



DAN O'SULLIVAN STOLEN FRAGMENTS: EPISODES FROM SIX LIVES PUBLICATION STUDIO MALMÖ



PUBLICATION STUDIO
MALMÖ

Dan O'Sullivan was born in India in 1936 but has lived most of his life in the UK. He has degrees from Cambridge and the University of East Anglia. He is a retired history teacher and lecturer who has published books on a range of topics, including most recently Wikipedia. He is married, with four grown-up children and two grandsons, and lives in a village on the edge of the North York Moors.



PUBLICATION STUDIO
MALMÖ



PUBLICATION STUDIO
MALMÖ

STOLEN FRAGMENTS : EPISODES FROM SIX LIVES

Dan O'Sullivan



STOLEN FRAGMENTS : EPISODES FROM SIX LIVES

Dan O'Sullivan

PUBLICATION STUDIO MALMÖ

SERIES: PLAGIARISM

Series editors: Ola Ståhl & Terje Östling

Graphic design: Ola Ståhl

© 2013 PUBLICATION STUDIO, the authors, copyright holders and our readership. We actively encourage the re-use, re-cycling, re-staging, re-appropriation, re-mixing, and re-contextualisation of all parts of this book and the sources upon which it draws, preferably without written permission.

ISBN 978-91-977853-7-2

Printed and bound at Ystadvägen 13, Malmö, Sweden.

PUBLICATION STUDIO MALMÖ

Ystadvägen 13, Dalaplan, 214 30 Malmö, Sweden

www.psmalmo.com / www.publicationstudio.biz

psmalmo@publicationstudio.biz

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION	/ Chapter I: Take what exists and make something else 7
	/ Chapter II: Modernist Biographies 19
EPISODES FROM SIX LIVES	/ Chapter III: Franz Kafka: Love by Correspondence 27
	/ Chapter IV: Marcel Proust: The Suffering Artist 41
	/ Chapter V: Anna Akhmatova: The Survivor 55
	/ Chapter VI: Virginia Woolf: The Uses of Adversity 75
	/ Chapter VII: James Joyce: The Writer in Exile 89
	/ Chapter VIII: T. S. Eliot: An American Poet in London 105
POSTSCRIPT	/ Chapter IX: Plagiarism and the Student 119

CHAPTER I
TAKE WHAT EXISTS AND MAKE
SOMETHING ELSE

WHOSE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IS IT?

When economists speak of information they usually say that it is ‘non-rival’. We consider a good to be non-rival when its consumption by one person does not make it any less available for consumption by another. Apples are rival. If I eat this apple, you cannot eat it.

As Jefferson wrote, ‘He who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me.’

I now wonder where the idea or the ideology of creativity started. Shakespeare and company certainly stole from, copied each other’s writings. Before them, the Greeks didn’t bother making up any new stories. I suspect that the ideology of creativity started when the bourgeoisie – when they rose up in all their splendor, as the history books put it – made a capitalistic marketplace for books.

Samuel Johnson reckoned that he had written about forty sermons; but, except as to some, knew not in what hands

they were – “I have,” said he, “been paid for them, and have no right to enquire about them”.

Culturally diverse works are not doing well in the market, and they never have. If we are serious about having diverse cultural works, we must provide creative people with what they most need: the ability to earn a steady income. If copyright is not providing such a steady income, as it is not for most authors and artists, then we have to find other sources of income for them. A portfolio of copyrights does you no good if you can't pay the rent, buy food, or have the time to create because you are working full-time at a different job in order to pay the bills.

In speaking of “copyright” and the controversies that accompany it, we must ask: What can we truly say belongs to us? To what degree have we genuinely given consent to the structures and situations in which we find ourselves, including those that establish what “belongs,” and to whom?

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

If any new information good or innovation builds on existing information, then strengthening intellectual property rights increases the prices that those who invest in producing information today must pay to those who did so yesterday.

Fill our minds, not your pockets.

WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?

We now know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God), but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. [The writer's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. But there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author.

Against the work, therefore, the text could well take as its motto the words of the man possessed by demons (Mark 5: 9): 'My name is Legion: for we are many'.

Although, since the eighteenth century, the author has played the role of regulator, a role quite characteristic of our era of industrial and bourgeois society, of individualism and private property, still, given the historical modifications that are taking place, it does not seem necessary that the author function remain constant in form, complexity, and even in existence. I think that, as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear.

It were wisdom itself, to read all Authors, as *Anonymo's*, looking on the Sence, not *Names* of Books.

'What is an author, Daddy?' The ensuing attempt at a definition was evidently too abstract, but another tack suggested itself. Sabrina's favourite bedtime reading at the

time was Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, so falling back on the arch-author, her father tried again: "Shakespeare was a famous author, Sabrina". This obviously struck home. 'Oh!' Sabrina exclaimed, was there a *person* called Shakespeare?

The individual author defines the post-Gutenberg playing field, and that author is credited with the attributes of proprietorship, autonomy, originality, and morality. These attributes have come to be regarded as 'facts' about authorship, their historical emergence demonstrates them to be cultural arbitrariness, textual corollaries to the technical and economic conditions of the society that instated them.

What difference does it make who is speaking?

COLLABORATION

Today the technological innovation of the computer is precipitating and accompanying shifts in textual values that may be as profound as the modern emergence of the normative autonomous, individual author.

The computer is dissolving the boundaries essential to the survival of our modern fiction of the author as the sole creator of unique, original works.

In hypertext, readers make additions and changes without necessarily leaving any trace of who contributed what, and a text is never 'finished'.

The success of collaborative learning projects like Wikipedia demonstrate a need to reconsider our rules

surrounding the use of original work, to accept patchwriting and other methods of remixing content as a worthy academic equivalent.

Much intellectual work including the distinctively imaginative is now being done by teams, a practice apt to continue and grow. The French have a name for it – *travaux d'équipe*. Such collaboration, I fancy, may diffuse and diminish emotions of original discovery and exclusive ownership.

Journalists frequently rewrite original news agency copy without acknowledging the source, politicians claim the work of speech writers and researchers as their own, art and literature are full of uncited copies. In fact, when we look to art and music we see an environment where this 'remix culture' is actively encouraged. Has the read/write web made academic definitions of authorship and originality irrelevant?

We are as we are today, as cultural beings, occupying a set of common symbols and stories that are heavily based on the outputs of that industrial period. If we are to make this culture our own, render it legible, and make it into a new platform for our needs and conversations today, we must find a way to cut, paste and remix present culture. And it is precisely this freedom that most directly challenges the laws written for the twentieth-century technology, economy, and cultural practice.

ASSEMBLING CONTRIBUTIONS

It might be possible to see the compiler of the commonplace book as the paradigm for reading/writing practices in the Renaissance, insofar as the two practices cannot be separated and operate in tandem. The compiler, then, operates in ways similar to Barthes' notion of a reader: 'someone who holds collected into one and the same field all of the traces from which writing is constituted', not as someone who acts as a terminus; rather someone who channels the energies of discourse and then reintroduces them into the cultural flow from whence they were written/read.

By these methods, in a few Weeks, there starts up many a Writer, capable of managing the profoundest and most universal Subjects. For, what tho' his *Head* be empty, provided his *Common-place-Book* be full.

The entry on Bayle in one of the English editions of his work reported that 'In his youth he had made abstractions of all the books he read, and wrote his observations upon them. His Common-Place Book was of great use to him, when he began to write for the Publick.

None of my predecessors can blame me for the use I have made of them, since it is their own awowed practice. I have already assumed the *bee* for my device; and who ever brought an action of trover or trespass against that free-booter? 'Tis vain to pretend any thing of property in things of this nature.

They don't pretend to set up on their own bottom. Their Works are supposed, in great Measure, Assemblages of other Peoples; and what they take from others they do it avowedly, and in the open Sun. In effect, their Quality gives them a Title to every thing that may be for their purpose, wherever they find it; and if they rob they don't do it in any otherwise, than as the Bee does, for the publick Service. Their Occupation is not pillaging, but collecting Contributions.

There are many that I know and they know it. They are all of them repeating and I hear it. I love it and I tell it. I love it and now I will write it. This is now a history of my love of it. I hear it and I love it and I write it. They repeat it. They live it and I see it and I hear it. They live it and I hear it and I see it and I love it and now and always I will write it. There are many kinds of men and women and I know it. They repeat it and I hear it and I love it. This is now a history of the way they do it. This is now a history of the way I love it.

WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

To participate productively in culture, we must recognize that previous discourse always already shapes and constrains the activities of writers, that there is no neutral, non-regulated space from which to begin a writing activity. We must also acknowledge that productive participation involves appropriation and re-appropriation of the familiar often in ways that accommodate audiences by speaking to shared values and working with discourse conventions.

In the end, as we see it, this all comes down to a reconfigured notion of 'creativity', one more in line with postmodern work. Creativity is no longer, as we said, re-inventing the wheel, which does not remove creativity but shifts it to the assemblage: Take what already exists and make something else, something that works to solve problems in new, local contexts. Creativity, in this rearticulation, involves extensive research, filtering, recombining, remixing, the making of assemblages that solve problems.

The visual arts have long embraced uncreativity as a creative practice. Beginning with Marcel Duchamp's readymades, the twentieth century was awash with artworks that challenged the primacy of the artist and questioned received notions of authorship. Particularly in the 1960s, with the advent of conceptual art, Duchampian tendencies were tested to the extreme, producing important bodies of often ephemeral and propositional work.

The word 'art', etymologically speaking, means to make, simply to make. Now what is making? Making something is choosing a tube of blue, a tube of red, putting some of it on the palette, and always choosing the quality of the blue, the quality of the red, and always choosing the place to put it on the canvas, it's always choosing. So in order to choose, you can use tubes of paint, you can use brushes, but you can also use a ready-made thing, made either mechanically or *by the hand of another man*, even, if you want, and appropriate it, since it's you who chose it. Choice is the main thing, even in normal painting.

A lot of people just assume I took some Beatles and, you know, threw some Jay-Z on top of it or mixed it up or looped it around, but its really a deconstruction. It's not an easy thing to do. I was obsessed with the whole project, that's all I was trying to do, see if I could do this. Once I got into it, I didn't think about anything but finishing it. I stuck to those two because I thought it would be more challenging and more fun and more of a statement to what you could do with sample alone. It is an art form. It is music.

COPYRIGHT

Information, knowledge, and culture are being subjected to a second enclosure movement. The freedom of action for individuals who wish to produce information, knowledge, and culture is being systematically curtailed in order to secure the economic returns demanded by the manufacturers of the industrial information economy.

The intensity of protection extended to productions that qualify as works of authorship tends to bar their reuse for new creative purposes, making virtual outlaws of those who draw on such works for their raw material.

Once a tool for creativity, copyright law has been infested with a permission mentality in which all uses, no matter how trivial or remote from impacting on artists' wallets, are declared licensable and therefore must be licensed. Culture, however, can be built only out of a shared approach to knowledge, including a generous use of each others' creations. Culture is behaviour, creatively duplicated. To deny people the ability to copy – whether from a book, a

recorded performance, or from any source – is to deny them their dream of becoming who they want to be.

Merely claiming that copyright laws encourage creativity, stimulate innovation, create jobs, or provide the public with access to cultural works doesn't mean copyright laws do in fact encourage creativity, stimulate innovation, or create jobs. Policymakers have been operating in an evidence-free copyright law zone for many decades.

The evidence is overwhelming that the current, excessive length of copyright (life of the author plus seventy years in many countries) denies access to vast troves of culture and not only thwarts the preservation of old works, but does not incentivize the creation of new ones.

Honoring the commons is not a matter of moral exhortation. It is a practical necessity. We in Western society are going through a period of intensifying belief in private ownership, to the detriment of the public good. We have to remain constantly vigilant to prevent raids by those who would selfishly exploit our common heritage for their private gain. Such raids on our natural resources are not examples of enterprise and initiative. They are attempts to take from all the people just for the benefit of a few.

There is a whole new dynamic of social change based on the clash between free information and economic systems. It creates the possibility that the real contradiction in society is not so much about economics but about shared human knowledge versus 'intellectual property rights'. It opens the possibility that the new society can be created within the old, in a struggle over information and power.

How a society produces its information environment goes to the very core of freedom. Who gets to say what, to whom? Information underlies the very possibility of individual self-direction. Information and communication constitute the practices that enable a community to form a common range of understandings of what is at stake and what paths are open for the taking.

Information wants to be free.

CHAPTER II

MODERNIST BIOGRAPHIES

Writing an author's biography is a fascinating task, for it allows you the opportunity to delve into the mind of the person who has created published works. This can be all the more exciting if the person about whom you are writing has written works that you admire, or if the works are considered ground-breaking or controversial. By writing an author's biography, you are given the chance to learn about the mind that created the work, and what might have motivated the author to do so.

Another kind of group biography is a study of the lives of people in a particular set. These used to be thought rather dusty and academic, but now they seem very much of our time. There's no longer any problem explaining them. There's a commercial element too: book-buyers like variety and publishing goes in waves. Short lives have been a huge success, a refreshing relief after footnoted tomes: the best work on groups combines this succinctness with a broader landscape, a pleasurable avenue into periods or difficult ideas.

Some important early modernist writers (and selected works) are: Marcel Proust (1871-1922): *Du Cote de chez*

Swann (1913), the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-27); Franz Kafka (1883-1924), 'Metamorphosis' (1915), *The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926); T.S.Eliot (1888-1965): 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1916), *The Waste Land* (1922), *Four Quartets* (1935-42); James Joyce (1882-1941), *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922); Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Mrs Dalloway* (1922); Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966), *Evening* (1912), *Rosary* (1914), *WhiteFlock* (1916).

Until such time as one has put to oneself a certain number of questions about an author, and has answered them, be it only to oneself alone and under one's breath, one cannot be sure of having grasped him completely, even though the questions may seem quite foreign to the nature of his writings: What were his religious ideas? How did the spectacle of nature affect him? How did he behave in the matter of women, of money? Was he rich, poor; what was his diet, his daily routine? What was his vice or his weakness? None of the answers to these questions is irrelevant.

Just how relevant is an author's private life to our appreciation or understanding of his or her work? Many would argue that we should disregard it entirely. Others (myself included) might point out that while you can thoroughly enjoy a novel or poem without knowing who wrote it, any deeper grasp requires at least some basic information.

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David

Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me.

THE CRISIS OF MODERNISM

I think of modernism as that paradox, a tradition of those who have no tradition.

The effort, through art, to recognise that which will fit into no system, no story, that which resolutely refuses to be turned into art. That effort is at the heart of modernism.

If I was a modernist I was an unconscious one. All I can recall is that aged 20 I was already finding conventional English prose fiction quite as constricting as I did conventional English society. No, that's an understatement: the simple past in which he did this and she did that; the omniscient and unnameable narrator who moves she and he about on the page as if these pronouns were chess pieces; the assumption of discernible motivations for these characters; and despite, as much as because of, a sprinkling of Freudian 'depth psychology' across their features, the pathological woodenness of these fictive pawns – all of this was not only irksome to me, but painful.

These artists do not seek to give what can, after all, be but a pale reflex of actual appearance, but to arouse the conviction of a new and definite reality. They do not seek to imitate form but to create form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life.

Art doesn't imitate life, if only for fear of clichés.

Fiction must deal in ambiguity, the impossibility of judgement; it must avoid the formulaic definition of character. Conventional form falsifies through a linearity and closure imposed by the authoritative, unified, omniscient narrator.

Modernism, in its broadest definition, is modern thought, character, or practice. More specifically, the term describes the modernist movement in the arts, its set of cultural tendencies and associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes to Western society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This modern movement broke with the past in the first three decades of the 20th century, and radically redefined various art forms.

A break with traditions is one of the fundamental constants of the Modernist stance. Intellectuals and artists at the turn of the twentieth century believed the previous generation's way of doing things was a cultural dead end. They could foresee that world events were spiralling into unknown territory.

Even if you think that being modern requires a total rejection of the past, like Tzara or Artaud, you become dependent on the past if only because you need to have it around to reject. Histories of the arts are histories of past modernities.

This leads us toward another kind of account as to why Modernism is our art; it is the one art that responds to

the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty principle', of the destruction of civilization and reason in the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaninglessness or absurdity. It is the literature of technology. It is the art consequent on the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues when public notions of language have been discredited and when all realities have become subjective fictions.

All these artists were united by one common attitude, albeit a negative one: they all insisted on the *limitations* of the sphere of art. Art, they argued, was not a means of getting at the unknown. The whole mystery was there, right in front of us, where everybody could see it — except for the fact that normally men are too blind or lazy to do so. What most of us tend to do in front of the world, of ourselves, of works of art, is to neutralize what is before us by reducing it to something we know already. Thus we are for ever shut up inside our preconceived notions, reacting only to that which makes no demands that we should really see.

A DATE FOR MODERNISM

Perhaps the oblique nature of Modernism explains why critics have found it so hard a movement to find a clear definition or date for. Who is to be included in our identification parade of the Modernist spirit? Which are seen as the years of gathering force, of breakthrough, of concentrated change?

It is now taken for granted in some circles that there was something qualitatively different about *our* modernity; that there was a decisive *coupure* around 1870.

On or about December 1910 human nature changed. All human relations shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-1916 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed, and the genuine debasement began, the unspeakable baseness of the press and the public voice, the reign of that bloated ignominy, John Bull.

With the appearance of both *Ulysses* and T S Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*, 1922 was a key year in the history of English-language literary modernism.

So great indeed are the conceptual ambiguities surrounding the discussion of modernism that some historians have seriously suggested we cease using the word altogether. 'There is no such thing as modernism,' declared Roger Shattock a few years ago. 'There are professors talking about it in order to keep their tenure in the culture.' 'Modernism,' he continued, 'is not a meaningful category of literary or art history. It's a featherbed for critics and professors, an endless, renewable pretext for scholars to hold conferences, devise special numbers, and gloss each other's work into powder.'

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these names are fêted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

CHAPTER III
FRANZ KAFKA
LOVE BY CORRESPONDENCE

Kafka was born in 1883, to middle class German-speaking Jewish parents in Prague, Bohemia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was a prosperous dealer in fancy goods.

It is through writing that I keep a hold on life – since I am nothing but literature.

Health and Kafka's character militated against the uncertainties of a full-time literary career. From 1908 he worked for a semi-governmental agency, the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute in Prague.

He had a secure well-paid job and a routine that allowed him to write freely in his own room at night, after an afternoon of rest and recuperation, without interruption (apart from the family bustle of the apartment, about which he regularly complained). Yet he was torn apart by the work-writing opposition: a good night's writing spoiled his work at the office next day and vice versa.

The approach to writing as a holy vocation, a sacred service rather than a means to many ends, a way of life as

sternly self-contained as the daily Talmud study of Kafka's legendary sainted ancestors on his mother's side.

THE FATHER

Of all writers, Kafka is the greatest expert on power. He experienced it in all its aspects, and he gave shape to this experience.

His struggle with his father was essentially never anything but a struggle against superior power as such. He hated his family as a whole; his father was simply the most powerful part of this family.

His father, Hermann, was described as a 'huge, selfish, overbearing businessman', and by Kafka himself as 'a true Kafka in strength, health, appetite, loudness of voice, eloquence, self-satisfaction, worldly dominance, endurance, presence of mind, and knowledge of human nature'

At that time, and at that time everywhere, I would have needed encouragement. I was, after all, depressed even by your mere physical presence. I remember for instance how we often undressed together in the same bathing-hut. There was I, skinny, weakly, slight, you strong, tall, broad. Even inside the hut I felt myself a miserable specimen, and what's more not only in your eyes, but in the eyes of the whole world, for you were for me the measure of all things. But then when we went out of the bathing-hut before the people, I with you holding my hand, a little skeleton, unsteady, barefoot on the boards, frightened of the water,

incapable of copying your swimming strokes, which you, with the best of intentions, but actually to my profound humiliation, always kept on showing me, then I was frantic with desperation and all my bad experiences in all spheres at such moments fitted magnificently together.

W A R

[Diary. 2 August 1914] Germany has declared war on Russia – Swimming in the afternoon.

[Diary. 6 August 1914] I discover in myself nothing but pettiness, indecision, envy, and hatred against those who are fighting and whom I passionately wish everything evil. What will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my dreamlike inner life has thrust all other matters into the background.

[Diary. 6 August 1914] Patriotic parade. Speech by the mayor. Disappears, then reappears, and a shout in German: ‘Long live our beloved monarch, hurrah!’ I stand there with my malignant look. These parades are one of the most disgusting accompaniments of the war.

A M A R R I A G E ?

Marrying, founding a family, accepting all the children that come, supporting them in this insecure world and even guiding them a little as well, is, I am convinced, the utmost a human being can succeed in doing at all.

Why then did I not marry? There were individual obstacles, as there are everywhere, but, after all, life consists in taking such obstacles in one's stride. The essential obstacle, however, which was unfortunately independent of the individual case, was that I am obviously intellectually incapable of marrying. This manifests itself in the fact that from the moment when I make up my mind to marry I can no longer sleep, my head burns day and night, life can no longer be called life, I stagger about in despair.

LETTERS TO FELICE

Kafka's correspondence, like the bulk of his work, is a dialogue with himself. And in that sense the over five hundred letters he wrote to Felice Bauer between September 1912 and October 1917 may well be regarded as his longest novel, the only one he ever completed.

The correspondence developed rapidly, with daily letters coming from Kafka and Felice soon replying at the same rate (only his letters are preserved). It has certain quite astonishing features: for an open-minded reader, the most noticeable is the amount of complaining, on Kafka's part, about his physical states.

There can be no doubt that the obsessive fear of sex, or more specifically of wallowing in lustful filth and degradation not with a paid hooker or lower-class shopgirl but with the virginal mother image he secretly worshipped and wanted to love, did, in fact, account for much of the tension in the relationship, with the growing threat of marriage – after all, what else could all this have been leading up to – the

nauseous prospect of “marital duty” made him feel dead certain that he would never be able to consummate it.

My true fear – and surely nothing worse can ever be said or heard – is that I shall never be able to possess you, that at best I would be confined, like an insentient, faithful dog, to kissing your distractedly proffered hand, not as a sign of love, but merely as a token of despair on the part of an animal condemned to silence and eternal separation.

What you love you don’t sleep with; what you sleep with you don’t love. One loved one’s friends, one’s mother, and one’s wife.

His constant refrain, “I cannot live with her, and I cannot live without her,” was a cry from the heart.

Whenever she withdrew, he lashed himself into a foaming frenzy of despair and flirted with suicide or madness. Whenever she yielded to the platonic passion of his epistolary entreaties, threatened to take him at his word, let herself fantasize about marriage with all the trimmings, and, ever practical, suggested the appropriate steps, he fled in sheer terror, swaddled himself in his frailty and ill health, pleaded the ascetic demands of his vocation, his total enslavement to literature, and threw up all sorts of roadblocks he regarded as impassible.

[In August, 1913] he wrote to Felice’s father, formally asking for her hand, while at the same time enumerating all the reasons why his proposal should not be accepted.

[28 August 1913] You know your own daughter: she is a gay, healthy, self-confident girl, who in order to live should be surrounded by gay, healthy, and lively people. You know me only from my visit, and I cannot repeat what I have told your daughter about myself in some 500 letters. But please consider this one important fact: my whole being is directed towards literature; I have followed this direction unswervingly until my thirtieth year, and the moment I abandon it I cease to live. Everything I am, and am not, is a result of this. I am taciturn, unsociable, morose, selfish, a hypochondriac, and actually in poor health. I live within my family, among the kindest, most affectionate people – and am more strange than a stranger. In recent years I have spoken hardly more than twenty words a day to my mother, and I exchange little more than a daily greeting with my father. To my married sisters and brothers-in-law I do not speak at all, although I have nothing against them. I lack all sense of family life. And is your daughter, whose healthy nature has destined her for a happy married life, to live with this kind of man?

[Diary. 2 September 1913] Of the four men I consider to be my true blood-relations (without comparing myself to them either in power or in range), Grillparzer, Dostoyevsky, Kleist, and Flaubert, Dostoyevsky was the only one to get married, and perhaps Kleist, when compelled by outer and inner necessity to shoot himself on the Wannsee, was the only one to find the right solution.

A T H I R D P A R T Y

For six weeks, between mid-September and the end of October [1913], relations between Kafka and Felice were severed. He wrote no more letters – anything at that time rather than her insistence on an engagement. Hearing nothing from him, she sent her friend Grete Block to Prague, with the request that Grete mediate between them. With the entry of a third person, a new and very remarkable phase in the relationship now began.

[14 April 1914] Dear Fräulein Grete, it would be nicer if instead of the telegram I were holding your hand. There is one thing I can't tell you soon enough and that's this: our relationship, which for me at least holds delightful and altogether indispensable possibilities, is in no way changed by my engagement or my marriage. Is this a fact, and will it remain so? I repeat, in case it hasn't been made clear already: all this is independent of anything that I and F. (so far as I, the bridegroom, can say this) owe to you in our affairs.

Kafka had been seeking Grete's love. He had bewitched her with his letters and brought her more and more to his side. His love letters were now being written to her, not to Felice. This placed her in a bind, from which she could only extricate herself by an about-face which would make *her* judge in his case. She placed into Felice's hands the points of the accusation; in Kafka's letters to her there were passages she had underlined in red.

A T R I B U N A L

The 'tribunal' at the Askanische Hof Hotel [Berlin] in July 1914 marks the point of crisis in Kafka's double relation to

the two women. The breaking of the engagement seems to have been imposed on him from outside.

Felice was the plaintiff, and she had brought Grete Bloch along as well as her sister Erna and a friend, Ernst Weiss. The evidence against Kafka was overwhelming and irrefutable. He had himself provided it with extravagant abandon in his many letters to Grete, from which Felice proceeded to quote a number of incriminating passages. Kafka refused to defend himself and remained silent. Arguments nonetheless dragged on for some hours.

[Diary, 23 July 1914] The tribunal in the hotel. Trip in the cab. F's face. She patted her hair with her hand, wiped her nose, yawned. Suddenly she gathered herself together and said very studied, hostile things she had long been saving up.

T H E T R I A L

The manner of this break, its concentrated form as 'tribunal' – which is what Kafka called it afterwards – had an overwhelming effect on him. At the beginning of August his reaction begins to formulate itself. The trial, which had been proceeding for two years in letters between him and Felice, now changed into that other *Trial*, which everybody knows. It is the same trial, he had rehearsed it; he incorporated into it infinitely more than the letters alone reveal, but that should not deceive us as to the identity of the two trials.

It is deceptively easy to extrapolate directly from the writer's life to his work. Yet in this case the transfer seems plainly evident. Kafka began to write *The Trial* in August 1914, as the guns of Europe were being trundled up to the front line, and only weeks after the engagement-party debacle in Berlin and the subsequent tribunal at the Askanische Hof.

Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning.

'Do you know that your case is going badly?' asked the priest. 'I have that idea myself,' said K. 'I've done what I could, but without any success so far. Of course, my first petition hasn't been presented yet.' 'How do you think it will end?' asked the priest. 'At first I thought it must turn out well,' said K., 'but now I frequently have my doubts. I don't know how it will end. Do you?' 'No,' said the priest, 'but I fear it will end badly. You are held to be guilty'. 'But I am not guilty,' said K.; 'its a misunderstanding. And if it comes to that, how can any man be called guilty? We are all simply men here, one as much as the other.' 'That is true,' said the priest, 'but that's how all guilty men talk.'

BACK TO FELICE

The 'struggle for Felice' now entered a new phase, one over which the dour ghost of the recently deceased Strindberg hovered as a patron saint of sorts. Kafka evidently felt a distinct kinship with the misogynist side of the bleak Swede and with his paranoid fear of vampire females sucking him

dry of his creativity – not all that different from Kafka’s own fear of being emasculated as a writer by a woman who threatened to tie him down to an office or factory and bury him under mountains of overstuffed furniture.

[Diary. March 1916] We went to buy furniture in Berlin for an official in Prague. Heavy furniture which looked as if, once in position, it could never be removed. Its very solidity is what you appreciated most. The sideboard in particular – a perfect tombstone, or a memorial to the life of a Prague official – oppressed me profoundly. If during our visit to the furniture store a funeral bell had begun tolling in the distance, it wouldn’t have been inappropriate. I wanted to be with you, Felice, of course with you, but free to express my powers which you, in my opinion at least, cannot really have respected if you could consider stifling them with all that furniture.

Relations between them were now guardedly polite and friendly; the all-encompassing reality of the war, with its day-to-day uncertainties and wholly unpredictable consequences, made the problems of their relationship and its future seem less pressing.

[10 July 1916. letter to Felice’s mother]. Dear Mother, my right to this mode of address lies not in the past but in the present. Felice and I have met (such things do happen) here in Marienbad and discovered that years ago we tackled things in the wrong way. Nor was this very difficult to see. Good things, however, are not accomplished at the first attempt, nor at the second, but perhaps at the tenthousandth, and this is where we now are. Many things have changed, few for the better, this I do know; but one of

the few is the relationship between Felice and me and its assurance for the future.

They spent ten days together in Marienbad, occupying adjacent rooms at the exclusive Castle Balmoral Hotel. It was an idyll of quiet tenderness rather than blazing passion, during which they achieved their first true emotional and – one assumes – physical intimacy.

[July 1916. letter to Max Brod] Now I saw the look of trust in a woman's eyes and I could not shut myself off. I was impeded, earlier, precisely by fear of the reality of this letter-writing woman. Now things have changed and are well. Our agreement is, briefly, to get married soon after the end of the war, to take two or three rooms in a Berlin suburb, each of us providing for his or her own domestic needs. F. will continue to work as heretofore, and I, well, I can't tell yet.

A PERFECT EXCUSE

[Diary. 9 September 1917] Precisely four weeks ago, at about 5 a.m., I had a haemorrhage of the lung. Fairly severe; for ten minutes or more it gushed out of my throat; I thought it would never stop. The next day I went to see a doctor, who on this and several subsequent occasions examined and X-rayed me; and then, at Max's insistence, I went to see a specialist. Without going into all the medical details, the outcome is that I have tuberculosis in both lungs.

His visit to the specialist on 4 September marked the beginning of a new period in his life. The pronouncement

from this authoritative quarter, which he now compelled himself to recognise, freed him from Felice, from his fear of the marriage, and from the profession he hated. But it tied him for ever to his sickness, of which he was to die, and which at this juncture was perhaps not very serious.

He was to live for another seven years, but his life with Felice was over. In 1919 she married another man, and later had two children and emigrated to America.

NO OPTION

He watched that fame and glory settle effortlessly on the shoulders of his friends Franz Werfel and Max Brod. He knew their work was meretricious, sentimental, littered with cliché – yet was his own any better? After all, Werfel and Brod at least gave pleasure to thousands while his writing hardly even gave pleasure to himself. All he could say was that he had no option. His very body shied away from following the path of Werfel and Brod. Had his body accepted it he would have gone willingly down that path, but it didn't. It couldn't process food like that and so he couldn't eat it, and if the alternative was starvation, so be it.

They poked into the straw with sticks and found him in it. "Are you still fasting?" asked the overseer, "when on earth do you mean to stop?" "Forgive me, everybody," whispered the hunger artist; only the overseer, who had his ear to the bars, understood him. "Of course," said the overseer, and tapped his forehead with a finger to let the attendants know what state the man was in, "we forgive you." "I always

wanted you to admire my fasting,” said the hunger artist. “We do admire it,” said the overseer, affably. “But you shouldn’t admire it,” said the hunger artist. “Well then we don’t admire it,” said the overseer, “but why shouldn’t we admire it?” “Because I have to fast, I can’t help it,” said the hunger artist. “What a fellow you are,” said the overseer, “and why can’t you help it?” “Because,” said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and speaking, with his lips pursed, as if for a kiss, right into the overseer’s ear, so that no syllable might be lost, “because I couldn’t find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.” These were his last words, but in his dimming eyes remained the firm though no longer proud persuasion that he was still continuing to fast.

Franz Kafka, whose imaginative world resembles the vision of an animal looking out from its burrow on to a world which in its flames and greyness no longer belongs to him, voiced a similar despair.

What he felt in his bones was a reality beyond appearances. As a writer he was a realist.

Altogether he is a man who wants nothing but the absolute, the ultimate in all things.

CHAPTER IV
MARCEL PROUST
THE SUFFERING ARTIST

MISFORTUNES

Asthma attacks start when he is ten, and continue all his life. They are particularly severe, the fits lasting over an hour, as many as ten a day. Because they occur more in the daytime than at night, Proust takes up a nocturnal regime; he goes to sleep at seven in the morning and wakes up at four or five in the afternoon. He finds it impossible to go much outdoors, particularly in the summer, and when he has to, it is only in the confines of a sealed taxi. The windows and curtains of his flat are kept perennially shut, he never sees the sun, breathes any fresh air, nor takes any exercise.

The Problem of a Jewish Mother: Mme Proust loved her son with an intensity that would have put an ardent lover to shame, an affection that created, or at the very least dramatically aggravated, her eldest son's disposition towards helplessness. There was nothing she felt he could do properly without her. They lived together from his birth until her death, by which time he was thirty-four. 'I was always four years old for her,' said Marcel of Mme Proust, otherwise known as Maman, or more usually '*chère petite Maman*'.

For several years Proust lived a bachelor existence with his secretaries and servants at 102 Boulevard Haussmann, in a central, if not a particularly fashionable, area of Paris. Here he had installed the famous cork-lined bedroom (now re-created for the benefit of tourists at the Musée Carnavalet), in which he spent his nights working in bed, surrounded by papers and medicines, and his days trying to sleep, blocking out the noises of street life under his windows.

The first time she went into the big, cork-lined bedroom, it was hard to see through the thick cloud of fumes from the Legras powders. The only light was a green glow from the shaded lamp by the bed, and it was thanks to the gleam from the silver of the tray and coffee-pot that she found her way to the bedside table. Sitting with the upper part of his body propped against two pillows, M. Proust was wearing a white shirt and a thick sweater. Two intimidating eyes stared at her through the fumes, but he didn't speak. When she bowed, he thanked her by waving his hand.

It is in moments of illness that we are compelled to recognize that we live not alone but chained to a creature of a different kingdom, whole worlds apart, who has no knowledge of us and by whom it is impossible to make ourselves understood: our body.

Happiness is good for the body, but it is grief which develops the strengths of the mind.

I am myself only when I am alone, and I do not profit from others except in so far as they enable me to make discoveries within myself, either by making me suffer (which is more likely through love than through friendship), or by their

ridiculous behaviour which I don't make fun of, but which helps me to understand the human character.

It now seems as if the magnitude of Proust's misfortunes should not be allowed to cast doubt on the validity of his ideas, indeed, it is the very extent of his suffering that we should take to be evidence of the perfect precondition for insights. It is when we hear that Proust's lover died in a plane crash off the coast of Antibes, that Stendhal endured a series of agonizing unrequited passions and that Nietzsche was a social outcast taunted by schoolboys, that we can be reassured of having discovered valuable intellectual authorities. It is not the contented or the glowing who have left many of the profound testimonies of what it means to be alive. It seems that such knowledge has usually been the privileged preserve of, and the only blessing granted to, the violently miserable.

A NEW SECRETARY

Suddenly Proust's life was turned upside down by the reappearance of Alfred Agostinelli, who had worked for him earlier as a chauffeur. Proust now already had a chauffeur but he didn't want to turn Agostinelli away. He was good-looking and had shown, both in conversation and in letters, that he had a flair for words. Taking one of the abrupt decisions which cut through his habitual dithering, he asked Agostinelli to be his secretary and to live in, together with his new wife.

Who was Alfred Agostinelli? 'An extraordinary person who possessed perhaps the greatest intellectual gifts I have ever

known!’ said Proust, shocked with grief at his death. ‘An unstable boy who had ideas above his station’, according to Céleste Albaret [Proust’s maid].

No previous lover, bourgeois or working-class, had ever constituted such a threat to the memory of Proust’s mother. The son of a woman who’d never shake hands with a footman, he was living with a chauffeur, and sexually he was mostly feeling inferior and struggling for equality. He found it intensely pleasurable to do what he could never do when his mother was alive, and the rejection of her values wasn’t incidental. He was profaning her memory and enjoying it.

But he was closer to happiness than ever before in his adult life. For the first time he was living with the man he loved, and, knowing he didn’t have long to live, he was willing to pay any price for happiness. Most of his previous relationships with working class lovers had been fairly casual, but he’d never been less casual than he was with Agostinelli. They had hours of ecstatic happiness, even if these were brief in comparison with Proust’s bouts of agonised jealousy.

Proust asked Albert Nahmias whether he had ‘ever, for any reason, had anyone shadowed, and if so, have you kept the addresses of the detectives or maintained contact with them?’

Proust, who endured emotional and sexual loneliness and even misery, was the victim of one of those phenomena of the crystallisation of love that he himself describes. Since physical possession, ‘in which one possesses nothing

anyway', was far less important than mental possession, he quickly wove threads of dependence around the beloved, like a spider in the centre of its web. One can imagine Agostinelli having to undergo long interrogations that were intended to soothe the jealousy that, for Marcel, was inseparable from love, and the blackmail he subjected Proust to in return: money, presents, the offer of flying lessons, and even of an aeroplane.

In the first week of December, 1913 Agostinelli fled with Anna, seeking refuge on his native Riviera. He took with him the money he had saved from Proust's gifts, which was amply sufficient for his plans. However, it was not until nearly four months after his escape, when the flying season began again, that he took the decisive step. He enrolled at the flying school of the Garbero brothers at La Grimaudière near Antibes.

You can tell your wife that if (which heaven forbid) you should have an aeroplane accident, she will find in me neither a protector nor a friend, and will never get a halfpenny from me.

During the next two months his progress was rapid, and on Saturday, 30 May 1914, at five o'clock in the afternoon, he made his second solo flight. Rashly exulting in the liberation of flight, he ventured north-eastward over the sea. He prepared to fly back, but forgot the necessity to gain height and speed for the turn; his monoplane stalled and crashed, along the dipping right wing, into the sea several hundred yards from land. The horrified watchers on the shore saw the young man standing on his seat in the sinking wreck, waving and shouting for help. Agostinelli

had never learned to swim; and as a rowing boat drew near, the plane and the tragic aviator sank.

Alas, the cup has overflowed with the death of a young man whom I loved probably more than all my friends since it has made me so unhappy. Although he was of the most humble 'condition' and devoid of culture, I have letters from him which are those of a great writer. He had a delightful intelligence, though it wasn't at all for that reason that I loved him.

He wrote to a friend, 'I knew what it was to hope, every time I took a taxi, that an oncoming motor-bus would run me over.'

ALBERTINE

There now seems general agreement that the character of Albertine, who plays such a central role in Proust's novel, although partly based on transposition from the author's feelings for Agostinelli, is also a composite figure derived from his memories of various women with whom he had affairs, whether platonic or sexual, over a number of years.

Proust himself wrote that there had been many models for Albertine, since 'a book is a great cemetery in which one can no longer read the names on most of the tombs'.

But now these words: 'Mademoiselle Albertine has gone!' had expressed themselves in my heart in the form of an anguish so keen that I would not be able to endure it for any length of time. And so what I had supposed to mean

nothing to me was the only thing in my whole life. How ignorant we are of ourselves.

I forsook all pride with regard to Albertine, I sent her a despairing telegram begging her to return upon any conditions, telling her that she might do anything she liked, that I asked only to be allowed to take her in my arms for a minute three times a week, before she went to bed. And had she confined me to once a week, I would have accepted the restriction. She did not, ever, return. My telegram had just gone to her when I myself received one. It was from Mme. Bontemps. The world is not created once and for all time for each of us individually. There are added to it in the course of our life things of which we have never had any suspicion. Alas! it was not a suppression of suffering that was wrought in me by the first two lines of the telegram: "My poor friend, our little Albertine is no more; forgive me for breaking this terrible news to you who were so fond of her. She was thrown by her horse against a tree while she was out riding. All our efforts to restore her to life were unavailing. If only I were dead in her place!" No, not the suppression of suffering, but a suffering until then unimagined, that of learning that she would not come back.

TO FIND A PUBLISHER

There was now to follow a long and complicated search for publishers. Proust was up against it from the first because of the lack of plot and action in his work, for publishers were still concerned with the narrative-and-plot legacy of novels of the previous century: not yet the years of streams of consciousness.

My dear fellow, I may perhaps be dead from the neck up, but rack my brains as I may I can't see why a chap should need thirty pages to describe how he turns over in bed before going to sleep.

My sole consolation when I went upstairs for the night was that Mamma would come in and kiss me after I was in bed. But this good night lasted for so short a time: she went down again so soon that the moment in which I heard her climb the stairs, and then caught the sound of her garden dress of blue muslin, from which hung little tassels of plaited straw, rustling along the double-doored corridor, was for me a moment of the keenest sorrow. So much did I love that good night that I reached the stage of hoping that it would come as late as possible, so as to prolong the time of respite during which Mamma would not yet have appeared. Sometimes when, after kissing me, she opened the door to go, I longed to call her back, to say to her 'Kiss me just once again,' but I knew that then she would at once look displeased, for the concession which she made to my wretchedness and agitation in coming up to me with this kiss of peace always annoyed my father, who thought such ceremonies absurd, and she would have liked to try to induce me to outgrow the need, the custom of having her there at all, which was a very different thing from letting the custom grow up of my asking her for an additional kiss when she was already crossing the threshold. And to see her look displeased destroyed all the sense of tranquillity she had brought me a moment before, when she bent her loving face down over my bed, and held it out to me like a Host, for an act of Communion in which my lips might drink deeply the sense of her real presence, and with it the power to sleep.

I don't know whether I have told you that this book is a novel. At least it deviates least from the novel form. There is a Monsieur who narrates and who says 'I'; there are a great many characters; in the first volume they are 'prepared' in such a way that what they do in the second is exactly the opposite of what one would expect from the first. And from the point of view of composition, it is so complex that it will not be clear until much later when all the 'themes' have begun to be combined.

HOW TO NOTICE THINGS

An effect of reading a book which has devoted attention to noticing such faint yet vital tremors is that, once we've put the volume down and resumed our own life, we may attend to precisely the things which the author would have responded to had he or she been in our company. Our minds will be like a radar newly attuned to pick up certain objects floating through consciousness. Our attention will be drawn to the shades of the sky, to the changeability of a face, to the hypocrisy of a friend or to a submerged sadness about a situation which we had previously not even known we could feel sad about. The book will have *sensitized* us, stimulated our dormant antennae by evidence of its own developed sensitivity.

The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

Since I had seen such things depicted in water-colours by Elstir, I sought to find them again in reality. I cherished, as though for their poetic beauty, the broken gestures of the

knives still lying across one another, the swollen convexity of a discarded napkin upon which the sun would patch a scrap of yellow velvet, the half-empty glass which thus shewed to greater advantage the noble sweep of its sides, . . . the shifting colour of the plums which passed from green to blue and from blue to golden yellow in the half-plundered dish, the chairs, like a group of old ladies, that came twice daily to take their places round the white cloth spread on the table as on an altar. . . . where in the hollows of oyster-shells a few drops of lustral water had gathered as in tiny holy water stoups of stone. I tried to find beauty there where I had never imagined before that it could exist, in the most ordinary things, in the profundities of 'still life'.

An hour is not merely an hour, it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates, and what we call reality is a certain connection between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY

This notion of Time embodied, of years past but not separated from us, it was now my intention to emphasise as strongly as possible in my work. And at this very moment, in the house of the Prince de Guermantes, as though to strengthen me in my resolve, the noise of my parents' footsteps as they accompanied M. Swann to the door and the peal – resilient, ferruginous, interminable, fresh and shrill – of the bell on the garden gate which informed me that at last he had gone and that Mamma would presently come upstairs, these sounds rang again in my ears, yes,

unmistakably I heard these very sounds, situated though they were in a remote past. When the bell of the garden gate had pealed, I already existed and from that moment onwards, for me still to be able to hear that peal, there must have been no break in continuity, no single second at which I had ceased or rested from existing, from thinking, from being conscious of myself, since that moment from long ago still adhered to me and I could still find it again, could retrace my steps to it, merely by descending to a greater depth within myself. And I felt, as I say, a sensation of weariness and almost of terror at the thought that all this length of Time had not only, without interruption, been lived, experienced, secreted by me, that it was my life, was in fact me, but also that I was compelled so long as I was alive to keep it attached to me.

Thus we are all walking computers carrying about the records of past angles of light, sounds, tastes which, when by chance brought to our notice again, provoke a most mysterious and satisfying thrill: momentarily we are outside time.

Life thus defined is in a sense all the time immanent in ordinary men no less than in the artist. But most men do not see it because they do not seek to shed light upon it. And therefore their past is like a photographic dark-room encumbered with innumerable negatives which remain useless because the intellect has not developed them. But art, if it means awareness of our own life, means also awareness of the lives of other people. This work of the artist, this struggle to discern beneath matter, beneath experience, beneath words, something that is different

from them, is a process exactly the reverse of that which, in those everyday lives which we live with our gaze averted from ourselves, is at every moment being accomplished by vanity and passion and the intellect, and habit too, when they smother our true impressions, so as entirely to conceal them from us, beneath a whole heap of verbal concepts and practical goals which we falsely call life. In short, this art which is so complicated is in fact the only living art. It alone expresses for others and renders visible to ourselves that life of ours which cannot effectually observe itself. Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habits have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us.

It is not, as mistakenly is often supposed, a long treatise for the aesthete; in spite of often painstaking demands on the reader, it concerns itself with problems and questions and doubts which might occur from time to time in the mind of any thinking man.

RECOGNITION

My dear Proust, for several days I have never left your book; I am supersaturating myself in it with rapture, revelling in it. The refusal of this book will always be the gravest mistake the NRF ever made – and (for I have the shame of being largely responsible for it) one of the most stinging regrets, nay, remorse, of my whole life.

In June-July excerpts from *The Guermantes Way* were published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*; but it was the doomed year of war, the first scything down of Europe's men of fighting age; and thoughts of things like further publication had to be put aside in the vast and general upheaval.

FRANCE AT WAR

Armée de Paris Habitants de Paris

Les membres du Gouvernement de la République ont quitté Paris pour donner une impulsion nouvelle à la défense nationale. J'ai reçu le mandat de défendre Paris contre l'envahisseur.

Ce mandat je le remplirai jusqu'au bout.
Paris le 3 Septembre 1914

Commandant, l'Armée de Paris
GALLIÉNI

I know that two or three days before the victory of the Marne, when the siege of Paris was thought to be imminent, I got up one evening and went out in the light of a moon that was clear and brilliant, reproachful, serene, ironic and motherly, and at the sight of that immense Paris that I never knew I loved so much, waiting in her superfluous beauty for the onslaught that nothing seemed to be able to prevent any longer, I could not help weeping.

No doubt there is nothing very pleasant about the life I lead and even though I know I can be of no use to the army, I can be useful to myself by allowing myself to be withdrawn.

For I very much want to finish the book I've begun and to set down some truths in it which I know will inspire many people and which would otherwise be destroyed with me.

Never, I believe, has analysis of everything that constitutes our experience been pushed so far. . . knowing the unknowable, explaining the inexplicable, M. Proust's analysis is so clear that it reminds one of the clear blue ether on certain summer days.

CHAPTER V
ANNA AKHMATOVA
THE SURVIVOR

Anna Andreyevna Gorenko (1889 –1966), better known by the pen name Anna Akhmatova was a Russian and Soviet modernist poet, one of the most acclaimed writers in the Russian canon.

Akhmatova's first two books of laconic, intimate lyrics speak most poignantly of unrequited love. Her first book of poems, *Evening* (1912) accompanied the next two or three generations of Russians whenever they fell in love.

Her second collection, *The Rosary*, appeared in March 1914 and firmly established her as one of the most popular and sought after poets of the day. Thousands of women composed poems 'in honour of Akhmatova', mimicking her style and prompting her to exclaim: 'I taught our women how to speak, but don't know how to make them silent'.

Her success was extraordinary. Students and young women surrounded their beloved poetess. It was hard to reach her in the intermissions – the young people crowded around her in an impenetrable wall.

TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES

It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principles of its colour and odour, as to seek to transfuse from one language into another the creation of a poem.

All poems, irrespective of the formal characteristics of the original, generally end up translated into the free verse form. There is little attempt to retain the musical qualities of rhythm and rhyme that characterised the original poem, what makes up that indefinable aural dimension of poetic significance so treasured in Russian poetry.

Sir, Lesley Chamberlain, in her review of a recent translation of Anna Akhmatova's poems commends these lines as a fine translation:

We know each others hours worth will be made clear
And justified at the end of days.
None bear grief like ours with fewer tears,
With a prouder or simpler gaze.

I can't believe that any translator with an ear for verse would have committed the aural atrocity of that first line. Try saying it aloud. There is further clumsiness in the rhyming of the plural tears with clear in the first line; the hissing s at the end of the plural is too strong not to kill the gentler r of the singular.

SYMBOLISM v. ACMEISM

In Petersburg the literary scene was flourishing and was dominated by the Symbolists who viewed the poet as the bearer of a spiritual message rather than as a social reformer.

The Symbolist poet favoured a dream-like, distant and indefinable poetic landscape, a realm meant for the spirit, not for flesh and blood.

Fire birds

Fierce birds, with feathers made of pure fire,
Flew above the entrance into God's Empire.
The inflamed reflections reached the marble whiteness
And the strangers vanished in the waters' vastness.

But, on virgin marble of the steps of entrance,
Somewhat ever reddened by unnatural radiance,
And by gates and arches, everlasting, purest...
Angels drank from goblets of mysterious lures

Akhmatova's first readers were intrigued by the narrative line of her poems, which was so different from the poetic generalizations of the symbolists, and, even more so by the fact that this narrative was the point of view of a contemporary woman living in Petersburg. It was like reading *Anna Karenina* retold by its heroine. Her public was also amazed by the appearance in Akhmatova's poems of ordinary 'non-poetic' words. Her poetry is full of seemingly inconsequential items like dark veils, fluffy muffs, and gloves. In the poetry

of the decadents these objects could appear as symbols, but for Akhmatova they were things in their own right.

Then helplessly my breast grew cold,
But my steps were light.
I pulled the glove for my left hand
Onto my right.

At a meeting of the Guild of Poets an exciting new direction in Russian poetry called acmeism took shape. The name came from the Greek *akme*, meaning the highest degree of something. The poet must embrace this world with his whole heart, not whine and pine for another one more beautiful, more perfect, perhaps, but purely hypothetical.

While sharing a love for the beauty and mystery of the things of this world, the Acmeists also saw themselves as deeply rooted in the traditions of Western European art and literature. All had travelled and lived in France and Italy, knew the languages and had read the classic works of literature.

Acmeism set itself the task of understanding individual human experience. The acmeists demanded sharpness and clarity above all, and wrote about objects in the real world. Akhmatova, Gumilyov and Osip Mandelstam were the key figures in the new movement and Akhmatova's lucid verses the purest expression of it.

MARRIAGE

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev and Anna Andreevna Gorenko (Akhmatova) were born in the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century. In many ways their backgrounds were similar. Their families, if not distinguished by wealth and high social position, were of the *dvoryanin* class, the Russian landed gentry.

I am going to marry my childhood friend, Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev. He has loved me for three years now, and I believe that it is my fate to be his wife. Whether or not I love him, I do not know, but it seems to me that I do.

Close friends during their days at the Gymnasium, Anna and Nikolai were separated when Anna's parents divorced and she moved away. But after a lengthy and problematic courtship, their marriage and a wedding trip to Paris, they returned to live in the Gumilov home in Tsarskoe Selo near Petersburg.

Why did Anna marry Gumilyov in 1910? Her school friend Valeria was convinced she was never in love with him but that he represented a literary world which she passionately wished to join. [Furthermore] Anna was unusually poor for someone of her rank. 'We live in terrible poverty,' she wrote. 'We have to scrub floors and do our own washing'. She now lived with an uncle who shouted words of abuse at her. Conventions still oppressed unmarried women, and Gumilyov offered her the chance to leave the provinces and enter the exciting literary world of St Petersburg, in which he was already a figure.

Gumilyov was unable or unwilling to make that transition from the superficial, exciting stage of adolescent falling-in-love to a mature and lasting love relationship. New sights, new experiences, new love affairs kept adventure alive in his life, fed fresh imagery into his poetry and nourished his self-image and self-esteem.

He liked three things in life:
Evensong, white peacocks,
And worn maps of America.
He did not like crying children,
He did not like tea with jam
Or womens' hysterics.
And I was his wife.

From the first year of their marriage, Gumilyov began to chafe against its constraints. She wrote that he had lost his passion for her, and by the end of that year he left on a six month trip to Africa.

Through a half open door
The linden trees smell sweetly,
Forgotten on the table lie
A riding crop and a glove.

Inside the yellow lamplight
I listen to the murmurs.
Why did you go away?
I still don't understand.

One of Akhmatova's most celebrated poems may have been composed after a lover's quarrel.

Beneath my veil, I clutch my own hands.
'Why do you look so pale today?' they ask.
'Because I made him drunk with misery
And desperate grief,' I say.

How to forget that? He staggered out,
His mouth twisted into a line of pain
And I ran after him down the steps
Only catching up with him at the gate.

Panting I cried, 'It was all a joke.
Don't leave me. If you do, I'll die.'
His smile was grim and cool as he replied,
'Its windy now. Don't stand outside.'

Even the birth of their son, Lev, in 1912 did not save the
foundering marriage. 'We argued over him, too,' Gumilyov
later complained. Akhmatova rarely saw the child, who was
brought up by his relatives.

He does not seem to have been physically jealous of her
admirers. He readily accorded his wife the same freedom he
took himself, yet, despite his infidelities, Anna Akhmatova
probably remained the great love of his life. He had no idea
of divorcing her, for all his involvement with other women.

ALEXANDER BLOK

Rumours began to circulate that she was having an affair
with the influential lyrical poet Alexander Blok. Other
female poets had published love poetry, of course, but
Akhmatova was the first to 'construct' a literary love affair;

that is, for the first time, by force of her public readings and publications in magazines, a woman created a public perception of an affair in which, for a change, attention was focused on a man *she* selected for the purpose. Her first poem that was centered on Blok, the ballad 'Grey-Eyed King' appeared in 1911 and became phenomenally popular and was even set to music.

Gossip circulated that the hero of 'The Grey-eyed King' was Blok and that Lev Gumilyov was really Anna's son by Blok.

Welcome to you, everlasting pain!
The grey-eyed king died yesterday.

The autumn evening was scarlet and humid.
When my husband returned he told me calmly

They brought him back from the hunt, you know.
They found his body lying by an oak.

You must be sorry for the young queen. They say
In a single night her hair has gone grey.

Then my husband found his pipe near the fire
And went out promptly for his nights work.

Now I shall wake up my little daughter
And look deeply into her grey eyes.

Outside poplars are sighing in the wind.
He is no longer alive, your king.

Akhmatova's 'affair' with Blok, brought into the readers' consciousness by her poems beginning in 1911, had turned into a popular legend by 1914, one that Blok himself did not dispute.

I visited the poet on Sunday,
precisely at noon. It was quiet
inside his enormous room.
There was frost outside the windows,

What we said I still remember:
that Sunday, and a smoky noon
inside his tall, grey house,
by the sea gate of the Neva.

Not only was Blok immensely gifted and prolific, his romantic appearance and reputation as a lover fulfilled the idealized image of the poet. His popularity can only be compared to that of a movie star or rock musician today. His refined and sensitive features, his crown of golden curls, full, sensuous lips, dreamy blue-grey eyes appeared on picture postcards sold to his admirers.

THE STRAY DOG

In 1913, the Stray Dog was one of the few places in the nightlife of St Petersburg where literary and artistic people, often with little money, could find themselves welcome. Unlike La Coupole or Les Deux Magots in Paris, the Stray Dog did not function as an ordinary café: it was more like a club, with serious lectures, art exhibits and musical evenings. Guests had to sign in a thick volume

bound in pigskin. Writers and artists were admitted free of charge, while ordinary punters, dismissively nicknamed ‘pharmacists’, had to pay a hefty 25 roubles a head.

Wrapped in black silk, with a large oval cameo at her waist, Akhmatova floated in stopping at the entrance so as to write her latest poem in the pigskin book at the request of Pronin (owner of the premises), who was rushing to greet her, with the unsophisticated pharmacists, their curiosity piqued, wildly guessing who’s who in the poem. Attired in a long frock coat, not leaving a single beautiful woman without his attention, Gumilyov retreated, moving backward among the tables, either to observe court etiquette or to avoid dagger looks at his back.

The philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev condemned the frenetic, intensely creative yet claustrophobic atmosphere of pre-war St Petersburg: ‘All this took place within a very small, elite circle totally cut off from the masses. There was a feeling of breathing the putrefied air of a hothouse rather than fresh air. There was *Angst*, tension, but no joy. Serious creativity was combined with cheap imitation and a following of fashion. There were too many aesthetes, mystics, disciples of the occult, with a dominance of the erotic and aesthetic over the ethical. There was something poisonous in the air of Petersburg at this time.

We’re harlots here and carousers
How unhappy are we all!
On the walls the birds and flowers
Are homesick for the clouds.

The black pipe you are holding -
So strange the puffs of smoke.
To appear even more slender
I put on my narrow skirt.

Blocked forever are the windows.
Is there frost or a storm outside?
But the eyes of a wary house cat
Are not unlike your eyes.

WAR IN RUSSIA

In response to the general mobilization ordered by Nicholas II, Germany declared war. Thousands of people came out on Palace Square waving the flag, icons, and portraits of the tsar. When Nicholas and his wife appeared on the balcony of the Winter Palace, the crowd sank to its knees and sang the anthem, 'God Save the Tsar'. The city was caught up in patriotic frenzy. German stores were attacked and the gigantic cast-iron horses on top of the German embassy were thrown down to the street. The renaming of Saint Petersburg to Petrograd slipped through without serious debate.

Military action began favorably for Russia. In Petrograd they predicted that Russian troops would be in Berlin by Christmas of 1914, but then luck ran out. In the first eleven months of bloody battle, over a million and a half Russian men were wounded, killed, or taken prisoner. Rumors spread in the capital about a catastrophic shortage of weapons and ammunition, about the stupid, craven generals, about theft and bribery in the supply system.

They spoke more and more openly about treason, about the German-born empress and her favorite, the all-powerful Rasputin, leading the country to ruin.

Gumilyov joined the cavalry with enthusiasm the day war was declared, looking for a chance to prove his own physical bravery and much influenced by Nietzsche's aphorism that war and courage do greater good than charity.

I did not sleep the whole night. The attacks were so strong that I felt in good spirits. I think that at the dawn of humanity, people also lived anxiously, created a lot and died early. It is difficult for me to believe that someone who eats lunch every day and sleeps every night can introduce something into the treasure house of the culture of the spirit.

Generally speaking, I can say that this is the best time of my life. It reminds me a bit of my Abyssinian escapades but is less lyrical and excites me much more. To be under fire almost every day, to hear the screech of shrapnel, the clicking of rifles aimed at you – I think such is the enjoyment an inveterate drunkard experiences before a bottle of very old, strong cognac.

And truly radiant and holy
Is the wars great goal,
Seraphim, clear and winged,
Are seen behind the soldiers shoulders.

Only when the war became a matter of entrenchment, with machine-guns and heavy artillery murdering impersonally, did Gumilyov face up to the brutal fact that his conception

of the nobility of war was an anachronism. Even so, he was decorated three times, twice with the St George Cross.

Although Akhmatova did not share Gumilyov's enthusiasm for the war, her patriotism was intense and her Cassandra-like intuition that a whole world was ending in the catastrophe of war was soon to prove true.

The sunshine shows Gods displeasure.
There's been no rain since Easter.
Into my yard came a stranger
with only one leg, and he said to me:

Frightening times are approaching. Soon
fresh graves will cover the land:
there'll be earthquakes, plague and famine;
eclipses and signs in the heavens.

This elegant woman, seemingly so concerned with appearance, was already making herself into the voice of a whole people.

You can give me bitter years of illness,
Choking, sleepless nights and feverish heat,
Take away my dear friend and my baby,
Take my mysterious singing gift.
At your liturgy I will pray this
After so many tortured days,
That the black clouds over darkened Russia
Turn to clouds in a glory of rays.

LOVE AND BETRAYAL

Her poems of spring 1915 circle around her love for Boris Anrep, whom she claimed as her own true love even though she knew he had other commitments apart from his legal wife. She talked of him to the end of her life.

Anrep was a considerable artist in mosaic, but as a man light-hearted, irreligious, even frivolous. New research shows him to have exactly the cool dedication to his own pleasure which characterised so many of the men Akhmatova fell in love with. He was a free-living bohemian, already part of an international artistic world.

The evening light is yellow and wide,
April is tender and cool.
You have come many years too late
but still I am glad you are here.

Sit down very closely next to me,
and look at me with amusement.
I have filled this dark blue
notebook with my childish poems.

Forgive me for writing of misery
and not taking joy in the sunshine.
Forgive me for so often mistaking
other people for you.

I walked across the frozen Neva river in order to avoid the barricades around the bridges. I reached the Sreznevsky house and rang the bell. Anna Andreevna opened the door.

'Is it really you? On a day like this? They are seizing officers on the streets, you know.'

'I took off my epaulets.'

She was obviously moved that I had come to see her. We went into her room and she reclined on her sofa. For a while we spoke of the significance of the revolution. She was worried, saying that enormous changes were in store.

'It will be the same as it was in France during the Great Revolution, perhaps even worse.'

'Let's not talk about it any more', I said, and we were silent. She looked at the floor.

'We will never see each other again. You are going away.'

'I will come back. Look I have your ring.' I opened my jacket and showed her the black ring I wore on a chain around my neck.

It is quite simple, it is quite clear
And understood by everyone.
You don't love me now,
And I think you never have done.
Why is it I am always drawn
To someone else's man?

You are a traitor, and for a green island,
have betrayed, yes, betrayed your native land,
abandoned all our songs and sacred icons,
and the pine tree over a quiet lake.

Anrep went on to have a successful career in England as a ceramicist. He was commissioned to make a series of mosaics for London's National Gallery where they can still be seen when not covered by matting. He always felt

deeply guilty about abandoning Akhmatova, and also about losing a black ring which had belonged to her grandmother and which she had given him as a keepsake. In a memoir composed after her death he wrote, I am inconsolably bereaved and ashamed.

REVOLUTION

And the Revolution came. Power was rapidly slipping out of the tsar's hands; soon he was forced to abdicate when, at the end of February 1917, a new government was formed. However, its temporary nature was emphasized by its name, the Provisional Government. This government continued the war, totally disregarding the low morale, the lack of ammunition and food, and the thousands deserting because they thought they were fighting for a lost cause. Lenin arrived from abroad calling for an end to the war and urging the Bolsheviks to prepare for revolution. The revolution he had hoped for was realized on October 25.

The break with Gumilyov in 1918 would bring serious consequences for Anna. At a time when divorce was still considered scandalous, even disreputable, the social and economic consequences for a woman were enormous. With her father dead and her mother living on a modest pension in Crimea, Akhmatova had no family to fall back upon for help. She had little or no money of her own and could never hope to support herself writing. War had ravaged the Russian economy and prospects for future prosperity were exceedingly dim. Although she did not know it then, Akhmatova had taken the first step down in a precipitous spiral into a life of poverty.

The new government decided to leave Petersburg and move the capital of Soviet Russia to Moscow. The cold, hungry city was dying. The census of August 1920 reported only 799,000 people in Petrograd, that is, not quite 35 percent of the pre-revolutionary level.

TRAGEDY AND SURVIVAL

At an evening dedicated to Pushkin, Blok made a public declaration: 'There is no happiness in the world but there is peace and freedom. They're taking away our peace and freedom too. Not external peace, but creative peace. Not childish freedom, not the freedom to be a false liberal, but our creative freedom, our secret freedom. And the poet is dying because there is nothing for him to breathe, life has lost its meaning.'

After this speech he was inevitably regarded with suspicion by the authorities. Later in the year when he became ill with endocarditis coupled with malnutrition and depression, he was refused permission to go abroad for medical treatment because it was feared he would speak out against the regime. In August he died, going, as he himself put it, abroad, where everyone goes without preliminary permission from the authorities.

The Russian Revolution ended with the death of Alexander Blok.

It was at Blok's funeral on 10 August that Akhmatova first heard that Gumilyov had been arrested. He was declared to be an enemy of the people and was sentenced to execution by shooting.

Under cover of darkness, crushed into a truck filled with other 'conspirators', he was driven out of the city. Along a deserted roadway, the truck stopped beside a freshly-dug trench. The prisoners were roughly hauled out of the truck, forced to kneel beside the trench and shot with a pistol at point-blank range in the back of the head. As Nemirovich-Danchenko wrote: 'Illiterate, stupid and foul people killed him like a stray dog, somewhere outside the city, so that it would be impossible to find the grave. Professors, artists and young girls barely out of childhood, as innocent as he was, lay with him in the brotherly grave'.

I brought destruction on those I loved
 and one after another they all died.
 This is my sorrow. I foretold
 their graves in my own words.
 It was as if my wild love songs
 were ravens, circling and smelling out
 the hot, fresh blood they desired.

The stage was set for a confrontation. On one side, the triumphant, omnipresent, cruel, and manipulative regime determined to destroy and subjugate not only the remains of Petersburg but to recast the new Petrograd in its own image at any cost. On the side of the regime was the full power of the government, the secret police, and the cultural apparatus with its carrots and sticks. On the other was just a woman with a handful of confederates, poor, unarmed, and deprived. Her only strength lay in being a great poet in a country where poets traditionally wielded enormous influence and commanded great respect.

It was then that Akhmatova made final a choice crucial in determining the direction of her life and her art. The temptation to abandon a doomed and foundering Russia for Italy or France, whose culture she knew and loved almost as dearly as her own, must have been almost achingly irresistible. With her intuitive understanding, she knew what kind of future lay ahead for her and for the Russian people under a Communist government. But she made her decision not to flee to safety in the West, but stay in her motherland whatever the future might bring.

A voice came to me.
It called out comfortingly.
It said, "Come here,
Leave your deaf and sinful land,
Leave Russia forever,
I will wash the blood from your hands,
Root out the black shame from your heart,
Calmly and indifferently,
I covered my ears with my hands,
So that my sorrowing spirit
Would not be stained by those shameful words.

Miraculously, Akhmatova survived the civil war, two world wars, the extremes of poverty and deprivation, and years of the Stalinist terror.

UNESCO named 1989, the centenary of her birth, as the year of Anna Akhmatova. This was celebrated all over the world. Rather as Pushkin was claimed by all political factions in Russian society after his death, Akhmatova was praised on every side. To the mass reader, her simplicity made her poems easy to understand and memorise. The

liberals saw her as an opponent of Stalinism, religious people recognised her love of God, patriots saw she was deeply Russian. Even Communists observed that she had never been outspokenly anti-Soviet.

The widespread worship of her memory in Soviet Union today, both as an artist and as an unsundering human being, has, so far as I know, no parallel. The legend of her life and unyielding passive resistance to what she regarded as unworthy of her country and herself, transformed her into a figure not merely in Russian literature, but in Russian history in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER VI
VIRGINIA WOOLF
THE USES OF ADVERSITY

The Woolfs were married on 10 August 1912. They took a peripatetic honeymoon through the Continent, France, Spain and Italy. On their return Virginia went back to her work on the final draft of *The Voyage Out*, revising it with a feverish intensity. In March 1913 it was submitted to the family firm of Duckworth, and accepted with enthusiasm. It was not, however, published until 1915, because once more Virginia was gradually going mad. The attack, which became acute in the summer of 1913, lasted until the autumn of 1915. It was not only the worst yet, but the most serious in the whole of her life.

I was already troubled and apprehensive when we returned from our honeymoon in the autumn of 1912. All through the first seven months of 1913 I became more and more concerned, for the danger symptoms or signals became more and more serious. The symptoms of headache increased, she could not sleep, she would hardly eat anything. She could not work and became terribly depressed, and what was most alarming, she refused to admit that she was ill.

I got a telephone message from Ka to say that Virginia had fallen into a deep sleep. I hurried back to Brunswick Square and found that Virginia was lying on her bed breathing heavily and unconscious. She had taken the veronal tablets from my box and swallowed a very large dose. I telephoned to Head and he came bringing a nurse. Head, Geoffrey, and the nurse were hard at work until nearly 1 o'clock in the morning.

NEUROSIS?

Within a year of their marriage and honeymoon in 1912, Virginia was, it would appear from Leonard's account, in a state of suicidal depression. And within the same year, Leonard and Virginia took up new substitute rôles within their marriage. Leonard is no longer the husband so much as the nurse. Virginia is no longer the wife so much as the patient. He is sane. She is 'insane'. He consults doctors and visits 'mental specialists'. She behaves with the utmost irrationality and violence towards the nurses. The first years of their marriage were of unrelieved horror.

She believed, for instance, that she was not ill, that her symptoms were due to her own 'faults'; she believed that she was hearing voices when the voices were her own imaginings; she heard the birds outside her window talking Greek; she believed that the doctors and nurses were in conspiracy against her.

A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in

Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death.

The sudden desire not to eat would be a perfect cover for an anxiety that Virginia could no longer hide by any other means. The constant refusal of food would have been, that is to say, a deliberate distraction. What was really at issue was an intense unhappiness in her married life that Leonard was not prepared, or not able, to recognise. Hence he interprets her food code straightforwardly as having reference only to food.

Next day we went to see Head in the afternoon. I gave my account of what had happened and Virginia gave hers. He told her that she was completely mistaken about her own condition; she was ill, ill like a person who had a cold or typhoid fever, but if she took his advice and did what he prescribed, her symptoms would go and she would be quite well again, able to think and write and read; she must go to a nursing home and stay in bed for a few weeks, resting and eating.

They are locked in a battle of wills. Virginia is determined that, when she puts her side of the story to Head, she will affirm that she is not 'ill'. But Leonard was determined that Head should decide that his wife was 'ill'. And so Head's agreement with Leonard about Virginia's own view of her own inner state falls like a double judgement on her, utterly destroying her own sense of rightness, her own sense of identity.

‘We have had our little talk,’ said Sir William.

‘He says you are very, very ill,’ Rezia cried.

‘We have been arranging that you should go into a home,’ said Sir William.

‘One of Holmes’s homes?’ sneered Septimus.

‘One of *my* homes, Mr Warren Smith,’ he said, ‘where we will teach you to rest.’

And there was just one thing more.

He was quite certain that when Mr Warren Smith was well he was the last man in the world to frighten his wife. But he had talked of killing himself.

Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless.

I do not now believe, although I once did, that the behaviour which Woolf manifested later in her life can be accounted for by any single cause, and surely not by an inherent madness. Any view which explains Virginia Woolf’s behaviour as madness is archaic: too much is now known about the behaviour of victims of childhood abuse to support such a description.

There was definitely sexual interference from both half-brothers. Gerald’s took place when Virginia ‘was very small’ and may or may not have continued in some form or other up to 1895. But some form of interference was begun by George, either as early as 1895, or soon thereafter, and continued until 1904.

Sleep had almost come to me. The room was dark. The house silent. Then creaking stealthily, the door opened: treading gingerly, someone entered. 'Who?' I cried. 'Don't be frightened', George whispered. 'And don't turn on the light, oh beloved. Beloved — ' and he flung himself on my bed, and took me in his arms.

Yes, the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also.

Only recently have researchers begun to demonstrate the extent to which sexual abuse in childhood taints the quality of the rest of the victim's life, often causing a lifetime or periods of overwhelming sorrow, mental anguish, self-destructive and self-abusive behaviour, negative feelings about one's body, feelings of emotional coldness, emptiness, and detachment.

The effect of George Duckworth's attentions was, I believe, to traumatise Virginia, and to provoke in her a sexual anaesthesia. She could not feel any normal sexual feeling, and sexual matters were attended in her mind with fantasies of horror and dread. The first two novels she wrote, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, are both explicitly about the problem of getting engaged, and the attendant problem of how to feel something emotionally as well as sexually for the preferred or prospective partner.

I think it's a little odd, don't you?' he said, in a voice of detached reflection. 'Most people, I mean, would be seriously upset if their marriage was put off for six months or so. But we aren't, now how do you account for that?'

She looked at him and observed his judicial attitude as of one holding far aloof from emotion.

'I attribute it,' he went on, without waiting for her to answer, 'to the fact that neither of us is in the least romantic about the other. That may be partly, no doubt, because we've known each other so long, but I'm inclined to think there's more in it than that. There's something temperamental. I think you're a trifle cold, and I suspect I'm a trifle self-absorbed.'

'What is this romance?' she mused.

'Ah, that's the question. I've never come across a definition that satisfied me, though there are some very good ones' – he glanced in the direction of his books.

'Its not altogether knowing the other person, perhaps – its ignorance,' she hazarded.

'Have you no personal experience of it?' he asked, letting his eyes rest upon her swiftly for a moment.

'I believe its influenced me enormously,' she said. She sighed, teased by desires so incoherent, so incommunicable.

'But isn't it curious,' William resumed, 'that you should neither feel it for me, nor I for you?'

Katherine agreed that it was curious – very.

To read Leonard Woolf's volumes of autobiography is to breathe in the aroma of the very fine flower of the Bloomsbury rationalist-reductive consciousness. A reading of the volumes will turn up case after case where the reader is struck by the actual naïveté of what is being asserted, a naïveté which is the conscious and chosen result of excluding all parameters of thinking which are not strictly logical or deductive. And nowhere is this self-imposed set of limitations more evident than in those pages of his autobiography where he writes of his wife's 'insanity'. Now this is the man Virginia had married. Sexually disturbed from years of interference from her half-brothers, terrified

of her own body, and deeply distrusting food, it began to dawn on her, on their return from their honeymoon, that she had married an adversary in the mind *too*. Not only were she and Leonard physically incompatible, but they were going to be mentally incompatible, and above all else, were going to be mentally incompatible on this matter of their physical incompatibility.

OR MADNESS?

In the rarefied atmosphere of academia many psychoanalytically inclined critics cling to the outmoded, simplistic Freudian model of this disorder as a neurotic conflict that the patient is, either consciously, or unconsciously, unwilling to resolve

Most analytic treatment carries with it a strong implication that it is a major analytic task of the patient to accept responsibility for his actions. However, it now seems likely that there are patients with depressive, anxious, and dysphoric states for whom the usual psychodynamic view of responsibility seems inappropriate and who should not be held accountable. Distinctions must be made between psychological conflicts and those disturbances arising out of a strong biochemical predisposition.

Afflicting approximately 1 percent of the general population, manic-depressive illness is a severe mood disturbance in which prolonged periods of inappropriate depression alternate either with periods of normal mood or with periods of excessive, inappropriate euphoria and mania.

In light of current knowledge, it has been widely accepted that Virginia Woolf, like many writers and creative artists, suffered from manic-depression, or bi-polar disorder as it is also called. Hers was an almost textbook case, with onset occurring early in life and proceeding in periodic bouts broken up by long stretches of sanity and good health.

Her grandfather, mother, sister, brother, and niece all suffered from recurrent depressions, her father and another brother were cyclothymic, and her cousin James, who had been institutionalized for mania and depression, died of acute mania.

Genetically, Virginia Woolf's family history tallies with studies showing that relatives of manic-depressives are more likely than the general population to exhibit affective illnesses (mania, depression, cyclothymia, schizo-affective disorders).

I myself have always thought Leonard deserved the Purple Heart for keeping Virginia safe, cared for, and out of the nut-house for three decades. Virginia's many letters and diary entries speak of her love for Leonard, her dependence upon him, and her sense of peace when they are together.

If Virginia decided to share her life with a perhaps excessively rationalistic man, it was because she with her overdeveloped sensibility and fragile emotional defences, needed that quality: similarly, however much Leonard might have chafed under the constraints of being an on-again-off-again nursemaid, he was eminently suited to that task and must have found a certain fulfilment in it, or he would never have stuck it out for thirty years.

ILLNESS INTO ART

Her early, abrupt weaning and the lack of intimacy with her mother, as well as her frightening violations by George and Gerald, brought home to her her crucial need to develop an independent, confident, adaptive self that could tolerate life's disappointments and the body's mood shifts. Fiction became a source of nurture because it could mirror back to her a creative self that was not contracted, numb, infantile, or self-deluding.

To an extraordinary degree she was able to transform from chaos into meaning her tumultuous thoughts and feelings. In her struggle to understand her 'violent moods of the soul', she was able, as a consummate writer, to give eloquent voice to the fragmented and wildly opposing ways of perceiving that existed within her. Like many other mercurial writers, she learned to absorb what her fiery, violent, and desolate moods might teach. In their contrasts she saw different truths, and in seeking their reconciliation she imposed a kind of order and rhythm unique in literature.

As an experience, madness is terrific I can assure you, and not to be sniffed at; and in its lava I still find most of the things I write about. It shoots out of one everything shaped, final, not in mere dribbles, as sanity does. And the six months – not three – that I lay in bed taught me a good deal about what is called oneself.

I wish you could live in my brain for a week. It is washed with the most violent waves of emotion. What about? I don't know. It begins on waking; and I never know which

– shall I be happy? Shall I be miserable – I grant I keep up some mechanical activity with my hands, setting type; ordering dinner. Without this, I should brood ceaselessly. And you think it all fixed and settled. Do we then know nobody? – only our own versions of them, which, as likely as not, are emanations from ourselves.

Although it might seem unlikely that fiction devoted to expressing the experience of a specific illness in terms of a particular family's psychology could appeal to many diverse readers, in fact Woolf's mood swings and her interpretive struggles, while extreme, are shared by all of us to some degree.

THE VOYAGE OUT

Against a backdrop of minor characters embodying elements of various fixed moods, Rachel moves, a sensitive, unformed human being, indefinitely drawn, gathering experiences. Because of her vagueness as a character, she is plastic enough to be intensely aware of subtle changes in her own moods. This is her function in the novel – to be difficult to pin down, to chart the aimless waters of mood shifts, life's ambiguous nature, and self's constantly changing relationship to it. No one in this novel possesses an 'authoritative' reading of events.

[Rachel's mind] was so fluctuating, and went so quickly from joy to despair, that it seemed necessary to confront it with some stable opinion which naturally became dark as well as stable. Perhaps Mrs. Ambrose had some idea that in leading the talk into these quarters she might discover

what was in Rachel's mind, but it was difficult to judge, for sometimes she would agree with the gloomiest thing that was said, at other times she refused to listen, and rammed Helen's theories down her throat with laughter, chatter, ridicule of the wildest, and fierce bursts of anger even at what she called the 'croaking of a raven in the mud.'

'It's hard enough without that,' she asserted.

'What's hard?' Helen demanded.

'Life,' she replied, and then they both became silent.

Helen might draw her own conclusions as to why life was hard, as to why an hour later, perhaps, life was something so wonderful and vivid that the eyes of Rachel beholding it were positively exhilarating to a spectator.

What I wanted to do was to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death [of Rachel], and go on again – and the whole was to have a sort of pattern, and be somehow controlled. The difficulty was to keep any sort of coherence

CHARACTER

I believe that all novels deal with character, and that it is to express character – not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire – that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved.

But now I must recall what Mr. Arnold Bennett says. He says that it is only if the characters are real that the novel has any chance of surviving. Otherwise, die it must. But, I ask

myself, what is reality? And who are the judges of reality? A character may be real to Mr. Bennett and quite unreal to me. For instance, in this article he says that Dr. Watson in *Sherlock Holmes* is real to him: to me Dr. Watson is a sack stuffed with straw, a dummy, a figure of fun. And so it is with character after character – in book after book.

In the course of your daily life this past week you have had far stranger and more interesting experiences than the one I have tried to describe. You have overheard scraps of talk that filled you with amazement. You have gone to bed at night bewildered by the complexity of our feelings. In one day thousands of ideas have coursed through your brains; thousands of emotions have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder.

To describe the multiplicity of the subject and the elusive contact between self and world, Woolf deliberately knotted and twisted her own narrative style 'in conformity with the coils in my own brain'. The pattern of the 'coils', though unknown, could still be expressed, but not in traditional narrative order. And so her depiction of character consisted, not of a single integrated ego but rather of separate states of awareness, a discontinuity which implies that human identity changes with each new set of perceptions.

GREAT BRITAIN AT WAR

[Diary, 23 Jan 1916] I become steadily more feminist, owing to the Times, which I read at breakfast and wonder how this preposterous masculine fiction (the war) keeps going a day longer – without some vigorous young woman pulling us

together and marching through it – Do you see any sense in it? I feel as if I were reading about some curious tribe in Central Africa.

[Diary. 25 June 1916] Leonard has been completely exempted from serving the Country in any capacity. He went before the military doctors trembling like an aspen leaf, with certificates to say that he would tremble and has trembled and will never cease from trembling. It's a great mercy for us.

[July 1916] The whole of our world does nothing but talk about conscription, and their chances of getting off; and they are all taken up with different societies and meetings and wire pulling – Clive having breakfasted with Lloyd George, and even I got in touch with Lord Salisbury! The latest rumour is that all C.O.s are to be interned as Alien enemies.

If you insist upon fighting to protect me, or 'our' country, let it be understood soberly and rationally between us that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits where I have not shared and probably will not share.

As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.

Meanwhile the war went on. Apart from Virginia's illness, the four years of the 1914 war were the most horrible period of my life. Nothing seemed to happen, month after month and year after year, except the pitiless, useless slaughter in France. There was indeed one lightening of the

darkness. In the last two years of the war Virginia's health slowly but firmly improved. She was able once more to work and she wrote steadily at *Night and Day* so that she gave me the completed MS to read in March 1919.

[28 March 1941] Dearest, I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. . . I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been. V.

CHAPTER VII
JAMES JOYCE
THE WRITER IN EXILE

Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church.

My brother's breakaway from Catholicism was because he felt it was imperative that he should save his real spiritual life from being overlaid and crushed by a false one that he had outgrown. He believed that poets in the measure of their gifts and personality were the repositories of the genuine spiritual life of their race and the priests were usurpers.

I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile and cunning.

Cranly seized his arm and steered him round so as to lead back towards Lesson Park. He laughed almost slyly and pressed Stephen's arm with an elder's affection.

Cunning indeed! he said. Is it you? You poor poet, you!

But I owe a duty to Ireland:
I hold her honour in my hand,
This lovely land that always sent
Her writers and artists to banishment
And in a spirit of Irish fun
Betrayed her own leaders, one by one.

In his early twenties he emigrated permanently to continental Europe, living in Trieste, Zurich and Paris. Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, Joyce's fictional universe does not extend beyond Dublin.

For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal.

GIACOMO IN TRIESTE

From Paris to Trieste he struggled to find work as a language teacher, struggled to survive the boredom of language teaching, struggled to find rooms to rent, struggled to pay the rent, struggled to find people who would lend him money, struggled to keep Nora, who understood nothing, knew no one and was soon pregnant, in good spirits.

His skill at borrowing money saved him from indigence. What income he had came partially from his position at the Berlitz school [Trieste] and partially from teaching private students.

So easy and intimate was the relationship of this teacher to his pupils that it is no wonder that with one of his girl

students Joyce dreamt of a closer intimacy. This may well have been Amalia Popper, the daughter of a Jewish business man whose first name was Leopoldo, though the identification cannot be established with certainty. Joyce wrote an account of the affair in his best calligraphy under the ironic title of 'Giacomo Joyce'. He envisions this signorina as a Jewess come out of the dark East to hold his western blood in thrall.

Rounded and ripened: rounded by the lathe of inter-marriage and ripened in the forcing-house of the seclusion of her race.

When researching his biography of Joyce, Ellman tried to meet and talk to Amalia, but was constantly blocked by her husband Michele Risolo. After the biographer's public identification of Popper in the second edition of *Giacomo Joyce*, Risolo wrote an article for *Il Corriere della Sera* in which he attempted to prove that his wife could not have been the "Who?" referred to in the text. He also attempted unsuccessfully to convince Ellman to retract his claim.

She raises her arms in an effort to hook at the nape of her neck a gown of black velvet lining. She cannot: no, she cannot. She moves backwards towards me mutely. I raise my arms to help her: her arms fall. I hold the websoft edges of her gown and drawing them out to hook them I see through the opening of the black veil her lithe body sheathed in an orange shift. It slips its ribbons of moorings at her shoulders and falls slowly: a lithe smooth naked body shimmering with silvery scales. It slips slowly over the slender buttocks of smooth polished silver and over their furrow, a tarnished silver shadow. Fingers, cold and calm and moving. A touch, a touch.

The year 1912, Joyce's thirtieth, was the most disheartening of his life. His domestic arrangements remained precarious, and the annoying objections of George Roberts and his printers to *Dubliners* – among them to Joyce's use of the real names of public houses in certain stories – continued, preventing him from completing the *Portrait*, which had been tied up in an old sheet after Eileen had saved it from the flames. While Joyce's career as a writer had hardly begun, he continued his side lines as language teacher, public lecturer, journalist and tweed salesman.

PREZIOSO

Yesterday evening, Dr James Joyce concluded his series of lectures in English on *Hamlet*. The hall was crowded for all of the lectures. The assiduous attendance was a tribute firstly to the lecturer but also to his Italian audience who managed to follow his complicated talks. The Elizabethan words, fashions and traditions inspired in the able lecturer literary and historical memories which fascinated the audience which was his for many hours. [review by Roberto Prezioso in *Il Piccolo*].

Prezioso's reputation as a *conquistatore amoroso* is what marks him out among Joyce's companions in Trieste. Prezioso made a number of afternoon visits to Nora. All proceeded well until the Italian made an explicit declaration to her, saying, "Il sole s'è levato per lei" – the sun has risen for you. Nora instantly called a halt to his advances and informed Joyce about what had happened. He rapidly sought out the offender and gave him such a virulent public dressing down that Prezioso burst into tears.

The fact that Nora was Joyce's woman was certainly part of her attraction for Prezioso. Joyce was not ignorant of the psychological vagary called triolism in which a homosexual desire for someone is expressed in sharing, or dreaming of sharing, a partner. Strong hints of this can be found in *Ulysses* and even more openly in Joyce's play, *Exiles*, for which he began making notes late in 1913.

BREAKTHROUGH

But Joyce's luck was about to change quite dramatically. Amidst this uncertainty, in mid-December he received a letter from Ezra Pound, the manic young American poet, part-genius, part-charlatan, with a mission to revolutionize English Literature.

For Joyce, knowing Pound would open doors for him which had so far been closed, meant that dreams of greatness suddenly would seem achievable. It was as if he had been visited by Literature's own fairy godfather and been dragged from a dark and painful obscurity into the bright light of literary stardom.

Dear Sir: Mr Yeats has been speaking to me of your writing. I am informally connected with a couple of new and impecunious papers ('The Egoist' and the 'Cerebrilist'). They are about the only organs in England that stand for free speech and want (I don't say get) literature. The latter can pay a little, the former practically can not pay at all, we do it for larks and to have a place for markedly modern stuff.

I also collect for two American magazines which pay top rates. I can not however promise publication in them as I have no absolute powers for accepting mss. As I don't in the least know what your present stuff is like, I can only offer to read what you send.

Anyhow these are the facts for what they are worth. Please, if you send anything, mark quite clearly what you want done with it, minum price as well as price desired. I am *bonae voluntatis* – don't in the least know that I can be of any use to you – or you to me. From what W. B. Y. [Yeats] says I imagine we have a hate or two in common – but that's a very problematical bond on introduction. Yours sincerely, Ezra Pound.

Ten years of my life have been consumed in correspondence and litigation about my book *Dubliners*. It was rejected by 40 publishers; three times set up, and once burnt. It cost me about 3,000 francs in postage, fees, train and boat fare, for I was in correspondence with 110 newspapers, 7 solicitors, 3 societies, 40 publishers and several men of letters about it. All refused to aid me, except Mr Ezra Pound. In the end it was published, in 1914, word for word as I wrote it in 1905.

In October [1914] he heard from Harriet Shaw Weaver, the new editor of *The Egoist* asking after the latest two chapters of *A Portrait*. Unlike Pound, who had swept into Joyce's life like a hurricane, Weaver's entrance was comparatively silent but would be nonetheless just as significant and more long-lasting.

Harriet Weaver, then aged thirty-nine, was a doctor's daughter with a very strong social conscience. Although

she enjoyed an independent income derived from her late mother, she believed that to live on inherited wealth was to live on usury. In James Joyce, who believed that the world owed him a living, she found the ideal partner to lift the burden from her conscience.

T O Z U R I C H

The assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, the Archduke Francesco Ferdinando, and his wife Sofia Chotek by a Bosnian student called Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 dominated the news in Trieste, as it did elsewhere. The bodies returned to Vienna through Trieste in what was destined to be its last important role as an Austrian imperial city. Things would never be the same again in Trieste or anywhere else.

It was becoming hopeless and dangerous to stay on. On 23 May [1915] the predictable news arrived that Italy had entered the war and Trieste was plunged into chaos. The Lieutenancy of Trieste ordered the closing of the borders and within a couple of hours anti-Italian demonstrations had already broken out at various hot-points around the city. Pro-Austrian mobs roamed the city attacking irredentists and key irredentist symbols. The irredentist clubs and gyms were destroyed, their caffès, such as the Caffè San Marco, the Milano, the Fabris and the Stella Polare, were ransacked and vandalized, the statue of Verdi demolished, and the offices of *Il Piccolo* destroyed by arsonists.

To the secretary, the Royal Literary Fund: At the outbreak of war I was in Trieste where I have lived for the last eleven

years. My income there was derived from my position in the Higher School of Commerce, and from private lessons. The school however closed in spring, nearly all the professors having been called up as officers of the reserve. In these circumstances I lived with great difficulty and was obliged to recur to the assistance of friends.

At thirty-three and thirty-one, although still penniless, they were hardly the bedraggled unsophisticates of 1904. They had two half-grown children and Joyce enough of a literary reputation to be invited into *Who's Who 1916*. With *Chamber Music* and *Dubliners* published in book form and the serialisation of *A Portrait* (in twenty-five instalments) continuing in the *Egoist*, with Yeats declaring him a genius and Pound lobbying for him in London, Joyce knew that he may have left Trieste as a teacher but he arrived in Zurich as a writer.

Nora had never lived in a city like Zurich – Protestant, orderly, clean. When she threw away a piece of paper in a hallway, a policeman made her pick it up.

They would remain in Switzerland for the rest of the war. But Joyce would never lose his deep affection for the liberal culture of Trieste and would look back with nostalgia on the happy times spent overindulging around its convivial cafés.

During their first year in Zurich, Nora and Joyce both began to complain a great deal of ill health. Mainly they blamed the climate. They were experiencing bitter weather cold for the first time in their lives, and were learning that the alternative to snow and ice was grey skies and damp.

Joyce suffered from rheumatism, tonsillitis and possibly colitis, and Nora from 'nerves' and occasionally a 'nervous breakdown'.

In outward appearance, however, Nora at thirty-one was the picture of health and a very pretty woman. A formal photograph for which she sat in Zurich shows her mocking eyes and provocative mouth set off by a dark, brimmed hat.

The unknown lanky man with the eyeglasses came directly to me. He was leading a little girl by the hand. Close behind him came a lady, apparently his wife, with lovely dark eyes. A lusty little youngster was dragging at her right hand.

Dear Yeats, Ezra Pound writes to me telling me of your kindness in writing a letter of recommendation on my behalf as a result of which a royal bounty has been granted to me (£100). I am very grateful to you for your friendly and valuable support. I hope that now matters may begin to go a little more smoothly for me for, to tell the truth, it is very tiresome to wait and hope for so many years. I am writing a book *Ulysses* which however will not be published for some years.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

Joyce's eyes had troubled him since his severe bout of rheumatic fever in 1907. Since reaching Zurich they had been inflamed and he was treated for inflammation of the iris (iritis). Early in 1917, however, while walking along the street, he was struck with glaucoma, a swelling and increased tension of the eyeball. He could not walk for the pain.

For the first time in ten years Nora found herself with an invalid for a husband. And without Stanislaus [Joyce's brother] or any other alternative, she did what she most loathed: acted as Joyce's secretary. Their income depended on the increasing tide of correspondence with publishers, lawyers and patrons, and above all with Miss Weaver. Nora had come to see Miss Weaver as someone who shared her loyalty to Jim.

Dear Miss Weaver, My husband is recovering slowly after the operation. It was difficult but we hope successful. He thinks that as the second edition [of *Portrait*] is set up perhaps the owner of the printinghouse will consent to allow it to go out. If not perhaps Mr Edward Marsh, Colonial Office, Downing Street, can assist you in the matter of importing sheets from New York. If so, could you at once cable for sheets the expenses being to my husband's charge. I shall see that the 1000 press notices are sent on to you. I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking you Dear Miss Weaver for your heroic efforts in my husband's interest. Sincerely yours, Nora Joyce.

Nora was worried about her own problems. Her 'nerves' were bothering her and her hair was falling out. In early August [1917] she took off to Locarno on Lake Maggiore in Italian Switzerland. This break from one another's company was one of the rare periods after 1909 during which Nora and Joyce were separated long enough to correspond.

Dear Jim, Thanks for the money. I hope you will make the best of your time. We are alright as I told you before the food could not be better and more than we can eat and the bedroom is alright it has a balcony now that the weather

is much better we will be able to take some nice walks yesterday and it was quite lively to hear the men calling out the prices and making as much noise as they could just like in Trieste they are just like Italians lively and dirty and disorderly it is quite different from Zurich.

A NEW OBSESSION

As regards *Ulysses* I write and think and write and think all day and part of the night. It goes on as it has been going these five or six years. But the ingredients will not fuse until they have reached a certain temperature.

I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.

His method was to write a series of phrases down, then, as the episode took form, to cross off each one in a different coloured pencil to indicate where it might go. Surprisingly little was omitted, but no one looking at the notesheets could have predicted how the fragments would coalesce.

Now let awhile my messmates be
My ponderous Penelope
And my Ulysses born anew
In Dublin as an Irish jew.
With them I'll sit, with them I'll drink
Nor heed what press and pressmen think
Nor leave their rockbound house of joy
For Helen or for windy Troy.

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.

Why was I always returning to this theme? Now in *mezzo del cammin* I find the subject of Ulysses the most human in world literature. Ulysses didn't want to go off to Troy; he knew that the official reason for the war, the dissemination of the culture of Hellas, was only a pretext for the Greek merchants, who were seeking new markets. When the recruiting officers arrived, he happened to be plowing. He pretended to be mad. After Troy there is no further talk of Achilles, Menelaus, Agamemnon. Only one man is not done with; his heroic career has hardly begun: Ulysses.

Then the motif of wandering. Scilla and Charybdis - what a splendid parable. Ulysses is also a great musician; he wishes to and must listen; he has himself tied to the mast. The motif of the artist, who will lay down his life rather than renounce his interest. Then the delicious humour of Polyphemus - no one is my name. On Naxos, the oldster of fifty, perhaps bald-headed, with Nausicaa, a girl who is barely seventeen. What a fine theme! And the return, how profoundly human! I am almost afraid to treat such a theme; it's overwhelming.

Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: colour signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware

of them bodies before of them coloured. . . Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see.

No sooner did Margaret Anderson read the opening words of the *Proteus* episode, 'Ineluctable modality of the visible' than she cried, 'This is the most beautiful thing we'll ever have. We'll print it if it's the last effort of our lives.'

A Joyce scholar and expert on the background of *Ulysses* has suggested that the active sexual life of the Joyces ceased around this period. As Joyce plunged deeper and deeper into his own erotic imagination, he lowered, as he had said to Stanislaus in 1906, 'a bucket into my own soul's well, sexual department', and everything he drew up he put into *Ulysses*. It seems likely that there was nothing left – from that department – for Nora.

In Weaver's quest for a publisher for *Ulysses*, Eliot suggested Leonard and Virginia Woolf, who had recently established the Hogarth Press at Richmond and were printing books on a hand-press. Weaver found herself invited to tea shortly afterwards. but seemed ill-at-ease in the over-refined atmosphere chez Woolfs. Virginia viewed her through the disdainful eye of a Bloomsbury snob as the unappealing and dowdy proprietress of a questionable periodical.

I did my best, (she wrote in her diary) to make her reveal herself in spite of her appearance, all that the editress of the *Egoist* ought to be, but she remained unalterably modest, judicious and decorous – how did she ever come in contact with Joyce and the rest? Why does their filth exit from her mouth? Heaven knows. She is incompetent

from the business point of view and was uncertain what arrangements to make. And so she went.

NEUTRALITY

In Switzerland Joyce stayed out of politics and said little about the war, feeling perhaps with Yeats, 'I think it better that in times like these/ A poet keeps his mouth shut.'

As an artist I am against every state. Of course I must recognise it, since indeed in all my dealings I come into contact with its institutions. The state is concentric, man is eccentric. Thence arises an eternal struggle. The monk, the bachelor, and the anarchist are in the same category. Naturally I can't approve of the act of the revolutionary who tosses a bomb in a theatre to destroy the king and his children. On the other hand, have those states behaved any better which have drowned the world in a blood-bath?

As to the outcome of the Great War, Joyce professed such unconcern that his friend – the English painter Frank Budgen – teased him. If Joyce was ever asked what he did during the Great War, Budgen said, he could say, 'I wrote *Ulysses*'. He felt profoundly that to be Irish was to be not-English.

Who is the man when all the gallant nations run to war
Goes home to have his dinner by the very first cablecar
And as he eats his canteloup contorts himself in mirth
To read the blatant bulletins of the rulers of the earth?

It's Mr Dooley,
Mr Dooley,
The coolest chap our country ever knew
'They are out to collar
The dime and dollar'
Says Mr Dooley-ooley-ooley-oo.

Who is the tranquil gentleman who won't salute the State
Or serve Nebuchadnezzar or proletariat
But thinks that every son of man has quite enough to do
To paddle down the stream of life his personal canoe?
It's Mr Dooley,
Mr Dooley,
The wisest wight our country ever knew
'Poor Europe ambles
Like sheep to shambles'
Sighs Mr Dooley-ooley-ooley-oo.

For a brief moment in late September the ferocious war engulfing the Western Front touched Joyce, when news came that Captain Tom Kettle of the Dublin Fusiliers had been killed leading his company 'over the top' at the Battle of the Somme.

Dear Mrs Kettle, I have read this morning, with deep regret in the 'Times' that my old school fellow and fellow student Lieutenant Kettle has been killed in action. May I ask you also to convey to your sisters (whose addresses I do not know) my sympathy with them in the losses they have suffered? I am grieved to hear that so many misfortunes have fallen on your family in these evil days.

With the war over, myths were beginning to circulate in Ireland about Joyce's wealth and wartime activities in Trieste, which further fuelled the idea that he had become a lackey of the British – not a healthy reputation in a country moving towards violent rebellion. When Budgen asked him why he would not be returning to Ireland, he said, 'Because I'm a coward and afraid of being shot'.

It was Ezra Pound's idea that the Joyces should move to Paris.

CHAPTER VIII
T. S. ELIOT
AN AMERICAN POET IN LONDON

In August 1914, his plans to travel in Europe having been cut short by the recent declarations of war, Thomas Stearns Eliot, a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard University on a one year (renewable) Sheldon Travelling Fellowship, left Marburg in Germany and arrived in England. His purpose was to complete his study year at Merton College, Oxford. He seemed set for, though not noticeably enthusiastic about, a career as an academic philosopher.

How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!
With his features of clerical cut,
And his brow so grim
And his mouth so prim
And his conversation, so nicely
Restricted to What Precisely
And If and Perhaps and But.

When Eliot arrived in England he had already written the best poems of his first book (*Prufrock and Other Observations*); but they existed only in manuscript, known to a chosen few. The period 1914-1920 saw the initial establishment of his reputation, by the publication of his writing.

A MEETING

Then in 1914 my meeting with Ezra Pound changed my life. He was enthusiastic about my poems, and gave me such praise and encouragement as I had long since ceased to hope for. I was happier in England, even in wartime, than I had been in America. Pound urged me to stay and encouraged me to write verse again.

Pound was an American poet and literary missionary of stupendous energy and tactlessness. All his life, but particularly when he was young he was generous to the point of recklessness. He was as much concerned with the encouragement and improvement of the work of unknown writers in whom he discerned talent, as with his own creative work. He saw that their writings were published; saw that they were reviewed somewhere by critics who could appreciate them, organized or supported little magazines in which their work could appear.

Eliot visited Pound and his wife, at Holland Park Chambers, on 22 September 1914. Pound asked Eliot to send him some poems. 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait', along with some others, arrived and Pound told him, 'This is as good as anything I've ever seen. Come around and have a talk about them'.

Pound had, by a potent mixture of posturing and talent, placed himself at the centre of the really interesting cultural activities in London at this time; he knew, or thought he knew, who was worth knowing and who was worth attacking. He had marshalled together the

Imagists and was now promoting the Vorticists. Almost by accident, Eliot had arrived during a unique period in twentieth-century English literature, when there seemed a chance that a literary revolution might be effected.

[Pound to Harriet Monroe, editor of the Chicago magazine Poetry, 29 September 1914] Eliot has sent in the best poem I have yet had or seen from an American. PRAY GOD IT BE NOT A SINGLE AND UNIQUE SUCCESS. He is the only American I know of who has made what I can call adequate preparation for writing. He has actually trained himself *and* modernized himself *on his own*. The rest of the *promising young* have done one or the other but never both (most of the swine have done neither). It is such a comfort to meet a man and not have to tell him to wash his face, wipe his feet, and remember the date (1914) on the calendar.

Virtually from the date of his renewed poetic production in 1914 Eliot forwarded his work to Pound for revision and critical comment.

These are the poems of Eliot
By the Uranian Muse begot:
A Man their Mother was,
A Muse their Sire.
If you must needs enquire
Know diligent Reader
That on each Occasion
Ezra performed the caesarian Operation.

I M A G I S M

Pound's comments cannot really be appreciated without some idea of the predominant literary groupings in pre-war London. These fall into three main camps, corresponding to traditionalist, centrist and radical positions. The first is represented by poets who sold well but generated almost nothing that was new; the second, by those poets who were published in Edward Marsh's collections of 'Georgian' poetry; and the third, by those poets who declared themselves to be practisers of 'Imagism'.

Imagism was a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry that favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language and was described as the most influential movement in English poetry since the Pre-Raphaelites. The Imagists rejected the sentiment and discursiveness typical of much Romantic and Victorian poetry. This was in contrast to their contemporaries, the Georgian poets, who were by and large content to work within that tradition.

What Eliot added to Imagism was what I shall call the principle of aggregation. Pure images could be added one to another, without the imposition of a structure, without logical or narrative continuity; and given that there was a singleness of poetic impulse they would be found to cohere, or could be edited into coherence.

The elements that go into the making of Modernism are of course multiple, and any picture one offers is bound to be either confusing or oversimplified. It is clear that the strongest and most immediate influences were French,

and specifically French Symbolist. It was the Symbolist and post-Symbolist poets in France whose theory and practice opened the way to free verse, and Imagism was essentially a free verse movement – a cutting down so close to the bare bone of poetic statement that any shaping into verse forms was inevitably felt as a falsification.

Eliot's modernism had arrived early and more or less complete. It took the form of a sort of conversion by which he entered imaginatively into the being of Jules Laforgue. It was almost certainly Eliot's reading of Laforgue that had decided him to go to Paris in 1910. And it was in Paris that he shook sufficiently free of his Unitarian family identity to become a Modernist poet before Modernism had been invented.

PRUFROCK

[30 September 1914, Eliot to Conrad Aiken] Pound has been *on n'est pas plus aimable*, and is going to print 'Prufrock' in *Poetry* and pay me for it. He wants me to bring out a Vol. after the war. The devil of it is that I have done nothing good since J. A. P. and writhe in impotence.

'Prufrock' is the first fully-fledged Modernist poem in English.

Let us go then, you and I
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table.

The shock here is first to the reader's expectations. The lines could not have been written without some awareness that they would affront many readers. As an image, however, they are successful, although it has been argued that it is not possible to see any way in which the evening is really like a patient etherised upon a table.

Eliot was subject to attacks of a romantic fever once called 'inspiration' which left him fragments of unaccountably beautiful lyric poetry. His problem was then to sort and (however loosely) unite these fragments into some kind of order, which could never be rational or narrative, but which might be made to form an artistic whole.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us and we drown.

His poems are very near to the techniques modern painters were developing at the same time, in which colours and forms were worked into relationship, not in order to 'represent' in any direct and obvious sense, but to create an artistic unity.

In 'Prufrock' the predominant effect derives from the music, which in its repetitive melancholy is the primary vehicle for those 'floating feelings' of indecisiveness, nostalgia, failure, lassitude, which, mixed with some ironic self-mockery, give the poem what Eliot would probably have called its 'structural emotion'.

Nothing in the poem will support any of the explanations offered in terms of logic or narrative. Nothing will tell us where the room is, who the women are, why they talk of Michelangelo, how if at all they relate to the voice which speaks before and (if it is the same voice) after the couplet. And so on. The continuities have been invented by the critics.

The poem dramatises the state of mind of Prufrock, a tragicomic figure of uncertain age. He is a self-mocking little man, by his own account physically unimpressive and sexually timid, cultured and sensitive. He imagines going through sordid streets to the room where the women chatter, but coming away having failed to achieve anything: though this is his 'Love Song', he cannot make a declaration of love. From them he turns to a fantasy of love with mermaids until real voices call him back to the stifling real world.

The poem will not licence any one reader to claim that he or she had cracked the code.

The chief use of the 'meaning' of a poem, in the ordinary sense, may be to satisfy one habit of the reader, to keep his mind diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him; much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a bit of nice meat for the house-dog.

AN IMPULSIVE PROPOSAL

[December 1914. Eliot to Conrad Aiken] How much more self-conscious one is in a big city! Just at present this is an inconvenience, for I have been going through one of those nervous sexual attacks which I suffer from when alone in

a city. One walks about the street with one's desires, and one's refinement rises up like a wall whenever opportunity approaches. I should be better off, I sometimes think, if I had disposed of my virginity and shyness several years ago: and indeed I still think sometimes that it would be well to do so before marriage.

He was unhappy and lonely at Oxford, where he was a visiting philosophy fellow at Merton. To Vivienne Haigh-Wood, meeting him for the first time in March 1915, he seemed an old-fashioned American 'prince' and his 'deep and thrilling voice' with its slow drawl added a dash of glamour. She was susceptible to all things American.

Tom and Viv have balloons. Music.

Viv: Why aren't you inside chattering to all the dons' wives?

Tom: I don't chatter very well.

Viv: Or dancing?

Tom: I won't dance.

Viv: One of these balloons has got a Chinese proverb in it. Whoever's got it wins a bottle of gin.

Tom: I find it an enormous effort to be trivial

Viv: Oh dear.

Tom: You aren't mad at me?

Viv: I was thinking you've possibly reduced your chances of being a social success here at Oxford by a hideous margin. That's all.

He later attributed his impulsive proposal to Vivien six months later to exactly this lack of experience; what he had wanted from her was 'a flirtation or a mild affair', but found himself 'too shy and unpractised to achieve either

with anybody'. Instead, under pressure from Pound – who was desperate to keep his protégé in London – they decided to marry.

On first acquaintance it seemed to Eliot that Vivienne came from a social background equivalent to his own in New England. It must have also seemed that Vivienne, child-like, artistic and vulnerable, was the very opposite of his formidable, managing mother, and in this lay her attraction for him.

On 26 June 1915, after knowing each other for three months, Vivienne Haigh-Wood and Thomas Stearns Eliot were married at Hampstead Register Office, shortly after the end of the term at Oxford. So ill-prepared were the couple for life together that neither had given the slightest thought to money or where they would live.

To her, the marriage brought no happiness. To me, it brought the state of mind out of which came 'The Waste Land'.

A LOVE TRIANGLE

Before he came to England, Eliot was a student of Bertrand Russell's at Harvard. A fortnight after his marriage to Vivienne, the poet invited the philosopher to dinner to meet his new wife. The evening was the beginning of an extraordinary, ultimately devastating triangular relationship.

[July 1915, Bertrand Russell to Ottoline Morrell] Friday evening I dined with my Harvard pupil, Eliot, and his bride. I expected her to be terrible, from his mysteriousness, but she was not so bad. She is light, a little vulgar, adventurous, full of life; an artist, I think he said but I should have thought her an actress. He is exquisite and listless. She says she married him to stimulate him, but finds she can't do it. Obviously, he married in order to be stimulated. I think she will soon be tired of him. She refuses to go to America to see his people for fear of submarines. He is ashamed of his marriage and very grateful if one is kind to her.

As Vivienne's brother Maurice said later, the Eliots' honeymoon was 'rotten', a euphemism for the sexual failure that had undoubtedly occurred. It cannot have been helped by Tom's emotional state on his return from what had been a painful confrontation with his parents; he was, said Maurice, 'terrified' of his mother.

It is almost impossible to believe that Tom was unaware that Russell and Vivienne were having a sexual relationship. Nevertheless, Eliot remained complacent and grateful for several good reasons. First, although Russell could ill afford it, he was subsidising both Eliots because he had taken pity on his former pupil for being 'desperately poor'. Second, Eliot was relieved to turn over to Russell the conjugal duties he often found distasteful. While Russell took care of Vivienne's demands for affection and sexual fulfilment, all three could be happy. A third reason was that Russell was an important literary contact for Eliot; he put his protégé in touch with a number of editors who commissioned reviews from him.

A P R O P E R J O B

During the summer of 1915 he applied for, and was offered, a post at High Wycombe Grammar School. His was a nature, however, quite unsuited to the demands of schoolteaching – he was not able to project his personality in a forceful enough manner, and he found the demands on his time and patience exhausting.

In March 1917 he joined the Colonial and Foreign Department at Lloyds Bank. His first job was to tabulate and interpret the balance sheets of foreign banks so that their development could be charted. His salary, in 1918, was £270 per annum – well above the general level of a clerk.

If you see our young friend, you might tell him that we think he's doing quite well at the Bank. In fact, if he goes on as he has been doing, I don't see why – in time, of course, in time – he mightn't even become a Branch Manager.

I still cannot put these two halves together. I am the clerk in the Foreign and Colonial Section who imagines he's a poet. I am a poet at night who hopes to achieve the rank of branch manager.

[8 April 1917. Vivienne to TSE's mother] Tom is going on smoothly at the bank. His health is *much* improved since he went there. There is a marked change in him. Everyone notices it. His nerves are so much better – he does not have those black silent moods, and the irritability. Those months when he was entirely at home were very very trying. I am so *thankful* this work is congenial to him. I never thought it would be. It was quite a surprise to me to find he liked it.

[29 March 1919. TSE to his mother] I occupy rather a privileged position. I am out of the intrigues and personal hatreds of journalism, and everyone respects me for working in a bank. There is a small and select public which regards me as the best living critic, as well as the best living poet, in England. I really think that I have far more influence on English letters than any other American has ever had, unless it be Henry James. All this sounds very conceited, but I am sure it is true.

A DOOMED RELATIONSHIP

Two ever-present problems dominated that time, as they would continue to dominate his life for the next sixteen years: earning a living and Vivienne's ill health. Of these two desperate problems, the first proved to be soluble; the second was not.

Eliot never forgave Vivienne her closeness with Russell and their marriage deteriorated over the next eight years, as the poet grew colder and more distant from his wife and Vivienne turned to drugs and affairs with other men for consolation.

Right from the start. We kept secrets. You didn't tell me. I had to find out. People whisper – there go Tom and Vivie. Poor dears. What do they say to each other? What do they ever say? And we'd go home and go through the bills. Count the medicine bottles. Say good-night. And I used to sit in the deckchair by the bed. And watch for the morning sunlight in the hall.

You were lodged inside my mind. I'd say, 'Don't Vivie. Please no, Vivie. Let's not, Vivie' and – We've gone from one room to another trying to pretend we are not strangers.

My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me. Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak. What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? I never know what you are thinking. Think.

That frantic, driven woman, racked by fears and anxieties and suspicions, exacerbated if not caused by chronic ill health, still turned, awkwardly and painfully, like a stunted heliotrope, toward the best and truest person who had ever happened to her, who had been, however unhappily, her lover, husband and friend.

'Because I showed I enjoyed our brief period of Prosperity, and because I made the most of it, Jealousy and Envy and Hate surrounded us both, and finally tricked Tom into going to America, and worse, to deserting me,' she wrote in her diary.

In 1938 she was committed to a mental asylum, Northumberland House. Eliot never visited her there. In 1947, she died, aged 58. It is probable she saved up her drugs and overdosed. Her depression can only be guessed at, as her contact with the outside world was cut off. Suicide may have seemed her only option. She saw no meaning in a life without Tom.

SADNESS INTO ART

For a year and a half after Eliot's disastrous marriage he felt as if he had dried up. Yet within six months, in January 1916, he confided to Aiken that although he was not actually writing he had '*lived* through material for a score of long poems in the last six months'. It was during this period of financial hardship and disillusionment with his marriage that he accumulated in their first sharpness the impressions of London and the distraught wife that formed the basis of the urban sections of *The Waste Land*.

Tom came to Hogarth House and read a new poem. He sang it and chanted it and rhythmized it. It has great beauty and force of phrase: symmetry; and tensivity. What connects it together, I'm not so sure. But he read it till he had to rush – letters to write about the London Magazine – and discussion thus was curtailed. One was left, however, with some strong emotion. The Waste Land, it is called; and Mary Hutchinson, who has heard it more quietly, interprets it to be Tom's autobiography – a melancholy one.

The first two sections of *The Waste Land* are not in any real sense autobiographical. Taken as a whole they add up to a panoramic or cinematographic view of their time. They are an image of modern Europe narrowing especially on London.

The poem was written in the aftermath of the Great War – a period of lost directions and disappointed expectations.

Eliot was an intensely modern poet who intensely disliked the modern world.

CHAPTER IX
PLAGIARISM AND THE STUDENT

CHAPTER IX
PLAGIARISM AND THE STUDENT

I certify that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance in preparing this paper, that it represents my original work except that which is noted by citations, that all sources used to prepare this paper are cited in accordance with University policy, and that I have not submitted this paper (or a significant portion) for a grade in another class.

Name: _____

Instructor: _____

Course/section: _____

Date: _____

According to a web site at the University of Kentucky, students sign a “Writing Program Originality Form” in order to testify to the originality of their written work. This form, which is matched by similar administrative documents at other schools, remains rooted in a Foucauldian sort of examination that is attempting, futilely, to get at the

authorial genius hidden inside the student. When all is said and done, teachers seem to ask students the question: 'After you have read all the background material and assembled your evidence, what did *you*, just you, produce? Show us *your* words; let the words of others fade into the background.'

Teachers too often remain loyal to a reductively 'expressive' model of composition, which defines their task as one of helping students 'find a voice' – articulate the authentic, originary selves that lie deep within, beneath the layers of cliché in which they write.

AUTHORITY

In our world words may not be appropriated at will, but 'belong' to the individual who 'originated' them. So important to us is this division of intellectual property into mine and thine that we have codified it in laws of copyright and author's rights that enable us to prosecute trespassers.

Intellectual property, that is to say the private ownership of words and ideas: it doesn't sound like the kind of relationship with knowledge that a place of higher learning like a university ought to foster, does it? Besides, how do you even steal words, or ideas? They are hardly gone after you have snatched them.

In our schools, we demand originality but reward conformity, insisting that those we educate build new temples to the old gods. Literary culture, with its genres and forms, demands that even the most original imaginations begin by conforming to the past literary tradition.

Recent cases in the USA reveal that plagiarism is simply a rhetorical trope, an articulation of *power*: while a student caught submitting plagiarised work is subject to expulsion, national leaders and university presidents plagiarise without sanction; institutions appropriate language from strategic plans.

Most writing today – in business, government, industry, the law, the sciences and social sciences – is collaborative, yet it is still being taught as if it were a solitary, originary activity.

The concept of copyright – and with it the modern understanding of plagiarism – arose with the advent of printing, offering protection not to the author but to commercial publishers. Originality is a shopkeeper's illusion, a way to claim that one's wares are distinctive by the style of presentation when the goods themselves are in reality no different from what you have sold each year.

Plagiarism, in these terms, has little to do with authorship, and everything to do with authority.

COLLABORATION

I see my students writing in class (when I give them the option) – many talking the whole time to each other, commenting on what the other is writing, asking questions about 'how do you say' or 'how do you spell'. They lean toward a more collaborative style than I ever have, and I've wondered if that's because of their age, their range of cultures and languages, their life experience so far, or what. I don't think I'm worried about it, though. I'm not so convinced of the primacy of

individual genius – it seems like the most worthwhile stuff comes through collaboration, or at least accretion. Someone has a great idea, and then it takes more people to envision and create its potential in different contexts.

Why does so much of our day to day activity work better when we collaborate but as soon as we come to assessment it is not only discouraged but often referred to being practically criminal?

COPY & PASTE?

When cutting and pasting are integral to the writing process, it would be mad to imagine that writers wouldn't exploit these functions in extreme ways that weren't intended by their creators. If you don't want it copied, don't put it online.

A progressive and just society allows the free circulation of materials required for the education of its citizens, both in libraries and in the classroom, and such circulation, in order to be 'fair,' should not be subject to permissions, royalties, seizure, or arbitrary limits on the number of chapters of a book that can be copied.

UNCREATIVE WRITING

What happens if we tell students that their goal is not to create new, unique texts but to filter and remix other texts in ways that solve concrete problems or enact real social action? What if we expect and encourage them to copy

other texts? Plagiarism, in these situations, becomes much less of an issue, and what counts, in this new context, is the ability of students to remix texts in ways that address specific issues, readers, and situations.

What if the 'final' product a student produces—a text—is not concerned with original words or images on a page or screen but concerned primarily with assemblages of parts? Importantly, in this reconception, the assemblages do not distinguish primarily between which parts are supposed to be original and which have been found and gathered from someplace else; assemblages are interested in what works, what has social effects. The distinction between original and existing fragments in a text is, if not meaningless, at least secondary.

A central characteristic of assemblages is the challenge to established notions of originality. The traditional distinction between original and plagiarized material maintains that not only is original work superior in terms of creative effort, but that it is not derivative. Johnson-Eilola and Selber claim that such a distinction is based upon outdated notions of 'the lone genius' and is no longer practical in an academic setting. The authors assert that despite shifting attitudes in academia, work produced by students at the scholastic and collegiate level is still evaluated in terms of its originality. They find fault with the current evaluative process for two reasons. First, the authors find that evaluating students for their originality is 'increasingly unrealistic in our postmodern age' as this method is based on antiquated ideas of creativity. Second, they treat the idea of isolating a student's unique composition from the inspiring source materials as unrealistic and futile.

If skills at making assemblages are made the focal point, then teachers would want to put great value on the ability of students to find existing chunks of text they can reuse. Re-inventing the wheel becomes an inefficiency, a misplaced waste of effort. 'You borrowed that chunk? Great! Maybe I can use it, too.'

For the past several years, I've taught a class at the University of Pennsylvania called 'Uncreative Writing'. In it, students are penalised for showing any shred of originality and creativity. Instead, they are rewarded for plagiarism, identity theft, re-purposing papers, patch-writing, sampling, plundering, and stealing. Not surprisingly, they thrive. Suddenly, what they've surreptitiously become expert at is brought out into the open and explored in a safe environment, reframed in terms of responsibility instead of recklessness.

'I copied most of it out of books or the internet, referenced it and just put a few words in between and I passed with it'. And then you start thinking, well where does plagiarism come into it? I know that's not plagiarism because she's referenced it, that's her loophole, but then is it her essay?

The origin and ownership of all electronic documents is now peculiarly evanescent; one click of the 'Save As' button can give a whole new name and identity, instantly, to someone else's creation. Summarising and paraphrasing of content is an equally tricky area, again largely measured in an arbitrary way by the individual examiner. Patchwriting and assemblages occupy much the same space. In terms of learning outcomes, what do we gain by the requirement of using our own words? We have known for a very long time

in education that one of the most powerful ways we learn is through imitation and appropriation, that education cannot survive without it. But while we teach in this way we do not assess in kind.

What the Internet offers us is not so much new forms of economy, production, and exchange (although the open source movement has certainly made efforts in those directions), but the opportunity to render visible once more the instability of all the terms and structures which hold together existing intellectual property regimes, and to point to the madness of modern, capitalist framings of property.

INSERT I
WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

Over the years I have tried my hand at researching and writing on a variety of subjects, e.g. Wikipedia, Captain Cook, Tudor history. The trouble is I never seem able to stick with any one subject for very long – the boredom factor always enters the equation. Otherwise, no doubt by now I might have become a real expert on something! My latest project, however, took plenty of researching but no writing at all. It involves constructing literary collages, or 'assemblages'. My definition of an assemblage is a collection of bits and pieces taken from other peoples' books and articles, and put together without commentary in an (I hope) logical way, so as to form a discourse, perhaps even a narrative, on a particular topic. The idea is to make the extracts fairly short, and avoid using any particular source too heavily. This, I fondly believe, will avoid falling foul of the laws concerning intellectual property. Its not plagiarism because I don't pretend the extracts are mine, and it certainly doesn't

affect the earning capacity of other authors or copyright holders.

The other thing about my assemblages is that I do not give the sources of my quotations – or at least, not until the end of the book when there is an alphabetical list of all sources used throughout. This is because I think it would be an interesting exercise to present the reader with a level playing field. If one knows that a particular extract comes from some prestigious writer – say, Nietzsche, or Umberto Eco – rather than someone totally unknown, then this inevitably influences how much weight one gives to it. But I would like readers to evaluate extracts entirely on their own merits. As Roland Barthes famously said, ‘What does it matter who is speaking?’

In this book I have chosen six poets or novelists all of whom were alive and creative a century ago, during the time of the First World War, and to keep the project fairly brief I have limited my assemblages to this particular period. All those chosen were ‘modernists’ which is to say they all in some way broke with the literary conventions of the past and set out to produce their own original versions of poetry or fiction. The authors are: Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Anna Akhmatova, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. I chose these particular authors partly because they were innovators,

and, without in any way presuming to compare myself with them, I felt it appropriate to link my experiment with those whose work transgressed boundaries, and challenged contemporary assumptions about what poems or novels should be about. A more mundane reason for choosing them is that in these six cases there is always plenty of material to quote from. Because they all achieved fame within their lifetimes, many of their letters have been preserved for posterity, and also, of course, much has been written subsequently about each of them.

I see certain advantages in the creation of such assemblages. The vast majority of non-fiction texts, including conventional biographies, are channelled through the single perspective of an omniscient, all-controlling narrator. Even when there is a liberal sprinkling of quotation it is the author's voice that dominates, and his or her opinions that are offered to the reader, on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. But in an assemblage the extracts allow the reader to glimpse a variety of voices without the need to resort to a shelf-full of books. Another positive is that readers are stretched. They have to plug gaps and make their own connections between the various extracts on offer because it simply isn't possible to skim-read an assemblage in a meaningful way. Admittedly, the close reading of any text is a more demanding and active process than

much conventional wisdom allows. As Michel de Certeau says, 'readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves'. The copy-and-paste technique employed here makes the reader's journey more challenging still. To continue de Certeau's metaphor, the land is now divided up into a patchwork of little fields, and consequently there are more fences and hedges for the nomad reader to clamber over. The absence of citation gives readers yet another task, that of deciding what kind of extract they are reading – for instance, whether contemporary or modern, or who is in fact speaking – by looking for clues within the text itself.

In another way, however, I would claim that by picking out interesting passages I am actually helping the reader. I suppose I am imitating one of those students who likes going through a book highlighting in green ink the bits she thinks will help with her assignment – except that I have done it for numerous books, and not damaged them in the process! I do also think that many biographies of famous people tend to be unduly long and detailed for a rather impatient reader such as myself, incorporating, as they might well, original research into the archives. They usually start with the subject's birth and

family background, and end with their death and influence. As Salinger's Holden Caulfield says, he really doesn't feel like going into 'my lousy childhood', and 'all that David Copperfield kind of crap'.

It is also an enjoyable and educational experience to construct one's own assemblage. As I suggested, you need to pick a topic about which much has been written, A biography of someone famous, e.g. an author, politician or explorer, would do. Someone who kept a diary or whose letters have been published perhaps, so as to combine contemporary accounts with what modern critics and biographers have to say. But of course it doesn't have to be biography. If anyone is interested in experimenting with this kind of assemblage I would say to them that, although it might seem a lot less trouble than constructing one's own text, it is, in fact, no easier, and has its own particular problems. The main difficulty, I find, is not so much in choosing the extracts, as in putting them into a sequence which makes sense, develops a particular theme, and avoids too much repetition. The idea is to pick passages which in some way are connected with those that come before and after. No doubt, I myself have not always succeeded here. It is also important not to rely too heavily on any one writer because this not only might involve breach of copyright, but also it

approaches too close to convention, and away from that variety of voices which is the object of the exercise.

A brief word on the rules which I set myself for this project. I tried to pick short passages that interested me, that I thought were memorable, and that helped link up with other passages into something that made logical sense. All the extracts are genuine quotations, and were not invented by me. On the whole I felt no need to change the wording of the extracts. However, I admit I do occasionally cheat slightly. For instance, I sometimes alter punctuation or a particular conjunction or pronoun in order to make for easier reading, and I occasionally join up passages that were separated in the original text.

Finally, I acknowledge my debt, not only to Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault who first suggested the theme of the 'death of the author' half a century ago, but also to a group of academic writers who have taken up and developed that theme today in response to the internet and its information overload. Among those whose work I have profited by (and plagiarised!) are Kenneth Goldsmith, Martha Woodmansee, Marcus Boon, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, and Stuart Selber, all of whom I thank.

Dan O'Sullivan

INSERT II
SOURCES

Acker, Kathy, 'A Few Notes on Two of my Books', www.thefreelibrary.com

Ackroyd, Peter, *T.S.Eliot*, 1984

Anderson, Chester G., *James Joyce and his world*, 1967

Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, 1977; 'From work to text' in *Revue d'esthétique*, 1971

Bell, Quentin, *Virginia Woolf*, 1972; *Bloomsbury*, 1986

Benkler, Yochai, *The Wealth of Networks*, 2006

Bently, Lionel, 'Copyright and the death of the author', *Modern Law Review*, vol 57, no. 6 (Nov 1994)

Boon, Marcus, *In Praise of Copying*, 2010

Bowker, *James Joyce, a Biography*, 2011

Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James, *Modernism*, 1976

Brand, Stewart, quoted in Mason, 2012

Brod, Max, *Franz Kafka, a Biography* 1995

Brodsky, Joseph, 'The Keening Muse', in *Literature in the Modern World*, ed. Dennis Walden, 1990

Canetti, Elias, *Kafka's Other Trial*, 1974

Caramagno, Thomas C., *The Flight of the Mind*, 1992

Danger Mouse [aka Brian Burton] in Patry, 2011

De Botton, Alain, *How Proust can change your life*, 1997

de Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984

DeSalvo, Louise, *Virginia Woolf, The Impact of Childhood sexual abuse on her Life and Work*, 1989

Duchamp, Marcel, quoted in Josipovichi, 2010

Eliot, T.S., *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 1952;
The Letters of T.S. Eliot 1898-1922, 1988

Elissa, <http://jeffkunkle.blogspot.co.uk>

Ellmann, Richard, *James Joyce*, 1959

Feinstein, Elaine, *Anna of all the Russias*, 2005

Foucault, Michel, 'What is an author?' in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 1991

Gilbert, Marjorie, www.ehow.com

Gluck, Mary, 'Towards a Historical Definition of Modernism', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 58 no.4

Goldsmith, Kenneth, *Uncreative Writing*, 2011

Hastings, Michael, *Tom & Viv*, 1985

Hayman, Ronald, *Proust*, 1990

Herbert, Michael, *York Notes on Selected Poems (T.S. Eliot)*, 1982

Hollis, Matthew, *Now All Roads lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas*, 2011

Howard, Rebecca Moore, 'Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the academic death penalty', *College English*, vol 57, no.7 (Nov. 95)

Johnson-Eilola, J & Selber, S., 'Plagiarism, originality, assemblage', in *Computers and Composition*, 24 (2007)

Josipovici, Gabriel, *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* 2010; 'The Birth of the Modern 1885-1914' in *War, Peace and Social Change in Twentieth-century Europe*, ed. Clive Emsley, etc., 1989

Joyce, James, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1916; *Dubliners*, 1914; 'Gas from a burner', 1912; *Giacomo Joyce*, 1968; *The Letters of James Joyce*, 1957; *Ulysses*, 1936

Joyce, Stanislaus, *My Brother's Keeper*, 1958

Kafka, Franz, *Diaries, 1910-1923*, 1975; *Letters to Felice*, 1978; *Letter to his Father*, 1954; *The Trial*, 1935

Kermode, Frank, *London Review of Books*, vol.8, no.9 (1986)

Laird, Frances, *Swan Songs: Akhmatova and Gumilev*, 1999

Lawrence, D.H., *Kangaroo*, 1923

Lehman, John, *Virginia Woolf*, 1975

Letham, Jonathan, www.harpers.org

Lobanov-Rostovsky, Sergei, 'The death of the plagiarist', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2009)

Maddox, Brenda, *Nora, a biography of Nora Joyce*, 1988

Mantel, Hilary, in *The Guardian*, 5.1.2008

Mason, Paul, *Why its kicking off everywhere*, 2012

Matthews, T.S., *Great Tom; Notes towards the definition of T.S.Eliot*, 1974

McCourt, John, *The Years of Bloom*, 2000

Miller, Laura, www.salon.com

Morris, Jan, *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*, 2001

Murray, Nicholas, *Kafka*, 2004

Nayman, Anatoly, *Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 1991

Painter, George D., *Marcel Proust*, 1983

Parks, Tim, 'Joyce and Company', *London Review of Books*, 5 7 2012

Patry, William, *How to Fix Copyright*, 2011

Pawel, Ernst, *The Nightmare of Reason; a life of Franz Kafka*, 1984

Polivanov, Konstantin, *Anna Akhmatova and her Circle*, 1994

Poole, Roger, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 1978

Proust, Marcel, *In Search of Lost Time* (vols. 1 & 6), 1992, 1996; *Selected Letters* (vol. 3, 1910-1917), 1983

Reeder, Roberta, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, 1997; *Anna Akhmatova, Poet and Prophet*, 1994

Sainte-Beuve, quoted in De Botton, 1997

Salinger, J.D., *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951

Sansom, William, *Proust*, 1973

Sharpe, Tony, *T.S. Eliot, A Literary Life*, 1991

Shattock, Roger, *The Innocent Eye*, 1960

Spender, Stephen, *New Collected Poems*, 2004

St. Bonaventura, quoted in Eisenstein, Elizabeth, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 1979

Stead, C.K., *Pound, Yeats, Eliot and the Modernist Movement*, 1986

Stein, Gertrude, *The Making of Americans*, 1934

Strakhovsky, Leonid I., *Craftsmen of the Word: Three Poets of Modern Russia*, 1949

Svarny, Erik, 'The Men of 1914' and early Modernism, 1988

Swift, Jonathan, quoted in Yeo, 2001

Tadić, Jean-Yves, *Marcel Proust, A Life*, 2000

Thomas, Edward, in Hollis, 2011

Thomas, Max W., 'Reading and Writing the Renaissance Commonplace Book', in Woodmansee

Tibby, Che, <http://objectdart.wordpress.com>

Uglow, Jenny, *Guardian Review*, 2005

Volkov, Solomon, *St Petersburg, A Cultural History*, 1996

White, Edmund, *Marcel Proust*, 1999

Whitlock, Richard, (1654) in Jeffrey A. Maston, 'Beaumont and/or Fletcher', in Woodmansee

Wikipedia

Woodmansee Martha and Jaszi, Peter, (ed.), *The Construction of Authorship*, 2006

Woolf, Leonard, *Beginning Again: An autobiography of the years 1911 to 1918*, 1964
Woolf, Virginia, *A Writer's Diary*, 1953; *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, 1924; *Moments of Being*, 1976; *Granite and Rainbow*, 1958; *Mrs Dalloway*, 1925; *The Common Reader (First Series)*, 1925; *The Question of Things Happening (Collected Letters 1912-22)*, 1980; *The Voyage Out*, 1915

www.brainyquote.com

www.onlineliterature.com

Yeats, W.B., 'Among Schoolchildren', 1928

Yeo, Richard, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 2001