



Between Light & Darkness

– New Perspectives
in Symbolism Research





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EDITOR Marja Lahelma

DESIGNER Tuija Kuusela

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Foreword

During his years in Paris, [Magnus] Enckell dreamed of an ancient pagan temple, its ruins still suffused with intense yet imprecise feelings and thoughts: “empty dreams and melancholy thoughts perhaps for those who step in from the outside, out of the sunlight; yet for those already inside, everything still appears as in the days when people gathered to worship in the temple.” He felt himself to be the guardian of this temple, moving from room to room, penetrating ever farther into the building, suffering on every threshold for each thing he had to abandon. “But in me remains the certain hope that one day all will be regained. When we have reached the innermost sanctum, then suddenly the barriers will crumble. Everything will be revealed to our eyes and restored to our hearts. Time will no longer exist.”

– Salme Sarajas-Korte¹

¹ Salme Sarajas-Korte “The Finnish View of Symbolist Painting: From Antinoüs Myth to Kalevala Mysticism,” *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, ed. Donald Pistoletti (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1995).

The symposium *Between Light and Darkness* was organized in December 2010 at the Ateneum Art Museum in Helsinki. It brought together researchers working on nineteenth-century studies in various fields and disciplines – literature, art history, religion, history of science and psychology. The conference also sought to create a space where encounters and dialogues between the different historical disciplines could take place. During the conference discussions, perspectives were shared on different discourses of spirituality, mysticism and psychical research which accompanied the secularization of culture in the late nineteenth century.

The 1890s were much less unified than retrospectively constructed narratives tend to portray it as being. In the 1890s, Naturalism in its various guises – “art of the actual” as Richard Thomson has defined it – was contested especially by what was called by the umbrella term Symbolism. What Symbolism meant varied greatly from speaker to speaker. However, there is a kind of family resemblance between its proponents, as well as a surprisingly definite time period when Symbolism was at its height. After the optimism and great confidence in science and industrial development of the 1880s, the 1890s witnessed a reaction against belief in both industrial and societal progress. The Symbolists were perhaps the most critical of all. Instead of industrial and technical progress, and its concomitant mass

production, they propagated highly personal choices in every realm of life. They proposed *melancholia* and, in the words of the very young Serge Diaghilev, *new decadence*, and shared company with different varieties of seekers, anarchists, mystics, and animal activists.

Historians Alex Owen and Lynn Sharp have pointed out that even though it seems difficult to conceive how the very same late nineteenth century could evince both the rise of science and of mysticism, this is exactly what happened. Indeed, it was very often claimed that discoveries brought about by the progress of science would be able to prove the existence of formerly unseen forces and describe the laws governing their interactions. As the monolithic understanding of the nineteenth century is being increasingly questioned we are beginning to see not only how deeply intertwined artistic, scientific and religious discourses were at the end of the nineteenth century but also how these discourses were connected to new conceptions of self and identity.

In a letter to the Finnish artist Magnus Enckell, written in either 1894 or 1898, Serge Diaghilev writes: “You know about my dream of becoming purely and sincerely myself and not forever being this fine mirror of other personalities.” (“Tu sais mon rêve de devenir purement et franchement moi-même, sans être toujours ce bon miroir des personnalités étranges.”) Becoming one’s self was generally felt to be exceedingly difficult; the self was questioned in many respects while it was also felt to be unfathomable and too shifting to be known. The desire to *become oneself* was felt with particular acuity among the Symbolists. In the 1890s, artists were as deeply interested in the enigmatic cosmos of the human psyche as in mystical discourses but mysticism and esotericism were also popular phenomena. Fin-de-siècle scholars need hardly be reminded of the notoriety of Josephin Péladan’s Salons de la Rose+Croix.

For scholars of the late nineteenth century, it is centrally important to make an effort to understand what enchantment and *le merveilleux* might have meant for contemporaries and how these ideas were related to emerging new conceptions of the self. Much more attention could still be paid to the ideas and beliefs about religion, science, art, progress and different forms of spirituality held by those people who were living in the late nineteenth century, making art, writing music and literature, shaping and formulating novel ways of thinking about religion, society, art, progress, decadence. In fact, I’m inclined to believe that at the present moment we are somehow, partially and perhaps even unknowingly, still living out that very same fin-de-siècle, sharing its unresolved and hidden conflicts between different attitudes toward science, religion, art, as these categories were in the process of being formed and their borders negotiated in the nineteenth century. The late nineteenth century epistemic shift is yet to be completed.

In the visual arts, fin-de-siècle art history has until quite recently been written from the point of view of Modernism understood as having as its main objective “pure visuality.” The Greenbergian strand of Modernism even emphasized the minimal requirements of painting and its final telos as perhaps just a canvas set on the stretcher. In the High Modernist narrative, the artwork came to be defined as that which remains visible, as the visual residue of all the activities and decisions of the artist – a finished, well defined work of art, set apart from its environment and from the intentions and actions, the beliefs and behaviour of the maker. Until relatively recently, historians of Symbolist and fin-de-siècle art have, accordingly, looked for signs of praiseworthy “flatness” and disregarded what artists themselves had written, what kind of activities they had been engaged in – what they themselves had felt relevant to their art, indeed what the artists themselves had placed at the centre of their art.

What was art for the fin-de-siècle artists? Art was often discussed in terms of religion, while religion in its turn was understood as having great many senses. It is perhaps salutary to remember that the Durkheimian conception of religion was yet to be defined. Esoteric Buddhism and the tradition of mysticism originating with the Alexandrians were common art theoretical currency, and Albert Aurier discussed Paul Gauguin’s work through the philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyrios. When Diaghilev described his artistic generation in an article published in the journal *Ateneum* in 1898, he portrayed it as “a tribe whose members attend vernissages as if they were participating in esoteric ceremonies, chanting masses, carrying roses, moving in processions to the accompaniment of the mystical tunes of Parsifal.”

In her dissertation, published already in 1966, Salme Sarajas-Korte brought to life the early 1890s artistic milieu in a way that was quite unusual for the time – the 1960s were after all the highest moment of Modernism. Through her work, she encountered and recreated the Parisian art scene of the early 1890s. The scene is evoked in vivid detail in her doctoral dissertation with a set of characters that she portrays with empathy, sharing in their quest for what was variously termed as self, religion, science or art. Quest is definitively a fin-de-siècle concept!

Ivan Aguéli who was condemned in the 1894 anarchist court case in Paris and later became a practicing Sufi mystic said: “I’m looking for a language, not a religion.” When he was held in detention, his friend Werner von Hausen who supplied him with books from Chamuel’s Librairie du Merveilleux wrote of him: “Even though he does not say it, he is looking for a religion.” The quest for a style of life is perhaps what feels the most contemporary aspect of the late nineteenth century artistic practices. Recently, the contemporary art curator, and now principal of Ecole-des-

Beaux-Arts, Nicolas Bourriaud proposed in *Formes de vie: l'art moderne et l'invention de soi* that the significance of art in Modernity is in its capability of imagining different attitudes – points of passage between art and life. Bourriaud sees artists as potentially exemplary in that they invent the succession of postures and gestures that permit them to create. He also says that modern art derives not only from the paintings of precursors but equally importantly – if not more importantly – from the attitudes and structures of behaviour they invented.

The French philosopher Pierre Hadot has claimed that the nature of ancient philosophy is gravely misunderstood when it is seen as a system of dogmas. Instead, he saw philosophy foremost as the practice of a certain kind of life. Perhaps the same idea could be applied to late nineteenth century art. It is, indeed, becoming more and more strenuous to hold on to simplistic oppositions projected by twentieth century modern ideals – and to believe in the strict separation of scientific, artistic, literary, and religious domains in the nineteenth century. It is increasingly evident that the late nineteenth century witnessed a great variety of attitudes, a whole spectrum of interrelated and sometimes conflicting heterodoxies.

Recognizing that Modernity in the arts is not monolithic but rather that its genealogies are several, intertwined, and for a great part heterodoxical, we dedicated the symposium to Salme Sarajas-Korte. The interdisciplinarity of her research serves as an example when the methodology of research calls for serious attention to the multifaceted and intertwined discourses of subjectivity and of different heterodoxical spiritualities.

Riikka Stewen is the Professor of Art History and Art Theory at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. She held the opening speech at the symposium.

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**Keynote Speech:
LYNN L. SHARP**

Truths Beyond Reason: Fluidité in the French fin-de-siècle

Matter, Matter, what a shadow you have cast over truth!
– Louis Claude de Saint Martin

[S]piritism takes no more account of the barrier of space than of time.... It matters not whether it be by intuition, by clairvoyance, by telepathy, or by double personality that the soul is permitted to leave momentarily its terrestrial prison and make the voyage between this world and others in an instant of time, or whether the feat is accomplished by means of the astral body, by the reincarnation of disincarnate omnisciences, by 'fluid beings,' . . . [A]ccording to spiritism, no serious objection would be offered to the possibility of such communication.

– Théodore Flournoy

In this discussion I contend that the mesmerist and spiritist concept of *fluidité* acted as fertile ground for the multiple discourses of the fin-de-siècle, most particularly occultism but also, because of their links to the occult, Symbolism and the Decadents. The latter part of this contention I have not fully proven but strongly suggest here. After exploring the ways *fluidité* functioned in mesmerism and flowered in spiritism, I turn to the fin-de-siècle to follow its fortunes

there. Spiritism and occultism popularized and made omnipresent the ghosts and ghost stories, the encroaching world of the spirits and the revival of hermetic knowledge that so fascinated much of the fin-de-siècle. Spiritists used the concept of *fluidité* to describe the soul's existence in this world and its movement between worlds. *Fluidité* offered access between worlds; this opened the door to seeing the "beyond" as a "reality". Spiritist mediums brought that beyond into the parlor and the lecture hall via the rapping and tapping of tables, "automatic" writing, and the ability to bring forth music and even roses from the spirit world beyond this one. The very "reality" of these otherworldly phenomena challenged realism as a movement and positivism as a science. By the 1880s, orthodox science, in the form of the new psychiatry, reacted to subsume and (attempt to) tame these phenomena. Spiritism and occultism, despite deep differences, banded together in claiming the magical/enchanted/more-than-material basis of these phenomena and contributed an important semi-mystical strain to modernist thought. The connections between spiritism/occultism and Symbolism/decadence suggest a more popular ancestry for the elite art movements, or at least a greater shared set of concerns and values, than has previously been considered.

As Théodore Flournoy pointed out (above), the soul could “leave its terrestrial prison” in myriad ways at the end of the nineteenth century. Mesmerists spoke of the “doubling” of the body, the ability to send a fluidic copy of the body outside the corporeal flesh. Spiritists theorized a *périsprit* which allowed the disembodied spirit to cross into and affect the earthly realm. Similarly, occultists spoke of astral bodies existing between the “world of things and [the] world of principles” (Papus) which allowed magicians to slip between realms, moving on the astral plane to affect the mundane one. Swedenborg, rediscovered by both Symbolists and mesmerists alike, also posited a universal fluid that linked the natural and the surnatural. All of these theories shared (at least) one common core concept – that of *fluidité* – that a fluidic material existed, allowing access of the solid material body to the immaterial truths beyond.

Each of these beliefs created a path to what I am calling here “truths beyond reason,” truths beyond the limited empiricism of modern science but outside the realm of traditional religion or philosophical logic. Mesmerists, spiritists, theosophists and many others sought to free both mind and matter from Max Weber’s “iron cage” of reason, and from the fixed limits of science. They allowed a re-enchantment of the fin-de-siècle world, insisting that the world of the spirit – be it “actual” spirits, dreams, astral planes, or hypnotic trance as a source of creative work – offered the means to reach a more fulfilling set of truths than those offered by science and reason.

The history of *fluidité* as a useful interpretive tool has yet to be written – and I won’t do so here – but that it played a key role in the myriad discourses at the end of the century can hardly be denied. *Fluidité* appeared first as “solid,” or at least quasi-material and this-worldly in Mesmerism early in the century. Spiritists inherited the concept and applied it to the envelope encasing the ethereal souls of

the dead. Spiritists used *fluidité* as a means to explain empirical events attributed to spirits and thus to prove, scientifically, the existence of the soul. Spiritism, especially in its early years, remained firmly linked to the positivist strain of thought. The recourse to positivism only furthered, perhaps ironically, the tools of the imaginary that would be available to later experimenters. In the fin-de-siècle, “fluidité” of doctrine also allowed the intermingling of a variety of groups interested in truths beyond reason – spiritists, occultists, rosicrucians, and others. Despite sometimes strong differences, this meant a fertile sharing of ideas and a coming together of alternative thought against the main currents of the late nineteenth century. The prevalence of these ideas at the end of the century came from the widespread popularity of spiritism throughout the second half of the century. The spiritist “fluidité” led, by an indirect path, to the centering of truth in a realm beyond that of matter and reason. These contemporary discourses offered fertile ground for literature and art to reject realism, to explore the mythical past, to find truth in the symbolic and to privilege the meaning coming from the worlds “beyond” the scientifically proven.

Mesmerism

For our purposes, fluidity starts with Anton Mesmer and early mesmerists who took their ideas of “imponderable” substances from a line of thinkers going back to Newton and his “aether.” Mesmer described magnetic fluid as “universally diffused; it is the medium of a mutual influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and animated bodies.”¹ That influence, however, was not surnatural but natural, and Mesmer argued that the fluid existed within the human body. For Mesmer, illness resulted from fluid

imbalances; these could be cured by “realigning” fluids that somehow had jumped the banks of their proper stream. With the advent of spiritism, magnetism found its identity mixed, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes less so, with the more spiritually-oriented group. Materialist magnetists rejected the claim that spirits could communicate and continued to insist that the magnetic force was strictly earthly. But they had gifted the spiritists with a key idea that the latter group would popularize and carry forward into the fin-de-siècle.

Spiritism

During its early years, in the 1860s, spiritism was highly positivist but anti-materialist. Spiritists insisted that spiritism was “scientific,” by which they meant empirical, rational, repeatable, and proven by effect. Yet they refused to give up the “enchantment” of a world of mystery beyond our own material world. The movement struggled to claim positive proof of the survival of the soul in offering new “scientific” knowledge based on the concept of fluidity. Spiritism’s alternative vision of science insisted that moral as well as physical facts could be discovered through scientific investigation. In an article titled “The Perpetuity of Spiritism,” the *Revue spirite* insisted that, “Spiritism will not deviate from the truth, and will not fear conflicting opinions, in so much as its scientific theory and its moral doctrine will be deduced from facts scrupulously and conscientiously observed.”² Spiritists argued that although other reform movements based only on systematic theories had failed (and here they were thinking both socialist and republican revolutionary movements, many of whose aims they shared), spiritism would succeed as knowledge of the facts it was based on spread. Growth of spiritism and its

new view of science meant more than just new ideas on the soul. According to the article's author, probably spiritist leader Allan Kardec, "the consequences [of the spread of spiritism] mean a complete revolution in ideas and in the manner of seeing the things of this world and of the other."³

Spiritist science engaged in what Michel de Certeau called the "art of doing." Rather than passively receiving new cultural knowledge (in this case scientific), spiritists appropriated it, merging it with their separate spiritist knowledge to create ideas that would challenge many of the assumptions of the dominant culture. De Certeau argues that "re-employment of an external power" (or knowledge) creates a new way of speaking that modifies function and meaning.

A way of speaking this received language transforms it into a song of resistance, but this internal metamorphosis does not in any way compromise the sincerity with which it may be believed nor the lucidity with which, from another point of view, the struggles and inequalities hidden under the established order may be perceived.⁴

Spiritists used the concept of *fluidité*, an external factor in de Certeau's sense, to reformulate scientific knowledge within their own sphere of thought. *Fluidité* functioned as an alternative "scientific" explanation and allowed spiritists to reject the conclusions science came to regarding the "facts" of spirit apparitions. Spiritists theorized a democratic version of science; knowledge did not belong to experts with the power to monopolize meaning. They firmly believed in the power of science itself (slightly redefined), and in their right to use it.

Spiritists adopted and adapted Mesmer's fluid for their own purposes. They located fluidity not in the material although unseen world, (as did magnetists) but in the "immaterial" world of the spirits. That world remained

nonetheless only partially immaterial. Or at least, the spirits, when they acted in the material world, made use of matter. Spiritists postulated a fluid "body" in which the soul or spirit was enveloped. They called that envelope the *périsprit* and argued that the spirit is not exactly immaterial. Rather, according to the spirit guides of Allan Kardec, "[I]ncorporeal would be nearer the truth. . . . Spirit is quintessentialised matter, but matter existing in a state which has no analogue within the circle of your comprehension, and so ethereal that it could not be perceived by your senses."⁵ That meager materiality allowed the spirit to act in the material world. It was the *périsprit* that allowed for rappings on tables, the playing of tambourines, the turning of tables – even the movement of a medium's writing arm in trance writing. Spiritists did not see mediums as "possessed" by spirits, but argued for a collaboration between willing mediums and intelligent spirits. Both thought and universal fluid flowed freely in exchanges between spirits and their followers.

Spiritist emphasis on the fluid spirit found a paradoxical complement in an insistence on the materiality of what others might term "supernatural" or immaterial phenomena. The *périsprit* allowed spirits to assume a material form and move fluidly from one realm to another. They could be seen, measured, examined, and proven. This was, of course, tied to the need to make them scientific and empirical. I am not implying by saying spiritists "make the spirits scientific" any deliberate fabrication on the part of spiritists but only exploring the discourse they chose to discuss spirit phenomena in order to try to legitimate them. The result of this discursive move, however, was a clear gesture toward making natural the supernatural, making accessible the immaterial realm in which spirits move.

Conversely, the more material a being, the lower it was on the evolutionary scale of advancement set out by spirit-

ism. According to spiritist doctrine, the more advanced a soul is on the ladder of reincarnation, the less material its bodily incarnation, literally. Spiritists believed that reincarnation took place on myriad worlds; on other, less "material" worlds, beings enjoyed less heavy, gravity-bound lives.⁶ Even while proclaiming the "materiality" of the spirit world, spiritists critiqued the contemporary scientific privileging of matter over spirit. They employed scientific evolutionary ideas to critique earthly materialist thought. Science's focus on the material, as such, pointed up the low point of scientists on the progressive scale of being. Spiritism thus challenged the monopoly of scientists over definitions of reality.

Despite this insistence on the semi-materiality of the immortal spirit, spiritists refused to integrate the *périsprit* into materialist thought. Matter was much despised by the spiritists, who blamed it, or at least the materialist position, for many of the ills they saw afflicting late nineteenth-century society. By rejecting religious teaching, materialism, they argued, shunned the promise and the responsibility carried by the immortal soul to improve and perfect the world. The doctrine strove to resolve the spiritual discomfort felt by so many nineteenth-century thinkers who valued science as a means of progress yet could not imagine a world without deep and meaningful belief. Spiritist use of fluid offered the antidote to too much matter and not enough faith. In spiritist doctrine, materiality was transformed from an either-or to a continuum.

The very nature of fluid, moving quickly across the boundaries of the perceptible and the imperceptible, challenged the staid fixity proclaimed by nineteenth-century empiricism. Spiritists took advantage of the permeability of these boundaries in many ways but most "miraculously" in terms of healing. An ailing patient (or her family) could consult a medium in a different town, even by letter. The

medium would consult with spirits and, with their aid, send healing fluids across great distances in order to effect a cure. The ability of the medium and spirit to act on the material world anywhere, not just at the point of the medium as intersection, dissolved the bounds of space. Although time was not so directly dissolved, the spirit could both speak to the medium and analyze the patient, nearly simultaneously, thus creating a blurring of time.

The spiritist use of the concept of fluidity to express the relationship between natural and surnatural meant thus a dilution of the fixed boundaries of this life and the next, of space, and of time. All of these offered a clear challenge to empirical and positivist science. They also presaged many of the ideas that Henri Bergson would formulate in a much more sophisticated manner at the end of the century. Spiritist belief in progressive, evolutionary reincarnation, of the soul as an evolving project rather than an unchanging entity meant that the soul, too, had lost its fixity. By using the tools of bourgeois rationality – the rational and empirical observation so important to the Enlightened mind, the spiritists ended by offering a strong alternative formulation of the world.

Spiritism's great popularity meant that these alternative ways of viewing the relationship between this world and the "beyond," of the relationship between truth and scientific reason, gained widespread attention. Granted, much of that attention aimed to discredit spiritism, but interest in the phenomena mediums produced simply did not wane. Occultists would shape these ideas into a much more direct challenge to contemporary views of both nature and of the self.

There is a second form of "fluidity", this time much more figurative, that I find in both spiritism and occultism. That is the fluidity of doctrine, the inability – I would argue refusal – to create a consensus among followers about what

constituted spiritist faith or truths. Other than the key doctrine of belief in spirits and thus in the survival of the soul, spiritists had no absolutely necessary beliefs. Most followed the founder of the movement, Allan Kardec, in his beliefs in reincarnation and in the progressive evolution of the soul, but Kardec was no pope and many spiritists argued with his interpretations, even before his death. After his death in 1869 the interpretive frame became even more diverse. Spiritists increasingly split into two groups. One continued to insist on the "scientific" nature of study of the spirits. The other, and perhaps more popular group, focused on the magic and wonder of contact between the worlds.

Contradictions in doctrine were thus one of the most prevalent features of the spiritist movement as a whole. They define in some sense its basic shape – or lack thereof. This syncretism meant the movement built membership through openness and an accumulation of meanings. The one attempt to formalize doctrine met with great hostility. One wealthy spiritist tried to call a conference on doctrine in the 1870s. The very idea caused furor in spiritist communities and great debate in their periodicals. The details of this are not important for our context, but the claims made to reject any effort to solidify doctrine reflect the importance of fluidity as a key structural concept for spiritists. Without any seeming irony, the spirit "Jean Darcy," clearly a male version of Jeanne d'Arc, insisted that "Spiritists will be always and above all free-thinkers, and will never believe anything except that which seems to them just and reasonable, that which they have understood themselves, not what it pleases someone to impose on them."⁷

As John Monroe has argued, the "decentralized, argumentative, exuberantly diverse Spiritism of the 1880s and 1890s attracted an unprecedented number of adherents."⁸ Spiritist circles formed around mediums who could produce continued contact with spirits from more advanced worlds,

or more exotic ones. The narrative form of these episodic experiences allowed spiritists to imagine themselves into other realms. Mediums brought into bourgeois drawing rooms exotic, advanced beings, who shared both adventure and advice. The most famous of these mediums was Hélène Smith, chronicled by the psychologist Théodore Flournoy in *From India to the Planet Mars*.⁹ Smith and her followers used exotic locale and invented language to create a more meaningful world than that offered them by contemporary, scientific society.

The very fluidity and shapelessness of spiritist doctrine, the ability it offered to move into and back out of various interpretive rooms, countered the rigidity of natural, scientific law, and of ever-more controlling bourgeois society and morality. By opening its doors to all ideas that could be molded onto the two founding structures of a belief in the immortal soul and contact between living and dead, spiritism created an edifice for expression of individual ideas and interpretations that differed from those of official institutions. Their very plurality represented both their greatest challenge to the dominant consensus and the reason they could not create enough of an organized movement to make effective any of the specific challenges that were articulated by particular members of spiritism. It also offered an example and applicable concepts that other movements in the fin-de-siècle easily adopted and adapted.

Adopting fluidité

Fluidity as a conceptual tool began to permeate both mainstream and other alternative discourses after 1870 and especially after the solidification of the Third Republic by 1880. In addition, the very phenomena of spiritism – mediums' results – became the subject matter of occultists, of psychol-

ogists, and of psychical research. Elsewhere I have argued that this was in many ways the death of spiritism as able to adapt to the main stream of French values.¹⁰ Here, however, I want to focus on how these groups all borrowed and profited from the concept of *fluidité* in one way or another and how fluidity of ideas, of exchange, and of boundaries of space, time, and the supernatural were key to discourses on mysticism at the end of the century.

The 1880s saw a rapid rise in orthodox scientific study of medium-produced phenomena. The spiritist claim to being scientific had rested on the “facts” it could observe and the fluidic explanation of the *périsprit*. Spiritist “facts” were the phenomena obtained at séances. By the end of the century, phenomena such as table turning, trance writing, the ability to make objects move or instruments play without any clear material cause, and the materialization of objects, including the mysterious “ectoplasm” which spiritists claimed was the materialization of spirits themselves, drew the attention of scientists studying the brain and its abilities.

From 1885, a group of important psychologists and physiologists formed the new *Société de psychologie physiologique* (Society of Physiological Psychology) dedicated to the study of psychic phenomena by the scientific method of observation and experimentation. Jean-Martin Charcot presided over the group, which gathered together prominent investigators of the subconscious mind. Pierre Janet, Théodore Ribot, Charles Richet, and Charles Féré all numbered among the officers.¹¹ These scientists believed that mediumistic phenomena previously declared fraudulent or supernatural could in fact be traced to the physical body in one way or another, usually to abnormalities of the nervous system.¹² With the invention of the unconscious the qualities of somnambules and mediums to heal, to heal at a distance, and to act in “supranatural” ways during trances also became the subject of orthodox science. Hypnotic

trance reproduced much of the phenomena of mediums, as famously studied by Charcot and illustrated by his public demonstrations using hysterics. (Similar phenomena were also reproduced by some Symbolists, as Rodolphe Rapetti has shown.¹³)

More traditional physicians concurred with the burgeoning psychology. Among the most renowned of doctors to study spiritist phenomena was Dr. Joseph Grasset, from the University of Montpellier. He explained mediumistic phenomena as a process of “exteriorization” of the physical being, which then acted as an invisible force to move objects or play instruments.¹⁴ Grasset also published a survey of early psychical research which included mental suggestion, clairvoyance, and telepathy along with spiritism. In it he listed spiritism as a historical predecessor to “the occultism of today” and called his work “a record of progress made in the reduction of occult phenomena to a scientific basis.” He categorized most mediumistic phenomena as false or very unlikely to be proven.¹⁵ Grasset’s and other scientific works echoed spiritist explanations while rejecting its theoretical underpinnings; they accepted the possibility of a fluidic body but stopped at the point of looking for a source of fluid beyond the natural body.

The late-century interest in medium-produced phenomena also brought magnetism back into prominence and closer to spiritist thought. Mesmerists shared with spiritists the emphasis on both types of fluidity – that of refusing one single doctrine and that of the importance of fluid. Although in the 1840s jealousies and disagreements had formed between certain proponents of magnetism and of spiritism, most recognized their shared beliefs; by the 1870s many magnetists believed their fluids had an extra-natural source, and spiritist mediums often contacted their spirits through trances brought about by magnetists. Each group praised and published the other, and the mesmeric fluids

became less “material” than they had at first been.¹⁶ Leading mesmerists Henri and Hector Durville, for example, emphasized the existence of a fluid body and its ability to step outside the corporeal body – the *dédoublement de corps*. Doubling allowed that fluid body to act on material objects while the body was in magnetic sleep, but also to achieve things not possible for the normal human body.¹⁷ This doubled body resembles the spiritist *périsprit* by its material abilities; it is not quite the same as the occultist astral body, but its superhuman abilities echo the astral.

Mesmerism also shaded into the occult. Mme Louis Mond, “femme de lettres,” linked the two in her popular journal *Le Magicien* which ran from 1883–1890. (And was recommended as reading by leading occultists.) The masthead of this supposedly Mesmerist journal shows the importance of symbols in multiple discourses at the end of the century. The masthead refers to the occult idea of analogy: “That which is on high is like that which is below; that which is below is like that which on high.”¹⁸ The image shows Death on one side, with the moon, trees, globes and crosses. He has a scythe over his shoulder and in one hand what looks like a mirror. The other side shows a magician, with the sun, a sheet with a star of David on it, a sword, a sickle, a big goblet, a book with pictures of the tarot and a smoking brazier. The mage raises a wand in his hand, perhaps about to act on the unseen realm. The journal at first emphasized accounts of mesmerist healings but later added teaching from Eliphas Levi, mid-century occultist. *Le Magicien* hoped to teach readers the “grand laws of nature” and to “raise the veil on the unknown, this sensation that both repulses and attracts at the same time.” The first issue described the journal as a work of propaganda and vulgarisation which worked to “spread knowledge that has been forgotten for too long a time.” The journal would be, said Mme Louis Mond, the “continuation and complement

of our popular teachings” and would publish everything that seems “useful, curious, and interesting, speaking to all and not only to the erudites.”¹⁹ This journal, like the later *Initiation*, aimed to bring magnetism and occultism to a popular audience. These journals, and many others like them, promoted the popularity of the interwoven multiple discourses surrounding ideas of *fluidité* and research into “truths beyond reason” that gained prominence in the post-1870s era. Spiritism, still popular, increasingly shared its fame with the rising tide of occultism.

Occultists and Fluidité

The two most important occultists of the fin-de-siècle were Dr. Gérard Encausse, generally known by his mystic name Papus,²⁰ and Stanislas de Guaita. Together they built direct paths of exchange between spiritism and its ideas of fluidity and the literary and artistic movements of the fin-de-siècle. Occultism never aspired to be “scientific” in the ways that spiritism had and it recruited a more educated following. However, the two groups had clear links, sharing both members and ideas. For occultists, arcane study led to the ability to reach and act on the “astral plane.” The astral body, the traveler on the astral plane, the source of magical action and occult knowledge, was a fluid body, a body that shared much with the theory of the spiritists’ *périsprit*. Occultism’s use of *fluidité* was always more free, less bound by the attempt to prove phenomena were empirically “true.” The truths beyond stale reason were the only real truths for the occultists, as for the Symbolists.

In practical terms, strong connections linked the movements. The mysterious phenomena that spiritist mediums produced were a means of recruitment for occultists and a way to make accessible many of their ideas about the astral

plane. According to occultism, mediums, without realizing it, interacted with beings from the astral plane. Occultists rarely made this argument directly, however, and the more elitist among them, such as Stanislas de Guaita, rejected spiritism as lowly, logical, and populist. That said, mediums who regularly contacted spirits or who acted as conduits for channeling fluid were a popular topic of exploration for occultists, especially Papus, and he refused ever to make a complete break between the two movements. In fact, Papus insisted in the journal *Initiation* that spiritism, like occultism, was a “society of initiation” and that spiritist study would lead thinkers directly into occult study.²¹ He thus recommended to readers that one way to begin a study of the occult was to attend séances and study the writings of the spirits and the spiritists.

A flamboyant man, Papus flitted from idea to idea, synthesizing as many of them as possible. As Dr. Gérard Encausse he worked at the Hôpital de la Charité and promoted explorations into hysteria and hypnosis. Unlike Charcot, who influenced him, Encausse and those surrounding him promoted fluid theory and occult connections as a way to explain hysteria and other trance symptoms.²² He poured his energy into the new occult movement, forming a number of occult groups. At his urging Lucien Chamuel founded the *Librairie Merveilleux* (around 1890), the bookstore that both published numerous occult texts and acted as a gathering place for all manner of artistic, literary and occultist thinkers.²³

The most extensive occultist circle that Papus formed was that of the *Ordre Martiniste*. Both Papus and de Guaita belonged to the Martinists and Guaita was its “dominant intellectual presence”²⁴ but the spirit of Papus animated its outlook. This is seen most clearly in its outright search for publicity. The Martinist order proposed to bring occultism to the masses. To promote this, Papus founded the

journal *l’Initiation* in 1888 (published by Chamuel’s *Librairie Merveilleux*) and in 1890, the *Groupe indépendant d’études ésotériques* which specifically aimed “to publicize Occultism”. The group’s goals included cultivating members for secret societies, training Occultist lecturers, and the study of “the phenomena of ‘Spiritism, Mesmerism, and Magic.’”²⁵ One occultist promoter claimed that the *Groupe* had registered 50,000 occultists.²⁶ *l’Initiation* shows the potent and popular mixture of movements that prevailed in the late nineteenth century. Articles on spiritism and mesmerism sat side by side with discussions of Blavatsky’s theosophy and articles on “symbolism in Free-Masonry” or predictions for the future.²⁷ The literature section of the journal regularly featured symbolist poetry by Joséphin “Sar” Péladan.

Language rather than science played the crucial role in defining occultism. Occultists claimed as precursors mid-century mages like Eliphas Levi (Alphonse-Louis Constant) and St. Yves d’Alveydre.²⁸ These thinkers shared with spiritists a skepticism of modern science, and a very broadly-defined Christian focus, but added an emphasis on the word. Levi drew from and adapted Swedenborg. Similar to Swedenborg’s “correspondances,” analogy posited two corresponding realms: the Macrocosm of the universe and the Microcosm of humanity. Each element of the visible world has an analog in the invisible world of which it is the symbolic reflection. The analogy between the two reveals the secrets of the macrocosm and allows the microcosm to act on the macrocosm. Only an interior vision (and much study) would enable the student to understand these connections. Unlike Swedenborg who searched for already-existing harmonies, Levi’s theory drew on “the ability of the initiate to control and manipulate language in such a way that it might transform the world around him.”²⁹ And thus create real magic.

Analogy argued that the natural (empirically observable) world was always an emblem for the hidden, metaphysical world. Thus by observing nature you could be studying both science and religion, reaching knowledge in both realms. Occultists, building on Levi, emphasized the importance of analogy as the key explanatory factor of the material world. (Versus the spiritist emphasis on reincarnation and human solidarity.) The Occultists, unlike the spiritists, saw themselves not as correcting science but as using language to go beyond it. The emphasis for occultists remained on the unseen world, the truth that lay beyond the visible.

The analogy between the seen and the unseen worlds meant that action on the unseen, or astral, plane could directly affect events and individuals on the seen, material plane. Papus offered a popular, easily accessible version of these teachings through his *Traité élémentaire des sciences occultes* (1887) and Guaita a more elitist one through his *Au seuil des mystères* (1886). Both of these texts became best-sellers, spreading and popularizing the notion of the fluidic world's connection to this one. Both Guaita and Papus argued that the ability to indirectly affect the material realm could be achieved through mastery of the fluid, astral, body. Universal fluid was a key part of practicing magic. Astral bodies existed between the “world of things and world of principles” (Papus); the universe was filled with astral fluid and elemental beings. The secret to magic was the use of this fluid – the magician materializes in the astral sphere and, from there, manipulates the fluid of the universe, thus affecting the world.

The most infamous example of fluid affecting the world lay in the accusations made by Jules Bois and J-K Huysmans that Guaita used his fluidic body to murder the dark mage, the ex-abbé Boullan (1893), an event I am sure my audience is aware of, so I won't recount in detail here. (Two duels resulted: Jules Bois and Guaita with pistols; Bois and

Papus with swords. No one died.) Huysmans' experience of the event, however, shows how “real” the fluidic world could be. Huysmans claimed that Guaita also attacked him physically: the “Paris Rosicrucians ... struck my head every night with fluidic fists; even my cat was afflicted by these blows....”³⁰

Most fluidic activity remained significantly less deadly. Instead it was creative in one sense or another. The highly trained “adept” could use his (or her) skills, and especially his or her *will* to transform the very production of matter. Thus the imagination could then produce the real in the sense of creating tangible entities capable of acting at a distance in material ways.³¹ Like the Spiritists before them, occultists put *fluidic* activity at the center of their doctrine; in this case, they were the very matter of magic.

Here we arrive at the most direct link between occultism and Symbolism – the occult insistence on the use of symbols as the means to practice magic, to reach a truth beyond reason. The occultist channeled his will, through the use of symbols and talismans, to influence the astral world. Both strains of thought insisted on the ability of individuals to overcome materialism. For the occultists, most symbols came through the Hermetic tradition and represented a looking-back, a rejection of positivism and an attempt to rediscover a mystical tradition. The newspaper *Le Matin*, in 1899, described an occultist meeting room, celebrating its Hermetic symbols, mysterious inscriptions along the walls, astrological signs and Hebrew and Sanskrit letters, all of which created “an atmosphere of miracle and prophecy.”³² The most mysterious part of occultism was this ability to cross worlds. Guaita insisted that this was dangerous and could not be taken lightly. The world was made up of elemental spirits, some of them malignant beings called *larves* that could move from the astral to the material plane to work mischief (or good.) These elementals, Guaita said, are

able to become visible, and even tangible, by condensation: thus they assume the form of the beings who approach them. The occultist (who attracts them, dominates them and directs them with his own astral body) can give them the appearance of any object at will, provided he determines the nature of that object mentally, and forcefully sculpts its contours in his imagination.

Guaita's presentation of the astral world was emotional and emphasized the danger:

High science cannot be an object of frivolous curiosity ... the sacrilege of capriciously importuning the Sphinx never goes unpunished. When faced with your indiscreet query, the Unknown will furnish an unexpected response, one so troubling it will obsess you forever. The veil of mystery has piqued your curiosity? Woe to you for raising it! It suddenly drops from your trembling hands, and what you believe to have seen fills you with panic.³³

This strong emotionality that surrounded the contact with the fluid meant that occultism offered a deeply emotional experience of the mystical – far removed from the mundane psychical researchers and even the spiritists with their emotional but more pragmatic approach.

Occultism, Symbolism, and decadent writers circled around similar ideas and they met together to discourse both the occult and the artistic. Guaita discovered the Hermetic tradition through Péladan's 1884 novel *Le Vice suprême* and introduced young Papus to the symbolist writer. Both Guaita and Papus also gave credit to Eliphas Levi and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre as the sources linking fin-de-siècle occultism to earlier Hermetic traditions. Together Péladan, Guaita, and Papus promoted intertwined mystical visions. Papus and Guaita gathered both Symbolists and Decadents around them at the Librairie merveilleux and in general in their occult circles. According to a detractor,

“Occultism recruits its adepts in France principally in the world of letters and among the bands of snobs who make up the retinue of the decadent authors.”³⁴ Symbolists Carlos Schwabe and Eugène Grasset joined those “clustered around Sâr Péladan.”³⁵

Péladan’s neo-Rosicrucian occult society of the Rose-Croix, of which both Stanislas de Guaita and Papus were early members, offers the most direct connection of these ideas to Symbolism. Symbolist painters who exhibited at Péladan’s Salon de la Rose + Croix, (1892–97) worked with and made visible the ideas of *fluidité*, partly through their use of water as a key symbol (obviously, water has many meanings and has long been symbolic) and partly through their very rendering. Carlos Schwabe’s posters for the Salon de la Rose + Croix develop images that are very mediumistic, and very reminiscent of both occultist and spiritist ideas. Using women as his “medium,” he symbolized the veiled otherworld as a veiled woman. In his first Salon poster the woman is pictured rising up, becoming increasingly more ethereal, less bestial, as she rises into the increasingly fluidic realms. She thus embodies the evolution of the soul from material to mystic through study of or travel upon the astral planes.

Conclusion

The symbolists drew off a century of thinking about *fluidité* in France. From Mesmer and Swedenborg in the early century, the ideas of *fluidité* had mutated in spiritism and occultism and come back into prominence. August Strindberg wrote, in an 1896 letter from France, “Swedenborg is much in vogue here and is regarded as the first theosophist in modern time, ahead of Allan Kardec.”³⁶ Alphonse-Louis Constant was a romantic socialist and egalitarian thinker –

the strain of thought so crucial to spiritists – before he took the name Eliphas Lévi, consorted with spiritists and spiritual magnetists, and wrote his books on *Haute magie* which would so influence the occultism of the later nineteenth century.

These nineteenth-century movements offered a strange mix of semi-mystical individualism. They spread belief in things from ghosts and spirits to a deep mystical connection with the world as a whole through fluid. Spiritism and occultism fought against the materialism and positivism by which psychiatry tried to harness and muzzle the invisible and mystical forces in the world. Fluidity functioned to create an image and a sense of openness, of crossable boundaries. Fluidity of doctrine and beliefs left open the path of interpretation. Each person’s dreams, symbols, thoughts, could be seen to reflect the fluid world and to affect the material world in ways particular to that person. The individual could reach forces unknown and not fully knowable, and even participate in those forces. He or she could be an active participant in the making of magic and in the ancient forces of knowledge that were unchanged by the modern world. This re-enchantment of the world was a key facet of Modernism in general and especially important to the questions that we have been looking at in this conference.

- 1 Anton Mesmer, *Mémoire*, quoted in Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), 33.
- 2 *Revue spirite* 1865: 40-41. This article is unsigned but was most likely written by Kardec, as editor of the *Revue*. Kardec wrote the majority of articles during the 1860s.
- 3 *Revue spirite* 1865: 40.
- 4 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 17-18. Certeau refers here to religion, but his terms are easily transferred to the scientific world.
- 5 Kardec, *The Spirits' Book* (Albuquerque, NM: Brotherhood of Life, 1989 [1857]), 89.
- 6 For more on spiritist doctrine, see my *Secular Spirituality: Rein-carnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-century France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), especially chapter two.
- 7 *La Lumière*, 1884: 157. These multiple directions meant spiritists took a variety of political positions, on socialism and gender especially. For more on this, see Sharp, *Secular Spirituality*, 91-110.
- 8 Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, 220.
- 9 Originally published as *Des Indes au planète Mars*, 1900.
- 10 Sharp, *Secular Spirituality*, chapter 5.
- 11 In the 1890s, the society was known as *Société des phénomènes physiologiques* but it retained the same members.
- 12 For example, see Jean-Martin Charcot, *Clinical lectures on diseases of the nervous system*, ed. Ruth Harris (London: Routledge, 1991[1889]) and "La foi qui guérit," (Paris: Alcan, 1897); Pierre Janet, *Etat mental des hystériques: les stigmates mentaux* (Paris: Rueff, 1893); Charles Richet, *La personnalité et la mémoire dans le somnambulisme* (Paris, 1883); and *Possession, l'homme et l'intelligence*, (Paris, 1897). Richet later came to believe in the reality of spirit manifestation, but he was a rare case among scientists.
- 13 Rodolphe Rapetti, "From Anguish to Ecstasy: Symbolism and the Study of Hysteria" in *Lost paradise: Symbolist Europe* (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1995): 224-34
- 14 Joseph Grasset, *L'hypnotisme et le suggestion* (Paris: Doin, 1903); and *Le Spiritisme devant la science* (Paris, 1904).
- 15 Joseph Grasset, *Marvels Beyond Science* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910) [originally published as *L'Occultisme Hier et Aujourd'hui; le merveilleux présicientifique*] quote is from title page of English edition.
- 16 For instance, MM. Robert et Durville, both popular professors of magnetism in Paris, speaking at the Congrès spirite of 1889, expressed faith in spiritism, arguing that it sprang from the same source as magnetism. *Compte rendu du Congrès spirite et spiritualiste internationale 1889*, (Paris, 1889), 209. Earlier, spiritist theorist Jean Rouxel described Durville's Institut Magnétique in his *Théorie du spiritisme*, encouraging followers to take the course and learn to understand the use of fluids. Rouxel (pseudonym of Auguste Leroux) also published frequently in G. Delanne's *Revue scientifique et morale du spiritisme*; this further illustrates the link between the two movements.
- 17 *Le Matin*, 7 août, 1913.
- 18 This is the same phrase that appears in Papus' *Traité élémentaire de sciences occultes* (1887) It comes from the "Emerald Table" a text attributed to the mythical Egyptian magician Hermes Trismegistus. (Part of the Hermetic tradition.) For this, see John Warne Monroe, "Evidence of Things Not Seen: Spiritism, Occultism, and the Search for a Modern Faith in France, 1853-1925," (Ph.D. Thesis: Yale University, 2002), 335.
- 19 *Le Magicien*, vol. 1, (1883): cover page, 2.
- 20 Papus is the name of the génie de médecine in Apollonius de Thyane's *Nuctéméron*. Victor-Emile Michelet, *Les Compagnons de la biérophanie: Souvenirs du mouvement hermétiste à la fin du XIX siècle* (Paris: Dorbon, 1977 [1937]), 32.
- 21 *L'Initiation*, April 1889: 15-16.
- 22 Anne Harrington, "Hysteria, Hypnosis, and the Lure of the Invisible: The Rise of Neomesmerism in Fin-de-siècle French Psychiatry Neo-Mesmerism," in *Anatomy of Madness*, ed. W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter, Michael Shepherd (London: Routledge, 1988), 232, 236.
- 23 Michelet, *Les Compagnons de la biérophanie*, 40.
- 24 David Allen Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment: Occultism and Politics in Modern France* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University: 2005), 95.
- 25 John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism and the Occult in Modern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 240.
- 26 Georges Vitoux, *Les Coulisses de l'au delà* (Paris: Librairie du Merveilleux, 1901), 2.
- 27 *L'Initiation*, vol I, 1888. The eclecticism of the journal continued throughout the century.
- 28 Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment*, 24.
- 29 Lynn Wikinson, *The Dream of an Absolute Language: Emanuel Swedenborg & French Literary Culture* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1996), 32.
- 30 Quoted in Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment*, 113.
- 31 For more on this, see Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, 247.
- 32 *Le Matin*, Nov. 6 1899, quoted in Monroe, "Evidence of Things Not Seen," 346.
- 33 Guaita, *Au Seuil des mystères*, quoted in Monroe, "Evidence of Things Not Seen," 338, 339.
- 34 Pierre Boudou, *Le Spiritisme et ses dangers: quatre conférences* (Bordeaux: np, 1921), 176.
- 35 Rapetti, "From Anguish to Ecstasy," 226
- 36 Quoted in Inge Jonsson, "Some Observations on Swedenborg's Influence in Western Literature," in Arnold T. Chadwick and G. Roland Smith, eds, *The Tricentenary of the Birth of Emanuel Swedenborg*, (London: Swedenborg Tricentenary Committee, 1988), 61-62.

Science, Belief and the Art of Subjectivity: From Fromentin's to Huysmans's Modern Primitifs

“**O**ne of those who defined themselves as modern in order to *believe*”: ¹ J.-K. Huysmans’s autobiographical comment in an 1883 letter to Paul Bourget, pinpoints an emerging paradox both in his and his period’s art. That is, an increasing focus on art and literature as stimuli for suggestively aestheticized religious and mystic experiences, yet as mediated through the *fin-de-siècle*’s newest scientific interests and discourses. There is a rich literature on science, its interfaces with art and transforming ideas of the spiritual from the mid-nineteenth century onwards – from Jules Verne’s “science-in-fiction,”² Darwinist-inspired spiritual evolutionism,³ to Symbolist occultism – especially in fuelling fascination with shifting boundaries of fiction and life; sensation and self; modernity and the spiritual. The extent to which resurgent late nineteenth-century religious revivals or their newer expressions contributed to, politicized, and complicated this momentum is perhaps less explored and merits closer study.⁴ This article’s concern is a more specific, yet neglected aesthetics and politics of spiritual revival through conceptions of art which, arguably, were to contribute compelling new insights within these broader developments. Focusing on two of the period’s most prominent art writers – Fromentin and Huysmans –

it examines their suggestive navigation of tensions between science, the natural, art and subjectivity around a growing interest in the spirituality of Northern European Renaissance artists as so-called “primitives” to develop models of art that do not so much transcend, but rather amplify these tensions.

My article’s particular focus is two-fold. First it considers how and for what purposes, Fromentin and Huysmans reposition ideas of “primitive” or regressive artistic tendencies from earlier art-historical periods as touchstones for a *fin-de-siècle* evolving modernity of vision and perception. My second, closely linked theme examines Huysmans’s developed interest in such innovations to show how, via Impressionism and especially from *Certains* (1889), his concern with a suggestive spirituality of both art and its experience, becomes consummately embodied in his emblem of the *primitif* modern artist.

Eugène Fromentin's suggestively spiritual "Primitifs": observation and invisibility

The genesis of this figure can be traced to Eugène Fromentin's 1876 *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*, especially to the final section's journey to uncover the neglected "masters" of early Flemish and Dutch Renaissance art. Indeed it is here that Fromentin's overarching themes of artistic revival and pilgrimage ("pèlerinage"), observation and reflection, of "visibility" and "invisibility," reach their symbolic conclusions. What begins in the spirit of French Third-Republican discourses of nation-building through revivalism becomes instead, as unfolded in the geographically and spiritually displaced *pays* of the Brussels Musée des Beaux-Arts, "un pèlerinage"⁵ through the art of the Low Countries, to occulted and "invisible" histories, "lost on the world's great highways," that Fromentin intimates lie at the limits, "our frontiers" ("nos frontières"), of the familiar and charted.⁶ And the final section's "Belgique," bookending the Introduction's pilgrimage, develops these ideas with particular prescience around rediscovery of the early modern artist as a touchstone for new artistic creation and revelation. Fromentin's principal concern, here, is to uncover and shed light on hitherto unseen aspects of early Netherlandish and Flemish Renaissance visual culture, recuperating invisible "masters" from rarity and neglect in a final-stage emblematic return to a notional source in medieval craft, "this first wave of creations," of all Flemish and Dutch art.⁷ Yet in channelling his broader theme through the van Eyck brothers' and Hans Memling's intuitive realisms, Fromentin presents them as portals to a visionary new art of seeing for the late nineteenth-century viewer. That is, they become emblems of developed spiritual as much as national potency. Modelling an art of reflection, they evoke

"moral depths by means of their [painterly] surfaces" ("le fond moral avec les surfaces") as well as evolving descriptive observation, magnifying perception to the point where it becomes visionary.

Of significance here is Fromentin's art-critical evocation of Jan and Hubert van Eyck's and Memling's use of realism as artistically and socially regressive, or "primitive," in a sense borrowed from his mentor Taine,⁸ in aspects of their art's perceived "primitiveness" of conception, yet also as richly generative in sensory, imaginative and artistic terms. This involved a significant repositioning of the central arguments of Taine's 1869 *Philosophie de l'art dans les Pays-Bas*. In this study, based on his 1867 Sorbonne lectures, Taine had developed the central innovations broached in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1864), emphasizing the work of art as a product and distillation of its determinant historical race (understood as "culture"), moment and milieu: a race, moment and milieu, deducible from the work of art as a type of selective "evidence" or "document."⁹ But his *Philosophie de l'art dans les Pays-Bas* marked a critical expansion of these ideas, suggesting an artistic prototype and teleology for Taine's vision of contemporary scientific social advancement with its avatars in Dutch art and culture of the so-called Golden Age. Here, despite the innovations he ascribes to early Renaissance Netherlandish and Germanic art in its vigorous, new "living form" of art ("une forme vivante"), characterizing a progressive, emphasis on a "human" reality, Taine positions it as a springboard for an evolutionary genealogy of cultural progress.¹⁰ His is a narrative, therefore, that acknowledges the Van Eycks, Quentin Massys, Memling and the art of their contemporaries as emblematic of their period's "dual artistic character" ("le double caractère de l'art"). Yet, above all, he sees it as marked by its medievalism and socially regressive emblems of Christian ritual in "paintings for the altar or

oratory,"¹¹ to be displaced by the more humanistic, progressive vision expressed in Dutch seventeenth-century art, pre-eminently by Rembrandt's.¹² Fromentin traces a similar path of interests. However, it is precisely Taine's trajectory and its underpinning teleological drive towards rational explanation of the work of art as itself a rational, scientific expression of its history, that Fromentin's seeks overturn by his view of early Renaissance visual culture as sites for a mysterious "science" of inward evolution. In fact, his "primitives" provide stimuli for a reflective journey of perception and imagination which, for Fromentin, takes his readers to questions equally central to contemporary literary and visual scientific naturalisms and to their limitations. Indeed, they move readers to the possibilities of a deeper "seeing" which rejects discovery and scientific observation as mere encyclopaedic knowledge accumulation,¹³ to amplify the inward potential of the visible.

These ideas are evocatively explored in Fromentin's long description of "The Lamb of God," the central interior panel of the Van Eycks' *Ghent Altarpiece* (completed 1432, St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent), where this idea of heightened seeing codes an evolution of the process of descriptive observation itself. Even more striking is Fromentin's emphasis on how the panel's focus, the act of Redemption accomplished, is mediated "not by the art of the manuscript illuminator but in painting,"¹⁴ in other words, aesthetically, by its art. Reflection is stimulated and prolonged by an accumulation of visual and material detail, and temporal narrative devices that move the reader as if meditatively, in space and time (through the panel's iconographic details), as well as immersively into a visually intensified world. Description, however, becomes the basis for a greater mystery of exploration intimated in the panel's patterns and rhythms of natural and aesthetic motifs and effects, from the earthly bands of worshippers – "[from]

ancient bards to Ghent bourgeois; [with] abundant beards, faces a touch flattened, protruding lips, utterly lively expressions” – to the celestial sensations of the receding landscape with its “delicate colours” (“couleurs tenders”), fading “faintly tinged with blue marine” to the “iridescent pallor” of a poetically-charged dawn.¹⁵

It is here, as Fromentin suggests, not at its visual and symbolic centre, but at the panel’s blurred horizons, that “the spirit may there pause at infinity and dream there of infinity without divining the depths of the mystery it evokes.”¹⁶ But this limitless mystery is also intensified by Fromentin’s sensory and art-critical magnifications of it, bringing the Van Eycks’ much older, emblematic realism closer to the perceptual experience of *the fin-de-siècle* viewer’s, actively developing the beholder’s senses through art-poetical evocations of indeterminacy to create a spirituality of both sensation and *mood*. Mirrored in Fromentin’s unfolding critical evocation, his text thus creates an analogous, mobile “poetry of looking” (“une poétique du regard”) to borrow Barbara Wright’s term.¹⁷ But this is also a poetry of painting’s materiality as spiritual metaphor, taking readers to further corresponding textual and sensory journeys: from presence to inwardness, from external to internal “view,” from sensation to ineffable mood, much as the devices of fifteenth-century Netherlandish religious art encouraged viewers to travel metaphorically by episodic narrative and descriptive fragments of observable reality, from secular to sacred realms.¹⁸

Yet Fromentin also positions the van Eycks as transitional figures. Their art becomes a staging-post towards Hans Memling’s greater realism, seen as more spiritualized, intense, expressive and as visionary. Here, the focus shifts to Jan van Eyck’s Bruges *Virgin and Saint Donatian* (*The Madonna with Canon van der Paele* 1434–36: Bruges, Groeningemuseum). Once more, Fromentin’s concern

is to heighten and intensify a sense of the robustness of its “natural” effects, drawing out its mixture of “primitive” and opulent physicality: the Virgin, evoked as “ugly” (“laide”), her child, malformed – (“rachitique”), “a poor little malnourished type;”¹⁹ Saint George, characterized as strangely effeminate: “an androgynous type” (“une sorte d’androgyné”); the Donor with his hands “scored, all wrinkled” (“carrées, toutes rides”), his face, a “mask” its “rigid muscles, hardened, pitted by age” (“muscles réduits, durcis [...] crevassés par l’âge”), all knit together by “subtle values” (“valeurs subtiles”) and colour tonalities, correspondingly “deep, muted and rich” (“grave, sourd et riche”).²⁰ Yet if this precise realism borders on the visibly aberrant and strange, Fromentin’s innovation is a powerful and new association that sees van Eyck’s art of vision as less evolved, artistically and spiritually, than Memling’s more suggestive, synaesthetic art of feeling. Memling, Jan van Eyck’s neglected pupil, eclipsed by an almost cult following stimulated by his elder’s art from mid-nineteenth century onwards,²¹ is thereby resituated and *re-imagined* not, as for Taine, emblematic of an inferior and atavistic stage of art and social development, but as a “primitive” in a more expanded, illuminating sense. His is now linked with a complexly mysterious art, more spiritually attuned to the nervous sensitivities and psychological inwardness identified by Paul Bourget as defining the signal modernity of the late nineteenth-century beholder/reader’s experience.²²

The final section of “Belgique” teases out and develops this shift in emphasis. Indeed, Fromentin’s close-up on Memling’s *Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine* (c. 1479, Bruges, Hôpital St-Jean) forms a mirroring pendant to van Eyck’s Bruges Virgin, heightening qualities that, in contrast to van Eyck’s, are evoked as strange, bizarre and unearthly. St Catherine anticipates an almost proto-Symbolist over-refinement. Her face is “child-like and girlish” (“enfantin

et feminine”), her hands “full and long, tapering and transparent”; the seated Saint Barbara presents a similarly unearthly and attenuated grace with her “high, narrow neck” (“nuque haute et lisse”), her lips, “sealed and mystical” (“serrées et mystiques”).²³ Paradoxically, however, it is in these seemingly “primitive” visual languages, that Fromentin finds expressed an art closer to its medieval “origins.” It is an art highly attuned to its materials and manual processes; an art of “luxury and the beauty of craft” characterized by a rich but concise expressivity of means that seems to develop in intensity before its perceived decline into imitation and formula.²⁴

But even more significant for this argument are the ways in which Fromentin’s descriptive evocations again suggest links between these strange and “spiritualized” expressions of realism, new languages of art and a corresponding evolution in mid-nineteenth-century sensory and perceptual faculties. Textual magnifications (bordering on excess) of unusual sensory effects beginning in observation, thus become vehicles to transcend descriptive mapping, amplifying perception and illuminating the unseen. Fromentin’s art-critical language develops this idea, bringing Memling the artist and, more potently, his art’s mystery out of the shadows. Loaded with lexical evocations of sound, sight and touch that signify intense insight, these in fact, invert what Philippe Hamon calls naturalism’s “milieux transparent” – descriptive effects that render *visible*,²⁵ instead pushing the reader’s acquisition of “savoir” (description’s principal function) to intuiting the “unreadable” (“illisible”). There is, for example, Memling’s “extreme resonance of colour” and “passages of half-tones and vaporous half-tints not known even to Van Eyck.”²⁶ In sum, what matters for Fromentin, is that such effects, in which colour-play (tonal, as tint, contrast and intensity) has become a principal agency of insight, are markers not of primitive, but of

evolved vision and heightened capacity to grasp this, of a greater transfigured realism “which strikes one here *like a light*.”²⁷ It is an “illumination” in which Fromentin’s poetization of Memling’s visual and material mysteries and the beholder’s engagement in this process, becomes central to the transfigured “reality” it connotes: a process, inviting a “seeing” with the spirit and not just as Van Eyck does with the eye. Memling’s art thus becomes emblematic of a more significant journey, via perception and the museum, of a quasi-spiritual recovery and rediscovery. It metaphorizes what Wright calls “a privileged space” (“un lieu privilégié”), a Baudelairean “spiritual retreat” (“mansuétude surnaturelle”) in which making art, including poetically, and the sacred “act” may coalesce.²⁸ Even more than this: it figures a space which Fromentin actively identifies with an evolving state of subjectivity, reflection and *potential* creation, like the museums that house Memling’s paintings, as “a sort of virgin circumstance”²⁹ of vision, language and art.

This final point is arguably Fromentin’s striking innovation. On one hand, Memling’s art is projected as an alternative counter-cultural source for a modern mysticism. Yet on the other, this mysticism is located less as an ambition for late nineteenth-century nation-building or a new faith-based “enlightenment,” but as suggestively correspondent with a contemporary text and perspectives, seemingly distant from Fromentin’s. That is, Mallarmé’s 1876 defence of Manet’s *plein-air* painting as a touchstone for a new artistic vision and numinous ideology of it, that discovers mystery, spiritual qualities – “une sorcellerie,” also suggestively political – in the “science” as well as artistry of his art.³⁰ Such subtleties in Fromentin’s approach, his suggestion, via Memling’s and his other “primitives” art, of their “science” of the visible as also evocative of mysterious intuition, did not go unacknowledged by his readers. Indeed these innovations in Fromentin’s art writings were highlighted

in an important 1881 reassessment of their “delicate art of complex analysis,”³¹ challenging views, notably Zola’s, that placed them as “reactionary” and which instead linked them to a new, perception-driven and inward-looking modern, literary naturalism, in which the Goncourts’ “nervous realism” and Huysmans’s early writings are seen as determinant exemplars.

Huysmans’s “spiritual” matter: science, artifice and “les primitifs”

From an early point in his art criticism, Huysmans, like Fromentin, was similarly preoccupied with an emerging fascination with a more spiritually-directed art of late Medieval and early Renaissance so-called “primitives” and to the potential of its temporally and aesthetically “regressive,” yet spiritualized aspects. But his attitude to this interest, unlike Fromentin’s, was initially ambivalent, shown in his scepticism towards late-nineteenth-century Medieval and spiritual revivals with their consumerist trappings, *bibelots* and cultish mysticism.³² As he quipped late in life about a growing tide of “modern” saints and spiritualism: “The main difficulty is to distinguish between hysterical subjects and those filled with the spirit of divinity.”³³

A youthful attraction to early Northern (and Italian) Renaissance art is thus initially tempered by his distaste for its contamination by modern bourgeois fashions. His 1879 Salon review, for example, attributes to the Belgian Jan van Beers’s religious costume-dramas, a voguish realism imitating a “primitif” style – “It’s Van Eyck in hats [...] up-to-the-minute archaism” – while communicating nothing of its modernizing spirit.³⁴ Religious fakery inspires further bile about the recently-built Church of Nôtre-Dame de la Trinité as a shell without “croyants” for the bourgeois “church-

as-smoking-room” (“l’église-fumoir”), this “prayer-stool-cum-boudoir” (“ce prie-dieu Sopha”), little more than a fashionable backdrop for aspiring ladies taking their “lunchs mystiques.”³⁵ And sacred object cults, running themes in both his fiction and art criticism, is a recurrent obsession. We find it mercilessly satirized in the proliferating “relics” accompanying the pilgrims’ oblations at the start of *La Cathédrale* (1898), or in *Les Foules de Lourdes* (1903), in the opening account’s “explosion of knick-knackery of luxury goods”³⁶ at the holy Grotto; its phantasmagoria of ghostly religious *bric-à-brac*, substituting for mystic revelation, for “l’esprit divin.” But in Huysmans’s late art criticism, a developed interest in the art of the so-called “primitives,” elaborated in his 1904 evocation of Matthias Grünewald’s art, coupled with what Huysmans sees as the potency of “a realism of hidden regions” (“d’un réalisme avec dessous”)³⁷ – offered a way out of a spiritual darkness, both aesthetic and ideological.³⁸ The regressive “realist” of an earlier age becomes, as for Fromentin, but through more explicitly contemporary aesthetic and cultural routes, an emblem for a suggestive spirituality of art and being – one that resituates the “sacred” in the act of perception and ideas of its corporeal embodiment, as much as in spiritual subject-matter or in ways of capturing and communicating it.

Paradoxically, this is a process that begins not merely in revivalism, but as for Fromentin, is linked both with ideas of enhanced perception and a mysterious painterly materiality, stimulated by Huysmans’s initial interest in Impressionist modernity. Moreover, Huysmans’s view of Impressionism echoes ideas which Paul Bourget, in an important early article linking literary naturalism and visual Impressionism, situated not in “Impressionist” modern-life subjects, but in its treatment, foregrounding, as Bourget sees, by continuous nervous “exasperation,” a modern urgency of nerves in a focus on the potential of perception

to re-create the “real.”³⁹ This focus permeates Huysmans’s early 1880s responses to Impressionist art in ways that suggest his treatment of Impressionism in *L’Art moderne* (1883) as part of a trajectory of interests and approaches, not, as some scholars see them,⁴⁰ opposed to but anticipating the apparently anti-modern, Symbolist themes of *Certains* (1889), extending to his post-conversion *Trois primitifs* (1905).

In 1883, for example, Huysmans repeatedly reads Impressionist painting against the grain of its perceived objectivity and such narratives of its progressive modernity as Edmond Duranty’s.⁴¹ Instead, he stresses its heightened sensations of uncanny, unseen forces acting on nature, for example, turning Monet’s visions of modern railways into phantasmagorias, or seeing Pissarro’s hyper-real colour notations as alchemically-conjured landscapes, evoked as “melting to excess,” (“chauffées à l’outrance”).⁴² Fantastic “science” and exaggerated perception, here, work to extend the language of his art criticism. What is more, its painterly stimulus is more pointed than Fromentin’s in its tussles with a corporeal, political and ontological problem of naturalism’s mutating identities as an evolving discourse of late nineteenth-century science and art. Their intertwining becoming as much part of the critical dynamics of Huysmans’s engagement with Impressionism as related to the sources that inspire it. It is a process, indeed, carried much further in *Certains*, as manifest in heated descriptions of Cézanne’s “furnace-like” still-lives that again metamorphose nature into “a wild frenzy” (“un hourdage furieux”), of disintegrating matter, paint and colour.⁴³

But it is in *Trois primitifs*, and especially in Huysmans’s treatment of Grünewald’s art, that these ideas converge and develop further potency in the regressive, yet psychologically developed modernity of the “spiritualized”

naturalist artist. In its subject-matter, themes and aesthetic preoccupations, *Trois primitifs* seems far from the “modern-life” interests and their “decadent” reversals of Huysmans’s 1880s art-writings and fiction. Yet *Trois primitifs* does not so much reject contemporary literary or visual models of naturalism, nor Huysmans’s preoccupations with their scientific underpinnings, as reanimate it as a discourse charged with the potential both to suggest and *embody* the spiritual. The idea is central to Huysmans’s stress on Grünewald’s corporeal art he characterizes as “spiritual naturalism.” And it is elaborated forcefully in his long meditation on the expressive realism of Grünewald’s Colmar *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512–15; Musée d’Unterlinden, Colmar) that, for Huysmans, compels viewers artistically and mystically on a spiritual journey where no theologian can follow. Such interests also significantly build on earlier ones, reprising Huysmans’s travels in 1888 to discover German “primitifs”⁴⁴ and first encounter with Grünewald’s Cassel *Crucifixion* (1523–4, Karlsruhe: Kunsthalle). It is an encounter also yoked ontologically with the artificial thrust of his *Certains* articles, in which this growing interest in “primitif” artists converges with modern Impressionist art, science and their writing into Huysmans’s art-critical and literary concerns at this period to develop alternative models for a contemporary (Northern-focused) spiritual art.

In *Certains*, for example, Degas’s 1886 *Bathers* paintings incite in him powerful modern-Medieval transferences, between visions of their bathers’ strangely atrophied flesh, unearthly, almost putrescent beauty and what he calls “*the unseen*, so resonant of certain “primitifs.”⁴⁵ “Le Monstre” compares Redon’s *Tentation* lithographs (*La Tentation de Ste Antoine*, 1888, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago) to the hellish fantasies of both modern germ science and medieval bestiarities in a hybrid metaphor of darkness:

psychological, natural and aesthetic, as potent new sources of mystery in art. But, again, “les primitifs” and, in particular, Grünewald’s art, provide the stimuli for these developed science-artifice-spiritual analogies. Memorably reimagined in his novel *Là-Bas* (1891), in Durtal’s confrontation with the visceral spirituality of Grünewald’s Cassel Crucifixion, and its projection to Durtal’s time across the “chasms” of a lost world,⁴⁶ Huysmans finds his emblem, not of a revival, style or cliché of “the Middle-Ages rewound” (“le moyen âge raccordé”),⁴⁷ but of an active interference, an embodied, corporeal mysticism, as an occulted modernity in late nineteenth-century art and literature. Indeed, the need for emblems that might continue to answer to both imperatives yet revitalize and transform them, is central to Huysmans’s contrasting Flemish and Cologne school “pilgrimages” in *Trois primitifs*, highlighted with particular force in his detailed evocation of Grünewald’s “spiritual naturalism”: this discussion’s final focus.

Trois primitifs: regression and perception – towards a modern “spiritual” art

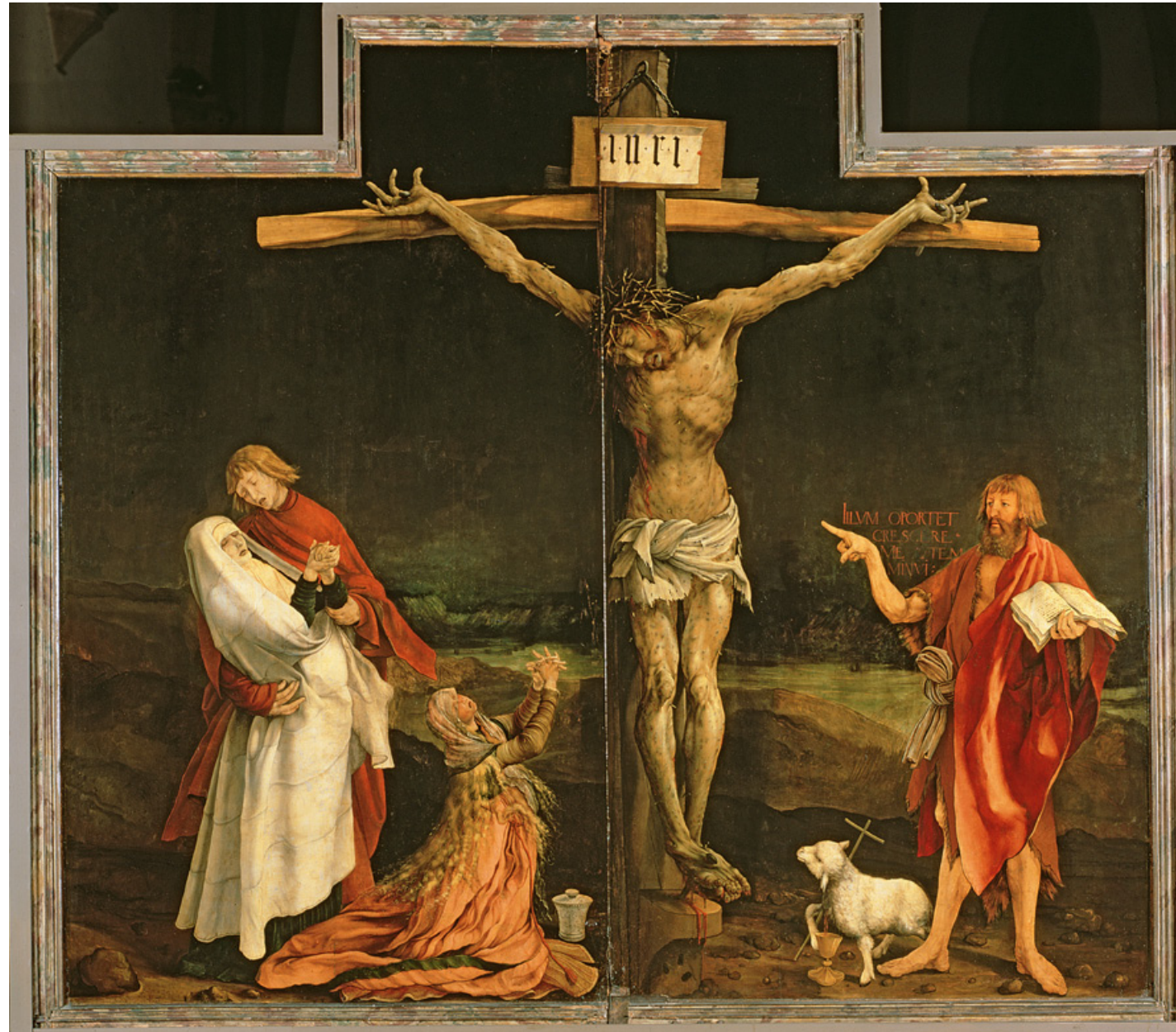
At its core is Huysmans’s developed treatment of his theme of the “regressive” modern artist. Indeed, the 1904 “Grünewald” article,⁴⁸ as the centre-piece of *Trois primitifs*, in an important sense, reprises – temporally and imaginatively – the final stages of the journey of *Les Maîtres d’Autrefois* to the aberrant but “spiritualized” realisms of Dutch and Flemish art. Like Fromentin’s “Memling,” it “pioneers” – retrieving from obscurity a new “primitive” modern, even though Fromentin’s remains an occulted presence in Huysmans’s text. It follows, too, other travels, art-historical and fictional, from Emile Verhaeren’s 1886 “Les Gothiques allemands” – the first treatment to identify a potential *fin-de-siècle* appeal in Grünewald’s intense colourism and “art farouche”⁴⁹ – to Durtal’s encounters

(in *Là-Bas*) with “primitive” artists (notably, again, Rogier van der Weyden, Metsys, Memling, the van Eycks), their “untranslatable” disturbances in image, mood and verbal evocations, acting as points of transference, “an exit from the senses,” between an unseen spirituality of past and present.⁵⁰ But Huysmans amplifies these sources in two ways that are of signal relevance here. First, is his stress on the abnormal intensity of Grünewald’s language of expressive realism – he does this through a heightened mediation of its sensational effects on its viewers – as a model for reanimating contemporary naturalism linked with his conception of the *primitifs*’ “absolute realism permeated by gushes of the spirit” (“réalisme absolue avec jets d’âme”).⁵¹ Second, is his communication of this idea in an expressive science and artistry of perception as spiritual, which in turn, figures a transformation and evolution in the viewer’s potential “spiritual” engagement with Grünewald’s art.

The journey begins, emblematically, like the final stages of Fromentin’s, in an apparently forgotten corner of art history. Yet Huysmans’s detailed response to Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altarpiece* turns his revival into another more illuminating exploration. That is, he sees in Grünewald’s expressive naturalism an art pushed to frontiers of realism and symbolism to a point of aesthetic and spiritual expansion – where art, materiality, subjective and spiritual realities converge.

Central to this idea is Huysmans’s stress on the perceptual and cognitive mystery of the viewer’s experience of the *Isenheim* polyptych, differing from contemporaries’

Matthias Grünewald (Mathis Nithart Gothart), *The Crucifixion*, from the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, c.1512–15, oil on panel, Musée d’Unterlinden, Colmar, France/ Bridgeman Images .



interest in Grünewald's art, by his approach to it as a dialogue. The Altarpiece's complicated structure, with its four layers of painted surfaces, unusually has, as its outside panel, the *Crucifixion*, depicted not as an event, but as a meditation on the most gruelling aspects of suffering. Huysmans's encounter with it fleshes out this aspect, emphasizing the *Crucifixion*'s sombre and livid realism, as materially, cognitively and even spiritually overwhelming. Yet the movement is also to recover what is aesthetically and spiritually modern and pertinent, especially from the human and material darkness of the "Crucifixion": a process Huysmans mirrors further on, in magnifying the plenitude of the brilliant colour and strange majesty of the *Resurrection* and final scenes of the Desert Saints within. His focus thus turns on the abnormal intensity seen as central to Grünewald's expressive plastic language, stressing, in a vocabulary remarkably similar to his 1889 treatment of Cézanne's "hourdage" ("frenzy"), its "typhoon of disintegrating art" ("typhon d'art déchainé"), "impression of overwhelming horror" ("impression de lamentable horreur"), making it difficult to take in, "it stuns you" ("il vous abasourdit"),⁵² evoking an unknown, that transcends a capacity to grasp it in language. What is more, the sense of being at the limits of narrative or art-critical possibility, creates a parallel dynamic of the alterity of the *Crucifixion*'s visual and material "typhoon" and the *Resurrection*'s answering "effusion of an almost palpable divinity" ("effusion de la divinité presque tangible") (figuring similar "violations" of body/language boundaries in *Les Foules de Lourdes*⁵³), which Huysmans builds through an abnormal intensity of perceptual encounter, that becomes a form of disperception as malady and *vision*. This approach, while not new to Huysmans's art-criticism, here acquires greater aesthetic and cognitive complexity. His evocation of Grünewald's crucified Christ as a collection of leaky and rotten body

parts, with his giant, disproportionate body, "livid and putrefying," "nails, blue with decomposition," "chest, striated with the stripes of martyrs,"⁵⁴ would seem almost comical if it were not so frightful. And this idea of perceptual revulsion bordering on the pathological⁵⁵ as key to grasping the intensity of Grünewald's "realism," is developed in Huysmans's amplified contrasts between the "brutal" Colmar (*Isenheim*) Christ and the more visually and theologically refined later Karlsruhe copy.

Yet, for Huysmans, it is also by its very limitations that the Colmar Christ, both "theological and primitive" ("théologique et barbare"), seems to push the boundaries of Grünewald's art to a new expressive level. Strikingly, this visual "barbarism" is again linked to something highly modern and evolved on the part of the viewer: to a perceptual, subjective intensity it invites. Indeed, Huysmans develops what become the Colmar Christ's generative discontinuities of colour, scale and sensory effects in a further series of contrasts between visual scale, Christ's exaggerated one; St. John's, "bald and sickly" ("glabre et minable"); Mary Magdalen's "ugly and dislocated" ("laide et disloquée"), contrasting with the Virgin's ("ethereal, fine and absolutely modern" ("frêle et fine, toute moderne"),⁵⁶ and their linking in an overarching dynamics of material, aesthetic and spiritual darkness and light.

These ideas are reprised most forcefully in the *Crucifixion*'s evocation of its subjects' passage through a state of material and figurative disintegration, from "a backdrop beginning in darkness,"⁵⁷ to aesthetic and spiritual re-composition. But here also, the stress on heightened perceptual registers, especially of colour sensation, that for Huysmans "fills the eye" with dark and radiance – "giving hue and tone, despite their sombre depths," lights up "Christ's vitreous skin," irradiates the Virgin's "astonishing whiteness"⁵⁸ – pushes a perceptual grasp of Grünewald's visceral, symbolic

realism to a point of abnormally intense cognition, to a point in other words, *where heightened cognition creates space for the spiritual*. Yet inasmuch as Huysmans suggests an inner absorption of the art-work through extended linguistic and imaginative "imitations" (*imitatio*) to induce a state of intense spiritual preparedness – advent, which in Medieval Christian mysticism, emerges as a pre-condition of faith,⁵⁹ Huysmans also intimates this as aesthetically and psychologically conditioned and contingent. Perhaps most striking, however, is that Huysmans repositions Grünewald's modernity in its very dissolution of hierarchies between body, sensation, art and mystery, in which boundaries of history and the present; perception and being are enlarged, become "spiritualized."

In this way, Huysmans's presentation of the Colmar polyptych, what he identifies as strikingly spiritual in Grünewald's art, transcends a focus on a "pseudo-spirituality" of subject, object or type, distancing his approach from Catholic spiritual revivals or, indeed, the virulent mysticism of such groups as Joséphin Péladan's "Rose+Croix," which he dismisses as "mysticism for schoolboys" ("mysticisme des pions").⁶⁰ It becomes, rather, a process analogous to the Symbolist critic Aurier's idea of "prolongation" as spiritualized poetic expansion.⁶¹ As his mirroring evocative diptych of the Colmar Resurrection panel shows, the sense of Christ's "blossoming and scintillating" transfiguration, heightened by its material and chromatic suggestiveness: "these Japanese fabrics which metamorphose [...] from one colour to another,"⁶² is seen, therefore, as much to do with a potential of perception and its capacity to recreate spiritual plenitude, as of subject-matter or its expression. Picking up on a Symbolist idea of form as a route to the ineffable, Huysmans situates the mysticism of Grünewald's *Resurrection as translated* by "the game of colours and lines" ("les simulacres des couleurs et des lignes")⁶³ that serve to pro-

long aesthetic reflection, taking viewers, as Huysmans avers, more deeply into spirituality than any theologian could. But significantly, these “Symbolist” elements of Grünewald’s art do not negate its naturalist visual and painterly effects as means of extending or “prolonging” its suggestive power. Rather, for Huysmans, Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altarpiece* reveals him as “a full-throated mystic” (“en pleine hallali mystique”⁶⁴): a process in which the viewer-as-mystic, is moreover implicated, compelling engagement as much with the material force and “barbarism” of Grünewald’s vision as with its spiritual message. As Huysmans affirms: “He [Grünewald] is at the same time, a naturalist and spiritualist, savage and civilized, frank and complicated.”⁶⁵

He is also modern, offering a visceral experience of art as a form of “primitive” reality that Huysmans now associates with a powerful racial vitality. Paralleling a rather unsettling connection Fromentin makes between Memling’s spiritually rarefied types and their “purification” by his art, this racial subtext points to a darker message in Huysmans’s “Grünewald,” explicit in its pendant “Frankfurt Notes,” in a stark vision of the “primitif” as a racially exclusive ideal.⁶⁶ In sum, what is striking here is that Grünewald’s presentation as a barbarian (“un barbare”), gestures less to an emblem of martyrdom with which Huysmans could identify, as some scholars argue,⁶⁷ but to something more mould-breaking. That is the re-positioning of the *fin-de-siècle* viewer as a “primitive,” whose perceptions are galvanized to a point of responsive tension and primal identification, strung, as it were, between the dark glass of the aesthetic and belief.

If Fromentin’s physical and emblematic pilgrimage in the closing pages of *Les Maîtres d’Autrefois* traces a neglected history of art to the possibility of a more spiritualized present one, in short, from the museum to the sanctified space, Huysmans’s visit to Colmar is also framed as a

journey. But it is one paradoxically that leads rather from art to the cloister, than from the cloister more deeply into art. Similarly, the example of Grünewald’s spiritual naturalism subsumes a more narrowly-focused 1890s Symbolist interest in suggestive or expressive languages of “form” as routes to the ineffable into an amplified and mysterious naturalism. It fuses science and subjectivity in the exemplary emblem of Grünewald’s regressive modernity, making this – and not Catholicism per se – portal to, and bearer of, spiritual and aesthetic insight in a new re-energized model of art, at once visceral and luminous, both dark and light, as “mystique,” “symboliste” and “barbare.”

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

- 1 Huysmans to Bourget (1883), in *Mélanges Pierre Lambert consacrés à Huysmans*, Pierre Cogny, et al. (Paris: Nizet, 1975), 35.
- 2 See Timothy Unwin's challenge to received ideas of Verne as a writer of "science fictions," arguing instead Verne's more complex mediations of "science," "art and illusion": *Jules Verne: Journeys in Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 7-10.
- 3 Notably in Fae Brauer and Barbara Larson, eds., *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms and Visual Culture* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press, 2009) and in relation to Redon's art,
- 4 Richard Griffiths's *The Reactionary Revolution: the Catholic Revival in French Literature, 1870-1914* (London: Constable, 1966) remains the main study in this field.
- 5 Eugène Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (1876), "Belgique I," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. G. Sagnès (Paris: Eds Gallimard, 1984), 571. (All citations are taken from this edition, hereafter abbreviated as LMA: OC).
- 6 "égarée sur les grandes routes du monde," LMA: OC, 572.
- 7 "ce premier flot d'inspirations," LMA: OC, 788.
- 8 Notably in relation to Taine's series of lectures at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, published as his *Philosophie de l'art dans les Pays-Bas* (1869) which Fromentin acknowledged as his main inspiration (Fromentin, Letter to Hortense Howland, 17 September 1875, Fromentin, *Correspondance*, ed. Barbara Wright, 2024-5) and his key themes of race, moment and milieu, developed in his narrative of "progress" from earlier "barbarisms" (including early Flemish and Dutch artists), to a vision of secular progressivism. Embodied in Dutch art of the Golden Age, pre-eminently by Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, Taine identifies in Rembrandt's art a synthesis of the "abstract" and "individual," as both an exemplary model of "naturalism" and of artistic and social evolution (*Philosophie de l'art dans les Pays-Bas*, 1866 and 1869, republ. *Philosophie de l'art*, 2 vols, 2, Paris: Hachette, 1904, 77): all citations hereafter are taken from this edition).
- 9 On his conception of the work of art as 'document' and vis-à-vis problems of the 'aesthetic', see Colin Evans, *Taine: Essai de biographie intérieure* (Paris: Nizet, 1975), 320-28.
- 10 Taine, "La Peinture dans les Pays-Bas," *Philosophie de l'art* (2), 15.
- 11 "tableaux d'autel ou d'oratoire," Taine, "La Peinture dans les Pays-Bas," 21.
- 12 For an overview of Taine's approach to Dutch and Flemish art, see T.H. Goetz, *Taine and the Fine Arts* (Madrid: Playor, 1973), 113-129; however, the important relationship between Taine and Fromentin on this subject remains unaddressed.
- 13 Fromentin "Manuscrit des Maîtres d'Autrefois" [*Ffos 473-477*: Amsterdam, July], OC, 1213-15.
- 14 "non pas en enlumineur de missel, mais en peintre," LMA: OC, 792.
- 15 "des bardes antiques jusqu'à des bourgeois de Gand; barbes épaisses, visages un peu camards, lèvres faisant la moue, physiologies toutes vivantes"; "faiblement teinté d'outremer"; "a blancheur nacré" LMA: OC, 792-3.
- 16 "l'esprit peut s'y arrêter à l'infini, y rêver à l'infini sans trouver le fond de ce qu'il exprime ou de ce qu'il évoque," LMA: OC, 793.
- 17 In this way, Wright argues, Fromentin's art criticism develops a "double vue," a suggestive interplay between painterly and poetic expression especially through mobility of perspective, movement and colour to engage the reader's 'personal involvement in a sketch which is always in a state of becoming'. Wright, 'La langue de la critique d'art dans *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* d'Eugène Fromentin', *Colloque Eugène Fromentin: Travaux et Mémoires de la Maison Descartes Amsterdam*, 1 (Lille: Université de Lille, 1979), 21.
- 18 On "mental pilgrimage" in the work of Jan van Eyck and Memling, see, C. Harbison, Jan van Eyck: *the Play of Realism* (London: Reaktion, 1991), esp. 186-7.
- 19 "un pauvre petit modèle mal nourri," LMA: OC, 794.
- 20 LMA: OC, 795.
- 21 On the issue of van Eyck's growing popularity and Memling's neglect (mainly in nineteenth-century British reception), see J. Graham, *Inventing Jan van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (London: Berg International, 2007), 7-8.
- 22 Especially in his widely-read 1881 essay on Baudelaire: see Paul Bourget, "Charles Baudelaire," *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1883), repr. *Paul Bourget: Essais de psychologie contemporaine, études littéraires*, ed. André Guyaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 3-18.
- 23 "pleine et longue, fuselée et nacré," LMA: OC, 797.
- 24 "luxe et la beauté du travail"; "avant de se corrompre," LMA: OC, 798-99; 798.
- 25 Philippe Hamon, "Qu'est-ce qu'une description?" *Poétique*, 12 (1972), 473.
- 26 "extrême résonance du coloris"; "passages des demi-teintes vaporeuses et fondues que Van Eyck n'avait pas connues [author's emphases]," LMA: OC, 800.
- 27 "qui éclate ici comme une lumière," LMA: OC, 801.
- 28 Barbara Wright, "La langue de la critique d'art dans *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* d'Eugène Fromentin" (1979), 30.
- 29 "une sorte de virginité de circonstance," LMA: OC, 803.
- 30 "a sorcery of art, a life which is neither that of the individual or of the senses, but the play of phenomena conjured by his science, and revealed to our astonished eyes in its perpetual transformations and its invisible actions, made visible" ("une sorcellerie de l'art, une vie qui n'est ni de l'individu ni des sens, mais de l'ordre des phénomènes conjurés par la science, et montrés a nos yeux étonnés avec ses métamorphoses perpétuelles et son invisible action, rendue visible"), Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet" [author's translation] trans. G. T. Robinson, *The Art Monthly Review* (no. 9, 30 September 1876): repr. (French translation) in *Mallarmé: écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), ed. Michel Draguet, 313.
- 31 Of Fromentin's "very supple and concise critical art [...] which with its means, its subtleties of analysis, has a fineness and a deliciousness" ("art très souple et très sûr chez le critique [...] cela avec des moyens, des complications d'analyse, une finesse et un délié"), Paul Souquet, "Eugène Fromentin," *La Nouvelle revue*, Vol. 8 (1881), 865-885 (883).
- 32 On medievalism, consumerism and "les primitifs," see for example, Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: the Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), especially, 37-60.
- 33 "La grande difficulté est de distinguer entre les sujets hystériques et ceux que remplit l'esprit divin," J.-K. Huysmans, "Saints modernes et miracles modernes," Interview with Frederick Lees (*The Humanitarian: a Monthly Review of Sociological Science*, February 1899), J.-K. Huysmans: Interviews, ed. Jean-Marie Seillan (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 265.
- 34 "c'est du Van Eyck toqué [...] de l'archaïsme chargé," "Salon de 1879," *Huysmans: Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. Jérôme Picon (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2008), 60-1 (all citations are taken from this edn: hereafter abbreviated as *Ecrits*.)

- 35 “Salon de 1879,” *Ecrits*, 100-1.
- 36 “explosion de la bimbeloterie de luxe,” Huysmans, *Les Foules de Lourdes* (Grenoble: Millon, 1993), 80.
- 37 Huysmans, Letter to Arij Prins (March 1886), *Lettres inédits à Arij Prins 1885-1907* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 36-7.
- 38 See Robert Baldick’s account, *The Life of J.-K. Huysmans* (Oxford: OUP, 1955), 264.
- 39 Paul Bourget, “Paradoxe sur la couleur” (first published in *Le Parlement*, 14 May 1881), repr. Bourget, *Etudes et portraits: portraits d’écrivains et notes d’esthétique* (1889-1906), edn déf. (Paris: Lemerre, 1919), 267-73. On this article, and Bourget’s conception of “nervous realism,” see Juliet Simpson, “Bourget, Laforgue and Impressionism’s Inside Story,” *French Studies*, Vol. LV, no. 4 (October 2001), 467-83.
- 40 See, for example, Alain Buisine, *Huysmans à Fleur du peau* (Artois: Artois Presses Universitaires, 2004), 13-15. Cf. M. Smeets, *Huysmans l’inchangé: Histoire d’une conversion* (Amsterdam, New York: Faux Titre, 2003) who argues a consistency between the naturalist/decadent type, dandy and ‘spiritual’ figure/artists in Huysmans’s late fiction (166-7).
- 41 Especially in his *La Nouvelle peinture* (1876) in which Duranty attempts to situate what he terms the ‘new painting’ in an objective context of interpretation, relating Impressionist innovations in techniques and subject matter to contemporary scientific and social advances.
- 42 Huysmans, “Exposition des Indépendants en 1881,” *Ecrits*, 205.
- 43 “Cézanne” (1889), *Ecrits*, 265.
- 44 From 31 July to 30 August 1888, visits included to Cologne, Lübeck, Berlin, Weimar, Erfurt, Gotha and Cassel: Huysmans’s reaction to his Cassel visit is intimated in a letter to Jules Destrée on his return from Germany (September 1888) noting that, ‘I have long studied the Primitifs in museums’ (“j’ai longuement étudiée les Primitifs dans les musées”) and further that, “I have some fragments in my books underway” (“j’ai des morceaux dans mes livres en vogue (sic)” – a reference to the description that would appear in *Là-Bas*: Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Jules Destrée* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 152.
- 45 “*l’invu si juste* des certains primitifs,” “Du Dilettantisme,” *Ecrits*, 255.
- 46 Huysmans, *Là-Bas* (1891), préf. Yves Hersant (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1985): see esp. 33-4.
- 47 Denouncing Medieval pastiche in the period’s decorative art and architectural innovations (“Le Musée des Arts Décoratifs,” 1889), *Ecrits*, 341.
- 48 Huysmans, “Les Grünewald du Musée de Colmar,” *Le Mois littéraire et pittoresque*, 63 (March 1904), 282-300; republished with minor alterations, *Trois primitifs* (Messein, 1905), *Ecrits*, 299-415.
- 49 Emile Verhaeren, “En voyage: Les Gothiques allemandes,” *L’Art moderne* (15 August 1886), republished in part, *La Vogue*, 2 (27 September – 4 October 1886); also important in this respect, is Tédodor de Wyzéwa’s treatment of Cologne School artists (although excluding Grünewald): “Les Peintres primitifs de l’Allemagne,” *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 92 (15 April 1889), 856-883.
- 50 “une échappée hors des sens,” Huysmans, *Là-Bas* (1985), 32.
- 51 Huysmans, Letter to Destrée, 12 December 1890, *Lettres inédites à Jules Destrée* (1967), 173-4.
- 52 “Les Grünewald du musée du Colmar,” *Ecrits*, 391-2.
- 53 On this and the idea of Huysmans’s language as “suffering,” see Robert Ziegler, *The Mirror of Divinity: The World and Creation in J.-K. Huysmans* (Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2004), 331-338.
- 54 “livide et vernissé”; “les ongles devenus bleus pourrissent”; “la poitrine [...] rayée par le grill des cotés,” “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” *Ecrits*, 392.
- 55 At this point, Huysmans reinforces his suggestive perceptual play with sensations of malady and spirituality in referencing comparisons between the Crucifixion’s revolting spectacle of putrefaction and cases described in Jean-Martit Charcot’s and Paul Richer’s “Les Morts,” *Les Difformes et les maladies dans l’art* (Paris: Lecrosnier et Babé, 1889), 130 (*Ecrits*, 405).
- 56 “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” *Ecrits*, 393.
- 57 “un fond, commençant de nuit,” “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” *Ecrits*, 394.
- 58 “les tons malgré tout sombre du fond”; “les chairs vitreuses du Christ”; “éclatante blancheur,” “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” 394.
- 59 Notably in the writings of the fourteenth-century Flemish mystic, Jan van Ruysbroeck (d. 1381) in *The Spiritual Espousals* (c.1340: transl. Eric Colledge, London: Faber and Faber, 1952; repr. 1983) in its proposition of a three-part journey from the active to the inward/contemplative state: the inspiration for the fifteenth-century *devotio moderna* developed in writings attributed to Thomas à Kempis (*Imitatio Christi*) and later, of particular interest for Maeterlinck and his *fin-de-siècle* mystic contemporary, Ernest Hello: see his *Jan van Ruysbroeck: Oeuvres choisis* (Paris: Perrin, 1902).
- 60 Huysmans: Interview with Bernard Guinaudeau, *La Justice* (2 April 1892), in *J.-K. Huysmans: Interviews*, (2002), 121.
- 61 Indeed, Albert Aurier refers to this idea of Symbolist ‘translation’ (describing his art-critical method) as “un prolongement spirituel,” “Henry de Groux,” *Le Mercure de France*, 3 (October 1897), in *Albert Aurier: textes critiques 1889-1892* (Paris: Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1995), 79.
- 62 “ces tissus japonais, qui se transforment [...] d’une couleur en une autre,” “Les Grünewald du Musée de Colmar,” *Ecrits*, 398.
- 63 “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” 398.
- 64 “nous sommes avec lui en pleine hallali mystique,” “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” 397
- 65 “Il est à la fois, naturaliste et spiritualiste, sauvage et civilisé, franc et retors,” “Les Grünewald du musée de Colmar,” 412
- 66 Principally against what he refers to as “contamination” by modern Jewish materialism: “Francfort-sur-le-Main, Notes,” *Trois primitifs* (1905), *Ecrits*, this idea: 434.
- 67 See Alain Buisine on Huysmans’s response to Grünewald as an act of spiritual identification (*La Fleur à peau*, 2004), 14. Cf. Marc Smeets on its “Baudelaireanism” (*Huysmans l’inchangé*, 2003), 142-47.

In Search of the “Chimerical” Émile Zola: Le Rêve illustrated by Carlos Schwabe

The nineteenth century was the golden age of the modern illustrated novel and Émile Zola an author in perfect tune with his time. Having started off his career at the publishing house Hachette, where he had quickly risen to head of the publicity department, Zola was well aware of the impact of images accompanying a text. In addition, his founding friendship with Cézanne back in Aix and his Parisian activity as a fearless young art critic testify of a writer deeply interested in the visual arts and to whom painting and literature were involved in much the same combat. In 1867, the hungry young Zola presented the editor Lacroix with a project concerning an illustrated edition of his debut *Contes à Ninon* with images by a friend, Edouard Manet, the scandalous painter of the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* that had shocked visitors to the Salon des Refusés in 1863.¹ Despite the commercial arguments put forward by Zola, Lacroix turned down the proposal and the project was never realized. Other illustrators, however, would accompany the long career of Zola, where illustrations played a major role in the commercial success of a book.²

Far from a Flaubert who refused to see his texts illustrated, Zola would encourage publishers to accompany his novels with etchings and lithographs by the best illustrators

in vogue: Castelli signed the haunted images of *Thérèse Raquin* as the novel appeared in volume in 1877, and among the artists requested for the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle we find names like Balzac's Bertall, André Gill, and Georges Bellenger, but also Pierre August Renoir, who contributed a splendid drawing to the illustrated edition of *L'Assommoir*, published by Charpentier in 1878.³ *Le Rêve*, the sixteenth of the twenty volumes that constitute the long *Rougon-Macquart* series, was first published in 1888 in *La Revue illustrée* with images by Georges Jeannot (fig. 1). Another artist, however, was solicited as the text was to be published in volume some years later: Carlos Schwabe, a Swiss symbolist living in Paris. Whereas Jeannot's images had presented no surprise to readers familiar with the aesthetics of Zola's illustrated novels, Schwabe's were bound to startle.

Still an unknown artist at the time he received the command for *Le Rêve*, Carlos Schwabe went from anonymity to fame almost overnight at the opening of the first Salon de la Rose-Croix in 1892 at the Durand-Ruel Gallery.⁴ The show was the work of the Sâr Péladan, and Schwabe had signed its much-acclaimed poster. Head of the idealist movement, Joséphin Péladan was a writer and the founder of the mystic Order of the Rose-Croix. His Salon attracted a huge crowd and he promoted symbolist artists and writers of his choice.



1 Georges Jeannot, *Le Rêve*, 1888.

Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Péladan was a dogmatic anti-modernist, praising the esoteric, mystic, and sacred dimensions of life and calling for a return to myth, legend, and religion. Here, every aspect of vulgar realism and naturalistic art was banned. So, if among Zola's readership anyone was surprised in 1893 to discover the in-volume edition of *Le Rêve*, it was legitimate: Émile Zola illustrated by a symbolist?

Influenced by humanist thinkers such as Fourier, Schwabe was an artist carried by a strong social awareness and idealism. In this essay I will contend that Zola found in Schwabe a highly sensitive interpreter, whose images capture founding dynamics of the text, most notably the role of figural thought. Schwabe's illustrations will thus give the impetus to a quest for what I here call the "chimerical" Zola. I borrow the term from the final Rougon-Macquart novel *Le Docteur Pascal*, where it describes the mystic pole within the intelligent young Clotilde, her attraction to dream and fantasy. As scholars have timely demonstrated, Zola was himself torn between a rational and a mystic stance;⁵ the idealist sensibility is a constant in his work, from the early romantic years all the way up to the last, utopist novels *Trois Villes* and *Les Quatre Évangiles*, and recent readings of *Le Rêve* have shown to what degree its idealism resonates with these works.⁶ Scholarship has systematically stressed the novel's negative outcome, however, and insisted on the failure of Angélique's "dream" for a better world. In my search for the *chimerical* Zola, I want to reverse the perspective and instead bring attention to the way Zola suggests what an explosive potential lies in the works of the imagination. I thus propose to read *Le Rêve* as a subtle reflection on the "miracle of art": as we shall see, Angélique's faculty of imagination is associated with claims of social change and justice and this mystic élan, in concert with the motif of metamorphosis that we shall see varied throughout the novel in connection to artworks, indicates

that *Le Rêve* voices a stronger faith in the subversive forces of art and literature than has been argued.

The artistic encounter in 1893 between Zola's *Le Rêve* and the symbolist Carlos Schwabe was unexpected, not the least to all those who knew Zola as an outspoken art critic. This dimension of his work is obviously of interest to us, in particular Zola's last article published in 1896 where he addressed the symbolist school in very ambivalent terms.

The art critic in 1866 and in 1896 – the criterion of originality

Since 1866 Zola had made himself a name as the most ardent defender of the impressionist avant-garde and of Manet, whom he had met at the Café Guerbois and immediately identified as the leader of a new naturalistic school.⁷ The sensuousness of the realist paintings representing scenes from everyday life, landscapes, and banal subjects of popular modern city life had resonated with Zola's own literary project. When the symbolist aesthetics emerged in the 1880s, it was widely seen as a reaction against realism for it put its emphasis on the opposite pole, the immaterial world of Ideas.⁸

In his very last piece of art criticism, the account of the Salons of 1896 that hit the presses of the *Figaro* on May 2, Zola addressed the symbolist "fashion."⁹ The article is more complex in its critique than it first may seem and it highlights a constant in Zola's definition of the artist that is worth reminding of here, namely the criterion of originality. Zola conceded that the idealist school is a rightful reaction, one that should allow a new generation of painters and writers to find their voices and seek out their specificity after the prevailing schools of naturalism and realism.¹⁰ He, who swore only by *realism, truth, nature, and life*, even

took the time to point out what every visitor to his house in Médan can still observe today, namely his affection for medieval embroidery and statuettes, gothic and renaissance aesthetics in craft and design, including stained-glass windows.¹¹ But the art critic in him was devastated by the lack of originality in the paintings filling the walls of the Salon. Whereas Puvis de Chavannes was an exceptional artist in every sense of the word “who knows and does what he wants,” the exhibition presented petty followers of the master, to Zola’s mind.¹² These copyists indulged in “a lamentable excess of mysticism,” their “unsexed virgins with neither breasts nor hips” struck Zola as a “challenge to nature, [a] hatred for the flesh and the sun.”¹³ Puvis’s tall figures “may not live in the realm of our every day lives, they no less have a life of their own, logical and complete, subject to laws determined by the artist”: “Nothing is of greater strength or health than his simplified tall figures.”¹⁴ Zola admitted a sincere admiration for the precursor but was appalled by those he considered to be his imitators.

The verdict of absence of originality was valid also for the second tendency dominating the 1896 Salons, namely the school of “plein air”¹⁵ – a judgment that has given critics reason to say somewhat hastily that the aging Zola had abandoned the painters he had so long defended.¹⁶ Zola did not hide his dismay. Now that impressionism was a buzzword, everybody adhered to the aesthetics of light and color: “They are all Manet then, all Monet, all Pissarro!”¹⁷ Wherever Zola turned his eyes he saw but pale copyists of masters! These impressionist paintings were no less denaturalized, “bloodless” and artificial than the works adhering to the idealist “fashion” where “faith is missing.”¹⁸

To Zola, who understood the artwork as “a corner of creation seen through a temperament,” nothing was worse than lack of originality: for an artist to earn his admiration the work must break new ground.¹⁹ Did he then

credit Schwabe with some originality in choosing him as the surprising illustrator of the in-volume edition of *Le Rêve*? Indeed it seems so, for in the only letter in Zola’s correspondence with his publisher Flammarion where the painter is mentioned, Zola speaks of Schwabe in precisely these terms: “I am sure this artist will give us a very artistic and original work.”²⁰ Zola always emphasized the role of the artist’s personality and subjectivity in the process of artistic creation, and this despite the rigid scientific claims of his theoretical writings. The famous ‘theory of the screen,’ formulated in a letter to Antony Valabrègue, dated August 18 1864, defines his preferred variety of the “écran réaliste” as a screen that “lies just enough to make me feel a man in the image of creation.”²¹ In some sense then Zola’s credo was in tune with the Symbolist aesthetics that stressed subjective interpretation as a key instrument in apprehending and representing the world. Zola could easily side, too, with the Symbolists concerning the importance of sensibility. Reason is not the only epistemological faculty! However, Zola’s sensibility would always stay anchored in the material world: in the senses and the body, in an all-dominating sensualism. If he too was drawn to *ideas* and certainly did not mind being called an idealist,²² he stayed forever puzzled by an idealism which turned its back on the real world and on contemporary social conditions.²³

Zola, we should remember, had started out deeply influenced by the romantic school. During his childhood and adolescence, Romanticism was the founding aesthetics for both him and Cézanne.²⁴ As a young boy, he admired the works of painters such as Greuze and Ary Scheffer, and was carried away by poets such as Musset and Victor Hugo, or the *Paul et Virginie* of Bernadin de Saint-Pierre. In the novel *L’Œuvre* from 1886, Zola had his alter ego, the writer Sandoz, state what many a reader of *Les Rougon-Macquart* intuitively senses:

Yes, our generation has been soaked in romanticism, and we have remained impregnated with it. It is in vain that we wash ourselves and take baths of reality, the stain is obstinate, and all the scrubbing in the world won’t take it away.²⁵ When in 1893 Zola ended his vast *Rougon-Macquart* cycle with the novel *Le Docteur Pascal*, he let the sensible and intelligent Clotilde recognize a founding duality in herself: she is equally drawn to the “real” or “exact” *and* to the “chimerical,” equally torn between the scientific *and* the mystic. In much the same way, all Zola’s writing is built on the constant tension between dry fact and fantastic fiction, strict documentation and boundless imagination. *Le Rêve* is the culminating moment of the chimerical Zola in *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

Le Rêve within the Rougon-Macquart cycle

When Zola began the monumental cycle *Les Rougon-Macquart* in 1870, he set out to write the natural and social history of a family during the Second Empire, the reign of Napoleon the Third that had just come to an end. *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac’s fresco of French society during the Restoration, was of course the undisputed model for Zola. Zola wanted to do the same, but painting his own time, using his own means, his own obsessions. In planning the 20 novels of the cycle Zola undertook to show how man is determined by heredity and environment, following the ideas of Taine in particular. He decided upon five “worlds” which would serve as frameworks for his naturalistic description of the different members of the Rougon-Macquart with their specific physiological properties. Characters like the unforgettable Gervaise and her lover Auguste Lantier in

L'Assommoir belong to the world of the working-class or People; a second world is that of merchants, les *Commerçants*, and in a third group of texts Zola mocks the Bourgeoisie; in a fourth, he considers the world of decision makers and politicians, *le grand monde*. A fifth world, finally, is set apart from the others. In this “monde à part,” representatives of professions as diverse as the prostitute, the murderer, the priest, and the artist are brought together.²⁶ It is in this fifth framework that we find the characters of *Le Rêve*.

Le Rêve is, as the title announces, not quite in Zola's ordinary naturalistic vein. For here we meet with angels and ectoplasmic apparitions; phantoms fill the air and we hear of miracles and saints. All this due to yet another Rougon-Macquart: Angélique, the young orphan girl early abandoned by her mother Sidonie Rougon, a greedy procuress and scrupulous business woman living in the popular neighborhoods of Paris.²⁷

The novel opens on Christmas Day morning in 1860, as the nine-year-old Angélique is found freezing in front of the Romanesque-Gothic cathedral in the small town of Beaumont in northern France. She is taken in and ultimately adopted by the town's ecclesiastical embroiderers living next door to the cathedral, the childless and goodhearted couple Hubert. Although their trade has been passed on for centuries in the family, Angélique soon outdistances both Hubert and Hubertine in skillfulness and artistry as she learns to embroider the rich robes of the Church's men.

Angélique thus quickly reveals the inherited artistic temperament she carries within, one that links her to, for instance, a tragic genius like Claude Lantier in *L'Œuvre* (1886). Passion, imagination, and folly are signature marks of these artist souls who, as we just saw, were placed in the same category as priests and prostitutes in Zola's planning of the cycle. If the latter are absent in *Le Rêve*, desire is no

less a significant theme and the presence of priests is prominent, bringing together the topics of sexuality, religion, and artistic creation in a story that most contemporary critics dismissed as a harmless conte bleu.²⁸

Zola had been known before to surprise his audience by making radical changes in tone and universe when passing from one novel to the next inside the *Rougon-Macquart* series. After *La Terre*, where scenes of rape, incest, and murder in the description of peasants and French rural life had caused regular outburst and scandal,²⁹ *Le Rêve* was unexpected and new coming from his pen with its medieval, mystic atmosphere of the cathedral town Beaumont. Yet, its principal themes were long among Zola's trademarks: adolescent love, the battle between the bodily senses and the spirit, art as mimetic illusion, and the critique of the Catholic Church exercising its moral and social coercion.³⁰ French society in 1888 was experiencing a strong revival of idealism, religion, and spirituality. The topics treated in *Le Rêve* were more than pertinent in the contemporary debate.

A Swiss symbolist in Paris

Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond's rich book devoted to Carlos Schwabe presents us with an idealist painter driven by a social and moral awareness inspired by the utopist theories of a Charles Fourier.³¹ Born as Emile Martin Charles Schwabe in Hamburg, Germany, the Swiss citizen Carlos Schwabe had only recently moved to Paris when Flammarion and Zola commissioned the illustrations for *Le Rêve* and Péladan solicited him for the poster of the Salon de la Rose-Croix. In Geneva he had been a student at the School of Industrial Arts. There he learned the trade of decorative painting by copying the ancient masters and by studying motifs like plants, animals, and flowers in the garden

of the School. Stylized flowers would soon count among Schwabe's favorite subjects, an Art Nouveau iconography we will see put to wonderful use in *Le Rêve*.

During the 1890s, Schwabe's work was characterized by the recurrence of hieratic, archaic, ideal angel figures inspired by his beloved first wife Maria and attesting to his interest in the Pre-Raphaelites and in old masters such as Dürer, Botticelli, and Mantegna. After *Le Rêve*, he would be sought for a number of select book illustration projects by bibliophile societies. When illustrating the poems of Baudelaire, his more sensual vein fully surfaces. Schwabe's personal vision of the artist as a close-to-Christ figure, sacrificing himself on the altar of art, strongly resonated with the dialectics of *Spleen et Idéal* emphasized by the poet. Works by Mallarmé, Catulle Mendès, and Maurice Maeterlinck complete the series of symbolist texts that Schwabe illustrated.³²

Symbolist book illustration, as opposed to that of the romantic and the realist periods, is characterized by the image seeking a certain autonomy from the text, following the principle of Baudelairean correspondences determined by complementarity rather than by redundancy.³³ One medium is thought to enrich the other, and the images may even be conceived of as a second, complementary piece of art rather than as faithful descriptions of the principal events and scenes.³⁴ Even though Schwabe took a strong painterly approach to the text, most of the images can be considered what Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine discusses as “citations” of the written text: that is, they can be brought back to Zola's choice of vocabulary or “repertoire.”³⁵ Critics disagree on whether Carlos Schwabe's interpretation of *Le Rêve* surprised Zola or not: Jumeau-Lafond argues the work upset the novelist and cites a contemporary witness who recounted having heard Zola say he found “things in the images he does not remember having put in his text;”³⁶

Danielle Chaperon, on the contrary, contends that Zola very conscientiously chose Schwabe in order that the novel's intrigue would be “transposed to the level of the illustrated book: a symbolist transplanted into a naturalistic novel immediately becomes a case of “mystic pathology,” a character of some sort” (my translation).³⁷ There is little information on Zola's reaction, but if he was indeed startled, the reason may well have been Schwabe's choice to take the text by the letter and *visualize the invisible*. Georges Jeannot's illustrations from 1888 had taken the opposite approach, only exceptionally representing Angélique's visions and thus dismissing them as folly and illusion. I want to argue that Zola found in Schwabe a congenial illustrator for his so profoundly contradictory and torn text, one that it is now time to explore in some detail.

My reading will take a twofold *intermedial* approach to *Le Rêve*: hence, the novel is analyzed both through the dialogue between Schwabe's images and Zola's writing, and through the correspondences between the verbal and the visual medium present in Zola's text. Scholars have often noted the insistence of the image in *Le Rêve* and have related it to Angélique's naïve understanding of the world, to the novel's unrealistic atmosphere and its share of legend.³⁸ I want to suggest it has further implications. The intermedial focus chosen here puts the image in the center of our attention; as we will see, it contributes to a dynamics where the “inanimate becomes animate,” art as creation is thematized, and important emphasis is given to figural thought and its – politically explosive – principle of *transfiguration*.

Announcing the colors: the novel's opening

Key words in the opening pages of Zola's *Le Rêve* immediately set the atmosphere and scenery. “Christmas Day” evokes the idea of a sacred gift arriving in the form of a child ‘being born’ to the childless Hubert couple; “Rue des Orfèvres” announces the role that fine old craftsmanship is to play; “the upper town” suggests there is a lower city and thus a vertical opposition of high and low; “the cathedral” finally, with the image of Saint Agnes represented on its central portal, puts religion and mysticism – and very much the visual arts – right into the center of the picture.

The ties between art works and the principal character Angélique are instantly established. Described as a “wavering shape”³⁹ in the snowstorm, the child is leaning against the cathedral wall, exhausted. Angélique has wandered for hours, running from violent foster parents, a tanner couple living in downtown Beaumont. Her ascension towards the cathedral suggests she instinctively seeks salvation by leaving the lower spheres for a higher transcendental world. To her mind she has reached “the end of the world,”⁴⁰ and she is physically at the end of her rope: “the only sign of life in her was the wispy steam of her breath.”⁴¹ As she clings to the cathedral wall trying to escape the storm, “sinking still deeper into these old stones,”⁴² it is as if her body were metamorphosing into the stone structure, becoming one with the building behind her.

Zola's incipit is packed with subtle suggestions of miracles and metamorphoses of flesh turning into stone and vice versa. The nine-year-old child of flesh and bone, with her mutative, “wavering shape,” is gently juxtaposed with the inanimate statue of Saint Agnes, carved in stone above her:



2 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893.
Angélique in the shape of a lily striving upwards.
Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



3 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. The chained lily.
Source: gallica.bnf.fr./Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Standing on her pillar, with her white palm and her white lamb, the statue of the virgin child had a white purity and a body as spotless as snow, in its stiff and icy immobility, such as to freeze around her the mystical transports of victorious virginity. And at her feet, the other figure – the poor miserable girl, white with snow too, frozen stiff and white so that she seemed to be turning to stone – was no longer distinguishable from the great virgins.⁴³

Sharing stiffness and whiteness, the stone virgin and the girl seem to leave their respective ontological status for a moment, exchanging in a mystic communion between art and human flesh that is to lay the foundations for *Le Rêve*.

Zola saw to it that nothing here is in a fixed state: everything seems floating, moving, in transition. Accordingly, the transitory mode is key throughout the novel: the cathedral's architecture goes from Romanesque to Gothic, depending on where one stands;⁴⁴ its ornaments can be evoked as both image and verb, depending on whether its saints and martyrs are sculptures or written chronicles in the *Golden Legend*; human beings have the correctness of marbles (Hubertine),⁴⁵ the posture of a stained-glass figure,⁴⁶ or simply the elegance of a lily⁴⁷ – everything in the novel *Le Rêve* is about to turn into something else.

The phrase “a wavering shape” that introduces Angélique to the readers is motivated by the snowy scenery in which she first appears, but also instantly points to a double indecisiveness in her nature. For one, it announces the uncertain ontological status that characterizes both her and the story she is part of, I will argue.⁴⁸ For another, it underscores her identity as a child bearing the curse of the Rougon-Maquart heredity. It is the “stain of the original sin” that Hubertine will in vain try to “wipe [...] away from her.”⁴⁹ Although Angélique is transposed into a new family context of goodness and honesty when adopted by the

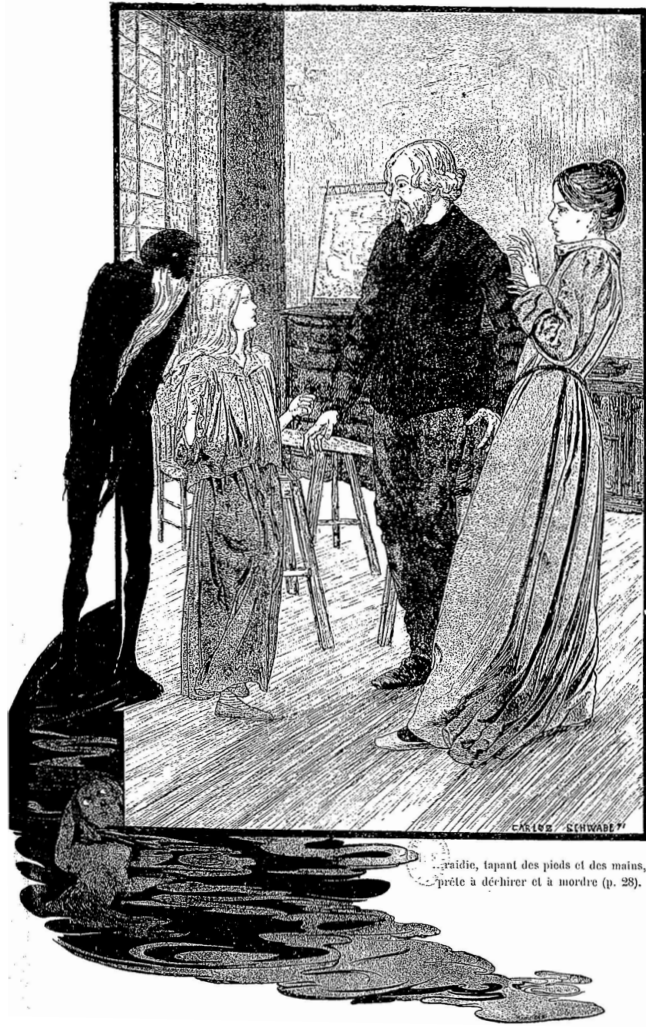
Huberts, she will remain characterized by the ambiguity between old heredity and new environment. She can metamorphose within a second, transforming from the delicate “lily” to a hissing diabolic “snake.”⁵⁰

Carlos Schwabe brilliantly renders this tension in her through some introductory images that show Angélique in the shape of a lily striving upwards (fig. 2) and growing out of a dark muddy, watery landscape from which she must be unchained before the monstrous creatures of heredity can stop emerging, tormenting her (fig. 3).⁵¹ In another illustration Schwabe insists on the clash between Angélique's biological origins and her new environment in the house of the embroiderers and makes the symbolic realm and the realistic realm co-exist within different sections of a same picture (fig. 4):

They could no longer recognize in her the little blonde lass with her violet-coloured eyes and her long neck with its lily-like grace. Her eyes had turned black in her vengeful face, and her sensual neck had swelled as the blood rose in her. Now that she was warm, stood erect, hissing like a snake they had picked up off the snow.⁵² [T]hey were frightened by this little monster, and retreated before her, alarmed at the raging devil within her. Who was she, then? Where did she come from? These foundlings are almost always the products of vice and crime.⁵³

Passion is the mark of Angélique and it must be stifled here in her new Beaumont environment. It is also a dynamic force of creation, constitutive of art and invention, as we are soon to find out.

Schwabe's reading is also immediately attentive to Zola's topological symbolism. His frontispiece (fig. 5) stresses the vertical opposition between upper and lower Beaumont, thus giving instant focus to a relation that Zola will explore both in terms of a sociocultural hierarchy and a celestial-



4 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. Angélique in the house of the embroiderers. Source: gallica.bnf.fr./Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

versus-terrestrial dimension. In placing the cathedral at the top of the hill, showing a heart at its center and giving it giant wings embracing the city, Schwabe responds to Zola's verbal description and foregrounding of the medieval church:

The cathedral explains everything, gave birth to everything and preserves everything. She is the mother, the queen, standing enormous amidst the huddled heap of low houses, which look like a brood sheltering from the cold beneath her wings of stone. The people who live here do so only for her and by her leave; industries work, and shops sell their good, only to nourish her, to clothe her, and to maintain her, together with her clergy.[...] She is a heart beating at the centre: every street is one of her veins, and the town draws breath only when she herself breathes.⁵⁴

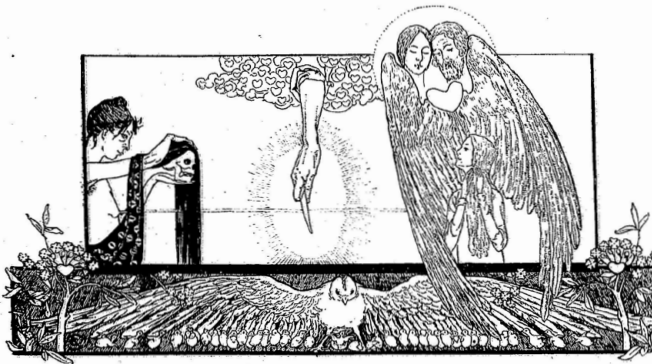
Zola's suggestive simile of the protective mother bird is reiterated by Schwabe in other two images opening and closing chapter two (fig. 6).

The cathedral is indeed a strong force of conservation: in the upper town called Beaumont-l'Église live some thousand souls whose lives circle entirely around the ancestral traditions of the church and the Bishop's palace, whereas in downtown Beaumont-la-ville, modern contemporary life is swarming with ten thousand inhabitants striving in prosperous bourgeois activities. Between the two spheres, there is no exchange and the only time Beaumont-la-ville is again mentioned is when the annual procession of the Miracle celebrating the statue of Saint Agnes descends into the streets of the modern city and spreads its antique gospel before the incredulous eyes of its citizens.

Beaumont-l'Église is thus completely set apart from the modern, secular world below. Here, where Angélique is to continue her life, a claustrophobic atmosphere reigns that is enhanced by Zola's choice to confine the events to



5 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. The frontispiece. Source: gallica.bnf.fr./Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



6 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893.

The protective mother bird, closing image of chapter 2.
Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

a setting made up only of the house with its workshop, the garden, the cathedral, and the castle ruins of the Hauteceœur fortress. Zolian scholarship has given due attention to this claustrophobic atmosphere and the novel's structure has been described as particularly "cloisonné".⁵⁵ Colette Becker has pointed out its affinity with the genre of the *conte*, where both space and time are unhistorical.⁵⁶ Time has stopped and is circular in the peaceful house of the Huberts, where the old craftsmanship of embroidery has been passed on through generations, respecting the same original tools and ancient designs. Here prevails a "hatred of change."⁵⁷ Science and knowledge have no business here, for Hubertine reckons there is no need to send Angélique to school and she charges herself with the girl's education: "she concurred with the tried and tested view that a woman knows quite enough when she can spell and has mastered the four rules of arithmetic."⁵⁸ Angélique's only reading is the medieval account of the lives of the saints, Jacques de

Voragine's the *Golden Legend*, whose marvels thrill her. The house is a breeding-ground for legend and myth. Time here is cyclic, figural, non linear. Angélique's lack of instruction, not the least her historical ignorance, will increase the impact on her imagination of the legends and the myths told and retold during the long hours in the workshop.

The theme of passion versus obedience

The claustrophobic composition of the setting returns in the composition of the characters and themes. Zola creates a cyclical structure of repetition and identity linking three couples and their love stories with one another, all marked by the controversy of passion versus obedience.⁵⁹ As is so often the case in Zolian texts touching on religion, *Le Rêve* will align a series of characters that, sooner or later, are forced to dominate their senses and desires in the name of duty and convention.

The destinies of three tragic couples are thus mystically entangled: that of the young lovers Angélique and Félicien; that of the childless embroiderers Hubert and Hubertine; and, finally, that of the parents of Félicien, the young lady of Hauteceœur who died "at the peak of [her] happiness"⁶⁰ and Félicien's grieving father, the Monseigneur Hauteceœur, who turned Bishop in despair at the death of his beloved wife. Reflexivity and similitude is the organizing principle among these characters⁶¹, who all mirror different aspects of each other and whose common feature it is to represent terrestrial passion. Hence Angélique can be said to chiasmatically repeat Hubertine's story, just as Félicien repeats that of his father the Bishop. In Beaumont-l'Église human passion is incompatible with duty and their love story is thus bound to run up against convention. The fiercest guardians of

convention are none other than Hubertine and the Bishop, for both of them hold a passionate nature to be responsible for the tragic events in their own lives and try desperately to control it through humility and obedience.

As a young girl, Hubertine herself – just like Angélique – had fallen in love outside her cast and, against her mother's will, had decided to marry the boy. The chasuble maker Hubert was a "lesser" man and before passing away the mother put a curse on the couple that, to this day, has remained childless. Hubertine believes that she and Hubert are punished for their disobedience and she repents as best she can: "Happiness for poor folk like us lies in humility and obedience" she declares, thus teaching Angélique the rules to live by.⁶² "To obey was to live. It was necessary to obey God, one's parents, one's superiors – a whole hierarchy of respect, outside of which existence would become disordered and corrupt."⁶³

Hubertine's worst nightmare, because it is also her deepest affinity, is the passion she saw in Angélique at her arrival, a passion she must not only dominate in herself but also in her beloved husband Hubert, who is always eager to endorse Angélique's excesses: "He was only too happy to soar aloft into cloudy heights with the girl."⁶⁴ Hubert, conscious of his passionate nature, takes heed of his wife's warnings and seeks to temper his excessive character as well as that of Angélique: "You hear, Angélique? You must listen to your mother. You and I are both a bit crazy, she's the only sensible one...."⁶⁵ His submissiveness to the principles of Hubertine is finally going to seal Angélique's destiny.

In much the same way, the bishop Monseigneur Hauteceœur has chosen to live in obedience and priestly seclusion since the loss of his beautiful wife after the birth of Félicien. In order not to be reminded of the woman whose memory so haunts him he even had his son sent away to be raised by another. Félicien, who is now twenty years of age,

has learned the craft of stained-glass painting and, when Angélique first lays eyes on him, is restoring a window in the Bishop's chapel depicting Saint George slaying the dragon. For the Bishop, who believed himself to be cured of his memories, it takes only a look into the face of Félicien to see the portrait of his beloved wife come alive and have the man in him wake again:

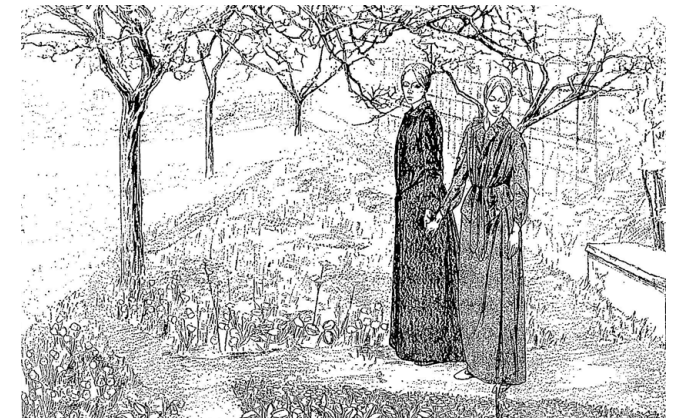
His increasing age, twenty years of prayers, God's descent into his soul: nothing had killed off his old self. And all it needed was for this child of his flesh, the flesh of the woman he had adored, to rise up before him, with laughter in his blue eyes, and his heart started beating fit to burst, filled with the belief that the dead woman had come back to life. He beat his breast, he sobbed in fits of ineffectual penitence, crying that the priesthood should be forbidden to anyone who has enjoyed a woman and contracted blood ties springing from her. [...] Ah, passion! – the evil beast that he longed to crush, so he might fall back into the extinguished peace of divine love!⁶⁶

Passion, Zola makes us understand, is a human condition that has no place in Beaumont-l'Église where the cathedral's "vast mass [...] blocked out the sky."⁶⁷ Following the laws of reflexivity that govern the text the Bishop's decision can only be one: "He would kill the passion in his son, just as he longed to kill it in himself."⁶⁸



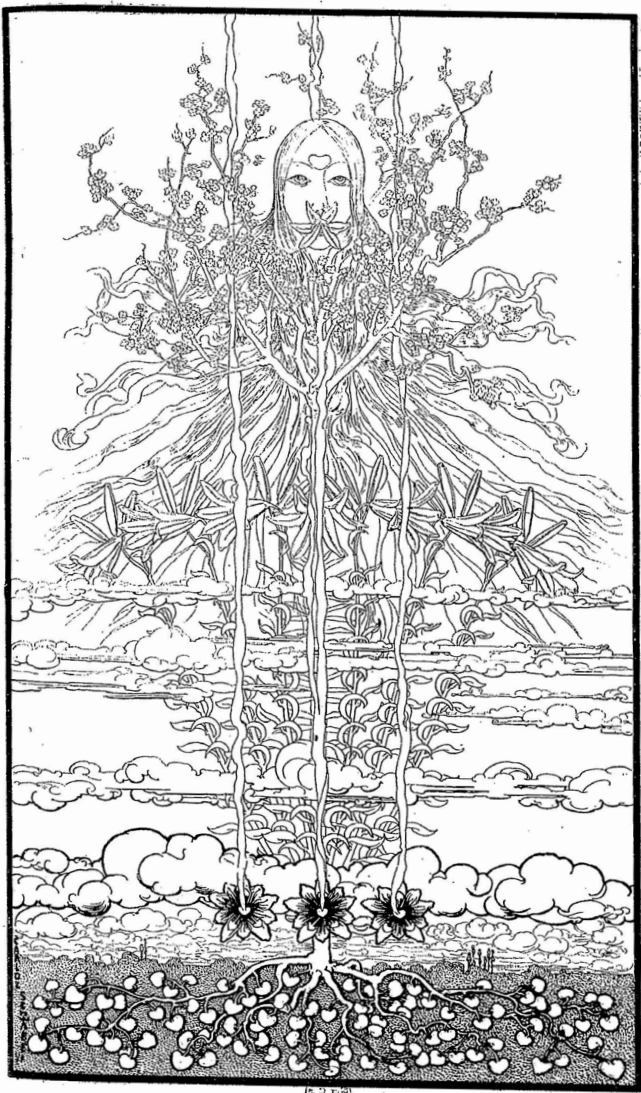
7 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. Angélique and Hubertine. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

8 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. Angélique and Hubertine. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



The figural composition of characters: from intratext to intertext

Not only do the young lovers Angélique and Félicien mimic aspects of the surrounding characters, they also draw much of their fictional identity from the lives of two saints as these are told in *The Golden Legend* and appear sculpted, embroidered, and painted in the rich Christian artworks of Beaumont.⁶⁹ Angélique is modeled on Saint Agnes, the child martyr whose sculpture she finds herself stranded under that Christmas Day morning when the story begins, while Félicien is likened either to Saint George fighting the Dragon – the very motif of the window he is restoring as they meet – or directly to the Christ and King. The dynamics of reflexivity, then, are not only *intratextually* but also *intertextually* anchored, or should we better say, *intermedially*? – for the types of Saint Agnes and Saint George are evoked through visual and verbal media alike in Zola's *Le Rêve*.



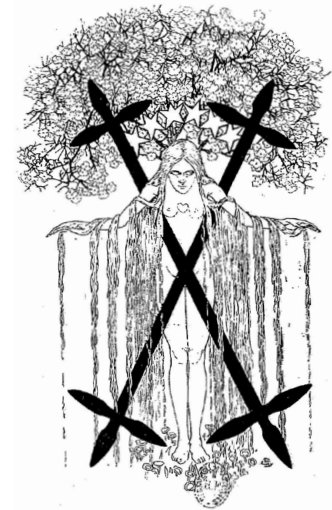
9 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. Angélique as Saint Agnes.
Source: gallica.bnf.fr./Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Whereas Georges Jeannot had drawn on the many descriptions of martyrs' ordeals for his illustrations, presenting images belonging to medieval iconography and clearly depicting a page from the *Golden Legend*,⁷⁰ Carlos Schwabe never resorted to the simple solution of reproducing any of the narratives or artworks described. In contrast, he seems to intuitively have captured their narrative function, for he is immediately sensitive to Zola's different uses of reflexivity as a compositional principle and he beautifully enhances it in his images. Schwabe thus underlines the *intratextual* analogies between characters by giving them a troubling physical resemblance, making the adoptive mother and her daughter twin-like (fig. 7) or even each other's perfect reflection (fig. 8). For the intertextual mirroring, in turn, referring to the lives of the saints, Schwabe insists on the sensuality of the female body and lets Angélique's long blond hair down. Saint Agnes is the child martyr represented through a tail of hair concealing her naked body, an attribute emphasized by Zola;⁷¹ the illustrations here lay bare the passionate, indeed erotic dimension of martyrdom when picturing Angélique as Saint Agnes surrounded by swelling vegetation and gorgeous nature (fig. 9 and 10). Schwabe's abundant flower motifs are constantly erotic, thus giving resonance to the characteristic Zolian association between the topos of the garden and sexuality, explored in *Le Rêve* as it was earlier in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*.

Schwabe thus alternates between two very different interpretations of Angélique: one where she looks like a younger version of the wise Hubertine, her hair neatly tucked away in a bun; and the other, where she takes on

the traits of the passionate Saint, with long open hair as an erotic attribute and where she recalls the girl who arrived as a foundling (cf. figure 4). Schwabe's visual typology is a brilliant counterpart to the typology operating in Zola's text and it underscores the weight of tradition, intratextual as well as intertextual. Just as he had initially stressed the transitory mode through images visualizing the principle of metamorphosis, his images now strengthen the claustrophobic feeling of cyclical life in Beaumont-l'Église instead, underpinning the impossibility of change and disruption.

Schwabe's subtle reading thus reveals two essential modes operating in the novel: a transitory mode implying transformation and change, and an opposite mode of circularity as arrested stasis. Both are equally linked to mimicry and repetition, something that suggests that, reading *Le Rêve*, we should perhaps not conceive of mimicry and repetition in terms of conservation alone if we want to grasp the full scope of the novel. I want to suggest that Schwabe's



10 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893. Angélique as Saint Agnes.
Source: gallica.bnf.fr./Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

double reading captures a fundamental structure of the text, namely its dependence on *figural thought*, characterized by its simultaneous emphasis on mimicry and change.

Jean-Louis Cabanès has timely insisted on the medieval anchorage of the novel's mimetic mirror composition, and shown that Zola was well acquainted with the works of his contemporaries Maury and Michelet on the analogical principle so typical for the medieval world.⁷² I want to pursue this line of thought by introducing Erich Auerbach's term *figura* into the discussion. In his account of figural thought, Auerbach emphasizes the possibility of "change within the same." Whereas Cabanès discussion confirms the strong focus on static immobility often put forward by critics in their reading of *Le Rêve*⁷³, Auerbach's argument on the *figura* allows us to shift focus and instead highlight the novel's other, transitory, mode.

The middle ages and figural thought

Le Rêve is a text drawing on the vogue for medievalism in 1888, a fashion that had been emphasized through the idealist movement, as we saw earlier in this essay. The reflexive, typological structure described above evokes the use of the *figura* in Christian theology, a tradition particularly strong in the European Middle Ages. Erich Auerbach, in his famous essay "Figura" (1938) and the seminal work *Mimesis* (1946), demonstrated the importance that types and exempla played for medieval Christians in their understanding of life. The word *figura* originally meant "plastic form" but soon encompassed "mold" (p. 13), "shape," "image," "appearance," "model," "copy," "statue," "portrait," "type."⁷⁴ Figural thought enabled the symbolic connection of two events or persons and invested them with a common meaning and essence:

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life.⁷⁵

This *figural prophecy or prefiguration* is essential in Christian theology for the understanding of the New Testament as a fulfillment of the Old Testament. Characters and events in the Old Testament are believed to foreshadow their corresponding fulfillments in the gospel: Adam is a *figura* or *type* in the Old Testament pre-figuring the arrival of the Christ in the New Testament, just as Noah's ark foreshadows the Church.⁷⁶

This kind of figural thinking dominated the conception of reality and history in medieval Europe and, according to Auerbach, stayed influential up until the eighteenth century. Its core is the understanding of a "new manifestation," a "changing aspect" "of the permanent."⁷⁷ The figural principle is thus a "creative, formative principle" implying "change amid the enduring essence," in other words allowing for "the shades of meaning between copy and archetype."⁷⁸

The reflexivity between Angélique and Hubertine, between Angélique and the Lady of Hauteceœur, or even between Angélique and Hubert, like that between Félicien and his father Monseigneur Hauteceœur – coupled with the intertextual resonances of the characters – point to a figural organization of the text. It seems to me that Zola poetically and playfully explores this Christian figural tradition with its obvious extensions into the visual arts (*figura* as plastic form originally belongs to the visual sphere). Statues, sculptures, embroideries, sketches, and images on stained-glass windows in *Le Rêve*, all participate in acts of metamorphosis, transubstantiation, and transfiguration, as the narrative

insists on the principles of analogy and likeness that governs the image or *figura*. Artworks coming alive in real persons and persons creating life through art are founding dynamics of the text.

As easily as a given *type* passes from inanimate to living matter in *Le Rêve*, as easily does it move from visual to verbal media and back again. Hence Saint Agnes turns up as a sculpture on the portal, as a wooden statue inside the church, as a written narrative in the Golden Legend, as an embroidered figure on the Bishop's miter designed by Félicien, and, of course, in Angélique herself, the girl of flesh and blood for whom she serves as the *figura*. The extreme porosity between ontological dimensions – that we already saw announced in the incipit – is illustrated in Félicien's drawing for the Bishop's miter where Saint Agnes becomes a spitting image of Angélique, a figure she will in turn embroider and render alive through her exceptional artistry:

But, as she stared fixedly at the saint, Angélique had just realized something that flooded her heart with joy.

Agnes looked just like her. As he had been drawing the old statue, Félicien must have been thinking of her.⁷⁹ Over and over in *Le Rêve*, works of art and human beings engage and exchange in the most intimate dialogues.

In figural thought we find the principle of *identity in essence* between copy and model that also governs the fundamental Christian doctrines of transubstantiation, transfiguration, and the Trinity.⁸⁰ The first claims that the host, in actual substance, is the flesh of Christ and that the wine is his blood; the second shows Jesus metamorphosed on the mountain as God in Man, as the eternal within the temporal, an event figurally understood to anticipate the Resurrection; the third, finally, presents the one God as three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

To transfigure is to change appearance, shape, aspect, body, form. *Le Rêve* announces the dynamics of metamorphosis as a guiding principle from its very opening pages and it keeps operating until the tragic end. Mystical transformations, where a copy is imbued with the essence of an archetype making it the fulfillment of a *figura*, seem to be poetically explored in *Le Rêve*, where Zola cannot but eventually also touch upon the theme of creation. Artistic creation is thus a given theme in the novel. It is time to let Angélique take us there.

Passion and creation – the marks of the artist’s soul

Angélique, like other characters before her in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, has the sensibility of an artist. As she learns the craft of embroidery, her artistic nature is immediately revealed. She is the most talented embroiderer and soon she has outdistanced the Huberts in artistry and creativity. Without any hesitation Zola credits her “hereditary flame.”⁸¹ It is Angélique’s passion, pride, and imagination, the traits inherited from the Rougon-Macquart family that Hubertine has in vain tried to eliminate from Angélique’s personality, that explain the enigma of her artistic talent:

Angélique had become an expert embroiderer, with a skill and a taste that made the Huberts marvel. To what they had taught her, she added her own *passion*, which gave *life* to the flowers, and faith to the symbols. Under her hands, the silk and the gold seemed to become *living things*; a mystical fervor filled the least decorations with *animation*, and she devoted herself fully to her task, with her *imagination* continually active, and her belief in the world of the *invisible* secure. Some of her embroideries had caused such a stir in the diocese of Beaumont that

one priest, an archaeologist in his spare time, and another who was very fond of paintings, had come to see her, and had fallen into raptures at the sight of her Virgins, which they compared to the naïve figures of the early masters. (my emphases)⁸²

Angélique brings alive any material she manipulates. She creates life – out of the void. Copying after models, crafting along the guidelines of tradition may be good enough for the Huberts, but not for her. Angélique’s needlework transgresses the rules, discards them in order to invent new forms of life out of the invisible. When she finishes a rose it is “so fresh that its fragrance seem[s] to waft up from the satin”:⁸³

She had a gift for drawing, a real miracle which, without any teacher, merely by virtue of her evening studies by lamplight, often made it possible for her to improve on her models, moving away from them to follow her own fantasy and create new things with the point of her needle. So it was that the Huberts [...] took something of a back seat in comparison with her, in spite of their seniority [...] being no more than her assistants.⁸⁴

After a long day in the workshop, Angélique returns to her room where she devours the *Golden Legend*, Jacques de Voragine’s medieval account of the lives of the saints. The illustrated book is her only reading: Angélique firmly believed in miracles. In her ignorance, she lived in the midst of marvels, the rising of the stars and the blossoming of the simple violets. It struck her as crazy to imagine the world as a piece of machinery, ruled by fixed laws.”⁸⁵ She gradually moves into a fantasy universe of miracles and chimera where “the invisible reigns, the only law is the whim of the supernatural.”⁸⁶ It is a phenomenal world where one hears “brazen statues laughing [...]: eucharistic hosts are changed into living flesh, images of Christ shed blood [...] a tree bows down in adoration before Jesus.”⁸⁷

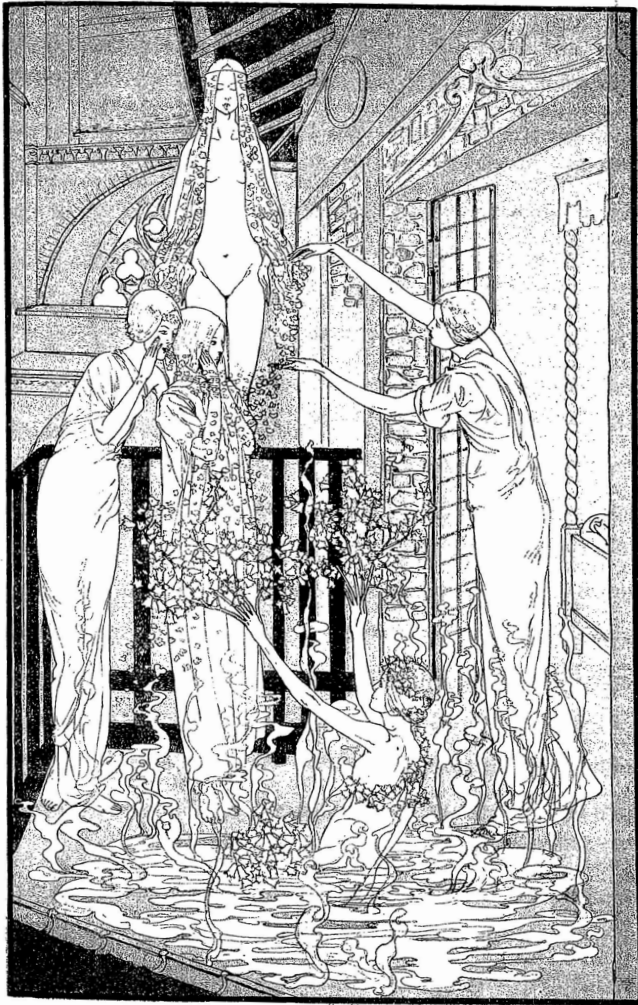
In this environment of myth and legend, the invisible is constantly present: “miracles seemed quite natural to her, and on the same plane as her everyday existence.”⁸⁸ Saint Agnes and the other child martyrs from Voragine’s *Legend* are just as real to her as are the figures and phantoms sprung out of the oral legends told in Beaumont about the ladies of Hauteceœur called “the Happy Dead,” women who like Félicien’s mother had all died young, “at the peak of their happiness.”⁸⁹ All these chimerical creatures that accompany Angélique have real existence in her phenomenal world and, accordingly, Carlos Schwabe represents them next to her (fig. 11).

Angélique has a strong imagination and fiction progressively takes over, fired by her growing into “womanhood”:⁹⁰ Miracles armed her for her struggle through life, just as grace had armed the martyrs. And she herself created miracles, all unbeknownst to her: they sprang into being from her imagination fired with fables, and the unconscious desires of her puberty; these miracles grew big with all of which she was unaware, summoned up by the mystery that dwelt in her and in the things around her.⁹¹ As Zola comments upon her reverie, he is uncompromising in his verdict on man’s relation to God:

Everything emerged from her to return to her; man created God to save man; there was only the dream. Sometimes, in amazement, she would touch her face, deeply troubled, doubting her own materiality. Was she not an appearance that would vanish away, after giving birth to an illusion?⁹²

Is everything we read but a hallucination? Should we maybe take the title *Le Rêve* literally? Zola is masterfully confusing us. And one wonders if it is not the better to have us understand the nature of literature and fiction itself.

In a final comment on its title, the novel ends “All is but a dream.”⁹³ In a capital scene Zola has had Angélique ask



11 Carlos Schwabe, *Le Rêve*, 1893.
 Angélique surrounded by imaginary creatures.
 Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

– she who is in some way a substitute for the writer since she incarnates the artist’s nature’s passion, pride, and imagination: “If it *is* nothing but a dream – the dream I have projected onto my surroundings now coming back to me – what does it matter?”⁹⁴ There are moments when Zola indeed allows us a metareading of his novel as a poetic reflection on literary creation itself.

Transubstantiation in the moonlight: the creation of Félicien

From her balcony at night, Angélique sees the Bishop’s chapel with its stained-glass windows from the twelfth century representing the legend of Saint George slaying the dragon. They are lit, for Félicien is restoring them. In some very suggestive and beautifully composed scenes Zola shows to what degree Angélique is an artist, creating the visions she sees out of the invisible.⁹⁵ Starting out in ink-black night, Zola progressively reduces the dark, creating tints, shades, shadows, lines, and moving apparitions for Angélique to dream around. All her senses are awakened:

Was it the St George of the stained-glass window who, *on the silent feet of a painted image*, was treading underfoot the tall grass to come over to her? The window was indeed starting to fade, and she could no longer see the saint so clearly; he was like a small purplish cloud, evaporating in a haze. (My emphasis)⁹⁶

The metamorphosis allowing the figure of Saint George to detach itself from the stained-glass window, walk through the two gardens, and appear as a young man standing under Angélique’s balcony, is slow and gradual. But one night in May he is there, and her auditory faculties testify of mute footsteps in the grass: “It was the noise of footsteps, cer-

tainly, the *footsteps of a vision* gliding over the ground” (My emphasis).⁹⁷

The reader has the impression of standing in the middle of Zola’s creative workshop watching an act of fictional creation take place:

And then, in the light, creation continued its course. What had emerged from a dream finally assumed the shadowy shape of a body. For at first all she could make out was a faint shadow moving in the moonlight. Whatever could it be? The shadow of a branch swaying in the wind? Sometimes it would vanish away, and the field lay sleeping in the deathly immobility, and she thought that what she had seen must have been a hallucination. Then it was no longer possible to doubt; a patch of darkness had crossed a moonlit space, slipping from one willow to the next.⁹⁸

He resembled St George, or a superb Jesus [...] just as she had expected him to look. *The marvel had at last been accomplished, the slow creative power of the invisible had brought forth this living apparition.* He emerged from the unknown, from the tremulous life of things, from the murmuring voices, from night’s shifting shadows, from all that had enfolded her and made her feel so faint. Thus it was that she saw him hovering two feet above the ground, in *the supernatural aura of his coming* [...] (My emphases)⁹⁹

Zola’s quasi-mystical understanding of the artist as someone who creates life is here addressed in religious terms that again bring to our attention the principle of transfiguration within the novel’s construction, to which Schwabe’s images have helped guide us. I have tried to suggest its importance for the metamorphic relation between artworks and human beings in a context of figural thought, and it now remains for us to see what uses Zola makes of the word *transfigure* as it explicitly occurs in his text.

The term appears on six occasions in *Le Rêve*.¹⁰⁰ A first category regroups examples associated with the theme of artistic creation: for instance, the chasuble described by Félicien to Angélique as a masterpiece of embroidery shows Christ's Transfiguration as a motif depicted in needlework:

a dalmatic, considered to be the finest in existence, the imperial dalmatic on which is celebrated the glory of Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven, the Transfiguration, the Last Judgment, with its various participants embroidered in shot silk, in silver and gold."¹⁰¹

In the same vein, and just thereafter, the term is associated directly with the artist's creative passion in a telling description of Angélique: "she remained transfigured by these tales, and her face still bore the radiance of her artistic passion."¹⁰²

But it is with the second, related, use of the word that I would like to end this essay: one where the act of transfiguration is understood as the unveiling of a hidden nature, that allows a character to step outside of its predetermined social conditions and thus revolt against the prevailing hierarchy. It reconnects us with the socially aware Zola of previous *Rougon-Macquart* novels and clearly announces the works of his last period, *Trois Villes* and *Les Quatre Évangiles*. This use of the term *transfigure* is illustrated in the following example where it refers to the revelation of the true nature of Félicien who is hiding behind the costume of a painter of stained glass:

Félicien was surely lying: she sensed full well that he was not poor, that he was concealing his identity beneath this worker's garb; and this counterfeit plainness, the whole story he'd concocted just so that he could inveigle his way to her, put her on her guard, however amused and happy she might be, deep down, since *his subterfuge transfigured him, and meant she could see the royal prince that he must be, absolutely certain as she was that her dream was coming true.* (My emphasis)¹⁰³

The term again appears in a similar use in this silent monologue from the Bishop, bewildered by his son's passion for a little embroiderer:

This whole fairy tale was the last straw, and filled him with anguish. To think of it! – a poor girl, a nameless girl, a little embroiderer seen by the light of the moon, transfigured into the slender Virgin of the Legend, adored in a dream! And he had finally uttered a single word in reply: 'Never!' (My emphasis)¹⁰⁴

Angélique and Félicien both recognize in each other their true beings and qualities behind the costumes; the ability to see beyond the appearances is the secret of their love.

A conte bleu as social critique

The possibility of a multitude within the same person – suggested by Zola's uses of the term *transfiguration* – thus emerges to outline a social critique of a culture claiming Christian values and yet maintaining an artificial separation between individuals who are categorized into classes that never meet, let alone mix. The love between Angélique and Félicien is impossible because they belong to different social spheres: she is a foundling adopted by craftsmen, whereas he is the son of an aristocratic bishop and the last descendant of one of France's finest families, the Haute-cœurs. The theme of transfiguration in *Le Rêve* thus contributes to question the legitimacy of costumes worn and, in doing so, ultimately ends up pointing to the theatrical falseness of spectacle and ceremony, in the novel intimately associated with the Catholic Church.

Not only does the Catholic Church, with its dogmatic, ascetic view on life, uphold an unjust social hierarchy but, in addition, it refuses the material dimension of love. As much as Angélique admires the stoic sufferings of the

saints, she is deeply confused by the *Golden Legend's* fantastic accounts of their martyrdom: "Prosperity and health are disdained, and joy begins with those privations that kill the body."¹⁰⁵ Bodies are torn, burnt, molested in every way – and the martyrs feel nothing? Angélique is much more sensible to the miraculous dimension of the stories than to their dogmatic teaching of renunciation: "In the *Legend*, it was the marvelous aspects that had captivated her, more than contempt for the world and the longing for death. Ah yes, of course she wanted to get married! – and to love and be loved, and to be happy!"¹⁰⁶

The same way Zola's last alter ego Pierre Froment approaches Catholicism – fascinated by its marvels and beauty but instinctively revolted by its taboos and condemning attitude towards the pleasures of the senses and claims of social justice – Angélique is as innocent as she is complete in her devotion to love. It is the Catholic Church, with its conservative values upholding a social system where classes do not mix, that will deny her and Félicien their happiness just as Hubertine and Hubert had been denied theirs through the same archaic structures.

Profoundly anticlerical in all his work, Zola would never stop revolting against injustice and ideological tyranny. The social Catholicism of Pierre Froment takes on corrupt papal Rome – in vain – but his utopist dream of a New Church, representing a social Christianity where individuals enjoy equality of chance, lives on. His four sons, named after the four Evangelists Matthew, Marc, Luke, and John, are the characters of Zola's last and unfinished cycle the Four Gospels.

The subject of religion thus kept fascinating Zola as a writer until the end. The priest and the poet share common objectives in that they both envisage a better world, but their means to achieve it differ radically. Schwabe's images do not try to contradict Zola's critique of religious

dogma. Subtle in their suggestiveness they are open to a plurality of meanings. The painter seems content to affirm, loud and strong, man's right to – and need for – dreams and reveries, not the least as an instrument of artistic creation. In this, the illustrations are true to Zola's novel, the feat of which lies in the fact that it defends this right to the chimerical, while showing what a castrating, negating, life-denying force religion is, especially when inculcated into a temperament such as Angélique's, who is naturally disposed to reverie but denied the knowledge that could balance and temper her oneiric side.

Le Rêve is a tribute to dreams, fiction and art just as much (if not more so) as the account of their defeat. Angélique's dream for justice fails, but it is hardly because of the deceitful and illusionary nature of fiction; on the contrary, the reader of *Le Rêve* is constantly reminded of the inherent power of fiction: through Angélique's imaginative faculty, through the legends and artworks that charm her, through the theme of metamorphosis itself. The dream fails because the dogmatic Church, representing the authoritative and conservative forces in society, strangles it. Imagination and fiction are not targets in *Le Rêve*, dogma and injustice are. Although Angélique's destiny is a tragic one, her instinctive and sane claim for terrestrial love and happiness is likely to deeply move readers.¹⁰⁷ The Zola *engagé* we have met here, under the insignia of the 'chimerical' Zola, undeniably gives a political force to Angélique's revolt.

Le Rêve, I have suggested, is a novel that thematizes artistic creation and cleverly links it to the idea of change and transformation. The intermedial focus of this essay has demonstrated the presence of a transitory mode that contrasts with the static mode so often emphasized in readings, creating a fascinating tension in the novel. The many acts of metamorphosis and transfiguration that fill Zola's text may well imply that Angélique's dream does not necessarily

have to end there on the church steps after her marriage to Félicien, but should continue on: for one, into the future fiction of Zola's ultimate works, for another, into readers' awareness, and accomplish the "miracle of art" that way.

- 1 "Lettre à l'éditeur Lacroix. Paris 8 mai 1867," Émile Zola, *Le Bon combat. De Courbet aux impressionistes. Anthologies d'écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon (Paris: Hermann, 1974), 305-306.
- 2 Charles Grivel even contends that a literary narrative must be translated into images in order to exist at all in the public sphere at that time. See his article "Zola. Comment voit-on? Illustration, non illustration," *Les Cahiers Naturalistes* 66 (1992): 125, note 1. For an introduction to the illustrated novel in the nineteenth century, see Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française 3. Le temps des éditeurs: Du temps du romantisme à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), especially the third part entitled "Le culte de l'image" (p. 329-383) and the fourth part "Des livres pour tous" (p. 409-568). See also Philippe Kaenel, *Le Métier d'illustrateur 1830-1880: Rodolphe Töpffer, J.-J. Grandville, Gustave Doré* (Paris: Edition Messene, 1996) and Philippe Hamon, *Imageries. Littérature et image au XIXe siècle* (Paris: José Corti, 2001).
- 3 See Élisabeth Parinet, *La Librairie Flammarion: 1875-1914* (Paris: IMEC éd., 1992), 53-56. For more information on Renoir's contribution see *Workers' Daughters on the Outer Boulevard (Illustration for Emile Zola's "L'Assommoir")*, 1877/78, The Art Institute of Chicago: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4104441> and Jean-François Thibault, "Renoir illustrateur de *L'Assommoir*," *Les Cahiers Naturalistes* 66 (1992): 147-156.
- 4 Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe. Symboliste et visionnaire* (Paris: ACR Édition, 1994), 18-19.
- 5 See, for instance, Colette Becker, introduction to *Le Rêve*, by Émile Zola (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1975) and Sophie Guermès, *La Religion de Zola. Naturalisme et déchristianisation* (Paris: Champion, 2003).
- 6 See *Les Cahiers naturalistes* 76 (2002), in particular the following essays: Colette Becker, "Le Rêve d'Angélique": 7-23; Jean-Louis Cabanès, "Rêver *Le Légende dorée*": 25-47 and Sophie Guermès, "La 'philosophie cachée' du Rêve": 49-65. Although seven of Schwabe's images are reproduced in this issue of the journal, they are not discussed by any of the authors.
- 7 Zola's art criticism is assembled in Émile Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: Gallimard, 1991) and in Émile Zola, *Le bon combat. De Courbet aux impressionistes. Anthologies d'écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon (Paris: Hermann, 1974).
- 8 Cf. Jean Moréas' literary symbolist manifesto in *Le Figaro* dated 18 September 1886.

- 9 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 471: "nous avons affaire à une mode, à toute une bande de triqueurs rusés et de simulateurs avides de tapage." Zola's account concerns two Salons: the traditional Salon and the one organized since 1890 at the Champ-de-Mars by the Société nationale des Beaux-Arts, founded by Meissonier and Puvis de Chavannes.
- 10 Gaëtan Picon, in his foreword to Zola, *Le Bon Combat*, 20, points out that Zola nevertheless remained blind to the revolution of painters like Van Gogh and Gauguin, and to a certain point to Cézanne whose importance he did not see in full, because of his insistence on a certain realism.
- 11 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 471-472: "Et je suis loin de dire qu'il n'y a pas eu des tentatives curieuses, des trouvailles intéressantes, dans ce retour du rêve et de la légende, de toute la flore délicieuse de nos anciens missels et de nos vitraux. Au point de vue de la décoration surtout, je suis ravi du réveil de l'art, pour les étoffes, les meubles, les bijoux, non pas, hélas! qu'on ait créé encore un style moderne, mais parce qu'en vérité on est en train de retrouver le goût exquis d'autrefois, dans les objets usuels de la vie." "I am far from saying that there have not been any curious attempts and interesting finds in this return of dream and legend, all the flora of our delicious old missals and our stained glass windows. In terms of decoration especially, I'm delighted by the awakening of art for fabrics, furniture, jewelry, not alas! that we have created a modern style, but because we are actually rediscovering the exquisite taste of the past, in the common objects of life." (My translation)
- 12 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 471: "Lui, sait et fait ce qu'il veut."
- 13 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 471: "c'est un débordement lamentable de mysticism"; 472: "ces vierges insexuées qui n'ont ni seins ni hanches"; 471: "ce défi à la nature, cette haine de la chair et du soleil."
- 14 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 471: "Elles peuvent ne pas vivre de notre vie de tous les jours, elles n'en ont pas moins une vie à elles, logique et complète, soumise aux lois voulues par l'artiste"; "Rien n'est d'une force ni d'une santé plus nettes que ses hautes figures simplifiées." Zola here reiterates an admiration for Puvis de Chavannes that he had expressed as early as in 1875 when describing the painter as a "truly original talent that had forged itself far from all academic influence": Zola in *Le Messager de l'Europe*, June 1875 cited in Dominique Fernandez, *Le Musée d'Émile Zola. Œuvres et citations choisies par Ferrante Ferranti* (Paris: Stock, 1997), 140: "un talent réellement original, qui s'est formé loin de toute influence académique." In *Le Voltaire*, dated June 18-22 1880, he reiterates his praise. In a similar way, though in terms more reticent, Zola had been intrigued by yet another precursor, Gustave Moreau. In articles from 1876 onward he discussed Moreau's "symbolism" as "particularly interesting" and as the most "surprising manifestation of extravagance" and "search for originality." *Le Messager de l'Europe* in June 1876 cited in *Ibid.*, 159.
- 15 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 469.
- 16 For a discussion see Sara Pappas, "Reading for Detail: On Zola's Abandonment of Impressionism," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* no 4 (2007): 474-484.
- 17 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 469: "Tous des Manet alors, tous des Monet, tous des Pissarro!"
- 18 Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture," 469: "cette file continu de tableaux exsangues"; 471: "La foi manque, il ne reste que le troupeau des impuissants et des habiles." "Ici, je crois bien que le coupable est le très grand et le très pur artiste Puvis de Chavannes. Sa queue est désastreuse, plus désastreuse encore peut-être que celle de Manet, de Monet et de Pissarro." / "His queue of followers is disastrous, maybe even more disastrous than that of Manet, Monet and Pissarro." (My translation)
- 19 "Les Réalistes du salon" published in *L'Événement* May 11 1866: "La définition d'une œuvre d'art ne saurait être que celle-ci: Une œuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament."
- 20 Letter from Émile Zola to Ernest Flammarion dated July 4, 1891, cited in Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe*, 36: "[j]e suis certain que nous aurons avec lui une œuvre très artistique et très originale."
- 21 Lettre à Antony Valabrègue, Paris August 18 1864, Zola, *Le bon combat*, 302: "se contente de mentir just assez pour me faire sentir un homme dans une image de la création."
- 22 In a letter to Charles Couïba, the editor of the journal *Le Cœur* and published in its July-August edition, 1893, p. 2, Zola writes: "Il ne me déplaît d'ailleurs pas du tout d'être traité d'idéaliste. J'ai toujours mis nettement en moi le créateur à part du théoricien."
- 23 Cf. Zola, *Écrits sur l'art*, "Peinture": "Rien n'est fâcheux comme la peinture d'idées. Qu'un artiste mette une pensée dans un crâne, oui! mais que le crâne y soit et solidement peint, et d'une construction telle qu'il brave les siècles. La vie seule parle de la vie, il ne se dégage de la beauté et de la vérité que de la nature vivante." Zola's idealism is not a moralism: his pamphlet from 1866, *Proudhon et Courbet*, published in *Le Salut public*, Lyon, on July 26 and August 31, is a raging critique against Proudhon's utilitarian appropriation of Courbet's realism, denouncing it as incompatible with the very function of art, while instead promoting the idea of an ideologically free and, when necessary, immoral art.
- 24 See Henri Mitterand, *Zola I, Sous le regard d'Olympia: 1840-1871* (Paris: Fayard, 1991)
- 25 Émile Zola, *His Masterpiece*, trans. Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (1886, Project Gutenberg E-book). The French original reads: "Oui, notre génération a trempé jusqu'au ventre dans le romantisme, et nous en sommes restés imprégnés quand même, et nous avons eu beau nous débarbouiller, prendre des bains de réalité violente, la tache s'entête, toutes les lessives du monde n'en ôteront pas l'odeur."
- 26 Émile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, 5 volumes, 1960-1967), volume 5, "Notes générales" and "Premier Plan remis à Lacroix," 1734f. (Cited by Philippe Hamon, "L'image dans la fabrique : avant-textes," *Item*, on line March 15 2007 (<http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=76037>))
- 27 See for instance Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon* (1871).
- 28 Indeed, the critics' first reaction to the novel when it was initially published in 1888 was one of surprise, and it occasioned slight mockery by some. For instance, Anatole France in *Le Temps*, dated October 21 1888, was so perplexed that he became blind to the obvious qualities of Zola's text: "la pureté de M. Zola [...] lui a coûté cher: il l'a payée de tout son talent. On n'en trouve plus trace dans les 300 pages du *Rêve*. [...] Cette fois-ci l'erreur est complète, et on ne saurait imaginer un roman plus déraisonnable que *Le Rêve*." In a letter to A J van Santen Kolff dated March 6 1889, Zola sums up the novel's reception in these terms: "*Le Rêve* a été en général bien accueilli partout, quoique peu compris." See Émile Zola, *Correspondance. Les Lettres et les arts* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1908), 299.
- 29 Cf. "Le manifeste des cinq," *Le Figaro* dated August 18, 1887.

- 30 In a letter to A. J. van Santen Kolff, dated March 5 1888, Zola speaks of wanting to do a follow-up of his novel from 1875, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*: "Depuis des années, j'avais le projet de donner un pendant à La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, pour que ce livre ne se trouvât pas isolé dans la série. Une case était réservée pour une étude de l'au-delà." For a comparison between the two novels see A. A. Greaves, "A Question of Life or Death: A Comparison of *Le Rêve* and *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*," *Nottingham French Studies* vol. 19, no 2 (1980): 16-24.
- 31 Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe*, 9. He shared this interest in Charles Fourier with Zola, whose last works *Trois Villes* and *Les Quatre Évangiles* are highly influenced by Fourier. For a brilliant analysis of the last Zola, see Michel Butor's lectures at the University of Genève in 1988-1989, available online: <https://mediaserver.unige.ch/play/54960>
- 32 Catulle Mendès, *L'Évangile de l'enfance de N.S. Jésus-Christ selon St Pierre* (Armand Colin, 1894). Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, (Paris: edition for Charles Meunier, 1900). Stéphane Mallarmé, *Poésies* (Paris: edition de la *Revue indépendante*, 1887). Maurice Maeterlinck, *La vie des abeilles* (Paris: Société des amis du livre moderne, 1908 (1910)).
- 33 On this new paradigm of illustration promoted by, for instance, Uzanne and Maurice Denis see Antoine Coron, "Trois termes, trois moments: illustrations, livres de peintres, artists' books" *Le Livre illustré* (Saint-Étienne: Cahiers de la Serre, no 19, octobre 1987); Antoine Coron, "Livres de luxe" in *Histoire de l'édition française IV*, eds. Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (Paris: Fayard, 1986) 409-437.
- 34 Schwabe proposed original watercolors, which were transposed into black and white engravings by Ducourtioux for the printed volume. Schwabe's choice of technique shows that he conceived of the illustrations as pieces of art in their own right, which should be able to stand for themselves. And indeed some of his originals found their way to the Munich Secession exhibition in 1893. See Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe*.
- 35 Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, "Roman, illustration/réception. A propos du Rêve" in *Modernités* no. 20. *Champ littéraire fin de siècle autour de Zola*, ed. Béatrice Laville (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2004), 41-56.
- 36 Gustave Soulier, "Carlos Schwabe," *Art et décoration* (Paris, May 1899): 129-146, 135, note 1, cited in Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe*, 37. Laura Morowitz in her article "Zola's *Le Rêve*: Symbolism and Medievalism in the Fin-de-Siècle," *Excavatio* 1997, 9: 93-102 largely follows the same path.
- 37 Danielle Chaperon, "L'Autre cathédrale, *Le Rêve* d'Émile Zola et de Carlos Schwabe," in *La Cathédrale*, ed. Joëlle Prunghaud (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille 3, 2001), 101: "Loin de censurer Schwabe, il lui aurait laissé carte blanche afin de transposer l'intrigue de son roman à l'échelle du livre illustré: un symboliste transplanté dans un roman naturaliste devient immédiatement un cas de 'pathologie mystique,' un personnage du roman, en quelque sorte."
- 38 In his rich account of nineteenth century literature, Philippe Hamon argues that the image is often associated with the feminine sex, indeed with the naive and childish. He mentions Angélique as an example of this and categorizes her as a "consommateur d'images", rather than as a "producteur d'image", hence portraying her as passive in regard to images (*Imageries*, 439). Cabanès notes the strong presence of "une iconographie fictive" in the novel and especially relates it to the illustrated version of *La Légende dorée* that Angélique is, again, naively reading ("Rêver *La Légende dorée*", 26, 39f, 42f).
- 39 Émile Zola, *The Dream*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus Press, 2005), 3.
- 40 *Loc. cit.*
- 41 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 42 Émile Zola, *The Dream*, trans. Elisa E. Chase (1893), Project Gutenberg E-book, 6. I here exceptionally refer to this first English translation, for the phrasing seems closer to the French original: "[il ne lui restait que] de s'enfoncer dans ces vieilles pierres" (Émile Zola, *Le Rêve*, (Paris: Garnier Flammarion/Centre National des Lettres, 1975). Andrew Brown has: "huddling deeper into the shelter of those old stones."
- 43 Zola, *The Dream*, 5. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 47: "la statue de la vierge enfant avait la pureté blanche, le corps de neige immaculé, dans cette raideur immobile du froid, qui glaçait autour d'elle le mystique élan de la virginité victorieuse. Et, à ses pieds, l'autre, l'enfant misérable, blanche de neige, elle aussi, raidie et blanche à croire qu'elle devenait de pierre, ne se distinguait plus des grandes vierges."
- 44 Zola, *Le Rêve*, 94. Its "ancient Romanesque portal" is "already almost Gothic in style," Zola, *The Dream*, 3.
- 45 Hubertine is first described as "ayant la sérénité correcte d'un marbre," Zola, *Le Rêve*, 47.
- 46 Zola, *The Dream*, 12: "with her rather long oval face, very pure, her violet eyes wan with tenderness, and the delicate rising curve of her neck that made her resemble the little virgin on a stained-glass window." Zola, *Le Rêve*, 53: "sa jolie figure de gamin blonde, à l'ovale un peu allongé, très pur, ses yeux de violette que la tendresse pâlisait, l'élan délicat de son col qui la faisait ressembler à une petite vierge de vitrail."
- 47 Zola, *The Dream*, 10.
- 48 This transitory aspect of her and the novel's other characters is essential for my reading, for it creates an opposition in the text to the *other* fundamental structure operating *Le Rêve* that we are soon to meet: that is, the static structure, the *cloisonné*, that critics have strongly focused on, see for instance Hamon (2001), Cabanès (2002), Duboile (2002), Becker (2002), Guermès (2002).
- 49 Zola, *The Dream*, 59. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 100: "la tache du péché originel à effacer."
- 50 Zola, *The Dream*, 10.
- 51 Bringing to mind the principles determining Schwabe's poster for the Salon de la Rose-Croix: in a composition clearly stressing the verticality of the picture, Schwabe had placed two female figures on a staircase moving upwards on the steps. The one standing highest is almost immaterial, bathed in light. In the palm of her right hand lies a burning heart connecting her to the ideal, celestial spheres above her. She is said to be the allegory of Faith. The second woman, standing lower, is darker and more material, her face and dress more realistically presented. She in turn is Purity, climbing up the stairs towards Faith, while leaving at her feet a broken chain from which her left ankle has just been liberated. In the foreground, separated from the women on the heavenly stairs by dark water, sits Humanity, represented as a naked, formless, muddy figure with algae dripping from its fists, staring longingly upwards. See Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, *Carlos Schwabe*, 18-19.
- 52 Zola, *The Dream*, 10. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 51: "Un tel orgueil impuisant, une telle passion d'être la plus forte soulevaient son corps de petite femme, que les Hubert en demeurèrent saisis. Ils ne reconnaissaient plus la gamin blonde, aux yeux couleur de violette, au long col d'une grâce de lis. Les yeux étaient devenus noirs dans la face méchante, le cou sensuel s'était gonflé d'un flot de sang. Maintenant qu'elle avait chaud, elle se dressait et sifflait, ainsi qu'une couleuvre ramassée sur la neige."

- 53 Zola, *The Dream*, 17. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 59-60: "Certains jours, quand ils voulaient la dompter, elle en arrivait à des crises de folie orgueilleuse, raidie, tapant des pieds et des mains, prête à déchirer et à mordre. Une peur, alors, les faisait reculer devant ce petit monster, ils s'épouvantaient du diable qui s'agitait en elle. Qui était-elle donc? d'où venait-elle?" Ces enfants trouvés, Presque toujours, viennent du vice et du crime."
- 54 Zola, *The Dream*, 15. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 57: "La cathédrale explique tout, a tout enfanté et conserve tout. Elle est la mère, la reine, énorme au milieu du petit tas des maisons basses, pareilles à une couvée abritée frileusement sous ses ailes de pierre. On n'y habite que pour elle et par elle; les industries ne travaillent, les boutiques ne vendent que pour la nourrir, la vêtir, l'entretenir, elle et son clergé. [...] Elle bat au centre, chaque rue est une de ses veines, la ville n'a d'autre souffle que le sien."
- 55 Philippe Hamon, in *Imagerie* (291f), uses the term "cloisonné" for *Le Rêve*. Other scholars who, in a similar way, insist on the reflexive structure of the novel to highlight the closed, compartmentalized and arrested dimensions of *Le Rêve* are Cabanès, "Rêver *La Légende dorée*"; Becker *Introduction* and "Le Rêve d'Angélique"; Guermès "La 'philosophie cachée' du *Rêve*"; Christophe Duboile, "Les Jeux spéculaires dans *Le Rêve*," *Les Cahiers naturalistes* 76 (2002): 97-103 and Olivier Got, "Le système des jardins dans *Le Rêve*," *Les Cahiers naturalistes* 76 (2002): 85-96.
- 56 Becker, "Le Rêve d'Angélique" 2002.
- 57 My translation of "par haine du changement," Zola, *Le Rêve*, 78. The English translation reads "since they hated change that much," Zola, *The Dream*, 36.
- 58 Zola, *The Dream*, 17. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 59: "D'ailleurs, elle pratiquait cette opinion ancienne qu'une femme en sait assez long, quand elle met l'orthographe et qu'elle connaît les quatre règles."
- 59 See also Becker, *Introduction* 1975 and Becker, "Le Rêve d'Angélique" 2002.
- 60 Zola, *The Dream*, 57. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 97: "Dans la famille, les femmes mouraient jeunes, en plein bonheur".
- 61 For a rich discussion of the importance of the analogical principle of the image in nineteenth century French literature, see Hamon, *Imageries*, 2001.
- 62 Zola, *The Dream*, 48. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 89: "Le bonheur, pour nous misérables, n'est que dans l'humilité et l'obéissance."
- 63 Zola, *The Dream*, 18. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 60: "Elle lui enseignait le renoncement et l'obéissance, qu'elle opposait à la passion et à l'orgueil. Obéir, c'était vivre. Il fallait obéir à Dieu, aux parents, aux supérieurs, toute une hiérarchie de respect, en dehors de laquelle l'existence dérégulée se gâtait."
- 64 Zola, *The Dream*, 46. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 87: "Il partait volontiers avec l'enfant, sur l'aile d'un nuage."
- 65 Zola, *The Dream*, 48. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 89: "Tu entends Angélique, il faut écouter ta mère. Nous sommes deux fous, elle seule est raisonnable...J'ai eu tort, j'ai eu tort..."
- 66 Zola, *The Dream*, 136-137. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 174: "L'âge, vingt années de prières, Dieu descendu en lui, rien n'avait tué l'homme ancien. ...Il se frappait la poitrine du poing, il sanglotait dans la pénitence inefficace, criant qu'on devrait interdire le sacerdoce à ceux qui ont goûté la femme, qui ont gardé d'elle des liens de sang. [...]...Ah! La passion, la bête mauvaise, qu'il aurait voulu écraser, pour retomber à la paix anéantie de l'amour divin."
- 67 Zola, *The Dream*, 53. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 94: "la masse énorme qui bouchait le ciel."
- 68 Zola, *The Dream*, 137. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 175: "Il tuerait la passion dans son fils, comme il voulait la tuer en lui."
- 69 The parallelism between the principal characters and two saints, of course, has not escaped critics. Cabanès (2002), for one, has emphasized this exchange, or 'impregnation'. I borrow the word "impregnation" from Philippe Hamon (*Imageries*, 212, 214, 221) who gives many examples of nineteenth century novels in which the invention of photography and new printing technics seem to have inspired narrative structures recalling the process of the imprint and playing with the different meanings of the word 'reproduction'.
- 70 According to Elisabeth Emery, Jeanniot "copied a number of the sixteenth century woodcuts of saints referred to in Zola's text, including the frontispiece to the 1549 edition Zola had consulted." See Emery, "The *Golden Legend* in the Fin de Siècle: Zola's *Le Rêve* and Its Reception," in *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture*, ed. Elisabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewait, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2004), 87.
- 71 Zola's emphasis on Angélique's hair is discussed by Cabanès, "Rêver *La Légende dorée*," 45.
- 72 Cabanès, "Rêver *La Légende dorée*," 27-32.
- 73 Maury presents the hagiographic accounts as "imitation circulaire" according to Cabanès, who speaks of the novel's "clôture du mimétique" and finds that Angélique is "prise dans la clôture du même" ("Rêver *La Légende dorée*", 27; 26; 44) Also see note 55.
- 74 Erich Auerbach, "Figura" [1938], trans. Ralph Manheim from the original German text in *Neue Dantestudien* (Istanbul, 1944, 11-71), in Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 15.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 53. "Figural prophecy implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfills the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and definitive event." (*Ibid.*, 58)
- 76 *Ibid.*, 30; 50; 38.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 12. "Throughout Ovid *figura* is mobile, changeable, multiform, and deceptive." *Ibid.*, 23.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 79 Zola, *The Dream*, 85. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 123: "Mais, à regarder fixement la sainte, Angélique venait de faire une découverte, qui noyait de joie son cœur. Agnès lui ressemblait. En dessinant l'antique statue, Félicien certainement songeait à elle."
- 80 See Erich Auerbach, *Figura*, 30-31: "[F]or [Tertullian] the *figura*, in the simple sense of "form", is a part of the substance, and in *Adversus Marcionem* (5, 20) he equates it with the flesh. Just above (4, 40), he had spoken of bread in the Eucharist." *Ibid.*, 60: "This becomes eminently clear in the sacrament of the sacrifice, the Last Supper, the *pascha nostrum*, which is the *figura Christi*. This sacrament, which is figure as well as symbol, and which has long existed historically – namely, since it was first established in the old covenant – gives us the purest picture of the concretely present, the veiled and tentative, the eternal and supratemporal elements contained in the figures." In the context of Zola's *Rougon Macquart* series it is interesting to note Auerbach's observation as he comments on Lucretius: "The important transition from the form to its imitation, from model to copy, may best be noted in the passage dealing with the resemblance of children to their parents, the mixture of seeds, and heredity" (*Ibid.*, 16).
- 81 Zola, *The Dream*, 104. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 142: "C'était une flamme héréditaire rallumée en elle."

- 82 Zola, *The Dream*, 38. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 80: “En dehors de ce qu’ils lui avaient appris, elle apportait sa passion, qui donnait de la vie aux fleurs, de la foi aux symboles. Sous ses mains, la soie et l’or s’animaient, une envolée mystique élançait les moindres ornements, elle s’y livrait toute, avec son imagination en continuels éveils, sa croyance au monde invisible. Certaines de ses broderies avaient tellement remué le diocèse de Beaumont, qu’un prêtre, archéologue, et un autre, amateur de tableaux, étaient venus la voir, en s’extasiant devant ses Vierges, qu’ils comparaient aux naïves figures des Primitifs.”
- 83 Zola, *The Dream*, 44. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 85: “si fraîche que l’odeur semblait s’en exhaler du satin”.
- 84 Zola, *The Dream*, 38. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 80: “Elle avait le don du dessin, un vrai miracle qui, sans professeur, rien qu’avec ses études du soir, à la lampe, lui permettait souvent de corriger ses modèles, de s’en écarter, d’aller à sa fantaisie, créant de la pointe de son aiguille. Aussi les Hubert ... s’effaçaient-ils devant elle ... ils en arrivaient modestement à n’être plus que ses aides.”
- 85 Zola, *The Dream*, 59. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 99: “Angélique croyait fermement aux miracles. Dans son ignorance, elle vivait entourée de prodiges, le lever des astres et l’éclosion des simples violettes. Cela lui semblait fou, de s’imaginer le monde comme une mécanique, régie par des lois fixes.”
- 86 Zola, *The Dream*, 59. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 99: “l’invisible règne, l’unique loi est le caprice du surnaturel.”
- 87 Zola, *The Dream*, 59. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 99: “on entend des statues de bronze rire... des hosties sont changées en chair vivante, des images du Christ laissent échapper du sang.”
- 88 Zola, *The Dream*, 60. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 100: “le miracle lui semblait naturel, de niveau avec son existence quotidienne.”
- 89 Zola, *The Dream*, 57. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 97: “en plein bonheur.”
- 90 Zola, *The Dream*, 53. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 93: “toute la floraison enchantée de la femme.”
- 91 Zola, *The Dream*, 60. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 100: “[le miracle] l’armait pour le combat de la vie, comme la grâce armait les martyrs. Et elle le créait elle-même, à son insu: il naissait de son imagination échauffée de fables, des désirs inconscients de sa puberté; il s’élargissait de tout ce qu’elle ignorait, s’évoquait de l’inconnu qui était en elle et dans les choses.”
- 92 Zola, *The Dream*, 60. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 100: “Tout venait d’elle pour retourner à elle, l’homme créait Dieu pour sauver l’homme, il n’y avait que *le rêve*. Parfois, elle s’étonnait, se touchait le visage, pleine de trouble, doutant de sa propre matérialité. N’était-elle pas une apparence qui disparaîtrait, après avoir créé une illusion?”
- 93 Zola, *The Dream*, 193. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 230: “Tout n’est que rêve.”
- 94 Zola, *The Dream*, 169. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 206: “Si elle n’est qu’un rêve, *le rêve* que j’ai mis à mon entour et qui me revient, qu’importe!”
- 95 Cabanès (“Rêver La Légende dorée” 30f) makes an interesting connection to Michelet’s reading of Jeanne D’Arc when discussing Angélique’s creative imagination: the maid had a capacity to create existences and so has Angélique. While discussing the phenomenon as a “psychologie de la résistance” in regard to Jeanne d’Arc, Cabanès however seems to want to reduce it to a “psychopathologie de la croyance” with respect to Angélique.
- 96 Zola, *The Dream*, 61-62. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 101-102: “Était-ce le saint Georges du vitrail qui, de ses pieds muets d’image peinte, foulait les hautes herbes pour monter vers elle? La fenêtrée justement pâlisait, elle ne voyait plus nettement le saint, pareil à une petite nuée pourpre, brouillée, évaporée.”
- 97 Zola, *The Dream*, 62. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 102: “C’était un bruit de pas, certainement, des pas de vision effleurant le sol.”
- 98 Zola, *The Dream*, 62-63. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 102: “Et alors, dans la lumière, la création continua. Ce qui venait du rêve finit par prendre l’ombre d’un corps. Car elle n’aperçut d’abord qu’une ombre effacée se mouvant sous la lune. Qui était-ce donc? l’ombre d’une branche balancée par le vent? Parfois, tout s’évanouissait, le champ dormait dans une immobilité de mort, elle croyait à une hallucination de sa vue. Puis, le doute ne fut plus possible, une tache sombre avait franchi un espace éclairé, se glissant d’un saule à un autre.”
- 99 Zola, *The Dream*, 64-65. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 104: “Il ressemblait au saint Georges, à un Jésus superbe [...] c’était ainsi qu’elle l’attendait. Le prodige s’achevait enfin, la lente création de l’invisible aboutissait à cette apparition vivante. Il sortait de l’inconnu, du frisson des choses, des voix murmurantes, des jeux mouvants de la nuit, de tout ce qui l’avait enveloppée, jusqu’à la faire défaillir. Aussi le voyait-elle à deux pieds du sol, dans le surnaturel de sa venue.”
- 100 Zola, *The Dream*, 84; 90; 91; 114; 137; 161. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 122; 127; 127; 152; 175; 198.
- 101 Zola, *The Dream*, 90. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 127: “la dalmatique impériale, où est célébré la gloire de Jésus-Christ sur la terre et dans le ciel, la Transfiguration, le Jugement dernier [...]”
- 102 Zola, *The Dream*, 91. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 127: “elle en restait transfigurée, elle gardait au visage le rayonnement de sa passion d’artiste.”
- 103 Zola, *The Dream*, 84. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 122: “Félicien mentait, elle sentait bien qu’il n’était pas pauvre, qu’il se cachait sous ce vêtement d’ouvrier; et cette simplicité jouée, toute cette histoire pour pénétrer jusqu’à elle, la mettait en garde, amusée et heureuse au fond, le transfigurant, voyant le royal prince qu’il devait être, dans l’absolue certitude où elle vivait de la réalisation entière de son rêve.”
- 104 Zola, *The Dream*, 137. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 175: “Quoi! Une fille pauvre, une fille sans nom, une petite brodeuse aperçue sous un rayon de lune, transfigurée en vierge mince de la Légende, adorée dans *le rêve*!”
- 105 Zola, *The Dream*, 22. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 63: “La prospérité, la santé sont en mépris, la joie commence aux privations qui tuent le corps.”
- 106 Zola, *The Dream*, 49. Zola, *Le Rêve*, 90: “Dans la Légende, le merveilleux l’avait prise, plus que le mépris du monde et le goût de la mort. Ah! Oui, certes, elle voulait se marier, et aimer, et être aimée, et être heureuse!” In Zola’s naturalist aesthetics the body and the senses occupy a fundamental place in man’s inner life and existence. Just as Zola lost his childhood faith, Pierre Froment in *Trois Villes* loses his faith and ends up leaving the priesthood to get married and have children.
- 107 Colette Becker (“*Le Rêve* d’Angélique”: 10) reminds us that *Le Rêve* attracted a great many readers from the very start (with 110 000 books sold in 1902) and that it still today counts among the best-selling Zola novels.

Queer Mysticism: Elisàr von Kupffer and the androgynous reform of art

The dynamic rapport between science, psychology, esotericism, and sexuality that characterized cultural production at the turn of the 20th century began to be recognized in the 1980s.¹ This emergent scholarly literature, however, tended to focus on French and Belgian contexts, omitting the contradictions found in parallel movements, such as those in Germany.² The artistic and theoretical practice of the Estonian born German artist Elisàr von Kupffer (1872–1942) and his long-term companion philosopher Eduard von Mayer (1873–1960), is representative of an alternative approach to sexuality and spirituality in the period.³ The historiography of von Kupffer and von Mayer’s practice is complex. Studied broadly as an example of gay art,⁴ French philosophers of the 1970s typically focused on the utopian dimensions of their work.⁵ More recently, Fabio Ricci examined the ways in which their textual and artistic production engaged with monist and esoteric philosophies as well as German nationalism.⁶ This article aims not only to synthesize these approaches, but also to explore the impact of contemporary ideas about the reform of masculine identity, particularly in von Kupffer and von Mayer’s use of the mythical metaphor of androgyny. Through their artistic and philosophical program called

Clarismus, von Kupffer and von Mayer sought to create a utopian ideal where male “over”-sexuality was deactivated. At the intersection of esotericism and the dreamed antique, their proposal of an alternative male sexuality can thus be considered as an example of what I call “queer mysticism.”⁷ A trans-historical aesthetic system, “queer mysticism” combines the decompartmentalization of male and female genders and religious iconography. The goal of this utopian visual program is an asexual vision of human sexuality, a “queering” of dominant models that used the mystical metaphor of androgyny.

Evolutionism, degeneration and the body’s reform

The crisis of *Kulturkampf* in the 1880s, or the “fight for the ideal society,”⁸ was colored by the tensions between nation and religion, by the conflict of the imperial chancellor Otto von Bismarck versus the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. Attempting to bridge this struggle, a number of new cultural movements arose that sought to reintegrate national unity and metaphysical beliefs. These movements, called *Jugendbewegung* (youth move-

ments), also tried to challenge the cultural and material conditions of the bourgeoisie. Faith in pagan forms of religion offered adherents a model to radically change their lifestyles while simultaneously searching for the authentic values of a utopic Germany. The *Wandervogel* (the migrants, or walking youths), the *Wagnervereine* (an association for Wagnerian festivals), and the *Lebensreform* (health reformers) all promoted a return to nature inspired by the philosophy of monism, which argued for the primordial unity of all things.⁹ This cultural context was extremely important for the German artists and writers who gathered at the margins of official practices. Monistic syncretism was intrinsically allied with naturalistic paganism and the political reform of society – a real critique of the materialistic bourgeois culture, a *KulturKritik*.¹⁰

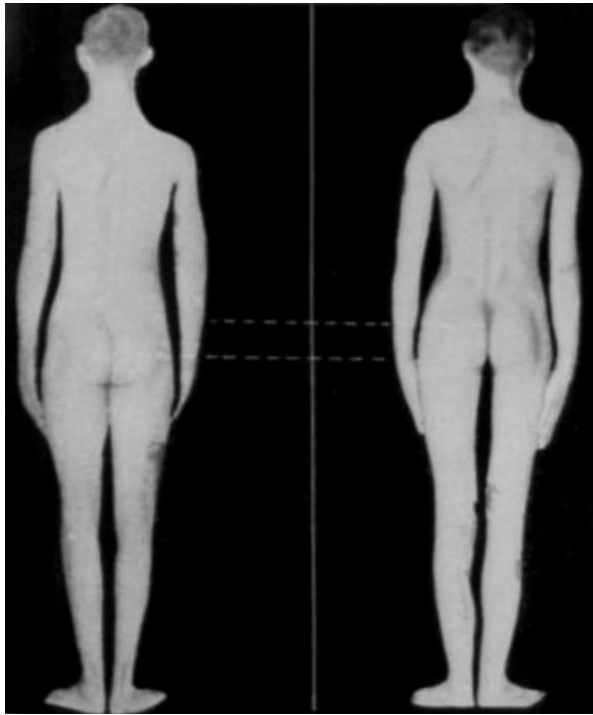
The monist biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), who championed positivism and denounced the Catholic Church during the crisis of *Kulturkampf*, was highly regarded by the *Jugendbewegung*, particularly for his ideas about nature, metaphysics, and the birth of the nation. In line with Romantic ideals, Haeckel advanced the principle of primordial unity through the observation of natural phenomenon, rejecting the dualistic principle of Platonic philosophy. Connecting nature and nation, he considered unity to be the primary element of biology and the essence of the German people. For the origins of human life, Haeckel proposed the famous “Recapitulation theory,” wherein the embryonic stage not only encompassed life’s diversity and the Spirit, but also concentrated all the physical and chemical phenomena seen in the world (water, air, light, etc.).¹¹ In the growth of the embryo, moreover, the processes of evolution were made manifest (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny). This classification of species was developed in Haeckel’s *Anthropogeny: Or, the Evolutionary History of Man*,¹² which took Darwinian ideas about the



inequality of the species and expanded it to include the inequality of the races. An evolutionary monism that greatly influenced Pangermanism and, later, National-socialism, Haeckel’s theories were also widely accepted by the pseudo-religious movements of the *Jugendbewegung*, particularly nourishing the romantic and nationalist ideas of the *Völkisch*. Through the search for the exceptional origins of the German people, their mystical and Teutonic roots, the *Völkisch* sought to virilize German culture: “Volk signifies the union of a group of people with a transcendental “essence”. (...) It was fused to man’s innermost nature, and represented the source of creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality and his unity with other members of the Volk.”¹³

1 “Classification of homosexuals as a natural third sex situated between man and woman,” in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, vol.5 (1) (Leipzig 1903), 128–129.

Haeckel’s evolutionary monism also had a distinct influence on psychopathological studies, the development of which intensified at the turn of the century. Nourished by contemporary discourses on the physical and moral degeneration of man, this growing corpus of literature tended to focus on male sexuality, placing white heterosexual men at the top of the biological pyramid. Pathologies, therefore, were observed through deviation from this norm.¹⁴ The



Verhältnis der Oberlänge zur Unterlänge des menschlichen Körpers.			
Oberlänge in Prozenten der Oberlänge	Fälle	Heterosexuelle	Homosexuelle
84 — 86	220	prozent 5,2	prozent —
87 — 90		8,0	—
91 — 93		10,0	1,4
94 — 96		55,8	2,5
97 — 99		23,8	5,9
100 — 102		15,0	11,4
103 — 105		6,2	23,2
106 — 108		—	22,5
109 — 111		—	18,2
112 — 114		—	8,0
115 — 117		—	5,2
118 — 120		—	0,4
121 — 123		—	1,8
124 — 126		—	1,4

Durchschnittsgröße	169 cm	170 cm
Verhältnis der Oberlänge zur Unterlänge im Durchschnitt	100 = 93	100 = 105

criminalization of sexual acts between men, made famous by Bismarck's paragraph 175 published in 1871, intensified the debates on sexual psychopathology and precipitated theories on homosexuality.¹⁵ The journalist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) was the first to explain the specific mechanisms of sexual attraction between members of the same sex, which he called “urning.”¹⁶ In his proposal, the homosexual male had inverted sexual poles, meaning he had the soul of a woman within the body of a man. This was explained by the supposed effeminacy of the homosexual. Imagined as a kind spiritual hermaphroditism, Ulrich's idea was based on the principle that sexual attraction could only result from the desire for reproduction, the union of differently sexed individuals being at the filial origins of the human species. The study of human evolution was therefore tied to growing anxieties about sex, which were often expressed by the systematic observation of anatomies and anomalies, especially in cases of physical hermaphroditism. Ulrich's concept of the homosexual's hermaphroditic spirit was later adopted by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) and used to explain sexual perversion and the signs of degeneration. These ideas also appeared in the anti-Semitic and antifeminist pamphlet *Sex and Character* written by Otto Weininger (1880–1903) in 1903.¹⁷

2 “Body measurements in homosexuals established by Dr. A. Weil Hirschfeld,” *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreissigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*, vol.4, (Stuttgart: J. Püttmann, 1926-1930), 521.

3 “Body measurements in homosexuals established by Dr. A. Weil Proportion of length of upper to lower part of the body”, *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreissigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*, vol.4 (Stuttgart: J. Püttmann, 1926-1930), 522.

At the turn of the century, defenders of the homosexual could also be found. The sexologist and committed monist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee, WhK) in order to fight the persecution inflicted by the application of paragraph 175 and the ideologies of men like Ulrichs. Hirschfeld proposed the hypothesis of “intermediate sexualities,” which opened gender and sex to non-heteronormative expressions. Particularly interesting for this article is Hirschfeld's concept of the third gender, which can be understood as a response to the threats constituted by the indeterminacy of homosexuality. Using physiognomic classifications and anthropometric measures, inherited from the criminological school of Alphonse Bertillon and the treaties of Gaspard Lavater, Hirschfeld created a unique anthropological study based on the classical canons of virile muscled man and procreative woman (figs. 1–3).¹⁸ The system lacked strict binaries, however, and allowed Hirschfeld to isolate cases of “gynosphygie” and “androsphygie,” morphologies that were assigned to the homosexual.¹⁹ Key identifiers were the level of the hips and the size of the pelvis, which differentiated the homosexual body from that of the heterosexual and tied it to both feminine characteristics and the body of the adolescent. Hirschfeld's final result was the *Sexualwissenschaftlicher Bilderatlas zur Geschlechtskunde*²⁰ (The Visual and Scientific Atlas of Sexualities) published in 1932. In addition to defining the homosexual morphologically, this text also associated the artistic temperament with intermediate sexualities, an idea that was colored by recent discoveries in sexual psychology. Section 21, for example, was dedicated to understanding the “unconscious narcissistic component in artistic production (...).”²¹ Hirschfeld not only gathered together self-portraits of Italian masters like Raphael, Andrea Del Sarto, and Botticelli, but also two pieces by

von Kupffer: *Der Neue Bund*²² (The New Covenant) from 1915/16 and *Amor Dei Victoria*²³ (Love of Victory) from 1917. Directly inspired by the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, which regarded the homosexual as an individual suspended in the narcissistic stage,²⁴ Hirschfeld was attempting to read artists' biographies through their paintings. For him, both the body and its artistic expressions broadcast sexuality and psychology, a branding of the homosexual individual that paradoxically marginalized those he sought to redeem.

The “araphrodite”: an idealistic counter-model

Elisar von Kupffer and Eduard von Mayer were fully conversant with and engaged in the scientific and political contexts described above. Although they both grew up in Eastern Europe, von Kupffer and von Mayer were strongly connected to the rest of the continent, with Germany having a special meaning for each. For example, in his autobiography,²⁵ von Kupffer “revealed” a semi-fantastical, doubly aristocratic ancestry: first from the god Apollo, because his birthplace at Sophiental in Estonia was on the same meridian as Delos (“Apollo island, creator of light”²⁶), and second from his biological family. His father, the doctor Adolf von Kupffer, was the descendant of a German aristocratic family with origins in the 16th century. Enrolled at the German school of Saint Anne in Saint Petersburg, von Kupffer met his future companion Eduard von Mayer, a Russian national who was deeply engaged in the study of German philosophical pessimism.²⁷ Von Kupffer's first play also had Germanic associations, being deeply connected to the Wagnerian movement. *Die toten Götter*²⁸ (The Dead Gods) presented an idealistic hero (like Parsifal) searching

for a sacred crusade. This hero's cause was meant to lead him across the medieval and erotic universe, just as Wagnerian mysticism spread over Europe.²⁹

Arriving in their beloved Germany in 1894, von Kupffer and von Mayer immediately found inspiration in the *Jugendbewegung* movements, which privileged the cult of masculine beauty. Amongst these groups, the image of the Greek Antique was becoming a new aesthetic ideal, where gymnastics and outdoor collective sports were being used to develop courage and bravery and negotiate sociability between men.³⁰ The ideal of Greek beauty allowed the *Jugendbewegung* to bridge their moral principles and their ideas regarding the health of men, the body, and the nation. This call for antiquity was also taken up by German Realist painters, such as Max Klinger (1857–1920) and Ludwig von Hofmann (1861–1945), whose careers marked the education of von Kupffer while he attended the Royal Academy of Art in Berlin. Although Von Kupffer left the academy soon after his enrollment, the city continued to nourish his training in art history, economy, and ethnography. The philosophical education of von Mayer found in Berlin was in turn influenced by the pessimistic vision of Schopenhauer, which provided a source of relief for the young man's crisis of faith. After von Mayer attempted suicide, which seems to have been provoked by von Kupffer's relationship with Agnes von Hoyningen-Huene, the pair left Berlin for a long voyage in Italy, following the esthete impulse for physical regeneration through the sun.

During this trip in the summer of 1897, the couple visited Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Capri, and Ischia. While passing through the ruins of Pompeii, they discovered traces of Roman art, which greatly contributed to their developing concept of the idealized androgynous. In his philosophical treatment of Pompeii, inspired by the paintings he saw, von Mayer depicted the lost city as a paradise,

“an antitype of our own age”³¹ that could function as an example for modern civilization. Putting aside Hellenic society's focus on masculine values, its patriarchal and militarist character, von Mayer instead emphasized the social harmony he saw depicted on wall decorations of the ruined city. Particularly seductive were images that could be interpreted as part of the Hellenic educational model for young boys under “feminine control.”³² While earlier discussions of Greco-Roman education had typically omitted the important relationship between morality and Antique sexuality, an exception to this silence has been written by John Addington Symonds in 1883, *A Problem in Greek Ethic. A Problem in Modern Ethic*.³³ Well-known for his work on the Italian Renaissance, Symonds was an early influence on von Kupffer.³⁴ In *A Problem in Greek Ethic*, Symonds examined antique moral codes in order to demonstrate how male bonding was connected with bisexuality, and thus operated beyond procreative goals. Male education was determined by the relationship between the *erastes* and the *eromenos*, the male adult and the young boy. Passive sexual activity was not meant to be experienced after adolescence, and was criticized once maturity had been reached (with the apparition of beard). Relationships between adult men, however, could be found, although the passive man was disparaged for taking on the submissive, female position. While the Roman tradition followed the idea of male Greek bisexuality, it progressively yielded to a more ascetic approach to sexual life during the Empire and the period of Pompeii.³⁵

Von Mayer's interest in the bisexuality inherent in Hellenic male sociability can be seen in the author's fascination with images of the hybrid in the frescoes of Pompeii. These figures of indeterminacy were interpreted by the author through a monist understanding of Neoplatonism: “Every force finds embodiment in form, that could fashion from the shapes of man and beast Fauns, Centaurs, Tritons, and

Nereids, could call sea-horses and sea-griffins into being, could conjure the tender forms of lovely children out of flower-bells, and conceive human limbs terminating in the tendrils of plants. Pompeian art converted these impossibilities into realities.³⁶ The love of hybrid would later influence the decoration of von Kupffer, especially with the development of “ornamentation (...) free to spin the bright threads of its sparkling tale.”³⁷

The Bacchanalian feasts dedicated to the god of wine Dionysus particularly interested von Mayer. The relationships between the chimeric figures and the young priests and virgins who honored them constituted the idyllic model for the communion between nature and the sexual ideal of purification: “Art is either a living natural religion or nothing.”³⁸ The impact of Hellenic religion can also be felt in von Mayer’s monist model of reform. In his description of the Adonis house, for example, an image of the god incarnated as a hermaphrodite was considered as a paragon of moral of virtue. Repelling the advances of the goddess of love, Aphrodite, Adonis represented mystical chastity, and like Narcissus was “fascinated by his own beauty, pined away in self-adoration, and was turned into a flower this admonition against the exclusion of fertile and glowing love, and also loftiest tribute to the supremacy of beauty over the senses, this intensely Greek conception of Life, that we find so inexhaustible again and again materialized upon Pompeian walls.”³⁹ This vision of human primitivism created an opening for fantastical and alternative sexualities. Amongst the possible approaches to sex represented in the frescos, the adolescent hermaphrodite was held up as the “loftiest” of goals, an image of chaste love where sexuality was transcended by the aesthetic-narcissistic admiration of male beauty. As a system that represented an alternative to the radical pathologization of gender and sexuality, von

Mayer’s ideal paired male desexualization with the synthesis of the genders. Against the evolutionist conclusions of the degenerate man who is feminized, von Mayer privileged what he saw as Pompeii’s lack of gender binary: “Owing to race-conditions, not sufficiently taken into account at the present day, the Hellenic people, from an aesthetic point of view, tended to equalise the distinctions of sex.”⁴⁰ Gender indeterminacy, therefore, became the expression of the purity of form, which only materialized abstract ideas of nature. The morphologic combination of the two sexes, as discussed by von Mayer and later painted by von Kupffer, thus added a male asexual point of view to the historical theories of the plastic androgynous described by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Théophile Gautier, and Joséphin Péladan.⁴¹

For von Mayer and von Kupffer, the regeneration of “our own age” and masculine virility took shape within antique forms of male bonding and rejected both Ulrichs and Hirschfeld’s concepts of homosexuality and feminization. In his anthology on male love,⁴² the preface to which was published in 1899 in the activist journal *Der Eigene*,⁴³ von Kupffer used extracts from ancient and contemporary texts to demonstrate that male friendship was not only the origin of homosexuality, but also the primordial cell of society. Civilization, therefore, was not determined by the filial relation, but by friendship between men in accordance with the sibling model. The ideal masculinity, furthermore, was androgynous, a state von Kupffer described in an article dedicated to the painter Sodoma: “Eternal grace – the Edenic ideal of belief in angels and houris, a rare blossom on earth, – ‘where the antagonism of the sexes is resolved into One’ is the desire for harmonies. This is a vast field that requires the development of a specific work. If you want to understand Giovan Antonio [Sodoma], what is

certainly necessary is the ‘araphrodite’ (...) the harmonious penetration of the powerful and the graceful. This sensation was developed later in his career when it reached its highest expression.”⁴⁴ This idea of the “araphrodite,” an amalgamation of male Ares with the female Aphrodite, derived from the sexual ambiguity of Sodoma himself. Giorgio Vasari published a portrait of the artist as having been constantly surrounded by young boys, whose company he appreciated. This dimension of implied sexual attraction allowed von Kupffer to explain the reasons behind Sodoma’s desire to paint himself and his adolescent models with a combination of the delicate female beauty and male strength. The “homosexual” or “bi-erotic” aesthetic relationship did not designate the attraction for the same or the different, but instead for the fragile and the strong at the same time.

The renewal of antique social models, whose modernity Michel Foucault demonstrated in *History of Sexuality*, provided an alternative to patriarchal domination. Foucault underlined the relationship between the access to Truth and the distance from the imperative of sexual reproduction present in male bonding. The antique hedonism inherited from Plato did not signify total sexual freedom, however, but was instead a path towards the pure use of sexuality: “it is in the reflection on love of boys that one sees the principle of ‘indefinite abstention’ formulated; the ideal of a renunciation, which Socrates exemplifies by his faultless resistance of temptation; and the theme that this renunciation has a high spiritual value by itself.”⁴⁵ The purification of ascetic love, where androgyny was the principal agent, allowed von Kupffer and von Mayer to achieve a certain idea of Truth, whose goal was not “pleasure and the esthetics of its use, but desire and its purifying hermeneutics.”⁴⁶ As philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) underlined in the 1960s, the importance lay in the refusal of sexuality (the

paragon being Narcissus and his absorption in his dreams of a lost paradise), and the denunciation of the “normal” Eros.⁴⁷ The rejection of established systems of stable sexuality played a central role in the genesis of queer politics in the 20th century.⁴⁸ In Marcuse’s philosophy and the artistic program of von Kupffer and von Mayer, an alternative vision of sexuality was deployed, one that participated in the concept of “queer mysticism” mentioned in the introduction. Both of these systems explored sexual renunciation and sublimated desire as a means to provoke the reform of masculine domination. Contrary to the democratic vision of gay sexualities developed during the 1970s, the esoteric dimensions of von Kupffer and von Mayer’s work pursued the moral values of sexual asceticism in an unlimited quest for new sensorial stimuli.

“Queer mysticism” and the “Clarismus” solution

By the end of the 1910s, von Mayer and von Kupffer had developed an aesthetic and religious community called *Clarismus*,⁴⁹ which they based on the model of the *Lebensreform* movement. Their “cult of the sun” settled in Germany, founding the publishing house *Klaristische Verlag Akropolis* in Munich and Weimar in 1911, and expanding to Zurich in 1913. When von Kupffer began exhibiting works of art at the Brogi gallery in Florence in April 1913, he called himself Elisarion, “painter of Clarism,” in honor of this group. The artistic initiatives in Italy were, however, set aside during the First World War, when the couple chose to leave for Minusio Switzerland in 1915. This city was only a few miles from Ascona, where the utopic community of *Monte Verità* had settled in 1900.⁵⁰ In Minusio, von Kupffer and von Mayer built their neo-symbolist sanctuary, which opened

to the public in August 1927. The architecture chosen for this space was reminiscent of the style promulgated in Sicily, one of the first regions the couple has discovered when they left Germany. The artistic expression of nostalgia for national identity combined with medieval underpinnings found in the decoration of the Minusio sanctuary can also be found in von Kupffer’s *Die Entwaffnung*⁵¹ (The Disarmament, 1914, fig. 4), where male regeneration is linked with medieval tropes, Antique heroism, and courtly eroticism. A nude young man, crowned with a wreath of roses, gently pulls off the glove of an armored knight while leaning back to prevent a kiss. Central to this gesture is the lifting of the knight’s sword, which is a proxy for the cross that both are meant to adore. The knight’s religious conversion to the antique ideal implicit in the piece is accentuated by the landscape, which contains both a medieval castle and an Antique temple. This spiritualized conversion of love was deeply connected to *Clarismus*’s dogmas. More than a religion, the model of purification through platonic Eros promoted by this group reflected a philosophy of life, Foucault’s “art of existence” and an example of the aestheticized approach to chaste love that is characteristic of “queer mysticism.”

The “araphrodite” figure equally played a major role in these conversions. A cross between man and woman, the androgyny of this figure had previously been admired by the couple in the frescoes of Pompeii. In the *Araphrodit und Falter*⁵² (Araphrodite and Butterfly, 1915, fig. 5), a young boy holds a golden cup within an orientalist interior, heightened by Persian tapestries and a bough of orange tree branches. The naked body of this adolescent, wearing

4 Elisar von Kupffer, *The Disarmament*, 1914, oil on canvas, 119x57, Fondazione Monte Verità/CCE.





golden sandals *à l'antique* and a headband, is endowed with surprisingly large buttocks. The combination of the sexually indeterminate body of the figure and the intimate atmosphere of the enclosed space enhance the erotic ultra-realism of the picture. Von Kupffer reinforced this impression through the work's illustrative style, including its saturated tones, classical and ordered composition, lack of depth between the space and the figure, and unity of chromatic scale. The *Araphrodite's* morphology, derived from photographs von Kupffer took of adolescent models, was demonstrative of a double level of artistic and medical homosexuality. If the adolescent was connected to the *eromenos* and became a sexual object whose large buttocks, was implicit of sodomy, he also corresponded to the medical observations of Hirschfeld on the larger size of the homosexual pelvis.

Like his process in the *Araphrodite*, many of von Kupffer's figures were derived from his photographic experiences. His meeting with the photographer Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) in Sicily appears to have revealed to von Kupffer the potential of materializing erotic desires through *tableaux vivants* connected to antique canons.⁵³ Playing on the painting of the *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* by Sodoma, von Kupffer himself posed for a photograph against a tree, clad in the very little clothing (fig. 6).⁵⁴ This practice of self-portraiture eventually shifted to the photographic observation of the younger boys who took part in the cult of *Clarism*. One of the first adolescents to be photographed was Adolf Schmitz. Nicknamed "Fino

5 Elisar von Kupffer, *Araphrodite and Butterfly*, 1915, 155x66, oil on canvas, CCE.



6 Elisar von Kupffer, *Saint Sebastian*, published in *Nackte Schönheit: Ein buch für Künstler und Aerste* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fritsch, 1907).



von Grajewo” or “Eros Messenger,” Adolf was the son of the couple’s first landlord in Berlin. Von Kupffer’s article on Sodoma was also illustrated by one of his photographs of an acolyte, in this case an image of Amleto Fanfani dressed as *Madonnina* (1908, fig. 7). Illustrative of the aesthetic preoccupations behind, “queer mysticism,” this photograph expresses a desire for religious purity through the inversion of gender and the use of cross-dressing.

Von Kupffer’s photographic productions seems to have also played with the Pictorialist project of the American artist Fred Holland Day (1864–1933), who had a handful of exhibitions at the beginning of the 20th century in London and Paris. For example, the image of another acolyte, Luigi (Gino) Taricco, dressed as a medieval knight, seems to have been inspired by themes used in Holland Day’s work, especially the wearing of leopard skin, medieval clothing, and the use of Christian imagery (figs. 8 and 9). Holland Day’s photographs were published in catalogues and other journals on photography that we know greatly interested von Kupffer. The symbolic and spiritual atmosphere of von Kupffer’s photographs, however, exceeded Holland Day’s theatrical compositions. For the project of *Clarismus*, moreover, these photographs – and the paintings that resulted from them – represented conversions, which in turn gave birth to divine reincarnation that regenerated male identity.

As the philosopher René Schérer demonstrated in his study of von Gloeden, von Kupffer and Otto Meyer Amdem, utopic visions had taken hold of a generation during this period, and helped Kupffer to develop his “queer mysticism.” To explain von Kupffer’s utopic cosmology,

7 Elisär von Kupffer, *Madonnina* (A. Fanfani), circa 1908, 1915. Photo. CCE.



Schérer utilized the metaphor of the angel in Honoré de Balzac's *Seraphita*: "The flesh of the image is a 'spiritual flesh,' directly and precisely visible in the child (...). The pictorial motif, with its inherent abstraction, is the operator of this manifestation."⁵⁵ Von Kupffer's pictorial operations, wherein bodies of adolescents were transformed into superior beings, proceeded from the consciousness of the artist himself. This "indestructible adolescent"⁵⁶ figure became an exaltation of eternal youth. According to Schérer, these investigations of the "dionysiac vibration"⁵⁷ were opposed to scientific evolutionism, and celebrated a new rhythm based on suffering, death, and resurrection. The artistic program advocated by von Kupffer and von Mayer, however, remained remote in Schérer's estimation, since the machinations of their eroticism were always distant from contemporary codified sexual practices.

In *The Mystery of the sexes*, a quasi-manifesto for Clarismus written by von Mayer in 1923, pansexualism and the belief that only sexual libido could explain human behavior was heavily criticized. This attack against the foundations of psychoanalysis⁵⁸ and the psychology of sexuality ran alongside the text's promotion of the androgynous desexualizing goals of Clarism's sexual utopia. In his book, von Mayer provided the reader with examples of behaviors that would allow for the coordination of sexual rhythms, as in musical harmonies. Physical attraction was shown to be made up of fluid energies that allowed the renewal of sexual and intellectual polarities. Only the redemption embodied by the

8 Elisàr von Kupffer, *Gino Taricco*, circa 1910, photograph, CCE.

9 Elisàr von Kupffer, *Warrior*, undated, oil on canvas, CCE.

10 (next page) Elisàr von Kupffer, *The Clear World of the Blessed*, 1923-30, 345x2590, oil on canvas, Fondazione Monte Verità/CCE.







“klangfigur”⁵⁹ (sound figure), could bring these energy poles into equilibrium: “(...) a spiritual state of form-like, driving to the pleasure of rhythmic harmony which lifts the whole soul and swings through it - an anticipation and notion of the highest stages of maturity (...).”⁶⁰

These sound figures, in combination with light (*clarity*), were given a physical dimension through dance. The cycle *Die Klarwelt der Seligen*⁶¹ (Parthenon Frieze of the Eros Faith, fig. 10) testifies to this connection of music, dance, and sexual idealism through the figure of the “araphrodite.” On 33 circular panels that describe the evolution of life through the cycle of the four seasons, von Kupffer created a series of neo-symbolist frescoes where utopic male bonding was explored. The technique of these images was the application of dry colors of resin to chalk panel. The naked male figures, with very static and stereotyped poses, were oriented in groups of two or three, locked in embraces and loving games. The saturated tones and flattened surfaces compress the figures into decor, like the cardboard cutouts of photography studios. Most of the poses were taken from other compositions, perhaps indicative of the series’ position at the end of von Kupffer’s artistic career. Previous studies that have examined these frescoes also mention the influence of Ludwig von Hofmann (1861–1945) and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898), both of whom the couple met during their travels. Contrary to these artists, however, the male beauty exalted by von Kupffer was connected to political issues around masculinity and male bonding, subjects that were avoided by von Hofmann and de Chavannes.

With von Kupffer’s composition *Resurrection* (fig. 11),⁶² the artist furthered his theories of androgyny through a

sublimated vision of mystical elevation, in this case through the loving communion of bodies on the cross. Highly reminiscent of the composition found in *The Loves of the Souls*⁶³ (1900) by the Belgian artist Jean Delville (1867–1953), this double-body image on the cross features similarly androgynous figures. The Symbolist conception of the androgynous initiated by Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918), art critic and head of the symbolist Rose-Croix Salon in Paris, can be connected to the theory of “queer mysticism” through its desire for the neutralization of masculine and feminine poles within a singular figure of chastity. For von Kupffer, it was through the syncretism of antiquity and medieval Christianity that his theories of androgyny were forged. In the *Resurrection*, the dream of male love within heteronormative culture is given form, consecrated by the light of a geometrized sun that recalls Christ’s halo.

Masculine identity rebuilt through androgyny was completely at odds with the pantheism of the *Jugendbewegung*, whose ideas were later coopted by National-Socialism and the Nazi party. Von Kupffer and von Mayer’s artistic practice of virilizing masculine identity through idealized desexualization not only helps us to understand how sexual difference was constructed, but also how their ideas later nourished studies on masculinity. It is far from surprising, then, that the first appearance of the term “masculinity” occurred in Germany, as opposed to “virility,” which was first used in England and France. Linked with the early years of homosexuality’s identification and framing, the artistic and theoretical practices of von Kupffer and von Mayer revealed a new utopia based on the ideal of transcendent sexuality (“queer mysticism”), which would bear fruit in the second part of the 20th century. All these operations resulted from a desire to give Man the image of eternity⁶⁴ that his virility did not allow him to possess since his masculine domination was being contested.

11 Elisar von Kupffer, *Resurrection*, undated, CCE.

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Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

- 1 For an analysis of the relations between art, science, and spiritualism at the turn of the century in Europe, see Maurice Tuchman, Judi Freeman and Carel Blotkamp, ed., *The Spiritual in art: abstract painting 1890–1985* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986) and Veit Loers, ed., *Okkultismus und Avantgarde. Von Munch bis Mondrian 1900–1915* (Frankfurt/M: Edition Tertium GmbH + Co, 1998).
- 2 Except recently Kai Buchholz, ed., *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, 2 vol. (Darmstadt, Institut Mathildenhöhe: Häusser, 2001).
- 3 Concerning Elisàr von Kupffer, see Claudio Berger, “Das Sanctuarium Artis Elisarion,” in *Die Lebensreform*, vol.2, 109–112; Cecile Beurdeley, *L'Amour bleu*, trans. Michael Taylor (Köln: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1994); Ekkehard Hieronimus, “Elisàr von Kupffer (1872–1942),” in *Ausstellungskatalog der Kunstballe Basel* (Basel: Kunsthalle, 1979), 2–16; Graziano Mandozzi, *Elisàrion : un santuario per il Clarismo* (Minusio: Comune de Minusio, 1996); Harald Szeemann, “Elisàr von Kupffer, dit Elisarion,” in *4e biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon* (Paris: RMN, 1997), 37–39.
- 4 See Jim Steakley, *The homosexual emancipation movement in Germany* (New York: Body Politics, 1975) and Michael Bolle, dir., *Eldorado, Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850–1950. Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur* (Berlin: Frölich und Kaufmann, 1984). Neither explored von Kupffer and von Mayer's writings.
- 5 See René Schérer, *Pari sur l'impossible: études fouriéristes* (Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1989) and Guy Hocquenghem, “Elisàr Von Kupfer,” in *Race d'Ep ! Un siècle d'images de l'homosexualité* (Paris: éditions Libre/Hallier, 1979), 30–33.
- 6 Fabio Ricci, *Ritter, Tod und Eros: Die Kunst Elisàr von Kupffers (1872–1942)* (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).
- 7 The principle of “queer mysticism” is based on the writings of René Schérer, Guy Hocquenghem and Gilles Deleuze. See among other writings, *Grande Encyclopédie des homosexualités: Trois Milliards de Pervers* (Paris: Recherches, 1973).
- 8 See Rebecca Ayako Bennette, *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion After Unification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, trad.K. Traynor, *The German Empire, 1871–1918* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997).
- 9 On monism in Germany, see John Heil, *Philosophy of mind. A contemporary introduction* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998); Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction publ., 2004).
- 10 The *KulturKritik*, or critique of the culture, was concerned with the material surroundings and political issues connected with aesthetics values. Fredrich Nietzsche is considered as one of the main culture critics in Germany at the end of the century. See Ralf Konersmann, *Kulturkritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008).
- 11 These ideas were developed in Ernst Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen: allgemeine Grundzüge der organischen Formen-Wissenschaft, mechanisch begründet durch die von Charles Darwin reformirte Descendenz-Theorie* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1866).
- 12 Ernst Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Exposition of the Principal Points of Human Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, volumes 1 and 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897) from the German version, *Anthropogenie oder Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1874).
- 13 George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig Pub, 1998), 4.
- 14 These concerns have been developed in various books. See, among others, J. Edward Chamberlain and Sander L. Gilman, *Degeneration. The dark side of progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985); L. Sander Gilman, *Differences and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- 15 The terms “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” appeared in a letter from Karl Maria Benkert (1824–1882) to Ulrichs dated the 6th of May, 1868. See Manfred Herzer, “Kerbeny and the Nameless Love,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 12 (1985): 1–26. I use “homosexuality” purposefully as a medical term, dissociating it from “male bonding” or “love between men”.
- 16 Ulrichs called love between men “Urnings,” a term he pulled from the speech in Plato's Symposium where Pausanias explains why Aphrodite's sister is called Uranus. See Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, trans. Michael A. Lombardi-Nash, *The Riddle of “Man-Manly” Love. The Pioneering Work on Male Homosexuality*, vol. 1 and 2 (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994), 23 and quotes from Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett, “Symposium, 3:304,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4 vol. (New York: Random House, 1937). On Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, see also Hubert C. Kennedy, “The ‘third sex’ theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 6 (1980–81): 103–11.
- 17 Otto Weininger, trans. Ladislaus Löb, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
- 18 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, vol.5–1 (1903): 128–129. On the connections between androgyny and intermediate sexes in Hirschfeld's theory, see Katharina Sykora, “Androgynie als ‘Genus tertium’ in Magnus Hirschfeld Theorie der ‘Geschlechtsübergänge,’” in *Querelles. Jahrbuch für Frauenforschung, Androgynie*, vol.4 (Stuttgart, Weimar: Vielfalt der Möglichkeiten, 1997), 37–39 and Charlotte Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld: a Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* (London: Quartet, 1986).
- 19 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreissigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet* (Stuttgart: J. Püttmann, 1930), 521.
- 20 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexualwissenschaftlicher Bilderatlas zur Geschlechtskunde* (Berlin: Püttmann, 1932).
- 21 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexualwissenschaftlicher Bilderatlas zur Geschlechtskunde*, 383, “Wie sich die unbewußte narzisstische Komponente im künstlerischen Schaffen auswirkt (...).”
- 22 Elisàr von Kupffer, *Der Neue Bund*, 1915–16, oil on canvas, 214 x 119 cm, Centro Culturale Elisarion (CCE), Minusio.
- 23 Elisàr von Kupffer, *Amor Dei Victoria*, 1917, oil on canvas, 160 x 117 cm, CCE.
- 24 On narcissism and homosexuality, see Jean Bergeret, ed., *L'érotisme narcissique: homosexualité et homoérotisme* (Paris: Dunod, 1999).
- 25 Eduard von Mayer, dir., *Elisàr von Kupffer, Aus einem wabrhaften Leben* (Minusio-Locarno, 1943).
- 26 Quote from Fabio Ricci, *Ritter, Tod und Eros*, 7.

- 27 Von Mayer wrote a dissertation on Schopenhauer, after studying in the University of Geneva. Eduard von Mayer, *Schopenhauers Aesthetik und ihr Verhältnis zu den ästhetischen Lehren Kants und Schellings*, dissertation unpublished (Halle a.S., 1897).
- 28 *Die toten Götter*, mentioned in Eduard von Mayer, dir., *Elisär von Kupffer*.
- 29 See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner androgyn* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois éditeur, 1990).
- 30 For an explanation of the construction of masculine bodies through the Greek ideal, see George L. Mosse, *The image of man. The Creation of Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Brian Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality and the Meaning of Sex* (New York: Saint Martins, 1990).
- 31 Eduard von Mayer, *Pompeii as an art city* (New York: A.Stokes Company, 1907), 5.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 33 Republished as John Addington Symonds, *Male Love. A Problem in Greek Ethics and Other Writings* (New York: Pagan Press, 1983).
- 34 His volumes on Italian Renaissance art, published during the 1860s and the 1870s, were especially influential. John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy* (London: Smith, Elder and Co; New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1903–1904).
- 35 On the history of Antique homosexuality and the progressive asceticism, see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Harrison G. Pope, et al., *The Adonis Complex: The Secret Crisis of Male Body Obsession* (Winnipeg: Free Press, 2000).
- 36 Eduard von Mayer, *Pompeii as an art city*, 30.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 45.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 41 On the history of French androgyny, see Frédéric Monneyron, *L'androgyné décadent. Mythe, figure, fantômes* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 1996). On German androgyny, see Ursula Prinz, *Androgyn. Sehnsucht nach Vollkommenheit* (Berlin: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 1987).
- 42 Elisär von Kupfer, *Lieblingsminne und Freundesliebe der Weltliteratur. Eine Sammlung mit einer ethisch-politischen Einleitung* (Berlin: Marita Keilson-Lauritz, 1995).
- 43 Elisär von Kupfer, “Die ethisch-politische Bedeutung der Lieblingminne. Einleitung zur demnächst erscheinenden Sammlung,” in *Der Eigene* (Berlin, October 1899), 182–199. *Der Eigene* was partially reproduced and translated in Hubert Kennedy, dir., *Homosexuality and male bonding in pre-Nazi Germany: the youth movement, the gay movement, and male bonding before Hitler's rise: original transcripts from Der Eigene, the first gay journal in the world* (Michigan: Harrington Park Press, 1992).
- 44 Elisär von Kupffer (Elisarion), “Giovan Antonio – il Sodoma, Der Maler der Schönheit. Eine Seelen- und Kunststudie,” in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen IX* (1908), 94, “Das Ewig-anmutige – das Eden-Ideal des Glaubens an Engel und Huris, auf Erden eine seltene Blüte, – ‘wo der Geschlechter Widerstreit in Einer gebunden’ ist das Begehrens und Erstrebenswerte – das Harmonische. Das ist ein weites Feld, dessen Bebauung ein eignes Werk verlangt. Freilich ist zum Verständnis Giovan Antonios fast unbedingt notwendig, was ich, als erster, ‘araphroditisch’ genannt habe – die harmonische Durchdringung des Kraftvollen mit dem Anmutigen. Diese Empfindung entwickelt sich bei Sodoma noch mehr und gelangt später zu seinem höchsten Ausdruck.”
- 45 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality II. The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurey (New York: Vintage Books), 245.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 254.
- 47 See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1987).
- 48 This is particularly relevant for masculinity studies, especially Raewyn W. Connell, *Gender and Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, ed., *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987).
- 49 The expression comes from German term “Klar,” meaning clarity, lightness. See Elisär von Kupffer, *Was soll uns der Klarismus – eine menschliche und soziale Neugeburt* (München, 1912).
- 50 The connections between the two movements have not been thoroughly explored. See Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins: Ascona, 1900 – 1920* (London: University Press of New England, 1986).
- 51 Elisär von Kupffer, *Die Entwaffnung (Il Disarmo)*, 1914, oil on canvas, 119 x 57cm, Fondazione Monte Verità/CCE.
- 52 Elisär von Kupffer, *Araphrodit und Falter*, 1915, 155 x 66 cm, oil on canvas, CCE.
- 53 For the connection between Wilhelm von Gloeden and the desire for a Mediterranean ideal, see Robert Aldrich, *The seduction of the Mediterranean: writing, art and homosexual fantasy* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993).
- 54 Photograph reproduced in Elisär von Kupffer, *Nackte Schönheit. Ein buch für Künstler und Aerste* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fritsch, 1907).
- 55 René Schérer, with Guy Hocquenghem, *Pari sur l'impossible: études fouriéristes* (Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1989), 100.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 104
- 57 *Ibid.*, 114.
- 58 Von Mayer wrote his criticism of psychoanalysis in Eduard von Mayer, “Psychoanalysis und Klarismus,” in *New Psychische Studien*, 48 (1921): 433-440.
- 59 Eduard von Mayer, *Das Mysterium der Geschlechter* (Pfullingen, 1923), 44.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 44, quoted in Fabio Ricci, Ritter, *Tod & Eros*, 114, “(...) ein geistiger Zustand gestalthaft fühlender Lust des rhythmischen Einklangs, der das ganze Wesen erhebt und durchschwingt – gerade eine Vorwegnahme und Ahnung höchster Reifestufen, (...)”
- 61 Elisär von Kupffer, *Die Klarwelt der Seligen*, 1923–1930.
- 62 Elisär von Kupffer, *Auferstehung*, undated, CCE.
- 63 Jean Delville, *L'Amour des âmes*, 1900, Musée communal des Beaux-arts d'Ixelles.
- 64 This term “image of eternity” is borrowed from Eric Michaud, *Un art de l'éternité. L'image et le temps du national-socialisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

Lure of the Abyss: Symbolism of Surface and Depth in Edvard Munch's *Vision* (1892)

I want life and its terrible depths, its bottomless abyss.
– Stanisław Przybyszewski¹

Symbolist artists sought unity in the Romantic spirit but at the same time they were often painfully aware of the impossibility of attaining it by means of a material work of art. Their aesthetic thinking has typically been associated with an idealistic perspective that separates existence into two levels: the world of appearances and the truly existing realm that is either beyond the visible world or completely separated from it. The most important aim of Symbolist art would then be to establish a direct contact with the immaterial and immutable realm of the spirit. However, in addition to this idealistic tendency, the culture of the fin-de-siècle also contained a disintegrating penchant which found support, for instance, in the Nietzschean “deconstruction” of such entities as the “self” and “spirit.” According to Nietzsche, there was no fundamental level beyond the shifting and changing world of appearance, and therefore we should embrace change rather than attempt to go beyond it. The Symbolist movement, in fact, appears to be powered by the tension created by these opposing aspirations, and to understand this complex phenomenon, one has to take into account both sides: the one that is trying

to hold on to the ideal, and the other that is at the same time ripping it apart.

This article reflects on this more general issue through analysis and discussion of a specific work of art, the painting *Vision* (1892) by Edvard Munch. This unconventional self-portrait represents a distorted human head floating in water. Peacefully gliding above it is a white swan – a motif that is laden with symbolism alluding to the mysteries of life and death, beauty, grace, truth, divinity, and poetry. The swan clearly embodies something that is pure and beautiful as opposed to the hideousness of the disintegrating head. The head separated from the body may be seen as a reference to a dualistic vision of man, and an attempt to separate the immaterial part, the soul or the spirit, from the material body. However, the setting is intentionally ambiguous: is the fundamental truth to be found in the realm of universal abstractions represented by the swan or is it hidden below in the abyss? Perhaps new kinds of truths and artistic visions could be discovered beneath the shimmering surface?

For Munch himself, *Vision* was one of the central images of the 1890s. It was shown in all his major exhibitions between 1892 and 1898, including the scandalous *Verein Berliner Künstler* exhibition of 1892.² Moreover, when in 1893 Munch started assembling the series entitled Love,

which would later evolve into the *Frieze of Life*, he planned to use *Vision* as the central image around which the other works would have been arranged. He decided to leave it out only after having been discouraged by the Danish artist Johan Rohde, who considered the whole painting a failure because he thought its symbolism was confusing and unclear.³ I believe, however, that what makes *Vision* such a fascinating image is probably related to the very same qualities that gave Rohde the reason to perceive it as a failure: the symbolism of this painting is extremely rich and complex. It is a work of art that refuses to yield to a simple and one-sided interpretation.

Due to this richness of meaning, it is impossible to follow all the leads that *Vision*'s symbolism may suggest, but the purpose of my analysis is to present this painting in a way that appreciates the dynamic interplay of meanings that is manifested in it. As I shall go on to argue, a certain sense of indeterminacy and a multiplicity of meanings became important elements of artistic production at the fin-de-siècle, and in order to appreciate this quality, my interpretations also have to remain to a certain extent open-ended. Munch himself expressed this idea in a very straightforward manner:

Explaining a picture is impossible. The very reason it has been painted is because it cannot be explained in any other way. One can simply give a slight inkling of the direction one has been working towards.⁴

1. Edvard Munch, *Vision*, 1892, oil on canvas 72x45 cm, Munch Museum, Oslo. Photo: Munch Museum / Munch-Ellingsen Group / BONO, Oslo 2014.



Technical Innovation and the Creative Process

Most of this article is devoted to a rather “literary” analysis of the symbolism reflected in the contrast between the misshapen head and the white swan, and the two levels of being that they suggest, but it is important to note that the formal qualities of this painting also add to the meanings that are read into it. I shall therefore begin with a brief discussion of the technically innovative elements of *Vision*, which reflect a broader tendency in the art of the period. The painting has features that resist the idea of the work of art as a finite object; it has an open-ended quality which draws attention to the process of its making, thus emphasizing its artificial character. At the same time, by remaining unfinished and sketchy, it eludes object status, instead harking towards something beyond materiality, something that is impossible to express directly in the material object. This indeterminacy of form corresponds with the multiplicity of meaning in Munch’s *Vision*.

The poet Max Dauthendey, who had been highly impressed with Munch’s 1892 exhibition and with *Vision* in particular, described Munch’s brushstrokes as “colorful colonies of bacillae.”⁵ This metaphor connects Munch’s work with contemporaneous scientific concerns. In addition, it refers to the unfinished quality of the painting as something that gives it life; “a colony of bacillae” is not a static entity but a continuously changing, living process. Munch’s desire to breathe life into his artworks went so far that he wanted to make room for physical transformation of the object. Reinhold Heller has suggested that *Vision* might have been subjected to one of Munch’s notorious “kill-or-cure treatments” which left his paintings weather-beaten and occasionally mouldy or covered in bird-excrement.⁶

Munch’s biographer Rolf Stenersen has given a lively description of these unconventional working methods:

An untiring experimenter, he tried everything – sometimes even squirting colors onto the canvas. Had he labored long and fruitlessly he might threaten his picture: “Watch out or I’ll give you a shower!” Or he might subject the picture to a more fiendish penalty by leaving it out in the open at the mercy of the sun and rain for weeks – a treatment he called the “horse cure.” As a result, he might by accident discover new color effects that would give him the necessary impetus to continue working on the canvas.⁷

These methods not only allowed the forces of nature to transform the colour and structure of the painting but they also opened it to the natural effects of time and aging.⁸ This kind of experimentation into nature’s way of creating has obvious affinities with August Strindberg’s ideas about the role of chance in the artistic process. In the essay entitled “The New Arts! or the Role of Chance in Artistic Creation” (“Du hasard dans la production artistique,” 1894) Strindberg explained artistic creativity as an organic process controlled by imagination rather than consciousness. “Imitate nature closely,” he states, “above all, imitate nature’s way of creating.” This, according to him, will be the art of the future, and an artwork like this is endowed with the gift of life, it “remains always new, it changes according to light, never wears out.”⁹ Strindberg put these ideas into practice in his own painterly activities, which were based on a method of imaginative perception. The artist sets his imagination into work by a process of alteration between the roles of the creator and the receiver, and between conscious and unconscious acts. Hence the artwork appears to come into being organically, simulating the creative processes of nature. Yet, at the same time, the alternation of roles introduces the artist’s conscious control into the process.¹⁰

In Strindberg’s essay the imitative aspect of art as such is not called into question but instead of copying *natura naturata*, the outward appearance of nature, the artist is to imitate *natura naturans*, the creative spirit of nature.¹¹ Rather than concentrating on the work of art as a material object, Strindberg emphasized the creative process of the artist which was associated with the processes of nature as well as the creative power of God. However, whereas Strindberg relied on unconscious automatism to introduce effects of the larger nature into his paintings, Munch always retained more control over the process of painting. Nevertheless, his method of scratching and scraping, painting over, and repeating adds a certain element of unconsciousness and contingency into the process. Antonia Hoerschelmann has compared this “modern aspect” of Munch’s working method to Andy Warhol’s “Factory Concept.” This is reflected, for instance, in an anecdote describing Munch’s manner of instructing the lithographer about colours by closing his eyes and blindly pointing the colours in the air. He would then go out for a drink and leave the printer to get on with his work. According to Hoerschelmann, the anecdote demonstrates Munch’s disregard for the physical presence of the artist during the production of his works. He consciously made room for an element of chance and even allowed other people’s intentions to influence the outcome. Similarly to the creative process carried out by Strindberg, Munch also shifted back and forth between active and passive elements of creativity.¹²

Both Strindberg’s and Munch’s approaches can be seen as attempts to find new ways of making art that would be liberated from the constraints of imitation and materiality. This issue was noted by Heller in an article written already in 1985, in which he discusses Munch’s works along with works by Gauguin, Degas, and Khnopff as examples of an almost contradictory interplay of overt materiality and

dematerialization. Heller has observed that although the Symbolist aesthetic was based on an idealistic view, the paintings at the same time appeared to contradict this idealism in the way that they draw attention to their materiality and the process of their making. Hence, he perceives Symbolist art not in terms of “a disjunction between the material and the ideal,” but rather as a dialogue between these two postulates.¹³ The technical innovativeness of Symbolism has only recently gained more emphasis in art historical research. It has been examined very convincingly by Rodolphe Rapetti who has stressed the quest for immateriality as one of the essential features of Symbolist art:

The Symbolist period was marked by a feeling of disgust towards painting, not only painting that pursued the truth of appearances but also painting that cultivated the glamour of the craft for itself. Instead, Symbolism favored a painting that disembodies itself, leaving its assigned path, through the impersonal brushwork of Neo-Impressionism or the use of “prismatic” colors, or a stress on color at the expense of pictorial substance, or a Cloissonist stylization that eschewed all illusionism, or the allusions to fresco in the work of Puvis de Chavannes and later Gauguin, or simply subjective and imaginary coloring.¹⁴

Dario Gamboni’s discussion of “potential images” assesses a broader phenomenon in the development of modern art, but it also adds to this new conceptualization of Symbolism and its relationship to modernism. Potential images, according to Gamboni, are intentionally ambiguous – both iconographically and in terms of representation. Their visual ambiguity gives them an open-ended and processual quality, and they depend on the imagining activity of the perceiver to come fully into being. This kind of indeterminacy and open-endedness has always been a part of pictorial presentation, but Gamboni maintains that it

became a major trend in the nineteenth century, originating at Romanticism and intensifying towards the end of the century.¹⁵

Contemporary critics like Stanisław Przybyszewski and Albert Aurier were conscious of these developments and they encouraged artists to experiment and find new means of expression. Aurier emphasized the artist’s right to exaggerate, attenuate, and deformate the directly signifying elements, such as forms, lines, and colours, not only according to his subjective vision, which happens in realist art as well, but also according to the idea that was to be expressed.¹⁶ He also wrote about Van Gogh’s paintings in which the materiality becomes so tangible that it is literally “flesh.” Yet, even with this overwhelming materiality, the spirit who knows how to find it, can grasp the thought, the essential idea beneath the surface.¹⁷ Although Aurier valued sophistication of technique, he preferred awkwardness to the overblown perfection of Salon art. Awkwardness is not something an artist should pursue as such but it can be valued as a sign of sincerity.¹⁸ Too much perfection, it seems, can destroy the originality of artistic expression.

When Przybyszewski published his little book on Munch’s art in 1894, he called attention to the expressive power of colour and form in Munch’s art. He saw it as the result of looking with the inner eye of “individuality,” by which he means the unconscious. Munch’s art, therefore, constitutes a radical break with tradition: “All previous painters were in effect painters of the external world, and they clothed every feeling they wished to express in the garb of some external process, allowed all mood and atmosphere to emerge from the external setting and environment.” Munch, on the other hand, “attempts to present psychological phenomena immediately through colour” and “his shapes and forms have been experienced musically, rhythmically.”¹⁹ Przybyszewski’s description

reflects Munch’s desire to render form and colour directly and universally meaningful. At the same time, it endows the artist with the ability to see beyond what ordinary people are capable of perceiving. It represents, therefore, a thoroughly modern transformation of the Romantic conception of the artist as a visionary.

The role of technical innovation in Munch’s creative process may also be interpreted in terms of the ideas presented by Hans Belting, who has argued that throughout the modern period (that is, the era of the art museum and the avant-garde), artistic production has been based on an ideal of absolute art that is impossible to capture in any single material object.²⁰ His claim is that this seemingly auto-destructive tendency has in fact been precisely what has fuelled art and driven it to search new means of expression. Belting talks about “an almost pathological fear of perfection” in the works of Cezanne and Rodin which was manifested as the aesthetics of the *non-finito*:

Works turned into nothing but preliminary devices that were not intended to attain a final form – devices not for a work but a vision of art behind the work. It was this vision that now came to represent the utopian idea of the former masterpiece. The idea could carry conviction only in the absence of realization; the individual work simply occupied the place of a perfection that was already impossible (...) The goal was no longer the perfected work, but the ceaseless perfection of an artistic vision that transcended simple visibility.²¹

The absolute work of art encompassed the ideal that served as a yardstick for all actual works but it could only exist beyond the actual material object. It was an unattainable dream that loomed somewhere behind the creative process and it could be manifested in the work of art only as long as it remained in an unfinished state.²² The processual and open-ended tendency in Munch’s art may be perceived as

a strategy to come to terms with the impossible ideal. It transposes the focus of the artwork from the material object towards an “imaginary space” where the artist, the artwork, and the viewer come together.²³

The Swan and the Ideal

There are several text fragments and sketches relating to the theme and subject of *Vision*. This is a feature that is typical for Munch’s working methods; with an almost compulsory determination he would repeat themes, motifs, and subjects, both in writing and in pictorial form, sometimes with less and sometimes with more variation.²⁴ The opposition of the “I” that dwells in the murky water and the pure and unattainable swan is present in all versions of the text. In one fragment, written on a page that also contains a drawing of a drowned man and a swan, he writes:

I lived down in the depths in the midst of slime and creatures – I forced myself up to the water’s surface, longing for the bright colours – A dazzling white swan glided there on the glossy surface which mirrored its pure lines – it also mirrored the light clouds in the sky – I tried to reach it with my hands – asked for it to come to me – but it could not – It could not reach over the circle of mud and slime that was around me . . .²⁵

The swan, which is the clearly mythological and narrative element of the painting, was a widely used motif in nineteenth century art, decoration, poetry, literature, and music.²⁶ With its gracefully curving long neck, it was naturally suited for decorative purposes of the Art Nouveau aesthetic. The shape of the swan peacefully gliding in a pond is uncomplicated and easily recognizable, and it carries appropriate associations of idyllic harmony and the beauty of nature with a slightly melancholic undertone of

romantic longing. Although this motif was almost banal in its popularity, Munch managed to turn it into a rich and complex symbol, taking advantage of its familiarity. Precisely because the swan carries such a wide range of associations, it was possible to induce it with several parallel layers of meaning.²⁷

The Finnish artist Axel Gallén (Akseli Gallen-Kallela²⁸) with whom Munch had a joint exhibition in Berlin in 1895 employed the motif of the swan in many of his works. For instance, in the painting *Lemminkäinen’s Mother* (1897), the swan appears as a multifaceted symbol reflecting the ideal of art, the mysteries of life and death as well as sexuality.²⁹ The painting depicts the mother of the hero Lemminkäinen lamenting over her son’s dead body. According to the legend described in the Kalevala, Lemminkäinen attempts to hunt the holy bird which lives in the river that borders the realm of death, but he is killed and dismembered in the process. His mother gathers the pieces of her son’s body from the dark water and brings him back to life. The swan is seen in the background, gliding in the pitch-black water of the river, gazing directly at the viewer. It has escaped completely unharmed from Lemminkäinen’s defiant effort to catch it, whereas the brave hero is now at the mercy of his mother’s love. The swan thus becomes a symbol of something that is impossible to attain. As the bird who reigns in the river that separates this world from the realm of death, it is in possession of the secrets of life and death.

The association of the swan with death is embodied also in the ancient myth of the swan’s song, according to which the mute bird only sings at the moment of death. The swan, being the bird of Apollo, has the gift of prophesying, and therefore is not afraid of dying. In classical mythology, the swan carries associations of unity, harmony, originality, and the lost Golden Age. This tradition was passed on to the fin-de-siècle generation through Romanticism and Neopla-

tonic mysticism. Gallén’s fin-de-siècle interpretation of the theme adds yet another level of mythical syncretism into the image. The theme of resurrection and the Pietà-esque composition connect Lemminkäinen with Christ. The descent to the realm of death and the dismemberment of the hero, on the other hand, link him with the mythical figure of Orpheus.

The erotic dimension of the symbolism of the swan can be connected with the Eros philosophy that was propagated by Stanisław Przybyszewski in the bohemian artistic circles of Berlin in the 1890’s. Przybyszewski, who was an aspiring writer as well as a student of neurology, was equally well versed in psychological research, occultism, and Satanism. Przybyszewski’s ideas were founded on the Schopenhauerian view of the erotic force as the basis of all creativity, artistic as well as biological.³⁰ The swan, as a symbol of sexuality, represents the sparkle of life in the realm of death; a reminder of the regenerative force that creates new life from death. Gallén’s swan is hence connected with the secrets of both love and death; it is desirable and dangerous at the same time, and forever unattainable. The swan in *Vision* is similarly elusive, and Munch also came to embrace the idea of the interconnectedness of life, death, and sexuality. Moreover, in both Munch’s and Gallén’s paintings the attempt to capture the ideal represented by the swan leads to bodily disintegration. Although the ideal is desirable, it is also something that threatens the integrity of the self.

Heller has suggested that the swan in *Vision* could also be seen as an image of woman as an object of desire. However, he notes that it reflects both the sensuality and the inapproachability and innocence of the woman, representing her plural nature as it was perceived by Munch. He then concludes that *Vision* is not only an image of Munch’s conception of woman but it also expresses his view of art; it is a

“visualization of artistic imagination.” *Vision*’s swan, as the swan of Apollo, is “the singer of art’s immortality.”³¹ Hence, we can interpret *Vision* as a vision of life and death and also a vision of art. The swan can then be seen as a symbol of the ideal that the artist is forever chasing yet never able to achieve. The artist’s tragedy seems to lie in his inability to separate his mind from the repulsive bodily functions and desires that are dragging him below the surface and keeping him away from the pure and beautiful ideal. This brings to mind the swan imagery in the poems of Mallarmé and Baudelaire. Mallarmé’s poem “Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui” is arranged around the cygne-signé wordplay which reflects the idea that swans have the ability to understand signs. The swan appears as a messenger of a higher and brighter reality, caught in icy frost but still remembering the other reality beneath the ice and hoping for the new day to break it free. A similar image can be found in Baudelaire’s poem “Le Cygne,” in which the bird is dragging its wings in the dirty ground, homesick for its native lake, and desperately thirsting for a refreshing stormy rain. Both poems describe the severe conditions of artistic creativity, and the artist’s infinite longing for the higher realm.

This theme of the artist chasing the ideal can also be reflected in connection with another artwork by Gallén. In the painting *Conceptio Artis* (1895), a man is trying to catch the secret of art and life symbolized by an elusive sphinx. The painting, which today exists only in fragmentary form, came into being as the result of a close exchange of ideas between Gallén and the author Adolf Paul, who was staying in Berlin and moving in the same circles with Munch and Przybyszewski. Apparently due to unfavourable criticism the artist decided to cut the painting into pieces circa 1919.³² As an image of the artist and his mission, *Conceptio Artis* can also be understood as an allegorical self-portrait. Here the sexual metaphor is emphasized: the artist

is represented as a naked man with a strong and vital body, and the seductive sphinx alludes to the motif of the femme fatale. The word “conception” in the name of the painting may refer to conception in the sense of the idea of art, or it can allude to conception as fertilization or impregnation. The second sense underlines the parallel between artistic and bodily creativity; the male artist is trying to capture the artistic ideal in order to fertilize it. This is the ultimate mystery from which art is born. But rather than this erotic dimension that we find in *Conceptio Artis*, Munch’s *Vision* emphasizes the unattainability of the swan. As Heller has suggested, the swan may be seen as a symbol of the ultimate ideal of art. This can be connected with the myth of the swan as the bird of Apollo. Since Apollo was the god of music and poetry, as well as of light and knowledge, the swan of Apollo was associated with the divine aspects of art and the artist.

The world of the swan is that of universal abstractions, the timeless and eternal world of the spirit. It is attractive because of its clarity and coherence. Yet the deep and dark abyss also has its appeal as the potential realm for new kinds of artistic discoveries. *Vision*, then, becomes a perfect illustration of the melancholic situation of the modern artist. In terms of the self, the swan represents the pure soul separated from the body. But perhaps this is, in the end, nothing more than an illusion. Perhaps the truth is hidden beneath the surface, and one who has seen it can never go back to believing in the illusion. In one text fragment connected to the theme of *Vision*, Munch writes:

I who knew what was concealed beneath the bright surface I could not be reconciled with one who lived in the world of illusions – where the pure colours of the sky were reflected on the sparkling [surface].³³

Orpheus and Other Disembodied Heads

The head in *Vision* appears to be completely separated from the body. It is trying to remain on the surface of the water, although it clearly has its home in the dark realms below where the body of the artist still resides – the body is not seen in the painting but it is visible in some of the studies. The disembodied head was a widely used motif in late nineteenth-century art, particularly in the works of Odilon Redon. Robert Goldwater maintains that Redon’s solitary heads typically do not carry any specific allegorical or religious reference. Rather, the head “suggests without being named, the soul or the intelligence, struggling to free itself of its corporeal inheritance and to rise towards union with a pantheistic spirit.”³⁴ This interpretation summarizes the general symbolism of the disembodied head – particularly as it was employed in the Symbolist context. However, by examining some of the mythological allusions of this motif we can elaborate on its multiple meanings. Dorothy M. Kosinski has observed that several of Redon’s disembodied heads can in fact be identified as Orpheus.³⁵ Other popular myths featuring the motif were the biblical story of Salome and Saint John the Baptist, and the ancient legend of Medusa. Through these associations, the motif of the disembodied head is capable of suggesting both spirituality and violence. It may refer to an idea of the mind of the artist as pure, spiritual, and immortal, capable of seeing beyond the limitations of the visible world. Yet, the heightened sensitivity of the artist also means that he is prone to extreme suffering.

Redon’s earliest rendering of the figure of Orpheus, *Head of Orpheus Floating in the Water* (1881) is the most unusual one, and the one that appears to be most directly related to *Vision*, because the head is floating in an upright position. One of the studies Munch made of the theme of

Vision, in fact, bears a very close resemblance to the charcoal drawing by Redon. Munch has with just a few lines sketched a head with black hair, not unlike the bushy mop in Redon's image, and a white swan is hovering above the head. In Redon's drawing instead of the swan there is a shining white triangle or pyramid, which, like the swan, can be interpreted as a symbol of ideal perfection.³⁶

The myth of Orpheus has several different associations which link it with many of the most central issues of late nineteenth-century art and culture. Occultism and religious syncretism gave the figure of Orpheus an elevated status as prophet, priest and initiator – a parallel and sometimes even a replacement for Christ.³⁷ In the highly influential book *The Great Initiates (Les Grands Initiés, 1889)*, the French poet and occultist Edouard Schuré represented Orpheus as one of the initiates into the ancient mysteries. The figure of Orpheus is associated with both Apollo and Dionysus and in this sense comes to symbolize the dual nature of man. According to the legend accounted by Schuré, Orpheus was the son of Apollo and a priestess, and was initiated into the mysteries in Egypt by the priests of Memphis. He then returned to Greece and formed a synthesis of the religion of Zeus and that of Dionysus. His followers received the sublime message through his teachings, and they passed it on to the people through religious rituals and poetry.³⁸ The mystical initiation was thus directly connected with poetry and art.

The Symbolist artists of the late nineteenth-century found in the figure of Orpheus a profound expression for their complex aesthetic-religious attitude. Kosinski has noted that they were the first artists since antiquity to depict the severed head of Orpheus.³⁹ Gustave Moreau's painting *Orpheus (1865)* had great influence on subsequent Symbolist renderings of the myth. It depicts the moment of victory after the tragic death when the Thracian maiden,

who is holding the head in her arms and contemplating it peacefully, has become aware of its power. The head of Orpheus is here an image of the eternal isolation of the artist, misunderstood and martyred and venerated only after his death. The death by dismemberment transforms Orpheus into a victim and a martyr and simultaneously sets the stage for the triumphant victory of his transcendence of death with the magical power of song and music. In Symbolist representations of the head of Orpheus an atmosphere of melancholic mourning is combined with the implication of victorious transcendence.

The head of Orpheus also reflects the belief that the body is a prison of the soul, and that this world can be transcended by releasing the soul from the body. The head separated from the body and miraculously continuing to sing and prophecy is a perfect manifestation of the idealist and anti-materialist aesthetics of Symbolism. The distorted head of *Vision*, on the other hand, although perhaps reflecting the wish to release the soul from the body, does not contain the promise of victory and transcendence. The pure ideal symbolized by the swan remains out of reach and the artist is condemned to his earthly existence. Symbolist depictions of the head of Orpheus can most often be interpreted in terms of the creative process: the head torn apart from the body symbolizes the painful yet potentially transcendent process of artistic creativity. Despite this violent undertone, these artworks are usually characterized by calmness, serenity, and ethereal beauty. The distorted head in *Vision* is in stark contrast with this; if it refers to the myth of Orpheus, it does so with a heavy dose of dark, pessimistic irony.

However, if the head in *Vision* is interpreted as that of Orpheus, then the white swan also becomes an image of the beloved Eurydice: she is what the artist most desires, the perfect ideal, and the harmonious Apollonian unity.

The artist is doomed to destroy his ideal; like the fateful backward glance of Orpheus that sends Eurydice back to Hades, the artist's attempt to reach the ideal is ultimately destructive. Yet his desire will never end, and it is what keeps him going. In Maurice Blanchot's essay "The Gaze of Orpheus" ("Le Regard d'Orphée," 1955) Eurydice is "the limit of what art can attain; concealed behind a name and covered by a veil, she is the profoundly dark point towards which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead."⁴⁰ The gaze of Orpheus symbolizes the simultaneously creative and destructive power of artistic inspiration.⁴¹

Another self-portrait in which Munch represents himself as a disembodied head is the small watercolour and ink painting entitled *Salome-Paraphrase (1894–98)*. The man's head is trapped in the woman's hair falling down and folding around his neck. The faceless woman is composed of black lines of Indian ink painted over the red background giving her an immaterial appearance; like the swan in *Vision*, she is perhaps nothing but a thought hovering above the man's head – but this makes her no less real. The woman does not need to be physically present to enforce his power over the man. Munch was interested in telepathy, and he believed that human beings communicated consciously and unconsciously sending and receiving signals that function like electricity or a telegraph. He also explained that in the paintings of the *Frieze of Life*, the long hair represents waves of communication.⁴²

The shape of the woman's hair resembles a vagina or a uterus from which the man's head is emerging.⁴³ Woman is the mystical birth giver and the secret behind all life. She is the reason for all of his suffering, but without her life would not exist at all. The name Salome in the title defines her as the castrating woman, the destroyer of men. Salome was one of the most popular "femmes fatales" in the art of the fin-de-siècle. Her legend was accounted thousands of times

in paintings, sculptures, and decorative objects, as well as in dance, music, plays, and poetry.⁴⁴ The reference to Salome also contains an allusion to the artist as Saint John the Baptist. The woman's hair around the man's neck folds itself into arms with which the woman holds the severed head of the martyr. John the Baptist was a saint, a prophet, and a martyr, and hence a perfect model for an image of the artist as a misunderstood visionary who sacrifices his own happiness for the sake of his art.

Gustave Moreau made numerous paintings and drawings of the legend of Salome, and in the painting *The Apparition* (1876) the head of Saint John is hovering in the air like a vision, radiating divine light. Some of Redon's images of disembodied heads can also be identified as Saint John. For instance, in a charcoal drawing from 1877, known as *Martyr* or *The Head of Martyr on a Plate* or *Saint John*, the head of Saint John rests peacefully on a plate. This extremely simplified image very closely resembles Redon's depictions of Orpheus. It is also possible to perceive the head in *Vision* as that of Saint John the Baptist; the circle on the water around the head could then refer to the plate on which the martyr's head was placed. Or perhaps the circle could also be seen as a fallen halo, turning this image into a representation of the artist as a fallen prophet. These allusions to prophecy and martyrdom present the artist as both heroic and misunderstood, and as an outsider in the sense of being at the margins of society, as well as in the more elevated sense of belonging to the select few who have gained a more profound understanding of the world. The religious associations sublimate the pain and emphasize the fact that this artistic suffering is something completely different from the everyday troubles of ordinary people. The suffering has a specific purpose; its aim is to give the artist the ability to see beyond the illusions and appearances of the ordinary world.⁴⁵

Nocturnal Visions

Vision appears to represent some kind of a visionary experience but it is something very different from what we may see in the images of spiritual vision and enlightenment which are quite common in Symbolist art. How, then, should we understand the painful state of the artist? I have already suggested that the surface of the water refers to two levels of being – the pure and beautiful realm of light above and the watery depths of unconsciousness below. In this sense *Vision* resembles Redon's painting *Closed Eyes* (*Yeux Clos*, 1890) which has become an emblem of Symbolist art and aesthetics. This painting represents an androgynous figure with closed eyes and a calm, dreamy expression. Only the head and shoulders are visible, the rest of the body is hidden below the surface of water.⁴⁶ In both *Vision* and *Closed Eyes* a human figure emerges through the surface of the water, and appears to be in between the two levels. The suggestion of watery depths below the surface in *Closed Eyes* may be seen as a reference to the realm of the unconscious, but the androgynous figure has an expression of calm and pleasurable ecstasy and seems to be in a state of ascent rather than descent. The painting embodies an experience of emerging from the unconscious depths towards a higher consciousness. The shimmering light that is reflected on the surface of the water, illuminating the right side of the figure's face and neck emphasizes the atmosphere of spiritual enlightenment. In *Vision*, on the other hand, the figure is neither descending nor ascending; it is as if he was caught in a limbo between the two realms. This painting is like a more pessimistic and ironic interpretation of the theme of Redon's *Closed Eyes*. The ecstatic dream has turned into a disturbing nightmare.

Munch's *Vision* embodies a Baudelairean antagonism between "spleen and ideal," between our disgusting bod-

ily existence and the world of the ideal which perhaps will always remain unattainable.⁴⁷ The soul yearns to separate itself from the corporeal being and purify itself in the realm of the spirit which also reflects the ideal order of art, but man is doomed to his earthly existence, and must endure terrible suffering. However, as we shall see, Munch also followed Baudelaire in his contention that heaven and hell alike could serve as sources of artistic inspiration. This dual aspiration is reflected in his famous claim in *Mon cœur mis à nu*:

There is in every man, at all times, two simultaneous tendencies, one toward God and the other to Satan. The invocation to God, or spirituality, is a desire to ascend: that of Satan, or animality, is the joy of descending.⁴⁸

In her study concerning the myth of the poet as seer in Romantic literature, Gwendolyn Bays has distinguished between two kinds of seers and two kinds of visionary experiences: the "nocturnal" or "orphyic" experience is related to the unconscious as it was later conceptualized by Freud, while the "mystical" experience pertains to the Platonic-Plotinian experience. Bays argues that until the mid-eighteenth-century, the Platonic-Plotinian mode was the predominant one, but the discovery of the unconscious at the beginning of the nineteenth century opened up a new mode of visionary literature which originated from the visions of the unconscious. The "nocturnal" visionaries described their experiences using symbols of water, darkness, and descent, as opposed to the symbols of fire, light, and ascent employed by the mystics.⁴⁹ This distinction may be employed as a useful tool for analysing the different aspects of the visionary experience. However, we should also be aware that a lot of the interesting tension in Symbolist art stems precisely from the conflict between an aspiration towards light and purity and the simultaneous lure of the dark abyss. Bays's interpretation places too much

emphasis on the “confusion of ways” between the mystical and the nocturnal experiences. Bays views Symbolism, along with Surrealism, as a rebirth of the Romantic idea of the poet as seer. However, she maintains that while the theoretical ideal of the Symbolists was the search for the Absolute, that is, the Neoplatonic mystical experience (which had also been appropriated by the Christian tradition), they mistakenly resorted to the means of occultism and the unconscious to achieve this. In other words, their aim was to ascend but instead they descended. Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and several other Romantics and Symbolists, are defined as “nocturnal seers ... because of the dark regions into which they delved at such a terrible price to their health and sanity.”⁵⁰

Rimbaud is one of the most famous representatives of the poetic tradition that sought to transcend the conscious mind, and his example demonstrates that the visionary experience of the artist did not necessarily bring about personal happiness. To become a visionary and to be able to see beyond the everyday world of appearances, the artist must open himself to intense suffering as well as to joyful ecstasies. Rimbaud did not hesitate to hurl himself into a frenzy induced by drugs and alcohol in order to capture his dark vision. He found inspiration from Baudelaire, who in *Paradis Artificiels* had accounted his own hashish-infused dreams. For Rimbaud, these dreams and visions were the true substance of poetry, and he believed that the “disorganization” of his senses caused by intoxication would make them more acute. This meant a descent into hell, and it was a form of self-sacrifice. What was important was the mission, not the individual. Even if the individual perishes, he will have done his part in leading mankind in its road to progress. Other “horrible workers” will come after him and continue the mission.⁵¹ For Rimbaud, suffering was both the cause and effect of artistic creativity; the extreme

sensitivity or the artist makes him more prone to pain and suffering but this pain can also heighten his vision.

This aesthetics of sickness and suffering had a deeply personal meaning for Munch. Ever since the turn of the 1890s when he started to diverge from Naturalism, he had to defend himself and his art against several accusations of sickness. In 1891 he was the subject of a particularly violent attack on behalf of a twenty-six-year-old medical student Johan Scharffenberg who, using the ideas put forward by the Hungarian-German author Max Nordau, set out to prove that Munch’s art was the product of a mind degenerated by inherited illness and therefore a threat to the health and sanity of Norwegian youth. Munch himself was in the audience, along with many of his friends who came to his defence. Nevertheless, the image of Munch as a sick man lingered in the minds of the Norwegian public.⁵² A sign of these conflicts can also be seen in Munch’s most famous image: in the 1893 version of *The Scream* in the National Gallery in Oslo, a handwritten comment can be made out in the blood red sky, stating: “Could only have been painted by a madman” (“Kan kun være malt af en gal mand!”). It is not entirely clear whether Munch has written it himself or if it was added by a visitor in one of his exhibitions, but what is significant is that Munch allowed it to remain there.⁵³

However, although Munch genuinely seemed to believe in his own inherited sickness, we should not automatically perceive this in terms of pessimism. It can also be understood as conscious role-playing; he assumed the role that was forced upon him, but endeavoured to turn it into his advantage. As Patricia Berman has pointed out, Munch truly believed that extreme emotional states as well as a marginal position in relation to the bourgeois society were stimulating forces which could lead to a new kind of aesthetic.⁵⁴ Among Munch’s friends and colleagues the interest

in mental disturbances was motivated first and foremost by the desire to perceive the world in a way that was different from ordinary consciousness. This was the reason why they studied the very latest developments of psychological and neurological research. Some of the most popular sources for these artists and writers were Théodule Ribot, Hippolyte Bernheim, and Max Nordau. All these thinkers questioned the coherence of the human subject, and instead represented the human mind as fragmented and irrational, controlled by unconscious impulses.⁵⁵ Przybyszewski was well aware of Munch’s tendency to venture into unknown terrain when he wrote:

Munch paints the delirium and the dread of existence, paints the feverish chaos of sickness, the fearful premonitions in the depths of the mind: he paints a theory which is incapable of logical elucidation, one which can only be experienced obscurely and inarticulately in the cold sweat of direst horror, the way in which we may sense death although we properly cannot imagine it to ourselves.

Considering the centrality of the idea of creative suffering in Munch’s art, it is probably not too implausible to propose that the tangled wisps of hair in *Vision* could also refer to Medusa’s mane of snakes.⁵⁶ The head of Medusa has been throughout the history of art one of the most popular motifs of the disembodied head. Medusa was one of the three Gorgons, the mythical female monsters whose one look could turn men and beasts into stone. Unlike her gruesome sisters, however, Medusa was mortal and originally very beautiful. According to Ovid’s account of the legend, Neptune became enamoured of her and seduced her in the temple of Minerva. This provoked the anger of Minerva who punished Medusa by changing her beautiful hair into snakes. Medusa was killed by the hero Perseus who, using a mirror to avoid her petrifying look, cut off her head.⁵⁷

In fin-de-siècle culture the most common association of the figure of Medusa, stemming from the myths fascinating combination of beauty and horror, was that of the femme fatale. Jean Delville's *Idol of Perversity* (1891) is one of the most blatant expressions of this theme. Sigmund Freud has associated the head of Medusa with castration anxiety, and Patricia Mathews interprets Delville's work in these terms: "The femme fatale's seductively veiled body, trance-like gaze, and especially her medusa-like hair, are classic Freudian signs of castration anxiety."⁵⁸ Munch's many female figures with long dangling strands of hair can be associated with Medusa as the threatening woman. However, the distorted half-rotten head floating in water is clearly no castrating femme fatale. If we wish to apply the myth of Medusa to this work, we have to look for other associations. In Nordic fin-de-siècle literature Medusa also functioned as a symbol of pessimism and decadence. The myth of Perseus's encounter with Medusa was seen to reflect the existential position of man in the modern world.⁵⁹ To avoid the look of Medusa, then, means avoidance of facing the horrible truth that existence is fundamentally meaningless and that we are powerless in the face of fate. This Medusa as a symbol of fatalism and disgust for life we encounter in Gustaf Geijerstam's novel *Medusas huvud* (Head of Medusa, 1895), as well as in the novels and essays of Munch's friend Ola Hansson.⁶⁰ In *Sensitiva amorosa* (1887), a collection of pessimistically inclined novels about the impossibility of love in the modern world, Hansson reflects on the fate that works like the petrifying look of Medusa: "... is it fate, the old malignant fate raising its Medusa head in front of the modern fatalist?"⁶¹ And in his essay on Edgar Allan Poe (1889/1921) he writes:

What he depicts in human nature is its basis in nature and its night side, the secretive, the abnormal, in the

darkness of which all proportions are twisted awry, obsessions rise up like the heads of Medusa, anguish stalks like some ghost at midnight, incomprehensible impulses shine like a woman's sea-green eyes, which must be pursued wherever they lead, no matter whether it is as revolting as bathing in warm blood and your hair stands on end.⁶²

The Medusa head as a symbol of the horror and disgust of life is also present in Munch's own writing. He associates it with the loss of innocence at the onset of sexuality.⁶³ Munch was haunted by the painful image of his youthful love affair with an older woman, Millie Thaulow, whom he calls "Mrs Heiberg" in his diaries. In 1890, five years after the affair had ended, he writes:

Was it because she took my first kiss that she robbed me of the taste of life – Was it that she lied – deceived – that she one day suddenly shook the scales from my eyes so that I saw the medusa's head – saw life as unmitigated horror – saw everything which had once had a rosy glow – now looked grey and empty.⁶⁴

The association with sexuality and desiring women may serve as a link between the myth of Medusa and that of Orpheus. The death of Orpheus is caused by desiring women who kill him because they are jealous of his eternal love for Eurydice.⁶⁵ According to his own account, Munch became aware of the horror of life as a result of his first sexual experiences with an older woman. Hence, the desiring woman is seen as the origin of the horror of life. Sexuality is the fundamental reason for all suffering, and it is intrinsically linked with death. The deathly power of vision is also connected with both myths: the man who looks directly at Medusa will be turned to stone; in the Myth of Orpheus, the fateful backward glance sends the beloved Eurydice back to Hades.

Matters of Life and Death

Munch's art manifests a constant struggle with religious questions and coming to terms with the idea of death. He was unable to find any consolation in the Christian faith and its promise of salvation and eternal life. Yet the futility of life without any idea of an afterlife was hard to bear.⁶⁶ He had rebelled against his father's pietistic Christianity already during his Bohemian period in the 1880s but he was never averse to religion or spirituality as such.⁶⁷ The problem for him was how to find a spiritual outlook that would be suitable for the modern world in which the existence of God seemed doubtful to say the least.

In the painting *The Empty Cross* (1899–1901) Munch presents an allegorical image of the world in which all traditional moral and spiritual values have lost their meaning.⁶⁸ The cross stands empty and the blood red sun is shining its last rays upon the barren landscape. Munch himself is dressed in the black robes of a monk – he is playing with the literal meaning of his surname.⁶⁹ Behind his back a group of people appears to be engaged in all kinds of immoral activities, whilst others have fallen over the cliff into the angry sea and are struggling against drowning. These floating heads are not unlike the one that we encounter in *Vision*. In a text related to this image, Munch writes:

Purple red as through a sooty glass the Sun is shining over the World – On the hills in the Background stands the empty Cross and weeping Women pray to the empty Cross – the Lovers – the Whore – the Drunkard – and the Criminal are on the ground below – and to the right in the Picture – nis a Slope down to the Sea – Men are stumbling down the Slope – and Terrified – they cling to the Edge of the Cliff – a Monk stands in the midst of the chaos, staring bewildered, and – with

the terrified Eyes of a Child at all this – and ask why, whereto? – It was me now – furious Love and Vice in the Town – the terror of Death was lurking behind – a blood-red Sun shines over everything – and the Cross is empty.⁷⁰

We can see a reflection of Munch's hollow-cheeked appearance in several figures in the background: in the man pressing his head into the whore's breast, in the face of the man sitting on the ground behind the monk's head, as well as in one of the floating heads. The image of Munch himself as a drowning man connects this work directly with the theme of *Vision*. *The Empty Cross* represents the artist as an outsider. He turns his back to the sensual pleasures of life and chooses the ascetic life of a monk. But the question remains: "why, whereto?"

Berman has noted how modernity and Christian tradition come together in Munch's work – particularly in many of the subjects associated with the *Frieze of Life*.⁷¹ For instance, in the famous *Madonna* – to take a very straightforward example – allusions to the Holy Virgin are brought together with associations of the modern woman as the desiring and dangerous "femme fatale." The painting originally contained a wooden frame, the reflection of which can still be seen in the lithograph version of the motif: the woman is enclosed within a frame decorated with spermatozoa, and in the lower left-hand side corner sits a little foetus, sadly hugging itself and gazing at the viewer with empty, round eyes. The woman, shown at the height of sexual ecstasy, is at the same time fulfilling her sacred duty as the birth giver. Yet, death is reflected in her face; the shape of the skull can easily be perceived through her features. And the sad little foetus resembles the Peruvian mummy which Robert Rosenblum has suggested as a possible visual source also for the figure in *The Scream*.⁷² The image of this very same mummy was also employed

several times by Gauguin – most famously in his monumental painting about life and death and the meaning of existence, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897). In both Gauguin's and Munch's art this mummy figure appears as a symbol of the interconnectedness of life and death. For Munch, as for many of his contemporaries, the monistic idea of death as transformation provided a release from the dualistic system which appeared to be the source of all human suffering. However, the new secular religion ultimately failed to provide the soothing assurance that Munch was searching for. In his notebook he describes an experience in Saint-Cloud outside Paris where he lived in 1889–90. A sensation of the approaching spring on a winter day awakened his faith in the eternal cycle of life. However, we can see that the warm and joyful feeling of unity with the cosmos does not last very long and he ends up feeling "chilled to the bone":

To me it seemed as if becoming united with this life would be a rapturous delight, to be one with the earth at all times fermenting, always being warmed by the sun, and nothing would pass away. That is eternity. – I would be united with it and from my rotting body plants and trees would sprout. Trees and plants and flowers. And they would be warmed by the sun, and nothing would pass away. That is eternity. – I stopped suddenly. As if from a funerary chapel, freezing cold, a slight breeze rose up. And I shuddered, and went home to my room, chilled to the bone.⁷³

The cosmos may be immortal but from the point of view of the individual this conception provides very little comfort. Still, the monistic and cyclical perspective remained the best available solution to the questions of life and death – and one which could incorporate both spiritual and scientific perspectives into one system of belief that was ancient as well as modern.

The notion of death generating new life was something that occupied Munch's thoughts throughout his life, and it was an idea that kept him going as an artist. Heller may be correct in his conclusion that the swan in *Vision* represents immortality. But the word "vision" in the title is to be understood as something that is not really true – an illusion. Perhaps, then we should understand that the disgusting bodily existence beneath the surface is the fundamental level of truth, and the realm of the swan on the shimmering surface is nothing but an illusion. Whether we believe the truth of existence to be found by means of ascent or descent depends on what kind of truth we are looking for. The Platonic truth exists, as it were, above the phenomenal world, in the pure heaven of eternal abstractions – this is the realm of the swan. Nietzsche, on the other hand, situates the truth behind or below the world of appearances. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Apollonic state is compared to a blissful dream, whereas the Dionysian resembles intoxication. The Dionysian artist may be pictured "sinking down in his Dionysian intoxication and mystical self-abnegation."⁷⁴

In an undated note Munch has written about life as a beautiful illusion, like reflection of air and light on the surface of water. But the horrible truth – death – is hiding in the depths:

And life is like this calm surface – it mirrors the bright colours of the air – pure colours – the hidden depths – with their slime – their creatures – like death –⁷⁵

This passage echoes the Nietzschean idea that life as we know it is nothing but a reflection on the surface, a beautiful illusion. The disgusting and unavoidable truth of death and destruction resides in the abysses below. The swan in *Vision* could then be seen as a beautiful illusion, the "Apollonian veil," which serves to hide the horrible truth. The Dionysian, however, is also "the eternal life beyond all phenomena" and "the eternal and original artistic power."⁷⁶

The duty of the artist would then be to delve into the depths no matter how painful it may be, and find joy in this experience of self-abnegation. To become a true artist, one must be prepared to descend into unknown depths and to endure enormous suffering, and this also involves an abandoning of one's individuality in the traditional sense.

Vision reflects a rather pessimistic view of the world, but Munch was not prepared to draw away from life and to find release in solipsistic resignation. His artistic activities attest to a constant search for meaning. The Christianity of his father, which according to Munch was verging on insanity, was not an option. Neoplatonic idealism was impossible to reach – the feathers of the swan were stained – and a Schopenhauerian asceticism would have estranged him from the very substance of his art. For an artist who wanted to unravel the mystical forces behind life, an active engagement with life, no matter how horrifying it may be, was absolutely essential. Przybyszewski translated this artistic attitude into words in his novel *Overboard*:

What I want? What I want? I want life and its terrible depths, its bottomless abyss. To me art is the profoundest instinct of life, the sacred road to the future life, to eternity. That is why I crave great big thoughts, pregnant with meaning and content, thoughts that will lay the foundation for a new sexual selection, create a new world and a new understanding of the world. For me art does not end in rhythm, in music. Art is the will that out of nonexistence conjures up new worlds, new people.⁷⁷

A longer and somewhat modified version of this article has been published as one chapter of my doctoral dissertation *Ideal and Disintegration – Dynamics of the Self and Art at the Fin-de-Siècle* (University of Helsinki, 2014).

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

- 1 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Homo Sapiens: A Novel in Three Parts*, trans. Thomas Seltzer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1915), 33. This comment is made by the writer Erik Falk in the first part of the novel trilogy, entitled *Overboard* (1896), believed to be a *roman à clef* describing Przybyszewski's own experiences in Berlin and Munich. The character Falk is probably modelled after the author himself. The novels were originally published in German as *Über Bord* (1896, *Overboard*), *Unterwegs* (1895, *By the Way*) and *Im Malstrom* (1895, *In the Maelstrom*).
- 2 The exhibition was closed after having been open to the public for only one week. It was re-opened on December 26 at the Equitable-Palast. See, for example, Reinhold Heller, *Edvard Munch's "Life Frieze": Its Beginnings and Origins* (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University 1969), 29-30, 31; Reinhold Heller, *Munch: His Life and Work* (London: John Murray 1984), 100-101, 111; Iris Müller-Westerman, *Munch by Himself* (London: The Royal Academy) 2005, 29, 56 fn5.
- 3 See Heller, *Edvard Munch's "Life Frieze"*, 33-37; Reinhold Heller, "Edvard Munch's 'Vision'," *Art Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1973): 229; Müller-Westerman, *Munch by Himself*, 29.
- 4 Manuscript 1890-1892, The Munch Museum: MM N 29. English translation cited from Poul Erik Tøjner, *Munch in His Own Words*, trans. Ian Lukins and Jennifer Lloyd (Munich: Prestel 2003), 134.
- 5 Heller, "Edvard Munch's 'Vision'," 210.
- 6 *Ibid.* 213.
- 7 Rolf Stenersen, *Edvard Munch: Close-Up of a Genius*, trans. Reidar Dittman (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag 1969), 40.
- 8 Nowadays most of Munch's paintings have been conserved to death, so to speak; they have been cleaned and varnished to stop and even reverse the natural transformation that the artist had intended as a continuous process. See Dieter Buchhart, "Disappearance – Experiments with Material and Motif," in *Edvard Munch: Theme and Variation*, ed. Antonia Hoerschelmann and Klaus Albrecht Schröder (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz 2003), 27.

- 9 Strindberg, "The Role of Chance in Artistic Production," in *Selected Essays*, ed. and trans. Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), 103-107.
- 10 See Strindberg's description of the creation of the painting *Wonderland* (1894). Strindberg, "Role of Chance," 106.
- 11 *Natura naturans* is a concept that was employed by Friedrich Schelling and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to describe the imaginative power of nature which presupposes a bond between nature and man's soul. Only by capturing this power would the artist be able to imitate nature truly. This also reflects the idea that nature is in a constant state of becoming and thus must originate from spirit. See James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1981), 83, 319, 333, 358.
- 12 Antonia Hoerschelmann, "Crossover: Munch and Modernism," in *Edvard Munch: Theme and Variation*, 14-15.
- 13 Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," *Art Journal* 45, no 2 (1985): 149, 152.
- 14 Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 103. On the Symbolists' use of colour as an expressive tool, see also Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, *Colour Asceticism and Synthetist Colour: Colour Concepts in Turn-of-the-20th-Century Finnish and European Art*. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2012).
- 15 Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, trans. Mark Treharne (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 10, 18. 105-106.
- 16 "... non seulement suivant sa vision individuelle, suivant les modes de sa personnelle subjectivité (ainsi qu'il arrive même dans l'art réaliste), mais encore de les exagérer, de les déformer, suivant les besoins de l'Idée à exprimer." G.-Albert Aurier "Le Symbolisme en peinture – Paul Gauguin," in *Œuvres posthumes*, ed. Remy de Gourmont (Paris: Mercure de France, 1893), 215.
- 17 Aurier, "Les Isolés: Vincent van Gogh," in *Œuvres*, 262.
- 18 Patricia Mathews, "Aurier and Van Gogh: Criticism and Response," *Art Bulletin* LXVIII, no I (1986): 76.
- 19 Przybyszewski, *Das Werk des Edvard Munch* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1894) 13-14. English translation cited from *Art in theory 1815-1900*, ed. Harrison et al., 1046-50.

- 20 In his book *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London: Reaktion Books 2001, trans. Helen Atkins) Hans Belting presents a conceptual history of art centred on the idea of absolute art. He traces the history and development of the modern conception of art from its beginnings at Romanticism to the period after the Second World War when art production increasingly turned away from the traditional idea of the “work” as the definitive end of the creative process. The book was originally published in German in 1998 as *Das Unsichtbare Meisterwerk. Die modernen Mythen der Kunst*). The English edition omits three chapters from the original German version.
- 21 Belting, *Invisible Masterpiece*, 202.
- 22 Belting, *Invisible Masterpiece*, 12. There probably is no better illustration for this idea than Henry Fuseli’s *The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Antique Ruins*, 1778-79. The modern artist who sits in mourning is physically dwarfed by the size of the sculpture fragments that are all that remains of the magnificent whole that once was there. Even in fragmentary form – or perhaps precisely due to their fragmentary form – the grandeur of these monuments of the past is too much for the artist to bear. See Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (London: Thames & Hudson) 1994, 7-8.
- 23 I borrow the concept of an “imaginary space” from Dee Reynolds who uses it in the context of nineteenth century Symbolist poetry and early twentieth century abstract art. As is evidenced by her choice of material, Reynolds does not establish parallels between Symbolist poetry and Symbolist visual art. She claims that the disruption of communicative codes of Symbolist poetry where the medium itself becomes an object of aesthetic transformation does not become a central issue in painting until the advent of abstract art. I believe, however, that the theoretical construction that Reynolds presents in her book captures a phenomenon that is central to modern art and with a few modifications would be applicable to very different kinds of artistic production. See Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist aesthetics and early abstract art: Sites of imaginary space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 7, 225, and *passim*.
- 24 This aspect of his art was the focus of the 2003 exhibition entitled “Edvard Munch: Theme and Variation” (Albertina, Vienna).
- 25 Manuscript c. 1896 (?), The Munch Museum: MM T 2908. The drawing has previously been dated for c. 1892 but Müller-Westerman suggests a later date because the arrangement of the text and picture resembles Munch’s illustrations to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*, which he created in Paris in 1896. See Müller-Westerman, *Munch by Himself*, 2005, 56n12.
- 26 Heller, “Edvard Munch’s ‘Vision,’” 214-225.
- 27 Riikka Stewen has employed the term “paraphrase” to describe the way Symbolist artists worked with this kind of cultural material. They used elements of myths and legends, allegorical images, poems, etc. in an allusive and fragmentary way that transforms and alters their meanings. Riikka Stewen “Rakkauden kehissä: Magnus Enckellin mytologiat” / “I kärlekens kretsar: Magnus Enckell’s mytologier” / “Circles of Love: The mythologies of Magnus Enckell,” in *Magnus Enckell 1870-1925*, ed. Jari Björklöv and Juha-Heikki Tihinen, trans. Tomi Snellman and Camilla Ahlström-Taavitsainen (Helsinki: Helsingin kaupungin taidemuseo 2000), 50-54.
- 28 Axel Gallén started to sign his paintings with the more Finnish sounding name Akseli Gallen-Kallela from 1907 onwards.
- 29 My discussion of *Lemminkäinen’s Mother* is based largely on Salme Sarajas-Korte’s interpretation of the painting. See Salme Sarajas-Korte, “Axel Gallénin joutsensymboliikasta,” in Juha Ilvas, ed., *Akseli Gallen-Kallela* (Ateneum: Helsinki 1996); Salme Sarajas-Korte, “Valon ja pimeyden lintu,” in *Pinx. Maalaustaide Suomessa 1: Suuria kertomuksia*, ed. Helena Sederholm et al. (Espoo: Weilin+Göös 2001).
- 30 See Carla Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel: A Study in Early Modernism* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia 1972), 38-39, 40.
- 31 Heller, “Edvard Munch’s ‘Vision,’” 227, 231-232, 243.
- 32 See Minna Turtiainen, “We Could Amuse Ourselves by Teaching the Symbolists Symbolism,” in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, trans. Jüri Kokkonen (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011).
- 33 Cited from Müller-Westerman, *Munch by Himself*, 30.
- 34 Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (New York: Harper & Row 1979), 119.
- 35 Dorothy M. Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press 1989), 199.
- 36 See Gösta Svenæus, *Edvard Munch: Im männlichen Gebirn* (Lund: Vetenskaps-societeten i Lund 1973), 73. Svenæus was the first to point out the similarity between Munch’s sketch and Redon’s *Orpheus’ Head Floating in the Water*. He has noted that Munch could have seen this work in the Durand-Ruel Gallery in Paris in 1892.
- 37 The Myth of Orpheus has several similarities with the story of Christ: both are teachers of the people, both transcend death, and both end up in martyrdom followed by the ultimate victory. In the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke Orpheus becomes almost a substitute for Christ. See Kosinski, *Orpheus*, 256.
- 38 Edouard Schuré *The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions*, trans. Gloria Rasberry (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks 1977), 231. See also Kosinski, *Orpheus*, 1-2, 205.
- 39 Kosinski, *Orpheus*, 193-194.
- 40 Maurice Blanchot, “The Gaze of Orpheus,” in *The Gaze of Orpheus and other literary essays*, ed. P. Adams Sitney, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown NY: Station Hill), 99.
- 41 Kosinski, *Orpheus*, 125-126.
- 42 In a letter draft to Jens Thiis he writes: “The bowed line also relates to the discovery of and belief in new energies in the air. Radio waves, and the new communication methods between people. (The difference is that I symbolised the connection between the separated entities by the use of long waving hair it also occurs in the *Frieze of Life*.) The long hair is a kind of telephone cord.” Notebook 1933-1940, The Munch Museum: MM N 43. English translation cited from Tøjner, *Munch in His Own Words*, 148.
- 43 See Shelley Wood Cordulack, *Edvard Munch and the Physiology of Symbolism* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2002), 72-73. Cordulack compares the shape to a scientific drawing of a cross-section of a uterus.
- 44 See Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the “Fin de Siècle”* in Europe, ed. Jefferson T. Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2002), 104-138.
- 45 See Alexander Sturgis and Michael Wilson, “Priest, Seer, Martyr, Christ,” in *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Johanna Stephenson (London: The National Gallery 2006), 139.
- 46 I am referring here to the most famous version of the work, the oil painting which nowadays resides at Musée d’Orsay in Paris. Redon made several versions of the work, the first of which is from 1889 and known as *Au ciel*. See Fred Leeman, “Yeux Clos,” in *Odilon Redon: Prince du Rêve 1840-1916*, ed. Marie-Claude Bianchini, trans. Marc Binazzi (Paris: Grand Palais 2011), 228-229.

- 47 The first part of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1861) is entitled "Spleen et idéal," and many of the poems also deal with the dual sense of being.
- 48 "Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade: celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre." Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux Intimes: Fusées, Mon cœur mis à nu*, ed. Adolphe Van Bever (Paris: G. Crès, 1920), 57.
- 49 Gwendolyn Bays, *The Orphic Vision: Seer Poets from Novalis to Rimbaud* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press 1964), 4, 19-20.
- 50 Bays, *Orphic Vision*, 7.
- 51 Ibid. 14.
- 52 Heller, *Munch*, 155; Patricia Berman, "Edvard Munch's Self-Portrait with Cigarette: Smoking and the Bohemian Persona," *The Art Bulletin* 75 (1993): 629-630.
- 53 Heller "Could Only Have Been Painted by a Madman, Or Could It?" in *Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art 2006), 17, 32 n1, n2.
- 54 Berman, "Edvard Munch's Self-Portrait with Cigarette," 629.
- 55 Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, 198.
- 56 This has been suggested by Juha-Heikki Tihinen who refers to Vision in connection with Magnus Enckell's painting *Head* (1894) and the theme of the disembodied head. Tihinen links Vision primarily with Redon's Orpheus motif but he notes that it can also be viewed in terms of the head of Medusa or the myth of John the Baptist and Salome, connecting it thus with the theme of the "femme fatale." See Juha-Heikki Tihinen, *Halun häilyvät rajat: Magnus Enckellin teosten maskuliimisuksien ja feminiimisyksien representaatioista ja itsen luomisesta* (Helsinki: Taidehistorian seura 2008), 85.
- 57 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1955), Book IV, 774-803.
- 58 Patricia Matthews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 96. Freud discussed the myth of Medusa in connection with castration anxiety and a fear of women in the essay "The Medusa's Head" ("Das Medusenhaupt," 1922) in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology, and Other Works: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVIII, ed. and trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), 273-274. Matthews notes that "Freud's readings are culturally appropriate in the Symbolist context not because the artists or writers knew his work but because he came out of a fin-de-siècle culture, had worked in Paris, and thus had personal insights into the possible motivations for such imagery." Matthews, *Passionate Discontent*, 258n9.
- 59 Claes Ahlund, *Medusas huvud: dekadensens tematik i svensk sekel-skifteprosa* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 1994), 19.
- 60 See Ingvar Holm, *Ola Hansson: en studie i åttitalsromantik* (Lund: Gleerups 1957), 63-64.
- 61 Ola Hansson, "Sensitiva Amorosa," *Lyrisk och essäer* (Stockholm: Atlantis 1997), 149.
- 62 Ola Hansson "Edgar Allan Poe" in Carl L. Anderson, *Poe in Northlight: The Scandinavian Response to His Life and Work* (Durham: Duke University Press 1973), 199. Hansson's essay was first published in an abbreviated German translation in 1889. Anderson's book contains a translation of the original Swedish text which appeared in 1921.
- 63 This is a theme that Munch has famously treated in the painting *Puberty* (1894-5), and in the several version that he made of this subject.
- 64 Manuscript 1890, The Munch Museum: MM T 2770. English translation cited from Arne Eggum, *Edvard Munch: The Frieze of Life from Painting to Graphic Art* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersens Forlag A.S. 2000), 25.
- 65 Kosinski, *Orpheus*, 15-18, 189-205
- 66 Stenersen writes: "Munch, evidently unable to believe in anything transcendental, did not want to rot away, become gas and crumbs. He hoped death was a transition into a new existence, but he had seen too much spiritual and physical need to be able to believe in God. There would have to be some other meaning to death – something he could not comprehend." Stenersen, *Edvard Munch*, 65.
- 67 See Heller, *Edvard Munch's "Life Frieze,"* 48-52; Patricia Berman, "Edvard Munch's 'Modern Life of the Soul'," in *Edvard Munch: Modern Life of the Soul*.
- 68 Berman argues that rather than as an image of a Nietzschean spiritual void of modernity, this image can be connected with the theme of the *Frieze of Life* as an embodiment of "the modern life of the soul," which she perceives as "a complex philosophical system whose inherent contradictions shaped his bohemian identity." Berman, "Edvard Munch's 'Modern Life of the Soul'," 35-37.
- 69 See Heller, *Munch: His Life and Work*, 165.
- 70 Sketchbook 1908, The Munch Museum: MM T 2730.
- 71 Berman, "Edvard Munch's 'Modern Life of the Soul'," 36.
- 72 Robert Rosenblum, "Edvard Munch: Some Changing Contexts," introduction to *Edvard Munch: Symbols and Images* (Washington: The National Gallery of Art 1978), 7-8.
- 73 Sketchbook from 1891-92, The Munch Museum: MM T 2760. English translation cited from Heller, *Munch: His Life and Work*, 63.
- 74 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library 1968), 38; On Nietzsche's conception truth, see also Philip J. Kain *Nietzsche and the Horror of Existence* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 15-26.
- 75 Undated manuscript, The Munch Museum: MM N 613.
- 76 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 104, 143.
- 77 Przybyszewski, *Homo Sapiens*, 33.

Adolf Paul – Farmer, Musician, Author and Dramatist in Between Identities



The author Adolf Paul (1863–1943) moved with ease among the musicians, authors and artists of his day. He corresponded with leading writers in the Nordic countries such as Gustaf Fröding (1860–1911), Knut Hamsun (1859–1952) and August Strindberg (1849–1912), and was a friend of the painters Edvard Munch (1863–1944), Olaf Gulbransson (1873–1958) and Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865–1931). Paul also achieved some acclaim as a playwright, theatre critic and author in Germany.

It is characteristic of Adolf Paul to be remembered in the Nordic countries specifically because of his friends who rose to fame. When writing of his famous friends, Paul presumably fulfilled the same social need that is served by contemporary media when producing news about the private lives of celebrities, including unembellished details. After the present article, we still need research about Adolf Paul’s literary output.¹ We would need the help of researchers of literature and the history of theatre to see the present significance of his works.

¹ Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Adolf Paul*, 1897, ink on paper, private collection. Photo: Akseli Gallen-Kallela Drawings Collection / The Gallen-Kallela Museum.

Since Adolf Paul obviously does not belong to any national history of literature, he has been studied and evaluated incompletely. It has been said that his destiny to become a forgotten author was a consequence of his cosmopolitan nature, but could it also have been due to issues of ideology and identity and the acceptable treatment of identities at the time? It is also suggested that the reasons why Paul's own artistic output and his role as a cultural actor were forgotten may lie in the themes that he addressed, the ideal of purity in genres of art, the myth of individual creativity, and Paul's later pro-Nazi sympathies.²

My question here is what information can be gained from studying the life and work of Adolf Paul to shed more light on the cultural connections of the 1890s between Berlin and artists in Scandinavia, including Finland. The aim is to place my art-historical inquiries in connection with research in other disciplines and to explore how material related to Adolf Paul clarifies our understanding of art in the 1890s and symbolism in particular.

The life of Adolf Paul

Adolf Georg Wiedersheim-Paul was born in Bromö in Västergötland, Sweden.³ His father Alfred Fredrik Wiede[r]sheim-Paul (1828–1892) was an affluent businessman, who had been a bookkeeper at the Lesjöfors ironworks and the general manager of a glassworks. He sold his share in the works in 1868. Adolf Paul's mother was Hedvig Charlotta Cecilia Blix (?–1900). Together with a Swedish partner and two financial backers, Alfred Fredrik Wiedesheim-Paul subscribed to shares in the Jokioinen Estate company (Jockis gods aktiebolag) in Finland and rented Talsola Manor near Forssa, South-West Finland. In this connection, he changed the spelling of his surname from Wiedesheim-

Paul to Wiedersheim-Paul. Adolf Georg was the second of the family's ten children. He moved to rural Finland with his parents in 1872 at the age of 9 and attended the Turku classical lyceum from 1876 to 1880.⁴ Adolf Paul studied at the Mustiala School of Agriculture from 1880 to 1882, graduating as an agronomist, after which he was a farmer for several years in Ruissalo near Turku, Finland. He first helped his father at Talsola, but then rented Runsala Manor near Turku.⁵

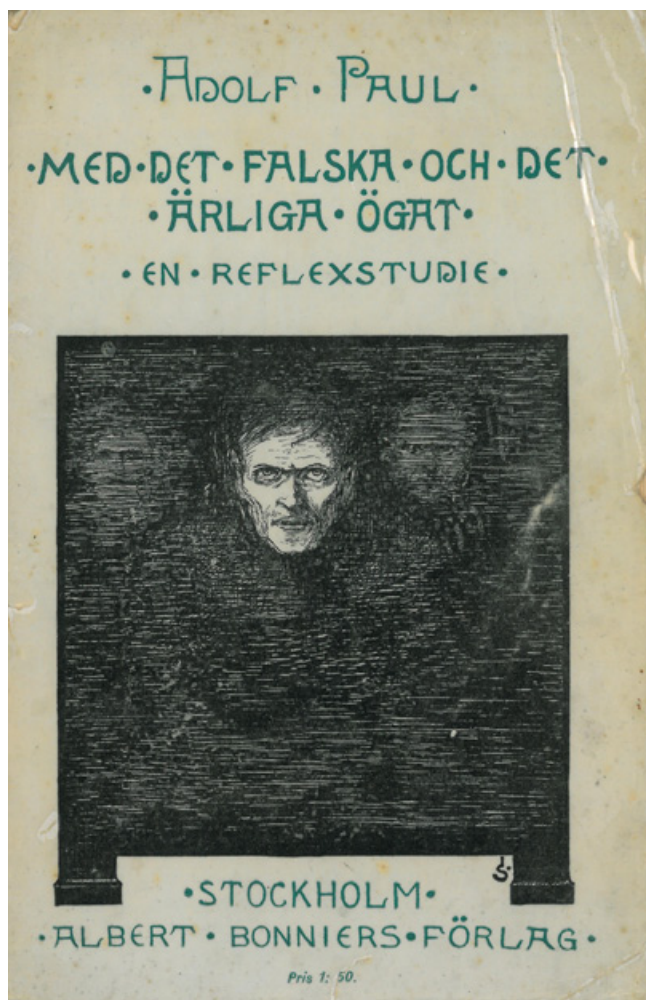
According to Paul himself, he enthusiastically immersed himself in the arts after an encounter with the Finnish artist Albert Edelfelt (1854–1905). He met Edelfelt and his wife Ellan de la Chapelle (1857–1921) at Matku railway station. They were on their way to Ellan's childhood home, and Paul gave them a ride in his horse-drawn carriage, because the available rented carriage was not quite suitable for the couple. He was thrilled by Edelfelt's stories about the art world of Paris.⁶ Paul's father had tried to dampen his son's interest in music and literature, but Paul now plucked up enough courage to travel to Helsinki and enrol at the Helsinki Music Institute in 1886.

Paul studied piano from 1886 to 1889 at the Helsinki Music Institute under several teachers. He became friends with the future composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) and Armas Järnefelt (1869–1958), the later composer who was also a conductor of the Royal Swedish Opera and the orchestra of the royal family of Sweden.⁷ The promising young virtuoso pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) taught piano in Helsinki from September 1888 until 1890. Busoni was a couple of years younger than Paul. He had come to Finland upon the request of Martin Wegelius (1846–1906), the founder of the Helsinki Music Institute (1882–1924), later Helsinki Conservatory (1924–1939), thereafter Sibelius Academy (1939–). While working in Finland, Busoni became friends with the young

composer Jean Sibelius, whose music he also promoted in Central Europe. Busoni taught Armas Järnefelt, and also Mary Slöör (1868–1947), the later wife of Akseli Gallen-Kallela. In Helsinki, he met his future spouse Gerda Sjöstrand (1862–1956), the daughter of sculptor Carl Eneas Sjöstrand (1828–1906).

In 1890 Busoni won the first Anton Rubinstein music competition in St. Petersburg, and went on to hold master classes in Weimar and to teach in Moscow in 1890. From 1891 to 1894, he taught in the United States, where he also gave concert tours. In 1894 Busoni settled in Berlin, which he left only during the First World War. Busoni is given a role in Adolf Paul's book *Med det falska och det ärliga ögat* (With the Deceitful and the Honest Eye, 1895), which was dedicated to him. There is also correspondence between Busoni and Paul,⁸ which requires further study.

Adolf Paul followed his Italian piano teacher Busoni to Weimar in 1889,⁹ where Busoni held master classes during the summer. Busoni returned to Finland for the autumn term, while Paul remained in Germany. Paul then moved to Berlin where he studied under Karl Klindworth (1830–1916) in 1889–1890. Sibelius and Paul studied music in Berlin from the autumn of 1889 until the spring of 1890, after which Sibelius spent a summer in Loviisa in South Finland. Sibelius then travelled in the autumn of 1890 to Vienna, from where he engaged in correspondence with Adolf Paul, who had moved to Berlin.¹⁰ Paul is known to have given his last concert in Turku with Jean Sibelius, *Quintet in G minor* 11.10.1890, playing the piano part.¹¹ In the early 1890s he began to focus with greater determination on writing. Adolf Paul married Natalie Bremer (1879–1960) from Lübeck, Germany in 1897, and they had five children, one of whom became a writer and three became painters. He lived in Berlin and died there during the Second World War in 1943.



2 The cover of Adolf Paul's novel *Med det falska och det ärliga ögat*. The Gallen-Kallela Museum. Photo: GKM.

The present article focuses on the years before Adolf Paul married, as my starting point for investigating him involves defining Axel Gallén's relationship with symbolism. Matters outside the present time frame will also be mentioned where I feel the context to be of interest and requiring further study. There has recently been interest in the connections between symbolism and nationalism and Paul's links with these themes are worth considering. Adolf Paul's own multinational identity, his observations on nationality (see below) and his favourable attitude towards the Nazis are important factors in this context.

Musical circles

Owing to his own studies in music, Adolf Paul was personally acquainted with the young Finnish musicians and composers of the period, and he wanted to participate in musical life. He is said to have jealously guarded his monopoly of promoting Sibelius, and in fact he helped Sibelius on many occasions, translated into Swedish the German-language songs of Sibelius's op. 50,¹² and influenced Busoni's publications of sheet music.¹³ He also appears to have been actively involved in organizing Robert Kajanus's (1856–1933) orchestra tour abroad in 1900.¹⁴ Adolf Paul has thus far been noted best in musicological studies.¹⁵

Sibelius dedicated to Paul the piano suite *Florestan* (1889),¹⁶ with reference to his and Paul's shared interest in E. T. A. Hofmann. (*Kreisleriana*). Ferruccio Busoni had performed Schumann's work of the same name in Helsinki in December in the previous year.¹⁷

Ferruccio Busoni dedicated the different parts of his composition *Geharnischte Suite* op. 34A (1895/1903) to the members of the so-called Leskovite circle consisting of Sibelius, Adolf Paul, Armas Järnefelt, and the artist Eero Järnefelt (brother of Armas Järnefelt). This situation brings to mind Akseli Gallen-Kallela's painting *The Problem* (later renamed *Symposium*), which also has a circle of three composers and a painter.¹⁸ The group of young artists called themselves the Leskovites with reference to Busoni's dog Lesko, a Newfoundland shepherd. They would meet in Busoni's home, in the cafés of Helsinki and the Restaurant Kämp. Their get-togethers included a great deal of music and improvisation.¹⁹ Adolf Paul often mentioned Armas Järnefelt in his letters,²⁰ especially when Järnefelt was in Berlin. Armas Järnefelt had begun to study the piano in Helsinki in 1887 as the pupil of Carl Schuler (1851–?) and under the direction of Martin Wegelius. I have not yet come across their correspondence, but Adolf Paul wrote several letters to Armas's brother Eero in the 1920s. There is no information on earlier correspondence.

Adolf Paul and Sibelius remained friends and corresponded throughout their lives, as is clearly shown, for example, in Sibelius's diaries.²¹ Adolf Paul's and Jean Sibelius's correspondence concerned practical matters in concrete terms. The correspondence began when Paul moved to Weimar in 1889.²² They discussed the conditions for performing Sibelius's works in Berlin (String Quartet in B Major for a small invited audience), a planned but unrealized performance of *Kullervo* in Berlin,²³ the choice of musicians and individual performances,²⁴ the issue of artists' commitment to expressing nationality or lack thereof,²⁵ music as colours, and the philosophy of Schopenhauer²⁶.



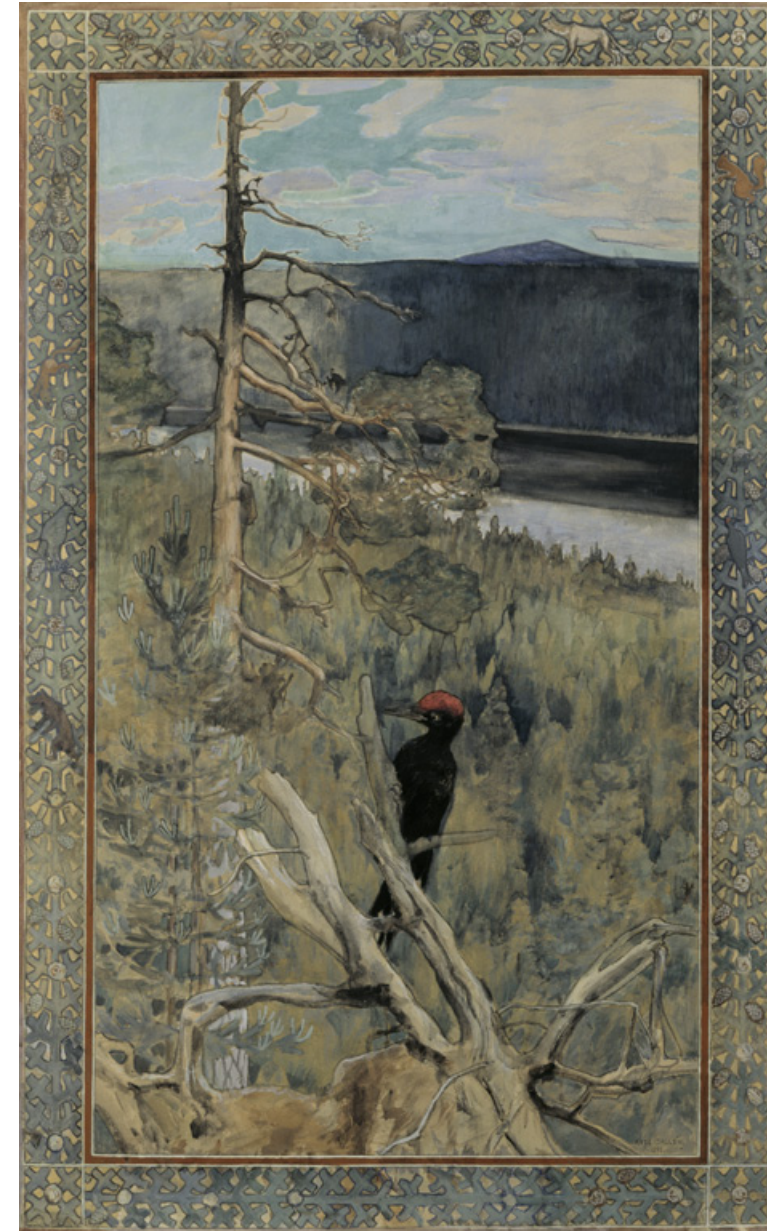
3 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Ex libris Tali et Adolf Paul*, 1897, etching, 10x5.5, The Gallen-Kallela Museum. Photo: Jukka Paavola / GKM.

Adolf Paul as an author

Adolf Paul and his friends are a source of fascinating and highly colourful stories that are difficult to verify in retrospect or even prove to be close to the truth. Despite the possible lack of hard facts, they have their appeal. The whole story of Paul's life still remains unwritten.²⁷ In several books, Adolf Paul used his friends and acquaintances as inspiration for his characters, and these patterns can easily be recognized. Although fiction cannot be read as fact, getting to know Adolf Paul's works can at least shed light on the artist's own comprehension of symbolism or concepts of art.

Adolf Paul had his first novel *En bok om en människa* (1891) published in Denmark by the Danish critic Herman Bang (1857–1912), who translated it into Danish and published it in serialized form in *Berlingske Tidende* in 1891. It was published in Sweden in the same year by the Bonnier company. The book introduces the young composer Sillén, easily recognized as Jean Sibelius, to whom the work was also dedicated. Paul's second book *The Ripper* was censored in Finland in 1892 due to its startling description of sexuality, especially in the short story "Oedipus i Norden" [Oedipus of the North] describing a mother-son incest story in Scandinavia. The chapter "Vanitas" is about a homosexual liaison between a schoolboy and a priest in Weimar. The title story is about Jack the Ripper's fictional

4 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *The Great Black Woodpecker*, 1892-1893, gouache on paper, 144x89, Ateneum Art Museum. Photo: KKA/Pirje Mykkänen. - tilattu



diary. Paul's next novel, *Herr Ludvigs* (1893), was based on the life and business of his father who had died the previous year, and seems to have made Paul *persona non grata* in South-West Finland. *Med det falska och det ärliga ögat: en bok om en människa II* (1895) is a continuation of the debut novel describing the gap between impulse and analytical intellect. The characters of the book have features of members of the *Zum schwarzen Ferkel* circle of Berlin, such as Stanisław Przybyszewski, Dagny Juel and Edvard Munch.²⁸ Just as in reading Strindberg, the characters and events in Paul's writing must not be regarded as direct accounts of his close circle. The words of one are put in the mouth of someone else and the order of events is changed. The third part of the trilogy *Ung-Hans kärleksbrev*, about a tortured young artist falling in love²⁹, came out in 1897 and finally offered something positive to read. Later yet, the novel *Die Madonna mit dem Rosenbusch / Madonnan med rosenbusken* (1903/1904) caused a scandal when depicting the carpenter Klaus unknowingly fathering a baby with his own mother, and later having another baby with this daughter of his. The starting point had been an old legend from Lübeck but nevertheless Paul was attacked in a pamphlet by a group of priests, whom he countered claiming that they could not know about the immorality of the book unless they had carefully read it themselves.

In addition to his 14 novels, Adolf Paul published six collections of short stories, which he often called fairy-tales for adults, obviously referring to the realm of fantasy and dreams as his source of inspiration. It has been known for a long while that Axel Gallén's painting *Conceptio artis* was created in concert with Paul's short story "A Dream", which he published in *Ein Gefallener Prophet / En saga från ödemarken*. I have previously studied the stages of this collaboration in detail with reference to correspondence. The same collection contains a short story with the title

"En saga från Ödemarken" (A Tale from the Wilderness) that can be linked to Akseli Gallen-Kallela's painting *The Great Black Woodpecker*, originally entitled *Ödemark* (Wilderness). His other short stories and their possible connection with paintings by either Gallen-Kallela or other artists still require further research.³⁰

Adolf Paul may have enjoyed his greatest success as a playwright. He wrote at least 23 plays, which to my knowledge have not been studied. *Alte Sünden / Gamla synder* was performed in the Swedish Theatre of Helsinki in 1893, but received negative criticism because of the previously censored collection of short stories by the same author. His play *Kung Kristian den II* (1897) was performed in Helsinki in 1898, and also in Germany and Austria. In Germany it was staged in Hamburg, Dresden and Munich, and in Vienna at the Burgtheater and the Hofburg-Theater. It is still remembered because of the music composed by Jean Sibelius.³¹ His fantasy tales were well received, for example *Die sprache der Vögel* (1912), which is based on an Oriental legend and was performed in the Hofburg-Theater in Vienna. This play also contains a wedding march composed by Sibelius. Stuckenschmidt notes that Paul's plays "Hille Bobbe" and "Der Triumph der Pompadour" were a great success in Germany.³²

Zum schwarzen Ferkel and its circle

In Berlin, Scandinavian bohemians along with some local kindred spirits established themselves in the former "G. Türkes Weinhandlung und Probierstube" at the corner of Unter den Linden and Neue Wilhelmstrasse. Several articles and studies have been written about the circle associated with the tavern known as *Zum schwarzen Ferkel*.³³ It had been a meeting place for E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–

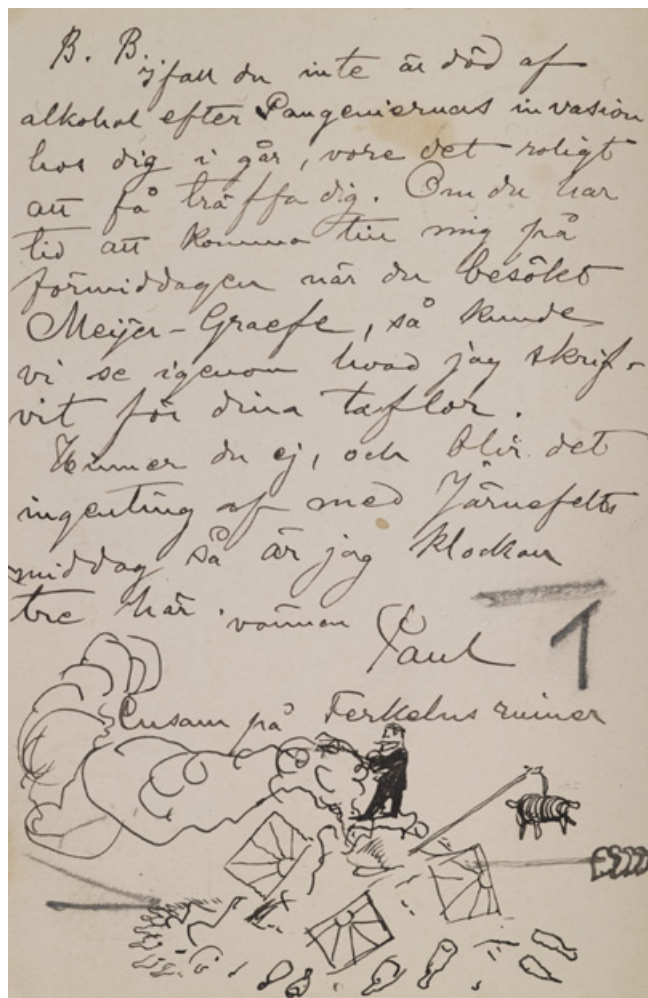
1822), Robert Schumann (1810–1856) and Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) in their own time. The building no longer exists. Paul tells about the origins of the circle:

The Black Piglet was found by accident when walking by a little tavern at the corner of Neue Wilhelmstrasse and Unter den Linden. Three stuffed black wineskins dangled from rusty iron chains over its door. That caught Strindberg's eye. He went in, and as the host was the happy owner of at least nine hundred different sorts of Schnapps, beginning with Swedish punsch and ending in Japanese rice wine, there were no difficulties at all to find a suitable *fluidum* for all possible sentiments.

One could eat and drink there for a reasonable price, in two little rooms to the left and right of the buffet room. There were oysters and lobsters in storage. The keeper was born to host wandering journeyman poets, he accepted without question the new title "Zum schwarzen Ferkel" that Strindberg gave his business, and had a young, beautiful, slender, blonde and lovely wife.

All around, on every wall, piled from the floor up to the ceiling, on the countless shelves there were bottles of the most fantastic shapes and colours. Even the windows were packed so full that we literally saw the sun rise through spirits! Strindberg carried his guitar there the very first evening, satisfied and content with finally having found a corner in Berlin where he could get along well. That is, we had a permanent base, where the general public could not find its way, and in addition to that was absolutely free of music, unless when we ourselves seized the moment.³⁴

Paul finally ended up in discord with almost everyone in the Ferkel circle. This kind of disharmony was common in the circle, where its so-called members would fall out and later return for their own personal reasons, the details of



5 A postcard from Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 31.1.1895.
The Gallen-Kallela Museum. Photo: Jukka Paavola / GKM.

which are not discussed here. Briefly put, the reasons were mostly ordinary, concerning matters such as money, women and competition over merits and the attention of the public. Even if incoherent, the Ferkel circle left a mark on its members – and led to Pan, one of the most progressive art journals of the period. Of the members of the Ferkel circle, only the writer Holger Drachmann (1846–1908) seems to have remained Adolf Paul’s life-long friend.

Zum Schwarzen Ferkel leads easily to a seemingly endless network of gossip and mutual references. Besides the circle in the tavern, Paul kept in contact with many other fascinating figures, and a survey of them can lead to new material such as correspondence or artworks. Persons outside the Ferkel circle with whom Paul corresponded included, for example, the manufacturer John Da[h]lberg (1856–1936) from Turku (Paul’s patron), the Swedish author Gustaf Fröding, the Norwegian author Knut Hamsun, and the Norwegian artist Olaf Gulbransson.

Writers, authors, critics associated with the Ferkel circle

Ola Hansson

The Swedish writer Ola Hansson and his Baltic-German writer spouse Laura Mohr (pseudonym Marholm) did not exactly belong to the Ferkel circle, for the Ferkel became a base for writers, artists and intellectuals that followed August Strindberg there after he fell out with the Hanssons. The couple moved to Berlin in 1891. Before this, Hansson had written about materialism in fiction in a piece entitled *Materialismen i skönlitteraturen* (1891). Their home near Berlin, at Friedrichshagen by the Müggelsee, became an important meeting place, where also August Strindberg stayed for a while. Other writer friends were Gerhart

Hauptmann (1862–1946), Richard Dehmel (1863–1920), Max Dauthendey (1867–1918) and Bruno Wille (1860–1928).³⁵

A collection of Hansson’s writings on literary criticism was published in 1893 with the title *Tolkare och siare*.³⁶ It includes essays on Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), the Russian author Vsevolod Garschin (1855–1888), Max Stirner (1806–1856), Paul Bourget (1852–1935), and the essay “Rembrandt als Erzieher” referred not only to Julius Langbehn’s (1851–1907) book of the same title but also to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Hansson had known Nietzsche at least since 1888, and played an important role in promoting the German philosopher in literary circles in Berlin. Ola Hansson’s essay on Nietzsche (“Nietzsche, seine Persönlichkeit und sein System”) was an important mediator of Nietzschean thought also to Nordic artists. It was first published in German in 1889, and in 1890 in Danish-Norwegian translation. In 1889, Georg Brandes (1842–1927) had written his essay on Nietzsche, “Om aristokratisk radikalisme”, in Danish. Stanislaw Przybyszewski’s (1868–1927) book *Zur Psychologie des Individuums*, bd II: Ola Hansson (Berlin 1892) was about Hansson. The latter had considerable influence in shaping Przybyszewski’s thought.³⁷ Hansson was also familiar with Karl August Tavaststjerna (1860–1898), a Swedish-speaking writer and poet from Finland.

K. A. Tavaststjerna’s letters to Hansson began in 1887, when he was living in Copenhagen. In 1890 Tavaststjerna wrote to Hansson about his own works *Barndomsvänner* (1886, Childhood Friends), *Marin och Genre* (1890) and *Nya vers* (1885, New Verse).³⁸ In *Korta brev från en lång bröllopsresa* (1893, Brief Letters from a Long Honeymoon) Tavaststjerna expressed, in fiction, the moods of his honeymoon and perspectives on contemporary Europe. Tavaststjerna was a friend of Adolf Paul, and he established his

reputation with realistic prose, but can also be connected with decadent literature.³⁹ Axel Gallén and Tavaststjerna began their correspondence in 1887, and they lived in the same neighbourhood in 1890. To my knowledge, there is only one, undated, letter from Paul to Tavaststjerna. It remains to be seen if any letters from Tavaststjerna to Paul exist.

Stanisław Przybyszewski

Adolf Paul came to know Stanisław Przybyszewski, the leading figure of the Ferkel circle apparently through the Friedrichshagen literary circle before Przybyszewski's first noteworthy published work and before August Strindberg came to Berlin. They became central figures of this circle.

The Polish-born Przybyszewski had begun to study architecture in 1889 before going on to medicine. From 1889 until 1893, he studied neurology, the functions of the brain and the nervous system and cognition under Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), a debated figure at the time. He gained first-hand knowledge of Haeckel's monism and views on neurology. Przybyszewski, who wrote in both German and Polish, became interested in Nietzsche, and also in Satanism.⁴⁰

Paul recalls:

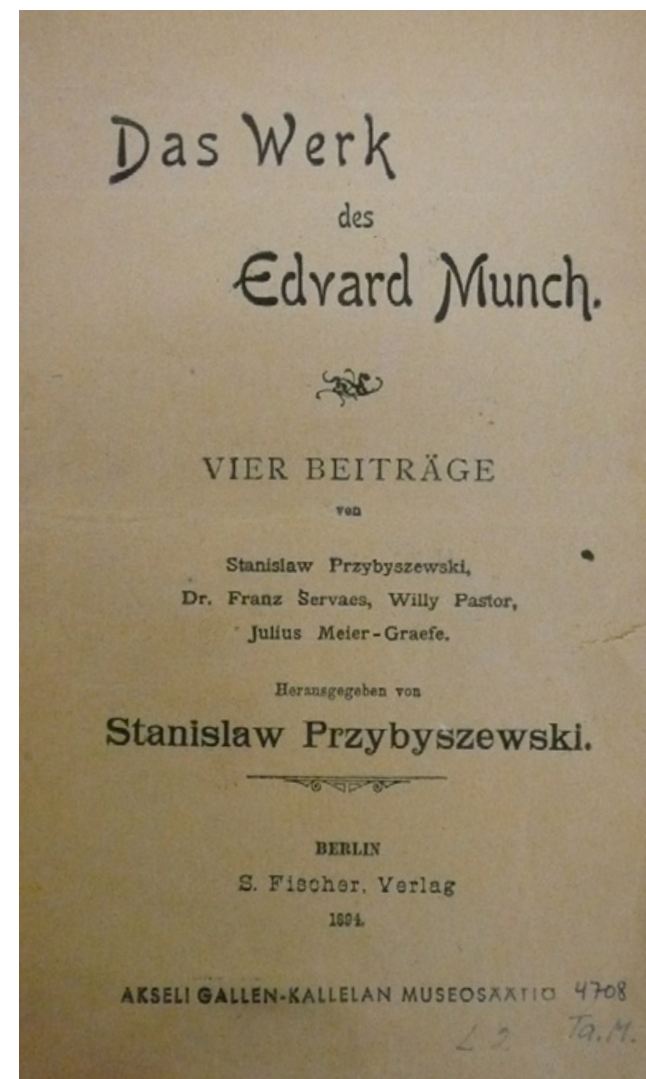
Przybyszewski was a medical student, and he was also involved in politics in between lessons, and was ever full of the most chaotic poetic visions. Still under the influence of Nietzsche – intoxicated by Chopin – surrounded by the secretive martyr glory of a political refugee – all the time in love, but so that love was more an affair of the brain than the heart – more a business of consciousness than of unconscious instincts, he could not fall victim to Strindberg from their very first meeting.⁴¹

Przybyszewski regarded man in dualistic terms, dividing spiritual life into the realms of mind and soul respectively. According to Przybyszewski, old-fashioned naturalistic art

followed the orders of the mind, whereas the new art chose to get to know the soul. The limited human mind cannot fully understand the transcendent soul, but on certain special occasions a human individual can reveal the mysterious secrets of the “naked soul”. The task of the artist is to describe the psychological states that are beyond the control of consciousness. According to Przybyszewski, art should not serve any social or moral purpose, but should instead seek to describe the life of a soul regardless of whether its described states are good, bad, ugly or beautiful. As an author, Przybyszewski was drawn to pathological individuals and characters. Human sexuality was another area where the “naked soul” could be found. Here we can find similarity with the thinking of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and August Strindberg.⁴²

Przybyszewski's first texts seeking a new conception of art in his book *Zur Psychologie des Individuums* (1892) were on the relationship between Nietzsche and Chopin, and Ola Hansson's short erotic novellas. Przybyszewski then sought to promote the revolution of the new conception of art, calling it “psychological naturalism.”⁴³ He presented a manifesto of his new conception of art in 1894 in an article on the work of Edvard Munch and a collection of essays on Munch published in the same year.⁴⁴

Other works by Przybyszewski that are of interest for studying Berlin symbolism of the late 1890s are *Zur Psychologie des Individuums* (1892), *Totenmesse* (1893), the essay collection *Das Werk des Edvard Munch* (1894), the short story *De Profundis / Pro domo mea* (1895), the poetry collection *Vigilien* (1895), the novel *Homo Sapiens* (1895–1896) on human sexuality consisting of three texts (*Über Bord, Unterwegs, Im Malstrom*), *Die Synagoge des Satan* (1897), and the essay collection *Auf den Wegen der Seele* (1897). The latter was widely noted around Europe. George C. Schoolfield has described the content of these works in a



6 Stanisław Przybyszewski. *Das Werk des Edvard Munch* / GKM

highly analytical and perceptive way, placing Przybyszewski within the framework of European decadence literature.⁴⁵

Przybyszewski later published a book of memoirs referring to the literary circles of Berlin. In this book, written after the falling-out between Paul and Przybyszewski, the latter describes (perhaps unfairly) Paul as a humble cringer, *famulus* and house-slave of Strindberg:

Adolf Paul volunteered to be a footman for Strindberg – when apparently acting for the benefit of Strindberg he in fact served his own interests trying desperately to struggle for some kind of position in German literature.⁴⁶

There is correspondence between Przybyszewski and Paul. It seems that at least some letters from Przybyszewski have been published in German.⁴⁷ Whether the letters from Paul to Przybyszewski still exist is for the time being unknown to me. The character Popoffsky in Strindberg's *Inferno* took Przybyszewski as its model.

August Strindberg

August Strindberg was the literary celebrity of his day and Adolf Paul knew his work and reputation before knowing the author personally. It appears that Paul once sent Strindberg a letter praising the latter's writings as a paragon for his own work.⁴⁸ He also mentioned that he had seen Strindberg once in Stockholm before Strindberg had come to Berlin.⁴⁹ Strindberg's published correspondence contains letters to and from Paul from 1892 onwards, but not from any earlier date.

The Swedish writer moved to Berlin in September/October 1892. He had been invited there several times by the writers Ola Hansson and Laura Marholm (born in Riga of a Danish family) and Adolf Paul. Both Paul and Przybyszewski have described Strindberg's arrival in Berlin and

his first evening at the Hanssons in Friedrichshagen, where the surgeon and gynaecologist Max Asch (1855–1911) was also present.⁵⁰ After his arrival, Strindberg suggested that he and Paul open a photographic studio. After a while, Strindberg moved to the same boarding house (at no. 2 Neue Wilhelmstrasse) near Unter den Linden, where Paul was already staying.

Already in December, the writer escaped from the rich music student Sigrid Lund, whom he had probably seduced and who had paid for his upkeep, going to Weimar with Paul and on the latter's advice. To his misfortune, the Finnish writer K. A. Tavaststjerna was on his honeymoon in Weimar with his newly wedded Swedish wife Gabriella (née Kindstrand, 1868–1946), who went on to have some kind of an affair with Strindberg.⁵¹ Strindberg's affairs are a distinct and complex part of his stay in Berlin and they no doubt have connections with his works, but they are of little interest for investigating the role and activities of Adolf Paul. Strindberg's writings set in Berlin or associated in some way with the city include *Inferno* (1897/1898), *Legender* (1898), *Till Damaskus* (1898–), *Antibarbarus* (1894, published in Swedish in 1906) and *Klostret* (1898).

Paul published a book about his friendship and correspondence with Strindberg a few years after the latter's death (*Strindberg-minnen och brev* in 1915, and a later, enlarged edition *Min Strindbergsbok: Strindbergsminnen och brev* in 1930). Although subjective in nature, Paul's book has provided material for psychological Strindberg studies and permitted diagnoses of Strindberg. In the years 1894–1896, Strindberg experienced his so-called inferno crisis (from August 1894 to the end of 1896), i.e. a series of psychoses. During this time in Paris, he engaged in chemical experiments and alchemy, and was in correspondence with alchemists, occultists and theosophists, aiming at a more



7 The cover of Adolf Paul's *Strindbergs-minnen och brev* / *Min Strindbergsbok*. The Gallen-Kallela Museum. Photo: GKM.

religious orientation and becoming increasingly influenced by the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), who was admired by many symbolists. A model began to emerge in his thinking whereby human suffering had its purpose and an ennobling effect. Life was a penitentiary and hell was a state of mind. The forces of providence try to make people recognize this.

Paul tells about the end of his close friendship with Strindberg in *Min Strindbergsbok*. He writes that it was all about a series of misunderstandings. He also says that he did not let Strindberg read his unfinished book (*Blindboken*), because Strindberg had disturbed his writing with his advice previously in Berlin. Paul notes that Strindberg interpreted this so that Paul's book was about Strindberg himself. According to Paul, Strindberg later believed Paul wrote about Strindberg's marriage in his collection of short stories *Ein gefallener Prophet*.⁵² Söderström, however, feels that it is obvious that the text that led to the falling-out between Paul and Strindberg was the Symbolist roman à clef *Mit dem falschen und dem ehrlichen Auge*, which finally came to have the motto "À bas les Misogynes!" Söderström quotes a diary entry by Paul when he was preparing to meet Strindberg at Rügen in the summer of 1893:

I needed almost a year to see Strindberg for what he is and to lose my respect for him! – He can now come – I have closed my books with the bohemian scum – he can step right into my gaping mouth and become the model for my snob genius! [...] I hate this bohemian humbug that has overshadowed me since I was young . But I am glad to have had that schooling with the pack in their bohemian academy in the Ferkel [...] And all this swinishness they offer as evidence of their courage – only to prevent people from seeing their cowardice. A bas la Bohème – A bas les chochons d'epigones!⁵³

Strindberg described Zum schwarzen Ferkel in his posthumously published novel *Klostret* (1898). In research concerning Strindberg it has sometimes been said that due to its autobiographical nature, he did not publish the novel in its original form. New research emphasizes, though, that the autobiographical nature of Strindberg's oeuvre is only a myth.⁵⁴

Painters and sculptors of the Ferkel circle

Edvard Munch

An exhibition of work by Edvard Munch had caused a scandal in Berlin in 1892. Much has already been said about Munch and the Ferkel Circle and therefore I leave this subject to the experts on Munch. With reference to Paul's diaries, Söderström notes that there was a lack of mutual sympathy between Paul and Munch from the very beginning.⁵⁵ In the Munch Museum, there is only one post card from Edvard Munch to Adolf Paul in Helsinki.⁵⁶ The card, however, reveals that there had been other correspondence between them.

Dear Paul!

Greetings from the Ferkel – I have already received a drunken letter from you – please send my greetings to Gallen and thank him for the drawing and his greetings – I know him well by reputation – My address is Kurfürstendam [sic] 121 – if they can give me an offer for a painting it would be good since poverty is in bloom – Strindberg is probably in Brünn – will let you know more – Ferkel greetings – German and others.
Yours E Munch

Paul wrote to Gallén about Munch in his letters, but it is still not clear whether it was he who introduced Gallén to Munch or whether Gallén already knew Munch or the reputation of his work. In a letter to Axel Gallén in 1894, Paul mentions that Edvard Munch sends many greetings and was happy to know that Gallén was coming to Berlin in the autumn. Munch had promised to do his utmost to support Gallén's exhibitions, although Munch himself, according to Paul, had gone through a difficult winter. He mentioned that Munch had seen a sketch by Gallén and asked to send his greetings and to say he found it to be great.⁵⁷ In his letter, Gallén expressed his pleasure over the admiration expressed by Munch and Przybyszewski⁵⁸ and said he was awaiting with interest the reviews of Munch's work,⁵⁹ and was glad that Munch and Przybyszewski liked his art.⁶⁰ Gallén also mentioned having received an article about Munch⁶¹ – I assume this was *Das Werk des Edvard Munch* (1894) edited and partly written by Przybyszewski. (1894). Gallén asked whether Munch's works found buyers.⁶² Paul wrote that Munch had held an exhibition in Stockholm,⁶³ and sent greetings from Munch.⁶⁴ Gallén and Munch had a joint exhibition in Ugo Barroccio's gallery in Unter den Linden in 1895.

Adolf Paul and Axel Gallén (Akseli Gallen-Kallela from 1907)

My starting point for studying Adolf Paul was an essay on the artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela's treatment of a subject called *Conceptio artis* (fig. 8).⁶⁵ The subject of *Conceptio artis* was developed together with Adolf Paul, and the stages of the artwork can be easily found in the correspondence. My interest at the time was in the Egyptian motif and its reference to the occult, in addition to possible connections with Emanuel Swedenborg's theory of correspondences.



8 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Conceptio artis*, oil on canvas, the original painting later cut in pieces. Photo: GKM.

Paul's correspondence did not help much to specify these matters. However, in the letters we can follow the treatment of a subject that transgressed the boundaries of different art forms. In his letters, Gallén commented and made notes and suggestions to Paul's short stories. For me, it is also of importance whether the well-known literary background of the painting was a possible reason for evaluating the painting as lacking independence and as a superficial adaptation of a given story. In my article, I also considered whether the obvious connection between literature and painting was a later reason for negative evaluations within the paradigm of modernism.

In regard to Gallén, his involvement with naturalism came under question when new movements in art were taking place. We must not forget that the foundation of Gallén's symbolism was already laid in Paris, where he studied at the Académie Julian from 1885. At the same time Maurice Denis (1870–1943), Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947) and Paul Ranson (1864–1909) studied in its so-called Small Atelier. Paul Serusier (1864–1927) came to the Académie Julian in 1886, and became a prominent figure there. Gallen-Kallela's separation from naturalism and realism found support from the contacts introduced by Paul. Even if naturalism and symbolism can in some sense be regarded as almost mutually contradictory, and there was almost a programme against naturalism among symbolists, in Gallén's case the two are alike in their rebellious nature and desire to shock. Both conceptions share a claim for the truthfulness of art – the differences lie in what was considered to be true.

In an undated letter from 1894 Paul wrote to Gallén concerning the painting *The Problem* (now known as *Symposium*, fig.9):

Helsinki

Dear Brother!

I think we have misunderstood the sphinx in your Kajus painting as a symbol of feminine matter. Let it be what it is in the other painting, the wonderful feminine element in our fantasy, to which one gives oneself up with of one's sexual force in all artistic production. In the other painting it gives thus the fully surrendered elevation to its fantasy life only as a consequence of the inner superior vigour of manhood's ability to be intoxicated – and in the Kajus painting internal productivity develops under the intoxication of alcohol. The sphinx, the mother of our spiritual children, comes then for a moment, flying like a strange bird in the miraculous, oversaturated brilliancy of colour - sitting for a moment at our table, ready to fly away again at the very next moment. And it tells and lies, partly as a joke, the most splendid tales, interprets the most wonderful riddles, conjures forth the most adventurous pictures of the future for us, that is the hermaphroditic soul in the whole pastime, only an enchantment of mind that comes and flies away – with alcohol. But never the mother that gives birth to any other children of my fantasy than the fleeting ones. Fog, matter, the fat of the soul, the man of flesh in us that alcohol has been able to arouse, sinks again with alcohol and closes itself to the endless expanses through which the wonderful bird came flying to us and through which it flew away.

Am I right? Was it not that sphinx riddle you wanted to pin down in the painting. To bed now, you devil, so you will get a couple of delightful fantasies from me to entertain yourself. In exchange for what I got from you.⁶⁶

In art-historical writings published in Finland, Adolf Paul has most widely been noted in Salme Sarajas-Korte's book



9 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Symposion* (until 1904 *The Problem*), 1894, oil on canvas, 74x100, private collection. Photo: Jari Kuusenaho / Tampere Art Museum.

Vid symbolismens källor.⁶⁷ It is unfortunate that in many studies touching upon Finnish symbolism the difference in source material between Sarajas-Korte's dissertation from 1966 and the later Swedish-language edition from 1981 has not been noted. The letters from Gallen-Kallela to Adolf Paul became known to Sarajas-Korte only after the dissertation, and in consequence, this material is relatively unknown to Finnish-speaking readers. Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén has later referred to correspondence between Gallen-Kallela and Paul. His main argument is that the two versions of *The Problem* should be understood as separate works of art of different content and that neither of them should in any way be associated with Nietzschean thought. According to Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, the earlier work in the collection of the Serlachius Art Museum has a Biblical background (Acts 2:2, 2:12–21), while the final version, in a private collection, has a connection with Rubens's *The Four Philosophers* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence).⁶⁸

Sarajas-Korte limits her study to the years 1890–1895, and neither does Gallen-Kallela-Sirén cite any later correspondence. Later correspondence between Gallén and Paul, however, reveals many interesting facts about Gallén's main works. To give a few examples, here are a few previously unpublished observations on Gallen-Kallela's art from the year 1896.

On 21 January 1896, Gallén wrote of his woodblock print *The Defence of the Sampo* and referred to his portrait of Paul, which he felt was good and which he expected to come back from Gothenburg. He considered whether he could display his painting *Conceptio artis* in the exhibition of the Finnish Art Society, for which it had been requested by Dr. J. J. Tikkanen (1857–1930). Gallén said that he was afraid of a new scandal, “for if I display the painting, there will again be a scandal and every ‘educated art buyer’ will turn away in disgust”. He told of a work in progress that

he intended to exhibit in Berlin and which he called *ex orbis terrae* (later known as *Ad astra*) and another painting with the title *Lem[m]inkäinen i Tuonela*. He said Paul could submit, on his behalf, these two and two woodblock prints (*The Defence of the Sampo* and *Flower of Death*) along with the “Champs de Mars boys” for an international art exhibition in Berlin. On 12 February Gallén wrote that because of having to earn his income he could not finish the above-mentioned two works. The correspondence thus suggests that *Ad astra*, dated to 1894 (also by Gallén himself) was not finished before 1896, for which the correspondence also provides evidence. It was customary for Gallén to work several years on his larger paintings. The dating to 1896 is also supported by the history of exhibiting the work, which seems to begin as late as 1912. It would be strange that Gallén did not display it in public for example in his exhibitions in Berlin and Dresden, where he boldly showed all his main symbolist works. On 28 March Gallén wrote of *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, which he regarded to be one of his best works. On 4 May he wrote of the display of *Conceptio artis* in Turku, “as the inhabitants of Turku have never treated me shamelessly like the people in Helsinki”. On 17 October 1896, Gallén wrote of his work on “an ancient Finnish pietà motif”.

Adolf Paul must be taken into account when considering the reasons why Gallen-Kallela began to make prints. Paul wrote repeatedly about the good sales prospects of prints in Berlin, publications of portfolios of prints and new art magazines in connection with which prints were sold. He introduced Joseph Sattler (1867–1931) to Gallén in his letter of 1.12.1894 as a graphic artist from Alsace.⁶⁹ Sattler later became Gallén's teacher in graphics. Sattler is known for his book illustrations and drawings, and as a graphic artist and engraver. He moved to Berlin in 1894, and held an exhibition in the Kunstgewerbemuseum. In 1895 he

made the cover for the new symbolist magazine *Pan*, which appeared in national and international editions. Sattler was involved with *Pan* until 1915.⁷⁰ He was awarded a prize at the Paris World's Fair of 1900 for his illustration for *Die Nibelungen*. For the study of Gallén, one has to remark that Sattler was famous for his *ex libris*. (It has sometimes been assumed that the impulse for making *ex libris* came to Axel Gallén from Louis Sparre (1863–1964), which may be true insofar as Sparre presumably encouraged Gallén to experiment in this field.)

A study of materials concerning Adolf Paul has led the present author into highly fruitful areas where research in musicology and literature provides further light on the author's original subject of interest, Akseli Gallen-Kallela's symbolist works and their underlying ideas and conception of art. A number of works (*Sibelius as the Composer of En Saga*, *The Great Black Woodpecker / The Wilderness*, *Mäntykoski Rapids*, *The Problem / Symposium*, the different versions of the Lemminkäinen theme, the different versions of Kullervo, and *Skogsrået / Hiisi*) still await a new analysis, but this is not within the scope of the present article.⁷¹ It is not yet time for Adolf Paul to leave the stage.

Themes and ideological context

Adolf Paul not only organized practical matters for his artist friends but also passed on ideas and impulses. For the time being, distinctions between these two roles are incomplete and they would require an extensive and detailed biography of Paul. He introduced influential cultural circles in Finland to the themes and individuals who were talked about in Berlin. He passed on to his friends news and greetings from August Strindberg, Ferruccio Busoni and others. Some of the areas in which Adolf Paul had a disseminating role were

the ideas of the Polish writer Stanisław Przybyszewski, the philosophy of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and Strindberg's changing conception of man. His letters also point to his desire to combine different genres of the arts, to collaboration, concepts of synaesthesia and interest in depicting the human psyche, a specific area being the description of manifestations of sexuality classed as abnormal. Listed in the following are a few examples. The observations are still diffuse, since the related research has only just begun. At any rate, these themes appear to be of importance to the present author. Without a comprehensive analysis of Paul's oeuvre, it is difficult to judge how clearly he conceptualized these themes in his own work. A challenge of future research will be to formulate his views of these themes.

Propagating Przybyszewski's ideas

In the autumn of 1892, Adolf Paul sent two texts by Przybyszewski to Jean Sibelius, who expressed his thanks and commended them. The material in question was most likely *Zur Psychologie des Individuums*.⁷²

[Writing of Przybyszewski] I have finally found a good friend here. And since this good friend is also a genius and his work will be epoch-making in both the arts and sciences, I must naturally present him to you. I do so by sending you two brochures by him. Keep them and read them several times. If you wish to have more of the same please write to your faithful friend A.P.

Some time after this he introduced Przybyszewski to Axel Gallén. The former was probably mentioned in discussions in late 1893 and early 1894, when the artists met in Helsinki in their so-called Symposium sessions. Paul wrote to Gallén about Przybyszewski on 24 April 1894, immediately upon his return to Berlin, asking Gallén to send a sketch of his sphinx motif (*Conceptio artis*) within a week so that he could show it to Przybyszewski and Otto-Julius Bierbaum

(1865–1910). Przybyszewski is later mentioned in passing in several letters.⁷³ Paul described to Gallén the possibility that Przybyszewski could write a presentation of Gallén for the future Berlin exhibition or for newspapers. Relations between Przybyszewski and Paul, however, cooled within a few years, and Paul no longer rated him as a genius in his reviews. Przybyszewski in turn described Paul as a toady. Their falling-out was presumably associated also with August Strindberg's possible sexual liaison with Dagny Juel (1867–1901), which is said to have lasted for a few weeks, for soon afterwards Juel and Przybyszewski began to see each other, and there were now new tensions between Strindberg and Przybyszewski, the leading figures of the Ferkel circle.⁷⁴

Paul's letters to Axel Gallén illustrate how his opinion of Przybyszewski changed:

Przybyszewski was totally fascinated by the sketch for your painting (Kajus); he will provide all possible propaganda for you if only you will come. Munch, that poor loner, has almost succeeded in making people bow to him. Soon he [Przybyszewski] will publish a brochure about Munch together with four other critics. It is enthusiastically written and interesting and as soon as it is printed I will send it so you can see how one can be understood here." (2.5.1894)

Read the attached essay about Munch but don't believe it. (21.5.1894)

In my opinion, Przybyszewski's publicity for Munch is worthless. It is the speculation of an authority like Jacen's but at the Berlin level, that's all it is. Munch is one of the many steps for P. to climb on, I have seen several previous ones and I warn you about him, and my conscience does not permit me to [bring] you and him together. Hell, I'm up to here with all the humbug and filth that the whole coterie of friends from last year has

sunk to. I close the door definitely to the group, it was a purgatory worth experiencing once, but never again. Apart from you, I have three friends and that is plenty when I think of the whole bunch of false friends that have made me mistrust all mankind. I do not want to write about everything that has happened since your last visit, when you come I might ask to torture you with my disillusionments if have not been able to digest them yet. (24.6.1894)

Eroticism and sexuality

Adolf Paul was offended when his writings had been interpreted as naturalistic and ten years too late in relation to the naturalistic conception of art. The symbolists shared an interest in human psychology and the topical nature of this theme was expressed in many ways in contemporary philosophy – while psychology fervently sought its specific form as a discipline. Sexuality was associated with creative activity; issues of the role of sexuality in the human psyche were pondered and limits of propriety of the manifestations and orientations of sexuality were tested. Stanisław Przybyszewski began his book *Totenmesse* (1893) with the words: "In the beginning there was sex".⁷⁵

In his written works, Paul repeatedly addressed forms of sexuality that were regarded at the time, and partly even now, as unconventional or classified as perverse by society. However, it was a source of anxiety for him if he was suspected of differing from conventional heterosexuality. His final falling-out with August Strindberg was apparently due, at least partly, to the latter's suggestion that Paul was homosexual. Strindberg himself had been impressed by his visit in Berlin to the so-called Wienerbal, a ball for homosexuals, which he mentions in several of his works.⁷⁶

When reading contemporary texts, it must be noted that homosexuality was often unnamed and also referred

to with the terms “contrary sexual emotion”, “misogyny” or “pederasty”.⁷⁷ I will not present any suggestions here about Paul’s sexual identity. Human sexuality was an area that fascinated Paul and his contemporaries as a domain beyond the control of reason and often associated with discussions of artistic creativity. Because this subject was addressed in ways that tested the limits of propriety, the works of the symbolists did not suit the acceptable conception of art without problems. Paul’s written works, however, may reveal how contemporary artists masked their ways of addressing, for example, homosexuality or bisexuality.

Do you think people will acknowledge the purely sensual sexuality of motherly love, which I (in the first place) underline in *Oedipus*? – And do you think that one likes to have a crime at which one would prefer to shake one’s head, psychologically motivated and studied with the result that it loses its character as a crime? Do you think they want to understand that madness is not madness? Or find themselves being criticized – religion is the sexual urge of the spirit – because it is the formulated desire for eternal life that has been raised to a doctrine – for the masses, for those who are stupid.⁷⁸

Schopenhauer, the philosophy of art and colours

Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy was appreciated by his contemporaries and its influence also extended to Finland. Adolf Paul wrote to Sibelius that he didn’t dare ask him to read anything any more, for he would otherwise ask Sibelius to read what Schopenhauer had written about art. Paul assured him that Schopenhauer was not a misogynist and in fact one of the most amusing writers that Paul had ever read. Paul urged Sibelius to begin with the text “Über das Sehen und die Farbe”, which would lead to the feel-



10 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Fantasy Landscape*, detail of *Sibelius as composer of En Saga*, 1894, watercolour on paper, 30x24, The Ainola Foundation. Photo: Douglas Sivén / GKM.

ing that one had previously been blind. He said that it was available in libraries.⁷⁹ An evaluation of Schopenhauer's conception of art and comparisons of it with the views of contemporary artist might be to provide a great deal of broader perspective.

In his later recollections of Sibelius, Paul associated colours with Sibelius's conception of colours.⁸⁰ The text on seeing and colours was associated with Paul's own subjects of interest: he often wrote of colours not only in connection with the visual arts but also when describing literature and music. This can be associated not only with contemporary thinking concerning synaesthesia but also with new research on visual perception and the nature of colours and related discussion. Albert Aurier, a theorist of symbolism, regarded the separation of colour from nature to be emblematic of symbolism and colour independent of external reality was an integral aspect of synthetist style. Paul wrote to Gallén that he hoped soon to be able to imbibe some life from the colours of Gallén's works.⁸¹ In Berlin, Paul wrote of a coming visit by the surgeon and writer Carl Ludwig Schleich (1859–1922) to Gallén, whom he urged to speak of Schleich's discoveries with regard to colour:

Schleich will come to see you at one p.m. to look at your painting. Don't forget to talk about his discoveries regarding colour and humour him by wanting to test them. You would do him a favour by doing so. I wrote this in case I won't be able to come and see you earlier.⁸²

Nietzsche and man creating his own ideals

Friedrich Nietzsche's thinking was present in conversations and it is also referred to in Paul's correspondence. For example, in a letter to Sibelius on the issue of nationality, Paul spoke of the concept of the dawn with reference to Nietzsche (Nietzsche, *Morgenröte, Gedanken über der moralischen Vorurtheile*, 1881).

– And it is wrong to think that you could ever let yourself be bound to some once discovered mannerism of seeing or feeling and describing what you have seen and felt.

Someone like Grieg is needed. But your conditions are completely different. – The passion for freedom that is within you will raise you much higher, above everything that nationalism means, to a height from which one sees not only all mankind but also all life, as a large whole, like a single large *Bewegung* [movement], and nothing less. – It is only when you stand on that height, with one foot on Beethoven and the other on Wagner that you can stop climbing – then you can calmly hover up there and tell us who do reach that far a bit more about the dawn of the new day – the dawn light whose nature we sense but do not understand since we do not know our own lives – we do not know why we live and why we wait for a new day. –⁸³

Paul also urged Axel Gallén to study Nietzsche's thinking and to start with the works *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Götterdämmerung*, the language of which he described as easy.⁸⁴ The ways in which Nietzsche was interpreted and what was found to be fascinating in his thinking must be discussed elsewhere. Along with his texts, Nietzsche's personality and life were also found to be an inspiration. Writing to Gallén, Paul said he admired Nietzsche's ability to distinguish when man is satiated and decadence begins. According to him, only Christ and Nietzsche were able to do this:

And Nietzsche is the other one; he let his reason commit suicide when his work was completed and his spirit is now spread all over the world. He annulled Christ, downgrading him to the valley between himself and Zoroaster, and his works will survive and his kingdom will survive – until the coming of an anti-Nietzsche.⁸⁵

Issues of nationality

Adolf Paul's own multinational background makes his thoughts on nationality interesting even from today's perspective and because the relationship between symbolism and nationalism is still mostly unexplored. Przybyszewski described Paul as “a Swedish writer who absolutely wanted to be Finnish, although he didn't speak a word of Finnish.”⁸⁶ It would be good to analyse Paul's work and correspondence with reference to issues of nationality and to investigate his attitudes to contemporary nationalizing tendencies in art.

Karl Flodin (1858–1925), a critic of the *Nya Pressen* newspaper, wrote that Sibelius had come to a nationalizing tendency in his music, which prompted Paul to write to Sibelius to express his views on nationality in the latter's art:

I can never in my life believe that you imagine that you belong to some orientation – that you would have ‘joined’ as some inventive critics believe they have seen in your *Kullervo* – For me you have always represented individualism and done so to such a full extent that I have wanted to exclude all so-called nationalization in your case. It is self-evident that you understand the poetry of your homeland's nature better than anyone else. And that therefore you appear, to a Finn, to be completely national when you give your stories a Finnish setting, and the Finnish colour is natural.

But the actual depiction – the purely human aspect – is nonetheless the main thing, and you do not have to be born in a different country to give your stories a different setting than the Finnish national one

[...] – For this reason I am glad that I have always seen you in this way – and for this reason I protest that you let some half-blind critic for whom nationality is only a learned phrase paste a costume of national phrases on you, put you in a cage, clip your wing feathers

ers and lull you to sleep with “the murmur of the firs by which your abode stands” [A Finnish saying implying respect for one’s roots] – I am totally convinced that you could create the yet uncomposed music to Peer Gynt just as well as Kullervo. And teach small-minded Grieg *et consortes* that he who wants to describe people and human suffering does not do so with an original (i.e. ‘national’) horn bugle. – Compose for example the death of Aase! [...] The scene from Peer Gynt – unrivalled in all word literature – where the young, poor poet of nature lulls his mother to eternal rest with the stories that she had given him when he was small – where he sends her straight to eternity wreathed in her fantasy – in which he conjures for her dying gaze the things great and fantastic in nature, of which she herself is a child – and brings all the mystical characters of folk tales to her death-bed – this farewell of a great spirit to all that raised and educated him, all that can be summarized in the concept of ‘mother’ – before he goes in exile to distant countries and becomes the world in itself that is known as an individual personality – that scene you could give, and none other, for you yourself are a great spirit and you have your own personality – And you have suffering and passions of your own that entitle you to described those of others. – Perhaps you believe yourself to be a prophet of nationality – despite your origins – and despite the fact that your family has many original personalities in addition to you. – If this is so, then believe it, for you are still dependent on the atmosphere under which you created your last works and because one never knows what one will be tomorrow (unless you’re a philistine).”⁸⁷

A further look at the material

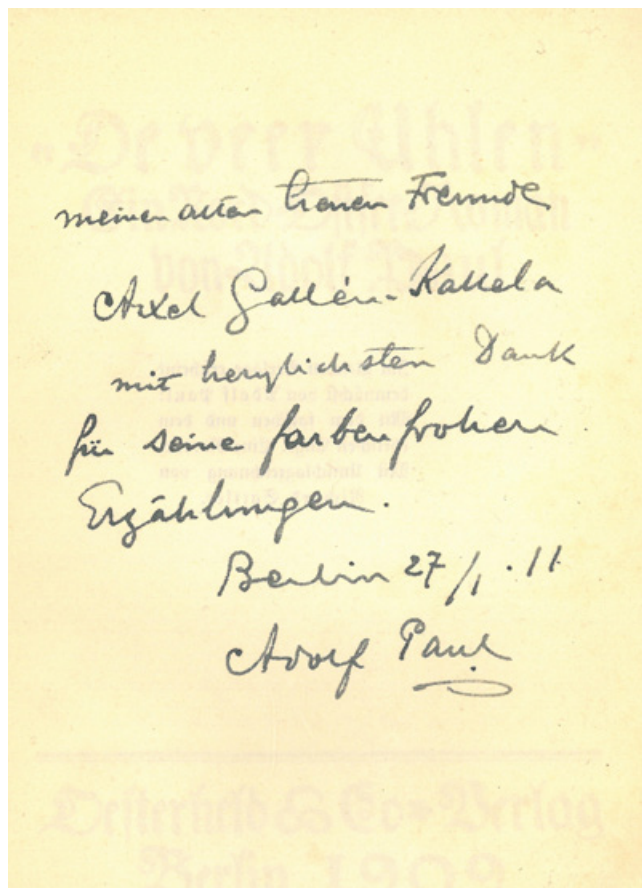
The main body of material concerning Paul is in Uppsala, and the present author has not yet had the opportunity to study it. Göran Söderström often quotes Paul’s diaries, which are kept in the Uppsala University Library, and notes that they contain long explanations of the theories of the Ferkel circle.⁸⁸ These sources may of course be of relevance. Excerpts from Paul’s diaries have been also published in research on Edvard Munch.

I am mostly familiar with the letters between Adolf Paul and Axel Gallén written during the years 1894–1895, when their correspondence was at its liveliest. They also mark the decisive years in the formation of Gallén’s symbolism and the ingredients of his art in the years to come. The known correspondence between Paul and Gallén continues until the year 1908, and often discusses problems of art. Therefore it is of importance to carefully study the whole correspondence. The Gallen-Kallela Museum houses the personal library of Akseli Gallen-Kallela, which includes 16 works by Adolf Paul.

The rarely noted correspondence between Adolf Paul and the amateur pianist, textile manufacturer and later patron of the arts John Da[h]lberg is in the collection of library of Åbo Akademi University. On other letters, see sources below.

It is obvious that Adolf Paul’s published recollections of his contemporaries, letters and diaries have already been important material for research on the composer Jean Sibelius, the artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela and the author August Strindberg. It would appear, however, that not all the aspects have been investigated even in this respect and that important materials may still remain to be studied or identified – an investigation of the whole correspondence between Busoni and Paul would be a welcome addition and

it would also be necessary to see if Sibelius’s letters to Paul have survived in the archive material that still remains to be catalogued. It would be also good to investigate if these materials provide new information on other contemporary artists or themes that were the shared interest of symbolist artists. Adolf Paul has clearly been noted until now as an important source in studies on his “great” friends. Would it now be time to shift focus from the celebrities to Adolf Paul himself and undertake a systematic study of his literary output and biography and their archival sources? Must Paul truly be remembered only as a minion of the “great and the good” or might an analysis of his oeuvre without the shadows cast by celebrity gives us a better understanding of the phenomena of art in the period?



11 The inscription by Adolf Paul in his book *De Veer Uhlen* to Axel Gallén. The Gallén-Kallela Museum. Photo: GKM.

Adolf Paul's written works

Novels (14):

- En bok om en människa: berättelse.* Bonnier, Stockholm 1891.
Some five pages of excerpts published in Harold E. Johnson, *Jean Sibelius* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 34-39.
Herr Ludvigs: skildring från vestra Finland. Söderström, Helsingfors 1893.
Blindebukk: ei saga um eit barn. Mons Litleré, Bergen 1894. / *Blindbuck: en historia om ett barn.* A. B. Ljus, Stockholm 1907.
Med det falska och det ärliga ögat: en bok om en människa II. Bonnier, Stockholm 1895 / *Mit dem falschen und dem erlichen Auge.* Oesterheld & C:o, Berlin 1909
Ung-Hans kärleksbref: en bok om en människa III Stockholm: Bonnier 1897 / *Jung-Hansens Liebesbriefe.* Georg Müller, München 1911
Die Madonna mit dem Rosenbusch: eine alt-lübische Geschichte. Alfred Janssen, Hamburg 1903 / *Madonnan med rosenbusken: en gammal-lübsk historia.* Ljus, Stockholm 1904
"De veer Uhlen": ein Nord-Ostsee-Roman. Oesterheld & C:o, Berlin 1909 / *Die vier Eulen : Roman.* Kronen-Verlag, Berlin 1916
Dornröschen: Roman. Georg Müller, München 1913
Die Tänzerin Barberina: Roman aus der Zeit Friedrichs des Grossen. Albert Langen, München 1915
Exzellens Unterrock: Roman. Albert Langen, München 1916
Das heilige Donnerwetter: Roman. A. Langen, München 1919
Aus der Chronik des „Schwarzen Ferkels“: phantastische Erzählung. A. Langen, München 1922
Frau Sybrecht und die drei Hübnerdiebe: eine Kriminalgroteske. A. Langen, München 1925
- #### Collections of short stories (7):
- "The Ripper": Uppskäraren.* Grönlund, Åbo 1892
Ein gefallener Prophet. Albert Langen 1895 / *En saga från ödemarken och andra berättelser.* Hagelstam, Helsingfors 1895
Oedipus im Norden und andere Erzählungen. Schuster & Loeffler, Berlin 1907
Finnische Erzählungen 1: Wenn die Kosacken kommen: Erzählungen aus Finnland. Georg Müller, München 1915
Finnische Erzählungen 2: Stille Teilhaber: Erzählungen aus Finnland. Georg Müller, München 1916
Der Teufel im Exil: Novellen. A. Langen, München 1925
Krönta och okrönta rebeller: historiska noveller. Albert Bonnier, Stockholm 1931

Plays (23):

- Alte Sünden: spiessbürgerliches Schauspiel in drei Aufzügen und einem Intermezzo.* Verlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus, Berlin 1893.
Den gode vännen: skådespel i en akt. Helsingfors 1894
Mater dolorosa: skådespel. C. & E. Germandts förlagsaktiebl., Stockholm 1897
Karin Månsdotter: skådespel i fem akter. Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm 1899
Kung Kristian den andre: skådespel i fem akter. Albert Bonnier, Stockholm 1899
Harpagos: Schauspiel in fünf Akten. Lübeck & Hartmann, Lübeck 1900
Heroische Komödien: Erste Folge: David und Goliath; Der Fall Voltaire; Der Tiger. Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig 1902
Die Doppelgänger-Komödie: in drei Akten. A. Janssen, Hamburg 1903
Die Teufelskirche: Komödie in drei Akten. Schuster & Loeffler, Berlin 1905 / *Djävulskyrkan: komedi i tre akter.* A. B. Ljus, Stockholm 1906 (Finnish translation by Aarne Orjatsalo *Pirunkirkko: 3:mi näytöksinen näytelmä: 4 kuvaelmaa.* M. V. Vuolukka, Pori 1908)
Hille Bobbe: Komödie in drei Akten. Schuster & Loeffler, Berlin 1905
Heroische Komödien: Zweite Folge: Der Klingelbeutel; St. Helena. Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig 1907
Der Triumph der Pompadour: Komödie in drei Akten. Erich Reiss, Berlin 1908
Blauer Dunst: Komödie in fünf Akten. Oesterheld & C:o, Berlin 1909
Wie die Sünde in die Welt kam: ein Legendenspiel in fünf Akten. Erich Reiss, Berlin 1909
Unverkäuflich, 1910
Die Sprache der Vögel: Komödie in vier Akten. Georg Müller, München 1912
Drohnen: Tragikomödie in drei Akten. Georg Müller, München 1913
Der bewusste Jemand: Komödie in 5 Akten. A. Langen, München 1917
Lola Montez: Schauspiel in 3 Akten. A. Langen, München 1917
Von Rechts wegen: Komödie. Langen/Müller, München 1922
Blauer Dunst: Komödie mit Musik in 5 Akten. A. Langen, München 1922

Lobndiener: die Komödie des Helden einer Komödie in fünf Akten.

A. Langen, München 1923

Sturmflut: Schausp. in 3 Akten. Berlin : Bühnenverl. Ahn & Simrock. [um 1933]

Das Schwert Karls des Grossen. Ein westfälisches Bauernstück in fünf Akten. Volkschaft-Verlag für Buch, Bühne und Film, Berlin 1935.

Memoirs etc.:

”Zwei Fennonenhauptlinge: Sibelius / Gallén”. *Deutsch-Nordisches Jahrbuch für Kulturaustausch und Volkskunde 1914*. Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1914, 114-119, 121.

Strindberg-minnen och brev. Åhlén & Åkerlund, Stockholm 1915 / *Strindberg-Erinnerungen und -Briefe.* Albert Langen, München 1915

Aus der Chronik des „Schwarzen Ferkels“: phantastische Erzählung. A. Langen, München 1922

Min Strindbergsbok: Strindbergsminnen och brev. Norstedt & Söner, Stockholm 1930

Profiler: minnen av stora personligheter. Söderströms, Helsingfors 1937 / Fahlerantz, Stockholm 1937.

”Mein Freund Sibelius, I-III.” In *Völkischer Beobachter*, January 22., 28., 29. 1938

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by the author and Jüri Kokkonen.

- 1 On Adolf Paul’s literary output, see George C. Schoolfield, ed., *A History of Finland’s Literature* (Lincoln & London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 378-380; Esko Aaltonen, ”Kirjailija Adolf Paul Talsolasta” (Forssa: Lounais-Hämeen Kotiseutu- ja Museoyhdistys, 1952); Arne Toftegaard Pedersen, ”Paul, Adolf: Författare, teaterkritiker,” in *Biografisk lexicon för Finland*, accessed February 20th, 2013, www.sls.fi/blf/artikel.php?id=9524; Jarl Pousar, ”Adolf Paul, vår sensationsnaturalist.” (Helsingfors: SLS 2000).
- 2 I would regard Paul’s book *Profiler: Minnen av stora personligheter* [Profiles: Recollections of Great Personalities] (Helsingfors: Söderströms, 1937) as expressing his pro-Nazi attitudes. He was by no means the only one whose judgment of Hitler failed, although this does not justify his Nazi sympathies in any way. Paul died in 1943 and did not witness the fate of Hitler’s Germany. I have not been able to study Paul’s Nazi connections sufficiently to comment on his position regarding Nazism and Fascism.
- 3 The father was German and the mother Swedish; the family roots lead also to Italy and Eastern Europe, among other places. Glenda Dawn Goss, *Sibelius: a composer’s life and the awakening of Finland* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 86, 453. Leo P. Wiedersheim Jr., *The Wiedersheim Family Journal* (2003), accessed on 3 October 2013, at http://www.wiedersheim.com/family/WIEDERSHEIM_JOURNAL_2003.pdf; Göran Söderström, “‘Mästaren’ och ‘husslaven’”. Om förhållandet Strindberg – Adolf Paul,” in *Strindbergiana* 18 (2003), 89.
- 4 In an article on Paul, Esko Aaltonen investigates the local history of Forssa concerning Paul, listing some names of his schoolmates. According to him, Paul was also in correspondence with some of them. Esko Aaltonen, ”Kirjailija Adolf Paul Talsolasta.”
- 5 Aaltonen, ”Kirjailija Adolf Paul Talsolasta,” 68-71; Arne Toftegaard Pedersen, ”Paul, Adolf”; Söderström, “‘Mästaren’ och ‘husslaven’,” 89-90; Wiedersheim, 2003.
- 6 Aaltonen, ”Kirjailija Adolf Paul Talsolasta,” 70. The period 1887–1889 given by Aaltonen is in conflict with the fact that Paul already began to study piano at the Helsinki Music Institute in 1886. He had probably taken piano lessons before this in Turku.
- 7 Aaltonen, ”Kirjailija Adolf Paul Talsolasta”. Jarl Pousar, “Adolf Paul, vår sensationsnaturalist.” (Helsingfors: SLS 2000). Söderström, “‘Mästaren’ och ‘husslaven’,” 90. Fabian Dahlström, *Sibelius-akademien 1882-1982* (Helsinki: [Sibelius-akademien], 1982), 458. From 1886 to 1888, piano was taught by: Ludwig Dingeldey (Germany, taught by Liszt), 1883-1887; Heinrich Wefing (Germany) 1884–1891 (secondary teacher), Carl Schuler (Saksa, taught by Liszt) 1887–1 February 1888, Ferruccio Busoni 1888–1890, and Richard Faltin in February 1888, when Schuler was released of his duties. Dahlström, *Sibelius-akademien*, 44. For the time being, it is not clear who of the above actually taught Adolf Paul and from whom he may have taken piano lessons in Turku.
- 8 Tawaststjerna notes the correspondence in the English-language version of his Sibelius biography, see Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: Volume 3*, 1914-1957, ed. and trans. Robert Layton (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), 212. Professor Tomi Mäkelä has noted the letters in the collection of the Sibelius Museum of Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 156. In letters to other persons, Busoni himself refers to Adolf Paul, see Ferruccio Busoni, *Selected Letters*, trans. & ed. Antony Beaumont (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 25, 271, 273, but does not mention correspondence with Paul. The letters referred to above reflect Busoni’s distaste for Paul’s recollections of Strindberg, see. Busoni, *Selected Letters*, 271, 273. Paul is not mentioned in Gisella Selden-Goth, *Fünfundzwanzig Busoni-Briefe* (Wien-Leipzig-Zürich: Herbert Reichner Verlag, 1937) or Ferruccio Busoni, *Briefe an seine Frau*, hrsg. von Friedrich Schnapp (Erlenbach – Zürich / Leipzig: Rotapfel-Verlag, 1935). The letters in the latter compilation begin in 1895; Stuckenschmidt mentions that in the summer of 1889 Busoni wrote daily from Weimar to his fiancée Gerda. H[ans] H[einz] Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni: Zeittafel eines Europäers* (Zürich und Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis Verlag, 1967), 21.
- 9 See Ferruccio Busoni to Henri Petri 18.8.1889 in Busoni, *Selected Letters*, 42. In this letter, Busoni suggests that the performance of the Ring of the Nibelungs in Dresden in late August will be an excellent opportunity to educate Mamma and Paul and to introduce them to Henri Petri and the splendours of Dresden.
- 10 Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, 186-235.
- 11 Pousar, “Adolf Paul, vår sensationsnaturalist,” 33. Goss, *Sibelius*, 86.

- 12 See Fabian Dahlström, ed., *Jean Sibelius: tematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2003), 228-233. At a later stage, the publisher did not accept Paul's translations of texts by Ernst Josephson for op. 57, see *ibid.*, 260.
- 13 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven,'" 90, note 4.
- 14 Adolf Paul to Robert Kajanus 8.3.1900, 14.4.1900. KK, Coll. 96.4. Of the concerts planned by Paul, the following were held: Copenhagen 12.-13.7., Lübeck 15.7., Hamburg 16.-17.7., Berlin 18.-19.7., Brussels 25.7.1900. The concerts in Wiesbaden, Cologne and Antwerp were not held, but there were concerts in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. Matti Vainio, *Nouskaa aattee!* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2002), 363–374.
- 15 See Goss, Sibelius, in particular p. 86-87, 94-96; Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, in particular p. 90-92, 140-142; Erik Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius: Åren 1865-1893* (Helsingfors: Söderströms, 1992).
- 16 Professor Glenda Goss suggests that *Florestan* with its water nymph motif is associated with many other compositions by Sibelius. The motif of the water nymph, the French subtitle *Ballade pour orchestre* and the distinct eroticism of the work link *Florestan* to the ideas of symbolism. Goss, *Sibelius*, 203; regarding *Florestan*, see also 86, 159. Related to this theme in Akseli Gallen-Kallela's oeuvre is the motif *Drowned among the Water Lilies* executed in oils and as a relief in wood.
- 17 Goss, *Sibelius*, 86.
- 18 While working on this painting, Gallen-Kallela called it *Kajustaflan* [The Kajus Painting, with reference to Robert Kajanus (nicknamed Kajus)] but when he displayed it in 1894 he gave it the title *Probleemi* [The Problem]. Contrary to claims by Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, see Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, *Minä palaan jalanjäljilleni: Akseli Gallen-Kallelan elämä ja taide* (Helsinki: Otava, 2001), 193-202, the title of *Kajustaflan* does not refer to an earlier version in the collection of the Serlachius Art Museum. This is clearly indicated by Gallen-Kallela's description in his own words of the frame of the painting and expographic information on the respective versions. In a letter to Robert Kajanus from 16 May 1894, Gallen-Kallela describes the frame of *Kajustaflan*, carved in the Egyptian style, which the version in the collection of the Serlachius Museum does not have. *Symposion* [Symposium] was exhibited until 1904 with the title *Probleemi* [The Problem], and in 1907 for the first time as *Symposion*. The work in the Serlachius Museum's collection is known to have been displayed for the first time in 1924, during the artist's lifetime as *Probleemi, luonnos* [The Problem, a sketch]. While the Platonic connotations of the later title are obvious, it has not been established why the soirées of prominent cultural figures who joined Young Finnish political circles began to be known as symposia. Minna Turtiainen, "We could amuse ourselves by teaching the symbolists Symbolism. The Phases of a Sphinx in the Correspondence of Axel Gallén and the Author Adolf Paul," in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela* (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011), 81-82, 91.
- 19 Ferruccio Busoni to Hans Huber 29.4.1918, cited from Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, 101. [Briefe Busonis an Hans Hüber, hrsg. von Edgar Refardt, Zürich and Leipzig, 37. Busonis letters see Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.] Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, 100-104. Salmi, "Nuoruusvuodet ja uran alkutaival (1869-1907)," 22-26.
- 20 For example Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 14.9.1894, 16.11.1894.
- 21 Jean Sibelius, *Dagbok 1909-1944*, utg. av Fabian Dahlström (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland & Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005).
- 22 The letters from Sibelius to Paul in the period 20.12.1894 – August 1898 (six letters from Paul to Sibelius in this period) do not appear to have survived.
- 23 In editing the critical edition of the works of Jean Sibelius, *Jean Sibelius Works* (JSW), Goss observed that Paul's handwriting can be clearly seen in the manuscript of *Kullervo*, see Jean Sibelius, *Kullervo*, Op. 7. in (JSW) *Complete works, Series 1, Orchestral works, Volume 1.1* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Library and The Sibelius Society of Finland, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2005), 125: Facsimile I/1, 129: Facsimile II/1.
- This discovery by Professor Goss shows that Sibelius himself planned to have this work performed in Germany, which calls for a revision of the former conception of *Kullervo* as pointing the way for vocal music in the Finnish language in particular. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Worttext und Übersetzungen in Sibelius' *Kullervo* Symphonie," in *Autor-Autorisation-Authentizität: Beiträge der Internationalen Fachtagung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für germanistische Edition in Verbindung mit der Arbeitsgemeinschaft philosophischer Editionen und der fachgruppe Freie Forschungsinstitute in der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Aachen, 20. bis 23. Februar 2002*, edited by Thomas Bein, Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, Bodo Plachta (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004), 335.
- 24 Jean Sibelius to Adolf Paul 30.12.1890, 19.2.1891, 20.9.1892, 31.10.1892. Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 16.2.1891, 10.4.1892.
- 25 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 6.5.1892.
- 26 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius after 23.11.1894.
- 27 Biographical details of Paul given briefly in Pedersen, "Paul, Adolf"; Aaltonen, "Kirjalija Adolf Paul Talsolasta"; Pousar, "Adolf Paul, vår sensationsnaturalist."
- 28 Goss, *Sibelius*, 87.
- 29 Nimi viittaa Ola Hanssonin teokseen *Ung-Ofegs visor*, 1892. See Schoolfield, *A History of Finland's Literature*, 379.
- 30 Fairy-tales and fables were a general subject of interest in symbolist circles. Professor Goss points to possible connections between Gallen-Kallela's painting *Sibelius as the Composer of En Saga* with the lynx-hunting scene in Aleksis Kivi's novel *Seven Brothers*, Goss 175-176.
- 31 The great popularity of this play in Finland at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was related to its allegorical treatment of current political affairs. In Europe and the United States it presented Sibelius to audiences as an orchestra composer and established his contacts with the international music publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. Goss, *Sibelius*, 233-235.
- 32 Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni*, 44.
- 33 Asbjørn Aarseth, "Berlin som kulturmetropol og vinstuen 'Schwarzes Ferkel' – nordmenn i Berlin," in *Skandinavien och Tyskland 1800-1914. Möten och vänskapsband*, (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1998). Göran Söderström, "Zum Schwarzen Ferkel," in *Skandinavien och Tyskland 1800-1914. Möten och vänskapsband*. (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1998); Carla Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel: A Study in Early Modernism* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1972); Karin Bruns, "Das schwarze Ferkel [Berlin]," in *Handbuch literarisch-kultureller Vereine, Gruppen und Bünde 1825-1933*, ed. Wulf Wülfing et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998); Marek Fiałek, *Die Berliner Künstlerbobème aus dem Schwarzen Ferkel* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač), 2007.
- 34 Adolf Paul, *Strindberg-minnen och brev* (Stockholm: Åhlén & Åkerlund, 1915), 52-53.
- 35 Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, 9-13. Arne Widell, *Ola Hansson i Tyskland* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1979). Inger Månesköld-Öberg, *Att spegla tiden - eller forma den* (Göteborg: Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Göteborgs universitet, 1984).

- 36 Ola Hansson, *Tolke og Seere: kritiske Essays* (Kristiania: Aschehoug & co.s förlag 1893).
- 37 Widell, *Ola Hansson i Tyskland*, 142-143.
- 38 K. A. Tavaststjerna to Ola Hansson 22.12.1890 (in two letters).
- 39 George C. Schoolfield considers in particular Tavaststjerna's novel *I förbund med döden* (1893, In Alliance with Death) to be a confessional novel in which the author grapples with his personal demons. The work was written during the summer of 1893 at Rügen, where August Strindberg and Adolf Paul also stayed. George C. Schoolfield, *A Baedeker of decadence: charting a literary fashion, 1884-1927* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 135-146.
- 40 Schoolfield, *A Baedeker of Decadence*, 118-121. Fiałek, *Die Berliner Künstlerbohème aus dem Schwarzen Ferkel*, 145-200. Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, 38-39. Przybyszewski also appears as a character in at least 15 novels, see Fiałek 201-218.
- 41 Paul, *Strindberg-minnen och brev*, 96.
- 42 Roman Taborski, "Stanisław Przybyszewski and the New Art," in *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890's*, ed. Phillippe Jullian (New York: Praeger Publ. 1971).
- 43 Stanisław Przybyszewski, "Psychischer Naturalismus," in *Neue Deutsche Rundschau (Freie Bühne)* 5 (1894), 150-156.
- 44 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Das Werk des Edvard Munch. Vier Beiträge von Stanisław Przybyszewski, Dr. Frans Servaes, Willy Pastor, Julius Meier-Graefe*. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1894.
- 45 Schoolfield, *A Baedeker of Decadence*, 119-131. On Przybyszewski's novels including *Homo sapiens* see op. cit. 182-197.
- 46 Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1965), 190.
- 47 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 8: Briefe 1879-1927*. Hrsg. und übers. von Aurelia Jaroszewicz. Oldenburg: Igel, 1999.
- 48 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven'," 91-92.
- 49 Paul, *Strindbergminnen och brev*, 33.
- 50 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven,'" 96-97; Lathe, *The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, 47.
- 51 Söderström, "Strindberg ja Suomi," in *August Strindberg* (Espoo: Gallen-Kallelan Museo, 1991), 48. Also K. A. Tavaststjerna's letters to Birger Mörner mention Strindberg a great deal, but this is not the focus of the present article.
- 52 Paul, *Strindbergminnen och brev*, 192-193.
- 53 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven,'" 109-110.
- 54 Olof Lagercrantz, *August Strindberg*, 1979.
- 55 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven,'" 103, 118 note 24.
- 56 Edvard Munch to Adolf Paul, Munch-museet MM N 2396, 1892-1895. Judging from Strindberg's location in Brün/Brno and Paul's location in Helsinki, the postcard was sent apparently in late 1893. Paul returned to Berlin in May 1894.
- 57 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 24.4.1894, 9.5.1894.
- 58 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 15.5.1894.
- 59 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 9.5.1894.
- 60 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 15.5.1894.
- 61 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 5.6.1894.
- 62 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 15.6.1894.
- 63 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 2.10.1894.
- 64 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 16.11.1894.
- 65 Minna Turtiainen, "We could amuse ourselves by teaching the symbolists Symbolism. The Phases of a Sphinx in the Correspondence of Axel Gallén and the Author Adolf Paul," in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, trans. Jüri Kokkonen (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011).
- 66 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén, likely in January 1894. Axel Gallén to Carl Dørnberger 15.9.1894: "Last spring I displayed a large number of watercolours in a watercolour exhibition, I was derided in the reviews in our leading newspaper, being told quite frankly that I had gone mad. At the "Finnish artists' exhibition" this autumn I exhibited various things, including a painting of a couple of my friends (the musicians Sibelius and Kajanus) sitting in a tavern in the light of a fire with bottles and glasses. The title of the painting was "The Problem" with myself painted among them. A pair of Isis wings appears before our eyes looking in amazement. Kajanus is sitting and explaining the situation to us. Blood-red clouds are crowding behind my head, spreading out against a deep blue starry sky with a large oppressive planet. A dark fairy-tale forest appears to grow out of Sibelius's hair. A fourth man, who didn't have the strength to follow the conversation has passed out on the table. I had faith in my painting, people just deride me and attacked me in public for having displayed such a painting."
- 67 Salme Sarajas-Korte, *Vid symbolismens källor: den tidiga symbolismen i Finland 1890-1895* (Jakobstad: Jakobstads tryckeri och tidnings AB:s förlag, 1981).
- 68 With reference to correspondence between Paul and Gallen-Kallela, Gallen-Kallela-Sirén suggests that Gallen-Kallela did not get to know Nietzsche's thinking until he had painted the different versions of *The Problem*, see Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, *Minä palaan jalanjäljilleni*, 202-204. Nietzsche is mentioned for the first time in this correspondence in late June 1894 when Gallén asks Paul about translations of Nietzsche's works, see Turtiainen 76, 90. It should be remembered, however, that philosophical influences in particular are largely adopted through other channels than original texts: various summaries, general works, articles, lectures and conversations. In Gallen-Kallela's close circle they could have been passed on, for instance, by the author K. A. Tavaststjerna. Gallen-Kallela-Sirén does not specify what Nietzschean ideas in particular should, in his opinion, be excluded from interpretations of *The Problem*. For example, Nietzsche's distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian art would seem to suit Gallén's works well, as also the ideal of the critical, independent individual – the ideal individual creating his own world view and values. Evaluations of Nietzsche are often influenced by an implicit "Nazi stigma", which is mostly due to the activities of his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. The Nazis adopted many "Nietzschean" notions through her influence, and the anti-Semitic comments attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche actually came from her.
- I do not regard Rubens's painting as a direct example for Gallen-Kallela's work. Gallen-Kallela visited Florence for the first time in 1898 and his personal library does not contain any books presenting the art of Rubens. It would be interesting to know the sources on which Gallen-Kallela-Sirén bases his assumption that Gallen-Kallela would have known this painting. On the other hand, this parallel opens up interesting interpretations. By the same token and with equal likelihood we could suggest that *The Problem/Symposium* is a comment on Christian Krogh's painting *Med venner rundt bordet i Berlin*, (With Friends Around the Table in Berlin) ca. 1876, oil on metal, 37.5 x 76.9 cm (Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste). The only place where Gallen-Kallela could have seen this painting was Max Klinger's studio, where it was found after Klinger's death in 1920. Information on the expography of the painting by Krogh: personal communication from Øystein Sjøstad to the present author, 6 January 2013 with Oscar Thue, *Christian Krogh* (Aschehoug, 1997) as the source.

- Professor Mäkelä has interpreted Gallen-Kallela's *Problem / Symposion* via Albert Dürer's *Melancholia* and links the subject to Sibelius's *Malinconia* in D minor op. 20. See Tomi Mäkelä, "Jean Sibelius' *Malinconia* d-Moll op. 20 – Finnische Fantasie oder Ballade der Sprachlosigkeit?" in: *Facetten I: Symposien zur Liszt-Rezeption, zu Jean Sibelius und Max Kowalski*, edited by Joachim Brügge, Tützing: Schneider 2014, 24 pages (forthcoming).
- 69 Dieter Distl, "Joseph Sattler – Ein Wegbereiter des Jugendstils," in *Joseph Kaspar Sattler. Ein Wegbereiter d. Jugendstils*, ed. Ludwig Hollweg & Hanns Schultes (Pfaffenhofen: Ludwig, 1988), 29-38.
- 70 Klaus Englert, "Gesicherte Daten," in *Joseph Kaspar Sattler. Ein Wegbereiter d. Jugendstils*, ed. Ludwig Hollweg & Hanns Schultes. (Pfaffenhofen: Ludwig, 1988).
- 71 Professor Mäkelä notes Gallén's interest in musical notation around 1894 and suggests the five golden lines in *Mäntykoski Rapids* (in the year 1895 exhibited under the title *Waldpartie mit Wasserfall / Dekoratives Wandgemälde*) to be understood not only as strings but also as a vertical five-line staff. See Tomi Mäkelä, „Gemalte Musik 1894. *Les Rapides de Mäntykoski* und *Fantasielandschaft* von Akseli Gallen-Kallela zwischen nordischem Horizontalismus und symbolistischem Vertikalismus,“ in: *Musikwissenschaftliche Brückenschläge. Festschrift für Wolfgang Aubagen zum 60. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von Veronika Busch, Kathrin Schlemmer und Clemens Wöllner, Olms: Hildesheim 2013, 301–310 (forthcoming).
- 72 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 30.9.1892. Jean Sibelius to Adolf Paul 31.10.1892. Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Zur Psychologie des Individuums* came out as two booklets, corresponding to Paul's mention of "två broschyrer" in his letter as the form of publication. Przybyszewski had not had any noteworthy publications before this. The other part was on Ola Hansson, who at that stage belonged at least to circle of acquaintances of the Finland-Swedish author K. A. Tavaststjerna. Schoolfield mentions that it was Przybyszewski's unrealized dream to have his five prose poems (*Totenmesse* 1893, *Vigilien* 1894, *Androgyne* 1906, in Polish from 1899 on, *De Profundis* 1895, *Am Meer* 1900 as a part of *Epipsychidion*) published in a single volume (*Pentateuch, oder fünf Bücher von erhabenen und niederen Sachen / Five Books Concerning Matters Exalted and Base*). Schoolfield, *A Baedeker of Decadence*, 121.
- 73 Axel Gallén to Adolf Paul 9.5.1894, 15.5.1894.
- 74 About the relationship of Strindberg and Juel, see Mary Kay Norseng, 12-14.
- 75 About Schwarzen Ferkel and erotics, see Fiałek, *Die Berliner Künstlerbohème aus dem Schwarzen Ferkel*, 77-109.
- 76 Björn Meidal, *The Worlds of August Strindberg* (Stockholm: Max Strom Publishing, 2012), 275-276.
- 77 Söderström, "'Mästaren' och 'husslaven'," 111-116.
- 78 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 15.12.1892.
- 79 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius after 23.11.1894.
- 80 "Es existierte bei ihm eine sonderbare Beziehung zwischen Ton und Farbe. Jeder Klang wurde in seinen Gehirn sofort mit einer gewissen Farbennuance identifiziert. Dann stellten sich Melodie, Harmonie und Rhythmus von selbst ein." Adolf Paul, "Mein Freund Sibelius. Persönliche Erinnerungen von Adolf Paul." *Völkischer Beobachten*. 27.1.1938.
- 81 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén s.d. [18.4.-24.4.1894].
- 82 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 28.3.1895.
- 83 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 6.5.1892.
- 84 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 9.7.1894.
- 85 Adolf Paul to Axel Gallén 24.6.1894.
- 86 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin*, 186-187.
- 87 Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 6.5.1892. See also Tavaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, 211.
- 88 Söderström, "Strindberg ja Suomi," 50.

Contributors

Damien Delille is completing a Ph.D at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and works as a Part Time Faculty at Parsons Paris: The New School. As an assistant researcher, he co-organised the program “History of fashion and clothing” at the Institut national d’histoire de l’art (INHA) from 2010 to 2013. He is currently co-directing one of the first French readers on Fashion and Clothing History, and curating the exhibition “Christian Lacroix and the Performing Arts” at INHA’s Gallery (forthcoming, April 2014). His researches are mainly focused on art and fashion at the turn of the 20th century, and on contemporary art.

Sonia Lagerwall obtained her PhD in Romance Languages in 2004 at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her doctoral thesis in French Literature examines the functions of implicit and explicit references to visual arts in a novel by Michel Butor. During 2004–2007 she was one of the members of a pluridisciplinary research program at the University of Gothenburg on literary reading and on academic teaching of literature (with a project on intermediality). As a postdoctoral researcher she spent 2004 at *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS) in Paris. In a project supported by the *Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences* she recently focused on the French nineteenth-century illustrated novel. She is currently the *Swedish Academy Research Fellow* in Literature with a project on French contemporary fiction under the influence of “The Pictorial Turn” and New Media.

Marja Lahelma studied art history at the University of Helsinki. In her doctoral dissertation *Ideal and Disintegration: Dynamics of the Self and Art at the Fin-de-Siècle* (2014) she examined the dynamic interplay of the self and art in Nordic Symbolism during the years around 1900. She is currently preparing a postdoctoral research project on the concept of subjectivity in Symbolist art and aesthetics. Lahelma has also worked in the museum field and organized seminars and conferences on nineteenth-century art and culture.

Juliet Simpson studied History of Art at the Universities of St Andrews and Oxford. She is Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Buckinghamshire New University and a research member of Wolfson College, Oxford where she was holder of a Visiting Scholarship in fin-de-siècle Art and Criticism. She is a specialist in European fin-de-siècle visual cultures and Symbolism. Her publications include: *Aurier, Symbolism and the Visual Arts* (1999), *Jules Flandrin (1871–1947): the Other Fin de Siècle* (2001), and with Carol Adlam (eds.) *Critical Exchange: Art Criticism of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in Russia and Western Europe* (2009). Current work includes books on European art writing to 1914 and on the ‘artist as primitive in 19th and 20th-century art and cultural reception.

Lynn Sharp is Associate Professor of History at Whitman College, a four year Liberal Arts institution. Her work on French *spiritisme* has been published in *Journal of Religious History*, *French Historical Studies* and in her book *Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-Century France*. She also has work forthcoming in Brill’s *Handbook for Spiritualism*, to be published in 2014.

Minna Turtiainen is an art historian working as the head of collections of the Gallen-Kallela Museum in Espoo near Helsinki. Her research interests include the theoretical and philosophical background of symbolism and its expressions in the visual arts. She is currently working on an article based on original sources on the artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela’s Berlin period in 1895.



THE BIRCH & THE STAR

Finnish perspectives on the long nineteenth century
