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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about time, narrative, and war. It examines changes in the registration and the representation of time provoked by the protracted war of attrition of 1914-1918 and its prolonged consequences throughout the 1920s and 1930s. What I call stuckness in time is the paralyzed awareness of duration without a complementary sense of advancement in event, action, or plot. Against characterizations that cast modernism as obsessed with speed, novelty, mobility, and instantaneity, I pose the situation of a war that stretched from weeks to years in a scenario of dragging cataclysm, spatial sprawl, and little strategic gain. Through readings of authors including Ford Madox Ford, Elizabeth Bowen, Rebecca West, T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett, I ask the question of how narrative form—considered since Aristotle to comprise the representation of an action—represents the predicament of temporal continuation in the absence of perceptible action or defined eventfulness.[1] What happens when time continues but plot and progress stop?

In fundamental ways, the scale, mortality, and duration of the war of attrition fundamentally altered notions of space and time for those who lived through it. At the macro level of history and the micro level of individual experience, the war's temporal prolongation without climax or resolution aggressively challenged the relation between narrative and plot—that is, the relation of events within a structure of causation or progress. The war experience and its human and economic cost demanded new ways of representing temporal experience as well as narrating history. As event and phenomenological experience, the war instituted a decisive break from what had come before. Yet it also engendered temporalities of perpetuation, both during the war and in the long years of reconstruction afterward. What narrative or poetic forms could be adopted to the non-progressive continuity of war and the chronic slowness of recovery? And in avant-garde circles, how could such temporalities be reconciled with modernism's attachment to the new?

[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Dover Thrift, 1997).

The works I examine in this dissertation—Ford Madox Ford's *A Man Could Stand Up* (1926), Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier* (1918), Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris* (1935), T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and critical essays, and Samuel Beckett's early writings—experiment with temporal dilation and the sense of an unreachable future while maintaining attachments to realism that emphasize the permeability of literary narration to the historical.

In my first chapter, author and veteran Ford Madox Ford discovers a way to represent frontline temporalities of attenuation by narrating the experience of sonic perception. For the trench soldier deprived of sight, events are signaled by sound; the sonic phenomena of technological warfare announce threat or injury. Yet as Ford himself experienced, such sounds become both the source and the sign of trauma.

For Rebecca West and Elizabeth Bowen, it is not a specific sense capacity but the embedded histories of bodies and objects that non-discursively registers wartime. Civilian and combatant experiences of the war and its aftereffects collide in the substance of bodies that absorb incidents and leak residues of other times. I connect the uncanny bodies of West's and Bowen's postwar fictions to major public discourses of mourning and monumentalization, and to national forms of memory like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, that specifically rely upon symbolic logics of bodily substitution for their impact.

In my third chapter, Prufrock's body in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" reacts like a metronome to the reiterations of bourgeois life. Locked into a continuum of immediacy, Prufrock is incapable of seizing meaningful experience. It is Eliot's development of the notion of tradition that allows him to take the literary canon out of the anxious bodies of his urban speakers

and the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," into an ideal, eternal order.[2]

In my final chapter, Samuel Beckett's writing and thinking in the late 1920s and early 1930s brings together these three approaches to the bodily experience—and the literary representation—of time. In his early essays, Beckett deconstructs the shapes that narrative gives to temporal experience, at the level of history (in Vico) and of the individual (in Joyce and Proust). Attacking the notions of progress and teleology conceptually, personally, and aesthetically, Beckett asks what plot can look like when causality is abandoned, and how continuation can be represented when neither the past nor the future can be accessed.

[2] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 177.

INTRODUCTION

"Do you know the cry common to those in purgatory ? Io fui."

- Samuel Beckett, Letter of 2 August 1948 to Georges Duthuit

This dissertation is about time, narrative, and war. It examines changes in the registration and the representation of time provoked by the protracted war of attrition of 1914-1918 and its prolonged consequences throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Against characterizations that cast modernism as obsessed with speed, novelty, mobility, and instantaneity, I pose the situation of a war that stretched from weeks to years in a scenario of dragging cataclysm, spatial sprawl, biopolitical degradation, and little strategic gain. The First World War names the mass public experience of an inconceivably protracted historical event whose implications reached into the lives of virtually everyone on the European continent and many in the colonies. In rude contrast to the aspirations of technological dematerialization that promised to extricate individuals and institutions from the accepted laws of nature, the war met the early 20th century's dreams of speed and efficient action with the figure of the trench soldier buried in mud, submitted to inconceivable industrial weaponry, and imprisoned by memories he could not escape or consciously encounter—for years.

The challenge of representing this war becomes apparent when we consider the two major offensives of 1916. The first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916, saw some 60,000 casualties including 20,000 dead, many in the first few hours—still the most bloody single day in the history of the British armed forces.[1] Though it dragged on for several months after its disastrous

[1] David Jones describes July 1916—the date of the beginning of the battle of the Somme—as "roughly mark[ing] a change in the character of our lives in the Infantry on the West Front":

> From then onward things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair, took on a more sinister aspect. The wholesale slaughter of the later years, the conscripted levies filling the gaps in every file of four, knocked the bottom out of the intimate, continuing, domestic life of small contingents of men … The period of the individual rifle-man, of the 'old sweat' of

commencement, the date of its inauguration came to epitomize the war's toxic mix of imperial pride, inept leadership, and generational waste. The Battle of Verdun, the longest battle of the war, stretched from February to November 1916—ten months of continuous artillery that claimed almost half a million men.[2] In France, the fort of Douamont names an ossuary holding the remains of approximately 130,000 soldiers—the exact number is unknown.[3] Verdun and the Somme thus name both places and events: the gradual grinding of hours into earth. They name sites where the progress and movement promised by the advance of clock and calendar did not occur—where, in Siegfried Sassoon's words, "War … stopped our clocks / Although we met him grim and gay."[4]

This dissertation examines modernist writing that gropes to articulate the paralyzed awareness of ongoing, non-progressive time during and after the war of 1914-1918. What I call stuckness in time is the protracted continuation of duration without a complementary sense of advancement in event, action, or plot. Looking at writers like Ford Madox Ford, Elizabeth Bowen, Rebecca West, T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett, I pose the question of how narrative form—considered since Aristotle to comprise the representation of an action—represents the predicament of temporal continuation in the absence of perceptible action or defined eventfulness.[5] What happens when time continues but plot and progress stop? This is the question that confronted writers of all genres in 1916, the year I take as the beginning point of this project.

> the Boer campaign, the 'Bairnsfather' war, seemed to terminate with the Somme battle … it seemed never quite the same.

In Parenthesis: seinnysessit e gledyf ym penn mameu (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), ix.

[2] Neil Heyman, *Daily Life During World War I* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2002), 67.

[3] Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 171. Annette Becker notes, "If war memorials are empty tombs, the ossuaries preserve the remains of thousands or tens of thousands of men whose identity has been swallowed up in earth and fire." "Remembering and Forgetting the First World War," in *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 96 [89-104].

[4] Siegfried Sassoon, "Song-Books of the War," in *Collected Poems 1908-1956* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 87, lines 15-16.

[5] Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Dover Thrift, 1997).

The Great War and Narrative Form

In 1916, for Ford Madox Ford, "War, the war of millions, of a whole continent, a whole region of the world, seemed to be something dispassionate and universal—more dispassionate and more universal than the sun or the moon. It existed always, through day and night, through summer and winter: dispassionate, precisely, and all-pervading, like an ether, like atoms—like God himself."[6] This was the year in which the war was acknowledged to be a quagmire—the year in which both sides came to accept "a new war, the intentional war of attrition."[7] The stalemate of 1916, epitomized by the Somme and Verdun, was unimaginable in the autumn of 1914.[8] Germany's Schlieffen plan emphasized gestural action and decisive moment; it "was to have the features of … a revolving door," producing a "push" through Belgium and delivering a "quick knockout blow" in France. The Schlieffen plan stalled, and after a few weeks of frenzied movement during the "race to the sea," both sides burrowed into trench fortifications that stretched from the Swiss border to the English Channel. There was no significant exchange of real estate for the next three and a half years.[9] By 1916, the confident predictions of autumn 1914 that the war would be "over by Christmas" had been replaced by the numb mantra of shell-shocked soldiers: "They shall not pass. *Ils ne passeront pas*."[10] In this phrase, mumbled by French *poilus* at Verdun, the notion of what is to

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[6] Ford Madox Ford, "War and the Mind," War Prose, ed. Max Saunders (Manchester, Carcanet Press, 1999), 44.
[7] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 143.
[8] Ibid., 101.
[9] Ibid 98-99. Eksteins emphasizes the ideological and practical disconnect prompted by the transition from rapid movement to immobility in the early months of the war as "the dream of the 'gap'" that persisted on both sides of the conflict until at least 1916—a dream based on "the sudden parting of the enemy front, as if it were the Red Sea confronted by the faith of Moses, and the subsequent charge to victory" (143).
[10] "It was universal auto-suggestion on a vast scale," explained a "high French officer" quoted in an April 1916 New York Times article. " All were so self-hypnotized by the constant repetition of the phrase: 'They shall not pass,' (*Ils ne passeront pas*) that no idea save that of resistance to the uttermost

come cannot be envisioned beyond a simple continuation of the current state of things. "The dark, flaming storm never ceases. Never," writes Henri Barbusse. "We are buried in the depths of an eternal battlefield; but, like the ticking of the clocks in our houses, in the olden days, in that almost mythical past, this is something that you only hear when you listen for it."[11]

Historians and psychologists have labored to understand the phenomenon of endurance that enabled soldiers to continue under such circumstances for almost four and a half years.[12] The scale of losses, when placed in proportion to geographic gains, remains almost inconceivable. Already by the end of 1914, after just five months of fighting, both France and Germany had almost a million casualties.[13] The 7th Division of the British Expeditionary Force landed in France in October; after eighteen days in the fields of Ypres, over three quarters of its 12,000 men and 400 officers were dead.[14] With the slaughter of professional armies, forces were supplemented, and eventually entirely replaced, by volunteers and conscripts. The paradigmatic trench soldier—a "Tommy," "*poilu*," or "Jerry"—was immobilized in shambly pits before the combined assaults of enemy artillery, gas, and snipers, gnawed by cold, mud hunger, rats, and noise, and sent on suicidal sallies "over the top" through the barbed wire barricades and corpse-ridden shell holes of No Man's Land.[15] W. R. Bion,

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could enter their heads." A doctor described the same attitude: "In some cases their faces seemed fixed in an expression of ferocious resolution, especially among those suffering from shell shock. These, although only semi-conscious, repeated at intervals, 'Passeront pas,' 'Passeront pas.'" See "Hypnotizing Phrase Saved Verdun, He Says: 'They Shall Not Pass,' the Words That Inspired Petain's Army to Hold Fast." *New York Times* 28 April 1916. *The New York Times Digital Archive.* Accessed 23 October 2014.

[11] Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*. Trans. Robin Buss. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 8.

[12] See Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[13] Wade Davis, *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006), 9. This included 27,000 dead in a single day in late August.

[14] Eksteins, 100-101.

[15] Soldiers on deployment did not spend all of their time at the front; military commanders learned quickly that an overall sustained pressure could only be maintained if units were rotated in and out of the front lines. Heyman writes, "When not involved in a major battle, a soldier might expect to spend four to eight days in the front line and the support trench followed by four days in a rear

who would later become Samuel Beckett's therapist in London in the 1930s, was a member of a front-line company near Wytschaete: "I am at a loss now to tell you of our life. Such worlds separate the ordinary human's point of view from mine at that time, that anything I can write will either be incomprehensible or will give a quite wrong impression."[16] The incommunicability of the trench soldier's everyday reality had the effect of separating the trench soldier from his family and friends at home—a gap that would haunt combatant nations' postwar efforts to rebuild and reconsolidate social life.[17]

The absence of causal narrative that could lend sense and meaning to soldiers' experiences on the Western Front produced an epistemological and descriptive problem of as well as a narrative one.[18] As the weeks and then the years went by, the war's duration without progress produced a narrative problem that Samuel Hynes describes as "the condition of middleness."[19] He writes, "Fiction conventionally moves through time and through problems to resolutions; but how could one represent the war in such terms when one was in the middle of it, at a point of lost momentum

area." *Daily Life During World War I*, 48. For a comprehensive study of the construction, operation, and experience of different types of trenches and trench warfare methods over the course of the war, see Stephen Bull, *Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014).

[16] Wilfred R. Bion, *War Memoirs 1917-1919*, ed. Francesca Bion (London: H. Karnac Books Ltd., 1997), 94.

[17] "A common feeling among soldiers was that their experience at the front had created an insurmountable barrier between them and civilians. Communication with them was no longer possible. People could not understand what the soldiers had been through." Eksteins, 228.

[18] Eksteins, Sherry, and others emphasize the disintegration of linguistic expression and interpretive thought for trench soldiers under industrial violence, quotidian sameness, lack of strategic progress, and strict censorship, not to mention official doublespeak. "Defeats were presented as victories, stalemate as tactical maneuvering," Eksteins writes. "Truth became falsehood, falsehood truth. As euphemism became the official order of the day, language was turned upside down and inside out." *Rites of Spring*, 233.

[19] Samuel Hynes, *The War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 126.

and lost conviction, with no end in sight?"[20] According to A. A. Mendilow, the relative flattening of traditional, climactic or plot-driven narrative development produces a reduction in psychological tempo; the elimination of a causal or progressive relationship between events narrated in ongoing time makes the time of the novel's world feel slow. Mendilow identifies specific narrative strategies that produce or heighten this effect:

> Discontinuity, constant change of temporal sequence and absence of purposiveness reduce the [psychological] tempo because the reader is held up so often; where there is no clear line of progressive action, his impulse to thrust forward and anticipate conclusions is frustrated. Conversely, in the plot novel where a clear progression leads on to an inevitable climax by the close sequence of cause and effect, the attention is directed onward and the sense of speedy movement is thereby enhanced.[21]

At the macro level of history and the micro level of individual experience, the war's temporal prolongation without climax or resolution aggressively challenged the relation between narrative and plot—that is, the relation of events within a structure of causation or progress. Paul Fussell recounts that both combatants and civilians came "to conceive quite seriously that the war would literally never end and would become the permanent condition of mankind. The stalemate and the attrition would go on infinitely, becoming, like the telephone and the internal combustion engine, a part of the accepted atmosphere of the modern experience."[22] Battles like Verdun and the Somme did not produce victory or strategic advancement so much as continuation. In fundamental ways, the scale, mortality, and duration of the war of attrition fundamentally altered notions of space and time for those who lived through it.

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[20] Hynes, 126. Realist fiction produced during the war had to take account of this unrelieved continuity—for example, Rose Macaulay's 1916 *Non-Combatants and Others*, which ends, "The year of grace 1915 slipped away into darkness, like a broken ship drifting on bitter tides on to a waste shore. The next year began" (quoted in Hynes 129).

[21] A.A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (London: Peter Nevill, Ltd., 1952), 125.

[22] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 71. Those who held this view were known as "the Neverendians" (Ibid, 72). Fussell dates the broad emergence of this view toward the end of 1916.

In retrospect, the First World War could be figured as a coherent entity, as what Thomas Mann called a "rift that has cut deeply through our lives and consciousnesses."[23] During the years in which it stretched on without relief, however, the war's very boundaries were difficult to identify. It bled into the everyday experience of ordinary life. "Owing to the scarcity of paper," a London bakery sign advertises, "customers are kindly requested, where possible, to bring Wrappers for Bread."[24] Air power expanded the battlefield into civilian spaces; posters in the London & South Western Railway reminded passengers to extinguish carriage lights in the event of an air attack, while in a 1915 letter Virginia Woolf applauds her friend Lady Robert Cecil in 1915 for following a zeppelin in a taxi—"[S]uch it is to have the blue blood of England in one's veins."[25] The ubiquity of mourning brought the war from the frontlines into the home. The sprawl of the conflict across the organized practices, spaces, and rhythms of military and non-military life had the effect of diluting and dilating events and eventfulness, making the war as historical event difficult to disentangle from ordinary existence.

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[23] This famous figuration of the War's impact is found in Thomas Mann's forward to *The Magic Mountain*, published in German in 1924 and in English translation in 1927. Mann acknowledges his novel's anachronism:

> … the extraordinary pastness of our story results from its having taken place *before* a certain turning point, on the far side of a rift that has cut deeply through our lives and consciousness. It takes place, or, to avoid any present tense whatever, it took place back then, long ago, in the old days of the world before the Great War, with whose beginning so many things began whose beginnings, it seems, have not yet ceased.

The Magic Mountain, trans. John E. Woods, New York: Vintage International, 1995, xi-xii.

[24] Item LSC-593, *Archives of Bethlem Museum of the Mind*, http://archives.museumofthemind.org.uk, accessed 1 September 2015. Another bakery announcement personifies "Mr. Slice o' Bread" as a scolding schoolmarm: "I am a Slice of Bread. I measure three inches by two-and-a-half, and my thickness is half-an-inch. My weight is exactly an ounce. I am wasted once a day by 48,000,000 people of Britain." Image LSC-620, *Archives of Bethlem Museum of the Mind.*

[25] Item LSC-598, *Archives of Bethlem Museum of the Mind*, accessed 1 September, 2015. Virginia Woolf, Letter of 29 September 1915, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2: 1912-1922, ed. Nigel Nicholson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 64. "[M]y literary friends hide in cellars, and never walk at night without looking at the sky," Woolf adds.

The meeting of the time of individual lives with the time of historical eventfulness was a core component of the mass public experience of the Great War and of attempts to find appropriate forms of commemoration—and continuation—afterward.[26] The sense of rupture was such that Ford called the Armistice "a crack across the table of History."[27] The war produced shattering transformations in the global geopolitical order and the economic security of nations. It inflicted massive damage on the demographic and psychic stability of entire populations, and eradicated cultural and intellectual ways of life previously seen as invincible, throwing into doubt the very idea of a European future. Between 1914 and 1918, four empires fell (German, Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian) and tens of millions of individuals perished in the service of disputable aims. In Vincent Sherry's blunt summation, "Dead bodies by the millions weighed out the nineteenth-century myth of progress through technology, that grand syllogism of liberal history. No longer could the present be cast as a transitional point between an identifiable past possessed of recognizable values and an aspirational future certified by empire and capital."[28] Paul Valéry wrote in 1919, "We were aware that the visible earth is made of ashes, and that ashes signify something … we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life."[29]

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[26] In the 1920s, "[T]he consciousness of time appears on the micro as well as in the macro plane," Michael Levenson notes. "The Time-Mind of the Twenties," in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, *Cambridge Online*, accessed 13 September 2016, 198-99.

[27] *A Man Could Stand Up,* in *Parade's End* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2013), 450. Echoing Ford, François Hartog states, "[A]s an aftereffect of the 1914-1918 war, a fault line appeared in the order of time, something like a rift." *Regimes of History: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, translated by Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 137.

[28] Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 16.

[29] "The Crisis of the Mind," in *History and Politics*, trans. Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 23.

Alongside massive human losses, it has become a truism that an invisible but consequential casualty of the war was the Victorian and Hegelian idea of history as progressive and reliably ameliorating. The war experience and its human and economic cost demanded new ways of representing temporal experience as well as narrating history.[30] The relations between the present, the past, and the future were radically destabilized; the postwar period was witnessing an altered "regime of historicity."[31] As event and phenomenological experience, the war instituted a decisive break from what had come before. Yet it also engendered temporalities of perpetuation, both during the war and in the long years of reconstruction afterward.[32] This was the first major war in which medicine was sufficiently advanced for many casualties to survive major wounds. The fact of living on after serious injury, mutilation, or amputation posed a new scenario of population management for governments and social institutions, as well as for individuals navigating family and gender dynamics. What narrative or poetic forms could be adopted to the non-progressive continuity of war and the chronic slowness of recovery? And in avant-garde circles, how could such temporalities be reconciled with modernism's attachment to the new?

Prior to the war, the historical avant-gardes took self-devouring transience and the continuous appearance of the new as the essence of the modern. Instantaneity became a defining

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[30] On the ubiquity of problems representing or otherwise addressing the war in writing and the arts, see Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 102-145. For Mary Favret, "[T]he everyday itself, its peculiar status in modern thought, derives from its intimate relationship with war." *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 12.

[31] *Regimes of History: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, translated by Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 15-19. A regime of historicity is a hermeneutic with which to "examine our relations to time historically," by enabling the comparative study of how particular societies understand past, present, and future; though it is "constructed by the historian," it is anchored in cultural traces. Ibid., 9, xvi.

[32] Michael Levenson calls the "double recognition in the 1920s the sense of rupture brought by a catastrophic war, and then the perception of a peace that is not a return to pre-war years but a passage into another strangeness." "The Time-Mind of the Twenties," 198-99. Levenson proposes that we think of "the conjuncture of the 1920s … as an acceleration within an acceleration, as a heightening of the sense of rupture and transition that had accompanied modernity since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century." Ibid.

rubric of a number of different aesthetic 'isms' and schools, including the Imagists, the Vorticists, the Impressionists, and the Futurists, whose 1909 manifesto sang of "movement and aggression" and "the beauty of speed."[33] Yet the quick moment and compressed instant came to ramify far differently in the context of the war of attrition. Trench poetry connects the instantaneous with the potentially fatal, thereby reversing the pre-war avant-garde penchant for the instantaneous image as a poetic encapsulation of vitality ("an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time").[34] In Siegfried Sassoon's "A Working Party," written in March 1916, the brief launch of a flare is the sole moment of literal visibility in the world of the poem and also comprises its only singularly defined image.[35] Rather than acquiring a symbolic valence of light piercing the darkness, however, the image of a light-burst reappears at the poem's end to signal the banal killing of a soldier. It is the tired slog in the dark—the unseen register of endurance—that signifies the continuity of the individual lifetime, as it does of the war.

Sassoon's poem opens in the obscure confusion characteristic of trench accounts: "Three hours ago he blundered up the trench, / Sliding and poising, groping with his boots; / […] / "He couldn't see the man who walked in front; / Only he heard the drum and rattle of feet…"[36] Amidst

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[33] Filippo Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," *Le Figaro* 20 February 1909. *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 51.

[34] Ezra Pound, "A Few Don't's," in *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 1*, 3rd edition, edited by Jahan Ramazani, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O'Clair (New York: Norton, 2003), 930. First published in *Poetry* (March 1913) under the title, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste."

[35] Siegfried Sassoon, "A Working Party," *Collected Poems 1908-1956* (London, Faber & Faber, 1961), 19-20. Sassoon's conceit of the arc of a life illustrated by the appearance and slow fade of a light prefigures Beckett's experimental, micro-stageplay, *Breath* (1970). Beckett's script reads as follows:

> 1. Faint light on stage littered with miscellaneous rubbish. Hold for about five seconds.
> 2. Faint brief cry and immediately inspiration and slow increase of light together reaching maximum together in about ten seconds. Silence and hold for about five seconds.
> 3. Expiration and slow decrease of light together reaching minimum together … in about ten seconds and immediately cry as before. Silence and hold for about five seconds.

Samuel Beckett, "Breath," *The Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 209.

[36] Siegfried Sassoon, "A Working Party," lines 1-6.

this darkness and disorientation, the mire of non-action is broken by an event that tropes an ideal narrative arc:

> A flare went up; the shining whiteness spread
> And flickered upward, showing nimble rats
> And mounds of glimmering sand-bags, bleached with rain;
> Then the slow silver moment died in dark.[37]

Surrounding this isolable vision of the flare is a state of ongoing dreariness, apparent in descriptions of habitual action that use habitual verbs: "Voices would grunt 'Keep to your right—make way!"; "… rifle-shots / Would split and crack and sing along the night, / And shells came calmly through the drizzling air"; "And [he] always laughed at other people's jokes / Because he hadn't any of his own."[38] Oscillating between a soldier's time in the trench and his existence back home in England, Sassoon mashes together temporal markers to depict the inelegant progression of an ordinary man's life: "Three hours ago," "[n]ow," "never… again," "[t]hen," "always," "[t]hat night."[39] As these competing temporal references are reaching their maximum tension, suggesting all the different moments and temporal scales with which a life is measured, Sassoon intersperses textuality, visuality, and corporeality by rewriting the traditional poetic metaphor in which a dying flame depicts a dying life. We realize only after the poem's last line how Sassoon has doctored the literary analogy between the arc of the flare that rises and fades in the night sky and the narrative arc of a man's life between birth and death. The volta in the last line is literally a blow; the carefully observed flare whose "slow silver moment" cinematically illuminates the night at the poem's mid-point is supplanted by a flare whose banal luminosity brings an abrupt, nontheatrical, and technologically impersonal death:[40]

> He pushed another bag along the top,
> Craning his body outward; then a flare
> Gave one white glimpse of

[37] Ibid., lines 16-19.
[38] Ibid., lines 9, 22-24, 35-36.
[39] Ibid., lines 26, 27, 19, 35, 37.
[40] Ibid., line 19.

No Man's Land and wire;
And as he dropped his head the instant split
His startled life with lead, and all went out.[41]

The narrative lifeline of this unnamed soldier does not even become an arc in Sassoon's telling, but is cut off unceremoniously, tumbling the poem's end over a sudden cliff into silence. The poem's force stems from the simultaneous necessity and inadequacy of its temporal signifiers—"now" and "never," "always" and "that night"—to draw the weight and import of an individual life, with its familial rhythms, its pasts, its aspirations, and its stories.

By breaking the line (and the life) after the phrase "the instant split," Sassoon makes the verb intransitive for the heartbeat required of the reader to move to the next line; hovering in the reader's consciousness, the phrase is momentarily a full statement.[42] Time—or rather, the manner in which temporality is told—has broken. The instant split. The connection of climax to significance is similarly split in this moment; while the poem reaches its peak tension through diction and enjambment, the plot of the soldier's life is curtailed with emphatic anticlimax. Can the conclusion of a lifeline be calculated as its climax if that end arrives without anticipation or emotion, Sassoon seems to ask? What significance can be brought to such an end if the story continues, hardly pausing to notice that a character is missing? Unlike the fading flare, the war does not expire. Its attritional temporality does not follow the arc of birth, growth, and death signified by a flame, but by the shapeless, pervading constancy of the darkness around it. The isolable image of the flare is apt to the instant of death but inadequate to the temporality of continuity.

Both temporal experience and its articulation were profoundly altered by the Great War in ways that continued to ramify throughout the following decades. By giving attention to modernist experiments with temporal dilation, slowness, and stuckness, this dissertation offers a counterpoint

[41] Ibid., lines 45-49.
[42] Ibid., line 48.

to the emphasis on speed, instantaneity, rupture, epiphany, and the momentary that has typified characterizations of modernism until relatively recently.[43] Though by common consensus, the "*temporalization* of experience… is the defining quality of the modern world," critical attention has maintained an overwhelming focus on explosive, visible forms of temporality and on rubrics like speed, simultaneity, acceleration, and shock.[44] As my brief introduction to the Great War here has suggested, such temporal frameworks are inadequate to representing attrition, survival, recovery, reconstruction, or endurance.

"[Y]ou hear of the men that went, and you hear of what they did when they were There. But you never hear how It left them," Ford wrote at the beginning of the memoir he composed in 1919-20. "You hear how things were destroyed but seldom of the painful processes of Reconstruction."[45] While war literature of the 1910s and '20s, from trench poetry to war memoir, seemed to grapple with experiences that were fundamentally modern, it remained decidedly outside the intellectual coteries and formal innovations of literature that came to be known as 'modernist.'[46] W. B. Yeats controversially excluded Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Sassoon, and others from his 1936 edition of The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892-1935, commenting: "[P]assive suffering is not a theme for poetry. … If the war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is best to forget its

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[43] See, for example, Jeffrey T. Schnapps, "Speed as Engine of Individuation," in *Modernism/Modernity* 6.1 (1999): 1-49; and Sara Danius, "The Aesthetics of the Windshield: Proust and the Modernist Rhetoric of Speed," in *Modernism/Modernity* 8.1 (2001): 99-126.

[44] John Bender and David E. Wellbery, "Introduction," *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time* (Stanford UP, 1991), 1-15.

[45] Ford Madox Ford, *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction* (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1929), 9.

[46] Hynes notes, "War novels began to appear early in 1915, some six months after the war began, and from then on were published with greater and greater frequency, until by mid-year they were being reviewed in batches…" (43). Eve C. Sorum lays out the paradoxical relation of war poetry to the modernist canon as follows: "On the one hand, World War I is seen as the prime force between the high modernist mode—a cataclysmic event that forced artists and writers to reformulate how they thought about representation. On the other, much of the trench poetry is considered outside of the modernist canon." "Poetry of the Great War," *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, eds. David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald (Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 223.

suffering as we do the discomfort of fever." Yet both passivity and suffering occupy the heart of *Parade's End*, Ford's war fiction. Ford was the only novelist of his age to be a soldier, and more remarkably, one of the only modernist combatants to survive. He was deployed to the Somme in mid-July 1916; within a month, he was concussed by an exploding shell and suffered a three-week spell of amnesia. He returned to the front more determined to capture the war in literary form, yet also displaying symptoms of the shell shock that would haunt him for years and that would play a crucial role in the narration of *Parade's End*.

He wrote to Joseph Conrad from Ypres in late summer 1916:

> I wonder if it is just vanity that in these cataclysmic moments makes one desire to *record*. I hope it is… the annalist's wish to help the historian—or, in a humble sort of way, my desire to help you, cher maître! if you ever wanted to do anything in "*this line*." Of course you wd. not ever want to do anything in this line,—but a pocketful of coins of a foreign country may sometimes come in handy. You might want to put a phrase into the mouth of someone in Bangkok who had been, say, to Bécourt. There you wd. be![47]

The substitution of the present conflagrations in rural Western Europe with the cosmopolitan scene of Bangkok in Ford's image is symptomatic of modernism's ambivalent, inconsistent, or absent response to the contemporary realities of the war. Most of the modernists who lived through the war were civilians who had never seen combat.[48] For them, as Ford acknowledges was the case for Conrad, war writing was a "foreign country" that engendered xenophobic fears of contagion, invasion, and overpopulation.

Modernism's separateness from war writing of the kind produced by Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and Henri Barbusse had its roots in the aesthetic positions taken by the pre-war

[47] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 7 September 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton Princeton UP, 1965), 75. Emphasis in original.
[48] Vincent Sherry, "The Great War and Literary Modernism in England," *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 113 [113-138]. *Cambridge Companions Online*, accessed 24 May, 2015.

avant-gardes.[49] In 1913, Pound, Lewis, and Hulme moved toward an "extreme formalist aesthetic" that shunned the rhetoric of subjective expression but guarded the individualist impulse that informed movements like Imagism and the new Vorticism.[50] If there was to be realism in literature, it was to be a realism of sensory and aesthetic effect as opposed to a psychological realism of character or sociality.[51] "The value of a work lay in its technical properties," Levenson states; "realism, vitality, humanity were irrelevant considerations."[52] The purportedly apolitical domain of modernist aesthetics would ultimately reject on the basis of ideology the kinds of personal experience and humanistic subject matter into which much of the experience of the war fell.[53]

"War and art in those days mingled, the feature of the latter as stern as—if not sterner than—the former," Wyndham Lewis recalled in the 1930s.[54] For avant-garde artists and writers committed to novelty, rupture, and the rejection of bourgeois values, the war's outbreak represented a broad arena of potential dissent and expression.[55] Yet while avant-gardes like Apollinaire and

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[49] Carl Krockel gives an excellent historical summary of criticism's forging and maintenance of the split between "war writers" and "modernists." See *War Trauma and English Modernism: T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 5-9.

[50] Levenson, 133. Levenson's *Genealogy* provides an invaluable account of the rapid, subtle evolutions of opinion on the part of T.E. Hulme, Ford Madox Ford, Pound, and others around such concepts as humanism, subjectivism, and realism—issues I only briefly acknowledge here.

[51] In an essay of February, 1913 called "The New Sculpture," Pound writes: "Realism in literature has had its run. For thirty or more years we have had in deluge, the analyses of the fatty degeneration of life. A generation has been content to analyse. They were necessary. … We have heard all that the 'realists' have to say" (quoted in Levenson, 120).

[52] Levenson, 133.

[53] Carl Krockel writes of the trench poet Siegfried Sassoon, "For Sassoon 'the essential quality' of his poetry lay in it being 'true to what I experienced. All the best ones are truly experienced and therefore authentic in expression'; this principle runs counter to the Modernist aesthetic of impersonality." *War Trauma and English Modernism: T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 3.

[54] The statement is from Lewis's 1937 memoir *Blasting and Bombardiering.* Quoted in Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 138.

[55] Maria Stavrinaki argues, "[T]he war offered to the artist the opportunity to protect his self against its own excesses" by providing "powerful common experiences that the gloomy accumulation of days during peace time had seemed to deny." "Messianic Pains. The Apocalyptic Temporality in

Marinetti eagerly anticipated the clash of armies, more traditional or humanistic thinkers viewed the war as an epistemological and ethical failure. For Henry James, the outbreak of the war indicated that, "The subject-matter of one's effort has become *itself* utterly treacherous and false—its relation to reality utterly given away and smashed."[56] As death tolls skyrocketed, the avant-garde enthusiasm for war worked to its detriment. Writers from Edwardians to avant-gardes struggled to find forms that might engage with the war's scope and conditions.[57] Popular opinion consolidated around traditional, patriotic forms of expression, though over the course of the war, these forms themselves—such as the Georgian conventions of lyric poetry adopted by the British war poets—were forced to adapt to their new subject matter.[58] Pound, Ford, Eliot, and others were forced to renovate their previous bullish polemics in response to changing arenas of values, readerships, and markets.[59] The quick outmodishness of pre-war bombast is evident in an article in The Egoist from January 1917, titled "The Death of Futurism."[60]

Avant-Garde Art, Politics, and War." *Modernism/modernity* 18.2 (2011): 371. Stavrinaki's statement is ironic given that the phrase, the "gloomy accumulation of days," could as easily be used to describe the hundreds of days of war that would ensue.

[56] Quoted in Hynes, 11.

[57] Hynes writes that "the great Edwardians seemed to have lost their voices" in the first years of the war, either because they threw their energies into war work or pursued projects that sidestepped the current conflict. He gives the example of poet laureate Robert Bridges, who "wrote only three short war poems in 1914-16, and devoted most of 1915 to compiling *The Spirit of Man*, a wartime anthology that is intentionally *not* about the war (it contains only three war poems among 449 items)" (Hynes 103, italics in original).

[58] The decades-old division of ideology and canonicity between war literature and modernism is meeting increasing challenge from scholars. Samuel Hynes and Paul Fussell are among those emphasizing the radical departures from previous traditions of war poetry taken by the trench soldier-poets of the First World War. Nils Claussen contends that "the difference between the War poets and their Modernist contemporaries is one of degree rather than of kind," and argues that "the single greatest problem facing Blunden, Sassoon, Rosenberg and their fellow poets was to identify an existing set of literary conventions … which would enable them to write about the new kind of war experience they encountered in the trenches of France and Flanders." "'Perpetuating the Language': Romantic Tradition, the Genre Function, and the Origins of the Trench Lyric." *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.1 (2006): 125, 106.

[59] Levenson notes, for example, the radical change in Pound's rhetoric within the opening months of the war; from the pre-war language of aggression with which he praised Vorticism, Pound's pitch

In British modernist literature, the war often registers as an absence, an allusion, or an allegory—in the empty room in Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), the unspoken past of Jake Barnes in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), or the cuckolded husband being 'demobbed' in *The Waste Land* (1922). It also appears in the form of In Memorium notices, such as Eliot's dedication of *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) to an old Paris friend: "Jean Verdenal, 1889-1915 / mort aux Dardanelles."[61] The notice of Gaudier-Brzeska's death appears in *Blast 2*, immediately following his declaration of the utility of war. "This war is a great remedy … it takes away from the masses numbers upon numbers of unimportant units, whose economic activities become noxious as the recent trade crises have shown us," the sculptor writes.[62] He became one of those units with his death in 1915.

Alongside scholars like Allyson Booth, Vincent Sherry, and Paul Saint-Amour, I argue that modernism and the First World War share a closer relationship than has often been acknowledged.[63] The works I examine—Ford Madox Ford's *A Man Could Stand Up* (1926), Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier* (1918), Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris* (1935), T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and critical essays, and Samuel Beckett's early writings—experiment with temporal dilation and the sense of an unreachable future while maintaining attachments to realism that emphasize the permeability of literary narration to the historical. François Hartog's notion of

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altered to celebrating the "quiet and sober sanity called Vorticism" by January 1915 (quoted in Levenson, *Genealogy*, 140-141).

[60] Julian Hanna, "Blasting after *Blast*: Wyndham Lewis's Late Manifestos," *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.1 (2007): 126.

[61] T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 3.

[62] "Vortex Gaudier-Brzeska," *Blast* 2, ed. Wyndham Lewis (London: John Lane, 1915), 33.

[63] Booth contends, "[T]he Great War was experienced by soldiers as strangely modernist and … modernism itself is strangely haunted by the Great War." *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space Between Modernism and the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6. Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Paul Saint-Amour, *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encylopedic Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

regimes of historicity provides a hermeneutic with which to "examine our relations to time historically," by enabling the comparative study of how particular societies understand past, present, and future.[64] Though it is "constructed by the historian," it is anchored in cultural traces.[65] In its attachment to the social, a regime of historicity is thus distinct from a "chronotope," which in Bakhtin's famous formulation denotes "a formally constitutive category of literature" addressing "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."[66] Deploying these terms, this dissertation examines chronotopes of temporal dilation and arrested progress prompted by the new regimes of historicity introduced at individual and societal levels by the war of attrition and its aftermath.

Mary Favret calls temporality "the mediating voice of a mute spatiality," arguing that "we turn to temporal structures to discover our relationship to distant spaces."[67] In a sense, the question of this dissertation is what remains when the "outside" of distant places is erased and all that is left is the experience of a physical body, irremediably singular, locked in time. This is the body of the trench soldier who has no option under bombardment but to endure its duration. It is the body of the shell-shocked individual convulsing with unremembered rhythms. It is the bodies in the novels of Rebecca West and Elizabeth Bowen, frozen by the uncanny seep of time out of physical environments. It is the restless body of Prufrock wracked by the metronome of a social life devoid of meaning, and the anxiety prompted by the stoppage of a train and "the growing terror of nothing to think about."[68] Finally, it is the wracked and will-less bodies of Samuel Beckett's characters, and

[64] Hartog, 9.
[65] Hartog, xvi.
[66] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.
[67] *War at a Distance*, 53.
[68] T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 28, line 121.

his own body in motion throughout the 1930s, attempting to articulate inescapable change without defining trajectories in either space or time.

In my first chapter, author and veteran Ford Madox Ford discovers a way to represent frontline temporalities of attenuation by narrating the experience of sonic perception. For the trench soldier deprived of sight, events are signaled by sound; the sonic phenomena of technological warfare announce threat or injury. Yet as Ford himself experienced, such sounds become both the source and the sign of trauma.

For Rebecca West and Elizabeth Bowen, it is not a specific sense capacity but the embedded histories of bodies and objects that non-discursively registers wartime. Civilian and combatant experiences of the war and its aftereffects collide in the substance of bodies that absorb incidents and leak residues of other times. I connect the uncanny bodies of West's and Bowen's postwar fictions to major public discourses of mourning and monumentalization, and to national forms of memory like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, that specifically rely upon symbolic logics of bodily substitution for their impact.

In my third chapter, Prufrock's body in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" reacts like a metronome to the reiterations of bourgeois life. Locked into a continuum of immediacy, Prufrock is incapable of seizing meaningful experience. It is Eliot's development of the notion of tradition that allows him to take the literary canon out of the anxious bodies of his urban speakers and the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," into an ideal, eternal order.[69]

In my final chapter, Samuel Beckett's writing and thinking in the late 1920s and early 1930s brings together these three approaches to the bodily experience—and the literary representation—of

[69] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 177.

time. In his early essays, Beckett deconstructs the shapes that narrative gives to temporal experience, at the level of history (in Vico) and of the individual (in Joyce and Proust). Attacking the notions of progress and teleology conceptually, personally, and aesthetically, Beckett asks what plot can look like when causality is abandoned, and how continuation can be represented when neither the past nor the future can be accessed.

The surge of war memoirs at the end of the 1920s codified the tropes that came to typify accounts of this war—its mud and trenches, its boredom and anguish, its industrial destruction and human damage. Before it had even concluded, though, the war became more than the sum of its events, assuming figurative status as a marker for irreversible losses that would take decades to articulate. One of these losses was a faith in time as the instrument of progress. The First World War transformed individual and collective experiences of time by stilling the forward-moving narratives that had previously given sense to temporal passage. The war experience gave the lie to modernist ideologies of futural amelioration. In so doing, it offered an alternative panorama of modernity to writers and artists in the interwar period—one merging the intensity of crisis with the drag of the chronic. Coming of age in the intractably unresolved period of the 1920s, Samuel Beckett encountered as existential reality the stuckness in time that the First World War presented as historical event. Stripped of teleological fictions, void of event or narrative shape, time becomes a burden—a condition of living that is also an agent of suffering. In the trenches of Verdun and the Somme, duration became a weapon; in Beckett's most famous play, time continues but plot stalls as two tramps sit by the side of a road, waiting.

CHAPTER 1
THE SOUND OF FORD MADOX FORD

"It is rather curious, the extra senses one develops here," Ford Madox Ford wrote to Lucy Masterman in August 1916 from the Ypres Salient.[1] "I sit writing in the twilight &, even as I write, I hear the shells whine & the M. G.'s [machine guns] crepitate & I see (tho' it is hidden by a hill), the grey, flat land below & the shells bursting … Thanks so very much for the Echo de Paris" [sic].[2] Musing on the coexistence of the sounds of war and the activity of writing, Ford inadvertently slips from the audible landscape of the front to the literary *Echo* of the page.

Ford's experience of war sounds in the summer of 1916 awakened him to the literary possibilities of an *auditory* impressionism. Between mid-July and mid-September 1916, Ford was deployed to France, participated in his first active combat at the Battle of the Somme, suffered a concussion caused by an exploding shell, lost his memory for three weeks, returned to his battalion in the Ypres Salient with a renewed devotion to capturing the war in writing, and suffered a second collapse attributed by a medical officer to shell shock.[3] Between the recovery of his memory in August and his eventual medical evacuation in late September, however, Ford produced some of his most conceptually significant writing about the war, germinating a set of methodological and thematic concerns that he would devote the next decade of his life to exploring.[4] In these few weeks

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[1] In this essay, I adopt the convention of using the surname Ford adopted in June 1919 and under which his works have been republished since his death, rather than his birth name. Throughout the war, Ford was still known as Ford Madox Hueffer. See Ford's account of his reasons for changing his name in *It Was the Nightingale* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1933), 134-37.

[2] Letter to Lucy Masterman, 23 August 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton Princeton UP, 1965), 68-69.

[3] Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Vol. II, The After-War World*, 1-23.

[4] "The question of how to *render* his impressions of war—and how to transform them into narrative—[became] Ford's predominant concern throughout the next decade." Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Vol. II, The After-War World*, 15. These concerns are explicitly articulated in "Arms and the Mind" (dated September 15, 1916), an essay I examine in some detail in this paper.

of fragile, alert receptivity, Ford wrote three remarkable letters to Joseph Conrad that he described as "notes on sound."[5] These letters inaugurate Ford's adoption of sound as the medium of an attritional war that resisted visual capture and made duration itself into a weapon. In sound, Ford discovered a narrative tool with which to articulate the corporeal hum of "the eternal waiting that is war," the sudden interruptions of shock, and the psychic echoes of trauma.[6]

This chapter argues that sonic consciousness came to structure the time of war for Ford while he was a combatant and in the 1920s, during which he took the war as his primary literary subject. Compelled by circumstance to pay attention to sound, Ford found his aural experience of the war rich in the kind of sensory intensity appropriate to impressionist writing, an intensity notably lacking in the visual field of the trenches and reserve areas. More importantly, at the front Ford discovered the degree to which sound could affect temporal experience. The continuous sound of the artillery located the war's apparent endlessness in the sensing body of the auditor. Complementing this numbing perpetuation were the sudden interruptions of sharp, loud, or proximate sounds, which suggested the passage of some event but could also induce traumatic shock. As Ford found over years of convalescence, the effects of such shocks lingered in the body over long periods of time, like the vibrations of a struck bell.

These elements of sound, event, and trauma converge in *A Man Could Stand Up*, the third novel of *Parade's End*. In this depiction of the Armistice and its uncertain aftermath, Ford uses sound in thematic, metaphorical, structural, and onomatopoetic ways to mire his reader in a non-progressive temporality of continuous interruption and non-resolution. Happenings literally flicker

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"Arms and the Mind/War and the Mind" in *War Prose,* ed. Max Saunders (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999), 36-48.

[5] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 73. This second letter to Conrad begins: "I will continue, 'for yr information and necessary action, please,' my notes upon sounds."

[6] *A Man Could Stand Up*, *Parade's End* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2013), 503.

in and out of hearing, as the beginnings and endings of events are rendered inaudible or indistinct. By thus obscuring the boundaries of events and flattening any hierarchy of significance, Ford breaks the connective tissue of causality, thwarting the forward progress of plot. Using sound as both *histoire* and *récit* to occupy time in his depictions of both the trenches and the war's aftermath, Ford connects the anxious dilation of wartime to the anti-climactic sameness of the peace. Passing time—how to pass time, and how to let time pass away—poses major problems for these characters, and for the war-wracked communities they inhabit. The messy sounding of the armistice is symptomatically missed by Valentine Wannop, while, in an extended flashback Christopher Tietjens awaits a bombardment amidst a bewildering roar of different sounds and creeping mental breakdown. Instead of a future of difference, the Armistice brings only unplotted continuation, connecting the temporal drag of wartime to the recursive stuckness of trauma and the patient repetitions of reconstruction.

Before I turn to Ford's uses of sound in *Parade's End*, I set out some contexts for the production and reception of battlefield sounds in World War I and discuss the physiological and affective permeability of the body to sonic experience. I then examine Ford's experiences in the summer of 1916, during which he struggled to find a means of representing this non-optical war and was shaken into serious amnesia by an exploding shell. Situating Ford's "notes on sound" letters in the period of his temporary return to the front before his medical evacuation, I posit that Ford's years-long recovery from mental and physical injury awakened him to the aptness of sonic reverberation as a temporal model and metaphor for traumatic latency.

The Senses of Sound

In a 1913 treatise, Futurist composer Luigi Rossolo anticipated the extent to which the sense data of modernism would arise from the cacophony, and not the sight, of war: "In modern warfare,

mechanical and metallic, the element of sight is almost zero. The sense, the significance, and the expressiveness of noise, however are infinite. . . . There is no movement or activity that is not revealed by noise."[7] Rossolo's analysis was prescient for the war that broke out the following year, in which two armies inaugurated a war whose attritional strategies countermanded the privileging of vision in modernity.[8] Sound was the most available sense capacity in the trenches, where to gain a vantage point for vision meant offering a target to enemy snipers and where visibility was hampered by smoke, darkness, rain, and other environmental factors.[9]

The war of attrition introduced new synthetic sounds while also producing new scenes and conditions of listening. The most obvious and paradigmatic of these was the audition of massive, long-range artillery fire. "[M]y first experience of the realities of war was to be patiently suffering an awful inactivity while the artillery on both sides belched destruction on the men facing each other in the trenches," *The Daily Telegraph* quotes an unknown soldier in 1915.[10] For frontline soldiers, the

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[7] Luigi Rossolo, "The Art of Noises (1913)," *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 136 [133-39].The essay quotes a lengthy onomatopoeic—and poetic—description by then-reporter Filippo Marinetti of a battle near Arianople, Bulgaria. Marinetti gives unpunctuated but occasionally capitalized sonic descriptions, like, "… Boom-Boomb 2000 grenades straining to rip out with tearing shocks of dark hair ZANG-BOOM-BOOM-ZANG-BOOM-BOOOM orchestra of the war noises…" (136). See also Rainey, "Introduction: F. T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism," in ibid.,18 [1-39].

[8] Both within the trench and above its lip, the conditions of this war deliberately impeded vision. Since a bullet could find flight along any extended line of sight, trench design emphasized a continually curving path punctuated by *revêtements*. This non-linear model was haphazardly premiered in the autumn of 1914 and refined by the exigencies of weather and casualty counts. See Stephen Bull, *Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014).

[9] "Hearing became much more important than vision as an index of what was real and threatening," argues Eric Leed. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 124.

[10] Central News Special Correspondent, "Territorial's Story of Bayonet Charge." *Daily Telegraph*, London, 1 June 1915: 8. *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, accessed 20 June 2016, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/3VYMt1. Physicians connected soldiers' forced passivity to their preponderance for traumatic neurosis. Eric Leed writes, "There was a consensus among combatants: The conditions of neurosis were created not by the sight of exploding chemicals but by the deafening sound and vibration of the barrage, which defenders were required to suffer for hours, even days." 126.

sound of artillery could manifest as a mere background rumble—the "unintermittent thudding and throb of the engines of war"—or as "hell let loose … Inferno—inferno—bang—swish!"[11] *Scientific American* reports in amazement that during the final British offensive of 1918, "700,000 tons of artillery ammunition were expended by the British army on the Western front."[12] The important *sonic* element of these explosions becomes apparent when we consider that "a majority of [shells] fired actually killed nobody."[13]

Critics describe the war as an "incubator of sonic-mindedness" not only because it produced sounds of extraordinary volume and duration but because trench warfare "rapidly cultivated *alertness* to sound" as a conduit of information for combatants.[14] "Modern trench-warfare demands knowledge and experience," Erich Maria Remarque wrote in his 1928 bestseller *All Quiet on the Western Front*. "[A] man must have a feeling for the contours of the ground, an ear for the sound and

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[11] Ford Madox Ford, *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction* (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1929), 47. Siegfried Sassoon describes the enormous opening bombardment of the Battle of the Somme in his diary:

> Since 6:30 there has been hell let loose. The air vibrates with the incessant din—the whole earth shakes + rocks + throbs—it is one continuous roar—Machine-guns tap + rattle—bullets whistling overhead—small fry quite outdone by the gangs of hooligan-shells that dash over to rend the German lines with their demolition parties. … Inferno – inferno – bang – swish!!

At the bottom of the page, Sassoon has drawn a wide-eyed face with its hair standing on end. *Journal, 26 June 1916-12 Aug. 1916* (MS Add.9852/1/7), 10r, *University of Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed 20 July 2016, http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-09852-00001-00007/1.

[12] "Expenditure of Ammunition in Flanders," *Scientific American* 123 (July 17, 1920), 57. On July 31, 1917 alone, British ammunition expenditure in Flanders "exceeded 23,000 tons." Accounting for only a fraction of the war, these astonishing totals do not include ammunition expended by the Germans. "From March to November 1918 alone British forces on the Western Front expended more than a million shells each week, and sometimes two or even three. … During one bombardment at Delville Wood in 1916 it was calculated that 400 German shells per minute were raining down on the South African positions." Stephen Bull, *Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 21-22.

[13] Bull, 21.

[14] Leed, 85; David Hendy, "The Great War and British Broadcasting: Emotional Life in the Creation of the BBC," *New Formations* (2014): 86 [82-100], accessed 15 January, 2016, DOI: 10.3898/NEWF.82.05.2014. Emphasis in original. "[O]ne axiomatic feature of military life, especially for those bogged down in the trenches, was that the War was immensely noisy," Hendy states.

character of the shells, must be able to decide beforehand where they will drop, how they will burst, and how to shelter from them."[15] This "'mobilization of the ear' as a military cognitive organ" encouraged an emergent "trend toward audio perception" as trench soldiers were forced to rely on the ear instead of the eye for potentially life-saving information.[16] For the fortunate, attention to sounds might mean the difference between life and death.[17] The Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler believed "that his musical training certainly contributed to his survival, for he was able, by ear alone, to single out the shells that were coming closest, gauge their trajectory, caliber, and speed."[18] At the very least, a reactive engagement with aural signals sustained a necessary fiction of agency among immobilized soldiers continually threatened by such long-range, impersonal, and horrific weaponry.[19]

The ability to interpret sound, though, presupposes the ability to hear and spatially locate it. At close proximity or under severe bombardment, the sound of the artillery became an obstacle to perception, exemplifying Aristotle's argument that an excess of sense cripples sensation.[20] "In the trench you could see nothing and noise rushed like black angels gone mad; solid noise that swept you off your feet … Swept your brain off its feet," Ford writes. "Someone else took control of it.

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[15] *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1982), 129.
[16] Axel Volmar, "In Storms of Steel: The Soundscape of World War I and its Impact on Auditory Media Culture during the Weimar Period," *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th and 20th Century Europe*, ed. Daniel Morat (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 228.
[17] This is the logic that leads Luigi Rossolo to argue, in "The Art of Noises," "Noise enables us to discern a marching patrol in deepest darkness, even to judging the number of men that compose it. From the intensity of rifle fire, the number of defenders of a given position can be determined." "The Art of Noises," 136.
[18] Leed, *No Man's Land,* 124.
[19] As Elaine Scarry reminds us, "The main purpose and outcome of war is to injure." "Injury and the Structure of War," *Representations* 10 (1985): 1 [1-51]. See also Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 12.
[20] "[E]xcesses in the sensible objects destroy the sense-organs. For if the motion is too violent for the sense-organ, the character or form (and this, as we saw, constitutes the sense) is annulled, just as the harmony and the pitch of the lyre suffer by too violent jangling of the strings." *De Anima* II.12, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 105.

You became second-in-command of your own soul."[21] Overwhelming sound occupies the senses and the psyche to the extent that cognitive operations are impaired. We call these sounds "deafening" because they overload our capacity to hear them. Terms like "loudness" and "silence" cease to hold.[22] No longer able to be sensed, sound becomes something more than sensory information. When Tietjens witnesses a German trench raid during a bombardment in *A Man Could Stand Up*, the excess of noise produces a paradoxical impression of sonic paucity:

> They [the Germans] had appeared with startling suddenness and as if with a supernatural silence, beneath a din so overwhelming that you could not any longer bother to notice it. They were there, as it were, under a glass dome of silence that sheltered beneath that dark tumult, in the white illumination of Verey lights that went on.[23]

The surreal impression of silence produced by too much sound disables aural vocabulary, conjuring instead the solidity of a physical object—"a glass dome of silence that sheltered beneath that dark tumult."[24] The strange notion of sound acquiring a solid body in this passage is reiterated in contemporary accounts. "I felt that if I lifted a finger I should touch a solid ceiling of sound, it now had the attribute of solidity," a Canadian soldier wrote of the opening bombardment of the Battle of

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[21] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 492. Ford's "fictional" account of war is full of such first-order observations, thinly masked as the experience of the protagonist, Tietjens but recapitulated as personal recollection in the 1929 "memoir," *No Enemy*.

[22] "Loudness is the subjective magnitude of a sound," Robert S. Schlauch states, stipulating that while loudness "is a concept that has implicit meaning for nearly everyone … a formal definition is the purview of psychoacoustics." "Loudness," in *Ecological Psychoacoustics*, ed. John G. Neuhoff (San Diego: Elsevier Academic Press, 2004), 317 [317-345]. Scientific advances in studying loudness coincided with the post-war period: "Loudness has been a topic of considerable scientific inquiry since 1920, when a renaissance in psychoacoustics followed the invention of the vacuum tube, a device that enabled the accurate quantification of sound levels." Ibid.

[23] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 486.

[24] Ibid.

the Somme.[25] At times, the guns of northern France and Belgium could be heard in London and Paris.[26]

Since audio signals are waves of force that strike the body, mediated by a set of organs responsible for balance as well as hearing, the effects of sound extend beyond our ears to produce physiological and emotional effects on the body as a whole.[27] Scholars and scientists agree that sonic experience and affect are inextricable.[28] "An enormous crashing sound said things of an intolerable intimacy to each of these men, and to all of them as a body," Ford writes in the opening bombardment scene of *No More Parades*.[29] "After its mortal vomiting all the other sounds appeared a rushing silence, painful to ears in which the blood audibly coursed."[30] The bass of a club loudspeaker or a church organ is "heard" in the ribs, carrying its vibrational waves into the dynamic oscillations

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[25] Quoted in Wade Davis, *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006), 25. Written over twelve years, Davis's extraordinary book makes use of dozens of archives; he does not specify the original source of this quotation.

[26] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, 141. In a joking 1915 letter to Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf observed, "the Pheasants of Saxby … heard the guns on the North Sea before the Parson did." To Lytton Strachey, 26 February 1915, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. II: 1912-1922, ed. Nigel Nicolson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 61 A Lincolnshire vicar had written to *The Times*, observing "that the pheasants at Saxby Hall had begun clucking at an early hour when they heard the guns of the Battle of the Dogger Bank on 24 January." Ibid., n.1.

[27] In simplistic terms, the human ear combines the mechanical structure of a vibrating membrane (the ear drum) and three vibrating bones (the ossicles), with an inner ear chamber partially filled with fluid (the cochlea). The complex assembly of the middle ear and the cochlea enables the conversion of sonic pressure waves into fluid waves. Tiny hair cells on the organ of Corti, the sensory receptor for sound, enable the transduction of these waves into electrical signals that are sent to the brain. "Introduction," *Oxford Handbook of Auditory Science: The Ear*, ed. Paul A. Fuchs, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), accessed 18 June, 2016, DOI 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199233397.013.0001.

[28] Brian Massumi uses sonic terms to describe the workings of affect, contending that the affective sensorium functions by means of "a resonation, or interference pattern":

> The interference pattern emerges where the sound wave intersects with itself. The bouncing back and forth multiplies the sound's movement without cutting it. … This complex self-continuity is a putting into relation of the movement to itself: self-relation … Resonation can be seen as converting distance, or extension, into intensity … With the body, the "walls," as sensory surfaces.

Parables for the Virtual (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 14.

[29] *No More Parades*, *Parade's End* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2013), 261.

[30] Ibid.

of our own matter. While the ear functions as a converter and an amplifier, the human body as a whole can function as a resonator.[31] Man Ray's famous melding of a violin and a human body in *Le violon d'Ingres* is apt; like a violin, the human body combines the noise-making possibilities of surface friction with the resonant capacity of a hollow compartment to allow for both the production and the diffusion of sound.[32]

Transgressing obstacles to sight and repurposing matter into media of transmission, sound bridges geographical, architectural, material, and psychological boundaries.[33] Unlike the organs of sight and taste which can select and filter stimuli, the ear cannot choose which aural vibrations to receive. "Considered from a military perspective," Juliette Volcler observes, "the ear is a vulnerable target: you can't close it, you can't choose what it hears, and the sounds that reach it can profoundly alter your psychological or physical state."[34] In urban policing as well as military operations, sound waves have come to be used as acute or chronic agents of torture and harm, as means of surveillance, mapping, and communication, and as defensive or preventative deterrents to occupation or assembly. Cities around the world use classical music played from loudspeakers to

[31] Patricia Kruth and Henry Stobart note that "the ability to emit sound is a principle way we recognize a 'live' body, whilst 'dead' also means unresonant." "Inroduction," *Sound* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 1.

[32] The nomenclature of musical instruments has noted this similarity for centuries, using bodily terminology to describe, for example, the neck, ribs, back, and face of a violin.

[33] As Steve Goodman puts it, "One way or another, it is vibration, after all, that connects every separate entity in the cosmos, organic or nonorganic." *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), xiv.

[34] *Extremely Loud: Sound as a Weapon*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: The New Press, 2013), 1. Volcler's study investigates the strategic use of sound in military contexts from World War II to the present day, arguing that one of the major discoveries of the twentieth century was the growing appreciation of the vulnerability of the human body to sound waves and sound events. While the psychological impact of sound has been a part of warfare at least since the invention of gunpowder, its emergence as a mechanism of inflicting harm, rather than a byproduct of other weapons, dates from the middle of the 20th century.

deter congregation by teens, the homeless, or other 'undesirables.'[35] Many municipal police forces now employ "sound cannons" or long-range acoustic devices (LRADs) to force evacuations of public areas—devices capable of permanently damaging hearing.[36]

The weaponization of sound has also found geopolitical uses. The Israeli military has used sonic booms produced by fighter jets as "sound bombs" to shake buildings—and psyches—in the Gaza Strip.[37] When American troops invaded Fallujah in late 2004 with loudspeakers attached to their tanks blasting AC/DC and heavy metal, a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel compared the tactic to the Bible story of Joshua's army blowing horns outside the walls of Jericho before taking the city: "[T]he noise eroded the enemies' courage. Maybe those psychological walls were what really crumbled."[38] "It's not the music so much as the sound," a PsyOps (Psychological Operations Command) spokesperson stated. "It's like throwing a smoke bomb. The aim is to disorient and confuse the enemy." In the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, US military and NATO uses of sound as an interrogation method of the "war in terror" came under scrutiny, as it was revealed that prisoners were being subjected to sonic assaults amounting to torture.[39] U.S. Sergeant Mark Hadsell of Psyops told a *Newsweek* reporter, "If you play [heavy metal] for 24 hours, your brain and body functions start to slide, your train of thought slows down and your will is broken. That's

[35] Lily Hirsch, *Music in American Crime Prevention and Punishment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), chapter 1, "Classical Music in Crime Prevention."
[36] Alex Pasternack, "The New Sound of Crowd Control," *Motherboard*, 17 December 2014, accessed 11 July 2016, http://motherboard.vice.com/read/the-new-sound-of-crowd-control.
[37] Sam Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 13.
[38] Lane DeGregory, "Iraq 'n' roll," *Tampa Bay Times*, 21 November 2004, accessed 24 July 2016, http://www.sptimes.com/2004/11/21/Floridian/Iraq__n__roll.shtml.
[39] Robert Mackey, "Claim U.S. Used Eminem Raps on Detainees," *New York Times*, 9 March 2009, accessed 15 July, 2016, http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/claim-us-used-eminem-raps-on-detainees/. See also *Faces of Guantanamo: Torture*, Center for Constitutional Rights, accessed 15 July 2016 http://ccrjustice.org/sites/default/files/assets/files/FOG_torture.pdf

when we come in and talk to them."[40] Such practices offer an extreme example of what Sam Goodman calls "sonic warfare"—"the use of force, *both seductive and violent, abstract and physical,* via a range of acoustic machines (biotechnical, social, cultural, artistic, conceptual), to modulate the physical, affective, and libidinal dynamics of populations, of bodies, of crowds."[41]

As these examples show, volume and duration (or repetition) can turn any sound into a weapon.[42] Though the sounds of the First World War emerged primarily as byproducts of weapons designed for other types of injury, their psychological impact was extreme. The constancy of frontline noise, and its frequently stunning volume, wore away at bodies and psyches. "'It's damn it: it's the beastly row … Why isn't one a beastly girl and privileged to shriek?" complains a captain on the verge of insanity in *No More Parades*.[43] The heavy artillery sounds of the Western Front manifested the seeming endlessness of a war expected to last six weeks that stretched on for over four years.[44] "The dark, flaming storm never ceases. Never," Henri Barbusse wrote in *Under Fire* (*Le Feu)*, a memoir read by soldiers in the trenches.[45]

> For more than fifteen months, for five hundred days, in this corner of the world where we are, the bombing and the firing have not stopped from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. We are buried in the depths of an eternal battlefield; but, like the ticking of the clocks in our houses, in the olden days, in that almost mythical past, this is something that you only hear when you listen for it.[46]

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[40] Adam Piore, "Psyop: The Love's Not Mutual," *Newsweek*, 26 May 2003, 13.
[41] *Sonic Warfare*, 10.
[42] James Hetfield of the band Metallica (a favored music choice for interrogators) disclaimed the particular effectiveness of heavy metal: "I really know the reason. It's the relentlessness of the music. It's completely relentless. … If I listened to a death metal band for 12 hours in a row, I'd go insane, too. I'd tell you anything you wanted to know." A favored choice of music played to prisoners on repeat was the theme song of the children's show, *Barney and Friends*. Piore, 13.
[43] *No More Parades*, 470
[44] A German officer quoted in *Le Figaro* in September 1914 predicts that the war will last "Six weeks for France, six months for Russia, and one year for England." My translation of a German officer's prediction quoted in *Le Figaro* in September, 1914. "La Durée de la guerre," *Le Figaro*, 20 September 1914, page 1, *Gallica* (Bibliothèque nationale française), accessed 4 August, 2014.
[45] Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire: The Story of a Squad,* trans. Robin Buss (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 8. The novel was translated into English in 1917.
[46] *Under Fire,* 8.

Barbusse connects the breakdown of hearing to the breakdown of time by the war. Ears, like clocks, have ceased to function under the apparent endlessness of the sound—and time—of war.

For a Manchester NCO, the unstinting sound of the great guns becomes a concrete element in a landscape where time can be *felt*: "It hung over us. … the supernatural tumult did not pass in this direction or that. It did not begin, intensify, or decline and end. It was poised in the air, a stationary panorama of sound, a condition of the atmosphere, not the creation of man."[47] Neither the sound, nor, by extension, the war displays any movement resembling plot development—"it did not begin, intensify, or decline and end." Time seems to halt, transmuting sound—its own trace of passage—into the static and tactile qualities of space. But while the inextricable triad of time, sound, and the war partake in the solidity of a spatial image, the soldier's point is precisely that the object at the heart of this image stretches on *ad infinitum* in time, overflowing the instantaneous capture of the eye. This war demands a durational occupation of the ear.

The Theater of Sound

"With the pen, I used to be able to 'visualize things'—as it used to be called," Ford wrote in September 1916, two months into his frontline deployment.[48] "But, as for putting them—into words! No: the mind stops dead, and something in the brain stops and shuts down."[49] Ford was not alone in experiencing a profound crisis of representation in the war.[50] John Buchan wrote in the preface to his adventure tale *Greenmantle* in August 1916: "Let no man or woman call its events improbable. The war has driven that word from our vocabulary, and melodrama has become the

[47] Quoted in Davis, *Into the Silence,* 25-26. "The sound was different, not only in magnitude but in quality, from anything known to me," the soldier adds.
[48] "Arms and the Mind/War and the Mind" in *War Prose*, 36.
[49] Ibid., 36-37.
[50] The war's upending of the extraordinary into the ordinary required new techniques of representation for writers of all persuasion. On the ubiquity of problems representing or otherwise addressing the war in writing and the arts, see Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 102-145.

prosiest realism."[51] Massive scale, unprecedented casualties, and disorienting atomization made the war difficult to conceptualize, let alone communicate. Correlation rather than causality had become the rule. "There we were: those million men, forlorn upon a raft in space," Ford wrote at the mid-point of the battle of the Somme. "But as to what had assembled us upon that landscape: I had just to fall back upon the formula: it is the Will of God. Nothing else would take it all in. I myself seemed to have drifted there at the bidding of indifferently written characters on small scraps of paper."[52] Ruminating on the disasters of the year, Joseph Conrad told Ford, "Methinks to make anything of [the war] *in our sense* one must fling the very last dregs of realism overboard."[53]

To write "*in our sense*" for Conrad and Ford meant to write impressionistically.[54] Conrad had famously described the task of impressionism as being "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*."[55] At the front in 1916, though, Ford

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[51] "To Caroline Grosvenor," *Greenmantle* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), v.

[52] "Arms and the Mind," in *War Prose*, ed. Max Saunders (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1999), 38. *War Memoirs* (London: H. Karnac Ltd., 1997), 91. This impression of the almost arbitrary distribution of men and resources across the Western Front appears in many soldiers' accounts. Wilfred Bion, who became Samuel Beckett's psychotherapist for a time in the 1930s, stated: "Officers and men were mystified by a kind of fighting they could not understand. We knew very little of our work, and here we were, stumbling on to heaven knows what, led by a guide who probably didn't know his way and would only admit it when he had got us thoroughly lost." Wilfred R. Bion, *War Memoirs, 1917-1919*, ed. Francesca Bion (London: Karnac Books, 1997), 91.

[53] Letter to Ford Madox Ford, 4 December 1916, *Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 5: 1912-1916*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 683. Emphasis in original.

[54] Ford claimed the label of "impressionist" before and after the war, in his 1913 essay, "On Impressionism," and in his 1924 tribute, *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*. "On Impressionism," *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Frank MacShane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 33-55. "We accepted without much protest the stigma 'Impressionists' that was thrown at us," Ford says of himself and Conrad in 1924. "[W]e accepted the name because … we saw that Life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains." *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), 194. Ford's impressionism combines sensation with craft; "[I]n Ford's usage 'impression' means … something both empirically given and something aesthetically enhanced, that can therefore serve both mimetic and pragmatic purposes" (Matz, 162).

[55] "Preface," *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (New York: Doubleday, 1914), 13-14. Emphasis in original. Here and elsewhere in his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*—a document frequently read as an aesthetic manifesto for Impressionism—Conrad turns to sight as the primary sense organ with

was having a crisis of impressionism—specifically, a crisis of *visual* impressionism.[56] He found military functioning and writerly observation to be mutually exclusive faculties; contrasting "the official observer's mind: say the mind of the Battalion Intelligence Officer" with the "quiescent mind, that of the Impressionist in Letters," he averred, "The preoccupations of my mission absolutely numbed my powers of observation."[57] Beyond cognitive impediments, though, the war impeded vision in the most literal of ways.[58] Where a line of sight could extend, a bullet or a piece of shrapnel could travel. Consequently, the optical mastery of linear perspective was exchanged for the safe blindness of moles; soldiers were kept out of sight, repair work in no-man's land was conducted at night, and trenches were interrupted with transverses every several feet to contain explosions.[59]

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which to conceptualize and practice Impressionism. "The task … is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood," Conrad states, arguing that the senses are the means by which art appeals to "the secret spring of responsive emotions." Ibid., 13-14. Ian Watt calls it "very doubtful" that the phrase, "To make you see," "impl[ies] a specifically impressionistic position," but he takes the preface as "impressionistic in one important, though limited, sense, because it places so much emphasis on the translation of the artist's sense-perceptions into vivid and evocative language." Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 83. Watt gives a detailed philosophical survey of the term "impressionism" in a British history of ideas stretching back to the 17th century. Jesse Matz reads the doctrine and practice of impressionism in a more specific context of literary history, examining the theory and practice of Impressionism in light of Modernism's relationships to class and politics. *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155-173.

[56] Ibid., 38-39. Wyatt Bonikowski identifies a crisis of impressionism in Ford's war experience but frames the question in terms of the unrepresentable nature of trauma: "The questions for Ford after war are, what becomes of writing when it is no longer a way of visualizing with the pen, and how does one write about war when one is essentially 'blind' to one's experience?" *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction* (London: Ashgate, 2013), 61. Bonikowski devotes an entire chapter to this question. See "Transports of a Wartime Impressionism: Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End*" in ibid, 57-94.

[57] "War and the Mind," 42.

[58] "[I]f you are … up on an Observation Point, the class of object that is laid down for your observation is strictly limited in range … And of course, if you are actually firing a rifle your range of observation is still more limited," Ford explained. Ibid, 37.

[59] "The corollary of good cover was the truly 'empty battlefield' on which not only was one seldom seen, but one seldom saw the enemy," Stephen Bull states. Bull quotes war reporter John Masefield on the war's non-visibility:

Added to these practical impediments to vision was the war's prolongation. By 1916, a year that saw a ten-month battle at Verdun, time itself had become a problem.[60] In 1913, Ford had allied impressionist vision with the temporal frame of the moment, yet the certainty of an instant's impression, "as hard and as definite as a tin-tack," was incompatible with the durational temporality of attritional war.[61] In *No Enemy*, Ford contrasted the visual snapshot of an imagined moment with the exhausted drag that characterized his war: "Gringoire had four landscapes, which represent four *moments* in four *years* when, for very short intervals, the strain of the war lifted itself from the mind."[62] The sharpness of such a visualization was worn away by the obligation to endure and the inability to see. "There is so much—such an eternity of—waiting about in the life of any army on the move or up against the enemy trenches, that one's predominant impression is one of

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> In the fire trench they saw little more than the parapet. If work was being done in No Man's Land, they still saw little save by these lights that floated and fell from the enemy and from ourselves. They could see only an array of stakes tangled with wire, and something distant and dark which might be similar stakes, or bushes, or men, in front of what could only be the enemy line. When the night passed, and those working outside the trench had to take shelter, they could see nothing, even at a loophole or periscope, but a greenish strip of ground, pitted with shellholes and fenced with wire, running up to the enemy line. There was little else for them to see, looking to the front, for miles and miles.

In ibid.

[60] While the war relied on standardized time (soldiers were issued wrist watches that were synchronized before battles), its massive casualties and lack of strategic progress seemed to break the historiographical clock as the dragging prolongation of battles drowned progressive narration in non-progressive sameness. Stephen Kern writes, "For the officers, war time was essentially a sum of discrete, sequential units out of which the scenarios for battle were constructed, while for the soldiers in the trenches it was a seemingly endless flux, a composition in time that had neither a beginning nor an end." *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 290.

[61] "[A]ny piece of Impressionism … is the record of the impression of a moment … not a sort of rounded, annotated record of a set of circumstances." "On Impressionism," 41. In his war memoir, *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction*, Ford's protagonist, Gringoire, contrasts the pathetic, weary sights of the frontline with the ephemeral gleam of a momentary vision, emphasizing their temporal incompatibility: "[T]he contaminated fields, the ashamed elm—that was the long strain. And suddenly, at that point it came—… the simulacrum; the vision of the inviolable corner of the earth." *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction,* 65. *No Enemy* was written in 1919 and 1920. Mizener, 307-8.

[62] *No Enemy*, 24.

listlessness," Ford complained.[63] In this non-optical situation of immense scale and temporal prolongation, how could an impressionist writer find traction? An answer was literally within earshot.

As I have already suggested, frontline sound locates the trench soldier's temporal and existential predicament in the sensory register of the audible. The three letters that Ford wrote to Conrad in the early weeks of September 1916 show him to be fascinated by the possibilities of sound to alter temporal perception, to produce sensation without object, and to signal or muffle eventfulness—thereby altering plot. Ford's first letter to "My dear Conrad" describes "a curious opportunity with regard to sound wh. I hasten to communicate to you…[sic]."[64] In dense prose, Ford describes the terrifying simultaneity and consequent misinterpretation of a thunderstorm and an artillery barrage the previous evening—an event revealing the capacity for sound to manipulate narrative understanding. The letter begins by setting a scene of normalcy: "This aftn then we have a *very* big artillery strafe on—not, of course as big as others I have experienced—but still *very* big … The [illegible] last for about an hour—incessant and to all intents and purposes at a level pitch of sound."[65] Emphasizing different kinds of frontline ordinariness, Ford's next paragraph makes a creepy equivalence between the normality of continual shelling, army bureaucracy, the soldier's self-preservational reflexes, and the force field of an explosion:

> I was under cover filling up some of the innumerable A. F.'s [Army Forms] that one fills up all day long even here—& I did not notice that it was raining and suddenly and automatically I got under the table on the way to my tin hat. —Out here, you know, you see men going about daily avocations, carrying buckets, being shaved or reading the D'ly Mail &, quite suddenly, they all appear to be pulled sideways off their biscuit boxes or wagon shafts. I mean of course shrapnel or mines.

[63] "On Impressionism," 39. "Arms and the Mind," 38. 24, my emphasis.
[64] Letter to Joseph Conrad, ? September, 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton Princeton UP, 1965), 71.
[65] Ibid.

Ford's mechanical action of "suddenly and automatically" diving for cover mimics the mechanicity of the blast wave hitting soldiers: "quite suddenly, they all appear to be pulled sideways off their biscuit boxes or wagon shafts."[66] This comparison sets up a tension between theatricality and actuality—between human bodies affected by potential danger (soldiers automatically hiding under a table when they hear a loud noise) and actual danger (soldiers pulled off their biscuit boxes by the force of an exploding shrapnel burst). In both cases, surface-level phenomena act as signals of an unseen event; the involuntary movement of bodies encodes the shapeless force compelling the movement in the first place.

Ford's narration of the scene so far holds us in suspense; all we know is that Ford is under the table. Without any further explanatory detail, both soldier and reader hover in an epistemological vacuum in which some experience, we understand, is taking place that cannot yet be identified or categorized. Ford gives the reader sensation before interpretation and shock without immediate significance, replicating the trench soldier's own ignorance of the origin and fatality behind a loud explosion.[67] His next paragraph furnishes psychological content and hazards a primary interpretation: "Well I was under the table and frightened out of my life—so indeed was the other man. There was shelling just overhead—apparently thousands of shells … I was convinced … the

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[66] Ibid.

[67] What I have described as a generic attribute of sensation fiction, Ian Watt identifies as a technique of "delayed decoding" in the work of Joseph Conrad:

> Long before *Heart of Darkness* Conrad seems to have been trying to find ways of giving direct narrative expression to the way in which the consciousness elicits meaning from its perceptions. One of the devices that he hit on was to present a sense impression and to withhold naming it or explaining its meaning until later; as readers we witness every step by which the gap between the individual perception and its cause is belatedly closed within the consciousness of the protagonist. … This narrative device may be termed delayed decoding, since it combines the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning.

Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, 175. Watt calls Conrad's delayed decoding a "narrative technique which was the verbal equivalent of the impressionist painter's attempt to render visual sensation directly." Ibid., 177.

Huns had got note of a new & absolutely devilish shell or gun."[68] Beginning a new paragraph, though, Ford upends this initial interpretation with an extraordinary volta: "It was of course thunder. It completely extinguished the sound of the heavy art[iller]y, and even the how[itzer] about 50 yds. away was inaudible during the actual peals and sounded like *stage thunder* in the intervals."[69] The letter concludes, "I thought this might interest you as a constatation of some exactness."[70] Sound, it transpires, produces the war phenomenologically even when it does not produce it in actuality.

Ford's letter to Conrad provides a stunning instance of the extent to which the dramatization of danger within the medium of sound can be taken for the real thing—can, in fact, seem more real than the real. As this incident demonstrates, sounds received by the sensorium can suggest any number of different objects and events. This factor becomes particularly true when mediated through the ontological flattening of fantasy and reality within a text, where the reader only knows what she has been told—or what she has "heard." The careful narration of the letter suggests an effort to reproduce this phenomenological confusion in the reader; Ford adopts the premises of 19th century sensation fiction to affect the reader's body through a selective, gradual revelation of plot, adopting these premises specifically to the medium of sound. As D. A. Miller states, sensation fiction is "one of the first instances of modern literature to address itself primarily to the sympathetic nervous system, where it grounds its characteristic adrenalin effects."[71] Ford's aural

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[68] Ibid. Ford's fear was not misplaced; German supremacy in heavy artillery was well-acknowledged. The heavy 42cm mortar nicknamed "Big Bertha" could launch shells weighing 2,000 lbs over 8 miles, "shatter[ing] windows in a two-mile radius" upon impact. Bull, *Trench,* 16, 27; Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, 139-40.
[69] Ford, Letter to Joseph Conrad, ? September, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 71.
[70] Ibid. Notes in square brackets are Ludwig's.
[71] D. A. Miller, "Cage aux Folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*." *Representations* 14 (1986), 107 [107-136]. Miller does not view sensation fiction as unique in producing such effects; though it is the first genre to have done so, he writes, [i]t is not, of course, the last." Ibid.

misapprehension introduces him to a sonic means of activating this "'fight-or-flight' physiology that renders … reading bodies, neither fighting nor fleeing, theaters of neurasthenia."[72]

Ford's explicitly theatrical impression of the melding of artillery and thunder ("… even the how[itzer] about 50 yds. away … sounded like *stage thunder* in the intervals") reappears in a passage of *A Man Could Stand Up* that imagines Tietjens' aural experience of a bombardment as a noisy Shakespearean play:

> Tietjens became like a solitary statue of the Bard of Avon, the shelf for his elbow being rather low. Noise increased. The orchestra was bringing in *all* the brass, *all* the strings, *all* the woodwind, all the percussion instruments. The performers threw about biscuit tins filled with horseshoes; they emptied sacks of coal on cracked gongs, they threw down forty-storey iron houses. It was comic to the extent that an operatic orchestra's crescendo is comic. Crescendo! … C r e s c e n d o ! CRRRRRESC … The Hero *must* be coming! He didn't![73]

As Ford's diction emphasizes, verbal language produces its own sounds, playing upon the nervous system and the emotions in combination with temporal organizers like rhythm, repetition, cadence, frequency, acceleration, and deceleration. In Ford's sonic prose in *Parade's End*, fragmentation, assonance, repetition, and ellipses syntactically denote unexpected and irregular sound that rarely peaks, like the interruptive but non-resolving sound he registers at the front. "What was happening? What was going to happen? … What the bloody hell … What … Tidy-sized shells began to drop around them saying: 'Wee … ee … ry … Whack!'"[74] Ford imaginatively preys on the reader's suspension of disbelief and the possibility of sonic misapprehension that he discovered in 1916, using the convergence of these two conditions to construct incredible metaphors for the overwhelming sound of the artillery: "Two stories down below someone let two hundred pound dumbbells drop on the drawing room carpet; all the windows of the house slammed in a race to get

[72] Ibid., 107.
[73] Letter to Joseph Conrad, September 1916, in *Letters*, 71.
[74] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 486.

it over; the 'pop-op-ops' of the shrapnel went in wafts all over the air."[75] Deadpan descriptions of battlefront noise read like scripts of Futurist *serate*, oscillating between figurative license and irony. "An immense tea-tray, august, its voice filling the black circle of the horizon, thundered to the ground. Numerous pieces of sheet-iron said, 'Pack. Pack. Pack.'"[76] As these examples show, Ford renders sound by turns onomatopoetically and by turns metaphorically. In so doing, he touches upon a doubleness inherent to sound.

Sound holds a contested and unstable status, defined by some as the byproduct of an object or action registered by an auditor (sound as vehicle) and by others as an autonomous event or object existing independently of an auditor (sound "in itself").[77] While noise is frequently defined as

[75] Ford Madox Ford, *No More Parades*, *Parade's End* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2013), 270. *A Man Could Stand Up*, 493.
[76] Ibid., 259.
[77] Scientists, physicians, philosophers, and media theorists continue to debate what kind of object or event sound comprises, where it should be located, and whether or not its existence can be considered independently of its auditor. Some theorists define sound as a fundamentally subjective phenomenon localizable in a hearer's auditory apparatus. Casey O'Callaghan, for example, calls sounds "public objects of auditory perception." (*Sounds: A Philosophical Theory* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], 13. Publicity is paramount in O'Callaghan's definition, since it is this "[availability] for attention, thought, and demonstrative reference" that distinguishes sound from mere auditory experience of the type that can arise in tinnitus. Ibid. In contrast, Patricia Kruth and Henry Stobart situate sound at the site of its emission and consider it an autonomous event independent of the hearer. By this understanding, the registration of sound in the senses is always already belated; "[w]hen we perceive [sounds], they have already departed" ("Introduction," *Sound*, ed. Patricia Kruth and Henry Stobart [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 2.) Rather than existing as objects in themselves, for Kruth and Stobart, "[Sounds] are no more than the moving and intangible shadow of the source or the object that created them." Ibid. Juliette Vocler articulates a literally medial view between these positions, locating sound in the medium within which its waves are permitted to propagate: "Sound is a mechanical vibration (called acoustic) in a material atmosphere (solid, liquid, or gas) that propagates, like a wave, in time and space." (Juliette Volcler, *Extremely Loud: Sound as a Weapon*, trans. Carol Volk [New York: the New Press, 2013], 7. Originally published in French as *Le son comme arme* [2011].) For Vocler, it is a moot point whether to locate sound with the emitter or the auditor because the site of sound is in a medium, not a geographical point: "[T]hanks to the oscillation of molecules or atoms," "there is no displacement but rather transmission; the signal propagates this way and is called a *sound wave*" (ibid., emphasis in original).

unwanted or disorganized sound, this definition—like that of sound—is malleable and subjective.[78] In the modernist period, the potential for sound-as-signification to flicker in and out of apparent existence like a radio signal in and out of static offered a method of literary experimentation for writers like James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Ford himself. "Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyrining imperthnthn thnthnthn," Joyce begins the "Sirens" chapter of *Ulysses*, slipping in a single sentence from the sound of sense to the sound of sound.[79] Joyce draws upon the double ontology of sound, which oscillates between circuit and signal, medium and message, or signifier and sign. At points in *Parade's End*, Ford replicates this doubleness by having sonic sensation oscillate between diegetic and textual levels: "[T]he later they began the less long it lasted … Less long it lasted was ugly alliteration," Tietjens thinks.[80] As discussed in my first section, sound revealed the plot of a war that trench soldiers could not visualize, either literally or figuratively. Yet the contingency of sonic perception meant that events—like sounds—could flicker in and out of cognitive significance, uncannily merging action with atmosphere.

The semiotic interpretation of external sound dominates Ford's second letter to Conrad, dated September 6, 1916. The letter offers a taxonomy of different artillery sounds striking different kinds of matter:

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[78] The distinction between sound and noise is subjective and contingent. "Hearing has a highly subjective side to it … Since noise is widely defined as 'unwanted sound,' the subjectivity inherent in this definition complicates legal intervention when rival definitions of noise arise." Karin Blijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 2. The distinction relies heavily on the subjective factor of attention, which is itself heavily determined, Mari Riess Jones and William Yee argue, by "the role of both immediate and prior experience in shaping schemes that control attending [to sound]." "Attending to auditory events: the role of temporal organization," *Thinking in Sound: The Cognitive Psychology of Human Audition,* ed. Stephen McAdams and Emmanual Bigand (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 105.

[79] *Ulysses* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 256. William James notes, "Verbal sounds are usually perceived with their meaning at the moment of being heard… yet at the very moment "their interpretation suddenly occurs… one may often surprise a change in the very *feel* of the word." William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, 181.

[80] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 481.

> In woody country heavy artillery makes *most* noise, because of the echoes—and most prolonged in a *diluted* way. On marshland … the *sound* seems alarmingly close … The *sound,* not the diluted sound, is also at its longest in the air.
>
> On dry down land the sound is much *sharper*; it hits *you &* shakes *you*. On clay land it shakes the ground & shakes you thro' the ground. [81]

Ford's compendium to artillery sounds emphasizes the degree to which the human body and the geographic environment become sonic conductors. His own body becomes a tympanum for sound waves that penetrate the skin: "In hot, dry weather, sounds give me a headache—over the brows & across the skull, inside, like a migraine. In wet weather one minds them less, tho' dampness of the air makes the seem nearer."[82] Frontline sound connects any constituents in its ambient range through vibration, in a manner that uncannily blurs ontologies. In "Arms and the Mind," which Ford wrote a week after this letter, such a melding of human bodies and environmental space engenders a disturbing flattening of value: "It is all just matter—all humanity, just matter; one with the trees, the shells by the roadside, the limbered wagons, the howitzers and the few upstanding housewalls."[83] Acoustic functionality, when literalized into an existential condition, produces a bewildering mingling of subject and object—a dissolution of corporeal and psychic boundaries that Ford would later turn to his writerly advantage.

Ford's capacity to describe artillery sounds and connect them to particular weaponry and media in this letter shows the indispensability of acoustic memory to aural perception.[84] Yet over the course of his account, the categorical memory he uses to classify sound is supplanted by the anecdotal and emotional memory of particular sonic events:

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[81] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September, 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 73. Emphasis in original.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., 39.
[84] "Recognition means that what is currently being heard corresponds in some way to something that has already been heard in the past." Stephen McAdams, "Recognition of Sound Sources and Events," in *Thinking in Sound*, 146 (146-198). The degree to which memory and attention shape auditory perception becomes apparent when we consider that an auditory event comprises "any relationally intact acoustic pattern." Mari Riess Jones and William Yee, "Attending to auditory events: the role of temporal organization," in ibid., 75.

> Shells falling on a church: these make a huge "*corump*" sound, followed by a noise like crockery falling off a tray—as the roof tiles fall off. If the roof is not tiled you can hear the stained glass, sifting mechanically until the next shell. (Heard in a church square, on each occasion, about 90 yds away). Screams of women penetrate all of these sounds—but I do not find that they agitate me as they have done at home. (Women in cellars round the square. Oneself running thro' fast.)[85]

From a normative present tense, Ford shifts into an historical past tense, then into an experiential present. We find not just a recollection but a reliving of the scene: "Oneself running thro' fast."[86] The parentheses suggest an effort to contain these troubling memories within tidy boundaries, but Ford's understated, factual tone contrasts with the pounding brevity of his cadences; his parentheses surge up into the scientistic prose he attempts to establish for his "notes on sound." The day he wrote his second letter to Conrad, Ford also corresponded with Lucy Masterman in a short missive. "Why does *nobody* write to me? Does one so quickly become a ghost, alas?"[87] Only a sentence later, Ford breaks off abruptly: "We are in a h-ell of a noise, just now—my hand is shaking badly—our guns are too inconsiderate—they pop up out of baby's rattles & tea cosy & shake the rats thro' the earth."[88] The letter ends without so much as a breath. Ford's "Goodbye my dear" lacks closing punctuation, and seems to portend more than good wishes.

The next day, Ford began his third letter to Conrad. "I wrote these rather hurried notes yesterday because we were being shelled to hell and I did not expect to get through the night."[89] One week later: "[I]ndeed I collapsed & was made to see the M. O. who said I was suffering from specific shell-shock & ought to go to hospital."[90]

<u>The Sound of Shock</u>

[85] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford,* 73.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Letter to Lucy Masterman, 6 September 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 74.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 7 September 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 75.
[90] Letter to Lucy Masterman, 13 September, 1916. *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 76.

"'Two years of shells and bombs—a man won't peel that off as easy as a sock'."
– Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 87.

Ford had been in France since mid-July, 1916.[91] His unit was still in Cardiff when the Battle of the Somme began, so he avoided its disastrous commencement on July 1, 1916, which saw, in a single day, 60,000 British casualties including 20,000 dead—the worst day's casualties for any force of the entire war, and to this day the worst casualties suffered by the British army in its history.[92] When he enlisted at the end of July 1915, Ford approached military service as a writer and "the only novelist of his age to be in the fighting."[93] "[I]t is all matter for observation," he told Conrad.[94] One

[91] Ford had a complicated relationship to the war. His father was German, and Ford used his German family name, "Hueffer," for the duration of the conflict. He legally changed it to "Ford" on June 4, 1919 with the dual motivation of avoiding further anti-German sentiment and imposing further distance between himself and Violet Hunt (Letter to James B. Pinker, June 5, 1919, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 93). Like many intellectuals, Ford saw the war as a struggle between cultural ideals and civilizations. While he had visited Germany with Violet Hunt in the fall of 1913, the experience was marred by political tension. Arthur Mizener, *The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1971), 243. Ford described Germany in 1915 as "the chief enemy of humanity and the human letters," stating, "I can only perceive that the Anglo-Saxon and Latin civilizations have for the last forty years been browbeaten into timidity by the formidable productions of an alien barbarism." "Preface," *When Blood is their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), xx. Yet Ford's appreciation of elements of German literary culture remained strong throughout the war; in the Preface to his *Collected Poems* of 1916, he confesses, "I would give almost anything to have written almost any modern German lyric." *Collected Poems of Ford Madox Hueffer* (London: M. Secker, 1916), 12.

[92] Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume II,* 2; Neil Heyman, *Daily Life during World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 63. Wade Davis gives a meticulous description of that morning's disaster. See *Into the Silence*, 23-37.

[93] Ford enlisted at the end of July 1915 and was sent to Wales for training in January, 1916. Letter to Lucy Masterman, July 31, 1915, *Letters*, 60; Letter to Lucy Masterman, January 25, 1916, in ibid., 62; also see Max Saunders, "Introduction," *War Prose*, 5. Ford's penchant for canny self-dramatization should be taken into account when considering the various reasons he gives for enlisting. He writes to *The Good Soldier*'s publisher, John Lane, "I guess I am harder up than you as I have had to give up literature and offer myself for service to George Five"; yet this pecuniary motive falls out of sight when he writes his mother: "You ask me why I have gone into the army: simply because I cannot imagine taking any other course. … It is just a matter of plainsailingly doing one's duty." (Letter to John Lane, August 12, 1915 in *Letters*, 61; Letter to Catherine Hueffer, 18 September 1915" in *War Prose,* 218.) Ford's "friend and fellow officer Tim Sugrue" contends that Ford's reasons for enlisting were, in fact, literary, a stance that Ford himself reaffirms numerous times in letters and short pieces written during his actual deployment: "He was most anxious to obtain front line experience (and no

year later, on July 18, 1916, his unit was sent "up to the firing line," though Ford himself was limited to the rear of the action as part of the battalion transport line.[95] He wrote to Lucy Masterman on July 28, "We get shelled two or three times a day, otherwise it is fairly dull."[96] That day or the next, however, Ford was knocked about by an exploding shell, suffering a concussion and broken teeth.[97] In a letter to his daughter months later, Ford stated, "I wasn't so much wounded as blown up by a 4.2 and shaken into a nervous breakdown."[98]

Following this incident, Ford was sent to a Casualty Clearing station in Corbie to convalesce amidst other wounded men and under airborne bombs—an experience that prompted nightmarish recollections for the rest of his life.[99] On August 23, 1916 Ford rejoined his battalion in the relatively calm Ypres Salient with a renewed intention to put his experiences in writing, owing to a heightened consciousness of being "the only British novelist of anything like, say, my age who actually took part in hostilities as an infantry officer."[100] "I began to take a literary view of the war from that time," he

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doubt inspiration)" (unpublished letter quoted in Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Vol. II*, 1). A combination of these reasons is probable, in addition to his desire to absent himself from Violet Hunt, with whom relations had become fraught.

[94] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 7 September 1916, ibid., 75.

[95] Letter to his daughters, Christina and Katharine Hueffer, July 18, 1916, in *War Prose*, 221. See also Saunders, *A Dual Life, Volume II*, 2 on Ford's exposure relative to soldiers in the firing trench.

[96] Letter to Lucy Masterman, July 28, 1916, in *Letters,* 66.

[97] See "Shell Shock," in *War Prose*, 222.

[98] Unpublished letter, quoted in *War Prose*, 9. He later wrote: "I was blown into the air by something … I had completely lost my memory so that […] three weeks of my life are completely dead to me." *It was the Nightingale*, 175. Ford "even forgot his own name for thirty-six hours." Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Vol. II,* 2.

[99] Ford later called these nightmares the "Corbie-phobia of my middle years." "Shell Shock," in *War Prose*, 22. He wrote of his time in the CCS, "I used to worry agonizedly about what my name could be—and have a day-nightmare. The night-nightmare was worse, but the day one was as bad as was necessary. I thought I had been taken prisoner by the enemy forces and was lying on the ground, manacled hand and foot … and with the enemy, ignoring me for the time, doing dreadful stunts—God knows what—all around me …. Immense shapes in grey-white *cagoules* and shrouds, miching and mowing and whispering horrible plans to one another!" Ibid.

[100] "Letter to the Editor of The New York *World*," 6 November 1926, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton Princeton UP, 1965), 170.

later stated.[101] It was in this period, in the first ten days of September 1916, that Ford wrote his "notes on sound" letters to Conrad. He then spent three days of leave in Paris between September 11 and 13 feverishly translating one of his 1915 propaganda books into French. The effort was too much for him. "I collapsed and was made to see the M[edical] O[fficer] who said I was suffering from specific shell-shock & ought to go to hospital."[102] He refused to do so. (Ford's own explanation was, "The writing rather exhausted me."[103]) Back at the front almost immediately, Ford penned "Arms and the Mind"—the essay lamenting his inability to "visualize things"—on September 15, 1916. Before the end of the month, Ford was invalided back to the battalion base in Wales.[104] From this point on, Ford's mental and physical health was so unstable that he was eventually declared unfit for the frontlines.[105]

Ford's "notes on sound" to Conrad, then, appear at the nexus of literary ambition, bodily injury, and mental recovery. The period of their composition coincides with his convalescence from an injury that threatened his identity and his capacity to write—an injury unremembered, inflicted by an explosion he never saw, but continuously evoked by frontline sound.[106] When Ford wrote to Conrad, past and future harm was augured by his ear; every explosion issued a reminder of his recent concussion and amnesia while simultaneously threatening impending mortal injury or mental

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[101] Saunders, "Introduction," *War Prose*, 4. Uncited quotation in Saunders, "Introduction" in *War Prose*, 5.
[102] Letter to C. F. G. Masterman, September 13, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 76.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Saunders, "Introduction," in *War Prose*, 8.
[105] "[C]'est fini de moi, I believe, at least as far as fighting is concerned—my lungs are all charred up & gone," Ford wrote to Conrad in December 1916. Letter of 19 December, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 79. See also Saunders, *A Dual Life*, Vol. II, 21-28. Ford's explanation of exposure to gas for his respiratory problems has proved controversial, with critics questioning the truth of his subsequent explanations. See Saunders, "Introduction," in *War Prose*, 8.
[106] Wyatt Bonikowski provides an extended discussion of the effects of wartime and shellshock on Ford's impressionist technique. See "Transports of a Wartime Impressionism" in *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in post-World War I British Fiction* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013), especially pages 60-67.

breakdown.[107] On the day of his return to the front, the mere sight of "cotton pods" of shells bursting as he drew nearer to the frontline prompted the paralyzing fear of losing his memory again.[108]

Alex Volmar argues that the sharpening of the aural sensorium in combination with the harmful and traumatic effects of battle sounds inscribed "the soundscape of the war … deeply into the bodies and the collective memory of frontline soldiers."[109] This was demonstrably true for Ford. In his second letter to Conrad (containing his taxonomy of sounds), Ford relates a close call in a French shop while buying flypaper. "A shell landed in the chateau into whose wall the shop was built. One Tommie said, "Crump!" Another: "Bugger the flies" & slapped himself. The woman… went on laughing … No interruption, emotion, vexed at getting no flypapers. Subconscious emotion, 'thank God the damn thing's burst'." Ford's rat-a-tat prose catalogues the immediate, casual reactions of everyone in the shop. His next sentence revises these reactions, however, just as the experience of the shell exploding is itself refigured in memory: "Yet today, passing the place, I wanted to gallop past it & positively trembled on my horse."[110] The shock brushed off in the moment by laughter and parody (""Crump!"") is registered by involuntary memory when the site is re-visited, producing a corporeal and traumatic reliving of terror.

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[107] It is telling that Ford's frames his professional anxieties about his inability to "visualize things" in mid-September, 1916 in terms of brain dysfunction, not a lack of inspiration: "[A]s for putting [pictures]—into words! No, the mind stops dead, and something in the brain stops and shuts down." "Arms and the Mind," in *War Prose*, 37.

[108] Unable to remember the kind of brakes used by the small wagon he is driving, Ford is stricken with terror: "My panic became worse. It seemed a catastrophe that I could not remember what those brakes had been like. The memory that had chosen to return after Corbie must be forsaking me again. … I could remember that the Germans had dropped bombs on the hospital and that a nun had been killed. … But it was a catastrophe to forget about the brakes. … There were perhaps no brakes. …" *It was the Nightingale*, 195-96, ellipses in original. Ford's tendency to self-mythologize is apparent in this volume; his dates are slightly off in his account of his memory loss, and his narration is more concerned with the emotional shape of his experiences than strictly factual recollection.

[109] "In Storms of Steel," 228.

[110] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September, 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 74.

Ford's anecdote is recounted in a paragraph subtitled, "*Fear*," which begins: "This of course is the devil—& worst because it is so very capricious."[111] In his important postwar theorization of traumatic neurosis and the relationship of consciousness to memory, Freud makes a distinction between different kinds of fear according to their temporal stances, contrasting the preparatory mode of anticipation, under which traumatic neurosis cannot take hold, with the flooding shock of fright, in which the protective barrier of the psyche is breached.[112] In his first weeks at the front, Ford found some humor in his body's reflexive responses to sonic surprises. While bathing, he tells Lucy Masterman, "some shrapnel burst overhead—& I was amused to discover that I grabbed for a shirt before a tin hat."[113] By September, though, Ford was less sanguine about the perpetual shocks of combat service. "I have been for six weeks—with the exception of 24 hours—continuously within reach of German missiles &, although one gets absolutely to ignore them consciously, I imagine that subconsciously one is suffering," he states in his first "notes on sound" letter.[114] "I know," he continues, "that if one of the cooks suddenly opens, with a hammer, a chest close at hand, one jumps in a way one doesn't use when the 'dirt' is coming over fairly heavily."[115]

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[111] Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September, 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 74.

[112] Freud writes,

> Fright, fear, apprehension are incorrectly used as synonymous expressions: in their relation to danger
> they admit of quite clear distinction. Apprehension (*Angst*) denotes a certain condition as of expectation of danger and preparation for it, even though it be an unknown one; fear (*Furcht*) requires a definite object of which one is afraid; fright (*Schreck*) is the name of the condition to which one is reduced if one encounters a danger without being prepared for it; it lays stress on the element of surprise. In my opinion apprehension cannot produce a traumatic neurosis; in apprehension there is something which protects against fright and therefore against the fright-neurosis.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 9.

[113] Letter to Lucy Masterman, ? August 1916, in ibid., 68.

[114] Letter to Joseph Conrad, ? September, 1916, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 72.

[115] Letter to Joseph Conrad, September 1916, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 71.

As Ford's "thunder" letter to Conrad reminds us, the nervous system can be fooled into panic and the unconscious tricked into terror by even non-threatening sound, if it is sudden and unexpected. In *A Man Could Stand Up*, Tietjens steps up from the bottom of the trench to look through a peephole:

> He elevated his head cautiously: grey desolation sloped down and away. FRRRrrr! A gentle purring sound! He was automatically back, on the duckboard, his breakfast hurting his chest. He said, 'By jove! I got the fright of my life!' A laugh was called for: he managed it, his whole stomach shaking. And cold!"[116]

When one of his men asks if there are snipers, Tietjens answers that the heartpounding noise "was a beastly skylark that almost walked into his mouth."[117] Under frontline conditions of continual, modulating danger, where "the element of surprise" is ever present and an unbroken maintenance of anxious preparation is impossible, the traumatic ingredient of sudden fright remains a perpetual possibility.[118] In the memoir *No Enemy*, when a cartwheel lifts and drops a corrugated metal roof above the head of the sleeping protagonist, Gringoire, Ford states: "He thought the bottom of hell had dropped out. It was his worst shock of the war. I shouldn't wonder if it were not the worst shock any one ever had between the 4/8/'14 and the 28/6'19."[119] The hyperbole of this description suggests a nervous response so excessive that no measurement is adequate.

For the trench soldier existing in conditions of impaired visibility, then, sound offers the succor of environmental information, but it also constitutes the sensory medium of shock. The pairing of sound with traumatic shock in Ford's postwar writing is unmistakable and consistent.

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[116] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 481. Ford also recounts this episode in *True Love and a G.C.M.*, an unfinished novel he attempted before writing *Parade's End*. See Saunders, *A Dual Life, Vol. II*, 8.
[117] Ibid., 481.
[118] Freud states: "In the traumatic neuroses there are two outstanding features which might serve as clues for further reflection: first that the chief causal factor seemed to lie in the element of surprise, in the fright; and secondly that an injury or wound sustained at the same time generally tended to prevent the occurrence of the neurosis" *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 9.
[119] *No Enemy*, 43-44.

When O Nine Morgan dies in Tietjens' arms in the opening pages of *No More Parades*—an episode compulsively revisited over the succeeding novels—Ford gives Tietjens' psychic damage a sonic complements:

> Tietjens let the trunk of the body sink slowly to the floor. He was more gentle than if the man had been alive. All hell in the way of noise burst about the world. Tietjens' thoughts seemed to have to shout to him between earthquake shocks. […] It was impossible to think in this row … […] The face below him grinned at the roof—the half face![120]

The following two pages narrate a chaotic and clamorous babble of fragments of thought in Tietjens' mind, interspersed by the practical arrangements made by those around him to clean up. The synchrony of sound with traumatic experience in Ford's prose is emphasized as the mutilated body is removed to conclude the chapter: "Two men were carrying the remains of O Nine Morgan, the trunk wrapped in a ground sheet. … There would be an ambulance stretcher on bicycle wheels outside."[121] The next chapter opens: "The 'All Clear' went at once after that. Its suddenness was something surprising … after the perfectly astonishing row."[122] The quiet signals the return of something like peace.

In Ford's war writing, aggressive sound produces mental harm and also foreshadows mental breakdown. The intolerable noise of a bombardment in *No More Parades* precipitates a slide into madness for the young Captain McKechnie (Tietjens calls him Mackenzie): "His problem really was: could he stand the b—y noise that would probably accompany their returns? He had to get really into his head that this was an open space to all intents and purposes. There would not be splinters of stone flying about."[123] As the scene goes on, Ford uses sound metaphorically as well as diegetically to denote injury. A terrible memory strikes McKechnie through a sound that is both internally narrated and externally signaled:

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[120] *No More Parades*, 275.
[121] Ibid., 277-278.
[122] Ibid., 278.
[123] Ibid., 271-72.

> Divorce leave! … Captain McKechnie second attached ninth Glamorganshires is granted leave form the 14/11 to the 29/11 for the purpose of obtaining a divorce … The memory seemed to burst inside him with the noise of one of those beastly enormous tin-pot crashes—and it always came when guns made that particular kind of tin-pot crash: the two came together, the internal one and the crash outside. He felt that chimney-pots were going to crash on to his head.[124]

Diegetic and non-diegetic sound converge; the *imagination* of sound seems as immediate to the mobile consciousness of the text as actual sound in the character's ears. In Ford's free indirect discourse, a memory is simultaneously *triggered* by sound ("it always came when guns made that particular kind of tin-pot crash"), *figured* by sound ("[t]he memory seemed to burst inside him with the noise of one of those beastly enormous tin-pot crashes"), and *felt* through sound ("the two came together, the internal one and the crash outside. He felt that chimney-pots were going to crash on to his head").[125] If mental incoherence involves the confusion of internal with external experience and of past moments with present experience, Ford shows us that sound offers an ideal sensory mode with which to narratively convey such confusions to a reader.

The intertwining of immediate and past experience through the medium of sound became a signature motif of Ford's writing after 1916, and serves as a structuring principle in the war volumes of *Parade's End*, particularly *A Man Could Stand Up*. He arrived at this technique of aural montage, I believe, not only through his own experience of traumatic shock but also his subsequent years of recovery, during which sonic reverberations came to serve him as metaphor and temporal model for the continued impact of traumatic experience on the mind.[126] Sound can open the sensorium to the

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[124] Ibid., 272.
[125] Ibid.
[126] The direct, sometimes world-for-word correlations between Ford's wartime letters and his postwar fiction invite such biographical readings. For example, Ford's second letter to Conrad relates the sounds that dying makes: "When I was in hospital a man three beds from me died *very* hard, blood passing thro' bandages and he himself crying perpetually, "Faith! Faith! Faith!" It was very disagreeable as long as he had a chance of life—but one lost all interest … when one heard he had none." Letter to Joseph Conrad, 6 September 1916, in *Letters*, 74. This anecdote is recounted by Tietjens to Sylvia in *Some Do Not…*: "He let out a number of earpiercing shrieks and lots of orderlies

corporeal, non-discursive memory of other times, producing a palimpsest of memory and immediacy that can be pathologically displacing. In a scene from *A Man Could Stand Up*, the noises emitted by a shell-shocked boy provoke Tietjens' involuntary recollection of a previous bombardment, prompting a narrative blend of sensation and memory that foreshadows Tietjens' own impending breakdown:

> … of course, you might lose control of your mind in a reeling cellar where you cannot hear your thoughts. If you cannot hear your thoughts how the hell are you going to tell what your thoughts are doing?
>
> You couldn't hear. There was an orderly with fever or shell-shock or something […] asleep on a pile of rugs. Earlier in the night Orderly Room had asked permission to dump the boy in there because he was making such a beastly row in his sleep that they could not hear themselves speak and they had a lot of paperwork to do. […][127]

Ford suggests obsession through repetition: "… where you cannot hear your thoughts. If you cannot hear your thoughts… what your thoughts are doing? You couldn't hear."[128] The displacement of the present sound by the echo of a memory—an echo that is another sound—prompts not just Tietjens but the thread of narrative itself, in Ford's free indirect discourse, to question its own coherence and voice the fear of dissolution. The suturing of the narrative thread to the protagonist's character begins to fray, just as stable focalization, and psychological stability more generally, begin to fall apart.

As I have argued through this chapter, sound lends sensation to temporality. Existing in and as time, sound offers empirical markers like rhythm, continuity, and tempo to duration in a manner that is publicly perceptible. I have pointed out Ford's professional interest in sound's capacity to simulate event and structure time and demonstrated the convergence in 1916 of his concerns with

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came and pulled him off me and sat all over him. Then he began to shout *'Faith!'* He shouted: 'Faith! … Faith! … Faith! …' at intervals of two seconds, as far as I could tell by my pulse, until four in the morning, when he died…. […] I disliked him a great deal because he started my tortures, such as they were." *Some Do Not*, 151.

[127] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 491.

[128] Ibid.

sound, writing, and mental health. I have contrasted the duration of continuous sound over four years of war with the brief surprise of sudden sound, arguing that sound is the primary medium of shock for the trench soldier deprived of sight. All of these aspects of Ford's wartime sonic consciousness—duration, event, and trauma—combine in *A Man Could Stand Up*, the third novel of *Parade's End*. In this novel, Ford turns to sound as a sensory, impressionist means with which to depict not only the sudden wound of trauma but also its perpetuation in the psyche after the fact.

While the novel opens with the official end of the war, its plot and structure belie narratives of easy closure; the war continues in Christopher Tietjens's shell-shocked mind, not as concept or as image, but as durational experience. For Valentine Wannop, meanwhile, the Armistice brings only another situation of unscripted continuation, such that she can only muse after the announcement, "It was over now; they were by now in a situation; a condition, something that would affect certain things in certain ways …"[129] Ford manipulates temporality and the pace of plot by using sound as both *histoire* and *récit* in this novel—that is, by rendering major plot points as sonic events but obscuring them within a clamor of diegetic and textual noise. Using sound to both indicate and obscure events, Ford blurs wartime and peacetime into a single temporal framework of non-progressive continuation. Characters and reader are placed in the dependent position of a blind trench soldier, grasping to isolate and interpret significant sounds from a more general sound-scape, yet locked in epistemological and empirical doubt. In two key scenes of the novel—the telephone call to Valentine with news of Tietjens and Tietjens' agonizing wait for a British bombardment—mere minutes of diegetic time take entire chapters to recount.

The first part of *A Man Could Stand Up* recounts Valentine Wannop's concurrent experience of the Armistice and an important telephone call. The novel then flashes back, in its second section, to the slow creep of shell shock as Tietjens counts down the minutes to a barrage. The final section

[129] Ibid.

of the novel brings these two characters—and these two times—together in a postwar, unscripted present, in a house symbolically lacking furniture, where they will decide what to make of their past and their future.

"Slowly, amidst intolerable noises…"

A Man Could Stand Up begins with the end of the war. Like Valentine herself in the novel's first scene, the opening sentence (constituting the entire first paragraph) is caught between multiple simultaneous stimuli in a state of confused interruption:

> Slowly, amidst intolerable noises from, on the one hand, the street and, on the other, from the large and voluminously echoing playground, the depths of the telephone began, for Valentine, to assume an aspect that, years ago, it had used to have—of being a part of the supernatural paraphernalia of inscrutable Destiny.[130]

Narrative arrests and qualifications slow the flow of this long sentence, as does the knotty syntax. Three different sources of sound are pointed out in the first few clauses: "the street," "the large and voluminously echoing playground," and finally, "the depths of the telephone"—which, unlike the "intolerable noises" stemming from the first two, has yet to produce any diegetic noise. It is the telephone, though, that is weighted with "inscrutable Destiny," suggesting a reverberation in Valentine's psyche if not in her ears:

> The telephone, for some ingeniously torturing reason, was in a corner of the great schoolroom without any protection, and, called imperatively, at a moment of considerable suspense, out of the asphalt playground where under her command ranks of girls had stood electrically only just within the margin of control, Valentine with the receiver at her ear was plunged immediately into incomprehensible news uttered by a voice that she seemed half to remember. [131]

Sound and sonic instruments strike Valentine with extraordinary physicality in this mixture of description and event. Ford so confuses somatic with psychic sensation that the boundaries of both

[130] Ford, *A Man Could Stand Up*, 443.
[131] Ibid.

are overrun; "plunged immediately into incomprehensible news," Valentine seems to dive into a liquid pool of sound. The telephone's placement is "torturing" and "without any protection" as if Valentine's body is plugged directly into its current, a connotation emphasized by the "ranks of girls" standing "electrically" whose bodies seem to buzz with actual voltage.

The conversion of psychic content into physical sensation peaks in the following sentence, when a burst of noise and a fragment of comprehension impact Valentine like a blow: "Right in the middle of a sentence it hit her: '… that he ought presumably to be under control, which you mightn't like!'; after that the noise burst out again and rendered the voice inaudible."[132] In Ford's virtuosic diction, the origin and significance of these sounds remains a mystery. At the level of syntax as well as of plot, no single action or event is carried through from beginning to end, so causal relationships cannot be determined. Interruption piles upon interruption; Valentine is interrupted by the telephone from her vigil outside and then interrupted while on the telephone by the ensuing outside noise. Form here imitates content; the syntax of the sentence lurches between subordinate clauses that slow the thrust of its main action.

Into this muddle of interruption seeps the consciousness of an event experienced only second-hand by Valentine and the reader. I quote this passage at length to emphasize Ford's sonic delivery of plot:

> The voice disappeared; then it emerged again with: 'They're said to be friends now!'
>
> It was drowned then, for a long period in a sea of shrill girls' voices from the playground, in an ocean of factory-hooters' ululations, amongst innumerable explosions that trod upon one another's heels. From where on earth did they get explosives, the population of squalid suburban streets amidst which the school lay? […]
>
> The sibilating voice on the telephone went on spitting out spitefully that the porter said he had no furniture at all; that he did not appear to recognize the porter… Improbable-sounding pieces of information half-extinguished by the external sounds but uttered in a voice that seemed to mean to give pain by what it said.

[132] Ibid.

> Nevertheless it was impossible not to take it gaily. The thing, out there, miles and miles away must have been signed—a few minutes ago. She imagined along an immense line sullen and disgruntled cannon sounding or a last time.
>
> 'I haven't,' Valentine Wannop shouted into the mouthpiece, 'the least idea of what you want or who you are.'[133]

The methodology of this passage is typical of most of the novel. Virtually all of the clues to plot that Ford provides in this confusing scene are sonic or sonically inflected. Blurring *histoire* with *récit*, Ford draws attention to the quality of the voice on the end of the telephone ("[I]t exaggerated its *s*'s with an effect of spitting vehemence") while drawing attention to the sound of his own prose. The assonance of "h*oo*ters' *ulu*lations, amongst in*nu*merable explosions" complements the alliteration of the "*s*qualid *s*uburban *s*treets" and the "*s*ibilating voice … *s*pitting out spitefully."[134] Ford also peppers this scene with figurative descriptions of sound; the voice on the telephone is "drowned … in a sea" and then "an ocean" of noise, suggesting a full-body aural immersion. As in his "thunder" letter to Conrad, Ford reveals information selectively, intensifying sensation while delaying significance, so that even as emotion and reflection are registered in dense, abrupt detail, it is difficult to tell what is taking place.

Indeed, both the attended event and its mediation in sound elude immediate experience. The war's end is so coolly hinted at—"The thing, out there… must have been signed"—that its import to the narrative and to the world of the novel is not at first evident, even to Valentine. The Armistice only strikes her through the *imagination* of its somatic after-effects: "Intense heat possessed Valentine Wannop. She imagined indeed her eyes flashing. Was this the moment?"[135] Even as she tries to pinpoint the event to a single "moment"—an Impressionist instant—Valentine realizes she has missed it:

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[133] Ibid., 444.
[134] Ibid., 444. My emphasis.
[135] Ibid., 445.

> She didn't even know whether what they had let off had been maroons or aircraft guns or sirens. It had happened—the noise, whatever it was—whilst she had been coming through the underground passage from the playground to the schoolroom to answer the wicked telephone. So she had not heard the sound. She had missed the sound for which the ears of a world had waited for years, for a generation. For an eternity. No sound. […] All waiting: girls rubbing one ankle with the other rubber sole … Then … For the rest of her life she was never able to remember the greatest stab of joy that had ever been known by waiting millions. There would be no one but she who would not be able to remember that … [136]

By circling back to a recapitulation of previous events, as Ford does numerous times in this novel's spiraling narrative structure, the reader is paradoxically better oriented within the plot of the novel such as it is so far, but also—with Valentine—confirmed in our disconnection vis-à-vis the event. As Valentine emotionally figures the feeling of time spent waiting for the ceasefire, her individual past balloons into an infinitely deep past shared by an unquantifiable public: "She had missed the sound for which the ears of a world had waited for years, for a generation. For an eternity. No sound."[137] An incommunicable event is both registered and figured by sound, as emphasized by Valentine's fumbling and inadequate grasp for description ("It had happened—the noise, whatever it was—").

By missing the public closing of a wound, a new wound and a new experience of non-closure has perhaps been opened within Valentine. The exact repetitions in the free indirect narration ("she had not heard the sound. She had missed the sound […] No sound") raise the specter of trauma, a reading supported by Valentine's sense that something unrecoverable has transpired: "It was over now; they were by now in a situation; a condition, something that would affect certain things in certain ways …"[138] The ending itself has ended and can no longer be savored. "We had the experience but missed the meaning," Eliot wrote twenty years after *Parade's End* in *Four Quartets*. Here, Valentine does not even have the experience.[139] Ironically, Valentine has missed the sound she was yearning to hear because she was attending to another sound, and piling irony upon

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 39.

irony, the melodrama of Ford's telephone of "inscrutable Destiny" is punctured by static and a bad line. Both the event—and her missed experience of it—are *sonic*. The telephone continues to squawk in Valentine's ear.

This muffled transmission of un-comprehended news over the telephone from an unknown speaker in the midst of inexplicable noise begins Ford's novel—and ends the war for Valentine Wannop. The traumatically missed event is raised to the level of a public diagnosis over the course of the novel, as the Armistice brings not resolution but only continuation. The plot, syntax, narrative structure, diction, and characterization of *A Man Could Stand Up* belie the clean break of its famous and frequently misinterpreted metaphor for the Armistice as "a crack across the table of History."[140] This metaphor, focalized through Valentine, appears in a specific context; the Head of the school where Valentine teaches demands that the Armistice be met by the teenage girls with gravity and commemoration, not triumphal celebrations. On reflection, Valentine discerns the larger concern beneath this demand for order:

> Valentine had realised that what was really frightening them was the other note. A quite definite fear. If, at this parting of the ways, at this crack across the table of History, the School—the World, the future mothers of Europe—got out of hand, would they ever come back? The Authorities—Authority all over the world—was afraid of that; more afraid of that than of any other thing.[141]

Ford's capitalization of "History" places it with "the School," "the World," and "Authority" as ideological abstractions that nonetheless structure and concretely affect the existence of the lower-case "people" like Valentine. So the metaphor of the Armistice as "this crack across the table of History" is a formal, periodizing device deployed by capital-H History—and its deployment in this passage is Valentine's parroting of the official story to which she is expected to subscribe, just as she

[140] *A Man Could Stand Up,* 450.
[141] Ibid.

is expected to regard her students as the "future mothers of Europe."[142] The notion of the Armistice as a fissure dividing the future from the terrible past is a notion that Valentine feels must be true—a story she tells herself about how the story of this war should be told. But as the sonic opening of the novel demonstrates, such a clear-cut separation of past from present or future is affectively and psychologically impossible. The messy, sonic confusion of the end of the war for Valentine and her simultaneous imbrication in the life of a shell-shocked veteran deny her the clarity of such a fissure in either time or experience.

By blurring wartime with post-war time, Ford flattens any hierarchy that would claim exceptionality for either. Instead, the "event" of the war and the "event" of the peace are grounded in an ongoing, unstructured, and obscure duration, mediated here by ambient and indistinct sound. Sound is the primary medium of eventfulness in *A Man Could Stand Up*, yet the diegetic sounds that communicate happenings are muffled, distorted, interrupted, or unheard. Throughout the novel, beginnings and endings of events are missed, unclear, or inaudible for the characters straining to hear them. Consequently, the minimal condition of plot (the capacity to identify and order events) is radically undermined.[143] Reader and characters founder in a phenomenology of perpetually transitional but non-teleological time where duration continues but plot stalls. Michael Levenson states that in *A Man Could Stand Up*, "[N]arrative time loses pace; incidents take many pages to form; and the very notion of event seems to lose its hold."[144] As we see in Ford's masterfully narrated

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Peter Brooks calls plot "a structure for those meanings that are developed through temporal succession, or perhaps better: a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time." *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 12.

[144] "The Time-Mind of the Twenties," in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, *Cambridge Online*, 13 September 2016, 203 [197-217]. Rob Hawkes also situates his discussion of Ford's narrative technique in relation to notions of the event and its function in plot, arguing, "Ford's and Conrad's works are intensely preoccupied by the processes of plotting … If we regard plot as an *ordering* principle—both in the sense of shaping, stabilizing, and

opening scene, textual and diegetic sound is indispensable to this dilution and dilation of event. Exploiting the capacity to hear many sounds at once, Ford uses aural perception to give us two simultaneous events that interrupt, obscure, and dilute the other, such that the coherence of each falls apart.

This technique, when applied to the war's official end and Tietjens' shell-shock, argues against the war's closure, instead prolonging its formless, continuous present beyond the Armistice. The novel insists on this blending of wartime and post-wartime at every level, from diction and syntax to plot and temporal structure. The hostilities of the battlefield have leached into the postwar everyday such that the news that Christopher Tietjens is back in England strikes Valentine with the explosiveness of a cannon: "*When that telephone blew you out of its mouth you knew really that for two years you had been avoiding wondering whether you had not been insulted!*"[145] Comparing the telephone to artillery, Ford suggests a continuation of the war's violence in civilian psychic life, in non-militaristic technology, and in social relations. The war leaves a similar stain on Valentine's lexicon: "She had been about to say: 'Oh, *Hell!*' but the sudden recollection that the War had been over a quarter of an hour made her leave it at *'Oh!'* You would have to drop wartime phraseology!"[146] Only two pages later, Valentine exposes the difficulty of sanitizing her wartime language, "A hell of a lot … Beg pardon, she meant a remarkably great deal! … to have thought of in ten seconds!"[147] Even as the war sinks out of chronological sight, its undertow continues to structure the currents of what remains. Indeed, the second and central section of *A Man Could Stand Up* steps back in time to join

providing structural order within a narrative, and of an 'organizing line' governing the sequential order of events in the *histoire* as well as their representation in the *récit*—then it is one that many of Ford's and Conrad's works actively subvert." *Ford Madox Ford and the Misfit Moderns: Edwardian Fiction and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 61.

[145] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 458.

[146] Ibid., 455.

[147] Ibid, 457.

Tietjens in the trenches, "months and months before" the Armistice.[148] The structural center of this novel ostensibly about the postwar is thus occupied by a still-ongoing war.

The second part of *A Man Could Stand Up* places the reader inside Tietjens' consciousness as he contemplates his chances of frontline survival and counts down toward an unnamed future event. "It remained dark and quiet. It was forty-five minutes: it became forty-four … forty-three … Forty-two minutes and thirty seconds before a crucial moment and the slate-grey cases of miniature metal pineapples had not come from the bothering place …"[149] It takes Ford the next fifty pages to 'pass the time' and account for the elapsing 42 minutes and 30 seconds of Tietjen's life. The text eventually discloses that the "crucial moment" so anxiously anticipated is a heavy artillery bombardment during which Tietjens will have to serve as acting commander. The recalcitrant advancement of the clock is emphasized by continuous references to the countdown: "It wanted thirty-two minutes to the crucial moment. He said: 'Where are those bloody bombs?'"[150] And again, some pages later: "Twenty-seven minutes, by now!"[151] Still later, "The sun was practically up, somewhere. As soon as its disc cleared the horizon, the Huns, according to Brigade, were to begin sending over their wearisome stuff. In thirteen and a half minutes."[152] In this situation of protracted anxiety and still-reverberating injury, the formlessness of unstructured duration—of temporality without plot—degrades mind and body. Reader and characters are forced to "do time" through techniques like verbal repetition, hitching syntax, and plotless rumination, reproducing the discomfort of a scenario in which one must "hurry up and wait."[153] The indifferent regularity of

[148] Ibid, 479.
[149] Ibid., 479-80.
[150] Ibid., 488.
[151] Ibid., 499.
[152] Ibid., 506.
[153] A typical example of such mental cogitation reads as follows:

> Perhaps the *strafe* would not come. He hoped it would not. He did not want a *strafe* with himself in command of the battalion. He did not know what to do: what he ought to do by

minutes measured by the clock contrasts with the immeasurable psychic and sonic sensation that gradually fragment Tietjens' consciousness.

As responsibility and fear of a fatal failure weigh on Tietjens' disintegrating mind, his mental existence becomes correlated with the sounds he hears and does not hear. Sound keeps Tietjens tethered to a present moment of continuous shock, even as his mind wanders through memories, hypotheses, and hallucinations:

> Snap! Snap! Snap! … Clear sounds from a quarter of a mile away … Bullets whined. Overhead. Long sounds. Going away. Not snipers. The men of a battalion. A chance! Snap! Snap! Snap! Bullets whined overhead. Men of a battalion get excited when shooting at anything running. They fire high. Trigger pressure. *He* was now a fat, running object.[154]

By using sound to denote events but muddling these sounds with perceptual confusion, Ford imposes duration on the reader without the succor of plot advancement. He thereby reproduces a mode of temporal stuckness in which the present is inescapable and the longed for "event" identified with some change seems endlessly deferred—a mode that some critics might call the everyday. "The everyday," Michael Sayeau argues, "[…] is a name for a mode of temporal experience marked by stasis, emptiness, and meaninglessness that occurs only in the shadow of the event—whether past, future, or never to arrive."[155] The uneventful quality of the everyday exists in opposition to the significant, delineated, and identifiable events that typically support the armature of plot. By refusing such clarity of eventfulness, Ford breaks the motor of causality that drives plot advancement, and submerges his reader in the nonprogressive temporality of the trenches.

> the book. He knew what he would do. He would stroll about along those deep trenches. Stroll. With his hands in his pockets. Like General Gordon in pictures. He would say contemplative things as the time dragged on … A rather abominable sort of Time really …

Ibid., 509.

[154] Ibid., 566.

[155] *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11. Sayeau calls the everyday "at base a literary phenomenon, a type of temporal experience entangled from the start in the application of narrative models to lived time." *Against the Event,* 10.

By this point in the *Parade's End* series, Tietjens has been shell-shocked by a concussive explosion, removed from service for convalescence, and redeployed to the front. Like Ford in 1916, Tietjens' injury came from an unseen and unremembered blast that shook him into amnesia.[156] The frontline scenes recounted in *A Man Could Stand Up* depict the period of Tietjens' redeployment and his shaky, post-amnesia mental state—a period exactly analogous to Ford's return to the front between August and September 1916, during which he wrote his "notes on sound" letters.[157] For both Tietjens and Ford, the deleterious effects of trauma are agonizingly ongoing, escaping the instantaneous capture of a visual image. By rendering Tietjens' wait for the bombardment sonically, Ford demonstrates the degree to which his protagonist's oscillation between sanity and insanity occurs *in duration*. "I am in short rather ill still and sometimes doubt my own sanity—indeed, quite frequently I do," Ford confided to C. F. G. Masterman in January 1917.[158]

A quintessential characteristic of the traumatic neuroses of the war is their disruption of the ordinary functioning of memory, most notably by amnesia and the compulsion to repeat. Following Peter Brooks, we might consider such a disruption of memory a disruption to the plot of a life. As Brooks puts it, "[M]emory—as much in reading a novel as in seeing a play—is the key faculty in the capacity to perceive relations of beginnings, middles, and ends through time, the shaping power of

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[156] Wyatt Bonikowski notes that this amnesia and its after-effects structure *Parade's End*; "The first volume of *Parade's End*, *Some Do Not* …, is cut in half by the war, marked at its center with a gap in time between 1912 and 1917… The blast and Tietjens' three-day stay in a C. C. S. [casualty Clearing Station] make up only a small part of the five years missing at the heart of the novel; the blast is only one event in a larger amnesia that the novel never fully recovers." *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination*, 61.

[157] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 489.

[158] Letter to C. F. G. Masterman, 5 January 1917, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 82. Ford continues:

> I suppose that, really, the Somme was a pretty severe ordeal, though I wasn't conscious of it at the time. Now, however, I find myself suddenly waking up in a hell of a funk—& going on being in a hell of a funk till morning. And that is pretty well the condition of a number of men here. I wonder what the effect of it will be on us all, after the war—& on national life and the like.

Ibid.

narrative."[159] Ford's suspenseful countdown to the bombardment suggests a jump-cut back in time, an act of authorial orchestration of which the characters seem wholly unaware. He saluted this technique of non-chronological narration in his 1924 remembrance of Joseph Conrad, while he was writing *Parade's End*.[160] Yet when brought to the depiction of shell shock, Ford displaces the agency of the time-shift from an omniscient author-figure to his character's fugitive consciousness. As the scene of the bombardment melts into the contemporary present of Tietjens, alone in a house in England, the time-shift is shown to originate not from an external, organizing consciousness but from the disrupted temporal reality of Tietjens' injured mind. The impending mental breakdown tracked throughout the second section turns out to be a breakdown that has already taken place. The novel so wholly inhabits a traumatized temporality that, like Tietjens, the reader has been persuaded that the episode of the attended bombardment constituted the immediate experience of a past self, rather than the revisited memory of a present self. Reversing the technique of the "flashback" to a more pathologically inferential "flash-present," Ford presents the contemporary moment as an unreal analepsis for Tietjens.

This disorienting flash-forward to Armistice Day manifests as a sudden absence of sound after the cacophony of the bombardment he has mentally relived. In striking opposition to the noisy beginning of the novel, the sudden silence that opens Part Three of *A Man Could Stand Up*, immediately following the roar of the trenches, reverberates like a funeral for Valentine Wannop: "Coming into the Square was like being suddenly dead, it was so silent … The shouting had continued for so long that it had assumed the appearance of being a solid and unvarying thing: like

[159] *Reading for the Plot*, 11.
[160] "A novel must … not be a narration, a report. Life does not say to you: In 1914 my next-door neighbour, Mr. Slack, erected a greenhouse and painted it with Cox's green aluminum paint …" "Joseph Conrad," in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Frank MacShane (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 72.

life. So the silence appeared like Death; and now she had death in her heart."[161] This ominous and almost painful silence in Valentine's ear comes pages after the painful silence felt by Tietjens after the bombardment: "In the complete stillness, for, the guns having stopped, the skylarks, too, were taking a spell, Tietjens could hear his heart beat, little dry scraping sounds out of his lungs. The heavy beats were very accelerated. It gave an effect of terror."[162] Silence after great noise produces a shock almost as great as a loud noise on an unprotected ear. Like the effects of neuroses following a traumatic event, the duration of the effects of overwhelmingly loud or protracted sound on the human sensorium lasts beyond the emission of the sound itself.

Valentine arrives on Tietjens's doorstep on Armistice Day in the novel's concluding section with the intention of living with him and caring for him. Her first sight of Tietjens in years is unexpected and alarming: "[S]he was not given time even to be ready … there was not any last moment. He charged upon her … It was so quick. It was like having a fit. The houses tottered."[163] Tietjens seems not to recognize her and rushes out with a piece of furniture under his arm, leaving Valentine struck by the war's ongoing devastation. "Hitherto, she had thought of the War as physical suffering only: now she saw it only as mental torture. Immense miles and miles of anguish in darkened minds. That remained. Men might stand up on hills, but the mental torture could not be expelled."[164] Valentine maps the "miles and miles of anguish" *temporally*, in the "mental torture" that, she implies, can never be removed from survivors' minds. Sound, duration, and mental injury come together in Valentine's new understanding of the psychic aftermath of war. Tietjens' mental fragility seems to invade her own thoughts, as her focalized narrative takes up a sing-song, nonsensical tone: "He was beside her. Beside her. Beside her. It was infinitely sad to be beside this madman. It was

[161] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 571.
[162] Ibid., 569.
[163] Ibid., 571.
[164] Ibid., 584.

infinitely glad. Because if he had been sane she would not have been beside him. She could be beside him for long spaces of time if he were mad."[165] Valentine's voice sympathetically renders the sound of insanity through the use of repetition and assonance. The analogy of echo with madness recalls an earlier moment in which Tietjens chats with a fellow Yorkshire soldier, during which an aural memory of his childhood morphs into a metaphor for insanity: "He had often dropped stones down the well and listened: they made an astonishingly loud noise. Long: like echoes gone mad!"[166] The sound of echo places the "long spaces of time" that Valentine associates with madness into duration, *taking time*.[167]

As a frightened but ecstatic Valentine waits in the still house for Tietjens' return, the novel comes full circle, ending with a telephone call whose description echoes the novel's opening sentence: "Her mother's voice came turned by the means of its conveyance into the voice of a machine of Destiny."[168] As Valentine and her mother wrestle with the implications of her living out of wedlock with Tietjens, who refuses to divorce his adulterous wife because of the shame it would bring upon his child, Tietjens reenters the house and takes over the telephone conversation. Like the opening phonecall during the Armistice announcement, ambient sound disrupts communication: "Intense, hollow reverberations filled the house. … She said: 'I can't hear you. There seems to be thunder.'"[169] The reverberative knocking that sounds like thunder in the house turns out to be a group of Tietjens' men come to celebrate the Armistice with him. Among them is Captain McKechnie, the soldier driven almost to madness by the infernal noise of a bombardment in *No More Parades*. The conversation over the telephone concludes by bringing Tietjens and Valentine together with a mother's blessing. The novel's last blare of noise rings with optimism, as Tietjens

[165] Ibid., 572.
[166] Ibid., 560.
[167] Ibid., 572.
[168] Ibid., 579.
[169] Ibid, 582.

begins to dance with Valentine while the men sing: "The whole world round them was yelling and prancing round. They were the centre of unending roaring circles … better than a gramophone … better…"[170]

Moving through sound and time in the artistic structure of a dance, Tietjens and Valentine find a form of continuation. The last sentence of *A Man Could Stand Up* ends with the word "on," sounding the inconclusive hum of a nasal rather than the arrest of a fricative or the explosion of a plosive. "She was setting out on—"[171] The novel and the trilogy conclude in the unplotted hum of the everyday, extended indefinitely by this unmet dash.[172]

Conclusion

Joseph Conrad must have read Ford's 1916 "notes on sound" with intense interest, not only as a writer but as a father.[173] His son Borys was attached to the 40th Siege Battery as a gunner, serving in the same regions during the same period in which Ford was recording his observations.[174]

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[170] Ibid, 596.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ford claimed *A Man Could Stand Up* as the final book of *Parade's End*. "I strongly wish to omit the *Last Post* from the edition. I do not like the book and have never liked it and always intended the series to end with *A Man Could Stand Up*." Letter to Eric Pinker, 17 August 1930, 197.
[173] While Conrad's formerly close intimacy with Ford had cooled over his separation from Elsie Madox Hueffer and his relationship with Violet Hunt, the two remained significant interlocutors until Conrad's death in 1924. Ford denied any falling out. Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday*, ed. Bill Hutchings (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999), 145. Ford's third "notes on sound" letter to Conrad concluded, "I hope you have good news of Borys." 7 September 1916, in *Letters*, 76.
[174]"His unit of ASC has been dissolved and he is now personally attached to the 40th siege batty," Conrad writes in July, 1916. (Letter to E.L. Sanderson, 16 July 1916, in ibid., 621.) Conrad told John Quinn a month later, "As far as I can make out, his guns are on the Somme." (Letter to John Quinn, 10 August 1916, in ibid., 633. Borys's impressions of the guns would undoubtedly have been more extreme than Ford's by reason of his proximity. A French gunner describes firing a 75mm gun as an intensely corporeal experience:

> The gun springs back like a frightened beast. A tongue of flame leaps from the muzzle. Your skull vibrates, a thousand bells ring and peal in your ears, you shake from head to foot. The blast from the explosion has raised a cloud of dust. The ground trembles. You have a taste in

Virtually every letter Conrad wrote during the war mentions the boy with pride, affection, and anxiety: "On the day he left he was 17y. 8m 4d old," he tells Ford, and to E. L. Sanderson: "You will not perhaps think me a soft sort of idiot if I tell you that I miss him more than I can say."[175] Coincidentally, mere days after Ford recorded his "notes on sound," Conrad described his own impressions of the noise of a 13-pounder in a letter to his wife: "The report is certainly very sharp but with one's ears well stopped all one gets is only a sort of friendly tap in the pit of one's stomach."[176]

"The guns are going—so thank god it's over," Ford wrote on the day the Versailles peace treaty was signed.[177] Though the announcement of the Armistice and the treaty occurred through noise, the silence that follows sound is unambiguously coupled with peace in Ford's writing. The threat of sonic penetration and the aptness of sound to metaphorize psychic trouble make silence a signifier of mental as well as political peace, since, in Ford's mind, sound retained its threatening power to penetrate, shock, and immobilize. When the Armistice is signed, Valentine "imagine[s] along an immense line sullen and disgruntled cannon sounding for a last time."[178] A month after the Armistice, Ford wrote a poem for Stella Bowen titled "Peace," which depicts the war's end as a silent vision:

The black & nearly noiseless, moving, sea:

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your mouth that is insipid to begin with, then bitter: the taste—or is it almost more like a sensation—of powder.

Quoted in Bull, 20.

[175] Letter to Ford Madox Ford, 28 September 1915, in *Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 5: 1912-1916*, 516. Letter to E.L. Sanderson, 16 July 1916, in ibid., 622. "A week before the heavy Ypres cannonade [Borys] wrote 'I don't remember when I was last in bed'. And we guessed something was going to happen."

[176] Letter to Jessie Conrad, 15 September 1916, in ibid., 662. In early September 1916, when Ford penned his "notes on sound," Conrad had embarked on a month of travel and work in the service of the Royal Navy. Letter to Macdonald Hastings, 7 September 1916, in ibid., 658. It is not clear when Conrad received and read Ford's letters; his next letter to Ford was in December 1916.

[177] Letter to C. F. G. Masterman, 28 June 1919, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 94.

[178] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 444.

> The immobile black houses of the town,
> Pressing us out towards the noiseless sea
> No sounds …[179]

Such silence was slow to arrive. "I was an author. I had been," Ford wrote in the first novel he published after the war. "Once I had been a free man: I had sat and written! I was not well, of course. I had just come out of hospital, I think. … I was not, after that, much good until … 1921."[180] In fact, it was not until October of 1923—more than seven years after his concussive summer at the front—that Ford could state, "[A]fter many years of great anxiety and strain things have rather suddenly gone all right together. I've got over the nerve tangle of the war and feel able at last really to write again—which I never thought I should do."[181] It took circumstance, injury, and most importantly, time for Ford to arrive at a method for depicting traumatic duration as well as traumatic instantaneity.[182] "It's a sort of monomania," Tietjens tells Mrs. Wannop. "You see, I am talking of it now. It recurs. Continuously."[183]

Sound depicts both the ruptural instant of shock and the long reverberation of aftermath, enabling a narrative model of trauma focused not just on the extraordinary instant of acute injury but on the durational prolongation of its effects. Ford uses such sonic form in *A Man Could Stand Up* to depict conditions of existence in which the present seems not to advance and a future marked by change is endlessly deferred. In so doing, he makes a radical equivalence between the temporal phenomenology of attritional wartime and that of its uncertain aftermath. "No, you could not get the effect of that endless monotony of effort by numbers. Nor yet by saying 'Endless monotony of effort' … it was like bending down to look into darkness of corridors under dark curtains. Under

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[179] Letter of 10 December, 1918. *The Correspondence of Ford Madox Ford and Stella Bowen*. Ed. Sandra J. Stang and Karen Cochran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 48.
[180] "From *The Marsden Case*," *War Prose*, ed. Max Saunders (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999), 240.
[181] Letter to H. G. Wells, 14 October 1923, in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, 154.
[182] See Bonikowski, 61.
[183] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 583.

clouds… Mist …"[184] Neither numbers, nor *le mot juste*, nor a visual image can communicate the temporality of non-progressive continuation, Ford argues. Ongoing sound registers the unexceptional perpetuity of a chronic condition—a war, say—or the wavering steps of an unplotted recovery.

[184] *A Man Could Stand Up*, 485.

CHAPTER 2
FURNISHING REMAINS IN REBECCA WEST AND ELIZABETH BOWEN

In the still heat of a summer morning, a young girl in an Edwardian dress reads a dead man's love letters under the shadow of an obelisk. Jane is the daughter of the dead man's former fiancée. The letters "fell at her feet, having found her rather than she them" while she was exploring the attic of Montefort, her ramshackle country home. She was compelled to read them when "the word 'obelisk' caught her eye"—it is, in fact, the same domestic monument under which she sits.[1] Opening with this ghostly scene of re-embodied mourning, in which a young daughter unknowingly relives the love and loss of her elders, Elizabeth Bowen's *A World of Love* (1955) investigates the anachronistic stasis of lives that endure but do not develop in the aftermath of mass tragedy. In Bowen's plot, the monument and the letters mark an interruptive event—the First World War—and an individual absence—the death of Guy Montefort—that fatally becalmed the lives of those around them. Though *A World of Love* was written after a second World War, Bowen's plot centers on the lasting, and seemingly indelible, concussions of the First World War into mid-century.

In a book of reflections published in 1946, René Char wrote, "*Notre héritage n'est precédé d'aucun testement"* ("Our inheritance was preceded by no testament").[2] This aphorism capturing the sense of unpredicted burden placed upon the present by its history could well have been written after the First World War, not the Second. In addition to pithily mourning the weight of historical legacy, Char's phrase encapsulates the plot of *A World of Love*. When Guy Montefort is killed at the front in 1918 without having left a will behind, his cousin Antonia unexpectedly and unwillingly inherits his large house, throwing her into a relationship of guilt, resentment, and mutual dependency with Guy's bereaved fiancée, Lilia. Antonia was the unacknowledged 'other woman' in a love triangle, or a

[1] Elizabeth Bowen, *A World of Love* (London: J. Cape and the Book Society, 1955), 47, 36.
[2] René Char, "Feuillets d'Hypnos" in *Furor and Mystery and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Mary-Ann Caws and Nancy Kline (Boston: Black Widow Press, 2010), 154-55.

triangulated cathexis, of Lilia-Guy-Antonia—with Guy's ultimate affections—and his sexual orientation—remaining a mystery. The relationship between Antonia and Guy simmered in potentiality without ever reaching consummation, so it has remained a secret. Lilia, for her part, has repressed any suspicions of a romantic current between Guy and Antonia. Yet the restless non-resolution of both the love triangle and of Guy's sharply abbreviated life have kept him uncannily alive in Montefort. The war has made him a *revenant*. For Antonia, "Though a generation was mown down his death seemed to her an invented story"; for all of the adults, living is inextricable from the inadvertent usurpation of those lost: "The living were living in his lifetime, and of this his contemporaries … never were unaware. They were incomplete."[3]

Time continues but forward movement doesn't occur for those trapped in postures of incomplete mourning. Guy's ghostly presence and Montefort's unchanging limbo exist in symbiotic relationship, engendering a recursive continuity without progress where old calendars hang on the wall and clocks don't work, but where "something more than human [is] at intensity."[4] The significance of the physical remainders of Guy that haunt Montefort—objects, mementos, and even the obelisk—are intensified for Lilia and Antonia because of his unwitnessed death and non-repatriated body. Their very environment augers the presence, not the pastness, of Guy in their lives. Bowen depicts this ghostliness as an uncanny birth that the Second World War would simply repeat: "Meantime, another war had peopled the world with another generation of the not-dead, overlapping and crowding the living's senses still more with the senses left by unlived lives."[5]

Survival after mass death demands the continued, contemporaneous existence with the dead. By imbuing monuments (like the obelisk) and objects (like the letters) with the presence of the dead in the context of survivors' damaging inability to let go, Bowen connects the physical cultures of

[3] Ibid, 64, 67.
[4] Ibid, 155.
[5] Ibid, 67.

postwar mourning to psychological pathologies of fixated repetition. In so doing, this novel of the 1950s recalls a widely circulated analogy of the 1920s between two figures of fixated memory: the postwar monument that demands remembrance and the shell-shocked soldier who cannot forget.[6]

This chapter brings together three emergent bodies of work in post-war Britain to examine the temporal dynamics of a haunting that pervaded the 1920s, all of which intersect around the disturbances provoked by the materially absent but symbolically resonant bodies lost at war. I examine the history of monument-building and memorialization in Britain after the Great War, the repetitive fixations of shell shocked soldiers theorized in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and scenes of uncannily animated—and animating—interiors in Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris* (1935) and Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier* (1918). In interchanging humans and objects, West and Bowen participate in a prevalent and charged debate around material and symbolic understandings of the human that formed the backdrop to individual and state-sponsored programs of memorialization in the 1920s. West's *Return of the Soldier* provides an entry point into the convergence of these historical, cultural-medical, and literary discourses by combining a fascination with domestic objects, a diagnosis of shellshock, and the absence of a dead child to elaborate problems of memory, embodiment, and loss that confronted mourners *en masse* in post-war Britain.

The argument of this chapter is that remembrance takes the form of repetition in time, unconsciously compelled or consciously willed. The postwar injunction to "never forget" is ideologically embodied by the imperial monument and painfully corporealized by the shell-shocked veteran. Both the monument and the shell-shock victim manifest a form of consistent repetition over time. For the bereaved mourner before the monument and the shell shocked soldier locked into an injured mind, remembrance is predicated on haunting: a fixed idea from the historical past

[6] Shell-shocked soldiers, Fiona Reid writes, "were uniquely unable to forget the war and all its traumas … [and] lived most closely with their memories." *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment, and Recovery in Britain 1914-30* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 8.

consistently re-presents itself, colonizing the ongoing present of the consciousness in question.[7] Both the monumental object enjoining the mourner to remembrance and the shell-shocked soldier locked in fixation exist in suspension, refusing the capacity to move into the future. In West's *Return of the Soldier*, these seemingly distinct realms of material memorialization and psychic stuckness converge. An uncanny interchange between living and dead matter causes domestic interiors to act on human agents with the animation of subjects, compelling certain states of being or remembering, even as human characters at times take on the attributes of inorganic objects. I begin this chapter's discussion with West's 1918 novel before describing some of the historical contexts behind notions of objecthood and memory in the postwar moment. I then examine the surprising appearance of monumental form in Freud's account of repetition compulsion, and conclude with Bowen's 1935 *The House in Paris*.

I. Rooms of Perpetual Return

Return of the Soldier begins in a nursery that is also a mausoleum—a room that that gleams "so unendurably gay and familiar" in the absence of Kitty and Chris Baldry's child, who died when he was just a toddler.[8] "Everything was there, except Oliver," says the narrator, Jenny. This preservation of the space of the dead child is immediately complemented by Jenny's wish to 'entomb' a beloved soldier in a safe space: "I wanted to snatch my Cousin Christopher from the wars and seal him in

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[7] Andreas Huyssen writes,

> The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not, as some naïve epistemology might have it, the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is dependent on some past event or experience. It is this tenuous fissure between past and present that constitutes memory, making it powerfully alive and distinct from the archive or any mere system of storage and retrieval. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 3.

In a comment apt to the dynamics of remembrance and forgetting in *Return of the Soldier*, he continues, "The difficulty … is to think memory and amnesia together rather than to simply oppose them" (7).

[8] Rebecca West, *Return of the Soldier* (New York, George H. Doran Company, 1918), 10.

this green pleasantness his wife and I now looked upon," says Jenny.[9] The premonition of danger to the absent Chris disrupts the text's present location in the nursery by interposing another, terrifying space, as Jenny recalls a recent nightmare: "I saw Chris running … starting back here because he trod upon a hand, not even looking there because of the awfulness of an unburied head…."[10] From the remembrance of Oliver erupts the premonition of his father's death; from the private space of the home emerges the abjection of No-Man's Land; from the room intended to shelter the newly born child comes a burial ground without benediction. And from objects of life ("the woolly white dog and the black cat with the eyes that roll") the text produces the objectification of dead bodies ("the awfulness of an unburied head").[11] Objects and spaces stage the forewarning and fore-mourning of Chris Baldry's death at war, both psychic and literal. The already-at-hand monument to the absent dead that is the dead child's nursery sets in motion a story in which not only pathological psychic rhythms but also the ordinary manifestations of human accidents and grief are stuck out of causal time.[12]

At the command of Chris Baldry, the nursery has been shut and untouched since his son's death. In contrast to his avoidance of the place, Kitty, his vain wife, pragmatically uses the room's bright sun to dry her hair. The absence of the child in his parents' life—the concealed preservation of his memory in the nursery—and Chris's particularly severe reaction is replicated by the absence of fifteen years of memory in his mind; the novel's next scene informs us that he has been shell

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[9] Ibid, 4-5, 7.

[10] Ibid. Jenny attributes the specific images in her nightmares to cinema: "For on the war-films I have seen men slip down as softly from the trench-parapet, and none but the grimmer philosophers could say that they had reached safety by their fall" (West, 8). She could be referencing the famous *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), a part-documentary, part-fictionalized film viewed by over half of the British population in its first six months. Stacy Gillis, "'The Skeleton is well wrapped in flesh': Official First World War Films and Modernist Literary Corporeality in H.D. and Virginia Woolf," *Literature & History* 21.1 (2012), 25-26.

[11] Ibid, 4-5.

[12] Further interrupting linear causality in its play with life and death, the room itself serves not only as a memorial for a child already dead but also as one for the future dead—or rather, the future unborn. "I wish Chris wouldn't have it kept as a nursery when there's no chance—," Kitty complains. Ibid, 6.

shocked. In West's plot, Chris's amnesia derives from both the external traumas of war and the prior, internal repression of his son's death. By placing these two traumatic events in psychic relation, West allies herself with contemporary thinkers who saw little or no difference between the neuroses of war and those of peace.[13] And by analogizing the fixated mind of the traumatized neurotic in architectural terms through a house full of uncanny furniture and an undisturbed bedroom full of the objects of the dead, West figures shell shock as both a temporal *and* a spatial disorder, manifesting in the uncanny mixing of the human with the non-human.

The plot of *Return of the Soldier* is simple. Margaret Grey, a woman of little means who was long ago engaged to Chris Baldry, visits Kitty and Jenny with news that Chris has been wounded in the war. It transpires that in ignorance of his amnesia, Chris telegrammed Margaret—the woman he believes still to be his beloved—at her girlhood address to tell her of his accident. Kitty, Chris's jealous wife, drives Margaret from the house with accusations of fraud, but secretly, she fears her husband's madness or infidelity. Once he is brought home to Baldry Court to convalesce, Chris is confronted at every turn by an unfamiliar life in a manner that literalizes the condition of his unhappy marriage; his wife is now a stranger to him in every sense. Chris renews his acquaintance with Margaret in the hopes of aiding his recovery, and finds in her the symbolic safety of home that he cannot find in his own house.

Margaret is figured as an essential refuge from the trenches. When Chris first reencounters her after so many years, Jenny recounts, he starts "running across the lawn as night after night I had seen him in my dreams running across No Man's Land … I saw [Margaret's] arms brace him under

[13] This belief was widespread. "The war neurosis, like the peace neurosis, is the expression of a splitting of the personality," Ernst Simmel claimed in 1918. "Symposium held at the Fifth International Psycho-Analytical Congress at Budapest, September, 1918," quoted in Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 91. A 1917 medical manual states, "[S]hell-shock has brought us no new symptoms … The problems of shell-shock are the everyday problems of 'nervous breakdown.' They existed before the war, and they will not disappear miraculously with the coming of peace." G. Elliot Smith and T. H. Pear, Shell Shock and its Lessons (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1917), xiv-xv.

the armpits with a gesture that was not passionate, but rather the movement of one carrying a wounded man from under fire."[14] With Margaret, Chris's happiness has returned but his marriage and life as head of the household at Baldry Court is foundering. The abeyance of his memory through shell shock brings relief, security, and love, rather than the recapitulations of unprocessed war experience in night terrors or physical compulsions. His form of fixation is erasure—the absenting of his married life and the painful absence of his young son. The ethical quandary of what is best for this soldier only deepens as the novel continues—for, as Jenny states, "it became plain that if madness means liability to wild error about the world, Chris was not mad … he had attained something saner than sanity."[15] The return of the soldier's memory, we come to see, may very well mean the fatal loss of the man in the war, and it will certainly mean the abandonment of his happiness with a sympathetic, romantic equal. The novel ultimately ends with Chris's memory being restored, as his dead son Oliver's objects—repositories for Oliver himself—are taken from the closed nursery and re-presented to Chris, demanding his remembrance of the dead toddler and his married life.

As this concluding scene epitomizes, Chris's ability or inability to remember is predicated, in West's novel, on his interaction with physical objects. His first action on reentering the house as a wounded veteran is to touch the old hall table: "[W]ith the sleepy smile of one who returns to a dear, familiar place to rest, he walked into the hall and laid down his stick and his khaki cap beside the candlestick on the oak table. With both hands he felt the old wood, and stood humming happily

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[14] West, 122-23.

[15] Ibid., 133. The distinction between insanity and the traumatic neuroses of war was emphatically maintained by medical and civilian authorities. As Fiona Reid observes, these previously distinct categories were blurred over the ensuing decades by metaphorical interpretations of the war:

> During the First World War military and political authorities persistently argued that shell-shocked men were not mad, or … should not be treated as mad men. In stark contrast, by the late twentieth century it was the norm to present shell-shocked men as mad … The Great War was interpreted as such a wasted, ineffectual and inhumane struggle that it quite literally drove men mad. (99)

through his teeth."[16] Chris's last rituals before his deployment emphasized his wish to carry with him "the complete memory of everything about his home, on which his mind could brush when things were at their worst, as a man might finger an amulet through his shirt." West's tactile figure for remembrance reappears in the tactile relationships to objects that Chris assumes when he is back home—a tactility that brings objects nearer than vision and emphasizes a corporeal memory prior to linguistic cognition. In his first supper at home, the estranged Chris seems to try to solidify his own self through material osmosis. Jenny recounts,

> …all through the meal I was near to weeping, because whenever he thought himself unobserved he looked at the things that were familiar to him. … nearer things he fingered as though sight were not intimate enough a contact. His hand caressed the arm of his chair, because he remembered the black gleam of it, stole out and touched the recollected salt-cellar. It was his furtiveness that was heartrending; it was as though he were an outcast, and we who loved him stout policemen.[17]

William James argues that objects constitute an extension of selfhood: "*In its widest possible sense … a man's Self is the sum total of all he CAN call his*, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house … his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account."[18] And it is as if Chris is remembering himself as a whole, unshattered person when he touches these indexical proofs of his heritage, these monuments to his uninjured self. Yet though old objects are stabilizing, Kitty's recent fashionable redecoration of the house issues an existential threat to Chris's psyche: "He was looking along the corridor and saying, 'This house is different.' If the soul has to stay in its coffin till the lead is struck asunder, in its captivity it speaks with such a voice."[19] Trauma rearranges the furniture of Chris's interiority, such that the objects around Chris are more familiar with his past than he is

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[16] Ibid, 42-43.
[17] Ibid., 52-53.
[18] James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 291. James acknowledges that this expansive sense of self is "a fluctuating material," noting that "The same object [is] sometimes treated as a part of me, at other times as simply mine, and then again as if I had nothing to do with it at all." (Ibid.) Similarly, Jay Winter and others caution us that monuments and memory objects bear a dynamic, fluctuating status in prompting attachment or emotion.
[19] Ibid., 54.

himself. This effect is so disturbing for him that he is eventually "driven from the house by the strangeness of all but the outer walls."[20]

The deep ambivalence between the necessity to remember and the inability to forget—or, in Chris Baldry's case, between the inability to remember and the unconscious desire to forget—locates the shell shocked soldier, like the memorial object, at the nexus of postwar tensions around the degree to which one should remain fixed on, or fixed in, the past. Veterans with shell shock manifested the war in their bodies; they corporeally served as repositories of the memory of the war for those around them.[21] Fiona Reid reminds us that shell shocked men, "physically embodied the

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[20] West, 82.

[21] The etiology of shell shock was then, just as now, in its contemporary valence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, mysterious. Shell shock was first officially used as a term to describe the nervous disorders present in combat veterans in a 1915 article by C. S. Myers, the consultant psychologist of the British Expeditionary Force (Reid, 26). Myers' article was published as "A Contribution to the Study of Shell Shock.: Being an Account of Three Cases of Loss of Memory, Vision, Smell, and Taste, Admitted into the Duchess of Westminster's War Hospital, Le Touquet," *The Lancet* 1.4772 [13 February, 1915], 316-320. *Science Direct*, accessed 29 October 1915. The term "shell shock" was popularly adopted but quickly found disdain, as its suggestion of concussive origin proved unhelpful to attempts to describe and diagnose nervous symptoms in those who had suffered no physical trauma. "Whenever the term shell-shock appears in these pages," a 1917 medical text states, "it is to be understood as a popular but inadequate title for all those mental effects of war experience which are sufficient to incapacitate a man from the performance of his military duties" (Smith and Pear, *Shell-Shock and its Lessons*, 1-2). Mental symptoms of the war neuroses could include "loss of memory, insomnia, terrifying dreams, pains, emotional instability, diminution of self-confidence and self-control, attacks of unconsciousness or of changed consciousness sometimes accompanied by convulsive movements resembling those characteristic of epileptic fits, incapacity to understand any but the simplest matters, obsessive thoughts, usually of the gloomiest and most painful kind, [and] even in some cases hallucinations and incipient delusions," all of which "make life for some of their victims a veritable hell" (ibid., 12-13). Not just diagnostic criteria but also terminology resisted stabilization. Terms describing mental disorders prompted by the war included "hysteria, neurasthenia, [and] hybrid-neurasthenia … 'nerve-shaken men,' 'traumatic hysteria', 'concussion of the brain', 'hysterical lesions', 'nervous manifestations' and 'emotional shock'" (Reid, 37). Prevailing attitudes around gender, class, and lunacy added to the difficulty of isolating the causes or treatment of these psychosomatic illnesses. Lower-class enlisted men were often diagnosed with "hysteria," for example, while the term "neurasthenia" was more frequently ascribed to officers. "When working men had been described as neurasthenic, the term hinted at malingering and duplicity; when officers were described in the same way, the word became shorn of those pejorative associations" (Reid, 17). What is certain is that shell shock produced a population of urgently ill patients whose diagnoses, symptoms, and care constituted key sites of disagreement among military and government authorities

slogan 'Lest we forget', though their attendant sufferings made it plain that some memories really were too painful to remember."[22] This equivalence between the shell shock victim and the monument or memorial object was publically noted. In the 1918 case of a French shell-shocked soldier, a total loss of memory resulted in his transformation by 1922, in the popular imagination, into the "*poilu inconnu vivant*" (the living unknown soldier)—an appellation connecting him to France's tomb of the *poilu inconnu*.[23]

The shell-shocked soldier's diagnosis thus places him on a threshold between the categories of an object to be manipulated (or possessed) and an adult subject with agency and will—a quiver between subjectivity and objectivity similar to that prompted by a corpse.[24] This tension is exploited in West's constant play on two different valences of possession in the novel: the possession of an object under the terms of ownership, and the possession of a subject by illegible forces like illness, memory, and grief.[25] Before his illness, Chris is figured as an object to be kept and "sealed up" in the

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over the appropriateness and amounts of post-service compensation, and among medical practitioners over the validity and utility of psychotherapeutic care.

[22] Reid, 86.

[23] Laura Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 20. The soldier, who never regained his memory, was "recognized" in published photographs by over three hundred families, two of which pursued their claim to him in the courts into the late 1930s.

[24] Around the turn of the twentieth century, "Corpses became more like things to be managed than people to be tended." David Sherman, *In a Strange Room: Modernism's Corpses and Mortal Obligation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27. The soldier's slippage into the mode of being a passive object under the strategies of trench warfare was actually connected by medical experts to the onset of shell shock:

> In natural fighting, face to face with his antagonist, and armed only with his hands or with some primitive weapon … the uppermost instinct in a healthy man would naturally be that of pugnacity, with its accompanying emotion of anger … the intense excitement aroused in the relatively short contest would tend to obliterate the action of other instincts such as that of flight, with its emotion of fear. But in trench warfare the conditions are different. A man has seldom a personal enemy whom he can see and upon whom he can observe the effects of his attacks. … One natural way is forbidden him in which he might give vent to his pent-up emotion, by rushing out and charging the enemy. He is thus attacked from within and without. (Smith and Pear, 10-11.)

[25] This psychic meaning of possession has persisted in recent accounts of traumatic experience, such as that of Cathy Caruth, who describes trauma as manifesting "belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of

comfort of Baldry Court by his cousin and wife.[26] But if, to borrow a phrase, "reification has established the mode of human relation" on the part of Kitty and Jenny, this objectifying logic is heightened but also threatened by his loss of memory.[27] The concealment of origins inherent to traumatic memory blurs the boundaries between possessed and possessor that are such crucial fictions to the two women's forms of life and relationality; "If he could send that telegram," Kitty wails to Jenny, "he is no longer ours."[28] At once not quite human and excessively human, then, the shell shock victim oscillates between subject and object and physical definitions of the human as a mere bundle of matter and nerve fibers, and spiritualist or ideational views of the human as a site of reception, cognition, and transmission.

Chris's wavering ontology seems to unsettle the ontologies of other bodies in the world, as well as the formerly organized—or unexamined—temporal registers of humans and objects. Shortly after he returns home, Jenny narrates:

> … the furniture, very visible through the soft evening opacity with the observant brightness of old well-polished wood, seemed terribly aware. Strangeness had come into the house and everything was appalled by it, even time. For the moments dragged. It seemed to me, half an

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the one who experiences it." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), 4, emphasis in original. Ruth Leys persuasively dismantles Caruth's conflation of literal and representational understandings of trauma in her chapter "The Science of the Literal: The Neurobiology of Trauma" in *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). My point here is to emphasize the continued nomenclature of possession in its psychic sense within influential cultural critical accounts of trauma.

[26] West, 7.

[27] Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 160. Brown's phrase describes Henry James's late novel *The Golden Bowl*, a novel in which "the only way that affection can be expressed—or indeed felt—is through possessive predication" (160). West's *Return* torques this conceit to question whether the very notion of self-possession or the possession of others can ever inhere, given the extent to which the mind is strange to itself. The exception to the novel's rule of possessive affection and contractual, objectified intimacy is Margaret, the poor but gentle woman Chris loved as a young man who was thrown over fifteen years ago because of a misunderstanding. It is Margaret who will restore certain objects of the novel to meaningful plenitude, by taking them out of this domestically reifying market and thereby enable mourning. In doing so, though, she will help restore Chris's mind to the point that he can be reinserted into another reifying machine of human relation—the military apparatus that will return him to the front.

[28] West, 33.

> hour later, that I had been standing for an infinite period in the drawing-room, remembering that in the old days the blinds had never been drawn in this room because old Mrs. Baldry had liked to see the night gathering like a pool in the valley while the day lingered as a white streak above the farthest hills; and perceiving in pain that the heavy blue blinds, which shroud the nine windows because a lost Zeppelin sometimes clanks like a skeleton across the sky above us, would make his home seem even more like prison.[29]

A multi-generational human past and an encroaching geopolitical present converge in this passage that combines memory and sensation. The conditions of wartime—the effects of the recent past—have literally refurnished the home, placing blackout curtains where there used to be none. But the "strangeness [that] had come into the house" is not the banal adaptation of window coverings to the war, but the strangeness of Chris—the haunting of his psyche that renders the distant past uncannily immediate not just to his consciousness but to that of others.[30] Peaceful co-habitation with the past and the present is annulled by the traumatic neuroses of war.

Home, West suggests here, is as much a collection of temporalities as it is a spatial locus or an affective attachment. The novelty of alienation produced by Chris's shell shock changes affective relationships with time as well as with spaces: "[E]verything was appalled by it [strangeness], even time. For the moments dragged."[31] The very term, "appall," speaks to the spatialization of time in a static object; the etymology of "appall" in old French refers not only to an attitude ("to wax pale, be in consternation") but also to an object of death: "a cloth … spread over a coffin, hearse, or tomb… a shroud for a corpse."[32] The numerical ticking of clock time cannot be "appalled," though. It is human time, or the temporal experience of *durée* and memory, that is appalled. Similarly, it is the

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[29] Ibid., 47-48.

[30] Margaret, as the messenger to Kitty and Jenny of Chris's wounded condition, is also figured as part of this strangeness; Kitty and Jenny's revulsion at her manifests in physical terms as a rejection of her material qualities and those of her clothing—"her deplorable umbrella, her unpardonable raincoat, her poor frustrated fraud" (26). Watching her walk away from the house after first delivering the news of Chris's injury, Jenny figures Margaret as "a spreading stain on the fabric of our life" (30-31).

[31] West, 47-48.

[32] "appal /appall, v.". OED Online. December 2015. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/9487?rskey=XOeuxe&result=2&isAdvanced=false Accessed 8 December, 2015.

human sense of time that is distorted; though the minutes continue to tick indifferently in equidistant quantification, Jenny's notion of measure is warped by feeling: "It seemed … half an hour later, that I had been standing for an infinite period."[33] In Jenny's perception, pastness rushes up into the present, inhibiting the felt sense of progression. Jenny is literally frozen by the remembrance of things past, by how the home used to be when Mrs. Baldry looked out on the night. As the paralyzed conduit of memory, she stands fixed for a period of time, becoming, in West's prose, a statue—or rather, a monument.

Reminders of death abound in the passage, emphasizing Jenny's cataleptic posture: the mention of the deceased Mrs. Baldry, the window coverings that "shroud" the glass, and the "lost Zeppelin" that "clanks like a skeleton across the sky"—this last a figure that turns the mechanical specter of war into the wandering spirit of an unsettled ghoul. Chris himself is this wandering ghost, the bearer of a mind alien to itself that has brought death into the house; on the day he is scheduled to return to Baldry Court from the hospital, "the house was pervaded with a day-before-the-funeral feeling."[34] His presence appalls the temporal accumulations that transform mere house into symbolic home, disordering the organization of others' memories, charging the material furnishings of domestic history with uncanny vitality, and producing in other characters the change into a monumental object that his status as a shell shocked veteran presses onto him.

West's narrative and descriptive strategies connect the postwar debates over the *spatial* organization of memory in the domestic sphere of everyday life (debates about how to mourn in the absence of a body and what objects and sites should serve such a function) to the *temporal* organization of memory within the ongoing time of daily life, in which loss must be repeatedly, perpetually re-registered. The ethical conundrum of the plot of *Return of the Soldier*—the question of whether Chris "should" recover his memory or not—is balanced around the strange equivalence, in

[33] West, 47-48.
[34] Ibid., 41.

principle and experience, between the suffering prompted by the compulsive repetitions of traumatic neurosis and the suffering engendered by the non-pathological repetitions of everyday life.[35] Recalled to grief over her own dead child by the need to remind Chris of Oliver, Margaret "cried flatly, as though constant repetition in the night had made it as instinctive a reaction to suffering as a moan. 'I want a child! I want a child!'"[36] Margaret's "constant repetition in the night" is not the compulsively reenacted scene of nightmare experienced by the sufferer of shell shock. It is the conscious, necessary re-registration of an event in the lived condition of ongoing time. Living demands repetitions, and loss entails the repeated re-living of that loss—"the recognition of each a *re*-cognition."[37] The child is perpetually, repeatedly, daily dead to his parents. As Margaret understands from deep within her own experience, while a cure to Chris's amnesia might restore him to full self-knowledge and to a normal life, it cannot preempt the indifferent, temporal repetitions of continuously re-registered loss that are compelled by the simple fact of continuation in time. "You can't cure him. … Make him happy, I mean," she tells the specialist physician. "All you can do is make him ordinary."[38] To be ordinary is to be compelled to repeat non-pathologically.[39]

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[35] As Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis reminds us,

> Normal behavior includes a fair amount of repetition in the form of routines: overlearned motor programs that can run largely unconsciously, such as in the act of brushing your teeth or starting a car. But several pathologies—including obsessive-compulsive disorder, autism, and schizophrenia—produce repetitive behavior that ranges from nonfuctional to detrimental, and is referred to contrastingly as "ritual." It remains controversial whether ritualization represents an exaggeration of normal routinization processes or whether it may be a different process entirely. *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 60.

[36] West, 176.

[37] Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 52.

[38] West, 168.

[39] Freud places the compulsion to repeat in the traumatic neuroses on par with the less dramatic, but no less evident, repetitions of "normal people" who seem to repeat patterns of behaviour and attachment over and over: "The compulsion which is here in evidence differs in no way from the compulsion to repeat which we have found in neurotics, even though the people we are not considering have never shown any signs of dealing with a neurotic conflict by producing symptoms." *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 604.

During his amnesiac phase, Chris's temporal estrangement from the contemporary moment manifests as a physical loss, or a loss of physicality. His muscle memory—the historical chronometer of his body—is out of joint with his own time. A stumble down the stairs displays a gap in years of habit and a lapse to a previous state. This corporeality of fixated memory—the spatial presentation of temporal identification—manifests in the book's ethically disturbing conclusion. As a final attempt to restore Chris's memory, the doctor and Margaret decide to trigger the painful memory of his son and his son's death, by presenting physical evidence of Oliver's existence to Chris through the child's ball and jersey. In West's version of a trigger, Oliver's existence is "suggested" to Chris through the indexicality of Oliver's belongings; his ball and jersey materially testify to the existence of the beloved whose memory-trace has been erased from Chris's mind. Since Chris's pathological forgetting is connected to his rigid repression of the memory of Oliver, the aim of presenting these objects is to produce the effect of abreaction frequently sought by contemporary therapeutic practitioners in hypnosis.[40] Figuratively speaking, these objects are meant to open the door to the nursery—the space upstairs preserved at the command of Chris but, symptomatically, never visited by him. The scene occurs "off-screen," narrated only through Jenny's description to Kitty as she peers at Chris and Margaret through the window. But the "cure" manifests physically: Chris's gait as

[40] Medical practitioners during and after the war disagreed in fundamental ways about the causality of the war neuroses and their appropriate treatment. Some practitioners believed that traumatic neuroses were caused by the shattering of an external protective barrier to the mind by a sudden shock or terror (*Schreck*)—a hypothesis first advanced by Freud and Breuer in their 1895 *Studies in Hysteria* and reiterated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Advocates of the economic model recommended a staged reenactment of the trauma while under hypnosis, with the intention of producing a kind of structural catharsis called "abreaction" and releasing the psychic pressure from which symptoms derived. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy*, 83-84. The quality of emotional discharge was the most important factor within abreaction; as Freud and Breuer put it in *Studies in Hysteria*, "Recollection without affect almost invariably produces no result" (quoted in Leys, 85). Others argued that traumatic neurosis was a condition engendered by exposure to certain kinds of content. Treatment therefore depended, they argued, on qualitative engagement with and "conscious reintegration" of the specific content of the trauma into a narrative of self. Leys, 86. As Ruth Leys observes, the crucial point in this latter theory was its insistence that "what mattered in the hypnotic cure was to enable the traumatized soldier to win a certain knowledge of, or relation to, himself by recovering the memory of the traumatic experience." Ibid.

he walks toward the house, now in full possession of his faculties, has resumed the disciplined steps of a soldier.[41] Not only changed mentally, he has become a different object in the world—an automaton, a unit of military measurement, an atom of biopolitical mass.

Chris's cure thus stands at the meeting points of ordinary mourning and pathological neurosis, and of the physical endurance of memory in objects and in cycles of repetitive compulsion. To repeat my argument from the opening of this chapter, remembrance takes the form of repetition, sometimes compelled and sometimes willed. Towards the end of the war, Chris Baldry's diagnosis was diffused into a metaphor for the general culture: "The world is suffering from shell-shock," Prime Minister Lloyd George stated in 1919.[42] As the following years came to prove, shell shock's particular challenge to medical and military policy lay in its anachronicity—namely, the belatedness of its onset after a triggering incident and its tenacity long after that trigger's removal.[43] Forms of

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[41] The novel ends with Chris's corporeal transformation:

> Chris walked across the lawn. He was looking up under his brows at the overarching house as though it were a hated place to which, against all his hopes, business had forced him to return … He wore a dreadful decent smile … He walked not loose limbed like a boy, as he had done that very afternoon, but with the soldier's hard tread upon the heel. It recalled to me that, bad as we were, we were yet not the worst circumstance of his return. When we had lifted the yoke of our embraces from his shoulders he would go back to that flooded trench in Flanders under that sky more full of flying death than clouds, to that No Man's Land where bullets fall like rain on the rotting faces of the dead.

West, 187. Describing Chris's gait to Kitty, Jenny calls him "Every inch a soldier." Kitty's response, ending the book, is, "He's cured!"

[42] Quoted in Ben Shepherd, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 143. See Fiona Reid, *Broken Men*, 8, for a discussion of the reasons behind the embrace of shell shock as a metaphor for the Great War in Britain over the course of the twentieth century. The metaphor of shell shock, Susan Kent suggests, provided "a new model of the mind, which, in turn, transmuted into a felt condition, an 'experience,' for millions of individual Britons … Britons incorporated into their conscious and unconscious understandings of their political selves the meanings attached to the notion of shell shock, most particularly the imagery that informed the view of the traumatized psyche as shattered." Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 3

[43] Social stigma or medical indifference often greeted men whose symptoms did not manifest until after the war years, when they returned home. Fiona Reid notes that not only was "the burden of proof … tremendous," but that "[s]hell-shocked men were also at a disadvantage because of the prevalent medical assumption that psychological casualties had carried some kind of pre-war

grief and memory after the war manifested a similar anachronism and a similar latency—a latency, I have argued, that remains particularly available through the ongoing resonance of durable objects and spaces. As *Return of the Soldier* suggests and others have argued, objects can possess us—compelling our bodies, shaping our histories, and inaugurating temporal scales of change or changelessness of far greater extension than those of a single human life. In my next section, I will describe the postwar cultures of monument-building whose premises, I believe, underpin West's depiction of the temporal effects of objects and spaces in *Return of the Soldier*. The war monument and the country house novel are not so far apart; before becoming famous for his imperial war monuments, Edward Lutyens made his living building country houses like Baldry Court.[44]

II. The Zombie War: Non-Repatriation and Public Remembrance in Postwar Britain

> In October 1918, Lady Cynthia Asquith wrote in her diary:
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> > I am beginning to rub my eyes at the prospect of peace. I think it will require more courage than anything that has gone before. … One will have to look at long vistas again, instead of short ones, and one will at last fully recognize that the dead are not only dead for the duration of the war.[45]

Several days later, Asquith had a nervous breakdown. As Asquith presciently intuited, death might be instantaneous, but its import, meanings, and interpretation would unfold over the course of years—a fact emphasized by the surge of war memoirs that appeared in the late 1920s. Unlike the "soleil cou coupé" with which Apollinaire ended his famous poem, "Zone," in 1913, the suddenly cut-off half-

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disposition" (97). In cases where a direct wartime stimulus could not be linked to the later development of neurotic symptoms, men suffered under the suspicion of being merely weak-minded by heritage.

[44] Lawrence Weaver's illustrated monograph of Lutyens's domestic architectural projects, *Houses and Gardens by E.L. Lutyens*, was published in 1913 (London: Antique Collectors' Club). See also Gavin Stone, *Edward Lutyens: Country Houses* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2009).

[45] Lady Cynthia Asquith, *Diaries 1915-1918*, ed. E. M. Horsley (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1969), 480.

lives of those killed in the Great War were not cleanly and silently abbreviated.[46] After the Armistice was signed in November, 1918, the war persisted with unwanted resilience in the lives of communities, nations, and individuals, in ways that continue to ramify on contemporary geopolitics today and on our own traditions of memory.[47] Communities strove to cope with the absence en masse of hundreds of thousands of young men. To disentangle fragile peacetime societies from four years of war, attention had to be paid to both the living and the dead; moving on meant being able to properly forget; and to properly forget, one had to properly remember.[48] But in a war in which bodies were not repatriated but buried in mass graves near mass killing fields, properly remembering in order to properly forget posed significant challenges.

A 1920 guidebook recommends wearing "an old golfing suit" on excursion to the former battlegrounds of the Western Front, or for ladies, "strong boots, thick woolen stockings, and short skirts, with a woolen jumper or jersey."[49] Sandwiches are advisable. At all costs, tourists are recommended to avoid "souvenirs" like "old shells and bombs."[50] When the Great War ended, a site,

[46] "Zone," *Alcools*, ed. Garnet Rees, (London: the Athlone Press, 1993), 44.
[47] Germans only finished paying restitutions demanded by the Treaty of Versailles to France in October 2010, an event noted by a 5-line dispatch from the Agence-France Presse. Benjamin Gilles and Arndt Weinrich, *1914-1918*, *Une Guerre des images* (Paris: Éditions de la Martinière, 2014), 9. Other effects of the post-war treaty, notably the establishment of British and French mandates in the Middle East out of the dismantled Ottoman Empire, continue to exert force on contemporary geopolitical relations today. For a recent account of the Great War's lingering impact on 20th century Middle Eastern history see Scott Anderson's *Lawrence In Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Random House, 2013).
[48] Jay Winter emphasizes the complex dialectic between remembering and forgetting that these forms of social therapy entailed. "To remember the anxiety of 1,500 days of war necessarily entailed how to forget … Yes, these millions died for their country, but to say so was merely to begin, not to conclude the search for the 'meaning' of the unprecedented slaughter of the Great War." *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.
[49] Lieut.-Col. T. A. Lowe, *The Western Battlefields: A Guide to the British Line* (London: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1920), 3. Republished by G. H. Smith & Son, Easingwold, York, 2000. Print. Michelin and other companies began producing guides to the front around 1920.
[50] Ibid.

an object, and an encounter were lacking with which the bereaved could bear witness.[51] Some estimates put the number of bereaved close relatives in Britain at 10% of the population, numbering some 4.5 million people.[52] For many, a visit to the front was a necessary pilgrimage—the only possible gravesite by which to mourn.[53] Early in the war, Britain had come to the inevitable decision not to repatriate its dead—a decision dictated by mass numbers and grisly practicalities. Soldiers were buried where they fell, and military commanders learned to include the digging of mass graves among their preparations for major battles.[54] Many were blown away or remained nightmarishly half-

[51] By the conclusion of the war, approximately 160,000 British women had lost their husbands and the demographic of young, healthy men who had come of age in the pre-war years was staggeringly reduced, with "an estimated 30 percent of all men aged between 20 and 24 in 1911 …now dead." Juliette Nicholson, *The Great Silence: Living in the Shadow of the Great War, 1918-1920* (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2009), 25.

[52] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 252.

[53] As late as 1929 in the United States, an act was placed before Congress "to enable the mothers and widows of the deceased soldiers, sailors, and marines of the American forces now interred in the cemeteries of Europe to make a pilgrimage to these cemeteries"—a number totaling 11,440 women, of whom 5,323 intended to do so in 1930. *List of Mothers and Widows of American Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Entitled to Make a Pilgrimage to the War Cemeteries in Europe As Provided by the Act of Congress of March 2, 1929*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1930. 71st Congress, 2nd Session, House Document No. 140. In addition to lack of a gravesite, even the moment and place of death were often unknown or obscured. The simple acts of witnessing and accounting for the deaths of individuals were prevented by battlefield conditions like poor visibility, the threat of heavy artillery to the living, and the impact of that same artillery on corpses. In such conditions, it is unsurprising that military policies were drawn up in the first two years of the war to mandate the wearing of identification tags by soldiers. Regulations were also pioneered to stipulate the proper arrangement of bodies in mass burials and requiring the maintenance of a 'battlefield notebook' tracking the location of mass graves. These policies were only inconsistently followed. Civilian and military units were created to handle the huge amounts of data collection, communication, and other bureaucracy demanded by death at this scale. Their tasks ranged from noting the location of individual graves to informing local officials and families of the soldier's death and distributing pension benefits. Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman, *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War* (trans. Richard Veasey, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 49. My point in detailing these facts is to emphasize the ubiquity and scale of the problem of marking death in space and time during the war, and the complementary scale of the problem of mourning without a body.

[54] Wade Davis, *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006), 18.

buried. Trench warfare mixed human organic material with French and Belgian mud to such an extent that "[t]he whole zone was a corpse, and the mud itself mortified."[55]

The culturally separated orders of life and death were intermingled in literal and figurative ways. Images of the uncanny mixing of death and life in the everyday world of the trench soldier had begun to appear at the midpoint of the war, following the 1916 disasters of Verdun and the Somme, in popular films as well as in trench poetry and journalistic accounts.[56] Telegrams "generally informed people simultaneously of a death and a burial."[57] Virtually every trench poet describes the omnipresence of human remains in the earth, water, and air of the front, where the progress of military advance moved slower than the pace of corporeal disintegration. "Things to remember," Siegfried Sassoon wrote in his diary in 1917: "stumbling along the trench in the dusk, dead men & living lying against the sides of the trench—one never knew which were dead & which living. Dead & living were very nearly one, for death was in all our hearts."[58] The blurring of the territory of the dead with that of the living was highlighted among civilians in the postwar period by the fact that those men who returned from the front were overwhelmingly victims of visible mutilation or injury.[59] The war's literal mixing of animate and inanimate material, and of human and non-human substance, imposed practical and metaphysical difficulties on mourning.[60]

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[55] Edward Blunden, *Undertones of War* (1928) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 98. Blunden is describing the Somme.

[56] The 1916 part-documentary, part-fictional film *The Battle of the Somme*, viewed by some twenty million people in Britain in its first six weeks of release, was one of the early instances in which corpses were viewed by the general public through photographic media. Anthony Seldon and David Walsh, *Public Schools and the Great War: The Generation Lost* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2013), 209.

[57] Capdevila and Voldman, 49.

[58] Siegfried Sassoon, *Journal, 11 Apr. 1917 – 2 June 1917* (MS Add.9852/1/10), University of Cambridge Digital Library, http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-09852-00001-00010/22, 10v.

[59] "In 1928, 2.5 million British men were still in receipt of war pensions because of wounds, disability, or shell-shock, and in that year alone 6,000 new artificial limbs were issued to war-wounded men." Neil Hansen, *Unknown Soldier: The Story of the Missing of the First World War* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 267.

[60] Allison Booth particularizes this claim:

Postwar European nations were thus pervaded by the uncanny. Presciently, Freud wrote his now famous essay on that subject in 1919. In Britain, the wounded outnumbered the dead by over two to one. Almost 250,000 British men were amputees, and as scholars have since documented, plastic surgery developed out of a need to cosmetically repair the horrific damage inflicted on faces, bodies, mouths, and jaws.[61] In France, the "gueules cassées" or men with broken faces were placed at the head of the parade down the Champs Elysées on Bastille Day. [62] The visibility of these broken bodies and the political preoccupation with finding employment for mutilated or injured men literally incorporated the war's damage into the social fabric.[63] Internal notions of the living and the dead had shifted; returning veterans had been changed by their experiences of war to the extent that they found more in common with their dead compatriots than with the loved ones and communities to which they returned.[64] Physically mutilated veterans resembled the walking dead in the streets; for many more veterans and civilians, the war lived on, zombie-like, in the mind. In London, "[t]he War

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> The extremely restricted space within which trench warfare was fought simultaneously ensured that Great War soldiers would live with the corpses of their friends and that British civilians would not see dead soldiers. Soldiers buried their dead and then encountered them again … but … the civilian bereaved would never have anything to bury. Soldiers inhabited a world of corpses; British civilians experienced the death of their soldiers as corpselessness.

Postcards from the Trenches ((New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21.

[61] Hansen, 267.

[62] Amy Lyford's *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) offers a marvelous account of Surrealist uses of broken, deformed, and pan-gendered bodily imagery which she reads as a challenge to France's emphasis on hetero-normative masculinity and unsullied bodies after the war. In France, where two million young men had died and millions more wore visible injuries, the reconsolidation of masculine ideals was crucial to a state-sponsored effort at the construction of nationhood and empire.

[63] Speaking of the dead bodies underfoot in the tens of thousands, Henry de Montherlant reverses the corporeal incorporation of war into a living, mutilated body politic by conjuring a "dead" body politic, of which the living are part: "You walk on the Ground of Verdun as though on the face of the Country" (quoted in Booth, 50). Here, the body politic is constituted of the corporeality of the dead.

[64] Laura Wittman emphasizes the notion of "chorality" that linked veterans emotionally and psychologically to the dead and that was used to inspire an ideal cohesion of the social body during and after the war: "This 'chorality' was intensely physical, as soldiers held the dying and the dead, 'confusing' their limbs together in the mud of the trenches. At the same time, chorality became the ideal unanimity betrayed by squabbles back home" (31).

was over," Woolf writes in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), "except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June."[65] Refuting the text's determined, drill-like repetition of "over," Septimus Smith stands cataleptic, unable to cross the street, seeing himself as a skeleton. His young wife takes his arm: "She had a right to his arm, though it was without feeling. He would give her … who had left Italy for his sake, a piece of bone."[66] The war had come home, and the way forward was unclear.

In this difficult and unprecedented context of mass death, mutilation, and trauma, mourning and memorialization constituted two zones of experience that communities had to traverse in order to imagine a future, and two organizing principles around which postwar societies attempted to rebuild. Though not every individual grieved in the same way, mourning was a publicly ubiquitous, structuring force in post-war British society that assembled social groups, magnetized public debates, and refereed public understandings of the relationship between past and future.[67] This chapter takes

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[65] Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 5

[66] Ibid, 16.

[67] The substantial literature on post-World War I practices of memory is too great to detail here with any justice. Canonical books, however, include Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014; first published 1995) and Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; first published 1975). Other useful texts include Alex King's *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berg, 1998), which looks at both commercial and mythic factors behind the post-World War I memory boom in Britain. Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman's *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War* (trans. Richard Veasey, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), originally published in French, provides a pan-European comparison of wartime burial practices from the wars of the 18th century to Vietnam. It helpfully contextualizes the innovations of World War I burial conventions alongside earlier practices of conflicts like the Franco-Prussian War, for example. On memorials to the Unknown Soldier in various countries, Neil Hansen's *Unknown Soldiers: The Story of the Missing of the First World War* (New York: Knopf, 2006) gives close attention to the material particularities of exhumation, transportation, burial, and commemoration of the Unknown Soldier in Britain. Laura Wittman's *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) interprets ceremonies for the Unknown Soldier in the context of religious ritual

as a cultural given, then, the effectively omnipresent condition of mourning and the continued obligation to remember in Europe in the 1920s. Municipalities and regions quibbled with the national government to determine how to memorialize the dead—and who would pay for it.[68] Representatives from the Royal Academy of Art, the British Museum, and Canterbury Cathedral met with military and government officials to discuss "the control of war memorials," a question "which universally affected our lives, wherever we went and whatever we did," while as late as May 1920, debates were still raging in the British House of Commons about whether to repatriate bodies.[69] If all of this death had happened for nothing, then the ideals of nation, patrimony, and citizenship would collapse. If losses were presented under the rubrics of sacrifice and selflessness, on the other hand, tragedy could be recuperated into a narrative of meaningful social bonds.[70]

During the war, local sites and practices of memorialization had sprung up haphazardly, motivated by the desire to strengthen home-front morale and heighten patriotism. Encouraged by Anglican clergy, street shrines became such a common sight by 1916 that commercial firms patented

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and political theology, with particular attention to the uses of these ceremonies to supporting differing political agendas, notably the growth of Fascism in 1920s Italy.

[68] To give a French example, *"La fin de la guerre vit se dessiner deux mouvements parallèles : désir des communes de construire rapidement leur monument commémoratif et volonté de l'État de donner un cadre légal à ces opérations."* ("The end of the war saw two parallel movements emerge: the wish of communes to quickly build their [own] commemorative monument, and the will of the state to give a legal framework for these operations.") Daniel Fleury, "Plaques, stèles, et monuments commémoratifs: l'État et la 'memoire de pierre'," *Revue historique des armées* 259 (2010). My translation.)

[69] "Artistic War Memorials." *The Times* (London: England), Monday, 8 July, 1918, page 10, issue 41836. The article describes a conference on war memorials held at the Royal Academy of Art. Joanna Burke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 226.

[70] Even for those who rejected the public cults of remembrance on the grounds that they obviated the realities of this war; objects like the Cenotaph offered a grammar with which to order as-yet-unexplored feelings around war losses, whether positive or negative. Siegfried Sassoon, for example, a virulent critic of public, sentimental forms of remembrance that he felt obscured a sober witnessing of war's horrors, focalizes his critique of willful forgetting through the image of the Cenotaph. Against the palliative benedictions of church and state officials, he portrays the Devil offering his own prayer before Lutyens's monument: 'Make them forget, O Lord, what this Memorial / Means; their discredited ideas revive … / And crown their heads with blind vindictive Peace." "At the Cenotaph," *Collected Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1949), 201.

and sold readymade designs.[71] It was not until the midpoint of the war, however, that street shrines began to serve as spaces of commemoration for the dead (in the form of Rolls of Honor that tracked the losses of local soldiers).[72] The war's end did not halt these somber lists, though. Daily lists of the dead continued to be published in the *Times* and other newspapers well into 1919, as soldiers continued to die from injuries or, like Guillaume Apollinaire, from the Spanish Flu. The ongoing tally of deaths after 1918 challenged attempts to structure memorialization and to consign the war to the past.[73] And even as young lives continued to end, the finality of this end and the stability of its interpretation were continually disrupted by the selective exhumation of corpses. In France, where repatriation became official policy in 1921, the search for the bodies of the dead continued for over a decade.[74] For European nations and colonial families across the globe, death could not be put in the

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[71] King, 47-49. Advertisements for war monuments appeared in the *Times*, along with the daily lists of names of the dead, in the final years of the war and afterward. Municipal or church fundraising, sometimes by subscription, provided the funds for these projects.

[72] It is important to remember that, "Commemoration of the war dead was not simply a retrospective activity which began with a release of feeling made possible by the end of hostilities. It had been part of the wartime effort to keep up home-front morale and to focus attention on servicemen at the front in a personal way." King, 60.

[73] Hansen, 271; King, 45, 21. To give an example of "structured" memorial practices, the date of the war's beginning, August 4, was marked every year as "Remembrance Day," and after 1918, the 11th of November was commemorated yearly as "Armisticetide."

[74] France and the United States became the exception within combatant nations in eventually repatriating their dead after the war and leaving the decision of whether the soldier should be buried in a private or a military cemetery up to families. In the French case, though, while the war lasted, the French High Command prohibited "the exhumation and transportation of any soldier killed in battle and buried in the war zone," for reasons of sanitation, frontline safety, and resource allocation. After the war, the Western Front was in a state of such chaos that in February 1919 the French Ministry of the Interior forbade by decree disinterment or transportation of bodies for three years. Lisa Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 39. It was not until September 1920, that a law finally made legal the exhumation and delivery of bodies to French families wishing to bury their sons at home. Well after the war was over, a "great wave of funerals" took place in France to commemorate combat deaths of the preceding four years; "Between 1921 and 1923, 240,000 bodies were exhumed and taken to parents all over France, which represented 30 per cent of those who had been identified" (Capdevila and Voldman, 55, 54). The active exhumation of bodies continued far beyond the first half-decade of the postwar period, however. "Between 1926 and 1935, 122,000 bodies of French and German soldiers without graves were found on the battlefield. The unidentified bones of those who fell in battle were placed in massive ossuaries. The reason for their construction," Capdevila and Voldman explain, "was to

past tense; it occupied the continuous present. Given this openness of an event without representation, how to establish a border between life and death that would "contain" the dead and take account of the depth and scale of loss while not entrapping the living in perpetual melancholy? And more pressingly, for administrators and government, how might one mourn without stirring up partisan antipathies between classes or between those who had fought and those who had not? [75]

Civil cohesion in post-war Britain was threatened by eruptions from a volatile populace that was frustrated by the slow pace of demobilization, mass unemployment, economic depression, and bad labor conditions.[76] The end of war meant that three million employees of formerly booming munitions factories were now out of a job; this was in addition to the four million returning combatants seeking work.[77] Two thirds of the unemployed population were ex-servicemen.[78] Among those who were employed, labor strikes in industries such as mining dotted the calendar beginning in January 1919. The volatile climate was such that veteran policemen and newly recruited police force

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create something like a tomb with a body so that families could mourn those they had lost" (53). The remains of First World War soldiers continue to emerge up to the present day in construction projects along the Western Front.

[75] As Neil Hansen argues, in the context of regional and international turmoil, the policies and practices of mourning were construed as bearing directly on the nation's social and political stability:

> The ritual of commemoration was … fought over and adapted for propaganda purposes by those who supported the war and those who opposed it, but against a background of growing unemployment strikes and popular discontent, and with the Bolshevik revolution in Russia casting a shadow over all Europe's monarchies, it became essential for government, military and grieving relatives alike to assert, via Remembrance Day, that the fallen had not died in vain. (324-25)

[76] Susan Kingsley Kent has argued that the war's cataclysmic losses and destabilizations affected basic terms of political discourse and self-identification, and consequently, that the history of trauma and of politics in Britain in the post-war period cannot be considered separately. See *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

[77] Nicholson, 3. In an example of how the end of the war produced unemployment in Britain in sometimes unexpected ways, the Treaty of Versailles reallocated German ships to Britain, France, and the United States, thereby annulling demand for new ships from British shipyards and putting workers out of a job.

[78] Hansen, 269. Hansen adds that unemployment payments to ex-soldiers came to an end in March, 1921.

members were the first to eventually be demobilized.[79] Indeed, 12,000 returning servicemen found jobs between 1920 and 1922 in a new, paramilitary British police force sent to fight the Irish Republican Army and quell the civil war in Ireland; they would become known as the Black and Tans.[80] As of 1918 the British electorate had tripled, from 7.7 million to 21.4 million people, a shift that democratized political representation while heightening fears of class instability.[81] And throughout all this, debates over proper forms of memorialization saturated the national and local media.[82] Producing adequate forms of mourning, then, was not simply a matter of trying to attain more comfortable feelings in the wake of extreme loss. It was necessary to the continuation of ideas of nation, culture, and tradition that many feared the War had irrevocably damaged, and it became pertinent to immediate questions of postwar governance and civil coexistence. "After August 1914," Winter writes, "commemoration was an act of citizenship."[83]

In the absence of so many, a particular pressure was placed on the bodies—human and object—that remained to stand in for those that were gone. The constitutive presence or absence of a dead body structured two national monuments that emerged in Britain after the war: the erection of the famous London Cenotaph and the 1920 burial of the Unknown Soldier. The embrace of these monuments by mass publics transformed them into repositories of social, metaphysical, and often, spiritual meaning.[84] By magnetizing memorial discourses around questions of corporeal absence or

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[79] Hansen, 268.
[80] Kent, *Aftershocks,* 94.
[81] The Representation of the People Act extended the vote to women over 30, men over 21, and graduates of British universities, and removed some property ownership provisions. See Nicholson, *The Great Silence*, 74.
[82] "By 1918," Alex King details, "discussions about war memorials were common in art and architecture periodicals and in the daily press. Many memorial projects were already under way. National and local papers carried a mass of reports of decisions about memorials, commissions for them, and unveilings. *The Times* regularly mentioned the unveiling of memorials in places of all sizes in its brief news items during and after the war." (70)
[83] Winter, 80.
[84] Jay Winter reminds us that these meanings change over time; they are not fixed and immutable but dynamic and malleable according to the calendar of public and private mourning. What remains

presence, of indexical veridicality and symbolic ideation, the Cenotaph and the burial of the Unknown Soldier had an impact on ideas of memory that lingered long after the explicit content of these memorials had dropped out of public discussion. Sir Edward Lutyens's Cenotaph (from the Greek *Kenos*, empty, and *taph*, tomb) was intended to function as a sober receptacle of viewers' projections; its white walls supplanted the corpse-filled earth of Flanders and Verdun with a clean container of quiet rest.[85] This monumental style evoked immaterial, ontological understandings of the human based on spirit, not on flesh. The commemoration of an Unknown Warrior provided an alternative tradition of mourning, insisting on the material corporeality and particularity of a single individual in whom significance adhered by virtue of his indexicality—his embodied situatedness in history. The Unknown Soldier stands in for the body of any mother's son, any woman's husband or father. If the Cenotaph works by metaphor, the Unknown Warrior works by synecdoche.

The planning and implementation of the Cenotaph and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier took place within a particular window in the history of British heritage in which state control was, for the first time, being legislatively extended to ensure the identification, preservation and promotion of historical sites and antique objects considered "monuments." The inaugural Inspector of the recently created Ancient Monuments Department, Sir Charles Reed Peers, submitted his first annual report to Parliament in 1911 and the British state took possession of its first Roman site.[86] Between 1912 and 1914, no fewer than three bills appeared before Parliament arguing for government protection of historical sites, a motion in defiance of which opponents decried government incursion into private

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stable, however, is the fact that these memorial objects continue to signify, even as their significations alter over time. See *Sites of Memory*, 98.

[85] Nicholson, *The Great Silence*, 263. See Wittman, 44, for a comparative look at French and Italian Cenotaphs.

[86] Simon Thurley, *Men From the Ministry: How Britain Saved its Heritage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 68, 71. As of 1911, that report stated, there were "104 monuments in care" under the new department.

affairs and argued for existing rights of private ownership.[87] A rhetoric of national tradition and social consolidation by means of monuments was used in support of the bills—the very rhetoric with which the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior would be discussed in 1919 and 1920.[88] When the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act was passed on August 15, 1913, it described its purview as "any monument or part or remains of a monument, the preservation of which is a matter of public interest by reason of the historic, architectural, traditional, artistic, or archaeological interest."[89] While the potential impact of the Act was blunted by its thick bureaucratic protocols, its imaginative scope articulated an important new relationship between England and its material history, under which the past was available to every citizen in "a great outdoor museum of national history."[90]

With the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914, however, the Office of Works, under which the Department of Ancient Monuments fell, was assigned such essential tasks as buildings arms factories, providing housing for munitions workers, and managing civilians in internment camps, so projects of monument-acquisition or preservation largely fell by the wayside.[91] Members of the department pursued war work for the next several years; monuments including Stonehenge frequently bore the brunt of military exercises or land requisition in the service of immediate aims.[92]

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[87] Ibid, 71-73.

[88] For example, the recent Viceroy of India, George, Lord Curzon, argued that monumental sites "are part of the heritage of the nation, because every citizen feels an interest in them although he may not own them." Likewise, Charles Trevelyan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, stated, "part of the character of the nation which depends on the appreciation of its past may really be affected by the preservation of these monuments now." Ibid, 76.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid, 79. Thurley adds, "In 1913, the Government acknowledged, for the first time, that the State had a cultural responsibility for the physical remains of its own history and set out to collect them" (82-83).

[91] Ibid, 99.

[92] Principal Architect Sir Frank Baines, for example, who virtually ran the Department of Ancient Monuments with Charles Peers, received a knighthood in 1918 for his service to the Ministries of Munitions, War, and Air. Thurley, 86. Stonehenge had its caretaker's cottage razed for an airstrip and its foundations shaken by nearby mine explosions on the Salisbury Plain. Ibid, 127.

Ironically, ideological investments in national monuments were consolidated in Britain in the war years by the popular sympathy engendered by the destruction of medieval architecture on the Continent, at such bombarded sites as the Cloth Hall of Ypres and the cathedral of Albert, France.[93] The coincidental timing of the war's environmental impacts on European monuments intersected with the institutional history of heritage protection in Britain in a manner that amplified and contextualized discussions of the postwar memorials to come. Moreover, the same governing body responsible for the preservation of ancient sites like Stonehenge was also charged with identifying and reburying the remains of Commonwealth soldiers.[94]

The story of Stonehenge—Britain's most well known monument already by the 19th century—exemplifies this convergence of the state sponsorship of ancient monuments and the contemporary necessities of national reconstruction at the end of the war. When the owner of Stonehenge died in 1915, the monument was put up for auction because his heir had been killed at the front.[95] Cecil Chubb of Salisbury purchased the site for just over £6,600, and only a few years later, in September 1918, made a gift of it to the British government. Explicitly linking his gift to the ongoing conflict, Chubb made it a condition of the donation that any revenues from Stonehenge visitors for the duration of the war be donated to the Red Cross, "whose work at the present time is of such great national value."[96] The government, in return, thanked Chubb for his "patriotic and public-spirited gift."[97] Stonehenge's transfer from a private to a public heritage site was articulated in terms of national symbolism, patriotism, and the mysterious disappearance of former cultures—

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[93] Thurley, 92.
[94] Thurley, 99. The Office of Works was the umbrella ministry for the Department of Ancient Monuments as well as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission headed by Fabian Ware. It was also tasked with alleviating a national housing crisis during and after the war, by constructing estates for munitions workers that were converted to commercial units upon the cessation of hostilities.
[95] Ibid, 127.
[96] "Stonehenge for the Nation." *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday 25 September, 1918, page 5, Issue 41904.
[97] Ibid.

themes that were only too tangible in the current climate.[98] The embrace of postwar monuments and memorials including Sir Edward Lutyens's "fictional" (i.e. not-antique) Cenotaph, then, must be understood in the context of the decade's historically particular investment in grounding a national myth of ages-old tradition—and presumably ages-hence continuation—in the material remains of the cultural past.[99]

When the Versailles Treaty was finally signed in June 1919, the British were propelled, partially in competition with the French, to hold a Victory Parade similar to that organized in Paris for the first, Bastille Day celebration of the postwar period.[100] The well-known story of the London Cenotaph originates from this impulse. At the request of Prime Minister Lloyd George, architect Sir Edward Lutyens imagined a temporary construction—a sober, rectangle form—that would spatially focalize tributes to the dead within the parade through central London. Abjuring iconography in order to appeal to the widest possible audience, he designed a symbolically empty tomb whose classical origins and structural void could absorb the aspirations of empire as well as the grief of individuals. The Cenotaph's formal claim to empty interiority offered a visual metaphor for absence while providing a material receptacle for unarticulated feelings. Wildly popular from the moment of its unveiling, the outpouring of public feeling for the Cenotaph swelled over the weeks, rather than

[98] The Ancient Monuments Department's thank-you letter to Cecil Chubb stated, "As the remains of a long bygone civilization, it has a value and an interest equaled by no other monument in the United Kingdom." "Stonehenge for the Nation." *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday 25 September, 1918, 5, Issue 41904.

[99] Thurley writes, "After the First World War ruins struck a chord in people's imaginations, and those of the Reformation and Civil War were rendered more poignant by association." (92-93) This interest was not merely sentimental but also scientific; investigative archaeology was conducted at national monument sites beginning in 1920. (107)

[100] Consistent with her other, class-inflected responses to postwar mourning, Virginia Woolf complains that the Victory Parade is "a servants' festival; something got up to pacify and placate 'the people'—and now the rain's spoiling it; and perhaps some extra treat will have to be devised for them." She goes on to state that "the reason of my disillusionment" is that "there's something calculated and politic and insincere about these peace rejoicings." *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harvest Books, 1981), 16.

diminishing.[101] "[I]n the last week of July alone, half a million people paid their respects at the temporary Cenotaph, and so many flowers were laid that the Department of Works had to employ two 'custodians' to deal with them."[102] By popular demand, a permanent, marble iteration of the monument was unveiled on Armistice Day, 1920. Lutyens's manufactured rectangle offered a prophylaxis against imperial decay and individual loss.

Despite their changing significance over time and the wide variety of materials from which they can be made, monuments promise to bestow supra-human durability upon the fragile, human memory of the person or event being commemorated.[103] Their occupation of geographical space endeavors to analogically mark a temporal "location" in history, and to keep it available to apprehension for an incalculable duration into the future. Serving as placeholders for a time, event, or person that is no more, monuments function by a logic of substitution; their empirical presence conjures that which is empirically absent. The body of the Unknown Soldier buried under the floor of Westminster Cathedral in London or the Arc de Triomphe in Paris substitutes in imagination for the brother who never came home. The viewer's act of imagination, her capacity for metaphor, catalyzes the symbolic substitution that the material object of the monument facilitates; it is this act of imagination, or this acceptance of a more-than-material ontology, that allows the temporary Cenotaph to be apprehended not as rectangular construction of wood and plaster, but as a sacred tomb befitting the imaginatively undefiled body of a heroic, fallen warrior. Both the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier draw their power from this monumental logic of substitution.

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[101] The tide of public sentiment ran so high that the Anglican Church decried it as "Cenotapholatry" in the *Church Times* on November 21, 1919. Hansen, 275.

[102] Ibid, 276.

[103] Jay Winter writes, "Like many other public objects, [monuments] manifest what physicists, in an entirely different context, call a 'half-life', a trajectory of decomposition, a passage from the active to the inert … . Their initial charge was related to the needs of a huge population of bereaved people. … after years or decades, then the objects invested with meaning related to loss of life in wartime become something else. Other meanings derived from other needs or events may be attached to them, or no meaning at all." *Sites of Memory*, 98.

During the Victory Parade in 1919, the Cenotaph enabled another symbolic substitution. The surviving soldiers who paraded past the Cenotaph became visual placeholders of those who had died. Living bodies stood in for the shades. This substitution was visually emphasized by widely circulated photographs of the parade, which show men in dark, military uniform standing in shadow under the white monument's inscription to "The Glorious Dead."[104] "Near the memorial there were moments of silence when the dead seemed very near, when one almost heard the passage of countless wings," reported *The Morning Post*. "Were not the fallen gathering in their hosts to receive their comrades' salute and take their share in the triumph they had died to win?"[105] "The role of the army is not to celebrate victory but to represent the dead," Geoff Dyer writes of this substitution. "The soldiers marching past the Cenotaph, in other words, comprise an army of the surrogate dead."[106] The figurative substitution of the living for the dead exceeds metaphor, and it was marked at the time. Fabian Ware, the head of the Imperial War Graves Commission, calculated in publicly shared figures that were all the Commonwealth dead to file past the Cenotaph in lines of four abreast

[104] The *Times'*s only images in its full-page coverage of the Cenotaph—two photographs, one of the Army and one of the Navy marching past the monument—are formally similar. Iconographically, they are composed of a parade of men on the right-hand side of the frame marching toward the photographer, past the white shape of the monument on the left. As if diagetically captioning the soldiers on parade, the only text in the photograph stands out sharply; inscribed on the Cenotaph, it reads, "The Glorious Dead." Even—or perhaps especially—in mediation, it is difficult to avoid seeing the men on parade as actors representing the fallen. "Men of the British Army Passing the Cenotaph in Whitehall" and "The Men of the Royal Navy Passing the Cenotaph," *The Times* (London), 21 July 1919, 7, *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed September 27, 2015.

[105] Quoted in King, 143. As another example of the appeal of uncanny atmospheres, the spirit photography of Ada Emma Deane purported to show the spirits of dead soldiers surrounding the memorial on Armistice Day, 1922 (Winter, 73). Her extreme popularity accompanied a wave of spiritualism that grew up over the course of the war as families yearned to contact their deceased loved ones. Among the proponents of spiritualism was Arthur Conan Doyle, whose son died in the war.

[106] *The Missing of the Somme* (New York: Vintage, 2011). Dyer's reasoning emphasizes the dual meanings attached to veterans within the postwar remembrance boom—they were on the one hand recipients of patriotic praise, and on the other, perpetual shadows of "the glorious dead." This tension was not merely semantic; surviving soldiers mobilized protests in the postwar years over the disproportionate energy and resources devoted to the memory of the dead, which contrasted with the lack of political will directed to the care of veterans.

as the ceremony dictated, the march would continue without a break for three and a half days.[107] The uncanniness of this substitution of the living for the dead is important to my argument later in this chapter, in which I will connect the kinds of "positive" remembrance valorized by imperial and domestic monument forms to the "negative" or traumatized remembrance experienced as compulsion by the shell-shocked soldier.

Unlike the Cenotaph, the body of the Unknown Soldier was an object whose value inhered in its very materiality—in the reality that this object or body was once a person who was *there, then*. This type of monument was unprecedented in public mourning in the West; the postwar period "was the first time that a random and anonymous body was asked, in its fragile materiality, to abstract itself into the nation's entire dead."[108] The desire in many countries after the war to bury an

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[107] Ware expressed his gruesome calculations in a geography of empire, in statistics broadcast over the radio on the first commemoration of Armistice Day, November 11, 1919:

> Imagine them moving in one long continuous column, four abreast; as the head of that column reaches the Cenotaph the last four men would be at Durham. In Canada that column would stretch across the land from Quebec to Ottawa; in Australia from Melbourne to Canberra; in South Africa from Bloemfontein to Pretoria; in New Zealand from Christchurch to Wellington; in Newfoundland from coast to coast of the Island, and in India from Lahore to Delhi. It would take these million men eighty-four hours, or three and a half days, to march past the Cenotaph in London.

Fabian Ware, *The Immortal Heritage: An Account of the Work and Policy of the Imperial War Graves Commission during Twenty Years, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 27. The Imperial War Graves Commission was charged with the design and maintenance of over 23,000 burial grounds from the Western Front to Gallipoli—each filled with the remains of anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of men, many of unknown identity. Ware's memoir begins with a table outlining total imperial graves (767, 978), total identified graves (587,117), and total missing commemorated (517,773)—a combination adding up to 1,104,890 "Total Death Casualties" for British Imperial armed forces (26). Though these figures are extreme, those on the French side are even more so. Were all the French dead to perform a Victory Parade like the one held in Paris in July 1919, Dyer notes, it would take them eleven days and nights to march down the Champs-Elysées. Dyer, 23, n. 1.

[108] Sherman, 95-96. Wittman writes, "With the Unknown Soldier, it is to a great degree anonymity itself—the everyday—that becomes heroic" (45). Memorials to the Unknown Soldier were unprecedented in that they honoured the common foot soldier and not, as in previous wars, military commanders from the upper classes. On the important relationship between class and commemorations of the Unknown Soldier, see Hansen, 261-262.

Unknown Soldier used a Catholic logic of encountering the sacred through the material body.[109] In a plea to inter an Unknown Soldier beneath the base of the Cenotaph, the *Daily Express* stated that "the *dust* of one soldier, unknown and undistinguished, would lend it a sacredness worthy of so great a monument."[110] As a symbolic object, the Unknown Soldier's importance stemmed from its material substance and its personal anonymity; "[t]he crucial image was not the tomb itself, but the story of the selection of the body."[111] The aim was to assure the randomness of the Unknown Soldier's selection and the material veracity of his bones, without conjuring the prospect of his pain or the gruesome mixture of corpses in the mud.[112] The narrative of the Unknown Soldier's repatriation was thus delicately partial; the dead muck of Flanders had to be expunged from the thought of the Unknown Soldier's corpse for the memorial to offer any solace at all.[113] Paradoxically, the Unknown

[109] The origin of the idea was claimed by the British, French, and Italians after the war, and there is evidence for suggestions of this kind of memorial in each country as early as 1916. Wittman, 34-35. The religious implications of the monument are obvious in newspaper accounts of the Unknown Soldier's burial. The *Times* wrote that the dead sleep "no longer on the battlefields of the world, for they all lie buried from henceforth in our great Abbey … There is only one body, but the spirits of all the dead are there as well. There was only one burial, but the whole Empire was one vast memorial service." "A Silent City. Solemn Pause for Two Minutes." *The Times* (London), Friday 12 November, 1920, 3, *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 3 October, 2015.

[110] Quoted in Hansen 262, my emphasis. The idea for this honouring of an unidentified soldier of the armed services been taken up after the war by working class and labor groups seeking recognition of their sacrifices, and by politicians seeking to quell class and partisan agitations. He was termed the Unknown *Warrior* in order to extend his representative hold to members of the Royal Navy as well as the Army. I have guarded the more common, colloquial nomenclature of the "Unknown Soldier" that Hansen himself uses in his title.

[111] King, 139.

[112] This worry actually altered the French plans for its unknown soldier. One site that had been randomly selected for retrieval of a body was rejected after digging was begun, so that a selection of unidentified French soldiers from only eight sites instead of the planned nine along the Western Front were disinterred. The problem with the rejected site was that the bodies of French soldiers were so inextricable from the bodies of their German counterparts that the French feared selecting the "wrong" corpse and raising an accidental monument to their enemy under the Arc de Triomphe. Hansen 288.

[113] Where the dirt of the Western Front did appear in the burial ceremony, it did so in symbolic and sanitized ways. Earth from the Ypres Salient—"sixteen barrels, stated to contain fifty bags of French soil"—was carried across the channel and accompanied by a British officer on the train from Dover, to be placed in the tomb wif the body as a gesture of eternal comradeship with the other fallen.

Soldier's lack of traceable origins denoted an ur-origin: the battlefield that was his grave birthed the corpse as monument. Reversing Beckett, we might say of the Unknown Soldier that "death was the birth of him."[114]

Like the Cenotaph, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was immensely popular; on the day of the Unknown Soldier's invitation-only interment, 40,000 people filed past the tomb and Westminster Cathedral closed its doors an hour later than scheduled, and the Dean of the cathedral ultimately postponed the sealing of the Unknown Soldier's tomb by a full day to accommodate the crowds.[115] By November 15, 1920, up to a million and a half mourners had visited the Cenotaph in Whitehall, and half a million had stood in line to visit the Unknown Soldier.[116] This desire for presence with a physical object of memorialization—the need for some haptic or proximal contact—pervaded postwar Britain. The mass impulse to pay homage in person at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and at the Cenotaph, which the popular press termed the "Great Pilgrimage," can be seen as existing on the same spectrum of remembrance as domestic and private attachments to smaller, personal

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Hansen, 285. During the ceremony, dirt was used in the homeopathic form of a holy anointing; "[t]he king scattered earth from the soil of France on to the coffin." Dyer, 22.

[114] Samuel Beckett's "A Piece of Monologue" begins, "Birth was the death of him." *Samuel Beckett: The Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove, 1984), 261.

[115] Though at first the plans for the ceremonies had not included bereaved widows and mothers, protests in the tabloid newspapers and in person at he Ministry of Works forced a reassessment. Hansen 302-3. The deeply personal impact of the Unknown Soldier was evidently so visceral for families of the missing that the government was compelled to alter the list of invitees to the burial ceremony in Westminster Chapel. Those given tickets to the restricted space ultimately included "a thousand bereaved widows and mothers; a hundred nurses wounded or blinded in the war; a guard of honour made up of a hundred men who had won the Victoria Cross" and pallbearers comprised of "[t]he highest-ranking commanders …: Haig, French, and Trenchard." Dyer, 22. Stories of extraordinary loss appear in this audience, including a girl who had lost nine brothers, either killed or missing. Hansen, 303.

[116] "On Monday, 15 November, it was estimated that as many as a million and a half pilgrims had filed past the Cenotaph and at least half a million had paid their respects at the grave of the Unknown Soldier." Hansen, 312. Even after the tomb was sealed, visits in extraordinary numbers continued; on Sunday, 21 November, 10,000 people filed past the tomb in the two-hour visiting window. Remembrance of these remembrance ceremonies became its own subject of memory. Audio recordings of the burial ceremony for the Unknown Soldier were sold for seven shillings sixpence on the street, and the *Daily Mirror*'s coverage of the ceremony in its November 12, 1920 issue sold a record-breaking 2 million copies (309-10).

objects of memory, as death made relics of ordinary objects in postwar Britain.[117] As it was for Chris Baldry in *Return of the Soldier*, though, haptic attachment to objects conjuring memory could be as disruptive as it could be therapeutic. Years after the war, Vera Brittain recalled the effect of receiving the kit of her fiancé Roland, shortly after his death:

> I wondered, and I wonder still, why it was thought necessary to return such relics—the tunic torn front and back by the bullet, a khaki vest dark and stiff with blood, and a pair of blood-stained breeches slit open at the top by someone obviously in a violent hurry. Those gruesome rags made me realize, as I had never realized before, all that France really meant … though he had only worn the things when living, the smell of those clothes was the smell of graveyards and the Dead. The mud of France which covered them was not ordinary mud; it had not the usual clean pure smell of earth, but it was as though it were saturated with dead bodies—dead that had been dead a long, long time.[118]

Indeed, the smell is such that Roland's mother cries, "I must either burn or bury them. They smell of death; they are not Roland; they even seem to detract from his memory … I won't have anything more to do with them!"[119] Brittain's objects are extreme in their proximity to the deceased, but they illuminate the visceral impact of materiality on the preservation of memory, prolonging and preserving both longed-for and unwanted reminders of that person.

Under the legislative view of the Department of Ancient Monuments, characteristics like age, grandness of scale, historical importance, and architectural significance were necessary to the designation of a "monument." But in the context of the war's mass losses and the non-repatriation of bodies, the popular concept of a monument underwent a dramatic dilution, to encompass a variety of sizes, media, materialities, venues, spectators, messages, and so on. Domestic memorials came to be seen as part of a shared territory of remembrance to which the state contributed in public space. The blurring of the vocabularies of public and private "monuments" revealingly demonstrates this imagined territory of memory across the Empire and in every home. Explaining the decision by the War Graves Commission to adopt uniform headstones for every fallen soldier regardless of rank,

[117] Hansen, 310.
[118] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (New York: Seaview Books, 1980), 251-52.
[119] Brittain, 252.

for example, a November 1918 *Times* article states, "Were the erection of monuments left to individual initiative, probably those of the well-to-do would overshadow those of their poorer comrades, to the loss of the whole sense of common sacrifice and service. The place for the individual monument, it was thought, should be at home."[120] This rhetoric makes no distinction between large monuments in public space and "individual monument[s]" or repositories of memory in private space, however small they might presumably be. By this logic, Oliver's room as well as his ball and jersey can be seen as monuments, performing the same kind of work as the obelisk of Montefort or the Lutyens Cenotaph. In the extreme context of postwar mourning, it seems that the most banal of personal objects could be endowed with the symbolic weight of a monument.

The Latin verb *monere*, from which we take the word "monument," means "to remind." Over the centuries, its meaning has ranged from the specificity of a tomb or sepulcher to the functional openness of "[s]omething that by its survival commemorates and distinguishes a person, action, period, event, etc."[121] In the postwar period, material traces tied to a soldier whose body was not repatriated were invested with an ontological weight beyond mere material things. Soldiers' extracorporeal, material remains became treasured possessions for families while fueling the roaring trade in souvenirs and "trench art" for collectors that had sprung up in the war's early months.[122] "The war experience was so extreme," states anthropologist Nicholas Saunders, "that it had the power to revalue almost any object, from a lump of chalk to a splinter of coloured glass from a

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[120] "War Graves: Uniform Pattern Memorial Decided On." *The Times* (London: England), Monday, 25 November, 1918, page 5, Issue 41956.

[121] "monument, n.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/121852?rskey=zFrSsa&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed May 04, 2016). The latter definition allies the survival of that which is commemorated in memory with the survival of the material monument itself. By this reasoning, matter and memory and not separate, as Bergson would have it, but inextricable.

[122] Both soldiers and local civilians engaged in "souveniring"—a "thinly-veiled euphemism for looting" which provided souvenir-hunters with extra income and social capital. Deaths were frequent owing to this dangerous activity. Nicholas Saunders, *Killing Time: Archaeology and the First World War* (Thrupp, UK: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2007), 35.

stained-glass window, a fragment of shrapnel, live bullets, empty artillery-shell cases, and the military equipment and personal possessions of a dead soldier."[123] The preservation of a dead person's belongings provides a way of maintaining a material, corporeal attachment to the missing person that can be phenomenologically experienced.[124] Saunders continues,

> Great War objects in the home altered physical space, changed the emotional atmosphere, and were constant reminders of absent loved ones. A pair of decorated shells on a mantelpiece, a bullet letter-opener on a desk, or a shell dinner-gong sounded at mealtimes, was an ever-present memory object, and only a glance away. Sometimes, such items were the only material reminders of the dead, whether sent home by a soldier who was subsequently killed, or bought by a widow on a visit to the battlefields.[125]

It is by this logic of the material signifiers of the dead that certain objects in West's war novel *Return of the Soldier*—a familiar table or a comforting glass, a child's ball and a teddy bear—enable the house's inhabitants to hold communion with the past.[126] This transhistorical but war-amplified emphasis on the direct relevance of objects to mourning anticipates the titular structure of Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922). The novel's famous last scene, in which we learn with a shock of

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[123] Ibid.

[124] In fact, objects belonging to the dead participate in the dynamic of presence and absence intrinsic to a corpse, as an object that once participated in life but that now makes physically present death. Here I follow Robert Harrison, who argues, "The corpse is the site of something that has disappeared, that has forsaken the sphere of presence … In its perfect likeness of the person who has passed away, the corpse withholds a presence at the same time as it renders present an absence. *The Dominion of the Dead* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003], 92. Likewise, David Sherman argues, "Corpses inhabit a complex, narratable temporality implicitly structured as demand because they are not inert objects in an unremarkable perduring, but only ambivalently objectifiable, both objects and subjects." *In a Strange Room*, 110.

[125] Saunders, 61-62. Saunders emphasizes the material transformations effected on local streetscapes and domestic interiors by the war, through street memorials, community displays of tanks or matériel (56), and personal collections amassed by civilians or brought home by soldiers. "Sometimes these were unaltered mementoes of war, such as the rifles, helmets, bullets and lumps of shrapnel that they had somehow acquired. … These objects, saturated with the memories of conflict, now became an integral part of the world of the home—artifacts of war in the surroundings of peaceful family life." (59-60)

[126] In *Return of the Soldier,* the aura of physical objects of memory supersedes their visual image or the mere thought of them—hence the importance of tactility in encountering these objects. When Margaret finds a photograph of Chris's son, who died at about the same age as her own child, "she did not look at the child's photograph, but pressed it to her bosom as though to staunch a wound." West, 160-61.

narrative omission that Jacob has died at the front, enacts the frequent realities of an unrepresented, unknown death "somewhere in France" and an empty room full of resonant objects that confronted loved ones with their maddening perpetuity, emphasizing the permanent absence of the deceased. The model of preservation of the beloved's room still holds today for military families.[127]

The severe preservation of Oliver's room in *Return of the Soldier* differs crucially from the transformational refurbishment of Jacob's room in Woolf's novel in its inadmissibility of change. Its extreme mixture of repressive forgetting and perfect remembering—the refusal to let go—materializes the ideal logic of public monuments' approach to mourning and memory. The Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier demand fidelity to memories of the absent for the length of these objects' material existence. Their ontological premise as monuments obliges not the recognition of an object but an act of remembering; and in the temporal aspirations of sentiments like "never forget," they enjoin a continually reiterative structure of remembrance that defies the passage of historical time.[128]

The notion of fixed repetitions for perpetuity, in which the measurement of time becomes virtually irrelevant, structures the qualitative experience of the burial grounds of non-repatriated

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[127] Photographer Ashley Gilbertson's *Bedrooms of the Fallen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014) documents the preserved bedrooms of young men from the United States, Holland, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Scotland killed in Afghanistan or Iraq. Gilbertson writes, "In Jack Sweet's bedroom, two … trunks were stacked by a hamper filled with dirty clothes. He'd been dead two years, and the clothes still smelled like him" (89). When I spoke briefly with Gilbertson at a Chicago photojournalism event in the fall of 2015, he connected his project to a recent story involving the sale of a house in northern France, which mandates the preservation of the bedroom of a fallen soldier, Hubert Rochereau, within the house as part of its transfer requirements. See Anne Penketh, "French soldier's room unchanged 96 years after his death in First World War," *The Guardian*, 14 October, 2014. Accessed 30 April, 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/14/french-soldier-room-unchanged-first-world-war

[128] Citing antiquity in its name and form, the Cenotaph situates the war of 1914-18 within a deep history of human existence and promises to carry its message of remembrance forward into equally deep futures. Jay Winter notes, "The great Cenotaph… it's not Christ's tomb, it's a Greek tomb, an empty tomb. Lutyens went back before Christ to say something about loss of life in war." Jay Winter and Robert Wohl, "The Great War: Midwife to Modern Memory?" *The Legacy of the Great War: Ninety Years On* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2009), 179.

Commonwealth soldiers along the Western Front. This uncounted, incalculable *durée*—the time of forever and never—appeared in Rupert Brooke's famous 1914 poem, in which "there's some corner of a foreign field / That is for ever England."[129] It was taken up and perpetuated in postwar sentiments like "lest we forget" and was essential to the design and negotiations around Commonwealth cemeteries on the Continent, for which land was donated "in perpetuity" in 1920 by the governments of France and Belgium.[130] These Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries are so meticulously maintained as to seem to exist out of time. There is no moss on the white headstones, the grass is perfectly trimmed, flowers are replanted and trees are pruned; weather has not yet eroded the inscriptions of soldiers' names to illegibility and only the mature trees suggest that the war occurred a century and not a decade ago. As Geoff Dyer writes, "This is strange: cemeteries, after all, are expected to age. In these military cemeteries there is no ageing: everything is kept as new. Time does not exist here, only the seasons."[131] Similarly, the mantra, "Lest we forget," demands the infinite preservation of memory as both substance and action—both a non-entropic datum and an unending repetition of the act of remembering.[132]

Rudyard Kipling, from whose hymn "God of our fathers" the phrase, "Lest we forget, lest we forget" was taken as a collective injunction after the war, also chose the Cenotaph's inscription:

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[129] "The Soldier," *Collected Poems* (Cambridge: The Oleander Press, 2010), 139. For Siegfried Sassoon, the palliative sentiments of eternity in the public culture of remembrance were an affront; ""Their name liveth for ever,' the Gateway claims," he wrote of the Menin Gate in Ypres after it was reconstructed as a memorial to the missing in 1927. "Was ever an immolation so belied / As these intolerably nameless names?" "On Passing the New Menin Gate," *The War Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1983), 153.

[130] Ware, 39. Ware emphasizes the novelty of the international agreements that began to spring up as early as 1915 between France, England, and Belgium in determining responsibility for the selection of burial sites and their maintenance.

[131] *The Missing of the Somme* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 15. Burials of recently excavated bodies continue to take place on a regular basis; when I visited the Somme and Ypres in 2014, a French CWGC worker gave me a bullet found nearby and told me about a re-interment ceremony taking place that weekend in Fromelles.

[132] The phrase, "Lest we forget, lest we forget" constitutes the closing line of Rudyard Kipling's poem-turned-hymn, "God of our fathers."

"The Glorious Dead." In 1925, though, Kipling penned another phrase for the war's mortal effects: "A dead sea of arrested lives."[133] The metaphor is striking for its utter stagnancy. A dead sea is a thing becalmed, a body of water incapable of sustaining life. Rudyard Kipling's son John had died in the war. Like approximately half the British dead, his body was never found.[134] The "dead sea" refers to the rows of 11,000 headstones Kipling saw in a Rouen graveyard tended by migrant workers.[135] But the figure is appropriate to the "arrested lives" of the living, whose continued existence was, in this period, so intensely tethered to the dead, to their absent bodies, and to their material remains. The coincidence of the reiterative practices of remembrance, the material stasis of monuments, and the intransigence of death appears after the war in an important essay by Freud, to which I now turn. Core issues of death, memory, repetition, pleasure, and survival are reworked by Freud in the context of the patient symptoms documented in shell-shocked soldiers, but latent, he believes, in all of us.

III. Momentum and monuments in Freud

The cultural and material register of monumentalization meets the psychic and temporal register of repetition compulsion in one of the most famous accounts of traumatic etiology to emerge from the war. Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in 1920, represents a major swerve in Freud's thought with his introduction of the death drive as an organic, organizing principle, which, acting in tension with the life instinct, precedes and overrides the operations of the

[133] Letter to Sir Henry Rider Haggard, 14 March 1925, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling,* Vol. 5: 1920-1930, ed. Thomas Pinney (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 212.
[134] Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History, and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 65-66.
[135] "Went off at once to Rouen Cemetery (11,000 graves) and collogued with the Head Gardener and the contractors. One never gets over the shock of this Dead Sea of arrested lives—from VCs and Hospital Nurses to coolies of the Chinese Labor Corps." Letter to Sir Henry Rider Haggard, 14 March 1925, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling,* Vol. 5: 1920-1930, ed. Thomas Pinney (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 212. Chinese workers were employed by the British military during the war as construction workers; many remained after the war, doing the dangerous work of clearing battlefields of barbed wire and filling in shell holes. Nicholson, 101.

pleasure principle.[136] In reading this essay, my interest is not clinical or diagnostic, but discursive and cultural. I take this essay as a disciplinary response to a moment in which many individuals had been not just demobilized but immobilized by what they had experienced.[137]

Freud arrives at the conceptualization of the death drive out of his bewilderment at the iterative re-enactments of traumatic, *unpleasurable* experience to which shell shocked soldiers are subjected in their nightmares. From this patient group and its symptoms, Freud constructs an argument rationalizing the temporal effects specific to traumatic disruption—namely, the involuntary, repeated return to previous experience that he will call "repetition compulsion." In addition to this etiological intervention, though, the essay makes an audacious proposition about the homeostatic impulse latent to an organism's nervous system. The death drive is a tendency toward inertia and stasis by means of which, Freud claims, living matter is always attempting to return to its nonliving origin. The will to stasis, to frozen endurance, exists at the core of human biological life, he argues, and not just psychic life. From the compelled repetitions of the shell-shocked soldier, Freud will extract a universal organic tendency to return to stone.[138]

Freud's economic theory of the psyche is predicated on the assumption that motor energy is convertible into emotional energy and vice versa.[139] In Freud's economic model, homeostasis or lack

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[136] The theory of the death drive thus becomes known as his "second dual instinct theory," supplanting the "first dual instinct theory" that opposed the sexual and self-preservational instincts. Salmon Akhtar, "Introduction," *On Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle,'* edited by Salmon Ahktar and Mary Kay O'Neil. (London: Karnac Press, 2011), 2-3.

[137] The essay was largely written in 1919 before the death of his daughter Sophie, despite later critics' readings of it as a response to this personal loss.

[138] *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* thus interestingly presents as a meeting of neurological and psychoanalytic approaches to the brain—a crossroads of critical contention that Nima Bassiri examines in his discussion of neuropsychoanalysis in the early 20th century. See "Freud and the Matter of the Brain: On the Rearrangements of Neuropsychoanalysis," *Critical Inquiry* 40.1 (2013), 83-108, especially 85-87.

[139] Describing Freud's 1895 work *Studies in Hysteria* with Breuer, from which the economic metaphor of the psyche as an electrical system comes, Bassiri writes,

> [W]hat is … especially significant about Freud's earliest psychoanalytic account of the nerves is that the nervous system, in addition to being a model for the psyche, also functioned as a

of excitation produces pleasure in the organism, while excitation or the disruption of homeostasis prompts unpleasure.[140] From his work in the 1890s on, reflex responses by the nervous system offer Freud a visible model of the manner in which the psyche absorbs and discharges excitation or, in other words, maintains homeostasis.[141] The organism's instinct toward homeostatic "constancy" is motivated by the pleasure principle, which is thwarted at times by the postponements of the self-preservational or "reality" principle enabling the organism to defer pleasure and react appropriately to external threat.[142] But in a patient-group suffering from traumatic neurosis, the reiteration in dreams of "experiences of the past that contain no potentiality of pleasure, and which could at no time have been satisfactions" begs a crucial question: "In what relation to the pleasure-principle then does the repetition-compulsion stand, that which expresses the force of what is repressed?"[143]

The basis of Freud's psychoanalytic work up to this point has assumed that neurotic symptoms can be alleviated by the bringing-to-consciousness of formerly repressed experiences under hypnosis or psychoanalytic transference. This bringing-to-consciousness would permit the "discharge," according to his economic theory, that would restore the organism to homeostasis

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> sort of circuit of psychosomatic exchangeability, either ensuring a smooth and economic circulation of psychical and physical energies or, otherwise, facilitating pathological transpositions, conversions, and short-circuits across psychical and somatic thresholds.

"Freud and the Matter of the Brain: On the Rearrangements of Neuropsychoanalysis," *Critical Inquiry* 40.1 (2013), 93. Freud's ideas of neuronal inertia relied on models advanced by the physicist Gustav Fechner (92).

[140] "We have decided to consider pleasure and 'pain' in relation to the quantity of excitation present in the psychic life—and not confined in any way—along such lines that 'pain' corresponds with an increase and pleasure with a decrease in this quantity." *Beyond the Pleasure Priniciple*, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 2. Freud emphasizes that there is not a proportional relationship between the strength of emotion and the quantity of excitation.

[141] "By 1920 … this process of maintaining a state of nonstimulation, what was initially described as early as 1895 as a principle of neuronal inertia, is reframed as the principle of constancy: the tendency 'to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli'." Bassiri, 98.

[142] *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 3, 5-6. In addition to unpleasure prompted by the reality principle, Freud says, unpleasure is also felt with the belated gratification of impulses that have been previously repressed in the psyche—repressions that occur as a process of growth when ego-development conflicts with instinct.

[143] Ibid, 20

under the tenets of the pleasure principle. The psychic function of dreams has been crucial to this clinical hypothesis, since, for Freud, in dreams, the unconscious can evade the repressive interference of waking consciousness and express desires in latent content. As offshoots of repressed desire, dreams normally operate according to the pleasure principle. By presenting an image of wish-fulfillment, they aim to discharge repressed energy and bring an end to the disruptive excitation of desire.[144] The dreams visited upon sufferers of traumatic neurosis, though, do not follow this model, and they thus trouble the very bases of Freud's theorization of the psyche.[145] Freud writes: "Now in the traumatic neuroses the dream life has this peculiarity: it continually takes the patient back to the situation of his disaster, from which he awakens in renewed terror. This fact has caused less surprise than it merits."[146] It is not just the unpleasurable content but the continual repetition of these dreams that is at issue for Freud, and that prompt his investigation of what he describes as the compulsion to repeat. And at the core of this inquiry is the relationship of repetition to memory, or of the compulsion to *repeat* instead of to *recollect*.[147]

Freud was already fascinated by the role of repetition in psychic life before the war. In 1914, he examines the non-conscious repetitions prompted by action over memory in a typical patient who "does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces

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[144] Freud succinctly describes the aim of the dream as follows: "to do away with the motives leading to interruption of sleep by presenting wish-fulfillments of the disturbing excitations" (38).

[145] Freud articulates the challenge presented by traumatic nightmares to his understanding of dreams as follows:

> To regard it as self-evident that the dream at night takes them back to the situation which has caused the trouble is to misunderstand the nature of dreams. It would be more in correspondence with that nature if the patient were presented (in sleep) with images from the time of his normal health or of his hoped-for recovery … perhaps the expedient is left us of supposing that in this condition the dream function suffers dislocation along with the others and is diverted from its usual ends, or else we should have to think of the enigmatic masochistic tendencies of the ego. (10)

[146] Ibid, 9.

[147] "[The patient] is obliged rather to *repeat* as a current experience what is repressed, instead of, as the physician would prefer to see him do, *recollecting* it as a fragment of the past." Ibid, 18, italics in original.

it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it."[148] Freud hypothesizes that "the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation … the compulsion to repeat … now replaces the impulsion to remember."[149] Already viewing remembering and repeating as operating in counterpoint, in 1914 Freud suggests a working out of the repression through the dynamics of transference.[150] "We render the compulsion harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field," he states.[151]

By 1920, however, Freud has come to admit that the repressed content of traumatic experience is constitutively unavailable to memory. He arrives at this conjecture in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by hypothesizing an energetic economy of traumatic experience, whereby the memory-tracing functions of psychic systems other than consciousness are temporarily disabled under the flood of excitation that broaches the protective shield in a traumatic incident. "Such external excitations as are strong enough to break through the barrier against stimuli we call traumatic," Freud writes.[152] In an attempt to diffuse the injury of this penetration, all other psychic systems are requisitioned to produce an answering rush of energy at the site, and it is this action that interferes with the normal operations of memory: "An immense 'counter-charge' is set up, in favor of which all the other psychic systems are impoverished."[153] The pleasure principle is "put out of action here" by

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[148] "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through," *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958), 150. [145-157]. Originally published 1914.
[149] Ibid, 151.
[150] "The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering." Ibid, 151.
[151] Ibid, 154.
[152] Ibid, 34. "I think one may venture (tentatively) to regard the ordinary traumatic neurosis as the result of an extensive rupture of the barrier against stimuli. In this way the old naïve doctrine of 'shock' would come into its own again, apparently in opposition to a later and psychologically more pretentious view which ascribes aetiological significance not to the effect of the mechanical force, but to the fright and the menace to life." Ibid, 36.
[153] Ibid.

the prioritizing need to "bind" the onslaught of stimuli that are bombarding the organism, "so as to bring about a discharge of it."[154]

The factor allowing some kinds of traumatic shock to penetrate the psyche in the first place, for Freud, is passivity, or a vulnerable lack of psychic preparation. And at this point in his hypotheses, the anecdotes of the repetitive play of children that have interspersed *Beyond the Pleasure Prinicple* are suddenly seen to offer an insight into the psyche's response to trauma. The "rehearsal" of the traumatic scene of maternal loss in the child's *fort/da* game figures the psychic attempt to regain mastery over a traumatic breach, such that the child—or the psyche—can claim an active role in the traumatic event. Traumatic neurosis, Freud says, does not seem to occur under situations of apprehension or anxiety, where danger is expected and where the psyche is appropriately "charged" with defensive energy through "the mechanism of apprehension."[155] Traumatic shock occurs, rather, in a situation of *schreck* or fright—a state of sudden danger or threat for which one is wholly unprepared; "[w]e thus find that the apprehensive preparation, together with the over-charging of the receptive systems, represents the last line of defense against stimuli."[156] Just as a blow to a flexed muscle produces less pain than a blow to soft tissue, Freud argues that a traumatic shock to an already quiescently-charged or "bound" psychic apparatus will produce less damage than a traumatic shock to a relaxed or "unbound" one. So the compulsive repetitions of traumatic nightmares, for Freud, like the *fort/da* games of a child's maternal loss, "are attempts at restoring control of the stimuli by developing apprehension, the pretermission of which caused the traumatic neurosis."[157] In the traumatic instance, the compelled repetition of nightmares complicates the model of neuronal

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid, 37.
[156] Ibid. Freud notes that at a certain level of intensity to traumatic stimuli, no amount of apprehensive preparation or "charging" may prevent the organism from being overwhelmed; "with a trauma beyond a certain strength such a difference [of psychic charging] may no longer be of any importance."
[157] Ibid.

inertia he has previously used to account for psychic repetitions, one modeled on reflex action and prompted, he believes, by the pleasure principle.

The war neuroses produced problems of maladaptive repetition. Rather than growing weaker over time, like the gradually blurring registration of a printing plate under the press, symptoms of shell shock like nightmares or amnesiac occlusion took the form of consistently intense reiteration. The temporality of repetition compulsion, entrapping its sufferers in a continually tripping clock that will not advance, reminds us of the spatial etymology behind the notion of obsession, a primary form of neurosis. While we might today associate an obsession with an object, the word originally comes from a military metaphor. An obsession is a state of siege. In classical Latin, it denotes "the action of besieging"—in other words, a state that only manifests by means of the passage of ongoing, attritive time.[158] This obsolete definition of obsession as siege—the forgotten unconscious of this word—has passed on its temporality of forced continuation to the present moment in its contemporary definition as "an idea, image, or influence which *continually* fills or troubles the mind … a *recurrent*, intrusive, inappropriate thought, impulse or image causing significant distress or disturbance to social or occupational functioning."[159] Wyatt Bonikowski contrasts the nervous system's typical operations against stimulus— which Freud describes in 1915 as a "'single expedient action' such as a 'flight from the source of stimulation"'—with the inadequacy of this single-action strategy before certain kinds of *durational* traumatic experience:

> Repetition compulsion suggests a driven quality, a constant force one cannot flee from. If a situation of danger leads to repetition, there must be something *more* happening in the psyche than a mere response to a momentary external threat or a mere failure to maintain consistency or unity, something that disturbs body and mind at the deepest levels of

[158] "… its etymon classical Latin *obseessión-, obsessió*– the action of besieging, a siege." "sobsession, n.". OED Online. September 2015. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/129901?redirectedFrom=obsession (accessed November 09, 2015).
[159] Ibid.

> motivation. The repetition of war nightmares has more in common with the constant threat of the sexual drives than with a momentary threat of external danger.[160]

The production of repetition in the war neuroses, then, is crucially different from that of the homeostatic constancy under the pleasure principle; pathological repetition is constant but non-discharging. Traumatic dreams effectively manifest as or an inability to move forward in time owing to a forced return to the past. But Freud reminds his readers that such notions of time arise within consciousness, and not in the unconscious that drives the repetition itself.[161] Our chronological ideas of time, mapped in consciousness, contrast with the "unconscious mental processes [which] are in themselves 'timeless'." He continues, "That it is to say… they are not arranged chronologically, time alters nothing in them, nor can the idea of time be applied to them."[162] The temporal disorders of traumatic repetition compulsions are prompted by dysfunctions of systemic and, Freud believes, spatially implicated processes in the mind.

The importance of the spatial element in Freud's account of the mechanism of traumatic repetition appears in his account of the organism's protective layer. He regards it as a crucial point that the traumatic breaching of this shield causes a breakdown in the organism's ability to distinguish outer from inner stimuli. Since the shield has only developed in an effort of protection from the outside world, "towards what is within no protection against stimuli is possible."[163] When the psyche is flooded with excitation by the traumatic incident and this protective shield is breached, inner

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[160] Wyatt Bonikowski, *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction* (London: Ashgate, 2013), 41.

[161] Ibid, 32. Perceptual consciousness is unique among psychic systems because "the excitation process does not leave in it, as it does in all other psychic systems, a permanent alteration of its elements, but is as it were discharged in the phenomenon of becoming conscious and vanishes"—a factor that Freud attributes to the economic precedence of its contact with the outside world (28-29). Freud states, "[B]ecoming conscious and leaving a memory trace are processes incompatible in the same system. … [in the system of perceptual consciousness,] *consciousness arises in the place of the memory-trace* " (28).

[162] Ibid, 32. Freud specifies, "Our abstract conception of time seems rather to be derived wholly from the mode of functioning of the system W-Bw. [perceptual consciousness], and to correspond with a self-perception of it."

[163] Ibid, 33.

stimuli (composed mainly of instincts) react with such a complementary flood of excitation that "[t]here will be a tendency to treat them as though they were acting not from within but from without, in order for it to be possible to apply against them the defensive measures of the barrier against stimuli."[164] Internal, instinctual activity within traumatic experience becomes as dangerous to the psyche as the flood of data from without. The repetitive attempt to belatedly "master" this flood of data then manifests as the production of unpleasurable dreams desiring to ward off both internal and external attack.

This insight into the significant role of internal instinct in producing repetition compulsion leads Freud to reflect on the role of instinct more generally, and to propose some radical amendments to his metapsychological theory that will culminate in his theory of a death drive latent in all organic life. Even as his essay moves "beyond" the pleasure principle in metapsychological thinking, it moves "before" the pleasure principle in attempting to find a primary structure of organic action. "[W]e have stumbled on the trace of a general and hitherto not clearly recognized—or at least not expressly emphasized—characteristic of instinct, perhaps of all organic life," he states. "According to this, *an instinct would be a tendency innate in living organic matter impelling it towards the reinstatement of an earlier condition*, one which it had to abandon under the influence of external disturbing forces—a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the manifestation of inertia in organic life."[165] The preexisting notion of neuronal inertia alters significantly under this hypothesis, which Freud explores further in the "speculative" sections on cellular life and organic development that follow. Instead of the organism acting on the desire to return to homeostasis *tout court* in the interest of a determining pleasure principle, homeostatic pleasure now looks like the byproduct of a previously unrecognized mechanism of organic life predicated on conservatism rather than pleasure.

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid, 45.

The implications of this theory lead to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*'s astonishing central claim. Freud writes, "If we may assume as an experience admitting of no exception that everything living dies from causes within itself and returns to the inorganic, we can only say, '*The goal of all life is death',* and, casting back, '*The inanimate was there before the animate.*'"[166] So prior interpretations of instinctual behaviors as "striving after change and progress" are inaccurate, Freud contends; "they are merely endeavoring to reach an old goal by ways both old and new."[167] The radical consequence of this thought, for Freud, is that life begins to look like an accident prompted by an unknown combination of external factors, rather than the progressively ameliorating result of a theological or evolutionary program.[168] Life is no longer the goal of existence but the consequence of a failure to achieve other states—namely, the failure to not be alive; it is an uncomfortable condition visited upon prehistoric matter "by some operation of force which still completely baffles conjecture."[169] "What the war has revealed to Freud," Wyatt Bonikowski writes, "is that life, paradoxically, is motivated by the work of death."[170] Indeed, existence, Freud contests, is nothing but an assortment of "evermore complicated and circuitous routes to the attainment of the goal of death."[171] Even more deflatingly, the failure to achieve the instinctual aim of non-life comes about because instinct lacks intelligence: "Hence the paradox comes about that the living organism resists with all its energy influences (dangers) which could help it to reach its life-goal by a short way (a short circuit, so to speak); but this is just the behavior that characterizes a pure instinct as contrasted with an intelligent striving."[172]

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, 47.
[168] Under the principle of conservatism, Freud writes, "we are obliged to place all the results of organic development to the credit of external, disturbing, and distracting influences." Ibid, 46.
[169] Ibid. Out of the emergence of life, Freud says, the first instinct developed in response, with the desire to restore equilibrium and "to return to lifelessness."
[170] Bonikowski, 42.
[171] Ibid, 48.
[172] Ibid, 49.

Against the conservative tendency of the death-instincts to return the animate organism to non-living matter, the sexual instincts generate interference and produce the continuation in time that we describe as life. Consequently, Freud proposes an opposition of "ego- (or death-) instincts and sexual (life-) instincts," arguing, in essence, that the sexual instincts desire the phylogenetic (species) survival of the organism form and that their striving for cell multiplication prolongs the otherwise death-bound existence of the individual (ontogenetic) organism.[173] Like the death-instincts, the sexual instincts, he argues, operate by a principle of inertia, or the conservative wish to return to a prior state of existence. He finds a literary analogue to the conservatism of the sexual instincts in the image of the soul divided between two lovers in Plato's *Symposium*, which is always "desir[ing] to grow together again."[174] In the *Symposium*, the desired reinstatement of a prior state of wholeness takes place through the *sexual* congress of lovers. Freud is clear that many questions remain to be answered with regard to the viability of the death drive as a principle of organic action. But considered in this global model of the organism's adherence to a conservative principle of instinct, repetition compulsion is reframed not as a malfunctioning of the pleasure principle but as an undisguised manifestation of a death drive latent in all living matter.[175]

Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* develops two arguments about the presence of repetition compulsion in human life. The first addresses the traumatic repetitions of the neurotic psyche attempting to belatedly prepare for an event that has already occurred. The second takes as a universal condition of life the desire of animated beings to return to non-living matter. Pertinently for my purposes, Freud produces a model of the human in this postwar moment that theorizes an

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[173] Ibid, 55. Giving further description of this conflict, Freud writes, "[T]he one group of instincts presses forward to reach the final goal of life as quickly as possible, the other flies back at a certain point on the way only to traverse the same stretch once more from a given spot and thus to prolong the duration of the journey." 51.
[174] *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 74.
[175] "The assertion of the regressive character of instinct rests … it is true, on observed material, namely on the facts of the repetition-compulsion." Ibid, 76.

immanent stuckness in time—or rather, an immanent drive toward a stuckness beyond time. Under the theory of the death drive, the human organism seeks to evade the disruptions of history and the chronological calendar of existence by aiming before the beginning and after the end—before the birth. In essence, the uncanny mixture of living and non-living matter, mud and bodies, on the Western Front illustrates a prehistorically implanted struggle going on in every moment within the living organism. Just as Freud theorizes a "beyond the pleasure principle," then, he also theorizes a "beyond human history," in which latent movements to human life subtend the more visible narratives of action that can be told in an autobiography. Existing before and after the "life-stories" we typically describe and with which history is constructed, Freud's account of the death drive scripts the human organism into a longer, slower, and more enduring story, one that radically displaces the goalposts of human birth and death by which we mark the arc of a given life.[176] This account paradoxically moves human life beyond life-writing, and endows it with the enduring indifference of stone.

The Biblical myth combining a petrifying death drive with the penetrating shock of a traumatic event surprisingly does not appear in Freud's essay. The story of Lot's wife, recounted in Genesis, describes the transformation from human individual into material object that Freud would call the death drive, and attributes this transformation to the individual's action of witnessing atrocity. While the tale's doctrinal import is found in the punishment meted out against (female) disobedience to a godly injunction against looking, the story, when stripped of its devotional pedagogy, is a story about the effects of witnessing trauma and of clinging to a previous way of life:

[176] Peter Brooks has discussed the relationship between Freud's theory (or 'plot') of the death drive and the constitutive elements of narrative—i.e. a formal structure arising from stasis into movement before returning to stasis. His analysis intersects with but does not wholly underlie my own; where for Brookes, narrative is described as that which is *not* static, my inquiry in this dissertation concerns the kind of narrative that results from the continuation of stasis itself, or the perpetuation of the organism in the absence of change or development. See *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); also Bonikowski, 70-71.

"Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."[177] Lot's wife is the solid instantiation of tears, a monument who cannot help remembering. Left behind to eternally regard the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, she becomes an object in excess of mere materiality. The monuments I consider in this chapter are similarly endowed with an ontology beyond objecthood, one that marks an historical past but that paradoxically shows indifference to any further change.[178]

An obsolete meaning of "monument" uses it as a verb. It means, "to cause to be perpetually remembered."[179] In Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, monument (Latin: *monumentum*) and momentum converge in perpetual inertia. Existence is predicated on the continual reiteration of what came before.[180] For Freud, the First World War was a family affair; his daughter Anna was briefly interned as an enemy alien in England and three of his sons were in active service with the Austrian

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[177] *The Bible*, English Standard Version, Gn 19:24-26.

[178] The difference in ontology between a public monument and a mere block of materials can be seen as similar to that between a work of art and its constituent materials. In a passage whose strenuousness indicates the difficulties of delineating these ontological differences between the work of art and the objects that compose it, Peter Lamarque writes,

> [A] work is not identical to its constituting object, having fundamentally different identity and survival conditions. The existence of a constituting object—a painted canvas, a piece of molded bronze, etc.—is never sufficient for the existence of the corresponding work. Works are underdetermined by their physical or structural properties, or, put more strongly, there are possible worlds where, for any given work in this world, a structurally isomorphic object exists that is not a work at all or not that work. A work is a cultural entity whose existence depends essentially on appropriate cultural conditions.

Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4. My point here is that monuments are imbued by their semiotic context with temporal resonances that demand reflection on history but are not straightforwardly historical.

[179] "monument, v.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/121853?rskey=zFrSsa&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed May 04, 2016).

[180] Inertia is defined in physics as, "That property of matter by virtue of which it continues in its existing state, whether of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line, unless that state is altered by external force." "inertia, n.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/95000?redirectedFrom=inertia (accessed May 09, 2016).

army.[181] All three sons survived, but the war experience produced considerable anxiety for Freud as a father.[182] After the Armistice, and following the writing of most of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, his beloved daughter Sophie perished from the Spanish Flu. The little boy playing the *fort/da* game in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* was her child. In 1929, Freud wrote to his friend Binswanger, "My daughter who died would have been thirty-six years old today." He continued:

> Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know that we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish.[183]

In the inadequate substitution of the monument and the never-complete repetitions of remembrance, time and space hover in form, fixated.

IV Elizabeth Bowen's Missed Encounters: Echoes of Absence After the Aftermath

Minutes into their first meeting, two children in a strange house in a dead-end street in Paris discuss death and remembrance. "Look—now your mother's dead so you can't possibly see her, do you still mean to love her, or is that no good now?" Leopold asks Henrietta.[184] "When you want to love her, what do you do, remember her? But if you couldn't remember her, but heard you could see

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[181] Helen Fry, *Freud's War* (Stroud, UK: The History Press, 2009), 34.
[182] Freud's oldest son, Martin, was most consistently stationed at the front and thus prompted the most concern. Martin anticipated a difficult readjustment to civilian life after his experiences: "You are right when you say I have become hard and can't talk about things," he wrote to Freud in October, 1918. "I am frightened that when I get home I won't be able to function anymore" (quoted in Fry, 51). Delays in communications in the chaotic final days of the war concealed Martin's whereabouts and his state of health. In alarm, Freud contacted his half-brother, who had war office connections: "Martin is still missing. It is time to start making enquiries. 9 days ago I sent an urgent telegram to the headquarters of his regiment in Linz, no reaction" (quoted in ibid, 54). Martin was at that moment in a field hospital with a broken leg. He spent several months in a POW camp in Italy but returned home safe.
[183] Letter to Ludwig Binswanger, 12 April, 1929. *Letters of Sigmund Freud,* ed. Ernst L. Freud, Trans. Tania and James Stern. (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), 386.
[184] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* (New York: Vintage Books, 1935), 18-19.

her, would you enjoy loving her more, or less?"[185] Leopold's blunt questions strike at a tangled web of quotidian, postwar problems. Does one love better if one has been in proximity to that person's physical body? How does one bear the absence of a loved one over the long, ongoing time of life? What type of imaginative act is it to love a dead person? What is the point of loving someone already dead?

This final section takes the questions of the temporal dynamics of memory, materialization, and fixation to the claustrophobic interiors and haunted minds of Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris*, published in 1935. Written years after a conflict that left millions of children fatherless and without a father's grave by which to mourn, this novel examines the position of an illegitimate child whose father committed suicide shortly after his conception and whose mother gave him away after birth. Leopold is the unacknowledged trace of literal and figurative death—the death of his father, for whom no other memorial exists, and the death of his parents' budding relationship, which ended precipitously after his conception. Manifesting in his very body the proof of his father and mother's brief and undocumented love affair, Leopold's existence signifies a memory that he does not discursively possess. Like the amnesiac, shell-shocked soldier, he is living a history he cannot remember, yet which he continually signifies for others. And like the locked room of remainders upstairs in *Return of the Soldier*, Leopold is hidden out of existence: "[N]o one knows I'm born," he tells Henrietta proudly.[186]

Materiality and narrative are the means by which memory is transmitted as knowledge. Without these circuits of data and signal, the past holds no trace in the present of those that live afterward. The difference between Henrietta, whose mother died when she was young, and Leopold, who has never met his mother, lies in their respective proximity to their parents' material traces and the narratives they have been provided about their history and origin. Whereas Henrietta handles

[185] Ibid, 19.
[186] Ibid, 50.

her remembered mother's death with practical aplomb, Leopold's very existence is defined by what he is not yet allowed to know but what his very body preserves as visible memory in the present. In the figure of Leopold, the child without parents whose history has been suppressed up to this fateful day, Bowen interrogates the movement of memory from matter to discourse to suggest that, through the uncircumscribed potential of imagination, narrative memory admits possibilities of change into the closed circuits and fixated repetitions of materially compelled remembrance.

Monumentality is a central theme of this novel, I argue, and as others have pointed out, stasis is its default temporal mode.[187] Like Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier*, *The House in Paris* draws the energy of its plot from the potential for existential and temporal stasis latent in material artifacts as reminders of the dead. But Bowen's novel is also deeply concerned with the psychic residues of non-materialized memory; her narrative structure and description continually ask what kind of memory is possible when no physical trace of relationship or event remains. In Bowen's modernist gothic, material and immaterial pasts alike haunt surviving generations, trapping them in fixation and impeding the capacity to move forward into the future. In this chapter's concluding section, I examine two aspects of *The House in Paris* that foreground the postwar problem of temporal stuckness through implicit discourses of monumentality and traumatic repetition. I first examine the central missed encounter of the novel and the psychic potency of non-materialized memory more generally, and then turn to Leopold's position as a material and figurative monument, specifically his dual position as a marker of an absent past and a disrupter to patterns of repetitive remembrance.

Leopold and Henrietta are almost the same age, both in transit, passing through Paris to other European destinations and breaking their journeys at the house of never-met family friends.

[187] See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) and Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2004). Temporal stasis is explicitly and continually described in *The House in Paris*, as in this passage describing Karen: "The time in Ireland, like one long day spent waiting, hung on her mind. She was in that flagging mood when to go on living seems only to be to load more unmeaning moments on to your memory" (93-94).

Henrietta is the daughter of a widower and is going to see her grandmother; Leopold is the illegitimate child of a mother he has never met and a father who died before he was born. He is in Paris for the day to meet, for the first time, his mother, Karen, in a rendez-vous he has long imagined as an answer to all of his questions. The children's stopovers in Paris on the same day are a coincidence. On the cusp of adolescence, with a too-great understanding of their lack of self-determination but with an incomplete sense of how their "over-understood" backgrounds will haunt their lives, the children are in transit existentially as well as practically.[188] For Leopold, this day in the house in Paris presents a crossroads between two potential kinds of lives—one without knowledge of his parents' history and one with full knowledge of it from his surviving parent. The clarity of these possibilities is broken when Leopold's mother cancels the arranged meeting and Leopold, instead, learns about his past from Madame Fisher. Henrietta, meanwhile, serves as spectator to this daylong excavation of Leopold's origins—an investigation structurally noted in the novel's middle section, "The Past," which is sandwiched between a beginning and end section both titled "The Present." Henrietta's presence as witness affirms the necessity of a gaze to substantiating emotional events whose passing leaves no material traces—for though nothing can exactly be said to happen in the house on this day, much is realized and recounted. The children's séjour in this waiting room is thus both a transport and an abeyance, an interruption to the movement of their continental journeys and a journey of its own.

The house in which the children sit is where Leopold's parents met years ago but where all forms of progression and resolution have since been annulled. Greatly disappointed by this view of Paris, Henrietta's impression is that, "Here she had dropped down a well into something worse than

[188] Bowen writes of Leopold, "At the Villa Fioretta, outside Spezia, the solicitude of his relations by adoption, his Aunts Sally and Marian and his Uncle Dee, who was at the same time his tutor, drove him into a frenzy about himself. He was over-understood. The repercussions of all that he said and did echoed through the hollow rooms of the villa …" (21).

the past in not being yet over."[189] Above the children's heads upstairs, an old woman lies unwillingly dying—seemingly the only process of change she cannot successfully ward off within a desperately static life. Ghosting between this grim deathbed and the children's vital *tête-à-tête*, the old woman's daughter, Naomi, has spent decades acceding to her mother's rigidity. Today, the living fact of the two children returns Naomi to memories of herself as a young woman who was once engaged to the dead father of Leopold. The only hope for change in this house once lay in this engagement between Naomi and a young, Jewish Frenchman named Max Ebhart, of meager background but high prospects. Since their broken engagement and his suicide, nothing has happened in the house. On the day the children visit the house in Paris, Naomi Fisher's "olive-green coat and skirt, absorbing what light there was, looked black"—symptomatically connecting the frozen mourning of the present with the incomplete mourning of the past.[190]

While Leopold is haunted by absence—by the non-materialized figures of his parents—the house in which he waits for his mother is overfull of the residues of lives whose futures were foreclosed and whose latent potential seeps into the present. Virtual lives and what-might-have-been haunt every human interaction in the novel. "You still exist in that house—haunt it, if you prefer," Max tells Karen when they meet again in the novel's flashback.[191] This contest between lack and excess, absence and presence, suffuses the novel's settings and determines its narrative structure. A woman whose "unmoved regard was a battery," Madame Fisher is the presiding spirit over Naomi's existence and Leopold's parents' ill-fated relationship.[192] Her notion of temporality is instantly palpable to the children on entering this static and silent house: "Mme Fisher's eyes, her indifferent way of talking, made Henrietta feel that nothing was going on—never had, never would."[193] Mme

[189] Ibid, 40.
[190] Ibid, 4.
[191] Ibid, 106.
[192] Ibid, 36.
[193] Ibid, 46.

Fisher's refusal of eventfulness or change commands the conditions by which Naomi is allowed to live and by which Max may be remembered. Her strange flattening of all times into the present determines the novel's strangely fatal tone; her commanding pronouncements are as much forecasts as they are conclusions, similar to the manner in which Leopold's past appears as both an unspoken potential and an already determined reality. This malevolent seer of past and future pushes Max to suicide by convincing him that his love for Karen will result in claustrophobic unhappiness if he marries her. "How frantically but coldly she loved the present!" Henrietta observes.[194] A hard, worldly, and intelligent figure, Mme Fisher ran a *pension* for years for the daughters of bourgeois families abroad in Paris. It was Mme Fisher who formed an intellectual friendship with the young Jewish Frenchman, Max, and it was as an art student in this house that Leopold's mother, Karen, became close friends with Naomi Fisher and first met Max. Finally, it is in this house that Max, driven to despair, slashed his wrist by the mantelpiece where his son now stands and stumbled into an alley to die, leaving "blood splashed on the marble, on the parquet where he had stood and in a trail to the door."[195]

The novel's three titled sections purport to distinguish chronological periods ("The Present," "The Past," and again, "The Present"), yet its language and its material descriptions continuously merge the boundaries of both. In the novel's first section, "The Present," for example, Leopold prepares himself for the memory he intends to have of the meeting with his mother: "From that door opening, I shall remember on. If I opened that door *now*, there would be the hall wallpaper. *Then* when it opens there will be her face. I shall see what I cannot imagine now."[196] Disregarding Leopold's wishes, the novel's depiction of characters, setting, and plot purposively mixes "then" and "now," and never more explicitly than when Naomi Fisher comes to tell Leopold that he will not

[194] Ibid, 42.
[195] Ibid, 185.
[196] Ibid, 28.

meet his mother today: "Miss Fisher's entrance, like anything much dreaded, happened at no one moment; she seeped in round the door. She seemed, now, to having been standing between them always, with the telegram shaking in one hand. … Her manner seemed to have frozen."[197] The announcement that the meeting with Karen will not take place presents as a tableau; Naomi kneels on the carpet before Leopold, who stands still at the mantelpiece, one arm raised. The final line of this opening "Present" section confirms the missed encounter, the constitutive absence that triggers the next section's plunge into "The Past": "Your mother is not coming; she cannot come."[198] The missed encounter between Karen and Leopold structurally produces the entire second section of the book as a flashback; or rather, it produces a flash-beyond, a flash out of time. As Bowen would have it, it is the constitutive absence of the missed encounter that makes the very recounting of this "Past"—a complex mixture of imagination and fact, focalized desire and omniscient recounting—textually possible.[199]

"Meetings that do not come off keep a character of their own. They stay as they were projected," the central section of "The Past" begins. "So the mother who did not come to meet Leopold that afternoon remained his creature, able to speak the truth."[200] "The Past" is the story of Karen and Max, the story of the origin of Leopold. It is the history that Leopold hoped to hear from his mother's own lips but that, Bowen states, could not be told as it was from within the plane of physical confrontation. "The Past" instead transpires in a textual vision that only exists "on the plane of potential, not merely likely behavior. … call it art, with truth and imagination informing every word. Only there … on that plane—could Karen have told Leopold what had really been."[201] This

[197] Ibid, 56-57.
[198] Ibid, 57.
[199] Though she serves as the protagonist and imagined co-author of the entire retrospective projection of "The Past," Karen never appears in the novel's "factually" recounted scenes in "The Present."
[200] Ibid, 59.
[201] Ibid, 60.

paradoxical and impossible narration combines the literal directness of a child's imagination of how things must be and the "more varied memory" of his mother who has loved and lost. It thus presents an idealized (because imagined) rendition of memory that is mutually and unconsciously constructed by two figures, Max and Karen, that never meet, yet who are inextricably bound together. "[R]eferring backwards and forwards between imagination and memory, she relives scenes, he sees them alive."[202] Like the "Past" narrative itself, which straddles fact and imagination without marking the difference between either, Karen and Leopold's positions are oblique. It is unclear whether a fated narrative writes their characters, or whether the desires they seem to acknowledge but rarely state write the narrative. Self-consciously narrated as something fated and unalterable, yet paradoxically potential and futural in its dependence on imagination, Leopold's heritage is both already-determined and not yet written.

The missed encounter in the novel's "present" plot—the non-transmission of memory in actuality from Karen to Leopold—produces a vacuum out of which "The Past" can be recounted; indeed, the text's very ability to recount this past depends on these memories' non-manifestation in actuality. Emphasizing the material concreteness of Leopold's imagination of history, the omniscient narrator tells us: "He expected from her a past as plain as the present … He expected her account of what is really: apples and trains, anger, the wish to know: what else is there?"[203] The story of Max and Karen that follows, though, cannot be told in material remainders or even in a simple explanation of facts. A fuller and, Bowen intimates, more truthful account of "memory" is made possible in the novel's structuring insert (or black hole) of the imagined past—a mode of narration that itself is only possible because the missed encounter of mother and son in the "Present" reality of historical occurrence does not take place. The potentiality of projected memory allows for the enumeration of

[202] Ibid, 59-60.
[203] Ibid, 59-60.

what would be otherwise non-realizable, while also allowing for an ideally projected auditor or receiver of memory:

> In the course of that meeting that never happened, that meeting whose scene remained inside Leopold, [Karen] would have told what she had done without looking for motives. These he could supply, for he would understand. You suppose the spools of negatives that are memory (from moments when the whole being was, unknowing, exposed), developed without being cut for a false reason: entire letters, dialogues which, once spoken, remain spoken for ever being unwound from the dark, word by word.
> This is, in effect, what she would have had to say.[204]

Bowen imagines a documentary exposure whose comprehensive honesty of revelation could only occur on the plane of potentiality, like a film that unfurls its indexical content in the dark without the editorial interventions of being enlarged, printed, and materially manifested in the plane of reality. It is not film as a mechanism of projection under light but the Beckettian image of a film "being unwound from the dark" in irreversible utterance that Bowen uses to depict an unalterable, non-materialized, and virtually unspeakable past.[205]

The problem of how non-materialized events and relationships may be remembered haunts the entirety of the relationship between Max and Karen that is related in "The Past." Both of them are engaged to other people, and it is to this engagement that Karen clings when Max re-enters her life and disrupts her equilibrium, trapping her in unwilling attachment: "She must rely on marriage to carry her somewhere else. Till it did, she stayed bound to a gone moment, like a stopped clock with hands silently pointing an hour it cannot be."[206] As this passage troping Karen's attraction as a stopped clock suggests, Karen and Max's relationship is constitutively atemporal as well as placeless. And throughout the novel, it is described in terms of both compulsion and fixation; "There has been no time to feel anything but compulsion," Karen tells Max when they agree to break their

[204] Ibid, 61.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, 122.

engagements to other people.[207] Their intense intimacy is so invisible, in fact, its events and fruition so ephemeral and unremarked, as to seem almost never to have taken place. The first, unsanctioned admission of their attraction occurs in the simple press of Max's hand on top of Karen's in the grass as they sit outside the house of Naomi's dead aunt after tea. "Their unexploring, consenting touch lasted; they did not look at each other or at their hands. When their hands had drawn slowly apart, they both watched the flattened grass beginning to spring up again, blade by blade."[208] A later moment similarly lacking material registration occurs when Karen and Max are momentarily locked together in the corridor of a train about to leave the station: "There was no escape. She stared at his right shoulder. … they faced each other unwillingly, defiant, dead. Then their eyes met; they looked steadily into each other's pupils."[209] The tryst that produces Leopold takes place in an unfamiliar town: "Not having been here before and now coming with Max made an island of the town. It stayed like nowhere, near nowhere, cut off from everywhere else."[210]

Diagetically, and not just narratively within the novel's account of this day in Paris, Max and Karen's history exists in shivers of proximity and ephemeral spaces of transit. Their connection is forged in non-spaces and moments experienced out of historical time, in the corridor of a train as a porter is passing, or in the house of a dead woman they have never met. Max diagnoses their relationship as outside of history and geography: "What she and I are … is outside life; we shall fail: we cannot live what we are."[211] They shall fail, Max thinks, because they are too different and they come from worlds too far apart; as such, they will suffocate rather than enabling each other. Whether

[207] Ibid, 166.
[208] Ibid, 118.
[209] Ibid, 119.
[210] Ibid, 148.
[211] Ibid, 183-184. Similarly, Karen's sharp retort to Max upon their first re-meeting since Paris, when they quarrel, captures this sense of achronicity: "If I exaggerated again just now, it was because today is hardly a day, is it? Here we are in a place that's hardly a place at all, in a house belonging to somebody dead … If I did come [to Twickenham again], I might never find this house." Ibid, 108.

this prognostication is accurate or not is never revealed, since Max's suicide terminates their nascent life together.

It is this very tracelessness, the non-registration of Karen and Max's connection on the matter of the world, that compels the text—or Karen, its ostensible co-author—to produce a monument to what has happened. Lying awake after their illicit coupling in a Hythe hotel, wearing the fake wedding ring she purchased for the tryst, Karen feels herself and her world altered so dramatically as to require some empirical corollary, some visible sign of their encounter. The text startlingly swerves from the non-confrontational enclosure of third person narrative to a second-person address, as if welcoming the presence that suddenly enters Karen's consciousness: "Having done as she knew she must, she did not think there would be a child: all the same, the idea of you, Leopold, began to be present with her."[212] The idea of a child is connected to the event's perpetuation in memory. Karen had anticipated her tryst with Max as an end in itself, as something compelled to happen that would now be completed, but she did not anticipate this end as leaving no mark: "It looked like the end. I did not see it would have an end. These hours are only hours. They cannot be again, but no hours can."[213] Tapping into postwar concerns about the fragility of undocumented or unmarked memory, Bowen's answer to this anxiety is found in the physical substance of a monument—the material composition of a child.

Max and Karen's understanding before the tryst was that it would simply be a sexual rendez-vous, but as Karen's thoughts spin in the night, the fact that this life-altering event should be so abruptly and invisibly over in the morning begins to seem increasingly intolerable—even impossible. Like Leopold wishing for the concreteness of apples and trains in accounts of history, she desires a legible byproduct of this untraceable story. So Karen explicitly figures her imagined child, Leopold—

[212] Ibid, 151.
[213] Ibid, 153.

the child with whom, the text tells us, this entire account of her past is imagined—as the visible trace of this intimacy, which material existence would otherwise not preserve:

> If a child were going to be born, there would still be something that had to be. Tonight would be more than the hours and that lamp. … I should see the hour in the child. I should not have rushed on to nothing. He would be the mark our hands did not leave on the grass, he would be the tamarisks we only half saw. And he would be the I whose bed Naomi sat on, the Max whose sleeve I brushed rain off: tender and guardable. He would be the Max I heard talking when I stood outside the salon, the I Max rang up: that other we were both looking for. I could bear us both lying tired and cast off if it were for him, if we were his purpose.[214]

Karen's conception of the child as the repository of what would otherwise pass unremembered is explicitly bound to the condition of Max's absence thereafter in her life—a condition that is rescinded when Max asks Karen to marry him, but reinstated when Max kills himself shortly thereafter: "Leopold belongs to when I thought of Max going, when I thought I must stay alone."[215]

Leopold, then, is the living monument to his father's life and love, conceived mere days before his father's death. Like the body of the Unknown Soldier made impactful by its indexical claim—"I was there"—Leopold is the index of Karen and Max's meeting. He exists and thrives in spite of the repressive negations of Karen, who has never had him live with her, and in spite of the over-solicitous stiflings of his adopted parents. Like the capacity of any monument to perfectly embody loss for those who remain, though, this metaphor of Leopold as a monument cracks wildly by the conclusion of the novel. In so doing, it offers an alternative to eternal mourning that, if not a palliative, is at least a cauterizing agent. Unlike the fixated eternity of forever and never demanded by slogans like "never again" or "lest we forget," Leopold refuses to inhabit the trapped circuits of predestination and memorialization that the Fishers inhabit. If Karen's manner of breaking out of her staid life was to sleep with Max and agree to marry him, and then to literally bear the consequences of that decision, Leopold's demand is for knowledge and growth, not for the perfect reproduction of former lives. Entering the story as a physical monument to his parents' doomed

[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid, 169.

relationship, Leopold finishes the day—and the narrative—with a resolution to crack the suffocating tomb of preordination imposed on him by the rigidity of this repressed yet predetermining memorialization.

As Leopold's trajectory shows, the non-progressive, eternal temporality of monuments dedicated in perpetual remembrance clashes with the dynamic lives of those trying to move forward in time. Throughout the book, domestic interiors, as in West's *Return of the Soldier*, are held up as determinant actors on human affect; yet in contrast to West, the novel shows them to be insufficient evidence of human relation. Relationships, in the book, occur in movement—in the fleeting encounters of Max and Karen in the hallways of the Fisher house when Karen is a teenager, in their glancing re-meetings as adults, and in Henrietta and Leopold's circumstantial passage through the same house on the same day. Yet the facticity of what has been, what did occur, seeps out from every material surface and substance in "The Present," from the uncanny animations of the house's furniture—severe, rigid, filled with time, but changeless—to the indexical proof in Leopold's very body that his parents lived and loved. Existing between these poles of concrete materiality and traceless immateriality, the novel's metanarrative suturing of memory and imagination enables the positive, non-reiterating remembrance of emotional intensity and unwitnessed connection. Bowen's self-reflexive structure poses literary narrative as a medium whose combination of materiality, memory, and imagination permits remembrance without compulsive reiteration.

The postwar period saw a strange dialectic between the *desired* repetitions of mourning and remembrance, culturally sanctioned in the monument form, and the *compulsive* repetitions of pathological fixation, figured in the preponderance of shell-shocked soldiers suffering from traumatic neurosis. Like the blind denials of repression, the repetitions of remembrance were intended to seal a wound. Yet an overly strict adherence to monumental logic threatened to injure rather than cure, edging the recursive structures of remembrance toward the re-injuring repetitions of compulsion.

Absences resonate with psychic intensity in *The House in Paris* in part because they are imaginatively, and not just factually, constructed. While Karen wonders how a love affair might be remembered when there is no ring and no child, the plot's engagement with the memorial discourses of postwar Britain tempt me to recast her inquiry with a more pressing contemporary content: how is an absence to be mourned if there is no body and no grave? In the narrative of Max and Karen, Bowen forcefully investigates the question that consumed the postwar years—that of how ephemeral human relationships signify in memory when there are no material traces to accompany them. One of the major questions she leaves unanswered—as does Rebecca West—is whether humans are haunted by the material traces of past lives around them, or whether material is itself haunted by the projections of human memory and desire.

In the connections this chapter has made between monuments and repetition compulsion the question of gender has remained in the background. But postwar gender constructions have, in a sense, determined the very terms in which I have outlined my premises. Shell shock's gradual acceptance as a medical condition is a history of differential diagnosis carefully articulated around the "female" disease of hysteria, effortfully distinguishing the traumatic repetitions of shell shock from the hysterical repetitions diagnosed in late nineteenth century women. Postwar monuments like the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier worked to repair the damage to masculine bodies and identities that the war had enacted by promulgating images of sacred rest after heroic sacrifice. And the very distinction between public, imperial monuments and domestic, private memorials is one based on the normative gendering of space, emotion, politics, and historiography. Heroic images in public monuments contradicted—while attempting to mask—the visibility of returning veterans as wounded, unemployed, and traumatized specters of masculinity. The paradigm of this second kind of masculine figure was the shell-shocked soldier, the living monument of the war whose penetrability

and lack of rational control threatened masculine ideals of militarism and portended an involuntary and unending stuckness in time.

Shortly after the war, Paul Valéry personified a shattered Europe in the figure of Hamlet looking out from the battlements over "millions of ghosts," contemplating the wreck of hundreds of years of culture and picking through the skulls of Leonardo, Kant, Hegel, and Marx. "No one can tell what will be dead or alive tomorrow in literature, in philosophy, in aesthetics …. what ideas and what kinds of expressions will be placed on the list of what is lost."[216] From Valéry's point of view, there are certain necessary hauntings that Europe must allow—some *revenants* that must persist—for culture to continue beyond the shocks and breakages of the 1910s. Yet which hauntings are healthy?[217] "What will I, the European intellect, become?" Hamlet asks himself.[218] While injury can happen in an instant, recovery occurs in time, in repetitions both voluntary and involuntary—breathing, sleeping, stretching, talking. But repetition with a difference allows for the gradual mollification of physical or psychic wounds, whereas fixed, exact reiterations admit no possibility of change. One of the questions facing the societies of postwar Europe was how to enable certain forms of tradition, or latent repetition, while averting other repetitions—the repetition, notably, of the recent catastrophe.[219]

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[216] « Personne ne peut dire ce qui demain sera mort ou vivant en littérature, en philosophie, en esthétique. Nul ne sait encore quelles idées et quels modes d'expressions seront inscrits sur la liste des pertes, quelle nouveautés seront proclamées. » Paul Valéry, "La Crise de l'esprit," Œuvres, vol. 1 (Paris : Gallimard 1962), 990. My translation.

[217] Valéry's metaphor is specific to the condition of postwar Europe:

> Now, on an immense terrace of Elsinore stretching from Basel to Cologne, touching the sands of Newport, the swamps of the Somme, the chalk of Champagne, the granite of Alsace—the European Hamlet looks at millions of ghosts.…He totters between two abysses, because two dangers unceasingly threaten the world: order and disorder. (Valéry, *Oeuvres* vol. I, 993)

[218] Ibid, 993-4, my translation.

[219] "After every great war men have looked about to see what can be done to prevent a repetition of all that war involves, and if the demand is more urgent and more effective than it has ever bee beore, that is because of the extent of the catastrophe which we have endured." Lord R. Cecil, quoted in

"The League." *Times* [London, England] 14 June 1919: 16. *The Times Digital Archive*. Accessed 26 Sept. 2015.

CHAPTER 3

T. S. ELIOT'S ETERNITIES

> Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly, every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alternation in this experience. The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to 'change the world', but also—and above all—to 'change time'.
>
> - Giorgio Agamben[1]

> Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
> Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
>
> - T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"[2]

As the Great War entered its second year, Thomas Stearns Eliot's formal education in the deep time of Indo-European cultures was drawing to a close. The St. Louis-born, Boston-raised Eliot had studied ancient and modern philosophy, modern French literature, Sanskrit and Indic literatures, and Latin and Greek, first at Milton Academy and Harvard, then at the Sorbonne, and finally at Oxford, where he was a doctoral student in philosophy until mid-1915. It was a time of beginnings and endings. The war had lived in England only slightly longer than Eliot himself. In the summer of 1914, he had arrived in Marburg, Germany to solidify his German language skills and attend philosophy lectures. "We rejoice that the war danger is over," Eliot wrote to Conrad Aiken on July 25.[3] Days later, declarations of war rebounded like firecrackers between the countries of Europe. Nations whose significance for the young scholar had, just weeks previously, inhered in the artistic treasures of their museums and churches now ramified as geopolitical entities with shuttered borders. After an uncertain circuit across Germany, the Netherlands, and the Channel, Eliot found himself in

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[1] Giorgio Agamben, "Time and History: Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 2007), 99.
[2] T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *Let Us Go Then, You and I: Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 5-6 (3-7), lines 79-80.
[3] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Vol. I: 1898-1922*, edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 49.

London in the war's first weeks. He experienced Bloomsbury as a tumult of headlines shouted by paperboys, and he met Ezra Pound only days after the so-called Miracle of the Marne halted the German advance to Paris.[4]

This planned stint in Europe comprised Eliot's second educational venture on the continent. He had spent a year at the Sorbonne in 1910, studying philosophy, attending Henri Bergson's popular lecture series at the Collège de France, and developing a close friendship with a student named Jean Verdenal, with whom he exchanged letters discussing the function of criticism.[5] (Of his time in Paris, Eliot wrote, "I have gained, I think, a great deal. My opinions on art, as well as other subjects, have modified radically.")[6] By 1916, Eliot was married, Verdenal was dead, and Eliot's first book of poetry was pending publication.[7] The titular poem of *Prufrock and Other Obsevations* (1917)— dedicated "to Jean Verdenal, mort aux Dardanelles"— describes the wasted time of life anxiously observed through a gaze directed at its end.

Eliot's career, marriage, and life in England had hardly begun, but he was already concerned with last things. More properly, he was concerned with lasting things. Pound famously marveled that Eliot "has actually … modernized himself *on his own*."[8] Anyone other than Pound might have been impressed, rather, at the degree to which Eliot had *aged* himself. Engraining himself within an English culture he intended to revitalize from within, Eliot was consolidating a poetic and a professional persona steeped in the deep interior of Europe's long history. Beginning with the essays

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[4] Eliot called Bloomsbury "the noisiest place in the world." Letter to Eleanor Hinkley, *Letters, Vol. I,* 60. He met Ezra Pound on September 22, 1914. James Edwin Miller, *T. S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004), 198.

[5] Frederic Worms has published the lecture notes for Bergson's courses of 1902-03 ("Histoire de l'idée de temps") and 1904-05 ("L'évolution de la problème de la liberté"), based on the stenographer's notes that Charles Péguy commissioned of these courses. See *Écrits philosophiques d'Henri Bergson*, edited by Fréderic Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011). The archive of the Collège de France does not hold documentation on Bergsons's 1910 lectures and I have thus far not tracked down their title or content.

[6] Letter to Edward Forbes, 22 May, 1911, *Letters, Vol. I*, 20.

[7] Eliot married Vivien Haighwood in June, 1915. Miller, *The Making of an American Poet*, 203.

[8] Quoted in Miller, 199.

published in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), Eliot situated his poetry within a corpus of millennia-old cultural expressions ranging from the Upanishads to St. Augustine and Shakespeare, all connected on a plane of ever-present simultaneity that he called "tradition." While Eliot's criticism recognized stylistic distinctions and particular historical contexts, his vision of "the tradition" flattened teleogical notions of history as progression, thereby dispensing with the importance of chronology as a metronome of value. Instead, Eliot set high culture, and specifically, British imperial culture, in a temporality reaching beyond the specificity of human historical language to notions of eternal presences grounded in faith. Taking literature out of the counted time of chronology and into the uncounted time of canonization, the cultural program outlined in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" deliberately separated high modernism from quotidian existence, rejecting the historicity of everyday time to affirm an ahistorical conservatism. The ongoing, unshaped present of contemporary history was a problem that Eliot felt at the psychosomatic level and to which his poetic and critical ideology responds. Ideologically rejecting the tripartite model of past, present, and future intrinsic to notions of historiography and the event, Eliot's notion of tradition forestalls crisis and smoothes over historical rupture by placing past, present, and future on a single, timeless plane. Stuck in time like others of his generation, unable to imagine an ordered future adequate to modernist aspirations, Eliot developed a drama of absenting himself and culture as such *from* time.

Temporal schemas ramify politically. To embrace a particular attitude to time is to take a particular stance toward action and decision, memory and projection, history and narrative. Such culturally and historically specific understandings of temporal existence are called "régimes of historicity" by historian François Hartog; for philosopher Giorgio Agamben, both "[e]very conception of history" and "every culture" presuppose "a particular experience of time, and no new

culture [or historical paradigm] is possible without an alteration in this experience."[9] In Agamen's terms, "The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to 'change the world', but also—and above all—to 'change time'." A poetics, like a politics, is a gesture of temporal imagination; like the making of a world (politics), the making of a poem (*poeisis*) cuts edges in time, scripting beginnings and endings and claiming some durational scope. Notions of temporality can be communicated implicitly, and not only discursively, through form, medium, and implied audience. Such general claims can be made with particular certainty in the case of Eliot, a poet and critic who thought deeply for so many years about the different temporal orders occupied at any one time by works of different disciplines, authors, and periods. Eliot's poetry, from *Inventions of the March Hare* to the late *Four Quartets*, tests the reach of different temporal scales; he can shift in the course of a line-break from the immediacy of individual existence in the contemporary city to the imagined teleologies of social progress or decay, and from the cyclical reassurances of the sun and the seasons to theological, inquiries into timeless existence. Across his career, Eliot's temporal idiolect and ideology is based on a basic bifurcation between the time of particular human lives (history) and the time of myth and immortality (tradition)—a bifurcation Erich Auerbach would explore in his studies of the repeated appearance of structuring tropes in Western Literature. This bifurcation persistently spurs Eliot's thinking and the ethics he developed as a British citizen, Anglican, and critic.[10] Over three decades, Eliot produced an internally consistent body of poetry, poetics, and criticism that eschewed the flux of the momentary for the sanctity of the eternal. The anxious meaninglessness of mortal hours and minutes in *The Waste Land* and the poems of *Prufrock* contrasts sharply with the

[9] Hartog, *Regimes of History: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, translated by Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Agamben, "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 99.
[10] Eliot's temporal structure contrasts with accounts that insist on the historical and cultural specificity of temporal orientations. One well-known such theory is that proposed by Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, published in French in 1975.

eternal now of immediate experience and theological purview glimpsed in *The Waste Land's* hyacinth garden, explored in *Four Quartets*, and theorized by Eliot as "tradition."

Eliot's contemporary, German philologist Erich Auerbach, used Dante and Vico in the interwar decades to develop a theory of narrative interpretation of historical and transhistorical form.[11] His 1938 study *Figura* argues that with the advent of Christianity, the Old Testament, formerly read as "a book of laws and a history of the people of Israel," is transformed into "a series of figures of Christ and the Redemption."[12] Instead of synchronically recounting history, that is, these narratives come to be diachronically interpreted as recounting the prophetic futurity of Christian redemption. They are thus at one and the same time historical and transhistorical. As he puts it:

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only the first but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future.[13]

Auerbach's notion of "figura" offers a useful hermeneutic with which to approach what we might call Eliot's "spiritual act[s]" of historical interpretation, which, like the practice of Christian reading, read historical forms through the lens of their transhistorical reach and with an ideological aspiration

[11] Auerbach's first major work, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, appeared in 1929, the same year as Eliot's essay on Dante; it was based on his 1921 dissertation. Eliot and Auerbach were not alone in deeply pursuing the study of Dante; as Michael Dirda observes, citing works by Osip Mandelstam and others, the interwar period produced an intense revival of interest in Dante as "the central figure of European literature, the linchpin of the great classical and Christian tradition of learning and culture." "Introduction," *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), ix [vii-xvii].
[12] "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: Unviersity of Minnesota Press, 1984), 52.
[13] "Figura," 53.

of eternity.[14] As I will argue in this chapter, Eliot brought the force of Christian and imperial temporal logic to his aesthetic and critical judgments by grounding his cultural argument for the simultaneity and availability of "the tradition" upon preexisting temporal models—namely, Christianity's binary of venial vs. divine time, and, in the 1910s and 1920s, the timeless eternity of memory articulated by World War I monuments, explored in my last chapter. The temporally ideological gambits that Eliot first deploys in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" were corroborated in the course of Eliot's conversion to Anglicanism and his adoption of British citizenship in 1927, reaching their apogee in his affirmation of his adopted homeland in the *Four Quartets* written during the crisis time of World War II.[15]

Before Eliot was Anglican and even before he was English, though, the intersection of time and the timeless was a hieroglyph without a code. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" articulates this discomfort by posing the open question of what kind of counted time *counts*, and by what means we measure it.

Prufrock's Question

Eliot's earliest literary success, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), describes the cognitive dissonance of living with the irreversibility of mortal time within a public temporal order not suited to the questioning of final things.[16] This psychic discomfort manifests itself as the condition of having, on the one hand, too much empty time to fill and, on the other, not enough time to learn how to live—a conundrum that places existential pressure on each hour to adequately signify by holding some action within it. Modulated by allusions, tenses, tone, and image, several

[14] Auerbach provided a full exposition of "figura" and its consequences for narrative interpretation in his 1946 magnum opus *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).
[15] Jewel Spears Brooker, *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 123.
[16] *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 6.3 (1915): 130-135. *JSTOR.* 28 February 2016.

different temporal scales and discourses intersect and fold into one another, from the quotidian to the metaphysical and from the societal to the individual. The question of how death can be known from within the midst of life will literally haunt the poem, as the voices of those rare figures who returned from the underworld—Lazarus and Dante—interrupt the murmur of contemporary drawing-room conversation.[17] Such voices remind us that different temporal schemas hold different ethical and political acoustics. Prufrock's question, "Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?" marks the collision between two scales for measuring the time of life—the linear, endless continuum of public, standardized time and the teleological temporality of an individual's "being unto death." This collision also appears in the contrast between quantitative representations of time and their qualitative description, articulated by Henri Bergson as the incommensurability between spatialized schemas of time and the indivisible flux of *durée*, or lived time.[18] As Agamben puts this conundrum, "Since the human mind has the experience of time but not its representation, it necessarily pictures time by means of spatial images."[19] "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" dramatizes the clash of these modes of encountering and accounting for time. Measurement meets metaphysics as the poem's obsession with counting and temporal repetition runs up against the constitutive unrepeatability of a human life—the finite zone in which questions of morality and ethics find their force. Given the ephemerality of mortal passage—the fact that "the moment of my greatness" is but a "flicker" (84)—what is the unit of significance for a given life? An hour? An evening? A peach? A spoon? A song?

[17] On historical and transhistorical narration in the *Divine Comedy*, see Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: Unviersity of Minnesota Press, 1984), 62-76.
[18] *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated by F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950).
[19] "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 100.

We enter the intensity of this question immediately in the poem's epigraph from the *Inferno*, with its testimonial claim that the amplitude of speech resonates differently in the mortal world than it does in the afterlife:

> *S'io credessi che mia risposta fosse*
> *a persona che mai tornasse al mondo*
> *questa fiamme staria senza più scosse.*
> *Ma per ciò che giammai di questo fondo*
> *non tornò vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,*
> *senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*[20]

From the confines of hell, the speaker begins an honest tale to his auditor; assured that his words will not reach the light of mortal day, he fears no infamy. The words of the sinner Guido da Montefeltro are predicated on a bifurcation between the uncountable duration of eternity in hell and the countable hours of the mortal sphere.[21] For the dead, everything has already happened, forever. In this ever-limbo of hell that abandons hope but also forecloses further consequences, the eternal—the time of forever—breaks the scale of counting. Eternity connotes endless repetition without hope of further change; one might also say it is a state in which repetition does not count as such, because in the absence of linear time, nothing can be said to accumulate. It thus refuses the necessities of event and order that structure chronological narrative. The soul in hell, therefore, experiences the perpetuation of his death in the strange privacy of the ahistorical, in a non-time that resists historical inscription. Yet though the poem begins under the apprehension of a declamation too terrible to be heard by the living, we hear it. "Do you know the cry common to those in purgatory?" Samuel

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[20] "If I believed that my reply were to a person who would ever return to the world, this flame would remain without further shaking; / but since never from this depth has any one returned alive, if I hear the truth, without fear of infamy I answer you."
Dante Alighieri, "Canto XXVII," *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Vol. I, Inferno*, edited and translated by Robert M. Durling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 419.

[21] See Erich Auerbach's chapter, "Farinata and Cavalcante," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

Beckett writes in 1946, recollecting his discussions of Dante with James Joyce. "Io fui [I was]."[22] Immortality and history are mutually exclusive, yet mutually constituting; it is only through the spread of Montefeltro's infamy among the living that his immortality can be publically known. "*Hístor* [the root of the English word "history"] is in origin the eyewitness, the one who has seen," Agamben reminds us.[23] The mortal plane is the historiographical tablet of the immortal.

The poem's first stanza begins under the umbrella of a frozen twilight, the time of day that looks forward into the dark: "Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table" (lines 1-3). Evening is a centuries old poetic figure that tropes the waning of the light as the end of a life; Shakespeare opens Sonnet 73, "In me thou seeest the twilight of such day / As after sunset fadeth in the West").[24] In this figurative understanding, the evening of death can happen only once, as a human life encounters death only once. But evening is also a repeating event that can be empirically observed on a quotidian basis. Toying with this duality, Eliot's simile flirts with the figural end of life without confirming it; evening performs an imitation of night just as the anaesthetized patient's body mimics the deep rigidity of death. By thus allowing the uneasy question of whether an event is exceptional or routine, this first line erects a tension between the habitual and the singular that electrifies the poem's subsequent articulations of events and temporal indicators, placing into question the stakes of each temporal measure or action. Is the speaker's invitation to "go," for example, a singular occasion or one that repeats every day at dusk? Though evening is the time of visible transition between day and night, in Eliot's simile the drugged evening connotes an unchanging stasis, the perpetual limbo of Montefeltro's hell.

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[22] Letter of 2 August 1948 to Georges Duthuit, in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume II: 1941-1956*, edited and translated by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn, and Lois More Overbeck (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92.
[23] "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 102.
[24] William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 73," *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 527.

These tensions between the exceptional event and the repeating cycle, between the action of transition and the immobility of stasis, become structuring leitmotifs in the poem both formally and thematically. In a quick succession of spatial figures that describe the iterative, indistinct city streets, Eliot consolidates a number of singular experiences into bland, homologous typologies through the use of plural nouns. Gesturing to specificity while abiding in vagueness, these nouns suggest the wearing down of singularity over time through habit. The "muttering retreats / … one-night cheap hotels … / And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells" are categories that open up a temporal expanse within them, implying an unspoken narrative of historical repetition (6-7). Boredom connotes a structure of reenactment without substantive change, a state in which the singular and the exceptional are absent and yearned for; boredom saturates the poem's opening.[25] Even the peripatetic colloquy of the speaker and the undefined, silent "you" holds a sense of practiced formality, an intimacy born of routine and lived as detachment—there is no need to stipulate where or to whom "[we] go and make our visit."

From the restless repetitions of these anonymous streets, the poem moves to a more respectable bourgeois narcotic—the drugging comfort of habit. Habit steals into the ear in micro-similitudes of assonance and alliteration; the poem takes sonic delight in repetitions and resonances, in the close alignments of homophones and the pleasurable circuits of reiteration. Rubbing familiarly around the house, the catlike fog keeps its sounds familiar, from the strict repetitions of "yellow," "rubs," and "window-panes" to the alliterative enjoyment of "[l]icked," "[l]ingered," and "[l]et fall." The figurative cat closes its eyes in comfortable repose, just as a resolving CDCD rhyme sonically closes the octave. In a beautiful, internal repetition structurally mimicking the figurative cat's action

[25] Calling boredom "a problem for and of women," Allison Pease contrasts the femininized, corporealized attribution of boredom in the period of literary modernism with the masculine, philosophical attributions of nihilism and ennui. *Modernism, Feminism, and the Culture of Boredom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), xiii. Pease's account is apt to the feminine attributes given to Prufrock that I discuss later in this chapter.

of curling around the house, the rhyme scheme of the octave's second quatrain formally reiterates the ground it has just covered; CCDC echoes AABA. By soliciting the reader's conceptual and sensory delight in these banal reiterations of familiar forms, the poem encourages a similar pleasure in the repetitions that follow.

Yet in the following stanzas, Eliot's excessive alliterations, rhymes, and repetitions increasingly connote imprisonment, as this bourgeois life with its refrains of teatime, grooming, and sociability shifts from comforting to confining.[26] Boredom, habit, and routine, by presupposing elapsed duration, are backstopped by time; yet their structure of reiterating similitude simultaneously forecloses the future to come. The density of repetition in these opening stanzas anticipates the poem's realization—or revelation—that the patterned repetition of many small acts in the rocking cradle of habit can take up the time of life, counting a life's time away—especially in the absence of major action.

Yet as if responding to this still unvoiced anxiety, the next stanza inaugurates a repeating platitude whose refrain simultaneously calms and paralyzes Prufrock: "And indeed there will be time…" (26). This airy aphorism hovers in the poem's consciousness like a blank check, guaranteeing a seemingly unlimited future in which human action can fulfill any potential, however radical: "There will be time to murder and create, / And time for all the works and days of hands" (28-29). The extremity of these actions, epitomized by the violence of unmaking and of making, blasts open the existential possibilities of Prufrock's life. Yet the poem's syntax tethers these lofty, generalized actions to the domestic furniture of bourgeois existence: in this world of "novels … teacups … [and] skirts," the aforementioned "hands" ultimately "lift and drop a question on your plate" (102, 29-30).

[26] "Time" is repeated eight times in this twelve-line stanza; the phrase "there will be time" repeats four times; "face" and "faces" sit side by side; and the rustling repetitions of "a hundred indecisions, / And … a hundred visions and revisions" reduce everyday life to an undifferentiated hum.

Prufrock's "hundred visions and revisions" are followed not by the execution of these visions but by "the taking of a toast and tea" (32-34).

This feminized repetition without effectiveness—a circular or wavering path like the "hundred indecisions… [and] a hundred visions and revisions"— is implicitly contrasted with the straight line of direct (masculine) action, that needs to occur only once to be effective.[27] Relentlessly unmanned, unable to hold this "straight" line as "perfume from a dress" causes him to "digress"; Prufrock is penetrated, "pinned and wriggling on the wall" (65-66, 58). The only evidence of Prufrock's virility is found in the collar "mounting firmly to the chin"; he is incapable of "swell[ing] a progress" except on an imagined stage, and even his fantasy self is bald (42, 113, 82). Another refrain confirms this association of Prufrock's unproductive, issueless repetitions with domesticity and feminization: "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (13-14). Restricted to a single room and to a single subject, the women constitute a perpetuum mobile of deferral and unimportance, "com[ing] and go[ing]" without advance or arrival. Their ideas, like their trajectories, do not advance. Countering the couplet's resolving rhyme, Eliot's progressive present tense suggests an action never finished, a state endlessly incomplete and endlessly ongoing, like the hell of Montefeltro.

Abandoning the confidence that "there will be time," the poem forecloses the future in its third refrain through the weary refusal of novelty of either occasion or object: "For I have known them all already … known the evenings, mornings, afternoons … And I have known the arms already, known them all" (49-50, 62). Prufrock's search for singularity within the drama of repetition has evolved into a condition of emasculated anxiety, heightened by the awareness of aging and the realization that there may not, after all, "be time." Indeed, a brittle fragility has haunted the lulling forms of the poem's repetitions from the beginning. At crucial moments, for example, the insistent

[27] See Allison Pease, *Modernism, Feminism, and the Culture of Boredom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

rhyming couplets of the opening stanzas break from their expected phonemic schemes, as the expectations constructed by Eliot's patterned repetitions are suddenly shocked or disappointed. The first stanza gives us the following structure: AABCCDDEEFGG—essentially, five rhymed couplets in a row, interrupted only twice by unrhymed words. The effect of these precisely located, unconsummated rhymes is important. The single "B" line prosodically isolates Eliot's famously startling simile, "Like a patient etherized upon a table," while later in the stanza, the trailing ellipses of the phrase, "an overwhelming question …" remain symptomatically unconsummated—the "F" rhyme unmet and the question unasked. Moments of singularity in this poem is not given the exemplarity of eventfulness but the inadequacy of incompletion and non-achievement.

At other points, the temporal dynamics of reiterative prosody contradict the temporality of a given image, such that, though the prosody sooths the ear with a hum of expected sounds, the semantic import of the image hints at harm. The echoing effects of end-rhymes and assonance ("sky" and "night," "cheap " and street", for example) aurally enforce the images' emphasis on habitual repetition—of the indistinct plurality of "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells" (6-7). But by comparing the spatial line of a street to the logical progress of an argument in the next two lines ("Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent"), Eliot implies a semantic isomorphism and not just a slant rhyme within the proximate adjectives "tedious" and "insidious" (8-9). Boredom (the "tedious") suddenly resonates sonically and semantically with danger (the "insidious"), such that both speech and street are prosodically locked into the unwilling but obligatory rehearsal of a predetermined path. Twinned through the apposite mixing of assonance and sense, boredom and threat are paradoxically coupled, injecting the low hum of habit with the menace of the fatal. This meeting of apathy and danger in the management of ongoing time constitutes the tense heart of the poem.

These moments of shiver within an otherwise stable, repeating structure implant emotional fissures within the safe rhymes, alliterations, and repetitions of the subsequent stanzas, thereby locating Prufrock's ontological uncertainty in the very body of the poem.[28] This clash between the comfort of repetition and the banal fatality it engenders illuminates a disjunction between two broadly-construed scales of time: the infinite, "homogenous, empty time" of scientistic modernity that Bergson regarded as a fiction, and the heterogenous and incontrovertibly finite time of human mortality.[29] Standardized at the end of the nineteenth century, linear, public time divides temporal experience into regular, equivalent units, theoretically enabling the simultaneous marking of a single instant from two locations.[30] Bergson opposes this regularization of the flow of temporality with the notion of *durée*. For Bergson, private time is an immeasurable flux intrinsically tied to organic life, such that time is process, not substance. "The fundamental illusion consists in transferring to duration itself, in its continuous flow, the form of the instantaneous sections which we make in it,"

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[28] Ian Patterson makes a similar argument regarding the uses of poetic structure to suggesting crisis in "Time, Free Verse, and the Gods of Modernism," *in Tradition, Translation, Trauma: The Classic and the Modern*, ed. Timothy Mathews and Jan Parker. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 175-89.

[29] The phrase "homogenous, empty time" is Walter Benjamin's famous description of the temporal presumption of capitalism, with its units of labor time. "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 261. Agamben echoes Benjamin with the observation that, "Th[e] representation of time as homogenous, rectilinear, and empty derives from the experience of manufacturing work and is sanctioned by modern mechanics, which establishes the primacy of uniform rectilinear motion over circular motion." "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 105.

[30] International standard time was first adopted in 1884 at the prompting of railway companies, with the Greenwich meridian serving as point zero in the measurement of geographical time zones. Its full adoption, however, did not occur until around 1913, when the establishment of a global telegraph system allowed time signals to be transmitted instantly around the world. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 11-13. The introduction of global standard time was directly connected to the ambitions of empire and capital; it sought to both quantify time and render its use more efficient in the service of business, transportation, and military operations. Its consequences were still being felt in 1916, when perfectly synchronized wrist watches became a required part of military equipment for soldiers in the trenches—an ironic and unforeseen fulfillment of the efforts in 1890 of the German commander von Moltke, who led troops in 1914, to have Germany adopt the standardized system (Kern, 288). See Adam Barrow's *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) for an analysis of the relationships of colonial imagination and literary aesthetics to the global standardization of time.

Bergson states in *Matter and Memory*.[31] Since *durée* is inextricable from life force, time as Bergson conceives it is constitutively private and subjective, and its qualitative nature escapes positivist or scientific efforts at quantitative measurement. Both of these schemas, qualitative and quantitative, contribute to the poem's dynamics of repetition without accumulation, assuring Prufrock that only the present counts. Yet the time of being-toward-death applies a different economics to hours, days, and years, adding some necessity to count *for something*, and not just to count numerically. While at one level the question is epistemological, at another, this inquiry is existential: to what does a life add up? In what ways can the living of a life differ from the passage of hours? How does one make the counting of a life's time *count*?

Embodying this quandary of counting, the famous question at the heart of the poem—perhaps its "overwhelming question"— disrupts the decorum of patterned repetition by disrupting line length:[32]

> Do I dare
> Disturb the universe?
> In a minute there is time
> For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse. (45-49)

The magnitude of the first line's question—"Do I dare"—resonates in inverse proportion to its meager three syllables, an effect heightened by the almost parodic busyness of the over-long concluding line, "For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." The moment of decision of a life can only be counted once, and only flows in one direction. To dare is to count in this register of time and action, at the level of mortality and eternity. The potential to dare and to disturb, Eliot implies, is a chiasm in a life, a singularity. To "force the moment to its crisis" is to become an

[31] *Matter and Memory*, translated by N.M. Paul & W.S. Palmer. (Cambridge: Zone Press, 2004), 193.
[32] In his study of literary modernism's responsiveness to the wartime crisis of British Liberalism—a crisis notably manifested in the twisting of language to approximate reason—Vincent Sherry emphasizes the formal and rhetorical bases of "reason" in its original Latin root "*ratio*, meaning 'measure' (to *ration* means, if obsolutely, to 'reason')" (*The Great War and the Language of Modernism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 24.)

historical subject; it is to *make happening occur in time* instead of letting time happen. A crisis is a break in an existing order. It is an opportunity for rupture in the narrative of time, an occasion for the potential intervention in plot. Eliot situates the crisis moment of awareness that is *kairos*—the flashing up of the existential question of what counts, and how one should use one's time—within the single consciousness of his character in this modern dramatic monologue.

The notion that there is a specific time, a ripe moment, in which to carry out an action derives from the classical notion of *kairos*, the time of crisis and opportunity, the moment that ruptures the thread of the chronological skein of linear time stretching from past to future.[33] The word is believed to have found its first use in *The Iliad*, referring to "a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury and therefore necessitates special protection."[34] In complement and contradiction to *kairos*, *chronos* is the bountiful accumulation of hours within which one can dip at will; chronos makes possible the notion that "there will be time." Chronos is also the god that eats his children, as the appetitive mastications of chronos devour the finite body of a life. Chronos does not take account of this finitude, whereas "*kairos* is that point of time between a fictional beginning and an end, 'a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end'."[35] For Rilke, *kairos* is the moment at which one realizes: "You must change your life"; for Benjamin, it is "the moment of danger" at which the image of the past flashes up in a manner that demands present action.[36] *Kairos* is "time filled by the presence of the now *[Jetztzeit*]"—the epiphanic awareness of the plasticity of historical processes and one's potential

[33] Philip Sipiora, "The Concept of Kairos," in *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis* (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 2002), 1-2 (1-22).
[34] Ibid., 2.
[35] Ibid., 2. Sipiora quotes Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Knopf, 2011).
[36] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo" (1908), *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 68. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 255.

to intervene within them.[37] The vertiginous terror of not knowing what to do with time flashes up in a moment of danger that momentarily breaks the pattern, isolating the rhyme, or cutting the line. Confronted with the kairotic opportunity, though, Prufrock blinks. "And in short, I was afraid" (6).

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" presents ongoing time as a problem.[38] The poem contemplates the empty hours of an individual detached from myth, history, or other forms of temporal community, in which existence does not last beyond the events or actions through which it moves. Though he seeks a temporal belonging beyond the ephemeral, Prufrock cannot write history into his life or his life into history; the mellifluous repetitions of his inoffensive life are self-devouring and traceless, like modernity's instants.[39] His anxieties arise at the very thought of intervening in the instants that constitute his life, of effecting an action or event by breaking from the repetitions of what has come before: "And how should I begin?" The personage Prufrock imagines himself inhabiting were he to "squeeze[] the universe into a ball / To roll it toward some overwhelming question" is Lazarus, an ordinary man given knowledge of death. Importantly, in contrast to Montefeltro, Lazarus is given the power to speak of death by having been ushered back into the sphere of the living—the sphere of history. Yet Prufrock's imagined action—a literal molding of the world to the necessities of personal action ("To have squeezed the universe into a ball / To roll it toward some overwhelming question")—is supplanted by the gesture of a cold shoulder—a visual

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[37] Ibid., 261.

[38] Nancy Gish writes, "Prufrock, like other characters in the 1917 poems, is confined and isolated by time … he obsessively talks of it … yet he never actually defines his problem as Gerontion or the speaker of *Ash-Wednesday* do. Rather, he reiterates his unease and anguished sense that a problem is there, somehow inseparable from time." *Time in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot: A Study in Structure and Theme* (New York: Palgrave, 1981), 10.

[39] Antoine Compagnon distinguishes the "passion for the present" of the 19th century modern from the "desire to be ahead of one's time" of the 20th century avant-garde. The first moderns," Compagnon writes, "were not seeking the new in a present that pointed toward the future and carried within itself the law of its own disappearance, but the present with its quality of being the present. This distinction is crucial." Within the mode of this latter "avant-garde" or teleological temporality, the appearance of novelty demands the erasure of what came before. Modernity's futural drive is thereby bound to a self-negating rule of obsolescence. *The Five Paradoxes of Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 31.

replication of his own evasion— ("If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl, / And turning toward the window")—and the inconclusive ellipses of a life that continues without finding definitive articulation ("I grow old … I grow old …).[40]

Flirting with a tautology, we might say that Prufrock leaves no history because he shies away from the historical—from the moment of historical consciousness in which one becomes an actor of history. He avoids this *kairotic* moment of historicity by placing his life in the conditional past tense, thereby framing the still-ongoing present as an already foreclosed past: "Would it have been worth while …?" the poem asks three times. Instead of contemplating what "might be" in the present, Prufrock relegates the present to the imagined, future nostalgia of "what might have been." Using tense—the linguistic structuration of time—to avoid structuring time by his actions, Prufrock whiles away hours without worth, wondering all the while whether that whiling is worthwhile. The threat of eternal hell that sounded in the epigraph is transmuted into a belated realization of deadness within life in the poem's last lines. Prufrock hears the song of the sirens but only briefly, "Till human voices wake us, and we drown" (131). The tipping over of the line from the cliff-edge of this "Till" snatches Prufrock from the unrealized dream of an existence beyond the merely mortal—an existence as seductive as a siren song—to bourgeois airlessness that suffocates him. The repetitions of this meaningless present metaphorically drown Prufrock, invading the space of breath and stripping away any capacity for voice or amplification. From the voice of the infernally trapped Montefeltro with which the poem began, transmuting words not meant for human ears, having contemplated the imagined but unvoiced testimony of a Lazarus that has faced death, the poem leaves Prufrock with the tumult of merely human voices whose sound exists only in the present. The terror of a meaningless, traceless existence that has haunted the entire poem comes to rest; the difference of a pulse from a pendulum is in its end.

[40] Lines 92-93, 107-8, 120.

Prufrock's life runs out of time without having connected with history, myth, and collective memory—narratives that measure time by human action rather than measuring human action by temporal structures. In the years following this first major poem, Eliot grapples more deeply with the questions of myth and history in respect to his personal life and the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[41] Eliot's solution to the chaos of this present is to reframe the present as flat structure filled with pastness, a temporal vision that allows him to manage the double threats of meaninglessness and terror latent in the moments through which he, like Prufrock, must pass. Turning to the deep time of European literary tradition, a British national identity, and religious belief, Eliot constructs his own panorama of history, calling it "tradition"—an historical act that writes poet, critic, and culture out of contemporary history altogether.

II. Taking Tradition out of Time

Years before the drafts of the *Sacred Wood* essays were written, Eliot wrote to Conrad Aiken, "Does anything kill as petty worries do? And in America we worry all the time. That, in fact, is I think the great use of suffering, if it's *tragic* suffering—it takes you away from yourself—and petty suffering does exactly the reverse, and kills your inspiration. … The thing is to be able to look at one's life as if it were somebody's else … That is difficult in England, almost impossible in America."[42] The clarifying gift of an escape from self and the obscuring dangers of personal emotion were on Eliot's mind throughout his twenties, the years in which he solidified the opinions that would solidify his critical and poetic persona. In the later years of the First World War, while he was working at Lloyd's and learning the role of the married man with an English life, Eliot made himself crucial to the debates and publications of mid-1910s literary London, a city in which he had only lived a few years, while pragmatically and ideologically theorizing the role he would fulfill as a poet

[41] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 177 (175-178).
[42] Letter to Conrad Aiken, 30 September, 1914, *Letters, Vol. I*, 63.

and cultural arbiter. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), he provided a map for how poetry and criticism should function within a British culture still committed to a notion of imperial superiority at a time of immense national loss.[43] More pertinently for Eliot's later career, this essay and others in *The Sacred Wood* married the vocabulary and rigor of aesthetic criticism with the devotional imagination and structural expansiveness of religion and metaphysics. Separating poetry and criticism from the scrum of the social and the political, Eliot places European "history" on a different plane from that of the continuing histories of everyday life.

Published on the upward slope of a steeply climbing literary career, Eliot's most enduring and programmatic statement on the relationships of literature and the poet to time and history was written in 1919, an historically specific moment of the immediate post-war. Yet Eliot's notion of tradition, and specifically, of poetic tradition, takes European cultural history out of history as such. What he calls the "[i]mpersonal theory of poetry" is "the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written."[44] Locating the great works of previous centuries and the continuous additions of the contemporary moment within a simultaneous, eternal, and always available present, Eliot assigns supra-mortal duration to art and literature and excises the sphere of politics from its concerns. In so doing, Eliot's rubric for high culture across the ages smoothes any local folds of historical context into a seamless plane of eternal coexistence:

> … the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

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[43] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 47. Hathi Trust. 24 February 2016. In a strange premonition of his later poetry, Eliot concluded the September, 1914 letter to Aiken: "Anyway it's interesting to cut yourself to pieces once in a while, and wait to see if the fragments will sprout" (*Letters*, *Vol. I,* 64). The action of disinvesting himself of immediate concerns is masochistically imaged as "cut[ting] [him]self to pieces"—an action perhaps the fore-runner of his "continual extinction of personality." "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 47.

[44] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 48.

> And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.[45]

By using the terms of history to delimit a non-materialist, quasi-mythical sense of the historical, Eliot sidesteps the threat of incursion by contemporary social or political materialism. The notion of tradition swallows any individual work's immediate temporal horizon—its attachments to contemporary history—into a meta-mortal ontology. This allows Eliot to foreclose any threat to the tradition's continuation, either by excluding undesirable work *tout court* from the "existing order" of European culture (exclusions that can always be made on the grounds of taste or execution), or by conscripting works to its own ahistorical logic, situating them within a long temporal gaze that stretches beyond the mortal. As he puts it later in the essay, "the difference between art and the event is always absolute."[46]

Constructing a historical sense that disavows the history of the present, Eliot also constructs a persona that disavows personality. What Eliot critiques in his forerunners, both poetic and critical, is a tendency toward feeling at the expensive of thought. Calling for "expression of *significant* emotion … which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet," Eliot dismisses the affect of the present as an irrelevancy that blocks the poet's key capacity to internalize and synthesize the past:

> The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. … Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.[47]

We see here a rhetorical move that Eliot repeats elsewhere—he sets himself apart from the everyday individual by claiming to "have personality and emotions," then sets himself apart from this set of individuals by claiming a disciplined retreat from personality and emotion. This distrust of the

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[45] Ibid, 44.
[46] Ibid, 50.
[47] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 52-53. See Sharon Cameron, *Impersonality: Seven Essays* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007) and Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* ().

psychological content of individual experience follows a modernist trend toward impersonality that Michael Levenson has described as a turn toward objective formalism and "hard" modernism.[48] Far from being a purely literary phenomenon, "anti-psychologism" comprised a broader intellectual impulse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, visible, for example, in the embrace of logic over empirical philosophy by Frege, Russell, and others.[49] Within this broader history, however, British modernism around the First World War has been called "the most explicit manifestation of the struggle against psychologism"—with Eliot as a pivotal proponent of anti-psychologist sentiment.[50]

The reasons for Eliot's rejection of emotion reach far beyond psychoanalytic motivations or intellectual currents, however. Personal emotion is not only a distracting substitute for truth; it actually inhibits potential access to that truth, by orienting the poet incorrectly toward time. Emotion is immediate and fugitive, all-consuming and unreliable; it comes and goes, like the women in Prufrock's drawing rooms. Eliot's descriptions of "emotional people—such as stockbrokers, politicians, men of science—and a few people who pride themselves on being unemotional—" connect the bearers of emotion with a myopic focus on the brief and the ephemeral.[51] For Eliot, emotion is a negative influence on both poetry and criticism ("bad criticism … is that which is nothing but an expression of emotion"); and this in part, Martin Jay argues, because the psychic particularity of individual emotion threatens "the integrity of the work of art and its *timeless* truth

[48] *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Levenson sees in the anti-psychologism of non-combatant modernists a defensive reaction to the popularity of war literatures grounded in realist modes of psychological and emotional description.
[49] Martin Jay, "Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism," *Modernism/Modernity* 3.2 (1996): 93-111.
[50] Jay calls Eliot "a figure of inestimable importance who acknowledged an explicit debt to Hulme and through him to Frege and Husserl." (97)
[51] We can also hear in this unflattering description the kind of modernist rejection of the mass culture and its audience theorized by Andreas Huyssen. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1992).

value."[52] Eliot's strategy for achieving permanence is to take the work of the poet—and the poet—out of the phenomenological present of emotion, psychology, and ongoing history.[53]

Dissolving notions of historical sequence that would place Homer and Dante at a distant remove, Eliot imagines a space of impossible simultaneity called tradition that is accessed through the historical sense. It is a presence to self of the past that is also an absence of self from the present.[54] The "historical sense" he prescribes for the poet "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."[55] "[T]he poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done," Eliot opines. "And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living."[56] The detachment Eliot prescribes from the empirical reality of the here and now, the "I" of the personality and its feelings, enters the domain of "metaphysic or mysticism" at whose "frontier" he purports to "halt."[57] Indeed, it is difficult not to hear the pilgrim's step in the "progress" Eliot describes toward "something which is more valuable": "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."[58] The Christian logic and vocabulary of penitential striving in the service of an eternal reward is replicated perfectly in Eliot's formulae, not only in the temporality of slow, continuous self-abnegation to which the poet must "sacrifice" himself, but also in the

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[52] Ibid, 14. Eliot repeats this injunction almost word for word in "The Perfect Critic." Jay, 96, emphasis mine.
[53] Suggesting that Eliot was not as successful as he might have wished in scrubbing personal emotion from his poetic production, Lyndall Gorden argues, "As more is known of Eliot's life, the clearer it becomes that the 'impersonal' façade of his poetry—the multiple faces and voices—masks an often quite literal reworking of personal experience." *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 4.
[54] John Zicolsky observes that "Eliot blurs the past and present at least five times in this essay, each time positing the apparent paradox as perplexing yet matter-of-fact." "Modern Monuments: T.S. Eliot, Nietzsche, and the Problem of History," *Journal of Modern Literature* 29.1 (Fall 2005): 25 (21-33).
[55] Ibid, 44.
[56] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 53.
[57] Ibid, 53.
[58] Ibid, 47.

injunction to strive. Tradition "cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor," Eliot writes.[59] This labor is intended to take the poet beyond personal feeling, as the corporeal sufferings of the medieval saints that fascinated Eliot in his early poetic works were intended to take them out of the body and place them in sacred presence.

In 1923, Eliot imagines the historical present as a static, disorganized landscape that stretches as far as the eye can see, calling it "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[60] The antidote to the two sins of the historical present—futility (useless action) and anarchy (disorganized action)—is "order," a word that brings together multiple meanings of command and organization, action and internal coherence. The "mythic method" deployed by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, Eliot states, offers a way of "controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to" this "immense panorama of futility and anarchy."[61] In this same year, Eliot begins "The Function of Criticism" by quoting a long passage about the "ideal order" verbatim from "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "I was dealing then with the artist, and the sense of tradition which, it seemed to me, the artist should have; but it was generally a problem of order; and the function of criticism seems to be essentially a problem of order too."[62] Situating himself in the lineage of Matthew Arnold even as he hopes to supersede him, Eliot counters *Culture and Anarchy* with culture and order.[63]

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[59] Ibid, 47, 43.
[60] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 177 (175-178).
[61] Ibid.
[62] "The Function of Criticism," in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 68.
[63] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Eliot's essay "The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism" gives sustained consideration to Arnold as cultural arbiter and literary critic. See Adam Kirsch, "Mathew Arnold and T. S. Eliot," *The American Scholar* 67.3 (1998): 65-73.

Etymologically, "order" sits at the crossroads of verb and noun, time and space, event and object.[64] The earliest uses of "order" as a noun were exclusively religious, referring to the Holy Orders of the sacraments (practices of transformation from a state of separateness to communion with God) and to the hierarchical organization of the angels (the spatial arrangement of beings in this communion). Order denotes the formal structure of tradition. As Eliot puts it, "[T]he whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."[65] An order places the stilled moments of a chronologically avaricious history into a relation of timelessness, uniting non-mortal beings—angels or, say, texts—into the shared now of a spatial arrangement. One enters by order *into* an order. As the sacramental orders of the church take the individual from venial isolation into coexistence with the divine, the ideal order of tradition lifts the work of art out of the muck of history into the permanent presence of the timeless. The theological overtones are apparent, years before his conversion to Anglicanism; Eliot's principle concern in the postwar period is "the polity of literature and of criticism," but the polity he imagines forgoes the political present for theological presence.[66]

Even as Eliot sought to take himself and the discipline of poetry out of the anarchic discomfort of the ongoing, historical present, however, the language in which he did so reeks of his own contemporary moment. Eliot's formulation of a principle of poetic order absorbed and reconfigured the patterns of national memory by which the war dead were consigned in 1919 and 1920 to an eternal life of continuous reaffirmation.[67] At the moment of the writing of "Tradition and

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[64] In quotidian use, "order" describes the sequencing of objects or processes along axes of time or space, enabling the perception of depth of time (chronology) and depth of field (perspective). This formal systematization is apparent in the word's application to architectural history, namely the Doric, Ionian, and Corinthian orders of the classical period. "order, n." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, Oxford Online, accessed 21 January 2017.
[65] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 38.
[66] "The Function of Criticism," 76.
[67] I particularly single out 1919 and 1920 because the first Victory parade in London and the erection of a temporary Cenotaph for the remembrance of the dead took place in July 1919, following the

the Individual Talent," hundreds of thousands of British dead had been canonized under the rubrics of sacrifice, glory, and eternal rest, not only in public expressions of sentiment but also in the profusion of war poetry that had been appearing over the past half-decade. Laurence Binyon set the tone for a widely adopted *atemporal* attitude toward the war dead in a wildly popular poem published in September, 1914. "For the Fallen" sets the dead of the war on a temporal plane out of mortal flux and change, but within a context of eternal rest: "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old. / Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn," he writes in a poem that became wildly popular—a poem printed in *The Times* the day before Eliot met Pound for the first time in London.[68] This entombing of the dead in an eternity that is constitutively *im*mortal yet ever-to-hand through the rituals of remembrance inherits its temporal logic from the structures of Christian religious belief. Against this heroic existence out of time, within which narrative beginnings and endings do not matter, the historicity of Prufrock's fear is striking: "I grow old, I grow old / I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled."[69]

The vocabulary of the living and the dead and of monuments and mortals that Eliot adopts in "Tradition" is particularly loaded in the year of this essay's writing. Death and life are omnipresent human concerns, but in 1919, the politics of remembrance and renewal, pastness and futurity, were matters of considerable turmoil. Public discourse in Britain was so saturated with debate over how to remember the almost one million dead whose bodies had not been repatriated for burial at home

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signing of the Versailles Treaty in late June. As I detail in my second chapter, the Cenotaph proved so popular that a permanent version was installed on November 11, 1920, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Armistice—the same day that a representative unknown soldier was buried in Westminster Abbey.

[68] "For the Fallen." *The Times* (London), Monday, 21 September, 1914, page 9, issue 40642.

[69] "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," lines 120-21.Lukács writes, "The way Homer's epics begin in the middle and do not finish at the end is a reflexion of the truly epic mentality's total indifference to any form of architectural construction"—a claim about epic temporality that reflects Eliot's notion of the constitutively complete tradition that nonetheless always welcomes new additions, in the manner of Derrida's parergon. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 67.

that it is hardly surprising to find a lexicon of monuments, extinction, sacrifice, and death deployed in Eliot's discussion of cultural tradition in the contemporary moment. The metaphor of the "ideal order" that constitutes the tradition for Eliot is strikingly akin to the centuries-old metaphor of the body politic of which every individual is a member. But the spatial imagination of this ideal order, which is always in itself complete but which self-adjusts to the addition of new members to its corps, evokes a morbid contemporary comparison. Eliot's diction recalls the "ideal order" of the imperial graveyards comprised of individual "monuments" that are, at this moment, under construction along the Western Front. The nominal completeness of these burial grounds as assemblages of eternal remembrance ramifies against the concurrent efforts to identify and bury the remains of still-missing Commonwealth soldiers on the part of the Imperial War Graves Commission. To the constitutive completeness of "the dead," then, every new discovery of corpse or identity can be admitted into the tradition of remembrance, the scales of cemeteries adjusted, the "ideal order" of tombstones rebalanced. The historicity of Eliot's vision in the postwar period of a "simultaneous order" of cultural monuments finds isomorphic complement Rudyard Kipling's description of a military cemetery containing 11,000 graves as "a Dead Sea of arrested lives"—a description that similarly freezes and spatializes temporality.[70]

At Oxford, where Eliot was a student in 1915-1916, the proportion of student and alumni losses was astonishingly high.[71] The "impersonality" that Eliot imagines for the poet mimics the

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[70] Ibid, 44; Rudyard Kipling, "Rouen," *Kipling Abroad: Traffics and Discoveries from Burma to Brazil*, ed. Andrew Lycett. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 174.

[71] Samuel Hynes writes:

> [O]f all the young men who matriculated at Oxford and Cambridge between 1910 and 1914 and entered the army, one in four was killed in the war; of public-school old boys, about twenty per cent died; of peers and their sons under the age of fifty in 1914, nearly a fifth were killed; the death rate of officers (where most of the public-school and university men were) was twice that of the other ranks, most of whom were working-class. It would appear that the people like [Liberal politican and journalist Charles] Masterman who mourned the death of a class had some evidence on their side: certainly the upper and middle classes had lost something like a fifth of their young men.

selflessness of the soldier who stems personal feelings to become an instrument for the writing of military will. In his 1919 essay, Eliot states evenly, "In a peculiar sense he [the poet] will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past." Then—more violently—"I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics."[72] For all the self-divesting of emotion and personality that Eliot proclaims in the essay, it is impossible not to hear within his theories the defensive justifications of a young man of military age who had survived the war within England, and who, as late as the autumn of 1918, was making efforts to enlist in the armed services only to encounter a mire of bureaucracy and ultimately be refused on physical grounds.[73]

Comparisons of the lucky living and the heroic dead abounded in this moment. The living were those who, paradoxically, could not live up to the ultimate sacrifice of the dead. Describing the parade of veterans marching under the temporary Cenotaph's inscription to "The Glorious Dead" in July, 1919, Geoff Dyer notes, "The role of the army is not to celebrate victory but to represent the dead. This is an inevitable side-effect of the language of Remembrance being permeated so thoroughly by the idea of sacrifice … survivors testified to their exclusion from war's ultimate meaning—sacrifice—except vicariously as witnesses. The role of the living is to offer tribute, not to receive it."[74] The selflessness of soldiers like Jean Verdenal ("Mort pour la France") appears in their presumed sublimation of personality—indeed, their impersonality—that emphasizes an ideal of nationhood or community. Such selflessness, constituting an alternative theory of impersonality,

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A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture (London: Bodley Head, 1990), 385-6.
[72] "Tradition," 45.
[73] See Eliot's letter to his father, 4 November, 1918, *Letters, Vol. I*, 286-89. In June, 1917, Eliot had written to his father, "To me all this war *enthusiasm* seems a bit unreal, because of the mixture of motives. But I see the war partly through the eyes of men who have been and returned, and who view it, even when convinced of the rightness of the cause … as something very sordid and disagreeable which must be put through." Letter to his father, 13 June 1917, *Letters Vol. I,* 203.
[74] Geoff Dyer, *The Missing of the Somme* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 22.

finds its most extreme example in the memorial to the unknown soldier, buried in Westminster Chapel in November 1920.

The streets of London were full of amputees, as the newspapers were full of advertisements for private monuments. A young man with no visible defect on him who had spent the war in England, who married an Englishwoman and was establishing himself as an English cultural authority—such a young man might very well find himself writing, in an essay ostensibly about poetry, that "we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value."[75] Discursively troping the language of memorialization in the service of a stable futurity, Eliot was most certainly "fitting in." The eternal presence of the dead is a discursive cliché in Britain when Eliot redeploys it in the service of an elite cultural conservatism to which he will remain committed for the remainder of his career. Excluded from the ideal order of the dead, Eliot elects himself to a sacrificial vocation: "The second-rate artist, of course, cannot afford to surrender himself to any common action; for his chief task is the assertion of all the trifling differences which are his distinction: only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute," he writes in 1923.[76] Eliot thus chooses to detach his lack of combat service from its particular historicized valence in postwar England in the poem "Gerontion":

> I was neither at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought.[77]

The recent war is allusively transformed into a transtemporal image of all wars. In this image we see a poetic equivalent of the temporal ideology of "tradition," which discards the chronological apparatus of historicism to imagine an ever-present simultaneity of cultural works and authors.[78]

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[75] "Tradition," 45.
[76] "The Function of Criticism," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 76.
[77] "Gerontion," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I: Selected Poems*, 21.

The collection of essays comprising *The Sacred Wood* was published in November 1920. On November 12, 1920, *The Times* described the two-minute silence that was observed the previous day, on the second anniversary of the Armistice: "The world was for the time forgotten. The dead lived again."[79] Describing the scene of the unprecedented burial of the body of an unknown soldier under the flagstones of Westminster Cathedral, the article imagines an imperial body—an "ideal order"—that makes possible the living presence of the dead through an impersonal incarnation: "When the silence was over … the dead resumed their silent sleep, no longer on the battlefields of the world, for they all lie buried from henceforth in our great Abbey … There is only one body, but the spirits of all the dead are there as well. There was only one burial, but the whole Empire was one vast memorial service."[80] This mode of remembrance holds the dead suspended in eternal presence within an empire on which the sun never sets. With similar national, ethical, and aesthetic idealism, Eliot's ideal order of tradition takes culture out of contemporary history, rejecting the calculations of human time and aspiring toward timeless eternity.

The Ahistorical Polity of Literature

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* demonstrate the intensity of Eliot's search for a way to make time count.[81] During the publication of *The Sacred Wood* and the writing of *The Waste Land*, Eliot witnessed the fluctuation of global currencies on a daily basis from

[78] Michael Bell, "The Metaphysics of Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15 [9-32]. Describing the mythic approach to history of modernist writers like Joyce, Yeats, and Eliot, Bell writes, "The causal process enacted within historical and personal time is set against, not so much the timeless, as the intrinsic, values represented emblematically in myth" (ibid). I argue that timelessness itself becomes one of these values for Eliot.
[79] "A Silent City." *The Times* (London, England), Issue 42566. Friday, Nov 12, 1920. iii.
[80] Ibid.
[81] See Jewel Spears Brooker, "Substitutes for Religion in the Early Poetry of T. S. Eliot," in Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 123-139, and "Keeping Time with Time: Eliot's Struggle with Form in The Waste Land and Four Quartets" (140-163).

his desk at Lloyd's bank.[82] While Eliot's lived experience familiarizes him with politics and history, and his avowed concern in the 1920s is "the polity of literature and criticism," his attempt to construct this polity through the notion of tradition sidesteps both politics and history as such.[83] The 1919 poem "Gerontion" voices suspicion in the capacity of historical eventfulness—and its representation in historiography—to contain or transmit experience:

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceived with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving.[84]

Instead of providing nourishment, the food of "history" only increases the appetite of those that consume it in a search for meaning.[85] In 1923, Eliot would characterize "contemporary history" in terms of chaos and ephemerality, as drama in which action does not signify in a deep way and in which no collaborative governing structure can hold.[86] The contrast between the unreliable historical flux of "contemporary history" and the steady permanence of historical meaning found in "tradition" shows a value-driven bifurcation in Eliot's thought between contemporary historicity and mythic history.

In a historical period of deep skepticism and reflection upon the writing of history, Eliot bifurcated his own vision of the historical between the temporality of ephemeral meaninglessness and the temporality of permanent meaning. His mythic view of time and history in the notion of

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[82] Eliot worked in the Colonial and Foreign Department of the bank from March 1917 to the early 1920s. Lawrence S. Rainey, "Eliot Among the Typists: Writing the Waste Land," *Modernism/Modernity* 12.1 (2005): 27-84.
[83] "The Function of Criticism," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 76.
[84] "Gerontion," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I: Selected Poems*, 22, lines 33-39.
[85] Vincent Sherry reads this famous passage as a reference to the signing of the peace treaty in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles only the month previous to this poem's composition. *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-6; 214-16.
[86] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 44. Eliot calls contemporary history "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy." "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," 177.

tradition—elsewhere described as a "spatial" view—produces a paradoxically "dehistoricized" history, and suggests a postwar ambivalence toward the narration of history and the telling of time in a moment of radical fragmentation. The disjuncture between an accelerating present and an obsolescent past, identified already by Baudelaire as a signal problem of modernity, was only amplified by the chasm of the war.[87] The alienated inhabitants of the modern city, writes Siegfried Kracauer in 1922, "are struck by the curse of *isolation and individuation*. Tradition has lost its power over them … for them community is not a reality but merely a concept; they stand … somehow holding their ground as tiny splintered-off particles in a temporal stream that is trickling away."[88] Kracauer contrasts the flow of chronological time, dissolving into separate drops or grains, with the continuous lifeline of tradition that now exists only in the imagination. Time itself appeared to be fragmenting. In 1916 Einstein presented his General Theory of Relativity, radically destabilizing the idea of a shared temporality. In 1923, Bergson produced *Duration and Simultaneity,* and in the mid-1920s Heidegger began giving lectures in Heidelberg that would lead to the 1927 publication of *Being and Time*.[89] The preoccupation that Wyndham Lewis labeled the "time-cult of modernism" was at full

[87] Paul Valéry's 1920 essay "Crisis of the Mind" exemplifies the concerns regarding this chasm and its deleterious effect on European knowledge and culture. See also "The War Becomes History" in Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), and Michael Levenson, "The Time-Mind of the Twenties," in *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198-199.

[88] Siegfried Kracauer, "Those Who Wait," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). 130-131. The essay was first published as a feuilleton in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 12, 1922.

[89] David Scott, "The 'Concept of Time' and the 'Being of the Clock': Bergson, Einstein, Heidegger, and the interruption of the temporality of modernism," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 183-84 (183-213). Scott triangulates Heidegger's ontological theory of time through the intellectual collision of Bergson and Einstein: "Bergson's *durée* or 'duration' in opposition to Einstein's 'physicist's time' *as* 'public time,' one can argue, sets the terms for Heidegger extending by means of ontology, the ontic analysis of human being-in-the-world … the fundamental insight into the character of time revealed by the encounter between Bergson and Einstein is that time *extemporizes itself*" (184). Bergson met Einstein in Paris in April, 1922 (185).

throttle.[90] "[I]n the first post-war decade," Michael Levenson states, "time became such a dominant concern that it can be taken as a cultural signature."[91] In the 1920s, then, the representation of shared experience in social or historical narration raised fundamental questions regarding the nature and measure of historical temporality, its medium or form of representation, and which communities it might claim to consolidate. Making the ongoing time of individual lives and national histories *mean* something entailed connecting the individual to history and tradition; yet the atomized, modern individual lacked just such a connection to broader social narratives.

Eliot's most famous poem from these years takes as its central concern an historical present that has outgrown the traditional forms of its representation, in which the capacity for meaningful experience has atrophied. Published in 1922, *The Waste Land* uses multiple voices to stage a general condition of detachment from the valuing structures of myth and history—a state in which a non-specified "I" "can connect / nothing with nothing."[92] The modern world is suffering a nightmarish amputation from cultural heritage such that paintings have become "withered stumps of time" (line 104). The past floats through the present in disconnected fragments, like waste floating down the Thames to the unheard song of the nymphs. Instead of the organic whole Eliot imagines for the assembly of literary history, the citations that constitute much of the text insist on a mournful *déchirement*, the tearing of the body that is also the rape of Philomela. Human experience ricochets between shallow states of boredom, anxiety, and despair, seemingly incapable of reaching "[t]he

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[90] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, ed. Paul Edwards (Boston: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 115. The book was first published in 1927.

[91] "The Time-Mind of the Twenties," in *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 197 [197-217].

[92] *The Waste Land: The Authoritative Text*, ed. Michael North (New York: Norton and Company, 2001), 15. Eliot wrote and organized much of *The Waste Land* in 1921, but particular passages of the poem date from poems as early as 1914. See James E. Miller Jr.,. *T. S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State Press, 2005), 366; also Lawrence S. Rainey, "Eliot Among the Typists: Writing the Waste Land," *Modernism/Modernity* 12.1 (2005): 27-84. Nancy Gish remarks, "The poems published in 1920 and *The Waste Land* shift in perspective from personal memory to history." *Time in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot,* 27.

Peace which passeth understanding" sounded by the thunder (Shantih shantih shantih).[93] The crises articulated in the poem's various voices ramify with personal specificity for this poet of impersonality who, "by the waters of Leman … sat down and wept" (line 182).

In this condition of disemboweled significance and rot, the mere passage of time becomes unbearable. Beginning with its epigraph from Petronius's *Satyricon*, the poem figures the ongoing hours as a burden and the cessation of death as an unavailable mercy. Ensconced in a jar because of the fragility of her aged body, like a Beckettian creature *avant-la-lettre*, the Cumean Sibyl is sentenced to duration—condemned to live eternally by having wished for immortality but having forgotten to ask for eternal youth. When asked her desire, she replies uselessly: "I want to die."[94] Where impending death is presented as a certitude in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," however, the finality and naturalness of death are disputed in *The Waste Land*. "The Burial of the Dead" describes an uncanny middle ground between death and life, "breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing /Memory and desire" (lines 2-3). Throughout the poem, time continues but death and life are static and coequivalent, instead of dynamic and successive. "What creates the mood of horror, along with the images of rats and white bodies," Nancy Gish observes, "is precisely the changelessness of this world, its incapacity for redemption … there is no progress either individual or social."[95] The crowd of the "[u]nreal city" breathes yet does not live—"sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled" but "death ha[s] undone" them.[96] The last call in the pub, "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME," resonates like Donne's proverbial bell for the reader who hears this phrase in the context of the poem's fragments of cultural history, but for the women discussing dentistry and abortions within the poem (once again, females consume time without engendering meaning, like "the women" in

[93] Eliot's note 433 to "Shantih." *The Waste Land: The Authoritative Text*, 26.
[94] *The Waste Land: The Authoritative Text*, ed. Michael North (New York: Norton and Company, 2001), 3, n. 1.
[95] *Time in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, 57.
[96] "The Waste Land," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I: Selected Poems of T. S.* Eliot, 42-43, lines 60, 64, 63.

"Prufrock"), the existential significance of temporal passage is absent. The cyclical rhythms of birth, death, growth, and regeneration have been halted and fertility is gashed.

When examined at the level of the subject, the rupture of historical continuity by the loss of tradition manifests as a crisis of experience. The work of Eliot's contemporary Walter Benjamin specifically addresses the relationship between temporal experience and representational form in this period. Only four years younger than Eliot, Benjamin was also attempting in the 1920s and '30s to find modes of experiencing the cultural past that might offer solutions for the crises of the present. Benjamin identifies two modes of experience, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, that can be productively compared to Eliot's distinction between the meaninglessness of mere chronology and the plenitude of historical simultaneity. The meaningful experience of *Erfahrung* substantiates the connectedness of history with environmental and representational form, linking the individual body to a social body and a social past. Storytelling exemplifies this form of deep experience, in which the happenings of a single moment of time are linked to a pattern of past and future moments through the body of the storyteller. When communities passed time by telling stories, Benjamin argues, the very act of storytelling bound past and present together like wool boiled into felt, producing an indissoluble weave of time and meaning. "It is not the object of the story to convey a happening *per se*, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening," Benjamin writes.[97] This embeddedness is *Erfahrung.*[98] *Erfahrung* thus names the kind of experience of history and memory that Eliot demands for a poet with an historical sense, and presumes the transmission of that experience that Eliot locates in the vocation of the poet.

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[97] "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, 159.

[98] "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data." Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, 157.

If the experience of *Erfahrung* can be compared to the steady light of a homemade candle passed from parent to child, *Erlebnis* denotes the discontinuous flashes of a strobe light whose glimpses evaporate from memory as quickly as they appear.[99] Ruthlessly chronological, *Erlebnis* locates in experience the problem of modernism's attachment to the instantaneous. In the mode of *Erlebnis*, the unscripted flow of the present threatens to merge completely with the chronological time of capital, replicating the meaninglessness of its unattached instants and shattering both social connectivity and individual experience. In the mode of *Erlebnis*, temporal experience does not connect to history or memory; the past is locked into its pastness by no longer being transmitted to the present. *Erlebnis* is consequently a temporal expression of fragmentation—the sundering of moment from moment that strips narrative meaning from temporal experience and that places experience itself into the mode of shock.[100] This is the temporality of Prufrock's disconnected and disconnecting units of life, in which the unfulfilling hours do not count *toward* anything but instead fuel their own self-devouring erasure. It is the hell of Montefeltro and the torment of the Sibyl, in which ongoing time is encountered as boredom or as burden in the absence of signification.

A revealing dialogue in *The Waste Land* illustrates the destruction of meaningful communication by the preponderance of *Erlebnis* under modernity and demonstrates the strange anachronism—and loneliness—of *Erfahrung* in Eliot's postwar England. Possibly ventriloquizing Eliot's wife, Vivian, a jabbing voice syntactically crystallizes *Erlebnis*: "'Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak. / What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? / I never know what you are

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[99] Martin Jay writes, "The immediate, passive, fragmented, isolated, and unintegrated inner experience of *Erlebnis* was, Benjamin argued, very different from the cumulative, totalizing accretion of transmittable wisdom, of epic truth, which was *Erfahrung*." *Cultural Semantics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 48–9.

[100] In "Experience and Poverty" (1933), the lack of experience in *Erfahrung* presents an emancipatory possibility for Benjamin. In *Selected Writings Volume 2: 1927-1934*, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al., edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 731-36.

thinking. Think.'"[101] Aggressing the auditor with sharp consonants and pushy repetitions, these short lines fracture continuity and fill time without yielding meaning. Their content makes explicit the vicious cycle of novelty, repetition, and boredom engendered by *Erlebnis*. The voice demands not information but communication *tout court*—a restoration of the old functions of storyteller and auditor—but the impossibility of spoken communion between the pair becomes clear as the dialogue continues. The nervous, querying voice interrogates the "just now" of recent history, demanding, "'What is that noise?' … / 'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'"[102] The response of the interlocutor opt for a mythic vision of the present that refutes empirical immediacy—"I think we are in rats alley / Where the dead men lost their bones." Questioner and interlocutor are effectively living in two different versions of the present; despite their conversational proximity, they are isolated in their own worlds. This temporal incommensurability prompts mounting frustration from the questioner:

> 'Do
> You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
> 'Nothing?'
> I remember
> Those are pearls that were his eyes.[103]

The interlocutor's centuries-old answer to a utilitarian appeal to recent memory provokes further censure from the nagging questioner: 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?' The dialogue finally halts at a temporal bridge between the "now" of the questioner and the deeper past of the interlocutor. When this temporal bridge finally appears, though, it is mangled by irony; the direct quotation that reanimates *The Tempest* is cited by imitation and entered into the quickly evaporating temporality of pop culture and fashion: "But / O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—"[104] The stuttering O's emphasize the atomized instants of *Erlebnis*, in which the potential for

[101] *The Waste Land*, lines 112-14.
[102] Ibid., 117, 119.
[103] Ibid., 121-25.
[104] Ibid., 127-28.

community—between storytellers and auditors sharing a canon, and between the constituents of that canon itself—is ruptured.

This failure of communication and of meaning attains an increasingly religious resonance in Eliot's poems of the mid-1920s, leading up to his conversion in 1927. Though *The Waste Land* was written several years before Eliot's adoption of Anglicanism, he might be describing his own poem when he says of Tennyson's *In Memorium*, "It is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt."[105] This doubt—in community, in signification, in religion, and even in the sensations provoked by objects—is fully on view in Eliot's 1925 poem, "The Hollow Men," which, like an earlier version of *The Waste Land*, takes its epigraph from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[106] With imagery conjuring the frozen architecture of a De Chirico painting, "The Hollow Men" imagines a world in which growth has ceased, change seems impossible, and enunciation does not establish community. Though speaker and reader are forced to linger "[u]nder the twinkle of a fading star"—recalling the anesthetized evening of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—there is no camaraderie of "you and I" in the lifeless "we" of the hollow men, and no movement to mark through space or time.[107] In this environment of stillness without repose, "Our dried voices … / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass."[108] The articles of religious worship and past civilizations are monuments without meaning; cold stone is figured as the false idol of an abandoned people, and instead of the sensuous and present communication of physical love, "Lips that would kiss / Form prayers to broken stone."[109] This is the bareness of a world in which the past has abandoned the present.

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[105] "'In Memorium' (1936)," in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 245 [239-47-].
[106] "*Mistah Kurtz—he dead.*" "The Hollow Men," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I*, 65.
[107] "The Hollow Men," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I*, 68, line 44; "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in ibid., 3, line 1; .
[108] Ibid., 68, lines 5-8.
[109] Ibid., 68, lines 50-51.

The poem represents the apogee of Eliot's fears of secular modernity—an imagining of historical rot so complete that all organic matter has disappeared. These fears are once again connected to the unbearable experience of temporal duration in the absence of lasting signification. The most explicit figure in the poem for the meaningless passage of time in the present appears in the eerie child's rhyme:

> *Here we go round the prickly pear*
> *Prickly Pear prickly pear*
> *Here we go round the prickly pear*
> *At five o'clock in the morning.*[110]

The whirling circle of a child's game turns the marking of clock time into a meaningless fiction—a game of make believe in which, at the end, we all fall down. Against these non-accumulating circles, the threat of final judgment slices like a pendulum along a linear path of doom:

> Between the idea
> And the reality
> Between the motion
> And the act
> Falls the shadow
>
> *For Thine is the Kingdom*[111]

Physiological sensation wars with the desire for mystical experience in these final stanzas, which intersperse the weariness of the Cumean Sibyl ("*Life is very long*") with the seemingly unheard recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Yet the poem's most devastatingly skeptical note appears in the pathetic meaninglessness of the death that concludes it. There is no grand crescendo or moment of ultimatum; "the world ends / Not with a bang but with a whimper."[112] The entire span of life that has chronologically preceded this death is given no meaning, and does not even signify as an articulation of loss, since the existence that was in place before this death only presented as lack. Death is not an event but an evaporation. The past gives nothing to the present.

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[110] Ibid., 69, lines 68-71.
[111] Ibid., 69, lines 72-77.
[112] This anticlimactic end to "The Hollow Men" resonates with my reading of Siegfried Sassoon's "A Working Party" in the Introduction to this dissertation.

As the dark thought-experiment of this poem suggest, belief in the capacity of the cultural past to redeem the present demands a faith in redemption *tout court*—not merely an acceptance of historical argument. As it turns out, tradition is what makes the passage of human time bearable for Eliot—both because tradition both enables the stepping out of synchronic, chronological time into a framework of greater significance than the contingent span of a life, and also because tradition, when assimilated to ideas of Christian civilization rooted in Western European imperialism, enables a revaluation of human time according to a measure of eternal reward. Christianity's subordination of a mortal life's time beneath the sanctified time of eternal reward offers Eliot a way to re-contextualize the temporal flux of an anxious historical moment and an anxious human life that he dismisses as anarchy and chaos in 1923. In 1927, Eliot converted to Anglicanism, expanding the ethos of permanence that he sought through tradition to the measureless eternity of the Christian hereafter. By 1928, Eliot had reached "the conclusion that the humanistic point of view is auxiliary to and dependent upon the religious point of view. For us, religion is Christianity; and Christianity implies, I think, the conception of the Church."[113]

In essence, religion solved Eliot's time problem, by conscripting otherwise meaningless moments to a framework of deep significance, both theologically and culturally. Eliot's acceptance of theology verifies his acceptance of two scales of time belonging to two worlds and his displacement of the sphere of significant action from the human plane of the historical to the atemporal plane of the divine. In the 1930 poem "Ash Wednesday," Eliot discloses the separation between human time and divine permanence, from which all meaning comes. "I know that time is always time," he writes in "Ash Wednesday,"

> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is actual only for one time
> And only for one place

[113] "The Humanism of Irving Babbit" (1928), in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 284.

I rejoice that things are as they are … [114]

Whereas, as we have seen, the experience of *Erlebnis* constitutes the hell of Montefeltro, Prufrock, or the Sibyl, this ongoing experience of *Erlebnis* is positioned as a cleansing purgatory when framed within an extrinsic narrative of punishment followed by eventual reward. The countless hours *count* toward some future purpose or salvation, as the discomfort of their passage is validated by the Christian rubrics of atonement and sacrifice. Finally, paradise is the still point at which existence falls out of history and into divine union; continuity and simultaneity collapse into each other such that counting halts and human duration merges with divine eternity.

While guarding much of the same imagery and themes as his early poems, Eliot's writings after his conversion reinterprets the discomfort of mortal time in a crucial way, by reframing quotidian suffering and isolation as tokens of divine service. The world remains cold and hard for the questing kings in "Journey of the Magi," yet following the logic of earthly suffering for heavenly gain, their difficulties actually confirm the sacredness of the birth they travel to witness—and the redemption they can expect. With its focus on the difficulty of the narrow way, this poem seems to both pay homage to Eliot's own years of intellectual and religious searching and to demand a witness to the alienation and suffering he has endured:

> … I would do it again, but set down
> This set down
> This: […]
> … this Birth was
> Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.[115]

As in the stilted dialogue of *The Waste Land* between the voices of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, the deeply meaningful experience of the birth of the Christ child separates the kings from the communities they occupy in the present, while connecting them on a plane of deeper significance to temporally distant communities through prophecy and remembrance. The kings are irrevocably confirmed in their

[114] "Ash Wednesday," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I*, 73, lines 16-20.
[115] "The Journey of the Magi," in *Let Us Go Then, You and I*, 87-88, lines 33-39.

everyday isolation from the quotidian world around them by their visit to the Christ child: "We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / With an alien people clutching their gods."[116]

Represented in this poem and repeatedly in later years, the Incarnation comes to symbolize for Eliot the ultimate instance of divine eternity breaching the historicity of the human.[117] It is the entrance of God into human time that brings meaning to temporal experience, for Eliot, by paradoxically flooding the time of human counting with the timelessness of eternity. As Agamben describes this sundering of human counting: "Eternity, the regime of divinity, with its static circle, tends to negate the human experience of time. The discrete, fleeting instant becomes the point where time intercepts the wheel of eternity."[118] Yet this revelation of eternity is not without consequences; the kings are out of joint with their times, as is Eliot himself, in authoring a conception of culture that aspires to the eternal. Eliot belongs to a chorus of voices in the decade following the First World War and in the politically extreme years of the 1930s that draw a direct line between the uses of the cultural past and the survival of European civilizations in the future.[119] "Our problem being to form the future, we can only form it on the materials of the past; we must *use* our heredity, instead of

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[116] Ibid., 88, lines 40-42.

[117] As Nancy Gish puts it, "Time and eternity join in the Incarnation, yet to achieve eternity humanity must escape time by physical death or the mystic death to this world." *Time in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, 69.

[118] Giorgio Agamben, "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 105.

[119] See, for example, Paul Valéry's multiple essays on this subject, including his 1933 discourse delivered in Paris, "The Future of the European Mind":

> Many centuries ago, a certain tendency became manifest, a certain intellectual way of being, which in our time has been called "the European mind," but which in past centuries had many different names, "Christianity," "humanism," etc. This tendency long since took on for us the character of a conviction, an invincible hope in the future of knowledge … But events of every nature, some in the political, others in the economic, and even certain events in the intellectual order, have created an anxiety in our minds which is the image of our confused situation, and makes for a general decline and depreciation of hope.

"The Future of the European Mind," in *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry: History and Politics,* trans. D. Folliot and J. Mathews (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 541-42.

denying it," Eliot states in 1928.[120] Even as Eliot frames the contemporary present as a moment of particular crisis, though, he appeals to a notion of history that refutes the chronological schema and reaches beyond the time of human action altogether.[121]

Dante is Eliot's Virgil in bridging cultural history and theology, and *The Divine Comedy* offers Eliot a paradigmatic literary account of human historicity meeting divine timelessness.[122] In Dante, the experience of *Erfahrung* reaches beyond the cultural to an apex of religious epiphany. Dante also offers a model for a pan-European, Christian identity that Eliot seeks to resuscitate. Eliot first read Dante in 1911 while travelling in Europe as a student, and Dante would become, by Eliot's own account, "the most profound and persistent influence in his life."[123] Dante's writings bear a "universal"—i.e. pan-European—character in part because of their emergence at a particular stage in linguistic evolution; Dante's universalism is "not due to greater genius, but to the fact that he wrote when Europe was still more or less one."[124] In his essays of the 1920s and 30s, Eliot mourns the ideal of a pre-modern, European community grounded in the founding languages of Greek and Latin that found its apogee in the *trecento*. The medieval Italian of Dante is so close to "universal Latin" as to encourage a kind of reach across frontiers toward "what men of various races and lands could think

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[120] "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," in *Selected Prose*, 278-79.

[121] Eliot's diagnosis of a "dissociation of sensibility" in England in the 17th century likewise relies on a chronological account of cultural history "The Metaphysical Poets (1921)," in *Selected Prose*, 64 [59-67].

[122] See William Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Franke attests,

> It is in what happens to the *Commedia*'s characters in the present of their appearance in the poem, which essentially recapitulates the decisive event(s) of their earthly historical existence, now seen … in the light of an eschatological dawn, that the truth about them, the essence of their being in the sight and judgment of God, is revealed. In this sense, it is in the form of history, as realized in sequences of phenomenal events, that the poem proffers its truth … (10).

[123] *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, 85.

[124] "Dante," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 209. Eliot continues, "He not only thought in a way in which every man of his culture in the whole of Europe then thought, but he employed a method which was common and commonly understood throughout Europe" (ibid). The method to which Eliot refers is the use of allegory and a visual imagination.

together."[125] Somewhat surprisingly, given his frequent affirmations of Englishness, Eliot targets the recent surge in nationalism as inhibiting the realization of such a shared European identity. "It is not particularly the Treaty of Versailles that has separated nation from nation," Eliot states in 1929. "[N]ationalism was born long before; and the process of disintegration which for our generation culminates in that treaty began soon after Dante's time."[126] Eliot thus places Dante at the head of a temporal process whose deleterious effects have resulted in the ultimate fracturing of European identity in the Great War and the disastrous treaty that predicted a Second World War.

Eliot's final major poems advocate a *via negativa* of endurance, vigil, and prayer as a means of solidifying the mythic history of a Christian and European civilization.[127] Written between 1935 and 1942, *Four Quartets* were received as national affirmations of the continuing permanence of British culture under threat of German invasion from the sea and aerial bombardment by the Luftwaffe during the early years of the Second World War.[128] In these poems, the *kairotic* moment of the "overwhelming question" that demands action in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is refigured as the epiphanic moment of recognition of the divine that demands *non*-action: "You are not here to verify … You are here to kneel, Where prayer has been valid."[129] Within the framework of Christian belief, the "historical sense" of "the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together" offers the potential for a divine revelation.[130] It is with this notion of divine revelation that Eliot finds "the intersection of the timeless moment" in "England and nowhere.

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[125] Ibid., 206. Even the regional specificity of Dante's Florentine Italian "seems if anything to emphasize the universality" for Eliot, further undercutting national divisions in his reading. Ibid., 207.

[126] "Dante," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 207 [205-230].

[127] For a thoughtful reading of these poems within the genres of war-writing inherited from the First World War and reframed under the experience of the Blitz, see Marina Mackay, *Modernism and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially chapter 3, "The Situational Politics of *Four Quartets,*" 71-90.

[128] *East Coker* went through multiple reprintings after its publication in Easter 1940 and sold some 12,000 copies, Lyndall Gordon notes. *T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, 353.

[129] "Little Gidding," in *Four Quartets*, 50-51, lines 43, 45-46.

[130] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 44.

Never and Always"—and places faith in a continued historical existence of England that reaches beyond history.[131]

In his theological approach to historical time, Eliot strangely resembles his contemporary, Walter Benjamin, whose twin concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* so usefully illuminate Eliot's split vision of temporal experience.[132] Yet for Benjamin, the question of redemption rests with human action in the political sphere of contemporary history; "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption," he wrote in early 1940 in "Theses on the Philosophy of History."[133] Benjamin's idea of messianic rupture involves a revolutionary class consciousness "to make the continuum of history explode."[134] For Eliot, on the other hand, redemption results from one's ability to look beyond the chaos of ongoing temporal experience—and to presume the hierarchy of class—toward a timelessness that outlasts individual death. Benjamin passed a copy of the manuscript of "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to his friend and fellow refugee Hannah Arendt in Marseilles before his unsuccessful crossing and death at the Spanish-French border on

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[131] "Little Gidding," in *Four Quartets*, 51, lines 52-53.

[132] Connections between the thought of Benjamin and Eliot that could form the subject of an entire book. Beyond the importance they took, respectively, from the Jewish idea of messianism and the Christian notion of the incarnation as models of historicim's rupture, both Benjamin and Eliot had formative experiences in Paris around the same time—Eliot in 1910-11 and Benjamin in 1913—and built their articulations of philosophy, history, and poetics out of the cornerstones of modern French literature, including Proust, Baudelaire, and Valéry. Benjamin produced the first German translation of "Anabasis," by the French poet St-John Perse in 1925, while Eliot translated the poem into English in 1930. Both Eliot and Benjamin share ideas of the productivity of the fragment or the citation as a means of shocking the *mémoire involontaire*—or of synthetically replicating its effects on a reader.

[133] Agamben crisply states the Benjaminian ideal of historical consciousness:

> Benjamin seeks a concept of history corresponding to the statement that 'the state of emergency is the rule.' Instead of the nullified present of the metaphysical tradition, Benjamin posits a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. … Against the empty, quantified instant, he sets a 'time of the now', *Jetzt-Zeit*, construed as a messianic cessation of happening…

"Time and History: Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," 112.

[134] "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 261.

September 25, 1940.[135] The Blitz had begun barely three weeks before. Eliot began assembling the third of *Four Quartets*, "The Dry Salvages," in November, two months into the bombing; it was published in February 1941.[136] The poem advocates detachment from temporal concerns and urges attention to the timeless:

> Men's curiosity searches past and future
> And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint—
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.[137]

Eliot's ethos of time and religion exhorts a politics of abstention from politics. "We cannot, in literature, any more than in the rest of life, live in a perpetual state of revolution," Eliot would write in 1947.[138] Forgoing contemporary history as a space of direct action, Eliot's revolutions consist of a turning beyond the temporal to the eternal—whether in the simultaneous, ideal order of tradition or the divine rupture of the Incarnation.

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[135] Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 160.
[136] See Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 145-48.
[137] "The Dry Salvages," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harvest Books, 1971), 44, lines 199-205.
[138] "Milton II," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 273.

CHAPTER 4

TRAJECTORIES OF TELLING TIME: SAMUEL BECKETT'S INTERWAR YEARS

> "The cute thing to do now would be to write the prolegomena of W. I. P. [*Work In Progress*]. Do you feel like colleaborating? [sic.] And what about making a book on the title?"
> - Samuel Beckett, Letter to Tom McGreevy, ? after 15 August 1931[1]

> "… this delicious conception of movement as gress, pure and mere gress…"
> - Samuel Beckett, Letter to Nuala Costello, 27 February 1934

On November 13, 1928, Henri Bergson, the famous philosopher of time, was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.[2] Less than two weeks before, on November 1, 1928, 22-year old Samuel Beckett had arrived in Paris to take up his post as *Lecteur d'anglais* at Bergson's alma mater, the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS).[3] It seems fitting that Beckett's first steps toward a defining literary career would take place amidst adulation for Bergson, a transgressive thinker famous for his theories of time. Like Bergson, Beckett tests the disciplinary boundaries of literature and philosophy and insists on the limiting deformations of language and symbolic thought. While Beckett accepts Bergson's notion of *durée* as a continuous and ever-changing flux, his letters and fictions approach the structures and experiences of temporality as an almost unbearable imposition. "There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow nor from yesterday," he writes in 1930.[4] In

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[1] Letter of ? after 15 August 1931, in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929-1940*, ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 84. Beckett was briefly in Paris to celebrate the publication in one volume of Joyce's *Work In Progress*.

[2] The announcement appears on the second page of the Parisian daily *Le Temps* on 15 November, 1928. *Gallica.fr*, accessed 28 March 2017. Bergson's prize was awarded for the year 1927 while the Norwegian writer Sigred Undset won the prize for 1928; both prizes were announced on November 13, 1928.

[3] The position of *Lecteur* required Beckett to tutor *normaliens* preparing for the *agrégation* in English literature. Garin Dowd, "France: 1928-1939," in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. Anthony Uhlmann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 76 [76-86]. See also "Chronology 1906-1929" in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929-1940*, ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4-5, and "Chronology 1930" in Ibid., 17-18.

[4] *Proust* (London: John Calder, 1965), 12-13. Beckett wrote the essay in 1930; it was published by Chatto and Windus in 1931.

Beckett's mature works, action and event crumble under the disintegrative force of a time that neither consolidates in significance nor leaves room for an alternative. This is the burden of *durée* as Walter Benjamin describes it, bearing "the miserable endlessness of a scroll."[5]

Beckett's works from his time in Paris— the essay "Dante … Bruno. Vico … Joyce" (1929), the prizewinning poem "Whoroscope" (1930), and the monograph *Proust* (1931)— articulate a desire to represent the chaos and confusion of temporal existence, under the presumption that neither the experiencing subject, nor the world of objects it encounters, is stable. This deeply pessimistic view of subjective time as an agent of alienation from both self and world nourishes Beckett's antipathy to palliative teleologies of causality, progress, and resolution, and his critique of genres like the realist novel. Beckett's early investments in non-teleological narrative and subjective instability deepened throughout the 1930s, as is visible in his several hundred pages of philosophy notes and his intensely personal letters. Beckett's major concern in these early years, and throughout his entire career, is how to represent "the prospect of self-extension" without adopting "the shortcomings of the literary convention."[6] Long before *Waiting for Godot*—his "play in which nothing happens, twice"—, Beckett is invested in producing narrative forms that avoid traditional narrative structures of logical progression.[7] He observes in 1930, "As a writer, [Proust] is not altogether at liberty to detach effect from cause."[8] The simplicity of this statement belies the complex question it implicitly poses—is it possible to produce a narrative without the sutures of cause and effect? Can narrative be produced by means of connections that are not bound to linear temporality or causal association?

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[5] Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 185. Benjamin is referring specifically to the absence of death in Bergson's *durée* and its distancing from history; if, to take Arendt, death provides markers of beginning and ending that delimit events within narrative as traditionally conceived, Benjamin's comments on death and history bear consideration within a more extended discussion of the issues I raise in this chaper.

[6] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, ed. Rudy Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 19. *Proust* (London: John Calder, 1965), 11.

[7] Critic Vivian Mercier, quoted in *The Irish Times*, 18 February 1956, 6.

[8] "Proust," in *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (New York: John Calder, 1964), 11.

I. Dismantling Causality and Teleology

In the summer of 1929, six months into his two-year stay in Paris, Beckett wrote to his best friend, Thomas McGreevy:

> I have read the first volume of 'Du Côté de chez Swann', and find it strangely uneven … He has every kind of subtle equilibrium, charming trembling equilibrium, and then suddenly a stasis, the arms of the balance wedged in a perfectly horizontal line, more heavily symmetrical than Macaulay at his worst, with primos and secundos echoing to each complacently and reechoing.[9]

Beckett's critique attacks the immobile center of gravity that Proust's narrative structures occasionally attain; as he sees it, Proust's narrative stops moving in "subtle equilibrium, charming trembling equilibrium," and instead lurches from one pre-determined point to another, like a lugubrious triumphal history. Proust's lapses into "primos and secundos" [firsts and seconds] are unfavorably compared to the linear narrative assemblages of 19th century Whig historian Lord Thomas Macaulay, famous for stating that the "history of England is emphatically the history of progress."[10] Satirizing the clunky advancement of literary plot by comparing it to a teleological and badly constructed account of history—*English* history, at that— Beckett implies the desire for a trembling dynamism of activity in literary prose that escapes the preconceived outlines of progressive advancement.

Beckett had already given considerable thought to different ways of articulating temporal and spatial trajectories. When the 22-year old Beckett arrived in Paris in November 1928, he was introduced to Joyce and others of the Paris Anglophone literary community by fellow Trinity graduate and *École Normale lecteur* Thomas McGreevy, a World War I veteran.[11] Within a month, James Joyce had commissioned Beckett to contribute to a volume of essays on the as-yet-untitled

[9] Letter of Friday [? summer 1929], *Letters, Vol. I*, 11.
[10] Quoted in Robert E. Sullivan, *Macaulay: The Tragedy of Power* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2009), 376.
[11] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 98-99. See also Anthony Cordingley, "École Normale Supérieure," in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, 48.

Finnegans Wake (provisionally titled *Work In Progress*).[12] Joyce suggested that he examine the relationship between *Work In Progress* and the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico.[13] The ambitious essay Beckett produced in the winter of 1929-30 considers Joyce's adoption—and adaptation—of the cyclical historical structure proposed in Vico's *New Science*, framing the comparison through Dante's trajectory of ascent in *The Divine Comedy* and Giordano Bruno's principle of identified contraries. "Dante … Bruno . Vico . . Joyce" was recognized by Jolas and Joyce as "a very brilliant exegesis"; at Joyce's request, it was printed in Eugene Jolas's journal *transition* before it appeared in the Shakespeare and Company volume, *Our exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work In Progress* (1929).[14]

The formal attribute with which Beckett chooses to relate Joyce to Vico and Dante (Bruno is hardly discussed) is the respective shapes of their narrative arcs. Joyce takes his circular narrative structure from Vico, who views the arc of history as a circle. "In a word, here is all humanity circling with fatal monotony about the providential fulcrum," Beckett observes, noting "Vico's insistence on the inevitable character of every progression—or retrogression."[15] Joyce adopts Vico's cyclical scaffolding by producing the apprehension of change in his language, while refusing determined paths of progression or regression in his narrative arc. His writing, Beckett states, produces "an endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction, the cyclic dynamism of the intermediate"—a

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[12] See Beckett's letter to James Joyce, 23 March 1929, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 7-8, n. 1.

[13] Beckett recounted to James Knowlson in 1989,

> It was at his suggestion that I wrote "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce"—because of my Italian. I spent a lot of time reading Bruno and Vico in the magnificent library, the Bibiliothèque of the École Normale. We must have had some talk about the "Eternal Return," that sort of thing. He liked the essay. But his only comment on it was that there wasn't enough about Bruno; he found Bruno rather neglected. They were new figures to me at the time. I hadn't read them. I'd worked on Dante, of course. I knew very little of them. I knew more or less what they were about. I remember reading a biography of one of them.

Knowlson, 107. See ibid., 105 on Beckett's first reading Joyce in 1927.

[14] See Beckett's letter to James Joyce, 23 March 1929, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 7-8, n. 1.

[15] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 23.

"continuous purgatorial process" that reflects "the vicious circle of humanity … being achieved."[16] Robert Hollander emphasizes "that the word 'purgatory', as it is used in Dante's poem, while indicating a location in which suffering occurs, is used to denote the place in which every single soul is *in progress* toward salvation."[17] Yet unlike Dante's ascending structure from *Inferno* through *Purgatorio* to *Paradiso*, Joyce's purgatory does not build toward an eternal reward. As Beckett tersely compares the two,

> Dante's [narrative structure] is conical and consequently implies culmination. Mr. Joyce's is spherical and excludes culmination. In the one there is an ascent from real vegetation—Ante-Purgatory [Dante's *selva oscura*], to ideal vegetation—Terrestrial Paradise: in the other there is no ascent and no ideal vegetation. In the one, absolute progression and a guaranteed consummation: in the other, flux—progression or retrogression, and an apparent consummation. In the one movement is unidirectional, and a step forward represents a net advance: in the other movement is non-directional—or multi-directional, and a step forward is, by definition a step back. … Sin is an impediment to movement up the cone, and a condition of movement round the sphere.[18]

Already in 1929, Beckett is attracted to narrative structures in which "movement is non-directional—or multi-directional, and [in which] a step forward is by definition a step back."[19]

Beckett's next critical work, the monograph *Proust*, written for the Dolphin series of Chatto & Windus and published in 1931, continues his investigation into narrative representations of dynamic change.[20] Drawing on Bergson and Schopenhauer, Beckett uses Proust's groundbreaking work with the operations of memory to examine the mechanisms of perception and language that produce illusions of continuity and causality—the connective tissue of plot. Beckett casts temporal existence as an inescapable condition of constant change. The content or affective experience of time is irrelevant next to the fact of its passage; as Beckett puts it, "[Y]esterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us. The mood is of no importance. Deformation has taken place. We are other, no

[16] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 29, 33.
[17] "Introduction," in Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, translated by Jean Hollander & Robert Hollander (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), xxiii. My italics.
[18] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 33.
[19] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 33.
[20] See Knowlson, 118 for the circumstances of the agreement with Chatto & Windus.

longer who we were before the catastrophe of yesterday."[21] (We might think of Joyce's suggestive refrain for this mutability in the "Proteus" section of *Ulysses*: "[I]neluctable modality of the visible.")[22] Beckett's critique is structural; regardless of its particularities, language—and the subjects, objects, and predicates it names—are always already mischaracterizing temporal existence. Acts of recognition and nominalization have the fallacious effect of imputing qualities of solidity and fixity to experience, deforming perception and blocking access to the "real." Multiplicity is guaranteed by time, yet the dynamism of time is in some fundamental sense denied by the convention of appellation and other fictions of delimitation, such as the clean separation of subject and object. Naming thus inaugurates a heuristics of stability that Beckett cannot accept.

Beckett casts *durée*—the lived time of the individual—as a flux undermining the possibility of stable selfhood, accurate description, and legitimate syntax. The object of desire cannot be encountered by the desiring subject because of the deformations effected by time on both object and subject, however provisionally defined. The multiple facets of Proust's Albertine do not coincide; "Albertine is a fugitive, and no expression of her value can be complete unless preceded by some such symbol as that which in physics denotes speed."[23] Unfulfilled romantic desire in Proust thus presents a figure for the ontological predicament confronting every human being because of the temporal imperative of existence: "No object prolonged in this temporal dimension tolerates possession, meaning by possession total possession, only to be achieved by the complete identification of object and subject."[24] Reversing the marriage contract to suggest a nightmarish binding of past self and past object that can never be consummated, Beckett states: "For any given

[21] *Proust*, 13.
[22] *Ulysses* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 37.
[23] *Proust*, 55.
[24] *Proust*, 57.

Albertine there exists a correlative narrator, and no anachronism can put apart what Time has coupled."[25]

As Beckett acknowledges, however, lived experience presents reassuring fictions of continuous selfhood and sustained relationality, not this plethora of endlessly sprouting subjects and objects. The mechanisms that ensure fictions of stable identity, chronological ordering, and logical association, thereby concealing the true multiplicity of lived time from perception, are voluntary memory and habit. Beckett defines habit as "a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability."[26] Beckett figures the inescapability of habit in terms of physical processes and scenarios of inescapable abjection that prompt both aversion and capitulation, as in the memorable phrase, "Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit."[27] Biological processes are habitual, but so are operating fictions like identity; "the perpetual exfoliation of personality" is a habit, as is "that most necessary, wholesome and monotonous plagiarism—the plagiarism of oneself."[28]

Beckett seems to resent both the flux of time and the strategies for its management that are adopted by consciousness. He is especially averse to structures of causal association, which he sees as a habitually-enforced compromise with the chaos of reality—a social propadeutic for the alienating degradations of time.[29] Causality presumes that an object can be at least momentarily fixed to one "Time and Space," from which it can act upon other, similarly fixed objects. Yet as Beckett has already indicated, there is no stable vantage point from which to act upon the world—and no stable subject that can act—because even the subject cannot claim continuity through its mutations. The

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[25] *Proust*, 60.
[26] *Proust*, 19.
[27] *Proust*, 19.
[28] *Proust*, 33.
[29] Beckett lauds Proust's "non-logical statement of phenomena in the order and exactitude of their perception, before they have been distorted into intelligibility in order to be forced into a chain of cause and effect." *Proust*, 86.

appearance of causality is linked to the biological imperatives of desire, and thus to the appearance of the will. A key theme of Beckett's later aesthetics of submission appears here: Proust "deplores his lack of will until he understands that will, being utilitarian, a servant of intelligence and habit, is not a condition of the artistic experience. When the subject is exempt from will the object is exempt from causality (Time and Space taken together)."[30] Causality is a learned formula, certified by habit, aimed at the satisfaction of biological desire. Causal narratives of the most minute scope thus indicate an abject negotiation that conceals the reality of temporal existence.

In contrast to habit and boredom, which serve the biological imperatives of self-gratification and self-preservation, suffering indicates the opening to the real in which the aesthetic act can occur:

> Habit … is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations … represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious, and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being.[31]

The "real"—and art—engender the suffering of an organism uncertain of its survival by stripping consciousness of its preexisting categories and practices and revealing the instability and change that are always already happening in time. Whether in a text by James Joyce or an unfamiliar bedroom at night, the real of temporal existence can only provoke suffering, as Beckett has it, because both ego and nervous system are ill-equipped to handle uncategorized novelty. It is the task of art to strive for access to this novelty. Beckett adapts Kant's definition of the aesthetic experience to his purposes: "The suffering of being: that is, the free play of every faculty."[32] And later: "Suffering—that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of the artistic experience."[33] The suffering of being, for

[30] *Proust*, 90.
[31] *Proust*, 19.
[32] *Proust*, 20.
[33] *Proust*, 28.

Beckett, is inextricable from the naked apprehension of time, stripped of the reassuring fictions of stable selfhood, linear causality, and narrative continuity.[34]

While art offers access to the indifferent savaging of temporal existence, it is ahistorical. This is only apparently a paradox, if we consider that Beckett is considering history as a domain of causal logics and stabilizing narratives. History makes sense of time. In contrast, the work of art eschews utilitarian demands and straightforward interpretation; it is not an illustration of an idea. "It is not to be read," Beckett says of Joyce's *Work In Progress*. "It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*."[35] (Beckett settles on "apprehension" as the closest English description for the "sensuous untidy art of intellection" that Joyce's writing demands.[36]) Similarly, he defends Dante's *Divine Comedy* from being read through the lens of its historical author, stating: "[W]ho wants to love Dante? We want to READ Dante—for example, his imperishable reference (Paola-Francesca episode) to the incompatibility of the two operations."[37] Human sympathy and understanding is a process exclusive of artistic intellection, he argues. Art and the aesthetic encounter are incommensurable with utility or sense-making, for Beckett.[38]

For all its conditions of impoverishment and imposture, that language makes things happen seems not to be in doubt for Beckett. Like philosophy, literature and art for Beckett exist in atemporal autonomy, articulated in distinction to "the immeasurable background of space or time"

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[34] Beckett adds, "[W]e are reminded of Schopenhauer's definition of the artistic procedure as 'the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason'." *Proust*, 87.
[35] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 27.
[36] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 27. Beckett's suggestion of "apprehension" is his translation for the Latinate "intendere," which he takes from St. Augustine and Dante.
[37] "Papini's Dante," in *Disjecta*, 81. Emphasis in original.
[38] It is not only literature that can be instrumentalized in this way; "To represent a piece of music in a particular way, by means of dancing, gestures, settings, costumes, etc., is to degrade it by reducing its value to mere anecdote," Beckett tells Morris Sinclair in 1934. Letter after 13 July – before 2 August 1934, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 215. "[S]erious music cannot be of use," Beckett emphasizes.

that surrounds them.[39] He is severe in insisting on the separation of atemporal discourses—art (including literature) and philosophy—from merely historical signification. "The danger is in the neatness of identifications," he warns at the opening of "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce."[40] Vico's mistake was to "insist[] on complete identification between the philosophical abstraction and the empirical illustration, thereby annulling the absolutism of each conception—hoisting the real unjustifiably clear of its dimensional limits, temporalizing that which is extra-temporal."[41] While acknowledging that philosophy and philology offer a "coincidence of gesture," Beckett insists on their incommensurability and scoffs at "analogymongers."[42]

The non-intelligible is that which cannot be articulated in rational thought (anchored by causality) or preconceived forms of expression. Indeed, "decadent" readers are those who desire the "rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense" from literature, a type of reading he calls "a continuous process of intellectual salivation."[43] In Beckett's desire for an art of "a statement and not a description" that emerges independently of the artist's predicament or personality, we can hear strong echoes of Eliot's poetry of impersonality, but Eliot's values-based argument for high culture is anathema to Beckett. Beckett tells McGreevy in October 1932 that art must emerge from

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[39] Beckett quotes Joyce's Stephen Dedalus to insist on the spatial and temporal distinction of the work of art from the life that surrounds it: "Stephen says to Lynch: 'Temporal or spatial, the esthetic image is first luminously apprehended as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it… You apprehend its wholeness'." Quoted in "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," 28. Beckett immediately reiterates Stephen's comment in his own critical voice: "There is one point to make clear: the Beauty of *Work in Progress* is not presented in space alone … There is a temporal as well as a spatial unity to be apprehended. Substitute 'and' for 'or' in the quotation, and it becomes obvious why it is … inadequate to speak of 'reading' *Work in Progress*." Ibid.

[40] "Dante … Bruno . Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 19 [19-33]. Beckett uses a racialized metaphor of deindividuation to decry the over-simplified equivalence of philology and philosophy: "The conception of Philosophy and Philology as a pair of nigger minstrels out of the Teatro dei Piccoli is soothing, like the contemplation of a carefully folded ham-sandwich." Ibid.

[41] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 19.

[42] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 19.

[43] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 26.

an imperative deeper than circumstance.[44] He denigrates art produced from an agonized reflex "to compensate the pus & pain that threaten [the spirit's] economy," calling it "a kind of writing corresponding with acts of fraud & debauchery on the part of the writing-shed."[45] The teleological justification of art for art's sake is also insufficient for him: "I don't know why the Jesuitical poem that is an end in itself and justifies all the means should disgust me so much. But it does—again—more & more. I was trying to like Mallarmé again the other day, & couldn't, because it's Jesuitical poetry."[46] Already Beckett seeks an art whose autonomy and gravity arises in independence of the artist's individual situation and that is unrelated to rational or metaphysical explanations of origin or *telos*. Beckett is testing a poetics of submission, attempting to articulate an aesthetic imperative deeper than biological response, one indifferent to the individual ego, and scornful of the palliatives of faith.[47]

Art must emerge independently of desire—it should look for nothing and move toward no ideal. Beckett frames the will-less exigency of the art he seeks as the "integrity" of a spontaneous, objectless ejaculation:

> I suppose I'm a dirty low-church P. [Protestant; McGreevy was Catholic] even in poetry, concerned with integrity in a surplice. I'm in mourning for the integrity of a pendu's emission of semen, what I find in Homer & Dante & Racine & sometimes Rimbaud, the integrity of the eyelids coming down before the brain knows of grit in the wind.[48]

The bodily metaphors are crucial in this letter, and it is notable that Beckett's own body throughout the 1930s was wracked by problems of abscesses, cysts, and digestive ailments.[49] Beckett grotesquely

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[44] Beckett thus denigrates his own poetry, which "though it may be reasonably felicitous in its choice of terms, fails precisely because it is facultative [optional]." Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 133-34.
[45] Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 134.
[46] Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 134.
[47] The poems of his own that he likes, he muses, were "written above an abscess and not out of a cavity, a statement and not a description of heat in the spirit to compensate for pus in the spirit." Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 134.
[48] Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 134-35.
[49] See Andrew Gibson, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Reaktion, 2010), 90-92.

severs individual or biological desire from the production of art through the image of the hanged man's spontaneous ejaculation. The image emphasizes isolation; the *pendu* is an individual expelled from social and biological circuits of intimacy, sexuality, and desire, and there is no more private act than his ejaculation. Prompted by the moment of death rather than a heightened moment of life, this "art" lacks both object and occasion. It is for no one, expresses no desire, and brings no pleasure. It is compelled. The force of the metaphor comes from Beckett's intimation that the predicament of the condemned man is the predicament of us all—but that we have lost the capacity for the compelled "integrity" of the salutary *pendu*.

Beckett's slide from proposing a figure to identifying with its condition appears more explicitly in a famous passage in *Proust*, chosen by Tom McGreevy as the epigraph to his monograph on Richard Aldington:[50]

> Proust's creatures … are victims of this predominating condition and circumstance—Time … victims and prisoners. There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow nor yesterday. There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us. We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday.[51]

As Beckett's pronouns slip from describing the temporal situation of Proust's characters to identifying with their predicament, his utterance expands to encompass aesthetic, philosophical, and personal registers. Spatializing time as a *field* instead of a line, Beckett poses a situation of instability so encompassing that, paradoxically, no progress is possible: "Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous."[52] The past is never left behind in the sense that a spatial marker is along a road, but remains part of the surface of the present. To put it another way, the content of past moments does not amount to solid footing but to a re-articulation of the inaccessibility of stability or

[50] See Beckett's letter of 29 May 1931 to Thomas McGreevy, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 79, N. 4.
[51] *Proust*, 13.
[52] Ibid.

direct reference. The metaphor of lived time as the surface of a plane rather than a line of progression resonates with Beckett's own confession to McGreevy in late 1931: "I'm right in a dead spot, one of the knots in my life teak."[53]

Time is felt in the body.[54] Beckett encountered physical disturbances to the temporal rhythm of his own body as early as April 1926, in attacks during which "his heart started to race faster and faster, fast enough to keep him awake."[55] He later described these symptoms as "the old internal combustion heart & head."[56] The bodily, the aesthetic, the psychological, and the philosophical intertwine in Beckett's writing throughout the 1930s, in which the subjective discomfort of temporal experience is a consistent theme. In the same period, from his essay on *Work in Progress* onward, Beckett's language is pervaded by phrases of movement and sketches of trajectories as he tests ways of articulating temporal and spatial change in all its dynamism—without hewing to the causal logics of the "literary convention."[57] The notion of "progress" that he examines in his first published work on Joyce, Dante, and Vico registers in his proprioception in subsequent years. Beckett told his biographer, James Knowlson,

> After my father's death I had trouble psychologically. The bad years were between when I had to crawl home in 1932 and after my father's death in 1933. I'll tell you how it was. I was walking down Dawson Street. And I felt I couldn't go on. It was a strange experience I can't really describe. I found I couldn't go on moving. So I went into the nearest pub and got a drink just to stay still.[58]

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[53] Letter of 8 November, 1931, in *Letters, Vol. I.*
[54] Beckett's own relationship to time was a subject of remark; at the *École Normale*, the school's Breton janitor "strongly disapproved of [Beckett and MacGreevy's] habit of getting up at lunchtime." Knowlson, 101. "Beckett made a great impression on the permanent staff of the École Normale by the lateness of the hours he used to keep," Knowlson writes. "Long after the gates had been locked (midnight), whenever he had forgotten or lost the key to which he was entitled, he would make a well-practiced, athletic entry up and over the railings at the front of the École, walking, often unsteadily, across the courtyard." Ibid.
[55] Knowlson, 77.
[56] Letter of 26 April 1937, in *Letters, Vol. I,* 490.
[57] *Proust*, 11.
[58] Knowlson, 167.

The inability to "go on" strikes across spatial and temporal registers here and prompts a strangely ambivalent bodily state; Beckett can neither "go on" nor stop, properly speaking, but must go into a pub "just to stay still."[59] The forward progress of Beckett's life seems to halt with the death of his father—"I couldn't go on"—yet he cannot *not* move temporally.[60] There is no straight path forward. Bodily arrest quarrels with linearity. When he informed Tom McGreevy of his father's death, Beckett stated, "I can't write about him, I can only walk the fields and climb the ditches after him."[61] Unable to put a line of thought on the page about his father, Beckett walks the feet of a poetic line that escapes linear reason—*moving* as verb, not noun.

This impossible imperative of going on without going forward forms the crux of Beckett's aesthetic project in the 1930s. As I will argue in the remainder of this chapter, this aesthetics of dynamic change without progress has a politics.

II. Beckett's "pure gress"

In mid-August of 1931, Beckett wrote to Tom McGreevy: "The cute thing to do now would be to write the prolegomena of W. I. P. [*Work In Progress*]. Do you feel like colleaborating? [sic.] And

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[59] *Damned to Fame*, 167.

[60] In his later work, Beckett's characters denaturalize movement as they denaturalize time. "Once and for all, do not ask me to speak and move at the same time," Mr. Rooney proclaims in the radio play *All That Fall* (1956)." "All that Fall," in Samuel Beckett, *The Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 22. Watt's displacement through space in the novel of the same name is almost mathematically farcical:

> Watt's way of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and at the same time to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and so on, over and over again, many times, until he reached his destination, and could sit down.

Watt (New York: Grove Press, 1953), 23.

[61] Letter of 9 October 1933, in *Letters, Vol. I,* 165.

what about making a book on the title?"[62] Beckett had already lionized Joyce's title in 1929 in "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," calling it

> a good example of a form carrying a strict inner determination. It should be proof against the usual volley of cerebral sniggers: and it may suggest to some a dozen incredulous Joshuas prowling around the Queen's Hall, springing their tuning-forks lightly against finger-nails that have not yet been refined out of existence.[63]

Beckett's extraordinary metaphor for *Work In Progress* figures the action of moving forward as the sounding of tuning forks that precedes the sounding of horns. In the Biblical story to which Beckett refers, the warrior-king Joshua laid siege to the city of Jericho, around which he paraded his armies for six days. On the morning of the seventh day, he commanded that all the trumpets be blown, and upon their sounding, the walls of the city collapsed into dust.[64] Beckett's complex metaphor frames Joyce as preparing a similar effacement of the old "walls" of literature. Aside from the heroization of Joyce as a conquering Joshua, though, Beckett shows the titular "work" and "progress" not as the steady ascent of a ladder but as a repetitious circumnabulation; not a sure path toward final victory, but the hesitant act of sounding out that precedes declamation. In every sense here, progress for Beckett is not a triumphal ascent but an *essai*.

In this chapter thus far, I have tracked the ways in which Beckett's burgeoning poetics adhere to an obligation of stating the real (the naked apprehension of time) without adopting "the shortcomings of the literary convention"—causal plot structures predicated on linear schemas of time.[65] My claim is that Beckett's work throughout this decade and into his mature writing pursues the antimony of two conceptions of progress, broadly speaking—the first a conceptual container for describing change in space or time, and the other, laden with moral content, a bludgeon with which

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[62] Letter of ? after 15 August 1931, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 84. Beckett was briefly in Paris to celebrate the publication in one volume of Joyce's *Work In Progress*.
[63] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 27.
[64] Joshua 6:1-27.
[65] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, ed. Rudy Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 19. *Proust* (London: John Calder, 1965), 11.

to persecute political ends. As Beckett comes to understand in the 1930s, there is a politics to linear teleologies—and when deployed at the level of historical discourse, these teleologies are only too consequential in the world around him. I will return to these historical and political dimensions shortly.

The notion of progress haunts Beckett's personal and published writings throughout the 1930s, and his personal and published writing in these years constantly experiments with different vocabularies of movement and trajectory. Anabasis—the Greek word for "ascent" used to refer to "a going up, a march or a military advance"—was in the literary air in the early 1930s with the publication of St-John Perse's poem *Anabase*, which T. S. Eliot translated.[66] Beckett found the poem awful—"bad Claudel, with abominable colour" [sic]—and Eliot's translation "uneven."[67] Only laconically engaging in intellectual gossip, as he will throughout his career, Beckett tackles the ideas and aesthetic qualities of works like "Anabase" with singular intensity. He tells Nuala Costello in 1934,

> The essence of all anabasis, I mean of all anabasis of good quality, is to be sought in its purity from destination and hence from schedule. That follows on most naturally, does it not, from what I have been saying, while from it again in its turn, if indeed the word turn has any sense in the context, I mean from this delicious conception of movement as gress, pure and mere gress, one arrives like a bird to its nest, though nest scarcely seems to be the right word in such a passage, at an elucidation of the crime immotivé that never occurred and never could to Gide or to any of his kidney […].[68]

Beckett palpably struggles in this letter to find a language that articulates movement without presuming trajectory: "[I]f indeed the word turn has any sense in the context"; "nest scarcely seems to be the right word…"[69] Beckett's desire for a way to express movement without presuming trajectory strikes at the heart of his poetics and his idea of art as the arena of failure. In a sense,

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[66] "anabasis, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/6874?redirectedFrom=anabasis (accessed July 10, 2017).
[67] Letter of 11 March 1931, in *Letters*, *Vol. I*, 73.
[68] Letter of 27 February 1934, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 186.
[69] Ibid.

Beckett is trying to imagine possibilities for representing movement without being shackled to either an identified mover or a traceable path of movement—a trace that would spatialize the dynamic action of time in the same way that the conventions of nominalization petrify the protean mutations of subject and object.

"That's not moving—that's *moving*," Beckett states gnomically in "Whoroscope" (1930).[70] Motive indicates direction, purpose, *telos*. Yet the ascent Beckett imagines in his letter to Nuala Costello is explicitly one of "purity from destination and hence from schedule."[71] The question of how to imagine a disinterested, "free" act was fermenting in French intellectual circles. André Gide introduced the possibility of an occasion-less action (what Gide termed an *acte gratuite*) in his 1902 novel *Les Caves du Vatican*, and the concept was popular with the Surrealists.[72] While lecturing on Gide at Trinity College Dublin in the fall of 1931, Beckett told his students, "Gide's work … originates in the assertion that there are forms of 'thought [which go] further than science', and that human actions 'cannot be reduced to motive[s]'."[73] Yet actions exist within such overlapping contexts and histories, such unremarked but habitually enforced envelopes of time, space, sociality, and ethical understanding, that the attempt to isolate any action, or to imagine a motiveless act, is immediately stymied by the number of actors (in the Latourian sense) that are involved.[74] As Beckett puts it to Tom McGreevy, recounting a conversation with the painter Jack Yeats: "I don't think it is possible to define cruelty, because somehow or other it would have to be separated from all the

[70] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 1, line 10.
[71] Letter of 27 February 1934, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 186.
[72] David Walker, "Acte gratuit," in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Accessed 12 July 2017. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198661252.001.0001/acref-9780198661252-e-27.
[73] Rachel Burrows's lecture notes to Beckett's modern literature class, held by Trinity College Dublin; cited in John Dolin, *Beckett and the Modern Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9. Dolin provides an extensive discussion of Gide's influence on Beckett.
[74] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

concomitant pointers in order to be apprehended. Can one imagine a pure act of cruelty? The old question!"[75]

The desire for a motiveless act, a datum of consciousness as event or experience that remains independent of pre-scripted paths, echoes Beckett's desire in *Proust* to escape the well-trod, utilitarian paths of habit and causal narrative. Beckett defends *À la recherche du temps perdu* in 1934 by describing Proust's project as an uncertain passage without a definite end:

> The book is the search, stated in the full complexity of all its clues and blind alleys, for that resolution [of the conflict between intervention and quietism], and not the *compte rendu* after the event, of a round trip. His material, pulverized by time, obliterated by habit, mutilated in the clockwork of memory, he communicates as he can, in dribs and drabs.[76]

This telling defense appears in 1934 in response to Albert Feuillerat's *Comment Proust a composé son Roman*—a work that aims to "restore" Proust's work as it might have been without the gap of writing produced by the First World War. Beckett's review savages Feuillerat, and accuses him of seeking a totalizing, homogenous presentation of Proust's material—the form of the work that Proust himself would have preferred, Beckett admits. The strength of the *Recherche* for Beckett is that it is *not* a statement of account (a *compte rendu*). The purpose of literature is not to make an argument or advance a coherent narrative of reason, logic, and causality. Beckett stated in 1929, "Literary criticism is not bookkeeping"—a comment anticipating his statement to Georges Duthuit in 1949 that art created on the "plane of the feasible" is merely "good housekeeping."[77]

The messiness of the middle and the leaking of chaos out of tidy forms is not an occlusion of Proust's project, for Beckett, but the essence of it. Proust is writing from the middle of the structure he is depicting—his life. There is no external perspective from which Proust can take stock of the arc of his life, because he does not know when he will die; as Beckett bluntly puts it in his 1931 essay,

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[75] Letter of 3 February 1931, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 65.
[76] "Proust in Pieces," in *Disjecta*, 65 [63-65]. Originally published in *The Spectator*, June 23, 1934.
[77] "Dante … Bruno . Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 19; "Bram van Velde," in *Proust*, 125.

"Death has not required us to keep a day free."[78] The convention of a tidily balanced plot moving at consistent speed from past to future and from birth to death is anathema to Beckett, both for its falsely linear model of temporality and for its sterile separation of death from birth. For Beckett, chronological models that place birth at the beginning of a line and death at the end fundamentally misrepresent both the reality of subjective time and the phenomena of death and life. Death and birth are not mutually exclusive categories for him. In *Proust*, Beckett represents this intermingling of ages and life moments with a visceral metaphor: "The immediate joys and sorrows of the body and the intelligence are so many superfoetations."[79] A superfoetation is "a second conception occurring after … a prior one and before the delivery; the presence of fetuses of different gestational ages within the uterus."[80] In this image, Beckett conjures the specter of many births and many deaths occurring at any one moment within the nominally separated individual self. Biological birth and death become a figure for the intermingling of memory and projection at every moment within consciousness—an intermingling that cannot be represented by linear diagrams of time or lived existence that place birth at one end of a line and death at the other.

The inextricability of death from birth in the lived time of existence finds its ideal metaphor for Beckett in the egg. While the egg is traditionally used as an image of birth or new life, and enjoys omnipresence at Easter to symbolize the Christian Resurrection, Beckett upends this tradition in "Whoroscope," conflating this symbol of birth with an abruptly violent death: "How rich she smells, / This abortion of a fledgling!"[81] In Beckett's prizewinning, 98-line poem written in a single night in June 1930 on the theme of "time" for Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, the voice of Descartes marks

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[78] *Proust*, 17.
[79] *Proust*, 13.
[80] "superfetation, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/194297?redirectedFrom=superfoetation (accessed July 10, 2017).
[81] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 1.

time according to the age of the eggs he prefers for breakfast.[82] As Beckett writes in his accompanying notes, "René Descartes, Seigneur du Perron, liked his omelette made of eggs hatched from eight to ten days; shorter or longer under the hen and the result, he says, is disgusting."[83] The poem's images grotesquely expand the nature of appetite to merge the willed consumption of food at table with the will-less consumption of the body by time and sickness. Thus Beckett superimposes the death by scarlet fever of Descartes' daughter Francine with the beating of a bloody egg for the making of an omelette:

> Francine, my precious fruit of a house-and-parlour foetus! […]
> Her little grey flayed epidermis and scarlet tonsils!
> My one child
> scourged by a fever to stagnant murky blood—
> blood!
> Oh Harvey beloved
> how shall the red and white, the many in the few,
> (dear bloodswirling Harvey)
> eddy through that cracked beater?[84]

Following this gruesome conflation of the circulation of the blood (discovered by William Harvey) and the whisking of eggs, Beckett adds another element of consumption with reference to the body of Christ: "So we drink Him and eat Him."[85] Sexual and gustatory appetites meet in neologisms like "prostisciutto" (a combination of prostitution and ham) while fertility is laced with sadomasochistic violence in phrases like: "Two lashed ovaries with prostisciutto? / How long did she womb it, the feathery one?"[86] Despite its darker threads, the humorous element in this macabre and erudite poem

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[82] Knowlson, 116-17.
[83] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 5.
[84] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 2, lines 31-40.
[85] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 3, line 60.
[86] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 1, lines 13-14.

is always on display: "In the name of Bacon will you chicken me up that egg."[87] Counting time by the additive days of an egg, whose consumption counts down the remaining days of Descartes's life against an unseen calendar, Beckett implicitly reinscribes the image of Chronos, the god of time, as the eater of his own children. Though it toys with the Cartesian hypothesis of the separation of mind and body, "Whoroscope" ultimately insists on the intermingling of mind and body through the muddied, multi-directional traffic of birth and death.[88]

Notions of fecund death, necrotic birth, and corrupted generation pervade Beckett's mature writing, often accompanied by the dark humor he shows in "Whoroscope." In *Waiting for Godot*, almost twenty years after the Vico essay, Beckett writes, "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps."[89] "A Piece of Monologue" memorably begins: "Birth was the death of him."[90] The seeds of such paradoxes are visible in "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," where we can sense a gleam of delight in Beckett's observation that "Mr. Joyce does not take birth for granted, as Vico seems to have done … there is a great deal of the unborn infant in the lifeless octogenarian, and a great deal of both in the man at the apogee of his life's curve."[91] Beckett's delight in conflating contraries like birth and death in "Whoroscope" and his later work finds an intriguing antecedent in Giordano Bruno's notion of the principle of identified contraries, which he briefly abridges in "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce": "Maximal speed is a state

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[87] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 3, line 66.

[88] Critics have paid strong attention to Beckett's interest in Descartes during the École Normale years, citing "Whoroscope" as a key piece of evidence. It is worth mentioning that Descartes appears as a logical next step to read after familiarizing oneself with Vico, whose philosophy emerged in opposition to the popularity of Cartesian thought.

[89] *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954), 58.

[90] "Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few. Dying too. Birth was the death of him. Ghastly grinning ever since." "A Piece of Monologue," in *Collected Shorter Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Grove Press, 1984), 263.

[91] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 22.

of rest. The maximum of corruption and the minimum of generation are identical: in principle, corruption is generation."[92]

Writing to George Reavey in late 1936 to refuse editorial cuts to *Murphy*, Beckett sputters metaphors that echo the uncanny mingling of natality and necrosis he deploys in "Whoroscope": "And of course the narrative is hard to follow, & of course deliberately so. Am I then Berdaev [*for* Berdyaev]? That I should adorn with historical amnions & placentae a non-historical uterus? And sink grapples in a womb ceaselessly pregnated & never delivered?"[93] Casting *Murphy* as a site of defiant barrenness, Beckett claims the non-historicity of his novel in contrast to a particular form of historicization. The author he references, Nicolai Berdayev, published a "wildly successful" analysis of the decline of modern civilization in 1925 in the mode of Oswald Spengler's monumental *Decline of the West*, which "produced the conceptual framework for the crisis debate" in the 1930s.[94] Berdayev's core argument in *The New Middle Ages* rests on the cataloguing of modern malaise into "a single image of decline which can only be evaded by breaking radically with the present."[95] Just as he disdains "unified tragic completeness" in the fiction of Powys, Beckett recoils from the systematizing logics of historical schemas like Berdayev's.[96]

Beckett's opposition to linear, teleological narrative finds nourishment in authors like Proust and Gide. Yet it is complemented throughout the 1930s by Beckett's firm resistance to teleological

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[92] "Dante … Bruno. Vico .. Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 21. The stalling of forward-moving plots by the defusing effect of equal and opposite forces also appears in *Waiting for Godot*. Writing to Alan Schneider in 1955, Beckett told him, "The other point is simply that Estragon is inert and Vladimir restless. the latter should be always on the fidget, the former tending back to his state of rest. On[e] should hear Vladimir's feet." Letter of 27 December 1955, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 586.
[93] Letter to George Reavey, 13 November 1936, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 380-81. "Reavey had translated the work of Nikolai Berdyaev." In ibid., 382, n. 3.
[94] Jan Ifversen, "The Crisis of European Civilization after 1918," in *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War*, edited by Meno Spiering and Michael Wintle (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 19.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Letter of 8 November 1931, in *Letters,* 94. Beckett makes this remark in reference to Theodore Powys's *Mark Only* and *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, and calls it "the Hardy vice caricatured." Ibid.

narratives of national histories, whether progressive—as in Hegel—or regressive—as in Spengler and Berdayev. Such schemas of politics and history abound in the various sites of his wanderings in this decade, from Ireland and England to France and Germany, from the faculty lounge of Trinity College Dublin to Parisian bistros and the streets of Hamburg, Cologne, and Berlin, places mired in distinctly unresolved histories throughout the 1920s and 1930s. "All the on & up is so tiresome also, the determined optimism à la Beethoven, the unconscionable time a-coming. The vinegar + nitre of Kant + Heraclitus," he complains to Thomas McGreevy from Germany in August 1936.[97] "I say the expressions 'historical necessity' and 'Germanic destiny' start the vomit moving upwards."[98]

In the remainder of this chapter, I connect Beckett's search for non-causal, non-teleological narration to his rejection of the teleological logics of history—whether of regression or progression—that underlie projects of national constitution in the interwar period. I connect these strands of Beckett's thinking, as he did, through the divergent meanings of the term "progress." Semantically, "progress" occupies the cross-section of time and space; it signifies the "course or process of a series of actions, events, etc. through *time*" as well as "the action or act of journeying or moving onward in *space*."[99] Linguistic migration over the centuries opened this descriptive term to political and values-based content, however. By the 14th century, a "progres" referred to a movement through enemy territory, and in the 16th century, "progress" came to denote "improvement."[100] It is with the 18th century, though, that the term "progress" comes to encompass a politics and a model of history, referring to "advancement in civilization."[101] Enlightenment philosophies connect this term for movement to the teleology of universal history sanctioned by reason. Progress as pure movement

[97] Letter of 19 August 1936, in *Letters, Vol. I,* 368 n. 8.
[98] Beckett's entry of January 15, 1937 in the German Diaries. Quoted in Knowlson, 228.
[99] "progress, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/152236?redirectedFrom=progres (accessed July 17, 2017).
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

in space or time is given a *telos*. As Dimitri Nikulin puts it, "Specifically modern, the story of progress or regress occurs when history becomes a construction that moves toward the rationally established end(s) of reason."[102] The epitome of this view appears in Hegel. As Beckett summarizes in his German Diaries of 1935-36, "Hegel's philosophy ∴ essentially historical, a systematic elaboration of entire material of history. He is above all a master of continuation. His aesthetics is a historical structure made up of aesthetic ideals of mankind … His philosophy of religion presents successive states of relation of finite to infinite geist."[103] The theory of universal history is inextricable from the logic of teleology, as Beckett discovered in the course of his intensive philosophical reading in the early 1930s.[104] The movement toward definite consummation that Beckett analyzed in Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1929 found a contemporary echo in the historical teleology and expansionist program of Nazi Germany.

III. Historical Ends

"History is the free acts of personalities taking place but once," Beckett notes around 1932.[105] This definition of history appears in the 600-odd folio pages of handwritten and typed Philosophy Notes of 1932-33, within a section titled "Problems of Universal History."[106] The Philosophy Notes

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[102] *The Concept of History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 17.
[103] Quoted in Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 73-74.
[104] As Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, and Trüper write, "[H]istorical teleologies were among the key vehicles of the formulation of universalist understandings of humankind in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as they offered unification in time to the species at large." Henning Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction: Teleology and History—Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of an Enlightenment Project," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 12.
[105] Philosophy Notes, Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading, MS10967.
[106] Philosophy Notes, Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading, MS10967. Beckett's notes on ancient and modern philosophy taken from four sources: J. Archibald Alexander's *A Short History of Philosophy*, John Burnet's *Greek Philosophy, Part I: Thales to Plato*; Friedrich Ueberweg's *A History of Philosophy, from Thales to the Present Time*, and Wilhelm Windelband's *A History of Philosophy*, with Windelband comprising the most significant source. As Matthew Feldman and David Addyman observe, "It is from here … that much of the key imagery in … *Murphy* is drawn." Matthew Feldman

cover questions of substance, causality, motion, teleology and more in ancient as well as modern philosophers; they include extensive biographical details on particular philosophers and the relationship of philosophical ideas to local circumstances of politics and history.[107] Beckett's notes on the "Problem of Universal History" emphasize the links between the causal logic of Christian redemption, with Jesus as its protagonist, and the similarly teleological presumptions of universal history:

> "Xianity … diverted its metaphysics not to an eternal process of Nature, but to the drama of universal history as an onward flow of events under action of free will. Jesus of Nazareth the center of this drama. Other religions were part of the evil overcome by him. …Course of history takes place once + for all. … For Xianity the historical drama of fall + redemption is connected series of events, beginning with a free decision of lower spirits to sin, + with its turning point in the redemptive revelation.
> History is the free acts of personalities taking place but once.[108]

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and David Addyman, "Samuel Beckett, Wilhelm Windelband and the Interwar 'Philosophy' Notes," in Matthew Feldman, *Falsifying Beckett: Essays on Archives, Philosophy, and Methodology in Beckett Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 191. The years 1932-33 were not Beckett's first encounter with philosophy; as Knowlson tells us, "At the École Normale,[Beckett's friend Jean] Beaufret was particularly interested in Greek thought and may well have introduced Beckett to the ideas of Parmenides on 'being' and 'nonbeing' and on change and changelessness, as well as to the thought of Heraclitus, Parmenides' opponent, and to the paradoxes of Zeno of Elea." *Damned to Fame*, 104.

[107] For references to teleology and causality in the Philosophy Notes, see, for example, Beckett's notes on Anaxagoras (MS10967: 35r-37r), who proposed "the first instance of the teleological explanation of nature" (MS10967: 36r); on "Motion as conceived by Empedocles, Anaxagoras, + Leucippus" (MS10967: 38r); and on the supplementation of teleology by the "causae efficientes" and "causae finalis" in Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, and others (MS10967: 186r), to cite just a few instances. In a 25-page section on Roman philosophy titled "Religious Period," Beckett notes "the beginning of the philosophy of history" (in the supplementing of natural law by the *jus civile* and *jus genticum*) and describes the melding of Christianity and pre-Christian thought: "The scholars discovered no Church, but the Church created its dogma. The neat course of history in this movement was, that the defeated Hellenism created the conceptions by means of which the new religion shaped itself into a dogma." MS10967: 131r. On Parmenides, Beckett writes:

> Most important thinker of the period. His conception of Being worked out in evident opposition to Heraclitus….He follows Xenophanes in his definition of Being as homogenous, without beginning or end, unchangeable, completed, limited + definitive. Being is a well-rounded sphere, perfectly homogenous within itself … Parmenides denies to Time, as to space, independent reality. For him there is only timeless being, with no distinctions. (MS10967: 11r-11v)

[108] MS10967: 142v. Emphasis in original.

It is likely that Beckett would reject every term of this last proposition, from the notion of a free act to the exemplarity of individual personalities and the idea of eventful singularity. His corpus seems constructed on dismantling these terms. The notes he has faithfully copied here describe the logic of universal history—the logic annexed to the narratives of "progress" as "advancement in civilization."[109] It is a model of history overwhelmingly identified with German schools of historiography—and it is a model that fractured with the war of 1914-1918.

Discussions of crisis abounded after 1918 with even greater intensity than the millenarianism associated with Max Nordau's 1892 *Degeneration*. In part this was owing to the degree to which aspects of European culture previously considered as unassailably good could produce such horrific ends. "So many horrors could not have been possible without so many virtues," Paul Valéry wrote in 1919. "Doubtless, much science was needed to kill so many, to, annihilate so many cities in so short a time; but *moral qualities* in like number were also needed. Are Knowledge and Duty, then, suspect?"[110] Not just the substance of European civilization but the idea of Europe itself and its unconsidered structures of thinking now seemed fragile. The ways in which history had been accounted for over the preceding two centuries—namely, with teleological theories of universal history—were insufficient to the realities facing cultures in 1918 and the years of reconstruction afterward.[111] Teleological histories presuming the progressively ameliorating advances of civilization were dealt a devastating blow. In François Hartog's summary, "Triumphant and forward-looking

[109] Ibid.
[110] "The Crisis of the Mind," in *History and Politics*, trans. Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 24.
[111] "Interwar period attacks on the unity of historicity—as in particular represented by nineteenth-century beliefs in progress and continuous betterment—appear remarkably concerted." Henning Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction: Teleology and History—Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of an Enlightenment Project," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 14.

universal histories seemed to have run their course. Entropy was gaining ground and would end up carrying the day."[112]

While Beckett in the interwar years was attempting to conceptualize a "pure act" and construct non-linear narratives, then, intellectuals in the new domains of sociology and anthropology, along with the evolving disciplines of history and philosophy, were posing similar questions. Though much of this intellectual work had begun long before the war, the trajectories of intellectual reflection in the 1920s across Europe were impacted in direct and indirect ways by the carnage of 1914-1918 and the institutions it swept away. Maurice Halbwachs's pioneering work on collective memory and Eugène Minkowski's study of the psychopathological implications of temporal orientation are just two examples of the impact of the war on intellectual currents.[113]

In his 1931 preface to *Regards sur le monde actuel*, Paul Valéry identified a key problem with modern historiography: "The notion of an *event*, which is fundamental, seems not to have been reconsidered and re-thought as it should be, and this explains how relationships of the first importance have never been mentioned, or have not been sufficiently emphasized."[114] Describing the subject of history as "*the sum of those events or conditions which in the past may have come to the notice of some witness*," Valéry not only points out a methodological lacuna in the academic discipline of history, but poses a more profound question: what kind of historical spectatorship is possible in a world of

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[112] Hartog, Regimes of Historicity, 13. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Henning Trüper, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam concur:

> [T]he philosophy of history of the interwar period … has in many respects been foundational for much of the discussion in the decades following the Second World War. Interwar period attacks on the unity of historicity—as in particular represented by nineteenth-century beliefs in progress and continuous betterment—appear remarkably concerted from today's perspective.

"Introduction: Teleology and History—Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of an Enlightenment Project," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 14.

[113] Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). Halbwachs coined the term "collective memory" in 1925. Eugène Minkowski, *Le temps vécu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013). First published in 1933.

[114] "Forward to *Regards sur le monde actuel* (1931)," in *History and Politics*, trans. Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 11 [3-19].

proliferating information and increasingly complex global relationships? How to articulate "this universe of multiple relations and contacts" in which "there is no more duration, continuity, or recognizable causality?"[115] Valéry's questions emphasize the intimate traffic between disciplines encouraged by the shared frame of narrative. As Chakrabarty et al. frame this point, "Teleology constitute[s] a poetics, and this poetics, however indirectly, also communicate[s] with other than fictional forms and genres of writing."[116]

Beckett's attempts to detach action from causality and to rearticulate notions of the event are surprisingly legible within a thick interwar context of other thinkers, many of them historians, attempting the same kind of exercise in their own disciplines in precisely the same years. In 1929, during the period of Beckett's first stay in Paris, two French historians based at the University of Strasbourg founded a new journal of history. Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch aimed to replace the "positivist" study of political histories, major "events" and diplomatic figures with the detailed study of ordinary people and social structures over long stretches of time. The first issue of the *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale* appeared on January 15, 1929; its stated aim was to remake the discipline of history by turning to the little-regarded study of economic and social history and to eliminate disciplinary barriers between social scientists so as to encourage greater intellectual collaboration.[117] Its subject matter encompassed the economic and technical banalities of ordinary life whose gradual accretion or drift produced movement over time. The *Annales* school revolutionized the methods and subject matter of historiography in the 20th century—a paradigm

[115] Ibid., 16.
[116] Henning Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction: Teleology and History—Nineteenth-Century Fortunes of an Enlightenment Project," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 13.
[117] Bertrand Müller, "Introduction," *Correspondance Marc Bloch/Lucien Febvre*, Vol 1, 1928-1933, ed. Bertrand Müller (Paris : Fayard, 1994), v. [v-lv]

shift that continues to reverberate today.[118] Though Bloch and Febvre were working within the narrow elitism of the French academy, their approach to history was deeply influenced by the diffuse crawl of the Great War. Bloch's first historical publication after the Armistice was a study on the spread of false rumors in the war and its consequences for notions of historical evidence.[119] The war offered a lived experience of eventfulness as protracted and gradual, and thus unrepresented by existing political historiography, with its focus on the climactic actions of major figures. It also presented an event that resisted the clarity of calendar dating.

The residues—or continuation—of the First World War after the signing of the Versailles Treaty, along with the Troubles in Ireland that continued to percolate after the Irish War of Independence of 1919-21 and the Civil War of 1922-23, present two major ongoing situations that refuse simplistic historiographies of progress.[120] I want to argue that there is a perhaps a closer alliance between Beckett's literary aesthetics and his experience and reflections on history in the interwar period than has yet been recognized. While Beckett's philosophical, aesthetic, and historical thinking should not be taken as equivalent or commensurable, there are indeed "reverberations, … reapplications" of the historicity of the interwar and its specific problems of historical articulation to

[118] The launch of the *Annales* by followed almost two decades of work by another French historian, Henri Berr, whose *Revue des synthèses historiques*, begun in 1900, had laid the groundwork for the reception of this mode of doing history.

[119] See Marc Bloch, « Réflexions d'un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre" in *Revue de synthèse historique* 33 (1921): 13-35. See also Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, translated by Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 105-110.

[120] Many historians have come to regard the interwar period as one "the continuation of war by other means," to take a phrase used by German veteran and *Storm of Steel* author Ernst Jünger in 1925. Jünger's formulation reverses Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that politics is war by other means. Ángel Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 175. James M. Diehl argues that "Interwar domestic politics opened not with the end of the First World War but with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and closed not with the beginning of the Second World War but with its end." "No More Peace: The Militarization of Politics," in *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919-1939*, edited by Roger Chickering and Stig Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97 [97-112].

be found in Beckett's thought.[121] Andrew Gibson and Marjorie Perloff are among critics that claim the singular impact of the Second World War on Beckett's writing.[122] There are extremely good reasons for this reading. Yet to take the influence of historical events on Beckett's work and thought as beginning only with his involvement in the extremities of the Second World War is to overlook a consistent thread of reflection and negotiation dating to the 1920s. While Beckett's literary production remains astonishing in its singularity, Beckett has so often been treated as *sui generis* by critics that we have overlooked the ways in which he is eminently of his time. I follow Lois Gordon in suggesting that "Beckett was very much aware of Dublin's—indeed, much of this century's—sociopolitical and religious crises" and that there is a strong case to be made for viewing Beckett's work as "a product of and testament to his times."[123]

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[121] "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," in *Disjecta*, 20. Beckett is prevaricating a reading of Joyce's *Work on Progress* that would take it as an illustration of Vico's philosophy of history, and chastises Vico for an analogous error in reading philology as simply an historical expression of philosophy.

[122] In his erudite short biography of Beckett, Gibson provides a catalogue of wartime tropes in *Molloy, Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*:

> The *Trilogy* is everywhere haunted by a vocabulary and images that call modern warfare and its consequences to mind; combustion, detonation, upheaval, crawling, scavenging, ambulances, boots, crutches, rations, ramparts, observation posts, guardrooms, hospitalization, annihilation, loss of limbs, amputation, lightlessness, sheltering in holes, violent encounters in forests, battle-cries, cries in the night, murder, immolation, blackouts, amnesias, extermination, regiments, returnees, war pensions, mutilation, enlistment, puttees, disfiguration, dust-clouds, festered wounds, tyrants, craters, mass burial, cenotaphs, greatcoats, memoirs, mud, decomposing flesh, bodies becoming shapeless heaps or living torches, uprooting, dislocation, and above all, ruins, 'leaning things, forever lapsing and crumbling away'. The protagonists of the *Trilogy* all make halting progress over featureless or shattered terrain. … Indeed, juggle the pieces, and the *Trilogy* supplies one with a clutch of phrases for a hauntingly vivid and wastefully well-told war story.

Andrew Gibson, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Reaktion, 2010), 119-20. Gibson picks up on the Great War tropes in Beckett's writing such as references to "no-man's land' in the German Diaries, but swallow such mentions within a discussion of the Vichy régime of World War II. Ibid. Marjorie Perloff, "In Love with Hiding: Samuel Beckett's War," in *Iowa Review* 35.2 (2005): 76-103.

[123] *The World of Samuel Beckett, 1906-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 5.

"The shuttle of a ripening egg combs the warp of his days," Beckett says of Descartes in his notes to "Whoroscope."[124] The shuttle of ripening wars comb the warp of Beckett's days from his schooling in Dublin to his arrival in Paris in 1928 and his peripatetic movements around Europe in the 1930s. Beckett matured during the fermentation of crises provoked by the 1914-1918 conflict, the Civil War and Troubles in Ireland, the emergence of Fascist movements in Italy, Spain, and Germany and Fascist parties in France and England, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the gradual militarization leading to the Second World War. His life was directly buffeted by historical contingency from the time he was a child. The Easter Rising of 1916 prompted his parents to send his older brother Frank, and a few years later Beckett himself, to a boarding school in the north.[125] The assassination of French president on May 7, 1932 forced Beckett to leave Paris, where he had been living, for London, because he did not have a valid *carte de séjour*.[126] Later, throughout the 1930s, geopolitical events ramified on the rates of exchange between his small allowance in Ireland and the French franc, and on his safety during the Second World War when he fled the Gestapo with other members of his Resistance cell.

More than these small details, however, I suggest that one of the core ideas of the Beckettian aesthetic—the impossibility of ending—exists in dialogue with dramatically visible public demonstrations of non-ending in the interwar period. Russell Smith observes,

> Although a whole series of Beckett's works, from *The Unnamable* through to *Stirrings Still*, set themselves the task of making an ending, it is widely accepted that ends, however desired, are never attained in Beckett's fiction, and indeed that Beckett's experiments with narrative form

[124] "Whoroscope," in Samuel Beckett, *Collected Poems in English and French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 5.

[125] Knowlson notes,

> Ireland was partitioned during Beckett's second year at the school. And although he himself felt that the event scarcely impinged on him at the time, passing across the border at the beginning and end of each term, seeing British troops stationed nearby, and then returning to the capital of a new country that was in the process of forming itself must have had some impact on his developing political awareness.

Damned to Fame, 53-54.

[126] Knowlson, 156.

> explicitly undermine the possibility of coming to an end. By ending repeatedly, they fail to end definitively. [127]

This description of the unachieved endings in Beckett's plays and fictions could as well describe the most egregious non-ending of the interwar period—the notion circulated in national and international discourses of the First World War as "the war to end all wars." Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau speaks of "a form of secularized millenarianism, a secular eschatology [*une eschatologie laïcisée*] whose heart was specifically the construction of a humanity definitively rid of war."[128] "We have killed war," a Lyon newspaper joyously proclaimed on November 12, 1918, the day after the Armistice.[129] Yet the very name of the "First" World War puts the lie to these assertions. The "Great War" was dwarfed twenty years after its conclusion by the scale and systematicity of atrocity in the conflict known as the "Second" World War. The "War to End All Wars" thus names a failed eschatology.

In his early twenties when he lived in Paris, Beckett encountered the perpetuation of this war and its non-closure. Arriving as he did on November 1, 1928, he would have been witness to the mass reach of its commemoration on the 10th anniversary of the Armistice on November 11th. Though the period we now call the "interwar" is widely acknowledged to be overdetermined in histories of the period that overemphasize the impending Second World War, the lingering impact of the First is not in question, particularly in France.[130] France averaged almost 900 deaths per day for almost four and a half years.[131] Not only did France suffer the highest number of casualties in the

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[127] Russell Smith, "Beckett's Endlessness: Rewriting Modernity and the Postmodern Sublime." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 14. *After Beckett / D'Après Beckett* (2004): 405.
[128] Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, "La Grande Guerre," in *Dictionnaire critique de la République*, ed. Vincent Duclert and Christophe Prochasson (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 542. My translation.
[129] "La guerre est morte et c'est nous qui l'avons tué!" claims *Le Progrès*. Quoted in Audouin-Rouzeau, 542-43.
[130] Roxanne Panchasi, *Future Tense: The Culture of Anticipation in France Between the wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 165, n. 17.
[131] Audouin-Rouzeau, 538.

war (along with Serbia), but the bloodiest front of the war was in French territory.[132] Psychically as well as practically, then, the persistence of the damage wrought by the First World War remained an open secret in France in the late 1920s, where the projects of reconstruction to the industrial, northeast part of the country along the Western Front were not completed until 1931.[133] In the bodies of its population, the war remained discernible; "By 1918, 63% of the active male population had been mobilized … and of these men 1.325 million (10 per cent of the male workforce) died, with over a million others still receiving a war invalidity pension as late as 1930."[134] The youngest of these veterans were only half a dozen years older than Beckett.[135]

Born in 1906, Beckett was a child during the hostilities of 1914-1918. Yet the relationships he formed in Paris between 1928 and 1930 were significantly framed by others' experiences of the war and by its continued undertow on the present. The First World War was the major social fact of the 1920s. Generational differences were marked by whether one had served (or been eligible for service). In France, such service was both invisible, because a large proportion of the young male population was now forever absent, and insistently visible, because of the large numbers of those who returned with injury. The Surrealist circles with which he associated in Paris were directly involved in the war and their aesthetic program was oriented by a rejection of its rationality.[136] Louis Gordon suggests that "Not only did [the Surrealists'] work influence Beckett's creative development,

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[132] Joan Tumblety, "France," in *Twisted Paths: Europe 1914-1945*, edited by Robert Gerwarth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 112.
[133] Ibid., 111.
[134] Ibid., 114.
[135] French veterans were born between January 1, 1870 and December 31, 1899. Janine Bourdin, "Les anciens combatants et la célébration du 11 novembre 1938" in *La France et les français in 1938-39*, ed. René Rémond and Janine Bourdin (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1978), 96-97.
[136] See Knowlson, 113. Amy Lyford connects the visibility of mutilated bodies among the general population and the disorder to gendered relationships provoked by the war with Surrealist experiments in collage and other media in the 1920s and 1930s. *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

but their bitterness toward World War I also recalled many arguments he had heard in Dublin."[137] Hemingway, who Beckett disliked, had driven an ambulance in Italy. Alan Duncan, an acquaintance Beckett regularly met in Paris though not always with enjoyment, was "a pensioned veteran of World War I."[138] Richard Aldington, who facilitated Beckett's agreement with Chatto & Windus to write *Proust*, was a veteran who described his war experience in both poetry and prose. Beckett's "closest friend and confidant," Thomas McGreevy, was a veteran thirteen years his senior who had been wounded twice in the war and whose studies in history at Trinity College Dublin had been postponed by the outbreak of hostilities.[139] In Ireland, service in the British cause during the First World War was a delicate matter in the 1920s. One of the letters Beckett references in the *Irish Times* articulated the complex position of Irish veterans like McGreevy; the writer declared pride in his service while declaring himself a firm Republican.[140] Writing to McGreevy from Dublin a few days after the twelfth anniversary of the Armistice in 1930, Beckett grumbles, "Glad to get your card … Here negation & negation to feed a sterile will-less phallus of black fire. Armistice Day & letters to the Irish Times and [professors] Luce & Ruddy and all the other means of the Spermopauleatic paroxysm."[141]

"The room is full of bastards talking about war films and the National Anthem—having ideas—et quelles idées—à toute vitesse," Beckett complains from Trinity College, where he was teaching in the autumn of 1931.[142] "And making <u>little</u> jokes—the kind that dribble into a subtle

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[137] *The World of Samuel Beckett, 1906-1946*, 34.
[138] *Letters, Vol. I.,* 29, n. 9.
[139] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 83. MacGreevy had served from 1916 on and been wounded in the Somme and in Ypres. See also Lois Gordon, *The World of Samuel Beckett, 1906-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, 37-38.
[140] Letter of 14 November 1930, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 56, n. 2. On the relationship between Great War combatants and republicanism in Ireland, see Alvin Jackson, "The Two Irelands," in *Twisted Paths: Europe 1914-1945*, edited by Robert Gerwarth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60-83.
[141] Letter of 14 November 1930, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 54.
[142] This is the semester in which Beckett taught Gide and lectured on the "motiveless act."

smile."[143] Popular historiography, enabled by new and ever cheaper media of representation and diffusion, presented a public counterpart to the largely private coteries of academic discussion. The merging of stories and histories of the war, imaginative representation and public fact, manifested to an unprecedented degree in the cinema. Part of this public historiography was a wave of war memoirs that appeared around the tenth anniversary of the Armistice.[144] Aldington published *Death of a Hero*, a popular war memoir, in 1929; his war poems comprised part of the work McGreevy evaluated in his monograph on Aldington, and for which McGreevy took an epigraph from Beckett's *Proust*. In July 1930, Beckett recommended Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz's novel *La Beauté sur la Terre* to McGreevy, telling him that he had bought it as a birthday gift for his brother Frank. He enthused: "It is the best novel I have read modernly after the shell-shocked triangle!"[145] Beckett is "probably" referring to Henri Barbusse's 1916 *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*), George Duhamel's 1917 *La Vie des Martyrs* (*The New Book of Martyrs*), and Roland Dorgelès's 1919 *Les Croix de bois* (*Wooden Crosses*).[146]

Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza observe that the overwhelming feeling articulated by this literature is that of horror.[147] Beckett may also have been intrigued by the modifications to the temporality and progression of plot that these trench memoirs imposed on traditional realist narrative structure. The prototypical temporality of trench memoirs is that of the individual numbed by an ongoing present, from which neither past nor future can be perceived as possible alternatives. Barbusse describes the effects of ceaselessly reiterated physical exhaustion and empirical sameness on the typical trench soldier: "Now he only hopes for one thing: to sleep, so that this dreary day will

[143] Letter of 14 November 1930, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 55.
[144] In his study of the relations between modernism and war literature, Carl Krockel argues, "The 'war boom' of memoirs at the end of the Twenties overshadowed the 'Modernist experiment' at the beginning of the decade." *War Trauma and English Modernism: T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 2.
[145] Letter to Thomas MacGreevy, c. 18 to 25 July 1930, *Letters*, Vol., I, 32.
[146] *Letters, Vol. I*, 34, note 13. Barbusse won the Prix Goncourt in 1917 and Duhamel won it in 1918; Proust won it in 1919 for the first volume of the *Recherche*.
[147] Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, 1900 à 1930* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2008),457.

expire, this nothing day, this day like so many to come which he will have to endure heroically, to get by, until he reaches the last day of the war, or of his life."[148] The attraction Beckett would have felt for these descriptions of temporal existence is palpable in the language of *Proust*: "There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow nor from yesterday."[149] His language for the wreckage wrought by time echoes the language of disaster and psychic degradation in these trench memoirs: "We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday."[150]

The psychic implications of war can be sensed in Beckett's approach to the engrained bodily memory of habit, which escapes the Proust "rememoration" of the *mémoire involontaire*.[151] Describing the opposition between voluntary and involuntary memory, he writes:

> Strictly speaking, we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to which Habit does not possess the key, and does not need to, because it contains none of the hideous and useful paraphernalia of war.[152]

War is the ultimate expression of utility in the degraded sense that Beckett brings to that term; it is opposed to the non-utility of art. Beckett does not romanticize war; indeed, he shows a cynical fatigue with habits of national remembrance that he casts as being emptied of their content and genuine emotion by habit. He confides to McGreevy in 1936 that he is tired of seeing old acquaintances with whom he no longer has vital friendships merely out of obligation: "If nothing has survived [of the friendship] but the habit, to insist is like doffing to the Cenotaph," he states.[153] Both

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[148] Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*, trans. Robin Buss (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 133.
[149] *Proust*, 13.
[150] *Proust*, 13.
[151] "In extreme cases memory is so closely related to habit that its word takes flesh, and is not merely available in cases of urgency, but habitually enforced." *Proust*, 31. The most available public example of such "extreme cases" of physicalized memory at this time is the embodied, unremembered traumatic neuroses of shell shock victims.
[152] *Proust*, 31.
[153] Letter of 16 January 1936 in *Letters, Vol. I*, 300.

war and its unthinking commemoration offer metaphors in Beckett's writing for the automaticity of habit.

Obligatory national sentiment of the reflexive kind baffled and frustrated Beckett.[154] In his friendships, he was ecumenical rather than identitarian.[155] Responding to McGreevy's essay on the painter Jack Yeats in 1938, he told his friend that he thought the piece overemphasized social and political criticism of Yeats's milieu: "I received almost the impression … as the essay proceeded, that your interest was passing from the man himself to the forces that formed him—and not only him."[156] He adds,

> But perhaps that also is the fault of my mood and of my chronic inability to understand as a member of any proposition a phrase like 'the Irish people', or to imagine that it ever gave a fart in its corduroys for any form of art whatsoever, whether before the Union or after, or that it was ever capable of any thought or act other than the rudimentary thoughts and acts belted into it by the priests and by the demagogues in service of the priests, or that it will ever care, if it ever knows, any more than the Bog of Allen will ever care or know, that there was once a painter in Ireland called Jack Butler Yeats.[157]

He concludes with a flourish, "This is … only to say that I, as a clot of prejudices, prefer the first half of your work, with its real and radiant individuals, to the second, with our national scene. Et voilà."[158] The harmlessness of doffing one's hat to the Cenotaph, however, and even the annoyance of political debates conducted by Beckett's pro-Republic friends, were overshadowed by more grim and destructive iterations of national sentiment, of which Beckett was only too aware.

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[154] Lois Gordon notes that "The eager willingness to sacrifice life and limb for God, king, and country … along with Crystal Palace dreams of world mastery through hard work, prayer, and good manners became grist for the mills of the hundreds of books published between 1914 and 1928." *The World of Samuel Beckett, 1906-1940* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), 22. Gordon gives a summary of books on such topics, including Spengler, that would have been available in the Clare Street bookshop across from the Beckett family business.

[155] Gibson notes that while travelling in Germany, "He repeatedly distinguishes people from their historically and culturally determined language, the discourses of the day in which they are caught up." *Samuel Beckett*, 85.

[156] Letter of 31 January 1938, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 599.

[157] Ibid., 599-600.

[158] Ibid., 600.

In 1936, Beckett spent several surreal months in Germany looking at painting. Beckett's own uncertain progress contrasted with the insistent narratives of historical destiny of the Reich. He found the arguments for national destiny and the prosecution of anti-Semitism infuriating on all levels, from the aesthetic to the ethical. "Mr. Furwängler, like the good Nazi he is, cannot tolerate mysteries," Beckett writes, critiquing an overly straightforward performance of Beethoven.[159] Beckett's uncle, Boss Sinclair, an art dealer who was Jewish, had been forced to bring his family back to Dublin after years of living in Germany, and as Andrew Gibson emphasizes, through this relationship and his wide reading, Beckett had been aware of the political situation in Germany for years.[160] His experiences in this trip, however, demonstrated the perniciousness of its restrictions. Many of the paintings he wanted to see were locked away under the label of degenerate art, or secluded in private collections. People he befriended, like the art historian Will Grohman, had been barred from their professions and worse; Grohman had been removed from his post in 1933 under the "Professional Civil Service Restoration Act."[161]

Beckett's critique of anti-Semitism in his letters and the German Diaries reaches beyond the specificity of National Socialism's emergence over the last decade to condemn the centuries-old persecution of Jews. He told McGreevy, "The great Nürnberg period [of art] is for me now a conspiracy… It is all so terribly guildy and complacent jealous zealous artisan."[162] Beckett grounds his aesthetic critique in a historical one: "They drove out the Jews in 1499 and kept them out for 3 and a half centuries. And the catastrophe of 1517 was right into their barrow."[163] Only two years earlier, the Nürnberg Laws of 1935 had stripped Jews of citizenship and prohibited interracial

[159] Letter of 27 January 1934, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 183.
[160] Gibson, 76-77.
[161] See Gibson, 76; Letter of 16 February 1937, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 450, n. 14.
[162] Letter of 7 March, 1937, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 460.
[163] Ibid.

marriage.[164] The city was also notorious as the site of the 1934 rally in support of Hitler that appeared in Leni Riefenstahl's film, *The Triumph of the Will*. Beckett told Gunther Albrecht,

> Nürnberg was so horrible, as I more or less expected, that I extended my resentments even to the Great Period and found good reasons, mostly connected with the expulsion of the Jews in 1499 (they didn't get back for nearly 4 centuries) and the Wittenberg catastrophe of 1517, for impugning the value of [painters] Stoss and Kraft and Pleydenwurff and Vischer and Wohlgemut [*for* Wolgemut] and even the great AD [Albrecht Dürer] himself.[165]

Beckett's aesthetic responses here are unequivocally affected by his historical consciousness.

It was during this trip that Beckett made one of his most famous statements about history, in his German Diary entry of 15 January 1937. Recounting a conversation with Axel Kaun and a man named about "books on history," he writes:

> I am not interested in a "unification" of the historical chaos any more than I am in the "clarification" of the individual chaos, and still less in the anthropomorphisation of the inhuman necessities that provoke the chaos. What I want is the straws, flotsam, etc., names, dates, births, and deaths, because that is all that I can know. … Meier says the background is more important than the foreground, the causes than the effects, the causes than their representatives and opponents. I say the background and the causes are an in human and incomprehensible machinery and venture to wonder what kind of appetite it is that can be appeased by the modern animism that consists in rationalizing them. Rationalism is the last form of animism. Whereas the pure incoherence of times and men and places is at least amusing… I say the expressions "historical necessity" and Germanic destiny" start the vomit moving upwards.[166]

Beckett's propensity for chaos over linearity, atomistic data over causality, and statement over explanation reiterate his approach to narrative form in his Paris writings of 1928-1931. The strictures of cause and effect that he saw Proust as agitating against manifest more consequential weight in the deployment of teleological justifications for Nazi Germany's exclusions of Jews, Roma, and others, and in its arguments for *Lebensraum* [living space]. The image Beckett uses to describe his bodily reaction to such nationalist doctrines formally mimics the progressive ascent of teleological arguments grounded in theories of universal history; "the vomit mov[es] upward" for Beckett as the

[164] Gibson, 76.
[165] Letter of 30 March 1937, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 479.
[166] Quoted in Knowlson, 228.

destiny of the Germany people aims to ascend to the end of history prefigured by Hitler's thousand year Reich.

Beckett's thinking about aesthetic forms of time and teleology in the 1930s is inextricable from his reflections on history and historiography and his own embodied experiences of time and movement. His effort to disentangle aesthetic representations of change and temporal existence from teleological certainty complemented the politics he adopted towards certain forms of historical justification in the interwar period, namely, the nationalist cooption of doctrines of universal history for projects of racial exclusion and occupation. I have argued that these efforts are legible in the opposition Beckett carved out between the Enlightenment understanding of "progress" as a term connected to the teleological, universal history of civilizational improvement, and the Latinate roots of "progress" as the registration of spatial or temporal change, free of moral or political valences.

Aesthetically, personally, and politically, these differing resonances of progress were on Beckett's mind in this decade, particularly during his time in Germany. In a discussion with a theatre director named Eggers-Kastner in Munich over Joyce's *Work in Progress* (whose own progress into print had shadowed Beckett over the years), Beckett had a realization about the structure of the *Work*:[167]

> As I talk and listen realise suddenly how *Work in Progress* is the only possibility [possible] development from *Ulysses*, the heroic attempt to make the literature accomplish what belongs to music—the Miteinander and the simultaneous. *Ulysses* falsifies the unconscious, or the "monologue intérieur," in so far as it is obliged to express it as a teleology.[168]

[167] See Dirk Van Hulle, *James Joyce's 'Work in Progress': Pre-Book Publishing of Fragments Finnegans Wake Fragments* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Beckett's letters regularly refer to the latest news of the manuscript and the afterlife of his 1930 translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* with Alfred Perón, which was undertaken at the prompting of the Surrealist Philippe Soupault, co-author with Breton of the 1919 poem *Les champs magnétiques*. Knowlson, 120.

[168] Quoted in Knowlson, 240. The quotation is from the German Diaries. Beckett adds, "[L]iterature can no more escape from chronologies to simultaneities, from Nebeneinander [side-by-side-ness] to Miteinander [together-ness or withness] … [than] the human voice can sing chords." Ibid.

The critique of particular forms of representation (namely causality and teleology) that Beckett has been developing since 1929 in "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce" emerges as an aesthetic critique of *Ulysses*. The "falsity" of its teleogical interior monologue contrasts with his own pervading sense of directionlessness, which is particularly intense during this trip. He tells Mary Manning Howe in December, 1936, "I can't imagine anything worse than the mental marasmus, in which I totter & sweat for months. It has turned out indeed to be a journey from, and not to, as I knew it was, before I began it. I can't begin to make it clear to you, I haven't the energy to make it clear to myself."[169] Several months later, he writes to her again:

> There is an ecstasy of accidia—willless in a grey tumult of idées obscures. … I lie for days on the floor, or in the woods, accompanied & unaccompanied, in a coenaesthesia of mind, a fullness of mental self-aesthesia that is entirely useless. The monad without the conflict, lightless & darkles. I used to pretend to work, I do so no longer. I used to dig about in the mental sand for the lugworms of likes & dislikes, I do so no longer. The lugworms of understanding.
> Do not envy me, do not pity me.[170]

In all of these letters, it is the slack burden of time that adds to the impression of imprisonment—"I totter and sweat for months"; "I lie for days"—and, to Tom McGreevy in March 1937, "The journey is over, mentally as usual long before physically, and from now on I shall simply be hanging around waiting to get in the air."[171] Empty time meets an emptiness of being—a sharp contrast to "the expressions 'historical necessity' and 'Germanic destiny' [that] start the vomit moving upwards."[172]

Beckett has frequently been taken as a writer who espoused no politics and whose works evade sociopolitical interpretation. By one account, Beckett's "omission of particular spatio-temporal details … contributes to the process of building a universalistic anthropo-philosophical claim around

[169] Letter of 13 December, 1936, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 397.
[170] Letter of 30 August, 1937, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 546.
[171] Letter of 25 March, 1937, in *Letters, Vol. 1*, 468.
[172] Beckett's entry of January 15, 1937 in the German Diaries. Quoted in Knowlson, 228.

his works."[173] For Badiou, this is "'generic humanity' brought down to its fundamental operators."[174] Yet as I have argued in this chapter, Beckett's aversion to totalizing historical narratives reflects a keenly defined historical position in the interwar period. These antipathies to the clarity of simplistic historical narration stayed with him. In the first act of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir asks Estragon, "What was I saying, we could go on from there."

> Estragon: What were you saying when?
> Vladimir: At the very beginning.
> Estragon: The very beginning of WHAT?
> Vladimir: This evening … I was saying … I was saying …
> Estragon: I'm not a historian.
> Vladimir: Wait …[175]

Incapable of delimiting either beginnings or endings, effecting actions, or encountering events, Vladimir and Estragon dramatize the predicament of existence in ongoing time, bare of the ordering structures of historical narrative.

Yet Beckett did sneak an oblique reflection on contemporary history into his most famous play. In 1938, Beckett wrote to his old friend Arland Ussher to thank him for his essay "The Age of Shadows," which Beckett passed on to George Reavey for publication. "Thanks for the letter and the MS which I liked. The image of the long drop and the garters was the best I have seen for a long time, much better than Herriot's 'obsolete vitamins of romanticism'."[176] Usscher's "image of the long drop and the garters" is a metaphor that presents the course of modern history as follows:

> In the eighteenth century the static world of antiquity had broken thread after thread that suspended it from the arch of heaven, until it hung by a single gossamer; now the last thread has snapped … Then came a first collision, the Great War; and since then we have become a little still, a little frightened. Yet most are drunken with the intoxication of speed, though a

[173] Arka Chattopadhyay & James Martell, "Introduction," *Samuel Beckett and the Encounter of Philosophy and Literature* (London: Roman Books, 2013), 15.
[174] Ibid., 11.
[175] *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954), 42.
[176] Letter of 12 May, 1938, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 621.

> few are trying to attach the careering world to some subjective absolute of the Beautiful or the Useful (which is like hoping to break one's fall by pulling at one's own garters).[177]

Usscher's skepticism toward the beauty or utility of the "careering world" and the futility of "pulling at one's own garters" to stop one's fall would undoubtedly have appealed to Beckett.[178] Not just the idea but the image stayed with him. When the essay was published in December 1938, he wrote to Arland, "Glad to sea [sic] you are bursting into print again. The "suspender" essay I always liked very much, and more than ever in such sad company."[179]

"There is one thing that bothers me," Beckett wrote to director Roger Blin days after the première of *Waiting for Godot* at the Théâtre du Babylone in January, 1953.

> Estragon's trousers. Naturally I asked Suzanne if they fall down properly. She tells me that he holds on to them half-way down. This must not do—it's utterly inappropriate. It wouldn't occur to him at that moment—he doesn't realize they have fallen down. … The spirit of the play, in so far as it has one, is that nothing is more grotesque than the tragic, and that must be put across right to the end, and particularly at the end. I have lots of other reasons for wanting this business not to be underplayed, but I'll spare you them. But please do as I ask and restore it as it is in the text, and as we had always planned in rehearsal: and let the trousers fall right down, round the ankles. It must seem silly to you, but to me it's vital.[180]

Recycling Usscher's metaphor (as he will recycle the joke about the tailor's perfect pair of pants from *Le monde et le pantalon* in *Endgame*), Beckett insists on the totality of the fall, and on the futile hitch of the pants that succeeds it. *Waiting for Godot* ends with a scene in which Vladimir and Estragon, looking for a rope with which to hang themselves from the tree, decide to try with Estragon's belt. The stage directions state: "*(Estragon loosens the cord that holds up his trousers which, much too big for him, fall about his ankles. They look at the cord. […] They each take an end of the cord and pull. It breaks. They almost fall.)*"[181] Estragon and Vladimir are left with the falling trousers, unable to attain the state of "integrity

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[177] Arland Usscher, "Three Essays," *Nineteenth Century and After* 124-742 [December 1938] 736-37. Quoted in *Letters, Vol. I*, 623, n. 1.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Letter of 28 December 1938, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 647.
[180] Letter of 9 January 1953, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 350. Beckett did not attend the première in Paris.
[181] *Waiting for Godot*, 60.

of a pendu's emission of semen."[182] The play ends a few lines later, in spatial stasis and temporal continuity:

Estragon:	Well? Shall we go?
Vladimir:	Pull on your trousers.
Estragon:	What?
Vladimir:	Pull on your trousers.
Estragon:	(*realizing his trousers are down*). True.
	He pulls up his trousers.
Vladimir:	Well? Shall we go?
Estragon:	Yes, let's go.
	They do not move.[183]

IV. The Falling Trousers

> I don't know whether we'll be able to do anything. I am not good at fighting. Perhaps we can do something by not fighting. After all, that is a widely shared talent. In the free-for-all, of course, rankest of rankers, not above it, indifferent to causes, caught up since the beginning in another war, without hope of leave or armistice, banished from the gains and the losses yet without falling into the New Testament.
>
> - Letter of 2 August 1948 to Georges Duthuit[184]
> -

The repetitions of history in their literary and political articulation (what Erich Auerbach might call *figura*) took concrete form in Beckett's life as a writer, as an individual resisting claims of country and projects of nationalism, and, paradoxically, as a citizen who, despite such protestations, adopted France as his home and his quotidian culture.[185] The task of representing the ongoing change of temporal existence without unified narrative or argument reaches across the spheres of

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[182] Letter of 18 October, 1932, in *Letters, Vol. I*, 134-35.
[183] *Waiting for Godot*, 61.
[184] Letter of 2 August 1948, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 92
[185] *Letters, Vol. I*, xci. Auerbach states,

> A figural schema permits both its poles—the figure and the fulfillment—to retain the characteristics of concrete historical reality, in contradistinction to what obtains with symbolic or allegorical personifications, so that figure and fulfillment—although the one "signifies" the other—have a significance which is not incompatible with their being real. An event taken as a figure preserves its literal and historical meaning. It remains an event, does not become a mere sign.

Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 195-95.

Beckett's life, from the personal and the aesthetic to the political and the ethical. He solidified this position by insisting on the ahistorical autonomy of the work of art and by deconstructing the structures of nominal stability, causal association, and chronological exegesis that universal historical narratives rely upon.

"I heard Adolf the Peacemaker on the wireless last night," Beckett told George Reavey in 1938. "And thought I heard air escaping—a slow puncture. But no matter how things go I shall stay on here."[186] Beckett moved to France for good in 1937 and began writing poems in French before the war.[187] As he recounted to Reavey, army uniforms were already proliferating in the streets of Paris, "and at night horrible curfew lighting, like that through which Proust stumbled to the Temple of Delights."[188] Proust's depiction of the darkened streets of Paris during a 1918 bombardment mediates Beckett's experience of military preparations in 1938. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Beckett applied to drive an ambulance for France before joining the Resistance in 1941.[189] When their cell was denounced, Beckett and his French partner Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil were forced to flee Paris in August 1942, shortly after the roundup of almost 12,000 Parisian Jews in the "grand rafle" of the *Vél d'hiv*. Beckett's war was passed under the Vichy regime of the "poor old misled man and hero of Verdun," Marshal Pétain.[190] After the war, he worked at the Irish Red Cross hospital in St-Lô, "la Capitale des Ruines," a town on the Normandy coast that was completely annihilated by Allied bombardments as part of the 1944 Allied invasion.[191]

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[186] Letter of 27 September 1938, in *Letters, Vol. I,* 642.
[187] Knowlson, 270.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Knowlson connects Beckett's decision to join the Resistance in 1941 to the arrest and internment of Joyce's secretary Paul Léon, who was Jewish. 279.
[190] Letter of 19 August 1945, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 18. See Gibson's chapters 5 and 6, "*Élimination des déchets*: The War, Resistance, Vichy France, 1939-44" and "*Indignités:* Liberation, the Purge, de Gaulle, 1944-9" in *Samuel Beckett*, 95-127.
[191] Letter of 19 August 1945, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 18.

Beckett was extraordinarily productive in the following years (Knowlson titles his chapter on 1946-53 "A Frenzy of Writing"), and the works he produced between 1947 and 1951 are among his most famous, including *Waiting for Godot* and the *Trilogy*. In 1949, he told Tom McGreevy that he and Suzanne had taken a room in the village of Ussy-sur-Marne, where he eventually purchased a home. "Marvellous country, peace," he enthused. "The Marne 100 yards away, i.e. bathes of a sort. The little village was mentioned in dispatches 1914-18."[192] In France, and especially this region, history lies in the soil. The writer who has perhaps come closer than any other modernist to describing the temporal phenomenologies of the trenches and their issueless mud describes his home in terms the soldiers of the Great War would instantly recognize. "If I don't get away by myself now and try to worth I'll explode, or implode," Beckett wrote Alan Schneider in 1955. "So I have retreated to my hole in the Marne mud and am struggling with a play."[193] (The play was *Endgame*.) "*E fango è il mondo*," Beckett quoted Giuseppe Leopardi as an epigraph to his 1930 *Proust*.[194] "And the world is mud"—*la fange* in French. Twenty-five years later, corresponding with a young doctoral student who had written a dissertation on Joyce and Mallarmé, Beckett recounted "once quoting to Joyce Leopardi's E fango è il mondo, to which his instantaneous and sole reaction consisted in seizing on the association Il mondo—immonde" ["The world—filthy, foul."][195] Beckett's version insists on the mud.

[192] Letter of 27 March 1949, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 145.
[193] Letter of 27 December 1955, in *Letters, Vol. II,* 586. He also uses the phrase, "my hole in the Marne mud" in an earlier letter to Barney Rossett. Letter of 17 December, 1955, in ibid., 584.
[194] See letter of 22 July 1955, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 538, n. 4.
[195] Letter of 22 July 1955, in *Letters, Vol. II*, 537.

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In June 1940, France fell to German occupation after six weeks of conflict. On the 11th of November of that year—Armistice Day—*lycéens* and university students staged "the first large scale collective demonstration of opposition to the defeat, of resistance to the occupier, and of protest against the assassination of the republic by Vichy."[1] The youth who led the demonstration were the children of combatants, elevated on the rejection of war brought on by the experience of 1914-1918.[2]

Erich Auerbach wrote his dissertation on Dante following his service in the First World War, for which he was awarded the Iron Cross. In the 1920s, he produced both a German translation of Vico's *New Science* and a monograph titled *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, published in the same year as Beckett's "Dante … Bruno. Vico . . Joyce."[3] He taught in Marburg before the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped him of the fragile professional status he had maintained after 1933 as a Jew who was nonetheless a veteran.[4] He wrote his magisterial study of narrative realism in Western culture, from Homer to Virginia Woolf, *Mimesis*, in Istanbul, where he took refuge during the Second World War; it takes the notion of "figura" as its structuring schematic.[5] Auerbach is explicit about the impact of contemporary historical events on the hermeneutical model he lays out in *Mimesis*: "International communications were impeded; I had to dispense with almost all periodicals, with almost all the more recent investigations, and in some cases with reliable critical editions of my texts."[6] He

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[1] Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, "La Grande Guerre," in *Dictionnaire critique de la République*, ed. Vincent Duclert and Christophe Prochasson (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 544.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Edward Said, "Forward," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), x-xi.
[4] James I. Porter, "Introduction," *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, translated by Jane O. Newman, edited by James I. Porter (Prnceton: Princeton Unviersity Press, 2016), x.
[5] Auerbach writes, "I was no longer concerned with realism in general, the question was to what degree and in what manner realistic subjects were treated seriously, problematically, or tragically." *Mimesis,* 556.
[6] *Mimesis*, 557.

concludes, "I hope that my study will reach its readers—both my friends of former years, if they are still alive, as well as all the others for whom it was intended."[7]

Pointing to both historical event and transhistorical echo, Erich Auerbach's concept of "figura" shimmers between literal statement and metaphor. As Auerbach defines it,

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only the first but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future.[8]

The Great War of 1914-1918, supposedly the "War to End All Wars," has taken on the resonances of Auerbach's "figura." Specific in its atrocities, it has nonetheless come to stand in as a watershed event predicting later wars, and as an origin story for certain narratives of reverberating loss—cultural, individual, and experiential. In examining literary representations of the First World War and the uncertain decades that followed it, this dissertation investigates the specificity of this war, while taking seriously its figural resonances in cultural production after the fact. The war offers a useful marker with which to constellate the changes in experience that swept the early twentieth century, notably those encompassing temporal experience and ideas of time. Its duration and attrition refute characterizations of the modernist period as one typified by speed, instantaneity, and progress. Within Anglo-American modernism, the First World War holds a major claim, not just for focalizing certain forms of beginning but for calcifying certain modernist commitments to anti-psychologism, anti-humanism, and the autonomy of the artwork within the broader cultural currents surrounding the war.

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[7] *Mimesis*, 557.

[8] "Figura," 53. The historical understanding that Auerbach brought to the development of this concept is largely owing to Vico. James I. Porter, "Introduction," *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, translated by Jane O. Newman, edited by James I. Porter (Prnceton: Princeton Unviersity Press, 2016), xiv.

A primary claim of this dissertation is that histories are not left behind, and that individuals and social relations change at a slower pace than technologies and institutional structures.[9] Wartime, for Mary Favret, is constitutively anachronistic; "it produces a history of the present always permeable to other presents, other wartimes. "[10] As such, it is an "affective zone" that uniquely resists attempts at historicization and periodization.[11] The writing of this dissertation has taken place over the course of the centenary of the Great War, and is informed by an adulthood that has been structured in visible and invisible ways by the interminability of the global war on terror. The history of my own time has been, at times, painfully permeable to the history of the Great War, in the repetitions of chemical warfare at Ypres and Aleppo, in the crises of refugee populations expelled from their homes, and in the predicament of individuals and communities watching the presumptions of ameliorating progress founder.[12]

This dissertation asks the question of how narrative form responds when crisis becomes chronic. It wonders what form continuation takes when schemas of ameliorating progress have been proven false by experience.[13] These questions, for which I have no definite answer, find attempts at elucidation in the works of Ford, Bowen, West, Eliot, and Beckett. In their company, and not in conclusion, this dissertation halts.

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[9] Fredric Jameson reminds us that it was not until after the Second World War that much of Europe attained access to the kind of technologically connected, accelerated existence that optimistic histories of the period have presumed to be widespread. "The End of Temporality," in *Critical Inquiry* 29.4 (2003): 699.
[10] Favret, 30.
[11] Favret, 18.
[12] McKinsey Global Institute, "Poorer than their Parents? Flat or Falling Incomes in Advanced Economies." July 2016. McKinsey & Company.
[13] Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" (1933), in *Selected Writings Volume 2: 1927-1934*, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al., edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 731-36.

AFTERWARD

This dissertation is part of a project of recovery. By affording me the opportunity to retrace paths, literal and metaphorical, that I had walked in darker moments, its writing perhaps represents a step out of the closed circuits that defined over ten years of my life, and that have, throughout my time studying literature in Montreal and Chicago, opened onto other ambits.

In continuation, without destination, I am grateful.

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