in order to reign in the natural aggressiveness of humankind) and it prevented him from looking more closely at the ways social restrictions could themselves lead to violence.

Freud continued to outline his ambivalent position on Marxism in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933).¹⁴ Here, it is no longer merely the

¹³ Evidently, the heterosexual family enjoyed a privileged position in Freudian theory as it was the source of the first sexual attachments and repressions. The depiction of the family as the “germ-cell” of civilization not only places it into the centre of human sexuality and culture, but also relates it to the alleged immortality of germ-cells described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As the central locus of sexual reproduction, the family reaches beyond the scope of individual pleasure to secure the life of the species.

¹⁴ Freud’s analysis also contains an insightful criticism of Marxist thought and Bolshevik rule in Russia. He observed that Russian Bolshevism had created a “ruthless prohibition of thought” (179), which he compared to religious dogmatism (in the 1930s, the opinion was not unfounded). He further noted that the un-nuanced rejection of and animosity towards other political options was one of the principal modes of maintaining unity in the country. Finally, he turned to the question of Marxist dialectics. Freud warned that it struck him as strange that “the changes of social stratification” could “arise from one another in the manner of a dialectical process” (176). This did not seem to him particularly “materialistic”, but rather “like a precipitate of the obscure Hegelian philosophy in whose

death drive that poses a threat to social equality. It is also recapitulation. “A mass of human beings,” explained Freud, “undergo a process of cultural development [...] independent of economic conditions” (178). Echoing Jung, he claimed that “the progressive strengthening of the scientific spirit” (ibid.) constitutes an essential part of this development. The expansion of scientific thought was thus presented as a biological condition for the establishment of a peaceful society. But since only certain community members were in possession of such a psychological structure, this requirement implied a new division into social classes. Not long before the publication of *New Introductory Lectures*, the political consequences of Freud’s psychology were explicitly formulated in “Why War?” (1932).¹⁵ Apart from a summary of his drive theory, Freud’s letter to Albert Einstein presented readers with an outline of the psychoanalyst’s ideal social structure. Simply put, the society should mimic the make-up of the scientific mind. According to Freud, social progress was achieved by two principal means: “a progressive displacement of instinctual aims” accompanied by “the strengthening of the intellect” and “the internalisation of aggressive impulses” (214).¹⁶ This hypothesis simultaneously provided the answer to Freud’s question why certain individuals felt an aversion towards violent conflict while others were drawn into it with ease. This, he suspected, had more to do with the interplay of drives than it did with education or ethics. Since Freud and his addressee had successfully managed to internalise aggression and strengthen their intellect, they were “organic pacifists” (215). This gave them a biological advantage over others, which the society should employ to its benefit:

school Marx graduated” (ibid.). It is almost amusing how exactly Freud pinpointed the weaknesses of Marxist dialectics while pronouncing the dialectical and universalist aspects of his own system a logical necessity.

¹⁵ In 1931 the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation was instructed by the Permanent Committee for Literature and Arts of the League of Nations to organise exchanges of letters between prominent intellectuals on subjects of common interest. One of the first people to be approached by the Institute was Einstein, who in turn suggested Freud. In June 1932 the secretary of the Institute wrote to Freud, who readily agreed to participate. To his surprise, the question Einstein posed was if he, as an expert in human instincts and emotions, could suggest methods of preventing armed conflict.

¹⁶ Freud believed that the displacement of instincts and internalization of aggression could only be performed within limits without causing suffering and mental illness. The progress of civilization may be defined as the gradual increase in the amount of instinct to be displaced without harm to the individual. According to him, certain individuals were endowed with a capacity for sublimation significantly higher than the rest. This was the biological predisposition of the scientific mind (cf. *CD* 78).

One instance of the innate and the ineradicable inequality of men is their tendency to fall into the two classes of leaders and followers. The latter constitute the vast majority; they stand in need of an authority which will make decisions for them and to which they for the most part offer an unqualified submission. This suggests that more care should be taken than hitherto to educate an upper stratum of men with independent minds [...] whose business it would be to give direction to the dependent masses. (212)

The “leaders”, the individuals endowed with the most pliable libido and a “constitutional intolerance of war” (215), would guide the violent and less intellectual masses to a better tomorrow. In Freud’s letter, this “upper stratum of men” is associated with the powers of Eros (212). Predictably, the masses occupy the position of the death drive; their energies need to be displaced and moulded to enable the group’s constitutional improvement.

That Freud occasionally got carried away in phantasies of grandeur concerning his scientific mission (as well as the social role of psychoanalysis more generally) is well-documented (cf. Sulloway 445-496). Yet perhaps the more worrying aspect is the frequency with which one encounters similar depictions of the relationship between the intellectual and the masses in biographical accounts of modernist scientists and artists. It is not by accident that all of the analysts and authors discussed in this thesis, with the possible exception of Djuna Barnes,¹⁷ at one point entertained notions of a heroic destiny. Some, like Spielrein and Bryher, gave them up in favour of left-wing views on social equality. Others, like Freud, Jung or H.D., did not. As the following chapters will show, the development of their psychoanalytic systems was inextricably linked with these political ideas.¹⁸

Spielrein’s Dialectics

Spielrein’s intervention into Freud’s and Jung’s narratives of progress could be described as a gender-based, but also a Marxist inflection. Her early model of symbolic thought operated with the distinction between the individual/contemporary and the collective/archaic. Like Jung, she emphasized the role of recapitulation in a person’s desires and behaviour. Indeed, in 1912, Spielrein went so far as to claim

¹⁷ Barnes’s animosity towards the masses was grounded in her rejection of the capitalist spectacle rather than in the belief in her own heroic mission (see chapter four).

¹⁸ Of course, it would be quite wrong to say that one could not, at the same time, engage with tales of heroism and left-wing thought. This was certainly true of H.D., and partly also of Freud himself.

that “all passing things are only allegories, perhaps of unknown primal experiences that seek analogues in the present” (Covington and Wharton 189). While individual experience is different for each person, “the depth of the psyche knows no ‘I’, but only its summation, the ‘we’” (ibid.). The further one moves into the unconscious, the more universal and typical the images. Unlike Freud, who allowed for experiences and desires that were in no way connected to phylogenetic, but only to individual history, for Spielrein all communication and behaviour were the result of a dynamic interaction between the individual present and primal ideas. Individual life-events serve as triggers that summon up unconscious complexes. A complex,¹⁹ by Spielrein’s definition, is a “particle that has differentiated out of our primal experience” (193). This experience is then either acted out in the present or transformed into a work of art. As for Freud and Jung, for Spielrein too works of art were closer to universal than individual imagery; it was precisely this primal quality that constituted their attraction. But it was not merely art that based its communicative capacity in universal symbolism. It was language as well. “Words,” explained Spielrein, “are used to mould universally human and universally comprehensible ideas around the personal” (192). The foundation of art, language and communication is thus lodged in the unconscious. It is the unconscious that supplies the universal aspect of meaning that enables us to be understood and it is also the unconscious that guides our individual actions and provides them with significance and affective charge.

The primal and universal therefore enjoys a somewhat privileged position in Spielrein’s historical outline of the mind. Individual and contemporary events are, after all, only important in so far as they trigger collective complexes. While growing stress on the universal and phylogenetic can be noted in Freud’s and Jung’s approach to symbolism after 1910, one major difference between Spielrein and her male counterparts concerns the value of these primal experiences. For Jung, the process of differentiation was synonymous with adaptation and was, as in most evolutionary narratives of the time, a harbinger of biological progress.²⁰ For Spielrein, on the other hand, un-differentiation (a return to the universal meaning of the

¹⁹ The term “complex” was adopted from Jung.

²⁰ This understanding originated from Herbert Spencer, who claimed that all things in the universe develop from simple, undifferentiated homogeneity to complex, differentiated heterogeneity.

unconscious) constituted the foundation of social life. As will be seen in the following chapters, Spielrein was not the only woman (and ex-patient) to extoll universal unconscious symbolism and describe it as the source of art and mutual understanding. One of the possible reasons for this reversal of values with respect to mainstream psychoanalytic narratives was the fact that, within these narratives, female psychology was often aligned with regressive tendencies. In Freudian psychoanalysis, for instance, women were described as more narcissistic than men (*FR* 373-374). After 1920, “regressive” psychological tendencies gained a further negative dimension due to their conceptual alignment with the death drive. Significantly, in 1912, Spielrein still accepted the axiom of women’s egocentric nature: “For man, who plays the active role in captivating women, subject images predominate; for woman, who has to tempt man, regressive images normally gain the upper hand. [...] Woman contemplates how she can please ‘him’ and this touches upon the essential homosexuality and autoeroticism of the female” (197). Evidently, man is here described not only as the active agent, but also as the more differentiated one. Yet, in Spielrein’s system, woman’s “regressive” nature and her proximity to unconscious modes of thought had positive rather than negative connotations. The same can be said of autoerotic and homosexual desire, although they are presented within a clearly heteronormative framework (a woman’s homosexual tendencies are derived from her self-regard under the male gaze). At this stage, Spielrein had begun questioning the gender politics of Freudian and Jungian theories and producing her own model of the interaction between the collective unconscious and individual experience, though elements of patriarchal ideas persisted in her description of male-female relationships.

Another original aspect of Spielrein’s early publications on drives and the unconscious had more to do with her philosophical and political background. A number of authors who studied Spielrein’s work (Kerr, Sells, Launer) have noted a specificity about her psychoanalytic theories: their foregrounding of a dynamic, transformational process (349-388; 119-128; 231-251). From her “Transformation Papers” (extracts from a diary written in 1906 and 1907), her dissertation (1911) and destruction paper (1912), through to the later work she produced in Berlin (1913-1914), Geneva (1920-1923) and Moscow (1923-1931), transformation remains a key

mechanism in Spielrein's psychoanalytic models. In her 1912 conception of symbolism, it consists of a creative merger of the archaic, universal and collective with the contemporary, specific and individual. In her drive theory, it takes place through the fusion of two aspects of the sexual instinct, which is, simultaneously, an instinct of destruction and transformation (the destruction of previous entities being the precondition of creation). Owing to its stress on the dynamic and productive synthesis of disparate elements, Spielrein's understanding of transformation had much in common with Marxist dialectics. Her early correspondence evidences her familiarity with Marxist theory. In one of Spielrein's letter drafts, she criticised Jung for his negative perception of socialism, challenging his belief that the rich were also the ablest in society (qtd. in Launer 120). In Zürich and Vienna, she was on good terms with Tatiana Rosenthal, another Russian analyst whose Marxist affiliations preceded the 1917 Revolution (Launer 371; Miller 41).²¹ In this segment of her psychoanalytic career, however, Spielrein was still critical of Marx's reduction of human behaviour to socioeconomic factors (Covington and Wharton 22). As we will see, Spielrein's relationship with Marxism developed along similar lines as her psychoanalytic approach: it proceeded from a universal dialectical system to a systematic study of contemporary social conditions and their influences on the biology of the mind.

Marxism, Instincts and War

Spielrein's early drive theory, as outlined in her essay "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being", has been extensively analysed in historical and biographical accounts of her contributions to psychoanalytic knowledge. Indeed the publication constitutes a crucial (though only the first) stage in Spielrein's psychoanalytic development. On the one hand, the destruction essay served as the springboard for Spielrein's later studies on symbolism, drives and childhood thought. On the other, a large part of Spielrein's claims in her destruction essay – which are still used to define her position in psychoanalytic history²² – were dismissed in her later work,

²¹ According to James L. Rice, Zürich was a favourite destination for Russian medical students, many of whom were "dissidents and sometime revolutionaries" (19). Jung's psychoanalytic discussion group included five Russian students, among them Spielrein, Rosenthal and Max Eitington.

²² As observed, Spielrein has repeatedly been compared to Klein. Covington adds a comparison to Karl Abraham and Donald Winnicott via the link of oral sadism (226-231). Angela Sells extends the

including the existence of a death drive.²³ As with Freud and Jung, one can only properly determine Spielrein's position if one applies a chronological dimension to her work and regards it in its social, personal and scientific context. So far, most authors have observed Spielrein's drive theory through the personal and scientific lens. Yet a shift of perspective to the socio-political element paints a new and intriguing picture.

Spielrein differentiated between an instinct for nurturing, self-preservation and the preservation of the species (the sexual instinct).²⁴ Unlike Freud, she described the instinct for self-preservation as simple and static, originating solely from a positive component.²⁵ The sexual instinct, on the other hand, is dynamic and ambivalent since it consists of a destructive and creative force and serves both individual and collective purposes (Covington and Wharton 185-189). Spielrein's drive theory is therefore different from Jung's, where all instincts are ultimately of libidinal origin, but also distinct from Freud's contesting and opposing relationship between the libido and the death drive. In comparison with Freud's, Spielrein's conception of drives is (in the Marxist sense) more properly dialectical: caught in a competitive interaction, Freudian drives are not capable of creative synthesis in the way that Spielrein's are. Another important difference concerns the political dimension of Spielrein's destructive drive. As an essential component of sexuality, destruction loses the negative connotations it had in Freud's theory. In addition, it is not associated with phylogenetic reversal or with any specific group of people whose psychological constitution would be defined as "regressive". Spielrein's drive is gender-neutral and its symbolism is equally present in mythological traditions, contemporary art and philosophy.²⁶ In her perception of human biological and social

parallel to thinkers like Georges Bataille and Camille Paglia (114). If one focuses solely on Spielrein's destruction essay, such parallels are legitimate. Yet one should also look beyond these to the innovative theories and scientific relationships that she formed later.

²³ Spielrein's last direct reference to the destructive aspect of sexuality appears in her 1912 essay "Contributions to the Knowledge of a Child's Soul" (SS 144-167; cf. Sells 133). She will occasionally continue to speak of rivalry in the context of oedipal relationships (cf. SS 225-229) but without reference to inherited violent urges, and even this will significantly decline after 1921.

²⁴ In Spielrein's early work the term "instinct" (Instinkt) and drive (Trieb) are used synonymously. The later differentiation between instincts as primarily biological and drives as a feature of Freud's metapsychology was never firmly established in Spielrein's texts.

²⁵ In "Why War?" Freud defined the instinct for self-preservation as a libidinal drive that needed to have the death drive (in the form of externalised aggression) at its disposal to achieve its aims (209).

²⁶ Her examples of the symbols of the sexual instinct include episodes from Russian folktales, Nietzsche's philosophy, Wagner's operas, Christian and Jewish religious tales (202-210).

history, there is no sense of betterment that can be detected in Freud's, Jung's or even Marx's stories of progress. For Spielrein in the 1910s, history is merely the fusion of the old with the new (primal complexes with individual experience) or of the old to create the new (sexuality). In spite of these political differences between Spielrein and her mentors, a mutual fondness for the transcendental (though unconscious in Freud's case) accounted for a methodological similarity.

From a structural point of view, Spielrein's argument unfolds in much the same manner as Jung's or Freud's. The first framework she provided for her drive theory was biological. Like Freud with his reliance on Weismann, Spielrein attempted to ground her model in a somewhat mystical interpretation of the reproduction of unicellular organisms – the first link in the evolutionary chain – which she compared to germ-cells in the human body. Spielrein did not build her argument around the immortality of germ-cells. Instead she stressed the fact that the singular identity of two cells disappears before a new one can be formed (186). It is this cycle of destruction and transformation that forms the eternal element in Spielrein's theory. Following the biological or evolutionary perspective, the essay turns to mythology, folk tales and religious narratives, where Spielrein discovered abundant images of sacrifice and rebirth and presented these as symbolic representations of the inherent ambivalence of human sexuality (202-210). The attempt to find a common thread between a universal evolutionary model and several mythological traditions (while occasionally reaching out to examples from literature and philosophy) and to then present this process as an omnipresent principle behind individual, culturally specific variations constitutes the common feature in Spielrein's, Jung's and Freud's notions of symbolism and drive theory around 1912. It is also what endows their theories with a vitalist flavour. Current histories of psychoanalysis rarely address the inextricable connection between biology (particularly cell biology), mythology and the understanding of drives as a dynamic trans-individual force within the body. In early-twentieth-century vitalist narratives, it is impossible to distinguish between the biological and the transcendental.

In this context, it is interesting that Spielrein's destruction essay was simultaneously attacked for being too biological (Freud) and too mystical (Paul Federn in his 1913 review) (cf. Sells 136). Recent biographical accounts of

Spielrein's life have continued the trend set by her contemporaries. John Launer's biography, conspicuously named *Sex Versus Survival*, is intent on identifying and celebrating the Darwinian paradigm in Spielrein's early work. The most recent biography by Angela Sells, on the other hand, is keen to commend Spielrein for her feminist mysticism. The point both biographers miss is that the biological and mystical trend in Spielrein's psychoanalytic approach were linked and that the social and scientific scope of this fusion reached far beyond Spielrein's ideas. In the following decade, Freud, and indeed psychoanalysis as a whole, would be reproached for its metaphysical undertones by Russian psychologists (see the last three sections of this chapter). Jung's mystical inclinations were criticised by Freud and continue to be emphasized with regard to his work. In fact, around 1912, the work of all three thinkers was, to varying degrees, progressing towards a mystical biology that began with recapitulation and universal symbolism and ultimately led towards a transcendental understanding of drives. This progress went hand in hand with the gradual elision of contemporary social circumstances. Although Spielrein's drive theory was politically more egalitarian, it was still founded on the premise that the negative feelings related to sexual encounters were not merely social, but also due to the destructive component of sexuality (Covington and Wharton 186).

Significantly, the destruction essay establishes a link between neurosis and war, the link that served as one of the primary triggers for Freud's formulation of the death drive in 1920. At this stage, Spielrein ascribed neurosis to the "derangement of the sexual instinct" (194) brought on by war rather than to war-trauma itself. The external presence of destruction and suffering calls up images associated with the destructive component of the sexual instinct. Even in healthy individuals, these images can make life feel "transient and aimless" (ibid.). In Spielrein's model, it is therefore not just real wartime events that alter the psyche through their traumatic impact. These events are traumatic only to the extent that they activate images (or complexes) that were present in the mind to begin with. One might rightly pose the question how Spielrein was able to immerse herself in a study of war-neurosis before World War I was even on the cards. The riddle is easily solved if one takes into account her Russian background. Although Spielrein was already in Zürich at the time of the 1905 Revolution, her family members were active participants and

supporters of socialist values. Her brother Isaac, for instance, became a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party when he was still a teenager. The violent events of the Revolution were preceded by the Russo-Japanese war. Due to their significant impact on her family, Spielrein would have been thoroughly informed about (and emotionally involved in) these political struggles.

In the Russian scientific and cultural realm, one can also locate a series of possible predecessors of Spielrein's destructive instinct. The most important of these was probably Élie Metchnikoff (cf. Sells 118), but Rice also points to the influence of Mikhail Bakunin and the Nihilists (29).²⁷ Alexander Etkind observes the connection between sexual love, death and rebirth as a central theme in Russian modernist culture, particularly in the work of three philosophers Vladimir Solovyev, Vasily Rozanov and Nikolai Fyodorov that Spielrein was familiar with (52-53). As Rice concludes, Spielrein's drive theory must have been considered by her colleagues a properly Russian contribution (29), although European analysts were not without similar role models (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer etc.). In sum, Spielrein's theory of instincts was significantly shaped by her political and cultural background, as is evidenced by the influence of Marxist thought on her dialectical conception of drives. In addition, her formulation of a death instinct before Freud may be connected both to the violent events of the 1905 Revolution and to similar philosophical and biological concepts in circulation in Russia at the time. Her outline of the relationship between war, neurosis and a destructive aspect of sexuality corroborates the historical connection between the "invention" of the death drive and actual social conflict, also observed in relation to Freud's work.

On Regression and Representation

Recapitulation theory did not only play a role in Spielrein's first psychoanalytic publications. It determined how she was perceived by her peers and later critics who tried to give shape to what is known about her life and career. Spielrein's Jewish

²⁷ Metchnikoff believed that early death was caused by microbes in the body (especially in the colon) that led to the premature aging of tissues and organs. This could be prevented by external interventions that would prolong human life until a natural death wish set in. His book *The Nature of Man: Studies in Optimistic Philosophy* was published in Paris in 1903 and was immensely popular. Bakunin is well known for his saying that the passion of destruction is also a creative passion. The Nihilists were fierce opponents of the tsarist regime. Their revolutionary efforts ended with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.

identity was not uncommon in psychoanalytic circles. The reputation of psychoanalysis as a “Jewish science” and its consequent anti-establishment position was repeatedly stressed by Freud and his followers. At the same time, it was then a widely accepted assumption that rates of nervous illness were higher among Jews than among other groups in Europe, a fact often taken up by racial discourses as proof of biological deficiency (cf. Kerr 25). As Stephen Frosh observes, it was precisely by embracing the recapitulation hypothesis within psychoanalysis that Freud managed to turn the tables. In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) he would proclaim the reliance “on intellectual understanding [...] rather than emotion and mysticism”, the same trait he had earlier defined as the precondition of progress, as an essential part of Jewish heritage and thus “a sign of cultural or even racial superiority” (52).²⁸ There is no doubt that Freud’s theory was partly formed in response to his anti-Semitic surroundings in the same way as H.D.’s was a reaction to her experience of patriarchy and heteronormativity (see chapter two). In Spielrein’s case, there was a list of other traits that could potentially designate her as biologically (and chronologically) inferior.

One of these was her national and cultural heritage. In an intriguing study on Russian stereotypes in the Freud-Jung correspondence, Rice points to the fact that, for both analysts, the Russian character was connected to “unbridled instinctual life” (*FR* 292) and “an archaic constitution” (*FR* 245), phrases which would again surface in Freud’s treatment of the Russian aristocrat Sergei Pankejeff (alias the Wolf Man) as indicative of obsessional neurosis. Jung was even more straightforward about connoting regression with “Russian material”, claiming that, in Russia, the “individual is as ill differentiated as a fish in a shoal” (qtd. in Rice 26). Taking into account the evolutionary meaning differentiation had in Jung’s understanding of mental life, it is clear that the intellectual capacities of the Russian population are here presented as phylogenetically inferior.²⁹ Spielrein’s case contained a further feature that

²⁸ As is well known, Spielrein’s Jewish identity also played an important role in her relationship with Jung. Jung’s idealised and generalised perception of Jewish women (and series of love affairs with them) is referred to by Kerr as his “Jewess complex” (56). On the other hand, Jung’s own social position (wealthy, respected, Christian) was initially attractive to Freud as a way of improving the institutional position of psychoanalysis (Frosh 42-43; Kerr 134-35).

²⁹ Thus when Jung further claimed that, in Russia, “the problem of the masses” (ibid.) needed to be addressed first, what he had in mind was not the economic, political or educational deprivation of

contemporary sexological studies would link to her Slavic origins. As Kerr remarks, ever since Krafft-Ebing, masochistic tendencies were assumed to be a congenital preference among Slavic women (33). If primary (congenital) masochism was, above all, “feminine” (“Economic Problem” 162), it was a most unsurprising trait in a female Russian patient. Furthermore, its psychoanalytic link with anal eroticism and the death drive rendered it as an inherently regressive phenomenon.

Finally, Spielrein’s history as a hysterical patient not only played into the current scientific prejudice about Jewishness,³⁰ it also determined the way her work was perceived by her colleagues and by critics for decades to come. As the phylogenetic paradigm in psychoanalysis grew stronger, so did the alignment of neuroses (including hysteria) with regression.³¹ Following her presentation at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Freud referred to the personal background of Spielrein’s theories (*Freud/Jung Letters* 46). Long after her work was rediscovered, her hypotheses continued to be read as symptoms of her condition rather than scientific psychological assumptions in their own right (cf. Sells 134).³²

Though today we seldom link womanhood, Jewishness, neurosis or Russian identity with regression, a conflation of death, primal sexuality, masochism and mysticism continues to haunt the artistic representations of Spielrein’s life. Certainly, Cronenberg’s version of Spielrein – a masochistic (though emancipated) femme fatale – does little to break the spell of masochism, danger, death and seduction that has surrounded the historical person of Sabina Spielrein for decades.³³ As we saw, these attributes were intrinsically related to psycho-historical narratives that heavily

Russian citizens, but the developmental stage that the Russian masses needed to reach before they could reap the fruits of civilization.

³⁰ Jews were frequently perceived as both hysterical and feminised (cf. Sells 159; Frosh 39). A link was also established between the “feminine” character of the Jew and homosexual desire (Brickman qtd. in Frosh 39).

³¹ Cf. *Totem and Taboo*: “Neurotics [...] may be said to have inherited an archaic constitution as an atavistic vestige; the need to compensate for this at the behest of civilisation is what drives them to their immense expenditure of mental energy” (77).

³² Sells names several authors who searched Spielrein’s work for evidence of hysteria (with psychotic episodes) or its current diagnostic counterparts (such as borderline disorder) (132).

³³ Sells points to an article in which Cronenberg’s 2011 film about Spielrein and Jung is related to the rise in cinematic motifs of “dangerous female sexuality” (138). She further notes that the cover of Christopher Hampton’s play *The Talking Cure* (that served as one of the inspirations for Cronenberg’s film) features Gustav Klimt’s painting of Judith, the Biblical character that also appears on the Penguin cover of Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs* (1870) (141). Masoch’s book was the literary text that gave masochism its name.

relied on notions of regression and social recapitulation. And while some of today's directors and historians are unable to renounce the collation of female sexuality and death, by 1912, Spielrein had begun to question the political paradigms of Freud's and Jung's psychoanalysis. Soon the instinct of destruction would be replaced by a holistic social biology.

Holistic Psychology at the Rousseau Institute

During the time Spielrein spent at the Rousseau Institute in Geneva (1920-1923), her psychoanalytic theories experienced a radical shift: the vitalist aspects in her understanding of the unconscious and drives largely gave way to socio-neurological considerations.³⁴ It was also at this time that she met Jean Piaget, who was just setting out on his own career in child psychology. Although the relationship between Spielrein and Piaget has been the subject of relatively few studies, most tend to presume that some kind of a fundamental disagreement put an abrupt end to their collaboration. Vidal, for instance, wonders why they decided to develop their theories of symbol formation separately and why Spielrein's planned paper on the subject was never published (147). Roudinesco hints at a conflict based on gender and power relations (363). Yet, although Spielrein's position as one of the first female analysts played a significant role in her Freud-and-Jung history, it is unlikely that her rapport with Piaget ended for these reasons.³⁵ Certainly, Spielrein and her younger colleague had more shared commitments than points of division.

In the 1920s, Piaget was an enthusiastic promoter of psychoanalysis. In 1920 he joined the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society and embarked on his didactic analysis with Spielrein. He found the method of identifying and working on complexes of particular interest and highly valued psychoanalytic contributions to child psychology. In 1921/1922 Piaget delivered a series of lectures on autistic thought,

³⁴ In terms of her career, Spielrein's time in Geneva (1920-1923) seems to have been her most productive period. She published sixteen papers and gave more than ten lectures at the Rousseau Institute and the affiliated Psychological Laboratory: eight on psychanalysis and education, one on dreams and several more on the reality and pleasure principle (SS 264).

³⁵ Spielrein had long considered returning to Russia and kept a careful record of the psychoanalytic developments in her home country (SS 202-213). Following World War I, she had trouble finding patients (she complained about this to Freud) (Launer 362). Even in 1923, she evidently planned the trip to be temporary as she left her entire correspondence at the Rousseau Institute.

which Spielrein attended and quoted in later studies (SS 302, 381).³⁶ In her own account of their collaboration, Spielrein referred to Piaget as “an admirable researcher, who was also an analyst and had set himself the goal of investigating the mechanisms of child and autistic thought” (ibid.). When their paths crossed, the two psychologists thus shared a number of preoccupations and had much to learn from each other. Professional experience and psychoanalytic knowledge were to Spielrein’s advantage, but Piaget brought his own biological and epistemological angle into the conversation.

To gauge the importance of Piaget’s and Spielrein’s account of the relationship between the human mind and its social environment, it is vital to consider their work in the context of contemporary epistemological and medical theories. In *Suspensions of Perception*, Jonathan Crary observes that the first half of the nineteenth century was marked by a “pervasive recognition of the physiological conditions of knowledge” (56). Knowledge, perception and attention ceased to be studied as objective categories, but gradually became functions of the relationship between the body and its environment. The expansion of Lamarckian and Darwinian theories of evolution and inheritance merged with recent physiological studies in an attempt to answer the question of how we conceive the world, what role the society plays in this conception and whether any of the acquired concepts can be biologically passed on to future generations. Towards the end of the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century, the question constituted a point of division between various scientific and philosophical schools of thought: associationism, Gestalt psychology, behaviourism, psychoanalysis, amongst others. Spielrein and Piaget were important figures in this debate and their capacity of combining and reconciling these various theories was both rare and commendable. Their approach incorporated assumptions current in psychoanalysis, philosophy, neurology, linguistics, sociology and ethnology.³⁷

Specifically, Spielrein’s and Piaget’s holistic, relational organization of the mind was particularly indebted to three sources: William James, Gestalt psychology

³⁶ Spielrein quoted from Piaget frequently, including in her last known article (1931), while Piaget mentioned her in two of his major publications from the 1920s: *The Language and Thought of the Child* (1923) and *The Child’s Conception of the World* (1926) (SS 381; LT 2,3; CC 150, 265, 378).

³⁷ Some of the commonly quoted influences include Pierre Janet, James Baldwin, Emile Durkheim, Hippolyte Taine, Lucien Levi-Bruhl, Charles Bally, Ernest Jones and Sándor Ferenczi.

and a mixture of Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionary paradigms. Like James, Piaget believed the human subject to be caught between the stream of consciousness and the stream of external sensations. Concepts and the relations between them constitute a number of points that “stand out in contrast to this flux” (*JR* 171).³⁸ But these relations are by no means static. With the interaction between the individual and his/her social environment “every idea grows, becomes generalised and more dissociated” (*ibid.*). The network of relations that forms between the observer’s mind and its surroundings thus constitutes “a moving equilibrium” (*ibid.*).

In his second book on child thought (*Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*, 1924), Piaget differentiated between two mechanisms that constitute the foundation of the dynamic relationship between the individual and his/her surroundings: imitation and assimilation (173). Imitation reproduces by gesture or imagination the external events to which the organism is supposed to adapt. The body is changed as a function of the environment. Assimilation, on the other hand, fits outside events to previously established mental patterns. External reality is changed as a function of the organism (177). Essentially, these are the same evolutionary terms employed by Jung in *Symbols of Transformation*. However, Piaget’s understanding of the society’s role in shaping these processes is different from Jung’s. A young child will imitate situations without assimilating them or will assimilate them to the point of significantly deforming their original content. According to Piaget, social education helps the child to strike a balance between imitation and assimilation (179). It offers its new member a set of concepts and categories, which will henceforth provide the basis for the assimilation (internalization) of new experiences. The society is thus responsible for both, providing concrete experiences that shape the individual’s mind and offering him/her ways of interpreting these experiences. Yet this psycho-social structure is not without its biological background and it would be wrong to say that Piaget considered the child’s development to be exclusively due to social influences. For in the “constant stream of particular experiences and stories” only certain events attract the child’s attention (171). The type of these events follows a certain order, a

³⁸ Spielrein also quoted from James in “Origin” (Covington and Wharton 240).

number of developmental stages determined by the child's expanding psychophysiological structure (cf. *JR* 213).

A study of Spielrein's work in Geneva shows that she agreed with Piaget on the points outlined.³⁹ In her essay "The Origin of the Child's Words 'Papa' and 'Mama'" (1922), she claimed that the child is born with the capacity, even desire, for social interaction and linguistic expression; yet it gradually masters the spatial, temporal and conceptual structures inherent in language (Covington and Wharton 235). These structures – as the child encounters them – are not the outcome of atavisms or ancestral recapitulation. They result from a combination of unconscious (genetically earlier) and conscious modes of thought and evidence different degrees of adaptation to sociobiological reality. Adaptation to reality is as important for Spielrein as it is for Piaget (cf. *SS* 282). Like him, Spielrein differentiates between two phases in the development of the child's thought, the autistic and the social stage. While the autistic stage does presuppose a certain degree of comprehension of the outside world, it is primarily ruled by the pleasure principle. Conversely, the social stage retains some of the fantasies and thought patterns of the autistic mindset, but its main goal is the gradual adjustment to social reality (Covington and Wharton 234). Evidently, the contrast between the autistic and social stage mirrors the distinction between assimilation and imitation. In spite of this, one can notice a shift in perspective with respect to Spielrein's earlier Jungian approach.

The change is perhaps most evident in the way she discussed the structure of thought in 1923. Thought, she claimed, is not to be confused with inherited

³⁹ In the case of Spielrein and Piaget, it is often difficult to determine the primacy of ideas. There is no documented correspondence that would comfortably settle the issue and Piaget only quoted from Spielrein when referring to concrete case studies or published articles, rather than to general influences. In this specific case, we know that Spielrein's essay was based on a talk she gave at the International Psychoanalytic Congress in The Hague (1920), shortly before she met Piaget and before he began to publish his research on child language and thought. The idea that the capacity for language and social behaviour were inborn, whereas the gradual appropriation of linguistic structures (spatial relations, time and causality) was learned, was thus present in Spielrein's writing before she began to work at the Rousseau Institute. When developmental stages are in question, the situation becomes more complicated. On the one hand, Spielrein is likely to have adopted the terminology from Piaget when she attended his seminar on autistic thought (winter 1921-1922), although she would have been familiar with the term from her time in Zürich and from reading Bleuler's studies on schizophrenia. On the other hand, psychoanalytic theory of the time operated with a number of similar notions including the child's narcissism, magical and animistic tendencies in children and certain types of disorder. Piaget offered quite extensive comments on all of these in his books (*CC* 151-3, 123-166; *LT* 2, 3) and it is probable that Spielrein introduced him to many of these theories during his didactic analysis in 1920 or on later occasions.

experiences, which have become “mechanised and stabilised, almost organic, as is the case with instincts” (SS 297). Thought is not the material outcome of an underlying mechanism, but only exists “in its expression” (ibid.). Three points are worth stressing here. First, for Spielrein, some experiences are organically inscribed and inherited. These experiences, which were once social, become biological through repetition. Secondly, these ingrained bodily patterns proceed automatically and do not give rise to thought. Thought (both subconscious and conscious)⁴⁰ results exclusively from the interaction between the individual and his/her surroundings. Finally, Spielrein openly dismissed the Kantian distinction between appearances and “things-in-themselves” (ibid.). Thoughts are not expressions of universal, original ideas, but always arise in concrete (social) circumstances. Such a position marks a significant departure from Jungian archetypes or Spielrein’s previous claim that primal ideas realise themselves through incarnation in material reality.

How did this change of opinion concerning ancestral heritage affect Spielrein’s views on recapitulation? Regarding theories of evolution, both Spielrein and Piaget have been variously associated with Darwin and Lamarck.⁴¹ As John R. Morss notes about Piaget and Claparède,⁴² the idea of the organism’s adaptation to its environment certainly has a Darwinian ring to it (55). Yet an adaptation that is not accidental, but willing and, more often than not, conscious (as described by Spielrein and Piaget) is much closer to the Lamarckian scheme. In addition, as Morss remarks, most developmental psychologists of the time were Lamarckians (31).⁴³ This is to an extent valid for both Spielrein and Piaget. The belief arose, among other things, from a deep conviction in the role of society in modelling groups and individuals. It is therefore wrong to present Spielrein’s legacy as predominantly Darwinian (or to pit it against Freud’s Lamarckism) as Launer does in his biography (246 ff.). Spielrein and Piaget outlined a fixed number of stages in the child’s

⁴⁰ As for Freud, for Spielrein the subconscious represents those thoughts that could potentially become conscious, although she occasionally uses the term more broadly. Dream symbols and thoughts that constitute the subliminal parallel of verbal reflection will therefore be referred to as subconscious.

⁴¹ In his preface to Piaget’s *Language and Thought of the Child* (1923), Claparède connects Piaget’s research with Darwin (LT ix).

⁴² Edouard Claparède was a Swiss neurologist and the founder of the Rousseau Institute. He was a source of great support to both Spielrein and Piaget.

⁴³ This includes psychoanalysts.

development. Both referred to an autistic and a social stage, with an intermittent magical stage sometimes inserted between them. These stages are determined by the child's biological constitution as well as the social environment that becomes inscribed into the mind. The moving equilibrium of concepts is to be thought of as a cerebral network.

Piaget's dynamic model of the mind formed the basis of his critique of both sensualism and associationism. In the course of his interviews and experiments, Piaget observed that a lot of children aged five or younger locate thought either in the mouth (thus confusing it with speech) or in the ear (thus confusing it with hearing) (CC 37-61). He then argued that, in this situation, the child acts as a sensualist, for whom mental activity is but "a series of images imprinted on the brain by the stimulus of things" (CC 45). According to Piaget, the sensualist disregards the mind's assimilative, transformative faculty. In the same way, the child sees sounds as directly placed into the mouth or ear by the agency of the stimulus. The mistake both make is essentially a lack of self-awareness, regarding their own body as a static receptacle, rather than an active agent in the genesis of perception. Like Spielrein, Piaget believed that the child first perceives general schemas, out of which elements are later differentiated through experience. An image or idea is more than the sum of its elements (associations) and a new element cannot be added without altering the existing network of relations. Of course, the same objection to associationism was currently being forwarded by the Gestalt school, whose approach was enthusiastically taken up by Spielrein and Piaget (*LT* 131, Covington and Wharton 243).⁴⁴ What all of these psychologists had in common was the endorsement of a subject "who perceives organised structures, not accumulations of disjunct sensations" (Crary 158). Like Gestalt psychologists, researchers at the Rousseau Institute distanced themselves from vitalist solutions to mechanism, claiming that no original or additional force(s) guided the behaviour of living organisms (cf. Harrington 123-124).⁴⁵ And in this sense, they also rejected Freudian and Jungian universal histories. Yet even within this new, social version of holism, there remained, at least

⁴⁴ The general schemas referred to are not abstract concepts in the adult sense (these are the product of verbal communication and social learning), but are always concrete and situation-based.

⁴⁵ Gestalt psychology shared with psychoanalysis its primarily Jewish descent. Consequently, its advocates frequently had to deal with the general accusations against Jewish science: that their approach was overtly materialist and rationalistic (Harrington 126, 138).

for Spielrein and Piaget, a vestige of the old evolutionary dichotomy between pleasure and reality, assimilation and adaptation. And a gradual renunciation of egocentrism remained the key of both childhood development and scientific progress.

From Egocentrism to Modern Science

According to Spielrein and Piaget, the child's progress from egocentrism to a collectively shared perception is accompanied by increasing self-awareness. Drawing support from Baldwin's and Janet's studies in imitation, Piaget claimed that the child begins by confusing the self with the outside world (CC 34, 128). In the autistic stage, the child regards his/her perspective as absolute. Desire seems to exert magical activity over reality.⁴⁶ In the transitional magical stage the self is differentiated from things, but can still influence them from a distance. Finally, in the social stage, symbols are completely detached from objects and physical causality replaces syncretic reasoning (cf. *LT* 127-162; Covington and Wharton 233-34). Spielrein and Piaget agreed in both the terminology and the description of this progress, though Spielrein preferred to focus on the early phase, while Piaget was most interested in the child's transition from the magical into the social stage.

It would be tempting to conclude, from their references to magic as well as from some of the sources they quote,⁴⁷ that Spielrein and Piaget (at least at this stage in their careers) supported the theory of cultural recapitulation. This would be inaccurate.⁴⁸ In *The Child's Conception of the World* (1926), Piaget would explicitly state that "absolutely no identity is implied between child magic and the magic of the

⁴⁶ Piaget linked the autistic stage to psychoanalytic theories of narcissism, but warned that psychoanalysts commit the mistake of treating the child like an adult that can distinguish the self from the world (CC 151).

⁴⁷ This refers, for instance, to Stanley Hall and Lévi-Bruhl. Though Piaget borrowed the term "participation" from Lévi-Bruhl's description of "the primitive mind" and applied it in his account of child development (CC 371), he and Spielrein stressed that both directed and undirected thought are at work in the majority of mental operations in any given cultural context. One can thus not argue that one is superseded by the other.

⁴⁸ Faced with the task of deciding whether Piaget should be counted with the proponents of recapitulation theory, Morris readily acknowledges the difficulty of the question. He finally opts for presenting Piaget's work as exemplary of a general and exclusively biological (not racial or cultural) recapitulation. One of the best summaries of Piaget's position can be found in Matt Ridley's *Nature via Nurture*. The description is also applicable to Spielrein: "Piaget saw cognitive development neither as learning, nor as maturation, but as a combination of the two, a sort of active engagement of the developing mind with the world. He thought the mental structures necessary for intellectual development are genetically determined, but the process by which the maturing brain develops requires feedback from experience and social interaction. [...] In nature-nurture terms, Piaget [...] defies categorization as an empiricist or a nativist." (126)

primitive” (132). And when Spielrein discussed archaic elements in the linguistic conception of time, she took examples both from “primitive” and European languages (English, German and Russian) (SS 324-28). The child does not develop animism or the idea of magical participation due to a repetition of ancestral experiences, but because of its incapacity to fully distinguish its own thoughts and actions from external events. All things are initially endowed with the same powers and desires as the self, until experience proves otherwise. If the social environment does not motivate the child to entirely renounce its animism or artificialism,⁴⁹ as is the case with various types of religious worldviews, it will not do so (CC 376). The animism of children or “primitive” societies is therefore not the result of any specific racial heritage, but of a projective tendency that is universally human. In the 1920s, neither Spielrein nor Piaget resorted to the cultural and racial hierarchy that was the standard feature in narratives of social evolution. Within their system, any given group of people could equally develop animistic beliefs or scientific thought (since it was their social environment and not their mental capacity/evolutional stage that determined this choice). Unlike Jung, Spielrein and Piaget did not claim that ancient or non-Western cultures were more narcissistic or possessed a lesser capacity for directed thought. But a certain kind of privilege still clung to logical reasoning when compared to its animistic, egocentric predecessor.

Piaget liked to draw parallels between the psychological development of the child and what he perceived as milestones in the history of science. In both, a gradual renunciation of the egocentric perspective constituted the principal predisposition of progress. In *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*, for example, we find the following statement:

What applies to the child is also true of science. So long as physics took absolute space and time as its domain, it reached a certain degree of development, but came short of any fundamental solution. But from the moment it was realised that the measurer was relative to the thing measured, the resulting relativity enabled physics to reach objectivity. (197)

That the theory of relativity had a profound effect on transforming the understanding of time and space is a well-known fact. In both contemporary and historical accounts, its social ramifications were often compared to those of psychoanalysis.⁵⁰ As

⁴⁹ The idea that natural events are of human origin.

⁵⁰ See Richard Panek’s *The Invisible Century: Einstein, Freud and the Search for Hidden Universes*.

psychoanalysts with a background in biology and medicine, Spielrein and Piaget enthusiastically championed the blows which natural and social sciences had recently dealt to anthropocentrism and cultural egocentrism. In this context, one cannot help remembering Freud's description of psychoanalysis as the third Copernican revolution (*Introductory Lectures* 285).⁵¹ According to Freud, humankind had so far suffered three scientific disruptions to its self-regard. First, Copernicus showed that "the earth was not the centre of the universe, but a tiny speck in a world-system of a magnitude hardly conceivable" (*ibid.*). Then Darwin and Wallace "relegated man to a descent from the animal world". Finally, psychoanalysis proved that "the ego of each of us is not even master in his own house" (*ibid.*). Like the child's, scientific progress in the 1920s was often conceived as a gradual adaptation to a disenchanting reality.

Spielrein's and Piaget's account of childhood development therefore operated with an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, their depiction of the child's decreasing egocentrism and increasing adaptation as a progression from pleasure to reality is reminiscent of Freud's and Jung's progress narratives (from pleasure to reality, from myth to science and industry). Certainly, the account of contemporary science as most objective because most self-aware (least egocentric) implies a kind of cultural hierarchy, though one that was more inclined to present itself as superior to previous (pre-Darwinian, pre-psychoanalytic) generations than to ancient or "primitive" cultures. Spielrein's and Piaget's rejection of cultural recapitulation meant that modern citizens were no longer privileged in terms of mental capacity, but still had science to thank for showing them the way out of their egocentric worldview. If there was still a history that the child repeated, it was the history of science working against its "innate egocentricity".

"A Mind Woven on Two Looms"

In the preface to Piaget's *The Language and Thought of the Child*, Claparède laid out two major advances that were achieved in the new volume on child psychology. One consisted in "extracting the good" (*LT* xi) out of a number of contesting theories

⁵¹ Freud was not the first to indicate the affiliation between Copernicus and Darwin. The formulation originated from Ernst Haeckel and Emil du Bois-Reymond, whose work Freud knew well (Weinert 185).

(psychoanalysis, functionalism, sociology and genetic psychology), while the other referred to devising a “three-dimensional” (ibid.) model of the child’s mentality. “Do you remember the little problem that consists in making four equal triangles with six matches?” (ibid.) asked Claparède. If one thinks about it “on the flat” (ibid.), the problem appears insoluble. Yet as soon as a third dimension is added, the difficulty vanishes. So far, he explained, the child’s mind had presented scientists with a puzzle “from which several important pieces were missing, whilst others seemed to have been borrowed from another game” (xii). Now, Piaget came to a resolution by demonstrating that “childish thought does not consist of one puzzle, but at least of two” (ibid.).

Before Piaget, psychoanalysis had its own three-dimensional model of the mind. Spielrein was consequently able to assert that the mechanism forwarded by Piaget in his seminar on autistic thought was entirely in agreement with psychoanalytic findings (Covington and Wharton 243). From this time onwards, Spielrein and Piaget would represent the “two looms” of the mind in virtually identical terms. The lower plane in their mental structure belongs to undirected, subliminal or autistic thought. It is characterised by visual and kinaesthetic images, organised according to the law of affective attraction and is primarily ruled by the pleasure principle. This type of mental representation, which is genetically earlier than verbal or logical thought, possesses no sense of temporal direction.⁵² Its course is determined by the interplay of emotions. The upper plane belongs to directed or logical thought. Directed thought is acquired by the child from its social surroundings. It is ruled by the principle of narrative or temporal direction, reversibility and physical causality. Since its primary goal is communication with others, it is better adapted to reality than autistic thought. As the child acquires language, undirected thought begins to operate subconsciously, while conscious thought becomes increasingly narrative (directed). Spielrein liked to stress, however, that there is no clear limit between directed and undirected imagination, just as there is no sharp distinction between consciousness and the subconscious (SS 281). In every mental operation,

⁵² Spielrein’s and Piaget’s unconscious is thus timeless in the sense that it possesses no sequential or narrative order. Instead, associations are grouped together according to an affective logic. In is not, however, timeless in the sense of containing a mixture of ancestral memories as it was for psychoanalysts who relied on social recapitulation.

both processes are usually present. Conscious thoughts are “translated into visual and kinaesthetic images” (SS 297) in the subliminal sphere, whereas these images are taken up by consciousness and ordered into a coherent narrative. The majority of mental work is performed by sub- and unconscious systems. These give conscious thoughts their energy and emotional potential. Without them, argued Spielrein, conscious reflection would be “unrooted” (SS 307). Spielrein and Piaget kept Jung’s distinction between two types of thought, but without subordinating one to the other. In their model, directed thought is not more advanced; it merely serves a different function (social interaction).

Spielrein was adamant in stressing the role of affect in mental symbolism. In contrast to Jung and Freud, who considered emotions and drives as something to be transformed – or even tamed – by the intellect, Spielrein regarded the affective reaction as the first and most important stage in the interaction between the body/mind and its surroundings. In a young child, “affective movement” (SS 283) is what binds and sustains a group of representations. It also provides the basis for the flow of associations. While emotions do not of themselves constitute thought, they do provide the basic impetus for mental and linguistic activity. Things that possess affective attraction will be imitated by the child through images (thoughts), movements and words (cf. SS 288-296). In the adult, conscious thought gets hold of these visual-kinaesthetic representations and arranges them into an ordered narrative. In the child, language is still coloured by the mechanisms of autistic thought. As the child progresses from the autistic into the social stage and becomes increasingly aware of the limits of the self, words become detached from things and begin to be used as plastic tools in communication. This constitutes the final step in the process of symbolization. “What we call language,” remarked Spielrein, “emerges only when words contain not an enforcing meaning, but an optional one.” (Covington and Wharton 244) Importantly, it was precisely this symbolic function that holistic neurologists were increasingly recognising as the thing first lost in persons who suffered from traumatic brain injury.

Aphasia, Trauma and Child Language

Apart from gradually renouncing the idea of universal unconscious symbolism, in the 1920s Spielrein no longer operated with the notion of a destructive drive. The

transcendental dialectics of drives was replaced by a neurologically founded understanding of trauma. In the course of her neurological investigations at the Rousseau Institute, she reverted to the older neurological model of neurosis, which had predominated in the early days of psychoanalysis. Her so far unacknowledged contribution to holistic neurology is important not only because it presents an admirable synthesis of contemporary neurological and psychoanalytic findings, but also because it served as the foundation of the materialistic approach to psychoanalysis she would fully elaborate in the Soviet Union.

Today's histories of neuroscience usually begin by providing an account of the emergence of the Broca-Wernicke-Lichtheim (BWL) model in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since Spielrein was one of the medical practitioners who engaged in its criticism, a brief outline serves as an appropriate introduction to her studies on aphasia. In 1861 the French anatomist Paul Broca was put in charge of a patient who suffered from extreme difficulties in producing articulated speech. He could only utter a single repeated syllable ("tan tan"), but could curse when emotionally challenged. Following the patient's death, autopsy revealed extensive damage to the left posterior frontal lobe, which would henceforth become known as Broca's area and the cerebral location of speech articulation. Broca concluded that the correlation between the impaired function and physical brain damage could lead to the localization of a centre responsible for that specific function. The question remained how a functional relationship between various centres was established. Karl Wernicke (whose name became associated with another type of aphasia) provided an answer in terms of underlying pathways. In 1885 Louis Lichtheim expanded and systematised Wernicke's model and produced accessible diagrams that had a great didactic value, but triggered some fierce debates in the scientific world (cf. Graves 3-10).

The mechanist, localizationist view was disputed by scientists who favoured a holistic approach to the mind. Instead of conceptualising brain function in terms of fixed centres and underlying pathways, they considered mental operations such as thought or speech to derive from the interaction between complex neural networks in several regions of the brain. A number of them depicted language and thought as the product of a cooperation between evolutionally earlier and later brain regions.

John Hughlings Jackson was one of the first neurologists to question the existence of specific centres. He argued for a hierarchical brain structure, in which the cortex was the highest evolutionary level of the nervous system. As such, the cortex was responsible for conscious reflection and had the task of controlling and inhibiting the lower regions. Since all levels were inextricably linked, consciousness was greatly influenced by the activity of the lower, genetically earlier, nervous arrangements. In case of brain damage, the highest mental functions were the first to be affected.⁵³ This resulted in the emergence of what psychoanalysts would term subconscious and unconscious processes (cf. Jackson 660-63). Jackson's theory was upheld by Constantin von Monakow, who developed his own dynamic, chronological system of brain anatomy independently of Jackson.⁵⁴

An even fiercer criticism of the BWL model arose from the Parisian physician Pierre Marie and the English neurologist Henry Head. In Head's *Aphasia and Kindred Disorders of Speech* (1920), Wernicke's and Lichtheim's schemas are dismissed as "mechanical diagrams founded neither on the anatomy nor on the known functions of the brain" (89). Instead, Head devised a series of tests for determining the symbolic capacity of brain-damaged patients. What Head noticed was that nearly all of his patients (irrespective of the type of aphasia they were diagnosed with) could carry out operations demanding simple imitation, but various difficulties arose with tasks requiring symbolic formulation (98). When the verbal or written command was given, the task could sometimes be carried out, but when the patient needed to formulate a spoken or written statement himself, this tended to pose substantial problems (159). In general, Head concluded that "the more abstract the proposition, the more likely is the patient to fail" (119). Here he quoted Jackson, who had earlier contrasted the ability to form abstract propositions with lower, more

⁵³ Like Jung, Jackson was very influenced by Spencer's theories. He maintained that the higher brain regions were more differentiated and therefore less automatic than the lower (evolutionally earlier) ones.

⁵⁴ In an attempt to position her own study on aphasia within the current scientific context, Spielrein declared her allegiance to Monakow and stressed the fact that Jackson and Monakow developed along similar lines without being aware of each other's work (SS 300). Monakow shared some of Spielrein's socio-cultural background. Originally from Russia, he spent most of his scientific career in Switzerland (Zürich), even worked for a time at the Burghölzli asylum. It should be stressed that Monakow's ideas discussed here stem from his pre-World-War-I writings, not from the more transcendental theories he developed after the war. For a more thorough discussion of Monakow's holistic concepts, see chapter three in Anne Harrington's *Reenchanted Science*. For a historical evaluation of Monakow's studies on aphasia, see Finger et al. "The Monakow Concept of Diaschisis".

concrete forms of thought. Head replaced Jacksonian “propositions” with the term “symbolic thinking and expression” (ibid.).⁵⁵ The same opinion was adopted by the Gestalt neurologist Kurt Goldstein, who, in 1936, observed that brain-damaged individuals could frequently use the correct word in a given situation, but “could not unstick them from the concrete things with which they were associated at any particular moment” (Harrington 147).⁵⁶ Symbolic capacity – defined as the ability to stick and unstick verbal symbols to/from concrete referents – played a seminal role both in holistic aphasia studies and Spielrein’s and Piaget’s theories of symbolic development.

For all of these authors, the ability to form abstract formulations represents the last stage of mental evolution. In addition, Head’s and Goldstein’s emphasis on symbolic thinking and expression is particularly close to Spielrein and Piaget.⁵⁷ If the final step in the development of the child’s language is marked by the recognition of causal relations, temporal direction and the skill of using words as symbols distinct from objects, a partial damage to these neural connections could cause a (more or less severe) regression to the previous stage of symbolism. The statements of the patient would thus bear a partial resemblance to the processes of autistic or subconscious thought. In a sense, the patient’s language would become “more childlike”. This is exactly the view Spielrein took in her neurological research.⁵⁸

Spielrein’s interest in neurology was established during her studies in Zürich and her involvement in Jung’s and Bleuler’s association experiments. The attempt

⁵⁵ It is important to stress that Head, along with other proponents of non-localizationist theories, did not deny that certain parts of the brain are more responsible for the genesis of certain linguistic features than others. In *Aphasia and Kindred Disorders of Speech*, he allowed for the fact that “each aspect of symbolic thinking is associated more closely with the physiological life of certain parts of the brain” and that “a local lesion may therefore produce a more or less partial disturbance” (120). What Jackson, Head, Monakow and Goldstein had in common was the assertion that even a local lesion would necessarily affect multiple mental capacities and that the idea of highly specialised and strictly localised centres was thus necessarily flawed.

⁵⁶ Harrington notes that Goldstein was greatly inspired by Monakow (152).

⁵⁷ Piaget’s neurological understanding was shaped by a similar tradition. He often quoted from James Sully who believed that lower neural centres come to be overlaid by higher inhibitory centres in the brain. As Morss notes, Sully’s model was an application of Jackson’s proposal of a hierarchy of cerebral levels (23). Both Jackson and Sully were in turn influenced by Herbert Spencer’s theory of the nervous system’s progression from simple, homogenous to complex, heterogeneous and integrated forms.

⁵⁸ The regression to childhood thought does not represent a regression in terms of social history. It merely signifies that the patient regresses to a mode of thought that is more habituated and emotionally coloured and thus more deeply ingrained than the functions that develop later in life.

to fuse neurology and psychoanalysis was not unusual in the Swiss context. In Geneva, Spielrein's attempts to combine these two fields with the study of child psychology and pedagogy were encouraged by the likes of Édouard Claparède. Indeed it was Claparède who transferred the first aphasic patient known to have been observed by Spielrein to her care (SS 301). The patient was a fifty-five-year-old man who had suffered a stroke, after which he could neither speak nor write, but retained a fairly good understanding of spoken and written language. In her discussion of child thought and aphasia, Spielrein was quick to voice her agreement with the non-localizationists. "Pure aphasia," she insisted, "is nowhere to be found. It is nearly always combined with alexia and agraphia" (ibid.). Moreover, the patients' spoken language frequently displays similar errors as their written expression. "Certainly, this speaks in favour of Jackson, Monakow, Head and their supporters," she concluded (ibid.). Spielrein sided with Jackson and Monakow in another respect. She believed that brain damage first affected the later-formed logical-narrative mechanisms of symbol formation. An injury to the neural networks responsible for directed thought would cause a regression and partially revert the patient's mental operations to autistic/undirected processes.

In her 1922 talk in Berlin, Spielrein presented two phenomena from her observational and experimental work to support her theory. The first was "perseveration" (SS 286).⁵⁹ Since a child's thought is always guided by affective associations, it returns to the previous attraction even after it has progressed to a new complex. By studying the sentences of a two-and-a-half-year-old child, Spielrein noted that they often contained amalgams of several different topics. A new complex would at first only vaguely appear, implied by gestures and single words and mixed with other representations. It would take some time before it could be formulated into a coherent sentence (SS 295). The child's thought, Spielrein explained, is "sticky" (SS 283). Needless to say, this could also be said of the logic of subliminal processes. Spielrein recognised similar mental tendencies in her aphasic patient. Asked to draw first a circle and then a triangle, the patient produced the following drawing:  Spielrein explained that this was due to the patient's thought

⁵⁹ "Perseveration" is a term Jung adopted from contemporary neurological studies and defined in his early association experiments (1904) as "the fact that the preceding association conditions the next reaction" ("Associations of Normal Subjects" 34).

“persevering” with the previous symbol and fusing with one he was supposed to draw next. The same tendencies were noted on the level of verbal language. When some of the patient’s capacity for spoken expression returned, he would be asked to name surrounding objects as part of his medical examination. If the doctor pointed first to the desk (Tisch) and then to the entire room (Zimmer), the patient would merge the two words into one (Trimmer) (SS 302). The great significance of affective logic and sequence in the language of aphasic patients and young children was seen by Spielrein as further proof of her hypothesis. She recalled the observations of Monakow and Head that patients tend to remember words more easily if they possess greater emotional value and took this as evidence that an affective associational mechanism (like the one outlined by psychoanalysts) lay at the bottom of human thought and language (SS 304; Head 109; Monakow 40).

In spite of her agreement with Jackson, Monakow, Goldstein and Head, Spielrein did not entirely reject the BWL model. She approved of the idea that various parts of the brain were responsible for the generation of motor, semantic or acoustic components inherent in the symbolization process. In his enhanced version of Wernicke’s diagrams, Lichtheim described “motor memory images” as responsible for speech articulation (cf. Graves 9). The loss of articulated speech in Broca’s aphasia would result from a destruction of these images. The idea was rejected by holistic neurologists, who blamed the articulatory difficulties in Broca’s aphasia on disconnection rather than destruction. Both Head and Monakow remarked that their patients reported an inability to recall the right word when they needed it (109; 88). To quote Head, “the words of a speechless patient are not there for voluntary use” (109). Furthermore, the few words the patients could pronounce were usually delivered with a perfect accent. To Head and Monakow, this meant that the primary problem did not lie in articulation. The disconnection theory was also favoured by Spielrein, although she conceded that “verbal motor images” play an important part in speech production. According to Spielrein, verbal motor images are a subgroup of kinaesthetic images located in the subconscious. In Broca’s aphasia (also known as motor aphasia), these images are not lost. What occurs is a disconnection between motor images and word representations. Due to this disconnection, logical verbal thought “runs dry” and regresses to the autistic, pre-symbolic stage (SS 307-

8). Spielrein thus accepted the notion of acoustic and motor images as outlined by Wernicke and Lichtheim, but adapted it to the dynamic, composite model of the non-localizationists in a conscious effort “to integrate both theories” (308). Within this paradigm, psychoanalysis is assigned the role of explaining the functioning of subliminal processes, which are deemed a genetically earlier level of neural connection and the source of all verbal and conscious reflection.

In this context, it is strange that Spielrein never quoted from Freud’s early aphasia studies, especially since Freud considered aphasia to be due to a disconnection between word representations (kinaesthetic/motor, auditory and visual images for the symbol) and object associations (concrete visual, tactile, auditory and other experiences connected with the word) (cf. *On Aphasia* 73). Significantly, the same mechanism was initially assumed to be the underlying feature of traumatic neurosis. In hysteria, for instance, the relation between a specific object association and word representation is refused. Consequently, earlier symbolic functions come into play and express the experience through bodily gestures, actions or unconscious behaviour patterns rather than verbally. While in hysteria the disconnection is very specific (because it refers to a concrete experience), in aphasia – depending on the locus and extent of the lesion – various aspects of the subject’s verbal thought and expression regress to a lower level of symbolization. In Freud’s neurological and early psychoanalytic career, both aphasia and the neuroses were thus thought to be caused by a traumatic disturbance of the symbolic function, which induced the subject’s words to slip voluntary use and conscious control (cf. Forrester 8-29; *Studies on Hysteria* 5-6). The same disconnection is related to the involuntary, repetitive nature of the traumatic symptom (whether these are gestures or automatically repeated words). In the 1920s, Spielrein rejected Freud’s later explanation of the repetitive nature of neurotic symptoms as related to the death drive and resorted to the early psychoanalytic account of a traumatic, neurological disruption.

In “Sounds of Silence: Aphasiology and the Subject of Modernity”, Laura Salisbury discusses Wernicke’s and Head’s models of brain function in the context of the epistemological shifts that occurred roughly between 1860 and the end of World War I. As noted above, these shifts resulted in an altered sense of subjectivity,

creating a subject who was “constantly [...] sifting sense from a world with which it was engaged” (213). Salisbury argues that Wernicke’s and Lichtheim’s cerebral maps belonged to an older account of knowledge, one that tried to reinstate a certain order “against [...] a more general epistemological uncertainty in which perceptual experience had lost [...] its privileged apprehension of truth” (ibid.). Looking back to Spielrein’s and Piaget’s theories of subject formation, it becomes evident that they did not share Wernicke’s and Lichtheim’s misgivings. Their psychoanalytic training contributed to their familiarity with epistemological uncertainty and fluid sensory-emotional relations. If the proponents of the BWL model refused to listen to the “noise that seeped back into the system” (ibid.), psychoanalysis was all about attempting to make sense of this very noise (cf. Kittler 83-85). Spielrein’s psychoanalytic skills enabled her to pay attention to the “temporal twistings” and “expressions of subjective affect” (Salisbury 212) in her brain-damaged patients that the localizationists shied away from. From her earliest association experiments, Spielrein’s ear was tuned to the interruptions of narrative time for what they could tell us about human emotional life in its relation to conscious reflection. In historical terms, there was an almost instinctive allegiance between analysts who embraced the Jamesian view of a sensational flux and the likes of Head, Goldstein and Monakow. These neurologists resembled psychoanalysts in their enthusiastic recording of the lapses in the patient’s flow of thought as well as in the considerable importance they accorded to the verbal manifestations of affect. Spielrein’s attempt to restore psychoanalysis back to its neurological roots could only be performed under the condition that neurology accept the epistemological lessons psychoanalysis had to teach.

In the 1920s, during her collaboration with Jean Piaget, Spielrein gradually renounced the notion of a universal ancestral realm situated in the mind. Instead, she and her colleague focused on the complex interaction between the mind and its social environment. While, in Spielrein’s new model, experiences repeated in successive generations could still be inherited and stored within the body as automatic action patterns or reflexes, these experiences were determined by their specific social and historical context and were therefore different from universal psychological structures like the Oedipus complex or the universal dream symbols

uncovered through the study of mythology and philology. Spielrein and Piaget retained Jung's differentiation between assimilation and adaptation, but emphasised the role of society in both processes. Still, one segment of Piaget's work remained reminiscent of Freudian and Jungian progress narratives: the progress of the child from egocentrism to self-awareness was compared to the progress of Western science from anthropocentrism to objectivity, a journey in which modern scientific achievements (such as psychoanalysis) were claimed to have played a major role. Significantly, precisely this narrative would be targeted by Spielrein's Russian collaborators following her return to the Soviet Union (1923). It was also during her time in Geneva that Spielrein renounced the idea of the destructive instinct and (based on her studies in aphasia and child language) replaced it with a neurological and traumatic model that restored psychoanalysis to its pre-phylogenetic roots. These tendencies would be further developed in the final stage of Spielrein's career.

A Materialist Psychoanalysis (the Soviet Union)

The period between 1921 and 1923 (when Spielrein moved to Moscow) is generally considered the heyday of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union (cf. Miller 53-68). Due to the rapid translation of Freud's works (sponsored by the State Publishing House), psychoanalysis briefly enjoyed great popularity among doctors, educators and the general public. In 1922 a psychoanalytic institute (an educational facility for future analysts together with an outpatient clinic) was founded in Moscow. At this point, only two such institutions existed in Europe, one in Berlin and one in Vienna. The extent of Spielrein's influence in shaping the perception of psychoanalysis on Russian territory was considerable. Along with Mosche Wulff and Ivan Ermakov, she was one of the Institute's principal lecturers and greatest analytic authorities (cf. Miller 59; Etkind 171). Due to their relative independence, Russian psychoanalysts assigned little importance to the divisions between analytic schools that existed in Europe and were comfortable with combining the ideas of Freud, Jung and Adler (Miller 46). Consequently, Spielrein's combination of psychoanalysis, neurology and

sociocultural inquiry and her capacity to combine various analytic methods fit well with her new environment.⁶⁰

Around 1925, the widespread revision of institutional and social discourses in Russia came to encompass the studies of the mind: attempts were made to devise a specifically Marxist psychology. For several years, it seemed psychoanalysis would significantly contribute to its formulation. Soviet psychologists agreed that the new approach needed to be founded on empirical research methods exemplified by biology and neurology, whilst at the same time taking into account the socioeconomic insights of historical materialism. The founder of reflexology⁶¹ Ivan Pavlov and the neurologist Vladimir Bekhterev soon became dominant figures on the scientific scene (cf. Miller 70). Consequently, anyone who wished to advance an independent opinion first needed to define their theory in relation to these role-models. This was precisely what Spielrein and her colleagues from the Moscow Psychoanalytic Institute were trying to do. In a letter to Max Eitington, composed in August 1927, Spielrein provided an outline of the position of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union. According to her, psychoanalysts were reproached for two reasons: tracing everything back to sexuality, thus neglecting the economic conditions Marx brought to the fore, and being overly “subjective and mystical” and therefore incompatible with the biological claims of reflexology (Covington and Wharton 222). Spielrein maintained that both criticisms were founded on a grave misunderstanding and that the theories of Freud and Marx could “exist peacefully side by side” (ibid.).⁶² She also mentioned giving a lecture on reflexology and psychoanalysis in order to dispute the metaphysical nature of analytic concepts and to demonstrate “how a good part of Freud’s theories are corroborated by biological psychology” (ibid.). Unfortunately, Spielrein’s paper has not been preserved, but the few studies from

⁶⁰ It was only in the second half of the 1920s that the restrictive effects of Stalinism started to make themselves felt and gradually repressed psychoanalysis from the official psychological discourse (cf. Miller 88-92). Spielrein was possibly the last person to publish a paper openly using psychoanalytic principles in 1931 (SS 345-382). Vygotsky was still a member of the Psychoanalytical Society in 1929. In 1927, when psychoanalysis was already under attack for being bourgeois, individualist and metaphysical, he gave a lecture on the psychology of art in Freud’s works (Miller 88). Luria publicly renounced psychoanalysis in 1932 (Proctor 157; Miller 107), but continued to use some of its methods and findings in his later work.

⁶¹ Reflexology refers to the study of human reflexes and their effects on psychology and behaviour. The term was used by Spielrein and her Russian colleagues.

⁶² She names Rosenthal, Luria and M. A. Reußner as analysts who have managed to prove this successfully (Covington and Wharton 222; “M.A. Reußner” 143-144).

her Russian years that are available attest to her preoccupation with demonstrating the social potential and the neurological grounds of psychoanalytic principles.

In a 1929 lecture, for instance, she confirmed that drives represent the deepest emotional layer that guides behaviour. But, in spite of what Freud's opponents claimed, drives are not merely sexual (SS 337). Instead of falling back on Jung's libidinal vitalism or Freud's dialectics, Spielrein returned to the flexible approach of early psychoanalysis which allowed for a variable number of instincts and complexes that originated from nearly any sphere of human life.⁶³ In her model, individual behaviour results from a dynamic interaction between bio- and sociogenic factors. In Freudian psychoanalysis, claimed Spielrein, "an upbringing which reinforces the original feeling of helplessness in the child" (338) is considered the primary cause of neurosis. Freud's emphasis on the sexual nature of neurotic disorders is thus transformed into an all-encompassing model of familial trauma. In addition, Spielrein foregrounded Freud's observation that many would be spared from neurotic ailments if one could remove the social regulations that give rise to repression (337).⁶⁴ In order to explain human behaviour, science needed to adopt an intersectional, historical and multi-dimensional approach. Piaget, she cautioned, studied the child's relationship to reality and here too one could observe regressions to earlier developmental phases under the influence of certain biological and social factors. Consequently, one could study everything from the point of view of this relationship, or from the point of view of sexuality or from the perspective of Adler's masculine protest.⁶⁵ Yet none of these theories alone could account for the genesis of a symptom or an individual behaviour: "Only the interaction between all the aspects of one's personality and the underlying drives gives rise to that resultant

⁶³ Kerr observes that this wide-ranging nature of complexes was one of the main findings of Jung's association experiments. The experiments offered "experimental proof that any and all complexes could be subject to repression" (247-248).

⁶⁴ In critiquing socially induced repression, Spielrein was actually much closer to Theodor Adorno and other representatives of the Frankfurt School than she was to Jung or Freud for whom repression was, in spite of its occasionally pathological effects, the primary motor of civilizational progress.

⁶⁵ Adler's theory of masculine protest describes the ways in which individuals deal with feelings of inferiority in their familial and social milieu. In women it typically manifests in a rejection of the culturally constructed feminine roles in order to be valued in the same way as men. In men it takes the form of a superiority complex – the need to assert one's superior position over others – which serves to hide feelings of insecurity (cf. 16-23, 109-144). Since Adler emphasized the fact that these psychological outcomes are dependent on social structures, his theories briefly enjoyed significant popularity in the Soviet Union.

which navigates our actions.” (SS 340) Apart from thus emphasising the social and integral nature of psychological research, Spielrein worked to embed psychoanalytic principles in the physiology of brain processes.

In a 1931 experimental study of kinaesthetic images and their relation to visual perception, she located verbal thought and conscious control functions in the cortex, whereas subliminal images were assigned to subcortical regions. According to Spielrein, the specific symbolism of dreams was due to the weakening of cortical control functions during sleep. This enabled ontogenetically older, subcortical images and mechanisms to interfere with the thought process (SS 347). Spielrein was careful to note that she was unsure what major psychoanalysts would think about her neurological model. She observed, however, that Freud himself defined dream-work as the outcome of “regression” and “diminished censorship” during sleep (ibid.). This, in combination with his representation of dream-symbolism as the “organic, preverbal thought of childhood”, led her to conclude that “what we are in fact dealing with is the activity of ontogenetically earlier brain regions” (ibid.). Spielrein’s statement reveals her ambivalent position with regard to the prevailing narratives of Freudian psychoanalysis. Although her approach was not out of place in Switzerland or Russia, a number of her colleagues (Piaget, Claparède, Luria, Vygotsky) were scientists who had relatively little analytic experience and did not wish to restrict their views to purely psychoanalytic ones. Psychoanalysts, on the other hand, were increasingly divided into different camps (Freud had already parted ways with Jung and Adler and, by the early 1930s, the disputes that led to the Freud-Klein debates were already under way). By contrast, Spielrein’s inclusive, socially and neurologically informed type of psychoanalysis was easy to align with Marxism. A materialist psychology needed a holistic model, but one that would bring the relationship between the society and individual biology back into focus while renouncing the political dangers of recapitulation.

One of the first people to recognise this was Alexander Luria, who joined the Moscow Psychoanalytical Society a few months after Spielrein and probably attended her lectures on aphasia, child psychoanalysis and subliminal thought. Spielrein’s course on child analysis incited the interest of another budding psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who came to work with Luria at the Moscow Institute of

Psychology in 1924. The close parallels between Vygotsky's and Piaget's work (as well as their differences) have often been noted and Spielrein is increasingly recognised as "the missing link" between them (Etkind 173; Launer 19; Santiago-Delefosse). Her perspective was therefore decisive in shaping and streamlining Vygotsky's and Luria's perception of both Freud and Piaget, particularly as regards their theories of symbol formation, the relationship between language, thought and affect and the links between psychoanalysis and contemporary neurological research. Around the mid-1920s, Vygotsky and Luria worked on their own version of psychology in line with the tenets of historical materialism. Thus, in 1925, each published a paper intended as a defence of psychoanalysis, but also as a way of critiquing and reforming the dominant reflexological methods through integrating them with analytic knowledge.⁶⁶

Making Sense of Drives, Complexes and Reflexes

Luria's and Vygotsky's objections were variously directed at reflexology or its Western counterpart, behaviourism, which had recently gained prominence in the USA. Both schools were criticised for three reasons. First, in most of their experimental work, psychological processes – attention, memory, perception – were regarded in isolation, as if their relationship were always identical ("Monistic Psychology" 14; "Consciousness" 59). Secondly, none of them applied a chronological, developmental approach to human psychology. For reflexology and behaviourism, development was simply an accumulation of reflexes provided by experience. The biological foundation of learning and maturation was always the same, while the role of society merely consisted in inciting the creation of new neurological connections (as conditioned reflexes) ("Monistic Psychology" 13; "Consciousness" 53-56). Finally, these psychologists only studied reactions that were visible to the naked eye. Consequently, they remained blind to the "rich domain of unconscious processes, which underlie the bare facts" ("Monistic Psychology" 34). According to Vygotsky, to ignore the unconscious would be "suicide for science" (67) and would condemn psychology to remain purely diagnostic and descriptive, without

⁶⁶ Luria's paper was titled "Psychoanalysis as a System of Monistic Psychology", Vygotsky's "Consciousness as a Problem in the Psychology of Behaviour".

probing to the root of the problem. Psychoanalysis's great advantage was its holistic, chronological dimension, which established "an organic unity between the mind of the child and that of the adult" ("Monistic Psychology" 15). It did not conceive of this relation in terms of an addition of reflexes, associations or experiences, but tried to determine the ways in which childhood events could change the nature of adult behaviour, perception and the very biology of thought. The phenomena of consciousness, Luria explained, always arise from the dynamic interaction between "the unconscious reaches of mental life" (12) and external conditions. If psychoanalysis were coupled with reflexology and the study of social factors, the result would be an integral science, which has "one foot in biology and the other in sociology" ("Monistic Psychology" 10).

In 1925, Vygotsky differentiated between three kinds of reflexes: innate, conditioned and social. Innate reflexes constitute the biological foundation for the formation of acquired or conditioned reflexes of the kind described by Pavlov. Conditioned reflexes are formed "on the basis of inherited experience through the formation of new connections provided by personal experience" (57). Social reflexes are a subgroup of conditioned reflexes and arise through learning and interaction. It is on this final type of reactions that Vygotsky placed the greatest stress in his later work. In *Thought and Language*, his last and most famous study, the differentiation between innate, conditioned and social reflexes would be replaced by the distinction between drives, complexes⁶⁷ and concepts. Complexes, which predominate in the thought of young children, are subjective categories. Their meaning is emotional and situation-based. They are unstable, insensitive to contradiction and prone to slipping from one ordering principle to another. Concepts, on the other hand, are abstract categories whose meaning is defined by a certain number of fixed, hierarchically positioned traits common to all members of a social community; what one would generally find under the dictionary definition of a word (cf. 112-128).⁶⁸ Evidently, Vygotsky's "complexes" closely correspond to Spielrein's notion of subliminal thought as described in her studies on the language of children and aphasic patients.

⁶⁷ Vygotsky borrowed the term "complexes" from Spielrein and Jung.

⁶⁸ Although Vygotsky talks about social reflexes in his 1925 paper, concepts can no longer be called reflexes in the proper sense since they contain an element of consciousness. Complexes, on the other hand, are acquired through situational associations, emotional links and habituation in the manner of conditioned reflexes.

Furthermore, the relationship between complexes and concepts as apprehended by Vygotsky is fully in accordance with Spielrein's depiction of the relationship between subliminal and verbal thought. According to Vygotsky, complexes do not disappear in adult life, but provide raw material and vitality to concepts, whereas concepts serve to order complexes and translate them into narrative form (134).

Vygotsky was also keen to emphasize that, although the development of thought follows a certain sequence (from syncretic thought through complexes to concepts), it is society that incites and guides development (55-56). Concepts are cultural formations and differ from one community to another. Complexes are formed on the basis of personal experience, specific to each individual. But none of the verbal or non-verbal symbols that arise in a person's mind have universal existence, independent of the social conditions in which they were created. To prove his point, Vygotsky fiercely criticised Freud's essay on Da Vinci's childhood memories, remarking that the psychoanalyst acted as if he were in possession of "a catalogue of sex symbols", which "remained the same at all times, for all peoples" (*Collected Works* 247; Proctor 167). Like Spielrein, Vygotsky admitted that there are inherited instincts, but these do not participate in the genesis of symbols, except through influencing their affective foundation. While the direction thought takes might be swayed by instincts, the shape in which it appears comes from experience.

As observed previously, Spielrein's understanding of instincts changed significantly in the early 1920s. At this time, she defined them as inherited experiences which had become automatic and organic, stressing the fact that they do not influence the form thought takes, but only its direction and affective charge (SS 297). This definition served as the foundation for Luria's and Vygotsky's comprehension of instincts, which were now viewed simply as inherited reflexes.⁶⁹ Luria went so far as to describe the biological nature of instincts as linked to nervous stimuli and the endocrine glands, alluding to the initial discoveries that were just being made regarding the relationship between hormones and the nervous system (22).⁷⁰ Spielrein's, Luria's and Vygotsky's theory of instincts operated within a

⁶⁹ Like Spielrein, Luria and Vygotsky did not distinguish between instincts and drives (at least the difference is not apparent in English translations of their work).

⁷⁰ The word "hormone" was first coined by the British physiologist Ernest Starling in 1905. In the 1920s, researchers primarily concentrated on identifying the glands or organs from which hormones were secreted, such as the thyroid or adrenal gland. The chemical nature of hormones was also

monistic, historical system, but renounced the transcendental element found in Jung's work. Their psychology included a potentially unlimited number of instincts of variable sort, but there was no longer an original force that operated behind them. An inherited reflex is a historically variable, environmentally and biologically determined behaviour pattern. It is not a universal idea, thought or symbol. Spielrein and her Russian students thus managed to root basic psychoanalytic concepts, such as drives or the unconscious, in human biology while preserving the holistic model of the mind offered by psychoanalysis. Moreover, they successfully integrated psychoanalytic terminology with the discoveries of reflexologists and behaviourists and situated both in the framework of social relations. Finally, they constructed a developmental chronology that acknowledged the possibility of inheriting social influences without falling back on narratives of cultural recapitulation.

Vygotsky's Challenge to Progress Narratives

Like Spielrein and Piaget, Vygotsky believed that the relationship between thought and language changes over time. In a child, the maturation of thought from complexes to concepts will affect its verbal expression, self-perception and relation to its environment. But all the earlier developmental stages remain present in the genesis of verbal thought. Concepts are but one dimension of the word, its most stable dimension (also referred to as word meaning). The rest is consumed by "the sum of all psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word" (*TL* 244), the individual cluster of emotions and sensual memories that Vygotsky calls "sense" (*ibid.*). In young children, speech is still very coloured by sense. As Spielrein proved in her experiments, "the senses of different words flow into one another, earlier ones are contained in and modify the later ones" (*TL* 246). In adults this type of thought descends into the subconscious realm and constitutes a part of what Vygotsky would define as inner speech.

Vygotsky's definition of inner speech is somewhat different from Piaget's and diverges greatly from contemporary neurological and behaviourist explanations,

identified at this time. In 1925 Edward Calvin Kendall determined the structures of cortisone and thyroxine in the USA. In addition, initial discoveries were being made about the interplay between the central nervous and the endocrine system. These were still in the early stages, however. A large number of neural and hormone signalling pathways (such as the HPA axis) would only be discovered in the 1950s (cf. Tata 490-491).

where inner speech was mostly conceived as speech minus sound. For Vygotsky, the nature of inner speech is unlike that of external speech and is marked by a “preponderance of sense over meaning” (244). Since external speech serves communication, it is more ordered and concerned with the conceptual content common to both speakers. Inner speech, by contrast, is intended for the self. It is prone to leave out what the speaker/thinker already knows and consists of both words and images.⁷¹ Inner speech is a mediator between conscious and subliminal thought or, as Vygotsky’s translator and biographer Alex Kozulin puts it, “between culturally sanctioned symbolic systems and private language and imagery” (xxxvi). Below the plane of inner speech, Vygotsky situates the realm of thought itself. Thought is predominantly visual and follows an affective rather than narrative logic. In accordance with the sticky affinity that Spielrein described, it does not observe a causal or chronological sequence, but fluctuates back and forth between individual associations (250-252). Emotional propensities constitute the deepest layer in Vygotsky’s explanation of the genesis of thought: “To understand another’s speech, it is not sufficient to understand his words. We must understand his thought. But even this is not enough. We must also know his motivation. No psychological utterance is complete until this plane is reached.” (253)⁷² Of course, this was precisely the plane psychoanalysts were aiming for.

Vygotsky’s statement from *Thought and Language* implicitly reiterates his criticism of behaviourism and reflexology delivered in 1925, when he explicitly asserted that studying a person’s visible behaviour was not enough and that disregarding subliminal processes would make any existing psychological study superficial. Spielrein’s influence on Vygotsky’s conception of mental hierarchies and the process of symbol formation becomes evident if one compares his stages in the evolution of thought (and speech) with those outlined by Spielrein. For both psychologists, emotions and drives constitute the primary impulse towards thought formation. Vygotsky’s description of thought (before its translation into inner speech)

⁷¹ Here Vygotsky echoes the question Spielrein poses in one of her Russian studies – whether we think in images or words – and confirms her findings (SS 345).

⁷² Here one can clearly perceive the change that happened in Spielrein’s conception of social communication since her early work. Communication still takes place via the communal dimension of words/symbols, but this meaning is neither unconscious nor inherited. It is learned. Unconscious communication remains important, but takes place through an affective exchange.

shares a number of characteristics with Spielrein's subliminal symbolism: it is visual, affective, subjective and exempt from narrative chronology. Inner speech represents a combination of subliminal and verbal symbolism, with speech being partially "sublimated" (TL 226) into thought.

It is, of course, necessary to take into account the criticisms of psychoanalysis and Piaget's work Vygotsky postulated in *Thought and Language*. These chiefly revolve around three different, but interrelated topics. First, according to Vygotsky, Piaget did not account for the practical purpose of the child's egocentric speech (speech that accompanies the child's actions, but is not intended for a specific collocutor). Vygotsky considered this type of speech to be a precursor of inner speech and to perform the same function, to assist the child in reaching a decision or solving a problem.⁷³ Through the process of socialization, various types of speech become differentiated and the child learns to internalize the speech intended for the self (34-36). This differentiation (often observed in the literature on Vygotsky and Piaget)⁷⁴ is closely linked to a less often noted psychoanalytic objection. Vygotsky reproached Piaget for appropriating the dichotomy between the pleasure and reality principle and equating the child's early development with the former (18). He stressed the fact that the child is a social being from the start and that every attempt to satisfy a physical need or desire necessarily included an adaptation to social reality. The reality and pleasure principle were thus so intertwined that one could hardly be regarded separately from the other (25). When Piaget described the thought of young children as egocentric and dominated by the pleasure principle he was thus echoing a problematic psychoanalytic belief. Both of these points were integral to Vygotsky's emphasis on the social component of development. Essentially, what the Russian psychologist wanted to avoid was the notion that the initial stage of individual maturation was less permeated by socio-cultural influences. He even echoed the opinion that the pleasure principle in psychoanalysis resembled a "primeval metaphysical force" (ibid.).

Importantly, similar objections were frequently voiced following the publication of the Russian translation of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The metaphysical air of

⁷³ Vygotsky conducted a series of experiments which showed that the amount of children's egocentric speech increases in situations of problem-solving.

⁷⁴ Cf. Tryphon and Vonèche; Smith; Santiago-Delefosse; Kozulin

Freud's binary drive theory could not pass unnoticed among Soviet psychologists. Consequently, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* did not enjoy much popularity in the Soviet Union (cf. Proctor 158).⁷⁵ Freud's treatise could not even be saved by the complimentary introduction written by Vygotsky and Luria in 1925. Rightly assuming that a regressive, repetitive mechanism that attempts to revert life into an inorganic state would be criticised by the representatives of new Soviet psychology, Vygotsky and Luria tried to define the death drive as a biological instinct, acting primarily on a cellular level. This instinct could, however, be successfully combatted by progressive social forces represented by the libido. The two psychologists thus equated the death drive with the organism's conservative, individualist, biological tendencies and the libido with progressive, collective, social influences, presenting development as a dialectical interplay of these two forces, an interpretation that was not incompatible with Freudian dialectics (16-17).⁷⁶ In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky rejected his earlier defence and extended his criticism to Freud's initial dichotomy between the pleasure and reality principle. What both of these binary systems (as well as Piaget's psychology) shared was a fundamental opposition between biological and social factors, which, Vygotsky would argue, was a profoundly flawed assumption (47).

It is for the same reason that Vygotsky disapproved of Piaget's (and Spielrein's)⁷⁷ notion of a mind woven on two looms, although his proposed mental hierarchy was but a more differentiated version of their model. A binary structure of

⁷⁵ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* was one of the works attacked in Valentin Voloshinov's *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* (1927), which initiated the collapse of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union. Spielrein mentioned Voloshinov in her letter to Eitington as an example of "the stupid objections" and misinterpretations analysts had to contend with (Covington and Wharton 224).

⁷⁶ We will remember that, for Freud, the libido is (via sublimation) responsible for cultural and scientific advancement, as it is for maintaining group cohesion. The death drive is, on the other hand, related to the egocentrism of early developmental stages. A particularly prominent example of the opposition between the libido and narcissism/individualism is to be found in Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921): "So long as a group formation persists or so far as it extends, individuals in the group behave as though they were uniform [...]. Such a limitation of narcissism can [...] only be produced by one factor, a libidinal tie with other people. Love for oneself knows only one barrier—love for others, love for objects." (101) There was a relatively small step from this to associating the libido with social influences and the death drive with biological individualism as was done by Vygotsky and Luria. Effectively, their introduction aligned Freudian theory with the collectivist spirit prevalent in Russia at the time. In renouncing this dialectical hypothesis, Vygotsky reinstated a socio-individual approach to psychology in spite of the forced collectivism of the 1930s.

⁷⁷ Vygotsky never quoted Spielrein in *Thought and Language*, although a significant amount of his psychoanalytic knowledge as well as his familiarity with Piaget's theories would have stemmed from her. At the time when Vygotsky wrote his final work, references to psychoanalytic sources were publicly condemned. This was likely the reason both for Spielrein's omission and Vygotsky's attempt to partially distance himself from psychoanalytic legacy.

the mind, claimed Vygotsky, “is the natural outcome of the original view of social and biological factors as alien to each other” (ibid.). In the light of contemporary psychoanalytic theories, Vygotsky’s criticism was by no means unfounded. As outlined earlier, after 1920, the bulk of European analysts (including Jung and Freud) vouched for the existence of a universal, phylogenetically determined symbolism that was transmitted from generation to generation and inaccessible to the impact of society or individual experience. Within the framework of these psychoanalytic narratives, a large proportion of the contents of subliminal thought and early childhood development could indeed be said to be purely biological. Vygotsky recognised this pattern in Piaget’s description of the egocentric nature of child thought. Consequently, he rejected even the general biological recapitulation suggested by Piaget: “The developmental uniformities established by Piaget are not laws of nature, but are historically and socially determined.” (55) To Vygotsky, Piaget seemed to oppose the biological nature of the child’s development up to the age of six or seven (egocentric and dominated by the pleasure principle) to the social nature of his/her later life (guided by the reality principle). Vygotsky’s recognition of the political dangers of the progress narrative leading from pleasure and egocentrism to reality and adaptation is commendable; yet it is doubtful if his criticism of Piaget (and Spielrein) was entirely warranted.

Spielrein and Piaget acknowledged the fact that the child is a social being (exposed to parental and environmental influences) from the onset of his/her life. For Piaget, egocentrism was grounded in the fact that the child considers his/her feelings and perspectives universal until it begins to appreciate the existence of different viewpoints.⁷⁸ In the 1920s and 1930s, Spielrein considered conscious and subliminal symbolism to be equally determined by biological and social factors (or rather by a

⁷⁸ Piaget knew about Vygotsky’s work from his communication with Luria, who he met at a psychological congress at Yale University in 1929 (Tryphon and Vonèche 5). It was not until 1962, however, that Piaget read *Thought and Language*. In his published comments, he expressed praise for Vygotsky’s book and repeatedly argued that he agreed with him on most points. He stressed that his notion of cognitive egocentrism should not be confused with the general meaning of the word and agreed that all of the child’s actions contain a certain measure of assimilation and accommodation (and, by extension, of the reality and pleasure principle), only the assimilative tendency is seen to predominate in young children. He also accepted Vygotsky’s claim that inner speech is internalised egocentric speech and that it can serve “both logical and autistic purposes” (“Comments” n. p.). In contrast to Vygotsky, however, Piaget insisted on a certain measure of spontaneous development (biological recapitulation) in the child’s mind.

biology moulded and produced by social factors in the way Vygotsky described). In addition, neither Spielrein nor Piaget could be counted among the proponents of social evolution who sought to introduce a biological explanation for socially imposed hierarchies. Vygotsky successfully exposed the layers between the two looms of subliminal and conscious thought and clarified the social circumstances that dictate their form. He also managed to expose and eliminate the final remnants of recapitulation in Piaget's work (the parallel development of the child and Western science from egocentrism to objectivity). In spite of this, Vygotsky's final psychological treatise took from psychoanalysis, Spielrein and Piaget more than he was allowed to admit.

Though certain similarities between Spielrein's and Vygotsky's conception of thought and speech have been noted (cf. Santiago-Delefosse), few studies have credited the indebtedness of Vygotsky's psychology to psychoanalytic theory, particularly the ways in which the work of Russian psychologists managed to revive, elaborate and reinterpret the early neurological research psychoanalysis originated from. While European psychoanalysts were rapidly moving towards an increasingly universal unconscious – an unconscious grounded in the phylogenetic past rather than in recent personal and cultural history – Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria employed psychoanalytic knowledge as a means of probing into the relationship between the social environment and the neurological development of the individual mind. These researchers led psychoanalysis back to a time when the interpretation of symbols primarily depended on the patients' life history and free association was the analyst's pivotal guide to their unconscious.⁷⁹ The individual and cultural genesis of reflexes, subliminal complexes and conscious concepts constituted the foundation of the materialist psychoanalysis developed by Spielrein and her Soviet collaborators. Before examining the ways in which the tension between mechanist, vitalist and materialist narratives played itself out in Western literature, a brief interlude will provide an example of vitalist trends in the Russian literary realm as well as disclose

⁷⁹ It is therefore not surprising that Freud's texts most often consulted by Russian psychologists and psychoanalysts were *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), where, as Forrester notes, dreams and neuroses were believed to be built "by the same mechanisms" (76), but one did not expect these mechanisms to produce the same symbol or symptom.

the outlines of the traumatic history concealed behind the lines of Vygotsky's final work.

Interlude: The Traumatic History of *Thought and Language*

The word I forgot
Which once I wished to say
And voiceless thought
Returns to shadows' chamber. (*TL* 210)

These lines introduce the final chapter of Vygotsky's book, in which a tacit homage is paid to psychoanalytic legacy. From the outset, the reader is made aware not only of the major topics examined in the pages to follow – the relationship between memory, thought, emotion and verbal expression – but also of Vygotsky's literary background. It is well known that Vygotsky's initial interest lay in the fields of literature and philosophy, before he finally turned to psychology some ten years before his death of tuberculosis. Rather than replacing one for the other, the aspiring scientist continued to combine and contrast the two spheres of knowledge to see how they could be used to illuminate and transform one another. These attempts resulted in a number of studies, including *The Psychology of Art* (1925). According to Vygotsky, literature and psychoanalysis both employ a narrative method that guides the reader/patient towards emotional discharge (cf. 199-217). It is therefore not surprising that the “psychoanalytic chapter” of *Thought and Language* is strewn with literary quotations, particularly those that were discussed by the big names of Russian psychoanalysis (Tolstoy by Nikolai Osipov, Dostoyevsky by Tatiana Rosenthal and Gogol by Ivan Ermakov). Yet, although it successfully draws together the strands of Vygotsky's scientific argument, the subtext of “Thought and Word” does not provide catharsis. Rather, it leaves us with a painful feeling of “voiceless thought” which, as the author announces, remains unsaid, or at least incomplete.

The opening lines stem from Osip Mandelstam's 1920 poem “The Swallow” (*Complete Poetry* 110).¹ In literary history, Mandelstam is mostly remembered for having composed a poem against Stalin, depicting the Soviet leader as “the Kremlin mountaineer, murderer and peasant-slayer” (N. Mandelstam 13). *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky's last psychological treatise, was published posthumously in

¹ While Mark Willis refers to the poem as “The Swallow”, in collections of Mandelstam's poetry, the poem mostly appears without a title.

1935. His reference to Mandelstam thus reached the Russian public about a year after the poet's arrest and internal exile in 1934, by which time the Stalin-poem had left an indelible trace in the Soviet oral tradition. It is not known if Vygotsky was one of the eleven people who heard Mandelstam recite the original verse, but in 1933 he was part of a close-knit circle of intellectuals that regularly met in Mandelstam's apartment (cf. Willis; N. Mandelstam 223). In order to fully comprehend the implications of Vygotsky's quotation, it is necessary to provide a brief outline of Mandelstam's position in Russian literary and cultural discourses, particularly as regards his views on society, language and evolutionary biology.

If the relationship to the past was a distinguishing feature of a number of literary and political movements in the first half of the twentieth century, this was particularly true in Russia. Following the heyday of symbolism in the 1900s and 1910s, Russian poets were divided into two opposing camps, the Futurists and the Acmeists. The Acmeist movement, which its critics charged with pastism and idealism,² had many traits in common with Anglo-American Imagism: the preference for clarity and compactness of expression, the focus on the creation of an image, the admiration for Hellenistic art as well as the yearning for world culture, a timeless fusion of authors and literary traditions, which their spiritual heirs could tap into in order to revive and reinvent modern art. Osip Mandelstam was a prominent member of the Acmeist movement. His vision of tradition called for "a principle of unity" ("Nature" 506), not "slavishly bound" (507) to thinking in time and causality, but one which opens up the possibility of synchronic connection.³ As Claire Cavanagh notes, this synchronistic approach that pays little attention to the boundaries of time, nationality, language or culture, links Mandelstam to other modernist poets such as Ezra Pound or T.S. Eliot. Cavanagh relates the three poets' desire for world culture with their position "on the outskirts" (15) of European heritage.⁴ Though vastly different in other respects, America and Russia were alike "in their ambivalence

² Following the Revolution, Acmeist poetry was denounced as bourgeois or anachronistic. Formalist critics, such as Roman Jakobson and Yuri Tynianov, described Mandelstam's work as "pure poetry" and "chamber music" (Cavanagh 11).

³ Jung's notion of synchronicity, fully developed after World War II, is reminiscent of these literary trends. All express the desire to establish relations or meaningful coincidences beyond temporal or causal restrictions that take place within a transcendental, holistic system.

⁴ Both Pound and Eliot emigrated from the USA to Europe, while Mandelstam was the child of Central European Jews who had moved to Russia from Warsaw.

towards the continent and a tradition to which they did and did not belong” (ibid.). Yet, alongside of their divided national and cultural identity, there were other factors that conditioned these poets’ wish for universal history and a transcultural, trans-linguistic symbolism that was beyond the “noise of time”.⁵ The influence of World War I, the social impact of Darwinism and the ensuing crisis of religious worldviews, a shift in social hierarchies, gender and class identities and a global circulation of news and knowledge affected Europe and the USA as much as it did Russia. If one wishes to explain the surprising similarity between a group of Anglo-American and Russian poets, one must take all of these aspects into account.

The next chapter will take a closer look at these historical events in order to discuss the tendency to universal symbolism in the work of Hilda Doolittle, another American poet who sailed to Europe from the USA in 1911 and joined the Imagists soon after her arrival. H.D. shared Mandelstam’s passion for Greek mythology, Hellenistic culture and his yearning for an international, timeless community of poets. Like him, she saw this community as inscribed into the human body. Following her analysis in Vienna, she came to locate it in the universal unconscious, seated in the pathways of the brain and revealed as symbols behind every-day objects and works of art. For Mandelstam, symbols of this kind appeared in language and operated as a vital, creative force behind words and things. These “representations” emerged in the body and were projected into the surrounding environment, filling it with “teleological warmth” and “creating an organic poetics of biological character” (“Nature” 518). Unlike her Russian counterpart, H.D. would succeed in rewriting contemporary theories of evolution (and psychoanalysis) to suit her feminist mythology and unconscious symbolism.⁶ For Mandelstam, the chronology of evolutionary narratives was a “foolish infinity” (507), devoid of connection, particularly if accompanied by “its vulgar appendage, the theory of progress” (ibid.). Although he did not explicitly engage in a celebration of bio-historical regression like H.D.,⁷ the Russian poet was adamant in his defence of vitalism and universal symbolism as well as in his attacks on industrialism and mechanist science. This was in the 1920s.

⁵ This was the title of Mandelstam’s 1925 prose collection.

⁶ Another significant difference between Mandelstam’s and H.D.’s oeuvre has to do with gender. While H.D. celebrated the visionary capacity of the bisexual female poet, Mandelstam’s poetry in the 1920s depicted a return to origins with primitivist and occasionally patriarchal undertones.

⁷ See chapter two.

By the early 1930s, history and biology had caught up with Mandelstam, whose poems began to address not only contemporary political atrocities, but also the complex questions of trauma, nature and nurture. Two years before his exile, the deeply revolted and increasingly isolated Mandelstam conceived of a poem entitled “Lamarck” (*Complete Poetry* 205).

“If this timid, clumsy patriarch” was right, the speaker speculates, “I’ll sit on the last step of Lamarck’s mobile ladder” (*ibid.*). He proceeds to outline his descent down the evolutonal scale until he is forced to “say no to warm blood” and embrace “a spider’s deafness” (*ibid.*). As a theory that accorded social influences a central role in shaping human biology, Lamarckism was very popular in post-Revolution Russia. It also bore the promise that the sociobiological creation of the increasingly standardised personality type of the “new Soviet man/woman” was possible if the required social conditions were provided. Mandelstam had a much more sinister (and more realistic) view of the biopsychological legacy of the Stalinist era: If it is true that environmental influences are passed on to future generations, what will be the heritage of a generation whose society has forced its members to go deaf, mute and emotionally numb (“to say no to warm blood”)?⁸ The prevailing anxiety and enforced silencing of the voices of difference and criticism during the 1930s is presented as a sociogenic regression in Mandelstam’s late poetry, in sharp contrast to the official rhetoric of progress through social intervention. Yet such a view also represents at least a partial modification of Mandelstam’s earlier conception of a cultural, linguistic and biological realm beyond social influences. Once the politically enforced silence is internalised, a traumatic severing of thought and word leaves behind a social subject incapable of self-expression. This traumatic forgetfulness, which is, at the same time, an excess of remembering (emotional, but not verbal), is precisely the situation addressed in the poem that served as the epigram to Vygotsky’s chapter.

Like Freud’s neurotics and Spielrein’s aphasic patient, the poetic subject of “The Swallow” has thoughts, but no words to articulate them. He is caught in a repetitious flow of thought with no conscious control or power to divert it (“that

⁸ In fear of leaving behind written evidence, Mandelstam composed his poems in silence following Stalin’s rise to power and would recite them to his wife or a circle of close friends who retained them in their memory (N. Mandelstam 310).

transparent thought keeps repeating the wrong thing”). As noted previously, Spielrein, Piaget and Vygotsky all believed that it is verbal thought that orders elements of subliminal imagination into a chronological, causal narrative. Non-verbal thought – the thought of aphasia, dreams and child language, and, we might add, the thought of unconscious memory – is guided by emotional associations which, as Spielrein warns, are sticky and repetitious. Yet since subliminal thought also serves as the source of all verbal expression, the severing of ties between these two forms of cognition can result in a chain of empty words or a train of images and emotions that is unable to rise to the surface of consciousness. This is the situation that Vygotsky addresses when he quotes from Mandelstam and Nikolai Gumilev, another Acmeist poet, towards the very end of *Thought and Language*. Without access to emotions, memories and sensations, words become “dead things” (255). Equally, a thought not formed and shared through words remains a “Stygian shadow” (*ibid.*).⁹ In ordinary circumstances, Vygotsky explained, inner speech keeps “fluttering” (249) between thought and word, between subliminal images and verbal language. The choice of the word “flutter”, however, harks back to Mandelstam’s swallow, the blind bird which can only fly “on amputated wings” and sing “night songs in unconsciousness”. While discussing the everyday thought-process of the healthy adult, Vygotsky thus keeps slipping back into the traumatic situation he outlined in borrowed words at the beginning of his chapter. The traumatic events surrounding the author seep into the scientific text, like a symptomatic break in time that interrupts the flow of thought in an association experiment. And the story concealed behind the words he does say revolves both around Mandelstam and psychoanalysis.

Still, perhaps not all of the subtext of Vygotsky’s psychological treatise was meant to remain unconscious. After all, since the erasure of both the chapter’s ghosts was socially imposed, one can read the hints (the psychoanalytic outline of the genesis of symbols and inner speech, the two Mandelstam quotes, all the references to Western psychologists and philosophers as well as Russian literary authors who did not belong to the established classics of the Stalinist era) as an act of protest. Unlike his friend’s, Vygotsky’s gesture of defiance requires more interpretation. Yet in the years of social oppression leading up to the Great Terror,

⁹ “Stygian echo” in the 1973 translation (*Complete Poetry* 110).

his compatriots would have been equipped with the interpretative tools required, since a lot of their daily communication was conducted through codes and signs. Each in his own way, Mandelstam and Vygotsky challenged the “death of speech” even while they were mourning it and writing about it. As Russian citizens of the first half of the twentieth century, the psychologist and the poet had witnessed a lot of death and social violence first hand. In addition, Vygotsky was anticipating the outcome of his rapidly deteriorating health condition as he was writing his final work, while Mandelstam must have been aware of the consequences of speaking out. In this context, it is almost ironic to go back to Luria’s and Vygotsky’s introduction to the Russian translation of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1925).

In “A Country Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Hannah Proctor offers a convincing account of how Luria’s redefinition of the death drive rejected the pessimistic aspect of Freudian dialectics while the development of political events in Soviet Russia provided a stark contrast to the positive valuation of social intervention in contemporary Marxist discourses (173).¹⁰ However, one must bear in mind that Freud’s binary drive theory (as well as Spielrein’s earlier version) was largely developed in reaction to the realities of World War I and other emerging forms of social conflict. And while the notion of a compulsion to repeat (cf. *BPP* 36) was certainly beneficial in attempts to make sense of the psychology of trauma, the notion of an inborn drive towards violent behaviour, which must be curbed or sublimated through socially facilitated pathways, was also a way of avoiding looking into the social origins of an individual’s wish to harm others or him/herself. In this sense, Vygotsky’s and Mandelstam’s account of unconscious traumatic repetition, which does not arise out of an instinctive need to return to a previous state, but out of a

¹⁰ The article also contains a fruitful analysis of Luria’s later work, primarily his 1932 study *The Nature of Human Conflicts*. Although Luria often resorted to association experiments – as they were used by Spielrein and Jung – to identify the complexes behind the subject’s conscious reactions and showed a marked interest in the experimental ways to extract subliminal thought processes, he rarely engaged in an analysis of these processes or their social causes. As Proctor notes, in his studies of criminal subjects, Luria’s sparse descriptions of the murders point to “the poverty and privations of NEP-era Moscow that formed the backdrop to these incidents” (176). Yet these sections remain purely descriptive and Luria’s experimental work diagnostic. Luria “documented the brutalities of Soviet life, but made no attempt to discern their origins or mitigate their circumstances” (177). Ironically, the Soviet neurologist is thus rightly reproached with the very criticism he once launched against the old schools of psychology: that they were only descriptive and did not investigate the social origins of the subject’s ailments. What Luria kept of the psychoanalytic method in his 1932 book was just the first step in the analytic process.

socially imposed severing of the link between speech and subliminal thought, is in many ways more productive. While it retains the repetitive temporal aspect of trauma and subliminal processes in general, it also accords society its rightful role in transferring a traumatic past to future generations. As Mandelstam warns in his dystopian poem on Lamarck, in a society that engenders unspeakable fear and conflict, nature will have forgotten “those [...] whose breath is red, whose laugh is supple...” (*Complete Poetry* 205). And while Mandelstam was silently mourning the timeless community of poets and the life-giving power of words, in Europe his American counterpart held onto them as a last defence in the face of mounting destruction.

Bees in the Shell or the Singing Skull: H.D.'s Freudian Defences

Since Hilda Doolittle's work was rediscovered by authors such as Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, her relationship with Freud has attracted undiminished interest. Although the influence of psychoanalytic ideas on H.D.'s writing – the particular amalgamation of myth, personal and cultural history, the rich and original employment of free-association as well as the frank utilisation of autobiographical prose as writing cure – has never passed unnoticed, these early accounts primarily tended to define the psychoanalytic encounter in terms of a clash of opposing social identities: poet/scientist, man/woman, believer/rationalist, Jew/Christian, heterosexual/bisexual and so forth.¹ In this context, H.D.'s work became famous for its feminist re-definition of psychoanalysis, its resistance to concepts such as penis envy, its questioning of oedipal chronology and the construction of a spiritual, feminine mythology. More recently, literary critics have shifted their attention to the common preoccupations of Freud and his patient.² Some have even ventured to turn a critical eye on the political implications of H.D.'s mythological system.³

Drawing particularly on these recent trends, this chapter will outline the political role vitalist and mechanist discourses played in the relationship between H.D. and her analyst as well as in the system of personal mythology that developed in her interwar and World-War-II writing. H.D. appropriated notions of phylogenetic regression and universal symbolism developed in Freudian psychoanalysis after 1910. A bit like Spielrein in her early phase, she transformed psychoanalytic narratives to endow phylogenetic regression with a positive meaning, but went a step further and turned this regressive capacity into a constitutional privilege of the bisexual female poet. As in Jung's or Freud's work, such a biological framework

¹ See Stanford Friedman's *Penelope's Web*, Blau Du Plessis' *H.D. the Career of that Struggle* or their joint essay "Woman is Perfect: H.D.'s Debate with Freud".

² See for example Dianne Chisholm's *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics*.

³ See chapter three in Hobson's *Angels of Modernism*, chapter five and six in Cathy Gere's *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* as well as Rachel Connor's *H.D. and the Image*. For a criticism of H.D.'s views on Jewishness see Sprio's "Weighed in the Balance: H.D.'s Resistance to Freud in *Writing on the Wall*". For H.D.'s engagement with contemporary technology see Morris' *How to Live/What to Do: H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* as well as her essay "The Concept of Projection: H.D.'s Visionary Powers". For an insight into the cultural history of modernist mythmaking, its relation to World War I and the crisis of spirituality, with a special focus on H.D. and D.H. Lawrence, see Nanette Norris' *Modernist Myth: Studies in H.D., D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf*.

served as the foundation of a social hierarchy, only one that celebrated the woman poet's access to unconscious symbolism rather than the progress of male scientific intellect. For H.D., this same intellect was associated with the mechanist nature of masculine industry and warfare. Consequently, what H.D. recognised as valuable in psychoanalysis was its universal, vitalist aspect, which she considered capable of enabling international understanding and communication (these tendencies become particularly apparent in her *Close Up* articles). Her World-War-II work – based both on her childhood biography and her analytical encounter with Freud (1933/1934) – constitutes a fictional attempt to convert Freud and psychoanalysis more generally to her feminine mythology. In sum, one might say that H.D. isolated and emphasised the transcendental elements that were already there in Freudian psychoanalysis, while adapting its political implications to her own social position. At the same time, H.D.'s psychoanalytic universalism served as a defence against the intense personal trauma she experienced during the two world wars. The relationship between vitalism, mechanism, war-trauma and psychoanalysis provides a comprehensive framework which enables us to understand H.D.'s ambiguous relationship with Freudian theories and contemporary politics, but is largely missing from current accounts of her psychoanalytic engagements.

Following a brief outline of the relevant scientific and social context, this chapter will focus on H.D.'s appropriation of vitalist and psychoanalytic theories from 1918 until the end of World War II. H.D.'s feminist interpretation of contemporary theories of evolutionary and racial repetition already becomes evident in her early essay *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1919). The transcendental anatomy she developed in *Notes* continued to evolve through her work on psychoanalysis and film in the interwar period. The politics of H.D.'s film writing, its relation to the universal unconscious and Freudian notions of dream-work deserve to be treated separately, however. It is for this reason that the first part of this chapter (sections one and two) will illustrate the progress of H.D.'s biological concepts by beginning in 1919 and then skipping on to the fiction she produced during World War II. The period of the 1920s will be discussed in depth in the sections dealing with H.D.'s film criticism. Read together, these sequences form a coherent story of H.D.'s psychoanalytic, cinematic and biological attitudes as well as their scientific and cultural sources. The

final three sections are devoted to the personal background that conditioned H.D.'s relationship with psychoanalysis. By outlining the influence of psychoanalytic narratives on H.D.'s socio-political views, I intend to address a political ambiguity a number of modernist authors shared with their psychoanalytic contemporaries: the fluctuation between socio-biological universalisms and the need for concrete political action.

Recapitulation, Sexuality and Art in 1919

The historical factors that caused an upsurge of vitalism in the medical sciences also ensured a proliferation of transcendentalism in the arts. The rise of urban capitalism, the burgeoning political power of crowds, the increasingly fragile class-divide, women's suffrage movement, the advance of left-wing initiatives as well as unprecedented advances in communication technology (the telegraph, the telephone, the radio and the cinema) brought the established social identities and worldviews into question. In this anxiety-provoking environment, the old Victorian interest in ancient mythology and culture was increasingly employed as a historical tool for escaping the present. Remarkable archaeological findings (Heinrich Schliemann's Troy, Arthur Evans' Palace of Knossos, Howard Carter's tomb of King Tutankhamun) provided new sites of imaginary projection and were, particularly in the 1930s, used to promote the ideals of pacifism and utopian social structures (cf. Gere 151). What is more, primitivist tendencies in the arts and sciences were widely supported by the conviction that ancient societies could provide that excess of energy which had been drained from the modern wo/man by speedy progress and years of global conflict (cf. Lears 99 ff.). Like vitalist scientists, H.D., Bryher and Barnes all believed in drives and communities that permeated bodies, but were part of a larger transcendental whole. These were generally described as emotional or erotic energies that enabled connection and communication to other human beings or to members of one's own ancestral past. What follows is an account, a case study almost, of how sites of mythological projection became physical realities for Hilda Doolittle and how Freudian analysis enabled her to discover a transcendental community of the mind.

In 1919, H.D. arrived with Bryher on the Scilly Isles to recover from a series of tragic events that conditioned her experience of World War I. Her brother had died

in combat; her father never recovered from the shock and passed away soon afterwards. Her husband Richard Aldington returned from the war severely traumatised and a series of affairs and personal conflicts followed. Apart from the deterioration of her formerly happy marriage to Aldington, H.D. also blamed the death of her first child, stillborn in 1915, on the shock of hearing the news about the British ocean liner *Lusitania*, sunk by German forces en route from New York to Liverpool. Finally, during her second pregnancy, she came down with influenza that nearly killed both her and her daughter. It is in these circumstances that Bryher appeared on the scene. Their meeting in 1919 was the beginning not only of a life-long relationship, but of a series of trips designed to help the physically and emotionally exhausted H.D. recover her strength. In H.D.'s novels and reminiscences, these travels would be associated with a series of visions or psychic episodes, which were to become the focal points of her biography, events repeatedly returned to and reinterpreted. The Scilly Isles hosted one such vision, the so-called jellyfish experience.

The first extensive interpretation of the jellyfish episode appeared in 1919 under the title *Notes on Thought and Vision*. The text is an unusual crossover of psychological study, aesthetic theory and transcendental philosophy, in which the event is idealized as heightened aesthetic awareness. The author describes a feeling of seeing things underwater, as if encapsulated by a cap or dome. This dome protects her from outside events, but at the same time operates as part of her psyche. Like a jellyfish, she is able to extend "feelers" into the outside world to establish contact with it: "There is then a set of super-feelers. These feelers extend out and about us, as the long, floating tentacles of the jellyfish reach out and about him. The super-feelers are part of the super-mind, as the jellyfish feelers are a part of the jellyfish itself" (19). H.D.'s subaqueous tentacles are elements of the over-mind, an organ through which the poet is capable of apprehending coded messages from the past (21 ff.). The precondition for the transference of these messages is "sympathy of thought" (22), an electric force similar to the Freudian libido.⁴

⁴ The history of the term sympathy is closely related to the history of vitalism. In the second century A.D., Galen maintained that connections among certain nerves allow animal spirits to travel between organs in the body, establishing a holistic harmony and enabling different body-parts to respond "in sympathy". This idea of inducing reactions from a distance gave the sympathetic nervous system its name (cf. Finger et al. 283). In the early modern period, the idea of animal spirits that "unite and apply

In addition to being facilitated by a libidinal form of energy, the jellyfish incarnation shared with psychoanalysis its transcultural evolutionary paradigm. Of the two recapitulation narratives addressed in the previous chapter (biological and socio-cultural recapitulation), *Notes on Thought and Vision* contained both.⁵ Towards the end of the text, the protective jellyfish layer of the over-mind becomes concentrated in the middle of H.D.'s forehead, inside the skull. This "pearl in the shell", as she called it, is said to outlast the body, though it is produced through its functions. Simultaneously, it constitutes the immortal essence of the individual physique, the soul (49). More importantly still, the pearl's genesis is reminiscent of the biogenetic scheme forwarded by contemporary biological and psychoanalytic discourses:

But as it takes a man and a woman to create another life, so it takes these two forms of seed, one in the brain and one in the body, to make a new spiritual rebirth. I think that is why I saw them as jelly-fish. They are really two flecks of protoplasm and when we are born again, we begin not as a child, but as the very first germs that grow into a child. (50)

Evidently, H.D. reproduced the notion that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, that the human being in its early stages of development repeats the entire history of evolution. The embryo initially imitates the existence of unicellular organisms, only to acquire more complex shapes in the course of its maturation, culminating in the final assumption of human form. But the evolution of the over-mind does not terminate here. "Probably," H.D. continued, "we pass through all forms of life and

the faculties of the soul to the organs" was still very much alive. Jackson Lears finds similar pre-Cartesian notions in poets like John Donne (93; see chapter four). In the seventeenth century, philosophers like Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, Baruch Spinoza and physicians such as Thomas Willis replaced the idea of an immaterial connection between the body and the soul with "thinking matter" and "defined animal spirits as a sentient principle underlying all nature" (94). This tradition was in turn taken up by Romantic philosophers and physicians, who, together with their seventeenth-century predecessors, served as role models for twentieth-century vitalists. Simply put, the idea of sympathy originated from ancient holistic perceptions of the body, but the immaterial conception of intercorporeal communication was replaced in the seventeenth century by various types of a physical immortal substance. The definition of modernist sympathy as an attachment that is, at the same time, physical, emotional and transcendental is also stressed by Martin in *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy* (10).

⁵ Before Freud, H.D. had met Havelock Ellis and had been analysed by the British psychoanalyst Mary Chadwick as well as briefly by Hanns Sachs, who, in the end, suggested Freud. H.D. had been familiar with psychoanalytic theories at least since her voyage to Europe in 1911 and her interests were greatly spurred on by Bryher (cf. *Analysing Freud* xxxiv). Whether the notion of ontogenetic repetition of phylogenetic and racial history was a direct influence of H.D.'s engagement with psychoanalysis is difficult to say, since similar ideas were equally pervasive in art, history, philosophy and anthropological studies of the time. It is therefore probable that the biological and racial narratives that constitute the cultural background of *Notes* were not of an exclusively psychoanalytic origin, but the ideas definitely gained more weight in H.D.'s oeuvre after her analysis with Freud.

this is very interesting. But so far I have passed through these two. I am, in my spiritual body, a jelly-fish and a pearl” (50). In the textual space of *Notes* the dividing line between the spiritual and the physical becomes very slippery indeed. In H.D.’s visionary metamorphoses, the psyche literally becomes both the jellyfish and the pearl. What is more, this spiritual incarnation, the “spiritual body”, is designated as the supreme reality, the immortal substance of the individual organism emanating from the subliminal sphere. H.D.’s image is thus simultaneously reminiscent of Freud’s portrayal of germ-cells as the immortal, collective element of the human body and Spielrein’s earlier interpretation in which the merger of germ-cells is a reiteration of the earliest forms of life (the protozoa). With one significant difference: for H.D. this regressive capacity – the ability to take the plunge into earlier stages of evolution – embodied the driving force behind her poetic and visionary powers, a defining feature of her artistic and sexual identity.

In this context, it is important to observe that early forms of marine life (such as the mollusc and the jellyfish) were often associated with bisexuality in evolutionary schemes of the time and that these ideas were adopted by sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing, Albert Moll and Havelock Ellis, who were, in many ways, direct predecessors of Freud (cf. Sulloway 259-315). Ferenczi even came up with a scheme in which the development of the embryo in the uterus mimics the onset of marine life (Sulloway 380). The premise of an original bisexuality is present in Freud’s early work (cf. *Three Essays* 140-143) and was originally adopted from Wilhelm Fliess.⁶ Freud’s increasing reliance on recapitulation theory, coupled with the frustration-regression model, eventually resulted in a definition of bisexuality as a general pre-oedipal phase of development, which individuals can regress to due to environmental and/or biological factors. In a footnote added to the section on inversion of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1915, Freud asserted that “the freedom to range equally over male and female objects, as found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history” (143) was the original psychological basis of every civilised individual, but was normally overcome following the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. The connection between the pre-

⁶ Fliess claimed that all organisms were fundamentally bisexual, but, in the course of maturation, one half of the inborn bisexual tendency is suppressed by the other (Kerr 79).

oedipal attachment to the mother (as well as its subsequent refusal) and female homosexuality had been analysed by Helene Deutsch just a few years before H.D.'s first sessions with Freud and was also referenced in Freud's own essay on female sexuality (1931) (130). Indeed, when his patient regretted not having come to Vienna earlier, Freud responded that, until fairly recently, her type of regression, the fixation harking back to the girl's pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother, would have been unknown in psychoanalytic circles (*Analysing Freud* 142).

In line with these recent sexological and psychoanalytic findings, Freud identified H.D.'s jellyfish vision as a reference to the womb and proceeded to connect it with her bisexuality and the pre-oedipal stage of development: "Freud says mine is the absolutely first layer. I got stuck at the earliest pre-Oedipal stage and back to the womb seems to be my only solution, hence islands, Greek primitives and so on." (*Analysing Freud* 142) The references to fixation and regression come out clearly in H.D.'s description. This leads us to the second repetition compulsion H.D.'s work shares with Freudian narratives. "The childhood of the individual is the childhood of the race," Freud's famous statement from *Totem and Taboo* (113), finds itself appropriately resurrected in H.D.'s post-World-War-II *Tribute to Freud* (12). Not only is the individual destined to repeat the crucial stages of evolution in the first years of his/her life. The rule also applies to significant events of racial history. H.D.'s visions and bisexuality were associated with the regression to the pre-Oedipal, Minoan stage of civilization, the "miracle" preceding the patriarchal societies of Greece and Rome.⁷ Freud's bio-historical scheme and its fixation/regression principle provided an explanation for ideas that had been present in H.D.'s work for decades. Already her Imagist poetry was predominantly motivated by the search for eternal essences behind material events (Chisholm 57). By the time *Notes on Thought and Vision* were published, she was convinced that the exceptional capacity of apprehending these essences was connected to sexuality and the occult, mystical knowledge of ancient cultures, primarily those of ancient Greece: "The Attic dramatist knew [...] they were not his ideas. They were eternal, changeless ideas he had grown aware of, dreams already conceived he had watched." (23) In addition, *Notes on Thought and Vision* mark the beginning of apprehending divination and literary transmission

⁷ The connection was explicitly made in Freud's essay "Female Sexuality" (225).

(which, in H.D.'s case, are overlapping concepts) as a physical process and of looking for psychobiological modes of explaining their dynamics.

H.D. took her suggested anatomy of the human mind very seriously. And she knew who to turn to for advice. Towards the end of the essay, she mentioned presenting her ideas to a “scientist”, a “psychologist” (48), who observed that her over-mind was virtually identical to what psychoanalysts were already referring to as the unconscious.⁸ At the time of *Notes*, H.D. was still sceptical about equating the immortal essence of the body with the all too corporeal, material content of the Freudian unconscious. The sub-conscious mind (a term used interchangeably with the unconscious in H.D.'s later prose) is said to be the “world of sleeping dreams and the world great lovers enter, physical lovers, but only very great ones” (49). The over-conscious mind, on the other hand, is defined as the “world of waking dreams and the world great lovers enter, spiritual lovers, but only the greatest” (ibid.). Two points are worth stressing here, both of which have to do with rather commonplace opinions of the artistic circles H.D. participated in before the end of World War I (cf. Hobson 72-111). One is the association of the unconscious with the “purely physical” in contrast to the sublime nature of artistic perception. The corporeality of the unconscious was often associated with mechanist tendencies in psychoanalysis. Authors influenced by vitalism, such as D.H. Lawrence, regarded the reduction of the unconscious to the sexual instinct (in its simple biological sense) or to culturally repressed desires as proof of mechanist crudeness.⁹ By reducing the sexual act to

⁸ One scientist H.D. certainly did impart her visions to was Havelock Ellis, her friend and psychologist around the time when she composed *Notes*. To her great disappointment, Ellis was not entirely impressed with the manuscript (*Analysing Freud* 4). In an author whose inspiration for his scientific preoccupations came in the form of a vision that revealed to him “the scientific conception of an evolutionary world” (Nottingham 18) and one so strongly influenced by Edward Carpenter (Nottingham 71), it does seem surprising that *Notes on Thought and Vision* did not provoke greater interest. It therefore came as an even greater encouragement that Freud seemed genuinely fond of the book, though he did not agree with all of its particulars (*Analysing Freud* 49-50).

⁹ Lawrence's vitalist system and the association of psychoanalysis with mechanism and materialism is most prominently outlined in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) (cf. 31-36). He envisions the unconscious as a vital force, a “creative electricity” (58) that “spins the nerves and the brain as a web for its own motion” (48-49). This creative operation produces a number of conscious and unconscious centres and is responsible for the establishment of affective connections between individuals. Unlike Freud's, Jung's, Spielrein's or H.D.'s, Lawrence's unconscious is not related to collective symbolism, but has an inherently individual quality (cf. 86). A similarity with H.D.'s ideas, however, is the primitivist tendency in Lawrence's work and his positive appraisal of regression as a way of saving civilization and restoring its depleted energies. Their perspective on gender is, of course, very different. On Lawrence, vitalism and sympathy, see chapter three in Martin's *Modernism*

a physical activity of the material body, psychoanalysts were robbing the human anatomy of its transcendental value.¹⁰ It is highly likely that H.D. picked up on some of these ideas during her communication with Lawrence. The other point concerns the closely linked concept of a physically or mentally elect group, which is alone capable of entering the over-conscious realm. The underlying elitism of such a worldview will be discussed in greater detail later. H.D.'s (and Lawrence's) engagement with psychoanalysis is an example of how vitalist narratives of evolution, history and the human body circulated between the literary and the scientific realm, how they were transformed and appropriated on both sides of the conversation and of how, sometimes, in spite of mutual criticisms, authors shared more ideas than they wished to admit. Though H.D. and Lawrence both at one point accused Freud of materialism, H.D. would soon recognise the similarities between her own vitalist system and Freudian thought.

Ancestral Voices in World War II

Following *Notes on Thought and Vision*, in the 1920s H.D.'s interest in universal history and symbolism continued to evolve through her engagement with the cinema. Meanwhile, as we saw in chapter one, the vitalist trend in Freud's understanding of drives and the unconscious was becoming ever more pronounced. It is hardly surprising that H.D.'s enthusiasm for Freudian analysis increased after Freud's own vitalist turn. During her sessions in Vienna, she would still interpret certain aspects of psychoanalysis as too mechanistic. But the narrative of the universal unconscious, as encountered in Freud's theory of the 1930s, would henceforth provide the groundwork for her literary creation and the interpretation of her personal history. In Britain during World War II, H.D. composed a series of autobiographical works which were, in many ways, a sequel to her analytic sessions. Within these, both Freud and psychoanalysis were transformed and integrated into her feminist mythological

and the Rhythms of Sympathy. For H.D.'s own account of the affair with Lawrence, see *Bid Me to Live*.

¹⁰ This view of psychoanalysis was of course objectionable, since clear vitalist tendencies can be traced in Freud's writing already in the 1910s and are an even more fundamental component of Jungian psychoanalysis (see chapter one).

system, which she offered as a universal, transcendental remedy to post-war society.

The Gift, a memoir of H.D.'s childhood, was conceived in the apocalyptic atmosphere of wartime London between 1941 and 1943. It was the first piece of autobiographical fiction H.D. produced following her sessions in Vienna. *Tribute to Freud* ensued in 1944. The first part, "Writing on the Wall", appeared in *Life & Letters Today* in 1945-1946 and can be read as a post-war account of H.D.'s analysis. "Advent", the continuation of "Writing on the Wall", was allegedly taken directly from the diary H.D. kept during her first visit to Vienna in 1933.¹¹ In 1956 both parts were eventually published together under the title *Tribute to Freud*. It is in this form that they mostly reach readers today. Much of the imagery and symbolic connections in H.D.'s childhood memoir anticipate those in "Writing on the Wall". In addition, the psychoanalytic method of free association, profusely exploited in *Tribute* and her later works is also made use of in *The Gift*. Written 1944-1946, *Trilogy* represents the final chapter of H.D.'s wartime sequence, which was at the same time a project of self-analysis, a continuation of the psychoanalytic process, and an attempt to work through the emotionally intense experience of the encounter with Freud. *Trilogy* is an epic poem that celebrates the feminine gift of healing, represented by a series of mythic female characters, who are capable of metamorphosing destruction into resurrection and converting patriarchal magicians to their benevolent teaching. Apart from thus being a "gift" or "tribute", all three works share a profound engagement with personal and historical trauma, which is overcome through the salutary effect of the Freudian unconscious.

Leaving behind the initial scepticism of *Notes*, *Trilogy* glorifies the id as a utopian, transcultural dimension, capable of bestowing peace and forgiveness on a war-shattered society:

through spiral upon spiral of that shell
of memory that yet connects us
to the drowned cities of pre-history;
Kaspar understood and his brain translated:
Lilith before Eve
and one born before Lilith

¹¹ H.D.'s journal of the analysis was not assembled for publication until December 1948. Cathy Gere suggests that some of the scenes in "Advent", especially those concerned with the threat of World War II, were added by H.D. when she was preparing the journal for publication (191-193).

and Eve; we three are forgiven. (157)

The quoted lines are taken from the final part of *Trilogy*, “The Flowering of the Rod”. The collection, published just after World War II, in 1946, consists of three parts. The first one, “The Walls do not Fall”, begins with a parallel depiction of bombed London and the ruins of the Temple of Luxor, whilst the final part ends with a nativity scene, the emblem of rebirth and eternal life. Freud makes his appearance in the role of Kaspar,¹² a magician whose epiphany is effected through a meeting with Mary Magdalene, a mother/goddess figure similar to the Isis of “The Walls do Not Fall” or the Princess in *Tribute to Freud* (36-42). Although he first rejects Mary for being an “unseemly woman”, “disordered and dishevelled” (158), her persistence delivers a powerful lesson, a conversion to the creed of forgiveness, spirituality and feminine power.

Significantly, Kaspar’s epiphany is depicted through the caption quoted above. If we take the figure of the mage to indeed stand for Freud, then the quotation also contains interesting implications for psychoanalysis. The spiral-shell of memory is then the same one depicted in *Notes of Thought and Vision*, in which the brain, “inflamed through the interchange” (22) of eternal ideas “becomes the jelly-fish” or “germ-plasm” (*ibid.*), the carrier of the unconscious treasure of inherited memory. The “intricate mollusc” (*TF* 90) that connects us to the drowned cities of pre-history is thus located in brain-matter itself. Through the erotic/libidinal charge of sympathetic brains, these eternal memories are transferred from one figure to another. But not everyone is capable of producing such a translation. Though first designated as the magician-translator, the knowledge of the unconscious is first revealed to Kaspar through Mary Magdalene. It is she who makes his spiral-shell vibrate with pre-historical voices. Conspicuously, the message she brings across refers back to a pre-Biblical time, a time before Lilith and Eve. If history itself, including psychoanalytic history, is coloured by patriarchal structures, H.D. evokes the pre-historical, pre-Oedipal psychology as an antidote to global conflict. The knowledge of this unconscious dimension would, like the child/jar of myrrh¹³ she

¹² For a more exhaustive account of the parallels between Kaspar and Freud see *Penelope’s Web* (302-303).

¹³ In the final nativity scene that ends *Trilogy*, Mary Magdalene gives Kaspar a symbolic jar of myrrh, though the rest of the scene is arranged so as to connote the birth of Christ.

gives to Freud at the end of *Trilogy* (169-172), breathe new life into the mechanistic tenets of the psychoanalytic method. Both in *Trilogy* and in *Tribute to Freud*, psychoanalysis and her father are several times offered resurrection and forgiveness, conferred by the knowledge/vision of their feminine pre-history.

The end of “Writing on the Wall” contains a parallel scene in which Mignon, the child-heroine of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, saves her companion, the master who is at once father, lover and protector, by taking him into the Promised Land. Instead of perishing before the gates of heaven like Moses (another Freud-character) or Goethe’s Mignon, H.D.’s daughter-figure does not “ask if she may go or exclaim, if only we could go; but there is the simple affirmation” (*TF* 111). So it happens that on All Souls’ Day, “the day of the dead waiting for salvation and final expiation of their sins” (Arens 397), Freud/Kaspar/Moses is granted forgiveness by his student-daughter, a forgiveness which, rather than being tied to a specific religious tradition, takes the form of a universal, unconscious spirituality. It is for this reason that the tribute is made on the day following All Saints’ Day. Freud was, after all, “more interested in souls than saints” (*TF* 106). This prompts us to reopen the question of the mechanist/vitalist paradigm in psychoanalytic theory. If H.D. was well aware that Freud was interested in souls, it was because the knowledge was, unconsciously at least, present in his psychoanalytic narratives at least since 1914 (cf. “On Narcissism”).¹⁴

The soul or the universal unconscious – located in brain-matter as its germ- or jellyfish substance – is evoked numerous times in H.D.’s fiction composed during World War II, mostly through the image of the shell and the transcendental community hidden inside it. In *Tribute*, the metaphor is first mentioned in connection to Oliver Wendell Holmes’s poem “The Chambered Nautilus”, in which the shell is represented as the ship, the perishable home of the immortal soul, deserted after the soul has “at length become free” (*TF* 43). H.D. makes use of Holmes’s religious symbol of the soul sheltered in a ship-shell to brush against (and thus reinterpret) materialist notions of contemporary science. For, as we have seen, in *Notes* it is the artistically/erotically enflamed brain that becomes the jellyfish, while in *Trilogy* its windings and neural pathways represent the spirals that connect us to the cities of

¹⁴ See the section on Freud’s dialectics in chapter one.

pre-history. Finally, towards the end of *Tribute*, the recollection of Goethe's Mignon-song sets off an orchestra of "singing skulls".

They went on singing like an echo of an echo in a shell [...] the very shell substance of my outer ear and the curled involuted or convoluted shell skull, and inside the skull, the curled, intricate, hermit-like mollusc, the brain matter itself. Thoughts are things. And sometimes they sing songs. [...] Another mollusc in a hard cap of bone or shell had projected these words. There was a song attached to them that another singing skull had fashioned. (90)

The mollusc-brain stores a pearl of transcendental memories, projected into another brain as songs. This projection carries the promise not only of salvation and eternal life, but of a perfect society in the present. If men could translate the "waking dreams" of the unconscious, they would again speak a common language. For H.D., the pre-Babel memories of the Freudian id simultaneously provide the material for establishing empathic relationships and emotional bonds within the community. Like the libido, the songs projected from skull to skull are an active, unifying force.

In *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination*, Elizabeth Anderson looks into the correlation of several "mana-words" in H.D.'s writing that are used to mark "material objects" (104), but whose "generativity" (ibid.) and repetition creates complex, transcendental meanings across the text. One of these words is the "bee" or "beehive". At the onset of *Trilogy*, the bee-symbol first makes its appearance in the hieroglyphic scrips of the excavated Temple of Luxor, where it continues to "prophecy" from the stone papyrus (3). Significantly, unconscious ideas are repeatedly referred to as "hieroglyphs" in H.D.'s psychoanalytic interpretations, particularly in relation to her psychic experiences. In a vision that shares its name with the first part of *Tribute* (the Corfu vision of 1920 known as the Writing on the Wall),¹⁵ the artist/medium finds "the hieroglyph of the unconscious or the subconscious of the Professor's"¹⁶ discovery and life-study, the hieroglyph actually in operation before our very eyes" (47). It is hardly surprising then that, in private letters, the sessions with Freud are praised as "all séance and fortune-telling bee" (*Analysing Freud* 156). On the one hand, the bee-hive carries the familiar meaning

¹⁵ The Corfu vision took place in 1920 during H.D.'s trip to Greece. It consisted of a series of images (a soldier's head, a tripod, a ladder, an angel figure, triangular tents) projected onto the wall of the hotel room. H.D. interpreted it as a succession of hieroglyphs, whose meaning stems both from the objects themselves and from their order and combination. The episode was part of a series of psychic experiences that occurred between 1919 and the early 1920s.

¹⁶ H.D. refers to Freud as "the Professor" in *Tribute*.

of regeneration and salvation: "Resurrection is the beeline [...] the treasure, the store-room, the honey-comb" (123). On the other, it marks the "nexus of sound, community, sacred space and creativity" (Anderson 109). Concerning the relationship between individual and collective psychology in modernist literature and science, bees and ants were often used as metaphors for groups in which individual psychology and interests were given up in favour of the group, to the extent that it was no longer the individual member, but the group itself that functioned as an organism. These insect communities were thus seen as the perfect biological incarnation of the collective spirit. Indeed, Freud himself used the image in this sense in "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921) (135) and *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) (122). In H.D.'s work, as in Freud's, the ancestral community is privileged in so far as it becomes the immortal part of the individual body, and, in H.D.'s case, the source of a prophetic, utopian power.

The Gift, a tribute before *Tribute* to H.D.'s analysis with Freud, anticipates the singing skulls in the "Writing on the Wall" and *Trilogy*. A central sequence in the novella takes place during H.D.'s conversation with her grandmother, which may be characterized as an initiation into the mystical credos of Moravian religion. H.D. grew up as part of the Moravian community in Pennsylvania. Especially the mother's side of her family was intent on sustaining the religious tradition. In *The Gift*, young Hilda recognises her role as the inheritor and joining force of a community stretching back into the eighteenth century, a community sustained through the transcendental power of words: "I am the last bee in the bee-hive, this is the game I play. Can one person keep a beehive alive?" (83) The prophetic force of the bee-hive as the unconscious mediated through art is therefore simultaneously the substance that keeps the community alive in a dimension beyond historical time, outside of the violent destruction of war-time London that envelops the H.D.'s childhood reminiscences. Interestingly, Anderson observes that, in Moravian religion, this unifying force is defined as the Holy Spirit, participating in creation as the mother to the community, "acting within to draw the community together and uphold its common purpose" (45). She further stresses the fact that, in early Moravian customs, the spiritual is inextricably linked to the erotic, which serves as the primary expression of the relationship between the human and the divine (44-46). The female

artist possesses the unique gift of vision, the ability to transfer the images of the unconscious through a libidinal current, which serves as the life of the community and the groundwork for the inheritance of eternal symbols. In H.D.'s wartime oeuvre, the spiritual is identified with the libidinal, which metamorphoses into a feminine force capable of converting patriarchal magicians (or psychoanalysts) and instituting a "united brotherhood" (*Gift* 135), "not only of the living, but of those ten thousand years dead" (*TF* 71).

And since unity is accomplished through vision – which is, at the same time, a racial and evolutionary regression – it is only logical that the most extensive description of the ancestral community should appear in H.D.'s most visionary work of fiction. *The Sword Went out to Sea*,¹⁷ a work documenting the spiritualist séances that took place in H.D.'s home during World War II, is one of her most transcendental and most Freudian books. Through a combination of personal history and historical vignettes, the text aims to transcend contemporary reality in order to achieve a trans-historical, overarching meaning, the universal cure for the wounds of history and individual psychology.¹⁸ Its method is therefore closely related to the two dimensions of Freudian analysis mentioned in the previous chapter, one focusing on individual history and the other on the racial and evolutionary content of inherited memory. But it is through the eternal sphere of phylogenetic memory, transferred through the erotic, jellyfish component of the libido, the soul of the individual organism and the community, that the psychological cure is bestowed: "If you are consoled or integrated, you help to console and integrate the scattered remnant. In saving oneself, one creates a shell, not the highly individual spiral shell I spoke of, but a minute coral shell, one in a million, or a single wax-cell of the honey-comb." (*Sword* 67) The community is located in brain-matter, the mollusc or jellyfish situated in the skull.

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud once wrote in a similar vein. For him too the trans-historical community resided in the unconscious, heritable substance of the id:

¹⁷ *The Sword Went out to Sea* was written between 1946 and 1947, but the manuscript was not published until 2007.

¹⁸ For a more comprehensive outline of transcendental history in *Sword* see Anderson pp. 63-67 and 139-142.

The experiences of the ego transform themselves into the experiences of the id if they had been repeated often enough in many individuals in successive generations. These impressions are preserved by heredity. Thus in the id, which is capable of being inherited, are harboured residues of countless egos and when the ego forms its superego out of the id, it may perhaps be reviving shapes of former egos and bringing them to resurrection. (37)

Before he introduced his tripartite division of the psyche, the modes of phylogenetic inheritance were very much on Freud's mind. Both Pamela Thurschwell and Frank J. Sulloway discuss Freud and Ferenczi's plan to write a joint book on Lamarck in 1917 (127; 275). In one of their letters, Freud underscored the intention "to put Lamarck entirely on our ground and to show that the necessity that according to him creates and transforms organisms is nothing other than the power of unconscious thoughts over one's own body" (qtd. in Sulloway 275). The power of unconscious thoughts would thus provide the psychological motivation for restaging the history of the race (and the species) in an individual's life. If an event is repeated often enough in succeeding generations, it will be recorded in the collective unconscious (located in the id and transformed into a part of the superego). Following this inscription, the successors are destined to repeat the event in the course of their individual development. Though produced in cultural circumstances, inherited memories remain largely unaffected by the cultural conditions in which the social subject abides (cf. Sulloway 367). Thus, for example, the primal murder in *Totem and Taboo* gives rise to the Oedipus complex, a universal structure present in all succeeding cultures, whose social constitution may determine its specific manifestation, but never question its existence. Within the Freudian superego, the contemporary/individual and the collective/archaic merge in a manner related to the one Spielrein outlined in 1912 (and Jung somewhat later). The same primacy of the unconscious and the universal in determining an individual's life can be traced in H.D.'s interwar and World-War II writing. The Moravian choir at the end of *The Gift*, another series of singing skulls, mimics the voices of countless egos, speaking in and through the brain-matter of an individual, directing and overseeing (through the super-ego) his/her emotional and physical reactions. In this manner, the racial and evolutionary past comes to speak on the individual body.

Tribute to Freud offers a manifesto of transcendental psychoanalysis, preserving the universal evolutionary and racial history of the unconscious, praising

trans-historical dream symbolism and imagining a brotherhood of mankind based on a pre-Babel unity of expression and sentiment. It is the “Freud who calls on poets, [...] on Romantic literature, who relies on schooling in classical philology, folklore and mythology” (Chisholm 3) who, for H.D., continues to exert healing properties following the Second World War. The literary tradition which Chisholm perceives as shared by Freud and H.D. is precisely the vitalist tradition – encompassing ancient mythology, gothic Romanticism and European Imagism (or Russian Acmeism) – that psychoanalysts and literary authors drew on in formulating their conceptions of the human body in relation to evolutionary and social history.¹⁹ What this literary tradition had in common with Freud’s post-1910 work was the belief in psycho-physical forces, essences or communities that transcended contemporary history and the individual physique. In this context, it will not appear strange that the same vitalist narratives also informed the modernists’ technological imagination.

Universal Language and Technological Vitalism

Following the series of visions that occurred around 1920, H.D. was handed a new source of inspiration in the form of a small projector that incited her passion for the cinema. This prompted her to equate the over-conscious with the unconscious mind, as Havelock Ellis had advised her to do in *Notes* (48), and to recognise the cinema as a suitable medium for the projection of universal unconscious symbols. H.D.’s cinematic preoccupations reflected her interests in psychoanalysis, spiritualism and unconscious hieroglyphics. Her engagement with the Pool Group – an organisation devoted to the promotion of film as an independent art form, launched by herself, Bryher and Kenneth MacPherson – included acting, filmmaking as well as regular written contributions to the group’s magazine *Close Up* (1927-1933). The contributors of *Close Up* encompassed a number of well-known figures from the world of psychoanalysis, literature and film, such as Bryher’s analyst Hanns Sachs, the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein and the British author Dorothy Richardson. Rather than offer expert insight into the methods and technologies of film production, the magazine provided a platform for intellectuals who shared a passion for film as

¹⁹ In chapters three and four, we will see that certain early-modern authors were also part of this transcendental tradition.

a new art form, believed in its educational (and reformative) potential, felt dissatisfied with the commercial principles of Hollywood filmmaking and recognised the importance of the new medium in encouraging international communication and understanding.

The relationship between psychoanalysis and early (particularly silent) cinema has been widely discussed.²⁰ The perception of silent films as “picture-writing”, similar both to hieroglyphs and the language of dreams, is present in numerous contemporary discussions of the social aims of film art. In psychoanalytic terms, the connection between film, dream and the visual medium made the language of the cinema appear closer to the mechanisms of subliminal thought. Yet, just as there were two ways of perceiving subliminal symbols as either socially and individually constructed images or the result of a universal phylogenetic heritage, *Close Up*’s contributors had two very different modes of understanding cinematic hieroglyphics.²¹ Eisenstein’s fascination with hieroglyphs in “The Fourth Dimension of the Cinema” rests on their capacity to form “intellectual contexts and series” (qtd. in *Tenth Muse* 365) out of single, neutral images. Marcus notes that Eisenstein’s montage techniques were greatly influenced by Vygotsky’s notion of symbolism and inner speech (355). This, coupled with Eisenstein’s interest in Gestalt psychology (cf. *Film Sense* 8), led to the notion of hieroglyphs as images that fuse into culturally constructed ideas, concepts (to use Vygotsky’s term) or Gestalts.²² But there was also another less materialist layer of significance attached to the perception of film as picture language. This interpretation related the dream-world of films to the universal symbolism of the unconscious and recognised in it a means of connecting to fellow citizens of other nations, regardless of their class, religion, linguistic or social background. As Marcus notes, “the dream of capturing a prelapsarian, universal language fed directly into early film aesthetics” (*CU* 103).²³ The

²⁰ Cf. *Tenth Muse* and McCabe’s *Cinematic Modernism*.

²¹ In *Hieroglyphic Modernisms*, Jesse Schotter echoes this distinction by distinguishing between the “mystical” and “linguistic” interpretation of hieroglyphs in the modernist period (25-27). In its stress on the universality and sacredness of hieroglyphic and cinematic writing, as well as due to its indebtedness to the Romantic tradition, H.D.’s approach corresponds to the mystical interpretation Schotter refers to.

²² The image of a woman and a grave will, for example, result in the idea of a widow (*Film Sense* 4).

²³ The same relation is stressed by Michael North in *Camera Works* (5-6). North quotes the poet Oliver Wendell Holmes (who H.D. referred to in *Tribute*) as saying that photography was “the card of introduction to make all mankind acquaintances” and adds that the new medium was imagined to

understanding and interpretation of cinematic symbolism was thus characterised by the same tension between a materialist and vitalist view of the perceiving body that we have already observed in the psychoanalytic and literary realm. Eisenstein's ideas were informed by the materialist holism developed in the Soviet Union. In line with her vitalist appropriation of psychoanalysis, H.D. celebrated the cinema as the ideal tool for the projection of eternal symbols lodged in the communal realm of the mind. In addition, her engagement with the film world points to the wider role of technology in fuelling a surge not only of the mechanist, but also of vitalist modes of thought in modernist science and art.

Like her subsequent World-War-II fiction, H.D.'s cinema-articles exhibit a longing for the unconscious as "the hieroglyph of the dream", which is "common property of the whole race" (*TF* 71). In this dream "man [...] meeting in the universal understanding of the unconscious or the subconscious, would forego the barriers of time and space" (*ibid.*). The ability of the unconscious to annul the effect of time and spatial distance was a popular trope in psychoanalytic theory. Several social factors contributed to the imagination of this universal storage system. Apart from the already mentioned influence of vitalist theories in biology and the destructive effects of World War I – which conditioned the desire for an ancestral community that served as the immortal portion of the individual body and was beyond the destructive effects of contemporary culture and history (space and time) – the Freudian unconscious also posed as the fulfilment of a modernist technological phantasy.

In *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking 1880-1920*, Pamela Thurschwell observes the connection between new communication technologies (such as the telephone and the telegraph) and the desire to "collapse [spatial] distance into itself" (22).²⁴ Photography, phonography and film were, on the other hand, responsible for inspiring phantasies of preserving the past (as an image, voice or a sequence of events respectively). Psychoanalysis was inherently connected with both of these tendencies. Before Walter Benjamin famously related photography, film and psychoanalysis via the notion of the "optical unconscious" (in

create "a pre-Babelic unity of word and thing" (5). The same suggestion was of course transferred from photography to film-art.

²⁴ Thurschwell links late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century studies of telepathy with these new communication networks.

their capacity to make visible details or motions that would normally escape our conscious perception),²⁵ Hanns Sachs proffered a similar definition of film and psychoanalysis as a “time microscope” in 1928 (*CU* 252). Freud’s and H.D.’s notion of an unconscious that promises simultaneous spatial presence without temporal corrosion was (among other things) an enhanced version of technological attempts to transcend time and space. In Freud’s work, the fullest elaboration of this phantasy (as he himself calls it) appears in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930):

This brings us to the more general problem of preservation in the sphere of the mind. [...] Since we overcame the error of supposing that forgetting [...] signified a destruction of the memory-trace [...] we have been inclined to take the opposing view, that in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish, that everything is somehow preserved and in suitable circumstances [...] it can once more be brought to light. Let us try to grasp this assumption by taking an analogy from another field. We will choose as an example the history of the Eternal City. [...] Let us, by a flight of imagination, imagine that Rome is not a human habitation, but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and the castle of S. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege of the Goths and so on. But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand – without the Palazzo having been removed – the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and this not only in its latest shape [...] but also in its earliest one. [...] There is clearly no point in spinning our fantasy any further, for it leads to things that are unimaginable [...]. (69)

Freud’s reference to the destruction of memory-traces is reminiscent of the destruction/disconnection debate in aphasia studies that he was originally a part of. As explained in the previous chapter, Freud had opposed the mechanist view of a simple deletion of memory images in favour of a holistic model of disconnection even before his psychoanalytic career had properly set off. By 1930, however, the opposing conception became exaggerated into extremity: not only were memories not destroyed; in the deepest layers of the unconscious they were not even distorted, weakened or faded. Importantly, Freud encountered considerable difficulties when trying to imagine the storage system of the mind.

²⁵ The notion of the optical unconscious appears in Walter Benjamin’s “Little History of Photography” (1931) (510) as well as in his famous 1935 essay on the artwork in the age of mechanical reproduction. In the latter study, it is defined as the film’s capacity to pause, enlarge, shrink and isolate. Here too this ability is compared with the access to unconscious instincts afforded by psychoanalysis (162).

Relinquishing the analogy with an archaeological site, he opted for a more appropriate comparison, contrasting the workings of memory with other processes of the human (or animal) body. Yet here too he was unable to find a suitable point of reference: “The embryo cannot be discovered in the adult. The thymus gland of childhood is replaced after puberty by connective tissue [...]. In the marrow-bones of the grown man I can, it is true, trace the outline of the child’s bone, but the bone itself has disappeared.” (70) Unconscious mechanisms therefore stood alone in their capacity to preserve all experience in its original shape and clarity. In contrast, the rest of the individual body could, like the excavation site, only present traces of its past, but never recreate its previous stages in their entirety. Why the mind should be an exception to this rule is an interesting question and one that is historically related to the association established between vitalism, technology and the central nervous system in the modernist period. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Friedrich Kittler claims that many of the new technologies that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century replicated the functions of the central nervous system as it was understood by contemporary science. The telegraph posed as an artificial mouth, the telephone as an artificial ear while the phonograph figured as a primitive technological reproduction of how information was stored in the brain (28). In literary, cinematic and scientific vitalist discourses it often happened that the cultural expectations from technology (to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries) were projected on to brain matter, while the transcendental nature of the brain as the seat of the soul and the central nervous system were injected back into technology.

This points to a significant oversight in Kittler’s opposition between modernism and Romanticism: his disregard for the vitalist legacies in modernist literature and psychoanalysis. Kittler argues that the “psychological apparatus” referred to by Freud was a “neologism for the antiquated soul” (89). While for the Romantics, “love is not only one of literature’s subjects, but its own media technology” (70), later technological advances prompted a transposition of the transcendental erotic from literature into the realm of sound. The domain of the written word thus became “mechanised” in the sense that it lost the mystical appeal it used to have. As a consequence, both literature and psychoanalysis struggled to represent the subliminal in written form. Yet if we consider H.D.’s and Freud’s

representation of the unconscious discussed earlier, the case becomes infinitely more complex. Even though Freud's early work (which Kittler quotes from) (37) certainly incorporated mechanist notions, these were integrated into his holistic psychological system. It is therefore wrong to present his image of the psychic apparatus as purely mechanistic. While incorporating (literally) technological metaphors, neither Freud's psychoanalysis nor H.D.'s fiction appear particularly envious of modern technology. On the contrary, literature and psychoanalysis are imagined to function in the same way as technology and to possess equal power to summon up ghosts (or souls). Furthermore, vitalist trends in science and transcendental perceptions of technology were coupled with a return to Romantic role-models in literature and the arts. Marcus and Chisholm are right in pointing out the influence of American transcendentalists (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman)²⁶ on Imagist poets, but also on the modernist movement more generally (*CU* 103; Chisholm 30). Romanticism, with its interest in folklore, mysticism, spiritualism and medieval heritage, exerted a great attraction on scientists and culture critics who were trying to infuse brain matter with eternal histories or immortal communities. By the late 1910s, Freud's conception of the unconscious and his technological comparisons had become so intertwined with vitalist representations that H.D.'s depiction of the telepathic transference of unconscious messages began to look like one of his psychoanalytic metaphors.

As Thurschwell explains in her study of the relationship between new media technologies and the scientific study of telepathic phenomena, popular representations of telepathy were related both to contemporary tele-technologies and the transmission of affect: "Genealogically linked to the older concept of sympathy and the newer word empathy, telepathy is also related to love." (14) It is evident that H.D.'s jellyfish feelers, compared to a telegraph (26) and transmitted directly into another's consciousness, have a lot in common with this concept. An additional link is provided by their analogy to electrical and libidinal currents. Indeed, the jelly-fish tentacles call to mind the image of the Freudian ego, which can extend feelers into the outside world or withdraw them and is, in Freud's essay on narcissism, compared to the "body of an amoeba" (*FR* 360). The image of an

²⁶ Incidentally, Whitman was also one of Mandelstam's favourite poets (cf. "Nature of the Word" 515).

amoeba again harks back to evolutionary beginnings, more so if we consider the initial position of narcissism in the chronology of individual development. Freud, who embraced the scientific study of telepathy around 1917, explained it through recapitulation, linking it to crowd phenomena and early forms of animal life (“Dreams and Occultism” 24). In “Dreams and Occultism”,²⁷ he too would compare telepathic transmission to telegraphy (36). As we saw earlier, H.D. celebrated the ability of the female poet to regress to this archaic, unconscious mode of communication. Invisible feelers, currents of electric power or libidinal energy: all of these exchangeable terms are applied to connect the present community to its ancestors, summoned to life in the mollusc of individual brain-matter. In both H.D.’s and Freud’s description of telepathic/telegraphic transmission, technological metaphors are used to describe a primal form of communication, which contemporary technology is seen to imitate.

Interestingly, the technological media H.D. made use of to explain the transmission of unconscious symbols evolved in the course of her work, roughly following the chronological development of communication technologies. While in *Notes on Thought and Vision*, the artist is compared to a telegraph (26), *Tribute to Freud* contains other technological incarnations. The 1920 Corfu vision sets off by a series of magic-lantern slides, but the two-dimensional images²⁸ quickly acquire spatial depth and become “moving pictures” “drawn in light” (*TF* 54-55). By the end of the Corfu sequence, the reader is left in no doubt that the wall of the Greek hotel room has been transformed into the screen of the silent cinema. In one of the final sections of “Writing on the Wall”, the silent images acquire sound and turn into a choir resounding in the shell of the ear and the passages of brain matter.²⁹ As Marcus observes in the introduction to H.D.’s *Close Up* articles, autobiography in *Tribute to Freud* is “intertwined with the history of optics” (*CU* 100). But not just the history of optics.

²⁷ The essay on “Dreams and Occultism” was published in *New Introductory Lectures* in 1932. These were originally two series of lectures held between 1915 and 1917.

²⁸ Two-dimensional images (presented as figures of light on a dark background) are reminiscent of the motion-pictures produced by the praxinoscope, one of the precursors of the film projector (cf. Crary 262).

²⁹ In *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, communication with the spirits in World-War-II séances is also compared to a wireless (67).

Apart from the history of media technology, the shifting palette of transcendental interests in H.D.'s work echoes the sources of spirituality identified by her contemporaries. H.D.'s fascination with mysticism and transcendentalism dates back to her childhood. Her affection for the Moravian rituals of her mother's family quickly fused with a deep interest in ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology. In school she was scolded for stating that Edgar Allan Poe was her favourite American author (*TF* 132) and her taste for Poe's gothic mysticism would later expand to the writings of the transcendentalists. All of these influences, along with the pervading aim of locating eternal essences behind material events, can easily be traced in H.D.'s Imagist poetry. One can even claim, as Chisholm does, that the Imagist movement as a whole was motivated by the search for the sublime. The Imagists "found in vision the release from a shared system of signs into spontaneous, intuitive apprehension of essences" (26). H.D. recognised a similar form of essentialism in Freud's universal symbolism and his dialectical conception of drives. By the mid-1920s, her growing interest in the cinema prompted her to see Freud's universal symbols behind the picture language of silent films.

What this history shows is that the vitalist trend in some conceptions of psychoanalysis and of modernist technological imagination (including the cinematic realm) were closely related. The universal language of the unconscious (situated in the brain) was imagined to transcend time and enable flawless memory in the same way as photography or the cinema. Conversely, the cinema was endowed with the capacity to project this universal language onto the big screen and in this manner facilitate international communication and understanding. H.D.'s work fused both of these historical trends by emphasizing the timeless, indestructible nature of unconscious symbols and proclaiming their existence behind the moving images of the silent cinema. Yet she also emphasised that not all films could attain the privilege of speaking in this universal language, nor were all people able to decipher it.

Cinematic Symbolism and Social Stratification

For H.D., the division into universal and non-universal (individual) symbols was firmly associated with a hierarchical conception of society (and human biology). In *Tribute to Freud*, a value scale is formed between those images, dreams or memories that possess a direct link to unconscious symbolism and those that do not. H.D.'s memoir

contains several dreams which are referred to as “super-memories” (40) or scenes from an “illuminated manuscript” (92). By contrast, dreams containing references merely to personal or daily public events are classed as less important. H.D.’s privileging of universal symbols (as compared to individual ones) is in line with the general development of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis (as portrayed in chapter one):

My Princess picture was one of an exquisite, endless sequence from an *illuminated manuscript* and has its place in that category among books and manuscripts; the dream [...] varies like the people we meet, like the books we read. [...] There are the most trivial and tiresome dreams, the newspaper class – but even there is, in an old newspaper, sometimes a hint of eternal truth or a quotation from a great man’s speech or some tale of heroism, among the trashy and often sordid and trivial record of the day’s events. (ibid.)

That the “newspaper class” contains not only books and dreams, but also people, is significant. The description of the Corfu vision is even more direct in referring to “tiny people”, “midges” or “flies” (48), who try to hinder the poet in deciphering the hieroglyph and learning to fly. The “half-winged” crowds in this image are placed in stark contrast to the goddess Nike, H.D.’s personal symbol, a three-dimensional angel figure, outlined in light, who climbs Jacob’s ladder to paradise. The illuminated manuscript of the unconscious remains removed from these tiny people until the poet or the analyst are ready to translate it. In speaking of these super-memories – memories transferred through the generations – H.D. overturned the conventional relation between history and present reality by pronouncing phylogenetic memory as “more real” than the historical present. “Here and there,” she explained, “a memory or a fragment of a dream-picture is actual, is real, is like a work of art or is a work of art. [...] Those memories, visions, dreams, reveries – or what you will – are different. [...] They are healing. They are real.” (TF35) In their cultural universality and healing property, the symbols of the unconscious are more real than the material, transitory reality of contemporary culture. The same hierarchy between different levels of reality, and those able to perceive them, was already established in H.D.’s analysis of the film-world.

In her essay “Beauty”, published in *Close Up* in 1927, H.D. put forward a curiously biological metaphor of the film-maker’s relationship with the audience. Unlike the vast horde of “fair-to-middling intellectuals”, the “uninspired wand-

bearers" of *Notes on Thought and Vision* (31), the journal's editorial is eulogised as "the valiant little army of the advance guard or the franc-tireur of the arts" (CU 105). Following this rather belligerent vision, the "army" turns into a "little leaven", "securely wedged" in the "lump" of unidentified crowds. The leaven sometimes "takes it into its microscopic mind" to "prod its little microbe way" into the lump's understanding (ibid.). Naturally, the decision is made for the lump's own good. The leaven is there to lead the lump to "happiness", "beauty" and "goodness" (ibid.). Yet the lump often "grandiloquently ignores it" (ibid.). The image of the lump and leaven is reminiscent of vitalist theories of reproduction. Like the sexual cells in Freud's interpretation of Weismann in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the leaven gives life to the passive lump (soma) and ensures its physical and psychological growth: "The mortal part is the body in the narrower sense – the 'soma' – which alone is subject to natural death. The germ-cells, on the other hand, are potentially immortal, in so far as they are able [...] to surround themselves with a new soma." (36) The leaven (the artist) wedged in the lump (the crowd) seems to invoke the germ-cells that surround themselves with a new soma (body). H.D.'s access to the healing vision of the unconscious – the substance concerned with immortal inheritance – and Freud's association of a small group of like-minded intellectuals with the powers of Eros – the sexual instinct – are, politically speaking, closely interrelated ideas. A crucial difference, of course, concerns questions of gender as well as H.D.'s foregrounding of artistic intuition and unconscious communication rather than the powers of reason. In the latter sense, she is more comparable to early Spielrein, although Spielrein's work never relied so strongly on an inverse gender hierarchy.

H.D. identified the hypnotic effect of popular entertainment as the reason for the crowd's disappointing disinterest in the sublime reality behind mundane events. In her *Close Up* articles, the Hollywood film-market is variously dubbed an "Ogre" or "Cyclops", but most often simply the "Censor" (CU 107). The "censor" is a term with strong psychoanalytic connotations and was likely borrowed from Freud. In Freud's later (post-1914) writing, it is used to describe the instance of the superego, the culturally imposed psychic critic who judges which fragments of the unconscious can

reach consciousness and in what form (cf. *FR* 384).³⁰ Since, for H.D., the unconscious represents a utopian dimension of eternal symbols and mutual understanding, the mechanistic nature of contemporary film-culture here assumes the role of the superego, the censor that prevents the hieroglyph of the unconscious from appearing on screen. The crowds are not to blame for the poor taste imposed on them by contemporary cultural production (particularly of the American sort). They accept it because they don't know of anything better:

The lump is hypnotised by the thud-thud of constant repetition, until it begins to believe, like the African tribesman, that the thump-thump of its medicine man's formula is the only formula, that his medicine man is the only medicine man, that his god, his totem [...] is the only totem. America accepts totems, not because the crowd wants totems, but because totems have so long been imposed on him, on it, on the race consciousness that it or him or race consciousness is becoming hypnotised, is in danger of some race fixation. (*CU* 106)

The "thud-thud of repetition" simultaneously evokes the mechanical reproduction of objects in a factory and the dance of the "primitive" tribesman. This somewhat puzzling juxtaposition is easily explained in the context of H.D.'s personal philosophy. What the conveyor belt and the totem have in common is the reduction of objects (or sounds) to their material value. Why H.D. should see totems as lacking in contact with essential spirituality is not immediately obvious. It may be due to their association with cult-worship as depicted in the Bible: a sort of a golden calf, a mask whose worldly value (good) overshadows the spiritual ideal behind it (God). Although, in H.D.'s psychological narratives, the unconscious is attained through regression, not all "primitive" societies are endowed with this capacity. Evidently, the matriarchal primitivism of the Minoan society, which H.D. believed to recreate in her visions, is not the same kind of primitivism here ascribed to the African tribesman: only the former group retains access to unconscious symbols.³¹ H.D.'s imagery is obviously informed by contemporary racial prejudice. Yet it also says a lot about the

³⁰ The relationship between the super-ego and dream-censorship is first introduced in "On Narcissism".

³¹ On the other hand, both H.D. and Bryher were involved in the production of the 1930 feature *Borderline*, directed by Kenneth MacPherson, which directly addressed questions of racial discrimination and was, in terms of the profound psychological analysis of the social genesis of racial violence, quite unique for its time. H.D. and her partner were also good friends with the actor and activist Paul Robeson, who played the main character in MacPherson's film. While one can criticize the appropriation of racial/primitivist discourses in H.D.'s and Bryher's work, one must equally admit that a lot of their artistic engagements were intended to oppose racial discrimination.

nuanced differences that existed between different kinds of primitivism in the modernist period. H.D.'s primitivism is not the primitivism of Mandelstam or D.H. Lawrence, nor indeed is it the primitivism of Bryher or Djuna Barnes. In each of these cases, the primitivist vision of the author was adapted to their own social position and personal preoccupations. H.D.'s biopolitics is therefore not easily summed up by the view of the "primitive" as less evolved than the "civilised" (or vice versa). For there was *a certain kind of primitive* and *a certain kind of civilised* that the emerging film critic preferred in comparison to others. Like the African tribesman, American totems released by the Censor obscure the illuminated manuscript, the super-memories buried in race consciousness. This is what is meant by "race fixation". For H.D., the African tribesman and the American filmmaker were – due to their having strayed from the universal language of the unconscious – both threatened by the danger of remaining "fixated" within the confines of a mechanical reality. It would take a real artist, attuned to the subtle vibrations of the unconscious, to turn Hollywood into "a holly wood", where "souls upon the screen" would be given an opportunity to act out their eternal lives (Morris 423).

The civilized masks (totems) again make an appearance in the third essay of *The Cinema and the Classics*,³² published under the title "The Mask and the Movietone". H.D.'s ambiguous feelings towards sound films were likewise connected to the mechanical nature of the speaking "robots" (CU 115) that had recently begun to take over the big screen. The characters in silent movies, she believed, were masks whose very imperfection made it possible for the viewer to imagine something greater behind them: "If I see art projected too perfectly, don't I feel rather cheated of the possibility of something more divine behind the outer symbol of the something shown there?" (119) In the hypnotic atmosphere of "darkness and cross-beams of light", rather different from the mechanical hypnosis (the "thump-thump") of the entertainment industry, the viewer's psyche opens to the hieroglyphs of the unconscious projected on screen: "The mask originally presented life, but so crudely that it became a part of some super-normal or sub-normal layer of consciousness." (116) The conflation of "super" and "sub" echoes the dilemma of *Notes on Thought*

³² *The Cinema and the Classics* is a series of three essays by H.D. – "Beauty", "Restraint" and "The Mask and the Movietone" – published in *Close Up* in 1927.

and Vision and simultaneously defines this “over-conscious” or “subconscious” dimension as the higher form of reality. Essentially, the cinema audience is faced with the same form of transcendental self-awareness that H.D. believed to uncover in psychoanalysis and her own dream-visions: “Into this layer of self [...] emotion and idea entered as from the primitive beginning.” (ibid.) Evidently, the “primitive” here refers to the over-conscious or unconscious sphere, the trans-historical reality concealed behind the mortal physique and ephemeral present.

Reality, War and Cinematic Redemption

For H.D., the fascination with a transcendental “primitive reality” was a way of escaping the traumatic memories of a reality that was much more recent. At times, the two realities fused into a single image. H.D.’s 1928 article on Lev Kuleshov’s *Expiation* (1926), for instance, begins with the description of a street she observed before arriving at the cinema after one third of the film had passed. In the author’s mind, the little street in Lausanne merged with a scene from the Russian film to convey a common message. “Someone,” H.D. concluded, “intended that I should grasp this, that some mind should receive this series of uncanny, almost psychic sensations [...] in order to translate them.” (CU 125) In the eyes of the translator, a sombre scene, in which wife and husband drag two corpses along a muddy field in pouring rain, is pronounced so abstract and Aescuylean that “the spirit [...] shouted almost audibly with the elements *the soul, the soul survives*” (126). The redemptive quality of unconscious symbolism persists as the author ruminates on *Expiation*’s leading female character, Edith (Aleksandra Khokhlova). The thin, worn-out woman “has a way of standing against the skyline that makes a hieroglyph, that spells almost visibly a message of cryptic symbolism” (127). Significantly, her ability to pose as a symbol of the unconscious is correlated with her psychological state.

Edith’s “vibrant, neurotic, almost cataleptic” (126) appearance and the warlike desertion of the empty field are evocative of scenes from World War I and perhaps H.D.’s personal experience of it (particularly just before her trip to the Scilly Isles). Writing about Georg Wilhelm Pabst’s *Pandora’s Box* in 1929, H.D. recalled how the Austrian director would sometimes unexpectedly relate one of his war-time memories, including a story about several of his fellow prisoners who committed

suicide just after the armistice (*CU* 147).³³ She remembered the anecdote following a conversation with Pabst in which she asked him about a dead body she had noticed in one of the stills advertising *Joyless Street* (1925). H.D. was apologetic about not having perceived the body when she first saw the film, but Pabst reassured her, claiming that he had not intended the audience to see the dead woman at all. In Marcus's *The Tenth Muse*, the episode serves as the starting point for a discussion about motion and motionlessness in the silent cinema (382 ff.). Yet in H.D.'s article, the body simultaneously becomes a symbol for all dead bodies hidden behind the screen of motion pictures or the hieroglyphs of the universal over-mind.

In this sense, it is a telling parallel that Kenneth MacPherson compares the Ufa Palace in Berlin to a "golden beehive", with "miles of exits and disappearances and cabinets" (qtd. in *Tenth Muse* 333). The beehive, which, in H.D.'s World-War-II writing, would become a metaphor of the ancestral community secluded in the recesses of brain-matter, here stands for the hypnotic unity of the post-war audience and the shadows on the screen. The protective, healing quality of this communal experience can be noted in the escape the hieroglyphs provide in the face of war, poverty and desolation. It was not only Russian films that, according to H.D., pledged for the survival of the soul. In *Joyless Street*, the first film that kindled her interest in the cinema, it was Greta Garbo's clairvoyant quality that bestowed higher meaning on the "little post-war street" (*CU* 109) and the rather down-to-earth plot of "poverty and fervid business speculation" (*CU* 108). There is an obvious parallel between H.D.'s wartime autobiography and her analysis of silent films. In *The Gift*, the restorative beehive of Moravian worshippers and childhood memories is embedded into a portrait of wartime destruction. Similarly, the silent cinema offers a message of hope combined with a fair share of post-war realism.

For H.D., film as high art needed to incorporate both of these dimensions. While she criticized the audience of *Joyless Street* (1925) for "not daring to face reality" (*CU* 109), she was equally angry with Theodor Dreyer, the director of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), for providing no "hint of angels" or "psychic recompense" (*CU* 133), but confronting his viewers with crude violence instead. The protective screen of the hieroglyphic unconscious, of the ancestral choir in the

³³ In 1914, Pabst was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp in Brest. He was not released until 1919.

beehive of the brain, is a precondition for facing the memories of war. As already mentioned, interwar Europe witnessed a wide circulation of similar images in the arts and sciences. This may prompt us to recognise H.D.'s response to film not merely as an individual, but a social condition. She herself seemed to be aware of this cultural predicament when, in "The Mask and the Movietone", she announced: "There is too much reality for the soul to cope with, all these outreaching odd soul-feelers that you and I and Tom Jones and the shop girl and the barber and the knife boy have sometimes felt threatened with odd maladies. We want healing in a blur of half tones and hypnotic vibrant darkness." (120) The jellyfish soul-feelers of the 1919 *Notes* here become the public mode of defence against the traumatic excess of post-war reality. But if H.D. and Tom Jones and the shop girl all resort to the beehive of the movie-palace to shelter their feelers against maladies produced by external realities, one is bound ask: Which reality? How many layers of reality lie between the screen of the unconscious and the historical present (and past)?

The essay on *Expiation* provides a partial response to this question. In a comparison of Russian, German and Hollywood films, the author differentiates between four levels of reality, ranked according to their position with regard to the universal unconscious. Much of the American commercial cinema represents a "candy-box realism" (127), often paired with elaborate scenery and excessive historical detail, yet rather distant from day-to-day reality and what H.D. perceived as the essential truths of the over-mind. Next comes the realism of Pabst and the German directors. Though H.D. complimented their devotion to representing the social conditions of post-war reality, it was not this kind of realism that she held in highest regard. Rather it was Pabst's ability to evoke the "elemental horrors of famine and the erotic-neurotic impulse" and in so doing to "take the human mind as far as it can go" (*ibid.*). Pabst, in other words, addressed the first layer of the unconscious, the libidinal energies of love and hunger and the neurotic responses that result from their fixations and regressions. Finally, the destructive beauty of Russian films takes the human mind "further than it can go", confronting it with "the human sub-strata of animal instinct" (*ibid.*). Russian directors are commended as those who have dared to venture furthest down the evolutionary scale. By reaching into the deepest layers of the unconscious, they simultaneously attain the highest level of reality, so close

to the essential symbolism of universal language that it becomes unbearable to the common viewer. Apart from the hierarchy that ensues between the artist/filmmaker/analyst as the one who has the regressive/creative capacity to translate the signs of this mystical language and those who do not, H.D.'s designation of the universal unconscious as the supreme form of reality often results in other politically questionable conclusions.

H.D. rarely wrote about the concrete political message of Russian films such as *Expiation* or *Mother*. Like Kenneth MacPherson, she was quick to persuade her readers that politics was not her specialty (*CU* 134). When she did admit to speaking politically, the message took on a general, rather diluted tone, very much in line with the ideology of the universal unconscious she developed in *Tribute to Freud*. "The greatness of Moscow art productions," she argued in 1928, "puts the question of Russian film [...] on a plane transcending politics. These films do not say to the English and American workman, go and do likewise. They say, look we are your brothers and this is how we suffered." (137) Though a call for empathy, such a statement appears to disregard crucial cultural, historical and economic factors. Instead of acknowledging the class question in early Russian cinema (acknowledging it moreover as a specifically *Russian* class question), H.D.'s article issued an abstract ideal of community and understanding. On the other hand, she was convinced that "there was no reason for the English working classes to rise and break and tear and rend" (136). In spite of the significant difference between English and Russian working classes, it is – two years after the 1926 General Strike – difficult to view the statement as anything but the result of diplomatic caution or political naiveté. Since the activities of *Close Up* were already regarded disapprovingly by the proponents of censorship and anti-Russian propaganda in Britain,³⁴ it was probably in the interest of its editors to tone down possible links of their educational and artistic interests to explicit political insurrection.

³⁴ Marcus mentions a memorandum issued by the Conservative Party Headquarters that linked the activities of *Close Up* to the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Comintern (*Tenth Muse* 342; 269). Following the public opposition of *Close Up* and the Film Society to the censorship of Russian films in 1929, the *Daily Express* "Cinema Correspondent" issued a warning that "efforts were being made by a pro-Russia propagandist organisation operating from Terriet, in Switzerland [where Bryher, H.D. and Kenneth MacPherson lived] to remove the ban imposed by the Government and the British Board of Film Censors on about forty Russian propagandist films now in cold storage in this country." ("40 Red Films in Cold Storage" n. p., "Film 1929-1963", Bryher Papers)

Yet the generalising, somewhat naïve cast of H.D.'s social vision had more to do with the universal language of the unconscious than it did with avoiding political allegations. If all people, irrespective of their class, national or cultural origin, share the same picture language, the same desires and essentially the same psychological foundation, it is not difficult to assume that their differences can be transcended. It is for this reason that H.D. was, after seeing *The Student of Prague* (1926), able to hear "a wee voice" (CU 124), quite distinct from the murmur of different languages spoken in a Swiss cinema. This voice assured her of the coming of a "universal language open alike to the pleb and the initiate" (ibid.). Yet just as this universal language was ranked above the mundane sounds of "gee" and "Doug Fairbanks" (ibid.), those who were more capable of transmitting and interpreting unconscious messages (the initiate, the leaven) were, for the time being at least, endowed with the supreme role of acting as the leader and educator to the passive lump (the pleb). The utopian generality of the hieroglyphic over-mind made even international understanding seem like a simple task.

In her essay on sound in the cinema, H.D. delightedly presented the instructive potential of the movietone as a means to "a new world of political understanding, of educational reform" and art "in the pure sense" (118). She imagined that the possibility to both hear and see members of different nations would facilitate an "intimate propaganda" (117), which would eventually lead to peace and the beginning of a new Art Age: "Nations are in turns of wrists, in intonations of voices," she said (ibid.). "Apply the Movietone to questions of international education and politics and you will do away with revolutions." (118) And while it is of course possible to find out something about nations and cultures from intonation or body language, even the initial enthusiasm following the introduction of sound films can hardly be justified for crediting them with the elimination of revolutions and their sociohistorical causes. Like in H.D.'s literary texts, the idea of a universal language, promising a brotherhood of men, culminates with the image of a "double divinity" speaking through the "gateways of the mind" (ibid.). While both *The Gift* and *Tribute to Freud* wind up with ancestral voices resounding through these same gateways, the movietone offers a means of projecting the ancestral choir onto the big screen, for everyone to hear.

In spite of her belief in the primal language of the cinema and the unconscious, H.D. did not reject the ideal of active spectatorship that attracted *Close Up's* editors to the techniques employed by Russian cinematography. Occasionally, her *Close Up* articles ventured beyond the protective surface of universal symbolism. In these instances, her views took on a concrete political dimension with a keen eye for cultural specificity. Indeed, H.D. ended her essay on the Russian cinema by applauding films "of the people, for the people and BY the people" (*CU* 138). In contrast to the Hollywood cult of the individual celebrity, the Russian idea, she explained, was "not to make star personalities, but to let personalities make stars" (*ibid.*). In letting the audience take on an active role not only in interpretation, but also in film production, the directors could attain a culturally specific symbolism which would give their cinematic language its unique character and force. Rather than imitate the methods of the American cinema, the British film industry should focus on its own, specific problems: "Certain of the productions of the foreign directors in Hollywood leave nothing to be desired, but that is America, is Hollywood and England has other problems. The problem of England [...] is never that of the Scandinavians. [...] Give me your English people and I will give you an English film." (*ibid.*) It can be difficult to unite this methodology with the idea of "prophets" and "adepts" "moving at will over foreign lands" (118). Yet this political ambiguity, which lies at the heart of H.D.'s film criticism, was characteristic of psychoanalytic and technological narratives produced between 1910 and the onset of World War II.

The Bisexual Wand-Bearer

Despite their claim to universality, vitalist narratives were produced by distinctly personal and socio-historical circumstances. As we saw in chapter one, this individuality best comes to the fore if one studies their political implications. In H.D.'s work, these remained relatively consistent since the end of World War I. Psychoanalysis and sexology played a key role in the creation of her narrative of female poetic supremacy. For H.D., the narrative also had the function of a personal justification, an attempt to make sense of her role in the post-war world. The social task of the poet, indicated in *Notes on Thought and Vision*, is repeated with increasing firmness in H.D.'s World-War-II writing. At the beginning of *Trilogy*, the poetic subject poses the central underlying question: "we passed the flame: we

wonder/what saved us? what for?" (4). The answer provided by the rest of the poem culminates in the hope of new life and salvation proffered by the sexually liberated female artist, a hope that manages to convert the patriarchal male magician and bestow the message of peace through the discovery of the eternal "frame that held", the "walls that do not fall" (ibid.), safeguarded in the protoplasmic substance of inherited memory. In *Notes on Thought and Vision*, a similar role was accorded to the elite group of intellectuals capable of reaching the immortal realms of the overmind: "Two or three people with healthy bodies and the right sort of receiving brains could direct lightning flashes and destroy the world of dead, murky thought." (27) The artistic elite emanates electrically charged libidinal currents – lightning flashes – which can only be received by those equipped with the right physiology: a healthy body and receiving brains.

Just what kind of a body this is has been alluded to in the discussion of H.D.'s evolutionary paradigms. Primarily, it is the physique of the bisexual female artist – a bio-historical return to marine existence and the matriarchal structures of Minos – that possesses the gift of regenerating vision, the "torch" (6) or "staff" (69) of *Tribute to Freud*, the "beehive" (83) of *The Gift* and the "myrrh" (10) of *Trilogy*. All of these symbols have one thing in common: they are handed to the elected female visionary in order to enable access to the fourth dimension of consciousness: universal dreams and memories that spell salvation. H.D.'s definition of symbols is in itself indicative of the type of psychoanalysis she was relying on. In *Tribute*, a symbol is identified as "a word or picture, [...] a mark intended to signify something else" (66). But it is also a particle of the unconscious, surfacing on the body as a "symptom" (ibid.). Thus far, H.D.'s explanation is in line with the semantic (symbolic) interpretation of physical phenomena that lay at the bottom of psychoanalytic methodology ever since Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria*. Neurotic patients were said to literally possess a speaking body (cf. 2-17). The cure is administered through remembering and giving verbal formulation to the traumatic experience that gave rise to the symptom and thus enabling the patient to gain control over it (and over his/her body). But, like the history of psychoanalysis, H.D.'s definition of psychoanalytic symbolism goes a step further and adds a transcendental dimension

to the original clinical scenario.³⁵ For the symbol is also “a direction post” (ibid.), which, in her Corfu vision, appears as Nike, the goddess of victory, a female angel-figure appropriately replacing Constantine’s sign of the cross (54).³⁶ What was originally a material manifestation of individual traumatic experience metamorphoses into a signpost intended for those endowed with the (biological) capacity of accessing and deciphering the universal language of the unconscious.

H.D. was not alone in eulogising the special talents of the bisexual artist. In early theories of homo- and bisexuality, a bisexual person was considered to exhibit a combination of “typically male” and “female” psychological traits (psychic hermaphroditism). This combination was frequently singled out as privileged and coupled with artistic or visionary powers. One of the most prominent examples of this philosophy was Edward Carpenter, who believed that such a fusion of masculinity and femininity led to “that order of perception which has been called cosmic consciousness or divination” (qtd. in Hobson 119). In *Angels of Modernism*, Suzanne Hobson criticizes H.D.’s acceptance of such scientific narratives and contrasts it with the views of her partner: “While Bryher emphasizes the ‘accidental’ nature of her double identity, H.D. suggests that these women are part of a very small spiritual elect, predestined to have special gifts and visionary powers.” (122) Hobson concludes that, while it is true that H.D. poignantly criticized the elitism and heterosexism of some of her peers, her refashioning of the female artist is suspect in the context of a feminist agenda (132). Having considered the social implications of H.D.’s re-inscription of psychoanalysis, one might wonder whether her transcendentalism, though promoting sexual liberty and pacifism, would indeed contribute to political equality or its scientific promotion. Although the deconstruction of patriarchal wand-bearers (those of psychoanalysis, religion and literature alike) is an important political cause that permeates all of H.D.’s poetry and prose, one should be wary of embracing too firmly a feminine wand-bearer who asserts an evolutionary privilege for her (female, artistic and bisexual) kind.

³⁵ In her interpretation of symbols, H.D. often relied on etymology, a typical procedure in psychoanalytic analysis of dream-symbols after 1910 and based on the belief that in the unconscious we all possess etymological knowledge of linguistic beginnings that we can make use of in dream symbolism.

³⁶ H.D. received the same legendary message as the emperor Constantine before his conversion to Christianity: *In hoc signo vinces* (In this sign you will win).

In this context, it becomes increasingly clear how their personal and social background conditioned the differences (and similarities) in H.D.'s and Freud's progress narratives and their understanding of the universal unconscious. One can hardly call it a coincidence that H.D.'s road to social progress leads back to the pre-oedipal bisexual feminine, whereas Freud's is not only dependent on masculinity, but also on the specifically Jewish talent for the rational control of instincts (see chapter one). In both cases, the constituents of one's identity that were pronounced inferior in racial and/or patriarchal discourses of the time (femininity, bisexuality, Jewishness) are turned into an evolutionary advantage. But the ideas formed as a result also became a stumbling block in the relationship between Freud and his patient.

One of the most widely analysed scenes in *Tribute* nicely illustrates the miscommunication that occurs when H.D.'s and Freud's understanding of universal symbolism collides (cf. 68-70). The dispute essentially boils down to the question whether an ancient figurine of the Greek goddess Athena (which Freud shows to H.D. in the hope of explaining female sexual development) is perfect without her spear/penis (H.D.) or whether she is but the perfect representation of female lack and penis envy (Freud). Naturally, this is a point feminist discussions of H.D.'s psychoanalytic encounters repeatedly return to. Instead of a spear, the phallic symbol of masculine strength and warfare, H.D. preferred to imagine the statuette as brandishing a rod or staff, the symbol of teaching, prophecy and spiritual guidance.³⁷ Several critics have questioned Freud's suggestion that H.D. may have wanted to be the founder of a new religion, especially his association of this wish with megalomania (Friedman and DuPlessis 418, *Penelope's Web* 311, Spiro 598).³⁸

³⁷ In "Woman is Perfect: H.D.'s Debate with Freud", Friedman and DuPlessis point to H.D.'s poem "The Master" (written during her analysis) as her personal response to this disturbing event (421 ff.). A psychoanalytic reading of the scene would probably also point to the fact that H.D. replaces Freud's phallic symbol (spear) with one that is no less phallic (rod or staff). But the point about the miscommunication is that H.D. does not perceive it as such. For H.D., a spear is associated with masculinity and war (and is therefore incompatible with her vision of femininity), whereas a religious symbol like a rod or staff performs a different function. It is precisely by appropriating a symbol traditionally associated with male prophets and religious leaders that H.D. wanted to alter the gendered perception of the image. The episode once again reminds us that each symbol can only be understood in the context of each individual narrative.

³⁸ What Freud may have been referring to when he pronounced the Corfu episode "megalomaniac" (51) and "a dangerous symptom" (ibid.) was its possible connection to psychosis. The myth constructed around psychosis in the early days of psychoanalysis is in itself a fascinating subject, but its complexity would require a separate chapter. It is worth noting here, however, that part of the

In a female patient, they argue, such a wish was immediately written off as dangerous or, at the very least, unrealistic. And while this is, of course, a social limitation to be reckoned with, one should not fail to take into account the fact that H.D.'s work does possess an elitist, if not a megalomaniac, inclination.³⁹ One need only remember the "tiny people" (*TF* 48) that interfere with her prophetic activities in the Corfu vision or the passive lump (crowd) that depends on the female visionary for its goodness and beauty. In trying to make sense of the various factors at play in this episode, it is not enough to say that the conflict between Freud and his patient was conditioned by gender or religion. One must understand the exact role religion and gender played in their respective worldviews at the time of their meeting as well as the history that led up to this point. This is why we now adopt a somewhat psychoanalytic method and turn to H.D.'s account of her early experience in order to see how her encounter with Freud was determined by it.

During H.D.'s sessions in Vienna, Freud frequently took on the role of both parental figures. Artistic and religious, H.D.'s mother Helen was associated with the positive, pre-oedipal part of psychoanalytic heritage. Identified with ancient Greece (Helen-Hellas), she was designated as the point of return both in the Corfu vision and in H.D.'s return to Vienna.⁴⁰ The parallel between Freud and H.D.'s father, which surfaced just as repeatedly, is important because it reveals much about the personal background of H.D.'s aversion to medicine, mechanism and empirical science. Her feelings of exclusion in her own family circle (an exclusion based both on gender and her inclination to mysticism) were periodically projected to Freud and other psychoanalysts. H.D.'s father Charles Doolittle, a mathematician and astronomer, but above all a materialist scientist, once wanted to train as a physician.

reason why psychosis was generally considered more dangerous than neurosis (apart from its resistance to the analytic process) was that a psychotic person was thought to regress to the earliest stages of evolution or racial development. In *Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality* (1916), Ferenczi described the hallucinatory wish-fulfilment in psychosis as a return to the perfect narcissism and omnipotence provided by intra-uterine existence (223). This adds an additional historical dimension to Freud's (and H.D.'s) belief that the jellyfish layer in the Scilly Isles stood for this same idealized womb-vision.

³⁹ Friedman does acknowledge this in *Penelope's Web*, but the assertion is somewhat mitigated through H.D.'s "identification with the father" (311). Spiro is critical of H.D.'s views on Jewishness, but not of the biological exclusivity of the female wand-bearer.

⁴⁰ Freud informed H.D. that the unconscious motive of her 1920 trip to Greece was to find her mother (*TF* 44, *Analysing Freud* 51). He identified the same reason behind her decision to return to Vienna in 1934. Though Freud was not entirely enthusiastic about this maternal identification, he did admit that this type of transference occurred surprisingly often (*Analysing Freud* 52).

Appropriately, the walls of his sombrely quiet study boasted a single painting: a copy of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson*. The image is perhaps the best illustration of how H.D. perceived the approach of scientific mechanism: a group of doctors attentively dissecting a corpse, the body reduced to its material value, shorn of the soul and therefore dead. Like Freud, H.D.'s father had "old, old sacred objects" (25) on his study table. Yet to the daughter's dismay, the staunch empiricist refused to recognise their transcendental value: "The shape and form of these objects [...] were not so identified. They were just a glass paper-weight, just a brass paper-knife or the ordinary magnifying glass my brother is still holding in his hand." (ibid.) In one of the childhood memories of *Tribute*, H.D.'s brother secretly takes the magnifying glass from their father's table in order to start a fire in the garden. In the eyes of the grown-up H.D., the magnifying glass metamorphoses into the sacred ankh, the ancient Egyptian symbol of eternal life. Her father, who silently takes the instrument away from her brother (Prometheus), cannot comprehend his children's "love of the unknown", their desire for "experimentation with occult, yet unexplainable forces" (ibid.). Yet without these forces, the magnifying glass and the ancient figurines become like the corpse in Rembrandt's painting. To deny material objects their unconscious essences is thus, literally, to rob them of life.

The image is extended in another episode in "Advent", in which H.D. watches someone (presumably her father or brother) put salt on a caterpillar she had saved from the garden. The "crucified worm" writhes in a struggle for its life "like an object under a microscope" (*TF* 135). The violence of materialist science, associated with patriarchy, is experienced as severely traumatic. The scene is unbearable in daytime and is pronounced as something "the mind cannot possibly assimilate" (ibid.). It is this fear that she sometimes experiences while lying on the couch in Freud's study. At odd moments she is reminded of her father, who would sleep on a similar couch in a similar study after nights of stargazing and research. In response to these flashbacks, the poet assumes the identity of the Minoan butterfly-goddess Psyche (cf. Gere 170). In a single image, the identification evokes the pre-oedipal stratum of Minoan culture, Edgar Allan Poe's *Helen* ("Psyche from the regions which are Holy-Land"), Helen Doolittle (cf. *TF* 44) and the holy land of the unconscious – the soul produced by the body and merging all of the said dimensions into a single evolutionary

mythology. In the scene with the spearless Athena, the transcendental aspect of psychoanalysis equally becomes a defence against psychoanalysis' materialist tendencies. And materialist tendencies, in turn, become associated with a commonly held ethnic prejudice.

H.D. on "Jewish materialism"

If H.D.'s relationship with Freud was marked by ambivalence, so was her relationship with (his) Jewishness. When Freud presented H.D. with the Athena figure, the patient felt tested, yet confused and at loss what to respond. "He may have been talking Greek," she admitted jokingly (69). The feeling of being a foreigner in a scientific world dominated by men, especially doctors, is a frequently addressed topic in *Tribute*, and one that again harks back to H.D.'s early history: "I do not always understand the words my brother uses. He is a big boy and known to be quaint and clever for his age. I am a small girl and not very advanced. I am, in a sense, still a foreigner. There are other foreigners." (26) In this context, the notion of the foreigner takes on a highly political meaning. Women are foreigners in phallogentric scientific and literary circles. The "other foreigners" surface but a couple of pages later. They are the deranged people of Paris, "not chained, though still segregated, separated, in little rooms" (78). It is in this imaginary setting that the young Sigmund Freud appears on stage as another alien. At the University of Vienna, he is expected to feel inferior and alien because he is a Jew. "I refused absolutely to do the former of these things," old Freud confesses to his patient. Young Sigmund does not feel inferior. But he does feel foreign. According to H.D., it was precisely this experience of being excluded from the dominant discourses that enabled him to comprehend the language of madness (*ibid.*). Both Freud and his patients were pronounced as outcasts by the prevailing power structures but refused to accept the feeling of inferiority associated with this position. H.D. thus identified with Freud's minority background. Yet whenever her analyst appeared to embrace the identity of the empirical scientist, the feeling of otherness slipped back into the conversation.

In addition to the castrating function of penis envy, what H.D. most resented about Freud's demonstration of the antique figurine was his "Jewish materialism": "Like a Jew, he was assessing its material worth. [...] He knew his material pound, his pound of flesh" (70). In a close reading of this scene and the ones following it,

Joanna Spiro outlines the conflict between Jewish and Christian worldviews in the textual space of *Tribute to Freud*. The “pound of flesh” is an allusion to Shylock from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. In the play, the Jewish moneylender agrees to grant a large loan in return for a pound of the guarantor’s flesh should the loan go unpaid. Spiro recognises Shylock’s function in *Tribute* as embodying both castration and the violence of medical disciplines (601 ff.). Since psychoanalysis was widely regarded as “a Jewish science” (cf. Frosh; Sulloway 423), the association between Jewishness and materialism was sometimes projected to psychoanalysis. As Harrington points out in *Reenchanted Science*, in the 1920s and the 1930s “Jews were increasingly identified as both the cause and flesh and blood instantiation of all the worst values of the machine: summative, non-synthetic thought, soulless, mechanistic science, rootless, mercenary social relations” (xx). Although Freudian psychology had already taken a gradual vitalist turn around 1910, H.D. was intent on denouncing what she perceived as the mechanistic elements of psychoanalytic theories. The accusation was therefore an expression of H.D.’s vitalist standpoint, in conjunction with contemporary anti-Semitic discourses. The episode is a good indication of the type of anti-Semitism H.D. succumbed to. It was not Jewish *religion* that she had a problem with, nor do her texts evidence a flirtation with degeneration discourses or racial science. But, due to her personal history and Freud’s reluctance to openly acknowledge psychoanalysis’ transcendental potential, she was susceptible to the popular association of Jewishness with capitalism and materialism.

In such a set of relations, it is easier to understand how H.D. could, with Bryher’s help, assist more than a hundred people in escaping Nazi Germany (Miller and Magee 23) and, virtually in the same breath, deliver virulent criticisms of the heritage of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (*TF* 70). Some critics, including Friedman, DuPlessis and Spiro, have found it significant that the anti-Jewish sentiment surfaces just after Freud’s demonstration of the Athena figure. One type of prejudice, they argue, is seen as a fit response to another. If Freud would present women as powerless, H.D. would answer him with a stereotype used to sustain his own oppression (DuPlessis and Friedman 422; Spiro 599-600). While Du Plessis and Friedman are more inclined to view the episode as an expression of anger, an

isolated incident, Spiro's analysis points to an entire subtext of religious rivalry in *Tribute to Freud*. However, not even Spiro acknowledges the role of materialist and transcendentalist narratives in fuelling this conflict. H.D.'s pronounced animosity towards scientific mechanism as well as the personal experience that sustained it made her an easy target for discourses that would link a self-pronounced materialist scientist of Jewish origin with the negative connotations of callousness and profiteering. At the very least, she wanted Freud and psychoanalysis to renounce this part of their "Hebrew" tradition in order to embrace its transcendental potential.⁴¹

Apart from the rod/spear symbolism, *Tribute to Freud* contains the re-inscription of another mechanist metaphor. In one of their conversations, Freud used the phrase "to strike oil" to mark the appearance of an important clue in the psychoanalytic process. To H.D., this was a "commonplace symbol", the slang "of the counting-house, of Wall Street, a businessman's concrete definite image for a successful run of luck" (*TF* 82).⁴² Striking oil, as one of the foremost signs of technological advancement, associated with high economic benefits and the development of warfare, was one of the images used to celebrate and mythologise the power of masculine progress. For H.D., as for many authors of the post-World-War-One period, the formerly eulogised images became the dystopian representation of an apocalyptic scenery, a decomposition caused by masculine technology and violence. Her 1930 novella *Kora and Ka* sets the stage for a transcendental quest by a unified representation of crumbling technology, neurotic breakdown and the destructive/self-destructive masculinity of the protagonist, a unity

⁴¹ In contrast to the association of Jewishness with materialism and capitalism, H.D. fully embraced the Jewish mystical tradition that was gaining popularity among artists and scientists intrigued by the occult (Norris 3).

⁴² H.D. and Bryher were both critical of doctors who "squeeze their patients dry". The issue of fees, how high they are and who pays for them, is a question of crucial importance in the history of psychoanalysis. Freud himself was more than a little ambiguous on the matter. In "Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis", a text published in 1913, he forwarded the dubious claim that free treatment increased neurotic resistances in some patients. Regular payment, on the other hand, simplified the analytic relationship and increased the patient's incentive to get better (131-132). During World War I, however, Freud's own financial position stood on shaky ground. Consequently, his views on fees also changed. At the Fifth International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Budapest he urged his colleagues "to start these institutions or out-patient clinics [...] where treatment shall be free. The poor man should have just as much right to assistance for his mind as he now has to the life-saving help offered by surgery." (qtd. in Danto 2) As Elizabeth Danto points out, this change of heart was consistent with the political and cultural atmosphere in Vienna and other European capitals in the 1920s and the early 1930s.

which Chisholm rightly refers to as a “phallic Thanatos” (25). In H.D.’s work, the death drive is – as the joint product of patriarchy and capitalist materialism – very much of cultural origin. But the cure proffered is less so. Just like in *Tribute*, it is administered through the combination of a mythological, pre-oedipal femininity, pacifism and unconscious hieroglyphics, which finally produce the unification of Kora (mother/analyst) and Ka (soul). Imbued with allusions to death, dryness and phallic imagery, her description of an oil field in *Tribute* incorporates all these dimensions. The author visualises “stark uprights”, “steel cages” and “unfinished Eiffel Towers” (83). Rather unexpectedly, the scene of phallic decay shifts into a critical presentation of the psychoanalytic institution:

And there are many, I have reason to know, who think of the whole method or system of psychoanalysis in such terms, a cage, some mechanical construction set up in an arid desert to trap the unwary, if there is oil to be inferred. [...] There are astute doctors who squeeze you dry with their exorbitant fees for prolonged and expensive treatment. (ibid.)

Though H.D.’s reference to the “pound of spirit” transferred between her and Freud initially seems like a mitigation of Shylock’s pound of flesh, what is at stake is merely a translation of the business transaction into psychological terms, where the materiality and quality of the psychic product are equally “weighed in the balance” (*TF* 70) for their abstract, socially accredited value and potentially “found wanting” (ibid.). In this profit-oriented science, the psychological health of the patient can be assessed and calculated, the malfunctioning parts identified and replaced for a fixed price. Evidently, H.D.’s equation of psychoanalysis with capitalist materialism continues to have troubling continuities with anti-Semitic narratives. Yet a pertinent question *Tribute* does pose concerns the social mission and political affiliation of psychoanalysis (a question we will return to in the following chapters), as well as its relevance to post-war society.

With a combination of regret and irony, H.D. summed up the prevalent opinion of the surviving generation on the psychoanalytic method: “A tiresome subject at best [...] it’s worn out, dated; true, it was fashionable enough among young intellectuals after the First World War, but they turned out a dreary lot and who, after all, has heard of any of them since?” (83) The association of psychoanalysis with intellectualism and bourgeois circles before World War II led to its often being dismissed by the Left, a trend which many of its supporters considered

disappointing.⁴³ Both H.D. and Bryher partook of this disappointment. In spite of this, when *Tribute to Freud* sought to adapt psychoanalysis to post-war society, it did so primarily through a redefinition of its norms, rather than through questioning its social status or financial accessibility. For H.D., the vital political potential of psychoanalysis lay in the unifying force of the unconscious.⁴⁴ Yet behind the feminist utopia and international cooperation that H.D. believed would result from the rediscovery of universal symbols, there was an additional layer of meaning which was deeply related to her personal history.

Glass Walls and Defence Mechanisms

Trauma always returns to the events it set out with, even if it returns to them with a difference. In a narrative imitation of this psychological journey, the end of this chapter will return to the jelly-fish episode in order to see what it can reveal about the traumatic background of H.D.'s relationship with Freudian psychoanalysis. We have already mentioned the protective role that universal symbolism and the notion of a transcultural picture-language played in the cinematic realm. In H.D.'s work, the connection between the symbolic unconscious as a mode of defence and the traumatic reality concealed behind it is most clearly displayed in her World-War-II fiction. In *Tribute to Freud*, one of the central memories depicts the young Hilda and her brother Eric lifting a log in the garden. Beneath the log, the children find a series of "little pockets or neat open graves [...] like Aztec or Egyptian burial chambers" (21). Inside the chambers, they discover white slugs, which the girl initially finds repulsive (or perhaps it is better to say that the grown-up woman remembers having found them so). The repulsion is quickly overcome, however, by thinking that the slugs are "cocoonless larvae" and might "hatch sometime" (ibid.). "There are things

⁴³ See the outline of the rise and fall of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union in Miller, Etkind and chapter one. See also the problems faced by European psychoanalysts after the outbreak of World War II as described by Bryher and Sachs in chapter three.

⁴⁴ In the introduction to the 2012 edition of *Tribute to Freud*, Adam Phillips puzzles over the fact that H.D. did not turn to Jung instead of Freud. Their views were, after all, so much more compatible (x). Part of the reason was simply circumstantial. Bryher's analyst Hanns Sachs was one of Freud's most faithful students and therefore not likely to recommend Jung. After the analysis with Freud, H.D. stubbornly refused to consult Jung, even when, in 1953, she literally lived down the street from him. She regarded this as a pledge of loyalty to the Professor (cf. *Analysing Freud* xxxvi). Jung's mystical inclinations and his interest in occultism would certainly have been appealing to H.D. Yet the universal unconscious Phillips mentions (x) she had no trouble finding in Freud's work.

under things as well as things inside things,” the author concludes (*ibid.*). In the first part of the image, the lifeless larvae connote death; yet they soon attain the potential of hatching and metamorphosing into butterflies. But the meaning of the image continues to unfold.

Following the memory of her brother lifting the log, H.D. is reminded of her mother’s death and her reaction to its impending possibility: “You can go round and round in circles like ants in that log Eric had propped up for us. Or your psyche, your soul, can curl up and sleep like those white slugs” (*ibid.*). The ants circling around the slugs connote the mind’s rotation around a traumatic event doubly associated with death: the slugs lie in burial chambers and remind her of the death of a family member. Perhaps they also allude to the debilitating effect of trauma on the psyche of the survivor (the soul sleeps like lifeless slugs). H.D.’s ants perform the circular, repetitious movement of Mandelstam’s blind swallow, and of traumatic thoughts that keep reappearing, but refuse to be embodied in speech. Indeed, Chisholm defines H.D.’s larvae as the “thing buried alive in subconscious memory, accessible only to the cryptic translation of dreams” (59). Like Mandelstam’s poem, the memory preserved in *Tribute* is this cryptic translation. The “things under things” allude to the double layer of meaning in this sequence: the childhood memory and the traumatic event “buried alive” behind it. Significantly, however, the episode does not end with the symbolic representation of traumatic thought, but also offers hope of redemption (the lifeless slugs will become butterflies).

It is not only in this section that the symbol of the cocoon and butterfly is associated with death and redemptive potential. On one of the first pages of “Advent”, H.D. refers to Freud as “not the sphynx, but the sphynx moth, the death-head moth” (*TF* 117). The lines follow a description of the jellyfish experience, in which the protective surface that extends above her head and upwards from her feet is portrayed as a “glass-dome”, “half-globe” or “bell-jar” (116). Furthermore, H.D. admits that in this bell-jar, she was for a short time “immunized or insulated from war disaster” (*ibid.*). If we decide to pursue the conclusions reached above, we can take the glass dome to stand for the same thing as the jellyfish, the soul or inherited memory of the unconscious sphere. Yet in this section, just like in the recollection of the log her brother lifts, the protective surface of eternal memories is jeopardised by

the traumatic memories of war. When the repressed traumatic content becomes too powerful, the protective glass of the bell-jar threatens to break: “No wonder I am frightened. I let death in at the window. If I do not let the ice-thin window-glass intellect protect my soul or my emotion, I let death in” (117). The death-head moth identified with Freud even more concisely depicts the unity of war-trauma and the defence mechanism in a single image. The butterfly – earlier equated with the butterfly-goddess Psyche, ancient Greece, the unconscious and eternal life – here appears fused with the image of death. The death-head moth also reminds H.D. of the shock when she, walking to her session, saw a death-head swastika chalked on the pavement leading to Freud’s door (93), a sinister prophecy of the oncoming events. As the guardian of the unconscious, in *Tribute* Freud is celebrated as “the midwife to the soul” (117); yet the memoir is also filled with anxiety concerning his old age and the jeopardy he was experiencing as a Jew in the increasingly anti-Semitic Vienna. Like the glass walls of the jelly-fish episode, the death-head moth represents the fusion of a death threat and life-saving protection, only here both the anxiety and life-wish are projected onto H.D.’s analyst.⁴⁵

Ironically, the sessions that were supposed to liberate H.D. from the agonies of war were interrupted by another global conflict looming on the horizon.⁴⁶ Thus H.D. was again forced to repress her “little Dragon of war-terror” (93), to “command him back to his subterranean cavern” (ibid.). The analytic process, and the corresponding defence mechanisms, continued in her autobiographical fiction. It is hardly a coincidence then that, in *Tribute*, Freud’s death is made known in the same radio announcement that declares the onset of World War II. Symbolising the death of psychoanalysis and of the eternal unconscious, Freud’s departure is an introduction into the violent deluge of masculine warfare (the phallic Thanatos of *Kora and Ka*). This is why, in 1944, it was time for H.D. to compose her own tribute to the Professor and to offer the gift of their joint vision to a disillusioned world. Just as in *Trilogy*, the gift would also consist in eliminating the remnants of materialism and patriarchy from Freud’s teaching and replacing them with the vitalist narrative

⁴⁵ Freud interpreted H.D.’s princess dream as a life-wish, directed both at himself and her deceased family members (*TF* 42).

⁴⁶ In biographical sources, H.D. is usually said to have turned to Freud for two primary reasons: to discuss her bisexuality and to work through her personal tragedies of World War I (*Penelope’s Web* 310, Friedman and DuPlessis 425, *TF* 93).

H.D. had already recognised in psychoanalysis, but desired to take further than Freud did. *Tribute to Freud*, as well as most other works H.D. wrote while the bombs were raining on London, represents an attempt to resurrect both Freud and psychoanalysis, to offer them like the universal heal-all of *Trilogy* to a society in which Gods (but not goods) are dead.

In “The Queer Materiality of History: H.D., Freud and the Bronze Athena”, Jana Funke shows how, for both H.D. and Freud, the bronze statuette figured as an image of historical loss, but also of “the untimely survival of the past in the present” (223). Of course, this untimely survival was also linked to the universal unconscious, which was in itself an untimely remnant, an instance of the collective past coming to life in the mind of the contemporary individual. As we saw, H.D. and Freud were both attracted to symbols and images that “resist the passing of time” (ibid.) and counter the notions of linear progress. The history of their encounter points to two important trends in modernist literature, science and technological imagination. One is the defensive role of the universal unconscious, which served as the fulfilment of the post-war desire for a psycho-spiritual realm beyond the destructive effects of war, progress and shifting social relations. The other is the capacity of individual artists and scientists to adapt this narrative to suit their personal needs, their social position and their cultural background, which we have already observed with respect to Spielrein’s, Freud’s and Jung’s appropriations of vitalism in chapter one. Yet a condition that is both timeless and repetitive – as the universal unconscious and its symbolism were imagined to be – is by definition a traumatic condition. Like the fort-da game of the child in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (cf. 14-16), the unconscious’ perfect ability to preserve and revive the past was both an illustration of the psychic mechanisms of trauma (traumatic thoughts are repetitive and refuse to move on) and a defence against them. In the history of psychoanalysis, as in H.D.’s work, one will inevitably stumble on the unconscious of individual and social trauma lurking behind the transcendental screen of universal symbols. Behind the “walls that do not fall” (as H.D. called the unconscious in her World-War-II *Trilogy*) lie the ones that did. And so the desire to escape the socio-historical present is exposed as the result of socially generated suffering.

From Epic Childhood to Psychological Realism: Bryher's Development

Of the authors covered in this thesis, Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) has received least attention. She is most well known as H.D.'s lifelong companion and financial supporter to a number of key modernist figures, including James Joyce, Marianne Moore, Sylvia Beach and Edith Sitwell. In her account of H.D.'s life, Susan Stanford Friedman does mention Bryher, but only in the context of her influence on H.D.'s writing. With the republication of Bryher's early autobiographical novels *Development* and *Two Selves* (2000) as well as the later autobiography *The Heart to Artemis* (2006),¹ her work has begun to attract critical interest in its own right. Up to the present moment, two aspects of Bryher's artistic projects have proved compelling to critics: her subversion of normative gender roles and (to a lesser extent) her preoccupation with psychoanalysis.² A few authors, such as Jane E. Marek and Emily Wojcik, have also provided a synopsis of Bryher's role as publisher and editor.³ Just as Spielrein's work has mostly been read in relation to Jung and Freud, feminist critics have often felt compelled to compare Bryher's work with H.D.'s. H.D.'s preoccupation with questions of gender and sexuality motivated them to perceive Bryher's texts primarily through this lens. This resulted in a perceptible focus on Bryher's early fiction where gender issues are indeed more foregrounded and most similarities with H.D. are to be found.

Even Diana Miller's and Maggie Magee's chapter on Bryher in *Lesbian Lives: Psychoanalytic Narratives Old and New*, a compelling chronological outline of Bryher's psychoanalytic interests, is, due to the book's overarching topic, primarily

¹ *Development* was originally published in 1920, *The Heart to Artemis* in 1963.

² With regard to questions of sexuality, one should single out the work of Joanne Winning and Susan McCabe. Winning is the author of several studies on modernist queer culture and editor of Bryher's newly republished fictional autobiography (*Development* and *Two Selves*). McCabe's *Bryher, Female Husband of Modernism*, the first biographical account of Bryher's life, is soon expected to reach its readers. Excerpts are now available online. Diana Miller and Maggie Magee's article "Superior Guinea Pig: Bryher and Psychoanalysis" is an informative summary of Bryher's psychoanalytic activities and discusses the development of Bryher's ideas independently of H.D.'s. The subsequent publication of the correspondence between Bryher, H.D., Freud and their circle in *Analysing Freud* (ed. Friedman, 2002) gave an additional boost to the public recognition of Bryher's investment in psychoanalysis. Some of Bryher's *Close Up* articles can be consulted in the volume *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*.

³ Cf. "The Literary Editing of H.D. and Bryher"; "Their Own Privately Subsidized Firm: Bryher, H.D. and Curating Modernism."

concerned with Bryher's intervention into psychoanalytic narratives of female sexuality. In addition, the chapter does not place Bryher's views into the context of contemporary psychoanalytical debates on the role of society in psychoanalysis and of psychoanalysis in society, nor does it outline the gradual shifts in Bryher's psychological (and political) opinions that occurred in the course of the 1920s. Bryher's cinematic criticism is referred to quite often in Laura Marcus's *The Tenth Muse*. Marcus does note the indebtedness of Bryher's and H.D.'s *Close Up* articles to universal unconscious symbolism, but, while she also acknowledges Bryher's concern with contemporary political events, the relationship between these two opposing narratives (within Bryher's work and within psychoanalysis) is not addressed (cf. 319-404). Thus the difference – and the difference is, I will argue, a crucial one – between Bryher's and H.D.'s approach to film again remains blurred.⁴ In sum, the psychology and politics behind Bryher's cinematic criticism and the novels she wrote in the interwar period and after World War II remain under-researched. By investigating the links between psychoanalysis, cinema, literature and politics in Bryher's oeuvre, this chapter looks to address these gaps.

Significantly, it is precisely in the under-researched period (roughly after 1927) that Bryher's and H.D.'s psycho-political paths diverge and that many of Bryher's most original ideas can be found. H.D.'s unflinching devotion to the universal, timeless nature of psychoanalytic symbols and Bryher's gradual shift towards a socio-individual approach to psychology were partly conditioned by their different responses to war, in which H.D. suffered greater losses than her partner and was thus more in need of the soothing, utopian permanence that universal symbolism had to offer. Her familial history and religious inclinations only served to corroborate these vitalist tendencies. The different development of two women who spent the larger part of their lives together sheds light on the role of personal history and cultural heritage in determining an authors' preference for vitalism or materialism. In addition, the shifts and transformations in their work are indicative of the wider socio-psychological trends in Europe after 1918: the need to escape the traumatic reality of post-war society by resorting to a timeless, international

⁴ Since the range of texts and authors Marcus discusses is very broad (the chapter in her book deals with the activities of *Close Up* in general), it is quite understandable that these distinctions are not dealt with in detail.

community beyond the scope of time and the need for concrete socio-political reform which would encompass recent psychological findings and dare to take an honest look at “life as it is”.

Much like Spielrein’s, Bryher’s psychoanalytical (and political) views changed significantly in the interwar period. Her development is marked by a transition from universal symbolism similar to H.D.’s (along with the elitist conception of the poet’s privileged access to the unconscious) towards a socio-individual approach to psychoanalysis and the cinema. Around 1920, Bryher was intensely captivated by her own version of universal history. Due to her childhood experience and gender identity, she defined the poet’s regressive capacity as a return to the ambivalent sexuality and gender fluidity of childhood (rather than extolling the feminine and bisexual nature of the poetic visionary like H.D.). The change in Bryher’s perspective was prompted by her association with the cinematic and psychoanalytic circles in Berlin. Her analysis with Sachs and her work at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute (where she worked as a training analyst with adolescents from poor backgrounds) increased her social awareness and enhanced her interest in the connection between the mind and its environment. It was also in Berlin that she was first introduced to Pabst and other members of the New Objectivity movement as well as to Russian cinematography (particularly films by Sergei Eisenstein, Abram Room, Lev Kuleshov and Vsevolod Pudovkin). Bryher recognised in these films a novel type of realistic depiction that included both individual psychological development and social criticism. For her, this psychological realism was particularly relevant in the post-war context, so she attempted to apply its methods in her literary representations of life during wartime.⁵ Apart from having a lasting effect on Bryher’s writing and political opinions, the psychological foundation of these films forces us to question a number of commonplace assumptions about Russian cinema: its reliance on mechanist psychology, its lack of individual characters and its relationship with the official politics of the Soviet Union.

The parallels between Spielrein’s and Bryher’s psychoanalytic journey were therefore not accidental. The materialist fusion of Freud, Pavlov and Marx devised

⁵ This refers both to the post-World-War-I period (when her novella *Civilians* was written) and to the series of popular novels she published after World War II.

by Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria greatly influenced Russian cinematography. Correspondence between German and Russian directors (such as Georg Wilhelm Pabst and Sergei Eisenstein) enabled the transmission of these psychological notions between Russia and Europe. In addition, European capitals developed their own versions of materialist psychoanalysis, devoted to alleviating the mental strain on the individual by changing society. Building on what was said about the development of psychoanalysis in Moscow and Geneva in chapter one, the following pages will provide a glimpse into the relationship between psychoanalysis and society in Berlin, London and the USA in the 1920s and the 1930s. The socially oriented approach established by analysts there had a decisive effect both on the way films were made and the way they were interpreted on the pages of *Close Up*. Yet the dialectics of drives developed in Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1920s, coupled with the recapitulation narrative and the notion of universal symbolism, posed significant problems for analysts who wished to study the interaction between individual psychology and its socio-cultural context. Focusing particularly on the work of Bryher, Hanns Sachs and the analysts they associated with, I will show how, during World War II, European psychoanalysts replaced the recapitulation narrative with the notion of the destructive infant: a joint product of binary drive theory and the image of the primal human. The compromises these analysts came up with in order to combine these notions with the materialist trends mentioned earlier attest to the incompatibility of universal vitalist narratives with the socio-individual approach, but they also point to the difficulty modernist analysts and film critics experienced in their attempts to let go of them.

Epic Childhood and Racial Memory

In the period between 1920 and 1925 Bryher composed a series of three autobiographical novels, *Development* (1920), *Two Selves* (1923) and *West* (1925). The former two were republished together in 2000. For today's readers, Bryher's autobiography ends with a scene of her first meeting with H.D., an encounter which is presented both as the culmination of a romantic narrative and the successful conclusion of her poetic quest and desire for self-expression. In line with this (somewhat idealising) admission of H.D.'s decisive influence, the biological and

psychological ideas in Bryher's early novels echo and foreshadow the ones H.D. produced around the same time.

The final section of *Development* contains an explanation of the psychology of artistic production – or, as the author calls it, visual imagination – which is more than a little reminiscent of the vitalist physiology we came across in *Notes on Thought and Vision*. In her attempt to distinguish between eternal essences and material events, Bryher differentiates between life and existence. Like the individual body (the Freudian soma), existence is transient. It “begins with birth and ends with death” (171). Life, on the other hand, is eternal. The aim of the artist is the “expression of life as art” (ibid.). Thus he/she again holds the privileged position of accessing this immortal source of “vitality” (172). What is more, the imperishable substance of the organism is associated with the universal, hieroglyphic language of childhood and “the world of dream” (ibid.). For Bryher, as for H.D., “dreams are the hieroglyphics by which the mind expresses its true thoughts” (ibid.). Since “true thoughts” (or rather symbols) belong to the universal realm of consciousness, they are not specific to a person or culture. Rather, an artist “must be free of the literature of all nations” (ibid.). They must see “the same problems, the same thoughts through the eyes of each different race” (ibid.). The ability to relate to a transcultural symbolism enables the creative individual to “live not one life, but many lives, a share in the immortal beauty of the past of the earth” (173).⁶ Like the countless egos steering the civilized mind in *The Ego and the Id* or the ancestral voices speaking through the shell-substance of the brain in H.D.'s wartime *Gift* and post-war *Tribute*, Bryher's visual imagination incorporates a collective and regressive capacity.

Indeed, the images she employs to describe it are nearly identical to those found in H.D.'s poetry and prose. For the painter or the poet, the symbols that appear “across the black curtain” of the brain become “shells” through which the artist pours “the expression of his mind” (ibid.). As in *The Gift*, the shell quickly metamorphoses

⁶ A poet who lives not one life, but many lives is relatable to Barnes's and Eliot's belief in transmigration (metempsychosis), discussed in chapter four. In Bryher's and H.D.'s case, the concept of an unconscious which constitutes the collective aspect of the individual mind was not dissimilar to the idea of past lives streamlining one's present existence. The fact that the poet has privileged access to this sphere of universal memory recalls Mandelstam's early model of literary creation as well as Eliot's understanding of literary tradition (although, as we saw, the gender politics of each universalism was vitally different).

into a series of imperishable cells or a hive: "The inside of the head seems as a row of cells, a hive, open in the middle and dark. A line of a poem, an adventure [...] opens one cell, many cells and frees the pictures they contain." (ibid.) Once again, the hive serves as a representation of the universal, collective dimension situated in the brain, while the eternal images projected onto its black curtain possess a decidedly cinematic quality.⁷ According to Bryher, the pictures launched by this mental projector can be of three kinds: unconscious, visual and conscious. While the child has access to the visual hieroglyphs of race-memory, it is only the artist who can evoke them willingly and consciously. As we recall, H.D.'s artistic perception was defined in terms of gender and sexuality (the visionary figure was both bisexual and female). Bryher, on the other hand, was more inclined to stress the artist's childlike nature. Bryher's lifelong identification with the opposite sex and possibly transgender identity fused with the idyllic memories of her childhood to create a poet whose visionary powers were linked to the gender ambiguity of the child. From a psychoanalytic point of view, this infantile trait was directly connected to the pre-oedipal. Consequently, in Bryher's artistic autobiography, the origins of her poetic disposition were firmly grounded in her early years, which she often described as both "epic" and "unconscious" (25). Yet what Bryher meant when referring to the unconscious is a complex question, not least so because the answer changed considerably over the years.

In line with the psychoanalytic narratives of her time, her first autobiographical novel defines the unconscious as both a concrete period in her childhood and the universal racial heritage located in the human mind.⁸ In *Development*, the reader accompanies young Nancy (Bryher's fictional alter-ego) on her travels across

⁷ That similar images should circulate between authors who spent half their lives together is to be expected. It is also not of particular importance whether the beehive image originated with Bryher or H.D. We know that it makes its first appearance in *Development* (1920), resurfaces in MacPherson's reports about the Berlin cinema (1927) and attains its final form in H.D.'s wartime autobiography (1941-43) (see chapter two). What is significant is that, in all three instances, the beehive is used to describe the transmission of universal, collective symbols. Interestingly, the same image surfaces in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), where a "dome-shaped hive" (217) is also situated in the "intricate passages of the brain" (216) and is used to represent the unconscious world of emotions which cancel out individual consciousness and establish invisible, shifting links between people. Here too, the hive offers an intimacy that is timeless and radically unspeakable, but affects both human relationships and the artistic process. This may well point to a wider circulation of the metaphor in modernist literature.

⁸ As observed before, a number of psychoanalysts believed that children repeated this early cultural history.

Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Apart from being a depiction of the actual voyages Bryher undertook with her family, the narrative is an evocation of numerous mythological locations in modernist historiography, particularly those of the ancient world (Egypt, Crete, Troy, Carthage etc.). Significantly, Nancy learns about these places through literary mythologies (Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), historical and adventure novels (her favourite authors include Robert M. Ballantyne, William H. Ainsworth, Frederick Marryat, Percy F. Westerman and George Alfred Henty),⁹ which produce a vivid, picturesque fusion of myth and reality in her mind. The journey abruptly ends when Nancy is forced to enter a boarding school for girls at the age of fourteen (she was home-schooled until then). School life is experienced as a violent clash with reality and children of her own age (but rarely of her education and social status) that "robbed her of the unconscious" (103). The adventures of travelling the world, getting to know other cultures and their histories only served to exacerbate the stiffness of a still rather Victorian education offered at schools like Queenwood. Raised on historical novels and adventure tales, free to pursue any hobbies and interests she wanted and safeguarded from financial hardship by her father's fortune, Nancy is (mentally and often literally) miles away from comprehending the functioning of British upper-middle-class society. With the unquestioning credulousness of childhood, she absorbs tales of heroism that make her see the past as an exciting, dynamic time, in which people lived shorter, but fulfilled and happier lives. This instils in her a deep longing for a return to history, particularly ancient history.

It is here that the collective dimension of the unconscious comes in and enables her just such a leap in time. Bryher's road to poetic achievement and adulthood presupposes a fixation and return to the pre-oedipal period, specifically to pre-classical antiquity. On her first European expedition, Nancy already feels summoned by the spirit of the ancient world: "The immortality of the land spoke. Naxos was immortal [...] and it was these she wanted, these – Greek Sicily, old beautiful freedom, not the Sicily of the Normans, not the Middle Age." (69) Following

⁹ The Bryher Papers include an assortment of historical novels and adventure books for children, which she named "Dusty Diamonds". These are primarily "boys'" adventure stories that deal with naval topics and expeditions into the unknown parts of the world. Less often they are tales about highwaymen or heroic depictions of sieges and battles.

her introduction into middle-class life she can still feel “the nine Minoan periods beating in her head” (285). Indeed, before the fateful meeting that concludes *Two Selves*, we find Nancy avidly learning Greek and discovering with exhilaration that she had “known the words before”. “It must be race memory,” she announces to her sceptical friend Eleanor (269). As previously pointed out, the Minoan periods were frequently equated with polymorphous sexuality and pre-oedipal attachments in psychoanalytic history. In H.D.’s and Bryher’s prose, these historical periods (and attachments) get extolled as the desired point of return, the source of childhood psychology and poetic inspiration, which have the ability to mend not only personal relationships, but also contemporary social structures.

The reasons why these modernist women writers felt the need to mythologise their personal psychology and celebrate a return to the pre-oedipal are numerous. On the one hand, contemporary archaeological discoveries and resulting narratives of pre-Classical civilizations included descriptions of sexual liberty, matriarchy and a peaceful society, all of which were appealing qualities to women who, in one way or another, rebelled against restrictive gender and sexual norms. In Bryher’s and H.D.’s case, one of the most significant influences in this sense was undoubtedly the work of Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of the Palace of Knossos and the greatest authority on Minoan civilization, whose archaeological studies served as an inspiration for Freud’s own theory of female sexuality.¹⁰ Other relevant sources include early sexological tracts on female sexuality (with authors like Krafft-Ebing, Carpenter and Ellis featuring most prominently). Bryher met Ellis in 1919, shortly after her first meeting with H.D., and corresponded with him until his death in 1939.¹¹ Although he supported current evolutionary theories of homosexuality (the idea of an original organic bisexuality espoused in different ways by Darwin, Krafft-Ebing,

¹⁰ Freud was a great admirer of Evans and, at the time of H.D.’s treatment, possessed all the Evans volumes on his shelf. Friedman suggests that “Evans’s analysis of religious syncretism (Egyptian, Phoenician, Minoan, Greek and Christian) and the butterfly iconography associated with female divinity was a significant source for H.D.’s *Trilogy*” (*Analysing Freud* 127). Of course, ideas of religious syncretism were an equally important source for the formulation of psychoanalytic universal history.

¹¹ Ellis shared his friends’ fascination with antiquity and accompanied them on their trip to Greece in 1920. Bryher is known to have discussed her sexuality with Ellis. He relieved some of her doubts by agreeing that she was justified in pleading that she ought to be a man (*Winning* xxviii). In her 1963 autobiography, Bryher was still grateful to Ellis for having “relieved the anxieties of hundreds of uneasy minds” (*Heart to Artemis* 287).

Fliess and Freud),¹² Ellis was not particularly inclined to formulate theories of racial regression. Rather, he believed that the evident attraction many homosexual persons felt towards ancient cultures was due to the positive image of homosexuality promoted in these societies (*Sexual Inversion* 339). He did, however, comment positively on Carpenter's assumption that the invert possesses a natural predisposition to art, divination and intellectual pursuits (*Sexual Inversion* 29). It was through a combination of these archaeological, sexological and psychoanalytic narratives that Bryher and H.D. formulated their bio-mythological understanding of their sexual and poetic inclinations. Freud's, Evans's and Ellis's shared belief in some form of universal history (evolutional and/or cultural) offered both women an image of the body in which the eternal and universal was blended with the perishable and mundane. Unsurprisingly, it was the same combination that Bryher and H.D. looked for in their literary predecessors.

The expression of the universal in and through material reality that we encountered in Jung, Spielrein's early work and H.D.'s texts on the cinema, is repeated in the final section of *Development*, which centres on the evolution of Nancy's literary taste. The future writer does not acquire a particular preference for the realists or for the Romantic poets: "There was no mingling of irony with loveliness; the unpleasant truths of existence were blurred with a false perspective or were not faced at all." (163) Instead, she forms a life-long attachment to the Elizabethans. While H.D. was more inclined towards the Romantic tradition, Bryher looked to the Renaissance for examples of literary vitalism. The importance of Elizabethan literature in the development of modernist vitalist conceptions will be discussed more fully in relation to Djuna Barnes. On the one hand, its attractions included a frank depiction of the body, sexuality and violence as well as a holistic

¹² The following excerpt from Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* is one of the best syntheses of contemporary philosophical and evolutional ideas on organic bisexuality available at the time: "We thus see that the ancient medico-philosophic conception of organic bisexuality put forth by the Greeks as the key to the explanation of sexual inversion, after sinking out of sight for two thousand years, was revived early in the nineteenth century by two amateur philosophers who were themselves inverted (Hössli, Ulrichs), as well as by a genuine philosopher who was not inverted (Schopenhauer). Then the conception of latent bisexuality, independently of homosexuality, was developed from the purely scientific side (by Darwin and evolutionists generally). In the next stage this conception was adopted by the psychiatric and other scientific authorities on homosexuality (Krafft-Ebing and the majority of other students). Finally, embryologists, physiologists of sex and biologists generally, not only accept the conception of bisexuality, but admit that it probably helps to account for homosexuality. In this way the idea may be said to have passed into current thought." (314)

perception of physical and mental processes. On the other, the religious belief in the passage of the soul between bodies of different genders and even species ensured a fluidity of identity which had interesting political connotations for a number of modernist writers, especially women who were themselves part of a sexual minority.¹³ In addition, as Bryher implied in the lines quoted, Renaissance authors offered an appropriate blend of universal syncretism and realism, which, as we saw, was characteristic of scientific, cinematic and literary narratives in the modernist period.

As was the case with early Spielrein, Bryher's and H.D.'s narratives of cultural history indicate a privileging of the unconscious sphere. Yet due to the fact that access to unconscious symbols remains restricted to the poet (and, sometimes, the psychoanalyst), the political implications of their universal history contain an implied social hierarchy. The heroic undertones present in H.D.'s characterisation of the bisexual female poet are paralleled in *Development* by the decidedly superior position that Nancy and her literary heroes occupy with respect to the people that surround them. During her stay at boarding school, Bryher's heroine adopts a hostile attitude towards her schoolfellows. The inmates of Queenwood are sometimes described as "a heard of savages" or simply "the mob" (95), while Nancy assumes the more appealing part of the misunderstood genius:

For the first time the spirit of the crowd – an oppressed thing in turn oppressing [...] with the strength of a sloth, the ferocity of a brute – weighed her and weighed her distrustfully. [...] Surely this was the feeling out of which was born the many-headed dragon of myth? [...]. Pity, that was a gift of the future; for the moment, as the class ended, Nancy rose with the rest in the same spirit as the Athenian follower of Nikias, learned in art, faced with the ruder Syracuse who had enslaved him. [...] When they provoked her beyond her bearing, she would compose long verses of defiance and contempt in French and hurl them at her tormentors. (88-95)

It would be wrong to simply equate Nancy's opinions with those of the author. The subtle irony of the image, the discrepancy between an ordinary classroom scene and Nancy's vision of the tormented hero as well as the reprimand she receives for

¹³ Bryher returned to the Elizabethans in her post-World-War-II fiction. In her novel *The Player's Boy* (1953) the Elizabethan period is presented as a time of peace and cultural progress, in sharp contrast to the oncoming reign of James I. The parallels between the Elizabethan period and the 1920s and early 1930s – with the looming threat of war and instability – are glaringly obvious in Bryher's book.

lack of pity point to the fact that she is a biased focaliser rather than Bryher's mouthpiece. Furthermore, the definition of the crowd offered in the first line – “an oppressed thing in turn oppressing” – alludes to the author's awareness of the social origins of collective violence. Still, most of Bryher's contemporaries rightly perceived her identification with Nancy as much too strong. While *Development's* criticism of public schools for girls elicited both positive and negative responses,¹⁴ Bryher's heroine was found to be almost universally unlikeable. Clemence Dane, a fellow author who had herself written about the problems of women's education,¹⁵ isolated the portrayal of Nancy as the young writer's main stumbling block: “Until her author, no less than Nancy, ceases to tip-tilt her nose so scornfully at her less gifted brothers and sisters, it is impossible that she should interest us. A Pharisee cannot write.” (“A Champion of Childhood” n. p.) It would take another seven years for the Pharisee to be replaced by a compassionate social critic.

The notion of the poetic hero reappears in the description of Nancy's favourite authors, particularly regarding their relationship with their contemporaries. The figure of Flaubert we encounter in *Development* is not unlike H.D.'s portrayal of the poetic visionary in the Corfu sequence of *Tribute*, in which the prophet-poetess is distracted from reading eternal symbols by a crowd of insignificant people that blur her vision. The only perceptible difference seems to be the more combative (and more masculine) element in Bryher's representation:

All the richness, all the power of antiquity were in his hands. [...] His was the pitiless mind of an early leader, who would bend the world to his power. It was an accident of circumstance he hewed his way, not by the slaughter of men, the burning of slaves, but by the javelin points of his words. [...] The mob might howl about him, jackal-wise, but the sand, scratched with their footsteps, only made his silence seem more beautiful. (166)

The animalistic, blood-thirsty image of the crowd evokes the many-headed mythical dragon from the earlier excerpt. In both cases, the poet's role is depicted as no less violent and his relationship with the masses (representing little but primitive, anonymous brutality) is defined as fiercely antagonistic. In Bryher's later

¹⁴ Cf. *Development* 98-119; see the articles “Narrow Round of Formalism”, “Cramped School Girls”, “Girls' Schools: Are They a Cramping Influence?” and “School Teachers as Social Exiles” in the Bryher Papers.

¹⁵ *Development* followed in suit of similar autobiographies such as Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* (1917) and Dane's *A Regiment of Women* (1917), also a study of life in a girls' school. Both novels caused a scandal due to their depiction of homosexual relationships in boarding schools.

work the antagonism lessens, but the notion of an elite community with access to the timeless sphere of universal symbols periodically reappears.

Bryher's autobiographical notes (1932-1938)¹⁶ prove that she often perceived psychoanalysts in the same way as she did her favourite poets. Her account of Weimar Berlin reveals an ecstatic enthusiasm following her first few analytic sessions with Hanns Sachs. She felt that the new psychological method provided answers to questions she had asked herself for years. It "stirred [her] sense of history" ("Berlin" n. p.) and "offered [her] a completely satisfactory picture of the universe" ("Congress PA" n. p.). Much like H.D., her partner often felt that psychoanalysis was "a papyrus roll that, if deciphered, held another and more secret message" ("Congress PA" n. p.). The potential of deciphering the symbols of dream and visual imagination led her to perceive analysts as a privileged group capable of initiating social change by disseminating their knowledge. As we will see shortly, in the late 1920s, Bryher's psychoanalytic opinions changed dramatically. In spite of this, at the congress in Lucerne (1934), she was still ruminating about the participants as figures from various historical periods conversing across time by way of psychoanalytic mythology: "The man in front of me as profound and powerful as an old Sumeran figure, some ivory from the great temples. The long skull seemed to brood over sensations too archaic to be expressed in words. The girl at his side, on the contrary, was tomorrow in a hundred years. [...] Further on, the fair hair and the forehead [...] might serve as a model for some conqueror of the neuroses." ("Congress PA" n. p.) The elitist conception of the artist's and the analyst's regressive capacity present in Bryher's early autobiography occasionally surfaces in her personal papers, particularly as concerns her historical meditations.

Yet in contrast to H.D. and many psychoanalysts of the period, Bryher's psychoanalytic development points to a gradual turning away from notions of recapitulation towards a sociocultural interpretation of human psychology. Her cinematic and psychoanalytic activities in Weimar Berlin, particularly her training at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, her friendship with Sachs and her growing

¹⁶ The notes can be consulted in the Bryher Papers.

interest in New Objectivity and early Russian cinema were crucial factors in this change of direction.

The Weimar Transition

Bryher and Hanns Sachs met in Berlin in 1928. Kenneth MacPherson had previously undergone a short analysis with Sachs, who had (together with Karl Abraham) helped Pabst in filming the first popular cinematic rendition of a psychoanalytic case study *The Secrets of a Soul* (1926). MacPherson quickly became a familiar face among the directors and film critics of Weimar Berlin, which contained more than a few Freudian analysts. Aware of Bryher's interest in psychology and her budding preoccupation with the film world, MacPherson took her to social gatherings in Pabst's apartment, a favourite meeting place of progressive moviemakers. It was there that she was introduced to Sachs. As it turned out, Bryher and the film-loving analyst had many mutual interests. Sachs was a lay practitioner who cherished a passion for antiquity and literature.¹⁷ In addition, both were keen to introduce psychoanalytic concepts into film and education.¹⁸ Consequently, Bryher soon found herself on the analytic couch, having, as she put it in her notes, "the time of her life": "I felt that the analysis of that period had been invented just for my own pleasure. I loved it. [...] I used to go to Dr Hanns Sachs [...] for my hour and in time was promoted to be allowed to go to the evening lectures on theory and with examples." ("Berlin" n. p.) The lectures took place at the Psychoanalytic Institute where Sachs had been active since its opening in 1920 (Danto 59). In many ways, the Institute

¹⁷ Indeed, Helene Deutsch, a Viennese colleague and physician by training, once observed that Sachs was fonder of literature than of treatment (Hale 131).

¹⁸ In 1928, Bryher published an article in *Close Up* entitled "Films for Children" (1928), which contained a list of films to be incorporated into the school curriculum (19-20). A number of them conform to the paradigm of romantic primitivism, in which foreign cultures are presented as the living remnants of an idyllic past, whose portrayal is intended as an implicit criticism of capitalist industrialism. The most outstanding example is Robert J. Flaherty's *Moana of the South Seas* (1926), in which, according to Fatimah Tobing Rony, the primitive man is represented "as a carefree adolescent" (139). Elements of a similarly idyllic portrayal appear in Marc Allégret's *Travels on the Congo* (1927), a documentary about the daily lives of eight African ethnic groups. Though a conscious removal from the sensationalism and exoticism of racial films of his time, there are suggestions that Allégret's preoccupation with the athletic primitive body served both an erotic and an aesthetic function. These narratives echo the celebration of regression and pre-oedipal psychology in *Development*. Bryher's other articles on children's films include "Films and Education" (1927) and "Danger in the Cinema" (1930).

and its members were the epitome of everything psychoanalysis had become since the end of World War I.

Social service to the masses was an essential part of the Institute's project. From its opening, the clinic was flooded with patients and its lectures attracted physicians, nurses, teachers and social workers who wished to apply psychoanalytic knowledge within their profession. Analysts who worked at the Institute considered it their priority to treat those who could not afford sessions or could only pay nominal fees (Hale 31). Berlin was, of course, not the only city that saw the fusion of psychoanalytic endeavours with left-wing politics in the 1920s. As we saw, similar attempts were under way in Moscow, Geneva and Vienna. The surge of poverty and unemployment in the late 1920s and the recent experience of war-deprivation incited a sense of socio-political urgency in a growing number of European intellectuals. Social awareness and left-wing views that predominated at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute were also a distinctive feature of the cinematic devotees that gathered around Pabst.¹⁹

Yet there was a twist about the strivings of Berlin analysts to fuse Freudian theory with the socio-historical tenets of socialism or social democracy. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, such attempts were made more difficult by the universalist trends that appeared in psychoanalysis roughly after 1910. This was also the main reason why the later part of Freud's work, especially his post-1920 drive theory, was rejected by Russian psychologists who were otherwise favourably disposed towards psychoanalysis (see chapter one). In Berlin, where the freedom to discard a significant portion of Freud's teaching and combine the rest with sociology and neurology was more restricted than in Moscow, analysts found various ways of negotiating this dichotomy.²⁰ Otto Fenichel, a Marxist analyst, criticised Freud's definition of the death drive as a psycho-biological entity and stressed the cultural function of the superego (Freud asserted that the superego was formed through the

¹⁹ Pabst's films regularly dealt with questions of war, privilege and social justice and include a film on a group of German coal miners who rescue French miners from an underground explosion – along with the familiar undertones of international working-class cooperation and comradeship (*Kameradschaft*, 1931), a cinematic adaptation of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (1930) as well as a graphic and critical depiction of World War I (*Westfront 1918*, 1930).

²⁰ For an outline of the specificities of the psychoanalytic approach in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, see also Hannah S. Decker's "Psychoanalysis in Central Europe: The Interplay of Psychoanalysis and Culture".

internalization of parental and social influences (*FR 382*)).²¹ Karen Horney, a founding member of the Berlin Institute and one of the most original second-generation Freudians, dismissed Freud's binary drive theory, the association between repression and cultural advancement as well as his progress narrative leading from primary narcissism towards object relations and instead looked for the social origins of neurosis.²² Though Horney's and Fenichel's ideas were fully formulated following their emigration to the United States, their foundations were certainly set in the Berlin of the 1920s.

In their emphasis on a dynamic, holistic, socially-founded model of psychoanalysis these analysts resembled those Spielrein encountered in Switzerland and Russia.²³ Berlin analysts were less keen to merge psychoanalysis with contemporary findings in psychiatry and neurology than their Russian or Swiss counterparts. But Sachs and Bryher would encounter some of these ideas through their engagement with Russian cinematography. In the 1920s, Bryher and her analyst occupied the middle ground between the socio-biological psychoanalysis exemplified by Spielrein's late work and the celebration of universal symbolism, vitalist drive theory and recapitulation, exemplified by H.D.

Bryher, Sachs and the Vicissitudes of History

As her analyst and close friend, Hanns Sachs was one of the most important influences on Bryher's psychoanalytic ideas. It is therefore important to assess the role of society, drives and recapitulation in Sachs's work as well as in the writings of other analysts Bryher sided with (or opposed) during the debates that occurred in psychoanalytic circles in the 1930s and the early 1940s. More generally, these examples help to enunciate the role social psychology and universal history played for first- and second-generation analysts as well as the ways in which they triggered divisions between analytic communities. While Sachs clung to Freudian drive theory

²¹ For Fenichel's criticism of the death drive, see *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (1945) 52-53; for his theory of the superego, see 90-103.

²² See Horney's 1937 book *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (282-283).

²³ Importantly, before Spielrein decided to go to Russia, Freud had advised her to try returning to Berlin (where she had briefly resided before the war) (Launer 362). In her notes on psychoanalysis in Switzerland in the early 1920s, Spielrein revealed that the psychoanalytic society in Geneva admitted both trained analysts and amateurs and that attendance at lectures was completely unrestricted (SS 263-265).

and universal history in his historical interpretations, his and Bryher's alliances within the British Psychoanalytical Society as well as Sachs's activities in Boston speak of the significant role they accorded to contemporary social influences both in generating and resolving psychological conflicts. Sachs's work is a good illustration of the difficulties European left-wing analysts experienced in trying to renounce the narrative of social recapitulation and of how the notion of the destructive infant formed in the 1930s and 1940s was both a reaction to surrounding wartime events and a remnant of this universal history.

Sachs was Freud's admirer and faithful student and, as such, mostly abided by the tenets of classical Freudian analysis. However, it would be unfair to say that all of Sachs's methods mirrored those in Freud's publications. It is important to observe, for instance, that in his 1936 popular guide to psychoanalysis *Zur Menschenkenntnis (Understanding Human Nature)*, Sachs explicitly refuted the theory of social recapitulation:

In biology and the related sciences, there exists the assumption that older, more primitive stages of development do not fully disappear after they have been replaced by more complex or, in any case, more competent ones, so that the old continues to exist within the new. We are very far from accepting or simply positing this principle as our own. We do not believe that archaic social structures continue to exist in our civilization. There are no atavisms. The old is dead, stone-dead. What does survive are the instinctive, pleasure-seeking drives in man. These haven't changed since the very beginning and the first foundations of human society until the present day [...]. (85)

Although, by the 1930s, biology had begun to question the hypothesis of evolutionary recapitulation, Freud famously clung to the concept until his final days and continued to defend it and heavily rely on it in his historical interpretations (most prominently in *Moses and Monotheism* (98-9)). In this instance, Sachs did not follow in his footsteps. His drive theory did, however, include Freud's binary scheme. Like Freud, Sachs argued that the origins of violence could be both socio-cultural and inborn (stemming from the death instinct). In order to be tamed or positively channelled, the death drive needed to be controlled by a firm, well-developed personality. This argument provided the foundation for a lot of Sachs's work on antiquity, particularly his volume on the infamous Roman emperor Caligula.

In this 1931 conglomerate of historical fiction and psychoanalytic case study, Sachs explained that, after a childhood filled with violence, uncertainty and struggle

for existence, the young ruler was unable to form a stable personality (a strong ego) and was left at the mercy of his original drives. Caligula's careless, sadistic attitude towards his subjects is compared to a child's game, in which the death drive fuses with a playful motion. Unable to develop a sense of empathy, he treated his fellow men "not as playfellows, hardly as toys, but merely as living objects" (93). It is significant that Sachs believed that a sense of empathy gradually developed in the child's mind, whereas a sadistic or violent attitude did not. In his narrative, such behaviour is not due to historical regression, but rather to the weakening of civilised defences against destructive urges. Yet this only serves to indicate the historical proximity of the two theories. If, as Sachs claimed, ancient customs embody emotional conflicts that arise between a child and its family members (along with primitive attempts at their resolution); if, moreover, every child is "a little savage" (ein kleiner Wilder) (*Menschenkenntnis* 86), how is it still possible to argue against the existence of atavisms?²⁴ Sachs's association of childhood with an excess of the death drive results in a demonization of the "undeveloped" personality (or childhood personality as such) that would later gain more momentum in psychoanalytic approaches of the Kleinian type.²⁵

The large amount of anxiety and violence present in Klein's description of early mental life (the paranoid-schizoid position)²⁶ is reminiscent of Sachs's characterisation of the young Roman emperor. In Klein's scheme, the paranoia and violent phantasies of the infant also stem from the death instinct, whereas a proper capacity to empathise with others is acquired later. This parallel is indicative of the direction universal psychoanalytic narratives would take during World War II. As we

²⁴ *Caligula* was well accepted in Germany and Austria, but less so when the English translation appeared in the United Kingdom. To Sachs, who had great ambitions regarding the English edition and wanted to engage James and Alix Strachey as translators, this reaction came as a great disappointment (Sachs to Bryher, 30 October, 1931, "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1931", Bryher Papers).

²⁵ Cf. "Every child goes through a period in their development in which they want to kill the father or the mother – preferably both – a period when they keep running around with a toy-sword to wipe out anyone that stands in their way. [...] This childhood phase, in which the destructive drive – an inherited trait of every individual – fuses with the pleasure of play, is the one that Caligula never outgrew." (*Caligula* 89)

²⁶ According to Klein, the paranoid-schizoid position occurs in child development because the infant projects its death drive outwards. This results in a splitting of the child's objects into good (idealised, nurturing) and bad (threatening) ones. In the next (depressive) position, the child learns to integrate the good and bad objects and perceive the person as a whole (cf. "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms" (1946); "A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states" (1935)).

saw in the preceding chapters, there was a crucial link between the experience of World War I and the growing importance of universal symbolism, recapitulation and binary drive theory. In the early 1930s Sachs had, like a number of analysts, begun to question the idea of social recapitulation. Yet his historical studies would keep returning to it, either in the form of social progress from narcissism to the reality principle (see chapter four) or in the characterisation of the monstrous, hyper-aggressive and hyper-sexualised personality that loomed behind the benevolent effects of repression afforded by civilisation (which Caligula represents). What Sachs's theories demonstrate is the complex connection between Freud's drive theory and recapitulation. In Freudian analysis, the death drive had the double benefit of explaining aggressive behaviour without digging too deep into its social causes and of strengthening the need for socially imposed repression and sublimation, already established as the origin of civilisation in Freud's universal history (see chapter one). If one wished to retain the notion of the death drive, but give up the idea of recapitulation or universal history, this would be difficult to do and Sachs never quite found a way out of this conundrum. Like Sachs, Klein preserved the idea of the death instinct and the image of the monster-infant – a remnant of the recapitulation narrative – but found a way of accounting for it without resorting to a ubiquitous pattern of cultural progress.

If World War I resulted in a proliferation of universal narratives, World War II had a related effect. Both Michal Shapira and Maud Ellmann have convincingly shown how psychoanalytic depictions of inborn destructive urges (as concerns World-War-II theories of child psychology) grew in proportion to the violence raging outside.²⁷ Thus the image of the destructive infant gained even more prominence in the 1940s, while the ideas of primitivism and recapitulation, which the image was originally indebted to, gradually faded into the background. In anticipation of these theories, Bryher's *Development* contains a comparison of warfare (World War I) with the irrational fury of a destructive child: "The war was due to lack of thought and it's being carried on the haphazard way a sick baby smashes plates" (271). Like Freud's 1932 letter to Einstein, Bryher's statement implies that war is due to the inability to control (repress) one's destructive emotions, in which the lack of conscious reflection

²⁷ Cf. *War Inside* and "Vaccies Go Home".

("thought") plays a decisive role. This incapacity is then connected to childhood, presenting aggression as a regressive trait which education and social intervention should be able to remove. Evidently, such an explanation is not too keen on investigating the historical and socio-economic causes of warfare. As we will see in the next section, by the late 1920s, Bryher would dismiss this simplistic explanation of human conflicts. What her 1920 comparison points to, however, is the frequency of the association between violence and childhood before it became a cornerstone of World-War-II psychoanalysis. It was, after all, in the same year that Freud first published his thoughts on the death drive, which served as the foundation of Sachs's and Klein's later theories of childhood personality. However, in spite of the similarity between Caligula and the Kleinian infant, politically speaking, Sachs's and Bryher's sympathies lay with the opposite analytic camp.

In the disagreements that occurred at the British Psychoanalytical Society in the 1930s and eventually led to the Freud-Klein controversial discussions, Bryher and her analyst firmly sided with Anna Freud.²⁸ Significantly, one of the main points of dispute in the Freud-Klein debates was how far, and in what way, education and upbringing could alleviate or exacerbate a person's mental conflicts. Both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud accepted Freud's binary theory of drives and argued that the infant could only learn to repress and control their violent instincts with the help of external support (primarily that of the parental figures). However, the emphasis on the role of the environment was much stronger in Anna Freud's methodology, as was evidenced in her clinical practice.²⁹ Like Sachs and Bryher, Anna Freud believed that a good analyst should cultivate interests "beyond the limits of the medical field [...] in facts that belong to sociology, religion, literature and history" (qtd. in Kohut 552). It is thus no surprise that, when Bryher was considering continuing her analytic

²⁸ The controversial discussions were a series of debates and business meetings between the supporters of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein that took place at the British Psychoanalytical Society between 1942 and 1944. The disagreements primarily concerned the theoretical basis and methodology of child analysis as well as the practical organisation of the Society. Although formal discussions took place in the early 1940s, theoretical discord between the Freudians and the Kleinians goes back to the late 1920s. The controversies eventually resulted in the split into the Freudian, Kleinian and Middle or Independent Group.

²⁹ Most of Freud's work was with children and adolescents with mental health issues (often from working-class backgrounds) and, following the establishment of the Hampstead War Nursery in 1941, children traumatised by the war, whereas Klein mainly received private patients (cf. Shapira 87).

training in Vienna, she was seriously contemplating working with Anna Freud (cf. Sachs to Bryher, 9 October, 1932).³⁰

In addition to Freud's daughter, Bryher and Sachs supported Melitta Schmideberg, who famously turned against her mother (Melanie Klein) and her former analyst Edward Glover at the time of the controversies. Bryher was good friends with Schmideberg's husband Walter (also an analyst), as their correspondence, spanning several decades, shows.³¹ Like Anna Freud, Schmideberg adopted the Freudian theory of drives and developmental stages, but stressed the need to restrict and transform one's primitive instinctual urges through a sensitive and supportive education. In 1948, she published a book (*Children in Need*), intended for a general audience and based on her work at the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency, in which she called on the authorities to provide psychiatric care for children in their homes, emphasizing the society's responsibility in helping vulnerable individuals.³² Reviewers were quick to recognise the socio-political role Schmideberg envisioned for psychoanalysis. A review by fellow-analyst Augusta Bonnard (a student of Donald Winnicott and Anna Freud) provides a revealing summary of the book's intentions:

Psychoanalysts are often accused of being a remote set of people, akin to bacteriologists, though perhaps less practical, who only study and pronounce upon distorted and minute aspects of Life which, meanwhile, surges painfully unaltered and unassisted, outside their quiet windows. Dr Schmideberg's book does much to correct this view. It shows how psychoanalytic knowledge can be used as a swift and accurate instrument for the precise exploration and relief of human misery, not for the few, but for the many, and not merely in the timeless shelter of the consulting room, but in the rush of urgent events. (183)

The image of the analyst hidden behind a glass barrier in the "timeless shelter" of the consulting room recalls the glass walls of H.D.'s vision in the Scilly Isles as well as the timeless layer of the universal unconscious that constitutes it. These parallel images are revealing in the light of the protective function universal psychoanalytic

³⁰ "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1932", Bryher Papers

³¹ Together with Melitta Schmideberg, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, Bryher attended the Thirteenth Psychoanalytic Congress in Lucerne in 1934. Her psychoanalytic papers contain a long article by Schmideberg on psychoanalytic technique, published in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* in 1938 and based on a talk Schmideberg gave before the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1937, in which her departure from the Kleinian group becomes evident (cf. "After the Analysis").

³² The same message is repeated in Schmideberg's public addresses regarding her work with children who suffered from war trauma. On this topic, as well as for more details on the activities of the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency, see Shapira 138-169.

narratives had in safeguarding both the analyst and the analysand from death and “the urgent rush of events” that flowed on the other side of the glass enclosure. The stasis and permanence of these narratives afforded reassurance in an environment where nothing seemed stable or durable. Still, the attempts of left-wing analysts to displace psychoanalytic practitioners from their timeless shelter into the urgencies of contemporary society attest to a fundamental ambivalence at the heart of psychoanalysis (and literature) in the interwar and World-War-II period. Like Sachs, Bryher, Melitta Schimberg and Anna Freud, a number of analysts and literary authors oscillated between attempts to understand the impact of the current environment on individual psychology – aligned with practical attempts to relieve “the human misery” of a growing number of people – and the protective shield of universal symbols or primal forces whose significance lay beyond the scope of an individual life and contemporary social structures. Faced with the urgent rush of events, these authors kept one foot in the timeless sphere of universal history, whilst dipping the other into the painful stream of life. Despite Bryher’s and Sachs’s occasional need to hide behind universal narratives, by the late 1920s both psychologists were increasingly preoccupied with a dynamic and socially informed view of psychoanalysis.

Yet it seemed that, in the 1930s, some of the social zeal that appeared at psychoanalytic institutes in the 1920s had come to a halt. Bryher’s autobiographical notes and her correspondence with Sachs in the early 1930s attest to her dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the English School³³ (cf. Sachs to Bryher, 9 February, 1930).³⁴ Nearly all of her complaints had to do with its social mission. She opposed the restrictive gender norms some of the analysts were trying to impose³⁵ as well as the defence of orthodox Freudian theory at the cost of dismissing constructive objections or innovations. The latter criticism was particularly directed at Ernest Jones. In her notes on the Congress in Lucerne, she observed: “We felt that Jones was determined to keep the gold standard in analysis. There must be no change.” (“Congress PA” n. p.) Whilst again attesting to the need to preserve a static

³³ What Bryher refers to as the English School of Psychoanalysis was the usual name for adherents of Melanie Klein within the British Psychoanalytical Society (cf. Bibring 68-9).

³⁴ “Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1930”, Bryher Papers

³⁵ Cf. Bryher’s autobiographical notes: “Institutions were static and even analysis was too much concerned with the old-fashioned picture of a woman.” (“Congress PA” n. p.)

view of history and human development, the comment is perhaps relatable to another reason why Jones earned Bryher's and Sachs's mistrust: he was one of the members of the British Psychoanalytical Society who opposed lay analysis (Hale 34).

The question of whether psychoanalytic institutes should allow the training of lay analysts (analysts who did not have previous medical or psychiatric qualifications) led to fierce disputes, particularly in the American context. Naturally, analysts who promoted a holistic, socially oriented version of psychoanalysis did not favour such restrictions. The exclusion of lay analysts had two immediate consequences: it narrowed down the scope of lectures in medical and social sciences that was offered in Berlin, Geneva and Vienna in the 1920s and it restricted the broad range of audiences (teachers, social workers etc.) who attended them. In the USA, where psychoanalytic societies began to deny admission to lay analysts already in the mid-1920s, both effects were clearly visible (cf. Hale 25-37). Following his departure for Boston in 1932, Sachs became one of the fiercest defenders of lay analysis among American psychologists. In 1938, he and his colleagues from the Boston Institute managed to persuade American institutions to admit non-medical trainees, but only to apply psychoanalysis within their own fields (cf. Hale 128). Despite this significant victory, in the same year Sachs wrote to Bryher:

The two outstanding facts are: American organised psychoanalysis has a tendency to become just another branch of psychiatry, well-regulated, mediocre and narrow. On the other hand, since there are no German countries left for reading, studying and supporting psychoanalysis,³⁶ the science has to be carried on in Anglo-American countries or it will suffer an eclipse. We have to concentrate on that and find out the most constructive way to aid it. (no date 1938)³⁷

One should not assume Sachs's words to mean that he opposed attempts to reconcile psychoanalysis with psychiatry. In fact, he himself made an effort to clarify the misconceptions of American behaviourists and neurologists. In 1936, he reported to Bryher on his successful exchange with members of the Psychology Department at Harvard: "My discussions with the Psychology Department ended last

³⁶ This was, of course, due to the rise of Nazism. Following 1933, analysts from Germany and Austria (particularly if they were Jewish) mostly emigrated either to the UK or the US.

³⁷ "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1938", Bryher Papers

Friday. [...] My antagonist No. 1, Prof [Karl] Lashley,³⁸ great authority on animal psychology, said to me – and to the others as well – that his attitude towards psychoanalysis has changed to a more positive one on the basis of our exchange of arguments.” (29 March, 1936)³⁹ What Sachs did oppose was the mechanistic attitude of some of the behaviourists (a refusal to regard all physical processes as related to each other and to the environment) as well as the unwillingness of American analysts to embrace a wider social agenda.

Significantly, it was the same elimination of a holistic, socially engaged perspective (in favour of a standardised, mechanistic one) that Bryher objected to in the film world of the 1930s:

I am sorry for the world today, how it has become a medical preserve and everything is standardised, but in those days it was experimental. [...] Film and psychoanalysis, in those experimental days they were twins. Some directors were trying to “make thoughts visible” and this was to some extent visible in the photographic techniques they had. Film was far more interesting in those days, it was flexible, sometimes a little blurred. To-day it is merely a set of coloured postcards that move, it is a replica of humanity if you will, but not a comment on it. [...] It is mechanical now and as far as I am concerned, totally without interest. (“Berlin” n. p.)

As we will see shortly, the ways in which the filmmakers mentioned were “trying to make thoughts visible” were inherently related to the neurological and psychoanalytic studies discussed in chapter one (with the influence of Spielrein and Vygotsky featuring most prominently). Thus the “comment on humanity” offered by *Close Up*’s contributors, the proponents of New Objectivity and Russian silent cinema was similar to the one championed by socially engaged analysts in Moscow, Geneva, Berlin and London. In her writings on the cinema, Bryher would (with Sachs’s help) provide a psychological and political outline of the hypnotic, repressive effect of the stream of “coloured postcards”. In their stead she would propose an alternative model of filmmaking which addressed the interaction between individual and social psychology and helped to expose the uncanny aspects of collective ideologies in the East and the West. In their understanding of the cinema’s psycho-social role, Bryher’s and Sachs’s approach comes closest to the materialist

³⁸ Karl Lashley was an American neurologist and behaviourist, who produced pioneering work on the cerebral location of learning and discrimination.

³⁹ “Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1936”, Bryher Papers

psychoanalysis developed in the Soviet Union. The (so far unacknowledged) psychological basis of their theories not only testifies to the circulation of ideas between Russia and Europe, but can be of interest to contemporary scholars investigating the relationship between desire, work and the social function of art.

Perception and Suggestion

The psychological experiments of German and Russian cinema proceeded from fundamental changes in the scientific and artistic understanding both of the observing subject and the object observed. In *Suspensions of Perception*, Jonathan Crary locates the transition from geometrical optics (found in the works of Descartes, Locke and Newton) to a physiological theory of perception around the year 1830 (56). With the intensification of research into the relationship between the human eye and brain, the make-up of neuronal networks and signal transmission, it became increasingly clear that the image a spectator perceives is significantly conditioned not only by the nature and refraction of light, but also by the properties of the observing body. In terms of cultural history, this realization gave rise to a number of distinct, but interrelated phenomena. First, a series of scientific experiments (the study of reaction times, the scope of the perceptual field, reflex actions or the ability of simultaneous sensory perception) arose from the need to control and capture the subject's attentive awareness. Secondly, an entire psycho-philosophical tradition (from Walter Pater to William James) was founded on the fundamental hypothesis of the instability of human perception and desire. Thirdly, the discoveries, interests and conclusions pursued in both of these spheres were incorporated and reformulated in the context of literature and the visual arts.⁴⁰

Related to the problem of perception were the concepts of attention and consciousness, which also became inseparable from physical temporalities (cf. Crary 4). By the 1880s and the 1890s, the experimental work of Wilhelm Wundt and Ivan Pavlov had popularised reflexological explanations of the functioning of the human organism, while the theory of conditioned reflexes promised a powerful means of unconscious influence through habituation and repetition. The study of

⁴⁰ Some examples include the interest in the psycho-physiological effect of different planes of colour in Post-Impressionism, the merging of disjoined perspectives in Cubism and shock techniques in Futurist or Dadaist literature and performance art.

reflex circuits encompassed the understanding of perception as a motor activity. Information from the external world, such as sound or light, travelled in wavelengths only to be transposed into the flow of electrical currents in the nervous system and then to initiate muscle movement or the activity of internal organs. It was in this manner that the direct relationship between perception and emotions was first established. Already for William James, emotions were no longer the result of perception, but an integral part of it. According to him, there was an immediate connection between what is perceived and our physical reaction to it, to which we ascribe the name of “attraction”, “apprehension” or “fear”.⁴¹ This emotional reaction is just as important and inevitable as the visual representation of the object that is formed in our brain. All these ideas were crucial to early psychoanalysts and continued to play a role in the materialist psychoanalytic tradition that developed in Russia in the 1920s.

Soviet psychologists who favoured a holistic model of the mind had a hard time negotiating with the mechanistic models of the body and society. Chapter one explained how Luria, Vygotsky and Spielrein integrated Pavlov’s reflexological concepts into a complex psychoanalytic system that allowed for a dynamic exchange between biological and social influences. An opposing understanding of reflexes developed in the context of labour efficiency studies that flourished in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. As Ana Olenina observes, these experiments were primarily driven by “utopian beliefs in technological progress and the possibility of improving the psychology and physiology of the New Soviet Man by optimising his daily habits” (302). Research was conducted to e.g. find out the best way of wielding a hammer to ensure maximum efficiency and minimal expenditure of energy. Moreover, it was believed that if workers repeatedly made efforts to move in this manner, the gesture would become hardwired into their nervous system and therefore natural. The scientific foundation of these utilitarian attempts to “optimise body culture” (Olenina

⁴¹ In “What is an Emotion?” (1884) James argued: “Surprise, curiosity, rapture, fear, anger, lust, greed, and the like, become then the names of the mental states with which the person is possessed. The bodily disturbances are said to be the “manifestation” of these several emotions, their “expression” or “natural language”. [...] Our natural way of thinking about these standard emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary is that *the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.*” (189)

323) was provided by a mechanistic understanding of the process of establishing conditioned reflexes, an understanding that left little room for the vicissitudes of individual personality or desire. Theories of montage and perception forwarded by Russian directors and film theorists such as Lev Kuleshov or Sergei Eisenstein have often been related to these mechanistic enterprises.⁴² Their studies of the best ways to capture the spectators' attention and emotions (either through actors' movements or through arrangements of moving images) were interpreted as attempts to implant the projected political ideals into the audience's brain, just as a repetitive movement would establish the right motor reflex. And perhaps this was what the Party wanted them to do. Yet, as Bryher and her analyst promptly recognised in *Close Up*, the psychology behind these directors' films was different. Rather than efforts to establish unconscious control, they were attempts to gradually guide the cinema-going public to a conscious recognition of their psychological and social condition.

In *Left of Hollywood*, a study of radical film culture in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, Chris Robé compares the political intentions of Soviet directors with their Western counterparts. Regarding the representatives of *Close Up* (which was published in the USA and had a significant influence on left film circles there), Robé contrasts their "moderate", "overtly Freudian" approach with the active, "more aggressive" (53) attitude of Soviet directors (such as Pudovkin or Eisenstein). Western left film theorists, he claims, put more stress on character psychology and individual development. In what follows, I will argue that the distinction Robé draws is, at least in this case, much too sharp. First, it was precisely the psychological component of Russian filmmaking that attracted Bryher and Sachs to Soviet cinema. Secondly, not only was the content of internationally popular Russian films founded on holistic psychology, so was their methodology (exhibiting the same eclectic combination of William James, Gestalt psychology, Pavlov and Freud as Spielrein's and Vygotsky's work). In contrast to the division usually made between the psychoanalytic inclinations of European critics and the overt political approach of Soviet directors, the following sections will outline the common

⁴² Tsivian locates the transition from a mechanistic to a holistic perception of the cinema in Russia in the mid-1910s (cf. 71-2). Olenina points out that Kuleshov's cinema was considered the epitome of the mechanistic quality of motion pictures frequently attacked by theatre directors (cf. 300; Tsivian 42), but she also questions Kuleshov's "anti-psychological" reputation. On the resemblance of Eisenstein's actors to machines, see Gillespie 40.

psychological, educational and political goals that emerged at the crossroads between Russian, German-Austrian and Anglophone voices of *Close Up*.

Russian Cinema and Holistic Psychology

As Bryher and Sachs were quick to observe, a holistic approach to individual psychology was discernible both in the content of Russian films and in the psychological techniques they relied on. Sachs's 1928 article "Film Psychology" offers valuable insight into what Pabst's advisor thought a psychologically informed film should look like. "The plot," explained Sachs, "whether of a novel, play or film, consists of clearly interwoven psychological coherences" (CU 250). As a visual medium, the film had to transport these coherences into the domain of the image. It needed to externalise "invisible inward events" (ibid.). Due to the absence of speech and its limited use of the written word, the silent film had to find new modes of psychological engagement and representation. Here the psychoanalyst could lend the director a helping hand. He/She knew how to draw psychological inferences from "those small unnoticed ineptitudes of behaviour described by Freud as symptomatic actions" or "reflexes" (251).⁴³ By virtue of their own instinctive familiarity with such processes, the spectators would be able to reach the intended conclusions. Sachs provided three examples of how the method was used in contemporary cinema, the first of which appeared in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

A friend had recently told Sachs that he was strangely moved by a sequence in Eisenstein's film in which the sailcloth is being carried on board, but could not determine what triggered his emotion. Following a detailed analysis of the scene, Sachs ascribed his friend's reaction to a slight movement of the head on the part of one of the guards. The apparently insignificant action happens just before one of the key events in the film, in which the guards refuse to obey the captain's orders. The

⁴³ Sachs's use of the term "reflex" for symptomatic or unconscious actions parallels the role accorded to reflexes in Freud's pre-1910 and Spielrein's post-1920 work. The word "reflex" appears often in Freud's early texts, most prominently in *Studies on Hysteria* and the *Interpretation of Dreams*, followed by *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*. In these studies, the term is still interchangeable with the symptomatic actions Sachs refers to. As seen in chapter one, these were precisely the studies most often quoted by Russian psychologists in the 1920s. Later on, Freud would be more careful to distinguish between "the reflex arc" as defined by biology and his own theory of instincts (cf. "Instincts" 117). Significantly then, Sachs was still talking about reflex-actions as deriving from the unconscious in 1928, long after Freud had introduced his binary conception of drives.

man's movement, "independent and not dictated by discipline" (252), is an anticipation of the events to come and awakens hope in the spectator. Although few members of the audience could have consciously recognised the importance of the movement, "upon all it will have worked as powerfully as upon my friend" (ibid.). In order to produce the moment of high tension, it was imperative that the transformation (the onset of mutiny) should appear suddenly. Only thus was it possible to produce the powerful emotional release in each of the spectators. For this affective impact to take place, "the spectator's mind must be cunningly prepared" (ibid.). He/She must have desired and anticipated the designated outcome. Otherwise, the whole chain of events would appear "strange, a rescue from the clouds" (ibid.). The director therefore needed to resort to a succession of symptomatic actions, which would be visible enough for the audience to notice them, but not overtly stressed so as not to reveal the plot in advance. The same intricate balance of timing and suggestion appears in Eisenstein's theory of perception.

Like Sachs, Eisenstein emphasized that a narrative (a film, play or literary text) must not only be logically connected, but must "contain a maximum of emotion and stimulating power" (*Film Sense* 4). How is this achieved and how, moreover, is this emotional stimulus transferred to the audience? Predictably, Eisenstein's primary response is "through montage" (ibid.), but this is because montage, according to him, is not merely an artistic practice, but a universal psychological mechanism. In *Film Sense*, Eisenstein argued that we are accustomed to make deductive generalizations as soon as two objects are placed side by side. Quoting from the Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka, he explained that the "image" (generalization) that results from two "representations" (elements) is more than the sum of its parts; it is a qualitatively different notion (8). Another Soviet director who relied on Gestalt principles was Lev Kuleshov. In 1922, Kuleshov described a series of experiments which proved that an actor's facial expression would be interpreted differently depending on the context (for example a neutral face followed by the shot of a coffin would be interpreted as sad) (cf. Olenina 299).⁴⁴ Both Kuleshov and

⁴⁴ Kuleshov's experiment was repeated in recent studies, with affirmative results (cf. Barratt et al.). In effect, Kuleshov proved the same thing as Spielrein in her research on aphasia and child thought: that, in subliminal thought, the emotions and associations triggered by one image/concept are partially transmitted to neighbouring concepts.

Eisenstein also operated with the Jamesian equation between perception and emotion. Kuleshov, for instance, claimed that witnessing involuntary, reflexive actions was the best way to re-create analogous emotions in the audience (thus the biting of lips and twisting of fingers would infallibly convey the message/feeling of anxiety) (qtd. in Olenina 326). We can conclude that both directors deliberately made use of the psychoanalytic technique recommended by Sachs to unconsciously produce emotional responses in their spectators. Apart from this, their reliance on Gestalt psychology attests to the holistic nature of the perceptual and cinematic theories they produced. As with Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria, references to Gestalt psychology were frequently accompanied by allusions to Freud's pre-1914 theories. When Eisenstein wished to support the universality of his mental montage, the examples included jokes, folk tales and several anecdotes from Freud's *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* (7). Following this psychoanalytic set of evidence, readers were introduced to the psychological process that constitutes perception. Here, Eisenstein's theories demonstrate a crucial reliance on holistic neurology.

Upon receiving a visual stimulus, a person automatically connects this representation with a series of associations. These associations, which contain certain emotions and sensations, merge into a general idea, distinct from, but related to, each of the associations. When several representations are simultaneously present, the mind attempts to connect them in a similar manner. Each representation triggers its own set of associations, whose combination and emotional potential eventually give rise to a common concept. In life, explained Eisenstein, it is important that memory passes through this stage of assembling (representations and associations) as quickly as possible. This is why the visual stimulus and its ideational perception will often seem instantaneous. The viewer will not be aware of the associations a visual stimulus triggers. A work of art presents an externalization of this mental operation. It must "reproduce that process whereby, in life itself, new images are built in human consciousness and feelings" (18). It is evident that Eisenstein is working with neurological concepts, similar to those Freud employed in his aphasia studies when he talked about networks of object associations or to those Vygotsky used when he discussed the personal meaning (sense) of a word (see chapter one).

Like these psychologists, Eisenstein was aware of the diverse sources that the viewer's associations and related feelings originate from. According to him, these were determined by his/her "individuality", "the premises of his character", "habits" and "social appurtenances" (*Film Sense* 33). This statement testifies to the conviction shared by all three film theorists that, due to cultural and individual differences, emotional reactions and associations of the cinema audience could never be completely controlled. Psychoanalytic knowledge contributed to this understanding. In one of his *Close Up* articles, Sachs warned that a seemingly ordinary film "may produce on one person or another a very deep impression [...] if [...] the complexes of the person receiving the impression are so disposed that they coincide exactly with what is offered by the work in question" (*CU* 264). One could therefore not know in advance what unpredictable ideas and feelings a feature may trigger.

This awareness of the complexity of individual and social conditioning was atypical of mechanist attempts on both sides of the political spectrum (particularly in the USA and the Soviet Union) to arrange leisure activities and working conditions in a way that would mass-produce the desired type of employee/citizen. It is therefore not legitimate to associate Eisenstein's or Kuleshov's films exclusively with industrial, mechanist ideals that prevailed in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the early 1930s (or with their scientific correlates). Even if Eisenstein's films (especially the *General Line*) do celebrate technological progress and even if Kuleshov sought to delimit his actors' movements by means of drawings and grids, the psychology behind these directors' ventures was based on the same holistic fusion of neurology, reflexology, Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis as those outlined in the first chapter. Bryher's articles of the late 1920s demonstrate her familiarity with these neurological and psychoanalytic theories, which helped her to formulate her own criticism of cinematic psychology.

Kitsch as a Conditioned Reflex

Sachs and Eisenstein showed that film and psychoanalysis could employ and imitate physiological mechanisms to approach the spectator's unconscious. But this influence could be of various kinds. Most members of Pool were critical towards a large portion of popular films in British, Swiss and American cinemas. Most of them

were equally well disposed towards Soviet and German filmmaking (or rather towards the tradition of New Objectivity which had gained a foothold in Berlin). What made German and Russian films preferable to those offered by the Hollywood and British market? *Close Up's* contributors had much to say on this topic and their answers were not always compatible. H.D.'s perception of an unconscious hieroglyphics in films like *Expiation* was not the reason why Soviet films were favoured by Bryher or Sachs, although, in both cases, it is true that the products of Sovkino were perceived through a decidedly Freudian lens. The problem was that the international group of film critics did not have *one* Freudian lens at their disposal. While H.D. relied on the psychoanalytic tradition of recapitulation and universal symbolism, Bryher and Sachs operated with a socially and neurologically founded model where symbols were of individual and cultural origin. Rather than the lack of universal symbols, they charged popular filmmakers with unconscious suggestion and the presentation of scenarios which were, in reality, psychologically unviable or harmful.

In his 1932 article "Kitsch", Sachs offered guidelines for the differentiation between good films and films which constitute an unoriginal form of mass entertainment. Although psychoanalysis was not concerned with aesthetic valuations, it could determine the laws controlling the subject's psychic reactions when faced with a visual narrative. For it was these reactions that provided the key to designating a film as "kitsch". "The difference," explained Sachs, "lies not in the subject, but in the manner in which it is treated" (*CU* 264). Like psychoanalysis, a work of art "creates hitherto unknown possibilities of inner experience, new approaches to an unconscious base" (*ibid.*). To comprehend just what is meant by these "new possibilities of inner experience", it is useful to read Sachs's text alongside Bryher's *Close Up* publications, particularly her 1928 article "Dope or Stimulus".

For Sachs, kitsch is "a special form of mass reaction" (*ibid.*), used to achieve a clearly defined socio-political purpose. The central part of his article revolves around the example of military farces, popular in German cinemas at the time. Taking into account the socio-economic background and typical reactions of audience members to characters in such films, Sachs posed the provocative

question: "But who is this public which identifies itself so promptly and readily with protagonists in a world of officers and princesses and is so delighted by ridicule of the common man?" (265) One might think, he continued, that it consists "only of men of the 'upper circles', men who might have been lieutenants and girls who might at least have carried the bridal train of a princess" (ibid.). This, however, was not the case. Rather, the greatest number of spectators were working-class people who belonged to the same social stratum as the characters ridiculed in the films they so readily attended. To explain this social paradox, Sachs turned to sociology, namely to the assumption that, "insofar as they are not educated to independent class-consciousness" (ibid.), the underprivileged classes adhere to the ideals of the class which governs them. In this case, the working-class audience internalises the projected desires of the aristocracy and the middle-class.

It is likely that Sachs borrowed the theory of class-imitation from Gabriel Tarde's book *The Laws of Imitation* (1890). Tarde was a French sociologist whose work was well known to anyone interested in mass-psychology and was quoted in Freud's 1921 essay "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (87). In *The Laws of Imitation*, Tarde wrote: "So-called powerful wishes, the aspirations of a small town for example, or of a single class, are composed exclusively, at a given moment, of tendencies [...] to ape in all particulars some rich town or some superior class." (106-7) In Tarde's view, this imitation was based on admiration and stopped once a group of people became dissatisfied with their social position. Though Sachs may have been attracted to Tarde's psychological model, he was certainly aware of other factors determining social hierarchies. The importance of educating people towards an independent class-consciousness would, for instance, not have come from Tarde, but was an expression of Sachs's own views and his research into Marxist philosophy and political economy.

At the same time, similar psychoanalytic theories of class oppression were being formulated on Russian territory. A Soviet psychoanalyst whose ideas are comparable to those expressed by Sachs here was M.A. Reußner (though it is not certain if Sachs was familiar with his work). According to Reußner, Freud's concept of repression and sublimation needed to be coupled with Marx's characterisation of working-class oppression. Workers were trapped "not only in the despair of wage-

slavery, but in a psychological situation of illusion and self-deception which was even more threatening because it functioned on an unconscious level” (qtd. in Miller 79). The common thread in Tarde, Sachs and Reußner is that class oppression functions through the production of phantasies. These phantasies, which represent the dominant social ideals, are shared by all members of the society, but their practical realization is only accessible to the privileged. By inviting workers to identify with middle-class phantasies, mass media were channelling their desires along inaccessible lines, while at the same time diminishing their capacity for resistance.

Bryher and Sachs saw this unconscious indoctrination as a form of habituation. The audience will come to the cinema with a culturally conditioned set of expectations and these expectations will be affirmed by the characters’ actions. The key requirement, warned Sachs, is that there must be no questioning of established assumptions (corresponding to the established social norms): “There must be no hint of diverse possibilities of psychic decisions, through which in a work of art first the director and then the person responding to the work must force his way.” (266) In “Dope or Stimulus” (1928), Bryher, like her analyst, argued that the spectators of kitsch-films “hypnotise themselves into the expectation that a given star or theatre or idea will produce a given result” (ibid.). The audience’s emotions are “built up by association of long-ago events” (59). A sequence of familiar images calls up a routine cluster of associations and pre-established affective responses. Bryher explicitly compared this mode of mass “intoxication” to the mechanism of establishing a conditioned reflex. When faced with films of this kind, people react “like the monkey in Professor Pavlov’s experiments, who reached always for food at the sight of a blue plate” (60).⁴⁵ Bryher cautioned that such a way of watching, which does not include the reflective processes (“which is not recorded as it happens by the brain” (61)), is “destructive because it is used to prevent real consideration of problems, artistic or sociological” (ibid.). And because it is the manner in which the aforementioned phantasies (such as those about lieutenants and princesses) get hardwired into the audience’s brains.

⁴⁵ Rather than being derogative, Bryher’s comparison is meant simply to illustrate the situation in a reflexological context. She did not consider the effect of popular cinema to be the result of a particular attitude of the audience. Rather, what conditioned the public’s reflex action was the joint product of cultural convention, content and structure of visual narratives.

In sum, Bryher and Sachs understood the social motivation behind kitsch-films (and the Hollywood entertainment industry more generally) as the unconscious internalisation of socially desirable phantasies and emotional responses. By being repeatedly exposed to the same narratives (corresponding to the ideals of capitalist middle-class society), the audience would learn to associate positive and negative emotions with the “right” things. These phantasies prevented the making conscious of real social issues, which these psychoanalytically informed film critics considered to be one of the main functions of cinema art. In Sachs’s and Bryher’s *Close Up* articles, the distinction between phantasy and reality can be summed up as the distinction between social ideals and a trustworthy representation of an individual life in its social context. When regarded in these terms, most popular films turned out to be of an ambivalent nature. Even American movies often included glimpses of reality, but it was the political phantasy that was foregrounded. In an article somewhat misleadingly entitled “Defence of Hollywood” (1928), Bryher described the character psychology of contemporary American cinema: “The settings, the crowds, the minor characters will emerge with startling reality, but the hero and heroine are obliged to follow a preconceived ‘story psychology’ that has little or no link to actual life.” (45) As we will see, Bryher’s thoughts on cinematic psychology contain a reversal of the distinction usually made between character types – perceived as characteristic of early Russian cinema – and the individualism of European and American films. By her definition, a type is any character who poses as the incarnation of social conventions without offering indications of psychological complexity or how his/her views were fashioned by the environment. Judged by these criteria, Russian and German films (at least those featured in *Close Up*) indeed contained more individual characters than American ones.

In the remainder of the article, Bryher analysed the trope of the American hero (the incarnation of American values) and the foreign character (usually female) who experienced an instant transformation through her attraction to him. It was almost as if the libidinal bond facilitated the prompt transmission of the hero’s entire cultural heritage. Yet this, warned the author, is not how it works:

Aren’t you tired of the spoilt Eastern girl who is saved from her own individuality and made into a community standard pattern by the Western hero from out of doors? One kiss, one sentence is cheerfully allowed to wipe out a character built by twenty years of a totally

different environment. [...] This is false to psychological truth, but it is not so different from actual superficial happening as it might seem. There must be no questioning in certain parts of America of certain American institutions. The newly arrived European will be invited to forego his modes of thought, dressing, eating, sleeping and accept without protest and with enthusiasm the community convention of those around him. [...] So it is not so much that American films are false (they are often painfully real) as that they are true to a mob-psychology that is unpleasing to contemplate to those outside it. (49)

Significantly, it is the Western hero who is here associated with social and cinematic typology (“community standard pattern”), whereas his non-Western counterpart is, at least in the beginning, allowed a sense of individuality. This is because, for Bryher, individuality is not equated with self-interest (as it is in the opposition between Western individualism and communist collectivism), but with the capacity of diverging from socially imposed narratives. A further crucial point refers to the chronology of psychological shifts outlined in Bryher’s article. In the lines quoted, she argued that the process of cultural integration, as shown in the Hollywood romance, was only partially inaccurate. It was actually a valid representation of how the American community expected integration to proceed. She further pointed out that this expectation was unviable from the psychological point of view. Since our experience and environment shapes who we are, it is impossible for a person to wipe out their acquired preferences and behaviour patterns as soon as they are faced with a new set of cultural norms. What is repressed from cinematic discourse is the fact that integration is a slow process, which necessarily involves a lot of misunderstanding and an active effort from both parties. Essentially, what Bryher was criticising in American films was the kind of forced collectivism (a forceful adaptation to psychologically untenable collective fictions) that also lay at the bottom of socialist realism in Russia.⁴⁶ Without taking into account the vicissitudes of individual desire and the lasting impact of cultural conditioning, she suggested, no socio-political agenda would get very far. In contrast to the celebration of speedy progress – promoted by mechanist scientists in the Soviet Union and the USA alike

⁴⁶ In *Film Problems*, Bryher claimed that America “tended to destroy independence” by “laying stress on the outward symbols of community life”, adding that “the facing of real human problems was obscured by prohibitions” (27).

– psychoanalytically informed film critics understood that, when it came to deep-rooted emotions, change always proceeded slowly.

The Slow Revolution (Take One)

If time was an essential factor in modernist cinema and politics, it was also the topic of intense debate in psychoanalytic circles in the 1920s and the early 1930s. Left-wing psychoanalytic communities concentrated around institutes in Berlin, Geneva, London and Moscow were, in spite of their specificities, all intent on providing service to the public. But since psychoanalysis was, as a rule, a lengthy and costly procedure, the question arose how one might diminish the cost and time of treatment in order to help more patients. Various analysts had various ideas on whether and how this might be achieved. Freud was not favourably disposed towards the prospect of shortening treatment.⁴⁷ Melitta Schmideberg cautioned that, since the psychoanalytic procedure included work on the patient's defence mechanisms and necessitated a restructuring of their psychological make-up (through the internalization of new objects, modification of projection and introjection processes etc.), it was unlikely that a full recovery could be achieved merely by lifting repressions or acting out ("Zur Wirkungsweise" 48-49).⁴⁸ Still, she favoured a practical approach to analysis that focused on the patient's most pressing issues. In Russia, Spielrein suggested adopting the so-called "abortive" psychotherapy, which would target the patient's most urgent symptoms. This form of psychotherapy would enable an analyst to treat fifteen patients in six weeks. She believed that this type of psychoanalysis still made relapses less probable than other forms of therapy, but stressed that it was only to be performed by experienced practitioners (SS 343). Bryher too favoured short and accessible treatment (though her own had lasted four years with intermissions) (Miller and Magee 7).

Yet we must bear in mind that what these analysts meant when they referred to short therapy was treatment that took place on a daily basis in the course of months (Spielrein's suggestion of six weeks being among the briefest). At the

⁴⁷ In "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" Freud warned of the tendency of symptoms to return in stressful situations and argued that the length of treatment largely depended on the individual case. Even the measure of setting the length of treatment in advance could only be effective in certain cases and its benefits had to be carefully weighed by the analyst (215-18).

⁴⁸ Cf. "Zur Wirkungsweise der psychoanalytischen Therapie" (How Psychoanalytic Therapy Works).

Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin most individual cases lasted between one and three years (Hale 31). This was due to significant discoveries on the chronology of sub/unconscious processes that psychoanalysts had made possible. As we saw in chapter one, many a thoughtful psychologist readily embraced the lesson. Around the time when he was working with Spielrein, Piaget found an interesting method of differentiating between stories his young interviewees made up on the spot (he called this romancing) and their genuine convictions. In the case of a genuine conviction, “its disappearance will not be sudden and it will establish a number of combinations and compromises” (CC 22). In addition, a genuine conviction would resist suggestion and would (in line with Spielrein’s findings) influence neighbouring conceptions (ibid.).⁴⁹ In this manner, Spielrein’s psychoanalysis (and Piaget’s psychology) provided insight into the duration of psycho-neurological shifts in subliminal thought.⁵⁰ The results confirmed what most psychoanalysts already knew: if one really wished to influence a person’s emotional reactions, there was no way to do it quickly.

Eisenstein acknowledged the lesson too. In his programmatic article “New Language of Cinematography”, published in *Close Up* in 1929, he argued that one of the main characteristics of the old cinema was its need to achieve “a quick emotional discharge” (12). By contrast, the new cinema “must include deep reflective processes, the result of which will find expression neither immediately nor directly” (ibid.). If, as both Eisenstein and Sachs claimed, the purpose of film-art was to bring the public to consciousness through reflection, the process could, like analysis, be neither quick nor always enjoyable. It is useful at this point to go back to Sachs’s essay on kitsch in which he contrasts the “effortless enjoyment” (CU 266) in kitsch-films to the affective dynamics of film-as-analysis: “Owing to the skill with which [in kitsch] the distribution of emotion is anticipated, the public are indeed saved a good deal of worry, including that of choice, but at the same time the free development of their emotions is restricted; the possibility of lifting them by degrees out of the unconscious and letting them have free play is done away with.” (ibid.) The establishment of conditioned reflexes in kitsch, which prevents the possibility of

⁴⁹ Needless to say, the same stubborn resistance, proneness to regression and gradual disappearance was also valid for physical symptoms.

⁵⁰ Cf. also Spielrein’s article “Die Zeit im unterschwelligem Seelenleben” (Time in Subliminal Thought).

autonomous reflection and choice, is comparable to the alienating effect of work on the production line. In both situations, the person is unable to develop his/her own phantasies and desires and transform reality in accordance with them. According to Sachs, this restricts the individual's emotional development: not development in the sense of any pre-defined progress, but in terms of giving voice to one's emotional complexes either through deeds or words.

In *Film Problems*, Bryher developed Sachs's theory further by presenting the father-figure in Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926) as the incarnation of the troubles of contemporary education and working life. Instead of criticising the working-class father, whose daily existence alternates between alcoholism and family violence, Bryher shifted the blame to class oppression and the social structures that fail to provide for his needs: "People may argue, but the father should not get drunk. But if lives become unbearably monotonous, something is going to break somewhere. That is where education up to the present point has failed. It offers repression instead of individual development." (50) Vlasov's (the father's) literal intoxication is related to the intoxicating nature of kitsch-films in "Dope or Stimulus", both of which are simultaneously defined as repressive. Repression is here used in the sense encountered in Sachs's text earlier: as the inability to mould one's environment in accordance with one's emotional needs. This combination of the psychoanalytic and Marxist paradigm⁵¹ was understood by Bryher and Sachs as the main precondition for the creation of the satisfied, active citizen. In Bryher's article, the passivity of the British cinema audience is therefore diagnosed as a symptom of social dysfunction and emotional frustration. This attitude is contrasted with the critical spectators in Germany who go to the cinema "not to forget, but to live", to get "fresh stimulus for

⁵¹ Marx famously argued that people realise themselves through work, i.e. through the creative transformation of their reality. This transformation is here defined in psychoanalytic terms by equating work with the concept of sublimation. Thus, independent work is a creative transformation of reality arising not only from one's physical needs, but also from one's desires. Within industrial work relations, workers are, according to Marx, alienated both from the product of their labour and from work as an activity. Their work is not meant for themselves and they have no capacity to decide what they do, how or when (cf. "Estranged Labour"). Evidently, such work does not leave much room for the realization of desire. Bryher identifies the same problems in the entertainment industry, which she sees as largely revolving around repetitive situations, which can bring a certain amount of fleeting pleasure, but do not encourage independent creative activity on the part of the worker. When discussing the introduction of film education in schools, Bryher attempted to counter this process by encouraging not only passive watching, but practical attempts on the part of the students to make their own films ("Films in Education" 54). Her promotion of critical spectatorship was also related to this set of ideas.

their work of tomorrow” (61). Workers who are not given the opportunity of independent decision-making as well as creative and emotional engagement – which, she argued, are “as necessary as sleep or food” – turn into “stale, mechanical figures, without the stability a robot would have” (60). It is not sufficient to vent one’s aggression or desire into projected phantasies. What one needs is a method of transforming reality through desire and reclaiming a sense of control over one’s existence (as is done by the mother and son in Pudovkin’s feature). Bryher’s text poses a dire warning to psychologists and politicians who see their workers as “mechanical figures” whose emotions are but quantities of energy to be channelled this way or that.

It is a telling fact that Bryher’s psychoanalytic training, particularly the contact with left-wing analysts at the Berlin Institute, enabled her to formulate such criticisms. As we saw in chapter one, early Freudian psychoanalysis, as well as the approach developed in the Soviet Union, placed great stress on the individuality of complexes and desires as well as on the need for gradual psychological interventions, which was absent from both mechanist discourses (that looked to establish the same physical mechanism behind a certain type of symptom) and vitalist ones (that saw symptoms as the material manifestation of universal principles). The advocacy of this specific type of individualism and gradual social change had important consequences for the formation of Bryher’s political opinions. But, in the 1920s and the 1930s, it was difficult to accommodate with the readily available political options. The outlines of this psycho-political conundrum most clearly come to the fore in Bryher’s book on the Russian cinema.

As the first book-length study of Russian cinematography on the British market, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929) received significant attention in the press. It was also a welcome addition to the heated debate on censorship between the political authorities and London’s film critics.⁵² Consequently, *Film Problems* was reviewed by newspapers across the political spectrum, including *New Age*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Times*, *Film Weekly*, *The Socialist Review*, *The Sunday*

⁵² In the same year Ivor Montagu, one of the founders of the Film Society, published a pamphlet called *The Political Censorship of Films*, in which he attacked British censorship laws. The Society had managed to organise private showings of certain Russian films, but had to proceed very carefully to avoid political allegations (cf. Marcus 269).

Worker, Workers' Life, The Morning Post, The Dundee Telegraph and *The Yorkshire Post*.⁵³ Nearly all of the reviews had something to say about the author's political affiliations. "Mr Bryher [sic]⁵⁴ the artist is obviously a very different person from Mr Bryher the politician," mused the sceptical reviewer of *The Morning Post*. "All that he has to say about Russian films and their methods of production is interesting, but when he seeks to enunciate his own philosophy, he is less convincing." ("Artistic Lead to the World" n. p.) Left-wing papers were generally more enthusiastic about Bryher's work, though for them too her political views proved somewhat problematic. The reviewer in *Worker's Life* regretfully admitted that Bryher was no communist, but agreed that she had "given a sympathetic and faithful review of a subject of first-rate importance" ("Workers Make Greatest Films" n. p.). Perhaps the most pertinent estimation of Bryher's apparently ambivalent political position (and its drawbacks when dealing with public media channels) can be found in *The Sunday Worker*: "Many will quarrel with her on our side and on the enemy's. To them she will be a Red. To many Reds she will lack class understanding." ("Fine Study of Russian Films' Genius" n. p.) When one reads the preserved reviews of *Film Problems*, one cannot help agreeing that this indeed was the case. Whether Bryher's study lacked class-understanding is debatable. While it contained no explicit proclamation of her allegiance to Marxism, its political and psychological background was certainly a left-wing and in a sense a Marxist one.⁵⁵ What the reception of Bryher's book proved was that the image of the human mind with its individual, repetitive, slow-shifting emotions – the image forwarded by holistic directors and psychoanalysts – was regarded sceptically on both sides of the political divide.

⁵³ All reviews can be consulted in the folder "Film 1929-1963" in the Bryher Papers.

⁵⁴ Two reviews referred to the author of *Film Problems* as "he". One appeared in *The Morning Post* and the other in *The Dundee Telegraph* ("The Cinema in Russia"; "Artistic Lead to the World"). It is interesting to speculate why these right-wing newspapers took it for granted that a cinematographic study should come from a male pen.

⁵⁵ In her private correspondence, Bryher categorised herself as "left" (qtd. in Miller and Magee 11), while in her published work she denied affiliation with communism (cf. *Film Problems* 27). On the one hand, this was due to the increasing suppression of psychoanalysis, independent film art and human rights in the Soviet Union. But it was also induced by her frustration with the inability of opposing political parties to communicate or unite around important issues. In the introductory pages of her book, she complained: "Whenever I read in the 'Times Educational Supplement' that there are one hundred and sixty thousand children studying in condemned buildings, I become as revolutionary as anybody. Whenever I read a communist leaflet urging dismissal from consideration of any idea unconnected with its immediate policy, I become equally irritated." (11)

The philosophy the *Morning Post* review found unconvincing was linked to Bryher's statement that Russian films would not cause an uprising among British workers, as many in high positions, including the board of censors, feared. Bryher light-heartedly dismissed such claims, describing them as a form of negative fetishism (11). With some regret, she proceeded to explain why such an instant effect was psychologically unworkable:

Would anyone throw away a lifetime of thought and learning and rush down the street waving an iron club if he happened to see a different point of view than his own flashed upon the screen for an hour? If it could happen, we might live in a better, happier world, because we might learn then from watching tolerance and wisdom. [...] But people do not learn from what they see or apprehend momentarily. (49)

This is of course not to say that people cannot learn from watching tolerance and wisdom, but to assert that the transformation cannot occur immediately and that one film is far from sufficient. If we wish to alter an emotionally invested opinion (or a genuine conviction as Piaget called it), it will take at least several examples (in fiction and real life), quite a bit of questioning, energy and time for a change of heart to take place. This is because the process involves overcoming the person's mental habits as well as long-held resistances and defences. While a film cannot incite a revolution, it can act as an educational medium and contribute to a gradual revision of the spectator's views. To quote Sachs again, if an individual is to be brought out of the unconscious, this can only be done "by degrees" (CU 266). Thus, even when social upheaval appears to come out of the blue, this is only because we were unable to perceive the long and quiet process of oppression, violence and spurious retaliation that preceded it. It is these psychological patterns that lie at the bottom of Bryher's concept of a "slow revolution" that she discussed in *Film Problems*:

For it is never, as people seem to imagine, a sudden thing, the hasty flaring temper of a destructive child. [...] No rebellion arises squall-like, suddenly, but is the outcome of perhaps centuries of growth [...]; it is the answer to petty tyranny and bitter oppression of thousands of families during several generations. (18)

Behind every type of social change there lies a complex psychological pre-history. In psychoanalytic terms, Bryher's reference to the destructive child can be read as a criticism of psychoanalytic narratives of childhood sadism and its connection (via phylogenetic or ontogenetic regression) to collective violence. At this particular point, her explanation of social conflict is far removed from the one we encountered in

Development and Sachs's *Caligula*. In *Film Problems*, the violence of the oppressed classes is the outcome of accumulated frustration and resentment following years of oppression, neither unexpected nor due to their "primitive" nature, but with a clearly discernible social origin.⁵⁶ If, in popular and historical representations, social uprisings are associated with unpredictable (and thus all the more frightening) violent outbursts, this is because the society is skilful at hiding (repressing) its own effects, or the ones it does not wish to see.

Psychological Realism

Holistic filmmakers who intended to counter this repression required a set of skills similar to the training received by a holistic psychoanalyst. What a director needed to do was to single out and realistically represent social issues by demonstrating their effect on individual character psychology. In order to do this, they had to understand the socioeconomic order and its history. To engage the spectators' active intellectual and emotional participation (in the manner outlined by Sachs and Eisenstein), they also needed to be familiar with the psychology of perception. This intersectional model of filmmaking thus comprised the knowledge of psychological and neurological processes, art and society. The programme at the Moscow State School of Cinematography, where students were taught "psychology, history of art, costume, dramatic literature, anatomy, sociology and photography" (15) was seen by Bryher as representative of the expansive training promoted by socially-minded analysts (and thus received much praise in *Film Problems*).

Bryher's book made it exceedingly clear that a filmmaker's education needed to encompass a biological, sociological as well as an artistic dimension. In her introduction to Soviet film, directors were often presented as either having a

⁵⁶ Though not an explicit supporter of political violence, Bryher did consider violent reactions to oppression as something to be counted with and, quite often, a response the oppressor deserved. While explaining her views on the Russian Revolution in *Film Problems*, she commented: "I myself did not follow the Revolution very carefully. Except that I was glad that it happened and I, of course, discounted the stories of the atrocities. Not that one didn't realise [...] that many unpleasing incidents and some injustice must have taken place. But one cannot discount responsibility, and one could not help feeling [...] that if one class deliberately refuses education to another they are asking for trouble and cannot expect much sympathy." (26) Bryher, who was an enthusiastic supporter of educational reform and considered education as the principal way of granting the individual independence in deed and thought, regarded educational deprivation as a powerful means of class oppression. Certainly, her work speaks to our own situation in which access to education is severely limited and its non-institutional forms devalued.

background in psychology or complimented for the scientific value of their work. This was particularly true of Eisenstein, whose combination of “the materialist portion of Freud’s teaching”, Pavlovian reflexology and Marxism was foregrounded in *Film Problems* (28). As we saw earlier, this combination was characteristic not only for Spielrein’s late work, but for the reception (and wider heritage) of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union. With reference to Abram Room, Bryher stressed that he had “studied the work of Freud and other modern psychologists for years” (71). Of Pudovkin it is stated that, had he been born earlier, he would have had a hard time deciding whether he wanted to become a scientist or a painter (45). As it was, both interests were usefully applied to his filmmaking. No scientist, argued Bryher, “could better the recording of Mongol dances [in *Storm over Asia*] from the ethnographical point of view or of the operation from the medical” (ibid.). In *Film Problems*, Pudovkin is presented as much more than an adherent of Pavlovian reflexology. Rather, his artwork is said to demonstrate a synthesis of natural and social sciences. Nevertheless, Bryher did mention Pudovkin’s collaboration with Pavlov on *The Mechanics of the Brain* (1926) – a documentary promoting (as the name indicates) a prototype of mechanist psychology – and used the opportunity to disclose her overall estimation of Pavlov’s work. Her feelings were ambivalent in much the same way as Spielrein’s were. On the one hand, she praised his “attempts to relate psychology and brain processes”, but on the other warned that “he may seem to ignore some of the new developments in the study of the mind” (46). Evidently, Bryher would have preferred to have Pavlov’s mechanist model incorporated into a holistic psychoanalytic system, as was done by Spielrein, Vygotsky, Eisenstein and herself in her analysis of the conditioned reflexes of the cinema audience.

In spite of what is usually asserted about Russian interest in historical events rather than their effect on individual characters, what attracted Bryher to German and Russian films was precisely their exploration of individual psychology, but individual psychology as it is produced by its immediate social context. While early Russian cinema has often been associated with political (communist) propaganda, the directors and films featured in *Close Up* and *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* regularly came under attack of party-minded critics in the Soviet Union, either because they put too much stress on psychological development or because they

criticised certain aspects of Soviet society. If European and American censors banned them due to their clear political import, Russian critics considered them not political enough or at least not representative of the kind of political image they wanted to convey.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, in Germany and elsewhere, Pabst's films were in a state of continual refashioning due to the demands of the censors (cf. Hall 150). By outlining the effects (including the very negative effects) of social structures on human psychology and sexuality, directors like Pabst or Abram Room were able to trigger the repressed content of both political systems. Indeed, this seems to have been a part of their psycho-political agenda. As Bryher informed her readers in *Film Problems*, the principal objectives of the new Russian cinema (which could certainly be extended to the representatives of New Objectivity) encompassed "psychological investigation and the stating of facts people would prefer not to know existed" (16).

In this context, it is worth remembering that members of *Close Up* were among the loudest critics of censorship laws that prevented a number of foreign films from being shown in British cinemas in the 1920s due to their "moral indecency" or political overtones. For some of them, releasing the hold of censors on film-content was tantamount to the gradual weakening of the resistance of the patient's superego in analysis. For Bryher and Sachs at least, there existed a clear link between individual and social repression. Rather than crediting the Censor with robbing the world of the healing powers of the unconscious, they accused it of depriving the audience of a realistic insight into the relationship between the society and the individual mind. In an article entitled "Modern Witch Trials" (1929) – actually a

⁵⁷ According to Gillespie, Kuleshov's *Expiation* earned criticism due to its focus on character psychology as well as for being based on Jack London's story "The Unexpected" (1907) (32-35). In the case of Abram Room, it was character psychology and sexual overtones that earned him the wrath of the critics (Youngblood 120-21, 160; Gillespie 8). Pudovkin, also credited for making his heroes individuals, was likewise criticised for not being ideological enough (Gillespie 68-9). Even Eisenstein – whose films are mostly connected to character typology in film histories – employed holistic methods in his methodology, but also in his focus on the position of a single person within social structures and historical events. Bryher stressed Eisenstein's holistic approach not only in relation to his montage techniques, but also to his treatment of the individual as a part of larger socio-historical forces. At the beginning of *Film Problems*, she compared the view from an airplane to "a crowd Eisenstein is directing; their place in a whole becomes apparent, all their characteristics and problems, instead of a tiny piece of them, become revealed" (9). In sum, one might argue that, while Kuleshov, Pudovkin and Room studied social forces by zooming in on the individual, Eisenstein attempted to offer an all-encompassing image of social structures in order to illustrate the individual's position in them.

sparsely edited letter to Bryher⁵⁸ – Sachs produced a psychoanalytic analysis of the emotional motivations at the heart of censorship:

The tendency of censorship [...] is simply to deny the existence of certain facts which are not in accordance with the code of life which censorship tries to uphold as the only existing one. [...] This “as if” is the centre of the problem; the true meaning of censorship is nothing more or less than the maintaining of a fiction – the queer idea that things are not what they are as long as you don’t say so. The psychoanalyst knows a mechanism which works exactly the same way in the individual mind [...]. The child [...] represses those facts – emotions, recollections, phantasies, whatever they are – which are contradictory to its newly acquired standard of personality [...]. Censorship is only the social repetition of this individual process of regression [...]. How long has a nation to resort to these infantile methods which are outgrown by every reasonable member of it? (CU 300-301)

Sachs believed that repression was a “primitive” and “infantile” (CU 300) way of dealing with emotional conflict, which was gradually outgrown by the child as it acquired better psychological defences and learned to deal with problems in a more productive way. Therefore, every repression was in a sense regression, an infantile manner of reacting to disturbing emotions. Evidently, this view is somewhat problematic and is rooted in universal developmental narratives discussed in the previous chapters. Yet Sachs simultaneously acknowledged that repression depends on one’s “acquired standard of personality” and is thus, to a large extent, socially imposed. It is our environment that determines which part of our thoughts and reactions we are unwilling to share with others or even with our conscious selves. As every psychoanalyst knew, if pursued to excess, this psychological mechanism could be harmful. And the more productive method of dealing with repressed emotions consisted in, first, letting them emerge and, second, investigating where they came from. In the cinematic realm, this was exactly what the proponents of New Objectivity and the directors of the golden age of Russian silent cinema were trying to do.

In 1927, Bryher published a *Close Up* article on Pabst’s films, in which she admitted that it was after seeing *Joyless Street* (1925) that she first became attracted

⁵⁸ In the Bryher papers, the letter was placed into the 1932 file of the Bryher-Sachs correspondence. However, since it is not dated and the article was evidently based upon it (the changes were minimal), it is logical to assume that it was actually written between November 1928 – when the Radcliffe Hall trial (which Sachs mentions) took place – and May 1929, when Sachs’s article was published in *Close Up*.

to the cinema. In Pabst's scathing depiction of sexual exploitation, violence and moral decay that reigned in the streets of Vienna during the post-war inflation (1921), she found "what she had looked for in vain in post-war literature, the unrelenting portrayal of what war does to life [...] of the conflict war intensifies between those primal emotions, hunger and eroticism" (58). The reference to Pabst's psychoanalytic background indicated by his familiarity with "primal emotions" is continued further on. The Austrian director is described as someone who "sees psychology" (note the appropriate emphasis on the visual) and "knows the subconscious impulse [...] that prompted this or that apparently trivial action" (60). Bryher's observations anticipate Sachs's suggestion from "Film Psychology" that silent films should rely on symptomatic actions. In addition, the inextricable fusion of class and gender relations in *Joyless Street* was representative of the equally close affiliation between individual and social psychology holistic psychoanalysts were arguing for.

In Pabst's film, the viewer is made painfully aware that the different outcomes of Maria's and Greta's fate are not due to Greta's superior morality or strength of character, but to their different social circumstances.⁵⁹ Maria is a working-class girl whose father is a member of the unemployed proletariat and channels his frustration into family violence (a motive also encountered in Pudovkin's *Mother*). She is later deceived by her boyfriend (a banking assistant) who borrows her money to seduce a wealthier woman. Greta's father is an intellectual whose naïve financial speculations lead him to the verge of poverty, but at least they have an extra room to rent. As it turns out, the room is quickly occupied by a Red Cross officer who falls in love with Greta and rescues the entire family from financial hardship. Despite the inflation's destabilising effect on class relations – even middle-class girls are now subject to exploitation and deceit – the fate of the working-class girl is infinitely more tragic. The spectator (including the female and/or working-class spectator) is invited to identify with Maria's violent outbursts, just as he/she is led to understand the revolt of the hungry masses as they rebel against (and murder) the greedy, exploitative

⁵⁹ Greta Rumfort (Greta Garbo) and Maria Lechner (Asta Nielsen) are two lead female characters. Maria becomes a prostitute. Greta comes close, but is saved by falling in love with a Red Cross officer.

butcher at the film's end.⁶⁰ Ironically, a number of scenes censored in 1926 (Germany) specifically focused on the relationship between gender and class exploitation (such as those showing men taking sexual advantage of women with no financial backing or those dealing with acts of violence provoked by trauma on the part of these same women) (cf. Hall 151).⁶¹ While Pabst's original film could broadly be said to be about the social genesis of violence and the hardships endured by women in post-war Vienna, censors of various kinds desperately endeavoured to foreground the love story between Greta and the Red Cross officer, turning the feature into something like the Hollywood romance Bryher criticised in *Close Up*. Certainly, *Joyless Street*, and the process of censorship that ensued, serves as an appropriate illustration of Sachs's theory of social repression as well as of the nature of the social uncanny within the capitalist system of the early twentieth century.

Pabst was not the only representative of New Objectivity who captivated Bryher's and Sachs's attention. Before his departure for the States, Sachs's letters to Bryher contain abundant remarks about new films in Berlin cinemas. In 1930, for instance, he commented favourably on Siodmak and Ulmer's *Menschen am Sonntag* (*People on Sunday*), stating that "it gives real life – just a summer Sunday of some hard working people" and presents "erotic motives without sentimentality or cynicism" (6 February, 1930).⁶² Indeed, the film's focus on seemingly insignificant actions of ordinary people and its subversion of the traditional role of the hero were characteristic of the new wave of realist filmmaking in Weimar cinemas.⁶³ The emphasis on positive representations of non-heterosexual identities came to the fore in Sachs's praise for Leontine Sagan's *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Girls in Uniform*) (1931) (Sachs to Bryher, 24 January, 1932),⁶⁴ one of the first visual depictions of a lesbian romance.⁶⁵ But the focus on the common man and the questioning of traditional

⁶⁰ Particularly in the deleted scenes, the butcher is shown as sexually exploiting poor women in return for meat.

⁶¹ In one of the deleted scenes, Else, who was formerly raped by the butcher, is shown striking him on the head (cf. Hall 150).

⁶² "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1930", Bryher Papers

⁶³ This is especially evident in two scenes in the film: one in which quarrelling lovers tear up posters of film-stars and another which features photographs of ordinary citizens enjoying a Sunday at the lake. Needless to say, in Siodmak and Ulmer's film, it is these citizens who replace the Hollywood version of the star (cf. Koepnick).

⁶⁴ "Bryher and Sachs correspondence 1932", Bryher Papers

⁶⁵ The first example of censorship in Sachs's article "Modern Witch Trials" also entails his comments on the UK trial (1928) of Radcliffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness*, which deals with a love

gender and sexual roles were not merely the hallmarks of New Objectivity. They were also the chief attractions of Russian film-art that started making its way into German territory.⁶⁶

It is no surprise that the first Russian film to attract Bryher's attention was Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* (1927). Of all the Soviet films one could see in German cinemas, Room's psycho-social criticism combined with a straightforward representation of individual development was akin to films like *Joyless Street*. The plot of *Bed and Sofa* centres on three characters. Liuda and her husband Kolia live in a small basement-apartment in Moscow. Liuda hardly ever leaves the apartment. She is frustrated with the lack of space and bored by her household duties. Her husband's behaviour is frequently dismissive. When Kolia's friend Volodia arrives in town, he has nowhere to stay so the couple offer him the sofa. Both partners welcome the distraction, but Volodia quickly takes an interest in Liuda. While Kolia is out of town due to work, Volodia succeeds in seducing Liuda. It is now Kolia's turn to sleep on the sofa. Yet in his newly acquired role Volodia turns out to be just as dictatorial as Kolia. For a while, all three live in a polygamous household until Liuda becomes pregnant. Both men want her to have an abortion, but following a visit to an illegal abortion clinic, Liuda decides to take life into her own hands and leaves Moscow. Certainly, Room had no reservations about presenting erotic motives without sentimentality or cynicism.⁶⁷

Apart from eroticism, he was very clear about placing his love triangle into a specific social context. Overcrowding, lack of housing, patriarchal gender relations as well as more than a hint towards the stultifying effect of popular media narratives constitute a powerful framework for various forms of erotic attraction, psychological violence, shifting hierarchies and character development that take place in *Bed and*

relationship between two women and was framed as an open plea for public and legal recognition of homosexual relationships (CU 299). Although the judge and the jury admitted that the book in question was "a serious work of art", it was banned due to "the danger of the unprotected ones who may get lured into vice" (ibid). Apart from dismissing such claims through his explanation of the psychology of censorship, Sachs jokingly added that he hoped the trial would increase the book's circulation (ibid.).

⁶⁶ In *Film Problems*, Bryher mentioned flying to Berlin to see "the output of a whole season of Russian films" (9) in July 1928. Before this she had only seen four, one in Switzerland and three in Germany.

⁶⁷ *Bed and Sofa* was one of the few Soviet films to be banished from Western cinemas for being overtly sexual, rather than being Soviet. Iakovlev (one of the film's fiercest Russian opponents) would have applauded this decision as he himself described the film's characters as "psychopathological" (Youngblood 120).

Sofa.⁶⁸ In *Film Problems* (as well as in *Close Up*), Bryher was characteristically quick to foreground Room's devotion to realism, enthusiastically proclaiming *Bed and Sofa* as "the first film to attack life itself" (*Film Problems* 27). In the course of her analysis, it becomes evident that "life itself" again refers to individual psychology as it is produced by historical and social circumstances: "Overcrowding cramps the human being in its struggle for independence, freedom and health. Alexander [sic] Room, who is a psychologist,⁶⁹ realizes the problem and sets to work to expose and tackle it. He knows that in doing so he has the support of the Soviet Government. In England, where there is shortage of nearly a million houses, film directors do not do things like that." ("Bed and Sofa" 59) It appears that the grass is always greener. For, in reality, a number of Soviet critics were far from enthusiastic about Room's feature.

In addition to his direct investigation of the housing problem in Moscow during the final years of the New Economic Policy and his negative portrayal of the two working men, Room was reproached for focusing on individual psychology without making attempts to promote proletarian ideals (Youngblood 120-122; Gillespie 8). As *Soviet Screen's*⁷⁰ editor N. Iakovlev put it, art should not concern itself with "life as it is, but life as it should be" (qtd. in Youngblood 121). As we saw in Bryher's criticism of the Hollywood hero, representing "life as it should be" (life according to prevailing social conventions) was precisely what psychological realists wanted to avoid. These critics and filmmakers believed that presenting life as it is was the first condition of finding out why life is as it is and an essential step on the way to beginning to think life as it *could* be. In order to counter the habitual internalisation of collective phantasies (or "fictions" as Sachs would call them), they sought to bring the public to consciousness of the psycho-social issues repressed from public media narratives: gender and class exploitation (in post-war Austria and Germany),⁷¹

⁶⁸ At the outset of the film, we find Liuda reading the popular Soviet film magazine *Sovetskii Ekran* (*Soviet Screen*).

⁶⁹ Before making a career as a director, Room was a psychiatrist and neurologist. He served as a medical officer with the Red Army during the Russian Civil War and studied at Vladimir Bekhterev's Psycho-Neurological Institute (Olenina 229). While Bekhterev later became an opponent of psychoanalysis, he was initially well-disposed to the type of analytic practice forwarded by Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria. Tatiana Rosenthal, another Marxist analyst whom Spielrein knew, worked at Bekhterev's Institute and was appointed by him as the head of the Institute's outpatient clinic, which allowed her to treat neurotic patients psychoanalytically (Miller 55).

⁷⁰ Evidently, the editor did not appreciate the witty role his magazine was accorded in *Bed and Sofa*.

⁷¹ Though Pabst's film deals with the situation in Austria, *Joyless Street* was actually filmed in Berlin. Certainly, German audiences could also identify with Pabst's depiction of post-war poverty.

patriarchy and the housing crisis (in Soviet Russia), an honest depiction of sexuality, poverty and the social genesis of violence (in both).

In the middle and late 1920s, Bryher shared Room's and Pabst's conviction that the concern of the cinema is with actual life (i.e. life as it is).⁷² For her, as for the Austrian director, the new appeal for realism was particularly relevant in the post-war context. In *Close Up*, Bryher published several articles on war films, denouncing their spectacular imagery, heroic narratives and lack of emotional horror in representations of violence. "There are plenty of guns and even corpses in the British pictures," she explained, "but the psychological effect of warfare is blotted away; men shoot and walk and make jokes in the best boys' annual tradition and that some drop in a heap doesn't seem to matter because one feels that in a moment the whistle will sound and they will all jump up again." ("The War from More Angles" 47) In contrast to this, her suggested methods of dealing with the realities of war are reminiscent of the focus on the psychology of the common man propounded by the representatives of New Objectivity and the Russian directors featured in *Film Problems*. Realistic war films should represent "the trifling impressions seen through the eyes of any average person" and reflect "the actual experience of people" in dealing with trauma and deprivation (46). In the same year in which she complimented Pabst on his treatment of post-war reality in *Joyless Street*, Bryher finished her own depiction of what war does to the mind. And since Pabst's film (as her article admitted) gave her what literature of the time could not, it is not surprising that Bryher's literary methodology borrowed a number of features from the cinema's psychological realists.

Her novella was called *Civilians* (1927) and its devotion to realism was proudly proclaimed even before the outset of the story. On the opening pages, the reader is informed that "the characters and incidents in this story are not fictitious" (2). The text's position on the borderline between "fiction" and "reality" as well as its

⁷² Cf. "Defence of Hollywood" as well as the following excerpt from *Film Problems* in which Bryher is discussing Room's films: "It is this that makes his work amazing, for things are seldom shown, in literature or film or art or education as they are. [...] Russia, Austria and Germany are the pioneers of this fight to recognise reality." (83) For Room's own perspective, see his programmatic text "Cinema and Theatre" (1925): "The cinema is pre-eminently realism, life, the everyday, objectivity, properly motivated behaviour. [...] Cinema is [...] the art of sincere truth and common sense that allows for no deception or dissimulation" (128). For realism and New Objectivity in Pabst's *Joyless Street*, see Hall 139-140.

relation to the cinematic were cunningly observed in one of reviews, which stressed the book's intention "not to create, but to record" and compared its imagery to that produced by a "three-guinea camera" ("New Novels" n. p.).⁷³ The cheapness of the camera strengthens the novella's association with the popular, rendering it as something like an everyman's documentary.⁷⁴ With its colourful array of characters and its quick shift of perspective, the book indeed produces a cinematic and documentary effect, but at the same time induces the reader to understand and empathise even with the morally questionable actions of its war-trodden citizens. *Civilians* was not Bryher's only attempt at a realistic depiction of post-war society. Following World War II, she published *Beowulf* (1948),⁷⁵ the first in a series of popular novels she wrote after the war. *Beowulf's* setting and style are evocative of Bryher's post-World-War-I novella. It makes use of the same dynamic, visual, straightforward narrative method and features an array of "ordinary" characters in London during the Blitz. As in *Civilians*, there are no lengthy representations of thoughts and feelings. We are left to infer these from the characters' dialogues and gestures (this is another of the book's cinematic features). Conceived without a conventional storyline, the novel is a depiction of a day and a half in the life of Selina and Angelina – owners of a teashop called The Warming Pan – as well as their employees, customers and tenants who reside in rooms above the restaurant. Its "fleeting glimpses of people during one day and night" ("Books of the Times" n. p.)⁷⁶ present the reader with stereotypes, an array of defence mechanisms, but also random acts of humanity and kindness. Unlike *Civilians*, the book was a success and was (following the English edition) also published in France and the USA, where it was well-received by readers and critics alike.⁷⁷ Bryher's novel evidences the enduring significance of psychological realism – as conceived by analysts and

⁷³ "Film 1929-1963", Bryher Papers

⁷⁴ This harks back to Bryher's *Close Up* articles, in which she claimed that the cinematic rendition of the average person's war-time hardships was valuable both "as a picture and as a document" ("The War from More Angles" 46).

⁷⁵ The deliberately pompous title is subverted in the context of the novel: Beowulf is a large plaster bulldog that Angelina buys and that becomes the teashop's mascot. By the end of the book, though, one might interpret it as a symbol of the characters' appropriation of their place in both the literary tradition and dominant war narratives. After all, the novel was, as one reviewer put it, "a memorial to the millions of Londoners who carried on after all the nervous people must have left" ("Books of the Times" n. p.).

⁷⁶ "Beowulf reviews 1948", Bryher Papers

⁷⁷ Cf. "Beowulf Reviews 1948" and "Beowulf Reviews 1956" in the Bryher Papers.

filmmakers in Russia and Germany – for her work. But it also illustrates the radical transformation which had occurred in her psychological and political approach since *Development* and *Two Selves*.

In the space of ten years, Bryher had distanced herself from the belief in ancestral voices, eternal symbols and poetic privilege, replacing it with a materialist understanding of human psychology. Importantly, it is in this latter portion of her work – in her film criticism and post-1925 fiction – that the stark difference between Bryher's and H.D.'s response to war is most distinctly perceived. Yet perhaps this too is an illustration of "what war does to life": the simultaneous excess of reality and the need to escape and defend oneself against it. Unlike H.D., Bryher did not lose any close family members in the war. Maybe she was thus more ready to face reality. What we know is that psychoanalysis and the cinema offered both women two narratives: the universal and the socio-individual (materialist) one. Each chose what best answered her needs (though, as we saw, their choices are best summed up as much of one and a bit of the other).

Closing the Circle: Djuna Barnes's Subversion of Psychoanalytic Progress Narratives

“One always looks up an authority to avoid quoting them. I looked up Sigmund Freud and so am in a position to go on with this story without further [...] interruption.” (*New York* 212-13) Thus wrote Djuna Barnes in an article on the “pet superstitions of sensible New Yorkers”, composed for the *New York Tribune* in 1916. The article, mostly overlooked, is one of the few sources where Barnes openly acknowledged her indebtedness to Freud or, for that matter, any other psychoanalytic authority.¹ And it is also one of the few texts in which she explicitly formulated her views on the unconscious. Apart from the familiar trope of the mental realm that stores the “voices of the past”, the Barnesian unconscious was also the physical region “through which all material things of the body are directed” (213). A vision of the unconscious that is rooted in material, biological processes, but also contains a transcendental element is an understanding Barnes shared with the other authors discussed here (early Spielrein, H.D., early Bryher). Like Bryher and Spielrein, she was also interested in the ways in which the unconscious interacts with contemporary society (and conditions the body’s automatisms).

That Barnes’s literary oeuvre often looks like another story which, though Freud is rarely quoted, was clearly written with his ideas in mind, has been noted by more than a few. Since the 1980s, feminist critics have identified Matthew O’Connor’s famous speech on the night in *Nightwood* (1936) as a criticism of cultural repression – a repression encompassing both unwanted people (Jews, blacks, homosexuals) and feelings (cf. Marcus 166, Henstra 136). The reading of O’Connor as either a parody (cf. Wilson 64) or a subversive inscription of the psychoanalyst (or sexologist),² staging a type of analysis that does not quite reject all psychoanalytic principles, but significantly alters the rules of the game, has become something of a mainstream notion in Barnes studies (Marcus 165; Allen 182; Blyn

¹ As Dianne Warren also notes, in her 1922 interview with James Joyce, Barnes let Joyce refer to her as a Freudian (*Interviews* 293; Warren xiv).

² On Barnes’s engagement with theories of the third sex, see Faltejskova (149-170) and Harris 63-97, though Faltejskova’s chapter contains less historical background.

519-20; Harris 63).³ Other psychoanalytically-minded scholars decided to follow the recommendation of Barnes's editor T.S. Eliot ("Preface" xiv) and focus on style. Teresa de Lauretis, for instance, reads *Nightwood's* semiotic ambiguity as a textual inscription of the death drive (cf. "The Terror of Uncertain Signs"). Apart from Barnes's most acclaimed novel, another text that inspired several psychoanalytic readings was her late play *The Antiphon* (1958), though these interpretations focus primarily on the play's relation with Barnes's family history – a history that included instances of child abuse, rape and, possibly, incest (Dalton, DeSalvo).⁴ Finally, several critics combine an examination of form and content to argue that Barnes's works, with their excessive use of visual tropes, their stress on internalization and recuperation of repressed or alternative histories, speak in the language of melancholia (Henstra, Victoria L. Smith).⁵ What is perhaps most intriguing about the increasing scope of Barnes scholarship, however, is a common preoccupation in all of the approaches outlined: the political ambivalence of Barnes's fiction (and of its engagement with psychoanalysis).

In the article on superstitions, Barnes revealed to her readers that her interest arose from the wish to "discover just how far the voice of the past has carried" (213). Like a number of psychoanalysts discussed in this volume, Barnes considered superstitions to be atavisms (cf. 217), traces of ancestral beliefs and thought patterns most prominently felt in childhood, but occasionally irrupting into the everyday life of the adult. Significantly, the use of cultural and biological recapitulation has proved to be one of the most confounding aspects of Barnes's writing. That Barnes associated certain social groups (homosexuals, pre-industrial societies, religious communities, the working classes) with regression can hardly be disputed. Yet, unlike H.D., who imparted special visionary powers to the bisexual female poet – thus assigning her the position of unambiguous privilege – in Barnes's work characters who embody "the rudiments of a life that has developed" (*N* 47) are neither heroic nor exclusively positive. For the most part, they struggle to carry the burden society and nature have

³ Similar claims are made by Kaup with respect to *The Ladies Almanac* (1928). In the *Almanac*, she claims, the diagnostic profiles of homosexual women promulgated by nineteenth-century sexology and psychoanalysis are "cited by Barnes, only to be stripped of their scientific authority" (93).

⁴ Dalton also discusses sequences from *Ryder* (1928), another of Barnes's literary depictions of her childhood.

⁵ Cf. also Kaup 96 ff.

imposed upon them, though their suffering does sometimes emanate an enigmatic transcendence. Already Kenneth Burke (1966) acknowledged that the protagonists of *Nightwood* perform a “transcendence downwards” (qtd. in Pinkerton 122), a concept merging religion, social descent and the notion of the primitive. The problem with most of the racial, national and sexual stereotypes Barnes freely employs is that a number of them (the effeminate Jew (*N* 1), the mannish lesbian (*N* 11, 41; *Almanac* 7), the “ox eyes” and “lazy good health” (*Collected Stories* 122) of a Polish father with his numerous children) were simultaneously present in degeneration discourses, sexology, psychoanalysis and various biological and sociological narratives that attempted to turn their negative implications upside down. Consequently, critics have often found it difficult to determine which of these narratives Barnes sided with and which she quoted only to subvert them through exaggeration and/or parody.⁶

Perhaps, therefore, the conundrum needs to be approached differently. If a narrative (or a part of a narrative) appears in discourses with disparate political agendas, the only way to find out how exactly it is used in a particular context is to see what role it plays in *that* particular context. In other words, we are in need of a holistic perspective. As I argued in the preceding chapters, at a certain point in time, the recapitulation narrative was present in Spielrein’s, Freud’s, Jung’s, H.D.’s and Bryher’s work. What made all the difference was the way it fit into their respective systems of thought, systems that were inextricably linked with their personal and cultural background, as well as the scientific, religious, artistic and sociological conceptions they encountered there. Applying the same method to Barnes may help to resolve some of the socio-political confusions her fiction places before the contemporary reader.⁷

If, in Barnes’s universe, things often seem upside down, this is because everything comes full circle. Circular movement is the foundational direction of Barnesian time. The motion is incorporated in one of the most frequent gestures of Barnes’s characters, the act of bowing down. It is worth remembering that “Bow

⁶ On Barnes’s engagement with sexology and degeneration theory, see Blyn, Seitler and Harris 63-97.

⁷ Unlike Caselli, I do not believe that indeterminacy is the point in Barnes’s prose, nor would I agree with Taylor when she argues that (in *The Antiphon*) “Barnes’s representations of the past contest claims of any original great culture that could be destroyed by [...] modernity” (65).

Down” was the original title of *Nightwood*. Indeed, in the novel, we find the Viennese Jew and fake baron Felix bowing down before nobility and symbols of social power (such as palaces and churches) (8), the transvestite doctor O’Connor kneeling and bending his head while confessing (and physically displaying) his sexuality in a church (119), and the animalistic Robin going down on all fours before Nora’s dog (152). In *The Antiphon*, the abusive brothers endeavour to force Miranda to crawl on all fours like Robin and when Augusta (the mother) asks her daughter where her youth is, the latter responds: “[...] bent down to greet your shadow. Running on all fours to keep you company” (*Selected Works* 220). Circular movement (and the act of bowing down) encompasses several meanings – social, sexual, religious and evolutionary – one bows down to social laws and institutions, one bends their body and head in religious devotion, in sexual intercourse, and then there is also the cycle of time: the time of an individual life and of humanity’s existence. Throughout this chapter, I will explore each of these meanings in detail and demonstrate how they help to build Barnes’s holistic and vitalist psychology.

Was the Industrial Revolution Necessary?

In twentieth-century psychoanalysis, as in modernist literature, there was a notion of progress that repeatedly surfaced in the writings of analysts whose socio-political opinions were otherwise incompatible. This was the idea that society, like the human mind, progressed from a narcissistic towards a reality-oriented perspective and from a religious-mythological towards a scientific worldview. In the context of this history, industrial progress often functioned as a measuring rod for determining the society’s level of development. In spite of the important discrepancies in the extent of their reliance on recapitulation, there was a point on which Jung, Freud and Sachs all agreed: the industrial revolution was a crucial turning point in the development of the modern mind. It was here that the main difference between these analysts and writers like H.D. or Djuna Barnes lay. Rather than a step out of the egocentric phantasy-world, the American authors saw the transition from pre-industrial communities into capitalism and empiricism as the beginning of a downward spiral.

In “The Delay of the Machine Age”, an article published in the collection *The Creative Unconscious* in 1942, Sachs posed the question Jung had asked thirty years earlier in *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* (1912): Why, despite

unprecedented scientific and artistic achievement, was there no incentive to replace human labour by machinery in the Roman Empire? Interestingly, the explanation both authors came up with was practically identical. The Austrian analyst was particularly intrigued by the period of the *Pax Romana* (lasting from the reign of Augustus up to the time of Marcus Aurelius), which he frequently referred to as the ancient Renaissance, a period of peace, progress and cultural refinement to be rediscovered in Italy “fifteen centuries later” (“Delay” 497). In describing the preconditions for the development of industry in the ancient world, Sachs adopted a Marxist historical paradigm. He posited the creation of a global trade and transportation network (explicitly perceived as a mirror-image of the one produced under industrial capitalism) as a *sine qua non*, a necessary stage in the advancement of civilization and human psychology. Just as, for Marx, the global industrial networks established by a capitalist economy were the precondition of a global proletarian movement (cf. *Selected Writings* 245-50), for Sachs the development of industry was impossible without a global trade system *and* a specific type of psychological economy:

A question of this kind [why human labour was not replaced by machines] would be entirely out of place wherever the primitive method of production is coincident with a narrow field of distribution. [...] No one need ponder over the question as to why, for example, no progress was achieved in the machine production of goods in the Carolingian Empire for, in the self-contented and static form of economy, there was no incentive [...] for technical progress. [...] Conditions were different in the Roman Empire. [...] The *Pax Romana*, the well-developed network of roads, the safety of the seas, the uniform monetary standard, laws and language, made possible an imposing expansion of commerce the like of which was again approximated only fifteen centuries later. [...] Nevertheless there are only very few traces of the use of machine instead of man power, of the ‘displacement of variable capital by constant capital’ such as is, according to Marx, characteristic [...] for a capitalistic period. This fact may serve as a starting point for an investigation, for when the ancient world disintegrated, [...] [it] had made significant achievements in practically every domain of intellectual activity, in literature and history, natural science, mathematics, and astronomy, except in the field in which progress was most to be expected. (497)

According to Sachs, economic conditions provide the only possible incentive for the invention and use of machinery. In a “static and self-contained” economy, such as that of a relatively isolated community, the question itself appears absurd. People could not, for example, invent machinery simply to make their own life (or the life of

their small community) better or easier. Of course, in the world of a capitalist global exchange, there is a growing demand for speedy communication and technological progress and thus the use of machinery expands on an unprecedented scale, but Sachs, like Marx, seems to ignore the question of whether such a headlong pursuit of technological innovation is an essential component of the dialectical flow of human history at all. Instead, he sees the Roman Empire progress to a point of no return (with the global trade system, the scientific advances and uniform monetary standard the society seemed ripe for an industrial revolution) and then, for some curious reason, back off. The possibility of a society that does not progress to a global industrial stage is further repressed by the explanation Sachs gave for the allegedly enigmatic lack of industrial progress during the *Pax Romana*. The Romans were, argued Sachs, still in the early stage of social evolution, under the reign of narcissism and the pleasure principle, and were therefore unable to imagine that human capacities could be replaced by inanimate machinery (506). This was only accomplished following the Renaissance. In Sachs's interpretation of Western history, then, narcissism and the dominion of the pleasure principle ended when the industrial revolution and capitalism began.

The same might be said of the historical views of Carl Jung. In *Symbols of Transformation* Jung too wondered why the ancients with their "first-rate knowledge" of mathematics, mechanics and physics never developed a "real technology in the modern sense of the word" (30). Unlike Sachs, he did not dwell on questions of economy or social structure, but immediately proceeded to the biological explanation. As outlined in chapter one, Jung associated the predominance of myths and fables (and the lack of empirical reasoning) in ancient societies with the hypothesis that the majority of their thought processes were dictated by undirected thought and the pleasure principle. For him, the progressive strengthening of directed thought was what led to the expansion of the scientific world-view, which in turn resulted in a cascade of industrial inventions. Thus, the technological inferiority of previous societies was effectively caused by the biological inferiority of their thought processes. These communities "lacked training in directed thinking" (ibid.) that would enable them to focus their attention on natural processes and reproduce them artificially. Jung's presentation of the industrial revolution as one of the greatest

achievements of mankind was thus less an espousal of the mechanist glorification of technology than a veneration of the natural sciences and the rising social acclaim accorded to them. He saw the rapid development of trade and transport merely as an outward sign of the mental development of his contemporaries, as their successful adaptation to their environment resulting from the subjection of their minds to the reality principle. Interestingly, the forces of nature and industry are not opposed in Jung's work. Rather than a subjugation of natural phenomena, technology is described as arising from the imitation and replication of natural processes. Still, the Jungian account of social evolution also posits the industrial revolution as an essential stage in human development – the same transition from a narcissistic (undirected) to a reality-based (directed) perception that Sachs discussed.

How does one account for this surprising similarity between Sachs, a Marxist and staunch Freudian, and Jung who, at the time of composing *Symbols of Transformation*, was already beginning to drift away from Freud? It appears that the idea of recapitulation, as applied to cultural history, was responsible. The chronological gap between Jung's and Sachs's psycho-historical narrative is easily understood when one considers the fact that Jung began to heavily rely on recapitulation much earlier than most Freudians. Fused with an unquestioning acceptance of scientific empiricism and industrial progress (which Marx's historical dialectics did little to dissipate), the recapitulation narrative made both Jung and Sachs play into the contemporary hierarchy between emotions (undirected thought) and reason (directed thought), fiction/mythology and science and non-industrial and industrial societies. By putting all of the said hierarchies, as well as the necessity of industrial progress into question, Djuna Barnes subverted both the Marxist and the psychoanalytic strand of this conversation.

For Barnes, the Renaissance (generally considered the beginning of the modern era) was as important a stage in social development as it was for Sachs and Jung, only for her it was the last stop before scientific mechanism and technology would lead the world towards global oppression and emotional repression. Much like H.D., who looked back to antiquity and the Renaissance to recover a fusion of science and spirituality and a vitalist perception of the body, Barnes was highly

critical of the mechanist disregard for the spiritual and its reduction of the living organism to a physical apparatus. Certainly, her “critique of the reductive materialism of modern science” (Kaup 100) has not passed unnoticed (cf. also Horner 86). Yet in order to comprehend all of its dimensions and political ramifications, we will proceed systematically by discussing each oppositional hierarchy Barnes interrogates, beginning with nature and industry, continuing to religion and science and finishing with the relationship between fact and fiction. The specificities of Barnes’s psychoanalytic system, focusing on the interaction between the body, society, emotions and thought, will be outlined in the second half of this chapter. The final sections will also explore Barnes’s circular model of evolution and its underlying link with the political and emotional cycles of trauma.

Mechanism and the Death of the Natural Wo/man

Barnes discussed the subjugation of nature by technology – and the corresponding invasion of non-industrial cultures by capitalist industry – throughout her work, though the preoccupation is most prominent in her short stories, composed during World War I and in the early 1920s. In all of these, the process is described as deadly and the characters who represent the new social order as mechanical and emotionless. But Barnes’s criticism of industrial capitalism was not limited to content. It also included her choice of narrative method. In *Modernist Articulations*, Alex Goody registers the lack of psychological introspection in Barnes’s work (36), particularly when compared to other modernist authors who were interested in psychology and the workings of the mind. In part, this was due to the baroque tendencies in Barnes’s language, with its excessive use of visual imagery, its preference for caricature and exaggeration. But another aspect few critics have detected is the symbolic value of Barnes’s characters (and their actions) and the fable-like quality of her short fiction (in fables, characters are primarily defined by what they do rather than what they think).⁸

Why this is a key factor in Barnes’s conversation with literary tradition will become clear later. For now it is sufficient to point to the meaning fables had in the

⁸ Dianne Warren does mention the indebtedness of Barnes’s story “The Rabbit” (134) to fables and folk tales, but does not extend this to her short fiction in general.

history of psychoanalysis. As mentioned in chapter one, around the year 1910 psychoanalysts became increasingly preoccupied with myths and folk-tales, which were frequently interpreted in the manner of a collective dream-work. They were thought to contain universal (or at least fairly wide-spread) symbols, which indicated the existence of complexes in the collective unconscious. Especially in Jung's work, they were also associated with undirected, primitive modes of thought (unlike the factual scientific narrative that would develop later). In this context, going back to these modes of narration is an interesting literary "regression", and one that fits well into the wider system of Barnes's psycho-political interventions.

Let us take as an example the 1917 story "No Man's Mare". In a village community in an unidentified location, a woman named Pauvla Agrippa dies, leaving behind a baby, her husband and her sister Tasha. Having no means of transport to take the body to the undertaker, the family come up with the idea of attempting to harness a wild mare that is regularly seen near the beach. Though no man has ever been able to catch it, the villagers persist in their plan as they know the mare is getting old and is now nearly blind. Having successfully caught the animal, they tie Pauvla Agrippa's body to the mare's back, but the mare breaks free, jumps into the sea and swims away.

As numerous parallels between the characters and the natural world suggest, the villagers in the story function as representatives of pre-industrial life. This is particularly true of Pauvla's sister Tasha who is repeatedly associated with the sea. When she sighs, her voice is "like the sound made of great waters running back to the sea between the narrow sides of little stones" (*Collected Stories* 136) and her "sea-beaten" face rises out of the "stiff elegance" of her dress "like a rock from heavy moss" (137). Appropriately, the story ends with Tasha holding Pauvla's child and finding comfort in praying to the sea (142). The mare is a complex symbol. On the one hand, there is the obvious stress on the animal's female sex. Phillip Herring noted that the word "mare" means "sea" in Latin ("Introduction to *Collected Stories*" 12), which is in agreement with the final fusion between the mare and the sea. But the sea, in conjunction with femaleness, is also a symbol of female sexuality and,

according to psychoanalytic symbolism, intra-uterine existence.⁹ The latter interpretation is supported by the proximity of death and birth in the story, which, as we will see in the following sections, is a common leitmotif in Barnes's works and one that originates not only from psychoanalysis, but also from early modern symbolism: "[...] she did not mind death. There were no candles about her where she lay, nor any flowers. She had said quite logically to her sisters: Are there any candles or flowers at birth?" (133)¹⁰ On the other hand, "no man's mare" is also untouched nature. The moment of harnessing the animal is presented as an ominous point in the narrative, with the old and weak mare quivering in every muscle and the villagers watching her "with small cruel eyes" (141). Utilitarian attempts to harness or declare as obsolete nature and natural cycles generally spell disaster in Barnes's fiction and this story is but one of the instances where nature fights back.¹¹ When the two interpretations are regarded together, the exploitation of women is aligned with the exploitation of the natural world, but the final birth/death scene also erases the difference between wo/man and animal (in her final moments Pauvla Agrippa is described as "some strange new sea animal" (142)), an equation repeated in the final pages of *Nightwood* and *The Ladies Almanac*.¹²

A similar message and symbolism are repeated in "The Rabbit" (1917) and "A Night among the Horses" (1918), only here the emphasis is on the relationship between nature, industry and urban life rather than on a gendered perspective. In the first story, Amietiev, a poor farmer from Armenia who lives off his land, inherits a small property in New York City. He decides to move to the States and start a clothes-making business there. He works tirelessly in the "foul air" (*Collected Stories* 200) of his small shop, saddened by the sight of slaughtered animals in a butcher's window across the road. When his business starts looking up, he is courted by Addie,

⁹ See for example Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (411). At this stage, Freud was still ambivalent about the existence of universal symbols in dreams, an ambivalence that would gradually subside in his later work (see chapter one).

¹⁰ If one wished to take the psychoanalytic symbolism further, one might also mention that the horse is usually identified with male sexuality in psychoanalytic writings, so a mare could be read as its female counterpart (cf. "Little Hans" (1909); *Freud/Jung Letters* 11).

¹¹ Apart from the other stories discussed here, see also Barnes's article "The Girl and the Gorilla" (*New York* 180-185).

¹² This refers to Robin acting like a dog in "The Possessed" (152). In the *Almanac*, Evangeline's followers are repeatedly compared to dogs or hounds (7, 33); her funeral is attended by various representatives of the animal kingdom (83) and the mourners bark and howl like the "hounds of the hills" (84).

an Italian girl who is after a lucrative match. Unaware of this, Amietiev falls in love with her, but she makes fun of his quiet and peaceful nature, claiming that there is nothing heroic about him. Determined to prove her wrong, Amietiev carries out his research into public and historical heroes and comes to the inevitable conclusion: “all heroes were men who either killed or got killed” (204). Seeing that he would be unable to marry Addie if he committed suicide, he surmises that his only option is murder. One afternoon, he sneaks into the butcher’s shop and finds a box with something moving in it. Without looking at it, he kills the animal in the box and offers it to Addie. She opens the box and finds a small grey rabbit. Bewildered by what he had done, Amietiev leaves, while Addie coldly reminds him to “shine his boots” (208).

Though Amietiev does not die, the narrative makes it clear that the death of the small grey rabbit is simultaneously the death of his old peaceful and sensitive identity. Before moving to New York, Amietiev’s life is a “steady, slow, pleasant sort of thing” (197). As he sits on a log in the forest, contemplating the future, he imagines himself “sitting in quiet misfortune, sewing, up on a table, as though he had died and had to work it out” (198). Indeed, as often happens in Barnes’s fiction, the prophecy comes true, for after the episode with the rabbit, we find Amietiev unaware of his surroundings, walking mechanically, but shaking, “his head straight up, his heart wringing wet” (208). The shocked tremors of the poor Armenian farmer recall the quivers of the old, previously unharnessed mare, both of whose bodies are about to be subjected to the utilitarian biopolitics of mechanist capitalism. The reduction of the mare’s and Amietiev’s physique to its socially useful aspects (either as a means of transportation or as labour force) symbolises the end of the harmonious relationship between human society and the natural world, which characters like Tasha, Pauvla Agrippa and Amietiev represent. At the same time, the death of this relationship is the initiation into the world of capitalist industry: Amietiev needs to murder his old self in order to become the mechanical character that Addie expects him to be.

“A Night among the Horses” contains all the characters and action sequences encountered in “The Rabbit” (the pre-industrial man and his natural world destroyed by the mechanist woman) and therefore might be said to work as its structural and symbolical mirror image. A groom who works in the stables has an affair with his

“cultured” (251) mistress. Depicted as a mechanical figure “with a battery for a heart and the body of a toy” (249), she tries to persuade him to renounce his “common” ways (250) in order to make him a gentleman. One night there is a masked ball at the mansion and he comes to the event dressed (up) in gentleman’s apparel. Following a feeling of intense anxiety, he runs out into the pasture to be with his horses. Something upsets the animals and they begin galloping across the field. The groom calls out to them, but, unable to recognise him, the horses ignore his cries and run him over.

Apart from their “uncultured” background, Amietiev and the groom (like Tasha in “No Man’s Mare”) share a physiology attuned to the natural world and its cycles. In addition, the groom, a man whose heart “moved with the movement of the earth” (247), is also able to foresee his end. He wonders what his lover will leave of him and, in a flash of honesty, realises: “Nothing, absolutely nothing, not even his horses.” (251) The women in both stories function as embodiments of the mechanist mind-set, a mind-set from which, it is implied, genuine emotions have evaporated. At the costume party, Freda, the groom’s affluent mistress, adopts the predatory pose of “a praying mantis” (253)¹³ and the only feeling ascribed to her is “impudence, with a mechanical buzz that ticked away her humanity” (249).¹⁴ One should refrain from concluding, however, that Barnes’s association of women with mechanism in these two stories is a gender-based decision. Bearing in mind the female characters in “No Man’s Mare”, we can see how, in Barnes’s narratives, women and men can equally pose as representatives of mechanism and the pre-industrial world. A more complicated case arises when one considers her treatment of foreign (non-American) figures.

As Philip Herring observes in the introduction to Barnes’s *Collected Stories*, her non-American characters seldom display anything that would specifically

¹³ The praying mantis is an especially appropriate metaphor since it is one of the few species of insect in which the female eats the male after copulation. In this context, however, the image of the female sexual predator is refashioned and fused with the symbol of a toxic social order. It is Freda’s “culture” and greed, rather than her sexual desire, that eventually kills her lover.

¹⁴ The association of capitalism with predatory images is a persistent feature of Barnes’s writing, but most intensely foregrounded in *The Antiphon*, where Miranda’s merchant brothers are compared to hunters in human and animal form (*Selected Works* 133, 141, 208, 220, 222), while their profit-oriented perspective is denounced as “That hooded stare the condor turns on quarry, The eyelid that absolves him of the kill” (209).

connote their ethnic or cultural background (9). Indeed, even their names are by no means typical of where they come from: Addie is Italian, Theeg and Pontos¹⁵ (in “The Head of Babylon”) are Polish, Trenchard and Jennie (in “A Night in the Woods”) are French, Gaya (in “Cassation”) is Italian, Moydia (in “The Grande Malade”) is Russian and so forth. Herring believes this was simply due to Barnes’s lack of knowledge about the language and culture of her subjects (9) and in some instances this was probably true. Until the 1920s, Barnes’s primary source of knowledge about other cultures (apart from the knowledge one can gain from books and the occasional trip abroad) was the immigrant community residing in and around Greenwich Village. But here again one should take into account the symbolic meaning of characters in Barnes’s stories. Part of the reason why her characters do not stand as representatives of their ethnic or cultural background is that they were not meant to do so. In Barnes’s short fiction, but also in her later work (particularly *Nightwood*), the protagonists can mainly be sorted into two kinds: the representatives of the old (pre-industrial) and new (mechanist, capitalist) world order.¹⁶ Although non-American figures can represent both of these types, one regularity that does appear is that characters from predominantly rural nations in Eastern Europe and around the Euro-Asian border are generally depicted as “uncorrupted” and living in harmony with nature. While Amietiev (Armenian) and Addie (Italian) are both immigrants who settle in New York, it is clear that Amietiev is, at least at the onset of the story, still a representative of the pre-industrial world, whereas Addie has become assimilated into the ways of urban industrial life (indeed, it is she who initiates Amietiev into the emotional politics of Western capitalism). Barnes’s story is thus an interesting twist on contemporary medical accounts which blamed the urban environment for overstimulating and demoralising the rural immigrant (cf. Heise 87).¹⁷ The factors responsible for Amietiev’s psychological

¹⁵ “Pontos” is Greek for the sea. Indeed, Pontos and his wife function as symbols of the sea and the earth (and therefore the natural world in general) in “The Head of Babylon”.

¹⁶ There are also those who are somewhere in between, characters who have been (negatively) affected by the new social structures, but have managed to hold on to a remnant of the past: the artists of Greenwich Village in Barnes’s newspaper articles (cf. Heise 94; Horner 92), O’Connor and Nora in *Nightwood*, Miranda in *The Antiphon*.

¹⁷ In “Civilised Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness” (1908) Freud himself addressed the question of overstimulation. Quoting from various authorities on the subject (George M. Beard, Ludwig Binswanger, Richard von Krafft-Ebing etc.), he presented claims ranging from the condemnation of modern art on the grounds of its preoccupation with the ugly and sexually

demise have nothing to do with overstimulation (either of the senses or of sexuality) and everything to do with a cruel way of draining both nature's and the worker's body of life (and empathy).

But it was not only her protagonists' physique that Barnes subjected to the life-threatening instruments of mechanism. It was also her own. When she submitted herself to force-feeding in the manner of British suffragettes in order to write her seminal article "How it feels to be forcibly fed" (1914), Barnes described the experience as one in which the body is reduced to mechanical functions: "Out across the city, in a flat, frail, coherent yet incoherent monotone, resounded the song of a million machines doing their bit in the universal whole [...] I had lapsed into a physical mechanism without the power to oppose or resent the outrage to my will. Science had [...] then deprived us of the right to die." (*New York* 178) Following this statement, the sheets enfolding her and the white robes of the doctors remind her of shrouds. It is as if Barnes were staging the inscription of the grim mechanical voices sounding in the city under her own skin, an inscription that is as shattering for her as it is for Amietiev. In both cases, the encounter with mechanism is described as death-like. For Barnes, for whom life as well as the body's emotional capacities stemmed from the soul, the utter objectification of the body under industrial capitalism was perceived as a denial of both. The body trapped by mechanist science (in this case medicine) – an existence reduced to its biological and useful functions – was therefore by definition a violated body. Barnes's account of bodies oppressed and bereaved of life by medical men vividly recalls H.D.'s vision of profit-oriented medicine (symbolised by Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson*).¹⁸

A further parallel between the two American authors is the association between mechanism and war. In 1913, as the threat of impending bloodshed hung over Europe, Barnes described one of the newly-built American battleships (the largest of its kind) for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Unable to directly criticise war or patriotism in the public press, she resorted to more indirect means of getting her message across. In a characteristically vitalist image, she compared the warship to

promiscuous (also found in degeneration discourses) down to the legitimate concerns that the fast-paced nature of modern working and social life was too stressful for most people. Freud did not dismiss these suggestions outright (though he was certainly not in agreement with the former), but added sexual repression as an additional factor in the genesis of nervous disorders (183-84).

¹⁸ See chapter two.

a whale and appraised its structure as intricate and imposing, but soulless, mocking the human incapacity to approximate natural creation: “They put holes in her eyes and she could not see. They put a mouth in her and she could not breathe. They put motion into her and she did not respond. They carved her out in the image of the monster of the sea, but though the whale has but enough soul to keep her alive [...] still man could not make her [...]” (140) The description contains a typical fusion of vitalist and religious motives: the vital energy the ship lacks is explicitly designated as the soul, while futile human attempts to create a being in the image of the sea monster are an ironic evocation of God’s creation of man in his image. But the violence behind the social objective of this mechanical monster is expressed earlier in the text in a striking visual metaphor: “This thing of grey in her battle colours, this leaning, almost human thing which rears up two masts in its incompleteness, as a man who loves and has no arms.” (137) The idea of an amputee simultaneously connotes the violence of the oncoming war and the soullessness (“incompleteness”) of the man-made whale (ship), both of which are implicitly linked with the precipitant industrial venture of modern times. The association of industrial capitalism with soullessness, mechanist science, war and death is a common feature in Barnes’s and H.D.’s writing (though H.D. liked to stress the masculine gender of mechanism more than Barnes and Barnes liked to focus on the destruction of nature and natural cycles more than H.D.).

The Slow Revolution (Take Two)

Barnes’s treatment of the relationship between nature and technology is intimately linked to her views on time and progress. If Barnes opposed Freud’s and Jung’s developmental narrative with its advancement towards industry and empiricism, she was equally sceptical of embracing the speed afforded by technology. The characters associated with the pre-industrial lifestyle in her fiction share the quality of being slow of thought and motion, in harmony with the cyclical, steady rhythms of nature. Amietiev’s life in Armenia is, as mentioned before, “steady, slow and pleasant” (197). Robin, the primary representative of the past in *Nightwood*, moves in a way that is both sluggish and heavy (42). Moreover, the same kind of rhythm is

attributed to her thoughts where “reason was inexact with lack of necessity” (ibid.).¹⁹ If the latter sounds reminiscent of Jung’s description of undirected thought, the likeness is not accidental. In Barnes’s biography, Phillip Herring quotes a letter from Emily Coleman in which Thelma Wood’s fascination with Jung is noted in passing (Wood was Barnes’s long-term partner and the model for Robin in *Nightwood*) (159).²⁰ Barnes’s association of non-industrial societies and the working classes with undirected thought and the collective unconscious in the Jungian sense can be detected in her stories and articles. In a report on the Industrial Workers of the World, for instance, we find her saying that one should go to the Bowery “when one wants to get in touch with the texture of the universal mind” (*New York* 199). Of the physiology of the working-class activist Mother Jones it is said that her body had “never had time to become an individual” (*Interviews* 103). The association is, of course, a politically problematic one, but it is important to note that the value Jung and Barnes ascribe to the alleged proximity of these people to the universal mind and the “lazy”, “inexact” nature of undirected thought is very different. As for H.D. and early Spielrein, for Barnes the unconscious is “that quality [...] that does the best work of most lives” (*New York* 213). Its slow, repetitive rhythms (and the people who represent them) are therefore something to be sought out and returned to. In Jung’s social evolution, progress is synonymous with an increase in “reason” and “exactness” (along with the consequent flourishing of science and industry). In Barnes’s cyclical view of history, time and individual life, there is no progress, not even a dialectical one.

As might be expected, the mechanical characters in Barnes’s stories are quick and nervous, with darting, spasmodic movements. In one of Barnes’s articles on life in Greenwich Village, the “restless”, “roving” (*New York* 237) eyes of a distinguished lady who has come to marvel at the excesses of the bohemians are contrasted with the “quiet, often lazy faces” of the artists who live there (ibid.). In the words of Thomas Heise, the Villagers in Barnes’s articles are treated as a “cultural residuum”, “a holdover from another era when, before the mechanisation of Taylor

¹⁹ Cf. also Pontos’ “lazy” body and “dull” mind in “The Head of Babylon” (122-23).

²⁰ Barnes’s perception of Wood as a “wonderful wild creature” is also discussed, as is her tendency to “romanticise” this image (ibid.). In this context, it is important to remember Wood’s Native American origins.

and Ford, time could be wasted" (94). The same image is repeated in *Nightwood*, where visitors to Nora's salon ("poets, radicals, beggars, artists and people in love; [...] Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine" (45)) are presented as re-enacting early American history (46): the history of the early settlers prior to the advent of industry and utilitarian biopolitics. Barnes's criticism of speed is thus closely affiliated with her repudiation of industrial capitalism, utilitarianism and narratives of progress. In 1917, as news of the Russian Revolution shook the globe, Barnes wrote a story in which all of these subjects are most poignantly expressed. It was named "The Terrorists".

Pilaat and his wife are artists and political activists who live in a garret which, like Nora's salon, is a refuge for radicals, artists and the poor. Pilaat is healthy and vigorous, but with a melancholy streak. Enraptured by stories of revolution and progress, he gradually loses the sense of pity for people's "sad, shabby hearts" (*Collected Stories* 185). The same is said of his wife, who copies him in everything and thus ends up annihilating "any slovenly ease of mind in herself" as well as her "delicate, sensitive and keen insight" (186). One day Pilaat invites some friends to the garret and works himself into a passionate, inebriated speech about the beauty of destruction and the imperative of conquering nature:

"Autumn," retorted Pilaat, flourishing his arm, "is the season of destruction, but [...] we leave to nature all the tearing down of the scenery, and to her we leave all the building up of the same scenery next year and the year after for interminable and tireless and wearisome years. [...] I would rip the whole existing plan of nature to pieces. [...] We are tired of your spontaneity and your persistency and your punctuality. [...] We will thrust our feet into your heart because they are cold, and our hands will be warm at your palms and we will shake them at your death saying: 'At last you have accomplished more than seasons and beauty; you have created destruction.'" (192-93)

Not long afterwards, all the radicals fall asleep on the floor, "huddling together for warmth" (195). In their sleep, they move away from the things they collected as weapons for a future raid: "They had rolled onto them and they found that they hurt and were uncomfortable." (ibid.) In the morning, Pilaat's wife wakes up, lights a cigarette, and, like every morning, puts the old coffeepot onto the stove, waiting for the water to boil. Still sleepy, she thinks about the pleasant routines of the oncoming day. Nature and habit had triumphed.

Like Barnes's other stories written in the final years of World War I (1917-1918), including those discussed here, "The Terrorists" associates progress and mechanism with death and destruction. A new element is the emphasis on gradual change and cyclical time as the rhythm of nature and of the unconscious. It is noteworthy that Pilaat and his friends give up the ideas of violent, speedy progress in their sleep (sleep and dreams being the realm of sub/unconscious thoughts). For it is precisely these ideas that make Pilaat and his wife lose their ease of mind, sense of compassion and become agitated and anxious. At this point, it is useful to go back to chapters one and three and remember Osip Mandelstam's, Vygotsky's and Bryher's critique of Marxist notions of speedy progress and social betterment, a critique that was, at least in Vygotsky's and Bryher's case, was also based on the psychoanalytic knowledge of gradual shifts in the human body and the subconscious mind. Both Bryher and Barnes can be said to have embraced the proposition of "the slow revolution", the awareness that stable social change can only be effected step by step. As the reader is warned in Barnes's story, the creation of a better society and the healing of social traumas is performed "not as one cleans up a floor, but as one binds up a wound" (185).

"The Scalpel and the Scriptures"²¹

Following the account of Barnes's subversion of psychoanalytic and Marxist narratives of progress and their hierarchy between nature and technology (as well as the industrial and pre-industrial world), we now turn to her treatment of the relationship between religion and science. Just as (in Marx, Sachs and Jung) the triumph of technology over nature was considered a crucial step in social evolution, the replacement of the religious worldview by the scientific one was often deemed an indispensable stage in the history of cultural development. In Freudian analysis, religious beliefs were equated with remnants of early developmental stages characterised by egocentrism and ruled by the pleasure principle (cf. *CD* 73). A similar belief, as we saw in chapter one, was shared by Jean Piaget in the 1920s. In the sense that they presumed a certain type of vital energy specific to living beings

²¹ The title is taken from O'Connor's words in *Nightwood*: "The Scalpel and the Scriptures have taught me that little I did not already know." (138)

– an energy that was often, though not always, equated with the soul – vitalist authors harboured ideas akin to transcendental philosophy and religious concepts. When Freud’s dialectical struggle of drives and his increasing reliance on recapitulation began to take the form of a “mythology”, the founder of psychoanalysis was visibly uncomfortable about making the admission.²² “Does not,” he asked in a rather defensive tone in “Why War?”, “every science come in the end to a [...] mythology like this?” (211) Freud conveniently avoided the question of what his suggestion might mean in terms of scientific truth claims or how it could challenge the psychoanalytic hierarchy between the mythological and scientific mind (one earlier and egocentric, the other mature and reality-based). Djuna Barnes did not share his apprehensions.

After a rather long lapse, Barnes’s relation to religion has once again become a subject of interest.²³ In *Blasphemous Modernism*, Steve Pinkerton positions Barnes among authors who, in spite of their engagement in apparently blasphemous narratives, took religion seriously (while simultaneously trying to undermine the exclusory politics of traditional faith) (112).²⁴ If Barnes’s friend Emily Coleman read *Nightwood* as “a Catholic sermon” (*Djuna* 254; Pinkerton 113), Julie Taylor has recently indicated that *The Antiphon* “relies on [...] ritualised performance of feeling that recalls the Christian ceremony of the mass” (57).²⁵ It is significant that the last tragic act in Barnes’s play (in which the destructive potential of familial and social trauma escalates) takes place in the absence of the only unambiguously positive character: Jonathan Burley, Miranda’s uncle, originally educated to be a priest (cf. 103). As many have emphasised, Burley Hall, the ancestral home of the Hobbs family and the location of their reunion, is said to have been “a college of chanty priests” (81; Taylor 38; Pinkerton 120). Equally, the garret in “The Terrorists” and

²² Freud refers to his theory of instincts as a mythology in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (94) and “Why War” (both published in 1933).

²³ In *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method* (1966), Kenneth Burke pointed to the inextricable relationship between regression, inversion and transcendence in *Nightwood* (240-254). In the 1980s and the 1990s, feminist readings of Barnes’s work rarely discussed the role of religion in her treatment of sexuality and history. It is only in the past decade that critical interest in Barnes’s early modern and religious preoccupations has resurfaced.

²⁴ Pinkerton also reminds us that Radcliffe Hall “took great pains to construct her novel as a Biblical typology”, presenting her inverted protagonist Stephen Gordon as a “Christ figure” and martyr (110).

²⁵ The dictionary definition of the word “antiphon” – the call and response between two choirs – equally connotes theatre and religious music.

Nora's house in *Nightwood* are both located in buildings that were formerly "a kind of church or house of devotion" (*Collected Stories* 187; *N* 45). The final meeting between Nora and Robin takes place in a dilapidated chapel (*N* 152). And then there is, of course, Barnes's fashioning of *The Ladies Almanac* as "a queer hagiography" (Kaup 94). The historical affinity between religion and art is frequently emphasised in Barnes's works. In most of the examples above, art is meant to side with religion or act as a contemporary substitute for it. Like the artist, the religious man/woman is a social relic, intended to preserve a shred of mystery and life in the face of profit-oriented destruction.²⁶

Given this background, it may be logical to suppose that Barnes was simply promoting a "regression" from the scientific to the fictional/religious/mythological mind-set. But the point of vitalist interventions into the socially imposed hierarchy between the scientific and the religious worldview was not to replace one with the other, but rather to fuse both into one. Indeed, this is an important aspect of Barnes's revival of the discourses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with their "pre-Cartesian connection between the body and spirit" and their application "of the faculties of the soul to the organs of the body" (Lears 93). Several critics have noted Barnes's juxtaposition of scientific (sexological, evolutionary, psychoanalytic) discourses with religious narratives and "speculative medical theories" such as humoral medicine (cf. Kaup 96; Seitler 549; Taylor 151). Most have concluded that she did this to undermine the authoritarian voice of scientific biology and psychology. This is the effect such a juxtaposition has on the modern reader and it was certainly part of the intention. But it is important to bear in mind that, in Barnes's fiction, the subversion of scientific authority is not achieved through interrogating the truth value of scientific claims by comparing them to the "plainly fictional" assertions of religion or alternative medicine.²⁷ Rather, the two types of narrative are fused into a single one that is, at the same time, religious, literary and scientific.

²⁶ Importantly, this does not apply to commodified art (or religion). While she often drew on popular forms in her work (the Renaissance almanac, fables, nursery rhymes in *The Antiphon* (*Selected Works* 120, 133, 135, 141) etc.), Barnes often criticised and foregrounded the violence of the contemporary spectacle (on violence and the spectacle in *The Antiphon*, see "High and Aloof: Verse, Violence and the Audience in Djuna Barnes's *The Antiphon*"; on the spectacle in Barnes's newspaper articles, see Loncraine and Smorul).

²⁷ This type of comparison would only re-establish the authority it set out to question in the first place.

How this fusion works is best shown in two ways: by looking at how Barnes represents well known scientific notions and how she combines religious with scientific narratives. Let us take as an example her illustration of penis envy and narcissism in the *Almanac*: “Love of Man is Fear of Fear. Love of Woman is Hope without Hope. Man fears all that can be taken from him, a Woman’s Love includes that, and then lies down beside it. A Man’s Love is built to fit Nature. A Woman’s is a Kiss in the Mirror [...] Battle after Retreat, Challenge when the Sword is broken.” (23)²⁸ The first thing that stands out in Barnes’s style is its intense visuality and repetitiveness. Instead of a logical and chronological explanation, we are faced with a series of images. Some of these are commonplace metaphors (“a kiss in the mirror” as a reference to narcissism), but some can only be connected to psychoanalytic concepts with a bit of interpretation (“challenge after the sword is broken” and “battle after retreat” as references to the woman’s perception of herself as castrated and her penis envy).²⁹ These two processes (repetition and visual representation) are key to the production of parodic effect in Barnes’s re-writing of scientific notions. The strangeness (uncanniness) of the lines just quoted arises from our (conscious or subconscious) conviction that scientific claims should not be repetitive and should only occasionally resort to metaphor. Barnes is aware, however, that such conventions have only been in place roughly since the eighteenth century and are related to the history of capitalism and the developmental narratives discussed at the outset of this chapter. We will come back to the relationship between Barnes’s style and the narration of traumatic histories towards the end of the chapter. For now it will be sufficient to point to the similarity between the nature of undirected/subconscious thought (repetitive, sticky and visual) and Barnes’s language. By translating psychoanalytic formulations into the language of the subconscious, Barnes subverts the historical link between science and directed thought (as well as all of the social hierarchies that it implies).

²⁸ Barnes employs capitalisation in imitation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts (although the imitation is never exact or perfectly consistent).

²⁹ Feminine desire (in Freudian psychoanalysis) is “battle after retreat” because the woman first perceives herself as castrated and then desires what she has already lost (cf. “Femininity” 125). The same image is repeated in “man fears all that can be taken from him” (fear of castration) and “a woman’s love includes that and then lies down beside it” (the phallus is already absent but the woman still sleeps with the man, or, alternatively, the phallus is already absent so the woman lies down with the absence i.e. another woman).

Following the translation of scientific concepts into the fictional and visual register, they can be readily combined with religious and mythological narratives, which are generally closer to this mode of representation. Here is a typical excerpt from the October chapter of the *Almanac*, in which evolutionary chronology and allusions to the third sex sit side by side with alchemy and religious motives, without the transitions always being apparent:

Now was it the same in the Hap-hour of the World, when Whelks whispered in the brink of the Night, rocked in the cradle of Time's Ditch [...], all in a flux of Tenses and Turns? The simplicity of their Nature was upon them, Cap and Shoe. What they gave out was but the Earth given bide, until some billion of improving years later, [...] having made a stink of Advancement, [they] became Queen-Man and King-Woman [...] from Slime onto Dream one long Mystery of Aeons-pot, steaming on the Hip of the Lamb,³⁰ bringing us forward [...] until we have it presented to us on an Anno Domini Salver [...]. (69)

Beginning with time immemorial of the earliest evolutionary history, Barnes proceeds to the creation of the third sex (the gender ambiguity of sexological definitions of homosexuality is captured in the phrases "King-Woman" and "Queen Man").³¹ This is not the only time the genesis of the third sex would be related in the *Almanac*, however. Just a few pages earlier (61-2) the fable is repeated in more detail, this time bearing a closer resemblance to the biblical creation narrative (proceeding from Eve to the woman who lost "God", "Man" and "Maternity" and, following a long and lonely winter, "made Fear and a God of the yellow hair of Dame Musset" (62)). In the March chapter, the first "Woman with a Difference" is hatched from an egg collectively produced by a group of angels, each of which represents one astrological sign (26). Thus, the same event is repeated in an evolutionary, religious and mystical-mythological context, although the narrator never fails to mention that her story has been repressed from all three discourses.³² At the same time, in the quotation above, evolutionary and biblical history both end up in an alchemical mixture of the same "Aeons-pot". Barnes's fusion of religious and biological narratives (achieved by converting them into the same fictional register) is also embodied in her characters.

³⁰ The Lamb of God is the title of Jesus Christ (and a reference to his sacrifice) in biblical symbolism.

³¹ Barnes seems to have endorsed the hypothesis of psychic hermaphroditism. Cf. *Almanac 7; Nightwood* (in relation to Robin and O'Connor) 41, 66, 71, 81, 90, 123, 124.

³² Cf. "This is the part about Heaven that has never been told." (24); "[...] for doubt me not but from Fish to Man there has been much Back-mating and Front to Front, though only a Twitter of it comes out of the Past [...]." (43)

Doctor O'Connor (perhaps the only positive medical figure in the entire Barnesian oeuvre)³³ has variously been referred to as a confessor, a psychoanalyst and a sexologist, usually a parody and/or combination of all of these titles (Marcus 164-168; Harris 63; Pinkerton 124). Indeed the Doctor, like Barnes, seems to derive equal pleasure from telling his patients stories based on Freud and the sermons of John Donne, repeating, varying and eventually fusing them both into a single religious-evolutional narrative.

Before it was put into O'Connor's mouth, the historical relationship between religion and science was symbolically summed up in Barnes's 1921 story "The Doctors". Otto and Katrina Silverstaff are German Jews who establish a medical practice in New York City. Originally, both study medicine, but Katrina drops out "somewhere in vivisection [...] as though she were aware of an impudence" (*Collected Stories* 319).³⁴ From this moment on, she becomes increasingly estranged from her husband and immerses herself in a comparative study of religion. As they sit together at the table, with a globe of the world on Katrina's side and a weighing machine on Otto's, Katrina remarks: "We have fashioned ourselves against the Day of Judgement." (320) The doctor decides his wife has become "incomprehensible" (*ibid.*), but this does not bother him. He quickly adapts to his new circumstances "by being in the stream of time" (319), even as he feels that his wife's movements are guided "by the rules of an ancient game" (320). One day, a pale, faceless merchant appears on Katrina's doorstep. He is selling the Bible, so she lets him in. Katrina presents him with a mysterious speech which the merchant does not understand and indicates her wish to become his mistress. She is open about the fact that the affair is motivated by a desire for self-destruction: "Some people drink poison, some take the knife, others drown. I take you." (325) After the act, the merchant begins quoting from the Bible: "Shall the beasts of the field, the birds of the air forsake thee? Shall any man forsake thee?" "One," Katrina responds, "[...]

³³ O'Connor is a positive figure because of his vitalist approach. On Barnes's dislike towards doctors (particularly mechanist doctors), see Herring's biography (233, 246, 309-10). See also her article "Twingeless Twitchell and his Tantalising Tweezers" (*New York* 21-25) on the public performances of a dentist-profiteer.

³⁴ The first anti-vivisection movements in the UK and the USA were formed in the 1870s and 1880s. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue again came to public attention. Due to Barnes's belief in metempsychosis (see the section "The Two Circles") and the close bond between humans and animals, she would certainly have supported the cause.

the one.” (325-26) The merchant becomes distressed and leaves. Soon afterwards, he finds out about Katrina’s death. Otto remains alone.

If we decide to approach this story as a further instance of the Barnesian fable and understand the characters as symbols, the first lines of interpretation are pretty straightforward. Medicine (Otto) and religion (Katrina) are first wedded together; then they separate. The motive of their separation (vivisection) is equally crucial. Like H.D., who remembers watching in horror the caterpillar her father and brother use for scientific experiments, who accuses Freud (and her father) of materialism and shudders at the sight of Rembrandt’s painting in which the body is reduced to a soulless physical object, Katrina becomes estranged from Otto due to his mechanist, materialist view of the body. Such a view, however, is “timely”. In a further anticipation of H.D.’s *Tribute to Freud*, Barnes places the scales next to the mechanist doctor, as if waiting for Otto to weigh up his “pound of flesh”.³⁵ Again, the scales also represent justice (the symbolism becomes more pronounced by placing the globe of the world next to Katrina). Following Otto’s (medicine’s) betrayal, Katrina’s (religion’s) final downfall occurs when she decides to give herself to a merchant (the assimilation of religion into capitalism is the death of religion). The meaning is underscored by the fact that the “colourless” (322) travelling pedlar is selling the Bible. References to the Day of Judgement are made twice in the story: first in the words Katrina says to Otto and second in the merchant’s “quotation”. The quotation is, of course, not a direct one, but a reference to the biblical description of Judgement Day: “The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts in the field, every creature that moves along the ground and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence [...]” (*New International Bible* Ezekiel 38:20) Apart from again equating human and animal existence before the higher law, the context Barnes provides for the biblical quotation incorporates the theme of betrayal (Shall any man forsake thee?). The split between Otto (medicine) and Katrina (religion) (and the social “advancement” it brought in tow) is thus presented as a sin for which humanity (and mechanist doctors) will be held to account.³⁶

³⁵ Otto too is a Jewish doctor, but then so is Katrina. Jewishness is thus associated not only with mechanist medicine, but also with the origins of religious thought.

³⁶ Otto is therefore metamorphosed into a veritable Judas-figure.

Diane Warren is one of the few critics to offer even a passing comment on this story. She believes, however, that the narrative was written as an indictment of women's isolation within the bourgeois family. According to her, religion and traditional femininity is criticised in "The Doctors" because their rhetoric makes women vulnerable to self-sacrifice (136). Much as Barnes opposed the notions of traditional femininity, it is quite clear that she was not critical of religion (or medicine) as such, but of what religion and medicine had become in contemporary society. The religion Barnes vouched for was not Puritan or even Catholic religion in the traditional sense, but a union of art, religion and medicine (including psychoanalysis) much like the one embraced by H.D. H.D. and Barnes both believed that one needed to reach into the pre-industrial, pre-modern mind-set to revive this vitalist worldview.³⁷ In spite of this advocacy of cultural "regression", however, Barnes was not an avid believer in the healing properties of universal symbols. Thus the antiquarian voice in her stories, novels and plays remains profoundly personal.

Fact or Fiction? Beyond the Reality Principle

Barnes's literary "regression" and the fable-like quality of her fiction performed a subversion not only of scientific empiricism, but also of its literary counterpart, realism. Several critics who turned their attention to Barnes's reliance on the fantastic, miraculous and the irrational (Kaup 100; Horner 86) have noted that her use of these narrative forms was meant as a critique of literary realism, the materialism of modern science and the utilitarian social structures in which both appeared. In this context, it is interesting to remember Amitav Ghosh's study about the difficulties contemporary literary and scientific discourses face when depicting improbable phenomena.³⁸ According to Ghosh, the advent of industrial capitalism and bourgeois culture conditioned a shift in the literary and scientific realm. While the realist novel – with its focus on everyday life – quickly rose to the position of the dominant form in Western literature, geological and biological sciences renounced

³⁷ A difference to be pointed out is that H.D. was more drawn to ancient Greek art, whereas Barnes was immersed in early modern narratives. In spite of this, the literary preferences of both authors evidence the continuity they felt to exist between ancient art, the Renaissance, the Romantic tradition and their own work.

³⁸ Ghosh's study deals with contemporary narratives on climate change. In his account of the rise of realism, he draws significantly on Franco Moretti's economic and cultural history of the novel.

the narrative of a series of sudden disasters in favour of the focus on gradual shifts and changes (cf. 18-20). One might therefore say that, in both spheres, there appeared a preference for the factual over the marvellous. In the scientific realm, this was visible in the gradual separation of science from the mystical, the occult and the spiritual, in its claims of objectivity and testability. In literature too the focus on the real, the possible and the logical arrangement of events pushed the supernatural occurrence into the territory of the Gothic, the ghost story and the mystery tale. The fable-like, Gothic, early-modern quality of Barnes's prose can be read as a consequence of her desire to revive the scientific and literary ideas that preceded the realist novel and Enlightenment rationalism.

Bearing this in mind, it seems appropriate that the collection of Barnes's New York articles (composed between 1913 and 1919) ends with one in which she, in spite of the recommendations of her employer, insists on steering clear of facts and remaining "purely personal" (352). While Barnes wished to write in the manner of a storyteller and to share her personal narrative with her readers, the demands of the journalism of her time tolerated personal impressions only if they were enveloped around a series of bombastic facts.³⁹ When her employer insinuated this, Barnes was only able to respond, slowly: "Facts. My God, have we come to that?" (351) In the established hierarchy between the mind and the body, reason and emotion, directed and undirected thought, facts bonded with the first, privileged element in the opposition, fancy, fiction and myth with the latter. Barnes's anti-realism was a conscious attempt to resort to a view of the body, literature, science and religion before these hierarchies were firmly established. What is also at stake in this history, as it is in the history of psychoanalysis, is the contest between two realities: the seemingly objective reality of the factual world (the object of medical science and the reality principle) and the reality of personal history, a history which freely resorts to symbols and metaphorical imagery when the need arises. Barnes, needless to say,

³⁹ The facts suggested by Barnes's collocutor revolve around the life of the city's high-class and business elite (operas, clubs, banks and restaurants), the wonders of industry (the bridge system) and an occasional peek into the disquieting secrets of hospitals and asylums (350-51). Barnes, on the other hand, insisted on writing about things that were interesting only for their personal value (an old stone cutter, a childhood friend with fiery red hair). Her personal style was often at odds with the spectacular demands of contemporary press (though she had to make more than a few concessions).

preferred the latter.⁴⁰ In connection to psychoanalysis, Barnes's insistence on the personal quality of symbols may seem at odds with her frequent reliance on recapitulation.⁴¹ Yet this was, as we have seen, a compromise she shared with the majority of authors and analysts in this thesis (early Spielrein, early Jung, Freud, Sachs, H.D. and Bryher).

In opposition to the developmental and historical narratives of mainstream psychoanalysis, which equated the cultural advances in industry with the intellectual capacities of directed or logical thought, Barnes embraced a circular view of evolution, in which regression was regarded favourably and speed and progress associated with destruction. Like Bryher and a number of psychoanalysts on the Left, she opposed both Western and Soviet attempts to speed up the use of natural resources or increase the worker's physical strength and productivity. Instead, her work encourages a return to the slow, cyclical rhythms of nature and the subconscious mind. In an attempt – comparable particularly to H.D.'s – to create a vitalist account of the body and society that would fuse science and religion, Barnes returned to the tradition of popular early modern psycho-medico-religious writings.⁴² This she did by first turning nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scientific texts into the visual and fictional register and then fusing them with mythological and religious narratives. By transposing scientific ideas into the visual and fantastic realm of the subconscious, Barnes questioned both the psychoanalytic association of science and directed thought and their cultural primacy/truth value.

⁴⁰ Kaup also observes that a lot of Barnes's "far-fetched analogies are private and do not derive from familiar mythological material" (72).

⁴¹ Barnes's use of symbols is related in complex ways to psychoanalytic symbolism. Though Barnes occasionally seemed to resort to universal symbols as defined in psychoanalysis – we will recall the parallels between the sea and intra-uterine existence in "No Man's Mare" – this symbolism often merged with early modern symbols Barnes made use of. In the following sections, we will see that Barnes's equation of birth and death originated from her belief in transmigration (metempsychosis). In the sense of the soul's passage into a new body, death is indeed the onset of new life. In "No Man's Mare", the early modern symbol which equates the cradle with the grave (cf. also *Selected Works* 219) fuses with the psychoanalytic equation of the womb and the sea (where Pauvla and the mare become one in death). Yet the combination of these two types of symbolism (which were historically indebted to each other) says much about Barnes's independent treatment of symbols. In spite of the fable-like quality of Barnes's stories, her symbols are not the same as those found in fables (or in psychoanalysis), but are integrated into her personal symbolic system.

⁴² On the neo-baroque elements in Barnes's writing (particularly how she drew on books such as Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*), see Kaup. On *The Antiphon* and the Elizabethan revenge tragedy, see Goody's "High and Aloof". See also Caselli (215-57). On the *Almanac's* indebtedness to sixteenth- and seventeenth century almanacs, see Caselli (43-6).

In sum, one might say that Barnes went beyond literary and scientific realism towards what, in chapter three, we referred to as psychological realism. Barnes's visual images – “a stop the mind makes between uncertainties” (*N* 100) – are real in the sense that we both feel and understand them (in this aspect they are also closer to the visual world of the cinema that so fascinated H.D. and Bryher). One feature of Barnes's writing most often noted by critics is its excessive quality (Kaup 67; Taylor 152; Caselli 38; Horner and Zlosnik 1-19). But Barnes's visual exaggerations and repetitions do not contain the elements of kitsch that Bryher and Sachs criticised in contemporary cinema. For if, for Bryher and Sachs, kitsch is an image severed from its emotional reality, Barnes's images of strained minds and suffering bodies (like a number of symptoms psychoanalysts deal with) are uncanny precisely due to their emotional excess. In spite of Bryher's preference for a documentary style of writing, what she and Barnes shared was the focus on emotions, characters and events which would be repressed from official public discourses, as well as a frank portrayal of their social causes.⁴³ How these representations of suffering were turned into a political statement, as well as an intervention into psychoanalytic theory, will be outlined in what follows.

The Three Taboos of the Freudian Subject

Barnes's interventions into psychoanalytic discourse were intimately related to her criticism of progress narratives. As we have observed, notions of a universal historical progress were incorporated into psychoanalysis as a specific developmental history. The result of this history was a subject who renounced pleasure in favour of reality, fantasy in favour of facts and mythology/religion in favour of the scientific worldview. Within the psychoanalytic framework, the formation of such a subject was dependant on three things: they needed to possess a stable, impermeable ego, to have secured themselves against regression and to be capable of a fair share of sublimation.⁴⁴ Barnes's work not only presents us with characters who do not conform to these ideals, but exposes the ideals themselves as an oppressive social phantasy. How this is done most clearly comes to the fore in

⁴³ Barnes's works (especially *Ryder*) were severely transformed and curtailed by the censors (see Barnes's condemnation of censorship in her 1927 foreword (vii)).

⁴⁴ See for example *Ego and the Id* 44; *Three Essays* 80; “Psychoanalytic Notes” 67.

Nightwood, though we saw in the previous sections that Barnes's criticism of progress narratives (psychoanalytic or otherwise) dates back to the time of her earliest published texts.

From the perspective of an early-twentieth-century Freudian analyst, *Nightwood's* characters could variously be described as narcissistic, melancholic or masochistic. Indeed, this has been a major concern for critics who tried to determine the political implications of these representations (Is Barnes's melancholia a Freudian type of melancholia or does it revert to the Renaissance depiction of the melancholic scholar? Does her representation of homosexual desire as narcissistic play into the homophobic anxieties of her time? Is Nora's masochism her punishment for embracing the patriarchal ideals of monogamy and for her infantilisation of Robin?).⁴⁵ To understand Barnes's subversion of Freud's notion of developmental progress, it is imperative to be aware of the connection between narcissism, melancholia and masochism in Freudian psychoanalysis. What this connection reveals is that the definition of these conditions as pathological largely stems from their infringement of the three imperatives enumerated above: the imperative of the impermeable subject, the imperative of sublimation and the imperative of preventing regression.

In Freud's seminal essay on mourning and melancholia (1917), it is argued that narcissistic object choice tips the standard mourning process into a pathological state (*FR* 316-17). Importantly, it was precisely the phenomenon of narcissism that (in 1914) led Freud to recognise the process of identification and internalization as fundamental to the formation of the cultural voice of the subject: the superego (still referred to at the time as the ego-ideal) (*FR* 382). Following the internalization of the parents or guardians, their characteristics become constituents of the superego, the ideal which the social subject strives towards. In the process of internalization, however, the bond is "desexualised" ("Economic Problem" 168) i.e. the sexual component becomes unconscious and is sometimes expressed as an "unconscious sense of guilt" or "the need for punishment" (165). This tendency, coupled with the sadism of the superego, plays a role in the formation of a strict conscience and forms

⁴⁵ For question one see Kaup 104 ff., Henstra, Smith; for question two see Taylor 137, Allen; for question three see Marcus and Allen.

the basis of the masochistic temperament (169). But it is not only the parental couple that becomes incorporated into the superego. It is also “teachers, authorities, self-chosen models and publically recognised heroes” (167). Furthermore, the same mechanism participates in the individual assimilation of social norms and the maintenance libidinal bonds to the members of one’s community (nation, class and so on) (*FR* 388). One might therefore conclude that the principle of internalization and identification forms the psychological basis of an individual’s social life (and the social production of subjectivity). Yet Freud was wary of pursuing this logic. After the parents, he claimed, the other figures “need no longer be introjected by an ego that has become more resistant” (“Economic Problem” 168). He offered no explanation as to how the influence of non-parental objects is incorporated. Nor did he explain why, after all, the subject should acquire a resistance towards introjection. In the context of the Freudian oeuvre, the key to his concerns about internalization appears to be twofold (although the two sides of the argument are closely connected).

Internalization (introjection) blurs the boundaries between the subject and his/her social environment: the subject’s body literally becomes the people he/she loved and the experiences he/she encountered. As we said, Freud proclaimed this type of attachment narcissistic. A further problem lay in the fact that this mechanism was deemed characteristic of social groups excluded by progress narratives: women, children, “primitive” societies, homosexuals, even animals (*FR* 374). Due to their inclination towards narcissistic object choice and internalization, these groups were described as more prone to regression. Consequently, in Freud’s late work, they were also positioned under the auspices of the regressive powers of the death drive.⁴⁶ The man, on the other hand, was claimed to be more prone to transposing his libido onto objects (and the community) and was thus considered least susceptible to the perils of narcissism (*FR* 373). To put it another way, the

⁴⁶ Interestingly, it was the study of narcissistic tendencies in schizophrenia that led Freud to differentiate between two types of instincts in the ego (otherwise he would have had to acknowledge Jung’s theory that there was only one type of libidinal energy that could be claimed for different purposes) (*FR* 361-65). Initially, they were referred to as the non-sexual ego instincts and ego-libido, but the distinction was later replaced by the binary opposition between the libido and the death instinct. The introduction of the death instinct into Freudian theory was thus directly linked to the economic problem narcissism (and, by extension, melancholia and masochism) posed within the psychoanalytic system of opposites (pleasure/reality, reason (sublimation)/passion (libido), science/mythology, subject/object, body/environment and so on).

psychological constitution of women, children, non-Western societies and homosexuals was implicitly pronounced as less favourable to civilizational progress than that of the man (particularly the Western man of science). Regarded in this light, the subjection of the death drive to the libido – one of the preconditions of progress in Freud's late work (cf. "Economic Problem" 159) – gains a sinister aspect, for the libido now becomes a representative of masculine power and the death drive of all the groups associated with its regressive pull. Freud's narrative of psychological development – especially the one he developed after 1914 – thus contained and depended on a narrative of social evolution that sanctioned a good deal of contemporary social hierarchies.

Unsurprisingly, Freud's essay on narcissism also points to the connection between narcissism and the mythological worldview of children and "primitive" societies, whose egocentric perspective retains the belief in magical occurrence and omnipotence of thoughts. At this stage, the ego is still the primary object of libidinal cathexis, which is later transferred to objects. The functionality of the reality principle is therefore directly proportionate to the amount of libido the subject is able to transfer to the outside world. We will remember that, in Freudian theory, it is the man who is capable of the greatest share of libidinal investment. And that it was precisely this alleged narcissistic cathexis of the ego that prevented the industrial revolution in Jung's and Sachs's interpretation of ancient history. Within these psychoanalytic accounts, a stable subject is one that adapts to the outside world through investing outside reality with (sublimated) libidinal attachment. Or, in Jung's terms, the ego of the civilised subject will be more prone to imitation than assimilation. In brief, in all of these narratives, there is a clear aversion towards the body that sucks the world in or adapts it to itself. Though Freud, Jung and Sachs (and Piaget) all agree that the social body is continuously prone to both assimilation (adapting the world to itself) and imitation (adapting itself to the world), it is the latter tendency – through its association with the reality principle and adult life – that acquires a decidedly privileged status. The stable, impermeable subject is the subject capable of the greatest share of libidinal investment, sublimation and, by extension, directed or logical thought. In the shadow of this subject lurks the permeable body of narcissism, masochism and melancholia, in which the object becomes subject, reality is

transformed into phantasy and the distinction between the sexual and non-sexual is lost in the spheres of autoerotism and the re-sexualisation of social relationships. Within the post-Enlightenment mind-frame, such a subject threatened the distinction between the biological body and its social environment and questioned the psychological economy on which theories of progress and social evolution were based. It appears logical then that this same subject should play a key role in Barnes's intervention into psychoanalytic theory.

On Sublimation and the Cultural Unconscious

While *Nightwood* offers the clearest proof that the principle of somatic introjection is the foundation of Barnesian subject formation, permeable boundaries between different characters on the one hand and between characters and their social environment on the other are characteristic of Barnes's writing in general. Already in her New York articles, Barnes was aware of the cultural variability of bodies and their unconscious gestures. In a piece on Greenwich Village, she described the movements of three European artists as "those little alien things that in their mother country are merely the dialect of the physique" (*New York* 221). It is not only in one's verbal language that one can detect the foreign accent; the body too retains a specific dialect. And since body language is one of the primary modes of unconscious communication, the unconscious we are faced with here is clearly a cultural one. A similar image is repeated in *Nightwood*, where "Nora watched every moving figure for some gesture that might turn up in the movements made by Robin; avoiding the quarter where she knew her to be, where by her own movements the waiters [...] might know that she had a part in Robin's life" (55). The bodies of characters reflect the history of the environments in which they reside and the people they come into contact with. The permeable subject that introjects their surroundings (the subject of early development and regressive conditions in Freudian psychoanalysis) is the normative subject in Barnesian psychology.

That this subject also subverts the imperative of sublimation is visible in the fluid limit between reason and passion in Barnes's fiction. As we saw in chapter one, both Freud and Jung defined sublimation as a precondition of cultural advancement. In order for civilizational progress to take place, libidinal energy needed to be diverted from its original aims (desexualised). This could only be done by repressing

the original sexual goals and replacing them by new non-sexual ones. Indeed the necessity of repression for cultural growth is considered one of the main advantages (and justifications) of repression in Freud's late work (cf. *CD* 96). Neither in Jung's nor in Freud's scheme is artistic creation or scientific work possible alongside of a complete satisfaction of one's sexual wishes (though the artistic sphere is usually proclaimed as somewhat closer to the sexual realm) (cf. *Three Essays* 237). This apparent incompatibility of sexuality and mental work (although the libido provides the initial impulse for both) mirrors the incompatibility of reason and passion in post-Enlightenment philosophy. And it is just this opposition that Barnes questions. In *Nightwood*, O'Connor claims that he can, at the same time, think and "be simple like an animal" (confess his sexual desires) (119). In the *Almanac*, Bounding Bess (Esther Murphy), who specialises in women's history, stresses that "the good Catherine of Russia thought nothing of twittering over a Man at ten, and at twelve thundering down Diderot [...] and in like manner was [...] Sappho herself, though given to singing over the limp Bodies of Girls like any noisy Nightingale, nevertheless held in great Respect by the philosophers of her time" (32). By discussing women who became famous both for their sexual conquests and their interest in philosophy, the *Almanac* interrogates not only the opposition between passion and intellectual work, but also the concomitant assertion that, because female psychology was traditionally defined as guided by emotions and sexual impulses, women were less fit for scientific preoccupations. The re-sexualisation of reason and philosophy in Barnes is not regressive in the way it would be for Freud or Jung. It is simply an emphasis of the continuity that exists between the sexual/emotional impulse, subconscious imagery and thought (the continuity also elaborated by Spielrein). In such a psychological system, cultural and sexual activity are not inversely proportional entities, for one can equally satisfy the cultural and sexual impulse, without subordinating one to the other.

But if, in this system, the body of the social subject works by incorporating its environment (and reflecting it in its physical and mental life), then this is also valid for socially constructed phantasies. Let us begin with a typical example of internalization as somatic incorporation, used to describe the relationship between Nora and Robin: "In Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and

about it for maintenance ran Nora's blood. Thus the body of Robin could never be unloved, corrupt or put away. Robin was now beyond timely changes, except in the blood that animated her." (51) Barnes frequently stressed the difference between this incorporated phantasy and the living body. It is only the phantasy that can remain unchangeable and it is for this reason that it is later compared to the body in a tomb (ibid.). Yet even the blood that sustains Nora's imago of Robin is never the same blood and Nora's desire to preserve a static image of her lover (or to adapt her experience to this image) is criticised throughout the novel.⁴⁷ In this respect, she is similar to Robin's other lover, Felix, whose incorporation of his friend O'Connor is compared to an oyster "that must cover its itch with a pearl", a process through which "what we must love is made into what we can love" (33). Indeed, the desire for a stable identity (and history) is a source of suffering for both protagonists. Felix's history is fixed because it is made up and was told to him from the perspective of a single person, while Nora's desire to possess and define Robin is compared to "an old master who disappears beneath the knife of the scientist who would know how it was painted" (117). Barnes's comparison of internalization to embodied fossils and tombs recalls Freud's metaphorical representation of the unconscious as an archaeological excavation site in which all the findings would be perfectly preserved, in spite of the admission that neither archaeology nor the human body can really offer examples of phenomena immune to time (see chapter two). In the preceding chapters, we were able to observe how the psychoanalytic desire for an unchangeable historical identity resulted in increasing reliance on recapitulation. Although Barnes was herself far from immune to these desires, she was occasionally able to expose their violent potential and social origins.

"Oppressed so Hard They Could not Stand"

When it comes to representations of social violence, Barnes's post-1930 work is particularly insightful. In the psychology of her characters, there is no margin for violent impulses which are not motivated by social circumstances. In *Nightwood*, this

⁴⁷ Cf. O'Connor's retort to Nora when she admits that sometimes she wanted Robin to die: "While living we knew her too well, and never understood, for then our next gesture permitted our next misunderstanding. But death is intimacy walking backwards." (116) Death, it is implied, is the moment when the living person can no longer interfere with the fantastic (unchangeable) identity we have constructed for them.

is best discerned by investigating the genesis of guilt and embarrassment, feelings that plague all characters except Robin.⁴⁸ In Freud's late writings, feelings of guilt were ascribed to two sources: guilt could result from a quantity of death drive redirected against the ego due to external obstacles ("Why War" 211) or it could stem from the repression of positive affect.⁴⁹ Guilt feelings associated with the death drive thus also emanate from repression, but they are different in the sense that a certain amount of death drive was present in the body to begin with and could either be directed against objects in the outside world or against the ego itself. Unlike the second type of guilt that stems from a positive emotion made negative, the initial origin of the first type is not social (see chapter one). It is therefore significant that, in *Nightwood*, guilt of this latter type is non-existent. In Barnes's novel, the genesis of guilt is most clearly elaborated in the psychological portrayal of its Jewish character Felix. Felix is a false baron with an invented history, which he uses as "an alibi for the blood" (6), i.e. for obscuring his Jewish descent. Early on he develops an obsession with royalty and social status: "With the fury of a fanatic he hunted down his own disqualification [...] He felt that the great past might mend a little if he bowed low enough, if he succumbed and gave homage." (8) In this habit, he takes after his father Guido, whose "remorseless homage to nobility" is compared to "the genuflection the hunted body makes from muscular contraction, going down before the impending and inaccessible as before a great heat" (2). It is important that already Guido's gesture is characterised as automatic, a conditioned reflex. Even if his first acts of submission were forced and performed with conscious awareness, they are no longer so.

One might also wonder what the transference of this reflexive submission from father to son means in terms of inheritance. Is it merely the consequence of parental influence and education or is Barnes implying that Guido's acquired reflex was also biologically transferred to his son? Her views on this subject are perhaps most concisely expressed in "The Terrorists", in which the protagonist blames the weakness of the people "on environment and not heredity, excepting as one can

⁴⁸ On the importance of shame in Barnes's novel, see Taylor's chapter on *Nightwood* in *Djuna Barnes and Affective Modernism* (110-145).

⁴⁹ Freud's statement from "The Uncanny" (1919) that "un" is a token of repression (244), i.e. that a repressed positive feeling often resurfaces with a negative emotional value, is worth remembering here.

inherit the filth of the gutter and the starvation of the ash pile” (*Collected Stories* 185). The lines seem to suggest that socially generated trauma can have inter-generational consequences. Like most of the Lamarckian analysts discussed in this volume, Barnes believed in the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Indeed, her notion of the permeable body that internalises environmental influences and close relationships would have been quite impossible without it. When faced with the deterministic argument found in contemporary criminology and degeneration discourses, however, she was firm about stressing the role of social environment (as opposed to inheritance) as the primary cause of crime, the rise in mental health issues and other social problems.⁵⁰ If one stops to think about the political implications of this complex set of views, it becomes evident that the imperative of social responsibility is even stronger here than if social conditions were only culpable for cases of individual trauma. For it is society, rather than a fortuitous genetic combination, that bears a crucial share of the blame for the psycho-physical conditions of its members. And apart from the conditions one inherits, there are the social phantasms one incorporates and which may become bodily mechanisms beyond one’s control.

Both Guido and Felix are representatives of social subjects that internalise the means of their oppression. Indeed, they are a lot like the working-class viewers marvelling at lieutenants and princesses in Sachs’s articles on the popular cinema (see chapter three). Both had introjected as ideals socially produced phantasies of what was never meant to belong to them. Of course, the ultimate tragedy occurs when the submission becomes unconscious. The submissive subject feels the difference between the social ideal and his/her approximation of it (the social origin of guilt in Freud), only instead of laying the blame on the society, they tend to blame themselves.⁵¹ Like Felix and his father, this subject believes that their position will mend if they follow social norms (through hard work, respect for authority etc.), when the opposite is in fact the case. What remains conscious is merely the feeling of

⁵⁰ See for instance her 1913 article “Sad Scenes on Sentence Day”: “For after all, the criminal, so often the direct result of environment rather than any inherited tendency to wrongdoing, possesses a very human, pitiful side to his [...] character, which years of hard labour behind prison bars do not improve.” (*New York* 31)

⁵¹ Of course, the emphasis on personal responsibility in capitalism has a large part to play in this simultaneous obscuration of social violence and the hyper-production of guilt feelings.

embarrassment or inadequacy, whereas the social violence that conditioned it remains in the background. Significantly then it is precisely Felix's mechanical genuflection that O'Connor, in his role of the psychoanalyst-confessor, tries to cure Felix from. In "Where the Tree Falls", Felix appears to make some progress. Like Nora, he recognises that his desire for stability, which brought him some pleasure, was at the same time "the most formless loss" and produced in him "a sense of terrible anxiety" (101). He also accepts the new definition of aristocracy proffered by O'Connor: "a condition in the mind of the people when they try to think of something else and better" (109). In spite of this, the last image of Felix we are faced with shows him making "a slight bow" before Grand Duke Alexander of Russia (110).⁵² What makes the scene more distressing is the fact that, for the first time, Felix does make a conscious effort not to give in to his temptation. Throughout the first part of the evening, he refuses "steadfastly" (*ibid.*) to look at the duke. Yet when the clock strikes twelve, he flees Cinderella-like and reverts (regresses) to his old social role.

It is important to observe how symptoms, regression and cure are redefined in Barnes's version of psychoanalysis. Felix's repetition compulsion is caused by the internalization of social oppression. The cure O'Connor offers consists in, first, making the oppression conscious and, second, trying to get rid of the physically ingrained reflex that resulted from it. While the first part of treatment succeeds to some degree, Barnes warns that a transformation of reflexive psycho-physical processes is both painful and long-lasting, sometimes next to impossible. Just as for Freud, regression is defined as a return to a former habitual state, only here this state is clearly socially produced. Neither regression nor the genesis of guilt in Barnes thus bear any relation to the Freudian death drive. Rather than being "a figural inscription of sexuality as drive", as De Lauretis claims, *Nightwood* exposes the drive's social history: collective violence inscribed into the oppressed body as a gesture and a reflex. Like Miranda in *The Antiphon*, Felix's father Guido is compared to the hunted body that finally succumbs before its persecutor (*N2*; *Selected Works*

⁵² Here we find a further parallel between Felix's position and working-class oppression. Duke Alexander is said to be "cousin and brother in law of the late Czar Nicholas" (110). Nicholas II is remembered in history as the last ruler of the Russian Empire prior to the February Revolution (1917). He is also known for the violent suppression of the 1905 Revolution as well as a number of anti-Semitic pogroms. In this context, Felix's ingrained need to bow before the emperor's relative assumes tragic proportions.

176). This final gesture of helplessness he transfers to his son, who will reflexively repeat it before every other “hunter” that appears in sight.

This is the social dimension of the gesture of bowing down, performed by all of Barnes’s characters. Like Felix’s and Guido’s, their bodies are also bent by the power of social disapproval. In her analysis of embarrassment in *Nightwood*, Julie Taylor points out the sexual and religious meaning behind the title of the novel’s penultimate chapter “Go Down, Matthew”. She also quotes Barnes’s letter to James Scott in which Barnes rejected the sexual interpretation and instead pointed to the title of the famous American gospel “Go Down, Moses”.⁵³ Although the sexual meaning of the bowing down gesture can, as Taylor points out, hardly be denied (118), perhaps we should trust Barnes in the sense that, in this particular chapter, it is the social rather than the sexual meaning that takes precedence. The gospel Barnes mentioned was closely associated with the American black community and established a direct link between the slavery of African-Americans and Jewish slavery in Egypt (the song deals with the Exodus). In *Nightwood*, Barnes drew a new parallel with the homosexual underworld of New York and Paris. When Felix bows down before the relative of an aristocrat who was the leader of the organised persecution of Jews in Russia, when O’Connor humiliates himself because of his sexuality in a church and when Miranda, in *The Antiphon*, is abused and forced to bow before her merchant brothers, they are all “oppressed so hard they could not stand”, as the lines of the gospel run. Like Freud in H.D.’s *Tribute*, O’Connor is *Nightwood*’s psychoanalyst who simultaneously occupies the role of Moses. Yet unlike his counterpart in H.D.’s memoir, he is unable to free his people from the slavery which the psycho-social economy of industrial capitalism has impressed upon their bodies, try though he does. Instead, the end of the chapter proclaims “nothing but wrath and weeping” (149). In sum, bowing down is an action that represents both stages of violence in the life of an oppressed subject (often appearing simultaneously and thus repeated and reinforced): the fear and guilt experienced as the result of a direct traumatic confrontation (like O’Connor’s arrest

⁵³ Barnes was not the only American modernist to use the song in her literary work. William Faulkner would also name his novel (*Go Down, Moses*) after it in 1942. The lyrics of the first stanza read: When Israel was in Egypt’s land/Let my people go/Oppressed so hard they could not stand/Let my people go.

on account of his homosexuality in a censored section of the novel (*Original Version* 28)) and the internalization of social phantasies one is unable (or not allowed) to approximate.

The Two Circles (Evolution and Life)

In spite of her emphasis on personal symbolism and social conditioning, Barnes was, as mentioned earlier, not averse to ideas of recapitulation. With H.D., early Bryher and early Spielrein she shared the positive value ascribed to a reversal of evolutionary and developmental chronology. Like a number of modernist authors and psychoanalysts, including her editor T.S. Eliot, James Joyce (with whom Barnes was also on friendly terms), Jung, Freud and the three protagonists of previous chapters, Barnes embraced the possibility of contemporary and ancestral voices conversing across time. What made her account specific was the inclusion of animal voices into this equation as well as her circular scheme of evolution and human life. The origins of these ideas can be traced back to the religious discourses of pre-industrial times, combined with contemporary evolutionary narratives. As with her account of the relationship between religion and science, fact and fiction, reason and emotion and the body and its environment, Barnes's views on evolution can be said to contain a pre-modern element.

A hint towards the literary and historical background of Barnes's circular temporality is provided in O'Connor's speech in "Watchman, What of the Night?". While discussing the proximity of birth and death, O'Connor quotes from a sermon by John Donne: "We are all conceived in close prison, in our mothers' wombs we are close prisoners all [...] all our life is but going out to the place of execution and death." (N 86-7) This proximity – and the related relationship between childhood and old age – is as crucial to Barnes's interpretation of individual development as the evolutionary cycle is to understanding her perspective on the history of human kind. The connection between the two is elaborated a bit further in Donne's sermon and provides valuable insight into Barnes's views on regression, sexuality and the affinity between the human and the animal world. It is therefore worth quoting at length:

Take a flat Map [...] and here is East and there is West, as far asunder as two points can be put: but reduce this flat Map to roundnesse, which is the true form, and then East and West touch one another, and are all one: so consider mans life aright to be a Circle, [...] *Dust thou*

*art and to dust thou must return;*⁵⁴ [...] *Naked I come and naked I must go;*⁵⁵ in this, the circle, the two points meet, the womb and the grave are but one point [...] there is but a step from that to this [...] for immortality, and eternity is a Circle too [...]. Of this Circle the Mathematician is our great and good God; the other Circle we make up ourselves; we bring the Cradle and the Grave together by a course of nature. (*Sermons* 199-200)

In the passage quoted, Donne outlines two circles that determine human existence: the circle of a single life extending from birth to death and the circle of eternity. While the first circle is constructed in the course of an individual lifespan, the second was created whole as soon as it began – an image equally connoting pre-determination and synchronicity (cf. *Sermons* 200). In Barnes's literary work, these concepts are combined with another pre-modern idea that proved attractive to modernist authors (especially those who cherished vitalist tendencies): metempsychosis.

In the final act of *The Antiphon*, during a crucial exchange between mother and daughter, Miranda curtly observes that "metempsychosis [is] not for asking" (*Selected Works* 212), implying that she did not choose the life (or family) she was assigned with. Barnes's interest in reincarnation was shared by her editor. In his book on T.S. Eliot, Craig Raine points to Eliot's indebtedness to the notion of metempsychosis in *The Waste Land*, relating it to the idea of the collective unconscious and the simultaneity of time (78). The observation is made with regard to Eliot's note on the hermaphroditic prophet Tiresias "throbbing between two lives" (13). As one of the figures that serve to unite all the temporal and structural dimensions in the poem, Tiresias provides the key to Eliot's perception of history. According to Raine, the prophet's gender ambiguity is not merely due to the fact that he was transformed from a man into a woman in Greek mythology and thus had the privilege of occupying two bodies and two lives. In fact, this type of transformation works as a general principle throughout the poem. Tiresias is simultaneously entrusted not only with two lives "but a great more than two" (ibid.). The same applies to the one-eyed merchant, who, as Eliot suggests, "melts into" the Phoenician sailor, who, in his turn, "is not wholly distinct" from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, just as all the violated women in the poem are actually "one woman" (23). The fluidity of personalities – and therefore also of gender identities – encountered in both Eliot

⁵⁴ Genesis 3:19

⁵⁵ Job 1:21

and Barnes, was deeply related to the early modern tradition they admired (particularly to metaphysical poets like Donne). And within this tradition, the transformations were partly enabled by the religious notion of transmigration.

During Donne's lifetime, the ancient idea of metempsychosis was incorporated into some religious and biological discourses (the distinction, as stated earlier, was still a porous one), whilst others fiercely disputed the possibility of a rational soul migrating between human and animal bodies (cf. Harvey 55). The question was of course loaded with important ethical implications, including the interrogation the supremacy of humankind as the only species on earth endowed with the capacity for reason and language.⁵⁶ Many early modern poets and philosophers sustained the belief in the tripartite division of the body/soul found in Aristotle's writings (cf. De Angelis). According to this tradition, the human soul was divided into the vegetative or nutritive soul, located in the lower parts of the body and responsible for digestion and growth, the animal or sensible soul entrusted with sensation, movement and sexual instincts and located in the region of the chest and the rational soul located in the head (cf. "On the Soul" 51 ff.). During the maturation of the embryo in the womb, the child would likewise go through all these stages, with its rational and human aspects largely developing only after birth (cf. Cassado and Savva). We will note that this ancient idea had a lot in common with the evolutionary theories of recapitulation (a human embryo or even a human child repeating the characteristic features of its animal ancestry). The most important parallel in this context is the erosion of the distinction between the human and the non-human world, since the non-human is both contained within and active in the human. In early modern times, the unsettling aspects of this claim were resolved by proclaiming the rule of the rational soul over its animal and vegetative counterparts, just as, in psychoanalysis, the rule of the libido over the regressive death instinct (and of directed over undirected thought) were intended to banish the threatening aspects of unconscious memory. Importantly, it is just these aspects that Donne's version of metempsychosis pushes into the foreground.

⁵⁶ If the soul can invade both human and animal bodies, then its human potential is present in the animal too.

Donne's satirical poem "Metempsychosis" (1601), subtitled "The Progress of the Soul", recounts one soul's journey from its first incarnation as the apple in the Garden of Eden to inhabiting the body of a woman (Cain's sister and wife). In between these two final points it becomes a mandrake, a fish, a sparrow, a whale, a mouse, an elephant, a wolf, a wolf-dog, an ape and other things besides. Although the soul appears to progress from plant life towards animal and human forms, there are a number of aspects in the narrative that turn its progress into an ironic one, as Elizabeth D. Harvey observes (67). Firstly, in the introductory epistle to the poem, Donne noted that the plant's incapacity for speech or movement and the animal's incapacity for speech were not due to the nature of their soul, but merely the material restriction of their bodies:

And therefore though this soul could not move when it was a melon, yet it may remember, and now tell me, at what lascivious banquet it was served. And though it could not speak when it was a spider, yet it can remember, and now tell me who used it for poison to attain dignity. However the bodies have dulled her other faculties, her memory hath ever been her own [...]. (*Complete Poems* 426)

Donne's choice of bodies reflects this view. The mandrake root, for instance, was traditionally thought to imitate the shape of the human body and the poem makes much of this similarity. The soul's final incarnations are therefore present and proleptically foreshadowed in the first.⁵⁷ The simultaneous presence of the past, present and future in every physical shape that the soul takes on recalls Donne's idea of the perfect circle – the circle of eternity – in which all time is as "stamped with a print" (*Sermons* 200), created whole as soon as it began and not "a Circle, made with a Compasse, that passes from point to point" (*ibid.*) as is the case with human time. Like Barnes, Donne seemed to suggest that the course of an individual life is gradually created, whereas the series of incarnations is pre-determined and reflected in each link of the chain.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Harvey shows that this type of prolepsis is a recurring strategy in the text (63 ff.).

⁵⁸ Barnes's belief in choice and free will, rather than a predetermined destiny or social hierarchy, is evidenced in her interview with commissioner Enright who presented Barnes with the view that the stars determine one's course of life and social position. When questioned by Enright if she was "under the delusion that good and bad were self-willed", Barnes responded: "To some extent – yes, I even know it." (*New York* 302) Appropriately, Enright turned out to be a fan of Voltaire and a perfect exemplar of the kind of utilitarian politics Barnes criticised throughout her life (301). The idea of pre-determination within metempsychosis should therefore not be mixed up with the belief in the predetermination of life events or one's social status, both of which were firmly rejected by Barnes.

A crucial factor also addressed here is the question of intergenerational memory, a question fundamental to the chronology of the unconscious. Donne's soul that recalls the memory of its previous lives can be said to anticipate the voices of ancestral egos speaking through the heritable substance of the Freudian unconscious or those singing in the mollusc of the brain in H.D.'s *Tribute*. Indeed, both timeless conversations can be situated within the same vitalist tradition (extending from antiquity⁵⁹ through the early modern period to Romanticism and finally to modernism).⁶⁰ Interestingly, Harvey also concludes that "Donne's poem provides a portrait of the early modern psyche that presages Freud's" (56), although her parallel is primarily based on the similarity between Donne's vegetable and animal souls and Freud's id, rather than on the notion of ancestral memory. There is, however, one significant difference between the temporality of the Freudian unconscious and Donne's soul: in the Freudian version of recapitulation, one's animalistic or "primitive" past may well resurface in the present, but the body can only predict its own future in so far as this future is the consequence of a combination of past and present influences. Due to the existence of the pre-determined circle in Donne's and Barnes's narrative, the future of the soul (and of the unconscious) proves to be much more stable.

In *Nightwood*, members of the third sex (particularly Robin and O'Connor) are described both as the past and future of modern sexual identity. This peculiar theory is closely associated with Barnes's circular view of evolution and history. In "Watchman, What of the Night?" O'Connor, dressed in woman's clothes, complains to Nora: "Am I to blame if I've been summoned before and this my last and oddest call? In the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor, and perhaps it's the memory that haunts me. The wise men say that the remembrance of things past is all we have for a future [...]." (81) The sexological theory of the third sex, which assumed that homosexual and bisexual individuals possess some psychological (sometimes also physical) characteristics of the

⁵⁹ In his poem, Donne drew on Pythagorean ideas in particular (*Complete Poems* 426).

⁶⁰ There are, of course, important anatomical distinctions between the modernist and early modern narratives. That H.D. locates the unconscious in the brain (whereas the early moderns always situated similar impulses below the head) has a lot to do with nineteenth and early-twentieth-century neurological discoveries. Also, Barnes's study of reflex behaviours implicitly draws on contemporary scientific knowledge.

opposite sex, was accepted by Barnes and is, as mentioned before, frequently referenced in *Nightwood* and the *Almanac*.⁶¹ What is of particular interest here, though, is the fusion of sexological knowledge with the notion of metempsychosis. As in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, O'Connor's gender ambiguity is conditioned by the memory of his past lives in which he used to be a woman. Like Tiresias, *Nightwood's* prophet is "throbbing between two lives", sometimes more than two. Significantly, O'Connor's current incarnation is also his "last call", just as Robin is proclaimed to be the only person at a social gathering "who has come to the end of her existence and will return no more" (64). The definition of the third sex as both the beginning and end of the cycle of evolution and metempsychosis is succinctly expressed in O'Connor's comparison of the invert with the doll and the fairy-tale prince/princess: "The last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy, and the boy who should have been a girl! The love of the last doll was foreshadowed in that love of the first." (133) Once again, we can trace Barnes's conversion of scientific theories into visual narration. The association of the third sex with the doll is likely to be a play on the psychoanalytic theories that described homosexuality as a regression to the pre-Oedipal sexual economy of childhood or a return to original bisexuality. For Barnes, however, such a regression is not an exceptional situation in the civilised adult, but the end-point of Donne's perfect circle. Even if a person is heterosexual, the gender-ambiguous body of the third sex awaits them as one of their future incarnations (i.e. the final one). In this context, although homosexuality is still described as childlike, the connotation loses the negative implications regression had for Jung or Freud. The comparison with the prince/princess (123) in turn invokes the restoration of "primitive" culture, of fairy-tale time. Just as the doll represents the return to childhood, myths and fairy-tales represent a regression to the "childhood of the race" (*Totem and Taboo* 113; cf. chapter two). Barnes's characterisation of homosexual (and bisexual) identity is thus, at least as far as its regressive capacity goes, comparable to H.D.'s. In chapter two, we explained how H.D. linked this regression with special artistic and visionary powers. Barnes did not. But she did posit the third sex as the alpha and omega of social evolution.

⁶¹ See note 31.

The same is true of the general narrative of evolutionary progress that involves both animals and humans. Barnes's representation of *Nightwood's* characters (particularly Robin) as animalistic has been noted numerous times (Seitler, *Modernist Articulations* 164-173, Blyn 521 ff., Marcus 176). We have also observed that similar imagery is used in relation to pre-industrial figures in her early fiction. That Barnes's work employs images of human to animal "descent" and primitivist notions is indisputable. Already in 1915, we find Barnes in the position that would later be occupied by Robin, facing the caged animals in a circus and "finding herself alone with [...] her iniquitous past" (*New York* 197). In *Nightwood*, Robin becomes one with this past. She is the "beast turning human", "an image of a forgotten experience [...] cast on racial memory" (33). In this sense, Robin performs the same mnemonic function as the ape Dinah in Barnes's article "The Girl and the Gorilla", who makes the viewer "remember something that has gone before" (*New York* 183). When considering the ethical implications of these images, one should take into account Barnes's circular scheme of evolution as well as the fact that, due to her belief in metempsychosis, the term "memory" is to be taken literally and not merely as a metaphorical way of saying that, in evolutionary terms, humans have animal ancestry. Evidently, the latter claim is quite different from saying, as Barnes did, that each and every one of us used to *be* a specific animal in their past life and that our soul – or our unconscious – still stores the memory of these lives. Just as Barnes's circle of history proceeds from childhood and mythology to civilisation and then recedes back to its beginning, her evolutionary circle (which is also the soul's "progress") proceeds from animal to human and back to animal. This circle of metempsychosis is again very similar to the one in Donne's poem, where the same soul occupies human and animal bodies, the only difference between them being the body's expressive capacity (the ability to speak).

The much-discussed final scene in *Nightwood*, in which Robin crawls on all fours and imitates Nora's dog, can be understood as a visual representation of this circular movement and of the union between the wo/man and the animal. Indeed, similar images pervade the entire Barnesian oeuvre. In the *Almanac*, Evangeline Musset "went to the Cockpit [...] and crowed with the best", "mooed with the Herd" and "hooted for hoot with the Quail on the Spinney, calling for Brides Wing and a

Feather to flock with" (15). In *Ryder*, Amelia's bedroom is entered by a black ox (98-9). Even if, in all three cases, the encounters are interpreted as sexual (as they might be), these should be read like similar scenes in ancient mythology or in Donne's narrative. In "Metempsychosis", the distinction between the human and the animal is undermined not only by the soul's identity, but also by the fact that one of its last incarnations is an ape that nearly succeeds in seducing Adam's daughter. After the ape is killed, his soul flees into the embryo of a human (Cain's daughter) and the child comes out "where the Ape would have gone in" (*Complete Poems* 458). Though the sexual act remains unfulfilled, the soul's final incarnation appears to achieve the union between the human and its closest animal ancestor (cf. Harvey 58). The close association between birth, death and sexuality in early modern literature and symbolism is often referenced by Barnes, especially in *The Antiphon* (cf. *Selected Works* 196). In the cases just outlined, one of the foundations of this association is the link between the sexual act and the soul's passage from body to body. If one of the bodies happens to be that of an animal, this is but one way of subverting the privileged position of the reasonable human within the animal kingdom.

Apart from the circle of eternity/evolution/civilization, there is also the circle of an individual life: the passage from birth to death and from youth to old age. Though reference to it is made in *Nightwood* (88) and Barnes's short fiction (we will remember Pauvla Agrippa's equation of birth and death), this circle is most extensively discussed in *The Antiphon*. At the beginning of the play, we find Augusta sitting on one half of a gryphon which used to be a car in a roundabout (*Selected Works* 81). The other half of the mythological hybrid⁶² is situated at the other side of the table. As the play ends, the two halves of the beast are brought together and it is now referred to as both a child-bed and a stage (192, 223). The circular movement of life and family history is indicated by the circular motion of the roundabout, which also references the passage of time. Needless to say, bringing together the two halves of the gryphon symbolises the closure of the circle. The association is emphasised by Miranda's narration of her birth at the beginning of the act which

⁶² The gryphon is a mythological creature whose back half resembles a lion's while its front half is that of an eagle.

ends with her death and the fusion of her identity with her mother's (194). In addition, the circling of family members around each other (Miranda and Augusta in the third (212) and the brothers around their mother and sister in the second act (175-180)) serve both to undermine the stability of their singular personalities and to connote the cycles of time and history. Miranda's reference to a "perambulator rolling to the tomb" coupled with "death with a baby in its mouth" (219) verbally reiterates the same image that the movements of the characters and the gryphon have already embodied through motion and visual symbolism. In fact, the three symbolic dimensions fuse into one as Miranda's visually charged language is transformed into striking images in the imagination of the audience, while the static gryphon carries the memory of circular movement actually performed by the actors. It is crucial to stress that the circle of life always contains and implies the circle of evolution and history: death is birth because the soul is born again and identities are exchangeable because one body is replaced for another throughout the course of history. Indeed, the figure of the gryphon – the mythological creature which is both the commencement and closure of *The Antiphon* – is a suitable illustration of these cycles as it is, in itself, the fusion of two animal identities. Just as the lion and the eagle are divided at the beginning, but eventually fuse into a single child-death bed, the characters of Miranda and Augusta begin as separate, but become one by sharing the same tragic fate. If Robin closes the soul's journey by "becoming animal", Miranda seals her individual path by becoming one with her mother, her death mimicking the prenatal unity of mother and child.

Barnes and Eliot between Individual and Universal History

As we saw in the preceding two chapters, Barnes was not the only author to turn to early modern narratives. H.D. and Bryher shared her admiration for the Renaissance. All three women were intrigued by the amalgamation of science and art that early modern texts provided, as they were by their vitalist approach to the body in its relation to the world. A further source of attraction had to do with the historical circumstances that gave rise to this type of thought. For a number of modernist artists, the scientific discoveries, religious divisions and political turmoil of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries provided a suitable mirror-image for the social anxieties of their own time (cf. Kaup 89). This leads us to the third circle

in Barnes's oeuvre, which underlies the other two: the circle of trauma. As for H.D., for Barnes this was a trauma wrought by modernity: by war, capitalist economy, mechanist science and the social divisions that ensued from these. These divisions entailed the strict separation of science and religion, fact and fiction (myth), nature and technology and reason and emotion. Related to them were the scientific (including certain psychoanalytic) narratives of social evolution, which associated women, homo- and bisexuals and pre-industrial societies with the less valued element in this set of oppositions. Barnes's solution consisted in reaching out to a time, and style, before these divisions and progress narratives existed. Her visual and emotionally charged language defies the distinction between religion, mythology and science by converting contemporary scientific ideas into the discourse of the other two. In a similar manner, Barnes's characters defy the post-Enlightenment principles of rationality, sublimation and impermeable subjectivity and could therefore be said to share a pre-industrial psychological economy.

Trauma is an intensely personal event. Yet, as we have seen in the course of the preceding chapters, narratives offering the stability of an invariable, universal framework were often formed in response to collective traumatic occurrences. Trauma's ambivalent position between the personal and the universal thus reflects one of the foundational questions of this thesis: the oscillation between universal history and individual/socio-cultural specificity found in psychoanalysis and modernist literature. It therefore remains to sum up the relationship between the personal and the universal in Barnes's work as well as to compare her approach with that of her editor. Many critics have recognised the import Eliot's conception of tradition and myth had in his endorsement of and interventions into Barnes's work. Indeed, Eliot's views on psychology and history are easily compared not only to those of Barnes, but also of the other authors discussed here. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot's famous sketch of the poet's relationship with the past, we are faced with the division into the temporal sphere of the poet's material circumstances (their experience) and the timeless sphere of "the mind of Europe" (38) i.e. Europe's literary tradition. Though this mind is capable of change, it "is a development which abandons nothing *en route*" (ibid.). In its resistance to time (its incapacity to forget), the European mind is reminiscent of the Freudian unconscious,

in which all memories are perfectly preserved. The poet's extinction of their personality through their work, as advocated by Eliot, also recalls the extinction of the individual body (soma) in favour of the heritable substance of the id, which contains the essential history of countless generations.

H.D.'s and Bryher's understanding of the process of artistic creation – as the synthesis and liberation of eternal symbols in the realm of the poetic mind – closely resembles Eliot's, for whom the poet's mind is also “a medium” (41), a receptacle used for “storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together” (40). It is important to emphasise that none of the bio-technological systems of the three poets imagine the medium/receptacle as simply passive. It is an active component in the artistic process, without which the synthesis in question would not occur. Yet in all three cases, the author's privileged access to the timeless poetic realm is described as a biological or mental trait that sets them apart from other people, rather than the consequence of individual experience, personality or even education. “The poet,” says Eliot, “has not a personality to express, but a medium [...] in which impressions and experiences combine in new and unexpected ways” (41). In the present context, Eliot's claim that he is “struggling to attack [...] the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul” (ibid.) becomes highly relevant. Not only is it related to the early modern concepts and the theory of metempsychosis outlined earlier, but its rejection of the self-presence of the rational, individual personality shares historical roots with the Freudian unconscious, which also shows us that the ego (which is this rational self-presence) is insignificant in comparison to the unconscious which precedes and exceeds its existence. In both cases, the individual is lost in favour of a timeless historical dimension, which is more valuable because it outstrips the transient state of the individual.⁶³ In sum, one could argue that Eliot's vitalist perception of the European mind also rejects the post-Enlightenment principles of individuality and rationality.

⁶³ Spielrein's early definition of the relationship between the unconscious and individual experience, in which a person's language and behaviour results from the fusion of individual and unconscious imagery, but it is the unconscious component that enables communication (see chapter one), can also be nicely compared with Eliot's scheme.

In view of these similarities, it does not come as a surprise that Eliot should challenge psychological and social progress narratives in a manner comparable to that of H.D. and Barnes. According to him, the development of literary tradition should not be regarded as an improvement from the artist's point of view. It is even not "an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist [...] perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery" (38). Unlike Freud or Jung, but like H.D. and Barnes, Eliot did not see human psychology (or literature) in terms of advancement. The progress so celebrated by the proponents of science, technology and various political groups was for him merely a matter of technological growth and an increasingly global economy which he, just as H.D. and Barnes, saw in negative rather than positive terms (it is enough to have one look at *The Waste Land* to perceive this). We should not extrapolate from this similarity, however, and conclude that Eliot's political views were akin to those of H.D. or Barnes.⁶⁴ What the overlap points to is merely the common idea of a timeless historical realm situated in the human mind – a realm in which individual existence is cancelled out in favour of a lasting communal one – as shared by various authors and analysts on the Right and the Left between World War I and the 1930s.

Barnes agreed with Eliot's premise that the personal needed to be transformed in order to create a work of art. Early accounts of Barnes's relationship with her editor mainly presented Eliot's preference for the universal and Barnes's insistence on the individual in terms of a (gender-based) dichotomy (Curry, Fuchs, Faltejskova).⁶⁵ Recent critics tend to acknowledge Barnes's own position between the universal and the individual as well as her alignment with high-modernist tendencies (cf. Fleischer, Taylor 42-3, Caselli 194 ff.). Julie Taylor, for instance, claims that the highly structured and ritualistic repetition of traumatic events in Barnes's literary work helped her to gain control over her family history (cf. "The Excellent Arrangement"), just as, we might add, the universal history lodged in the

⁶⁴ In spite of a type of elitism occasionally endorsed by both, Barnes and H.D. can be situated on the political Left, whereas Eliot endorsed conservative views. On Eliot's politics, see Levenson and Cheyette.

⁶⁵ Although Faltejskova's volume on Barnes was published in 2010, it can still be aligned with this earlier trend. On the other hand, Fleischer's article, though published in 1998, was one of the first to recognise the importance of religious concepts in the relationship between Barnes and Eliot. As ever, the comparison between earlier and later trends can only be taken generally, but there will always be significant exceptions.

unconscious often served as a shield against the violent realities of war and social upheaval.

Barnes's negotiation of the personal and the universal was of course not identical with Eliot's. On the one hand, her two circles do draw a clear distinction between the temporality of individual existence and the timeless, simultaneous dimension of evolution and cultural life. Barnes's historical system equally represents the individual body as a medium and disputes the notion of rational personality and the soul's unity. As with Eliot, H.D. and early Bryher, her circular model defies the imperative of increasing rationality and the control of instincts present in Freud's, Jung's and Sachs's narratives of progress. On the other hand, the Barnesian circle had its specificities (of crucial political significance) in comparison to her mentor. First, the ethical implications of a circle that returns to its starting point challenge the negative associations of regression as well as the hierarchies between the primitive and the civilised and the human and the animal. Secondly, the personal and emotional sphere did retain a higher importance for Barnes than it did for Eliot. While Eliot struggled to represent *Nightwood's* characters as symbols of universal human suffering in the novel's preface (xii), Barnes was emphatic about the social causes of their ailments. In addition, her notion of the permeable body that incorporates its environment is much closer to Spielrein's and Bryher's socio-cultural model of the unconscious. Barnes's work keeps a balance between a universal perception of evolutionary and cultural history – in which the child represents the first and the third sex the last of the soul's stations in the same way as the soul always migrates from animal to human forms and back – and a keen interest in social justice and individual suffering in the present.

Conclusion: What is Real(ism)?

In a footnote – added in 1924 – to his 1896 paper on the aetiology of hysteria, Sigmund Freud wrote: “All of this is true, but it must be remembered that at the time I wrote it I had not yet freed myself from my *overvaluation* of reality and my *low valuation* of phantasy.” (203)¹ Significantly, this was the paper in which Freud first elaborated the so-called seduction theory, the hypothesis that all hysterical patients suffered some form of sexual abuse in childhood (before the onset of puberty). The patients’ failure to formulate this traumatic experience in words eventually gave rise to psychosomatic symptoms in hysteria (cf. *Studies on Hysteria* 2-17). As is well known, Freud later gave up the seduction theory and claimed that some of the memories his patients came up with in the consulting room never actually happened – at least not in the form recalled – but were phantasies cathected with affect.² The 1924 footnote points to a central question of this thesis, and of psychoanalysis: How should one define the relationship between phantasy and reality? If a phantasy comes to bear on the patient’s physical sensations, thought and behaviour patterns, can it still be described as “unreal”? From screen memories to repression and the distortion of dreams, psychoanalysis uncovered a series of defence mechanisms which challenged the stable opposition between phantasy and empirical truth (fact and fiction) that post-Enlightenment medical sciences held in high esteem. In an effort to salvage the old opposition, some psychoanalysts presented human and social development as a progress leading from the egocentric phantasy-world of the pleasure principle (associated with the religious and mythological perspective) to the objective realm of the reality principle (associated with industry and science). This intricate set of relations had all the elements of a psychoanalytic complex: it included the surfacing of a previously repressed concept (the unstable boundary between the fantastic and the real, and between literature and science) and the compromise that

¹ Italics in original.

² More recently, scholars like Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson have argued that Freud gave up his seduction theory due to external pressures and an unwillingness to believe that familial sexual abuse could be so frequent (Masson’s book *The Assault on Truth* was first published in 1984). Whether one chooses to designate the sexual abuse of young children as the sole possible cause of hysteria or to opt for a more encompassing model of familial and social trauma (as was done by Spielrein and her Russian collaborators), the traumatic origin of hysterical symptoms remains indisputable. Freud’s intention was not so much to deny that trauma had taken place, but to stress the mind’s capacity to mould and transform our recollections.

arose from resistance to this concept (the privilege accorded to scientific reality in Freud's and Jung's progress narratives). Yet, as we have seen, these progress narratives were themselves part of a more wide-ranging "phantasy", which we have been referring to as the vitalist current in psychoanalysis, film and literature, and whose emergence and form depended on a specific set of global relations: industrialisation, the rapid spread of evolutionary narratives and their social applications, religious crisis, shifting class and gender relations and the devastating effect of the two world wars.

In psychoanalysis, the vitalist tendency primarily revolved around two ideas: the notion of universal, trans-generational and trans-cultural unconscious symbols and the transcendental understanding of drives. The theories of cultural advancement in Freud's and Jung's work were closely related to the latter. Both Freud and Jung accepted the premise that the invention of language and culture depended on the diversion of the libido from sexual purposes (sublimation). And since, for both psychoanalysts, the history of every society developed from egocentrism and the phantasy-world of mythology and religion to the realistic perspective of science, it was clear that the "fictional" worldview of the former required less sublimation. Indeed, this was the rationale adopted by both Jung and Hanns Sachs – a steadfast Freudian – when they attempted to explain the lack of technological progress in the ancient world (see chapter four). In 1920, Freud added a regressive force to this original narrative and called it the death drive. In contrast to the libido, the death drive needed to be internalised in order to ensure progress and prevent mass violence. Like sublimation, this internalisation could only be performed in a certain measure without harm to the individual and its increase through the generations represented the measuring rod of cultural advancement (cf. "Why War?"; see chapter one). Although, at one point in their careers, all of the protagonists of this thesis were proponents of vitalism, their universal histories were not founded on the same principles. Rather, their narratives of progress evidence the adaptation of Freud's and Jung's theories to their own cultural background and social position.

By making the death drive an essential component of the sexual instinct,³ Spielrein neutralised the adverse position of non-Western women on Freud's and Jung's scale of progress.⁴ Formulated in the wake of the 1905 Revolution and the Russo-Japanese war, her destruction essay supports the historical link between war, neurosis and the invention of a destructive instinct. Spielrein's version of the death drive drew on Marxist dialectics and Russian philosophical sources that established a link between creative transformation and destructive forces, which testifies to the political and socio-cultural specificity of her approach (see chapter one). H.D.'s intervention into psychoanalytic narratives was primarily concerned with the notion of universal symbolism. For her, as for Freud, the unconscious was a sphere of perfectly preserved collective memories beyond the damaging effects of time and physical decay. However, in H.D.'s work, access to the hive of ancestral voices was primarily granted to the bisexual female visionary, and, if they chose to take her lead, to the psychoanalyst. In H.D.'s film criticism, this chosen community of analysts and artists operates as the life-giving "leaven" in the "lump" of anonymous crowds (*CU* 105), just as, in Freud's late writings, a stratum of (Jewish) men endowed with an increased capacity for sublimation and internalisation of aggressive impulses is aligned with the progressive influence of the libido (see chapters one and two). H.D.'s indebtedness to American Transcendentalism and Romanticism, mentioned in the second chapter, is an indication of the vitalist tradition she resorted to in formulating the details of her psychological theories. In the early 1920s, Bryher was also a believer in the universal symbolic language accessible to poets, but her poetic figure was not the same as H.D.'s. In line with Bryher's gender identity, it was defined not only by pre-oedipal sexuality, but also by the gender fluidity of childhood. In chapter three, we saw how this image was conditioned by Bryher's early years as well as the mythological and heroic narratives she encountered at the time. Finally, Djuna Barnes fused early modern religious and contemporary biological narratives to devise a circular model of evolution and life, in which the third sex functioned as

³ While Freud also claimed that the libido and the death drive often work together (see for instance "Instincts" 138), in his work the cultural function of the two drives is largely oppositional. For Spielrein, on the other hand, destruction is a necessary pre-condition of creation.

⁴ As explained in chapters one and four, women, homosexuals and "primitive" societies were associated with narcissism and early developmental stages in Freudian and Jungian progress narratives.

both the beginning and the end of the soul's human incarnations. In brief, each author modified the evolutionary, historical and psychoanalytic narratives they encountered in their environment to suit their specific needs, apprehensions and defences, and continued to transform them throughout their work.

In contrast to Jung, Freud, Sachs, Jean Piaget and many others, the women in this volume did not believe that individual or social progress was characterised by decreasing narcissism/egocentrism and increasing adaptation to (scientific) reality. In accordance with their changing perception of the human body and the cycles of nature and history, each of them devised her own definition of what reality was. For early Spielrein, it was the outcome of the fusion of individual experiences and collective ancestral complexes. An event in the individual's life would trigger collective memories, which had hitherto lain dormant in the unconscious, and these would provide the individual experience with emotional charge and meaning. In her later work, the Russian psychoanalyst renounced this vitalist scheme and instead studied the individual mind in interaction with its social environment. According to Spielrein, this dynamic relationship gave rise to emotions, subconscious images and conscious thoughts, all of which were inextricably linked and incomplete without the others. Her new model thus discarded the hierarchy between directed (logical, conscious) and undirected (subliminal, fantastic) thought found in the work of her Swiss and Austrian colleagues.

H.D. believed that the unconscious contained eternal symbols or memories passed on from generation to generation. These memories were celebrated as the superior form of reality, in contrast to the transient nature of individual, quotidian recollections and events. In addition, these collective images were said to possess a healing property. For H.D., they represented a universal language that could bring unity and peace to the post-war world. After developing an interest in the cinema in the 1920s, the American poet infused contemporary films (particularly German and Russian ones) with these ancestral memories, whilst again stressing their significance in providing solace and protection against the traumatic excess of post-war reality. Concisely put, the higher reality of eternal symbols (revealed in dreams, visions, films, literary texts, psychoanalysis and works of art) needed to protect the twentieth-century citizen against the violent reality of war-time and post-war

deprivation. In a certain sense, H.D. was right to talk about the healing properties of the universal unconscious for, in her personal history as well as in the history of psychoanalysis, this was indeed one of its functions. In H.D.'s interpretation of the jelly-fish vision (which occurred after a series of traumatic events she had experienced in World War I), the glass dome that protects her from death looming outside fuses with the idea of unconscious memory. In her World-War-II work, the symbols give way to an imagined ancestral community, lodged in brain matter, which provides comfort and stability in the face of destruction. H.D.'s life and literary work serve as an example of the restorative role that the narrative of the universal unconscious played for a number of analysts and literary figures between the 1910s and the 1950s.

For the proponents of materialist psychoanalysis, whose ranks were joined by Bryher and Sachs in the late 1920s, psychological realities were accessed by investigating the individual mind in relation to its social surroundings. Like Spielrein and her Russian collaborators (Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria), Bryher and her analyst believed that actions and thought patterns which are repeated often enough become reflexes. The mechanism of establishing conditioned reflexes or what one might, in this context, refer to as social conditioning, formed the basis of their criticism of the entertainment industry. According to Bryher and Sachs, this industry was one of the social channels that produced and reinforced the phantasies which the audience internalised. With respect to American and European popular cinema, this relationship between the filmmakers and the cinema-going public was reproached for two reasons. First, the projected phantasies were middle-class ideals which remained out of reach for the working-class audience, but, at the same time, seduced them into submission. Secondly, both the working environment and the entertainment industry prevented individuals from transforming reality in accordance with their individual desires and complexes – regarded by left-wing analysts as a basic human need – and were therefore responsible for the generation of a considerable amount of unhappiness and frustration. As we saw in the preceding chapters, however, mechanistic attempts to turn the individual into a uniform social ideal (“community standard pattern” as Bryher would say) were a common feature of communist and capitalist systems.

In response to this tendency, German and Russian films praised by Bryher and Sachs sought to make visible the repressed problems of both political regimes. When Sachs accused censorship boards of the maintaining of “a fiction” (*CU 300*), what he had in mind was not only the process of hardwiring collective fictions into the audience’s brains (thus turning them into reality), but also the prevention of questions such as poverty, sexual exploitation, lack of housing and family violence from being openly discussed in the public realm. Bryher and her analyst did not believe that these social issues could be resolved simply by offering people a new collective phantasy to identify with, but by investigating the sources of each problem – as expressed on the individual body/mind – and gradually working towards altering society in a way that corresponded to the psychological requirements of individuals and groups. In this sense, their suggested methods are reminiscent of those outlined by the young Marx in a letter to his friend Arnold Ruge eight decades earlier: “[...] we do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle. [...] We develop new principles for the world out of the world’s own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it *has to* acquire, even if it does not want to.” (“Ruthless Criticism” n. p.) Related to this, and to their psychoanalytic background, was Bryher’s and Sachs’s advocacy of gradual social change (“the slow revolution”). Psychoanalysts were well aware that every effort to alter ingrained mental habits required a lot of time, patience and energy and that a swift, radical break with the past that politicians and artists the world over promised was not achievable, or – to return to the question of phantasy/fiction and reality – not “realistic”.

Even if they were not always conscious of this, the relationship between phantasy and reality which formed the basis of Bryher’s and Sachs’s model of social conditioning was incompatible with the binary division between egocentric phantasy and empirical reality. A collective phantasy that becomes inscribed into the bodies of political subjects becomes real, just as a person will always attempt to adapt reality to their desires and complexes. While, in Jung’s, Freud’s and Sachs’s own story of individual and social development, this assimilative mechanism was designated as “primitive” and destined to be replaced by adaptation, materialist psychoanalysis

posited the balance between assimilation and adaptation as the fundamental principle of human interaction with the world (see chapters one and four).⁵

Barnes's work offers the most extensive interrogation of the opposition between fiction and reality (and literature and science). By converting the language of science into emotionally charged symbolic images – akin to those found in literature, film and subliminal thought – and fusing them with religious and fantastic narratives, Barnes subverted the psychoanalytic hierarchy between pleasure, myth, phantasy and subconscious thought on the one hand and science, reality and conscious reasoning on the other. At the same time, like Bryher and Sachs, she demonstrated how toxic social phantasies are inscribed into and reflexively repeated by the bodies of the oppressed.

Different perceptions of reality led to different representations. H.D.'s symbolic framework was different from Barnes's use of symbolism. The realism of Pabst and directors belonging to New Objectivity or of Russian filmmakers who, like Abram Room, insisted on representing "life as it is" was different from the dogmatic approach of socialist realists, whose rendition of "life as it should be" (Youngblood 121; see chapter three) openly admitted itself to be a utopian imperative imposed on public consciousness. Bryher's documentary style, which recorded the actions and conversations (rather than thought processes) of "ordinary" characters was quite unlike Barnes's hyperbolic and grotesque imagery. But Barnes's excessive, visual language was "realistic" in another way. With its resemblance to subliminal imagery and its emotional intensity, it offered as effective a representation of suffering and human emotional life as the more "sober" types of realism that rejected all use of the fantastic. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, the psychoanalytic narratives these authors adopted were transformed not only in accordance with their respective worldviews, but also with these stylistic arrangements.

There are, of course, a number of questions that the research conducted here was not able to address at sufficient length, but which certainly warrant critical attention. Regarding the materialist narrative in psychoanalysis and silent cinema

⁵ In chapter one, we saw that Jung, Jean Piaget and early Spielrein differentiated between assimilation (adapting outside reality to one's wishes) and adaptation (adapting one's wishes to reality). The same dichotomy was, of course, present in Freud's differentiation between the pleasure and reality principle.

(see chapter three), there is the wider scientific and artistic context in which Bryher's idea of cinematic (and literary) realism was produced. It is known that Vygotsky's psychological studies influenced Eisenstein's filmmaking, in particular his theories of montage (Marcus 355). Eisenstein, in turn, discussed his psychological and political conceptions with German and British film directors. A question that poses itself in this context is: How important was the influence of the materialist psychoanalysis developed by Spielrein, Vygotsky and Luria in this exchange? This thesis contains a preliminary exploration of its impact on Bryher's representation of Soviet films in *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), but this is obviously only a small part of the intense circulation of psychological and political ideas that took place between materialist psychoanalysts in Russia, Russian film directors, Weimar filmmakers and psychoanalysts and the British and American voices featured on the pages of *Close Up*. Although critical inquiries into the relationship between Weimar cinema and psychoanalysis have already begun,⁶ the specific links between the different types of psychoanalysis and filmmaking in Russia and Germany (and their influence on Western left-wing writers and film critics) remain insufficiently explored. A good starting point for such an investigation would be a closer look at the exchange between G.W. Pabst, Karl Abraham, Hanns Sachs, Sergei Eisenstein and *Close Up*'s contributors, including H.D., Bryher and Kenneth MacPherson.

With respect to Bryher's own work, a number of its interesting and innovative features have only been touched upon here. Primarily, this refers to her two attempts at a realistic representation of the "common" person's life during wartime (*Civilians* (1927) and *Beowulf* (1948)). While the influence of Russian and German cinema is most obvious in these semi-documentary works of fiction, the focus on the lives of ordinary people caught up in the maelstrom of wars, revolutions and socio-political changes persists in Bryher's popular historical novels, which have been persistently ignored by critics. Apart from being Bryher's attempts to straddle the divide between highbrow and lowbrow literature, these novels constitute her fictional efforts of dealing with the war experience. Rather than ending with images of universal brotherhood and healing femininity like H.D.'s

⁶ Cf. for instance Fuetchner.

World-War-II fiction, Bryher's novels repeatedly tell the story of peace and cultural expansion disrupted by violent conflict, thus projecting the experience of the 1920s and the 1930s into different historical periods (from ancient Greece and Rome to Elizabethan Britain). Following *Beowulf*, a book actually set in World-War-II London, her historical novels remain preoccupied with the question of everyday existence and human relationships in a culture where life has been violently perturbed and identity categories have changed beyond recognition. For Bryher, what remains permanent in this context is neither the universal unconscious nor poetic prophecy, but lasting emotional bonds within small communities that help individuals to survive.

The vitalist trend in psychoanalysis and modernist literature also offers various ways of expanding on the cases discussed here. A central concern of this thesis (particularly in chapters two, three and four) is the role of recapitulation and the collective unconscious (as it was defined in psychoanalytic narratives of the time) in the attempts of modernist queer women to make sense not only of their identity, but also of their role in society and the political events surrounding them. This question is certainly not fully answered by looking at H.D., Bryher and Barnes. However, their histories do serve to show how these psychoanalytic ideas were adapted to each author's social position, which included much more than their sexual or gender identity and thus made it necessary to investigate the complex conversation between their socio-cultural heritage and the type of psychoanalysis they encountered and decided to embrace.

If one decides to renounce the focus on gender and sexuality, the question obtains an even wider scope. The brief comparison of the evolutionary narratives in the work of H.D. and Osip Mandelstam (see Interlude) calls for an investigation of the varying political roles of recapitulation and vitalist theories in Russia, Europe and the USA, particularly in the interwar period. Barnes's notion of circular evolution and metempsychosis could, on the other hand, be more extensively compared to those of James Joyce and T.S. Eliot. While all three authors shared a critical stance towards capitalism and mechanism as well as a circular conception of time, the political ideas underlying their understanding of human and biological

history (and the individual's position within them) were not always compatible.⁷ Finally, there is the general question of how psychoanalytic notions of recapitulation and/or the collective unconscious were subverted and used as a means of political struggle by modernist writers who were members of other oppressed groups associated with "primitive beginnings", such as those of other races or non-industrial nations, a topic which has been explored but by no means exhausted.⁸

The tension between the desire for eternal communities in the mind and the need to ground psychology in the concrete circumstances of one's individual and social existence – a tension characteristic of the modernist period – remains an essential factor in the imagination of socio-political realities in modernist psychology and art. The interventions of queer and non-Western women writers and psychoanalysts into these narratives have helped to uncover and subvert their implicit hierarchies and biased notions of progress (notions that privileged masculinity, heterosexuality, capitalism and Western science). The cases outlined in the preceding chapters demonstrate how imaginary communities (such as the collective unconscious) could easily turn into a political and conceptual battlefield, while also pointing to the global developments that engendered the nearly simultaneous need for such communities in the East and the West. The importance of materialist psychoanalysis in altering the psychological approach and, to some extent, the political worldview of Spielrein and Bryher, along with its wider impact in the context of modernist cinema, indicates interesting new directions in the study of the relationship between psychoanalysis and left-wing thought. The fact that this is also the least explored part of the histories presented here proves that there is still much to learn about how the findings of "Freud, Marx and Pavlov" were used and combined in different parts of the globe.

⁷ Eliot's work retains more than a little nostalgia for the ordered, hierarchical world of pre-World-War-I Europe (cf. Levenson), while Joyce's views were decidedly left-wing.

⁸ On how this was done by black American writers of the Harlem Renaissance, see chapter two in Eli Zaretsky's *Political Freud*. For a good discussion of the question of race in psychoanalysis, see also Celia Brickman. On psychoanalysis and its uses in anticolonial struggles, see Khanna (although this book focuses primarily on psychoanalysis after World War II).

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