



CIRCLES OF CONFLUENCE

Jean Toomer's *CANE*,
'Modernist' Aesthetics,
& Neo-Platonism

JOHN-FRANCIS KINSLER

Circles of Confluence: Jean Toomer's CANE, 'Modernist' Aesthetics, & Neo-Platonism is a search for the aesthetic foundations of the modernist author's literary influences and artistic innovations. This monograph seeks to provide a philosophical and aesthetic lens with which to view and interpret the prevalent 'mystical' aspects in Toomer's writings, and will attempt to situate the modernist text within the overlapping region between Neo-Platonism, Neoromanticism, and Neo-primitivism. This study traces Toomer's literary influences from American poetic realists, through Whitman and French symbolist poetics, through Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* and Russian writers, back to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and *Frühromantik* theorists—to show that the common thread connecting each movement is an essentially Neo-Platonist conception of reality and art, refracted and focused through a distinctly German prism.

As hinted in the title, much of what we properly designate 'modernist' and avant-garde in Jean Toomer's aesthetics has been passed down through writers of previous movements, adopted and adapted at each stage into a unique literary style—but one that still bears the imprint of a consistent view of God, the world, nature, and art. The intricate pattern of ideas which underpin American nativist modernism—its *Kunstanschauung* and *Weltanschauung*—is consistently and overwhelmingly Herderian in origin. This is not to suggest merely points of overlap or certain parallels, but an assertion that without Johann Gottfried von Herder's primal influence on German romantic aesthetics and idealist philosophy—covering a wide spectrum of disciplines, spanning various countries, and impacting a vast number of conscious and unconscious 'inheritors' in later generations—*CANE* would not exist as the modernist text we know today.

This monograph focuses on Toomer's *CANE*-era compositions, with special attention given to two contemporary notebooks and loose-leaf notes (1919-1923), along with the letters and critical essays of the *Seven Arts* group. Identifying major points of intersection in Toomer's writings and that of his predecessors will allow modern readers to view the seemingly disparate aesthetic and philosophical trends, not as isolated ideas, but rather, as interlocking fragments within a vast super-constellation.

JOHN-FRANCIS KINSLER

PhD Dissertation submitted to



ROYAL
HOLLOWAY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

Cover image is a detail of the photograph of Jean Toomer printed in the front page of the Cleveland, Ohio *Gazette*. Photo taken March 17, 1932. Credited to Bettmann as contributor, editorial # 515979934. For the full uncropped photograph see **Image H9** within.

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JOHN-FRANCIS **KINSLER**

PhD Dissertation
Department of English
University of London, Royal Holloway

Theages : What law of Nature has been discovered which should compel souls to revolve in this narrow race-course? The spirit is raised above the bounds of time, it despises space and the slow movements of earth. Once disembodied, it is immediately in its place, its sphere, in the new kingdom to which it belongs. Perhaps that kingdom is around us and we perceive it not; perhaps it is near us and we know not of it, except in occasional moments of happy fore-feeling, when the soul, as it were, attracts it to itself, or it the soul. Perhaps, too, there are appointed for us places of rest, regions of preparation, other worlds in which,—as on a golden heaven-ladder—ever lighter, more active and blest, we may climb upward to the fountain of all light, ever seeking, never reaching the centre of our pilgrimage,—the bosom of our Godhead.

Johann Gottfried Herder, from *Metempsychosis*, Dialogue II

I am still waiting for an apocalyptic angel with a key to this abyss.

Johann Georg Hamann, Letter to Herder, 1784

ABSTRACT

Circles of Confluence: Jean Toomer's CANE, 'Modernist' Aesthetics, & Neo-Platonism is a search for the aesthetic foundations of the modernist author's literary influences and artistic innovations. This monograph seeks to provide a philosophical and aesthetic lens with which to view and interpret the prevalent 'mystical' aspects in Toomer's writings, and will situate the modernist text within the overlapping region between Neo-Platonism, Neo-romanticism, & Neo-primitivism. This study traces Toomer's literary influences from American poetic realists, through Whitman and French symbolist poetics, through Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* and Russian writers, and back to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and *Frühromantik* theorists—to show that the common thread connecting each movement is an essentially Neo-Platonist conception of reality and art, refracted and focused through a distinctly German prism.

As hinted in the title, much of what we properly designate 'modernist' and avant-garde in Jean Toomer's aesthetics has been passed down through writers of previous movements, adopted and adapted at each stage into a unique literary style—but one that still bears the imprint of a consistent view of God, the world, nature, and art. The intricate pattern of ideas which underpin American nativist modernism—its *Kunstanschauung* and *Weltanschauung*—is consistently and overwhelmingly Herderian in origin. This is not to suggest merely points of overlap or certain parallels, but an assertion that without Johann Gottfried von Herder's primal influence on German romantic aesthetics and idealist philosophy—covering a wide spectrum of disciplines, spanning various countries, and impacting a vast number of conscious and unconscious 'inheritors' in later generations—*CANE* would not exist as the modernist text we know today.

This monograph focuses on Toomer's *CANE*-era compositions, with special attention given to two contemporary notebooks and loose-leaf notes (1919-1923), along with the letters and critical essays of the *Seven Arts* group. Identifying major points of intersection in Toomer's writings and that of his predecessors will allow modern readers to view the seemingly disparate aesthetic and philosophical trends, not as isolated ideas, but rather, as interlocking fragments of a vast super-constellation.

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[1] : THROUGH THE PRISM LENS

[U : < - > : S : < - > : T : < - > : Z]

[1773-1786 / 360BCE / 290AD / 1919-23]

HERDER / PLATO / PLOTINUS / KANT / FRANK / TOOMER
[GÖTT / 'SHAKESPEARE' / OSSIAN / REPUBLIC / TIMAEUS /
ENNEADS / DECLARATION OF WAR / CANE / NOTEBOOKS]
[HERDER'S CONTRIBUTIONS / SPINOZA / LEIBNIZ /
NOUMEANA vs PHENOMENA / KRÄFTE / POIESIS / BILD /
DAEMON / COINCIDENTIA OPPOSITORUM / EINFÜHLUNG]

[2] : BILD, BILDUNG, & EINFÜHLUNG

[U : < - > : Y : < - > : Z]

[1919-1923 / 1916-1917] : SEVEN ARTS PROSE

BENEFIELD / LAWRENCE / FRANK / ANDERSON
[SUGAR PIE / MISS WILLET / THIMBLE / TRIUMPH EGG /
WINESBURG, OHIO / WITHERED BERRIES / CITY BLOCK]
[NOUMENAL REALM / UNSPOKEN CONSCIOUSNESS /
VERFREMDUNSEFFEKT / AUFHEBUNG / VOLKSGEIST /
VOLKSLIED / COINCIDENTIA OPPOSITORUM]

[3] : "BETWEEN PROSE & VERSE"

[U < - > : X : < - > : Y : < - > : Z]

[1888-1921] : CHICAGO / NY / LONDON / PARIS

WHITMAN / ANDERSON / MASTERS / CORBIN / RIDGE /
LOWELL / FLETCHER / POUND / MALLARMÉ / ELIOT / DOSTOEVSKY
[LEAVES OF GRASS / MID-AMERICAN CHANTS / TESTAMENTS /
THE NEW POETRY / SPOON RIVER / OLD SOUTH /
CATHOLIC ANTHOLOGY / PRUFROCK /]
[IMAGISTE & SYMBOLISTE / POLYPHONIC PROSE /
INTER- & INTRA-TEXTUALITY / ARABESQUE / HOVERING /
SIMULTANEITY / DOPPELGÄNGER / GROTESQUES]

[4] : HERDERIAN NEO-PRIMITIVISM

[U : < - > : W : < - > : X + Y : < - > : Z]

[1852 - 1871 / 1866-1880 / 1917 / 1921] : RUSSIA

KARAMZIN / GOGOL / KOLTSOV / DOSTOEVSKY / TURGENEV
[SPORTSMAN'S SKETCHES / ARABESQUES /
DEAD SOULS / POOR FOLK / KARAMAZOV /
LEAVES OF GRASS / WINESBURG / TRIUMPH EGG]
[VOLKSGEIST / POETIC REALISM / LYRICISM /
INDIRECTION / SUGGESTION / NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE]

[5] : GOETHE & ROMANTIC IRONY

[U : < - > : V : < - > : T : < - > : Z]

[1795-1821 / 1921-1923] : GERMANY

GOETHE / F. SCHLEGEL / NOVALIS / PLOTINUS
[WILHELM MEISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP / TRAVELS /
ON MEISTER / GÖTZ / ENNEADS]
[ROMANTIC IRONY / PARABASIS / POLYSEMY /
SYMBOL & ALLEGORY / GOD vs POET / SCHWEBEN /
MULTIVALENT IDENTITY / INTERTEXTUALITY]

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
THE SEVEN ARTS CIRCLE

- [JEAN TOOMER] [Z]
CANE : C
Brother Mine : (*Letters of Toomer & Frank*) : **BM**
Jean Toomer Papers : **JTP**
The Letters of Jean Toomer : **LJT**
Selected Essays & Literary Criticism : **SEL**
Wayward & the Seeking : **W&S**
- [WALDO FRANK] [Y]
City Block : **CB**
Our America : **OUR**
Salvos : **SAL**
- [SHERWOOD ANDERSON] [Y]
Mid-American Chants : **MID**
A New Testament : **NT**
Triumph of the Egg : **EGG**
Winesburg, Ohio : **WIN**
- [GORHAM MUNSON] [Y]
Destinations : **DES**
Waldo Frank: A Study : **WFS**
- [PAUL ROSENFELD] [Y]
Men Seen : **MS**
"The Novels of Waldo Frank" in *The Dial* : "NWF"
Port of New York : **PNY**
Introduction, *The Sherwood Anderson Reader* : **SAR**
- [VAN WYCK BROOKS] [Y]
America's Coming-of-Age : **AGE**
Letters & Leadership : **L&L**
- [HART CRANE] [Y]
Complete Poems & Selected Letters : **CRA**
- [BARRY BENEFIELD] [Y]
Short Turns : **BEN**
- [THE SEVEN ARTS] [Y]
The Seven Arts, vol. 1&2 : **SA1/2**

[ABB]

OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

- [S] [PLATO]
PLA : *Complete Works*
- [T] [PLOTINUS]
ENN : *Enneads* [tr. MacKenna]
- [U] [JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER]
GOD : *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion*
EBE : *Essay on Being*
ADV : *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity*
MAN : *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*
PHL : *Philosophical Writings*
AES : *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*
SNG : *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music & Nationalism*
- HEB1/2* : *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, Vols. 1 & 2*
- [V] [JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE]
T&P : *Autobiography: Truth & Poetry, From My Own Life* [tr. Oxenford]
GOE : *Essential Goethe*
- WM I,II,III* : *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship & Travels* [tr. Carlyle]
I: *Apprenticeship* Bk. 1-4; II: Bk. 5-8; III: *Travels*
- [V] [JOHN PAUL RICHTER]
JPR : *Horn of Oberon: School for Aesthetics*
- [V] [NOVALIS]
NOV : *Philosophical Writings*
- [V] [FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL]
FRS : *Lucinde & The Fragments*
- [W] [IVAN TURGENEV]
SS1/2 : *The Sportsman Sketches, Vols. 1 & 2* [tr. Garnett]
- [W] [WALT WHITMAN]
WW : *The Portable Walt Whitman*
- [X] [SYMBOLISTES, IMAGISTS, & POETIC REALISTS]
FLE : JOHN GOULD FLETCHER :: *Selected Essays*
MAL : STÉPHANE MALLAMÉ :: *Selected Prose Poems, Essays, & Letters*
MAS : EDGAR LEE MASTERS :: *Spoon River Anthology*
MON : MONROE & HENDERSON [eds.; 1917] :: *The New Poetry*
"SYM" : JEAN MORÉAS :: "Le Symbolisme" in *Le Figaro*
CAT : EZRA POUND [ed.; 1915] :: *Catholic Anthology: 1914-1915*

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Image A1. Jean Toomer's Passport, c. 1924. JTP, Box 65, Folder 1490. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

ere is transient. I'm going to die, or be absorbed."
hen I come up to Seventh Street and Theatre, a wholly new life confronts me. A life, I am afraid, that Sherwood Anderson would not get his beauty from. For it is jaundiced, stunted, modern. Seventh Street is the home of crude new life. Of a new people. Negro? Only in the boldness of its expression. In its healthy freedom. American. For the shows that at least Seventh Street make their fortunes on Broadway. And both Theatre and Box-Seat, of course, spring from a complex civilization, and are directed to it. And Kabnis is Me. Holiday? Brother, you are revealing yourself into the truth of the South in a most remarkable way. You need it to complete your own spiritual experience. Because of your need, a beauty that is in solution will continue to live.

Image A2. Detail of Toomer's letter to Waldo Frank, January 1923. JTP, Box 3, Folder 85. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

PREFACE

I can still distinctly recall meeting one afternoon at the British Library with my advisor. It had been many years since I had completed my Master's degree at the **University of London, Royal Holloway** under his guidance, and as I discussed my plan to continue with the same topic for my doctorate degree—**Jean Toomer**—he asked me a very simple question: “Is there anything important left for you to say on the topic?” I believe the question was a way to gauge my focus and resolve as I was about to expend many more years researching an author I had already written two essays and a dissertation on. I remember answering ‘yes’ and sharing my fuzzy plans of delving further into the spiritual aspects of **CANE**. Although, half of me wanted to experience the thrill of becoming acquainted with a new author in depth, I had a growing sense that the conclusions I had arrived at previously needed to be re-examined and investigated further. And if I had been more articulate that day, perhaps I might have been able express the lingering questions I could not answer satisfactorily to myself.

While I had agreed with Charles Scuggs and Lee VanDemarr's warning against the “tendency to read backward and interpret *Cane* in light of selected bits of [his later Gurdjieffism] and New Age thinking”,¹ it had also seemed that the mystical and spiritual aspects evident in the work have not been addressed adequately (at least not in reputable scholarship). In my Master's dissertation, *Jean Toomer: Essentialist & Spiritualizer* (2006), I had suggested that **P. D. Ouspensky's** *Tertium Organum*, which had been in vogue in the '20s, may have served as a convenient sourcebook of mystical and philosophical ideas. While not fully convinced, I was surprised to find a number of theories explained in the ‘occult’ text overlapping with aspects of **CANE**. However, the oft-quoted line in Toomer's letter to **Waldo Frank**—“**Kabnis is Me**”—has never convincingly ‘fit’ with the interpretations and readings provided by various critics. More importantly, the explanation I had

¹ Charles Scuggs and Lee VanDemarr, *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 7.

confidently proffered in my dissertation—the argument I was most proud of—also wavered over time. In a sense, this research began as a search for other possible meanings of “**Me**” and a key to unlock mystifying aspects of the text. I had expected to be sifting through countless esoteric and occult books—which I have extensively done at the start of my research. Fortunately, my search has led me out of that labyrinthian muddle and has increasingly veered towards more established—although no less confounding—seminal works of philosophy and aesthetic theory in the Western tradition.

I am most indebted to Dr. Armstrong for advising me to make a visit to the **Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library** at Yale to get a first-hand look at the **Jean Toomer Papers**. While I was initially overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material in the collection, I am glad I had the foresight to take photographs of all of the materials I deemed might be relevant or useful to my research. After transcribing, deciphering, and organizing the materials photographed from the **JTP collection**, I became increasingly aware of the significance of Toomer’s early writings, which for the most part have been overlooked, undervalued, unpublished, and until very recently—remained out of reach for most academics—except by visiting the Beinecke library in person. In the spirit of making these materials more accessible and to draw attention to their value, I include the full contents of Toomer’s early “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook**, “**Poetry**” **Notebook**, and collected ‘**Loose-Leaf Notes**’ (1919-1923) at the end, organized into **Appendixes I, II, and III**.

I have found much recent Toomer scholarship to cite and replay the same revealing but well-worn quotes—which is understandable due to the limited amount of material relevant to his sole contribution to the Western literary canon, **CANE**. However, my hope is that some of the contents of **Jean Toomer’s notebooks** will be scrutinized and absorbed into the ‘mix’ of ideas. Although relatively sparse in volume, I believe these notes merit serious consideration as they can provide fresh insight of a different perspective: a more honest record of the author’s evolving philosophical concerns and literary endeavors—albeit, opaque and in fragments—yet lacking the self-conscious performative aspect of writing for an audience, as in letters and autobiographies.

My sense is that academic research on Toomer of the past twenty years has taken on a new phase—placing much more emphasis on the biographical and historical context, race and identity politics, and of course his literary innovations. What has been given short shrift are specific insights by earlier scholars addressing the spiritual and metaphysical elements of *CANE*; these concerns have not only been left behind, they have often been locked behind doors marked ‘irrelevant’ and hermetically sealed, perhaps in part due to Scruggs and VanDemarr’s warning. It is easy to surmise why these ‘cabalistic’ or ‘religious’ elements are viewed as less relevant today, and also to admit the difficulty and discomfort of dealing with ideas so closely associated with ‘the occult’. My motives for reopening this door, however, is to show that these elements are firmly rooted in the Western philosophical tradition, and are essential foundations needed to place **Jean Toomer**’s writings into proper context. My overarching aim for taking this unorthodox approach of incorporating a wide-angle yet detailed view into the seemingly distant literary and philosophical past, is that it will lead to new ‘relevant’ avenues to explore now—while hopefully also enlivening future research, if successful.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Tim Armstrong** for his guidance and endless patience during those many times I had “to sit in the dark and wait for a little flame / to appear at the tip of my pencil”,² and for his monograph *Modernism* (2005), which maps out the networks of modernism—and undoubtedly served a model and inspiration for this research. I sincerely thank my **inner circle of friends** for their motivation and encouragement; and **all my students** for reminding me time and again of the value and gratification of teaching literature. I also acknowledge and thank **Melissa Barton** and the Beinecke Library staff for their professionalism and generosity in granting me permission to include such a substantial amount of Jean Toomer’s early writings into the Appendixes. Most of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my parents, **Arthur** and **Sue Kinsler**, for their constant love and support throughout—especially in times of struggle. It has been a trial by fire for me, but I hope that something worthwhile has been forged within me and within this work.

² Lines pilfered from “The Trouble with Poetry” by Billy Collins.

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A FEW NOTES

- The complete contents of Jean Toomer’s “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook** and “**Poetry**” **Notebook** (along with most of his pre-Gurdjieff ‘**Loose-Leaf Notes**’ written before 1924) are provided in **Appendixes I, II, & III**—therefore, it will prove more beneficial to reference them specifically by section and fragment number rather than simply giving the general box and folder numbers of the **Jean Toomer Papers** collection. As most of these writings have not been published in book form, a more precise system of citation will be incorporated to refer to the contents presented in the Appendixes: for example, [“**POE**” **II:2**] correlates to the “**Poetry**” **Notebook**, **Appendix II: Fragment #2**. Brackets for citations refer to texts and images provided in the Appendixes & Image sections.
- The underlying objective of this study is to lay out a vast map of confluence—charting key figures, literary works, and movements. Key concepts, artistic movements, primary sources, and authors central to our overarching argument will be emphasized typographically, as Herder did in his works.
- Several new editions of **CANE** have been published recently—one included in the Library of America’s 2011 anthology, *Five Novels of the 1920s* edited by Rafia Ed Zafar, and the second *Norton Critical Edition of Cane* (2011) edited by Rudolph P. Byrd and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. To maintain congruity with previous scholarship on **Jean Toomer**, however, all citation page numbers will correspond to Darwin Turner’s first *Norton Critical Edition of Cane* (1988). In addition, my references to the text *Cane* will designate it in all-caps as ‘**CANE**’, which is how the author spelt it in many of his letters, to differentiate my reference from that of critics.
- For the names of the Russian writers covered in depth, all references will standardize the romanization of their names to ‘Fyodor Dostoevsky’, ‘Dmitry Grigorovich’, and ‘Turgenev’, to unify the numerous variant spellings used from text to text.

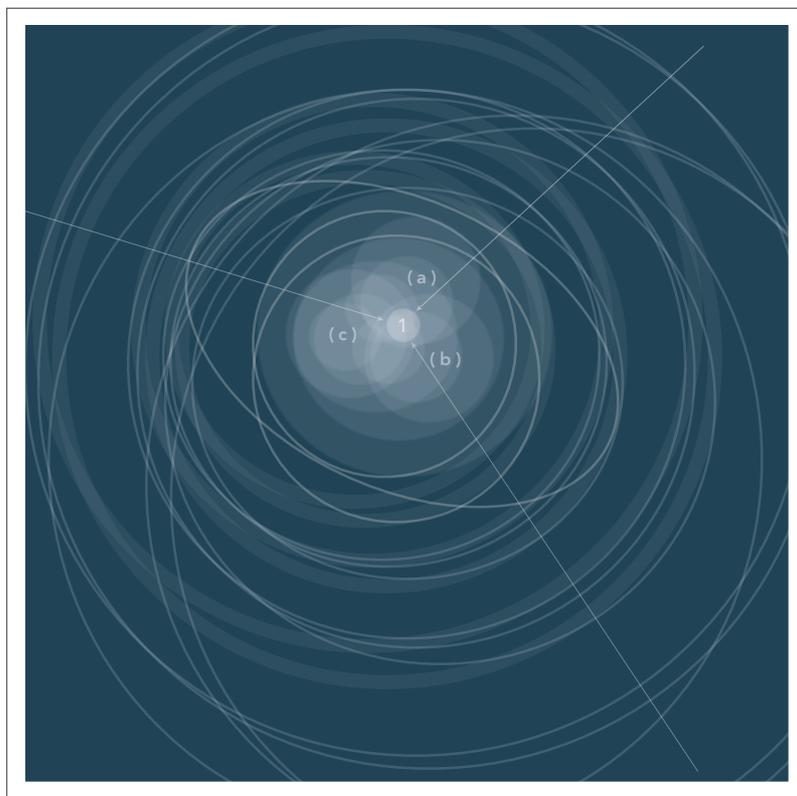


Image A3. *Three Mooring Threads (Drei Verankernde Fäden)*, by John-Francis Kinsler. May 3, 2019.

"THE PATTERN OF OUR MILIEU"
Gorham Munson's **Pendulum**

Break in
Continuity

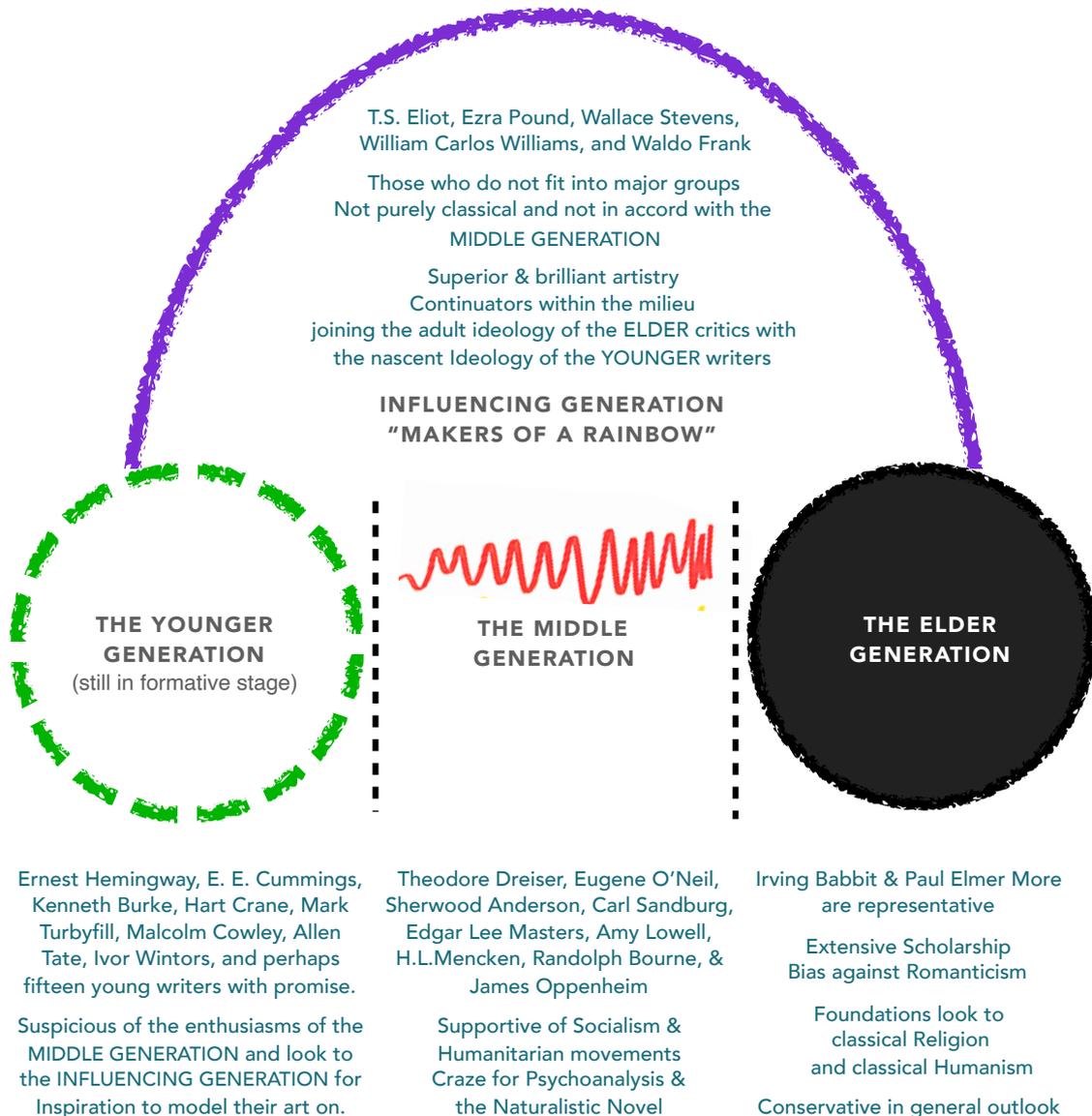


Image A4. Visual representation of Gorham Munson's description of the American literary terrain from his introductory chapter, "The Pattern of Our Milieu". Gorham B. Munson, *Destinations: A Canvass of American Literature Since 1900* (New York: J. H. Shears & Company, 1928), 3-6.

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Plotting a New Map for C A N E

Nōlī turbāre circulōs meōs!

—Archimedes

Conventional institutional religion was certainly in disrepute in many circles, but much of the religious energy of Americans has always expressed itself in fringe groups and solitary mystical epiphanies. Among American Modernists in the first jazz age, religion remains the forgotten topic, duly noted in study after study but rarely seeming central either to the lives or the art of those involved.

— Robert Crunden¹

Jean Moréas opens his 1886 essay, ‘*Le Symbolisme*’, with the following words: “As with all arts, literature evolves: a cyclical evolution with strictly determined returns and which become more complicated of various modifications brought by the step of time and the confusion of circles.”² He highlights the dynamic interplay between art movements as the historical **pendulum** shifts direction from one towards the other—how the birth of each new “progressive stage of art” comes up out of the ashes of its predecessor’s “senile degeneration” as “what was full of sap and freshness becomes dried out” (“*SYM*”). Moréas maps out the movement from “classical debris” laid waste by **Romanticism**’s “days of glory and battle”, followed by its revolutionary impulses being tamed by the **Parnassians**, the subsequent failed attempts at a “resurgence” superseded by an era of “timorous and servile” naturalism, finally leading to the anticipated “revival” in the form of *Symbolisme*, the “new manifestation, brooded for a long time, just hatched” (“*SYM*”). Moréas’s ‘**Symbolist Manifesto**’ goes on to list the defining features and principle “forerunners” of this new movement, while conceding the extreme difficulty of tracing its “exact parentage” due to the “extremely complicated” nature of its tangled lineage (“*SYM*”).

¹ Robert M. Crunden, *Body and Soul: The Making of American Modernism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 341.

² Jean Moréas, “Symbolist Manifesto”, translated by C. Liszt, *Mutable Sound*, October 3, 2009. <http://www.mutablesound.com/home/?p=2165>. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “*SYM*”.

From the vantage point of history, it is possible to continue **Jean Moréas's** outline and map out the various subsequent movements that followed—through the turn of the century, the Great War, and into the 1920s. However, as the scope broadens beyond France's borders, it soon becomes apparent we are no longer sketching out a single line of succession with alternating progressive and regressive tendencies—but rather an ever-widening **web**, with increasing points of contact, between the vast number of coteries, each linked by innumerable **intersections** and **interconnections**, that span both axes of time and space. When we consider that many of the artistic tendencies and influences originate from much farther back in history—as Moréas remarks “we should go back to certain poems of Alfred de Vigny, and on up to Shakespeare, even mystical, even further” in tracing the **symbolists'** lineage (“*SYM*”)—the practicality and possibility of producing such an all-encompassing map is called into question.

As many **cartographers** are aware, in order to create a **map** that provides utility, the parameters of scale and scope need to be set in relation to its purpose; and this purpose determines what categories of information should be left out and what level of detail will be necessary. As a general rule: the larger the scope, such as in a map of the world, the more general the accompanying information should be; omitting the finer details will lead to a more useful representation, and limiting the variety of information will provide more focus. The converse also holds true in most situations: the more limited the scope, such as in a map of a city block, the more particular details should be included from a more diverse range of categories in order to increase the utility of the map. Some representations call for broad strokes, while others require fine lines or delicate shading.

In **Gorham Munson's** *Destinations* (1926), he describes the American literary landscape in the opening chapter titled “**The Pattern of Our Milieu**”; he additionally provides instructions how to visually map out and organize the different groups in relation to each other, while also providing the defining features and listing the representative writers of each group [see **Image A4**]. Munson ignores the distinctions between writers within each group, to focus more on the broader changes from generation to generation

and track the general movements of the historical pendulum. By limiting the geographical scope to just America and the historical range to the early twentieth century, he is able to give readers a wide-angle view that provides focus and serves the purpose of the book. **Jean Toomer**, who is the subject of his twelfth chapter, can easily be situated on this map: he is part of the Younger Generation. Although acquainted with fellow group member **Hart Crane**, for inspiration and direction Toomer looks to previous schools and authors, rather than his own. A more prominent direct line can be drawn to **Sherwood Anderson** in the Middle Generation—with additional, fainter lines connecting Toomer to each regional writer of the Chicago literary Renaissance listed there. Another pronounced line links him to **Waldo Frank**, although many on the list might have taken issue with positioning Frank as a member of the Influencing Generation (and literary ‘elite’).³ Additional lines can be drawn from Toomer to those associated with the **imagist** movement and perhaps even **T. S. Eliot**.

However, at this point the inadequacies of Munson’s parameters become evident: there are no African-American writers listed at all, and the map provides nowhere to place them; the impact of the British literary tradition is sealed off, along with the impact of various European movements (save romanticism and naturalism); even the significance of a colossal figure like **Walt Whitman** or **James Joyce** is beyond consideration due to the limitations placed at the outset. These are all regarded outside of the boundaries and purpose set by the author, as is his prerogative. The value of a given map, however, is measured by its accuracy and usefulness. Munson selects and features various writers for his chapters to better define each group and make the case that each writer’s unique talent has changed the landscape or undoubtedly will do so. Many of the chapters feature recognizable names (some less so in hindsight); but it is worth keeping in mind that Munson knew many of these writers personally, and weigh that against any perceptible bias. It is understandable but also a little suspect that many of the representatives Munson props up in subsequent chapters are those he associated with during his *Secession* days, while others have been left out or

³ Munson’s eagerness to attribute to the subject of his recent book, *Waldo Frank* (1923), the almost transcendent position (next to T. S. Eliot) without justification or even discussion, strikes readers as being unearned, and a case of nepotism more than critical assessment.

only briefly mentioned as peripheral figures.⁴ In Toomer's case the chapter is very positive, but Anderson and Frank are the only influences on his style touched upon (besides general background mentioning **F. Matthias Alexander** and briefly referencing **Nietzsche**). Those omissions listed earlier should be appended or alluded to within specific chapters to offset any bias—but also to give readers better markers and an identifiable scale to qualify or get a better sense of Munson's judgments. However, the chapter on Toomer does not address any of the factors outside the parameters mentioned earlier, and as a result it becomes more personal testimony than useful criticism.

This kind of partiality is more prominent in a similar bird's-eye view of the American literary field offered by **Edmund Wilson** in his 1926 article 'The All-Star Literary Vaudeville'—this essay first came out anonymously, which may have emboldened him to dispense with any manners or subtlety. As is hinted at in the title, Wilson presents a scathing portrait of a bumbling troupe of dilettantes when compared to their European counterparts: "We have no novelist of the first importance of **James Joyce**, **Proust**; or that of **Balzac** or **Dostoevsky**".⁵ Wilson does of course exempt a few favorite Americans from his attack—**O'Neill**, **Mencken**, **Eliot**, and **E. A. Robinson** are presented as rare breeds that have met the international standard of great literature. The remaining specimen, especially American novelists, he paints with a broad dismissive brush, as provincial minor talents, despite his singling out individual redeeming qualities or successes.⁶ Readers are expected to accept his sweeping judgments at face value without being shown the specific standards he is applying, while making his partiality very clear.

⁴ Munson's acrimonious history with Sherwood Anderson obviously influenced his decision to elevate and devote chapters to lesser writers of the Middle Generation instead; Although he uncharacteristically tempers his animosity for Anderson the few times mentioned, this partial treatment and minimizing of the writer's achievement is noticeable.

⁵ Edmund Wilson, "The All-Star Literary Vaudeville", in *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s & 30s* (New York: Library of America, 2007), 192. Emphasis added.

⁶ Wilson praises Anderson's "stories and symbolist prose-poems", Paul Rosenfeld as an "excellent writer", Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology*, Edna Millay as "the most important of [women lyric poets]", Edith Wharton's prime works are highlighted, and he makes brief mention of our present subject: "I consider Jean Toomer's *Cane* rather better in literary quality than Frank's somewhat similar *Holiday*". *Ibid.*, 193-4; 198; 201.

These two examples show that the personal preferences, interpretations, and biases of a literary critic may have a greater role in shaping the final representation of the *'milieu'* than the actual *'terrain'* of the landscape. Bias is a problem, but also the lack of **distance**—and also **detail**. These are problematic in that they skew or obscure the big picture; and while subjectivity can not be avoided, this makes objective criteria and detailed examples even more essential to provide a more balanced and less arbitrary overview when gauging a given writer's achievement or impact. In short, not all maps are of equal value or accuracy; but those that prove invaluable, often succeed because they present a deeper understanding—connecting and explaining the scattered contexts in profound new ways—to reveal **insight** not attainable anywhere else.

Perhaps it has always been the task of academics to fill these gaps, rectify omissions, unearth new connections, set different parameters, and create new maps of varying sizes and scope—maps that take into consideration new categories and literary works, while including relevant insights that branch out in new directions. In regards to **Jean Toomer**, many scholars and critics have done just this—considering his position from different perspectives and interpreting **CANE** in relation to various contexts. As I pondered what my original contribution to Toomer scholarship might be and what kind of map might prove most valuable, my research has led me in a direction similar to that implied by **Jean Moréas's** suggestion: “even mystical, even further”. An attempt to determine the defining features and common thread connecting the myriad authors and ideas that Toomer drew inspiration from when writing **CANE**, led to a common discovery in each case: a univalent mysticism just below the surface of shared literary and philosophical values.

A simple question arises: *How do we explain the ambitions, focus, and the peculiar structure of CANE?* I believe answering this question involves unraveling the tangled lineage evident in this modernist text. In his essay **'The Function of Criticism'** (1923), **T. S. Eliot** writes of the invisible connection between “true artists” that forms an “unconscious community”:

I think of . . . the literature of a single country, not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as 'organic wholes', as systems in relation to which, and only in

relation to which, individual works of literary art, the works of individual artists, have their significance. There is accordingly something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position. A common inheritance and a common cause unite artists consciously or unconsciously.⁷

Identifying the various strands and interconnections with writers from the past will lead to a deeper understanding of the genealogy of systems that informs Jean Toomer's writings, his development as a writer associated with the **Seven Arts group**, and the various undercurrents that propelled post-war modernist aesthetics in 1920s America. It becomes obvious that we need to break from the general cartographers' guidelines mentioned earlier to create a specialized hybrid map that can simultaneously cover a macro expanse while also providing micro details. In order to do this properly, we need to narrow the focus to specific sections of this vast web, and clearly define the parameters.

OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES & HERDERIAN METHODS

In terms of purpose and scope, this monograph [1] seeks to provide a coherent philosophical and aesthetic lens with which to view and interpret the prevalent 'mystical' aspects in Toomer's **CANE**-era writings (1919-1923), including his various unpublished notebooks and letters; [2] it traces Toomer's literary influences back from contemporary avant-garde circles and American writers that venerated the Black American folk spirit, through **Whitman** and **French symbolist** poetics, through Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* and Russian novelists like Gogol and Dostoevsky, and finally Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and *Frühromantik* theorists—to show that the common thread connecting each movement is an essentially **Neo-Platonist** conception of reality and art, refracted and focused through a distinctly German prism; [3] it identifies the intricate pattern of ideas which underpins American nativist modernism—its *Kunstanschauung* and *Weltanschauung*—to be consistently and overwhelmingly Herderian in origin; [4] it views the 'modernist' text from the standpoint of this Herderian inheritance and examines the numerous intersections between three major intertwining mooring threads of (a) **Neo-Platonism**, (b) **Neo-romanticism**, and (c) **Neo-primitivism**.

⁷ T. S. Eliot, "The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot," vol. 2, *The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, eds. Antony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 458.

CANE's design is unique—it is multifarious and eludes simple classification. It is a mixture of short stories, verse, and drama, and even the prose works rely heavily on poetry, lyricism, and song to create its complex narrative structure. It is also a composite of disparate themes, styles, and philosophical ideas observed and gleaned from a wide range of works and then woven together into a unified aesthetic and form. Merely cataloguing an exhaustive list detailing all the influences and literary innovations would not only prove tiresome, it would also be less than illuminating. To get at the inner core of this modernist text—its intricate design and interplay of forces—will require a form and strategy just as unconventional to delve beneath the surface chaos and order it from within, rather than relying merely on typical methods of literary research. I committed to making **Johann Gottfried von Herder** (1744-1803) the controlling idea and intellectual prism of this monograph fairly late in the organization process. Not only were his major discoveries in philosophy and aesthetics sudden revelations providing an unexpected singular answer to my multiple unanswered questions, it had also become clear that adopting a Herderian approach to philosophical enquiry, along with elements of his unorthodox style, would be the most effective manner of communicating these ideas.

Herder's first major work, 'Essay on Being' (*Versuch über das Seyn*; 1763-4), opens with a dedication (almost certainly to Kant) claiming the work to be merely "a few thoughts, a metaphysical exercitium".⁸ Herder takes on a rhetorical strategy that aims to free himself from the expectations and constraints imposed upon academic works: "If I have thought in error, so be it! I do not write before the world, not before the great nor the academic environment. I write not to teach but to learn" (*EBE* 55); Herder breaks with the conventions of philosophical style—one moulded by **Christian Wolff** and later German philosophers into a "factual" and "naked" discourse in opposition to oration and poetry—which he found "so clear as to make one yawn".⁹ Herder opts for a freer, more elliptical poetic style and method in this and all subsequent works, best summed up in the closing of his earliest work's

⁸ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herder's Essays on Being: A Translation and Critical Approaches*, ed. John K. Noyes (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018), 55. Hereafter cited as '*EBE*'.

⁹ Hans Adler, "Herder's Style", in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, eds. Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 333-4.

dedication: “But I sing on one foot, / Where I should stand and speak” (*EBE* 55). Ironically, it is **Kant** himself who would decades later mock and denigrate Herder’s style in his reviews of *Ideen*¹⁰—which would ultimately lead to his former student and opponent being marginalized, “stigmatized and banned from the guild of the philosophers”; however, as Hans Adler points out,

The way Herder wrote was due not to a lack of intellectual discipline—as Kant and many others in his wake insinuated—but to a different and very modern understanding of the function of language and style. . . . for Herder language was inseparably tied to that which it refers to an indispensable “veil” of truth because for him there would be no access to truth without this “veil.” For Herder a separation of [philosophic from oratory and poetic] discourses did not correspond to the structure of human understanding, and language in itself is a genuine element of understanding. Hence, metaphors have their legitimate place wherever human beings pursue their quest for truth and knowledge.¹¹

Herder writes in his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91), “O for a magic wand which, at once transforming into faithful pictures all the vague verbal descriptions that have hitherto been given, might present man with a gallery of figures of his fellow creatures!”¹² The “magic wand” the author relies on throughout the four volumes is the oft-repeated trope of **organicism** (especially plants) to present a unifying birds-eye-view “picture” of mankind transcending time and space. Herder identifies in all beings an unknown “vital principle” that is “innate, organical, genetic” and “connects all parts together” (*MAN* 152-3) into a single system or organism—following natural laws equally applicable to “the immeasurable chain descend[ing] from the creator down to the germ of a grain of sand” (*MAN* 25). Drawing on this relationship between a **Part** and its **Whole**, he is able to describe man as “the most perfect animal plant” (*MAN* 152)—based on the belief that, “In the dissemination and degeneration of plants there is a similitude observable that will apply to beings of a superior order and prepares us for the views and

¹⁰ Kant wrote two devastating reviews of the first two volumes of Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, or *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91). Each of Herder’s four volumes were originally published separately and divided into 5 books.

¹¹ Adler, 336-7.

¹² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (San Bernadino, CA: Random Shack, 2016), 137. Hereafter parenthetically cited as ‘*MAN*’.

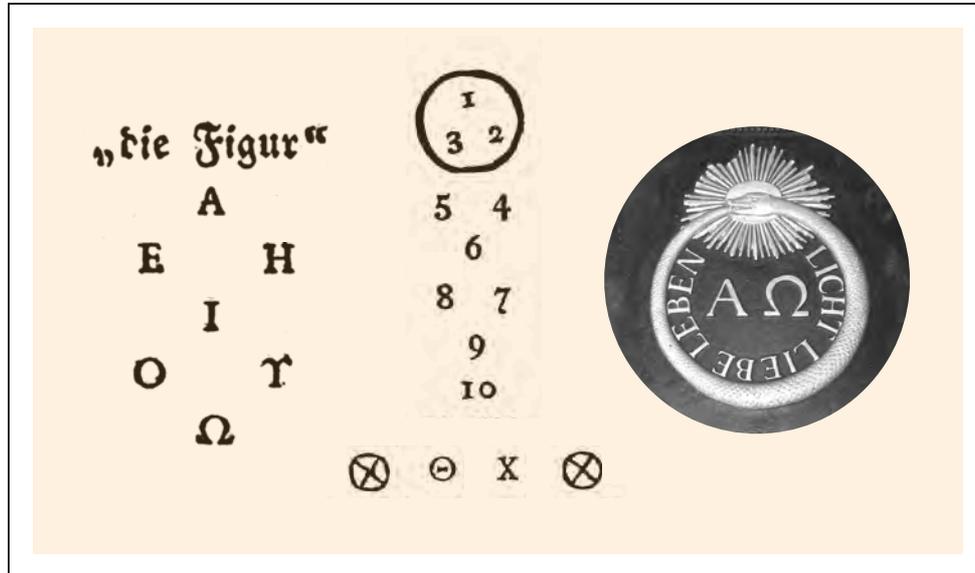
laws of Nature” (*MAN* 29). Herder’s organicist conception of the universe is more than an analogy, it is the ever-present foundation for his works and worldview.

Another Herderian work this monograph takes inspiration from is *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782–83).¹³ Firstly, is the manner in which the two volumes capaciously incorporate substantial Biblical passages and other sources of poetry throughout—opting to show rather than merely tell, and requiring participation from the reader to connect the dots—which ends up providing greater context and a deeper understanding of the source material in relation to the explication offered. Secondly, are the author’s methods of codifying and presenting different points of view and moving from one topic or argument to another—**Volume one** is written as an extended dialogue between **Alciphron** (the “publick”) and the meta-persona **Euthyphron** (a youthful student of poetry)—which allows for brevity, “gives to the subject animation”, and avoids didacticism: “The aim here was not to invent in general, but to elucidate, to exhibit, and point out to view, to find what is already before us” (*HEB1* 20-1). **Volume two** is written in a single voice and is more fragmentary in nature, but from start to finish relies upon various text sizes, a mixture of numbering systems (1, 2, 3; I, II, III; A, B, C), and a vocabulary of assorted **symbols** for ancillary footnotes (* , ** , *** , † , †† , ††† ; ‖ , ‡ , § ; a, b, c , &c), that instill a logical hierarchy to the explanations provided and allow the abundant biblical passages to remain mostly intact. This creates a sense of uniformity throughout the fragmented organization of argument, source material, and explication.

Herder was drawn to various symbols and icons throughout his life—from earliest unpublished dialogues, where he cryptically includes ancient symbols for the elements of **fire** \triangle , **air** \triangleleft , **water** ∇ , and **earth** ∇ , to his all-important hexagonal ‘hieroglyph’ in *Älteste Urkunde* (1774) of vertically aligned characters “A. I. Ω.”, crossed by an evenly spaced “E. H.” and “O. Υ.” [See **Image A5.1**]. Symbols often served as a source for Herder’s mystical insights. From the time of *Ideen*, he looked to the geometrical symbols of “the circle with radii converging upon the centre” to express “the mystical unity behind the main

¹³ Original title *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie: Eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben, und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* (Subtitle = “An Instruction for Lovers of the Same and the Oldest History of the Human Spirit”). Johann Gottfried Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, 2 vols., trans. James Marsh (Burlington, VT: Edward Smith, 1833). Hereafter cited ‘*HEB1/2*’.

processes of the universe”; and his “favorite mystical symbol” was the *Ouroboros*, “the snake biting its tail, the ancient symbol of infinity”, which he wore daily and had inscribed upon his grave ledger.¹⁴



Images A5. Herder’s representations of symbols presented in *Älteste Urkunde* (1774): [5.1] “The Figure” (far left) of Herder’s all-important sextogram & key to Hebrew texts; [5.2] “Ten Sefiroth” (middle top), the image accompanying Herder’s discussion of the Kabbalah & numerology mirroring Plotinian emanation of all multiplicity from “the One” & its trinity; [5.3] The “Ibisbild” (middle bottom), the Egyptian ‘Ibis’ hieroglyph is linked to various interrelated symbols representing the *Weltgeist & Weltall*. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Älteste Urkunde des menschlichen Geschlechts, in Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, zur Religion und Theologie, ed. J. G. Müller (Tübingen: Cotta, 1806), 201; 420; 203. **Image A6.** Detail of Herder’s grave ledger (far right) in Weimar’s church of St. Peter und Paul, featuring the *Ouroboros* symbol and motto: “Light, Love, Life”. Wikipedia, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Gottfried_Herder#/media/Datei:Herdergrab.JPG

Herder reminisced in a letter, “I did not want to write according to academic rules, but according to my own manner”.¹⁵ He broke rules of **syntax, grammar, and academic conventions** in favor of a more experimental and conversational ‘essayistic’ style scattered with heavy punctuation, various

¹⁴ H. B. Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science* (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1970), 162; 303. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘NIS’.

¹⁵ Qtd. in James M. Van Der Laan, “Herder’s Essayistic Style”, in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Language, History, and the Enlightenment*, ed. Wulf Koepke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1990), 112. This chapter contains a detailed overview and analysis of Herder’s unique style.

Sophokles fügte die dritte Person hinzu, erfand Bühne — aus solchem Ursprunge, aber spät, hob sich das Griechische Trauerspiel zu seiner Grösse empor, ward Meisterstück des Menschlichen Geistes, Gipfel der Dichtkunst, den Aristoteles so hoch ehret, und wir freilich nicht tief gnug in Sophokles und Euripides bewundern können.

Man siehet aber zugleich, daß aus diesem Ursprunge gewisse Dinge erklärlich werden, die man sonst, als todte Regeln angestaunet, erschredlich verkennen müssen. Jene Simplizität der Griechischen Fabel, jene Nüchternheit Griechischer Sitten, jenes fort ausgehaltne Rothurnmässige des Ausdrucks, Musik, Bühne, Einheit des Orts und der Zeit — das Alles lag ohne Kunst und Zauberei so natürlich und wesentlich im Ursprunge Griechischer Tragödie, daß diese ohne Veredlung zu alle Jenem nicht möglich war. Alles das war Schlaube, in der die Frucht wuchs.

Tretet in die Kindheit der damaligen Zeit zurück: Simplizität der Fabel lag wirklich so sehr in dem, was Handlung der Vorzeit, der Republik, des Vaterlandes, der Religion, was

Image A7. Example of Herder's usage of *Sperrdruck* from his essay 'Shakespeare'. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Shakespear", in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Georg Olms Verlag, 1967), 210.

forms of ellipsis, incomplete sentence fragments, interjections, questions, often addressing his readers directly. Herder wanted his own writing to contain the same defining characteristics that he believed made primitive folk poetry ultimately superior—unpolished (authentic and natural); vital (spontaneous and forceful), possessing "*Sprünge und Würfe*"¹⁶—these nonstandard elements help make all his works feel fragmentary and dynamic. Herder's unorthodox style of writing additionally incorporates an "unusual number of typographically emphasized words, originally printed in *Sperrdruck*, that is, with a space between the letters"¹⁷ [See **Image A7**], and in translations

¹⁶ Herder's phrase meaning "leaps and gaps and sudden transitions" from 'Extract from a Correspondence about Ossian & the Songs of Ancient Peoples' (1773)—Herder's first part of the *Sturm und Drang* manifesto *Von deutscher Art und Kunst: Einige fliegende Blätter*. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker", in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Georg Olms Verlag, 1967), 197.

¹⁷ Adler, 345. Hans Adler points out that "these elements of design belong to the realm of the paralinguistic typographic representation of a text . . . The emphasized words and phrases do not acquire a different lexical meaning but gain a different value within the text, and taken together they provide an additional perspective on the text, not only in the sense that the typographically emphasized elements are 'somewhat more important', but but because they provide an overarching and orienting structure that guides the reader by reminding him/her constantly of the text's fundamental discursive assumptions." *Ibid.*

“italics for emphasis, which range from emphasis on certain words and phrases to the identification of authors and titles”.¹⁸ I have found this aspect of Herder’s style (reminiscent of textbooks) to be initially jarring, but exceedingly helpful once accustomed to—as highlighting the central **personages**, **texts**, and **concepts** elevates and focuses these elements in relation to the criss-crossing lanes of various arguments and vast sea of information presented. Hans Adler calls these “marked words and phrases” the “layer that constitutes the text’s marrow” as they gesture towards the ‘theme’ and “axiomatic foundations”.¹⁹

Herder’s various stylistic and literary methods highlighted above have been adapted and incorporated throughout—not for the sake of breaking with academic norms or merely to write in a creative fashion—but rather, because I feel that Herder’s message is reliant upon his medium; in other words, his style and poetic method help *create* the context necessary to *unfold* this message. It would not make sense to only turn to logical and analytical thinking (*Abstraktion*), when discussing a philosopher whose entire corpus favored an antithetical approach: a more symbolic and ‘magical’ form of primitive thinking he termed ‘*Einfühlung*’—which relied upon poetic methods and the formative power of **imagination** guided by **Sympathy**. As Herder and his theories are the unifying intellectual **prism** of this study, I feel communicating these ideas adequately would entail not only including extended passages that convey the language and style of his epiphanic ‘**veil of truth**’, but adopting the poetic methods that embody the **spirit** of his message. This monograph also follows Herder’s footsteps for its symbolic structuring: (*x*) utilizing various **systems of symbols** (scripts & typography) from different traditions or disciplines to hierarchically structure and navigate the vast web of ideas and textual fragments by grouping them into ‘families’. (*y*) As a polysemic figure embodying Plotinian **animism**, Herderian **organicism**, and the interplay of gravitational **forces** within a given system—our **MAP** will play out multiple functions as a **pedagogical device** and **hieroglyph** providing insight into the **spiritual core** of this study—as fully elaborated in the **Addendum**.

¹⁸ Philip V. Bohlman, ed., “Note on Translation and Commentary” in *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism*, by Johann Gottfried Herder (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), xix.

¹⁹ Adler, 346.

BREADCRUMBS & GERMAN FORESTS

While I have profited tremendously from the vast store of critical writings on **Jean Toomer** by a wide array of scholars, my engagement with and further investigations into the specific insights offered by three ‘early’ critics has pointed me towards this thesis. The first was a bold claim made by **Robert Bone** in *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story* (1975): “Unless we grasp Toomer’s Neo-Platonism, with its basic commitment to noumenal reality, we cannot comprehend his attitude toward race.”²⁰ The second comes from an article written by **Bernard Bell** for *Black World/Negro Digest* in 1969: “Afro-American folk art, music in particular, has provided a sound base for the development of a distinctive body of ethnic literature. This concept, of course, is not new. It is largely derived from the folk ideology of . . . Herder [who] championed the idea of folksong as the essential base of a nation’s literature.”²¹ The third is a series of associations made in *Jean Toomer and the Prison-House of Thought* (1993), where **Robert B. Jones** notes that “Toomer’s Symbolist aesthetic derives from both French and American sources”, which he also views as “[a] Romantic reaction against realism”.²² These early pioneers of Toomer scholarship helped to resuscitate interest in **CANE** and re-establish Toomer’s place in American letters, thereby laying the groundwork for subsequent scholars. They also helped plant the seed and nurture the ideas that would eventually guide the direction and shape of this monograph. While their contributions are still being acknowledged by fellow scholars, and their works continue to be read and scrutinized, I feel at some point there has been a shift in general attitudes and critical perspectives that no longer deems the ‘**spiritual**’ elements found in literature worthy of serious consideration. Although this trend can partly be attributed to a natural shift in perspectives and interests from generation to generation, I sense there is a bigger factor at play here that needs

²⁰ Robert Bone, *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 205.

²¹ Bernard Bell, “The Debt to Black Music,” *Black World/Negro Digest* 22, no. 5 (March 1973): 17.

²² Robert B. Jones, *Jean Toomer and the Prison-House of Thought* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 10. Jones labels Toomer’s literary experimentation and style as stemming from a “Symbolist-Modernist aesthetic” and calls **CANE** “a triumph of Romantic idealism”, Jones, 33, 43, 57.

to be discussed as it directly pertains to this monograph, which in essence adopts a position that views the ‘**spiritual**’ or ‘**religious**’ context not only as **relevant**, but **inseparably linked** to all other considerations—even when those elements may be deemed ‘cabalistic’ in nature or ‘irrational’.

Just to be clear, I regard Scruggs and VanDemarr’s book *Jean Toomer & The Terrors of American History* (1996) one of the most comprehensive and important works on **CANE**; however, despite this general estimation, I have found the following two passages to be very problematic and inimical:

Although by the end of 1923 Toomer was on his way to embracing Gurdjieffism, this future choice is largely irrelevant to *Cane*’s meaning. **The “spiritual” always appears in *Cane* within a political context**, that is, within a context concerned with issues involving the American polis.²³

We find little point in the current **anachronistic** tendency that attempts to link *Cane* with Toomer’s New Age thinking after he came under the influence of George Gurdjieff and to read the book via Gurdjieffism or some other “spiritual” system. **Fixing on the illusory search for “spiritual wholeness” in the text reduces, intentionally or not, its social and political dimensions, and ignores the historical background of the times** and Toomer’s intricate and evolving connection to them.²⁴

I do feel there are two issues being conflated here. First, we need to broach an uncomfortable truth about **Jean Toomer**: regardless of level of admiration one ascribes to **CANE**, learning about his Gurdjieffism and lifelong attraction to similar ‘cults’ is disturbing and for most a stain on his reputation. Learning about these details may be just as distasteful for many as hearing about **Ezra Pound**’s attraction to fascism or his fascination with spiritualism and ‘occult’ doctrines, fostered at Stone Cottage with **W. B. Yeats**—or perhaps, the confusion or disappointment one feels at learning about **Eliot**’s anti-Semitism or his inclusion of many esoteric elements, like Tarot imagery within *The Waste Land* (1922). For admirers of Toomer it may be even worse to learn details of his ‘unfortunate’ meeting with **G. I. Gurdjieff**, as, in the eyes of many readers, that event left his subsequent works unrecognizable and unreadable. Most assessments of Toomer’s post-**CANE** writings are probably similar to **Gorham Munson**’s view:

²³ Charles Scruggs and Lee VanDemarr, *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 4. Emphasis added.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis added.

“Under the influence of Gurdjieff . . . he tried to do something different and something I feel was quite wooden. . . . In short, Jean’s attempt to write on the plane and in the manner of Gurdjieff was all to the bad.”²⁵ There may be numerous factors and choices that contributed to Toomer’s fall from literary grace, but most are linked to his conversion to Gurdjieffism and the conscious decision to incorporate those ‘truths’ into his fiction, which led to disastrous consequences for his talent and reputation. This is something all admirers and students of *CANE* must reconcile and come to terms with: that sole masterpiece, was simultaneously a debut and a ‘swan song’, at least for Toomer’s genius in tune with the ‘Negro folk-spirit’ (*Volksggeist*) that inspired the work.

What then is the problem with those two quotes? On one hand Scruggs and VanDemarr’s red flags are understandable as modes of reading that seek to locate mystical thinking in political contexts. My own hours spent researching Ouspensky, Orage, Blavatsky, and Gurdjieff fostered an awareness of their thinking as representative of, at best, a vague anti-modernity. These texts could easily be seen as only having relevance for shamans, witch doctors, or mystic seekers. Immanuel Kant and other leading philosophers used the label *qualitates occultae* to police what they saw as superstitious and ‘irrational’ mysticism creeping in disguised as scientific arguments. Herder was often called out in this way by his former teacher,²⁶ but as we shall see, God, art, and even Kant’s *Ding an sich* (‘thing-in-itself’), or *Noumena*, are by their nature not ‘rational’ and can not be defined or evaluated in purely materialist terms—they exist on a spiritual and aesthetic plane, which is **supra-rational**—and, according to Kant, beyond human comprehension.

On the other hand, Scruggs and VanDemarr’s warning against using *ex post facto* explanations as keys to understanding *CANE* seems like prudent advice; but *only* if steps are taken to carefully separate what **mysticism** is pre-Gurdjieffian and which is post-Gurdjieff. To do otherwise is to impose potentially misguided limits on Toomer scholarship. This attitude, together

²⁵ Qtd. in John Chandler Griffin, *Biography of American Author Jean Toomer, 1894-1967* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 183.

²⁶ The heart of their philosophical differences that would lead to their personal clash later is laid out in detail in Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 149-164.

with others' adopting a similar stance, has helped to create an atmosphere that prevents taking seriously any interpretation that deviates from a secular or materialist reading of the text.

I wonder what the reaction of an audience would be at an academic conference, if someone adopted and made these same arguments about **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**? If they asserted the "spiritual" aspects of his poetry were mostly historical in nature and should primarily focus on their socio-political dimensions. If they claimed the Plotinian or Spinozist tendencies in Coleridge's writings should be disregarded, as the striving for "spiritual wholeness" was part of an "illusory search"? How would the scholars in attendance react to being told categorically that Coleridge's religious nature *always* appears a political context and should be approached from that perspective? This would be to ride rough-shod over Coleridge's self-understanding. Then what is it about Toomer's **mysticism** that makes it so different from Coleridge's? By the time we get to the final chapter, I hope it will become evident to readers that there is not really any true distinction, because both of their works draw from the same sources and trends.

In his chapter titled 'S. T. Coleridge', **William Hazlitt** laments how his protagonist "wandered into Germany and lost himself in the labyrinths of the Hartz Forests and of the Kantian philosophy, and amongst the cabalistic names of Fichte and Schelling and Lessing".²⁷ He is right to note the great influence of German philosophy on Coleridge, but his words also disclose his "profound suspicion of German mysticism".²⁸ Pages earlier, Hazlitt also notes how Spinoza became Coleridge's "God, and he took up the vast chain of being in his hand, and the round world became the centre and the soul of all things in some shadowy sense, forlorn of meaning . . . but poetry redeemed him from this spectral philosophy."²⁹ The author's disdain for mysticism is inconsistent and puzzling, however, as he goes on to celebrate the effect of this poetry:

²⁷ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age: Or Contemporary Portraits*. London: Templeman, 1858), 313.

²⁸ See René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 2, *The Romantic Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 189-190.

²⁹ Hazlitt, 311.

—When he saw nought but beauty,
 When he heard the voice of that Almighty One
 In every breeze that blew, or wave that murmured—
 and wedded with truth in Plato's shade, and in the writings of Proclus
 and Plotinus saw the idea of things in the eternal mind, and unfolded all
 mysteries . . .³⁰

It seems that regardless of content, Hazlitt categorizes classical forms of mysticism as transcendent philosophy, while that of Spinoza and the other Germans is viewed with scorn as ideas entangled in shadowy forests infected with *qualitates occultae*, which *thankfully* Coleridge was able to cure himself of through the right kind of 'Truth'. I think the inconstancy and irony beneath this logic quickly becomes apparent, especially when we consider the title of the book itself, *Spirit of the Age*—from our perspective, what concept is more German or central to Herder than *Zeitgeist*?³¹ Furthermore, Wellek points out that Hazlitt publicly excoriated **Friedrich Schlegel**, "excited by his superior airs and intellectual arrogance", all the while plagiarizing and adopting wholesale the positions of the *Frühromantiker* in private.³²

I will not pursue this matter any further, except to say in response to Scruggs and VanDemarr that I will meet them halfway and deal *only* with forms of mysticism that are firmly established within the Western philosophical and aesthetic tradition, leaving the 'cabalistic' and blatantly **esoteric** occult texts out of consideration, quarantined behind a **Chinese wall** of sorts until the final chapter. However, if this path of enquiry using only 'established philosophy' can illumine previously opaque elements in **CANE**, then I hope it will lead to a general consensus to unseal all doors, and remove all unnecessary and arbitrary constraints placed on future research.

To highlight just how important the spiritual goals of his modernist text are, I will offer three letters written by Toomer to counter Scruggs and VanDemarr. In 1923 Toomer disclosed the underlying objectives of **CANE** in a letter to **Dubose Hayward**: "Both black and white folk come into **CANE**'s pages. . . . But in no instance am I concerned primarily with race; always, I

³⁰ Ibid., 312.

³¹ The notion of *genius saeculi* is not a German invention, but "it is indisputable [Herder's] work is the site where different approaches to the concept, and a plethora of related terms, converge and develop." Maïke Oergel, *Zeitgeist—How Ideas Travel* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 8-9.

³² Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 2, 190.

drive straight for my own spiritual reality, and for the spiritual truth of the South.”³³ Toomer’s first letter reaching out to **Sherwood Anderson** clearly positions the spiritual as being paramount to his aesthetics of literature: “It seems to me that art in our day, other than in its purely aesthetic phase, has a sort of religious function. It is a religion, a spiritualization of the immediate.”³⁴ Finally, in a letter to **Waldo Frank**, Toomer maps out his overarching vision and the general movement of **CANE** in a rather roundabout manner alluding to the printed arcs and curves placed before each of its three sections:

Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up into the North, and back into the South, and then a return North. (*LJT* 101)

He then reveals the existence of a another set of forces at work beneath the surface: operating at the core of the text is a latent metaphysical **sub-structure** with its own logic of direction, movement, and momentum:

From the point of view of the *spiritual entity* behind the work, the curve really starts with Bona and Paul (awakening), plunges into Kabnis, emerges in Karintha etc. swings upward into Theatre and Box Seat, and ends (pauses) in Harvest Song (*LJT* 101; italics added).

Where Toomer places the spiritual in his hierarchy of goals, seems unambiguous and incontrovertible, as subsequent chapters will clearly establish. But other questions remain: Who or what is this *spiritual* entity? What is the purpose or significance of the *curve*, and the *plunging*, and *swinging upward*? For these more nuanced queries, we need to rediscover and examine original contexts, focusing with unimpeachable clarity on the long train of barely perceptible influences.³⁵ We need to isolate the unconscious forces exerted by inherited traditions, and make meaningful connections between shared elements. As with most endeavors, only after we have reached our ends, can we accurately judge if this has been a fool’s errand and wild goose chase, or if it was worthwhile after all—we shall flag this question and return to it at the very end of our journey.

³³ Qtd. in T. Austin Graham, *American Songbooks: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121.

³⁴ December 12, 1922. See Mark Whalen, ed. *The Letters of Jean Toomer, 1919-1924* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 102. Hereafter cited as ‘*LJT*’, boldface differentiates all primary source texts by Jean Toomer or Johann Gottfried Herder.

³⁵ See **Metaphysical Exercitium §§ 23, 24** for an ‘exercise’ providing perspective and insight.

CARTOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS • ORIENTATION & ITINERARY

Following Toomer's example, I will chart my direction and course relative to geography, chronology, size of scope, and speed, but in general abstracted terms that put aside names and specifics briefly to focus on our movement. These bracketed markers, though they may seem cryptic, correspond to specific locations and nodes labeled on our **MAP (ǎ1)** [see **Image A8**]: the general movement of this monograph is from [WEST] to [EAST] on the horizontal axis, charting a course from [America] to [Germany] by way of [Britain], [France], and [Russia]—with our compass oriented towards [Greece], [Egypt], and [India] in the distance. On the historical timeline the general direction is reverse chronological order—[1923] marks the 'starting point' (**z**) of the line, and [360 BCE] (**s**) is at the other far 'end'—the vanishing point to where our mooring threads lead (**1**). For our purposes, however, we choose [1773-1787] as our vantage point (**u**) because it provides a commanding view of [AD 270] (**t**) a text from Alexandria and our 'ends'.

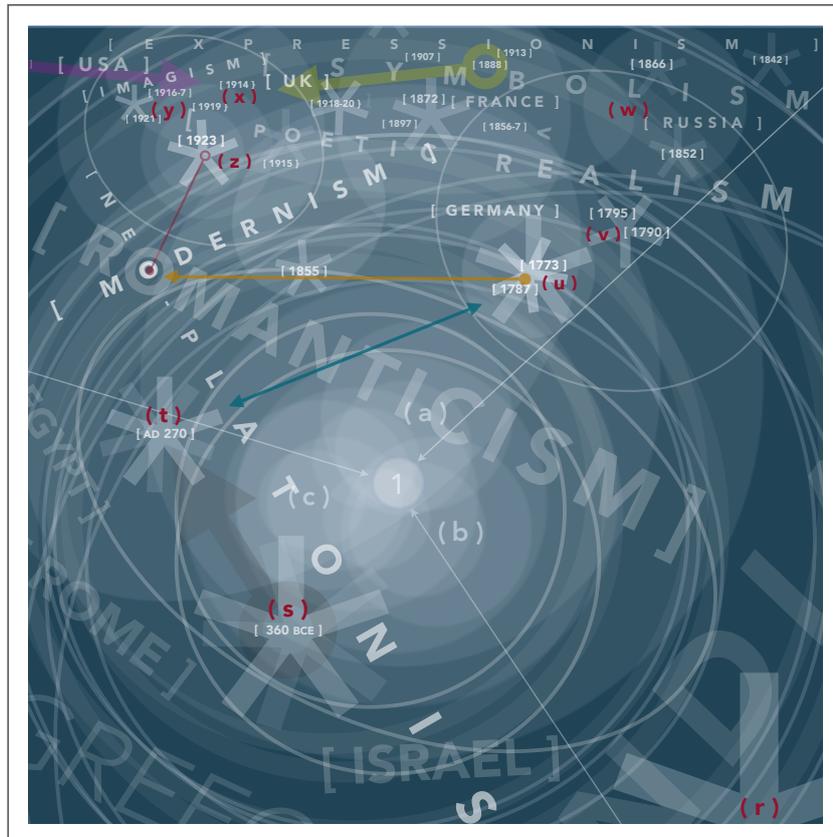


Image A8: [MAP (ǎ1)], detail. John-Francis Kinsler. May 3, 2019.

Along this line of enquiry, we will make 4 stops: around [1916-7] (**y**) to examine a certain magazine; (**x**) some area between [1914] & [1886], the poetic juncture of Chicago, New York, London, Paris; and (**w**) midway between [1866] & [1852] in distant Russia; after which we will reach (**v**) [1795] in Weimar in close proximity to our vantage point (**u**) as we turn to circle back to our beginnings (**z**).

In terms of scope and speed, [**Chapter 1**] takes a bird's-eye view and sets our sights on relevant background information to select the specific aesthetic and philosophical concepts (**u**) and innovations (**z**) that converge with our main thesis; [**Chapter 2**] will zoom in on the *Seven Arts* magazine (**y**) for a steady close-up analysis of three works of prose fiction in respect to aesthetics, then steps back to examine the relationship of the author's two closest mentors and their influence on the final structure of **CANE** (**z**). [**Chapter 3**] will broaden its scope to trace the various streams of influence that shaped the 'poetic realism' of the nativist modernists located within the (**x**) **imagist**, **Chicago renaissance**, and (**y**) **Seven Arts** constellations and its culmination evident in **CANE** (**z**). [**Chapter 4**] sweeps up and moves further away to look at the impact of Herderian Neo-primitivism at work in Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* and the German inheritance and aesthetic strategies of Russian writers like Karamzin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky (**w**), and then trace the transmission of these influences to nativist American modernism (**x + y + z**). [**Chapter 5**] marks the highest point of ascent where we start with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (**v**) then move on to define the forms and broader implications of **romantic irony**, then apply those insights to delve into the spiritual core of **CANE** (**z**). From that peak (**u + v**) we will attempt to merge all these separate observations—gathered as we progressed through each chapter—into a unified whole that coincides with the spiritual goal of Neo-Platonism (**1**), to better understand the underlying structures and interaction of forces (**a + b + c**) acting upon **CANE** (**z**) and modernism as a whole.

This **monograph** is a search for origins and contexts—an examination of the various **forces** of interplay occurring on five expanding levels or hierarchical **planes**—and while traversing through each chapter's fragmentary web of interweaving arguments, bearing these in mind will prove beneficial:

[○] : **textual** (intratextual / intrapersonal :: artist / text / images / concepts);
 [⊙] : **intra-circular** (intertextual / interpersonal :: within group / coterie);
 [⊗] : **inter-circular** (intertextual / interpersonal :: between groups / coteries);
 [⊛] : **radial** (intertextual / interpersonal :: trans-historical :: trans-geographical);
 and [⊜] : **spiral** (mythological / universal :: meta-literary / metaphysical / mystical).

As just shown above, the **cartographic elements** can help clarify the inter-relationship of forces between ‘systems’ operating on different planes, and situate the sheer number of artists and texts, coteries and movements, theories, themes, and innovations—in relation to each other. Most importantly, it is to provide an **Archimedean vantage point** from which to link these points of intersect and gauge the impact of various forces that can ultimately yield a more meaningful conclusion and historical understanding. This will rely on synthesis or **uniformalion**, and if Herder and romantic theoreticians are correct, strategies of **poetry** (and even **mysticism**), which will be further explained in the following section after presenting the detailed itinerary and specific objectives of the most important first chapter.

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW: THROUGH THE PRISM LENS

The first chapter proper is divided into two parts and tries to mediate a balance between the expansive [ǎ] and granular [℘] by narrowing and refocusing the line of enquiry through our two main filters: [ǎ] **J. G. Herder’s** wide-ranging influence; and [℘] **Jean Toomer’s** various fragments of early unpublished writings. [Chapter 1] is the heart of this monograph laying out all the major philosophical and aesthetic tendencies in broad strokes—how they are interconnected with our mooring threads, and also how the specific Herderian contributions link each of our chain of ‘inheritors’. Each of the subsequent chapters will zero in on a specific intersection by placing definite boundaries and objectives, then consider those discoveries in relation to **CANE**.

[SECTION 1ǎ] deals with the expansive; it begins by addressing the fundamental questions: *Why Herder?* and *Why Germany?* While laying out the major philosophical and aesthetic Herderian innovations to answer the crucial question of why the three mooring threads selected as our parameters—**Neo-Platonism**, **Neo-romanticism**, and **Neo-primitivism**—are intertwined.

It will make evident the reasons for making this German theologian and philosopher the prism for this monograph; Herder, as intellectual ancestor and arch ‘synthesizer’, will be revealed to be the **nexus**, or unifier of these points of intersection. Identifying the primary concepts and terms, tracing their origins and layers of meaning, will help us to identify regions of overlap between the notebooks, **CANE**, and the various other primary texts tied into this web; these will provide additional keys to unlocking mysteries.

[**SECTION 16**] addresses the granular; it lays out the significance of Toomer’s early notebooks by intimating why they are valuable and what unique role they can fulfill when properly contextualized. The section opens with a short overview of the *Fragmente* as the preferred mode of discourse adopted by Herder and subsequent *Frühromantiker*. More importantly this section groups Toomer’s notebook fragments into categories, pinpointing the specific links with Herder’s innovations and contributions in part [**ǎ**], to provide a new perspectival lens to view not only Toomer’s **CANE**-era writings, but also the other primary sources in subsequent chapters. The section concludes with a brief presentation of the links between the Seven Arts circle and various avant-garde coteries highlighted in each of the following chapters.

FOLLOWING HERDER’S FOOTSTEPS

When his former teacher Kant brutally attacked Herder’s theory of **organicism** as being anthropomorphic and nothing but *qualitates occultae*, Herder wrote this confession: “I am not ashamed of myself . . . I run after images, after analogies . . . because I do not know of any other game for my thinking powers.”³⁶ Beiser identifies this as the basis of Herder’s subsequent inversion of values that places literature in a superior role over philosophy:

It is the great strength of literature that it can grasp life through analogy. A Homer or a Sophocles, a Dante or a Shakespeare, is more helpful for an understanding of life than an Aristotle or a Leibniz, a Locke or a Shaftesbury.³⁷

³⁶ Qtd. in Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 148. The full foundations will be laid out later as it involves the relationship between *Poiesis*, *Ur-Bild*, and *Bild*. As Habib notes: “the Romantics exalted the status of the poet, as a genius whose originality was based on his ability to discern connections among apparently discrepant phenomena and to elevate human perception toward a comprehensive, unifying vision.” M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 410.

³⁷ Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 148.

The recognition of the primacy of this creative formative power—*Poiesis*—would gain currency in subsequent decades; Coleridge took this German posturing as the basis for his **primary imagination**: “It is wonderful . . . how closely Reason and Imagination are connected, and Religion the union of the two.”³⁸ The expansion and furthering of Herder’s stance is best exemplified by Shelley’s elevation of poets to the position of “unacknowledged legislators”, thirty some odd years later;³⁹ a position adopted by subsequent generations quite literally, as noticeable in **Waldo Frank**’s letter to **Jean Toomer** where art is given the status of religion: “Never Forget: we are the intimately sanctified priests of the new Vision, and of the eternal God.”⁴⁰

The title of this monograph was inspired by **Moréas**’s opening quotation, but also by an observation **Walt Whitman** made in his notebook:

First I wish you to realize well that our boasted knowledge, precious and manifold as it is, sinks into niches and corners, before the infinite knowledge of the unknown. . . . *By curious indirections only can there be any statement of the spiritual world*—and they will all be foolish—Have you noticed the [worm] on a twig reaching out in the immense vacancy time and again, trying point after point? Not more helplessly does the tongue or the pen of man, *essay out in the spiritual spheres*, to state them.⁴¹

The truth conveyed in these lines is something Goethe had discovered more than a half a century earlier. And it is something Herder also fully realized, as most of his writings approach these ‘veiled’ truths elliptically—through suggestion rather than by making unequivocal pronouncements—through the use of a wide variety of rhetorical strategies of indirection not orthodox at the time. Herder incorporates **philosophical dialogues** (like the opening epigram of this monograph), where characters present both sides of some argument and speak for him; he frequently relies on **fragments, digressions, pure conjecture,**

³⁸ Qtd. in Gerald McNiece, *The Knowledge that Endures: Coleridge, German Philosophy and the Logic of Romantic Thought* (New York: Palgrave, 1992), 56.

³⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry”, in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. Duncan Wu (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 956. Published posthumously in 1840, but written 1821.

⁴⁰ Waldo Frank. *Brother Mine: The Correspondence of Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank*, ed. Kathleen Pfeiffer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 77. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*BM*’.

⁴¹ From Whitman’s unpublished notebooks, sometime between 1855 and 1863. Qtd. in Paul Diehl, “‘A Noiseless Patient Spider’: Whitman’s Beauty—Blood and Brain”, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 6 (Winter 1989): 119. Italics added.

irony and wit; and prefers organic unsystematic thinking over philosophical tracts presenting some system based on pure reason.⁴² His method relies on *Einfühlung* (translated as ‘empathy’ or ‘Sympathy’)—which subsequent theorists placed in opposition to *Abstraktion*—to sympathetically ‘feel into’ the meaning of texts and original contexts.⁴³ In short, Herder places **synthesis** (unifying) over **analysis** (dividing) and breaks with conventions in his works to allow **intuition**, **imagination**, and **poetry** (defined as all forms of creative writing, relying on *Poiesis*, regardless of genre) a more prominent role in philosophical enquiry.

Herder was very critical of the dry abstract deserts his former teacher **Immanuel Kant** creates throughout his third critique on judgment *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), by failing to include even a single instance of poetry. By comparison, Herder’s writings are often more approachable and creative (than any of his contemporaries), his tone and style are protean and unconventional to say the least—reading through various writings by Herder, even in selected amounts in English translation, is reminiscent of the shifts in style and perspective one finds moving chapter to chapter in **James Joyce’s** *Ulysses*. His language is refreshing and free of jargon; down-to-earth and witty, and personal and colloquial relative to the subject matter. Reading the following passage from Herder’s ‘**Critical Forests: Fourth Grove**’, who would guess that such lines brimming with colorful wit could sit comfortably within what is “arguably his most important and fundamental work on aesthetics”?⁴⁴

⁴² “Herder’s well-grounded hostility to this type of systematicity established an important counter-tradition in German philosophy (which subsequently included, for example, Friedrich Schlegel, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Adorno).” Michael Forster, “Johann Gottfried von Herder”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2019), section 2. ‘Philosophical Style’.

⁴³ In his book *Das Symbol* (1887), Friedrich Theodor Vischer defines symbolism as a method whereby people assign “spiritual elements” to “sensory objects”. He believed that “[b]oth artworks and nature manifest themselves as *emotional beings* that can be felt with empathy, which was for him a primary, natural instinct”. Vischer delineated two forms of symbolic representation—(a) magical-symbolical thinking characteristic of primitive man’s tendency to anthropomorphise nature he termed ‘empathy’ or *Einfühlung*; (b) logical or allegorical thinking he ascribed to developed cultures where man and nature have become separated. Magdalena Nowak, “The Complicated History of *Einfühlung*”, *Argument* 1 no. 2 (2011): 303-4. Emphasis added. See also, Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 4; 23-5; 128-31.

⁴⁴ Gregory Moore, ed. & tr., Introduction to *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, by Johann Gottfried Herder (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 11. Hereafter cited as ‘AES’.

They throw jargon around like the simian artists of Africa; by aping everything that they set eyes on they become as celebrated as those who monkey about with sand and nutshells in perfect harmony. They condemn what they do not understand and speak whereof they know nothing, they dogmatize in metaphors and metaphorize in clichés. A Klotz writes whole books on arts where an artist like Michelangelo would say: “My maid could have explained it better!” (*AES* 261)

His writings are full of interjections and **meta-commentary**, but most of all they are poetic and imaginative in the original sense that tries to **fuse** all fragments of thoughts and images into a unified **whole**—a theme that will surface many times throughout this study. In addition, his writings also possess a clear guiding perspective that always keeps in mind, not the *bigger* picture, but the *biggest* picture—that all-encompassing new way of seeing from the stance of an ‘eternal glance’—that is central to **Neo-Platonism**.

At this point I am unsure of which, if any, of my two primary arguments will prove to be the more valuable—Herder’s philosophical innovations being at the spiritual core of American nativist modernism, or Toomer’s early writings being the key to contextualize **CANE**’s created ‘**spiritual realities**’ and unlock the mysterious link between **aesthetic innovations** and **mysticism**. For me, though, these two are inseparably interwoven—and even more so now as I look to Herder and Toomer’s shared strategies that give precedence to imaginative poetic writing—to fuse, **essentialize**, and attempt to order the chaos of fragments and concepts by binding and juxtaposing them into a **Gestalt**.⁴⁵ **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**—who is another figure situated along the juncture of our three mooring threads with his German and Neo-Platonist inheritance—expresses these shared core principles in this manner:

Imagination is synthetic and it is magical; that is, it is a mysterious power expressed in images in which **omneity**, ‘the existence of all in each’, is present . . . Imagination acts with ‘permeative modifying unifying might’ on thoughts and images and within moral intuitions . . . ‘the divine imagination’ is the **eye** of reason, the organ of transcendental insight, the interpreter of symbols . . .⁴⁶

This “unifying might” ascribed to **imagination**—what Herder called *Kräfte* and associated with **poetry** and the **soul**—is the underlying reason for my reliance upon a more creative approach to enhance my critical thinking.

⁴⁵ See **Glossary of Philosophical & Aesthetic Terms—German, Foreign, & Otherwise**.

⁴⁶ McNiece, 55. Emphasis Added.

The unconventional methods look to various symbolic modes of thought and poetic expression to present ideas with force and give them **esemplastic form**. These strategies have taken inspiration from Herder's own methods—customarily deemed beyond the perimeters of academic discourse—in order to allow for both a workable a path of enquiry and an original approach. My hope is that a more fragmentary structure of organization interweaving a wide-range of sources, various symbolic analogues, aesthetic devices, and two separate but parallel lines of enquiry that run alongside each chapter will provide valuable context and insights into Herderian Neo-Platonism. The **[first]**—labeled **'Forest of Correspondence'**—is placed in the middle of each chapter to isolate key concepts of Herder's writings that intertwine with Toomer and his various influences. The **[second]**—titled **'Metaphysical Exercitium'**—is a collection of fragments and exercises that provide additional context through symbolic and cartographic analogues that aim to elucidate **mystical** or **'irrational'** modes of thought. These are firmly demarcated from our central arguments and placed behind our Chinese wall—presented *after* the conclusion as an **Addendum**, providing an ancillary and supplementary function similar to explanatory notes.

The subtitle given to this monograph, *Jean Toomer's CANE, 'Modernist' Aesthetics, & Neo-Platonism*, intimates that the aesthetics that we so readily designate as 'modernist' has been misappropriated—it creates a lacuna that calls out to be filled with a more appropriate label. Our three mooring threads gesture towards what makes **CANE** distinctive and exceptional—the answer lies at its center—the point where these strands converge. If my chain of arguments prove worthwhile, it should become quite apparent by the final pages that replacing **'Modernist'** with **'German Romantic' Aesthetics**—is an improvement over the original title; however, this change still requires that we enclose the substitution in inverted commas, which amounts to filling our previous gap with yet another gap. If my thesis and arguments are ultimately successful, they will unveil how romantic and modernist literary aesthetics are integrally linked to Herderian formulations of Neo-Platonism; and by the final chapter, leave readers yearning for a more apt title—one that does not obscure Herder's legacy of vastly reshaping the intellectual landscape—*Circles of Confluence: Jean Toomer's CANE, Herderian Aesthetics, & Neo-Platonism*.

FRAGMENTE [INTRODUCTION]: 'ANCHOR THREADS'

To finally close this introductory chapter, I will present an extract from the essay 'A Monument to Baumgarten' (1767), written when Herder was just twenty-three. I chose this extended quotation on the following page for several interconnected reasons, and I will present them in a manner that will illustrate the function of the fragmentary method in miniature:

[INTRO §1]: As we have only been discussing Herder in the abstract, this early excerpt can serve as a personal introduction and way to *magically* 'feel into' the person, the **mind**, & his style of writing for those unacquainted or unfamiliar.⁴⁷

[INTRO §2]: I must confess that for many years I too got lost in the deep shadowy forests of German romantic and idealist thought; and the sentiments expressed here seem to outline Herder's methods and manner of disentangling me and leading me out of that darkness with a torch.

[INTRO §3]: The passage is reminiscent of **John Milton's** opening prayer and invocation to his "Heav'nly Muse" and "Spirit" in *Paradise Lost* (1674), that sets out the text's path and asks for guidance—I hope this will serve a similar function as we are about to begin our journey in earnest with **Chapter 1**.

[INTRO §4]: The lines can be viewed as an *Academics' & Educators' Creed* of sorts, that poetically encapsulates the epistemological process—touching upon all the themes we have been discussing—and ultimate aims and ideals we have to keep in focus and let shepherd us when writing or teaching.

[INTRO §5]: This extract is a perfect example of poetry and *Poiesis* intruding on an academic treatise on aesthetics, where breaking with conventions can and does lead to something more worthwhile and inspiring in the process.

[INTRO §6]: **Digression:** John Berryman opens his essay 'Prufrock's Dilemma' (1960), by analyzing the first three lines of Eliot's famous poem:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky . . .
Like a patient etherised on upon a table . . . (1-3)

He concludes his first paragraph with this concise but powerful statement regarding the third line: "With this line, modern poetry begins."⁴⁸

The confidence and authority necessary to make such a bold pronouncement in an essay commands respect, even though it took many years for Berryman's interpretation to take hold and slowly change my mind. I wonder after reading Herder's extract, if we may dare to disregard the dates and distinctions

⁴⁷ Herder's theory of *Einfühlung* is premised on sensing and merging all related forces (the unique context) that "leads to a mystical union of the subject and the object. . . . Herder also stated that empathy is needed in the interpretation of texts, cultures and history." Nowak, 303.

⁴⁸ John Berryman, *The Freedom of the Poet* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976), 270.

between the *Sturm und Drang* and *Frühromantik*, and put a pin in this page—if not now, then perhaps *in time*—so we may dare to mark these lines as the embryonic stirrings of German romantic thought: the moment the historical pendulum wavered—as it started to experience a bit of resistance pulling in the opposite direction—away from the currents of Enlightenment thinking.

[INTRO §7]: These words were poetic, novel, insightful, and beautiful when they were written over two-hundred and fifty years ago, and they are placed here in the hope you will agree that their *force* & *spirit* remain so to this day.

Johann Gottfried Herder : If you can refract the sunbeam of a thought and sensation, then divide that pregnant, that powerful representation which operates upon my soul now with the most concentrated, now with more diffuse, light and separate it from the false glitter of speech. If you know the workshops of my animal spirits, then show me the spirit of beauty that courses through my veins, fills my heart, lifts my breast, and is mine for the duration; show me beauty instead of conviction and reason and truth. Show me how the impressions in my sense organs become images in my soul, how my imagination pours rapture into my veins and at that very moment weaves a mist around my faculty of reason. Then awaken for me these poetic images, which produce such grand and sweet dreams for my soul, which deceive me with emotions and worlds that *magically* transport me into other people's natures and feelings. Behold! That lies in the sensuous region of my soul!

Now out of this, create poetry, just as Prometheus created human nature: and remove me to the world of objects that fill my soul with such light and intensity. Show me the power that individual subjects and examples and descriptions and resemblances and fictions can exert on me, so that I learn to look and love and admire. Then from language and expression forge for me the means, the instruments by which I can assail and assuage the soul in so decisive a fashion and melt, illumine, and delight it in sweet joy and even sweeter pain. Do this, O philosopher of feeling, and I shall revere you also as my teacher in matters of taste. You will have the power to hone my discernment and sharpen my wits, to examine my judgment of sensuous understanding and transform it into correct deductions; and all this because you speak from my soul and also reach into my soul to instruct me. Philosopher of beauty, of feeling, and of poetic art, then you shall possess words that grant you omnipotence! (*AES* 44)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Italics added. Translated by Gregory Moore.

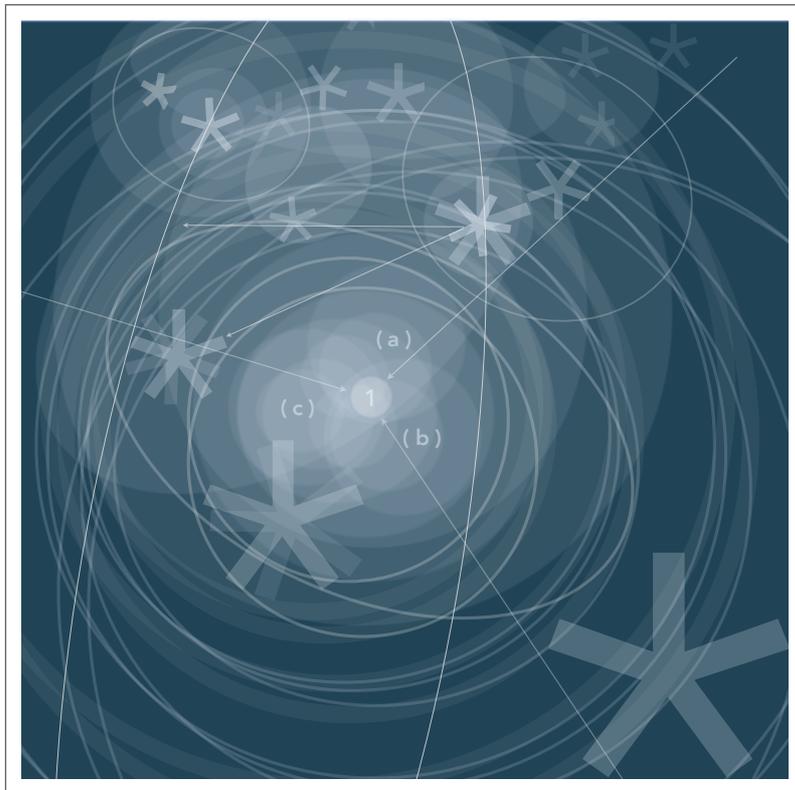


Image B1. *Circles of Confluence (Zusammenkommende Kreise)*, by John-Francis Kinsler. May 3, 2019.

clerk and manager, shipyard worker, social settle-
ment worker.

The quest of music.

Beginnings of the quest of literature.

Clarence Darrow and Evolution knock God out of
the world and out my ~~h~~ life.

The extraordinary awakening of my mind.

Victor Hugo's Les Miserables awaken my social
conscience. First Experiences with socialism.

My thirst for knowledge - sociology, history,
psychology. The writings of Bernard Shaw evoke in
me a desire for intellectual clarity and the
utter candor of my entire person. The end of
bluffing.

Adventures in New York. The impact of World War I.
I experience a transformation.

More pillars and more posts.

Goethe's Wilhelm Meister recalls me to the world
of cultural aristocracy.

Through Walt Whitman, my first intimation that
there is ^a ~~ix~~ greater consciousness.

My first contacts with the literary world of
New York. Lewis Mumford, Lola Ridge, Waldo Frank.

Shall it be music? Shall it be writing?

And all the while I become increasingly dis-
membered, increasingly chaotic. I become a
veritable genius of chaos.

Image B2. Toomer's typed notes for one of his numerous autobiographies listing major events in his life and literary development. JTP, Box 19, Folder 507. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

1. THROUGH THE PRISM LENS

[ð]: Philosophical & Aesthetic Foundations

SCOPE [1773-1786 / 360BCE / 290AD / 1919-23]

POINTS [U : < - > : S : < - > : T : < - > : Z]

[T]he function of the artist is to pierce through **here** and **there**, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action.

— T. E. Hulme, “Bergson’s Theory of Art”¹

They likewise see all things . . . And they perceive themselves in others.

For all things there are diaphanous; and nothing is dark and resisting, but everything is apparent to everyone internally and throughout.

For light everywhere meets with light; *since everything contains all things in itself, and again sees all things in another.*

So that all things are everywhere, and all is all.

Each thing likewise is everything.

And the splendor there is infinite.

For everything there is great, since even that which is small is great.

The sun too which is there is all the stars;

and again each star is the sun and all the stars. . .

— Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V.8.4. “On Intelligible Beauty”²

I believe it most prudent to begin our journey by properly situating **Johann Gottfried von Herder**, who lived from 1744 to 1803 in Germany, alongside **Eugene Pinchback Toomer**, who was born in 1894 and raised in the capital of the United States. The mystery we seek to unravel is how so many elements of the former’s ‘intellectual DNA’ has been passed down largely intact to the latter. Before delving below the surfaces of their texts, let us first begin by gathering the various labels ascribed to each by their contemporaries.

Herder has been called ‘Gatekeeper of the nineteenth century’ and a ‘spiritual force of the first magnitude’.³ He is renowned for being the ‘leader of the *Sturm und Drang*’; the ‘author of the **Storm & Stress Manifesto**’ (with the assistance of his protégé Goethe);⁴ some have described him as a

¹ T. E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Keagan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1936), 147. Emphasis added.

² Qtd. in P. D. Ouspensky, *Tertium Organum: A Key to the Enigmas of the World*. (New York: Manas Press, 1920), 290. Plotinus’ passage is translated by Thomas Taylor. Italics original. All remaining references to the *Enneads* will use Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber & Faber, 1970). Hereafter cited ‘ENN’ with page number; followed by Porphyry’s division into book, treatise, & chapter/section: i.e. (ENN 425; V.8.4).

³ John George Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (Edinburg: Blackwood, 1970), 293, 296.

⁴ *Of German Character and Art (Von Deutscher Art und Kunst)* published in 1773.

‘revolutionary’ rebelling against rigid Neo-classical rules; at war with Enlightenment hyper-rationalism. He was the ‘father of an alternative philosophy’ contra Kant’s overbearing *Kritik*; and in many ways Herder fulfilled the role of an ‘Arch Meister’ to the young *Frühromantiker*.⁵ He is also, in many respects, ‘a lost ancestor’, or a ‘forgotten forefather’ to later generations, because many of those immediate successors who took from his blueprints, never paid him his proper due.⁶ Oskar Walzel surmises why despite his vast influence this dominion went unacknowledged to his intellectual heirs:

Many of Herder’s intellectual achievements had already been so generally appropriated that in using them one scarcely gave thought to the author. The younger generation all too soon forgot that Herder had blazed the trail to Shakespeare, to indigenous poetry, to the Middle Ages, and to the folk-song and that he had even prepared the way for romantic orientalism.⁷

Recognition and acknowledgement of the extent, scope, and true weight of his contributions to philosophy and aesthetics seem to have gotten lost somewhere in those dark German forests Hazlitt described. As **Julian Schmidt** declared when the first critical edition of Herder’s collected works was released: “No one of our classical writers . . . so thoroughly needs a historical and critical revision [as Herder]”; adding that no one had been slighted to this extent and that “no one would [deserve or merit a revision] to such an eminent degree”.⁸ Herder was a ‘polymath and progenitor’ who created many new disciplines and methods along the way; an ‘Anglo- and Indo-ophile’ as well as the lead ‘architect of German nationalism’; a ‘Biblical scholar and

⁵ “Herder is often called a founder of romanticism”. See Malve von Hassell, “Johann Gottlieb Herder: A Lost Ancestor”, *Dialectical Anthropology* 5, no. 4 (May, 1981): 336. This view of Herder is offset by others who hold that “Herder’s relationship to the Enlightenment is far more complex than one of simple opposition. His career is defined by the championing of a number of Enlightenment causes: an empirical understanding of human consciousness, an opposition to philosophical and theological dogmatism, and a defense of the unique nature of the individual . . .”. Alexander J. B. Hampton, *Romanticism and the Re-Invention of Modern Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 2019), 90.

⁶ For discussions on Herder’s “massive” and “breathtaking” influence of his chain of ideas, see **Chapter 11: ‘Intellectual Influence’** in Michael N. Forster, *Herder’s Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 301-313. The last section ‘A Residual Puzzle’ covers the numerous instances this original thinker was not given proper acknowledgement. Other critics propose various reasons: he was ‘too revolutionary’, in opposition to ‘dominant trends’, and overshadowed by Goethe and Kant.

⁷ Oskar Walzel, *German Romanticism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1965), 18.

⁸ Qtd. in Robert E. Norton, *Herder’s Aesthetics & the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), ix.

enthusiast of Ancient traditions'; a 'lover of folksongs' and 'teacher who aspired to be a poet'.⁹ Alluding to his reputation abroad as 'the German Plato', **Thomas de Quincey** describes Herder to English readers as 'many-sided' and 'polymorphous', and rather more like a 'German Coleridge'—as both share a 'spirit of universal research' and an 'obscure and fanciful mysticism'.¹⁰ Although we could add many more titles and expand this list further, perhaps we should finish with the words of his life-long devotee, **Jean Paul (Richter)** who used the title 'Noble Spirit' and likened him to a 'constellation':

Few spirits are learned in such a grand way as he. Most men pursue only what is most singular or unknown in a single science; he, however, took up and blended the great currents of every branch of learning in his heaven-reflecting ocean, which pressed upon them its movements from evening towards the East.¹¹

To better make our acquaintance with Jean Toomer, we eschew labels such as 'Harlem Renaissance writer' or 'follower of Gurdjieff', in favor of designations given during the 'CANE-era' around 1919-23. The author hid some references within the text itself, like 'genius of the South' and 'Earth's child',¹² but the descriptions of his immediate literary associates may define him better. Munson labels him a 'literary craftsman', a 'follower of Anderson and Frank' and 'spectatorial artist' (*DES* 178-9; 182); and Frank uses phrases in his foreword like: a 'poet in prose', a 'creator working below the surfaces of race', and in his letters, 'Dear brother' (*BM* 86). Rosenfeld calls him a 'creative poet-novelist with promise', an 'enthusiastic proponent of Imagism', and a 'writer experimenting with style';¹³ **Matthew Josephson** describes Toomer as a 'superb folk-musician and folk-poet' ["PRO" IV : 3]; and **John McClure** describes him as an 'elemental artist' with universal human reach, firm grasp of aesthetics, and vision "deeper than superficial".¹⁴

⁹ "Herder's description of the ideal philosopher has the ultimate intent of returning to everyone the gift of poetry for living; philosophers, of course, were to be poets. Herder himself throughout his life, wanted above all to be a poet . . ." Hassell, 336.

¹⁰ Thomas De Quincey, *Essays on Philosophical Writers and Other Men of Letters*, vol. 1 (Boston: Tinknor and Fields, 1856), 165-5.

¹¹ Qtd. in Jean Paul Richter, *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's "School for Aesthetics"*, trans. Margaret R. Hale (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 313. Hereafter cited 'JPR'.

¹² Jean Toomer, *CANE*, 1st ed., ed. Darwin T. Turner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988) 19.

¹³ Paul Rosenfeld, *Men Seen* (New York: Dial Press, 1925), 228-9; 232-3. Hereafter cited as 'MS'.

¹⁴ Qtd. in Brian Benson and Mabel Mayle Dillard, *Jean Toomer* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 20.

After reading **CANE**, Anderson wrote Toomer these words: “You I am sure belong to us, nervous distraught ones, us **moderns** . . .”¹⁵ In a letter to Anderson, McClure goes into more detail about why our protagonist is a “supremely fine lyrical rhapsodist . . . better probably than nearly anyone”:

Toomer’s character seems to me to be lyrical—he is so intensely an individual that it is useless for him to attempt anything other than to express himself. He is not a sponge like Balzac. He is not a dramatist like Shakespeare, or even like Eugene O’Neill, for that matter. He is Jean Toomer. Anything he touches will be transmuted into a personal expression.¹⁶

We turn to examine the labels that Toomer would later apply to himself, beyond those ‘First American’ and racial markers or fractions of composition. The following quote of an author positioning himself along the literary spectrum will prove very insightful: “I am not a romanticist, I am not a realist—in the ordinary sense: I am an essentialist, a spiritualizer . . . I am a poetic realist” (*W&S* 20). I want to draw attention to yet another quotation and instance of self-nomenclature, which will take on new significance after we present a more intricate, nuanced, philosophical context for **CANE**: “I become increasingly dismembered, increasingly chaotic, I become a **veritable genius of chaos**.”¹⁷

At the end of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), **Arthur Symons** includes a short biography of each **French symbolist** poet introduced earlier. His curious remarks regarding the biographical sketches are of great import to us as we seeking to delineate our boundaries and target of enquiry:

The essays contained in this book are not intended to give information. They are concerned with ideas rather than with facts; each is a study of a problem, only in part a literary one, in which I have endeavoured to consider writers as personalities under the action of *spiritual forces*, or as themselves so many forces.¹⁸

If we take a look at our prime objective established in the introductory chapter, it is clear that our mission: [1] *is to provide a coherent philosophical and aesthetic lens with which to view and interpret the prevalent ‘mystical’ aspects in*

¹⁵ Letter dated January 3, 1924. Sherwood Anderson, *Selected Letters*, ed. Charles E. Modlin (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 53. (Emphasis added)

¹⁶ Qtd. in Darwin T. Turner, “An Intersection of Paths: Correspondence Between Jean Toomer and Sherwood Anderson” in *Jean Toomer: A Critical Evaluation*, ed. Therman B. O’Daniel (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1988), 108-109.

¹⁷ [See **Image B2**; **JTP**, Box 19, Folder 507; emphasis added].

¹⁸ Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), 176. Emphasis added.

Toomer's *CANE-era writings*. Although related, our concern is not for the personages of Herder or Toomer, but rather the specific forces we find exhibited in, on, and through their texts. All of those labels and identifiers just mentioned are useful to our search, only *if* they are also applicable to their respective texts to help distinguish these 'spiritual forces', or '*geistier Kraft*'.¹⁹ We need to identify a progenitor, but the sphere of *ideas* and the force of Herder's unique *contributions* are our **proband** or root node, not the person—although both the author and the texts often exhibit the same forces. Correspondingly, many generations lower on the **genealogical chain**, it is the spiritual pedigree of *CANE* we are after, not of its author. The 'DNA' links we are seeking are not biological, but rather philosophical, aesthetic, or theological in kind; and the model charting these relationships, we shall see, is less like that of heredity transference, but rather more akin to viral transmission.

THE HERDERIAN TURN—WHY GERMANY?

Van Wyck Brooks remarks in *America's Coming-of-Age* (1915), "German philosophy when it was released over the world inevitably came to port in this society, for above everything else it appeared to let one into the secret of universal experience".²⁰ German writers not only profoundly influenced the development of transcendentalism and New England intellectuals, Germany served as a model to the American nativist modernists in search of their own voice and culture free from Anglo influence, and the historical parallels were not lost on Brooks. In his *Seven Arts* essay '**Our Awakeners**', included in his collection of essays, *Letters and Leadership* (1918), he asks a series of questions:

Have we forgotten what Germany was like at the beginning of the nineteenth century, disjointed, vague and sentimental, for all the sporadic flames of her music and philosophy? And have we forgotten how Germany in a generation reached [a] wonderful maturity . . .?²¹

Brooks prescription for America was a rejection of pragmatism and the "complacent, mechanistic view of life" it has fostered, in favor of a new national poetry, that values imagination over intellect. He would expand

¹⁹ *Geist* and *Kraft* are central paradigms in Herder's philosophical worldview. See **Glossary**.

²⁰ Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming-of-Age* (New York: Huebsch, 1915), 72. Hereafter cited parenthetically as '*AGE*'.

²¹ Van Wyck Brooks, *Letters and Leadership* (New York: Huebsch, 1918), 100-1. Hereafter '*L&L*'.

upon this idea in a new concluding essay appended to his collection entitled ‘**Toward the Future**’, where he remarks “Could there be a stranger parallel to the state of our literature to-day than the state of German literature in 1795[?]” (*L&L* 120-1); Brooks develops his argument with an extended quote by Goethe outlining the state of German affairs:

Germany is absolutely devoid of any central point of social culture, where authors might associate with one another and develop themselves by following . . . one aim, one common purpose. Born in places far remote from each other, educated in all manner of ways, . . . carried away by a predilection in favor of this or that example of native or foreign literature, driven to all kinds of attempts, nay, even blunders in their endeavor to test their own powers without proper guidance . . . ever and anon confused and led astray by a large public devoid of taste and ready to swallow the bad with the same relish with which it has previously swallowed the good,—is there any German writer of note who does not recognize himself in this picture, and who will not acknowledge with modest regret the many times that he has sighed for . . . a general national culture, which, alas! was nowhere to be found? (*L&L* 120-1)

This new determination to throw off borrowed foreign elements into order to forge a distinct German identity would lay the vital seeds to a dynamic flowering of a **national culture** that covered entire spectrums of growth—in art, literature, music, the sciences, and especially philosophy. Brooks’s equation, that the lack of a native literary culture or national poetry in America was akin to Germany’s situation at the beginning of the 19th Century, led to advocating the same path to achieve the same desirable results as Germany had achieved. It was a formula that had already been adopted by Russia, as Hans Kohn notes:

The German romantic rejection of the West was adopted and surpassed by the Russian Slavophiles. They borrowed the guns from the Germans but they turned them not only against what the Germans considered the West but also against Germany herself.²²

Why did Brooks believe that German philosophy “let one into the secret of universal experience”? Walzel contends that powering this early German romantic regeneration was a conscious continuation of the “spiritual ancestry” underlying the **Storm and Stress** movement that has been largely obscured: to revive an “ancient fusion of the Neoplatonic and the Germanic. . . which carried on and enlarged the legacy of Plotinus.”²³

²² Hans Kohn, “Dostoevsky’s Nationalism”. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6, no. 4 (1945): 391.

²³ Walzel, *German Romanticism*, 7-8.

An overwhelming number of the strands crisscrossing with American Neo-romantic nativism lead directly back to Germany: (I) the nativists' preoccupation with aesthetics, as expressed in **Waldo Frank's** statement: "The artist in the act of creation can afford to be anything rather than an esthete";²⁴ (II) the nativists' fascination with folksongs and indigenous poetry, as evinced in **Alice Corbin's** numerous essays highlighting the folk in *Poetry* magazine; (III) their appetite for experimentation and new modes of expression, this "crusade for new materials" is what **Gorham Munson** would label 'romanticism', consciously aware of its German origins;²⁵ (IV) the religious impulse drawing modernists towards Theosophy, mysticism, and the Orient; (V) the predilection for the primitive and the emotion contained in the music of *Spirituals*—a term that **Constance Rourke** reveals to have been brought over and inserted into English usage by immigrants from Germany.²⁶ It seems that all the major threads connect back to Germany. How can we explain this phenomena?

German philosophy was absorbed and filtered into the American literary tradition at various stages, through the works of various intellectuals: the New England transcendentalists like Emerson, Coleridge, Poe, French symbolists—writers whose philosophical foundations also clearly drew from Neo-Platonism each had discernible ties to Germany.²⁷

²⁴ Waldo Frank, "The Major Issue". In *The Novel of Tomorrow: And the Scope of Fiction* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1922), 61. The modern pioneer of the field of *Ästhetik* is Baumgarten, to whom the young Herder directed our closing introductory chapter quote. However, in his collection of *Fragmente* titled *Critical Forests* (1769) he challenged many of assumptions Baumgarten made in *Aesthetica* (1750-8), reinventing the field of aesthetics.

²⁵ The third anniversary issue of Norman Fitt's *S4N* features Gorham B. Munson, "The Mechanics for a Literary Succession," *S4N* (Nov. 1922), no pagination.

²⁶ See Constance Rourke, *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942), 191-2. Rourke places Herder within the historical context of cultural nationalism: between Vico and Rousseau—briefly noting his role in shaping American cultural identity (24-26). It is interesting that Van Wyck Brooks wrote the introduction and helped to edit the book, as six years earlier he gave a detailed account of the transcendentalists' interest in German philosophy and mentions Herder in his book *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865*.

²⁷ M. A. R. Habib notes that "Some Platonic notions, such as the distinction between appearance and reality, emerge in highly refracted forms in the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, and some of Hegel's followers. Such notions also inform the work of English Romantic poets such as Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley. In America, Emerson's transcendentalism bore the imprint of Plato's thought, as did the poetic theory and practice of Poe, Baudelaire, and the French symbolists." Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 39.

More direct sources of German ideas for **Jean Toomer** are: (i) **Whitman** and (ii) **Goethe**, both of whom he cites as being “pillars” of his formative years—in particular the latter’s *Wilhelm Meister*, translated by another Germanophile, Thomas Carlyle. Another source is (iii) **Turgenev**, who had studied in Berlin for an advanced degree in German philosophy, and whose *A Sportsman’s Sketches* directly influenced Toomer as well as Anderson; (iv) Russian writers like **Karamzin**, **Gogol**, and **Dostoevsky**, who along with Turgenev, espoused Herder’s turn to a ‘Neo-primitivism’ celebrating the *Volk*, vernacularization, and being rooted in “soil” in the search for a truly national *Geist* and culture, or *Bildung*. We can also include (v) **William James** who spent over a year and a half in Germany (1867-8) where he abandoned medicine to pursue philosophy and psychology; and (vi) **Du Bois**, who also studied abroad at *Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin* (1892-4) where he absorbed many German concepts regarding the *Volk*; and we should also include (vii) **D. H. Lawrence**, who for a time lived in Germany and can be classified as a Neo-romantic critic of England (along with **John Middleton Murray** and **Herbert Read**)—as he “attempted to reinstate a Romantic belief in pantheism and the organic unity of the world. . . . and an organicist aesthetic which saw poetry as an organic totality transcending reason.”²⁸ We add two final names to our list: (viii) **Charles Godfrey Leland** (1824 - 1903), whose time in Germany led to his interest in folklore and magic, and later to his translating **Henrich Heine**’s oeuvre; and (ix) **Franz Boas** (1858–1942), the German physicist/geographer who pioneered American anthropology, one “grounded in the German Romantic tradition” with direct links to “the intellectual tradition of Herder”.²⁹ Finally, we can append to this list the various books available in English on the history of German literature (various books by authors such as John George Robertson and Calvin Thomas), or anthologies (like Hedge’s *German Prose Writers*, which Whitman heavily relied upon), and the numerous references made in various ‘little magazines’. Of course, many of the nativist modernists were looking to other countries for inspiration as well, but it seems like there

²⁸ Ibid., 561.

²⁹ Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and the Western Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59-60.

was a disproportionate and overwhelming amount of German ideas being siphoned and incorporated into American culture.

This brings us to **Goethe's** assessment of his country's reliance on foreign literature and outside "moral" influences and the consequences to its educated classes: "despite the great advantage which we have derived therefrom, [it] has nevertheless hindered the Germans, as Germans, from developing themselves at an earlier stage" (*L&L* 120-1). Two rhetorical questions to consider now, are: if indeed there was a sudden turn towards Germany and German methods for American nativist modernism—and Brooks makes it fairly clear it was a conscious shift—was this turn simply adopting a similar path like Russia, or can this be considered another form of imitation or reliance? Were the fruits of this cultural nationalism in America truly a distinct blossoming, or were they just an instance of transplanting a foreign seed to an unsuited native soil? These are complicated questions each reader should answer for themselves by the end.

And now, before moving on to the next section, here are two quotations that provide context for this chapter. The first is from 'A **Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads**' (1888) by **Walt Whitman**, where the author recognizes Herder's role as the pioneer who uncovered the truth that a nation's vital force stems from its poetry drawing from the *Volksgeist*—"national spirit"—and passed this knowledge onto his protégé Goethe:

Concluding with two items for the imaginative genius of the West, when it worthily rises—First, what Herder taught to the young Goethe, that really great poetry is always (like the Homeric or Biblical canticles) the result of a national spirit, and not the privilege of a polish'd and select few; Second, that the strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.³⁰

The second is by the American regional poet **John Gould Fletcher** from his essay titled 'The Impulse of Poetry' (1931):

It is increasingly certain that in Blake we have to admit an attempt to fuse in poetry the scattered fragments of much Kabbalistic, Gnostic, and seventeenth-century Occultist speculation about the universe: the fact that Blake himself tended to alter the meaning of his symbolic myth, and to bury its main outlines under the increasing weight of subsidiary figures, should not blind us to this truth.³¹

³⁰ Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 672.

³¹ John Gould Fletcher, *Selected Essays* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 50. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'FLE'.

Whitman leaves no doubt as to the originator of Goethe's inheritance, yet the American nativist modernists had no idea that this wide-spectrum of multi-hued interests is not only German in origin, each of these can be traced back to our prism, Herder—Walzel seems to have been correct, indeed, when speaking about an obscured “spiritual ancestry”! And in the remaining sections we shall try to dig up these buried connections to Herder and unravel the concealed patterns that intertwine with mystical traditions, just as Fletcher advised for Blake.

THE YOUNG HERDER & TWO MONSTERS

The young seventeen-year-old Herder was a student at the University of Königsberg studying under the guidance and supervision of **Immanuel Kant**, while increasingly falling under the spell of his other mystically inclined teacher, **Johann Georg Hamann**. As George Moore interestingly points out:

Herder spent most of the rest of his life striving to reconcile the opposing poles of Enlightenment thought represented by his early mentors. “A man who desires to be solely head,” he once wrote, “is just as much a monster as one who desires to be only heart; the whole, healthy man is both. And that he is both, with each in its place, the heart not in the head and the head not in the heart, is precisely what makes him a human being.” (*AES* 3)

This image of these two philosophers both vying to capture the young Herder's imagination and attention, while he tries to find a midpoint between their philosophical positions, sets up a dialectical relationship that perfectly personifies the developing intellectual crisis at that time in the territories of the German Nation. Kant relied upon rational and logical thinking while Hamann's philosophy emphasized mystical and intuitional feeling, we might say. Kant taught him logic and how to analytically craft an argument from both sides, and Hamann showed him the beauty of **Shakespeare** and ancient texts. Herder drew inspiration from both teachers and poured their knowledge into his own wellspring of experience to distill his own unique philosophical path, one that would lead to turning both mentors into his starkest critics.

We need to realize the dialectic nature of Herder's relationship with each, and also the antipodal positions held by his teachers, as they embody and exemplify the intellectual-spiritual clash occurring in Germany at that time between mystical and rational forces. The first distinction we need to make is that there are actually two different Kants that Herder is reacting to

in his writings: for the most part, Herder maintains a harmonious relationship with the ‘pre-critical’ Kant of his student days, while becoming a violent detractor—opposed to and attacked by—the later Kant who authored the three *Kritik* on *Pure Reason* (1787), the same year as *God, Some Conversations*; then *Practical Reason* (1787), and finally *Judgment* (1790). Referring to the wave of Kantianism as the “Influenza from the North East”, Herder dedicated the final years of his life to his two books—*Metakritik* (1799) and *Kalligone* (1800)—refuting Kant’s line of reasoning in the *Kritik*:

My object is now definite enough, namely, to expose in the shortest, clearest, and most pregnant way, the confusions and absurdities which these fellows [Kantists] have introduced into the criticism of all that is true and good and beautiful in art and knowledge; yes, into practical doctrines too, ethics and equity, even into philology, history, mathematics, and theology. In every journal these bull-dogs and hounds are barking and yelping out their critical canons without canon, without feeling, law, or regulation. God help me!³²

The weight and impact of Kantianism on German intellectuals was to such a degree that Kant affected even the mystically inclined *Frühromantiker* and **Goethe**. However, the position taken by many, including myself, is that Herder’s philosophy provided a viable and holistic alternative to the one laid out in the three *Kritik*. To boil their main opposition down to a single sentence: Kant unequivocally “demarcated” the thing-in-itself from the sensible, declaring that the *Noumenal* realm (including the Christian concept of God) is “unknowable to human intellect”—despite **Plato**’s insistence “only the Ideas [the objects of *Nous* or *Noumena*] are fully intelligible and knowable”³³—while Herder overcame Kant’s dualism by insisting that the body and spirit were one, he also provided poets a back door to the *Noumenal* by mixing parts of **Spinozism** and **Leibnizean** principles, adapted to portray a vitalistic universe suffused by God,³⁴ which allowed for a literal interpretation of the lines of Plato in *Timaeus*: “the most sovereign part of our **soul** as god’s gift to us, given to be our guiding **spirit** . . . raises us up away from the earth and toward what is akin

³² From Herder’s letter to letter to Knebel. Qtd. in Henry Wood Nevinson, *A Sketch of Herder and His Times* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1884), 419-420.

³³ T. K. Seung, *Kant: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (New York: Continuum, 2007), 24-5.

³⁴ Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 127-164. See also Johann Pillai, “Irony, Romantic” in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, vol. 1, ed. Christopher John Murray (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 564-5. The latter is quoted in *Metaphysical Exercitium* §12, which provides the direct link from the beginning of this section to the aesthetic foundations of the *Frühromantik*.

to us in heaven”.³⁵ Of course, Kant and his followers would denigrate Herder’s mystical notions as *Schwärmerei* (‘visionary enthusiasm’) and metaphysics, in the pejorative sense; while Herder’s proponents viewed his philosophical grounding as inspired and attuned to latest scientific advancements—the mystical components they saw as being *complimentum* to the spirit of **Plato** and **Plotinus**.

Herder’s *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772) marks his clash with his other teacher. Hamann believed language was God-given and divine (**Logos**), and was what made us superior to all other creatures. Herder rejected that idea, as he rejected the belief that the Bible was the divine word of God directly passed down through revelation; however, he agreed with the second half of Hamann’s position that man was at the apex of the animal kingdom on the great ladder of beings. He describes man’s development of language—images, words, and the ability to communicate thought—as a naturalistic evolutionary trait—much to Hamann’s chagrin for his *Aufklärung* position. At the end of the treatise, Herder does ascribe a divinity to language, that he argues is more “worthy” precisely because its origin is human not supernatural:

The human origin shows God in the greatest light: *His work, a human soul, creating and continuing to create a language through itself...* The human soul builds for itself this *sense of reason* as a creator, as an image of His nature. (*PHL* 163)

Älteste Urkunde (1774) marks Herder’s newfound belief in God’s revelation through symbols; he revises his former positions and is taken back into Hamann’s fold.³⁶ From the perspective of our study, Hamann’s most notable contribution was his passionate Neo-Platonism, which both Herder and Goethe found contagious. Not only was Herder an enthusiastic student of **Plotinus** and **Proclus**—whose ideas inspired his first major work, ‘**Essay on Being**’ (1764)—in the transmission and dissemination of Neo-Platonism into Germany, **he was**, according to Ulrich Gaier, “**its most important mediator**”.³⁷ The following sections outline the various Platonic and Plotinian concepts Herder refracted and reformulated into the substructures for his philosophy and aesthetics.

³⁵ Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1289. Emphasis added. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*PLA*’, followed by Stephanus pagination: i.e. (*PLA* 1289; 90a-b)

³⁶ Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 129. See **Metaphysical Exercitium** §2 & §5 for background on the significance of Herder’s *Denkbild* Sextogram and Kant’s ‘*Schwärmerei*’.

³⁷ Ulrich Gaier, “Herder’s Early Neoplatonism”, in *Herder’s ‘Essay on Being’: A Translation and Critical Approaches*, ed. John K. Noyes (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018), 162.

ORIGINS & SEEDS : PLATO

Plato's works revealed the nature of reality, truth, and enlightenment that would ground many later philosophical traditions; for our purposes, the double star of Plato's dialogues *The Republic* and *Timaeus* provide the cornerstones upon which spiritual and mystical systems can be overlaid. These are:

[┐] Placing an intellectual realm of the soul (Kant's *Noumena*) beyond the physical world of the senses (Kant's *Phenomena*). The invisible world of forms (*eide* or archetypes) that is truer and filled with light as opposed to the prison-house of the senses represented by the dark cave in Book VII.

[└] Book VI of *The Republic* establishes the metaphor of the sun to symbolize the highest good: "What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things" (PLA 1129; 508c).

[┘] Plato gives his 'Myth of the Cave' in Book VII depicting the path to enlightenment as an *ascent* towards the ultimate form of 'being': "The visible realm should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the power of the sun. And . . . the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm . . . provides truth and understanding" (PLA 1135; 517b).

[≡] Plato's *Timaeus* builds upon the doctrines of **Heraclitean flux** and **unity of opposites**, by presenting the World-Artificer, the "Demiurge" (Greek for 'craftsman') who takes "this whole universe of becoming . . . not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion—and brought it from a state of disorder to one of order" (PLA 1236; 29e-30a) creating the *Kosmos* or "world order". Goodness lies in bringing form to chaos, and Intellect or Reason (similar to the Anaxagorean "Nous")³⁸ is moved to the realm of the soul: "it is impossible for anything to come to possess intelligence apart from soul" (PLA 1236; 30b).

[□] *Timaeus* presents the world as a single organism "as a truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence . . . which contains within itself all the living things whose nature it is to share its kind" (PLA 1236; 30c-31a). This would become the basis for later philosophical conceptions of the *Anima Mundi*, or a **Macro Anthropos**, and also Herder's organicism and great chain of beings.

³⁸ Jeffrey Henderson, ed., introduction to *Timaeus* in *Plato*, vol. IX, *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 7. This organizing principle of order is designated 'Logos' by Heraclitus.

As we define ‘*Anima Mundi*’ for our **Glossary**, it becomes obvious this concept is a principle belief central to later Platonists (like Emerson, etc.):

[*Anima Mundi*] : *Welt-seele*, world-soul, oversoul, universal ego, infinite spirit;
Gr *Logos*.

[H] Plato’s following two passages would add two spiritual elements that later mystical philosophical systems would turn to as hidden doors of access:

[1] Applying this entire train of reasoning to the god that was yet to be, the eternal god made [the universe] smooth and even all over, equal from the center, a whole and complete body itself, but also made up of complete bodies. **In its center he set a soul**, which he extended throughout the whole body, and . . . set it to turn in a **circle**, a single solitary universe . . . All this, then, explains why **this world** which he begat for himself is a **blessed god**. (*PLA* 1238-9; 34b; emphasis added)

[H:1] The sphere as observed in nature is selected as the perfect form to represent the **One** encompassing the **Many**—a single “world” with a soul set in its exact center of gravity. This “world” as “a blessed god” will resurface in the *Unanimisme* of Jules Romains and Ezra Pound, but it is also at the heart of Herder’s organicism and his mystical force *Kräfte*.

[2] Now we ought to think of the most sovereign part of our soul as god’s gift to us, given to be *our guiding spirit*. This, of course, is the type of soul that, as we maintain, resides in the top part of our bodies. It raises us up away from the earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven, as though **we are plants grown not from the earth but from heaven**. In saying this, we speak absolutely correctly. For it is from heaven, the place from which our souls were originally born, that the divine part suspends our head, i.e., our **root**, and so keeps our whole body erect. . . . And to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality, he can in no way fail to achieve this: constantly caring for his divine part as he does, keeping well-ordered *the guiding spirit that lives within him*, he must indeed be supremely happy. . . . And the **motions** that have an affinity to the divine part within us are the thoughts and **revolutions** of the universe. (*PLA* 1289; 90a-d; emphasis added).

[H:2] Here a soul is presented not simply as an organizing principle but one linked to “heaven” but more importantly “one akin to us” there. In the passage above, Plato uses a plant metaphor to describe this “most sovereign part of our soul” that raises us up (in an *ascent*) and his mention of the spheres, motions, and revolutions tie back to his sun analogue. It is not hard to see where Herder harvested his seeds for his various concepts of *Geist*,

Kräfte, and the oft-used organicist model of “worlds” as applied to **Parts** placed lower on the chain or **ladder of beings** that make up the **Whole**. This ascribing a spirit to all parts of the world is, strictly speaking, **animism**.³⁹

Let us append a fuller definition for ‘*Animism*’ in our **Glossary** to reflect aspects of Plato incorporated into Herder’s ‘*Kräfte*’:

[*Animism*] : belief that all natural objects are animated by ‘spirits’ or intelligent beings; primitive anthropomorphism. Herder’s concept of *Kräfte* endows “different degrees of consciousness” to “inorganic worlds” on the ‘ladder of natural forms’, which can be labeled “animism, pananimism, panvitalism, panpsychism, panspiritualism, panlogism, hylozoism”.⁴⁰

In closing, let us discuss a particular Platonic concept in [H:2] that relates not only to mysticism but also provides a pathway for the divine inspiration of poets—the *Daemon* (Δαίμονας). This “most sovereign part of our soul” is “god’s gift” that is bestowed upon us to act as a “guiding spirit”; this almost shamanistic concept, with parallels to the “Holy Spirit”, is a cherished belief and life-long component of both Goethe and Herder’s *Kunstanschauung*.⁴¹ Angus Nicholls provides insight into the transformation of the concept as it entered Stoic and Neo-Platonic thought, before intertwining with romantic notions of ‘genius’ as it was adopted by the Germans:

the daemonic turns upon the possibility of there being *a conduit, nexus, or crossing* between the temporal, secular realm of *phenomena* and the *divine realm of the forms or eide*. . . . Related to this notion of the daemonic is the term (*Dämon*), which [in Orphic beliefs] can refer . . . to a kind of hidden or numinous force that shapes a person’s life. . . . It is also in this sense that one speaks of an individual being possessed by his or her daemon as by an alter ego or “other self.” A person’s daemon is thus seen as his or her life principle or entelechy.⁴²

We shall track the transformation of *Das Dämonische* in each of the next two sections outlining the philosophic-mystical roots of Plotinus and Herder.

³⁹ See **Metaphysical Exercitium § 1** in the section ‘**Introduction : Anchor Threads**’.

⁴⁰ Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, 10-11.

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin wrote that “The idea of the daemonic, accompanies Goethe’s vision all his life” and Benno von Wiese came to the same conclusions. Qtd. in Angus Nicholls, *Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic: After the Ancients* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), i, 3. Herder’s “belief in a personal daemon, as recorded in his letters” as one of the “convictions” that link his concept of *Kräfte* to the occult. See Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, 11-12.

⁴² A. Nicholls, 11.

PLOTINUS : SPIRITUALIZATION OF THE WORLD

The term “Neo-Platonism” (*Neuplatonismus*) was a pejorative label invented by German intellectuals in the 18th-century to distinguish the “unwholesome contaminations” of Plotinus and his followers from the “pure stream” of Plato and ancient Hellenic philosophy.⁴³ As Liebrechts notes, “The modern distinction between Platonism and Neoplatonism would have surprised Plotinus, since he regarded himself as an inheritor, interpreter, and continuator of Plato’s work.”⁴⁴ **Plotinus** took Plato’s valuation of the intellectual world of forms over the world of senses, and magnified and spiritualized it, as most coherently explained by Walzel:

[Plotinus] made out of Plato’s ideal world a world of the spirit. The phenomenal world was of value to him only insofar as it was thoroughly spiritualized. Thus he made the philosophy of antiquity subjective. He seemed, indeed, to suggest the fleeing from the objective world . . . [and later] followers of Neoplatonism were reproached for their tendency to pass on from the spiritualization of nature to superstition and belief in wonders and miracles.⁴⁵

Neo-Platonism had been a part of German culture in the form of Christian pietism that revived “the Old German mysticism of the Middle Ages . . . and the nature philosophy of the Renaissance”.⁴⁶ Herder’s mysticism draws from the religious as well as the philosophical tradition, like **Shaftsbury**’s revival of Neo-Platonism in the 18th century, along with **Bruno** and **Leibniz**. As M. H. Abrams puts forth in *Natural Supernaturalism*, the thinking of German philosophers and poets “can be viewed as highly elaborated and sophisticated variations upon the Neoplatonic paradigm of a primal unity and goodness. . . . Paul Reiff called Plotinus the ‘key’ to the understanding of Romanticism.”⁴⁷ Before moving onto specifics, Liebrechts’s condensed summary of the main Plotinian transformations of **Plato** is a useful overview:

⁴³ Lloyd P. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134. See also John Dillon and Lloyd P. Gerson, eds. *Introduction to Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), xiii.

⁴⁴ Peter Liebrechts, *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 19.

⁴⁵ Walzel, 5-6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6. Jacob Boehme’s Theosophy was born in Germany drawing from this same tradition.

⁴⁷ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 169.

Neoplatonic doctrines of the emanation or procession of the universe from the One, the aim of *henosis* or union with the Divine, the difference between man's two selves, and the complex association of matter with evil . . . [show] Plotinus's thought . . . marks a major original contribution [to Platonism].⁴⁸

The specific key mystical doctrines and innovations of Plotinus that inform Herder's aesthetics and the *romantik Weltanschauung* are:

[⊢] Plotinus transforms Plato's sensible and intellectual world into 3 hypostases: :]1[: the "Eternal" Divine Mind (*Nous*) ruling the Intellectual realm, :]2[: "There" containing the World-Soul and human souls (*psychē*), and :]3[: "Here" denoting the world of "matter, sense, and time"—with their totality expressed as "**The One**" (*τὸ Ἐν*), from which all things emanate. "**The All**" is the preferred designation for God used often by Spinoza, Kant, and Goethe. A. H. Armstrong contends that "All the idealism, all the essentialism of the Christian tradition of philosophy and of the secular metaphysical systems which derive from it is here found in embryo", while also suggesting this informs Kant's *Phenomenon / Noumenon* divide.⁴⁹

[⊣] Plotinus takes Plato's concept of the universe being a single organism with a soul and transforms it by mixing in "the dynamic vitalism" of **Stoicism**, which viewed "the universe as a single living organism held together, enlivened, and ensouled by the Divine Fire":

Plato seems to have imagined the spiritual world as a place of static, regular mathematical pattern and geometrical intelligence ordering all things on that pattern. Plotinus's spiritual world is a place boiling with life, where infinite power wells up and surges eternally in a carefree spontaneity without plan or need into a splendid superabundance of living forms.⁵⁰

Plotinus' view is ultimately **Monist**—unity-in-diversity melds the spiritual and material worlds (or organisms) "together in a living whole by a single life".⁵¹ A major conception of Neo-Platonism that is central to Herder's worldview is best explained in William Inge's lectures: "Plotinus conceives the universe

⁴⁸ Liebrechts, 19.

⁴⁹ A. H. Armstrong, tr., Preface to *The Enneads*, by Plotinus, vol. 1, *Porphyrus on Plotinus, Ennead I*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), xxxix.

⁵⁰ A. H. Armstrong, ed., Introduction to *Plotinus*, by Plotinus (New York: Collier, 1962), 20.

⁵¹ Ibid. This was illustrated in by Plotinus in *Ennead V.8.9*, where he presents an image of the universe as a great sphere, then asks us to superimpose another spiritual globe upon the first image and "call on God, maker of the sphere . . . to enter". Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 429. Hereafter cited 'ENN' followed by Porphyry's division into book, treatise, & chapter: (ENN 429; V.8.9).

as a living chain of being, an unbroken series of ascending or descending values and existences. The whole constitutes a ‘harmony’; each inferior grade is ‘in’ the next above; each existence is vitally connected to all others.”⁵²

[†] Matter which exists in chaos in the lowest realm is seen as evil in that it prevent us from seeing our higher spiritual form, leaving us “entrapped in the atomistic particularity of the material world and . . . imprisoned in the body and cut off from its high destiny”⁵³—“the contemplation of an **infinite self**” (*ENN* 425; V.8.4). This is Plotinus’ goal, which according to Porphyry he encapsulated in his dying words, “Try to bring back the god in you to the divine in the All”.⁵⁴

[⊖] This atomization of being cut off and separate from the One —“buffeted about by a worldful of things”—is viewed as wicked and the root of our ills:

There comes a stage at which individual souls become partial and **self-centred**; . . . the Soul is a deserter from the All; . . . it is a **partial** thing, **isolated, weakened**, full of care, intent upon the **fragment**; **severed** from the whole . . . it nestles in one form of being; for this, it abandons all else, entering into and caring for only the one, for a thing buffeted about by a worldful of things. . . . It has **fallen**. (*ENN* 360; IV.8.4)

This is the *descent* or *fall* in Neo-Platonism, which corresponds with romantic notions of division they saw resulting from modernity in various guises, which they identified as: **alienation** (*Entfremdung*), **estrangement** (*Entäusserung*), **division** (*Entzweiung*), **separation** (*Trennung*), and **reflection** (*Reflexion*).⁵⁵ Beiser identifies the three levels of fragmentation afflicting each of us according to romantics’ worldview: first, “the division within the self”; second, “what we might also call *anomie* or **atomism**—was the division between the self and others”; and the “third form of alienation was the division between the self and nature.”⁵⁶ Beiser’s summary of the *Frühromantiker*’s third level of division is particularly insightful:

⁵² William Ralph Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus: The Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews, 1917-1918*, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1918), 254.

⁵³ Armstrong, Preface to *The Enneads*, xxiii-iv.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xxv; 7.

⁵⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

[T]he growth of modern technology, which made nature into an object of mere use, having no magic, mystery, or beauty; and second, mechanical physics, which **made nature into a vast machine** and the mind either a smaller machine within nature or a **ghost** standing outside it. (31-2)

Here we can sense why Herder turned to vitalistic notions to resuscitate and transform the mechanical clockwork universe (including nature and God) into a spirit-infused “living organic force”.⁵⁷ It also points to the aims motivating Novalis’s *magical idealism* (*Magische Idealismus*): the re-enchantment, re-sacralization, spiritualization of nature and the world.

[] There is an “intimate” relationship between Soul and Intellect (*Nous*): Soul is “the great intermediary between the worlds of intellect and sense and the representative of the former in the latter.”⁵⁸ The role fulfilled by our Soul of mediating between the **material** and **spiritual** planes returns us to our previous discussion of Plato’s **Daemon**, Plotinus states in the *Enneads*:

The Timaeus indicates the relation of this guiding spirit [*Daemon*] to ourselves: it is not entirely outside of ourselves; is not bound up with our nature; it is not the agent of our action; it belongs to us as belonging to our Soul, but not in so far as we are particular human beings living a life to which it is superior: take the passage in this sense and it is consistent; understand this spirit otherwise and there is contradiction. (*ENN* 188; III.4.5)

R. T. Wallis points out that Plotinus did in fact believe that daemons were real, but in this instance he is referring not to those “anthropomorphic daemon[s], but an inner psychological principle, more precisely, it is the level of above that on which we consciously live, and so is both within us and yet transcendent”.⁵⁹ The paradoxical position the **Daemon** occupies “belonging to our Soul” while “not entirely outside ourselves” with its function bridging each soul with the Soul, our intellect to Divine Intellect—seems to manifest itself as familiar echoes in Herder’s function of the *Volksggeist*, along with the German aesthetic notions of **genius** that become popular during that time.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 160: “With this vitalist reading of Spinoza, Herder is able to reassess the moral and religious implications of his philosophy. There is now room for life and providence in Spinoza’s otherwise barren and gloomy universe. On Herder’s reading Spinoza’s **God is not a dead, static substance, but a living, active force**; and it acts not according to blind necessity, but with intelligent ends.” Emphasis added.

⁵⁸ Armstrong, Preface to *The Enneads*, xxii.

⁵⁹ R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1972), 71.

⁶⁰ For a fascinating encapsulation of the interrelationship between Herder’s pantheism, notions about genius and the daemon, and *Ossian*, see Angus Nicholls, 89-105.

[—] Plotinus states that when we perceive Nature, we are just sensing its representation or image (*eidolon* or *Bild*), its essence is in Soul and Intellect—echoing Socrates’ words in Book X of the *Republic*:

Besides, even granting that what the senses grasp is really contained in the objects, none the less what is thus known by the senses is an image: sense can never grasp the **thing itself**; this remains for ever outside. (*ENN* 403; V.5.1)

This sets up an interesting dynamic, as everything in the material world of ‘**Here**’ is a symbol, a mere figure of the original essence in the ‘**There**’ of the Intellectual realm. When poets or artists use symbols, they are in effect making a symbol out of a symbol whose real meaning or **Truth** is contained in the Intellectual realm. This is compounded by the fact that language is a system of semiotic signs and symbols—our sounds point to thoughts and objects, which are shells pointing to its essence elsewhere and immaterial.

[†] Every ‘thing’ that could ever exist in this world of senses is already present in the world of of Forms as an archetype,⁶¹ as Plotinus tells us: “From the beginning to end, all is gripped by the Forms of the Intellectual Realm” (*ENN* 428; V.8.7). According to this view, the entire universe is merely a representation or image of a pre-existing infinite number of archetypal worlds:⁶² “the entire aggregate of existence springs from the divine world, in greater beauty” (*ENN* 428; V.8.7). For Plotinus, beauty does not rest within the object but in the spirit of its **Form**. Corrigan highlights this shift of emphasis from the material to the intellectual/spiritual—from matter to Form and *formation*, or creation—which would have seismic consequences reshaping the field of aesthetics:

(a) the matter and the medium are not the simple sources of the beauty they express but a limitation and privation rather of what they attempt to express and (b) the artist has **access to intelligible being** and can therefore **create** the more-than-individual, the improvement upon nature, and the divine-which-should-be in concrete visible form. Art therefore has a natural analogical function.⁶³

Access to this higher plane, the *Noumenal*, provides the grounding for various aesthetic movements from the late eighteenth century onwards.

⁶¹ Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 135.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 210. Emphasis added.

[π] For our next Plotinian foundation we examine another cornerstone for Herder's mode of philosophical enquiry: the favors unmediated, intuitive creative and synthetic thinking over analytical logic in the *Enneads*:

All that comes to be, work of nature or of craft, some wisdom has made: everywhere a wisdom presides at a making. No doubt the wisdom of the artist may be the guide of the work; it is sufficient explanation of the wisdom exhibited in the arts . . . (*ENN* 426; V.8.5)

For each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an immediate unity, *not an aggregate of discursive reasoning* and detailed willing. Later from this wisdom in unity there appears, in another form of being, an image, already less compact, *which announces the original in terms of discourse* . . . (*ENN* 427; V.8.6 ; italics added)

Herder unites this Plotinian notion of mystical understanding with his view of poetic imagination, which is “associative” and goes against analytical logic. As Nisbet notes, this Herderian creative imagination

is not that of discursive thinking. And the poetic illusion which it creates cannot be assessed by any objective criterion of verisimilitude . . . The test of a successful poetic illusion is a subjective one: the internal coherence of a poem is not that of rationality . . . The laws of the imagination are more closely analogous to organic growth than laws of mechanics.⁶⁴

This unifying power of creative imagination (*Poiesis* and *Einbildungskraft*), much like his concept of *Einfühlung*, is antithetical to that of abstract reasoning (*Abstraktion*)—and to see why this symbolic mode is linked to the soul, we turn to Inge: “In all consciousness there is a synthesis of sense-material, and interpretation and combination of elements; and this, as Plotinus rightly says, is an activity of the Soul”.⁶⁵

[¶] Plotinus uses the term “Universal Sympathy” to describe the following paradoxical relationship—what Coleridge expresses as **omneity**:⁶⁶

The one soul reaches to the individual but none the less contains all souls and all intelligences; this, because it is at once a unity and an infinity; it holds all its content as one yet with each item distinct, though not to the point of separation. Except by thus holding all its content as one life entire, soul entire, all intelligence it could not be infinite; since the individualities are not fenced off from each other, it remains still one. (*ENN* 530; VI.4.14)

⁶⁴ Nisbet, ed., introduction to *German Aesthetic & Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller and Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 17.

⁶⁵ Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. 1, 224.

⁶⁶ Plotinus defines **Universal Sympathy** in the *Enneads* VI.7.14 (*ENN* 573). German romantics used the term *Verbindung* to express “the primordial inter-connectedness of things”. McCort, 29.

In Plotinus, the concept of **soul** refers to a duality: (1) “a cosmic force that unifies, organizes, sustains, and controls every aspect of the world”,⁶⁷ while simultaneously expressing (2) the “multiplicity of individual souls associated with particular bodies”⁶⁸—and each soul, expressed by (2), contains each other, but also (1), and vice versa. The function that Plotinus originally attributes to Soul (1), we find Herder redirecting and channeling into his conception of poetry and poetics—by placing poetry within the domain of the soul. *The Enneads* provides the justification and rationale for Herder’s *Kunstanschauung*, where his pseudo-mystical concept of *Kräfte* is linked with the **Soul, Imagination**, and by association—**Poetry** (see **Image B5**): “Plotinus insists that we must not regard Sensation as a passive impression made by external objects on the perceiving faculty. It is an activity; ‘a kind of force’”.⁶⁹

Ontological sphere	Work (stasis)		Energy (kinesis)	
Means of representation	Natural signs		Arbitrary signs	
Effective medium*	Space		Time	Force
Art form	Sculpture	Painting	Music	Poetry
Faculties of perception†	Touch	Sight	Hearing	Imagination

*Principles or categories that order the means of representation
†To which the individual orders of representational means originally appeal

Image B5: Herder’s Classification of Art Forms, in Robert E. Norton, *Herder’s Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 201.

And this realignment may be viewed as a pivotal step in “the process through which Platonic and Neo-Platonic patterns of thinking were modified and secularized in modern European literature”,⁷⁰ and the back door by which the *Frühromantiker* surreptitiously bring Neo-Platonism into the core of romantic aesthetics.

⁶⁷ Dominic J. O’Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 17. See **Glossary**, s.v. ‘*Seele*’, for Plotinus’ aspects of the soul that Herder ascribes to poetry.

⁶⁸ A. Nicholls, 74. Nicholls incorporates the quotation by O’Meara into his argument.

⁶⁹ Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. 1, 222. Greek translation of concepts removed.

⁷⁰ A. Nicholls, 109; 97. Angus Nicholls examines Herder’s & Goethe’s role in this secularization of Platonic/Plotinian mysticism as the broad thesis for his book, *Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic*.

[⚡] The metaphor of the poet as a creator has a long history in the Western imagination, and Tigerstedt accedes that the roots of this notion are found in *Timaeus* with Plato describing the World-Artificer/Demiurge⁷¹ as “Maker [ποιητής, or *poiétés*] and Father of the universe”.⁷² *The Enneads* also contains passages describing a relationship between creator and artistic creation: “Suppose this Universe to be the direct creation of the Reason-Principle applying itself, quite unchanged, to Matter . . .” (*ENN* 172; III.2.12). This relationship is likened to that between author and drama: “Just so the Soul, entering this drama of the Universe, making itself part of the Play . . . the Author has made Master of all this world” (*ENN* 176; III.2.17). The following Plotinian analogy would later resurface in Herder’s essay ‘**Shakespeare**’, but also reinforce his ideas about the relationship between the Soul and song:

[A] Soul can express of its own quality, as a singer in a song. A voice, a bearing, naturally fine or vulgar, may increase the charm of a piece; on the other hand, an actor with his ugly voice may make a sorry exhibition of himself, yet the drama stands as good a work as ever (*ENN* 176; III.2.17).

Ulrich Gaier confirms that Hamann, Herder, Goethe and Novalis read **Plato, Plotinus, Proclus**⁷³ in the Latin translation and commentary of **Marsilio Ficino** (1433-1499), head of the Academia Platonica in Florence.⁷⁴ This is significant as—despite prior disagreements of the “Fathers of the Church” over expressing God and World as *artifex* and *opifex mundi*—Tigerstedt pinpoints the first to explicitly use the ‘poet as creator’ metaphor to be Florentine Platonist **Christoforo Landino** (1424-1498), a friend of Ficino’s.⁷⁵ Herder was also greatly influenced by the writings of

⁷¹ “Demiurge: Greek *dēmiourgos*, also sometimes translated below as “maker” (40c2, 41a7) or “fashioner” (69c3)” (*PLA* 1235, n. 9).

⁷² E. N. Tigerstedt, “The Poet as Creator: Origins of a Metaphor”, in *Comparative Literature Studies* 5, No. 4 (1968): 468. See also, *PLA* 1235 ; 29c.

⁷³ Habib notes the importance of polysemy and allegory for Neo-Platonists like Proclus who turned to them in “an effort to loosen the bonds between a word and its meaning, to formulate a larger framework of interpretation . . . Proclus effectively reinterprets Plato’s own account of poetry using Plato’s own texts, arguing that **poetry can serve the highest function**, such as **facilitating the soul’s union with the divine**, through enabling knowledge, to the function of imitation. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 139. Emphasis added. It seems Herder turns this highest function of poetry into a central component of his aesthetics.

⁷⁴ Gaier, “Herder’s Early Neoplatonism”, 162.

⁷⁵ Tigerstedt, 465; 455.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of **Shaftesbury** (1671–1713), who expands on Landino’s parallel between the poet and God as Creators in his book *Characteristicks* (1711):

I must confess there is hardly any where to be found a more insipid Race of Mortals, than those whom we Moderns are contented to call *Poets*, for having attain’d the chiming Faculty of a Language, with an injudicious random use of Wit and Fancy. But for the Man who truly and in a just sense deserves the Name of *Poet*, and who as a real Master, or Architect in the kind, can describe both *Men* and Manners, and an Action its just Body and Proportions; he will be found, if I mistake not, a very different Creature. Such a *Poet* is indeed a second *Maker*: a just *Prometheus*, under *Jove*. Like that Sovereign Artist or universal Plastick Nature, he forms a *Whole*, coherent and proportion’d in it-self, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts. He notes the Boundarys of the Passions, and knows their exact *Tones* and *Measures*; by which he justly represents them, marks *the Sublime* of Sentiments and Action, and distinguishes the *Beautiful* from the *Deform’d*, *the Amiable* from *the Odious*. The Moral Artist, who can thus imitate the Creator, and is thus knowing in the inward Form and Structure of his Fellow-Creature, will hardly, I presume, be found unknowing in *Himself*, or at a loss in those Numbers which make the Harmony of a Mind.⁷⁶

The correspondence this analogue represents—between the higher realm of spirit and idea (the infinite) and the lower material world (the finite)—is what romantic theorists such as **Friedrich Schlegel** and **Karl Solger** believed art was meant to express and attempt to reconcile. The *Frühromantiker* place art where **Plotinus** situated the Soul—hovering between these two poles of the “higher” and “lower” realms. For F. Schlegel and **Novalis**, *Poiesis* plays a crucial role transforming the concept of art into “*aesthetic production*”:

the creation and production of new forms of reflection. It is their express desire to confound, and thus break open, established lines of demarcation between philosophy and art, between science and morality . . . they regard aesthetics as a merging of the finite and the infinite . . .⁷⁷

Solger believed that “irony and allegory focus on the split between knowing and doing, creating and reflecting. Romantic irony is, therefore, an expression of the allegory of the infinite at the level of artistic activity.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Qtd. in Tigerstedt, “The Poet as Creator: Origins of a Metaphor”, *Comparative Literature Studies* 5, No. 4 (1968): 455-6. Italics original.

⁷⁷ Jochen Schulte-Sasse, ed. *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), 158-9.

⁷⁸ McNiece, 117.

HERDER'S 'DOUBLE STAR' [1773] & [1787]

If we had to choose just three concepts to encapsulate the essence of Herder's philosophical and aesthetic endeavor, they would be *Poiesis*, *Kräfte*, & *Geist*. Solger identified two kinds of imagination: *Phantasie* (conceptualization) and *Einbildungskraft* (unifying function),⁷⁹ but *Poiesis* (ποίησις)—suggesting both poetry and creation—better expresses 'creative imagination'. Drawing from Shaftesbury, Herder writes that the poet is a "second creator, *poietes*, maker".⁸⁰ He believed that primitive folksongs and folk poetry were animated by **force & spirit**—rough equivalents for the other two paradigms. Herder identified three aspects in the universe: Space (*Raum*), Time (*Zeit*), and Force (*Kraft*). The last is a distinctly Herderian addition to his vitalistic view of reality, which he modifies into a mystical concept of *Kräfte*.⁸¹ Herder did not invent the term *Geist*, but his figurative and mystical development of it became key to expressing his animism and organicism. *Geist* is a richly multi-layered notion whose polysemic dimensions do not fully translate to English. The denotations *spirit*, *soul*, and *ghost* do translate, and we might add *intellect*, *mind*, *psyche*, and even *consciousness*; but the German term also suggests *wit* and *mood* (*Stimmung*).

We will briefly outline Herder's main contributions to philosophy and aesthetics that intersect with our three mooring threads (**a + b + c**), which align nearly perfectly with three of his seminal works. Each of the three texts are merely the most representative for each pole of thought, and we will include related ideas from other texts aligning with each thread:

- (**a**) Neo-Platonism: 'God, Some Conversations' (1789)
- (**b**) Neo-Romanticism: 'Shakespeare' (1773)
- (**c**) Neo-Primitivism: 'Correspondence about Ossian & the Songs of Ancient Peoples' (1773)

⁷⁹ Marr R. McCulloch, "Solger, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, 1780-1819", in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, vol. 2, ed. Christopher John Murray (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 1066.

⁸⁰ Qtd. in René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 1, *The Later Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 188.

⁸¹ H. B. Nisbet provides the most comprehensive study of the different disciplines Herder applied his notion of *Kraft*: philosophical, aesthetic, historical, physical, biological, psychological, animistic, occult, religious and mystical. See Nisbet, *Herder & PHS*, 8-16.

THREAD (a) NEO-PLATONISM: 'GOD, SOME CONVERSATIONS'

[γ] *God, Some Conversations* (1789 ; original title: *Gott, einige Gespräche über Spinoza's System nebst Shaftesbury's Naturhymnus*) is written as a dialogue between Theano, Theophron, and Philolaus—taking inspiration for its form from the philosophical dialogues of **Plato**. It is also influenced by the pre-*Kritik* Kant's method of tackling an argument from both sides, and this splitting of the self to represent and argue each of the opposing poles. This would serve as a model for one of the tent-poles for romantic irony (*Romantische Ironie*). Walter Silz notes how poetic realists often borrowed Goethe's technique of "split[ting] himself into two halves and let[ting] them expound or debate his own personal problems."⁸² This Herderian innovation that was adapted and reintroduced by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795) in the form of the double or *Doppelgänger* motif, which would become ubiquitous in German romantic and poetic-realist literature.

[δ] Goethe introduced **Spinoza** to Herder, who saw major flaws and contradictions in his philosophy—the biggest being the claim that God only had attributes of thought and extension and existed *within* Time and Space. Herder also disagreed with Spinoza's dualism, separating body and mind—instead holding the **Monist** view that the essence of material and spirit are one. Herder reconfigured Spinoza by mixing in with **Leibniz's** "notion of power, of organic or substantial force" to transform God into "an active, living force . . . the monad of monads, the *Urkraft aller Kräfte*";⁸³ as Beiser clearly points out: "the revival of Spinozism in late eighteenth-century Germany is indeed more a flowering of Herder's vitalistic pantheism than Spinozism proper".⁸⁴

[ε] Herder depicts the universe as interactions between forces, from the smallest atom to planets and galaxies—all of nature is subject to the same laws:

⁸² Walter Silz, *Realism and Reality: Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1965), 72.

⁸³ Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 163. Beiser argues that "Leibniz is the grandfather of German aesthetics" and the writings of Herder and Schelling draw extensively from Leibnizian principles and terminology in formulating an aesthetic conception of "the world as a work of art or organism", thereby reviving "[t]he very spirit that Kant wanted to inter . . ." See Frederick C. Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31.

⁸⁴ The most coherent and comprehensive summary of Herder's transformation of Spinozism is in Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 159-163; the quotes come from the final section of 163.

The power which thinks and works in me, is in its nature as eternal as that which holds together the sun and the stars; wherever and whoever I shall be, I shall be what I am now, a force in a system of forces, in the immeasurable harmony of God's world.⁸⁵

Herder saw each system as a holistic 'world'—“*a realm of living forces*”—all matter is “self animated” and all parts “possess something common, active, interactive” as well, animating each with a *Geist*—intelligence, mind, or spirit—“[o]therwise, they would not form a unity” (*GOD* 129-30). And just like atoms, these separate ‘systems’ are in the state of *becoming* when recognized to be constituent parts of grander scheme of *being*: “Great must be the whole where already in every individuality there appears such a whole, but in every individuality there also still only reveals itself such an indeterminate One, solely for the whole!” (*PHL* 356).

[Ψ] At the heart of Herder's worldview is his ‘dialectic formula’ of the unity of opposites, or *coincidentia oppositorum*—a whole is formed through a “counterbalance” of opposing forces: “Everything attracts, repels, or remains indifferent in relation to other things, and the axis of these active forces goes through all levels of existence” (*GOD* 134). Crediting Leibniz, Shaftesbury, and Plato at the end of *God, Some Conversations*, Herder depicts a world in constant motion and flux, a “great chain” of interconnected forces (organisms) feeding on each other in “a **progress** from chaos to order” (*GOD* 138). The ten principles describing the laws of nature he lists at the end—in addition to incorporating concepts above—contain echoes of oriental notions of reincarnation and Plotinus' stoic attitude towards what is labeled ‘evil’:

5. There is no death in creation; rather, there is transformation. . . .

8. Evil as a reality does not exist in the kingdom of God. (*GOD* 139)

THREAD (b) NEO-ROMANTICISM: ‘SHAKESPEARE’

[Θ] With ‘Shakespeare’ (1773), the second text of the *Sturm und Drang* manifesto, *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst*, Herder took a shot across the bow of Enlightenment thinking, overtly criticizing the French for adopting Classical rules wholesale. He believed “the essence of a nation's poetry can never be transferred to the language of another people, because poetry reflects a psychic

⁸⁵ Qtd. in Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 297.

life that grew out of peculiar conditions of time and place”.⁸⁶ Herder expresses this exact sentiment more poetically in *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782–83):

It would indeed be most strange if one were to rip an image from out of its context and compare its hue, the shadow of a flower plucked to pieces, with that of an image in a poet of a quite different age, nation, language and poetic character.⁸⁷

[λ] The essay famously mocks and pokes holes in the zealously guarded yet outmoded rules of drama demanding the unities of time and place. Herder viewed the works of **Sophocles** as having graceful form, but only within the boundaries of their unique historical context, as many of their features could not simply be transplanted or grafted on to another culture. Goethe noted that,

The unity of place seemed to me an oppressive prison, the unities of action and time burdensome fetters on our imagination. I leapt free—and knew for the first time that I had hands and feet. And now when I saw what harm the keepers of the rules had done me in their dungeon, and how many free spirits there were still cowering there—my heart would have burst had I not declared war on them had I not tried daily to destroy their prison towers.⁸⁸

[ω] Through Herder—who was forming his unique philosophy of history based on organicist notions of national culture as “flowering and decay”—**Shakespeare** was fashioned into an ideal that Germany could follow to “shake free from French cultural supremacy”.⁸⁹ Herder claimed that Germans were closer to the “northern bard” Shakespeare than the Greeks: “if Sophocles represents and teaches and moves and cultivates *Greeks*, then Shakespeare teaches, moves, and cultivates northern *men!*” (*AES* 298-9).

[η] Herder showed how Shakespeare’s “rich, deep, intense atmosphere” and **moods**—“through the special effects of dark, gloom, storm, heath, spooky castles, cemeteries, ominous birds, and supernatural phenomena as witches and ghosts”—far outshine French notions of time (*Zeitgeist*) and place (*Lokalgeist*).⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Calvin Thomas, *A History of German Literature* (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), 255.

⁸⁷ Qtd. in John D. Baildam, *Paradisal Love: Johann Gottfried Herder and the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 80 n.52. Translated by Baildam.

⁸⁸ Qtd. in David Hill, “The Fragment in the *Sturm und Drang*: Goethe, Coleridge and Herder”, paper presented at Thinking in Fragments: Romanticism and Beyond Conference (University of Birmingham, UK, 16-17 December, 2010. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 10-12 October, 2004), 11; n.18.

⁸⁹ Irmgard Wagner, *Goethe* (New York: Twayne, 1999), 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-7.

In their manifesto, *Of German Character and Art*, Herder would include Goethe's essay 'On German Architecture' alongside 'Shakespeare' and 'Ossian'. In the essay, Goethe celebrates what was formerly derided as **Gothic** as being essentially **German**: "The first point on which I insisted was, it should be called German, and not Gothic; that it should be considered not foreign, but native".⁹¹

[λ] Herder championed **William Shakespeare** as the universal writer who "speaks the language of all ages, peoples, and races of men" and "is the interpreter of Nature in all her tongues" (*AES* 299). He viewed him as a folk poet and genius gifted with the ability to perfectly encapsulate characters and interactions in such a natural manner that these expressions were infused with a mythical and timeless quality. Refashioning **Shaftesbury's** metaphor of the artist as Creator, Shakespeare is described as a poet able to fuse "all the minor details, motives, characters, and situations condensed into the work . . . into a **whole**"—and ascribed God-like powers as he "embraces a hundred scenes of a world event in his arms, orders them with his gaze, and breathes into them the one soul that suffuses and **animates** everything" (*AES* 300).

[μ] Herder sets up a universal correlation and metaphysical analogue between God : Nature :: Creator : Art, which grounds the *Frühromantik* mystical conception of art expressed as **romantic irony**. This understanding based on Herder's animism and organicism transforms works of art into living organisms—a totality and balance of binary forces, subject to the same vitalistic laws as the rest of nature, and endowed with consciousness (*Geist*).

[π] Perhaps most significant is the fact that 'Shakespeare'—together with its complementary work 'Ossian'—attempted to effect an inversion of the scale of values, based on a Eurocentric, ascending ladder of cultures—with France at the top. This program worked in concert with Herder's efforts to promote German nationalism based on a shared culture and common language. The scale he wished to rebalance was the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) valuation of Classical over Ancient, Rational over Intuition, Science over Religion, Material over Spiritual, High-brow Literature over Vernacular, Refinement over Vitality, Occidental over Oriental, etc.

⁹¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Autobiography of Goethe: Truth & Poetry, From My Own Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Oxenford (London: George Bell and Sons, 1897), 441. Hereafter cited 'T&P'.

THREAD (c) NEO-PRIMITIVISM: 'OSSIAN'

[φ] Herder's opening piece of the *Sturm und Drang* manifesto is 'Correspondence about Ossian & the Songs of Ancient Peoples' (1773),⁹² written in the form of a letter to the reader—it was a declaration of the folk aesthetic he would later celebrate and illustrate more fully in his anthologies, *Volkslieder* (1778-9). In 'Ossian' Herder equated refinement with a loss of vitality, or sterility—and touted the superiority of the vernacular and oral traditions:

The more primitive, i.e. the more vivacious and uninhibited a nation is, . . . the more primitively, vivaciously, freely, sensually, lyrically active must its songs be, if indeed it has songs! The more removed the nation is from artificial scholarly thing, language and letters, the less should its songs be prepared for paper, and its dead letters used as verses.⁹³

With his essay 'Ossian', Herder shifts the aesthetics of poetry away from some concrete "ideal of perfection" towards "authenticity and closeness to the life and expressions of the (simple) people as revelations of God's own nature".⁹⁴

[v] In *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782–83), Herder's meta-persona Euthyphron responds to Alciphron's characterization of Hebrew as a "poor and barbarous" language by declaring the most superior language is the one most poetical and perfect—he identifies "action, imagery, passion, musick, rhythm" as the most essential attributes in poetry (*HEB1* 25, 27). He argues that "the languages of people but partially cultivated may have this character in a high degree, and are in fact in this particular superior to many of the too refined modern languages"—citing the Celts and earliest Greeks as proof of this fact: "I need not remind you among what people Ossian, or at what period even the Grecian Homer sang" (*HEB1* 27).

[ρ] Herder idealizes the "natural directness" and "authentic spontaneity" of primitive modes of communication—the "phrase '*Sprünge und Würfe*' (leaps and gaps and sudden transitions)" becomes the key defining phrase of the writing of the *Sturm und Drang*.⁹⁵ Uwe Böker identifies the departure from

⁹² The only English translation that retains Herder's numerous poetic and musical samples is Bohlman's anthology on Herder's writing on music: *Johann Gottfried Herder, "Correspondence about Ossian & the Songs of Ancient Peoples"*, in *Song Loves the Masses*, trans. and ed. Philip V. Bohlman (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 140-167.

⁹³ Qtd. in Baildam, 82-3 n. 56. Translation by author.

⁹⁴ Sandra Richter, *A History of Poetics*, 78.

⁹⁵ Hill, "The Fragment in the *Sturm und Drang*", 10. Emphasis added.

“learnable rules”—and the “irregular” and “asyndetic” ‘*Sprünge und Würfe*’—as defining features of the folk-song and ballad tradition.⁹⁶ Of course, these are emblematic features Herder tried to incorporate into his own writings.

[τ] In *Volkslieder, Stimmen der Völker*, Herder looks to the communal function of folksongs—where poetry and music work in tandem—to bind primitive child-like peoples together in **Sympathy**:

There can be no question that poesy, and especially song, were originally folklike, in other words light and easy, formed from the conditions and the language of the masses, just as in the richness and fullness of nature, Song loves the masses, it loves to take shape from the common voice of the multitude . . . (*SNG* 50)

[σ] Herder links the Ancient concept of *Daemon* with modern notions of genius, calling it “this distinctive gift from heaven, spirit, genius. A spirit born with us, δαίμων, [*daimon*] *vis animi divini*or”.⁹⁷ Angus Nicholls views Herder’s notion of genius and the daemonic as being linked to his transformation and application of Spinoza’s notions to the “realm of culture”: “For Herder the *Dämon* represents that aspect of humanity through which the pantheistic *Kräfte* of nature come to expression.”⁹⁸ Like Shakespeare, Ossian came to embody “the poet of nature, a kind of conduit or medium” that voiced this *Kräfte* into an “expression of the natural, the organic, and the provincial . . .”⁹⁹ Herder’s program to foster a unified cultural identity for the German people viewed *Volkspoesie* and folksongs as essential. It did not matter that **Ossian** and **Shakespeare** were not German, as his concept of *Volksliteratur* held that folk poetry was “created inside a collective tradition that is open to stimulation from different cultures”; his program looked to and drew from various oral traditions and even works of more modern origin (by Shakespeare and Goethe), by “emphasizing their common origins in a *living* and vivid culture”.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Qtd. in Baildam, 84-5 n. 59.

⁹⁷ Qtd. in Angus Nicholls, 98.

⁹⁸ Angus Nicholls, 98; 105.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰⁰ Fabian Lampart, “The Turn to History and the *Volk*: Brentano, Arnim, and the Grimm Brothers”, in *The Camden House History of German Literature*, vol. 8, *The Literature of German Romanticism*, ed. Dennis F. Mahoney (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 171. Italics added.

[5,] The *Frühromantiker* were receptive to Herder’s recalibration of the *Aufklärung* scale of values—and many of them responded enthusiastically to his aesthetic program that celebrated primitive, vernacular, and spiritual traditions—especially those transmitted through Goethe’s works. Ceserani and Zanotti provide a list of devices utilized in service of **romantic irony**—various fragmentary structures “that hinder any type of linear narration”—adopted with conscious awareness that “they were retrieving old narrative techniques”:

- the incompleteness or the abrupt ending;
- the extensive use of digressive devices (which can be narrative, lyrical, ironic, essayistic, etc.);
- multiplication of narrative voices or the extensive use of the tale within the tale;
- the insertion of diverse textual material (quotations, poems, lyrical prose, diaries, letters),
- or the complete intermixture of genres (including the fusion of poetry and prose);
- the meta-literary textual dimension (conceived as the frequent act of consciously underlining the compositional devices or the materiality of the text, with the effect of turning the reader away from following the narrative plot).¹⁰¹

To this list, we shall also add **indirection**—the ancient mode of narration communicated through suggestion, hints, and ambiguity—“invoking the transitory presence of an infinite grasped only in shadows and reflections”.¹⁰²

These literary devices and experimental techniques would be taken up by subsequent writers in Russia, France, and even modernists of the twentieth century. **Romantic irony** becomes transformed into what Pillai describes as “**a kind of aestheticization of the Heraclitean flux**” incorporating “critical distance” with “the paradoxes intrinsic to language and meaning”—reshaped into **ambiguity, tension, paradox, and depersonalization** for the “new criticism” movements in Britain and America, and reconfigured as **defamiliarization** (*ostranenie*) and the **carnivaliesque** in Russian formalism.¹⁰³ We shall see that the wide spectrum of modernist devices, still retain many of its original German characteristics just below the surface, along with the deeply-rooted stratagem of wedding aesthetics with mysticism.

¹⁰¹ Remo Ceserani, and Paolo Zanotti, “The Fragment as Structuring Force”, in *Romantic Prose Fiction*, eds. Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, and Bernard Dieterle, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2008): 463.

¹⁰² McNiece, 115.

¹⁰³ Johann Pillai, “Irony, Romantic” in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, vol. 1, 564-5. This is one of the key arguments that provided the seed for my thesis, further explored in **Chapter 2ö, Section II : Aesthetic Devices & Strategies**, and elaborated in subsequent chapters.

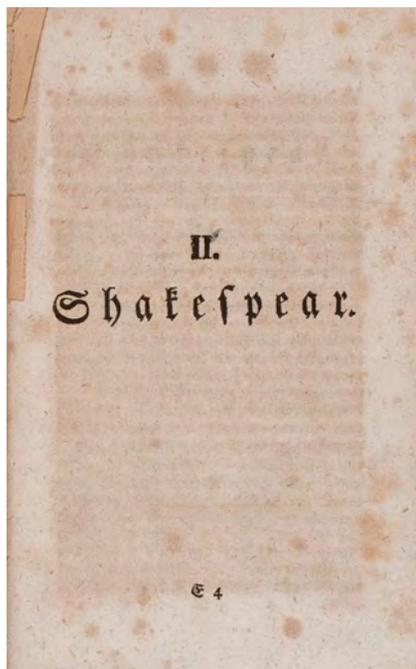
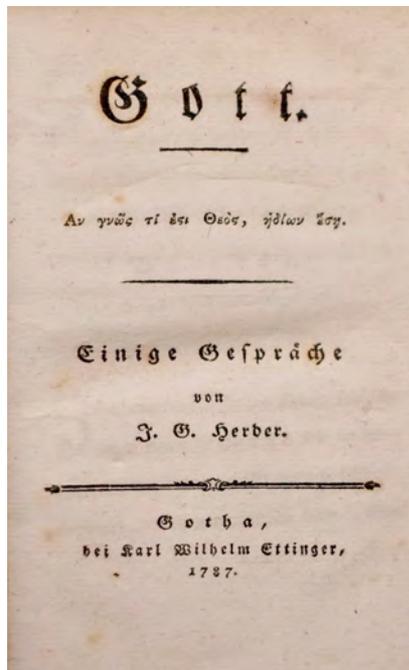


Image B4. Title Pages [Top Left]: Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Gott* (Gotha: Karl Wilhelm Oettinger, 1787), 3. [Top Right & Bottom]: Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst* (Hamburg, 1773, Textarchiv, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften), Bilder 3, 5, 75. http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/herder_artundkunst_1773.

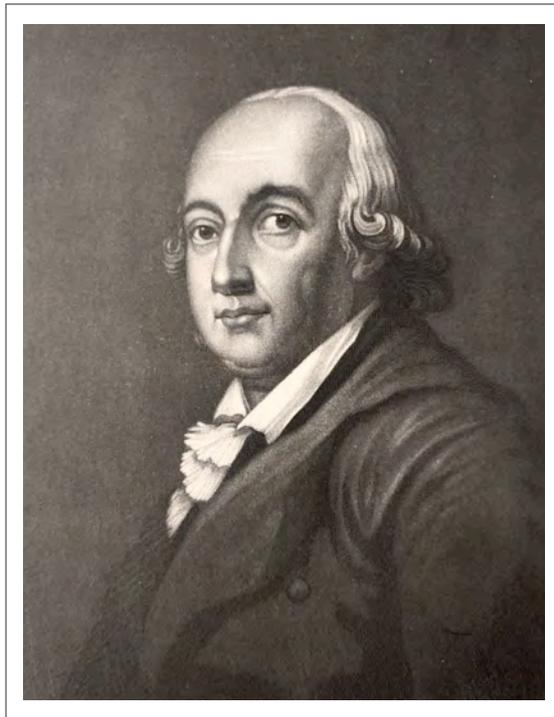


Image B5. Portrait of Johann Gottfried von Herder (Aug. 25, 1744 – Dec. 18, 1803). Engraver Unknown. Photograph of page from F. H. Hedge, *Prose Writers of Germany* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1870).



A FOREST OF CORRESPONDENCE I

It may certainly be true that Jean Toomer and his associates in the Seven Arts circle were not familiar with Herder in the 1910s and 1920s—even though T. Churchill’s English translation of *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* was published in 1800 and Walt Whitman mentions Herder in passing in ‘**A Backward Glance O’er Travel’d Roads**’ (1888).¹⁰⁴ This spiritual ancestor would remain obscured to most nativist American writers until 1942, when Constance Rourke connected some of the dots in her book, *The Roots of American Culture*; however, a vast spectrum of Herderian seeds had already taken root long before and were interwoven into the American fabric unbeknownst to these young avant-gardes trying to initiate a rebirth of art. The use of various amaranthine organic metaphors was for them a perennial favorite—a pattern they learned from their paragon Whitman, who repeatedly relied upon this image throughout *Leaves of Grass*. However, the revitalization and resurgence of this universal and ancient trope into a more pliable modern form began in Germany—and without question an innovation popularized by **J. G. Herder**. By the time Toomer started using the metaphor it was commonplace in America and in danger of turning into parody. Although written with the best intentions, Brooks likely regretted the following awkward lines: “Whitman was himself a great vegetable of a man, all of a piece in roots, flavor, substantiality, and succulence, well-ripened into sunshine” (*AGE* 112). More embarrassing for these Neo-romantic rebels, perhaps, is the fact that this organic metaphor was so imbedded into the *Zeitgeist* and establishment that even President Wilson could not help but draw from this same well . . .¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ There have been various sources available on Herder and his philosophy throughout the 19th Century (including Henry Wood Nevinson’s biography and Goethe’s autobiography), but perhaps more contemporary to this circle was Martin Schültz’s series of articles in *Modern Philology* titled “The Fundamental Ideas in Herder’s Thought (I-V)” spread over six issues from June 1920 through November 1923. See **Bibliography**.

¹⁰⁵ As Victoria Kingham points out: “a speech by then president Woodrow Wilson (reprinted in his 1913 collection *The New Freedom*) refers to the ‘utility, the vitality, the fruitage of life’ that comes ‘like the natural growth of a great tree, from the soil’. He spoke (and wrote) of the ‘constant rise of the sap from the bottom’ of society, and of ‘nourishing stalk deep-planted in the common soil’” etc. Victoria Kingham, “Audacious Modernity”: *The Seven Arts* (1916-17); *The Soil* (1916-17); and *The Trend* (1911-15)” in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. 2, eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 407.

Our venture into this delineated space in each chapter marked '*A Forest of Correspondence*' is to observe and discuss the various organic tropes Herder and Toomer relied upon to accurately express the world as they saw it. The numerous trees planted in this epicenter or liminal garden between each of the two chapter halves addressing the expansive [α] and granular [β], is not meant to show some specific one to one correspondence but rather to bring central concepts and beliefs to the fore to reveal a shared canopy of ideas. It is a quiet spot where we can become better acquainted with extended selections from both writers, as each subsequent chapter will get increasingly crowded taking on a new focus covering additional writers in depth. The Herderian selections will augment and demonstrate the points made in the [α] expansive section in more detail, and further demonstrate his unconventional yet poetic style. These middle sections will allow us to pursue a separate line of enquiry that transcends the borders of each chapter, as each of the examples presented will accrue with every subsequent chapter and hopefully develop into an interconnected forest that will organically manifest and bolster the individual claims made along the way.

[**HERDERIAN FLORA 1**] : This selection is from *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1784–91; *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*). The organicism represented through various metaphors is not simply an instructional device for Herder; his sincere belief was that plants and animals shared the same pattern of development, as did all living creatures as Parts of the Whole. Herder's philosophy draws from Platonic foundations where the universe itself—the sum of creation—is the *Ur-organism* composite, animated by a Soul; and in his hierarchy of beings, all sub-organisms [the Many] draw from this blueprint [of the One] and are likewise animated and formed.

It is obvious that human life, as far as it is vegetation, has the fate of plants. As these, so man and animals are produced from seed which, too, like the germ of a future tree, requires a matrix. Plantlike, its first form is developed in the womb, and out of it, does not the structure of our fibers, in their first buds and powers, nearly resemble that of the fibers of the sensitive plant? Our ages, too, are the ages of a plant: we spring up, grow, bloom, wither, and die. [. . .] As long as man is growing and the sap rises in him, how spacious and pleasant the world seems to him! He stretches out his branches and fancies his head will reach the heavens. Thus Nature entices

him forward in life until with eager powers and unwearied exertion he has acquired all the capacity she wished to call forth in him on that field, or in that garden in which he had been planted by her hand. After he has accomplished her purpose she gradually abandons him. In the bloom of spring and of our youth, with what riches does nature everywhere abound! Man believes this world of flowers will produce the seeds of a new creation, yet a few months and how changed the scene! Almost all the flowers are gone and a few unripe fruits succeed. The tree labors to bring these to maturity, and immediately the leaves fade. He sheds his withered locks on the beloved children that have left him; leafless he stands, the storm robs him of his dried branches until at length he falls to the ground and resigns the little phlogiston¹⁰⁶ he contains to the soul of Nature.

Is it otherwise with man considered as a plant? What vast hopes, prospects, and motives of action vividly or obscurely fill his youthful mind! In everything he confides, and while he confides he succeeds, for success is the spouse of youth. In a few years all around him is changed, merely because he is no longer the same. [. . .] In the eye of a superior being, man's actions upon Earth may appear just as important, certainly at least as determinate and circumscribed, as the actions and enterprises of a tree. He develops all he can develop, and makes himself master of all that it is in his power to possess. He puts forth buds and germs, produces fruits, and sows young trees, but never quits he the place which Nature has appointed him to occupy; never can he acquire a single power which Nature has not planted in him. (*MAN* 28)



[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 1**] : The first image of Jean Toomer that we examine comes from a fragment in his “Poetry” Notebook, most likely written around 1920-21, which portrays the artist as a stalk that grows into an “omnivorous” tree that lives off his own works:

Nothing is. All life is becoming. Art is the highest expression, manifestation, of this process. An artist creates; he grows. He is a stalk, thrusting ever upward, and his works are the leaves and branches which he puts out. There is no final flower. Each work, perfected for its level, withers, dries, and flutters to the ground. It has relinquished value in itself. The soil absorbs it. Roots of the artist draw fresh sustenance [sic] because it has decayed. True artists may have a poignant joy in old works, but until life becomes a dead thing with them, their **extacy** [sic] and **power** lie in the contemplating, in the creating of an ever profounder life. These creations are never outside themselves. No one absorbs a work like its creator. It is the eternal mystery, that life grows while feeding on itself. Of all, the artist is the most omnivorous. He is incarnate mystery. [“**POE**” II:2; emphasis added]

¹⁰⁶ See **Glossary**.

Herder's reliance on and repeated variations of this **pattern of organic development** manifests time and time again in all of his writings—it is the trope he turns to most often.¹⁰⁷ Herder often uses this analogy **figuratively** and **poetically**, however, considering his mystical organicist conception of the universe it could be argued that in many instances there is a literal component as well. With each repeated usage, this **symbolic framework** and the inter-relationships he draws out become part of a sophisticated philosophical lexicon and poetology, where each new form presents another layer of meaning that draws on and builds upon previous connections made. A similar case can be made for instances of recurrent symbolic images found throughout Jean Toomer's CANE-era writings (like his use of leaves and flowers to approximate skin color).

Most interesting to note is how beneath each of instance of Jean Toomer's plant and tree symbol is an overlap with a Herderian innovation or foundation. Herder points out that Man is essentially the same as flora, "He puts forth buds and germs, produces fruits, and sows young trees"; and Toomer's quote is basically a variation of Herderian ideas, which also incorporates his animistic notions that were reformulated by the *Frühromantiker*: that artistic creations are endowed with consciousness or a soul (*Geist*). This is supported by the following curious fragment from Toomer's poetry notebook:

The creative critic slips repeatedly from his art object into himself, and from himself into his art object. The **transfer of consciousness** sometimes becomes so rapid that it seem as though he were sounding the two existences **simultaneously**. [“POE” II:8 ; Emphasis added]

Toomer's view of the process of 'creative criticism' is very similar to Herder's 'creative imagination' related to empathy or **Sympathy**—As Nowak explains:

In empathy, an object is animated like the living body of the viewer. The important role of the imagination in the *Einfühlung* theory brings it close to aesthetics and art. According to Vischer, in a work of art and thanks to artistic imagination **the subject and the object merge**. **Transferring** artistic vision onto a haptic impression allowed viewers to enter into the picture.¹⁰⁸

One 'feels into' the mind of the '*artificial* organism' much like Universal Sympathy in primitive shamanism merges with spirits of animals and nature.

¹⁰⁷ Walter Moser's study of Herder's semantic "metaphoric fields" in *Ideen* finds "Organic structure and growth (especially of plants)" to top the list. See Hans Adler, "Herder's Style", 338.

¹⁰⁸ Nowak, 305. Emphasis added.

Toomer's depiction of the artist as a carnivorous plant drawing sustenance from its creations is reminiscent of **Chronos** devouring his own children sired with Rhea; but it also points to the artist valuing the spiritual over the material: the dynamic process of creation—**becoming**—is the sole concern of the artist. The resulting material artifact becomes dead to his creator after it serves its purpose as it “withers, dries, and flutters to the ground”, although it is absorbed by the soil to continue providing sustenance to all (including the tree).

The phrase “All life is becoming”—representing life as flux—is core to Plotinian philosophy and significant because the distinction between **becoming** and **being** is a central concern in **Platonism**; this corresponds to Herder's worldview,¹⁰⁹ which denies the concept of death, viewing “decay, nourishment, or pulverization . . . [as] the transition to a new, young, organic whole” instead (*GOD* 138). The usage of terms “ecstasy” and “power” in this early fragment written when Toomer was merely twenty-six years old, makes it quite clear how reliant the author's view of artistic creation is on romantic and mystical conceptions—and the fragment's relevance to our overall discussion becomes evident when we substitute the original German ‘*Werden*’,¹¹⁰ ‘*Ekstase*’, and ‘*Kraft*’ for these terms. I do not wish to force this interpretation, but we shall collect and note each of these points of intersect with our mooring threads found in each fragment and poetic device, and by the end—after contextualizing the overlap between **Novalis** and **Herder**—I believe the case will make itself, as it becomes clear each node and shared idea is not coincidental but following an identical pattern and design, without any major deviations.

For the remaining moments spent in our liminal forest of ideas before moving onto [**6**], I would like us to consider the **Seven Arts** circle's view of art, and its relationship to the poet and the *Noumenal* realm. Toomer's mentor **Waldo Frank** provides an understanding of the relationship between art and ecstasy, and also links this to several philosophical and aesthetic concepts we have been discussing in our forest and in [**ǻ**]:

¹⁰⁹ Herder sees history “as a dialectical process between being and becoming, as the progressive revelation and realisation of the divine in humankind, in individual cultural epochs and stages of national genesis.” John A. McCarthy, “Philosophy and Literature in the German Enlightenment”, in *Philosophy and German Literature 1700-1990*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47.

¹¹⁰ For context about Leibniz's formulation of his Principle of **Being**, see Glossary, ‘*Werden*’.

If the work of art is, as we have ascertained, a **constructed organism** of natural events, of their symbols and our perception of them, through which we experience the **ecstasy** of union; and if this union of events in space and time is prehended within the enjoyer's self as beyond space and time, **art may be called a kind of revelation of the cosmos**. And the man who creates it, the artist, although he has no conscious term for what he does (or a false one), is a self in which the cosmic dimension may be said to rule, at least while he is creating.¹¹¹

Frank's '**For a Declaration of War**' was first printed in Munson's magazine, *Secession* (1924), then included in his collection of essays, *Salvos* (1924). Among these enumerated declarations one finds **Waldo Frank** lamenting that Science and Positivism have "ignored the intuitions of the poets and the statement of philosophers who had declared in a hundred tongues and in a hundred ways the disability of positive logic to enter the domain of the **noumenal**".¹¹² Frank denigrates "art which adheres to the formed phenomena of intellect and sense [as] weak, retroactive, atavistic art" (*SAL* 26-7). The importance of experimental techniques and literary devices is made evident in Frank's declarations that "*The language that expresses Mystery is Art* . . . not to subserve the intellectually accepted forms of life: but to conquer new forms of life and to bring them within the reach of the intellect. Art is the language which expresses vision of **being** that has not yet been conventionalized into simple words and concepts" (*SAL* 23; 25-26; emphasis added). The definition of religion and beauty he gives is steeped in the same Neo-Platonic mysticism as the Germans:

Religion in its true sense is the experience of being bound together in some universal principle related to our personal experience: *i.e.*, it is the experience of wholeness, of holiness and of health. The experience of beauty is one of harmony between a subject and an object. . . .The great work of art invests the individual with the **ecstasy** of participation in the **Whole**. This function is not kin to the religious, it is one with it. The great primal artists were creators, prophets and sustainers of religion. (*SAL* 16-17; emphasis added)

Schelling's *The Ages of the World* (1811) portrays both creation and **becoming** as the same "process of revelation of the inner essence of things, that was originally revealed in God's Being, but then seems to have been buried in the dark depths of beings."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Waldo Frank, *The Rediscovery of Man* (New York: George Braziller, 1958), 322. Emphasis added.

¹¹² Waldo Frank, *Salvos* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1924), 22. Hereafter cited as '*SAL*'.

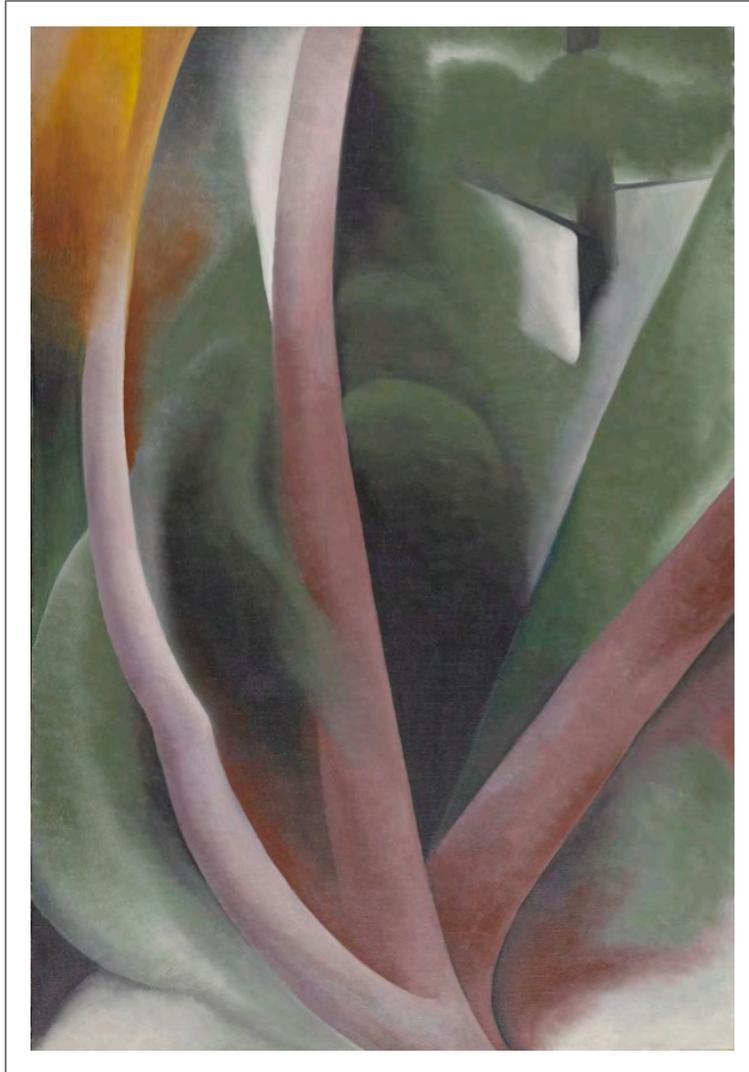
¹¹³ Kyriaki Goudeli, *Challenges to German Idealism: Schelling, Fichte and Kant* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 114-116. Goudeli's interpretation is based on Heidegger's reading.





Image B6. Portrait of Jean Toomer (Dec. 26, 1894 – Mar. 30, 1967). JTP, Box 65, Folder 1493. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Image B7. Georgia wrote to Toomer about her “surrogate portrait”:
“there is a painting I made from something of you the first time you were
here.” Werner Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
Press, 2002), 109. © Georgia O’Keeffe Museum / SACK, Seoul, 2019.



Georgia O’Keeffe
Birch and Pine Trees-Pink, 1925
Oil on canvas
36 in. x 22 in. (91.44 cm x 55.88 cm)
Colby College Museum of Art
The Lunder Collection
Accession Number: 2013.220

[6]: JEAN TOOMER'S FRAGMENTARY CORPUS

As one progresses so much becomes dispensable—
much appears in a different light—so that I should not
have wished to work on a single point before the
exposition of the great, *all-transforming idea*.
That which is imperfect appears most tolerably as a
fragment—and thus this form of communication is to be
recommended above that which as a whole is not yet
finished—and yet has single noteworthy opinions to offer.
— Novalis, §55 *Logological Fragments II*¹¹⁴

Before presenting representative fragments from **Jean Toomer's** various notebooks and their links to Herderian innovations, a brief overview of the fragmentary form as a genre will provide valuable context. The fragment was one of the preferred forms of the *Sturm und Drang*—Herder, Goethe, and Schiller—and later utilized and developed by *Frühromantiker* like **Jean Paul** and those associated with the *Athenaeum* in Jena, most notably **Friedrich Schlegel** and **Novalis**. Herder rejected the strict linear rationality of enlightenment discourse in favor of a “curved”, elliptical, and antithetical method creating a “protean, multifaceted, and open-ended” form that juxtaposes “sensual, rational, and analogical patterns of arguments”.¹¹⁵ Herder used this mode or genre exclusively for his early critical writings ‘**Fragments on Recent German Literature**’ (1767–68) published anonymously in four groups or collections of various fragments.

Herder, who thought it “a weakness of human nature that we wish always to construct a system,” perfected a style that is essayistic, exclamatory, and digressive; he wrote quickly, sometimes clumsily, but always avoiding the appearance of a conventional scholarly work. Not for nothing did he call his first major work *Fragments*; the title of his second, *Critical Forests*, is no less apt.¹¹⁶

Herder's style takes inspiration from Hamann's fragmentary organization in his *Diary of a Christian: 'Crumbs'* (1758),¹¹⁷ and perhaps also from **Gotthold**

¹¹⁴ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. & trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 199), 81. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*NOV*’.

¹¹⁵ Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges, eds. from their Introduction to Johann Gottfried Herder, *Selected Early Works, 1764-1767* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 5-6.

¹¹⁶ Gregory Moore, ed., Introduction to Herder's *Selected Writings on Aesthetics (AES 6)*.

¹¹⁷ See Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 152. Behler cites Hamann's text as a precursor and model for Schlegel's fragments.

Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766), which the author described as “unordered notes”.¹¹⁸ Herder directly comments upon the unfinished nature of *Laocoön* in his *Fragmente* to counter objections to the fragmented form of his collection:

There are some who did not want to judge a fragment, because it is not yet a whole! Wonderful! Can I not judge as much about the spirit of the parts, about each poetic evocation within them, as I can judge about a whole, without needing to be a prophet, or doing injustice to the author?¹¹⁹

Furthermore, the fragment is *the* mode of writing often evident in various ancient texts that Herder came to admire under Hamann's guidance—like the works of **Plato**, the **Old Testament**, and the sacred writings of **India**. The fragment, for **Friedrich Schlegel**, was viewed as both a distinct philosophical and literary genre but also as a feature shared by various modes of writing:

Schlegel also deemed the work of authors as diverse as Goethe, Diderot, Sterne, Cervantes, Leibniz and Plato as “fragmentary.” . . . he writes that “[a] fragment, like a miniature work of art, must be wholly isolated from the surrounding world and complete in itself like a hedgehog [*Igel*].” But a fragment is also a fragment, i.e. it is incomplete by design, overtly elliptical and suggesting various interpretations.¹²⁰

F. Schlegel's various fragments reveal his intricate understanding of this genre and altering of the form to a more compressed style—closer to classical “literary forms such as the epigram, the maxim, the sentence, the pensée”¹²¹—which he along with **Novalis** would help fine-tune and popularize into a mainstay of German romantic philosophical and aesthetic discourse. Here are the younger Schlegel's theories as recorded in his *Athenaeum Fragmente*:

[§ 22]: A project is the subjective embryo of a developing object. . . . projects—which one might call fragments of the future—is distinguishable from the feeling for fragments of the past only by its direction: progressive in the former, regressive in the latter. What is essential is to be able to idealize and realize objects immediately and simultaneously: to complete them and in part carry them out within oneself. Since transcendental is precisely whatever relates to the joining or separating of the ideal and the real, one might very well say that the feeling for fragments and projects is the transcendental element of the historical spirit. (*FRS* 164).

¹¹⁸ Gregory Moore, *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, 6.

¹¹⁹ Menze and Menges, 188. From Herder's ‘Second Collection of Fragments: On Recent German Literature’ (1767–68).

¹²⁰ Fred Rush, “Irony and Romantic Subjectivity”, in *Philosophical Romanticism*, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (London: Routledge, 2006), 183.

¹²¹ Remo Ceserani and Paolo Zanotti, Remo 457; 459–60.

[§ 24]: Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written. (*FRS* 164)

[§ 77]: A dialogue is a chain or garland of fragments. An exchange of letters is a dialogue on a larger scale, and memoirs constitute a system of fragments. But as yet no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and content, simultaneously completely subjective and individual, and completely objective and like a necessary part in a system of all the sciences. (*FRS* 170).

[§ 259]: **A.** You say that fragments are the real form of universal philosophy. The form is irrelevant. But what can such fragments do and be for the greatest and most serious concern of humanity, for the perfection of knowledge?
B. Nothing but a Lessingean salt against spiritual sloth . . . (*FRS* 199).

Schlegel compared fragments to the hedgehog (*Igel*), meaning each is a complete **Whole** in itself (like each quill), yet only a **Part** of the greater organism. Johann Pillai views each fragment as “a metonymy for the totalization of the collection as a whole, a system” where “spaces or gaps . . . represent the ironic disjunction between the totality of meaning and the fragmentation of its expression in language”.¹²²

This fragmentary style allowing Herder to jump from idea to idea and image to image is a characteristic trait running through all his works. One of the best definitions of Herder's own style and the *Fragmente* genre as a whole comes from the conclusion to his second group of ‘**Fragments on Recent German Literature**’:

I repeat once more: let one collect the preceding fragments, a language full of images and passions, idioms and pleonasms, word transformations and stubborn idiosyncrasy, which sang and gestured, painted for eye and ear. What is this language, when a little art comes on top? Nothing other and nothing better than a poetic language. (*PHL* 64)

J. G. Robertson remarks that the totality of Herder's oeuvre of “writings can be described as at best only a collection of fragments . . .”; however, he also notes that there is a certain grand design and theme allowing each text to interlock and contribute towards this overarching aim: “. . . but a certain plan is behind them all; they are fragments of one great work on the evolution of mankind.”¹²³ In his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1784–91), Herder's view of the world is one where all individual identities and their

¹²² Pillai, 565.

¹²³ Robertson, *A History of German Literature*, 295.

actions are separate threads that require religion to provide the mystic force to bind all separate elements into a whole pattern that has meaning.¹²⁴

All things upon Earth are fragments, and shall they remain forever and ever imperfect fragments, and the human race a group of shadows perplexing themselves with vain dreams? Here has religion knit together all the wants and hopes of mankind into *faith*, and woven an *immortal* crown for humanity. (*MAN* 91; italics original)

I would like to suggest the same for the body of work that make up Jean Toomer's *CANE*-era writings (1919-1923). The "Memorandum" **Pocketbook** and the "Poetry" **Notebook**, as well as the various other **Loose-Leaf Notes** are collections of fragments; in addition, we also need to recognize that the modernist short-story cycle sub-class of literary fiction that includes *CANE*, is also part and parcel of this *Fragmente* genre. The fragment incorporates a poetic and indirect mode that relies on *Poiesis* and imagination to fuse all the disjointed points and arcs of various perspectives into a circle that gestures towards some manifold "inward" essence or meaning at its center.

TOOMER'S NOTEBOOKS IN BRIEF

The lost 'holy grail' of Toomer resources would have been the complete early drafts of every one of *CANE*'s pieces with their evolving revisions and additions—which *do not* exist. After that initial disappointment, one may then conclude after a cursory glance that this collection of fragments is too sparse, too eclectic, and of questionable value. However, after reading through all the fragments several times, one is struck by just how much these sketches, notes, and jottings actually *do* reveal about the author and the development of our central text. The symbols, sketches, and motifs specifically related to *CANE* will be covered in subsequent chapters, but here we need to put these fragments under our Herderian prism lens to identify those revealing mystical, aesthetic, and folk themes that intersect with our three mooring threads. We will first examine general connections to **Plato** and **Plotinus**, and then consider all fragments looking for a distinctly Herderian imprint, as spelled out and enumerated in [1ã]. One final word: we will also consider those *CANE*-era essays previously published in Robert B. Jones's *Jean Toomer: Selected Essays and Literary Criticism* (1996) as they are concurrent to and part of this collection.

¹²⁴ This function is the same as that ascribed to folksong and poetry in binding a *Volk* together.

When we examine Jean Toomer's collection of early fragments, we can divide the notes roughly into the following seven categories (with brief examples given):

- |1|: **Poems of Various Styles & Length, Poetic Phrases**

["MEM" I:14]: Moon blossom bending
downward.

["MEM" I:7]: I believe that it was Mallarmé
Who sang of Simone, Simone

- |2|: **Aphorisms or Philosophical/Aesthetic Musings**

["LLN" III:5]: Only he whose mental eye is blind, can see no deeper
than the surface.

["LLN" III:8]: The creative critic slips repeatedly from his art object
into himself,

- |3|: **Observations about the 'Negro Volk' or Life in General**

["POE" II:24] The Negro slave, ill-housed and fed . . .

- |4|: **Phrases from the Black Vernacular or Dialogues**

["POE" II:38]: I could take my rithmetic and
work from marnin till night
an never git tired. I loves it.
Better in rithmetic than anythin else.

["POE" II:36]: "Your condescension is childish."
"What do you mean?"
"Just what I say. To elaborate: . . ."

- |5|: **Literary Strategies, Ideas for Stories, or Story Fragments**

["POE" II:9]: Method — the physical is to be brought into sharp
relief whenever a spiritual force, aborting, distorts it.

["LLN" III:17]: A man stands in a barn door — looks down into the
yard. Thinks of jumping off. . . .

["LLN" III:5]: Upon the thin veneer of asphalt, roots the modern
industrial civilization. Skyscrapers sink down into stone

- |6|: **Longer Essayistic Writings on Authors/Criticism/Literary Topics**

["POE" II:26]: Whitman's gesture included rather than designated
mediocrity. . . .

- |7|: **Longer Essayistic Writings on Philosophical/Religious/Mystical Topics**

["LLN" III:26]: We now witness, in a few, the synthesis of the new
consciousness. . . .

JEAN TOOMER & (NEO)PLATONIC THOUGHT

The first question that we need to answer is: *Was Jean Toomer directly acquainted with the writings of Plato and Plotinus?* There is ample evidence that suggests Toomer held a special regard for **Plato** and, more importantly, his notes and letters show a deep affinity for and an influence of Neo-Platonic ideas. An unpublished letter from **Hart Crane** makes it clear that Plato and the ideas circumscribed within the larger Platonist tradition was a subject Jean Toomer was greatly devoted to, and that fact was well-known amongst his colleagues and associates: “I have a book to recommend to you *as successive to your direct study of Plato*: Pater’s ‘Plato and Platonism’, than which no other book of Pater’s is better and which I think is one of the best experiences I have ever had” (JTP Box 1, Folder 36; italics added). Toomer’s long-standing reverence for Plato is also evident in his unfinished essay written in response to **Richard Adlington’s** 1920 *Dial* piece, ‘**The Art of Poetry**’:

We of the Western world, whose thoughts have been shaped and moulded by the poets **from Plato (Goethe, Ibsen, etc.) to Whitman** suddenly roll on our backs with our face towards China and the Chinese. Charmed by their pictorial, suggestive loveliness we no longer hear the mighty voices of the past. . . . [Adlington] and similar ones whose eyes are so charmed and fascinated by the gem, by its outward appearance, by its external form, that the spirit behind the gem is not perceived. [“POE” II: 40; emphasis added]

In this early attempt at literary criticism, Toomer includes Plato amongst his perennial heroes Goethe and Whitman, while also consciously identifying him as a “poet”. We could say that the Plato of Jean’s mind was not the strict authoritarian who banished all poets in *The Republic*, but rather the creator of divinely inspired myths and ecstatic bard of *Ion*. The young writer’s casting of Plato in this light mirrors the views of many Neo-Platonists like **William Inge**:

Plato was not a mere professor of philosophy . . . He was a poet and prophet. . . . The true Platonist is he who sees the invisible, and knows that the visible is its true shadow. The man Plato was of course many things besides a poet of Divine beauty . . .¹²⁵

Toomer’s ‘Adolescent Notes’ [“LLN” III:1-12] also show the influence of pantheistic mysticism prominent in Goethe and Whitman, authors he lists in his biographical notes as reading in 1919, which coincides with his beginnings as a writer. These earliest notes on record reveal that his attraction to Plotinian mysticism is longstanding and constant:

¹²⁵ Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. 1, 74.

The difference between similars is a matter of fine distinction. It challenges the best of our poets and philosophers. The higher faculties of intuition and reason are challenged. A sense of the *all pervading mystery* and the dignity of man is a concomitant [sic] of its discovery; it is ennobling. The discernment of this difference but assures one of *the essential unity underlying all*. It makes a God of man while at the same time *revealing the diversity in everything*. [“LLN” III: 1, italics added]

Toomer’s familiarity and preoccupation with Platonic ideas is also discernible in his writings and notes concurrent with when *CANE* was published. In his note dated October 25 1923, Toomer discusses memory and consciousness in relation to time and space using Platonic language that we find in *Parmenides* and other philosophical dialogues, as well as the *Enneads*:¹²⁶

The One and the Many, within man, within the universe, exist in pure harmony, in ultimate reconciliation. What this harmony is, and what the method of reconciliation, furnish the object and the substance of philosophy. [“LLN” III:31; Italics added]

Both fragments cited above are but a few examples among many that deal with major tenets of Plotinian mysticism—themes picked up and expanded upon in detail by Herder, Goethe, and the German *Frühromantiker*—which I argue to be at the heart of Toomer’s *Weltanschauung*, well in advance of his introduction to Ouspensky or Gurdjieff.

As a way of closing this discussion of Toomer’s relationship to **Plato** and **Plotinus**, I want to bring attention to two poems in *CANE* that my understanding of have shifted considerably over the years after following these leads and researching Neo-Platonism. The first is ‘**Beehive**’ (C 50) where the lines “Within this black hive to-night / There swarm a million bees” (lines 1-2) alludes to both the city and the collective racial consciousness attained through communion with the *Volksgeist* of the Black folk. The concluding lines: “And I, a drone, / Lying on my back, / Lipping honey, / Getting drunk with silver honey, / Wish that I might fly out past the moon / And curl forever in some far-off farmyard flower” (lines 9-14), seem to be unmistakably inspired by **Plato’s** *Ion*, where Socrates makes the case that poets must be “inspired” and “possessed” to compose “beautiful lyrics” or “sing prophecy”:

¹²⁶ For an in-depth study of the One and Many in Platonism and Neo-Platonism, see Dmitri Nickulin, “The One and the Many in Plotinus”, *Hermes* 126 no. 3 (1998): 326-340.

For of course poets tell us that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey, flying like bees. And what they say is true. For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him. (*PLA* 941-2; 533e-534b)

This would square with Toomer's identification of **Plato** as a poet. The poet-as-bee metaphor also fits in nicely with the author's greater system of symbolic language—using the shades and qualities of organic leaves and flowers to point to the physical attributes or personality of human subjects. Here the bee's relationship to the flower and attraction to its nectar simultaneously represents the male's sexual drive and devotion, while also suggesting the poet's role of extracting essences and morphing what is gathered into golden honey. **Sherwood Anderson** often expressed a similar connection between poets and bees also: "In the fall when I had walked there the ground was covered with ripe pears. A fragrance arose from them. They were covered with bees that crawled over them, drunk, filled with a kind of ecstasy [sic]."¹²⁷

The other poem is 'Prayer', which **Waldo Frank** recommended dropping from **CANE** along with the other poems he viewed as "failures"—'Something is Melting Down in Washington', 'Tell Me', and 'Glaciers of Dusk' (*BM* 103). Although Toomer admitted the piece to be an "imperfect realization" he was adamant about retaining this poem as he felt it was "essential to the spiritual phase of **CANE**" (*BM* 105). The reason he gave Frank was that it was the "only companion piece" to the final poem 'Harvest Song' (*BM* 105), but there may have been a more compelling reason he left unstated. The main images of the poem—the soul, the flesh-eye, and finger—are symbols drawn directly from discussions of the soul in relation to the body in both Plato and Plotinus.¹²⁸ The Parmenidean theme of the relationship of the **Part** to the **Whole** is central to 'Prayer' (*C* 70), with the final lines admitting a failure to disregard and transcend one's material identity in favor of the spiritual collective identification of the *Geist*: "My voice could not carry to you did you dwell in stars, / O Spirits of whom my soul is but a little finger . ." (lines 13-14).

¹²⁷ Sherwood Anderson, *The Triumph of the Egg* (New York: Huebsch, 1921), 193. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'EGG'.

¹²⁸ See Plato's *Republic*, Book VII (*PLA* 1140-1; 523d-525e); Plotinus' *Enneads* III.2.3; IV.2.2; IV.4.19 (*ENN* 163; 257-8; 302).

HERDERIAN FINGERPRINTS & DNA

We will select and group Jean Toomer's fragments into categories by identifying elements bearing a mystical stamp and intersecting with Herder's program. It is under this prism and contextual lens that we try to get at the young writer's underlying meaning and philosophical/aesthetic worldview providing the foundations for **CANE**. These short discussions will provide an overview of Toomer's views regarding these topics, but relevant fragments will be introduced throughout each chapter, especially in each of our **Forest of Correspondence** sections where Herder and Toomer will be isolated and discussed in depth.

• | A | : Aesthetics & the Modern Artist

In his "Poetry" Notebook, Toomer outlines the challenges, methods, and ultimate goals for the modern artist:

The movement which today is directed solely towards the elementary in life seems to have ignored the farther implications of some master. Cézanne perhaps. Great art is formalizing of an experience, of a vision of the core of things, of the essence, one might say of the ultimate reality. This essence exists in a complex no less than in a primitive state of society. Each state imposes itself as a means upon the artist. The imposition upon the art of literature is more definite than that of any other art. Hence, unless the piece of work be a direct lyric, modern reality can only (or perhaps) be conveyed in terms of the contemporary setting. Beneath, and not without, the complexities of thought and human emotion must be revealed the modern essence, which, of course, is similar to the essences of all times. This involves no sacrifice. It does impose an immense burden upon the artist. He must be, while remaining the artist, as manifold and as diverse as his age. It imposes the power of comprehension, of selection, of organization on a scale hitherto unknown upon the direct capacity for aesthetic experience. The purity of a piece of contemporary literature will depend not only upon its simplification but also upon its fusion and balance. [“POE” II: 4]

In this fragment it becomes clear that, for Toomer, great literary works needed to first and foremost reveal the “essence” of the “ultimate” noumenal reality, and he dismisses dealing simply with surfaces as “elementary” concerns of a lesser artist. The modern artist needed to sift through—to comprehend, select, and organize—the vast mountain of works and theories needed to express the psychological “complexities” of modern man and society, to encapsulate the “modern essence” through aesthetic forms. The “purity” or success of a contemporary literary work relies upon “simplification” (essentializing), “fusion” (amalgamation), and “balance” (organic form).¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Cf. Toomer's entry in his "Poetry" notebook discussing "organic form" [“POE” II: 35].

• | **B** | : **Organic Design & the Spiritual in Art**

Toomer's disdain for the purely materialist focus of naturalism and realism is clearly evident in his notes relating to aesthetic:

Most novels are nothing more than intellectual outlines filled with more or less well chosen characters, incidents, descriptions, thoughts, comments, studied [crises] and all such naturalistic baggage. Very seldom does one find a design which is organic to a pervasive creative impulse. In short, most novels are compilations, chronicles, documents, and not art. [“POE” II : 3]

Toomer's apprenticeship, then, is a quest to search for the elements that could serve to formulate his individual style of literary art and create organic forms that could carry the deeper spiritual essences of reality rather than merely the physical. It is a search for new experimental modes of expression that could encompass the complexities of modern existence but also convey the mystery lying underneath. It is a search for materials and forms capable of evoking higher transcendent realities and truths—and elevating his works to the status of art.

• | **C** | : **Consciousness in Relation to Memory, Space & Time:**

Among Jean Toomer's many early notes is one written 25 October 1923, right after *CANE* was published, which contains an interesting observation:

The conscious memory is the instrument of spatial and temporal location. It follows that should this memory be effaced, then consciousness will find itself **released to eternity**. Memory and consciousness would then be identical. And **experience . . .** [and] **all reality** would achieve a definition, not as now by means of attachment, association, incident, but by way of **essence**. [“LLN” III : 31; emphasis added]

The language used in this fragment is unmistakably colored by mystical language of the **Neo-Platonist** tradition, but also touches on Bergsonian themes that would have been in style at this time. Toomer seems to be suggesting that the perspective needed for philosophy and ‘great’ art in relation to ‘reality’ and ‘experience’ is an alternative point of view beyond space and time: an eternal glance *Sub Specie Æternitatis* (with one's conscious “released to eternity”). To identify what is *essential* involves escaping from the constraints of one's individual memories and experiences to embrace a more ‘infinite’ perspective that encompasses all. He continues in the following fragment to illumine what sort of insight this sort of glance might provide:

Thus, in philosophy it would not be remembered that such and such a thing was written at such a time by a stated person. It would be known

whether the statement was (is) true or false. And likewise with poetry. No one would recall that Blake wrote a certain poem. But the poem's beauty or ugliness, truth or falsity etc etc, together with the reason for these, would be evident. ["LLN" III : 31]

The next fragment seems to link back to our discussion in our overview of **Plotinus**, where we listed the different levels of fragmentation that modern life inflicts.¹³⁰ Toomer suggests that the *Volk*, along with artists and philosophers, are not bound by the constraints of historical time: "The consciousness of primitive folk, of great artists and philosophers, [have] no temporal dimension" ["LLN" III : 22]. This belief that primitives, with their childlike innocence, are still one with nature is core to Herderian philosophy. According to Toomer, "great artists and philosophers" are those who have the ability to overcome their split consciousness and achieve a condition similar to pre-rational thinking—or 'primitive mentality'—which does not have a sense of time. In another fragment he takes an unmistakably romantic position that being bound to time is a result of our atomization and fragmentation:

A sense of time arises from an incomplete life. On those planes where existence is complete, where desires achieve an equivalently swift fulfillment, where desires therefore effect their own cancellation erasure, there is no sense of time. ["LLN" III:22]

Overcoming of division and fragmentation—becoming "complete"—not only achieves transcending the sense of time, but also the "cancellation" and "erasure" of individual desires. Echoing **Plotinus**, Toomer seems to suggest that our individual memories and desires are what keep us bound to our physical bodies and to our split condition:

Must it be concluded then that the faculty usually designated memory is an impediment to [real] knowledge? [to an immediate, inclusive consciousness]
And if so, must we of the new slope, set about the effacement of it?
["LLN" III : 31; Toomer's additions in brackets]

Our lower selves prevent us from attaining higher consciousness, and attaining "real" wisdom and truer existence. This last part seems counterintuitive, but perhaps "inclusive consciousness" is the key to understanding the fragment as it can be interpreted as collective consciousness (*Volkgeist*) or the goal of all mysticism: merging with **Divine Intellect**, the **One**. Although Toomer's tone and specific terms used may differ slightly from Herder's, the themes

¹³⁰ See *Plotinus* section [±].

unmistakably draw from Neo-Platonic mysticism. Substituting the German term *Geist* in each instance where Toomer uses “consciousness” is perhaps the best way to sense the affinity of ideas expressed.

• | D | : Herderian Spinozism + Leibniz + Neo-Platonism:

Many fragments show a mystical concept of God, which is infused with language identifiably Neo-Platonic: “God is the universe The universe is God. God is everything or nothing” [“LLN” III:3]. Although this quote evinces a **pantheism**, which seems to be at odds with Herder’s vitalist revision of Spinozism mentioned earlier in this chapter, a later poem fragment shows Toomer’s understanding to be more nuanced, as he places God outside of the material universe by referring to God as “uncreate” and “source”:

Again, O God, I give myself
up to thy direction.

They are lights that need a
blanket-mist to shine the
brightest.

To thee, uncreate, pure beginning,
source!

[“LLN” III:21]

Toomer’s worldview also incorporates a similarly organicist view of a nation or peoples, and a version of Herder’s chain or ladder of beings, with God at the top:

Every world force is moving the mass of people from a simple to a more complex level. [“LLN” III:19]

We also see in Toomer’s fragments a view of reality as a balance of opposing forces—*coincidentia oppositorum*—a constant in Leibniz and Herder’s writings. Not only are the constituent parts of reality conceived as *Kraft*, this vitalistic conception also draws from Herder’s animated understanding of **gravitational forces** in terms of the function of **centrifugal** and **centripetal** movement.

Hence every force is increasing the general chance for degredation [sic], or for ecstasy [sic]. (It takes genius to contain, and alternate between the two. Neither democracy nor any other known power will yield a race of geniuses.) The movement is swift. [“LLN” III:19]

These concepts would coalesce into poetic fragments like the following, written around the time *CANE* was published, September 21, 1923:

Temporal Dimension

Down and Up slopes of consciousness
Rapid disintegration on all planes
of the old slopes.

Swift synthesis on all planes
(now, particularly on the conscious
and intellectual) of the new slope.

Extend manifestation of the **new beauty** when the **opposing material powers check-mate, one the other.**

To this end, the temporal strategic direction/
The end (beginning), timeless, into
eternal **reconciliation.**

["LLN" III:25; emphasis added]

Toomer's mystical conception of the world is a constant we find at every stage of his writings. As mentioned before, even in his earliest notes:

A sense of the all pervading mystery and the dignity of man is a concomitant [sic] of its discovery; it is ennobling. The discernment of this difference but assures one of the essential unity underlying all. It makes a God of man while at the same time revealing the diversity in everything. ["LLN" III:1]

The language he uses—"mystery", "essential unity", and the concept of "unity"-in-"diversity"—are all **Plotinian**, but also part and parcel of the vocabulary expressing the early-German romantic *Weltanschuuang*. The remaining clusters of fragments align and correspond to such a degree with Herder's philosophical program, that they function as identifying markers to help isolate the mysticism behind the totality of Toomer's aesthetics to be of the Herderian 'strain'.

• | E | : The *Volksggeist*, *Folksong*, & *Suffering*

Toomer's description of Black "racial heritage" and "ancestry" as a "spirit" providing a "stream of energy" is an unmistakably Herderian notion.

The Negro has found his roots. He is in fruitful contact with his ancestry. He partakes of an uninterrupted **stream of energy**. He is moved by the vital determinants of racial heritage. And something of their spirit now lives within him. He is about to harvest whatever the **past has stored, good and evil**. He is about to be released from an unconscious and negative concern with it. (*SEL* 51; emphasis added)

This stream of energy drawn from own's roots of "racial heritage"—tempered by hardship, adversity, injustice, and "misery"—is channeled into folksongs.

The Negro slave, ill-housed and fed, driven relentlessly to an unrewarded labor, beaten, maimed, and killed, separated from his loved ones, and denied even the vestige of justice and liberty, gave to the world, in exchange for its bitterness, a song. From his misery came the deep and powerful beauty of his folksong. . . . ["POE" II:24]

The collective history of “bitterness” metamorphoses into “deep and powerful beauty”—‘Negro spirituals’ and sorrow songs of the folk. The spiritual power of sorrow and suffering is a recurring theme in his fragments:

you would squeeze blood from your broken members to create?

“I am — what? — skin, bones, and fluid, an old man. Hey. I am a youth whose **beauty is a broken image.**”

Break-ups involve the flesh. Into the **spiritual** solution. The body, a laggard in healing, drops its blood. The solution is red. The new solids will be delicately traced with crimson. **Sorrow sings about the portals of new worlds.** The flesh of Christ purpled and quivered before his spirit left the cross. [“LLN” III:42; emphasis added]

Toomer also applies this musical aesthetic of suffering and spiritual power to literature in general. The following are representative of fragments dealing with theme of suffering and how an artist can express the inarticulate or capture “wistfulness and charm”:

There are certain bruises, and emotions and thoughts arising therefrom, which only a relatively weak, sensitive, man may suffer. These, if once they can be put in writing, make a literature which is remarkable for its poignance, depth, fullness, and humanity. [“POE” II:4]

In writing of inarticulate people, the finest things that an artist can give are his own thoughts and emotions concerning them. (The narrative form should be used here.) For this reason I feel that the impersonal style does not fit here. It defeats the only impossible realization that is of interest.

It is from uncertain natures (from natures that lack direction or are in repose) that wistfulness [sic] and charm come. Forceful people, people with direction, convey a sense of their power. [“POE” II:12]

• | F | : The Soil, Vitality, & the Volk

This final group of fragments are related to the previous group of fragments in | E | dealing with the *Volksggeist*. These fragments pertain to the **soil**—which was a Herderian concept that had a profound reception in Russia—and the vitalistic and spiritual energy or force one can draw from one’s ancestors, or “race’s source”. Toomer’s distinction between ‘soil’ and ‘nature’ is particularly interesting:

A distinction should be made between the wish to return to nature, and the desire to touch the soil. Nature, as I here use the term, is a virginal track [sic] of land. The soil is tilled land, saturate with the life of those who have worked it. In these definitions will be found the distinctions I refer to. Those who wish to return to nature wish to rid themselves of man in what we are pleased to term his modern associations. Those who wish to touch the soil desire to know man in one of his most poignant relationships. . . . **To touch is to be revived by contact with the race’s source.** [“POE” II:15; emphasis added]

Toomer also relates this vitality to the separation of man from “the soil” mirroring *Frühromantik* notions—where movement towards cities, and acculturation into white society, results in a

thinning out and perverting the original emotional wealth of the southern Negro. This precept is more in force in the smaller cities and nearby rural districts. . . . the southern Negro as a body, though remaining essentially agricultural, will nevertheless be under the domination of a misfit and largely borrowed, standardizing, devitalizing moral code. Their emotions, should they retain their original strength, are, indulged in at the price of hypocrisy. [“MEM” I:42]

I would like to point out one final correspondence between Toomer’s aesthetics and Herder’s. The latter’s preference for primitive forms of expression—with their unpolished vitality and “*Sprünge und Würfe*”—is mirrored in Toomer’s “jerks and spurts” melding notions of rhythm and energy. This feature of the folk aesthetic is something both emphasized—and it is the defining characteristic of **poetic realism**, as we shall see.

Beneath the reactive type, the Negro is touching emotions which have to do with the primary facts of existence. These flow with that lyricism which is so purely Negro. Sometimes they come in **jerks and spurts**, yet **more powerful than a merely modern rhythm**. Rarely, they suggest no strain or time at all, having blended with the universal. . . . Pain is seen to be of the texture of life; not due to racial oppression, only. Likewise with fear, conflict, frustration, and tragic circumstance. Above all, the Negro finds that the poverty of creed has not lollod his religious impulse. He is on earth, so placed, somewhere is God. The need to discover himself and the desire to find God are similar. **Perhaps that strange thing called soul, hardly an existence, rarely mentioned nowadays above a whisper, the Negro in his search may help uncover**. . . . He feels his own milieu to be desirable: its beauty, ugliness, passion, poverty, rhythm, and color. (*SEL* 52; emphasis added)

This is further bolstered by Toomer’s note criticizing Flaubert’s method:

Purity is not simply a lack of the impure.
By an enormous labor Flaubert ruled out impurities from his literature.
This was his method. And its result was a sterilized art. [“LLN” III:35]

We can clearly see an alignment with Herder’s folk aesthetic—where the vitality of unpolished and primitive folksongs and the vernacular is celebrated for being “natural”, “original” and spontaneous—and is placed in direct opposition to the “artifice, intellectualism, and decadence” of “premeditated” works of ‘high art’ that follow standardizing rules leaving them impotent.¹³¹

¹³¹ Maike Oergel, *Culture and Identity: Historicity in German Literature and Thought, 1770–1815*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 53.

BORDER STATION—AVANT-GARDE CONNECTIONS

In his article ‘This Youngest Generation’, **Malcolm Cowley** tries to specify and pinpoint the major aspects of the modernist aesthetic: “Form, simplification, strangeness, respect for literature as an art with traditions, abstractness . . . these are the catchwords that are repeated most often among the younger writers.”¹³² **Gorham Munson** would further elaborate on each of the concepts Cowley identifies in the November 1922 issue of *S4N* and accept them as tenets for his “literary secession”, but of particular interest is his explanation of the indistinct term “**strangeness**”: “The movement away from naturalism and realism, the deliberate imposition upon a basically realistic attitude of romantic materials for the intellect to exploit and arrange. . . . The true meaning of romanticism is the crusade for new materials.”¹³³ This echoes what Arnold Hauser would later highlight as the core component linking the disparate modernist movements of **futurism, symbolism, expressionism, and Dadaism:**

In spite of their essentially sober, fundamentally antiromantic nature—with their tendency to abstraction and analysis—all of these movements, and subsequent ones as well, reveal a characteristic which derives from romanticism, namely, that of unconditional *avant-gardism*. . . . not so much in the assertion of what is new and spontaneous as in the negation of what is old and conventional, and its ideal style is seen not as a form which has already been discovered and realized but as one which has yet to be discovered and realized. . . . *Novelty* belongs to the characteristics of what is artistically valuable in every period . . .¹³⁴

In this section, we shall outline **CANE**’s connections and links to various avant-garde groups and try to clarify the logic behind the organization of chapters, or stops on our journey. We begin with the furthest in space and time (our ultimate chapter), those who arguably effected the great literary shift towards aesthetics, and created their literary innovations upon spiritual and mystical Neo-Platonic foundations. Although the works covered in chapters preceding it are separated by geographical distances and historical timeframes, my contention is that the dynamism and spirit of these disparate literary endeavors are interconnected, running along the philosophical and aesthetic tracks laid and pioneered by German precursors.

¹³² Malcolm Cowley, “This Youngest Generation”, *The Literary Review*, October 15, 1921, 82.

¹³³ Gorham B. Munson, “The Mechanics for a Literary Succession,” *S4N*, ed. Norman Fitts (Nov. 1922), n.p. The name is lifted from the 1890s **secessionist artist group** in Germany.

¹³⁴ Arnold Hauser, *The Sociology of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 680-81. Emphasis added.

[**Germany : (v)**]: The *Frühromantik* coterie—including **Friedrich Schlegel**, **Novalis**, and **Jean Paul**—formed around the *Athenaeum*, are arguably “the first ‘avant-garde’ group in history”;¹³⁵ and along with **Goethe—Herder’s** disciple and friend, fellow *Stürmer und Dränger*, and author of *Wilhelm Meister*, considered the “bible of Romanticism”,¹³⁶—whom Toomer regarded as one of his “pillars” and whose genre-defining German text played a pivotal role in Jean’s choice to become a poet and author. For these reasons, we set the destination/endpoint of our journey first, and we track these architects of the *romantische Ästhetik* tracing their impact on **CANE**.

[**Russia : (w)**]: Isaiah Berlin muses, “Perhaps Herder’s most characteristic descendants were to be found in Russia, in which he took so abiding an interest”.¹³⁷ The Russians were great admirers of Goethe (especially *Faust*), but several Russian writers adopted Herder’s program of creating a national literature based on the spirit of the folk and vernacular oral traditions. We trace the line of this influence from **Nikolai Karamzin** and **Nikolai Gogol**, down to **Alexeï Koltsov**, **Dmitry Grigorovich**, **Fyodor Dostoevsky**, and **Ivan Turgenev**, and as we unearth direct connections from Russia to the **Seven Arts** circle, we add them to our journey’s itinerary.

In his self-published collection of fragments, **Van Wyck Brooks** noted in 1910 that despite concentrating its energies on the novel, the literature of contemporary writers paled in comparison to “the mighty novels of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky” that “stretched to the farthest limits the possibilities of what the novel can be”; he lamented that stacked up against these, “there seemed to be a note of triviality about most of our western fiction, a nervous and finite compactness”.¹³⁸ In *Waldo Frank: A Study* (1923), **Gorham Munson** writes about American modernists’ turn away from the “anglo-servile” reliance on British

¹³⁵Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 8.

¹³⁶ “*Wilhelm Meister* became the bible of Romanticism and thanks to it, novel-writing and Romanticism neatly fused for a while.” Gerhart Hoffmeister, “Reception in Germany and Abroad”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, ed. Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 236.

¹³⁷ Berlin, 259.

¹³⁸ Van Wyck Brooks, *The Soul: An Essay Towards a Point of View* (San Francisco: Privately printed, 1910), 37.

traditions, and their looking to and conscious borrowing from Russia and France for guidance: “from [Russia] we received an impetus to a candid unflinching examination of ourselves” (*WFS* 60-61). **Waldo Frank** also relates the impact of Russian literature on nativist writers in his prose poem “Holy Russia”:

We had learned a lesson well from Russia: from the voice of her art in the world, and the glow of her youth in the world,—where they had been cast out. . . . We read their books. Terrible Russian books. Books of pestilent prisons: of poverty and disease. . . . Suffering and death and sin. O the loving knowledge of Russia's books. O the song mothered by the songs of Russia. Russia has come to life. (*SA2* 60-61)

Although **Sherwood Anderson** claimed never to have read any Russian authors before writing his books,¹³⁹ in private letters he is more forthcoming about his relationship with Russian literature: “I was probably 35 years [roughly 1911] when I first found the Russian prose writers. One day I picked up Turgenev's ‘Annals of a Sportsman’. I remembered how my hands trembled as I read the book. I raced through the pages like a drunk man.”¹⁴⁰ In a letter to **Hart Crane**, Anderson reveals the following: “I'm glad you found Dostoevsky. . . . There is nothing like *Karamazov* anywhere else in literature—a bible. You will like *The Idiot* and the prison tales too [*House of the Dead*]. However, one doesn't like this man, one loves him. I have always felt him as the one writer I could go down on my knees to.”¹⁴¹

[**Chicago / New York / London / Paris : (x)**]: This stopover concentrates on poetry and poetics—tracing the shared aesthetic and sensibility that links several cultural centers separated by vast distances. The first is London, due to the impact the **imagists** have had on Jean Toomer. As Rosenfeld notes:

Yet it was the imagists with their perfect precision of feeling that fevered [Toomer] most for work. Some clarity in himself must have responded to the clearness of these poets. That his definiteness remains as yet less intense than theirs is plain. Perhaps because his gift is warmer and more tubulent [sic], it is also less white and clear. (*MS* 232)

¹³⁹ See letter to Waldo Frank dated November 6th, 1916: “By the way, it may also be of interest to you to know that I had never heard of Dreiser or Dostoevsky when I wrote this book.” in Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout, eds., *Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1953), 3.

¹⁴⁰ Qtd. in William A. Sutton, *The Road to Winesburg. Mosaic of the Imaginative Life of Sherwood Anderson*. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972), 301-2.

¹⁴¹ Jones and Rideout, *Letters of Sherwood Anderson*, 70-71.

In an article published in the January 1918 issue of *Art & Letters*, **Herbert Read** grounds the **imagist** aesthetic upon the poetry of **Jules Romains**.¹⁴² This is noteworthy, considering that **Ezra Pound** did write fondly of Romain's *Death of a Nobody* (1911) and numerous articles introducing various French symbolist poets. Also interesting, is **John Gould Fletcher's** later admission in 'The Orient and Contemporary Poetry' (1945) that "Chinese influence if it existed, was only a vague something in the background" and that its was merely comparable to a "foster-father"—he reveals **French symbolism**, which most of their *coterie* had been reading, to be the real "father of Imagism" (*FLE* 64). France may be an unexpected direction, until we finish Munson's previous thought: "When American literature broke its bondage to England, when it smashed up its pioneer-puritan-industrialist-Victorian . . . genteelness" the other counterweight sought was France, where it found a "realistic attitude" and "some concern with form" (*WFS* 61).

The style of polyphonic prose—a modernist innovation that either Gould or **Amy Lowell** invented—is something much closer to French poetics, such as in **Guillaume Apollinaire's** modernist poem 'Zone' (1913), which influenced many Americans, including Frank. This evolution from condensed *Haiku*-esque verse to spiraling mood-infused spirit-scapes is perhaps best registered by the poems selected by Pound for inclusion in his *Catholic Anthology, 1914-15*—this is where we find **T. S. Eliot's** 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock' set beside the poetry of regional writers, such as **Carl Sandburg** and **Edgar Lee Masters**. We will place Sherwood Anderson's attempts at 'singing prose' alongside those Americans consciously striving to be included under the umbrella and moniker coined by Brooks: "the children of Whitman" (*AGE* 127). Of course, we can not forget Toomer's connection to **Lola Ridge** of *Broom* and his love of **Romain Rolland's** *Jean-Christophe*, which won the 1915 Nobel Prize—we take care to keep this leg of the journey from spiraling out of control, by narrowing our focus as much as possible.

[*The Seven Arts circle* : (y)]: Although Toomer decided to become a writer well after *The Seven Arts* ceased publication, his fortuitous meeting with

¹⁴² Herbert Read, "Definitions Towards a Modern Theory of Poetry" *Art & Letters* 1, no. 3 (Jan., 1918): 73-78.

Waldo Frank, his reaction to reading *Our America*, and affinity for **Sherwood Anderson**'s works all clearly align him within the *Seven Arts* group. This circle of writers—for whom Anderson's works best answered their call and became a model for a new nativism and distinctly American expression in art—includes **Randolph Bourne**, **Van Wyck Brooks**, **Paul Rosenfeld**, and **Hart Crane**. Although this 'beloved community' would fracture before Toomer's arrival due to early death, personal altercations, or a divergence of cultural programs, the *Seven Arts* group as a whole would leave its indelible imprint on *CANE* and American letters; this influence could justifiably be labeled 'Neo-romantic'.

We turn to a letter dated October 31, 1922, where **Jean Toomer** writes to Munson, defending himself against veiled accusations of aesthetic thievery:

I cannot *will* out of Waldo. With the exception of Sherwood Anderson some years ago (and to a less extent, Frost and Sandburg) Waldo is the only modern writer who has immediately influenced me. He is so powerful and close, he has so many elements that I need, that I would be afraid of downright imitation if I were not so sure of myself. But I know my own rhythm (it has come out fairly pure in a formative way, in some of my southern sketches. It is when I attempt a more essentialized and complex pattern that Waldo comes in). And I feel with you that I will 'eventually make a successful amalgamation with (my) own special contribution.' I must grow out of him. (*LJT* 90-91)

We take Toomer at his word for now, and chart **Sherwood Anderson** and **Waldo Frank** on our *MAP*, and also **Robert Frost**. We also select a short story that kicks off the inaugural issue of *The Seven Arts* by a relatively obscure author: **Barry Benefield**. We shall note the points of intersect *CANE* shares with this and another work of short fiction by Benefield, to closely examine and contextualize the shared themes and strategies that Toomer seems to have borrowed. The final selection for this first stop, is a British writer who had been garnering attention across the Atlantic. His fictional stories and novels do betray his Neo-romantic penchant for mysticism, and he has authored texts on psychology with cabalistic undertones, which he calls "philosophicalish" books. This writer is **D. H. Lawrence**, who shared the same American publisher as Anderson, but more importantly, whose two works of short fiction Frank included in the *Seven Arts*. We embark on our journey to search out deeper links and spiritual connections between the names forming this intricate web.



Image C1. *The Monographic Spirit (Die Monografie Geist)*, by John-Francis Kinsler. May 3, 2019.

Accomplishments:

3. For three years, beginning in 1919 and ending in 1922, I concentrated my efforts on the task of learning the craft and art of literature in its various forms. During this period I wrote poems, plays, sketches, short stories, essays, and the part of a novel. In bulk, my manuscripts of that period were enough to fill a trunk. But I was not satisfied with these attempts, and so I did not try to have them published. It was not till the summer and winter of 1922 that I began writing things which I considered to have literary merit. And then I began sending them to the various magazines; with the result that some of my pieces began appearing in *The Double Dealer* (New Orleans), *The Liberator*, *Broom*, *The Little Review*, *Prairie* (a mid-western magazine of that period), and later, in *The Dial*, and *The Chapbook* (London).

And then, in 1923, I made a collection of poems, sketches, short stories, and one drama, all more or less of one kind. I called this volume, *Cane*. It was published by Boni and Liveright in 1923. It received favorable and even enthusiastic criticisms and reviews in magazines and papers all over the country. It was one of the causes which led Paul Rosenfeld to write an essay on me in his book, *Men Seen*, and Gorham B Munson to write an essay on me in his book, *Destinations*. I am told that *Cane* has since come to be considered a minor classic in American literature.

During the year of *Cane's* publication, I wrote considerable, most of which appeared in various magazines.

And then, in 1924, I went into another period of preparation.

Image C2. Toomer's list of literary accomplishments prepared for publishers. JTP, Box 11, Folder 343. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

2. *BILD, BILDUNG, & EINFÜHLUNG* Apprenticeship with *The Seven Arts*

SCOPE [1916-1917 / 1919-1923] : SEVEN ARTS PROSE

POINTS [U : < - > : Y : < - > : Z]

No, it will be some years before Jean Toomer the
thinker, the feeler, the man in love with life
in toto, passions, vices, sorrows, despairs—
all of life, will be able to put half what is in him
on a cool surface of a white sheet of paper.

— **Jean Toomer**, January 7, 1920,
letter to Georgia Douglas Johnson¹

Two souls, alas! reside within my breast,
and each is eager for a separation:
in throes of coarse desire, one grips
the earth with all its senses;
the other struggles from the dust
to rise to high ancestral spheres.
If there are spirits in the air
who hold domain between this world and heaven—
out of your golden haze descend,
transport me to a new and brighter life!
— **Goethe**, *Faust*²

The *Modernist Journals Project* features an epigram that states “modernism began in the magazines”; it would not be a stretch to apply this to **Jean Toomer** and claim that his modernism was drawn from and developed through studying the various writings found in the “little magazines”. What **Gorham Munson** writes of **Hart Crane** seems applicable to Toomer:

I was dazzled by the *literary* education he was giving himself. His private ‘college’ was the *Little Review*, which he read from cover to cover, advertisements included. The head teacher in the *Little Review* was Ezra Pound, and Hart was quick to take the courses of reading that Pound recommended. . . . Hart was, so to speak, graduated from the *Little Review* ‘college.’ He went on to the *Dial* as though to a ‘university’.³

In the manuscripts for his autobiographical “Book X”, Toomer recalls an incident during his university days in Madison, WI, in 1914 where a kind professor who took a personal interest in him asked him if he was familiar with magazines such as *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, and recommended

¹ *LJT*, 5.

² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Collected Works*, vol. 2, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 30.

³ Gorham Munson, *Awakening Twenties* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 192.

that he read them and familiarize himself with “the ideas and events of the literary worlds of America and England.”⁴ Toomer laments the missed opportunity of finding his calling at the age of twenty; for it was not just the literary works themselves he missed out on but the chance to enter the larger discourse of ideas. He writes:

The ideas being expressed in those magazines would have helped me emerge from confusion and find myself and find my direction. I would have been guided to Walt Whitman and Emerson, to Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. I would have been introduced to the writings of Dreiser, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, . . . Randolph Bourne, Carl Sandburg, and many others.⁵

Toomer regrets not entering the literary world sooner, but after his chance meeting with **Waldo Frank** at **Lola Ridge**’s party in August of 1920, he quickly committed himself to becoming a writer and made up for lost time. In his memoirs Toomer makes an ambitious claim and lists the various literary works he studied and absorbed:

I read all of Waldo Frank, most of Dostoevsky, much of Tolstoy, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Sinclair Lewis, Dreiser, most all of the American poets, Coleridge, Blake, Pater, in fine, a good portion of the modern writers of all western countries. In addition, Freud, and the psychoanalysts, and a miscellany of scientific and philosophical works. (*W&S* 117).

The statement suggests that he read all the greatest works in various fields, absorbed their ideas, and then developed the foundations for his own unique writing style. However, considering that his **apprenticeship** lasted a few years, one can not overstate the importance of the various magazines and works of criticism that would have highlighted the best works and most important trends of **modernist expression**.

He also mentions the various magazines he read and drew inspiration from: “I began reading the magazines: Dial, Poetry, the Liberator, the Nation, New Republic, etc” (*W&S* 117). These magazines would not only provide a convenient and inexpensive way to read various works by writers deemed significant, but more importantly they contained editorials, reviews, and essays that would provide explanation, debate, and theories related to the

⁴ From unpublished autobiography, “Book X”, 119. (*JTP*, Box 11, Folder 364).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

modernist aesthetic. Perhaps what is most remarkable about Toomer is the short time in which he was able to cull important aspects of the modernist idiom on his own and become a proficient writer in various literary forms. As Nowlin notes in his essay “The Strange Literary Career of Jean Toomer”:

Cane was built from experimentally hybrid forms originally tailored to the unwritten specifications of avant-garde magazine publications: imagist poems, poetic prose vignettes, minimalist short stories, a closet drama or dramatic story.⁶

By the time Toomer reached out by letter to Frank in March of 1922, the bulk of his pieces later included in **CANE** were already written in one form or another, and he would have his first piece ‘**Song of the Sun**’ published in June 1922, with others following shortly after. When Toomer sent some pieces for Frank to evaluate in April, the latter’s reaction was perhaps akin to Pound’s amazement when first reading Eliot’s ‘**Prufrock**’: “He has actually trained himself *and* modernized himself *on his own*”.⁷ Although Frank would help select what works to include in **CANE** and help edit and get the book published, perhaps more important to Toomer’s development was providing him with the original impetus to become a writer and indirect guidance provided through his writings and *The Seven Arts*.

THE SEVEN ARTS

Toomer does not directly mention reading *The Seven Arts* in his numerous autobiographies. However, his letters reveal that he borrowed copies from Frank in 1923 and that he “had pleasure and instruction in the work” (*LJT* 177). It seems to me more likely that Toomer studied *The Seven Arts* much earlier—that he sought out issues of the magazine after his first meeting with **Waldo Frank**, to familiarize himself with Frank’s literary tastes and aesthetics. This is supported by the early note fragment: “The Seven Arts said that they should be infused with palpable emotionalism or lyricism, and by this quality, acceptably formed. The result is Sherwood Anderson” [“LLN” III : 13; Facsimile IIIb.4]. I hope to show in this chapter that issues of *The Seven Arts* along with

⁶ Michael Nowlin, “The Strange Literary Career of Jean Toomer,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 53, no. 2 (Summer, 2011): 207-235.

⁷ Qtd. in David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry. Vol. 1, From the 1890s to Pound, Eliot, & Yeats* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1976), 495. Emphasis original.

Our America would have served as much more palpable lessons in Frank's thought than his novels, and would have provided Toomer with an entry point to approach modernist works in other magazines.

The Seven Arts was a short-lived periodical that was published from November 1916 until October of 1917, which Whalen describes as “a journal committed to a ‘Romantic Radicalism’ of cultural and economic transformation of the United States”.⁸ James Oppenheim was the chief editor of the magazine (listed as “Vice-President from the third issue); **Waldo Frank** and **Van Wyck Brooks** served as its associate editors; among those regular contributors on its advisory board were **Randolph Bourne**, Louis Untermeyer, **Robert Frost**, **Kahlil Gibran**, and later, **Amy Lowell**. The magazine's name was most likely inspired by Arthur Symons's book of essays, *Studies in Seven Arts*, which actually excluded poetry and literature from the genres it covered; however, traditionally the arts have been classified into seven categories: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, dance, and theater. The opening issue set out its goals and vision:

It is the aim of The Seven Arts to become a channel for the flow of these new tendencies: an expression of our American arts which shall be fundamentally an expression of our American life. We have no tradition to continue; we have no school of style to build up. . . . The Seven Arts will publish stories, short plays, poems, essays and brief editorials. Such arts as cannot be directly set forth in a magazine will receive expression through critical writing, which, it is hoped, will be no less creative than the fiction and poetry. . . . We hope that creative workers themselves will also set forth their vision and their inspiration. (*SAI* 52-53)

The “new tendencies” stated in its aim are of a religious, philosophical and psychological nature as the selection of works in the magazine show a strong preference for the mystical and new methods of understanding reality; many essays openly called for a new distinctly American cultural program to replace the outmoded Puritanism impeding the country's natural expression—themes that would be expanded upon in *Our America*. Although Frank was only an associate editor, Brooks (who was promoted to associate editor from the fifth issue), later recalled that more than Oppenheim, Frank was “the real creator of The Seven Arts”; he devoted his passion and energy not only to

⁸ Mark Whalen, *American Culture in the 1910s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 106.

oppose America's involvement in the war, but to transform the magazine into a "living organism" (a term he would also apply later to *City Block*) and catalyst for cultural change in America.⁹ Oppenheim described him as "an editorial tyrant",¹⁰ but Frank used his connections to get established writers in Europe and England to contribute (while also turning down **Ezra Pound's** offer to become an editor); he also championed **Sherwood Anderson** early in his career and helped to assemble an impressive range of submissions from various writers in diverse fields.

In terms of prose fiction published in *The Seven Arts* that overlap with our mooring threads, and therefore on the same plane as Toomer and **CANE**, the list narrows to those by **Barry Benefield** and **D. H. Lawrence**, and of course **Waldo Frank** and **Sherwood Anderson**. As we zero in on *The Seven Arts* to re-examine prose works that may have benefitted Jean during his years of honing his craft and style, We narrow the scope by selecting the first two for the first section and group the latter two for the second. The intersection of the Seven Arts circle and modernist poetics in relation to the influence of peripheral groups will be the focus of [**Chapter 3**].

BARRY BENEFIELD

The first issue of *The Seven Arts* opens with a story by **Barry Benefield** entitled 'Simply Sugar Pie' (1916). Thematically this short story is more similar to the Georgia-set pieces in **CANE** than any other work of the period written by white or black authors. Of all the stories, poetry, and dramatic pieces featured in its twelve issues spanning the twelve months the magazine was in print, Benefield's piece would have struck a major chord with Toomer, who in his first letter reaching out to Frank would lament that *Our America* overlooks "the Negro" (*BM* 66). Michael North suggests that Frank placed the story front and center in response to **Romain Rolland's** congratulatory message for the launch issue he penned (as the previous year's recipient of Noble Prize for Literature). He rallied *The Seven Arts* to "express [their]

⁹ Walter B. Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, Vol. 1 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 236.

¹⁰ Gorham B. Munson, *The Awakening Twenties: A Memoir History of a Literary Period* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 58.

brotherhood of individuals, of races, of cultures banded together”.¹¹ As a realistic and unidealized portrayal of Black American life written by a white author and featured in a well-known magazine, it is unlikely that the story would have gone unnoticed by Toomer, or that the Washington literary group he met with regularly would not have examined and discussed the story as its portrayal of ‘Negro life’ is markedly different from that of predecessors and contemporaries in its tone. As George Hutchinson reports:

In the fall and winter of 1920-21, Toomer was meeting with the Washington group at Georgia Douglas Johnson's home and introducing them to his ideas, the books he had been reading, and some of the work he himself had written.¹²

Toomer describes that the focus of those meetings was “a historical study of the Negro and Slavery . . . [and] the actual place and condition of the mixed-blood group in this country”.¹³ As it was a literary group comprised of writers, Benefield’s story would have drawn their interest on many levels and proved worthy of discussion and closer examination. In February 1927, *The Crisis* briefly commended Benefield’s collection of stories, *Short Turns* (1926), as containing “striking short stories” and highlighted ‘**Simply Sugar Pie**’ and ‘**Ole Mistic**’ as notable depictions of “Negroes . . . Sympathetically done”.¹⁴ Of course, the former story would have crossed Toomer’s radar much earlier as he had just been introduced in the summer of 1920 to Waldo Frank, no doubt as the former editor of *The Seven Arts* and author of *Our America*. Whether he chose to share the story with the Washington group is uncertain; however, the remarkable number of aspects of Benefield’s story that overlaps with *CANE* makes it more than likely that it served as an early model for the budding novice, who would adopt and adapt many themes and elements of style observed as a framework for various *CANE*-era pieces.

¹¹ Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language & Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 133.

¹² George Hutchinson, “Jean Toomer and the ‘New Negroes’ of Washington”, *American Literature* 63, no. 4 (1991): 685.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 686.

¹⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois and Jesse Redmond Fauset (eds.), *The Crisis* 33 no. 4 (Feb. 1927): 210.

[26/κ]: 'SIMPLY SUGAR PIE'

'**Simply Sugar Pie**' is a unique and moving psychological portrait of a young, Black woman, who is caught in the turmoil that erupts between white and black members of a Louisiana town. The ensuing riot forces the town's black inhabitants to flee, yet the protagonist, Sugar Pie, is unable to leave as we learn much later she is with child. There are numerous features of the story that would have appealed to Toomer stylistically and thematically. First is its use of a racially indistinct narrator whose treatment of the black folk protagonist is both realistic—capturing the vernacular black dialect—and “sympathetically done” in a way that highlights her humanity. The story is in stark contrast to other works by nativist authors (such as **Vachel Lindsay's 'The Congo'** or even **Sherwood Anderson**) that exoticize black Americans by emphasizing their primitive African roots and otherness. The delicate manner in which Sugar Pie is portrayed presumably suggests an intimate understanding of the black underclass, which might have left many readers perplexed as to the racial background of its author.

A limited-omniscient narrator unfolds the events of the story from Sugar Pie's perspective throughout the narrative—the readers learn about the cause of the furor and the escalation of violence gradually and second-hand as the protagonist does. Sugar Pie is woken up from her sleep but is too weak to unlock the door or even reply when her neighbor Aunt Viney comes to warn her:

“Wake up, chile, wake up,” Aunt Viney kept calling insisently. “Jerry Cole—you know dat nigger whut drove Dr. Forchaux's buggy—Jerry shot Constable Larkin to-night, ‘count of a crap game Mr. Larkin was tryin’ to stop; an’ dey done hung Jerry to a telegraft pole. Den dem oilmen said to run out all de niggers an’ make dis a white man’s town, like dat New Era place is. . . . Dey done started in on de folks on de yuther side of town. . . . Dey is comin’ on down heah next. . . . You reckon, honey, you could make out to git up an’—” (*BEN* 222)

Aunt Viney's exhortation is cut off mid-sentence, and Sugar Pie hears her running off dragging her shoes. It is only when she hears the “low buzzing hum of voices” that she realizes the reason for her neighbor's sudden flight: “The mob was coming” (*BEN* 223). Instead of depicting the mob's violence, which the protagonist would not have been able to witness, Benefield deftly shifts the

narration into the protagonist's consciousness. Her memories, imaginings, fear and trauma all fuse together along with the sound of the mob outside:

Once Sugar Pie had seen two bodies hanging under a railroad trestle . . . the necks were stretched out to a hideously unnatural length. Always after that, whenever she recalled the event, she could see plainly . . . those two long, terrifyingly thin necks that no time could ever dim. Timid, her imagination inflamed by centuries of superstitious thinking, her nerves burning and twisting with fear and pain, the young negro woman there on the bed went through all the torturing horrors of hanging and burning at the stake while the low buzzing voices covered a mere hundred yards of ground coming across the grassy flat. (*BEN* 223)

This rendition of her heightened psychological state is not only realistic, the inner turmoil becomes a symbolic representation for the rout erupting outside her home; and the violence under way is linked to history's recurring nightmare of lynchings and burnings. Sugar Pie's psyche relives their anguish and torment which merges with her own. The scene culminates in an agonizing convulsive fit that lifts her up from bed only to scream out before losing consciousness. The scene simultaneously portrays the material and psychological planes, while also hinting at the spiritual. The physical suffering she undergoes, obliquely mirrors the passion and crucifixion of Christ taking on the sins of the world. Sugar Pie is overcome by a wrenching "swift convulsive agony of gigantic pain" and lifting her head up she lets out a single scream into "the sooty smothering darkness above her" (*BEN* 223). When it is revealed much later in the story that Sugar Pie's child was stillborn, we are meant to recognize that this was the moment the unborn child dies. The excruciating burden of pain and violence weighing on her body, mind, and soul is expelled, but her baby becomes the innocent sacrificial lamb.

The techniques of **suggestion** and **indirection** are utilized throughout the story, leaving the reader to piece together the obscured aspects central to understanding the story. The meaning of the short story's title and the protagonist's name is supplied at the outset: "As for her name, nearly all negro babies are called Sugar Pie at first . . . she had almost forgotten her more properly Christian name" (*BEN* 226). It is only near the end of the story that its secret is suddenly unlocked: "Sugar Pie rose to her feet, and going up to the foot of the tree unwound the red-shawled bundle and lifted out on the straw a tiny naked baby, almost white, long stiff in death" (*BEN* 231). It becomes

apparent to the readers why she was immobilized and could not leave town, but more importantly the title takes on deeper meaning because this baby is also “Sugar Pie”; he becomes the central symbol of the story. However, the most extraordinary and significant aspect of the story is given in a roundabout manner, without drawing much attention: it is left to the reader to discern why the baby is “almost white” and the implication that truth entails. The boy is a product of **miscegenation**—a transgression of the racial divide—considered one of the most despicable, ineffable acts in the South. He is also a symbol of interracial harmony, whose death is emblematic of the racial violence and discord spreading throughout Louisiana. As the night watchman Dick Walters remarked to Sugar Pie after giving an update on the mob’s destruction the next day: “That’s the way it’s done these days, with a lot of new men comin’ in from ever’wheres. We used to lynch a man now an’ then for doin’ the worst thing, but we never bothered the innocent ones” (*BEN* 224). Although he is portrayed as a kind and sympathetic character and Sugar Pie is thankful to him, there is something disturbing about his complicit acceptance and the matter-of-fact way he justifies the killing of the ‘guilty’. More importantly, where is the father and what is the reason for his absence or apathy? Was the twenty-one-year-old laundress taken advantage of or raped? Benefield refrains from sermonizing and reducing ‘**Simply Sugar Pie**’ into a morality tale, as readers are left to supply their own answers and draw their own conclusions. However, he does intimate the existence of a higher “ultimate” reality in several scenes. The rural landscape and aspects of nature are infused with a barely perceptible mystical force: “the dark-headed pines swayed slowly back and forth moaning in long-drawn whispers” (*BEN* 230). The ‘**Negro spiritual**’ and the wind heighten this sense of the *Noumenal* in the final touching burial scene where the mother tries to bless her dead son in the most sacred manner she knows:

All at once she . . . decided to sing a popular negro hymn, in which new words have been fitted to an old tune. It was her favorite. She began: “Oh, he gwine to hebben on de mawnin’ train / An’ ole St. Peter gwine to—” But she stopped singing suddenly, bending low her head and covering her face with her hands. . . . A gust of wind came rattling across the hill-side with the bodies of dead leaves, and one of them, a little figure in red gold, hovered over the rounded mound, and dropped, and started up again. . . .” (*BEN* 233)

The pain and sense of loss Sugar Pie feels bursts out unmediated and naturally in the only manner she knows how: folksong. She hangs her personal sorrow upon this ‘racial’ matrix for expression—she instinctually takes the words and sentiment of this *Spiritual* and joins her individual suffering to that expressed by her folk. This form *gives her* the words and method of expression, and her soul gives the form its emotional force and vitality. It is a spontaneous overflow of feeling—her race is speaking through her, but also communicating to her and giving her consolation through song.

A MODEL FOR CANE

From theme to symbolism to technique and style, it becomes patently apparent that there are just too many parallels between ‘**Simply Sugar Pie**’ and **CANE** to chalk them up to mere coincidence. To focus on the most significant aspects of overlap will prove to be more insightful than linking every scene or technique borrowed to numerous corresponding scenes in Toomer’s work.

The secret that remains hidden until the end of Benefield’s story—the dead baby—presents a greater mystery that is only alluded to, as racial interbreeding is an illicit act and taboo subject. The heart of the story remains obscured and muddled with all the surrounding details pointing to but resisting a single definite meaning.¹⁵ As George Hutchinson notes: “Interracial desire is denied, thwarted, . . . Driven underground, or violently purged throughout section I of **CANE**. Manifestations of this desire and denial—this burial, this violence—become sacred, taboo. . .”¹⁶ The mulatto child becomes the proof of violation of racial codes strictly enforced by the color-line and anti-miscegenation laws set up “for the prevention of abominable mixture and spurious issue”, both of which the child personifies and gives evidence to.¹⁷ Many critics have noted that in ‘**Karintha**’ as her

¹⁵ E. M. Forster explains the ‘muddle’ regarding the cave incident in *A Passage to India*: “In the cave it is either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book. And even if I know! My writing mind therefore is a bit of a blur here—i.e. I will it to remain a blur, and to be uncertain, as I am of many facts in daily life.” Qtd. in Peter Childs, *Modernism*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 205.

¹⁶ George Hutchinson, “Jean Toomer and American Racial Discourse” In *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000): 377.

¹⁷ From “An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves”, Act XVI passed by Virginia’s General Assembly in April 1691.

“child fell out of her womb onto a bed of pine needles”, the “pyramidal sawdust pile” that burns as “smoke curls up and hangs in odd wraiths about the trees” obliquely intimates that the her mixed-race baby was burned in that pile and its soul is carried by the smoke (C 4). Charles Scruggs and Lee Van DeMarr provide the most detailed and systematic explanation in *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History* of how this veiled symbol becomes the recurring and haunting motif that binds the rest of the pieces together:

Secrecy and miscegenation are the major themes in the first section of *Cane*. They underlie the mystery of “Karintha,” and they appear directly in “Becky”; they emerge as hints and glimpses through the rest of the section’s stories and poems . . .¹⁸

So the “parting soul” and the “velvet pine-smoke air” in the poem ‘**Song of the Sun**’ (C 14), and the “Smoke from the pyramidal sawdust pile / curl[ing] up, blue ghosts of tree, tarrying low” in ‘**Georgia Dusk**’ (C 15), along with the oft repeated image of the despised mulatto as a white “half-moon” child suckling the breasts of a chanting negress (C 84)—refer back to the Karintha’s baby, becoming the text’s most central and most obfuscated symbol.

The same sense of secrecy and mystery are at the core of his story ‘**Becky**’ as well. Similar to Benefield’s mob, most of the white community of Sempter, Georgia are sensed and not actually seen. In his essay “The South in Literature”, Toomer reveals that in ‘**Kabnis**’ the protagonist is overwhelmed and depleted by “the impalpable fog of white dominance [that] spreads over the entire country-side” (SEL 15). It seems he formulated this idea relatively early as it is mentioned in his “**Poetry**” **Notebook** also:

South—the white of white becomes unreal. Whiteness becomes a shade, vaguely oppressive. A dominant shade sheathed with moist [mist?]. A cloud is near to me because I walk on mountains. When I look up from the darkness of the valley, it is so. [“**POE**” II: 11]

The refrain/chorus that begins and ends the lyrical vignette also pushes the story into the past, as Becky is already in her mound eulogized in a folksong when the tale begins. All the information is passed on second-hand to the reader through the black and white community members’ condemnation and gossip interspersed with audible prayers. The strict religious and communal policing of racial

¹⁸ Charles Scruggs and Lee VanDemarr, *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 23.

boundaries banishes her from both sides of the color line where she becomes an invisible **outcast**. It is revealed that the same segregated Christian community that **ostracized** her then begins to care for her “more tenderly than if she had been permitted to continue living in the town” (*SEL* 14). The railroad track where she lives “on the narrow strip of land between the railroad and the road” is under the constant watch of “a blue-sheen God” (*C* 7), the locomotive symbolizing the **racist** anti-miscegenation laws enforced by puritan **hypocrisy**. Becky is crushed by the words of Black *and* white folks, but ultimately it is this dark, unforgiving **force** of history—embodied by the ghost train—mowing down anyone daring to **transgress** the color-line. All the **annihilated** victims, like Karantha’s (and Sugar Pie’s) baby, become burnt offerings and **wraiths** of curling smoke (or spirits in the wind) *sacrificed* to the “blue-sheen God” *to purge* the stain of **sin**.

Scruggs and Van DeMarr’s description of Toomer’s indirect and opaque style is insightful:

Cane is a modernist text in that its narration is fragmented and indirect; it hides what it is talking about yet makes the hidden its actual topic. Toomer draws threads of meaning between stories and poems, threads composed of single repeated word or phrase or image or idea. The meaning of the text derives not only from a complete story or sequence of stories, but from those accumulated repetitions that, beneath surface narrations, join scene to scene or character to character. The techniques of modernism served Toomer because the culture of secret miscegenation in the South could be powerfully represented by indirection. To put it in another way, Toomer made W. E. B. Du Bois’s veil of double vision into a modernist mode of storytelling.¹⁹

Through this “double vision” approach, Toomer creates ironic distance between those who can read the signs and those who are blind to them. **CANE** is a subversive text only to those who fathom that he is challenging the ‘one-drop rule’, that he is rejecting binary definitions of ‘black’ and ‘white’, and also disputing and exposing the secret history of miscegenation—for everyone else, **CANE** a book about ‘Negro life’. The (sub)text also divides its audience into those who can apprehend his fragmented and experimental “modernist mode of storytelling” and those who are nescient. And last of all, his readers are separated into those who can sense the higher *Noumenal* reality expressed and those who are captive and bound to the phenomenal world of the physical plane.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

[26/×]: 'MISS WILLETT'

If further support or 'evidence' is needed to show that **Jean Toomer** was familiar with the works of **Barry Benefield**, there is another story '**Miss Willett**' that was first published in *The Century Magazine* in 1916, and was also selected for Edward O'Brien's yearly anthology of the best American short stories. As someone developing and honing his skills as a writer of short fiction, Blanche Colton Williams's book *How to Study "The Best Short Stories"* (1919) would have been particularly helpful in pointing out important modernist techniques and themes of the finest anthologized stories in O'Brien's series from 1915-1918. The full subtitle of the book is: *An Analysis of Edward J. O'Brien's Annual Volumes of the Best Short Stories of the Year Prepared for the Use of Writers and Other Students of the Short-Story*; and the publication date of this book coincides with Toomer's beginnings as a writer. This book would have served as an invaluable step-by-step guide to recognizing highly regarded aspects of style and technique among modernist writers.

'**Miss Willett**' is a story set in the urban landscape of New York about a large woman described as having "pale yellow hair", who while glancing out of her single windowed apartment notices a "brown-bearded face" peering at her from across the street from behind blinds. She works behind a show window exhibiting baby beds while dressed as a nurse and holding a baby doll—but she had recently been given notice and comes to work to find a line of applicants applying for her job. However, her fortune changes this final day (after having seen the mysterious bearded man) as a myriad of customers inexplicably line up to buy baby beds, and her boss quickly realizes he needs to hold on to Miss Willett and make sure she stays on. Her continual fascination and preoccupation with the bearded man increases as she has only seen his face clearly once when the angle of the sun was just right. The climax of the story comes when she finally decides to go and confront the man in person, only to discover that the 'man' is actually just a white plaster statue of Jesus. Although the plot and structure of the two stories vary greatly, '**Bona and Paul**' borrows many images, techniques, and motifs from the story and study of '**Miss Willett**'. It seems too much of a coincidence that central aspects of the

story and those specifically pointed out and explained in Williams's book, would end up in one form or another in *CANE*.

The framing of the characters in various windows with the slanting sunlight or shade highlights the story's theme: **frames of reference**. The status of the subject and object are constantly shifting within the story; Miss Willett sees the man through a window, but at work she is the object of everyone's attention behind a similar frame. The mysterious bearded man was staring at her, but it turns out he was just an object of art to be observed. According to Williams the statue is the "chief character" from a mystical point of view—"the two become active and passive, reciprocally."²⁰ Frames of reference, or **perspectivism**, is the major theme of '*Bona and Paul*' also, where the characters become the windows themselves: "Paul is in his room of two windows. Bona is one window. One window, Paul. . . . With his own glow he looks through a dark pane" (C 73). Bona's view of Paul differs from her peers: "Dark blood; nigger? That's what the jealous she-hens say. Not Bona though, or she . . . from the South . ." (C 74). Paul becomes an object of the black doorman's subjective judgement as he is allowed entry, which is contrasted with the curious stares of the white customers at the Crimson Gardens: "What is he, a Spaniard, an Indian, an Italian, a Mexican, a Hindu, or a Japanese?" (C 76). Then later the crowd and the doorman are inverted into objects during Paul's mystical visions of the purple garden: "a spot is in the purple. The spot comes furiously towards him. Face of the black man. . . . It smiles sweetly like a child's" (C 79).

Benefield's story also features racially indistinct characters, suggesting that color is just surface or simply a matter of perspective. The protagonist seems to be white but the story introduces **ambiguity** by the end; Williams's introduction to the story relates that Benefield's inspiration for the story '*Miss Willett*' was "a negro woman of a most evil expression used to demonstrate a folding bed".²¹ Perceived realities and notions about race are consistently confounded throughout the story. The narrator keeps mentioning her

²⁰ Blanche Colton Williams, *How to Study "The Best Short Stories": An Analysis of Edward J. O'Brien's Annual Volumes of the Best Short Stories of the Year Prepared for the Use of Writers and Other Students of the Short Story* (Boston: Small, Maynard, and Company, 1919), 22.

²¹ Williams, 21.

“big bloneness” or white skin, yet by the penultimate scene she breaks out into a distinct black dialect when speaking to herself: “He’p him out. Them’s the best kind—the kind you have to he’p some. It’s a sign they ain’t fresh” (*BEN* 142). The implication is that Miss Willett has been passing for white, however, as the narrator simply reports her speech without drawing attention to the fact that it undermines the white identity the story has been ascribing to the protagonist. Benefield’s **misdirection** and **suggestion** leaves it up to the reader to discern the narrator’s accounts are not fully reliable—it creates an illusion that perhaps even the storyteller is unaware she is actually ‘black’. Likewise, the brown bearded man begins the story as an unseemly “blackguard” to Miss Willett, but her mind becomes increasingly infatuated by him, and only in the final climactic scene is revealed to be the white figure of the saviour Jesus. A similar shifting of skin color depending on light and perspective occurs throughout ‘**Bona and Paul**’ (and in ‘**Blood Burning Moon**’):

[Paul] sees Art curiously. Art is a purple fluid, carbon-charged, that effervesces beside him. He loves Art. But is it not queer, this pale purple facsimile of a red-blooded Norwegian friend of his? Perhaps for some reason, white skins are not supposed to live at night. . . . I’ve got to get the kid to play that [jazz piano] for me in the daytime. Might be different. More himself. More nigger. (C 75)

The use of **suggestion** and **indirection** is prevalent throughout Benefield’s narrative; obscured passages leave the readers unsure as to exactly what occurs in the story. As Williams explains to his readers: “the greater the suggestion, the greater the story. In other words, a story is artistically successful in proportion to the collaboration exacted from the reader.”²² The moment of discovery is given to us in hints as to what is discovered: “She broke into a hysterical giggle, instantly smothered with a sob. . . . ‘Oh, Jesus!’ she whispered, pleading, holding out her arms to the plaster figure by the window—‘Jesus! I didn’t know! I didn’t—’” (*BEN* 146). The reader has to piece together the reality of the situation—that her exclamation “Jesus” is actually a reference and hint to the identity of the ‘man’—which complicates the mystery of what brought about her sudden change of fortune. Williams points out that Mr. Bimber’s phrase “Yesterday you had nothin’; today you got everything” creates multiple layers of meaning: “for the reader who

²² Williams, 53.

prefers the mystical interpretation, the influence of the sculptured Jesus. To the non-mystical reader, this logic alone is satisfactory: loss of job had meant an unconscious spurt, the spur of desperation, with unanticipated success.”²³

Miss Willett’s miraculous **transformation** can also be traced psychologically as a series of chain reactions. The wistful longing she perceives in the ‘man’s’ first glance kindles a spark in her spirit: “No man’s eyes had ever before looked like that at her” (*BEN* 129-30). And believing herself desired in such a way manifests itself as maternal love and warmth she showers upon the “royal infant” doll: “Bless her heart! nobody looks after *her*. Your muzzer’s goin’ to make you a brand-new dress even if she is losin’ her job” (*BEN* 131). This genuine display of affection draws the attention of other mothers in the crowd who “smiled across the silent chasm of the plate-glass window in the eager instant intimacy of common motherhood” (*BEN* 132). This results in a frenzy of customers ordering Mr. Bimber’s Patent Baby Bed and the miracle of her getting to keep her job, which was symbolically hinted at earlier:

Miss Willett turned her chair to face the Broadway side, and sat staring out at the park, just across the street. The old trees waved their young green branches at her, beckoning her to look. The multitude of flowers, banked row on row around the fountain, lifted their hot faces to the kisses of the sun. The big woman leaned over suddenly and kissed the Princess Bimberino. (*BEN* 132)

According to Williams, the colors, light, and sound in the story have special symbolic significance. Toomer’s fragment in his **“Poetry” Notebook** also mentions the aesthetic significance of color, an image that he later develops and uses as the basis for Paul’s final epiphany of purple roses at dusk (C 80):

Color in literature comes from a temperament whose passion and spirit meet in a mellow sunniness. Such as one can infuse color into the grey of twilight as easily as it can paint rose in the dawn. [“**POE**” II: 7]

Throughout ‘**Miss Willett**’ the protagonist’s psychological state is reflected in nature, and projected symbolically onto the environment: the sun, the clouds, the flowers, and wind—which is another technique that Toomer would ‘borrow’ for **CANE**. Miss Willett places on her windowsill at night “a small potted geranium with two open flowers, flushing as red as they because she felt that already she was whispering to him in tones that no one else could hear” (*BEN* 138).

²³ *Ibid.*, 22.

The flowers become a symbol for her passion, but also for the shame she later feels as her desire turns to desperation: “the big, gorgeous, tremulous, flaming woman halted again, panting, crying ‘Shame’ at herself within her heart” (*BEN* 144). The symbolic simmering at the beginning of the story is brought to a boil—tired of waiting for ‘him’ to make a move, she decides to confront the brown bearded man. However, just like the vision of the garden of purple and red roses at dusk leads to Paul’s realization that “Bona was gone” (*C* 80), Miss Willett’s epiphany is followed by her passion similarly evaporating. Both stories end anti-climactically as the swelling desire experienced by each protagonist is suddenly deflated at the precise moment of their final revelation.

‘*Miss Willett*’ would also illustrate for Toomer a method with which to convey “the modern essence” within a “contemporary setting” alongside “a vision of the core of things” [“*POE*” II:4]. The story depicts the cosmopolitan landscape capturing the modern bustle of the city, but uses the forces of nature symbolically as a **counterpoint** to the cold, sterile cityscapes, devoid of spirit:

It *was* a swell day. Though the elevated trains roared on north and south as usual, though the trolley-cars rattled their loose and loosening steel bones along the steel tracks, yet the harsh, clattering, shrieking week-day noises of innumerable trucks and machines and whistles were withdrawn from the general volume of sound, and the city’s mighty voice was lowered and softened to its gentler Sabbath key. The west wind, coming from across how many millions of passionate fields and forests, shook out over New York the whispering ghosts of their soft summer sights. (*BEN* 141)²⁴

The modern city is invigorated by the wind passing through from rural landscapes symbolizing **invisible spiritual forces** and vitality: “The wind was soft, like silk, and fiery sweet, . . . in it the fragrance of millions of flowers. . .” (*BEN* 129).

²⁴ Compare the fusion of machinery, cityscapes, and mystical visions vitalized by rural soil in *CANE*: “Outside, the South-Side L track cuts them in two. Bona is one window. One window, Paul. Hurtling Loop-jammed L trains throw them in swift shadow. Paul goes to his. Gray slanting roofs of houses are tinted lavender in the setting sun, over the stockyards where a fresh stench is just arising, across wheat lands that are still waving above their stubble, into the sun. Paul follows the sun to a pine-matted hillock in Georgia.” (*C* 73) Compare also, the scene immediately after the birdlike light descends and Jesus appears in *Waldo Frank’s City Block*: “The ‘L’ train settled swiftly against the wooden platforms: gates jarred open, jarred shut: a progress of sudden bells: the train drew out. Upon the platform are a heaped deposit of women and men: they gathered themselves, finding again their separate limits from the shunted mass they had partaken of . . . scattering, dying.” (*CB* 18)

Toomer's Washington-based story, 'Avey', borrows this technique when describing the narrator's favorite spot in Soldier's Home:

Robins spring about the lawn all day. They leave their footprints in the grass. I imagine that the grass at night smells sweet and fresh because of them. The ground is high. Washington lies below. Its light spreads like a blush against the darkened sky. Against the soft dusk sky of Washington. And when the wind is from the South, soil of my homeland falls like a fertile shower upon the lean streets of the city. (C 47-48)

Peter Childs notes that “[p]art of the emphasis on metaphor in modernism can be demonstrated from its use of symbols for allegorical or representational effect”, which he links to the **French symbolist** notion “that the purpose of art is not to denote but to connote, to convey by symbols the transcendent reality behind appearances.”²⁵ Toomer's aesthetic writings in his “Poetry” Notebook reveal the importance he attaches to symbolism: “The symbolic, in sacrificing a lesser reality, attains to a greater and more lasting one” [“POE” II : 6]. **Symbolism**, then, becomes a mystical method of artistic creation that attempts evoke and point to some higher reality beyond our world of senses. Toomer's implication that this involves a sacrifice merits further discussion because it underscores a major difference between **Waldo Frank's** form of ‘**Mystical Realism**’ and that of other modernist writers.

In Benefield's stories, all the supernatural aspects are merely suggested or hinted at—the cause of Sugar Pie's miscarriage might be the result of shock and stress, the wind at the end of the story could simply be the wind blowing a leaf, the change in fortune for Miss Willett could merely be a stroke of luck, and the red flowers signaling desire and censure for the mysterious ‘man’, perhaps do so simply in her mind. Each story implies the existence of a higher plane, but the material world of the “lesser” reality is left intact—it is up to the reader to decide whether to accept the supernatural explanation merely hinted at. By contrast, Frank's moments of spiritual intensity are unambiguous and essentially tear apart the physical plane of his fiction. **Paul Rosenfeld**, his former co-editor at *The Seven Arts* and friend, levels criticism against Frank for incessantly presenting the hidden depths of reality in too conscious a manner that breaks the story. Rosenfeld faults him for focusing too directly “upon hidden ground-movements of the psyche”:

²⁵ Peter Childs, *Modernism*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 201.

In his novels and tales, the plane of concealed motors and projectors of perception becomes the immediate foreground. . . . Their formal dislocations, give evidence of having been induced and prearranged and glued together by a theorizing intellect. . . . The great proportion of his work sounds forced, false and “off.” (MS 91-2; 94)

Frank is basically being accused of emphasizing **aesthetics** and **form** at the expense of the veracity of his art, and for lacking subtlety and nuance by failing to merely suggest the *Noumenal* realm. In his 1921 *Dial* review that would cost him their friendship, Rosenfeld disparages Frank’s narrative style: “instead of pressing outward steadily, quietly, sustainedly, [it] charges sporadically and abruptly, sometimes even in a series of clumsy and irritating assaults”.²⁶ Throughout *CANE* Toomer would make extensive use of indirection and obscuring—techniques exemplified in Benefield’s works—while also incorporating Frank’s method of having the unconscious or spiritual burst onto the surface of the narrative. However, it is precisely these or “assaults” or outbursts in a “Frankian pitch” (MS 227) that numerous modernist critics would fault in their generally enthusiastic reviews of *CANE*.

In his introduction to Benefield’s collection *Short Turns*, Edward O’Brien writes: “Although I have been called on to read some thousand American stories annually for the past twelve years, these two simple unobtrusive narratives [‘**Simply Sugar Pie**’ and ‘**Miss Willett**’] have always remained clearly focused in my mind” (BEN ix). Actually, the two Benefield stories are mirror images—two black women holding babies, one dead another a doll—one set a rural town in Louisiana, the other set in the urban landscape of New York; through each of these stories there is the mystical pulse signifying that landscape is invested and animated by spirits and natural forces. Whether the author intentionally planned the stories as complimentary halves is doubtful, but they were the two stories written by Benefield prominently featured in 1916 and easily accessible for Toomer to draw from a few years later. The oblique passages dealing with racial issues indirectly and merely hinting at miscegenation and passing, would not be lost on Toomer, even though these veiled subjects would be overlooked by the editors of *The Crisis*; in their review of *Short Turns*, they failed to recognize

²⁶ Paul Rosenfeld, “The Novels of Waldo Frank”. *Dial* 70 (January 1921): 95. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “NWF”.

‘**Miss Willett**’ as a story about passing and omit it from the list of stories they highlight in the collection to be about “Negroes”.

Benefield’s two short stories would have not only been models providing lessons in technique, but also would have served as sources for vibrant themes and symbols to incorporate into **CANE**. In terms of thematic movement or momentum, both stories ultimately end in division and fragmentation—just like Toomer’s opening symbol: the field rat sliced in half by a mower that readers are given a glimpse of in ‘**Reapers**’. The character Sugar Pie, when viewed mythologically, embodies the exploitation, displacement, and soul-crushing adversity weathered by African Americans as a whole; yet out of the ashes of collective misery and extinguished hope for the future, rise plaintive notes of a *Spiritual*—that lifts the spirit into an *ascent*—bringing solace and comfort through its primal beauty drawn from pain. It does not take much explanation for us to see that **CANE**’s Georgia pieces express this same leitmotif throughout to form a *Spiritual* chorus by the end.

For ‘**Miss Willet**’ the main thrust of the story is the protagonist, who—cut off in the city from her roots and the *Volksgeist* (race-soul)—is filled with a crescendoing desire for some meaningful fulfillment or union to free her from her uprooted and atomized life; however, the possibility of achieving such a state of psychological connection and wholeness is in the end revealed to be illusory and unattainable in the cold cosmopolitan confines detached from the soil. This coincides with the overall theme that runs through the Chicago and Washington pieces in **CANE**: dissolution, and a *descent* on the psychological plane. As O’Brien notes, each of Benefield’s tales may be viewed by its readers as “a chronicle of defeat or failure” but that the author’s careful discovery of life beneath the surface of their lives unveils “the spiritual victory concealed behind the total rout” (*BEN* viii)—a description that could easily apply to many of Toomer’s vignettes in **CANE**.

D. H. LAWRENCE

In the preface to its December issue, *The Seven Arts* make a general claim that “J. D. Beresford and D. H. Lawrence are perhaps the most significant English prose-writers of today” (*SAI* 95). **Waldo Frank** would again in his essay ‘**Vicarious Fiction**’ single out these two authors—both who would contribute

works to the magazine—as writers that represented “at last the vital rebirth of an art which in England has been largely given over since the Eighteenth Century to unquickened spirits”; however, he would go on to dismiss them in favor of other authors claiming “they are practically without influence in our country” (*SAI* 302). This statement is vague as to whether Frank considered himself as one of the exceptions who were influenced. Those who were closest to Frank and his wife Margaret Naumburg (a Lawrence devotee), seem to suggest he was. In his book *Men Seen* (1925), **Paul Rosenfeld** would write a chapter on both Lawrence (Chapter 3) and Frank (Chapter 5). He would begin his chapter on Frank by complimenting his “talent for verbal orchestration” unmatched by “*his master* D. H. Lawrence, [or] Joyce . . . [or] any other modern stylist” (*MS* 89; emphasis added). Frank’s debt to Lawrence was also obvious to **Sherwood Anderson**, who wrote to his mistress, Bab (Marietta D. Finley): “I expect your reactions to *Dark Mother* are very like my own. It is of course all right to write a book about the mother complex and to involve it with other complexes . . .”²⁷; the suggestion is that the mother complex is a topic already covered in *Sons and Lovers* (1913). **Gorham Munson’s** overview *Waldo Frank: A Study*—which was highly criticized for not only being premature but also a coordinated puff piece²⁸—betrays an anxiety of influence when depicting Frank as a pioneer artist that merges Freudian psychology with the novel, while failing to state the obvious: that Lawrence was a forerunner (*WFS* 13).

D. H. Lawrence, who was gaining notoriety for his novels *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, and had *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* recently published in America by Huebsch in 1916, would submit two short stories to be featured in *The Seven Arts*: “**The Thimble**”²⁹ and “**This Mortal Coil**”.³⁰ Out the two stories, the former seems to have been submitted by Lawrence to appeal to the magazine’s enthusiasm for expressing the mystical—Lawrence would write to its editor Frank asking if he was a theosophist—while the latter

²⁷ Qtd. in Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 387.

²⁸ Lewis Mumford writes in his scathing review for *The New Republic*: “It needs the spleen of the Edinburgh reviewers to reproach this sort of thing with sufficiently [sic] moral venom. *This will never do.*” Qtd. in John Chandler Griffin, *Biography of American Author Jean Toomer, 1894-1967* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 114.

²⁹ D. H. Lawrence, “The Thimble”, *The Seven Arts* 1 (Mar. 1917): 435-448.

³⁰ D. H. Lawrence, “The Mortal Coil”, *The Seven Arts* 2 (Jul. 1917): 280-305.

was offered after it was rejected by *The English Review*, perhaps as an afterthought.³¹ ‘**The Thimble**’ will be discussed in detail because it demonstrates with clarity two aspects of Frank’s aesthetic that Toomer specifically refers to in his critical writings: “unspoken consciousness” (*SEL* 7) and the “ironic use of Christian symbolism” (*BM* 176). It is possible that Toomer absorbed these two modernist methods solely from Frank or other writers; however, it would be harder for Frank to have denied being influenced at all by Lawrence’s technique, as he was the one who accepted Lawrence’s stories for publication in 1917, before these elements became part of his aesthetic. This story we shall analyze in isolation, as specific borrowing or overlap of literary techniques will be pointed out in the second half of the chapter dealing with the **form** and **aesthetic strategies** incorporated by **Jean Toomer** and his two closest mentors—**Sherwood Anderson** and **Waldo Frank**.

[26/☞]: ‘THE THIMBLE’

Lawrence’s story is about a young couple who rush to get married throwing “all considerations . . . to the wind”; after a two-week honeymoon, Lieutenant Hepburn is sent off to France to serve in the artillery division (*SA1* 435). The narrative begins ten months later and it is revealed that during the interim the wife has had a near death experience with pneumonia, and during that time the husband’s face has been disfigured by an exploding shell. As the protagonist recovers, she becomes “bewildered” with “no key to the puzzle” and realizes she and her husband did not really know each other (*SA1* 436). On the day of his return, while waiting and dreading their reunion, she finds a gold thimble studded with jewels in her chair; and as they are reunited in awkward conversation, she is understandably sickened by the grotesque image of his mutilated jaw. She enters a sort of trance fiddling with the thimble, which then becomes the topic of trivial conversation. But gradually as she suffers a “strange, convulsive struggle” and “pure unconsciousness passed over her” (*SA1* 444); she is transformed and awakened, able to perceive a higher reality. After a mystical scene where they are both reborn and resurrected spiritually, the story ends with the husband throwing the thimble out the window.

³¹ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 387; 825.

The short story is exceptional in the way it is able to actualize and express both the material realm and the spiritual realm to its readers; through various techniques and symbolism, Lawrence captures the gradually **ascent** towards mystical consciousness for his characters. It is rather obvious that the thimble is a symbol for the lower physical world the unnamed wife has been bound to—she begins the story as a materialist, from an aristocratic background, attracted to the physical attributes of her husband, preoccupied with fashion and surface realities. The husband, also, is portrayed as someone existing merely on the physical plane and trivial in his sensibilities. However, their respective crises take each of them to the brink of death and **transform** them; she comes to realize that her husband is just a “subjective impression” in her mind whose body was lit up by an “intense light”, but that “the man himself was something . . . in the dark” that threatened to “annul her own image of herself” (SA1 437). Life becomes terrifying and hopeless, and for her husband even more: “his eyes were like the eyes of a child that has been ill . . . That belongs almost more to death than to life . . . Waiting vaguely where the dark and the light divide (SA1 444). The images and descriptions given point to a much more vivid and intricate symbol for reality than the thimble:

And she held out the thimble. He reached to take it. She sat *obsessed*, as if his disfigurement were *photographed* upon her mind, as if she were some sensitive *medium* to which the thing had been *transferred*. There it was, her whole *consciousness* was *photographed* into an *image* of his disfigurement, the dreadful sunken mouth that was not a mouth, which mumbled in talking to her, in a disfigurement of speech. It was all accident, accident had taken *possession* of her very being. All she was, was purely accidental. It was like a sleep, a thin, taut, *overfilming* sleep in which the wakefulness struggles like a thing as yet unborn. She was sick in the thin, *transparent membrane* of her sleep, her *overlying* dream-consciousness, something actual but too unreal. (SA1 444; emphasis added)

Perhaps the best way to approach Lawrence’s symbolism, would be to look to a comparable analogy drawn by **Walter Benjamin** in a fragment written 1921-2, where he describes the poet Charles Baudelaire as,

a photographer who photographs the essence of things. But because of the nature of earthly time and its apparatus . . . manages only to register the negative of that essence on his photographic plates. No one can read these plates; no one can deduce from the negative . . . the true essence of things as they really are. Moreover, the elixir that might, act as a developing agent is unknown. And there is Baudelaire: . . . he alone, is able to read the plates,

thanks to infinite mental efforts. He alone is able to extract from the negatives of essence a presentiment of its real picture.³²

There is a striking similarity, the moment the thimble is handed over to the husband standing between dark and light, she becomes “possessed” by the accident and is transformed into a “medium” in both senses of the word. The light of his physical body was formerly lit up because the world is in negative; his true identity was in the dark and was threatening to “annul her own image”—but in the manner of a photographic negative, using the language of photographic transfer of light passing through the negative film, the *Phenomenal* and *Noumenal* planes become inverted along with the **dialectical charges** of all dualistic forces involved.

In *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence*, Robert E. Montgomery outlines the romantic philosophical foundations behind **D. H. Lawrence’s** aesthetics, especially the **dualistic polarities** with which he was “singularly—obsessively—preoccupied with”: Light / Dark; Sun / Moon; Mind / Senses; Knowledge / Nature; Male / Female; Love / Law; Motion / Inertia; The Son / The Father; etc.³³ The sudden shock of lightning in the story effects a symbolic **geomagnetic inversion** of all dualistic charges: the wife begins to awaken to a higher mystical reality. She senses that her husband’s physical deformity is but an accurate portrait of her psychological state. The italicized words are indirect clues to what is actually happening on the higher plane, in a language we can comprehend. Every instance in **CANE** where the spiritual plane is hinted at, Toomer alerts the attentive reader with similar mystical cues by using words like “queer”, “strange”, “uncanny”, “weird”, “moony”, etc. Mrs. Hepburn’s transformation is described in the following manner revealing the spiritual:

And her soul *divined* that he was [deciding] whether to come in to life, or hesitate, and pass back. She lowered her eyelids, and for a second she sat erect *like a mask*, with closed eyes, whilst a *spasm of pure unconsciousness passed over her*. It departed again, and she opened her eyes. She was *awake*. . . . [When her husband spoke it was] as if speech itself were disintegrating. (SA1 444 ; italics added)

³² Walter Benjamin, “Baudelaire”, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913-1926, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996), 361.

³³ Robert E. Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13-4.

This moment of course is analogous to the moment Plato's freed prisoner ascends and can leave the cave of shadows to go into the light. She can perceive higher truths and having become enlightened has mystical powers to perceive essences and vibrations beyond the sensory world:

It was on the tip of her tongue to say: "And why didn't you die?" But instead, her soul, *weak* and *new-born*, looked helplessly at him.

"I couldn't while you were alive," he said.

"What?"

"Die."

She seemed to pass away into *unconsciousness*. (SA1 445; italics added)

Before she is able to voice her words into sounds, her mind has already communicated her message on a higher plane. This is **unspoken consciousness** technique is similar to clairvoyance or telepathy, where unspoken thoughts are not only made conscious and communicated without the need for words, it is a moment of fusion on a higher spiritual plane of consciousness. Toomer writes in his essay 'Waldo Frank's *Holiday*' that unspoken consciousness technique plays a larger role "than in any [of Frank's] previous work" and it is "a structural mechanism" that allows "condensation, swiftness, and dramatic contrasts essential to such a design" (SEL 9). He goes on to state that in the revival tent the "psychology of a repressed people, seeking release" as "Virginia Hade's consciousness is unfolded in seven lyric pages" (SEL 9). In Lawrence's story the Hepburns attain a purgatory-like state neither in death nor life:

"Are we dead now?" he asked in fear.

"Yes, we are."

There was a suspense of anguish, it was so true.

"Then we must be born again," he said.

* * * * *

But her eyes were watching him who was dead, who was there like Lazarus before her, as yet *unrisen*. (SA1 447-8; italics added)

And at this moment, Mrs. Hepburn has reached a state similar to Benjamin's Baudelaire, able to sense "the true essence of things as they really are". And this unknown and mysterious, miraculous power is presented in terms that Western readers we can understand—using Christian terminology and allusion. In his unpublished essay 'Waldo Frank as Ironist', Toomer writes that "in six of the fourteen designs of City Block, the ironic use of Christian

symbolism creates a pervasive mordant note” (*BM* 176). Lawrence’s story incorporates Christian imagery by directly alluding to a scene in the Book of John, detailing an episode after Jesus’ resurrection just before his ascension:

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:** but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God: (John 20:16-17, *KJV*).

A direct parallel is established between the story and biblical passage, and this correspondence provides the key and context for understanding the mysterious climax of ‘**The Thimble**’: the ineffable mystical transformation of the protagonist is expressed in Christian terms and equated with Jesus’ resurrection, receiving the Holy Spirit, and ascension—symbolizing rebirth, the epiphanic moment of revelation, and elevation into divine mystical union.

“And do you think we’ve got the power to come to life again, now we’re dead?” she asked.

“I think we have,” he said.

There was a long pause.

“Resurrection?” she said, almost as if mocking. They looked slowly and darkly into each other’s eyes. He rose unthinking, went over and touched her hand.

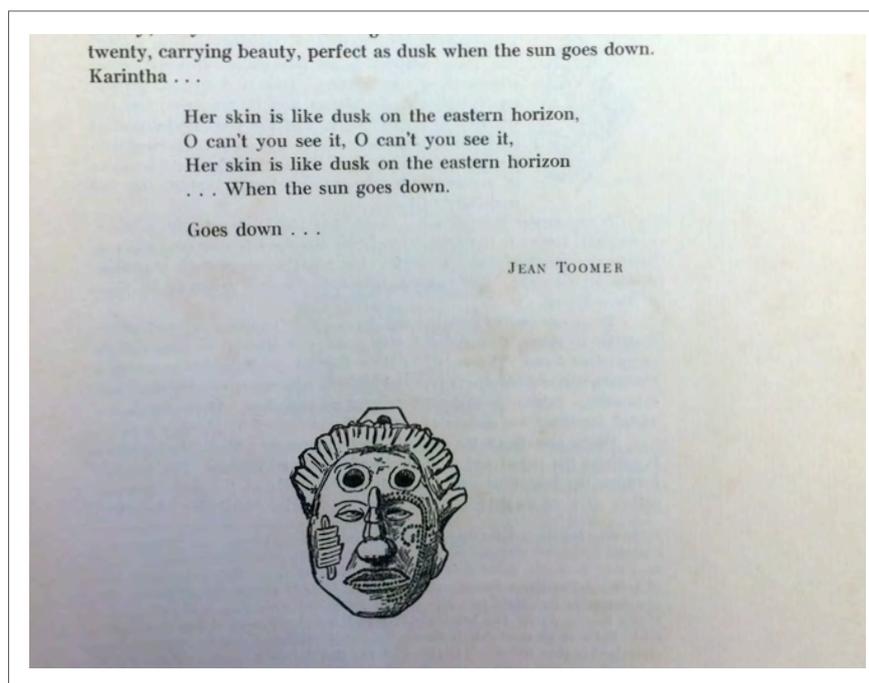
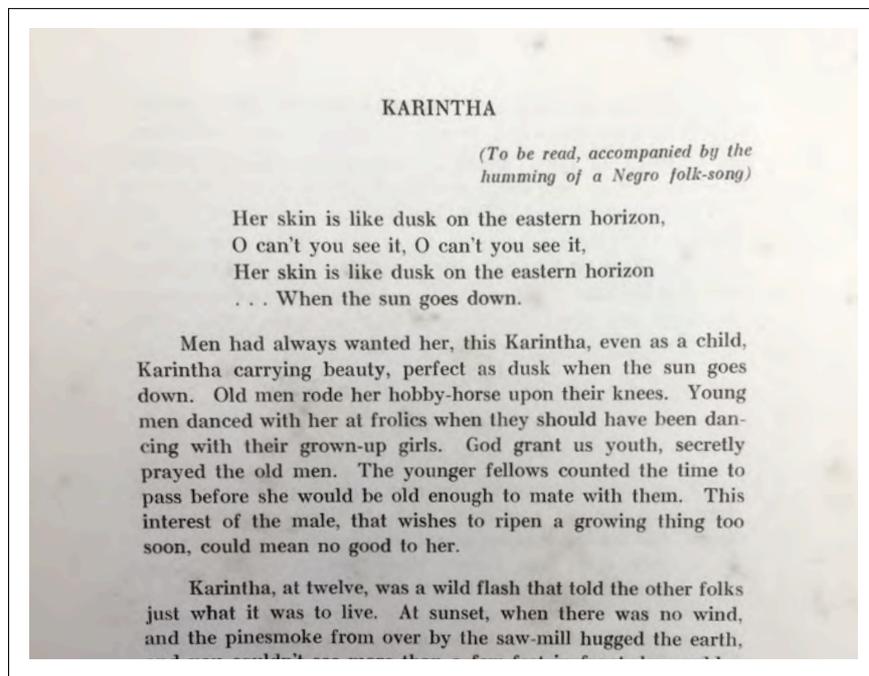
“*“Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto the Father,”*” she quoted, in her level, cold-sounding voice.

“No,” he answered; “it takes time.”

The incongruous plainness of his statement made her jerk with laughter. At the same instant her face contracted and she said in a loud voice, as if her soul was being torn from her:

“Am I going to love you?” (*SA1* 447-8; italics added)

The Hepburns look simultaneously at the thimble, before the husband throws it out the window, symbolizing that both of them have moved on to a newer mode of existence leaving the material behind—they have been ‘**resurrected**’. This scene mirrors the account given in verses 22-23 that follows the episode quoted above, where the theme of receiving the Holy Spirit and holding onto or casting off sins is discussed—which directly correlates to the casting off and discarding the thimble of the title. The story ends with the fractured couple being **reconciled**, as they step out of the darkness and into a truer essence of reality invisible to most—the ‘**There**’—where they join in **Sympathy** and mutual understanding on the higher *Spiritual* plane.



Images C4.1-2: 'Karintha' with directive and printed alongside wood-cut image in *Broom's* "primitive issue". Jean Toomer, "Karintha", *Broom* 4, no. 2 (Jan., 1923): 83, 85.



A FOREST OF CORRESPONDENCE 2

Johann Gottfried Herder, as the father of both *Volkslieder* and *Volkspoesie* in Germany, played a consequential role in providing “the charter for the vernacularization of literature as a cornerstone of romantic nationalism”.³⁴ Among the various points listed in this ‘charter’, one might find: (x) ascribing primacy to the primitive songs and poetry of the folk; (y) drawing rhetorical strategies from folk tales of the oral tradition; and (z) contributing to the deep fascination with the ancient texts of the East, as Germany was at the center of Europe’s ‘Oriental Renaissance’. Herder’s reception of these works would run counter to Enlightenment thinking—his attitudes were profoundly influenced by his teacher **Johann Georg Hamann**, who viewed these works (along with the Hebrew Bible) as beautiful poetry containing humanity’s greatest wisdom.³⁵ Herder consistently used the term *Morgenland*, or ‘land of the morning sun’, for the **Orient**—which he believed mankind’s place of origin.³⁶ Herder would base his philosophical worldview and programs for cultural nationalism, *Bildung*, and *Humanität* upon the then radical position of historicist relativism.³⁷

Herder’s folk aesthetic and his theories regarding national identity would lay the vital seeds for a new and authentic Russian literature; and also provide the blueprint for the nativist movements in America—the **Chicago Renaissance**, the *Seven Arts* circle in New York, and even the **imagist** group—each of these would build upon and pass on this inherited tradition. Herder’s influence is long-lasting and his aesthetic principles are far-reaching; his imprint is evident not only in the works of his protégé Goethe, who helped popularize many of these ideals—but also stamped upon those of subsequent groups that inherited and adopted these foundations—the *Frühromantik*, poetic realist, transcendentalist, and French symbolist movements.

³⁴ Richard Bauman, and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 181.

³⁵ For a comprehensive overview of Herder and the Orient, see Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38-52.

³⁶ Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 76. For an extended quotation, see note 10 of the final chapter, ‘Closing the Circle’.

³⁷ See “*Humanität*” in the **Glossary** for extended context from North’s *Herder’s Philosophy*.



[**HERDERIAN FLORA 2**] : Our first excerpt is from the introductory essay in Herder's *Alte Volkslieder* (Ancient Folk Songs), a four volume anthology published in 1774:

In a climate that is so mild, mere sprouts and buds could turn into the forests that nurtured an ancient way of thinking. In the shadow of that forest, poetry could touch those who were foreign or only *distantly related* neighbors, also bringing them joy. [. . .]

Would that I might find my brothers in arms, Germans, fellow citizens, and friends of this land, whose envy and anger I might arouse, so that they would respond, full of anger, revenge, and joy, and they might *surpass me as much as possible!* This is what I wish; this is what I hope for!

A great people with rich abundance! More to the point, the people and wealth of ten great peoples . . . do you have no *folk songs?* [. . .]

However, the songs lie so *deeply buried*, they are so *despised* and *held at a distance*, they stand at the edge of *extinction*. It is precisely for these reasons that I dare to undertake this project, which has the primary goal of urging others *more numerous* and with *better fortune* to take up the cause. But do so with *zeal* and *courage*, and do it *now!* We stand at the very edge of the precipice: in another hundred years it will be too late! [. . .]

If we only truly had a history of the German national spirit . . . but how, where, if only, and whereby? . . . it would receive all the *rubbish* and *weakness* that had accumulated in the sayings of all surrounding peoples. Alas, that would say far more than I am able here to say. If the growth of a tree too quickly spreads into unruly branches that can no longer be nourished *together from a single root*, nor do they desire to be, would not the result be a relentless fate, even in the crown of the tree, truly dominated by the disadvantages of honor and misfortune? *Offshoots, saplings, and uncontrollable brush* would not be weeded out by even the gentlest hand, and the tree would forever *break apart and lose its branches*. [. . .]

How happy I should be, if I could *again truly account for recovered national fragments!* Even in this case, as it so often and usually is, the seed, the sprout, the branch, and the *tree full of fruit* would spring forth from the most meager beginnings: that would be *growth from God!* [. . .]

At this moment! My German brothers, let me call out one more time! At this moment, all that survives from the ways the folk think approaches the edge of the abyss of memory as rapidly as possible! Like cancer the light of so-called culture consumes all that surrounds it! [. . .]

If only we could employ *the truly fine stories that touch upon the sensibilities of the folk*, possessing only a single moral: *true music* is that which stirs the ear with simple tones. If only the human soul, in its formative years, could be the *soul of the folk*, seeing and hearing, not thinking and pondering! [. . .] (*SNG 30-34*; emphasis original)



[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 2**] : Our second text is the poem ‘**Song of the Son**’, which first appeared in the April 1922 issue of *The Crisis*; it was the first piece to appear in magazine form that would later be included in **CANE**.

Pour O pour that parting soul in song,
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night,
Into the velvet pine-smoke air to-night,
And let the valley carry it along.
And let the valley carry it along.

O land and soil, red soil and sweet-gum tree,
So scant of grass, so profligate of pines,
Now just before an epoch’s sun declines
Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee,
Thy son, I have in time returned to thee.

In time, for though the sun is setting on
A song-lit race of slaves, it has not set;
Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet
To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone,
Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone.

O Negro slaves, dark purple ripened plums,
Squeezed, and bursting in the pine-wood air,
Passing, before they stripped the old tree bare
One plum was saved for me, one seed becomes

An everlasting song, a singing tree,
Caroling softly souls of slavery,
What they were, and what they are to me,
Caroling softly souls of slavery. (C 14)

[**A THIRD TREE**] : Ode 9, Book II, *The Book of Songs* [詩經] (1046-771 BC)

Dropping are the fruits from the plum-tree;
There are only seven of them left!
For the gentlemen who seek me,
This is the fortunate time!

Dropping are the fruits from the plum-tree;
There are only three of them left!
For the gentlemen who seek me,
Now is the time.

Dropt are the fruits from the plum-tree;
In my shallow basket I have collected them.
Would the gentlemen who seek me
[Only] speak about it!³⁸

³⁸ Anonymous, “Peaou Yew Mei”, in *Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, *The She King*, trans. and ed. James Legge (London: Henry Frowde, 1939), 30-1.

Herder's sense of urgency to preserve the "ways of the folk" being swallowed by "so-called culture" and lost in the "abyss of memory"—is one keenly felt by Toomer as well. Jean's recollection of his reaction to hearing folksong sung by a Black family during his brief sojourn in Georgia alludes to this awareness:

They sang. And this was the first time I'd ever heard the folk-songs and spirituals. They were very rich and sad and joyous and beautiful. . . . I realized with deep regret, that the spirituals, meeting ridicule, would be certain to die out. . . . The folk-spirit was walking in to die on the modern desert. That spirit was so beautiful. It's death so tragic. (*W&S* 123)

Herder laments that the "*soul of the folk*" is "*despised*" and "*beld at a distance*", sounding the alarm that this "*deeply buried*" essence will soon become extinct: "in another hundred years it will be too late!" Toomer's letter to Waldo Frank, written early January 1923, echoes this very sentiment, and reveals just how much the nativist movement in America draws from Herder's program of turning to the primitive folk to revitalize a sense of cultural nationalism:

the Negro of the folk-song has all but passed away: the Negro of the emotional church is fading. A hundred years from now, these Negroes, if they exist at all will live in art . . . America needs these elements. They are passing. Let us grab and hold them while there is still time. (*LJT* 115)

What Toomer wished to capture was not merely his experiences with the folk in Georgia, but the more important emotional affinity and spiritual revelation his first contact with the 'Negro *Volkgeist*' and folksong awakened within him:

In my own stuff, in those pieces the come nearest to the old Negro, to the spirit saturate with folk-song: Karintha and Fern, the dominant emotion is a sadness derived from a sense of fading . . . (*LJT* 115)

From which avenues did Jean Toomer receive these clearly Herderian notions? Rather than a single line of transmission, we find three obvious streams:

{ *ERSTE* } African-American cultural leaders **W. E. B. Du Bois** and Alain Locke. Du Bois was clearly influenced by German concepts of *Volk* and nation during his time spent studying at the University of Berlin. His *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) relates how the "haunting echo of these weird old songs in which the soul of the black slave spoke to men . . . stirred [him] strangely".³⁹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses identifies Du Bois as "the first American intellectual to attempt a theory of African American culture rooted in the folkways of the masses", citing his 1897 paper presented to the American Negro Academy advocating "the

³⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Modern Library, 1996), 252.

development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit".⁴⁰ Toomer corresponded intermittently with Du Bois, who was an acquaintance of his grandfather and published 'Song of the Sun' in *Crisis*, but he was closer to and regularly corresponded with **Alain Locke** around the time of his Georgia trip and writing of *CANE*. In his *New Negro* anthology introduction, 'Negro Youth Speaks' (1925), Locke proclaims that, "Negro genius to-day relies upon the race-gift as a vast spiritual endowment from which our best developments have come and must come"—and identifies this "racial substance" to be at the core of the "technically distinctive . . . idiom of style":

In flavor of language, flow of phrase, accent of rhythm in prose, verse and music, color and tone of imagery, idiom and timbre of emotion and symbolism . . . under the sophistications of modern style may be detected in almost all our artists a fresh distinctive note that the majority of them admit as the instinctive gift of the folk spirit.⁴¹

In 'Beauty Instead of Ashes', Locke expresses his hope that African-American art "will be true to original qualities of the **folk** temperament . . . [which] stands today, one would say, in the position of the German temperament in **Herder's** day" and his belief that the prescription for progress—and a "new pride" overcoming the sense of inferiority—is "to find **genius** of the first order to give it final definiteness of outline and **animate** it with creative universality".⁴²

{ **ZWEITE** } In *America's Coming of Age* (1915), **Van Wyck Brooks** substitutes the term "national culture" for *folk*—describing it as the "kind of spiritual teamwork, which radiates outward and articulates the entire living fabric of a race" (*ACA* 120). As an editor at *Poetry* magazine, **Alice Corbin (Henderson)** would be influential in shaping an American nativist aesthetic that looked to vernacular folk forms—with articles like 'Poetry of the American Negro' (1917), 'A Note on Primitive Poetry' (1919), 'The Folk Poetry of these States' (1920), and 'Who Writes Folk-Songs?' (1921). She posits that "[i]t may be that the folk-spirit is a necessary sub-soil for any fine national poetic flowering" and laments the failure "to recognize [the native folk-songs]"

⁴⁰ Moses, Wilson Jeremiah, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 220-221.

⁴¹ Alain L. Locke, *The Works of Alain Locke*, ed. Charles Molesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 183, 186.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 218. Emphasis added.

peculiar significance as genuine expressions of the folk-spirit”—while earlier advising the adoption of “Negro songs and spirituals as a part of our store of native folk-song”.⁴³ This appropriation becomes necessary, because as **John Gould Fletcher** points out in ‘**Some Contemporary American Poets**’ (1920):

. . . the thing which expresses the life of the community—that is, folk lore. Now America has practically no folk lore except the Indian, which requires a very different type of brain from the average Angle-Saxon to appreciate it. The only other folk lore which America has produced, and which it is in any way capable of instant understanding, was that invented by the American Negro in slavery. (*FLE* 126)

America, as a hybrid nation that was made up of peoples of various cultures, lacked a unified native *Volkgeist* or shared ancestry from which to draw from.

{ *DRITTE* } **Alfred Stieglitz’s** 291 gallery and his *Camera Work* magazine (1904-17), functioned like a market square transacting in the latest trends in art that were celebrated on the European continent. Herderian aesthetics grounded on the primitive folk and Neo-Platonic concepts had long since taken root—having been passed along via German writers into literary works of **Russian literature** and **French symbolism** that were in vogue—now these aesthetic and cultural notions could be spotted blossoming in every artistic medium. The Russian critic **Viktor Shklovsky** argues that “as literary schools change, it is not sons who inherit from their fathers, but nephews who inherit from their uncles”—noting how various folk and popular traditions, as well as literary trends in neighboring countries, influenced Russian writers more than their direct literary predecessors.⁴⁴ Perhaps we could build upon this observation and claim that as truly and innovative ‘novel’ **aesthetic devices** became harder to discover, **avant-gardes** increasingly began to look to ‘cousins and step-fathers’ for inspiration—searching out faraway traditions and even formerly distant disciplines. *The Seven Arts* literary magazine was formed in 1916 with this objective in mind of drawing from various artistic spheres—a formula already firmly realized by Stieglitz since 1910, when he broadened the horizons of *Camera Work*

⁴³ Alice Corbin Henderson, “The Folk Poetry of these States”. *Poetry Magazine* 16, no. 5 (August 1920): 271-2; 266.

⁴⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader*, ed. & trans. Alexandra Berlina (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 98.

beyond photography, to introduce European modern artists and discuss aesthetic ideas and philosophy.

John Weichsel's 'Cosmism or Amorphism?' (1913) brings together a curious mixture of cousins, step-fathers, uncles, and nephews—all under a single roof: poets like Goethe, Schiller, Poe, Maeterlinck, Apollinaire, Jules Romains; philosophers like Plato, Hegel, Bergson, Lipps, Worringer; musicians like Richard Wagner, Arnold Schoenberg, Skryabin, Von Hartmann; and painters like Picasso, Van Gogh, Du Champ, including the "Blaue Reiter" group and Japanese *Ukiyo-e* artists. The essay places Paul Cézanne on a grand pedestal and refers to him as "the arch-primitive" in opposition to Wassily Kandinsky and his inferior spiritual methods. Cézanne and Gauguin are positioned in the essay as "arch-artists" whose goal is to "reveal reality by form; its soul in color; its dynamics in line; its mystic leitmotiv in tone-relations;—in fine, to synthesize the world in symbols born of racial experience".⁴⁵ This assessment of Cézanne was proffered fifteen years before Fletcher's essay 'The Key to Modernist Painting' (1928) declared that "Cubism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Vorticism, even Futurism—all start from Cézanne" (*FLE* 233); and about seven years before Jean Toomer identifies him as a "master" of great art in his "Poetry" Notebook ["POE" II:4]. Surprisingly, we find many of the names Weichsel mentions to be the very same ones appearing within the vast web of influences charted on our MAP.

Although never mentioned, the influence of Herder's Neo-primitive *Volk* philosophy is ever-present—the word "racial" is invoked no fewer than 66 times throughout its thirteen pages. 'Einfühlung' is brought up in connection with Lipps and is defined as "the projection of the artist's ego into his perceptions, and which, from our point of view, is a racial apperception of new experience . . ." (*CAM* 81; emphasis added). In regards to New Art's relationship to music, Weichsel's writes: "Music, appealing through sound-sensations, which are elements of orientation much older racially, than those of vision, summons into our consciousness ancestral memories antecedent to those of even the oldest plastic recollection" (*CAM* 82; emphasis added). What Weichsel refers to as

⁴⁵ John Weichsel, "Cosmism or Amorphism", *Camera Work*, no. 42-3 (April-July 1913): 77. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'CAM'. Emphasis added.

“the tree-concept” is unmistakably Herder’s **organicism**, and the “racial seed” no doubt expresses the *Volksgeist*, just as the plum seed symbolizes in CANE:

Racial sensations that have originated from plastic perception, through the agency of one of our plastic sense-organs, are irrevocably bound up with form-conceptions. A tree that has virtually grown into **racial consciousness** by means of its plastic characteristics, will forever summon all **ancestral recollections** of it in terms of their origination, i. e. in form-conceptions. It will appeal by an impression paralleling its cerebral evolution. In doing this it cannot fail to make a contact with all of the eternal experiences concomitant with the racial acquisition of the **tree-concept**. Hence it will bring the whole treasure of our racial life to enrich the new impression; it will become an affair of the whole man. [. . .] Immersion in the universality of race feeling, and nothing less, gives poetry and art. [. . .] Such considerations lead the New artist to a demand for full freedom of expression and an absolute awakening of the racial man. Archaism and **Primitivism**, dictated by plastic considerations, were fostered by this ideology. It meant the shedding of the epochal husk, to obtain the **racial seed**. (CAM 73-4; emphasis added)

The oldest folksongs of China were collected in the *The Book of Songs*, or *Shijing* [詩經], written about 1046-771 BC. One of the most famous of these odes, ‘**Peaou Yew Mei**’, is about a plum tree and sung through the voice of a maiden in search of a husband. The folksong is structured around the ancient formulae of repetition with variation and **indirection**, which leaves the true theme hidden. The young woman calling out to suitors is cognizant that her time is limited—as the falling plums not only symbolize the passage of time, but also her fertility—and she does her best to hide her desperation as summer ends and the tree is left barren. The forms and methods of expression are distinct for each *Volk*, but the archetypal well they draw symbolic meaning from—**Nature & Noumena**—is universal. This ancient Chinese folksong and Jean Toomer’s ‘**Song of the Son**’ share the same central symbol of a **plum**, using images of the fruit falling to express a sense of urgency. Time is measured in the latter with the sun setting on “A song-lit race of slaves” (line 12), and the tree is almost “stripped bare” as ripe purple plums have mostly **fallen**, symbolizing the almost faded ‘**Negro folk-spirit**’. Fortunately, the son returns just *in time*—“Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet / To catch thy plaintive soul” (lines 13-14)—to save this “**racial seed**” by cultivating it into the “everlasting song” and “singing tree” that is CANE.



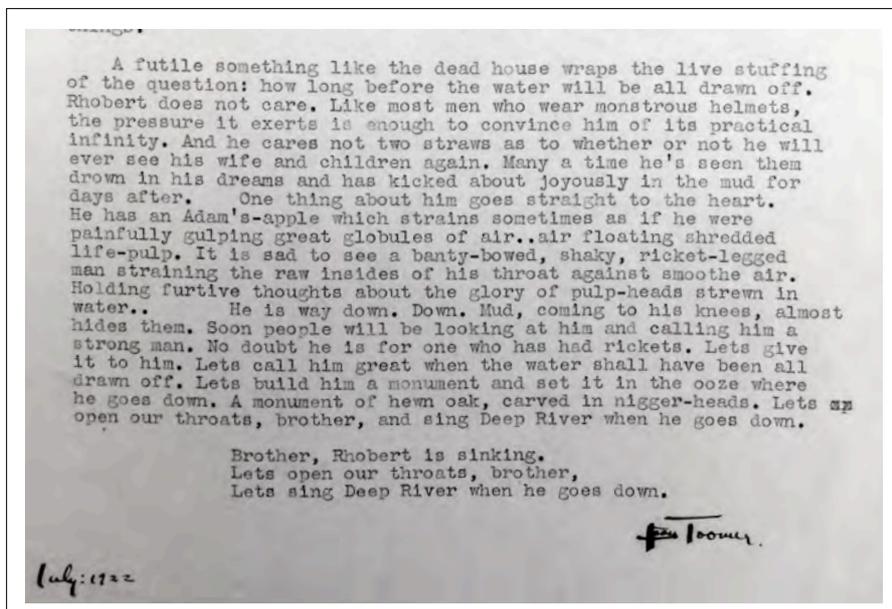


Image C5. Typed and signed final draft of "Rhobert", July 1922. JTP, Box 58, Folder 1371. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

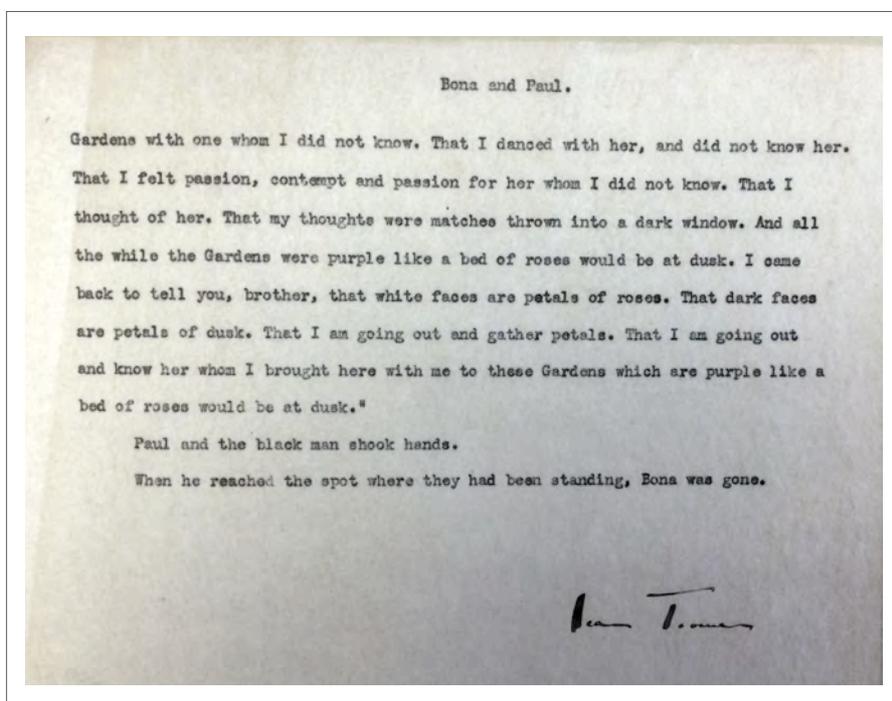


Image C6. Typed and signed final draft of "Bona and Paul", winter 1922. JTP, Box 57, Folder 1336. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

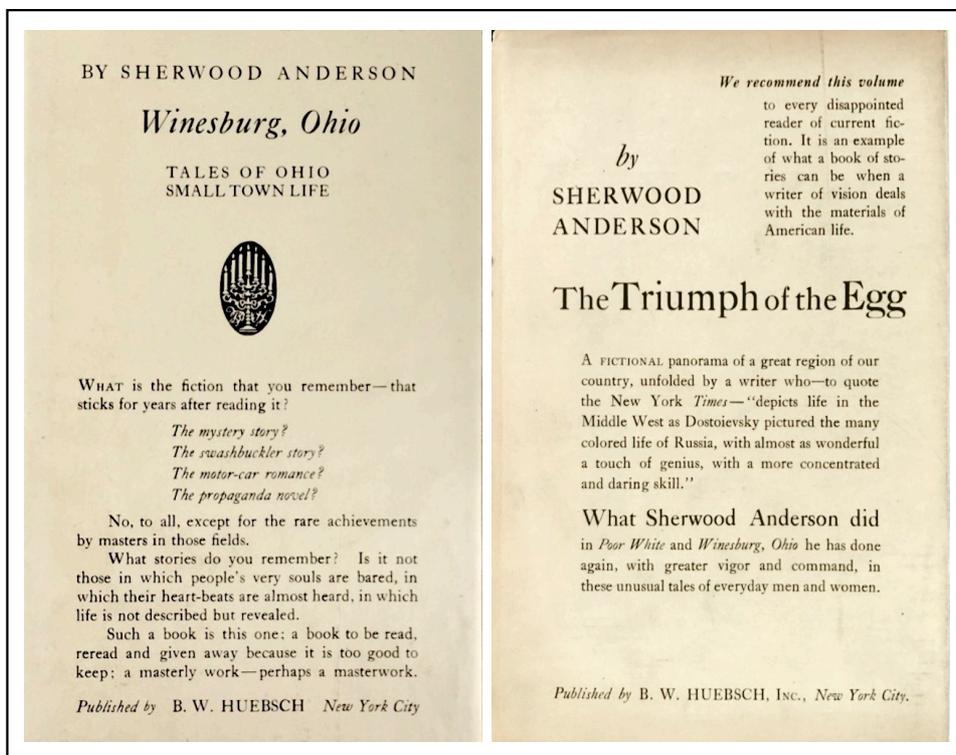


Image C7. Dust Jacket for *Winesburg, Ohio*. (Left). Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio: Intimate Histories of Every-day People* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1922). Image C8 Dust Jacket for *The Triumph of the Egg*. (Right). Sherwood Anderson, *The Triumph of the Egg: A Book of Impressions from American Life in Tales and Poems* (New York: Huebsch, 1921).

[2ǎ]: WALDO FRANK vs. SHERWOOD ANDERSON

For the precise translation of its synthesis, it is necessary
for symbolism to take on an archetypal and complex style;
of unpolluted terms, periods which brace themselves
alternating with periods of undulating lapses, significant
pleonasm, mysterious ellipses, outstanding anacoluthia,
any audacious and multiform surplus; finally the good
language – instituted and updated . . .

— Jean Moréas, “*Le Symbolisme*”⁴⁶

The negroes are the living wonder of this place.
What a tale if someone could penetrate into the
home and life of the Southern negro and not taint it
in the ordinary superficial way.

— Sherwood Anderson,
letter to Hart Crane⁴⁷

So, what became of Jean Toomer’s apprenticeship? How did his *Bildung* progress? Toomer’s recollection of that period of his life, describes the period of his and *CANE*’s formation with these words:

I resumed writing. Some of the pieces were impure and formless. But some, I knew, were really written. These authentic ones I began sending out. The *Double Dealer* New Orleans was the first to accept. Then the *Liberator* and, later, *Broom*. In these literary magazines I made my mark. Beyond them was Waldo Frank and the possibility of a book. . . . But I had not enough for a book. I had at most a hundred typed pages. These were about Georgia. It seemed that I had said all I had to say about it. So what, then I’d fill out. The middle section of *Cane* was thus manufactured. (*W&S* 124-5)

There are some problems with this account, like Toomer obscuring the fact that the first piece to be published was ‘*Song of the Sun*’ in a ‘Black’ journal;⁴⁸ many critics have also taken issue with the notion that the Washington pieces of *CANE* were merely created as filler material “manufactured” to pad a book, rather than inspired or organically grown, like the Georgia pieces. Is Frank—as presented here—an obstacle or facilitator in being tied so closely to getting a book published? I want to propose a theory that the complicated relationship between **Waldo Frank** and **Sherwood Anderson** and the tensions created by the clash of their aesthetics is ultimately what gives

⁴⁶ “*SYM*”.

⁴⁷ Qtd. in Hart Crane, “Sherwood Anderson”, in *Hart Crane: Complete Poems & Selected Letters* (New York: Library of America, 2006), 157. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*CRA*’.

⁴⁸ ‘*Song of the Sun*’ first appeared in the June (1922) issue of Du Bois’s periodical *The Crisis*.

CANE its mercurial force and juxtapositional instability. I want to show that Sherwood Anderson's aesthetics, with its complex meta-substructures and elliptical narration in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) raises doubts that **CANE** is as Scruggs and Van DeMarr have argued, "the son of two fathers".⁴⁹ My contention is that Waldo Frank's influence, although present, has been overstated by critics (when it comes to Frank's fiction), and that for Toomer, like Munson noted, mostly "it is the hand of Sherwood Anderson that he takes hold" (*DES* 179).

My sense of the situation is that the path Toomer's apprenticeship took was one of studying and adapting those strategies that **Sherwood Anderson** used in his short-story cycles to become the exemplar of the new nativist American literary voice—only to sense upon joining Waldo's circle, that the formerly lauded writer and recipient of the *Dial* Award was no longer in favor with the group. Anderson had become *persona non grata* due to the falling out with his former "brother" and champion, **Waldo Frank**, and relations further soured with Munson's relentless public attacks on Anderson in *Secession*. We might view the late-stage Washington pieces as a last minute attempt by Toomer to adjust course and win over his new friends by adopting a much more experimental, psychological, and expressionist narrative mode. These tensions may also explain why Toomer was so quick to proffer negative assessments of Anderson in his letters—despite Frank's attempts to veil his animosity by projecting a neutral stance towards Sherwood, claiming he did not fully understand the reasons for Munson's venom (see *BM* 94).

It seems acceptance into the group was tacitly understood to be conditional upon declaring Frank superior to Anderson. In **Hart Crane's** correspondence with Munson we can sense this pressure and arm twisting—the effusive praise for Anderson and critical view of Frank's works evident in early letters shift to an awkward, almost forced praise in later correspondence elevating Frank above even Joyce: "*Rehab* is a beautiful book. It has a synthetic beauty that is more evident than the lyric note behind *Ulysses*. It contains beautiful language—Frank is a real artist—no doubt about that and of course way beyond Anderson when it comes to craft" (*CRA* 290). At some point after

⁴⁹ Scruggs & Van DeMarr, 132-34. See section titled 'The Son of Two Fathers' in Chapter 5.

his book's publication is secured, Toomer's public 'betrayal' of Waldo Frank by submitting a brutally honest review of *Holiday* to the *Dial* is significant for several reasons: he may have adjusted course after realizing his misstep—that Anderson's style far outshone Frank's, and that critics of the latter were correct about his style being flawed and inferior; or, he may have known all along yet understood his place as a 'colored' writer who wanted to break into the 'white' publishing world—the power dynamic of their friendship dictated that he play the fawning inferior to receive Frank's patronage.⁵⁰ This view of the situation and the tensions latent in the Seven Arts circle may help to explain the retrospective account given of *CANE*'s "manufactured" middle section.

The general critical consensus—that *CANE* is a "fusion" that weds Waldo Frank's program of "mystical realism" (*WFS* 27, 60) together with Sherwood Anderson's lyrical style and poetics, "complicated" by Toomer's racial politics—needs to be re-examined to establish the differences between Frank's and Anderson's aesthetics, style, and metaphysics, in order to reassess what Toomer drew from each. To better understand the structure and dynamics of *CANE*, we zoom out to first consider its (I) **form** in relation to several sources of influence, then attempt to contextualize the (II) **aesthetic strategies** adopted.

SECTION I : FORM—"ROMANTIC REARRANGEMENT"

In a letter to Anderson, Toomer admitted that "Winesburg, Ohio and the Triumph of the Egg are elements of my growing. It is hard to think of myself as maturing without them" (*LJT* 102). He goes on in the letter to detail how he and a friend were particularly moved by the story 'Out of Nowhere into Nothing'.⁵¹ Although *Winesburg, Ohio* is often viewed as the more influential text, it is my belief that *The Triumph of the Egg*'s form, blending short-story and poetry, along with its final extended story—had a greater influence on the structure of *CANE*; this argument will be laid out in the following sections and throughout **Chapter 3**.

⁵⁰ Griffin makes a compelling, albeit cynical, argument that "their relationship [was] one essentially utilitarian in nature", where Toomer become "a mere tool" for Frank to "exploit" (including being 'asked' to write an favorable review of Munson's book on Frank), while his enthusiasm to visit New York and Darien is met with an endless series of excuses. John Chandler Griffin, *Biography of American Author Jean Toomer, 1894-1967* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 88-9; 120-3.

⁵¹ Sherwood Anderson's 'Out of Nowhere into Nothing' was published over three issues of the *Dial* in 1921, but is also included as the final prose piece in *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921).

John Peale Bishop's *Vanity Fair* review of *The Triumph of the Egg*⁵² pointed out many similarities between Anderson and **D. H. Lawrence**: both portray the dynamics of human interrelationships and the "private struggles of the soul" (although in different ways), both turn to a "mythopoeic faculty" to capture "the physical ecstasy and contentment that would come of belonging utterly to the dark rich life of the earth and moving with the ancient rhythms of light and dark, of green and sterile seasons, of dayrise and nightfall".⁵³ In a letter written in reply, Anderson would acknowledge the positive review: "It is an amazing article"; yet he would claim that the writer that "opened my eyes to what the possibilities might be in the development of my own vein was not Lawrence but Dostoevsky who has always been the one great master to me".⁵⁴ However, as early as January 1921, in a letter to **Paul Rosenfeld** upon finishing *Women in Love*, he called it "tremendous . . . like a storm I once lived through"; and in another letter to Harry Hansen he heralds Lawrence's emergence into the literary world as "one of the great events of our decade".⁵⁵ Anderson and Lawrence (as well as Joyce) shared the same publisher, B. W. Huebsch, from 1919, and, although it is hard to precisely gauge the extent and impact that Lawrence's books actually had, the title and overarching theme of *The Triumph of the Egg* do seem to have been directly inspired by the Englishman's essay, 'The Crown' (1915):

The ego, the self-conscious ego remains fixed, a final envelope around us. And we are then safe inside the mundane egg of our own self-consciousness and self-esteem. Safe we are! Safe as houses! Shut up like unborn chickens that cannot break the shell of the egg. . . . **Safe within the everlasting walls of the egg-shell we have not the courage, or the energy, to crack, we fall, like the shut-up chicken, into a pure flux of corruption,** and the worms are our angels. And mankind falls into the state of innumerable little worms bred within the unbroken shell: all clamoring for food, food, food, all feeding on the dead body of creation, all crying peace! peace! universal peace!

⁵² John Peale Bishop, "The Distrust of Ideas," *Vanity Fair* 17 (Dec. 1921): 10–12.

⁵³ Qtd. in Walter B. Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, vol. 1 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 442.

⁵⁴ Sherwood Anderson, *Selected Letters*, ed. Charles E. Modlin (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 26.

⁵⁵ Qtd. in Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 398.

brotherhood of man! Everything must be “universal,” to the conquering worm. It is only *life* which is different.⁵⁶

Being confined in houses and shells is a recurring motif throughout *Triumph*, and in the section immediately after we can discern the title’s debt to Lawrence:

“To those who are in prison, whose being is prisoner within the walls of unliving fact, there are only two forms of triumph: **the triumph of inertia**, or **the triumph of the will**.”⁵⁷

The structure of *Triumph of the Egg* is dialectical in that stories are split in two groups that are placed in dynamic opposition to each other. This would provide the blueprint for Toomer to modify into his tri-partite structure for *CANE*. Additionally, Anderson’s subtitle, “*A Book of Impressions from American Life in Tales and Poems*”, would allude to the fact that the short-story sequence would intermix poems into the cycle of short fiction, along with choruses and songs included in a number of pieces. The opening poem and the title page inscription quoting a passage from his own *Mid-American Chants* (1918) previously published in *The Seven Arts*—would both set the theme and mood for the entire text. Toomer seems to have modeled his inscription and dedication in a similar manner, and the inclusion of images into *Triumph*—several busts of characters from the text modeled in clay by the author’s wife, Tennessee Mitchell—these may have influenced him to try something similarly original with *CANE*’s cover and dust jacket design.

Triumph of the Egg

In the fields
Seeds on the air floating.
In the towns
Black smoke for a shroud.
In my breast
Understanding awake.
—Mid-American Chants.

(EGG vi)

CANE

Oracular.
Redolent of fermenting syrup,
Purple of the dusk,
Deep-rooted cane.

(C 1)

Toomer’s inscription plays a similar role to Anderson’s opening: providing primary images and tone running through the various pieces. “*Oracular*” and “*Redolent*” hint at the mystery and mysticism that would infuse the entire text. Coincidentally, these two words also appear near each other in Calvin Thomas’s

⁵⁶ D. H. Lawrence, “The Crown”, in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 286. Emphasis added.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

History of German Literature, near the section about **Goethe**: “Schlegel . . . was fond of paradox, regarded obscurity as rather meritorious, and preferred to express himself dogmatically in **oracular** fragments”; and, “The savior of Theodor Storm (1817-88) is very like that of Mörike, but with the difference that his verse is **redolent** of the north”.⁵⁸ While it may be pure coincidence that these words can be found in a book discussing Toomer’s favorite author, if that is not the case, however, it would suggest that Toomer had some exposure to the **Friedrich Schlegel** and even **Theodor Storm**, in addition to **Goethe**. We shall see in following chapters how **CANE**’s style incorporates various elements that align with the aesthetics of these three German writers.

When viewing the overall structure and sequence of Anderson’s cycle of stories and poems in outline form, we can easily find similarities and also contrasts between the two author’s works. [See **Image C9 : Schema for CANE**]

SCHEMA FOR **THE TRIUMP OF THE EGG**

OPENING POEM: “Tales are people who sit on the doorstep
of the house of my mind. . . .”

Inscription & Dedication:
“to Robert & John Anderson”

PART 1 Poem 2—“**THE DUMB MAN**”

“I WANT TO KNOW WHY”
“SEEDS”
“THE OTHER WOMAN”
“THE EGG”
“**UNLIGHTED LAMPS**”
“SENILITY”

PART 2 Poem 3—“**THE MAN IN THE BROWN COAT**”

“BROTHERS”
“THE NEW ENGLANDER”
“THE DOOR OF THE TRAP”
“WAR”
“MOTHERHOOD”
“**OUT OF NOWHERE INTO NOTHING**”

FINALE Poem 4—“**THE MAN WITH THE TRUMPET**”

⁵⁸ See Calvin Thomas, *A History of German Literature* (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), 332-3. Emphasis added.

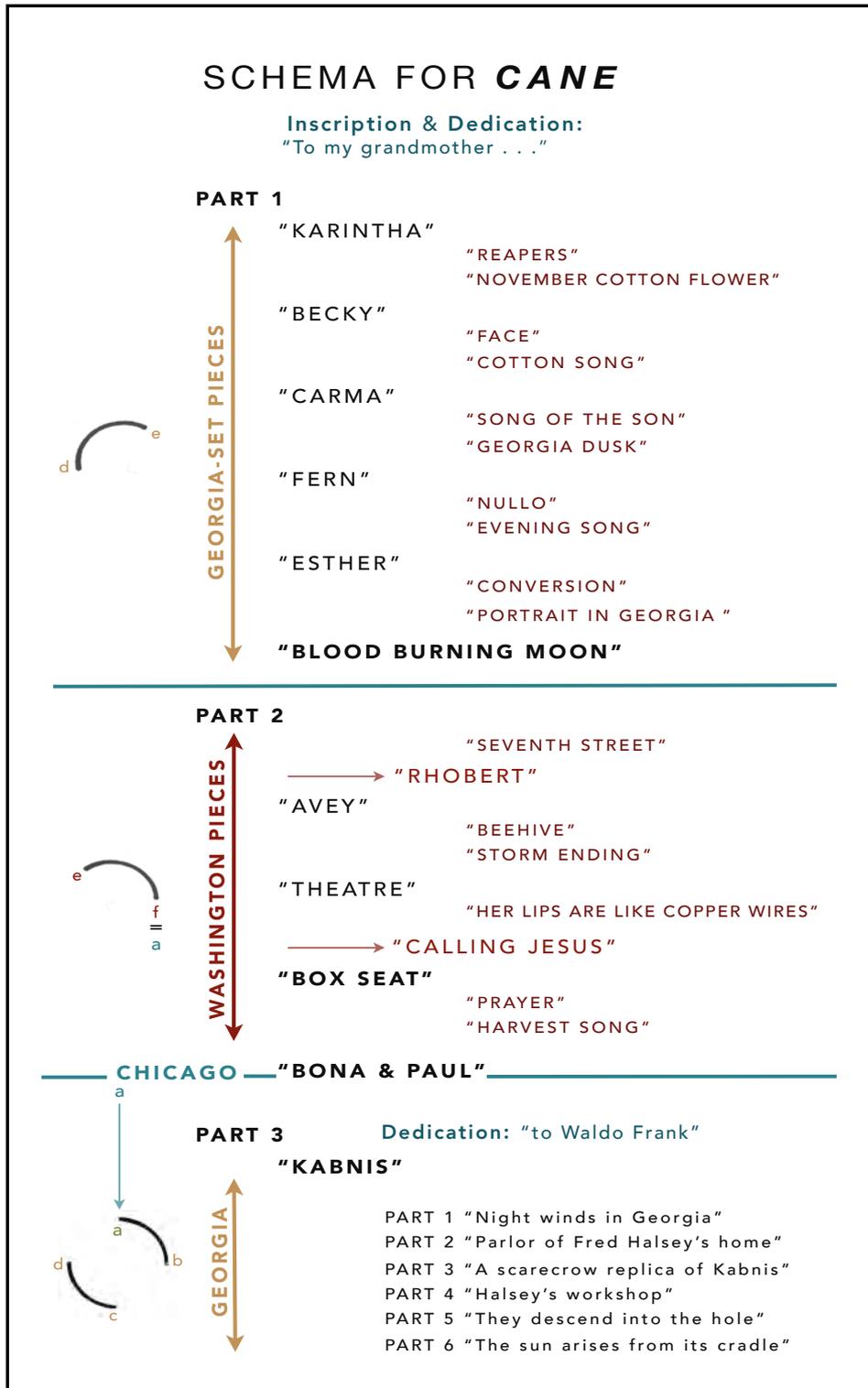


Image C9. Schema for *CANE*.

As we can readily see, if we put aside the third section of *CANE*, ‘**Kabnis**’, Toomer mostly follows Anderson’s design, but in modified form interspersing a pair of poems between each vignette or story proper. By contrast, Anderson ‘sandwiches’ each group of stories between the prose poems—each half culminates in a longer piece that tries to unify the preceding stories’ themes into a harmonious thematic chord or chorus, which was hinted at by the poem placed before each group. As Walter B. Rideout has insightfully gleaned about the overall thematic movement of *The Triumph of the Egg*, the pieces within each half, thematically mirror and build upon each other:

[T]he first six [stories] deal with the destruction of innocence (**‘I Want to Know Why’**), with the entrapment of personality by old belief (**‘Seeds’**) or by a not fully satisfying marriage (**‘The Other Woman’**), with grotesque defeat (**‘The Egg’**), non-communication and death (**‘Unlighted Lamps’**), and fantasy gone futile (**‘Senility’**). In the second group of six, though these also usually deal with locked-in, thwarted persons, there is always some kind of ultimate, if limited, release. . . . **‘I Want to Know Why’**, the first tale in the book, declares that the sensitive can not break through the wall of life; **‘Out of Nowhere Into Nothing’**, the last tale and by far the longest, declares that the sensitive can.⁵⁹

The movement and charges of two halves are placed diametrically opposed to each other, and this arrangement of Anderson’s stories creates a dynamic where “the progress of the two groups of stories is from imprisonment to escape”, and the poems placed before each half hint at the underlying movement of the stories “from inarticulate failure to successful communication”.⁶⁰ When we turn to *CANE*, we can discern and uncover a similar **dynamic** at work, where parts one and two are antithetically set in thematic **opposition** to each other.

THE FRAMEWORK OF *CANE*

In his letter sent out to publishers years later **Jean Toomer** describes *CANE* as “a collection of poems, sketches, short stories, and one drama, all more or less of one kind” [*JTP*, Box 11, Folder 343; see **Image C3**]. *CANE* was viewed by the author and those in his circle as a single text and organic whole, but not as a ‘novel’ in the traditional sense. When Waldo Frank expressed his concern about the new direction his revised pieces were taking, he advised “*CANE* is written. Leave it alone. And now, go and write your book!” (*BM* 113).

⁵⁹ Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 404-5. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 405.

In his reply to Frank (and also to Horace Liveright), Toomer shared his plans for a second book collecting “Natalie Mann and that Withered Berries thing” but confesses “I’m not quite ripe enough for a novel” (*BM* 117). While it is true that Toomer was eager to have various pieces published separately in various modernist magazines, and that was the norm in garnering attention and gaining an audience for one’s work, it is also clear that Toomer viewed the collection of pieces known as **CANE** as a cohesive unit or “single organism” just as Frank claimed in *City Block*.⁶¹ This can be supported by his refusal to give permission to **Alain Locke** to ‘dismember’ pieces from **CANE** and include them into *The New Negro* anthology of 1925—though Locke judged the works too important to leave out and audaciously ignored the author’s wishes by including ‘**Carma**’ and ‘**Fern**’.

Jean Toomer dedicated the final section ‘**Kabnis**’ to Waldo Frank; it seems probable that the symbolic structuring Toomer settled upon of placing broken arcs before each division of his “collection” was a veiled nod and allusion to a passage from his mentor’s novel, *Rahab* (1922):

Yet I must think . . . for I am motionless. To think is to move when one is motionless. Trees move forever. Leaf and trunk move upward, circle out: seed moves downward, inward. Trees swing forever so they are thoughtless. But I am a broken curve, a splintered part of a Circle I cannot see . . . My thought’s a finger feeling from the line of my brokenness for a Roundness beyond me.⁶²

We return to the letter to Frank revealing the logic behind **CANE**’s structure quoted in the introductory chapter: “**CANE**’s design is a circle. Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up into the North, and back into the South again” (*LJT* 101). The typographical broken arcs placed before each section of **CANE** help us visualize the author’s pattern [see **Image C7 : Schema for CANE**]. The first graphic

⁶¹ *City Block* begins with the inscription: “The author assures the reader that CITY BLOCK is a single organism and that its parts should be read in order. . . .” D. H. Lawrence’s collection of “unrhyming” poems, *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917), also has a similar foreword: “These poems should not be considered separately, as so many single pieces. They are intended as an essential story, or history, or confession, unfolding one from the other in organic development, the whole revealing the intrinsic experience of a man during the crisis of manhood, when he marries and comes into himself. The period covered is, roughly, the sixth lustre of a man’s life.”, D. H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. 1, eds. Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (New York: Viking, 1964), 191.

⁶² Frank, Waldo. *Rahab* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 33.

[] captures the movement “from the South up into North” (marked **d** to **e** in my schema) and the “simple forms” seem to refer to the folk and vernacular traditions the Georgia pieces draw from throughout. The second section’s curve [] represents a continuation from where the first curve ends (point **e**), the crest denoting the North as it swings back down towards the South for the final section set in Georgia. The “complex forms” allude to the “Jazz rhythms” capturing the “complications of the city” (in the vein of **Carl Sandburg**’s frenetic rhythms in *Chicago Poems*) mentioned in Toomer’s inner flap copy [see **Image H6**]. The Washington section ends with the Chicago piece ‘**Bona and Paul**’ (point **f**)—which the author also identifies as his spiritual “awakening” and beginning (point **a = f**)—before the curve “*plunges*” into the final section ‘**Kabnis**’, marked by a set of diametrically opposed arcs.

In terms of the circular design, the dust jacket copy points out: “There can be no cumulative and consistent movement, and of course, no central plot to such a book” [see **Image H6**]. The composite text made up of various shorter texts, eschews the conventional linear progression of narrative found in a ‘novel’: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement. Each arc, then, can be seen as a depiction of narrative progression *for each story* in the section. Each of the Georgia sketches and stories follows the same the same general dramatic movement of the first curve—building up to a climactic moment; and the opposite for the northern pieces as the dramatic energy generated in each sketch and story flounders to an anti-climax. The third section of ‘**Kabnis**’, designated by the double curve [] indicates a continuous fall in dramatic action for the first three parts (points **a** to **b**) and a shift upwards for the last three parts (points **c** to **d**)—crescendoing into the intensity of the climactic finale in Halsey’s cellar.

The second part describing **CANE**’s design discloses a “spiritual” movement that aligns with the dynamics of German idealism and romanticism:

From the point of view of the *spiritual entity* behind the work, the curve really starts with Bona and Paul (awakening), *plunges* into Kabnis, emerges in Karintha etc. *swings upward* into Theatre and Box Seat, and ends (pauses) in Harvest Song. (*LJT* 101; italics added)

Toomer’s language is particularly revealing as it corresponds with **Hegel**’s philosophical terminology—“‘Concepts’ [*Begriffe*], are self-movements,

circles . . . spiritual entities”—and his **Dialectic** or “dynamic principle—that the creative power of contraries which are antithetic yet complementary, exhibit a tension of opposition and attraction, and conjoin in a union that generates a new existence”.⁶³ **Jean Toomer** and the **Seven Arts group**’s debt to German idealist and romantic philosophy is underscored by their emphasis on dynamic movement, using terms like “slopes of consciousness”, “synthesis”, and “spiritual fusion”. However, as M. H. Abrams points out, the **romantic image** that depicts human development as circular, moving from “unity, separated opposites, reunion” (NS 177) has deep roots in the Plotinian concept of **emanation**: “the movement from the One to the many as a *descent* from perfection to its laudation as an indispensable stage in the *ascent* toward perfection” (NS 186) and reconciliation.

Similar to Lawrence’s list of antimonies provided earlier, **CANE** is structured around a series of diametrically positioned polarities, or binary opposites: North / South; Urban / Rural; Individual / Group; Subject / Object; Male / Female; White / Black; Man / Nature; Body / Spirit; Sensual / Intellectual; Phenomena / Noumena; Day / Night; Dawn / Dusk; Sun / Moon; etc. The text seeks to capture the dynamic interrelationship between these forces and the ‘totality of movements’ to attempt a portrait of the whole, apart from which the essence and meaning of each isolated component cannot be defined.

McCort identifies the “primordial principle” of *coincidentia oppositorum*—this drive to reconcile opposites [dualities]—as the substrate behind of “all important aspects of Romanticism”.⁶⁴ Throughout his wide-ranging scientific studies, Goethe repeatedly refers to this “principle of life” whereby Nature produces “the most infinite and varied forms” out of the simplest:

Basic characteristic of an individual organism: to divide, to unite, to merge into the universal, to abide in the particular, to transform itself, to define itself, and;

⁶³ About the the ‘physics’ of romantic aesthetics Hegel writes: “Wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work. . . . Everything that surrounds us may be viewed as an instance of Dialectic.” Qtd. in M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 174-6. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘NS’.

⁶⁴ Dennis McCort, *Going beyond the Pairs: The Coincidence of Opposites in German Romanticism, Zen, and Deconstruction*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 20. We have laid out the grounding of Heraklitus’ **union of opposites** in Plotinian philosophy in section [≡], and in Herder’s **God, Some Conversations** in section [ψ].

as living things tend to appear under a thousand conditions, to arise and vanish,
 . . . Genesis and decay, creation and destruction, birth and death, joy and pain,
 all are interwoven . . .⁶⁵

For Goethe, this “Duality of the phenomenon as opposites” is woven into the very fabric of life and the universe:

We and the objects	Sensuality and reason
Light and dark	Fantasy [<i>Poiesis</i>] and practical thought
Body and soul	Being and yearning [<i>Sehnsucht</i>]
Two souls	Two halves of the body
Spirit and matter	Right and left
God and world	Breathing.
Thought and extension	. . .
Ideal and real	Magnet ⁶⁶

And as such, this notion of “polarity” appears equally in his writings about science and physics as in his poetics and literature—drawing from both western and oriental texts. The same could be said of Herder, as *coincidentia oppositorum* is foundational to both philosophical works, like *God, Some Conversations*, and writings on aesthetics—‘On Image, Poetry, & Fable’ (*AES* 365).

Abrams describes the basis for Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) as “*the nisus which drives the universe* as the energy inherent in **polarities**—conceived as **antitheses, contraries, contradictions**—which manifests itself as a tension of **repulsion** and **attraction**, of **centrifugal** and **centripetal forces**” (*NS* 173; emphasis added). We find the same conceptual understanding and universal dynamic within Jean Toomer’s loose-leaf notes, where he writes of an “experience of reconciliation” and illumination he had on November 17, 1923, and a “vision that flashed from it” [“LLN” III:39]:

Perception of actions, thoughts, events, which seem discordant and accidental. These, flooded by emotions and **analyses** which heighten their **discordancy**. As the analysis progresses, the entire being intensified, and pulled by the **perceived oppositions** to an immanent **distinction**. Suddenly, a vision and insight achieved which **resolves** the accidental to the right and inevitable. All emotions, thought, consciousness, concentrate in a **single essence**. The ecstasy [sic] of **reconciliation**. [“LLN” III:39; emphasis added]

He provides more context with the following notes: “Literature concerns itself with struggle, and this is natural, for an artist is subject to spiritual

⁶⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe’s Collected Works*, vol. 12, *Scientific Studies*, ed. Douglas Miller (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 156; 303-4. Translations inserted.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

travail” [“LLN” III:33]—and in answer to the question, “How as to reality and essence?”—he provides the following figure [see **Image C10**], and written below it: “Contraries are not banished from a timeless world. . .” [“LLN” III:34]. This figure will be examined more closely in **Chapter 3**, but we will close with the following explanation of Schelling’s system by McNiece as it clarifies the relationship between **contraries**, **poetic imagination**, and **reconciliation**:

The unity of subject and object, ideal and real, occurs within man’s organising mind, echoing the activities by which the divine understanding links *Geist* and *Natur*. Schelling’s view of the universe in terms of dynamic process stressed the energies inherent in polarities, and his system helped inspire a view of creative process which installs poetic imagination or ironic wit as a center of art and reality wherein all contradictions could be reconciled.⁶⁷

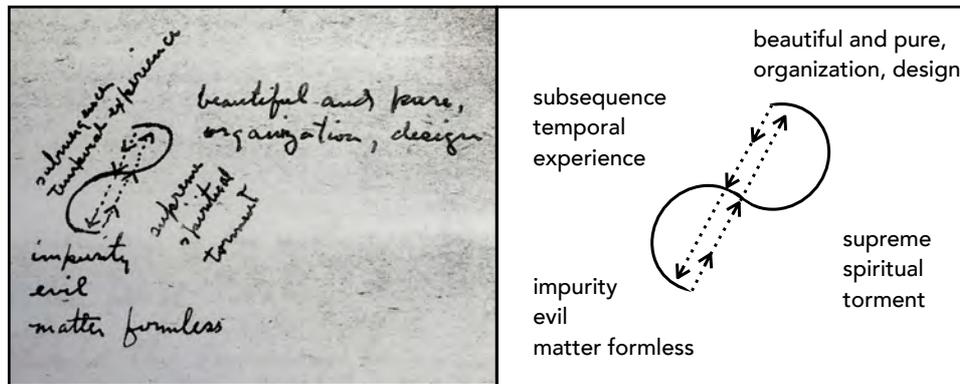


Image C10. Jean Toomer’s ‘Maelström’ [“LLN” III : 34]. Left: Original. Right: Rendering.

EXTRATEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF *CANE*

In “Jean Toomer and Horace Liveright”, Michael Soto makes the case that highlighting the racial aspects of the author and book was the promotional strategy decided upon and pushed by the publisher Boni & Liveright. He shows how, along with **Waldo Frank**’s introduction, these adverts would have been “influential in framing early discussions of *Cane*” in the various contemporary reviews.⁶⁸ Soto’s discussion of the mismatched “green-and-purple tropical jungle” dust jacket and the inner flap copy describing the book as a “vaudeville out of the South” merits closer examination—especially

⁶⁷ McNiece, 107.

⁶⁸ Michael Soto, “Jean Toomer and Horace Liveright,” in *Jean Toomer and the Harlem Renaissance*, eds. Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 173.

his claim that “Toomer never compared the structure of the book to a vaudeville show”.⁶⁹

While it is plausible that the idea and decision to push the label “vaudeville” to market the book and attract a larger readership may have originated from Horace Liveright, if we examine early drafts of the promotional copy for the dust jacket, it becomes evident they were composed by Toomer and not B&L’s marketing team [see “PRO” IV: Facsimile 1 & 2]. It would not be the first time Toomer would try to appeal to the public’s taste for the ‘primitive’—when he submitted ‘**Karintha**’ to be published in the ‘Mayan issue’ of *Broom*, the piece was printed alongside primitive woodcut prints of Mayan art [see Image C4.2]. Toomer also appended after the title: “(To be read, accompanied by the humming of a Negro folk-song)” —this directive to readers borrows and adapts **Vachel Lindsay**’s technique of interspersing italicized musical and oratory cues throughout his poem “**The Congo**”: “*A deep rolling bass . . . More Deliberate. Solemnly chanted . . . With a touch of negro dialect*”.⁷⁰ These directions running alongside the right margin of Lindsay’s poem help set the appropriate mood and rhythm—sometimes even suggesting the melody: “*Sing to the tune of ‘Hark ten thousand harps and voices’*” (*MON* 173), for the poet and audience to channel the right ‘spirit’ for the different sections. Haliwas and Reader reveal that *The Congo and Other Poems* (1914) “brought to the public an idealistic—often visionary—sort of chant poetry which [Lindsay] called the Higher Vaudeville”.⁷¹ The vision the poet receives while the audience chants along are prayers of the “tattooed” and the “skull-faced witch-men” to the primitive god Mumbo Jumbo and his later spiritual battle with “pioneer angels” of the Bible who protect the “good old negro in the slums of the town” (*MON* 169-173). **John Gould Fletcher**, who dismisses much of Lindsay’s poetry as “journalism”, reveals that the “higher Vaudeville imagination” utilized in his “quasi-Negro poems” was a “poem-game”—akin to a Greek chorus—with the audience “shouting the refrain” (*FLE* 127).

⁶⁹ Ibid, 169.

⁷⁰ Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds., *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: MacMillan, 1920), 169-174. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*MON*’.

⁷¹ John E. Haliwas and Dennis J. Reader, eds. Introduction to *The Vision of This Land: Studies of Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg* (Macomb, IL: Western Illinois University, 1976), 7.

This “**Higher Vaudeville**” may be what Jean Toomer had in mind when he wrote at the end of the dust jacket copy: “It is black super-vaudeville out of the South” [see “**PRO**” IV: Facsimile 1 & 2]. On the other hand, framing *CANE* as a ‘vaudeville’ may have been intended in the same ironic way that “Carma’s tale is the crudest melodrama” (C 13). Or perhaps it is a conscious attempt to incorporate **romantic irony** and destroy the dramatic illusion, like **Thackeray** seems to borrow from *Faust* for his preface—framing *Vanity Fair* (1847-8) as a puppet play and its author as the “Manager of the Performance”:

He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints and lively on the wire.⁷²

Another possibility is that ‘vaudeville’ is used metaphorically, rather than referring to an actual show associated with the comic mask of minstrelsy or oral performance as some critics have proposed. It may simply equate *CANE*’s variegated form resembling a typical evening show at the vaudeville theater,

[which] would begin with a sketch, follow with a single (an individual male or female performer); next would be an alley oop (an acrobatic act); then another single, followed by yet another sketch such as a blackface comedy. The acts that followed these for the rest of the show would vary from musicals to jugglers to song-and-dance singles and end with a final extravaganza—either musical or drama—with the full company.⁷³

The helter-skelter mixture of various performance styles of artistic expression all brought together under the evening show bill’s ‘umbrella’ may have been the analogue that Toomer had in mind, especially as ‘**Kabnis**’ does function as an extended “final extravaganza”. He would have also been keenly aware that vaudeville stages were “a highly sexualized space” which highlighted and objectified the female body as a “sexual delight”,⁷⁴ which certainly is a recurring theme in *CANE*. Although ‘vaudeville’ certainly is not the most appropriate term to describe his work, any combination of the reasons mentioned above—plus the fact that a blurb is generally considered to be situated ‘outside’ the text (as an *Arabesque*)—is enough to explain this decision.

⁷² William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1954), 6.

⁷³ *World Heritage Encyclopedia Edition*, s.v. “Vaudeville”, accessed Nov. 19, 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.us/articles/Vaudeville>.

⁷⁴ Andrew Erdman, *Blue Vaudeville: Sex, Morals and the Mass Marketing of Amusement, 1895-1915* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 83.

The “incongruous” design of the book cover, however, is another matter; despite Soto’s characterization of it having a “gaudy” color-scheme and landscape evoking “primitive tom-toms” of Africa⁷⁵—I believe Toomer also had a hand in its design. Although it is unclear if he appreciated the art deco style, the symbolic elements of the design would have been viewed by the author as playing an integral function. The dust jacket of **CANE** depicts a tropical nightscape with the view of the moon partially covered by palm trees and clouds [see **Image C11**]. The broken arcs placed before each section and the obscured circle of the full moon on the front all correlate with the overriding theme of the mosaic-styled text: fragmentation, and the inability to achieve wholeness or unity. This is the repeated leitmotif that is echoed in all the pieces in **CANE**. However, what has been overlooked by most critics up until now is the significance of the cloth cover design⁷⁶—situated directly under the dustcover’s image of the **moon** is the central image of the text: the unbroken full-circle of the **sun** [see **Image C11**]. The **sun** is, just as in Plato’s *Republic* and Plotinus’ *Enneads*, **CANE**’s dominant and multivalent symbol the author uses throughout, counterbalancing—while also fusing with—the multiple elements within the text signified by the **moon**.

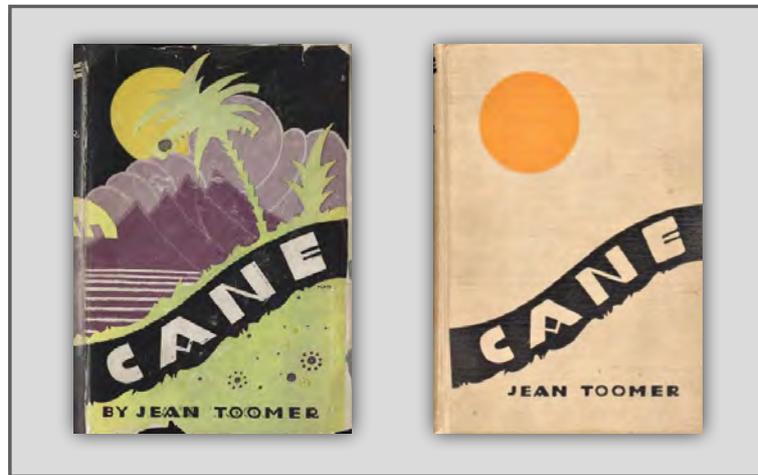


Image C11. Dust Jacket (left) & Cloth Cover Design (right) for the first edition. Jean Toomer, *CANE* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).

⁷⁵ Michael Soto, 169, 175, 173.

⁷⁶ The sole reference I am aware of is by Sorensen in her 2017 book: “The cloth cover’s completed circle achieves a wholeness and plenitude underneath the riotous fragmentation of the eclipsed partial sun/moon on the jacket . . .” Jennifer Julia Sorensen, *Modernist Experiments in Genre, Media, and Transatlantic Print Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 114.

SECTION II : AESTHETIC DEVICES & STRATEGIES

I wish to introduce a list of key **aesthetic devices** and strategies at the end of the **Glossary** as a guide and organizing structure to frame and focus our discussion of various texts within this and each of the following chapters. These devices appear at moments of the texts where experimental form or figurative expression have a disorienting effect, which coincide with some hidden spiritual objective or narrative revelation below the surface. In ‘**Art as Device**’ (1917), literary theorist **Viktor Shklovsky** lays out the aesthetic basis for his literary concept of **estrangement**, or *Ostranenie* in Russian:

The goal . . . is not to bring its meaning closer to our understanding, but to create a special way of experiencing an object, to make one not “recognize” but “see” it. . . . [Poetic language] is created with the explicit purpose of de-automatizing perception. **Vision** is the artist’s goal; the artistic [object] is “artificially” created in such a way that perception lingers and reaches its greatest strength and length, so that the thing is experienced not spatially but, as it were, continually.⁷⁷

This process of “de-automatizing”—to transform the familiar and ordinary into something unrecognizable and unfamiliar—is the unifying core principle at work below the surface of each of our aesthetic devices.

If we re-examine Munson’s explanation of ‘**strangeness**’ as being a “movement away from naturalism and realism” towards “an imposition of . . . romantic materials for the intellect to exploit and arrange”,⁷⁸ we find he is quite correct regarding the origins of this all-encompassing umbrella-concept. Shklovsky admits that his concept of *Ostranenie* is “unoriginal”, and he gives credit to **Novalis** for his method of *Verfremdungseffekt* by quoting a fragment: “The art to make things pleasantly **strange, to make them alien** and at the same time familiar and attractive—*this is what makes up Romantic poetics.*”⁷⁹ This is Novalis’s poetic strategy fueling his **magical idealism** (*Magischer Idealismus*)—to overcome our division with nature involves instilling a sense of enchantment (*Verzauberung*) and infusing the world with spiritual meaning. According to Roger Griffin, this mission of “re-enchanting and resacralizing the

⁷⁷ Viktor Shklovsky, *A Reader*, 88; 93. Emphasis added.

⁷⁸ Gorham B. Munson, “The Mechanics for a Literary Succession,” *S4N*, ed. Norman Fitts (Nov. 1922), n.p.

⁷⁹ Shklovsky, *A Reader*, 272. Emphasis and italics added.

world” (*Wiederverzauberung*) is what major modernist artists undertook; they viewed “art and thought of ‘high culture’” as,

laboratories of visionary thought vital to the spiritual salvation of a world being systematically drained of higher meaning and ultimate purpose by the dominant, ‘nomocidal’ forces of modernity. . . . Such modernists consciously sought to restore a sense of higher purpose, transcendence and Zauber to a spiritually starved modern humanity condemned by ‘progress’ . . .⁸⁰

If we return to the three *Seven-Arts* stories covered in the first half of this chapter, and try to locate the points of the highest emotional intensity in each story, we can reasonably conclude that the narrative high points occur with:

[26/✕]: ‘Simply Sugar Pie’ :

The agony of child-birth & the ending scene of the baby’s burial

[26/✕]: ‘Miss Willet’ :

The miracle of multitudes flocking to buy cribs & final twist unveiling ‘Jesus’

[26/✕]: ‘The Thimble’ :

Inversion of charges—resurrection, revelation, & the Hepburns’ reconciliation

In each of these climactic moments, the authors shift to oblique, discursive, symbolic, mystifying language to express the spiritual and religious nature of the corresponding scenes. In order to communicate these epiphanies, which cannot be literally expressed with prosaic language, the authors suddenly switch to unconventional ‘experimental’ modes of narration that defamiliarize the scene through the use of *Ostranenie* [**DEVICE** ☒ : **STRANGENESS**] to disorient the reader and shroud each corresponding experience in mystery. The moments of ‘strangeness’ are created by a combination of various aesthetic devices working in tandem, which often culminate in an **epiphany** [**DEVICE** »⊆ : **AUFHEBUNG**], a spiritual moment of insight where the underlying essence is revealed.

What Toomer identifies as the “ironic use of Christianity” is akin to biblical allusion [**DEVICE** ☐ : **SACRED TEXT**], although in Frank’s writings the ironical tone almost always comes across as negative and “mordant”, revealing his bias. In Lawrence’s ‘**The Thimble**’, the emotional impact of the finalé relies upon the allusion to Jesus’ words before his ascension.

⁸⁰ Roger Griffin, ed., Series Editor’s Preface to *Modernism and the Occult*, by John Bramble (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), x-xi. Griffin’s ‘maximalist’ interpretation of modernism and art as a spiritual antidote to ‘disenchantment’ reveals a continuation of German romantic aims.

When we examine the context of Frank's passage in 'Accolade' that takes place Christmas Eve, the savior that appears majestically as the red bird descending turns out to be the face of the drunk friend Daley, who coaxes Clarence Lipper into joining him for an alcoholic binge and thereby squander his money meant for gifts. The story culminates in a melodramatic scene in the apartment of the former prostitute Fanny Luve, where she gives him a silver brush and comb to take home to his wife as a present—this is the Christmas miracle. The scene tries hard to offend religious sensibilities and its tone is ironic and mocking. The same goes for the unrealistic climactic scene later in story thirteen, 'Ecclesia Sanctae Teresae', which narrates the sudden sexual encounter between Clarence's wife Mrs. Lipper and her priest, Father Luiz Dennis—occurring at the same time as her husband's 'infidelity' in 'Accolade':

And Sin? What is Sin but a lack, a great Hunger? [. . .] Brow to brow, mouth to mouth, breast to breast. . . They were close. And so they remained. . .

The lamp gave its word . . . the far and sourceless light: the wood Christ sang still through the room. They were close. They were close. Slow like parting petals of a flower, they were less close. —Soon I shall see all this.

"What have we done!" came his words softly. [. . .]

"Now, I must go home. [. . .] I must tell Clarence."

"This?"

She smiled; she nodded. Her eyes were different eyes. They were eyes of a woman wise and sure of herself.

"I have something now to give at last to my husband!" (*CB* 298-9)

The story's climax is steeped in sacred iconic imagery but the encounter itself is not one of spiritual uplift but degradation. More inconsistent is the attempt to incorporate **Christian iconography** and **allusions** into a story that derides and treats the same religious tradition with contempt—it is self-defeating to deflate the foundations of the symbols one wishes to draw power from.

The more serious flaw afflicting Frank's fiction, which many critics have noted,⁸³ is the lack of realism in his characterization. Even granting that his novels and stories aim towards literary expressionism, his failure to personalize or portray believable characters, unintentionally punctures the dramatic illusion of his narratives—turning them into lifeless, wooden, and unrealistic portrayals—which even his friend Lewis Mumford describes as being "unreadable" (*MWF* xx).

⁸³ For critical assessments by associates, see Kenneth Burke, "The Consequences of Idealism", *The Dial* 73 (October 1922): 449-452; or Matthew Josephson, "Instant Note on Waldo Frank", *Broom* 4 no. 1 (December 1922): 57-60; and Paul Rosenfeld's review "*NWF*" cited earlier.

His fellow *Seven Arts* associate **Paul Rosenfeld** details Frank's "faulty esthetic" in his 1921 *Dial* review of *Dark Mother* in an attempt to have the author correct course by drawing his attention to this defect, but he later denounces "that false circle which Waldo has drawn about himself . . . that forbids anyone to be frank with him about his work, and that threatens everyone who dissents with excommunication" (*MWF* xi-xx), as criticism does cost him their friendship.

When Jean Toomer joined Frank's circle, he was conscripted to write a review of Gotham Munson's *Waldo Frank: A Study* (1923)—it was also suggested by Frank that in preparation he 'study' Burke's critical review (see *BM* 65-7). However, in the **Loose-Leaf Notes** we also find notes on Rosenfeld's article, which Toomer drew from for the review of Frank's *Holiday* submitted to *Dial*:

. . . stress the esthetic approach. Paul Rosenfeld's article on the Novels of Waldo Frank in the *Dial* 1921, serves him as first rate contrasting material. Rosenfeld's points are:
 (1) there is an acute
 (2) Frank fails to personalize his characters ["LLN" III:16]

Toomer seemed to zero in on the following section as the main thrust of the criticism directed at Frank's *The Dark Mother* and *The Unwelcome Man*:

In the form of both Frank's novels **there exists an acute dislocation**. [. . .] Both introduce us to sets of characters and to the experiences which they are supposed to undergo and by which they are supposed to be developed, and between the protagonists and the experiences, the often intrinsically impressive and magnificent effusions, visions, lyrical moments, there is no veritable relationship. The author has sought, very consciously, particularly in *The Dark Mother*, to use the expressionistic method of representation; he has striven to develop his characters by underlining sharply what lies between them and the objects present to their consciousness; he stresses without cessation the personal projections in their visions. He has striven to penetrate surfaces, to develop the half-conscious rhythms. **But it is precisely the personalization of his characters' sensations which Frank has failed to achieve**. He has left, on the contrary, their sensations completely unindividualized, or, at least, completely unrelated to what he would have us believe, from their names, their races, their parents, their environments, their histories, to be their individualities. (*NWF*" 95-6; emphasis added)

Would an artist as intuitive as Toomer have been oblivious to the major problems with Frank's aesthetic pointed out that he would blindly adopt them?⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See Barbara Foley, *Jean Toomer: Race, Repression, and Revolution* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 279 n.38. "For more evidence of Toomer's growing reservations about Frank's writerly abilities see J[ean's letter] to the *New Republic* critic Robert Littell. . ." (*JTP* 179, 181).

When we examine Frank's portrayal of African Americans, like the scene in *City Block's* seventh story, '**John the Baptist**', where the cellist Karl interacts with his housemaid Clara, we do find her dialogue written in the **Black vernacular**:

"You could describe me, Clara. Could you describe Heaven?"

"Why ob co'se I could! What I sees I can describe. . ." She ironed. "It's a great big place! Mos'ly light . . . glorious golden light! An' angels in white wings an' harps asingin', asingin'. . . When yo' play sometimes, Mr Loer . . . them waily shatterin' tones . . . dey sings like dat. Dey music . . . it starts *away* down an' it leaps *away* up!"

She ironed.

"Clara, what would you say if I told you that was all a dream—what you saw." (*CB* 149)

And the descriptions of Clara doing housework characterize her as a **primitive naïf** whose primal essence is still entwined with Nature and "rhythm fleshed": "Her hands were above her head. Her hands were flowers with the wind in them. There was a tree above her. And her long bare feet, with the straight toes, were somehow intertwined with the tree's roots" (*CB* 148). While observing her, the unspoken consciousness of Karl remarks: "—Nigger woman . . . you are all *one!* . . . What a strange thing to think about a person!" (*CB* 149). This is a rare scene where Frank's flaws are less apparent, however, Frank's more expressionistic passages, do suffer from the "acute dislocation"—where characters, actions, and dialogue often fall flat and lack any semblance of being true to life or belonging to a flesh-and-blood person. The "negro dwarf" Ceasar Dott, who appears later in '**John the Baptist**', functions merely as a grotesque symbol for the story's surrealistic ending where the "strong boy and the idiot boy who played tether ball forever" join hands with the dwarf and begin dancing (*CB* 163). The same could be said for the interracial sexual encounter depicted in '**Hope**', the eighth piece in *City Block*—where both characters are depersonalized to such a degree that the woman functions merely as a prop in an imagined sexual fantasy:

He flung away the cover. Her black body lay on the white sheet. [. . .]
Passion, pure beyond object, lifted him so. He took her body: it was body:
black dead body she was. So he took her. So he made her alive. He was
impress of life upon her substance: he was song. (*CB* 172; 173-4)

Unlike Anderson's and Toomer's poetics relying on **suggestion** and **indirection**, this story lacks subtlety or nuance in its lines: "he stiff, she undulous easeful, black like a buried sea", "in her blackness, the white mist running through", and "[f]alling through void threads of white, globules of white" (*CB* 172-3).

Although readers can guess why the male character lies “smiling with shut eyes on his back”, they are left in the dark as to why the female character might kneel on the floor and kiss his feet as if he were some savior, or the reasons or explanation behind the disjointed sudden ending, where “She beat her brow, dashed her brow and her breast against the iron bed. . .” (CB 174).

More egregious is the simplistic and amateurish manner in which characters and dialogue are portrayed in *Holiday*—they make it difficult for anyone to read the book charitably. Despite the praise he offers in letters, one can only imagine Toomer’s true feelings and reaction upon first reading through the draft of the novel as Frank requested, to make suggestions and ‘correct’ the Black vernacular (see *BM* 97, 99). In his “Poetry” Notebook, Toomer discusses the necessary balance between “the organic and the artificial form” an artist needs:

A personality, an intelligence, a vision, a style, consciously penetrating adequate material, produce organic form. These elements consciously controlling adequate material, achieve artificial pattern. In a perfect artist, these two processes would be synchronal. [“POE” II : 35]

Thereafter, he distinguishes between two basic types of “incomplete” artists: those “**primarily intuitional**” and those “**primarily cerebral**”. If we posit that most artists fall short of ‘perfection’ and had to classify artists within these two groups—Toomer and Anderson would belong in the former and Frank in the latter. Waldo Frank’s ‘superior’ formal education and vast store of theoretical knowledge may serve him well as a critic, but as an artist they lead to an overly intellectualized art lacking originality or a distinct individual ‘voice’. Even though Toomer and Anderson were basically self-educated, they are much more free-flowing and driven by intuition—perhaps analogous to **Jazz** musicians who can not read music but instinctively play ‘by ear’—their feel for melody is innate and not bound by ‘rules’ passed down in theories, and their sense of beauty is much more organic and original. Toomer’s fragment ends identifying the two possible attitudes motivating most writers, “one may either hate or make fun” when dealing with “vital experiences that sharply differ from the ones he is accustomed to”; then he suggests a third: “one may directly present them, create them, that is, one may love” [“POE” II : 35]. This naïve-sounding addition, however, is meaningful if we equate it with Herder’s *Einfühlung*; this sense of **Sympathy** and an understanding of human nature—

along with an appreciation for lyrical poetry and music—is what Frank’s **mystical realism** and “cerebral” fiction severely lack when compared to others.

Toomer’s disparaging review of the novel for *Dial*, ‘Waldo Frank’s *Holiday*’ (1923), would effectively terminate his relationship with Frank; the review mirrors the same points made in Rosenfeld’s article in the *Dial* that Toomer highlighted, which would form the basis of his criticism:

Holiday is first of all a subjective design; it has utilized certain elements of the South because these seemed suited to its purposes. Hence whatever local or racial truth (or untruth) the work may contain, must be considered as a purely secondary factor. (*BM* 172)

Toomer provides an extended passage from Virginia Hades unspoken consciousness, before remarking:

As functions of the larger organism, these crystallizations are effective and admirable. Considered in relation to specific characters, they operate fanwise. By their means, the figures expand to an awareness which otherwise would be impossible to them. . . . It nevertheless forces one to accept the characters as essentially Frankian in origin. . . . In *Holiday*, here and there are to be found breaks in texture: of the dialog, of the dialog compared to the unspoken consciousness . . . I do not of course refer to any superficial difference in the use of dialect. I refer to a psychological break, to an underlying textural break which is more readily felt than defined, that make one question Frank’s clarity on this point. (*BM* 174-5)

Interestingly, Toomer had another more positive review of *Holiday* written, which he did not submit (see *BM* 179-182). The complicated nature and politics of niceties is highlighted by Toomer’s rough draft of an inscription to his mentor (presumably transcribed into Frank’s copy of **CANE**): “For Waldo Frank, / separate, / the sheerest spiritual beauty / now manifest in America. / Jean Toomer / 14 Aug 23” [“LLN” III: 42]. These many profuse compliments need to be re-evaluated when weighed against the animosity Toomer unleashes towards Frank in his devastating review, along with the fact this was written while he was having an affair with Frank’s wife, **Margaret Naumburg**.⁸⁵ This dirty laundry is only brought up to point out the need to reassess the influence Frank’s aesthetics had on **CANE**, with less emphasis placed on what was said in letters.

⁸⁵ Years later in his memoirs, Waldo Frank would have the last word—while recounting their trip together to South Carolina in preparation for *Holiday*, he would go on to offer this simplistic diagnosis: “In his need to forget he was Negro, he joined the . . . cult of Gurdjieff”. Waldo Frank, *Memoirs of Waldo Frank*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 107. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*MWF*’. Either Frank never fully understood the complex nature of his “brother’s” racial position, or he knew all too well how sensitive the issue was and was all too happy to weaponize it.

‘WITHERED SKIN OF BERRIES’

Toomer’s story ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’ is a **CANE**-era piece completed the summer of 1922. Although it is not a work viewed by critics to be representative of or up to the same standards as the author’s best lyrical and narrative achievements, we shall see that the story embodies and obliquely comments upon this clash of styles and aesthetic aims between the two mentors. In that sense, this story is akin to a particle collider—our analysis of **CANE** will therefore include this story, as every one of the **aesthetic devices** identified in our partial list appears in one form or another within this work of short fiction. In 1926 Robert T. Kerlin reviewed **CANE** for *Opportunity* magazine describing the text to be “partly in verse form, partly in prose: all of it has the spirit of poetry. . . . an audacious book, stamped all over with genius”.⁸⁶ Gates singles out Kerlin as the sole reviewer out of many to have perceived “the text’s significance to be its gesture toward bridging two traditions of influence [Anglo- and Afro-American] . . . as a truly double-voiced discourse”.⁸⁷

Not only does ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’ balance the White and Black elements of both traditions, symbolized by interracial dating, it also holds in check the opposing forces of material and spiritual, prose and poetry, romantic and realistic narration, themes of fragmentation and mystic union, primitive and modern, oriental and occidental—while being a meta-literary portrait of influences. This short story is a stylistic departure for Jean Toomer, with the narrative being much longer like ‘**Blood-Burning Moon**’ or ‘**Box Seat**’. The fictional piece was submitted to and rejected by the *Dial* and the *Little Review* (see *LJT* 44, 85), however, Toomer still planned to include the story, along with his longer dramatic work, *Natalie Mann*, in **CANE**’s sequel.

On the **surface**, the story set in New York in the 1920s, is about Vera and her nervousness as a multi-racial secretary passing amongst white colleagues. The scenes revolve around a series of dates as Vera wavers back and forth weighing and juggling each prospective lover. She has to choose between Carl, her office superior who hates “niggers”, and a passionate African-American gentleman named Art—and often these scenes come across as flat or

⁸⁶ Qtd. in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial Self”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 219.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* These are the words of the author, Gates.

one-dimensional, and even furthering racial stereotypes. She finds Art too aggressive and beast-like: “Your a beast. O let me go. . . . Black nigger beast. . . . O Art have I hurt you so?” (*W&S* 152). On the other hand she finds Carl kind, but he does not ignite her passions: “Carl didnt paw. He loved as she had long wanted men to. Why couldnt she feel?” (*W&S* 148). David Teyy, who coincidentally has long known both Art and Carl—and is obviously a thinly veiled persona of Toomer—is the mixed-race bronze man of multi-coloured leaves, who Vera finds *just* right. The ending climactic scene—where Teyy and Vera are interrupted by Carl, and the three undergo some mystic experience—is ambiguous as to what exactly happens, while also feeling unrealistic and forced, with its abrupt ending that curiously replays the poetic opening lines as a chorus.

On the **symbolic** and **allegorical** plane this story gives human form to the two opposing stylistic forces at work in Toomer’s art—personified by the colleague Carl from Chicago, and Art Bond from the South—and the fact that the protagonist Vera wavers between the two while courting them both points to this, as do the **symbolic imagery** of the story. The opening lyrical lines contrast Georgian canefields, black souls, and folk-songs that she lisps, with mid-western towns, white souls, and adolescent fantasies⁸⁸—obliquely intimating that the story is a meta-narrative personifying the various influences and forces at work beneath the text: Japanese tourists, spontaneous imagist lines, and **Lafcadio Hearn**; smoke from Alexandria and the Masonic Temple; dead leaves from Northern Europe, the ju-ju man, and the spirits of Indians; references to Beethoven, John Brown, Nirvana, and Christ . . . All the elements of the story coalesce around the mystical man of multi-colored leaves, David Teyy, who is connected to all characters, and ever-present in Vera’s imagination, as poetry and phrases (of Teyy) fall from her mouth: “Poet. . . . Who put beauty, a senseless warm thing like a suckling baby, in my mouth” (*W&S* 146). It is subtly intimated that perhaps Vera might be viewed as a personification of Jean Toomer’s **poetics**, or even **CANE** itself, while David Teyy symbolizes the **mystical force** attuned to the Native-American **Geist** and drawing all characters and elements together into a “spiritual fusion”.

⁸⁸ For an extended extract from the story ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’, see the *Forest of Correspondence* 3 mid-section for Chapter 3.

THE 'NEGRO FOLK SPIRIT'

In his July 1921 essay for the *Double Dealer* entitled 'Sherwood Anderson' discussing *The Triumph of the Egg*-era stories, **Hart Crane** writes: "I would like to see Anderson handle the negro in fiction. So far it has not been done by anyone without sentimentality or cruelty, but the directness of his vision would produce something new and deep in this direction" (*CRA* 157). Jean Toomer would also confess to Sherwood Anderson in a letter, "In your work I have felt you reaching for the beauty that the Negro has in him. . . . Notably, in *Out of Nowhere into Nothing* . . . you have evoked an emotion, a sense of beauty that is easily more Negro than almost anything I have seen. And I am glad to admit my own indebtedness to you in this connection" (*LJT* 105-6).

Anderson's treatment of "the Negro" is in stark contrast to the portrayal of Black Americans in Waldo Frank's works, written more in the sympathetic vein of *Benefield*, while imparting a certain **mythic quality** to those characters. Anderson achieves this in the *Triumph* stories by adopting a strategy that portrays the '**Negro folk-spirit**' [**DEVICE** ☉ : **VOLKSGEIST**] alongside **folksong** [**DEVICE** ♪ : **VOLKSLIED**], and these scenes always pull the narrative away from the material (*Phenomena*) towards a more primal and mythic realm (*Noumena*). We can observe this in the story '**The Door of the Trap**':

The old negress sat in a rocking chair with his youngest child, a baby, in her arms. The whole room seemed under the spell of the crooning voice. Hugh fell under the spell. He waited in silence. The voice carried him far away somewhere, into forests, along the edges of swamps. (*EGG* 117)

Sherwood Anderson develops this *Volksgeist/Volkslied* strategy to much greater effect in the final story, as Toomer takes pains to explain in his letter—perhaps to thank him for the technique he clearly borrows for **CANE**:

The black sang a low voiced song. It ran like a little wind on the surface of a pond. It had no words. He had remembered the song from his father who had got it from his father. In the South, in Alabama and Mississippi the **blacks sang it when they rolled cotton bales** onto the steamers in the rivers. They had got it from other rollers of cotton bales long since dead. Long before there were any cotton bales to roll **black men in boats on rivers in Africa had sung it**. Young blacks in boats floated down rivers and came to a town they intended to attack at dawn. There was bravado in singing the song then. It was addressed to the women in the town to be attacked and contained both a caress and a threat. . . . It was a sad song, filled with **race sadness**. (*EGG* 228-9; emphasis added)

This song from Africa without words, referred to time and again throughout ‘**Out of Nowhere into Nothing**’, is later revealed to be the same song of defeat “Walter Sayers had sung in the field” with “strange foreign words” (*EGG* 255)—which Rosalind finally understands and gives voice to—as her **epiphany** draws all the separate plot lines together in a moment of *gestalt*:

The song of life was in the humming of bees, in the calling of tree toads, in the throats of negroes rolling cotton bales on a boat in a river. The song was a command. It told over and over the story of life and of death, life forever defeated by death, death forever defeated by life. (*EGG* 256)

The “sad song” originates from Anderson’s black gardener, who is “bound” to Walter’s wife Cora Sayers and is separated from “his own people, from the blacks of the African forests” (*EGG* 226). Similar to the Negress in the previous quotation, the gardener functions in the story more as an **idea** or **symbol**, than a realistic character. Toomer points this out in his letter, “Here your Negro, from the stand point of superficial reality, of averages, of surface plausibility, is unreal” (*LJT* 105-6); however, the chanting Negress recurring in *CANE*, as well as several other symbolic characters similarly function mythically and symbolically—sacrificing their “superficial reality”—as observable in ‘**Box Seat**’:

. . . a portly Negress whose huge rolls of flesh meet about the bones of seat-arms. A soil-soaked fragrance comes from her. Through the cement floor her strong roots sink down. They spread under the asphalt streets. Dreaming, the streets roll over on their bellies, and suck their glossy health from them. Her strong roots sink down and spread under the river and disappear in blood-lines that waver south. Her roots shoot down. Dan’s hands follow them. (*C* 65)

Both writers turn to images of soil, roots, and trees when referencing the ‘**Negro folk-spirit**’ [**DEVICE** ☉ : **VOLKSGEIST**], which is identified as a vivifying source, one we might describe—using Herder’s terminology—as *Kräfte*. Toomer writes of the power of this *Volksgeist* in ‘**The Negro Emergent**’:

The Negro has found his roots. He is in fruitful contact with his ancestry. He partakes of an uninterrupted **stream of energy**. He is moved by the vital determinants of racial heritage. And something of their **spirit** now lives within him. (*SEL* 51; emphasis added)

Robert Bone identifies **primitivism** as the “dominant tendency in the artistic and literary movements of the 1920’s”, and describes its objectives in the simplest manner possible: “White sophisticates felt the Negro to possess a superior juju. They wanted to touch, literally and figuratively, the magic we

have learned to call ‘soul’”.⁸⁹ In Anderson’s story, Melville Stoner reveals to Rosalind that “the white men . . . do not own an inch of the land in the whole continent. It still belongs to a race who in their physical life are now dead. The red men, although they are practically all gone still own the American continent” (*EGG* 245). American materialism and spiritual bankruptcy is contrasted with the numinous imagination of Native Americans investing the American soil with “ghosts, with gods and devils” (*EGG* 245). ‘Life’ and true ownership of the land are redefined in spiritual terms, inverting the meaning of the unifying song celebrating the **coincidence of opposites** and the endless cycle of “Life defeated by Death, Death defeated by Life” (*EGG* 257).

Toomer’s ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’ also utilizes folksong and musical elements that coalesce and convey the story’s theme [**DEVICE** ♪ : **VOLKSLIED**]. The climactic moment between Vera and David Teyy is presented in religious terms through **unspoken-consciousness** narration [**DEVICE** ☒ : **TELEPATHY**] using the language of Negro spirituals: “You cannot sin so. O Christ forgive him if he sins. Virgin Mother, you will understand if I drown in the river. O God, I dangle. Lord God, I want to cross over into the camp ground” (*W&S* 158), and spoken passages like “Her free hand tingled to the electric of his bent head. ‘I am not worthy that you should kneel to me.’ Vera shivered. Shook with a strange convulsion” (*W&S* 158). These two moments mirror biblical scenes featuring Jesus, but the words describing emotion are taken from religious songs: the Negro spiritual ‘**Deep River**’ and the hymn ‘**I Am Not Worthy, Holy Lord**’ (1875) by Henry Baker. Later in the final climactic moment of fusion, Toomer juxtaposes another Negro Spiritual, ‘**Roll, Jordan Roll**’,⁹⁰ with ‘**John Brown’s Body**’, the marching song memorializing the abolitionist, as the rivers of the two songs literally and symbolically merge into a **mystical union**:

They hung John Brown . . . Roll river roll! . . .
John Brown’s body, rumbles in the river . . .
. . . Roll river roll! (*W&S* 164)

Just as with Anderson, Toomer’s usage of folksong [**DEVICE** ♪ : **VOLKSLIED**] is coupled with notions of the **folk-spirit** or **race-soul** [**DEVICE** ☉ : **VOLKSGEIST**]:

⁸⁹ Bone, *Down Home*, 126; 128.

⁹⁰ See Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music*. (New York: G. Shirmer, 1914), 102-3.

We meet here where a race has died for both of us. . . . They have **resolved their individualism to the common stream**. We live on it. We live on them. . . . He paused. And then, ‘Deep River spreads over Mendota. Whirl up and dance above them new world soul!’ God if he hadnt stirred me. Songs, and young girls’ voices yodeling, criss-crossed on the waters . . . (*W&S* 147; emphasis added)

The moment of fusion or *gestalt*—foreshadowed musically and symbolically as rivers joining—also uses sacred biblical imagery alluding to the moment of Christ’s crucifixion to impart a supernatural sense of the Divine into the scene:

The boulder seemed cleft by a clap of thunder. As if the falls had risen and were thundering its fragments away . . . (*W&S* 164).

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent . . . (Matthew 27: 50-1 **KJV**)

This incorporation of **religious allusion** [**DEVICE** □ : **SACRED TEXT**] is similar to Benefield’s and Lawrence’s application analyzed in their respective stories. In ‘**Out of Nowhere into Nothing**’, Anderson’s usage of **biblical allusion** mixed with **unspoken consciousness** is impactful as the Bible verse continuously repeated in the mind of the protagonist throughout, is finally put into the symbolic context of **poetic inspiration** at the end in a moment of revelation:

A thought came that startled her. “The boy is hidden away in the body of this strange bird-like man,” she told herself. The thought awoke fancies within her. It explained much in the lives of men and women. An expression, a phrase, remembered from her childhood when she had gone to Sunday School in Willow Springs, came back to her mind. “**And God spoke to me out of a burning bush.**” She almost said the words aloud. (*EGG* 198)

The highlighted passage is an allusion to **Exodus 3:2**: “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed” (**KJV**). We shall see in later chapters that Herder, Goethe, and Poe had each assigned great significance to this biblical passage—the moment when the prophet *and* poet **Moses** comes face to face with **God** on Mount Horeb in the form of a **burning bush**. This allusion recontextualizes Rosalind’s relationship to this clairvoyant poet, Melville Stoner, as the repeated Bible verse imparts a sense of mystery (*Verfremdungseffekt*), and poetically expresses the moment of **revelation** and **spiritual illumination** (*Aufhebung*) within the events unfolding within Anderson’s story.

THE JOURNEY TO MASTERY

Although we can discern that the works of **Sherwood Anderson** as well as those showcased in *The Seven Arts*, played a major role in **Jean Toomer's** development as a writer, it is an oversimplification to suggest that he merely adopted some readymade aesthetic. The remaining three chapters will show just how wide a spectrum of influences **CANE** draws from, and how coherently these elements were **intuited** and then **interpolated** into a singularly distinctive style that is at once both modernist *and* mystical—firmly planted on our three mooring threads. In his later typed autobiographical notes, Toomer lists the formative “pillars” and “posts” marking his intellectual journey, where he underscores the significance of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* and **Walt Whitman**, as his “first intimation that there is a greater consciousness” [See **Image B2**]. If he had been more forthright, and more confident about his anxiety of influence, he would have included **Anderson**—not merely a guide or mentor who provided inspiration “some years ago”, along with the lesser “posts”, Frost and Sandburg (*LJT* 90)—but prominently as one of his “pillars”. One also has to consider the impact that **Russian novelists** had on British and American modernism, and what sort of effect reading “most of Dostoevsky” might have had on the young writer (*W&S* 117). And if this list were to become truly transparent and accurate, it would be necessary to include two additional columns—one for **T. S. Eliot** and one for **James Joyce**—even if their influence on nativist modernists was unconscious or reactive in nature.

In his review of *The Waste Land* for *The Dial*, Edmund Wilson attests, “Mr. T. S. Eliot’s first meagre volume of twenty-four poems was dropped into the waters of contemporary verse without stirring more than a few ripples. But when two or three years had passed, it was found to stain the whole sea”.⁹¹ The overwhelming response to *Portrait of an Artist* and *Ulysses* serialized in *The Little Review* also made waves within avant-garde circles on both sides of the Atlantic—a modernist writer would have found it hard to ignore Eliot or Joyce, as they were soaking up much of the oxygen of critical attention.⁹²

⁹¹ Edmund Wilson, “The Poetry of Drouth”, in *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s & 30s*, 865.

⁹² *Ulysses* was serialized first appearing in *The Little Review's* March 1918 issue and continuing through its September–December 1920 issue after which its publication was halted due to its famous court trial. See James Joyce, *The Little Review “Ulysses”*, eds. Mark Gaipa, Sean Latham, and Robert Scholes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

The fact that these two figures towering over the *Seven Arts* circle provoked a sense of rivalry is evident from **Hart Crane's** letters,⁹³ and **Gorham Munson's** 'Pendulum' [See **Image A4**], along with his comment in *Waldo Frank: A Study*: "anyone today who experiments at all with prose fiction is immediately and uncritically planted in the shadow of the Irishman" (*WFS* 62). In the following chapters we trace **Jean Toomer's** development into a modernist writer in relation to these "pillars", examining the connection between **aesthetic devices** and Neo-Platonism in the **polyphonic-prose** poetic of **Whitman** and **Anderson**,⁹⁴ the **poetic realism** of **Turgenev**, and **Goethe's** 'polyvalent' *Wilhelm Meister*.

⁹³ See Letter to Allen Tate, June 12, 1922: "I have been facing [Eliot] for *four* years,—and while I haven't discovered a weak spot yet in his armor,—I flatter myself a little lately that I have discovered a safe tangent to strike which, if I can possibly explain the position,—goes *through* him toward a *different* goal. You see it is such a fearful temptation to imitate him . . ." (*CRA* 278).

⁹⁴ It is my contention that Jean Toomer was greatly influenced by Sherwood Anderson's prose poetry—his 'Mid-American Chants' and more prominently, the 'Testaments' published in various modernist magazines, especially those appearing alongside Joyce's serialized *Ulysses*:

'Testament One', *The Little Review* 6, no. 6 (Oct. 1919): 17-19.

'Testament Two', *The Little Review* 6, no. 7 (Nov. 1919): 19-21. Included in *A New Testament* (1927) as 'The Dreamer' (*NT* 78-82).

'A New Testament, III', *The Little Review* 6, no. 8 (Dec. 1919): 17-19. The section before the first ellipses break was excerpted and retitled 'A Vagrant' when published in *A New Testament* (*NT* 82-3); the paragraph beginning with "There is a woman . . ." was excerpted and retitled 'Young Man in a Room' (*NT* 83).

'A New Testament, IV & V', *The Little Review* 6, no. 9 (Jan. 1920): 15-17. 'Testament V' was retitled and published in *A New Testament* in 1927 as 'Word Factories' (*NT* 85-8).

'A New Testament, VI-IX', *The Little Review* 6, no. 10 (Mar. 1920): 12-16. 'Testament VI' was retitled and published as 'Ambition' (*NT* 38-9); 'Testament VII' as 'Chicago' (*NT* 107); 'Testament VIII' as 'Cities' (*NT* 47).

'A Testament, X', *The Little Review* 6, no. 11 (April 1920): 58-60.

'A Testament, XI & XII', *The Little Review* 7, no. 2 (Jul-Aug. 1920): 58-61. 'Testament XI' was retitled and published as without the last stanza as 'Man Walking Alone' (*NT* 31-2).

'The Man in the Brown Coat', *The Little Review* 7, no. 4 (Jan-Mar. 1920): 18-20. This is the only Testament poem not titled as such, it was published in *A Triumph of the Egg* in 1921, and also included in *A New Testament* (*NT* 71-6).

'A Testament', 'A Testament: The Lame One', and 'A Testament: A Young Man', *MSS* (*Manuscripts*) no. 1 (Feb. 1922): 3-5. 'A Testament: The Lame One' was published in *A New Testament* in 1927 as 'The Lame One' (*NT* 101); 'A Testament: A Young Man' as 'A Dying Poet' and dedicated to Emanuel Carnevali (*NT* 98-100).

The Double Dealer published three testaments under the banner title, 'Testament (Containing Songs of One Who Would be a Priest)'—these were published after *CANE* was released: 'Testament, Song Number 1', *The Double Dealer* 7 (Oct. 1924), 15. (*NT* 12-5); 'Testament, Song Number 2', *The Double Dealer* 7 (Nov.-Dec. 1924), 59-60. (*NT* 15-7); 'Testament, One Puzzled Concerning Himself', *The Double Dealer* 7 (Jan.-Feb. 1925), 100. (*NT* 77-8).

Testaments I, IV, VIII, IX, X, XII, and 'A Testament', were omitted from Anderson's final version published as *A New Testament* (1927).

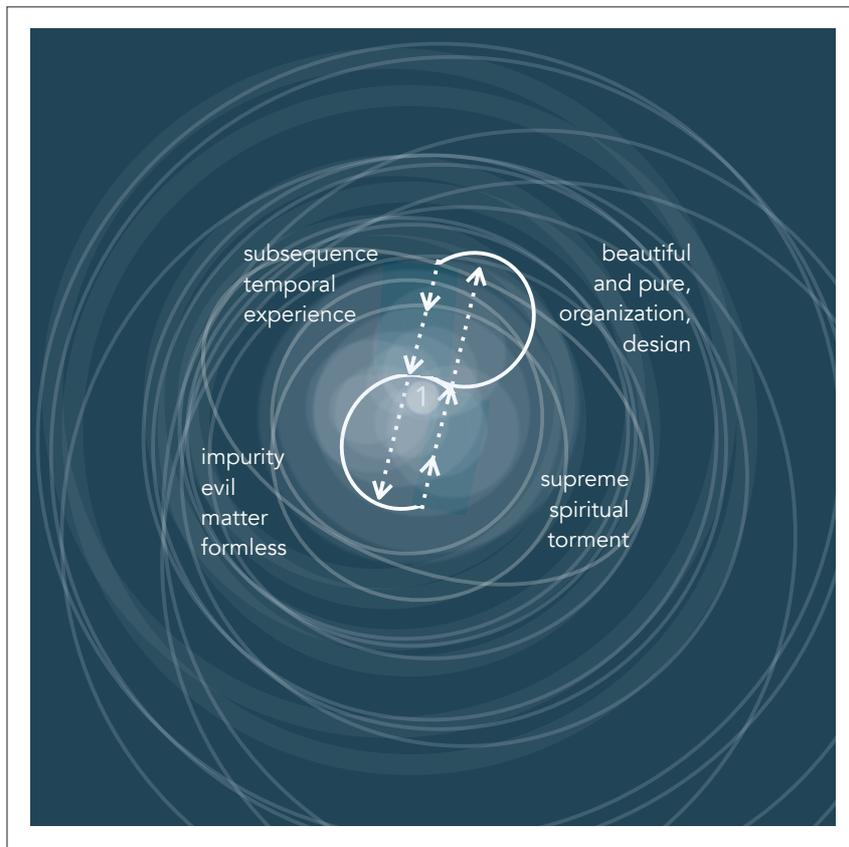


Image D1. Toomer's 'Maelström' ["LLN" III : 34], rendered by John-Francis Kinsler.

Poetry - Criticism

Is it sincere? (a) thoughts of others (b) sensations (c) emotions.

Personality?

Style -

conventional expressions?

appropriate phrases?

dead metaphors? dead phrases?

mixed metaphors

are words used for their essential meaning?

'look for the phrases which give one a sudden shock of illumination, which really evoke an object or convey a sensation.'

rhythm?

cadence?

Image D2. Jean Toomer's "Poetry" Notebook. Begins with notes on Aldington's "Art of Poetry" published in *The Dial* August 1920. It ends with a critical essay on Aldington's piece, left unfinished. JTP, Box 60, Folder 1411. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

3. "BETWEEN PROSE & VERSE"

A Spiritualized Poetics *Sub Specie Æternitatis*

SCOPE [1888-1921] : POETICS : CHICAGO / NY / LONDON / PARIS

POINTS [U < - > : X : < - > : Y : < - > : Z]

Intelligence, work, observation,
all these factors draw straight lines;
it is only poetry and art which can trace
the undulating waves of beauty.

— Ivan Turgenev¹

We still lack a romantic rearrangement
and transformation in our thinking.
Extremely simple style, but highly daring,
romance-like, dramatic beginnings, transitions,
consequences—now dialogue—then speech—then
narration, then reflection, then image and so on.
Wholly an impression of the soul, with perception,
thought, opinion, image, conversation, music, etc.
changing incessantly and quickly, and placed one next
to the other in clear, bright masses.

— Novalis, *Schriften*. Vol. III²

For the inaugural issue of *The Seven Arts*, the Nobel Laureate **Romain Rolland** penned the piece ‘**America and the Arts**’ that urges Americans to find their own voice and to “express themselves, freely, sincerely, entirely, in art” without becoming “slaves to foreign models” (*SAI* 48, 51). He concludes his essay by suggesting as a model for this task that his readers to look to their sole “elemental Voice of a great pioneer”: **Walt Whitman**—who he addresses as “your Homer” (*SAI* 48, 51). In issue after issue of *The Seven Arts*, Whitman is esteemed, referenced, or alluded to in editorials, critical essays, reviews, and poetry penned by **Waldo Frank**, **Van Wyck Brooks**, **Paul Rosenfeld**, Theodore Dreiser, Leo Stein, and especially the senior editor **James Oppenheim**—whose main contributions to the magazine were numerous Whitmanesque poems, which Frank privately derided as sentimental “sermons in dithyramb”.³ There was general agreement, however, about the underlying premise of the many articles celebrating Whitman; and the *Seven Arts* May 1917 issue celebrated ‘Walt Whitman month’ with a panegyric on the poet’s genius:

¹ Qtd. in Eva Kagan-Kans, “Turgenev: The Metaphysics of an Artist, 1818-1883”, *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 13, no. 3 (July-September 1972): 388.

² Qtd. in Ceserani and Zanotti, “The Fragment as Structuring Force”, 459.

³ Waldo Frank, *Memoirs of Waldo Frank*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 90-91. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*MWF*’.

[H]e set out in a free art territory, learnt most things for himself, and created his own forms, gathered his own materials. His form was built roughly by listening, as it were, to his own inner music, and setting it to words, instead of listening to the music of English poetry. His material was the life around him, in its multitudinousness, actuality, and chaos. . . . Naturally he was an optimist, a preacher of joy, health, simplicity, and the victory of man. . . . His work has been compared with ancient religious writing, and he has been called one of the prophets. (*SA2* 117-118)

The word ‘prophet’ has been invoked quite often to describe authors such as **Dostoevsky**, **Nietzsche**, and **Lawrence**. ‘Mystic’ is another related term that has been used frequently in reference to certain poets and authors. In his essay ‘**Sherwood Anderson**’ (1941), Lionel Trilling notes: “No one, I think, has commented on the amount and quality of the mysticism that entered the thought of many of the writers of the Twenties. . . . in addition to Anderson, Waldo Frank and Eugene O’Neill come to mind as mystics.”⁴ If Anderson and Frank deserve to be designated as “mystics”—and they consciously strove to represent themselves as such—then it goes to reason that this is a label befitting their protégé **Jean Toomer** as well. In his essay ‘**Modern Poetry**’, **Hart Crane** provides insight about exactly what the prophetic and mystic qualities were that modernists’ sought to effect into their poetry:

[P]oetic prophecy in the case of the seer has nothing to do with factual prediction or futurity. It is a **peculiar type of perception**, capable of apprehending some absolute and timeless concept of the imagination with astounding clarity and conviction.⁵

We shall focus on the **poetic devices**—distilled from Whitman and the various subsequent literary movements—that nativist writers incorporated in pursuit of this higher mode of “perception” that Crane describes.

The New Poetry (1917) anthology’s introduction by **Harriet Monroe** and **Alice Corbin Henderson** will serve as our touchstone to sift and sort through the various features, names, and movements—to identify those with the greatest valence and force in shaping the new American poetic:

What is the new poetry? and wherein does it differ from the old? The difference is not in mere details of form [. . .] It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity an ideal which implies an individual, unsteretyped diction; and an individual, unsteretyped rhythm. [. . .]

⁴ Lionel Trilling, “Sherwood Anderson”, *The Kenyon Review* 3, no. 3 (1941): 300.

⁵ Hart Crane, “Modern Poetry”, in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 826.

Perhaps the first of these disturbing influences from afar to be felt in modern English poetry was the Celtic renaissance, the wonderful revival [. . .] through the English work of two poets of genius, **Synge** and **Yeats** [. . .] inspired by the simplicity and clarity of primitive Celtic song. [. . .] **Whitman's** influence was felt first in France. It reached England, and finally America, indirectly from Paris, where the poets [. . .] have been experimenting with free verse ever since **Mallarmé**. [. . .] This **borderland between prose and verse** is being explored now as never before in English; except, perhaps in the King James translation of **the Bible**. The modern "vers-libertines," as they have been wittily called, are doing pioneer work in an heroic effort to get rid of obstacles that have hampered the poet and separated him from his audience. They are trying to make the modern manifestations of poetry less a matter of rules and formulae, and more a thing of the spirit, and of organic as against imposed, rhythm. [. . .] They have studied the French *symbolistes* of the 'nineties, and the more recent Parisian *vers-libristes* [. . .] have read **Greek poetry** from a **new angle of vision**; and last, but perhaps most important of all, have bowed to winds from **the East**. (*MON* vi-vi; ix-xi; emphasis added)

For this middle chapter of this monograph, we place **Walt Whitman** at the 'focal centre' of this vast web of names—"Here was a so-called poet who discarded all traditional patterns, and wove a carpet of his own" (*MON* vii)—and we identify *Leaves of Grass* as the aesthetic **nidus** giving form and substance to this new specimen of poetry. **D. H. Lawrence** describes him in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), as "the great poet, [who] has meant so much to me. Whitman, the one man breaking a way ahead. . . . Ahead of all poets, pioneering into the wilderness of unopened life".⁶ Lawrence characterizes Whitman's art as that of a wayfaring soul traveling along an **Open Road** "down the common way of the living", towards a new "doctrine of life . . . beyond the morality of salvation" (*LAW* 407; 402)—one founded on **Sympathy** (i.e. with the "Negro", the prostitute, the syphilitic) towards "merging, *en masse*, [into] One Identity, Myself monomania" (*LAW* 403). We shall examine these methods of **Sympathy** and "merging" passed on to the various "new little poets camping on Whitman's camping-ground" (*LAW* 400)—those nativist American writers that Brooks identified as "the children of Whitman" (*AGE* 127)—in relation to various strategies of **uniforamation** we find in modernist magazines, **CANE**, and the works of **Sherwood Anderson**.

⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Anthony Beal (New York: Viking Press, 1956), 400. Hereafter cited parenthetically as '*LAW*'. Lawrence's usage and capitalization of '**Sympathy**' has been adopted throughout this study where it correlates with Herder's concept of *Einführung*, as an alternative to 'empathy'.

UNIFYING SYMBOLIC LEXICON

Jean Toomer's fortuitous stint in the fall of 1921 as the assistant principal of the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute would provide the budding writer with a wealth of new experiences to ponder—most of his writing in his “Memorandum” Pocketbook and “Poetry” Notebook seem to draw from his stay in Georgia or mark contemporaneous developments and interests. The rustic agricultural setting of Sparta, Georgia would feature heavily in *CANE* with its cinematographic scenes of harvest, forests, bucolic landscapes, and native folk life. The various indigenous plants of Georgia—the crops, foliage, and flowers observed—would be transformed by its author into an intricate language of symbols conveying many layers of meaning. Toomer's stylistic **idiom** and **poetology** would be well formed by the time the final pieces, such as ‘**Bona and Paul**’, were being revised and completed the winter of 1922:

Paul follows the sun into a pine-matted hillock in Georgia. He sees the slanting roofs of gray unpainted cabins tinted lavender. A Negress chants a lullaby beneath the mate-eyes of a southern planter. Her breasts are ample for the suckling of a song. She weans it, and sends it, curiously weaving, among the lush melodies of cane and corn. (C 73)

In this single excerpt we can find the major components of *CANE*'s symbolic vocabulary along with their linked themes in compressed form. We have the **sun**, which along with the repeated pun on sun/son, provides the meta-literary vehicle to define the relationship between author and text. We have the oft-mentioned **pine trees** infused with spirits, which in *CANE* are doubly planted in both the material and spiritual realms. The colors **lavender** and **gray** both have symbolic value in the text written by a multi-racial author hinting at the mixed heritage of many of the ‘Negroes’. The **Negress** and the **planter** point to America's original sin—not miscegenation, but rather what George Hutchinson labels the history of “rape and concubinage”⁷—and the recurring Negress, intrinsically tied to *Spirituals* and **folksong**, is the embodiment of the ‘Negro folk-spirit’. Finally, we find the source of these “lush melodies”—**corn** along with **cane**, symbols for white and black folk, with the latter providing the multiple layers of meaning that the book's title suggests.

⁷ George Hutchinson, “Jean Toomer and American Racial Discourse”, in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242.

In his introduction to *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*, Paul Rosenfeld characterizes the mid-western writer's *oeuvre* as "possess[ing] the field-flower's crudeness and delicacy . . . a simplicity almost bizarre" and that "his tales and lyrical and general pieces . . . [were] the result of the joint operation of several very **different impulses of art** and **methods of experience** . . . [c]ausing the old boundaries of the genres in which he worked to **oscillate**, to **overlap** one another, the joint operations of different impulses made these genres the masters of **new effects** and performances" beyond the realm of **prose**.⁸ Nowhere is this precarious balance of various forms and genres more apparent than in Anderson's lyrical **short-story cycles**—and the source of inspiration behind these works is later revealed in a letter to his publisher Ben Huebsch:

Some years ago I wrote the little book *Mid-American Chants* and that led directly into the impulse that produced *Winesburg, Poor White* and *The Triumph*. For two years now I've been at work on another thing I call *A New Testament*. And that has led directly into *Many Marriages*. . . . The complicated rhythms and the rush of imagery I have worked for I these things would be better understood after reading the same impulse in prose and the prose would be better understood in the light of the *Testament*.⁹

The new "impulse" was sparked during a visit to New York early February 1917, with the reception and encouragement **Sherwood Anderson** received from the **Seven Arts circle** fanning his urge to become "the voice of Mid-America" and take up "the role of prophetic bard"—this "impulse" suddenly burst out into "songs" and "prose hymn[s] to the cornfields".¹⁰ Drawing from various sources—Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, the language of the Old and New Testament, the rhythm of folksong, imagist verse, and modernist polyphonic prose—Anderson would fuse these elements into a distinct voice singing free-verse poetry—these would later be collected and published as *Mid-American Chants* (1918) and *A New Testament* (1927)—but more importantly these "songs" form the essence of the flowing lyricism and style of his stories and novels. And just as Whitman orders his poetic fragments around the unifying multivalent symbol of **grass** (and **leaves**), Anderson similarly adopts an organicist symbol of mystical **cornfields**.

⁸ Paul Rosenfeld, ed., Introduction to *The Sherwood Anderson Reader* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), viii-ix. Emphasis added.

⁹ Sherwood Anderson, *Selected Letters*, ed. Charles E. Modlin (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 32-33. Letter dated 15 February 1922 and written in New Orleans.

¹⁰ Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 250-5.

[**DEVICE ¶¶ : MULTIVALENT SYMBOL**]: Wolosky describes **Walt Whitman's poetics** as one of “**complex figural orchestration**”—allowing the author “to create intersecting, elaborating, enlarging, and echoing levels of interrelated figures, with each a reflection and extension of each”—a dynamic structure like a ship's keelson, where multiple polysemic layers all adjoin at the center.¹¹ In *Democratic Vistas* (1871), the poet identifies the “common skeleton, knitting all close” to be—the “**IDEA**, melting everything else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, emotional power”¹²—whether this binding **force** is labeled *Poiesis*, *Arabesque*, **Sympathy**, **Democracy**—or, as the fifth ‘leaf’ of ‘**Song of Myself**’ suggests, “a keelson of the creation is **love**” (*WW* 8; emphasis added). From the “spear of summer grass” contemplated at the beginning, to the soil and “the grass I love” of the ending (*WW* 3; 62), this organic symbol for the “divine average” (*WW* 172), becomes a thematic spring-board for the poet's imagination as it expands, merging all into the **Self**: “I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul, /... / I help myself to material and immaterial” (*WW* 41).

Anderson would adopt **corn** as a multivalent symbol, just as Whitman had done for his polysemic image of grass.¹³ **Cornfields** signify the essence of Middle America, an image also imbued with religious significance as the place where “The gods wait in the corn, / The soul of song is in the land” (*MID* 60); where “memories of... dancing and fighting and praying” Indians linger (*MID* 69); and where the poet “pregnant with song” fills his “sacred vessel” (*MID* 11). Spencer remarks that “the long aisles of corn in their orderly planting not only signified man's conquest of the forest . . . [but also] their mythic reincarnation of . . . an elemental vitality to counteract the sterile religious tradition of New England”.¹⁴ Of all the critics, only **Alice Corbin Henderson** would give a positive review

¹¹ Shira Wolosky, “Walt Whitman: The Office of the Poet”, in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. 4, *Nineteenth-Century Poetry: 1800–1910*, ed. Sacvan Berkovich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 377–83.

¹² Walt Whitman, *The Portable Walt Whitman*, ed. Michael Warner (London: Penguin, 2004), 402. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*WW*’.

¹³ Sherwood Anderson, *Mid-American Chants* (New York: John Lane, 1918), cited parenthetically as ‘*MID*’; and Sherwood Anderson, *A New Testament* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), cited parenthetically as ‘*TES*’.

¹⁴ Benjamin T. Spencer, “Sherwood Anderson: The Mythopoeist”, in *Sherwood Anderson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Walter B. Rideout (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 160.

of *Mid-American Chants*—in *Poetry* magazine she praises them as “musical improvisations, with recurring themes and motives”, and identifies Anderson with nativist poets celebrating “Mid-America”—Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, and Edgar Lee Masters—adding, “is it not through local consciousness that we shall achieve national expression?”¹⁵ Despite ‘Chicago’ and ‘Mid-American Prayer’ being printed in *The Seven Arts*, the Whitman-styled ‘Chants’ and later ‘Testaments’ would elicit disappointingly tepid responses from Brooks and Frank as well—prompting the exasperated Anderson to write in 1919:

I think of my Testament as a passionate attempt to get poetry into the thing you have expressed time and again and that you and Waldo have together made me a little conscious of. I want to have it be a distillation. God knows how far I shall succeed.¹⁶

Waldo tries to steer Sherwood away from poetry towards his true “road”—prose¹⁷—just as he discourages Jean years later: “You are a poet in prose. You are shackled + thwarted in the verse forms” (*BM* 103). Although Frank praises Toomer’s “free woven narrative[s]”—‘Karintha’, ‘Becky’, and ‘Avey’—as “poems [that] are quite perfect” (*BM* 103), he seems to miss the essential elements poetry affords to prose—lyricism and rhythm, intertwined with a symbolic language. These intrinsic foundations of Anderson’s ‘Chants’ and ‘Testaments’ that directly blossomed into the lyrical prose-style of *Winesburg* and *The Triumph* will be examined further, especially to make the case that the two phases of Sherwood’s poetry were just as influential to Jean’s “growing” and “maturing” into a “poet in prose” (see *LJT* 102).

When we scrutinize the “Memorandum” *Pocketbook*, it becomes evident that Anderson’s various methods of incorporating corn and cornfields as symbols related to the mythic and spiritual realm was something that Toomer considered significant, as they later appear in various forms in his own writings:

¹⁵ Alice Corbin Henderson, “Mid-America Awake”, *Poetry* 12, no.3 (June 1918): 155-8. See also Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 289.

¹⁶Letter to Brooks, December 1919. Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout, eds. *Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1953), 54.

¹⁷ See Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*, 259. Anderson turns this criticism around by framing the lack of song and poetry in Frank’s writing as a deficiency: “I do think you are terribly young in your dissertation on prose and poetry. You see there is something in you that has not burst into song yet, and you have not found your own song. I have felt it in your prose and in you, the repressed thing.” Jones and Rideout, eds., 12. For more from Anderson’s letter to Waldo Frank written May 1917, See *Metaphysical Exercitium* § 40.

‘A Lullaby’

Soft creeps the wind in the old standing corn.

(MID 24)

‘Song of the Beginning of Courage’

I am come with infinite slowness into my
kingship. [. . .]

By the long aisles of the corn you must go,
little brothers, narrow and long the way.

The corn in its struggle whispers and
sways. Courage always new courage.

In deeper in far from the stars let the wide soft
corn leaves whisper to you.

*Crush and trample, brother, brother crush and
trample 'til you die.*

(MID 22)

The wind is in the corn,

And dry October leaves sway and creak,
talking to it, talking to me, [. . .] I listen to
them for they are the only voices in this place. [

. . .] it seemed to me they were monotonously
boastfully, repeating the same phrase, over and
over, “Cotton is **king**, but we’re the queens of
cotton. And Georgia soil is fertilized where we
grow.” [. . .] it vexed and irritated me that they
gave heed neither to that soil of a past hundred
years ago, nor to the rolling land that lost itself
for, far [too] westward. And, of course, in a
region where corn is the only voice, for life I
had to seek by turns the past and future.

[“MEM” I : 20]

This image of **corn** would appear in ‘**Carma**’ in the form of its repeated chorus, but alongside **cane**, inserted as a symbol representing ‘Negro life’: “Wind is in the corn. Come along. / Corn leaves swaying, rusty with talk, / Scratching choruses above the guinea's squawk, // Wind is in the cane. Come along.” (C 13).

The religious significance of cornfields as a **sacred** place and its other meanings would carry over into Anderson’s other works, such as in ‘**Testament V**’: “Long ago an old man sat on a log at the edge of a cornfield and talked to me of God.”¹⁸ In the *Winesburg* story ‘**The Untold Lie**’, which first appeared in the January issue of *Seven Arts* (1917), the cornfields become the mystical backdrop for a moment of **Sympathy** between Ray Pearson and Hal Winters:

There they stood in the big empty field with the quiet corn shocks standing in rows behind them and the red and yellow hills in the distance, and from being just two indifferent workmen they had become all alive to each other. (WIN 248)

The sense of fertility first associated with cornfields in the ‘**Chants**’ are further developed in the *Triumph* cycle, which **superimposes** additional sexual connotations in ‘**The New Englander**’ (and final pieces), of cornfields being a place for coital intimacy. We can observe in multiple **CANE**-era stories that Toomer is very familiar with Anderson’s **symbolic lexicon**, and that he freely and fluently borrows from it—as seen in his usage of **corn** in ‘**Georgia Dusk**’: “Give virgin lips to cornfield concubines” (C 15); but more importantly, with the same multivalent meanings transferred to **canefields**, as in ‘**Carma**’: “Time and space

¹⁸ ‘A New Testament, V’, *The Little Review* 6, no. 9 (January, 1920): 16. This Testament was retitled and published in *A New Testament* in 1927 as ‘Word Factories’ (NT 85-8).

have no meaning in a canefield" (C 13); in 'Fern': "Dusk [. . .] settled with a purple haze about the cane. [. . .] I felt that things unseen to men were tangibly immediate" (C 19); and even in 'Withered Skin of Berries' with the moment of mystical ecstasy and Sympathy resulting from the scent of boiling cane.¹⁹

The **superimposition** and layering of symbolic meaning is best understood through Anderson's **horse** image. In *Mid-American Chants*, the 'Song of Stephen' describes the harness maker Enid, the narrator's fall from a horse, and various images of war, before its chorus, "*Saddle a horse—sweep away. / Saddle a horse for liberty. / Harry my men harry my men. / Broken ground for mine and me.*" (MID 39). The multiple connotations—of being restrained, riding to freedom, injury and violence—associated with horse-riding, are all carried over to other texts. In *Winesburg, Ohio*, the author **overlays** additional meanings for the contextual symbol: David's mother driving recklessly in 'Godliness'; Enoch describing his painting of the woman lying injured thrown from a horse in 'Loneliness'; Hal comparing marriage to being harnessed like a horse, and his father Windpeter Winters frantically driving his wagon and steed towards an oncoming train and to his death in 'The Untold Lie'. When the theme of horse-riding recurs in 'Death', as Elizabeth Willard recounts her accident, the compounded previous meanings all coalesce to great effect. If we compare that passage to Toomer's first portrayal of Carma driving her **mule**, his usage draws from identical polysemic meanings Anderson inscribed into his **horse** symbol:

'Death'

"I went out Trunion **Pike** a mile or more and then turned into a side road. The little horse went quickly along up hill and down. I was impatient. Thoughts came and I wanted to get away from my thoughts. I began to **beat** the horse. The black clouds settled down and it began to rain. I wanted to go at a terrible speed, to drive on and on forever. I wanted to get out of town, out of my clothes, out of my marriage, out of my body, out of everything. I almost killed the horse, making him run, and when he could not run any more I got out of the buggy and ran afoot into the darkness until I fell and hurt my side."
(WIN 277-8)

'Carma'

Carma, in overalls, and strong as any man, stands behind the old brown mule, driving the wagon home. It bumps, and groans, and shakes as it crosses the railroad track. She, riding it easy. I leave the men around the stove to follow her with my eyes down the red dust road. Nigger woman driving a Georgia chariot down an old dust road. Dixie **Pike** is what they call it. [...] "Gedap." Using reins to **slap** the mule, she disappears in a cloudy rumble at some indefinite point along the road. [...] Some one stumbled over her. A cry went up. From the road, one would have thought that they were cornering a rabbit or a skunk. . . . (C 19)

¹⁹ For an extended excerpt of this scene, see **Forest of Correspondence 3** in this chapter.

In addition to horses, corn, or cane, Toomer consistently describes characters using **organicist metaphors** of leaves and plants—this was one of the most prominent features incorporated throughout *The Triumph of the Egg* as discussed later. Following a consistent ‘formula’ when comparing and making associations has a unifying effect of creating internal coherence. These various methods of symbolism [**DEVICE** ≡ : **MULTIVALENT SYMBOL**] rely on multiple figuration, or the “intersecting, elaborating, enlarging, and echoing levels of interrelated figures” identified as Whitman’s method earlier. Each referencing of the symbol reflects back to its earlier instances, creating a new aggregate meaning comprised of all the layers; for example when we read the following sentences from ‘**Sophistication**’—“They went along a path past a field of corn that had not yet been cut. The wind whispered among the dry corn blades” (*WIN* 248)—the meaning and context is altered for those that have read the other references quoted earlier. This repetition of an image, word, or association creates semiotic links providing a sense of cohesion between each instance *within* a text (**intratextuality**), or *between* texts (**intertextuality**). This technique of **interweaving** [**DEVICE** ≡ : **INTERLACING**] is a method of achieving **uniformation** or synthesis [**DEVICE** ≠ : **FUSION**]—which is essential to creating a sense of organic unity to separate pieces of poetry in a collection like *Leaves of Grass*, or in the case of short-story cycles, to the separate fragments of narrative, poetry, and song. In ‘**General Aims**’, Hart Crane provides context about the structuring of a poem in relation to correspondences:

As to technical considerations: the motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their **associational** meanings. Via this and their metaphorical **inter-relationships**, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the **organic** principle of a “**logic of metaphor**” which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension.²⁰

The “logic of the metaphor” is a topic that we will return to, but first we will examine various methods of intra- & inter- textuality American nativist writers innovated to achieve organic unity.

²⁰ Hart Crane, “General Aims and Theories”, in *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology, 1900-2000*, ed. Jon Cook (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 138.

INTER- / INTRA- TEXTUALITY

Alison Sharrock gives us a working definition of **intratextuality**: “A text’s meaning grows not only of the readings of its parts and wholes, but also out of the relationships between the parts, and the reading of these parts as parts”.²¹ We use the double label of inter- and intra- textuality because when examining poetry collections or short-story cycles, a prose poem like ‘**Nulló**’ is a *whole* text by itself, while also being a fragment or arc in **CANE**’s circle. The relationship of ‘**Nulló**’ to ‘**Karintha**’ could correctly be labeled either inter- or intra- textual, as the distinction is just a matter of perspective.

The *Spoon River Anthology* (1915) by Edgar Lee Masters is one of the clearest examples of intratextuality.²² Each of the free verse poems is a concise vignette revealing some significant event, details, or thoughts of the townspeople it is titled after. The opening poem ‘**The Hill**’ is set in the graveyard where “All, all, are sleeping on the hill” (*MAS* 1) and lays out the central conceit—each vignette captures the thoughts and voice of those dead and buried, revealing (or intimating) their innermost secrets from beyond the grave. The poet narrator becomes a **medium** channeling the voices of the dead townsfolk of Spoon River and **chronicler** revealing their deepest secrets, inner turmoil and tragic fates. However, it soon becomes apparent how intertwined the lives of these midwesterners are, as each individual reveals his or her relationship to other members of the community; and reading a subsequent poem often provides additional context or fills in the gaps left in the previous, while also branching out to other townspeople. The two-hundred-plus **interrelated** first-person accounts are written in free verse, then shuffled and ordered in a seemingly haphazard manner, though sometimes grouped by theme or placed near related characters. Readers have to piece together information from various poems to fill in the gaps—and the table of contents functions as a *dramatis personae*, or like a map to each community members’ gravesite and spirit. Instead of going through the pages cover to cover, readers jump from poem to poem like detectives following

²¹ Alison Sharrock “Intratextuality: Texts, Parts, and (W)holes in Theory”, in *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, eds. Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6-7.

²² A selection of vignettes from Edgar Lee Masters’s anthology were included in Pound’s *Catholic Anthology* (1914) as well as Monroe and Henderson’s *The New Poetry* (1917).

various leads, or rumormongers seeking salacious or intimate details in a roundabout manner—tangled confessions of love affairs, abortions, cruelty, violence, and rape. *Spoon River Anthology* ends up becoming not just a collection of individual confessions, but a lithographic portrait encapsulating the spirit of the entire midwestern town—its *Dorfgeist*.

Despite his claims to the contrary, it is doubtful that **Sherwood Anderson** was not aware of *Spoon River Anthology* when writing his stories that would collectively become *Winesburg, Ohio*.²³ In addition to both sharing the method of having overlapping and interrelated characters, both authors situate their characters within a specified town achieving a geographical sense of boundary that unifies the separate pieces. However, we shall see in Chapter 4 that this method was prefigured in Turgenev's short-story cycle *A Sportsman's Sketches*. *Winesburg* relies upon repeated images, mirrored scenes, and multivalent symbols, which he also features in *The Triumph of the Egg*—but the latter cycle contains more innovative techniques of interlacing, which also appear in *CANE*.

One such method is the **lock & key technique** [**DEVICE** ◻ : **SECRET LINK**]—where a crucial piece of information is made secret by hiding it elsewhere within the text (i.e. another story)—this is best exemplified in Sherwood Anderson's story 'The New Englander'. Elsie Leander moves with her family from Vermont out west past Ohio to Iowa, to live amongst the cornfields on a rural farm. As in all of Anderson's stories and poems, the **cornfields** symbolize something mystical—in this story, **sexuality** is the underlying theme: "The corn rows were mysteriously beautiful. They were warm passageways running out into life. . . . For some reason after she had touched the strong young stalk and had held it for a moment firmly in her hand she grew afraid. . . . Her body trembled" (*EGG* 145). When her brother Tom brings his family over for a visit, Elsie's childhood memories with her now dead cousin start intermixing with her niece Elizabeth's fling with a handsome farmhand. The story is rich in symbolic imagery of dogs chasing after rabbits, and at night Elsie hears voices: "From what seemed a far away place there came the shrill cries of the children.

²³ In *Our America* Frank contrasts the two works: "Spoon River Anthology marks the effect of our the conflict of American life against its own rigid forms, the new upward-stirring, the fierce passion of renewal. Spoon River is static: *Winesburg* is dynamic. Spoon River is the trampled and buried face of the American world: *Winesburg* is its heart." (*OUR* 161)

The cries became soft. They were like the cries of unborn children that had called to her out of the fields on the night before" (EGG 153).

As Elsie is walking through the cornfields, and when the farmhand and Elizabeth come running between the corn rows to spend some time together, she watches them in secret. We only get descriptions of the voyeur Elsie, lying watching and pleasuring herself as a storm is approaching "with closed eyes. Her fright passed. It was warm and close in the room-like tunnels" (EGG 153). Tom calls his daughter, and they leave before the storm breaks, but Elsie remains outside and gets drenched with her loneliness and sorrow:

in the storm she raised her head and heard, through the tangled mass of wet hair that covered her ears and above the sound of millions of rain-drops that alighted on the earthen floor inside the house of the corn, the thin voices of her mother and father calling to her out of the Leander house. (EGG 153)

While the time shifts and mediation of the tryst through the eyes of the voyeur Elsie is innovative and vaguely Turgenevian [**DEVICE** ☞ : **NARRATIVE SHIFT**], the **secret link** [**DEVICE** ☐] and **key** to unlocking this mystery emerges two vignettes later in 'Motherhood', set in the cornfields of another mid-west farm far away. With its mirrored imagery of dogs barking and wind rustling, this vignette, too, has an unnamed farmhand who finds love; and one day, "courage came and he went down to lie with her . . . He plowed her deeply" (EGG 169). The short lyrical vignette ends showing readers the grim reality of what often happens to such young girls: "when she was big . . . went to the fields. The heads of little stones stuck out of the ground like the heads of buried children. . . . The voices of the darkness cried to her . . ." (EGG 169-70). This short piece is the buttonhole that fills the gap in 'The New Englander'—bringing universal significance to, while suggesting the consequences of—Elizabeth's encounter, and reason for the mysterious crying Elsie heard at night. Once unlocked, this new understanding re-contextualizes the theme of crying repeated throughout the other stories of *The Triumph of the Egg*.²⁴

²⁴ 'The Egg': "the following spring I came wriggling and crying into the world" (EGG 46); 'Unlighted Lamps': "Then from some distant street came a child's cry" (EGG 46); 'Man in the Brown Coat': "I have heard the little voices. I heard the voice of fear crying . . ." (EGG 99); 'Brothers': "Presently one of the children would cry" (EGG 109); 'The Door of the Trap': "For a long time he stood in the darkness inside his own room. The children stopped crying and the house became quiet again" (EGG 130).

Unborn

Swift across the night a little cry,
 Against the cold white night
 a stain of red,
 The moon dips down,
 The dull winds blow.
 My unborn son is dead. (*MID* 53)

Nulló

A spray of pine-needles,
 Dipped in western horizon gold,
 Fell onto a path.
 Dry moulds of cow-hoofs.
 In the forest.
 Rabbits knew not of their falling,
 Nor did the forest catch aflame. (*C* 53)

When we examine Toomer's poem, 'Nulló', its many shared elements with Sherwood's Imagist-inspired 'Unborn' in *Mid-American Chants* is noticeable—the similar theme, form, and style—but placed in close proximity to its 'linked' scene in 'Karintha', the Andersonian influence becomes unmistakable:

But Karintha is a woman, and she has had a child. A child fell out of her womb onto a bed of pine-needles in the forest. Pine-needles are smooth and sweet. They are elastic to the feet of rabbits. . . A sawmill was nearby. Its pyramidal sawdust pile smouldered. It is a year before one completely burns. Meanwhile, the smoke curls up and hangs in odd wraiths about the trees, curls up, and spreads itself out over the valley. . . Weeks after Karintha returned home the smoke was so heavy you tasted it in water. (*C* 4)²⁵

This oblique and elliptical device [□ : SECRET LINK]—just explained in our analysis of 'The New Englander' with its obscured ties to 'Motherhood'—is identical to the method Toomer uses to plant and obscure his biggest lacunae: Nulló. Just as in Anderson's method of incorporating this device, Toomer plants similar repeated imagery like rabbits in both pieces to hint they are connected. The missing details of the buried child in 'Karintha' are intimated in the poem 'Nulló'—the 'erased' infant—who becomes the key to unlock the crucial details for the earlier vignette. The dark secret of the mid-West of what happens to unwanted babies is similarly mirrored in CANE. The burnt corpse of the unnamed Nulló is buried under the sawdust mound; with smoke signifying his spirit rising and infusing the pines—and also the entire text, as it intertwines and merges with other symbols [DEVICE ‡ : INTERLACING].

²⁵ The images of 'Karintha', 'Carma', and 'Nulló' were originally jointly composed in an intermeshed undifferentiated form:

The wind, though brisk, left still thy horizon
 fringe of Pines.
 Pine-needles, spraying, glistening in the sun.
 [. . .]
 the west, an unbroken band of gold and there
 In quarter heaven shines the
 crescent moon

["MEM" I: 16]

Feet that follow
 Snakes and Rabbits down their hole
 [. . .] Feet that press the rustle
 out of dead leaves ["MEM" I: 23]
 The smoke curls up from the saw-dust
 pile, curls up
 Above the pines the settles down, [. . .]
 Miles along the valley. ["MEM" I: 19]

ELEMENTS OF FOLKSONG & JAZZ

The incorporation of musical elements and combining various pieces or styles, are also methods of achieving intratextuality. In 'Echoes of Childhood', Alice Corbin Henderson's poem published in the September 1917 issue of the *Seven Arts*, the author strings together musical pieces from various traditions into a "folk-medley". The title along with a repeated chorus wedged between the separate renditions of folksongs provide a **unifying structure** that bind the separate pieces [**DEVICE** § : **INTERLACING**]:

(Underneath the southern moon
I was cradled to the tune
Of the banjo and the fiddle
And the plaintive negro croon.) (*SA2* 599-600)

Whether autobiographical or merely an imagined framing device, the suggestion is that all of these 'folksongs' are those lingering in the poet's memories of childhood. Each piece in the medley is preceded by a title—such as "UNCLE JIM", "MANDY'S RELIGION", or "BETSEY'S BOY"—that identifies whose voice the poem is given in or the subject of the "folksong"; and most notable in this medley is its inclusion and admixture of both white and Black folk traditions, which the framing naturally allows for. Although many lines are taken from recognizable tunes—"Down the middle an' do-se-do!", "Swing low, sweet chariot, swing low", "O my pore heart. Mis' Liza Jane", "Lawd, hab mussy, an' save mah soul!" (*SA2* 598-601)—the individual pieces are not transcriptions of existing *Volkslieder*, but rather poems that rework or allude to the lyric, tone, and rhythm of well-known works. 'Negro spirituals' and folksongs are incorporated into *CANE* in a similar manner, as T. Austin Graham observes,

Evaluating, accounting for, or transcribing melodies, lyrics, and song structures in any precise way was, for Toomer, largely beside the point . . . Toomer's text refers explicitly to a mere handful of independently verifiable folk pieces—"Deep River," "My Lord, What a Mornin'," and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," and even then only in snippets. As a consequence, *Cane* can come to seem "musical" in an essentially abstract sense, more concerned with what one of its poems refers to as "soul sounds" than with anything that could be literally heard.²⁶

Toomer's uses *Spirituals* in *CANE* at epiphanic moments (*Aufhebung*) where the *Volksgeist* is felt most intensely—just as in Benefield's ending of 'Simply Sugar Pie' and the recurring primitive song of defeat in Anderson's *Triumph of the Egg*.

²⁶ Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, 118.

In the second Washington-set piece, ‘**Rhobert**’, we find the harrowing depiction of a man drowning in reality—however, the descriptions jump from one image to another, creating an instability consistent with the theme of the prose poem: the image of “Rhobert wear[ing] a house, like a monstrous diver’s helmet” shifts into a stuffed “dead thing” with antennæ weighing him down—“He is way down”—then, this downward movement introduces the theme of sinking in mud, with an image of the helmet and the crushing pressure bearing down on him, then water being drawn off (C 42). The result is a free-flowing narrative constantly **shifting** between between its **images**—but maintaining consistency within each ‘stream’, as all of these work towards expressing the underlying theme. As Bradbury and McFarland observe:

Modernist works frequently tend to be ordered, then, not on the sequence of historical time or the evolving sequence of character, from history or story, as in realism and naturalism; they tend to work spatially or through **layers of consciousness**, working towards a **logic of metaphor** or form.²⁷

The logical coherence between successive images is maintained—yet the ‘jump’ or leap in logic has a **disorienting** effect [**DEVICE** ☒ : **STRANGENESS**]—this is best illustrated in the poem when God is introduced as a “Red Cross Man with . . . a respiration pump”(C 42). The consistent imagery and repeated phrases lend a sense of **organic unity** to the work [**DEVICE** # : **INTERLACING**]—the most innovative aspect of the poem is its breaking into song, as a narrated line is echoed suddenly by a refrain, sung in a different voice—“Brother, life is water that is being drawn off”—directly addressing readers as ‘Brother’ (C 42). This technique is repeated again at its end—creating a call and response—but one that also links back to themes established in the Georgia pieces: “Brother, Rhobert is sinking. / Let’s open our throats, brother, / Let’s sing Deep River when he goes down” (C 42). The last line, which suggests members of the chorus sing a eulogy for Rhobert, also mirrors the opening chorus’s final line in ‘**Karintha**’: “. . . When the sun goes down” (C 3), lines Toomer most likely composed as an allusion to the Afro-American work-song, ‘**I’ll Be So Glad, When the Sun Goes Down**’. I ascribe multiple functions to this phrase, as it not only refers to **CANE**’s central symbol of the **sun**, but hints the **son** will soon ‘descend’ into the text.

²⁷ Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane, eds., “The Name and Nature of Modernism”, in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1991), 50. Emphasis added.

In *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (1914), Krehbiel firmly places **folksong** within the German *Volkslied* tradition—quoting Grimm’s statement, “*Das Volkslied dichtet sich selbst*”—and offering this definition:

Folksong is . . . a body of poetry and music . . . [created] without the influence of conscious art as a **spontaneous utterance**, filled with characteristic expression of the **feelings** of a people. . . . marked by certain peculiarities of **rhythm**, form and melody [and linked] to **racial** (or national) temperament, modes of life, climatic and political conditions, geographical environment and language. Some of these elements, the **spiritual**, are elusive . . .²⁸

Krehbiel is very protective of what can be classified as **folksong**—clearly differentiating it from the English notion of “popular song”, which he associates with the “degraded and . . . vulgar music hall ditties . . . so-called ‘coon-songs’ and ‘ragtime tunes’ in which *some elements* of the Afro-American folksongs are employed” (*AFR* 2; italics added). However, despite his calling ragtime “degrading”, within a decade many would come to view **Jazz** as part of the *Volk* tradition. The article ‘Where *The Etude* Stands on Jazz’ (1924), published a year after *CANE*, gathers together various viewpoints: “jazz is an exotic expression . . . for those who fancy the savage in music”; it is “the characteristic folk-music of modernity”; “the unusual instruments—their unusual combination [create] . . . grotesque and burlesque effects”.²⁹ Most in tune with Toomer’s dialectical understanding of Black **vernacular** music, is the article ‘**Jazz at Home**’ (1925), by **J. A. Rogers**:

Jazz proper, however, is in idiom—rhythmic, musical, and pantomimic—thoroughly American Negro, it is his **spiritual picture** on that lighter **comedy** side, just as the spirituals are the picture on the **tragedy** side. The two are **poles apart**, but the former is by no means to be despised as it is just as characteristically the product of the peculiar and unique experience of the Negro in this country.³⁰

In ‘**The Message of The Negro Poets**’, Alain Locke overlooks just this dual aspect of *CANE*’s music when citing ‘**Song of the Song**’ as a “masterful example”:

There is more Negro rhythm here, and in a line like “Caroling softly souls of slavery” than in all the more exaggerated jazz of the sensationalists, black and white, who beat the bass-drum and trapping cymbals of American jazz

²⁸ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: G. Shirmer, 1914), 2-3. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*AFR*’.

²⁹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett, eds., *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925), 483-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 494. Emphasis added.

rather than the throbbing tom-tom and swaying lilt of the primitive voice and body surcharged with escaping emotion.³¹

‘**Bona and Paul**’ celebrates the “savage” and “primitive” instincts drawn out by the charged rhythm of the Jazz band playing ‘**Liza Jane**’, also known as ‘**Stealin’ Partners**’, which was a “dance-game song”.³² Toomer inserts the motif to create a dizzying carousel-like narration—with the exchanging of partners and shouted chorus line—with all the **hypnotizing** sensuous elements and thoughts swirling around the dance floor as mediated through Paul’s consciousness:

The cat jumps on the piano keyboard. Hi diddle, hi diddle, the cat and the fiddle.
Crimson Gardens . . . hurrah! . . . jumps over the moon. Crimson Gardens! Helen
. . . O Eliza . . . rabbit-eyes sparkling, plays up to, and tries to placate [. . .] Paul’s
contempt. She always does that . . . Little Liza Jane. . . (C 78)

Plotinus describes **music** as “a form of sorcery” and speaks of its power to beguile and **enchant**—he likens it to **prayer**, describing the power of such “incantations” to be akin to being charmed by a snake, leaving the person unaware that they have been ensnared until too late (*ENN* 323; IV.4.40). Herder sees **folksong** as imbued with magical prayer-like properties, too—but for him the spell lies within music’s power to **bind** a community together and draw from **ancestral rhythms**—along with the emotional **force** of its lyrics.

Herder’s theory of *Volk* composition expressed in Grimm’s statement, “The folksong composes itself”—is best exemplified by **Jazz**, with the folk formula—repetition with variation—is taken to its extreme limits, where each member reacts to the music freely interweaving his individual expression—only to have that inspiration merge within the greater sea of notes and crashing rhythms, and become anonymous. Paul Gilroy highlights this aspect of the “Black vernacular art of jazz” through the observations of Ralph Ellis:

There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment . . . springs from a contest in which the artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the canvasses of a painter) [the] individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition.³³

The **eclecticism** of Jazz embodies the modernist spirit of fragmentation and chaos, yet the hybrid form also relies on the structuring dynamics of **syncretism**.

³¹ Locke, *The Works of Alain Locke*, 73.

³² Natalie Curtis-Burlin, *Negro Folk-Songs* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001), 160.

³³ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 18; 79.

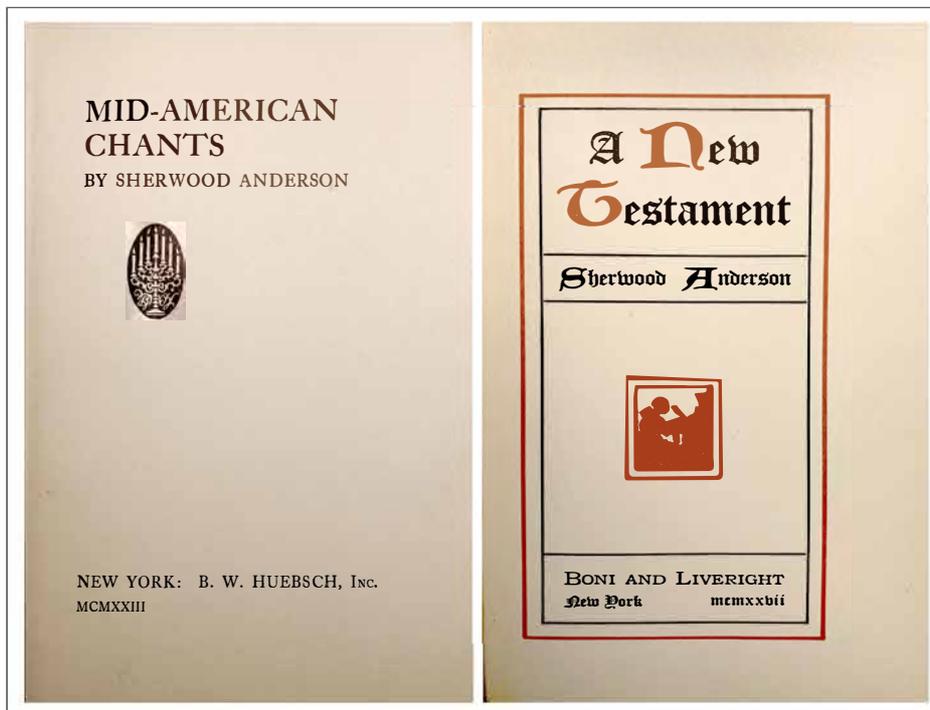


Image D4. Title Page for *Mid-American Chants* (Left). Sherwood Anderson, *Mid-American Chants* (New York: John Lane, 1918), iii. Image D5. Title Page for *A New Testament* (Left). Sherwood Anderson, *A New Testament* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), iii.



A FOREST OF CORRESPONDENCE 3

[**HERDERIAN FLORA 3**] : The following is an extract from the third section of Herder's *This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* (1774):

Behold the whole *universe from heaven to earth*—what is means?, what is purpose? Is not everything means for *millions of purposes*? Is not everything the purpose of *millions of means*? The chain of almighty, all-wise goodness is entwined one part *into* and *through* the other a thousandfold—but each member in the chain is in its place a *member*—hangs on the chain and does not see *where in the end the chain hangs*. Each in its delusion feels itself to be the central point, in its delusion feels everything *around itself only to the extent* that it pours rays or waves on this point—beautiful delusion! But the great circle of *all* these waves, rays, and seeming central points: *where?, who?, why?*

Would it be otherwise in the history of the *human species?*, even with all *waves* and *periods in the sequence*, otherwise than precisely the “*building-plan of almighty wisdom?*” If the *residential house* reveals “*divine picture?*” right down to its smallest fitting—how not the *history of its resident?* The former only decoration!, picture in a *single* act, view! The latter an “*endless drama of scenes!*, an *epic* of God’s through all *millennia, parts of the world,* and *human races, a thousand-formed fable* full of a *great meaning!*”

That this *meaning*, this *vision of the whole*, must at least lie *beyond the human species*—insect of a lump of earth, look again at heaven and earth! Do you in the whole universe, as it weaves its work dead and alive *all at once*, find *yourself* the exclusive central point towards which everything operates? [. . .] Given, now, that this is undeniable and beyond investigation in the great, all-extensive *together-world* of a moment, can you suspect anything less or different in the great, all-extensive *sequential-world*, in all the *events* and *progressive windings* of the human species, in the *drama* full of the inventor’s *wisdom* and *knotty plot?* And if the whole were for you a *labyrinth* with a hundred doorways closed, with a hundred open—this labyrinth is a “*palace of God* for *his* all-fulfillment, perhaps for *his* pleasurable viewing, *not* for *yours!*”

The whole world, the vision of God *at one moment*, an abyss.—Abyss in which I stand lost on all sides!, see a great work *without a name* and everywhere *full of names!*, full of *voices* and *forces!* I do not feel myself *in that place* where the harmony of all these voices resounds into one ear, but what here in my place I hear by way of abbreviated, confusing sound—this much I know and hear with certainty—also has something harmonious in it!, also resounds as a song of praise in the ear of Him for whom *space* and *time* are nothing. [. . .]

Among the great tree *of the father of all* [A great idea in the Norse *Edda*.] whose peak reaches above all the heavens and whose roots reach beneath worlds and hell, am I an *eagle* on this tree?, am I the *raven* who on his shoulder daily brings the worlds’ *evening greeting* to his ear? What a little *strand of foliage* of the tree I may be!, a small comma or dash in the book of all worlds! (*PHL* 335-337; emphasis original)



[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 3**]: Extract from ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’ (1922)

Men listen to her lispings and murmurs. Black souls steal back to Georgia canefields, soft and misty, underneath a crescent moon. The mystery of their whispered promises seems close to revelation, seems tangibly incarnate in her. Black souls, tropic and fiery, dream of love. Sing joyful codas to forgotten folk-songs. Spin love to the soft weaving of her arms. Men listen to her lispings and murmurs. White souls awake to adolescent fantasies they thought long buried with the dead leaves along the summer streets of mid-western towns. Solvents of melancholy burn through their bitten modes of pioneer aggressiveness to a southern repose. They too spin love to the soft weaving of her arms. White men, black men, only in retrospective kisses, know the looseness of her lips . . . Pale withered skin of berries . . . (*W&S* 139)

* * *

“O cant you see I’m empty . . . Art, Art I’m empty, fill me with dreams.”

“With love.”

“No, with dreams. Dreams of how life grows, feeding on itself. Dreams of dead leaves, multi-colored leaves. Dreams of leaves decaying for a vernal stalk, phosphorescent in the dusk, flaming in dawn. O Art, in that South from which you come, under its hates and lynchings, have you no lake, no river, no falls to sit beside and dream . . . dream?”

“Red dust roads are our rivers, the swishing of cane, our falls. I am an inland man.”

“Then you have choked with the sum—O tell me, Art, tell me, I know you have.”

“Besides the syrup-man. . . . He comes to boil the cane when the harvest is through. He pitches camp in a clearing of the wood. You smell only the pines at first, and saw-dust smoke. Then a mule, circling with a beam, begins to grind. The syrup, toted in a barrel, is poured on the copper boiling stove. Then you begin to smell the cane. It goes to our head like wine. Men are seated round. Some chewing cane-stalk, some with snuff. They tell tales, gossip about the white folks, and about moonshine licker. The syrup-man (his clothes look like a crazy-quilt and smell sweetish) with his ladle is the center of them. His face is lit by the glow. He is the ju-ju man. Sometimes he sings, and then they all commence to singing, But after a while you dont notice them. Your soul rises with the smoke and songs above the pine-trees. Once mine rose up, and, instead of travelling about the heavens, looked down. I saw my body there, seated with the other men. As I looked it seemed to dissolve, and melt with the others that were dissolving too. They were a stream. They flowed up-stream from Africa and way up to a height where the light was so bright I could hardly see, burst into a multi-colored spraying fountain. My throat got tight. I guess it was that that pulled me back into myself—” (*W&S* 150-1)

Our chapter epigram quoting Novalis's vision of a new poetic expression fusing all genres into a "progressive universal poetry", would ultimately be actualized by early modernists innovating upon past methods. **Walter Benjamin** writes in his dissertation, 'The Concept of Criticism' (1919), about the elevation of prose's status resulting from the formulations of *Romanpoesie* and *romantische Poesie*:

Prose is the creative ground of poetic forms, all of which are mediated in it and dissolved as though in their canonical creative ground. In prose, all metrical rhythms pass over into one another and combine into a new unity, the prosaic unity, which in Novalism is known as the "romantic rhythm".³⁴

Walt Whitman identifies what is "indispensable" in building a new literature and the poetic: "modern **image-making creation** . . . to **fuse** and express the modern political and scientific creations"—and only this faculty, working through "the divine magic" of genius, **analogy**, and **indirection** "can breathe into [literature or art] the breath of life, and endow it with identity" (*WW* 366; 455).³⁵ According to Whitman, at the core of this newer mode of poetic expression is the mystical force, *Poiesis*—(Schlegel links the **arabesque's** function with this "infinite power of image production")³⁶—and this combining power of **synthesis** is seen as "divine magic" (Novalis uses the term "**syncretical force**", and associates this drive with the *soul*, identifying God as the "syncretical spirit").³⁷ The foundations laid out in **Chapter 1**, make it apparent that these two visions for a new multiple-genre syncretic prose-poetic, are firmly entrenched in Herder's **Neo-Platonism**. Herder was an early proponent of free-verse poetry, as Koepke informs us, preferring "expressiveness over a beautiful and elegant style; and truth, including naturalistic prose, over beauty"—most importantly, he wanted to free poetry from "rules and conventions" in favor of **spontaneity**, **originality**, and **genius**.³⁸ It was, of course, Herder who recast the Hebrew Bible as sublime 'natural' poetry.

³⁴ Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 174.

³⁵ This is a composite blending his definition of 'image-making creation' in the preface to 'As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free' (1872) and *Democratic Vistas* (1871). Emphasis added.

³⁶ See **Glossary** of Literary Terms, s.v. '*Poiesis*'.

³⁷ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. David W. Wood (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 83. s.v. § 479 **PHYSICS**: "(The personifying, the communal, structuring principle stands between the soul and the spirit—and over this stands the *syncretical soul*—the perfect spirit. The soul is the *syncretical force*. [. . .] God is the *syncretical spirit*)." In § 419, Novalis describes Herder's and Schlegel's writings as "philosophical music". *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁸ Wulf Koepke, "Herder and the Sturm und Drang", in *The Camden House History of German Literature*, vol. 6, *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*, ed. David Hill (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 70-1.

The extended extract from *This Too a Philosophy*, provides us with our third Herderian tree, but also a prime example of poetic **superimposition**. Herder begins with an image of the great chain of being—the manifold interconnected beings of creation, where each organism believes itself to be the “center point”—unaware of the grand design of the “**great circle**”. Herder then overlays additions images and analogies of human history, a grand blueprint for a house, an unfolding epic drama—all communicating a single central idea—but with the jumble of symbols intermixing and overlapping, into a **flux** of waves and rays and names and punctuation . . . then suddenly, an abyss—of the “whole world, the vision of God *at one moment*”—and from this cacophony and confusion of voices arises a harmonious **song** of praise whispered into the Divine’s ear. Then, the final master symbol is overlaid—the archetypal image of the cosmic **World Tree**, or *Axis Mundi*—with the author unsure if he is a singing raven or eagle in this image, or perhaps a leaf upon the mythic Norse ‘World Ash’ tree, *Yggdrasil*.³⁹ In many ways this passage perfectly encapsulates Novalis’s jumbled “romantic rearrangement”—what Schlegel terms ‘Babel’—but more importantly for us, it points to the underlying strategies and objectives of **polyphonic prose**.

Romantic and modernist aesthetics both rely on a mystical understanding of **consciousness** and the all-important relationship between an image (*Bild*) and the poet’s imagination (*Einbildungskraft*). To fully grasp the origins and meanings of terms used to describe the poetic process—as ‘inward’, ‘outward’, ‘objective’, ‘subjective’, ‘ecstasy’, ‘flight’, ‘chaos’, ‘rhythm’, ‘unity’, ‘fusion’, ‘vortex’—we need to see each as interlocking ideas all predicated on a single universal ideal—*Unio Mystica*. We need to invert our **prism** into a **burning glass** to illustrate and impart the core meaning behind Herder’s extract, and also modernist **polyphonic prose**. And so—in the center of our third chapter and in the middle of this forest—we attempt to superimpose the following interpenetrating images:

{ **?** } In the epicenter of the *Forest of Correspondence* is where we place the archetype (*Ur-Bild*) of the cosmic **World Tree**—every primitive religion tells us at the center of its roots lies the **omphalos**—“the center of the world”. This is denoted in the Kabbalah with the **sefirot** symbol—and the Mesoamerican and Mongolian shamans reveal that a *bird* is needed to reach this spiritual tree.

³⁹ See **Glossary**, s.v. ‘*Axis Mundi*’.

{ २ } On this image, we overlay—*τὸ ἓν* (1)—The ONE representing the ‘unity of souls’ in Plotinus’ doctrine, or—the **SUN**—as figured in Plato’s cosmology. The following image is used in the *Enneads* to describe this interrelationship:

The Good . . . might be likened to a living sphere teeming with variety, to a **globe of faces** radiant with faces all living, to a **unity of souls**, all the pure souls, not the faulty but the perfect, with Intellect enthroned over all so that the place entire glows with Intellectual splendour. But this would be to see it from without, one thing seeing another; the true way is to become Intellectual-Principle and be, our very selves, what we are to see. (*ENN* 573; VI.7.15)

This provides the basis for the **inward / outward** dynamic in romantic aesthetics, and our **Forest 5** will thoroughly examine this relationship between **self & Self**.⁴⁰

{ ३ } Over this, place two conceptions central to romantic ‘physics’ and mysticism, best expressed by Novalis in his *Pollen fragment*: “The seat of the **soul** is to be found there where **inner** world and **outer** world touch. Where they interpenetrate, it is in each point of the interpenetration.”⁴¹ Central to this relationship is the dynamic *coincidentia oppositorum*—which powers the “reality of unseen” and is the basis for the concept of *Schweben*, or ‘**hovering**’; Novalis describes **wavering/oscillating** as a state of being “neither this nor that”:

From this luminous point of hovering all of reality streams forth—in it all things are contained . . . I-ness or the productive power of imagination, the **hovering**—determines, produces the extremes between which the hovering takes place—This is an illusion, but only in the sphere of common understanding. Apart from that it is something utterly real, for the hovering, its cause, is the source, the *mater* of all reality, indeed is reality itself.⁴²

We shall address this ‘streaming forth’ and the relationship between **image**, *Poiesis*, and the **imagination** soon—but this *Schweben* allows for our next image.

{ ४ } The next symbolic image that we layer is presented by Arthur Symons, who quotes Mallarmé’s definition of poetry as “the language of a state of **crisis**”, but then adds that the poet’s method is one dependent on “the evocation of a passing **ecstasy**, arrested in mid-flight”.⁴³ This is certainly a befitting poetic description—

⁴⁰ Schelling defined this relationship using the terms *selbst and Urselbst*. J. Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), lxi.

⁴¹ Qtd. in McCort, *Going beyond the Pairs: The Coincidence of Opposites in German Romanticism, Zen, and Deconstruction*. 31.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 25. Emphasis original.

⁴³ Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 120.

for Herder's frenzied third extract—as “ecstasy” sublimely epitomizes the essence of what is expressed in that superimposition of chaotic images. This state is what Novalis identifies as *Ekstase*, or “of ‘standing *outside*’ the confines of the personal or egoic self”.⁴⁴ In ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’, which we have included in this forest, Jean Toomer also hints that his **ART** of depicting Georgia, is fueled by an autoscopic moment of ecstasy infusing his poetics, **VERA**, —“soul rises with the smoke and songs above the pine-trees. [. . .] mine rose up, [. . .] instead of travelling about the heavens, [. . .] I saw my body there, [. . .] it seemed to dissolve, and melt with the others [. . .] They were a stream. [. . .] flowed up-stream from Africa and way up to a height where the light [. . .] burst into a multi-colored spraying fountain” (*W&S* 151).

{ 4 } In *Gaudier Brzeska* (1916), Ezra Pound reveals that the form of his poem ‘**In a Station of the Metro**’ is “super-position . . . one idea set atop another”, and that the poem “is meaningless unless one has drifted into **a certain vein of thought**”⁴⁵—he then gives readers the formula and equations for **imagism** and **Vorticism**, aligning it with *Symboliste* aesthetics (*GB* 104):

[Imagism=] trying to record the precise instant when a thing **outward** and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing **inward** and subjective. [. . .] the **image** is not an idea. It is a **radiant node** or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a **VORTEX** [. . .], from which and through with, and into which, ideas are **constantly rushing** [=Vorticism]. (*GB* 103, 106; emphasis added)

The fifth **image** we overlay—elucidating these concepts, while exposing their mystical foundations—is found in the following *sonnet* written by Pound in 1908:

‘Plotinus’

As one that would draw thru the node of things,
Back sweeping to the vortex of the cone,
Cloistered about with memories, alone
In chaos, while the waiting silence sings.

Obliviate of cycles’ wanderings
I was an atom on creation’s throne
And knew all nothing my unconquered own.
God! Should I be the hand upon the strings?!

But I was lonely as a lonely child.
I cried amid the void and heard no cry,
And then for utter loneliness, made I
New thoughts as crescent images of *me*.
And with them was my essence reconciled
While fear went forth from mine eternity.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ McCort, 31.

⁴⁵ Ezra Pound, *Gaudier Brzeska* (London: John Lane, 1916), 103. Hereafter cited ‘*GB*’.

⁴⁶ Ezra Pound, *Poems & Translations*. ed. Richard Sieburth (New York: Library of America, 2003), 46.

{ & } Above our **multi-image** we position Toomer’s ‘Maelström’ so that the **eye** of the **storm** is perfectly aligned with the **node** of the **vortex** cone in ‘Plotinus’.

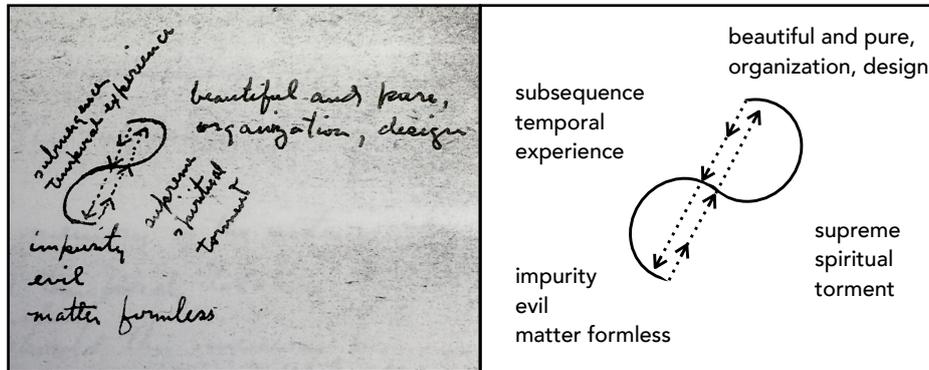


Image C10. Jean Toomer’s ‘Maelström’ [“LLN” III : 34]. Left: Original. Right: Rendering.

{ 9 } Now, as a **bird** is required to lift the poet’s **imagination** into a flight of fancy—we turn to Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm’s **Märchen** or fable, ‘*Die Goldene Gans*’, and we link this **golden goose** with the aesthetic technique [**DEVICE** f : **FUSION**].⁴⁷ And below the tree root where **Simpleton** dug up this bird, we line up with the **omphalos**, and identify this tree as a German variation of the *Yggdrasil* arch-image. We coin a term ‘*Goldene-Gans method*’ to denote the esemplastic *force* of *Poiesis*.

{ 4 } Goethe uses the analogue of a **burning-glass** to describe the syncretic power—of what Herder calls an “inward sense”—which “grasps what is meaningful in the world of daily experience and behaviour” and essentializes the various “outward senses” into a focused **schematization** of the world (*Schematisierung der Welt*).⁴⁸ Goethe describes the same concept through poetic language in this way:

If this feeling of inner form, which embraces all forms in itself [. . .] is once for all the glass through which we focus the holy beams of dispersed nature into a fiery ray on to the heart of man. But the glass! Those who have not got it won’t get it by hunting, it is like the mysterious philosopher’s stone. . . .⁴⁹

As we focus this **burning-glass** onto our superimposed **images** we try to extract and expose the interconnected **pattern** of meaning now melded into (**1**).

⁴⁷ Wilhelm & Jakob Grimm, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Jack Zipes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 212-5. See **Metaphysical Exercitium** §35 in the **Addendum** for a brief summary of the fable.

⁴⁸ Roy Pascal, *Sturm und Drang*, 280. See also Cassin, ed., *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, s.v. “Erzählen”, by Dubost.

⁴⁹ Qtd. in Pascal, 287.

DOORWAY TO NOUMENA

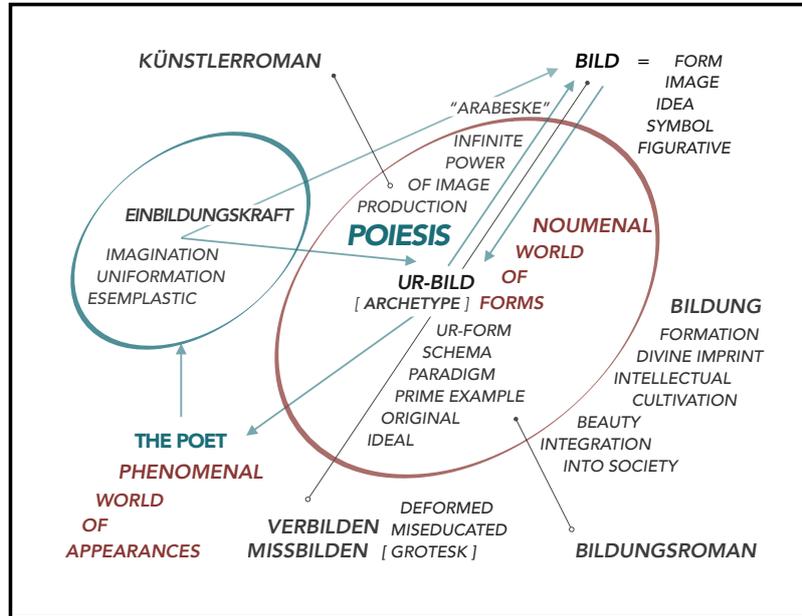


Image D5. *Ur-Bild, Bild, & Poiesis* by John-Francis Kinsler.

{ 9 } And now we turn around to apply our **inner sense** to these “dispersed” mystical and poetic concepts to **focus** and **synthesize** them into a comprehensible **schema**. Much more than its English counterpart(s), the German term ‘*Bild*’ carries polysemic valences central to aesthetics and mysticism—it also uncovers the connections between Form, Image, & Symbol.

{ 2 } **semiotic** : as every type ‘**Here**’ is a copy of the Archetype ‘**There**’—Reality is a network of **symbols** & the “**inner sense**” untangles meanings & connections, preserving & discarding—essentializing, simplifying—**focus**.

{ 6 } { 6 } { 3 } **synthesis** : the **Imagination** of the poet **assimilates** everything it encounters into a long **succession** of impressions and by **balancing** opposing **forces** can compress intense experience into **expression**—laughter, music, etc.

{ 4 } { 3 } { 8 } **penetration** : **broken** images lead back to the **Whole**, by threading the frenzy of experience through the **soul**, where the poet divines **Absolute** meaning. Music & Lyric allows exiting **one’s** body & merging with **Everything**.

{ 2 } { 2 } **Sympathy** : everything is connected by the **soul**, by turning away from the physical **self** and identifying with the larger **Whole** affords Spiritual insight.

Sensation->**Imagination**->**Poiesis**->**Soul**->**Chaos**->**Unity**->**Noumena**->**Whole**->**Form**

UNEARTHING THE CENTER

There may be **confusion** about what exactly is uncovered here in the middle of our **Forest of Correspondence**—whether the treasure chest we hold is a magical **bird**, or, if the revelation promised is merely a **void**: an ‘**empty center**’. To reflect upon the true value of this monographic ‘**prism**’ & ‘**burning glass**’, we look to Novalis’s words: “Isn’t reflection upon oneself . . . of a consonating nature? Song sung inwardly: *inner world*. Speech-prose-criticism.”⁵⁰ This phrase—“**Song sung inwardly**” is perhaps the best descriptive for Whitman’s *Leaves*—an apt characterization, also, for Sherwood Anderson’s *Chants & Testaments*—and a perfect encapsulation of the **polyphonic-prose** style of *Herder’s 3RD Tree* . . . This “peculiar and beautiful image” of Novalis, says Walter Benjamin, distills “the entire context of the Romantic philosophy of art at its **highest level**”.⁵¹ In his conversations with Johann Peter Eckermann, **GOETHE** shared his beliefs:

No productiveness of the **highest kind** . . . no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results is in the power of anyone; such things are above earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God . . . they are akin to the **daemon**, which does with him what it pleases, and to which he unconsciously resigns himself . . . In such cases man may be considered . . . a **vessel** worthy to contain a **divine** influence. I say this when I consider how often a single thought has given different form to whole centuries.⁵²

We probe into the darker depths of this forest, by emulating the **DAEMON** transporting **DIVINE SPIRIT** into **VESSELS**—we shall create two ‘poems’ applying the **ROMANTIC EQUATION** of balancing opposites and modulating **FORM & STYLE** to schematize **BILD & IDEE**. Blending the ‘**ILLUMINATED**’ style of **WILLIAM BLAKE** and **VORTICIST** typography of **EZRA POUND**, we delineate two spaces within the **UNCONSCIOUS** of these **VESSELS**—and pour **POETRY** (‘the sacred’) then **PROSE** (‘the prosaic’) and back, mixing the forms until the **SYMBOLISM & ‘RHYTHM’** of each *transgress* beyond its frame—creating a “fusion of different realms”.⁵³ The dynamics of **ARABESQUE & GROTESQUE** intersect here into a **JAZZ-like ROMANTIC CHAOS**—within this **VESSEL** the *essence* of **ART & MYSTICISM** is *distilled* to be **DECIPHERED**:

⁵⁰ Qtd. in Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism”, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 175. Emphasis added.

⁵¹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁵² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann*, trans. John Oxenford (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1946), 250. Emphasis added. Hereafter cited as ‘ECK’.

⁵³ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 53-58; 79. See also Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky & English Modernism*, 28.

What is the true **SPIRITUAL** power of a **CHANT**, a **PRAYER**, or **POETRY**?
 Why were **ARTISTS & POETS** identified with **SHAMANS, SEERS, or PRIESTS**?
 Why was **MOSES & JESUS** seen by **HERDER** as **PROPHET, POET, & SHAMAN**?
 What does **POETIC INSPIRATION** have to do with the **DAEMONIC & CHAOS**?
 Is the way to **TRUTH & LIGHT** through the depths of **DARKNESS & MYSTERY**?
 Every **IDEA** just capitalized above **LINKS** to each other—and Herder as well
 —**ALL** intersecting at the **nexus**—(1)—the “I” of the **Storm**, root of the **Tree**
 —situated on the **MAP**—at the **nucleus**—where opposing charges reconcile
 as each of the mirrored figures **eclipse**—the **SYMBOL** is created here where
 the **UR-BILD** flows into **BILD**—where **DOSTOEVSKY**’s “shapeless, disfigured”
GROTESK (*Bezobrazie*) gains **FORM** (*Obraz*). **TOOMER** places **WHITMAN** here,
 describing his “gesture” a “weather-vane . . . pivot” and “circle” [“POE” II: 26].
 This luminous point is where **MATERIAL & SPIRIT fuse**—**LOGOS** enters **FLESH**
 —instantly **CREATION** gets its **SPARK** from **GOD**—**PROFANED** turns **SACRED**—
 Between **MADNESS & REVELATION** (1)—at this *axis of paradox*—lies **GENIUS**
 —from the rushing *vortex* the **DIVINE SPIRIT** is *extracted & transplanted*—
true ART is a ritual of **EXORCISM & ANIMISM** enacted in the **ARTIST**’s mind.
ANIMISM=BEINGS ORGANISMS LANGUAGE MUSIC ART gain **CONSCIOUSNESS**.
The DAEMON=VEHICLE that *transports HOLY SPIRIT from VESSEL to VESSEL*.
Spirit joins IMAGES together—links WORDS with MUSIC—‘Spiritual’ binds PEOPLE.
This THREAD is the VEILED Volksgeist EQUATION behind AMERICAN MODERNISM.

With this, we turn to what Herder reveals in his letter to Johann Heinrich Merck:
 “In my **frenzy** for **SHAKESPEARE** I had long ago settled down specially to [translate]
 the scenes where he opens up his new world of ghosts and witches and fairies.”⁵⁴
 This state of “frenzy” or “ecstasy, arrested in mid-flight” is **key**—this heightened
 state of rapture—is one’s *spirit* being *magically lifted* into the **REALM** of **MUSIC**.
VOLKSLIED & POESIE are *Spiritual VESSELS possessing DIVINE transcendent FORCE*.

* * * * *

Song sung inwardly: this is the key to what *lies* under the **chest** beneath the **Tree**,
JAMES JOYCE found *digging away the soil*, placing his **HEAD** in the **VORTEX** : (1)
 —he discovered **IVY** *spiraling out in all directions* of his **MIND** *wrapping around*
 memory, dreams, & desires *buried* in the **DEPTHS**—*reconfiguring, freeing, pulling*
 them apart—then **IMAGINATION**, interweaves these *fragments* into *new FORMS*—
 18 *organic* **DESIGNS** *hatching* in a line *held together* by the same *golden KRÄFTE*
 that *invisibly guides* & **LINKS** the *birds in flight* into a *perfect* **SYMMETRY** of **FLUX**—
 Envision the **MAP** as **ULYSSES = SUN—POIESIS—binding [∞] particles in MOTION**.⁵⁵

* * * * *

⁵⁴ Qtd. in Pascal, *The German Sturm und Drang*, 271.

⁵⁵ See [Image G6] of the Addendum, *Metaphysical Exercitium*.



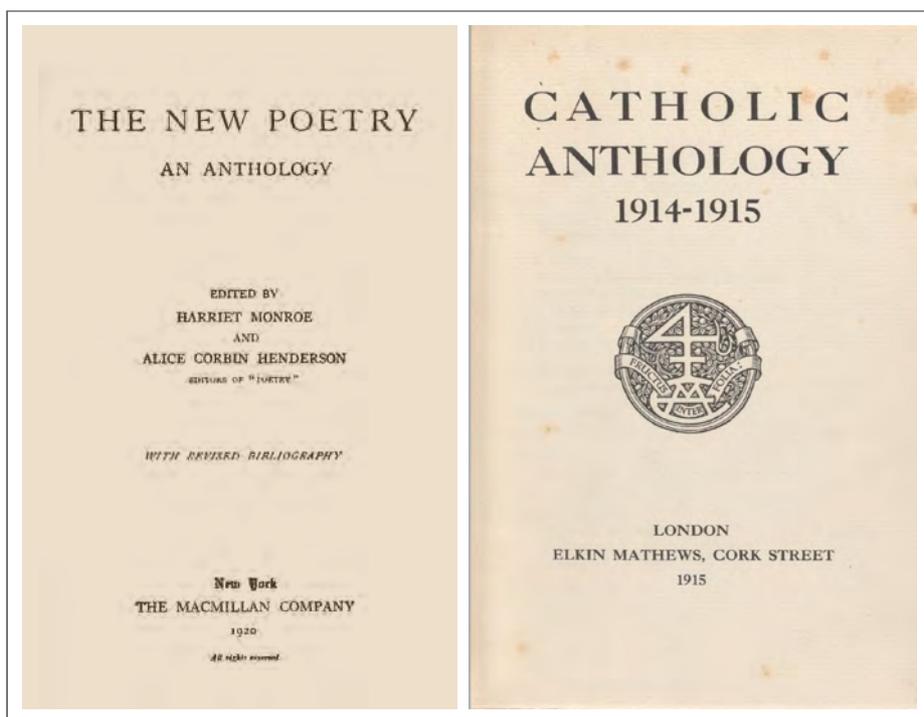


Image D6. Title Page for *The New Poetry* (Left). Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds., *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), iii. **Image D7.** Title Page for the *Catholic Anthology* (Right). Ezra Pound, ed., *Catholic Anthology: 1914-1915* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1915), iii.

POLYPHONIC PROSE & "SIMULTANIST" VISION

In her preface to *Can Grande's Castle* (1918), Amy Lowell defines polyphonic prose as "an orchestral form" that is "contrapuntal and various" in its "tone", rather than "single and melodic as is that of *vers libre*"—she also suggests that her poems were products of "a vision thrown suddenly back upon remote events to explain a strange and terrible reality."⁵⁶ Even more suggestive is her choice of the phrase "occult balance" to describe the syncopation and cadence that emerges from this prose, but only when read aloud.⁵⁷ John Gould Fletcher, who is closely associated with both modernist poetic 'tendencies' of **imagism** and **polyphonic prose**—and is likely the originator of the latter form—revealed that French Symbolism was their true source of influence, which would explain similarities to Mallarmé's view of poetry's objective—"to express the hidden meaning of existence through the ancestral rhythms of human language".⁵⁸

Applying the insights gleaned from our forest section, we identify polyphonic prose as the poetic form embodying what Whitman called a "new Metaphysics" from which to create "a new Poetry" for America (*WW* 451). This 'new' blueprint was shown to be prefigured and envisioned by Novalis as "romantic rhythm", created through a jumble of forms into a hybrid prose. This new poetic is predicated on what Hart Crane calls "a peculiar type of perception"—transforming it into "an architectural art [i.e. space], based not on Evolution or the idea of progress [i.e. time], but on the articulation of the contemporary human consciousness *sub specie aeternitatis*".⁵⁹ Crane's letter recommending *Plato & Platonism* to Jean Toomer makes it fairly evident that he drew this concept of poetry from how Walter Pater characterized Plato's philosophy, "to be a survey of things *sub specie aeternitatis*, the reception of a kind of absolute and independent knowledge (independent, that is, of time and position, the accidents and peculiar point of view of the receiver)".⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Amy Lowell, *Can Grande's Castle*. (New York: Macmillan, 1918), xv, vii.

⁵⁷ Carl Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew: A Biography* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 91-2. Lowell revealed this to Professor William Morrison Patterson of Columbia University.

⁵⁸ Nadezhda B. Mankovskaya, "French Symbolism: Aesthetic Dominants", *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 53, no. 1 (July 2015): 60. Fletcher claimed Lowell "appropriated" the form (*FLE* xvii).

⁵⁹ Crane, 'Modern Poetry', 825. See quotation from Hart Crane's letter in **Chapter 1**, p.98.

⁶⁰ Walter Pater. *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), 16. See Plotinus reference in John Gould Fletcher, "H. D.'s Vision" *Poetry* 9, no. 5 (1917): 266-269.

This must be the path that Herder followed—applying **Plato** and **Plotinus** to *Hamlet* and *Othello*, essentially—to envision **Shakespeare** as a transcendent **Creator** not hindered by the classical strictures of the unities of time and space:

If in Sophocles a single *action* prevails, then Shakespeare aims at the **totality** of an event, an occurrence. If in Sophocles' characters a single tone predominates, then Shakespeare assembles all the characters, estates, and ways of life that are necessary to produce the main melody of his **symphony**. [. . .] [I]magine yourself for a moment transported to another, poetic world, to a **dream**. Have you never felt how in dreams space and time disappear? [. . .] How it is up to the soul to create its own space, world, and time, however and wherever it wishes? [. . .] The poet's space and time lie in the unfolding of his event, in the *ordine successivorum et simultaneorum* of his world. How and where does he transport you? As long as he transports you, you are in his world. However quickly or slowly he makes time pass, it is he who makes it pass; it is he who impresses its sequence on you: that is his measure of time [. . .] (*AES* 298-9; 304-5 ; italics original, emphasis added)

And this is exactly what the ecstatic polyphonic prose of **Herder's Third 'Tree'** exemplifies—a “symphony” of images, analogies, poetry, philosophy, fable, and *Fantasia*—layering different planes of thought that overlap with a disregard for ‘proper’ ordering or keeping the different **streams of thought** segregated and clearly delineated. Modernist **stream of consciousness** is essentially this—what Frederick Schlegel calls *Arabeske*, the term he uses to refer to *Fantasia (Poiesis)*. The *Frühromantiker* viewed **arabesque** as “the oldest and original form of human Fantasy” which creates an “artificially regulated confusion” blurring the distinction between “the **inner** field of art” and “its **exterior**”—this “frame circumscribing the frame obsession” often associated with **Märchen**, leads to “chaotic form” and creates a ‘**maelström**’, or state of “Romantic **Chaos**”.⁶¹ Herder's choice of the word “symphony” is suggestive of what **polyphonic prose** aspires to—different lines of melody, counterpoint, and leitmotifs all occurring on different planes overlapping, intertwining, flowing—**simultaneously**—or, if the flow of the *durée* is frozen at a single **moment**—a “super-position”. **Stéphane Mallarmé** writes in ‘**Mystery in Literature**’, “Yes, I know: Mystery is said to be Music's domain. But the written word also lays claim to it. Yes, the supreme and heart-rending musical **moments** are born of fleeting **arabesques**,

⁶¹ Winfried Menninghaus, “Hummingbirds, Shells, Picture-Frames: Kant's ‘Free Beauties’ and the Romantic Arabesque”, in *Rereading Romanticism*, ed. Martha B. Helfer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 41-42. **Maelström** is, of course, my addition.

and their bursting is more true, more central, more brilliant than any reasoning. . . . In a single **surge of opposites**, the one descends, the other flies away, and yet the same silken veils follow in the wake of both [Music and Lyric]”.⁶² We identify polyphonic prose with **dream vision** and the structuring of a symphonic arrangement with lines simultaneously flowing and overlapping into an **arabesque**—*intertwining* and *interlacing* like ivy.

Before we locate examples in nativist modernist works integrating this “new mode of vision”, and consider these in relation to specific aesthetic devices—we turn to Lockerbie’s encapsulation of **Guillaume Apollinaire’s** theory of “**simultanist**” vision to identify the specific literary techniques aims and features:

Apollinaire called **simultaneity**: a type of structure that would give the impression of a full and instant awareness within one moment of space-time. Essentially this conception led Apollinaire to a radical dislocation of poetic structure. To create an impression of **multiple** and **simultaneous consciousness**, perceptions and ideas are abruptly juxtaposed in the poems in an arrangement that, at first reading, seems to be one of considerable disorder . . . characterized by **elliptical syntax and collocations of disparate images** . . .⁶³

This “simultanist mode of vision” freed from temporal and spatial constraints, strives to achieve a simultaneous *Polyperspektive* of different modes and layers of **consciousness**. The “new metaphysics” driving this poetic is the balancing of opposites by *hovering* at the center of two paradoxical positions to interlace the **Chaos** of multiple images into **ONE** moment. The poetic expression of these various modes and layers of consciousness and polysemic symbols “from the aspect of Eternity”—is the defining component of this polyphonic prose-style linked to *Imagisme* and *Symbolisme*.⁶⁴ Imagism focuses inward to reach the **Maelström’s** center—from where Symbolism **spreads** outwards, like **waves**. We now briefly survey modernist works through aesthetic devices grounded in shared mystical objectives that unite the “dispersed” avant-garde coteries.

⁶² Stéphane Mallarmé, *Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters*, trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 32. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘MAL’. Emphasis added.

⁶³ S. I. Lockerbie, Introduction to *Alcools: Poems 1898-1913*, by Guillaume Apollinaire (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 3. Emphasis added.

⁶⁴ Gelpi argues that *Imagisme* and *Symbolisme* “exerted a deep and abiding influence on twentieth-century poetry, precisely *because* they rest on contradictory notions of the poet’s relation to language and of the nature and end of the poetic experience. . . . with Symbolisme and Imagism enacting the dissolution of the Romantic synthesis and constituting, broadly speaking, its subjective and objective epistemological poles”. Albert Gelpi, *A Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance, 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5-6.

[**DEVICE** ~ : **SCHWEBEN**] : One of the clearest usages of hovering can be found in Ezra Pound's *Catholic Anthology*—in 'The Wanderer'—where William Carlos Williams interweaves seven poems into a vast landscape, zeroing **into** the **poet** and zooming **out** from a **bird**. The narrative *oscillates* between the two poles that **disorients** the reader: "Come!" cried my mind and by her might / [...] we flew above the river / Seeking her, grey gulls among the white—."65 These poems, are narrated from a dual perspective linking the inner soul with the outer world. Amy Lowell's 'Guns as Keys: and Great Gate Swings' depicts the chaos of Commodore Perry's landing in Japan—but through a consciousness that freely sweeps through the minds of Americans and Japanese—whose thoughts are voiced through an **alternation** between verse (Asian) and prose (Caucasian). John Gould Fletcher gives a sense of **timelessness** in his polyphonic-prose verse — 'Old Clipper Ships' mixes phrases into the narration that later link to shanty songs—the ships are drawn together from different eras and regions, transforming the poem into a ghost-ship harbor with all passing into the sea. The narrating consciousness of 'The Old South' is not a passive observer jumping through time periods, but like the constant river, one merging with and becoming **Time**. The dark atmospheres of empty structures and echoes of broken human figures are mirrored in the violent *symboliste* imagery used to describe the surrounding nature: as the "old plantation sleeps"; a horse carcass elicits the lyrical chant, "Death does not matter, for life is defeat", shortly followed by a **folksong** of "trees, dumb-stricken ghosts in flight", closing with the image of "a sad hymn of despair which a sleepy negro is humming to himself from nowhere".66 These songs bear more than a striking resemblance to moods and imagery of both **CANE** and 'Out of Nowhere into Nothing', but in terms of aesthetic devices linked to the "new mode of vision", Toomer and Anderson were certainly more enticed by the innovative styles and techniques of Eliot and Joyce.

In T. S. Eliot's 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock' we see the *Schweben* method taken to another level, as it is masterful example of **oscilloscopic** narration—within the *swirl* of despair, self-deprecation, and disappointment—the

65 William Carlos Williams, "The Wanderer", in *Catholic Anthology: 1914-1915*, ed. Ezra Pound (London: Elkin Mathews, 1915), 72. *Catholic Anthology* hereafter cited parenthetically as 'CAT'.

66 John Gould Fletcher, *Selected Poems*, eds. Lucas Carpenter and Leighton Rudolph (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 165-6.

protagonist's consciousness expresses itself through the guise of and allusion to a **vacillating** cast of literary figures. Repeated phrases and themes recur throughout providing a sense of cohesion—but the related imagery in successive scenes begins to overlap and create a **pattern**. Eliot differs from the three poets above in that all his aesthetic devices work in concert to **confound** and prevent its meaning from being **deciphered**. The poets above adopt wavering narratives, yet mystifying requires what the Germans prized—a **paradox**—not a poetics of '*both*', but as Novalis characterized hovering—a state of being "*neither* this *nor* that". The variegated form that Novalis envisioned for prose—could almost double as a review describing 'Prufrock'—this blueprint yields a Jazz-like **arabesque**:

Extremely simple style, but highly daring, romance-like, dramatic beginnings, transitions, consequences—now dialogue—then speech—then narration, then reflection, then image and so on. Wholly an impression of the soul, with perception, thought, opinion, image, conversation, music, etc. changing incessantly and quickly, and placed one next to the other [...].⁶⁷

The romantic **nisus**, or Pound's **vortex**, and even Toomer's **maelström**, are all propelled by a '**coincidence of opposites**'—like a strong tempest, the wave is pushing you to shore, while at the same time an undercurrent draws you away. This is an unbalancing that leaves the readers bewildered and lost. A state of ungrounding and indeterminacy—channeled and focused into a frenzied **Chaos**.

As we identify 'dream vision' in Herder's passage, a question arises when examining *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* in relation to **mythic vision** [**DEVICE ∞**]: *Where exactly does one stand to gain this infinite perspective?* The answer is: '**There**', from *inside* the crystalline sphere of Plotinus' figure—the *Noumena*, or the mythic realm where all images originate. **Chapter 5** will examine how Goethe achieved *unio mystica* in *Wilhelm Meister*, but 'Prufrock' is a good place to discuss the importance of the **mythic** in relation to poetry and aesthetic devices. As Campbell tells us, "the metaphysical realm = the unconscious. . . . the same equation in reverse: the unconscious = the metaphysical realm".⁶⁸ This subconscious—or **super-position** "through the vortex"—is easy to locate as Eliot has demarcated this **sacred space** using six evenly spaced **full-stops**—the key is placed in the unconscious—the **subliminal** "chambers of the sea"—the **epicenter** from where Prufrock's psyche is projected onto various characters:

⁶⁷ Qtd. in Ceserani and Zanotti, "The Fragment as Structuring Force", 459.

⁶⁸ Qtd. in Gelpi, *A Coherent Splendor*, 193

.
 Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .
 I should have been a pair of ragged claws
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

(*CAT* 2-8; lines 70-4)

The first three lines replaying the opening of the poem points to **memory** being the thread tying the fragments into a *durée*. This recasts the poem's ending—a plunging back into the sea of the self-reflection and self-loathing. The final two lines, we can take as the **master symbol**, with the “ragged claws” analogous to Toomer's sliced field-rat in ‘**Reapers**’. The theme of fragmented limbs, and unfinished sentences, and unfulfilled dreams, continues until the poem ends without offering any sense of **reconciliation** or even Hope. There is no possibility of **unanimism** or **communion** with the “ancestral rhythms”—instead dissolution, splintering, and **fission**. Gelpi defines a key distinction for us, “French Symbolism can be seen as signaling the **disintegration** of the Romantic epistemology into Modernism; and Imagism, as signaling the effort within Modernism to recover something of the Romantic epistemology.”⁶⁹

Anderson's final story, ‘**Out of Nowhere into Nothing**’, does not have a *single* moment or space where he obliquely offers the key to the entire short-story cycle, *The Triumph of the Egg*. Instead, he plants the *Axis Mundi* within the core of the book, to create an interconnected organic network manifesting primarily as trees (in opposition to streets and houses) or flora, such as leaves and shrubs. Cora Sayer and the Black gardener do cultivate and maintain a mythic Garden of Eden—but ultimately, it is Rosalind, who through her **wavering** attraction for the *doppelgänger* Walter Sayers (the businessmen and singer) and Melville Stoner (the bird-like philosopher), both aspects of Anderson—finds her ‘answer’ and **revelation** in the primal folksong of Life and Death, and in the end breaks out into the open air running. The conclusion does suggest a victory and escape from social confines (the Eggshell) towards some form of free expression, perhaps a meta-literary reference to his “singing prose” style. *The Triumph* clearly is a Neo-romantic work that strives *inward*, towards a **fusion**. For us, the ultimate question is, does **CANE** achieve a **unity**, or does it end in fragments of despair—a **fission**—like many critics and ‘**Harvest Song**’ suggest?

⁶⁹ Albert Gelpi, *A Coherent Splendor*, 5.

AN INTERTWINING MYSTICO-/RELIGIO- POETIC

Jean Toomer wrote in a letter, “The problem of art is to make 2 x 2 equal 5”—borrowing a figure from Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864) to illustrate the “extra-artistic consciousness” he viewed as essential in art (*LJT* 83; 93). Dostoevsky’s method shares much with the poetics and metaphysics we have been discussing throughout this chapter—and now to unravel some of the mystery surrounding ‘**Kabnis**’ we string together emblematic facets of Russian literary techniques and the shared mystical foundations of romantic and symbolist aesthetics that reveal the faint poetic footprints modernists followed.

[✖] The “polyphonic novel” is the new novelistic genre Mikhail Bakhtin identifies Dostoevsky as having invented, which according to him destroys “the fundamentally monologic (homophonic) European novel”:

In contrast to Goethe, Dostoevsky attempted to perceive the very stages themselves in their *simultaneity*, to *juxtapose* and *counterpose* them dramatically, and not stretch them out into an evolving sequence. For him, to get one’s bearings on the world meant to conceive all its contents as simultaneous, and to *guess at their interrelationships in the cross-section of a single moment*.⁷⁰

This is the logical sequencing of modernist short-story cycles—a simultaneous ordering within geographical **space**, rather than according to chronological **time**, just as Whitman braids each ‘leaf’ of grass into the Lord’s handkerchief (*WW* 8); and as Walter Pater defined *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* earlier: “independent, that is, of time and position, the accidents and peculiar point of view of the receiver”.

[⚡] In *Dostoevsky: A Critical Study* (1916) Murry observes the “fantastic and unreal” nature of the novelist’s “spiritual content”—noting his “annihilation of the sense of time”—which leaves readers disoriented in “a continual confusion between what may be called ‘the timeless world’ and the world in time”.⁷¹ Mallarmé’s call to poets in ‘**Crisis in Poetry**’ to focus on “the **horror** of the forest, or the silent thunder afloat in the leaves; not the intrinsic, dense wood of the trees”, embodies this shift rejecting the “erroneous esthetic” of ‘natural’ materials, and moving towards “divination”—a “fusible and clear” distillation of

⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Problem of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 7-8; 28. Italics original; emphasis and color added.

⁷¹ John Middleton Murry, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1923), 27; 29-30.

images that points to what Herder identified in *Ideen* as 'invisible spiritual forces'.⁷² This is obviously Fletcher's inspiration for images in 'The Old South': "terror of the forest"; "lightning that enlase and line the branches...[and] muffled thunder"; "rustling the canes of the brake and the motionless cypress trees".⁷³ Edward Garnett highlights a lengthy extract from 'A Tour in the Forest' in *Turgenev: A Study* (1917) showing how poetic realism might express the spiritual:

The sun's light threw a brilliant night on the tree-tops, and, filtering through the branches, here and there reached the ground in pale streaks and patches. Birds I scarcely heard—they do not like great forests. [...] A slight breeze brought the delicate pungent smell of burnt wood. A white smoke in the distance crept in eddying rings over the pale, blue forest air, showing that a peasant was charcoal-burning for a glass-factory or for a foundry. The further we went on, the darker and stiller it became all round us. In the pine-forest it is always still ; there is only, high overhead, a sort of prolonged murmur and subdued roar in the tree tops. . . . One goes on and on, and this eternal murmur of the forest never ceases, and the heart gradually begins to sink, and a man longs to come out quickly into the open, into the daylight ; he longs to draw a full breath again, and is oppressed by the pungent damp and decay.⁷⁴

Throughout the various pieces in *CANE*, Toomer similarly depicts the trees in his town of Sempter, Georgia as being planted along the fringes of the material and spiritual realms: "Time and space have no meaning in a canefield" (C 13); "Dusk, suggesting the almost imperceptible procession of giant trees, settled with a purple haze about the cane. I felt strange, as I always do in Georgia, particularly at dusk. I felt that things unseen to men were tangibly immediate." (C 19);

Smoke from the pyramidal sawdust pile
 Curls up, blue ghosts of trees, tarrying low
 Where only chips and stumps are left to show
 The solid proof of former domicile.
 Meanwhile, the men, with vestiges of pomp,
 Race memories of king and caravan,
 High-priests, an ostrich, and a juju-man,
 Go singing through the footpaths of the swamp
 Their voices rise . . the pine trees are guitars,
 Strumming, pine-needles fall like sheets of rain . . .
 Their voices rise . . the chorus of the cane
 Is caroling a vesper to the stars . .

⁷² Qtd. in Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 131. See also *MAL* 40.

⁷³ Fletcher, *Selected Poems*, 163-4. 'The Old South' published in *Poetry* 6 no. 4 (July 1915): 181-5.

⁷⁴ Ivan Turgenev, "A Tour in the Forest", in *The Novels of Ivan Turgenev*, vol. 13, *The Diary of a Superfluous Man, Etc.*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 105-107. For the sublime lyrical *Aufhebung* that occurs in the heart of this forest, see *Metaphysical Exercitium* §41.

O singers, resinous and soft your songs
 Above the sacred whisper of the pines,
 Give virgin lips to cornfield concubines,
 Bring dreams of Christ to dusky cane-lipped throngs. (C 15)

It is at dusk—in the space between day and night—that the author pulls “back the fringe of pines upon new horizons” (C 22). The twilight interlude in the middle of ‘*Carma*’ is a mythical layer demarcated at the start and end with a pair of *lunulae* (<- the moon-shaped parenthesis marks around this aside ->), which functions like the unconscious ‘middle eight’ section in ‘*Prufrock*’—and is, coincidentally, the enclosure Eliot chooses for his unifying symbol, *Tiresias*, in *The Waste Land*,⁷⁵ published three months after ‘*Carma*’ appeared in *Liberator’s* September 1922 issue. Toomer surely noted how **Lola Ridge** created a similar metaphysical space for the beginning of her imagist *Sun-Up, and Other Poems* (1920): “(*Shadows over a cradle . . . / fire-light craning. . . . / A hand / throws something in the fire / and a smaller hand / runs into the flame and out again, / singed and empty. . . . / Shadows / settling over a cradle . . . / two hands / and a fire*)”.⁷⁶ This is innovated further in ‘*Sons of Belial*’, Ridge’s four-part poem about violence and sacrifice, which encloses separate images within *lunulae*—that of Hypatia being stoned in Alexandria, Christ’s crucifixion, Rosa Luxemburg’s execution in Berlin, and a lynching in Missouri—these transhistorical symbols of violence create a mythic and subconscious layer that **concretizes** the central theme of the ‘surface’.⁷⁷ The significance of the *lunulae* passage of ‘*Carma*’ as ‘**There**’ will be addressed later.

[ÿ] **Friedrich Schlegel** shares his *Arabesque* aesthetic in a letter to Tiek in 1802:

The essence of landscape would be expressed [. . .] for man to see himself, his habits, and his passions embodied in flowers, plants, and other natural phenomena. [. . .] **I am, therefore, determined never to paint a flower piece without human figures.** [. . .] There would be a growing tendency toward **arabesques** and **hieroglyphs** [. . .] It is thus inevitable that this art should be seen as an expression for the most profound **religious mysticism**.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ “(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed; / I who have sat by Thebes below the wall / And walked among the lowest of the dead)” (II. 243-6).

⁷⁶ Lola Ridge, *Sun-Up, and Other Poems* (New York: Huebsch, 1920), 1. Cf. ‘*The Dream*’, 43. For a discussion of Tiresias and the multi-layered function of *lunulae* in poetry, see Alistair Brown, “Parentheses and Ambiguity in Poetry of the Twentieth Century”, *The Pequod*, October 10, 2003, <http://thepequod.org.uk/essays/litcrit/parenthe.htm>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 77-80.

⁷⁸ Qtd. in Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art & Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 52. Emphasis added.

This is precisely the maneuver Sherwood Anderson employs throughout his short-story cycle *The Triumph of the Egg*—interleaving characters with flora to create an intricate **arabesque** [**DEVICE** ☞☞☞]—characters not only lean against or touch the trees, they merge with the flora to form a pattern connecting **EACH** to **ALL**. This innovation also features prominently throughout the pieces in **CANE**:

‘Seeds’ : The lives of people are like young **trees** in a forest (*EGG* 23); I want to be a **leaf** blown I want to die and be born by the wind over hills again, and I am only a **tree** covered with **vines** and slowly dying (*EGG* 23-4); **‘The Other Woman’** : It is as though I were a **seed** in the ground and the warm rains of the spring had come. It is as though I were not a man but a **tree** (*EGG* 44); **‘Brothers’** : In the fog the slender body of the old man became like a little gnarled **tree** (*EGG* 113); **‘The Door of the Trap’** : He thought about Mary Cochran. [...] Her figure is like a young **tree** that has not borne **fruit** (*EGG* 126); **‘Out of Nowhere into Nothing’**: [Rosalind’s] legs and arms were like the slender top branches of **trees** swaying in a gentle wind. (*EGG* 179); [Cora] put her hands into the black ground. They felt about, caressed the **roots** of the growing things. She laid hold of the slender **trunk** of a **young tree** in a certain way as though she possessed it. (*EGG* 212); [Walter’s] body became like a **tree** or a **plant**. Life ran through it un-obstructed. [...] That would have been sweetest of all things to sway like the tops of young **trees** when a wind blew, to give himself as grey **weeds** in a sun-burned **field** gave himself to the influence of passing shadows, changing color constantly. (*EGG* 223)

‘Karintha’ : [Karintha] was as innocently lovely as a November cotton **flower** (*C* 3); **‘Carma’** : The sun, which has been slanting over [Carma’s] shoulder, shoots primitive rockets into her mangrove-gloomed, yellow **flower** face. (*C* 12); **‘Esther’** : Her hair thins. It looks like the dull silk on puny **corn** ears. Her face pales until it is the color of the gray dust that dances with dead **cotton leaves** (*C* 25); **‘Blood-Burning Moon’** : [Louisa’s] skin was the color of **oak leaves** on young **trees** in fall. Her breasts, firm and up-pointed like ripe **acorns**. And her singing had the low murmur of winds in **fig trees** (*C* 30); **‘Avey’** : Avey was as silent as those great **trees** whose tops we looked down upon. [...] I had the notion that if I really wanted to, I could do with her just what I pleased. Like one can strip a **tree**. I did kiss her. I even let my hands cup her breasts (*C* 46); **‘Theatre’** : [Doris’s] face is tinted like the autumn alley. Of old **flowers**, or of a southern **canefield**, her perfume. (*C* 55); **‘Calling Jesus’** : Her breath comes sweet as **honeysuckle** whose **pistils** bear the life of coming song (*C* 58); **‘Box Seat’** : Dan steps down. He is as cool as a **green stem** that has just shed its **flower**. (*C* 58); **‘Bona & Paul’** : Bona: He is a harvest moon. He is an **autumn leaf** (*C* 72); [...] I came back to tell you, brother, that white faces are **petals of roses**. That dark faces are **petals of dusk**. (*C* 80)

In a highly suggestive scene in the final story **‘Out of Nowhere into Nothing’**—Anderson utilizes a narration that **wavers** and plays with perspective and creates **indeterminacy** [**DEVICE** ~ : **SCHWEBEN**]—readers are unsure who is being referred to and in the dark as to exactly what is happening within the **arabesque**. Furthermore, it is unclear if Walter Sayers is thinking about Rosalind or his wife, and the way Cora is described—almost as Eve in her garden—leaves readers

confounded whether the scene with the Black gardener is taking place on a mythological plane, or merely suggesting sexual intercourse on the physical:

His wife came along the path and stopped nearby. She continued talking in a low voice, making plans for another year of gardening. The negro stood near her, his figure making a dark **wavering** mass against the foliage of a low growing bush. His wife wore a white dress. He could see her figure quite plainly. In the uncertain light it looked girlish and young. She put her hand up and took hold of the body of a young tree. The hand became detached from her body. The pressure of her leaning body made the young tree sway a little. The white hand moved slowly back and forth in space. (*EGG* 225)

In *CANE*'s final section 'Kabnis', Jean Toomer draws upon a shorthand of organicist lexicon of symbols to unravel the tangled nature of America's history of original sin—as the scene brings together all the opposing forces into a moment of **revelation** presented figuratively [**DEVICE** »≡ : **AUFHEBUNG**]:

Something in the air is too tense and deep for that. Lewis, seated now so that his eyes rest upon the old man, **merges** with his source and lets the pain and beauty of the South meet there. White faces, pain-pollen, settle downward through a cane-sweet mist and touch the ovaries of yellow flowers. Cotton-bolls bloom, droop. Black roots twist in a parched red soil beneath a blazing sky. Magnolias, fragrant, a trifle futile, lovely, far off. . . His eyelids close. A force begins to heave and rise. . . (*C* 107)

Anderson's story presents a similar moment of epiphany in the unspoken consciousness [**DEVICE** ☐ : **TELEPATHY**] of Rosalind's mother: "There is no love. Life is a lie. It leads to sin, to death and decay"—with Ma Wescott's voice **merging** with that of the thin, flat breasted bride in Rosalind's fancy (*EGG* 261-2).

[**φ**] Leonid Grossman identifies the aims, significance, and specific nature of Dostoevsky's aesthetic method of composition:

[1] to subordinate **polar-opposite** narrative elements to the **unity** of a philosophical design and to the **whirlwind** movement of events. [2] To **link** together in one artistic creation philosophical confessions and criminal adventures, [3] to incorporate religious drama into the story-line of a boulevard novel, [4] to lead the reader through all the **peripeteia** of an adventure narrative only to arrive at the **revelation** of a new mystery. . . . [5] Dostoevsky **merges opposites**. [6] He issues a decisive challenge to the fundamental canon of the theory of art. . . . to create out of **heterogeneous** and **profoundly disparate** materials of varying worth a unified and integral artistic creation. Thus the Book of Job, the Revelation of St. John, the Gospel texts, the discourses of St. Simeon the New Theologian, everything that feeds the pages of his novels and contributes tone to one or another of his chapters, is **combined** here in a most original way with the newspaper, the anecdote, the parody, the street scene, with the **grotesque**, even with the

pamphlet. He boldly casts into his **crucibles** ever newer elements, knowing and believing that in the **blaze** of his creative work these **raw chunks** of everyday life, the sensations of boulevard novels and the divinely inspired pages of Holy Writ, will **melt down** and **fuse** in a new compound, and take on the deep imprint of his personal style and tone.⁷⁹

This **polymorphous** poetic of Dostoevsky is the same as the defining essence of high modernism—exemplified by the “formidable assemblage” of **Joyce’s** “symphonic poem”, *Ulysses*,⁸⁰ and the “poetic mosaics” of **T. S. Eliot**, where “lines remembered from Shakespeare turn to jazz”.⁸¹ This new form of poetic expression is, as Peter Kaye recognizes, the “discourse uniquely suited to capture modernity’s unstable dialogical oppositions, its relativized, indeterminate plurality of languages, ideologies, and social experiences”.⁸² The aesthetic method envisioned by **Novalis**, which I have denoted as [**DEVICE** ∫ : **FUSION**], is less of a **synthesis**, and more of an **interpolation**. My alternative coinage ‘*Goldene-Gans method*’—suggesting the magical power of the golden goose to *string together* various heterogeneous figures into a long *grotesque chain*—is a more apt description of this aesthetic, which creates **uniforamation** *while preserving* its **multiplicity**. The **paradoxical** nature of this poetic is underscored in Bakhtin’s characterization—“multileveledness and contradictoriness”⁸³—it is a **formlessness** turned into **form** yet *wavering* between the two; like **eclecticism** and **improvisation** are utilized in Jazz to at once *destroy* and *recreate* a folksong; or **syncretism** that illogically **juxtaposes** two *irreconcilable* philosophical positions. This is the method at the heart of **CANE** and soul of Jean Toomer’s **modernism**.

[**Я**] What distinguishes literature from philosophy, according to McCarthy, is its celebration of “inquisitive indeterminacy and complexity of meaning in an aesthetically pleasing manner” and the ensuing “pleasure of its heuristic encirclements and self-reflexive ramifications”—the shift in semantics towards “the new connotations of ‘littera’ as ‘cipher’ or ‘hieroglyph’ or ‘signature’ of

⁷⁹ Qtd. in Bakhtin, 14-15. Emphasis and numbering added.

⁸⁰ J. W. Beach, *The Twentieth Century Novel* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932), 419-20.

⁸¹ Edmund Wilson, *Axel’s Castle*, in *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s & 30s*, 717; 719. “And it is true that, in reading Eliot and Pound, we are sometimes visited by the uneasy recollections of Ausonius, in the fourth century, composing Greek-and-Latin macaronics and piecing together poetic mosaics out of verses from Virgil”.

⁸² Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism, 1900-1930* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26-7.

⁸³ Bakhtin, 27.

something concealed or not fully present”—the origins of this shift, he traces to Hamann and Herder.⁸⁴ It is not only Goethe who draws on this ancient and modern *religious* conception of poetry to achieve ‘polyvalence’ in his novels, as this proclivity for mystery, opacity, and sibylline complexity is passed on to subsequent movements. William A. Nitz draws a direct line from Herder to *Symboliste* poetics, which “evokes, prompts, or suggests what cannot be imitated directly—namely, the secret quality or essence of things: the unexplained and inexplicable, the intangible and illusive, [...] what lies beyond the world of rational control”—this “symbolistic” aesthetic bestows upon words the quality of “music in a so-called elemental, sublimated sense” in order to “revive the primitive principles of verse, alliteration, and assonance” and “annihilate form as much as possible [...] to the extent even of confusing prose with poetry”.⁸⁵ T. S. Eliot was introduced to the French Symbolists through Arthur Symons, who writes that the poems of Verlaine “go as far as verse can go to become pure music, the voice of a bird with a human soul”, and quotes Mallarmé’s passage in ‘Crisis in Poetry’ declaring that “musicality” will wed **verse** with **form**:

we are now precisely at the moment of seeking, before that breaking up of the large **rhythms** of literature, and their **scattering** in articulate, almost instrumental, nervous **waves**, an art which shall complete the **transposition**, into the Book, of the **symphony** [...] for, it is not in elementary sonorities of brass, strings, wood, unquestionably, but in the intellectual word at its utmost, that [...] we should find, drawing to itself all the correspondences of the universe, the supreme **Music**.⁸⁶

In *Re-Discovery of America* (1929), Waldo Frank describes **Jazz** as a form reflecting society’s chaos, while also rebelling against it—“Jazz music is a similar flutter of dissent from the traditional base of harmonic, melodic forms. Its body is our jungle of traditions”—he equates Eliot’s poetry with **Irving Berlin**’s compositional style shuffling elements of “romantic *Lieder* [...] into his own American expression”.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ John A. McCarthy, “Philosophy and Literature in the German Enlightenment”, in *Philosophy and German Literature, 1700-1990*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15. “One commonly ascribes the origins of this semantic shift to Johann Georg Hamann (1731-88), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1813), Lessing and especially Karl Philipp Moritz (1756-93).”

⁸⁵ William A. Nitz, “Symbolistic Poetry in France”, *The North American Review* 197, no. 691 (1913): 802-4; 815. “The ‘magic power’ to which Herder refers is obviously what is otherwise called the power of suggestion, and this quality is at the basis of French symbolism”, 802.

⁸⁶ Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 86; 132. Emphasis added.

⁸⁷ Waldo Frank, *Re-Discovery of America* (New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, 1947), 129-32.

[X] The keys to unlock the most mystifying aspects of ‘**Kabnis**’ can be found in Dostoevsky’s **grotesque aesthetic** which relies upon the romantic equation *coincidentia oppositorum*. Bakhtin writes that Dostoevsky’s “stubborn urge” to view everything simultaneously in space rather than time, leads to his split characters [**DEVICE** (× ÷) : **DOPPELGÄNGER**], created from “every contradiction within a single person . . . in order to dramatize the contradiction and develop it extensively”.⁸⁸ Arnold Hauser identifies Dostoevsky’s “kaleidoscopic” characterization as mixing *Frühromantik* devices and “props” to form his unique “expression of the ego which has collapsed upon itself and which cannot be reduced to a unity”—this “romantic-antiromantic” *doppelgänger method* personifies an internal impulse or aspect alongside its paired antithesis.⁸⁹ The quintessential foundation of Dostoevsky’s aesthetic “merging opposites” is based on the relationship between *Bezobrazie* (formless, misshapen, grotesque) and *Obraz* (ideal form, beauty)—as Jackson points out, these opposites form the “axis of beauty in the Russian language”—his method obscures “the deeply Christian content of his aesthetic”.⁹⁰ **John Middleton Murry** and **D. H. Lawrence** both misread Dostoevsky and his characters because they fail to grasp the purpose of the **grotesque** in his novels. Murry views his disfigured and immoral characters as Nietzschean **Supermen** who have “passed beyond good and evil”—he interprets them as symbols proclaiming the author’s rejection of God, allowing man to achieve divinity.⁹¹ In a letter to Murry, Lawrence calls Dostoevsky’s works “great parables . . . but false art”, and sees his characters as diseased “*fallen angels*”, that are infected—like the author—with a disintegrating “mental consciousness” that corrupts desire.⁹² Peter Kaye’s analysis of the two writers’ misreading of Dostoevsky is insightful, as it lays out crucial aspects of the *Grotesk* [**DEVICE** ✖ : **DEFORMATION**] found in **CANE**.

⁸⁸ Bakhtin, 28. Dostoevsky’s method of doubling allows “a character to converse with his own double, with the devil, with his alter ego, with his own caricature (Ivan and the Devil, Ivan and Smerdyakov, Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, and so forth)”.

⁸⁹ “Not only are love and hate, pride and humility, conceit and self-abasement, sadism and masochism, the desire for what is lofty and noble and *nostalgie de la boue* combined in his works, . . . Myshkin and Rogózhin, Ivan Karamazov and Smerdyakov, Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov [are] various facets of one and the same principle.” Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, 749.

⁹⁰ Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 47; 53.

⁹¹ Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism*, 37-8.

⁹² Qtd. in Kaye, 41; 45. Italics original. Letter to Murry & Mansfield, February 7, 1916.

The two Englishmen, { 1 } “assume an absence of artistic design and novelistic intention” and dismiss “issues of plot, irony, style, point of view, and setting”—mistaking Dostoevsky’s uniquely formed creations and scenes “simply as eruptions of his personality”.⁹³ { 2 } Lawrence’s “discomfort” with the Russian novels’ polyphonic “mixture of radically disparate elements” and the aesthetic technique of merging opposites, led him to misinterpret the juxtaposing of “spiritual altruism with sensual depravity, high tragedy and low comedy, idealism and farcical ridicule, within the same scene and even in the same character”, as mixing “God with sadism”.⁹⁴ { 3 } Lawrence’s “pathology of Dostoevskian desire proves provocatively reductive, impaired by assumptions that the characters are **simple** and **static**”—this misses the point of Dostoevsky’s incorporation of **grotesque** characters and the **dynamics** of “**suffering as a means of purification**”.⁹⁵

[ɹ] Robert Louis Jackson lays out how “the aesthetic—and religious—character of Dostoevsky’s mystical vision or anticipation of world harmony” is based on “the idea of the inseparability of the ideal (**beauty**) from its incarnation (**Christ**)”—Dostoevsky discloses in his notebooks:

The main thing is the image of Christ from which comes all teaching . . . not Christ’s morality, not his teaching will save the world, but precisely faith that the Word became flesh. . . . [Christ] is the final ideal of man, the whole embodied Word, God embodied. . . . Beauty will save the world.⁹⁶

His wife relates how the painting ‘**Dead Christ in Tomb**’ [**Image G8**] by Holbein aroused a feeling of **sublime** “ecstasy” in the writer when they first saw it in Basel; not because Dostoevsky believed it to be beautiful—as the rotting corpse’s **grotesque** figure (*bezobrazie*) is antithetical to the ideal image of **Beauty** (*obraz*)—but precisely because its ugliness “restores to man his true image, reveal[ing] the divine image behind the mask of caricature”.⁹⁷ This paradox forms the axis of **sacred & profane** linking **physical & spiritual** in man—and is why Dostoevsky “re-created in his fiction a monstrous world, disfigured in violence, despair, and depravity, yet a world yearning for ideal beauty and the presence of God.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Ibid., 43-4.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 53-4. Last quote is from Lawrence’s 1916 letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 41. Emphasis added. See *Metaphysical Exercitium* § 25 on Lawrence, Russians, & the *Volk*.

⁹⁶ Qtd. in Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form*, 50; 56.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 67-70.

⁹⁸ Kaye, 28.

[A] Following Dostoevsky we position the **grotesque** as occupying the domain in polar opposition to that of the **sublime**. We turn to Wolfgang Kayser’s work, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (1957) for insight into the **grotesque**. Originating from the Italian *la grottesca* and *grottesco* to denote an ancient ornamental style of painting discovered in excavated caves (*grotta*) in the late-1400s, where foliage merge and intermix with animal and human forms—in his essay ‘*Von Arabesken*’ (1789), Goethe describes and commends the playful artistry of Raphael’s usage of this style to decorate the Papal loggias pillars in 1515. What sets this ornamental style apart from abstract counterparts, as Kayser points out, is its creation of a world where “the natural order of things has been subverted”—Renaissance artists of the sixteenth century begin using the synonym *sogni dei pittori*, ‘dreams of painters’, to refer to the “sphere in which the dissolution of reality and participation in a different kind of existence”, and in 1575, Fischart first uses the term “**grottogrotesque**” in German to describe “the monstrous fusion of human and nonhuman elements”.⁹⁹ Kayser’s conclusion provides a more nuanced definition of the intricate concept of *Grotesk/Arabeske*:

[1] THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD. [...] Only now do we plumb the final depth of the **horror** that is inspired by the transformed world. [...] If we were able to name these powers and relate them to the cosmic order, the grotesque would lose its essential quality. [...] What intrudes remains **incomprehensible, inexplicable, and impersonal**. One could use another descriptive phrase and characterize the grotesque as **the objectification of the “It”, the ghostly “It”**—in contrast to the psychological “It” (*es freut mich*: it pleases me = I am glad) and the cosmic “It” (*es regnet*: it rains)—the “It” which Amman defined as the third meaning of the impersonal pronoun. [...] The divinity of poets and the shaping force of nature have altogether ceased to exist. If Kubin harks back to the ancient *topos* of the *theatrum mundi*: “We, the creatures most mysterious to ourselves, are poets as well as **directors** of, and **characters** in, the play”, the apparent answer only increases the **mystification**. [...] [2] THE GROTESQUE IS A PLAY WITH THE ABSURD. [...] [3] AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD. [...] The various forms of the grotesque are the most obvious and and pronounced **contradictions** of any kind of rationalism and any systematic use of thought.¹⁰⁰

The **aesthetic devices** in service of Novalis’ *Verfremdungseffekt* and Shklovsky’s *Ostranenie*, to attempt a re-enchantment (*Wiederverzauberung*) of the world, are in effect, distortions and subversions of the “natural order of things”—**romantic irony**

⁹⁹ Kayser, 21–4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 184–8. Emphasis and numbering added. Capitalization original.

—then, can be characterized as the process of transforming the world into something unrecognizably *new*, but is also, in essence—**making the world *Grotesk***. Friedrich Schlegel's **Philosophical Fragment § 668** captures this sense when it states, "irony is a permanent *parabasis*", which is Greek for 'a stepping beyond'—Johann Pillai tells us "in the New Testament it is translated as 'sin' or '**transgression**'".¹⁰¹ Lawrence's distaste for Dostoevsky's eclectic and polyphonic style of merging contradictory elements is better understood from this perspective—as Peter Kaye suggests, "Lawrence could not tolerate the **sacrileges** and **travesties** that pervade Dostoevsky's novels, because, in his view, the sanctuary of the novel was too sacred a place to allow for such constant mockery . . . [judging him] a **heretic** in the temple of art".¹⁰² With *Ulysses*, Joyce proudly dons this title, searching out new sacred lanes to waywardly **step over** and transgress using the same blueprint. According to Beach, Joyce **juxtaposes** Bloom's "pedestrian day" with Odysseus' triumphant homecoming, **contrasting** "Irish futilities with heroic Greek adventure", achieved through **oscillating** protean styles—such as in **Episode XII** (**'Cyclops'**) where the narration **wavers** between "pot-house vernacular" and the "ideal form" of Biblical language, **superimposing** a fourth-dimensional "mock-ideal shadow" in the finalé, upon the three-dimensional reality of the scene:¹⁰³

When, lo, there came about them all a great brightness and they . . . beheld him in the **chariot**, clothed upon in the glory of the brightness, having raiment as of the sun, fair as the moon and terrible that for awe they durst not look upon him. And there came a voice out of heaven, calling: *Elijah! Elijah!* And he answered with a main cry: *Abba! Adonai!* And they beheld him even him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness . . .¹⁰⁴

This mythical method is one Sherwood Anderson already toyed with in *Winesburg, Ohio*, which he considered titling "*The Book of the Grotesque*"; the vignettes revolving around Jesse Bentley—'Godliness', 'Surrender', 'Terror'—all overlay the story of the "Old Testament Jesse, a lonely founder of a new race".¹⁰⁵ Dostoevsky's zodiac, which locates Christ as the pinnacle of ideal **Beauty** and at the intersection of flesh and **Logos**—dialectically opposite the **grotesque**—is the formula borrowed for Kabnis and Bloom, who claims, "Christ was a jew like *me*."

¹⁰¹ Pillai, "Irony, Romantic" in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era*, 565. Emphasis added.

¹⁰² Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism*, 54. Emphasis added.

¹⁰³ Beach, *The Twentieth Century Novel*, 420-2.

¹⁰⁴ Joyce, *The Little Review* "Ulysses", 298-9. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁵ Edwin T. Bowden, *The Dungeon of the Heart* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 117.

THE "ME" OF THE MAELSTRÖM

In closing, we focus in on 'Kabnis'—fusing together all the points covered in this chapter—to refract the various devices and methods incorporated into the text. Josephson's review of *CANE* for *Broom* highlights its 'whirlwind' **grotesque** style:

The hysteria, the passion, the madness and the great sweetness of his negroes recalls Dostoevsky and his possessed Russian characters. In the many moments of most perfect insight which occur in the book, these people speak and move with the same awful sense of revelation, and catharsis".¹⁰⁶

To identify these "moments of perfect insight", we select a scene in Part 1 that perfectly mirrors Dostoevsky's method (as characterized by Kaye) and dramatizes the protagonist's "lack of integration" and "despair", as he **oscillates** between profanity and veneration—"yearning for ideal beauty" in "the presence of God":

"God's handiwork, doubtless. God and Hanby, they belong together. Two goddam moral-spouters. Oh, no, I wont let that emotion come up in me. Stay down. Stay down, I tell you. O Jesus, Thou art beautiful. . . Come, Ralph, pull yourself together. **Curses** and **adoration** dont come from what is sane. This loneliness, dumbness, awful, intangible oppression is enough to drive a man insane. Miles from nowhere. A speck on a Georgia hillside. Jesus, can you imagine it—an atom of dust in agony on a hillside? Thats a spectacle for you. Come, Ralph, old man, pull yourself together." (C 85; emphasis added)

This scene of Kabnis **hovering** at the midpoint—between beauty and ugliness, sacred and profane, torment and revelation, sanity and insanity—depicts the birth of "the genius of the South" (C 15). Roger Didier's review of *CANE* for *The Negro Associated Press* notes that "Mr. Toomer seems to have had one grand fight with the so-called conventions"—reminding us of Joyce's infractions—and he discusses Toomer's unvarnished use of language before asking, "How far can the relations of the sexes be pictured or suggested without obscenity? Where does **art** end and **obscenity** begin? Does art comprise all truth?" ["PRO" IV : 2]. As laid out previously, the 'highest' art and religion both revolve around the **axis** of the coincidence of opposites—the **point** of Pound's vortex cone. This is the '**moment**' beyond space and time '**where**' the sacred and the profane **meet** [&]—where the **Divine Logos** is made Flesh, and where *Material* is infused with **Spirit**—**Art** is an act of transgression, as an earthly **Image** strives to attain heavenly **Form**—in essence, it is an attempt to name the Unnamable—**YHWH** (meaning 'to be')—"And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14, **KJV**).

¹⁰⁶ Matthew Josephson, "Great American Novels", *Broom* 5, no. 3 (Oct. 1923): 179. ["PRO" IV : 3].

This Bible passage depicting the scene where God appeared to Moses on Mount Horeb in the form of a burning bush had great significance for the *Sturm und Drang* and *Frühromantik* imagination, and especially **Johann Gottlieb Fichte**—as the Hebrew Bible, Platonism, Spinoza, and New Testament were melded together to form a syncretic and mystical, philosophical and aesthetic worldview.

To uncover the shared mystical design behind ‘**Kabnis**’ and Pound’s ‘**Plotinus**’, we shuffle and superimpose the two, matching corresponding lines of each text:

Cloistered about with memories, alone	Christ, how cut off from everything he is. [...] Washington sleeps. Its still peaceful streets, how desirable they are. (C 86)
In chaos, while the waiting silence sings.	Night winds in Georgia are vagrant poets, whispering . . . white winds croon its sleep-song. (C 83-4)
Obliviate of cycles’ wanderings	Whats beautiful there? Hog pens and chicken yards. Dirty red mud. Stinking outhouse. Whats beauty anyway but ugliness if it hurts you?. (C 85)
I was an atom on creation’s throne	A speck on a Georgia hillside. Jesus, can you imagine it—an atom of dust [Adam] in agony on a hillside? [Calvary?] (C 85)
And knew all nothing my unconquered own.	Soul. Soul hell. There aint no such thing. What in hell was that? Kabnis is about to shake his fists heavenward. He looks up and the night’s beauty strikes him dumb (C 84-5)
God! Should I be the hand upon the strings?!	If I, the dream [...] could become the face of the South. How my lips would sing for it, my songs being the lips of the soul. (C 84-5)
But I was lonely as a lonely child.	This loneliness, dumbness, awful, intangible oppression is enough to drive a man insane. [...] look at me now. Earth’s child. The earth my mother. (C 85)
I cried amid the void and heard no cry,	God Almighty, dear God, dear Jesus, do not torture me with beauty. Take it away. Give me an ugly world. (C 85)
And then for utter loneliness, made I	God, he doesnt exist, but nevertheless he is ugly. Hence, what comes from Him is ugly. (C 85)
New thoughts as crescent images of <i>me</i> . (Plotinus ’, lines 3-12)	Bastardy; me. [...] If I the dream (not what is weak and afraid in me) could become the face of the South. (C 83-4) [“Kabnis is <u>Me</u> ”]

Before we address the first two and final two lines of Ezra Pound’s ‘**Plotinus**’—which I believe corresponds with the ending of ‘**Kabnis**’—I would like to point out that Jean Toomer has offered us the image of a broken and disfigured **Trinity**: “Who in Christ’s world can I talk to? A hen. God. Myself” (C 87). This grotesque triangle is made up of a decapitated chicken, God as a red-nosed town drunkard, and His bastard son writhing in pain, stiff like an “artificial man”, and cursing his father with “bewildered” eyes, while the “shadow of his mind” drifts away (C 85).

Kabnis is positioned as Christ in this dramatic piece the same way that Bloom and Prince Myshkin are—or how Prufrock *is not* yet also *is* Hamlet.¹⁰⁷ Complicating the matter is that Carrie Kate identifies Lewis as Jesus: “The sun-burst from her eyes floods up and haloes him. Christ-eyes, his eyes look to her” (C 103)—there are not two saviors but rather two split halves, as Toomer borrows Dostoevsky’s double motif [**DEVICE** ☒ ☎ : **DOPPELGÄNGER**].

Returning to the beginning of ‘**Plotinus**’: “As one that would draw thru the node of things, / Back sweeping to the vortex of the cone,” (lines 1-2). To truly understand how this might correspond to ‘Kabnis’ requires that we look at the chapter’s opening image **Toomer’s ‘Maelström’** [**Image D1**]. The **eye** of this storm is where the soul *intersects* with God—the *Axis Mundi*—where the **inner** and **outer** worlds *converge*, this is where “supreme spiritual torment” melds grotesque “formless matter” into the “beautiful and pure”—where Kabnis pours the “holy avalanche” of “Misshapen, split-gut, tortured, twisted words” as the “whole damn bloated purple country” is *funneled* into his soul (C 111). Could we not draw from this that the poet Kabnis *is* the soul?

Now the question is, does the ending of **CANE** correspond with the final two lines of ‘**Plotinus**’: “And with them was my essence reconciled / While fear went forth from mine eternity” (lines 13-14)? Is Kabnis able to **unify** the polarities of “Master; slave. Soil; and the overarching heavens. Dusk; dawn” (C 109), or does the story end in **disintegration**? Is Carrie’s final prayer—“Jesus, come”—answered? I would argue ‘yes’, because the final scene is one where the intense suffering is **purified**, as “Her palms draw the fever out” (C 117)—the final Trinity of Father John, Sister Carrie Kate, and Kabnis correspond to the **forces** of Toomer’s ‘Maelström’ that **transform** the whirlwind of “misshapen words” within the soul, into the beautiful spiritual “promise-song” (C 48). As Carrie K. helps Kabnis remove his robe, he leaves his profane self behind, *metamorphosing* into the poet of the uplifting “**birth-song**”—that functions like the **chariot** of Bloom’s Christ-like **ascension**: “The sun arises. Gold-glowing child, it steps into the sky” (C 117). His **folksong**—like the rays shining through the iron bars—haloes Father John and Carrie, and **reconciles** the pain and beauty of the South. This is Jean Toomer’s praxis of Dostoevsky’s *Grotesk* formulae to make $2 \times 2 = 5$.

¹⁰⁷ See Berryman, “Prufrock’s Dilemma”, in *Freedom of the Poet*, 275. [**DEVICE** ☒ : **MISDIRECTION**]

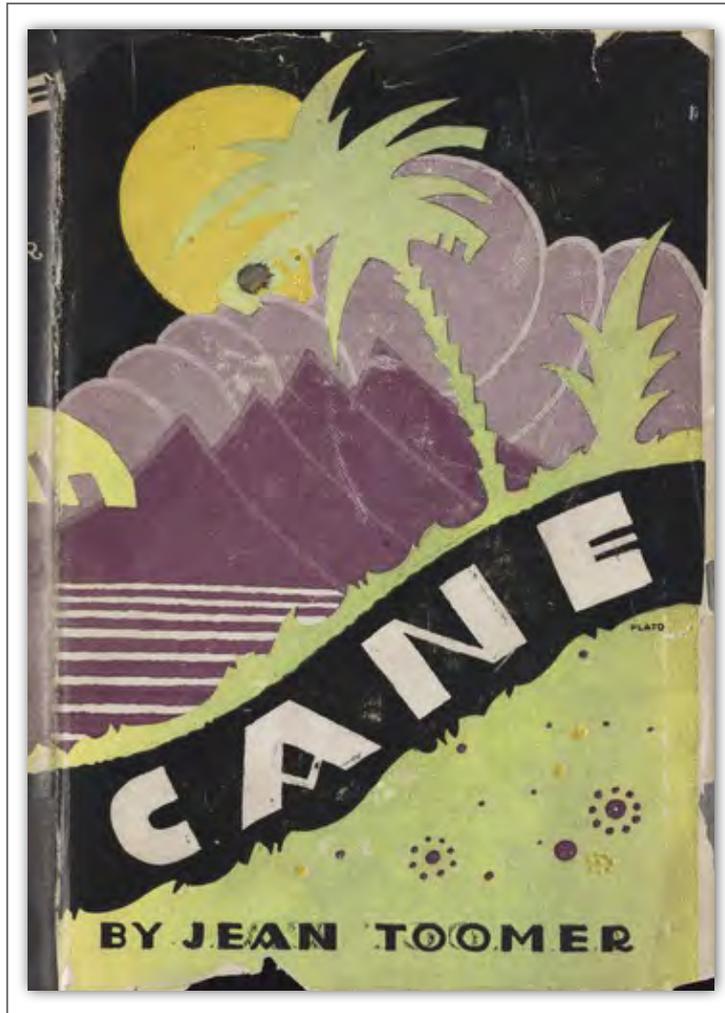


Image E1. Original Dust Jacket Cover Design for *CANE*, 1923. Jean Toomer, *CANE* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).



Image E2.1. Jean Toomer with students at the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute in Sparta, Georgia, taken in the autumn of 1921. JTP, Box 65, 1494. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.



Image E2.2. Photograph of another building taken the same period in Sparta. JTP, Box 65, 1494. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

4. HERDERIAN NEO-PRIMITIVISM

Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* & Poetic Realism

SCOPE [1852 - 1871 / 1866-1880 / 1917 / 1921] : RUSSIA

POINTS [U : < - > : W : < - > : Y : < - > : Z]

A poet is a creator of a people;
he gives it a world to contemplate,
he holds its soul in his hand.

— **Johann Gottfried Herder** ¹

Georgia opened me. And it may
well be said that I received my
initial impulse to an individual
art from my experience there.

For no other section of the
country has so stirred me.
There one finds soil, soil in the
sense the Russians know it,
—soil every art and literature
that is to live must
be imbedded in.

— **Jean Toomer**,
letter to Alain Locke ²

Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock point out that “nineteenth-century Russian realism presented a model to modernist British fiction, but British modernists has less knowledge of, and interest in, Russian literary modernism.”³ This observation also holds true for American modernists, but perhaps to an even greater degree as they marveled with envy at the heft and significance of just what these Russian writers were able to accomplish when measured against the literary achievements of the West. In 1910, **Van Wyck Brooks** wrote in his collection of fragments, *The Soul: An Essay Towards a Point of View*:

The great fact about the Russian people appeared to me this—that they are the most inarticulate people in the world. These mighty novelists are the voices of the inarticulate, voices themselves not quite articulate, but

¹ Qtd. in Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 229.

² Qtd. in Alain Locke, “Negro Youth Speaks”, in *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925), 222.

³ Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock, eds., “Introduction: Against Influence: On Writing about Russian Culture in Britain”, in *Russia in Britain, 1880-1940: From Melodrama to Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

struggling out of some chaotic depths, dragging their dreams out of the **soil**. Compared with them we of the western world express ourselves easily and toss ourselves to the wind. But they, who have no rhetoric and who cannot speak, accumulate feelings, emotions, thoughts which turn upon themselves within and grow rich and angry and prophetic until, too urgent for anything to stop them, they burst forth and pour out, turgid and volcanic; carving out of tremendous necessity *a language all their own*.⁴

Brooks admires that despite the Russian people's educational disadvantages and economic hardships, their novelists were able to **distill** from the depths of their **suffering**—a raw and genuine voice, powerfully proclaiming their **national identity**. Many recent critics hold views similar to that of the young Brooks—Jeanne J. Smoot identifies the distinguishing features of Russian realism to be a “sympathy for human suffering” and an “inner realism” that goes beyond “psychological penetration” towards “an awareness and a depiction of the very soul of humanity”, as well as the “sympathetic portrayal of the peasant”.⁵

This chapter focuses in on how Russian writers adopted Herder's program to provide the vital seeds for a new and authentic Russian literature based on its **vernacular** oral tradition, common peasant **folk**, and the **Russian soul**. It is easy to surmise why these notions would have been received favorably in Russia when we consider Herder's early contact with Russian culture growing up in **Mohrunen** and the following context that Hans Kohn provides:

Herder had hailed the Slav rural people of his day as the embodiment of primitive man and had prophesied their glorious future. What wonder that the Russian nationalists regarded rapturously the Russian peasant, the common folk, as a superior type compared with the bourgeois of the West. . . . The peasants appeared to them living in an organic and natural community based on mutual love and harmony, while Western society was held together, in competition and conflict, by the coldness of law and the brutality of force.⁶

We start by pinpointing some of the historical moments where Herderian ideas make inroads into Russian literature—influencing writers to draw from this German well to express the Russian *Volksgeist*. After considering modernists' views on **Ivan Turgenev**, we take a closer look at the impact of German **poetic realism** on *A Sportsman's Sketches*, and the influence of both on **CANE**.

⁴ Van Wyck Brooks, *The Soul*, 38. Emphasis added.

⁵ Jeanne J. Smoot, “Romantic Thought and Style in Nineteenth-Century Realism and Naturalism”, in *Romantic Prose Fiction*, eds. Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, and Bernard Dieterle (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2008), 593-4.

⁶ Hans Kohn, “Dostoevsky's Nationalism”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6, no. 4 (1945): 390.

HERDERIAN CROSS-POLLINATION

In his travelogue, *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, **Nikolai Karamzin** (1766-1826) gives an account of his meeting with Herder in Weimar 1789, an event that would lead to his propagation of the German writer's ideas into Russia.⁷ Karamzin's translations of Herder's '**Conversation about the Invisible-Visible Society**' and extracts from *Ideen* (Books IV & V)—describing the "inner organic force" active in nature and "invisible spiritual forces"—would appear in the *The Messenger of Europe* in 1798 and 1804; three years later, the journal *Genius of the Times* would publish a translation of Herder's chapter in *Ideen* celebrating the Slavic people—where he describes them as a "peaceful and productive . . . great nation" and urges them to gather what remained of their folksongs and folktales to chronicle the history and habits of the Slavic race.⁸

As a poet, translator, critic, and historiographer, Karamzin was an influential transitional figure helping to shape a national literature for Russia—the imprint of Herder's ideas encountered directly and indirectly are visible throughout the vast scope of his writings. Among the numerous instances, the most relevant to us are: [1] Karamzin's deep interest in folklore—rooted in a "preromantic understanding of the literary evolution in the spirit of Herder" that viewed myth as the source of "national spirit"—prompting him to translate *Ossian* and publish them in his own literary magazine, *Moscow Journal*.⁹ [2] Herderian notions of "Nation", *Volk*, *Volksgeist*, **organicism**, and *Humanität* appearing in Karamzin's writings (*HIS* 93). [3] The *Sturm und Dräng* dramatist **Jakob Lenz**, who was living in Moscow, would "nurture" Karamzin's understanding and veneration of **Shakespeare** into what would manifest later in his preface and Russian translation of *Julius Caesar* (*HIS* 27, 50-1). [4] Herder's philosophy of history and historicism laid out in *Ideen* and other writings would not only provide the foundations for Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*, but lead to his becoming "the most effective innovator of his generation" (*HIS* 100).

⁷ "Herder received me with the same gentle affability, the same cordial smile, and the same air of sincerity as yesterday." Qtd. in S. Mark Lewis, *Modes of Historical Discourse in J. G. Herder and N. M. Karamzin* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 62. Hereafter cited as 'HIS'.

⁸ Rudolf Neuhäuser, *Towards the Romantic Age: Essays on Sentimental and Preromantic Literature in Russia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 104-5. See (*MAN* 412-14).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

Moving beyond philosophy and history, [5] Herder's '**Paramythien**' is a work that defined a new "*Nachdichtung*" genre—consisting of three parts: a collection of fables and two longer narratives combining irony, Greek mythological elements, and "nature imagery taken from European folklore" (*HIS* 66-7). Karamzin's work editing and publishing a translation of this work in 1792 for his *Moscow Journal*, would lead to his own attempts at writing poems in prose (*HIS* 67), which provide a model for later Russian poets. [6] The 'sentimentalist' author Karamzin's most celebrated work, '**Poor Liza**' (1791)—is the story of a peasant girl taken advantage of by a young nobleman—and marks an important shift that is visible in the works of subsequent Russian authors. Lewis contends that despite Liza's unrealistic portrayal and lack of peasant dialect, the inclusion of historical references and the identification of the **nation** with Liza and her "insignificant peasant world", shows the imprint of Herder (*HIS* 72-3): "Karamzin was one of the first writers to reach the Russian readership by showing sympathy for a peasant figure without being censored" (*HIS* 75).

Early in his career, **Nikolai Gogol** (1809-1852) sought two professorships in Russian history—although this career path would prove unsuccessful, it would introduce him to the writings of German historical scholars who specialized in Russia, and also Herder. His early work, *Arabesques* (1835), is a hodgepodge of a few fictional tales mixed in with various essays and musings. Within this fragmented collection, one finds pieces relating to his former interests in Russian history—like '**The Songs of the Ukraine**', where Herder's influence is most discernible—he writes that folksongs contain:

the true lifestyle, the elements of national character, all the quirks and shades of emotions, anxieties, sufferings and rejoicings of the depicted nation [. . .] the spirit of a passed age, the general character as a nation as a whole and of each individual separately.¹⁰

Gogol would include several folksongs discussing the lyrics and the significance of "Slavonic" mythology. Also included is '**On Present-Day Architecture**', modeled after **Goethe**'s famous essay 'On German Architecture'. Especially relevant to our focus is the piece entitled, '**Schlözer, Müller, and Herder**', where he analyzes and compares the German historians, writing of the latter: "Herder displays a truly excellent approach. He sees

¹⁰ Nikolai Gogol, *Arabesques*, trans. Alexander Tulloch (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), 187.

through spiritual eyes. . . . Everywhere he sees individuals as the representatives of the whole humanity. . . . As a poet he is superior to Schlözer and Müller.”¹¹ Gogol had greater success as an author through his highly unconventional novels and short stories, he would pave the road for subsequent generations of writers. Gogol wrote about the underclass of Russia and in the **vernacular**—his stories and novels are replete with examples of **romantic irony**, playing with perspective, phantasmagoria, grotesque characters, and later mysticism. His celebrated novel *Dead Souls* (1842) is a comedy satirizing systematic corruption and the exploitation of serfs, also referred to in Russian as ‘souls’. This novel is curiously subtitled “*Poema*”, and though the second part was never completed, it shows his attempt to enact social change by fostering a sense of Russian nationalism:

The dishonest practice of accepting bribes has become a need and a necessity even for people who were not born to dishonesty. . . . I must call out at least to those in whose breast there still beats a Russian heart . . . The point is that it is time for us to save our country; that our country is perishing, not now from an invasion of twenty foreign nations, but from ourselves . . .¹²

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) had a tumultuous rise to fame—his arrest, reprieve, and subsequent banishment to a Siberian prison camp is well known, along with his epilepsy, gambling, and constant money problems. Like Turgenev, he was a great admirer of **Gogol** and **Goethe** (especially *Faust*), and Herder’s influence on Dostoevsky is not difficult to locate in his writings—his fervent nationalism, and his journal *Vremya* (*Time*), expressing the attitudes of the *pochvenniki*, ‘men rooted in the native soil of Russia’. His early success *Poor Folk* (1846) chronicles the plight of peasants—it is said this book caused Belinsky to embrace and declare him the future genius of Russia. Dostoevsky was a prolific writer who drew on close connections to the Russian people and the **soil**. Waliszewski outlines the features of his literary style and technique, many with obvious links to Germany: “This constant anxiety to discover a ‘**national soul**’ in the moral distresses and dark places of ordinary existence, has caused Dostoevsky to become, above all things, an analyser of the human conscience. . . . Except in matters of psychology, Dostoevsky is nothing of a realist. On the other hand, he belongs to the **Romantic school**”—he notes the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹² Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Everyman’s Library, 2004), 436-7.

experimental shifting narrative positions, the symbolism of his central characters, and the “clash of divided selves” with his technique of doubling.¹³

Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) was of the landowning class and had studied in Germany before moving to France to live as an expatriate. He was the first Russian writer to receive widespread international recognition, and he also fulfilled the role of an early missionary promoting Russian letters abroad. At first glance, it does not seem that this **Westernizer** would have much in common with the Russian *Volk* when placed alongside **Slavophile** writers. However, he was drawn to the folk poems of **Koltsov** and **Grigorovich’s** novel *The Village*, works that sought to capture the genuine emotion, speech, and songs of the folk—the latter’s descriptions of landscapes in his fiction would influence his first major work, *A Sportsman’s Sketches* (*Zapiski Obotnika*; also translated *Annals of a Sportsman, Sketches from a Hunter’s Album, or A Sportsman’s Notebook*). This freshman book of interlinked vignettes—comes closest to capturing the lyrical beauty and “sublimity of the Russian folk soul”.¹⁴ He spent years studying Hegel and German philosophy at the University of Berlin, and although he never completed his degree, his writings contain many specific references to German thinkers and notions in his fiction—and more significantly, within these works is a foundation of *Frühromantik* and Idealist methods, such as his dialectic approach to creating stories around paired characters, and his division of men into two types—**Hamlets** and **Don Quixotes**.¹⁵ In his introduction for the anthology of poetry, *Pastels in Prose* (1890), William Dean Howells conjectures whether the symbolist poetry collected might have been influenced by the “sound depths and reach heights untouched” of Turgenev’s prose poems¹⁶—this is prescient, as Turgenev’s lyrical style and technique intersect with the **poetic realist** and **symbolist** tendencies, which form complimentary constellations along the zodiac of Herderian influence, as even a cursory glance, draws this out: **‘Paramythien’—Karamzin—Turgenev.**

¹³ K. Waliszewski, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York: D. Appleton, 1900), 292. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘RUS’.

¹⁴ Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: Mantle of the Prophet 1871-1881* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 323.

¹⁵ Kagan-Kans, “Turgenev: The Metaphysics of an Artist”, 38-92.

¹⁶ W. D. Howells, Introduction to *Pastels in Prose*, ed. C. K. Ogden (New York: Harper, 1890), vi-vii.

MODERNISTS' VIEW OF TURGENEV

Edward Garnett's *Turgenev: A Study* came out in 1917, sparking a spirited discussion about the style and merits of the once reigning Russian artist who had been surpassed by both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in the West. In the foreword to Garnett's book, **Joseph Conrad** informs readers that the Russian author was an "impartial lover of all his countrymen", one who especially understood women "so tenderly, so reverently and so passionately":

Women are, one may say, the foundation of his art. They are Russian of course. Never was a writer so profoundly, so whole-souledly national. . . . All his creations, fortunate and unfortunate, oppressed and oppressors are human beings, not strange beasts in a menagerie or damned souls knocking themselves about in the stuffy darkness of mystical contradictions. They are human beings, fit to live, fit to suffer, fit to struggle, fit to win, fit to lose, in the endless and inspiring game of pursuing from day to day the ever-receding future.¹⁷

T. S. Eliot's review of Garnett's book in *The Egoist* notes how Turgenev "used Russian material naturally, with the simplicity of genius", with the keen understanding that "a writer's art must be **racial**—which means, in plain words, that it must be based on the accumulated sensations of the first twenty-one years."¹⁸ He goes on to praise Turgenev's "perfect proportion" in capturing "perfect outlines" of Russian peasants "never unreal or abstract, but simply the essential . . . [through] this austere art of omission". This "compression" and "process of condensation, ruthlessly eliminating all passages which did not further the succinct and single ground-plan of his poetic design" is something **Willard Huntington Wright** would also note in his *Seven Arts* article 'Turgenev' (1917), while highlighting the author's technique of moving from "seed-idea" to "poetic imagery" to "pictorialized scenes" knitted together by characters into "a beautiful and charming pattern" (*SA2* 792). When discussing the Russian's style in *Turgenev: A Study*, Garnett quotes **Henry James**, "Nature placed Turgenev between poetry and prose", before adding the following: "if one hazards a definition we should prefer to term Turgenev a *poetic realist*".¹⁹

¹⁷ Joseph Conrad, Foreword to *Turgenev: A Study*, by Edward Garnett (London: W. Collins & Sons, 1917), vii-ix. We can assume Conrad considered Turgenev's literary method superior to Dostoevsky's and Gogol's, which "strange beasts in a menagerie or damned souls" alludes to.

¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, eds. Jewels Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 615.

¹⁹ Edward Garnett, *Turgenev: A Study* (London: W. Collins & Sons, 1917), 7. Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'TUR'.

Vivien Flanders's review in *Art & Letters* would echo this moniker when observing that "a vital part of his realism was that admixture of Oriental sadness, fatalism, and fantasy which transmutes it, finally, satisfactorily, into **poetic realism**".²⁰ This is significant to us for two reasons: one, because that is the label Toomer would later choose for himself; and two, because it seems to be a literary movement understood then, but not clearly delineated in Anglophone circles today. **John Gould Fletcher** would write many years later in *American Caravan IV* about the link between **poetic realism** and **imagism**:

Like it's contemporary, poetic realism of the Masefield-Frost-Masters-Sandburg type, but in a more uncompromising fashion, Imagism marked "the return to nature." It aimed at creating a new form, a form dependent upon immediate visual and verbal intuition of every aspect of its subject. This new form was to be achieved not by elaboration of detail, but by a stark stripping off of all detail in order to pursue the essential. (*FLE* 44)

This context sheds new light on Toomer labeling himself an '**essentialist**' and a '**spiritualizer**' just before stating "I am a **poetic realist**" (*W&S* 20). And **imagism**, too—which Rosenfeld noted, "fevered" Toomer and gave him "clearness"—takes on new meaning when we view the two artistic movements as sharing common goals and aesthetic principles, just to a different degree.

Our final modernist assessment of Turgenev is given by **Edmund Wilson** in his essay 'Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop', where he describes the writer as a "master of both storytelling and Russian Prose".²¹ In reference to *A Sportsman's Sketches*, Wilson credits the Russian writer with having "invented what was really a new genre . . . through sheer technical precision"—a style that relied upon **indirection** to interweave his critique of "the antiquated system of serfholding" into the stories, while masking his subjective feelings on the matter:

He had been able to learn from Pushkin, whom he took for a master, the trick of evading the censorship by telling a story in such a way as to make it convey its moral without any explicit statement, and he was the first Western writer of fiction to perfect the modern art of implying social criticism through a narrative that is presented objectively, organized economically, and beautifully polished in style.²²

²⁰ Vivien Flanders, "Turgenev", *Art & Letters* 1, no. 3 (January 1918): 106-108. Emphasis added.

²¹ Edmund Wilson, *A Window on Russia: For the Use of Foreign Readers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 72.

²² *Ibid.*, 73-74.

GERMAN POETIC REALISM

‘**Poetic realism**’ is used to denote three European literary movements that arose at different points of the nineteenth century in **Denmark** (1820s-30s), **Sweden** (1830s-60s), and **Germany** (1848-90s). German Poetic Realism appeared immediately following the popular national uprisings of 1848, then “dominated the literary scene in the German-speaking world” for decades:

No one in Germany in 1848, or in the years immediately following, was more forceful in ushering in the new literary mode than was the militant Prussian critic Julian Schmidt (1818-1886). He was the architect of the movement’s theory; and the allegiance to his principles, either expressed or implied, constitutes a strong cable that runs through the works of German Poetic Realism.²³

The term ‘poetic realism’ first originates from **F. W. J. Schelling**’s lecture in 1802, but **Otto Ludwig** is often cited as the first to use ‘*Poetischer Realismus*’ to denote a literary movement.²⁴ Instead of a sweeping overview, we will zero in on and list major principles of poetic realism we find in Ludwig’s writings that intersect with our three Herderian mooring threads and Toomer’s fragments.

The **first Poetic-Realist Principle** drawn from Otto Ludwig’s aesthetics:

[—] Authors should reject the two extremes of art—romanticism or idealism, which has no cohesion with the real world; and naturalism or pure realism (*PR* 17).

Toomer’s agreement with this first principle is easy to glean just from his quote aligning himself with **poetic realism**: “I am not a romanticist, I am not a realist—in the ordinary sense . . .” (*W&S* 20); better context and the extent to which he believed an vacillation between the “two extremes” a necessary component for great fiction can be seen in his letter to Frank criticizing Flaubert’s style:

And it seems to me that his great creative powers were forever held in check from flowing into his materials. . . . I wish he had cast the whole lot overboard, friends, cant phrases, literary doctrines and dogmas and all, and just once, completely, vigorously, splendidly LIVED one novel. It wouldnt have been **realism**, no. And it wouldnt have been **romanticism**. But it would have been **that immortal achievement which superbly blends the two.** (*LJT* 156; emphasis added)

²³ Clifford Albrecht Bernd, *German Poetic Realism* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 17, 19.

²⁴ This section builds upon Baker’s insightful framework and research of German textual materials in Christine L. Baker, in *Landscape in Theodore’s Novellen: An Aspect of the Development of Storm’s Descriptive Style into Poetic Realism*. PhD diss., University of Leicester, 1999, 16. Hereafter cited parenthetically as ‘*PR*’. Bernd argues Atterbom coined the term, then Hagberg and the Brockhaus brothers introduced it into Germany. Clifford Albrecht Bernd, *Poetic Realism in Scandinavia and Central Europe, 1820-1895* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), 142.

This next principle corresponds fairly directly to Toomer's choice of the term 'spiritualizer', but more interestingly points to the reason why **poetic realism** and **symbolism** run parallel on our **MAP**.

The **second Poetic-Realist Principle** drawn from Ludwig's aesthetics:

[二] [T]he task of literature [is] to expose the inner truth of life, to reveal what is there but hidden from the eye. An author should take a piece of reality and reproduce it in his mind, to be left with a higher reality—poetic reality. (PR 16)

This principle correlates with what Mankovskaya says of the French *Neoplatonic* Symbolists: "the goal of symbolization in art is a breakthrough to the spiritual world of ideas, and the expression in artistic symbols of the world's extrasensory essence."²⁵

The **third Poetic-Realist Principle** drawn from Ludwig's aesthetics:

[三] This art should copy from true nature, however it should not blatantly imitate reality nor distort it, but it should *filter* reality through the creative imagination to produce the poetic reality (PR 16; emphasis added).

To contextualize this principle, we turn to Dale E. Peterson, who writes of the poetic realism of **Henry James** and **Turgenev**: "Both writers emphasize the play of perspective and the 'point of view'. Both favor the technique of filtering raw experience through a mediating consciousness . . ." ²⁶ This sheds light on the sudden shifts of perspective and polyphonic narration found in their works and **CANE**, but also points to why Toomer would view **Paul Cézanne** as "some master" of great art ["POE" II:4]; **Clive Bell** writes in *Since Cézanne* (1922): "the influence of Cézanne during the last seventeen years has manifested itself most obviously in two characteristics—Directness and what is called Distortion. . . . to play the oddest tricks with natural forms".²⁷

The **fourth Poetic-Realist Principle** drawn from Ludwig's aesthetics:

[四] The Poetic Realist . . . should give us the world, however, unmixed with his own private feelings and reflections [and ego. The goal is to] produce a world standing between the objective truth of things and its creator's own subjective viewpoint; a world we recognise from reality but one which is born again within us. (PR 17)

This principle is concerned with *Tendenz* (bias or leaning) or the need to maintain impartiality; German critics like **Julian Schmidt**, who were

²⁵ Mankovskaya, "French Symbolism: Aesthetic Dominants", 59.

²⁶ Peterson, *Clement Vision*, 2-3.

²⁷ Clive Bell, *Since Cézanne* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1922), 14.

contemporary to the author, overwhelmingly celebrated the poetic realism of *A Sportsman's Sketches*; however, in stark contrast to Wilson's later assessment, Schmidt found its satirical moments of to be "insufficiently poetic", as he viewed the scenes of harsh criticism were often moments marked by *Tendenz*, turning them into caricature.²⁸ In his essay, 'The Novel' (1922), T. S. Eliot surmises the source of Dostoevsky "genius", while suggesting the Russian had an influence on Lawrence, "the most interesting novelist in England"; he singles out and praises a scene in *Aaron's Rod* for its impersonal narrative stance where "one feels that the whole is governed by a creator who is purely creator, with the terrifying *disinterestedness* of the true creator".²⁹ H. L. Mencken similarly commends Anderson, whose earlier novels he saw as being "burdened with *Tendenz*. Now, in *Winesburg, Ohio*, he throws off that handicap!"³⁰

The **fifth** *Poetic-Realist Principle* drawn from Ludwig's aesthetics:

[五] The result is a reflection of true reality but one which has been intensified and clarified through the author. . . . authors [must] rid literature of unnecessary elements, and [try] to intensify and clarify surrounding reality before transposing it into art (PR 18, 20).

This principle seems to me to be explained best by Toomer's other label of self-identification, 'essentialist'; it is the technique Eliot and Wright commended in Turgenev with the phrases "simply the essential"; "austere art of omission"; "compression"; "process of condensation"; and "ruthlessly eliminating". It does coincide with the directives of **imagism**, providing a clearer understanding of Fletcher's aligning that movement with **poetic realism**, while also explaining the reason its marker on our **MAP** intersects with both currents of **symbolism** and **poetic realism**.

The **sixth** *Poetic-Realist Principle* drawn from Ludwig's aesthetics:

[六] [what is necessary is] the creation in narrative fiction of a complete and compact world, yet one which is as diverse as the real world around us, of a world which forges the impression of a single, complete unity rather than one consisting of several separate, divergent entities (PR 37).

²⁸ Dimitrij Čiževskij, *History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, vol. 2, *The Realistic Period*, ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1974), 45.

²⁹ T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, *The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, eds. Antony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 412–3.

³⁰ Qtd. in Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 139.

This sixth principle, with its drive towards creating a “compact world” and “single, complete unity” betrays its romantic and Neo-Platonic roots—(**b**)+(**a**) of our mooring threads. **Julian Schmidt**’s “advocacy of moderate or poetic realism also contained a hidden rural bias. Citing Scott’s example in *The Heart of Midlothian*, he encouraged the writing of extended *Dorfgeschichten*, or village tales”.³¹ This explains why Fletcher identified “the Masfield-Frost-Masters-Sandburg type” as **poetic realism**, which would also include Benefield, Anderson, and Toomer. More importantly, this folk agenda provides us with the Neo-primitivist link (**c**), and identifies **poetic realism** as *the* Herderian genre *par excellence*, as each of our mooring threads intersect here—and we shall see that Turgenev’s *A Sportsman’s Sketches*—celebrating the Russian folk and its *Volksgeist*—was the *vade mecum* for many of our American nativist writers. It was *the* proto short-story cycle that the major pioneers in this modernist sub-genre each admired: **Joyce** (until he dismissed the work),³² Anderson (while publicly denying having read the author, later admitted it was “the sweetest thing in all literature”),³³ and both **Hemingway** and **Faulkner** (recommended by Anderson).³⁴ An anxiety of influence, along with a subconscious understanding of the significance and depth of their borrowing—form, style, and content—might help to explain of why each of these modernists tried to obscure and bury their debt to **Ivan Turgenev** and his short-story cycle of lyrical vignettes capturing the spirit of the Russian folk. While it is conceivable that Turgenev’s stylistic techniques and aesthetic aims may have been passed onto **CANE** indirectly through reading **Sherwood Anderson**’s poetic realist works, in the second half of this chapter I will make the case that Toomer read and drew inspiration directly from various stories in *A Sportsman’s Sketches*.

³¹ Peterson, *Clement Vision*, 15. Emphasis added.

³² See Neil Cornwell, *James Joyce & the Russians* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 26-27; 35.

³³ Paul Rosenfeld also notes how Anderson found the book “like low fine music” (*SAR* xvii). The most conclusive confession by Anderson (quoted in Chapter 1) is given in William A. Sutton’s, *The Road to Winesburg. Mosaic of the Imaginative Life of Sherwood Anderson*. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972), 301-2. See also Walter B. Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America*. Vol. 1. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 475-6, 493, 515-16, 544.

³⁴ Michael Reynolds, “Hemingway’s *In Our Time*: The Biography of a Book”, in *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37.

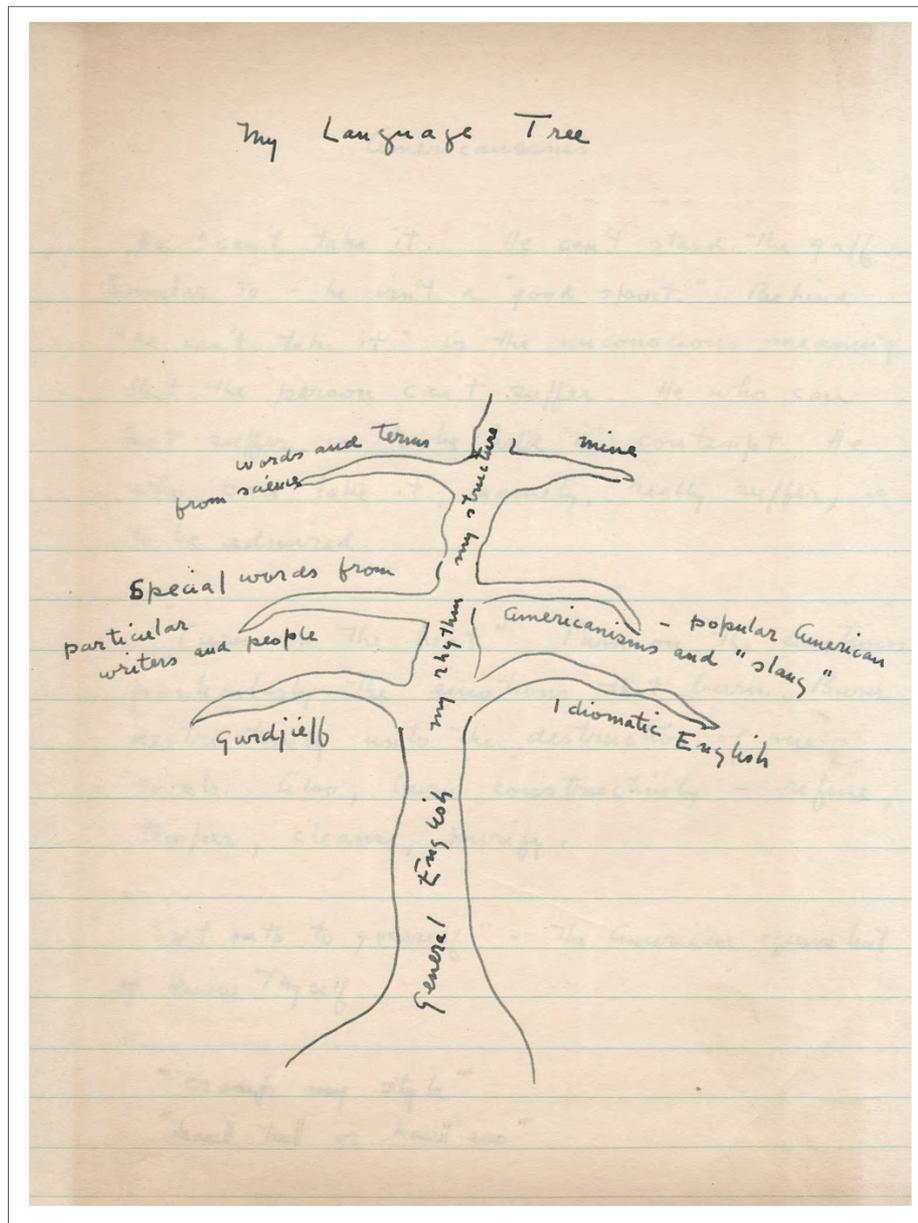


Image E3: Jean Toomer's sketch of his "Language Tree" mapping out the various linguistic elements and influences that comprise his unique style and usage of English, presumably in his literary works. JTP, Box 65, Folder 1481. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.



A FOREST OF CORRESPONDENCE 4

[**HERDERIAN FLORA 4**] : The first extract is from the Ninth Fragment of the Eighth Collection of ‘**Letters for the Advancement of Humanity**’ (1796).

A certain sultan rejoiced in the many religions that each honored God in their own way in his empire; it appeared to him as a beautiful, colorful meadow, where flowers of many kinds blossomed. Thus it is with the poetry of different peoples and ages on our globe; in each age and language it was the quintessence of the flaws and perfections of a nation, a mirror of its attitudes, the expression of the highest toward which it strove (*oratio sensitiva animi perfecta*).³⁵ [...]

There are three ways to provide oneself with an overview of this field of human thought rich in flowers and fruit, and each has been trodden. [...] the path of *genres and species* [...] Others have ordered poets according to *feelings* [...] The third, and if I may say so, the natural method, is to leave each flower in its place, and contemplates it there just as it is, according its age and species, from root to crown. The most humble genius hates hierarchy and comparison. He prefers to be the first in the village, than second to Ceasar. Lichen, moss, fern, and the richest scented flower: each blooms in its place in God’s order. [...]

The basis and ground of poetry is *imagination*, and *mind*, the *land of the soul*. By words and characters it awakens an ideal of happiness, beauty, and dignity that slumbers in your heart; it is the most perfect expression of language, of the senses and of the mind. No poet can escape the law that inheres in it; he reveals what he has and what he lacks. [...]

Nor can one separate *ear* and *eye* in poetry. Poetry is not mere painting or sculpture, capable like them of representing pictures without intention; it is *speech* and has *intention*. It affects the inner sense, not the outer eye of the artist; and to that inner sense belongs in every cultivated human being or one capable of cultivation *the mind, moral nature*, and therefore in the poet a *rational and humane intention*. Speech has something *infinite* in it; it makes deep impressions, which indeed precisely poetry strengthens by means of its harmonious art. [...]

But that the spirit of poetry in the course of all the periodic oscillations and eccentricities through which its endeavors until now have led, from nation to nation, and age to age, strives to throw off both all coarseness of feeling and all false adornment and seeks the focal point of all human endeavors namely the *genuine, whole, moral nature of man, philosophy of life*—this the comparison of the ages makes very credible to me. [...] (*ADV* 166-8; emphasis original)

³⁵ “A Sensuous and perfect discourse of the soul”—the definition Baumgarten gives for a poem in his *Meditationes* (1735). Timothy J. Chamberlain, ed. & trans., “Letters for the Advancement of Humanity, (Letter 107)”, by Johann Gottfried von Herder, in *Eighteenth Century German Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 169 n. 3. Hereafter cited as ‘*ADV*’.



[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 4A**] : In a letter to Gorham Munson in March 1923, Toomer uses a tree metaphor to lay out the structural “importance of form”:

The tree as a symbol comes to mind. A tree in summer. Trunk, branches: structure. Leaves: the fillers out, one might also say the padding. The sap is carried in the trunk etc. From it the leaves get their sustenance, and their arrangement comes their meaning, or at least, leaves upon the ground do not make a tree. Etc. This symbol is wanting, of course, because a tree is stationary, because it has no progressions, no dynamic movements. A machine has these, but a machine is all form, it has no leaves. Its very abstraction is now the death of it. Perhaps it is the purpose of our age to fecundate it. But its flower, unlike growing things, will bud from within the human spirit . . . So my stuff from now on will have more to do with conscious structure. . . . The point is, from now on I’m going to shoot the sap into the trunk, where it belongs. (*LJT* 177)

[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 4B**] : Toomer’s sketch “My Language Tree” maps out the various linguistic components of his diction and style. The inclusion of **Gurdjieff** is problematic (this was probably sketched around 1924-8), but if we substitute a more general description for the branch, such as ‘**Philosophical / Theological / Mystical terms**’, the outline can still prove valuable and relevant.

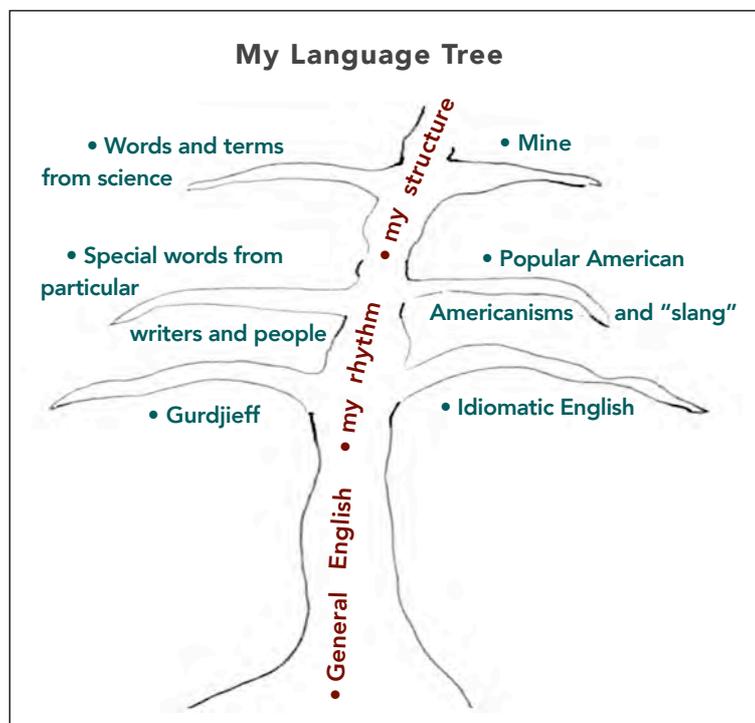


Image E4: ‘My Language Tree’ by Jean Toomer, Rendering. JTP, Box 65, Folder 1481.

For our interlude within this fourth **Forest of Correspondence**, we examine Herder's *Volk* aesthetic in closer detail—in relation to the prominent Russian Slavophile **Dostoevsky**, who was heralded a national genius—**Walt Whitman**, who was applying this aesthetic to poetry at roughly the same time—and the modernist **American 'nativist' writers**, who looked to both branches as models. We frame our discussion around **Henry Edward Krehbiel's** description of the foundations of this German aesthetic, as presented to the American public in *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (1914), where he describes the creator of folksong, or “the puissant genius of the people” thus:

[1] His idioms are taken off the tongue of the people; his subjects are the things which make for the joy and sorrow of the people, and once his song is gone out into the world his identity as its creator is swallowed up in that of the people. [. . .] [2] His potentiality is racial or national, not personal, and for that reason it is enduring,—not ephemeral. As a necessary corollary it follows that the music of the folksong [3] reflects the inner life of the people that gave it birth, and that its characteristics, like the people's physical and mental habits, occupations, methods and feelings are the product of environment, as set forth in the definition. [. . .] If Herbert Spencer's physiological analysis of the origin of melody is correct, the finest, because the truest, [4] the most intimate, folk-music is that provoked by suffering. (*AFR* 4; numbering added)

[1] Herder believed that the “unmistakable idiosyncratic traits and peculiarities”—the ‘graphic expressions’, or *Machwörter*, found in every language were its ‘genius’ and source of “its identity and distinction as a national poetic voice”.³⁶ Herder's defended these linguistic “idiotisms” and grammatical “inversions”, which he believed could not be translated—describing them in his writings as “sacred to the patron goddess of language . . . [and] beauties woven into the genius of a language that are destroyed when separated out”.³⁷ Oergel explains the convictions that motivated Herder to champion the *Volk*, and the basis for frowning upon the derisive and dismissive attitude the enlightened upper class showed for vernacular forms of expression:

While the lower classes may still hang on to local, even old national poetic traditions, as these traditions are despised and neglected by the educated and ruling classes, they will deteriorate and decay. This is exactly how in Herder's analysis the particularly bad literary situation in Germany had come about.

³⁶ Karl Menges, “Herder on National, Popular, and World Literature”, in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, edd. Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke, (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 190.

³⁷ Qtd. in Menges, 191.

If traditions are severed, the resulting unintelligibility can become damaging. Such poetry can no longer influence a national group's ethics and identity.³⁸

In our fourth Herderian 'Tree', the *Volk* "in the village" is represented with figures of the *common* and lower forms of flora—such as "Lichen, moss, fern"—and these are set against "the *richest* scented flower", presumably a symbol chosen to designate the showy aristocracy, associated with "Caesar". In Herder's phrase, "The most humble genius hates hierarchy and comparison. . . . each blooms in its place in God's order"—we see the author's **cultural relativism** being applied to the separate domains of the Provincial & Metropolitan Life. *Leaves of Grass* turns to the same class of symbols to suggest the identical meaning—just as Turgenev associates a cornflower with the peasant maiden, and Rosenfeld describes Anderson's "nativist" folk aesthetic and style being like a "Field-flower". Toomer would also use various flora, as cotton flowers or a yellow flower in a mangrove, to describe his female protagonists. When we inspect his 'Language Tree', it becomes apparent just how important "Idiomatic English", and "Americanisms" and "slang" were to the foundations of his poetry and prose. Russian writers also used the idiom and vernacular of commoners and serfs, folksongs & proverbs, and tried to capture the beauty and sorrow of peasant life.

[2] Even though Herder tilled the ground for many of the *Frühromatiker's* creations that blossomed directly out of the intellectual landscape he helped fertilize, that is not to say he was pleased with the works they produced.³⁹ The following quotation of Herder manifests his high standards, but also how essential **authenticity** and **vitality** were to his poetics expressing the *Volksggeist*:

It can be even less the purpose [of the collector] to replace the more regular poems or the more artificial imitating poetry of civilised nations. This would be foolish, or even nonsense. If I wanted to replace something, it would be those new romance writers and that new folk poetry, which in most cases have as much in common with the originals as the monkey with the human. They lack life, the soul of their original, i.e. truth, faithful representation of passion, of the time, of the customs, they are pointless fops dressed up as venerable bards, or ragged blind beggars.⁴⁰

³⁸ Maike Oergel, *Culture and Identity: Historicity in German Literature and Thought*, 61.

³⁹ Herder's assessment of his acolytes' works was generally negative, save a few translations of Shakespeare by the Schlegels and a few other exceptions. For a survey, see Robert T. Clark, Jr. *Herder: His Life and His Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 416-420.

⁴⁰ Qtd. in Oergel, *Culture and Identity*, 54.

Whitman identifies the poet's job as cultivating these vital 'racial' elements—shooting up through the soil of the common folk—or “divine average” (*WW* 172);

The **spirit** and the form are one, and depend far more on association, identity and place, than is supposed. Subtly interwoven with the materiality and personality of a land, a race—Teuton, Turk, Californian, or what not—there is always something—I can hardly tell what it is—history but describes the results of it—it is the same as the untellable look of some human faces. Nature, too, in her stolid forms, is full of it—but to most it there is a secret. This something is rooted in the **invisible roots**, the profoundest meanings of that place, race, or nationality; and to absorb and again effuse it, **uttering words and products as from its midst**, and carrying it into highest regions, is the work, or a main part of the work, of any country's true author, poet, historian, lecturer, and perhaps even priest and philosopher. (*WW* 446; emphasis added)

Although an impossibility, one wonders what Herder's reaction would be *if* he were able read the works of the *Frühromantiker*'s descendants—especially those mentioned throughout this chapter. One can only guess, but perhaps their sympathetic portrayals of the common folk, capturing the crude vitality of life close to the soil, and the authentic “idiotisms” of the *Volk*—would garner a smile.

[3] Woolf—who helped translate the censored ‘**Tikhon's Room**’ chapter of *The Idiot*, later published in *Broom*—viewed Russian novels as portraits of the **soul**: “The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul. . . . inextricably confused, a new panorama of the human mind is revealed. The old divisions melt into each other. Men are at the same time villains and saints; their acts are at once beautiful and despicable”.⁴¹ As the popularity of **Dostoevsky** spread across the Atlantic, this Herderian idea of a nation's **genius** (poet) needing to express the *Völkgeist* would take hold. We find **Sherwood Anderson**'s text-only dustcover for *Winesburg, Ohio* asking: “What *stories do* you remember? Is it not those in which people's very souls are bared, in which their heart-beats almost heard, in which life is not described but revealed”; Huebsch's next copy-centric cover for *The Triumph of the Egg* advertises the fact that the writer “depicts life in the Middle West as Dostoevsky pictured the colored life of Russia, with almost as wonderful a touch of genius, with a more concentrated and daring skill” [see **Images C7&C8** in *Forest of Correspondence 2*, 152].

⁴¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader: First & Second Series* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), 226-7. See *Broom*—October, November, December 1922 issues—for “Stavrogin's Confession”.

[4] In his introduction to *The Brother's Karamazov*, Edward Garnett notes how Dostoevsky bases his works on “those whose social roots go down very deep in old Russian soil”, and suggests that the author’s personal insight into the mentally unstable and deranged, helped to shape these “incarnations of a psychically diseased degenerate stock”.⁴² Garnett also gives his interpretation that the body, mind, and soul of Russia are—on the “metaphysical plane” of the novel—symbolized by the three brothers: The eldest brother Dimitri represents “man’s passionate lusts and his fierce will-to-live”; the second son Ivan signifies “the intellectual pride of the ‘scientific’ man without faith, *tormented* by his negations”; and the youngest brother Alyosha, “is designed as a foil to his brothers, a representative of pure Christianity”.⁴³

In his “Poetry Notebook”, we find Jean Toomer’s notion of **Beauty** to be integrally linked to **Suffering**—and this intense pain gives folksong its power:

The Negro slave, ill-housed and fed, driven relentlessly to an unrewarded labor, beaten, maimed, and killed, separated from his loved ones, and denied even the vestige of justice and liberty, gave to the world, in exchange for its bitterness, a song. From his misery came the deep and powerful beauty of his folksong. . .
[“POE” II:24]

This dialectical inter-relationship is charted in his diagram seen previously titled **Toomer’s ‘Maelström’** [Image D1 ; “LLN” III : 34]—which sketches out the movement of a vortex in the figure-eight shape (∞) of the **infinity** or **Ouroboros symbol**. Swirling around the **center** we find his inscription for the oppositional forces: “**supreme spiritual torment**” $\leftarrow \cdot \rightarrow$ “**beautiful and pure**”. We depart the forest with the words of Herder’s teacher **Hamann**, that seeded in his student a ‘rural bias’—an inclination favoring the vernacular and the primitive:

Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction; barter, than commerce. A deeper sleep was the repose of our most distant ancestors, and their movement was a frenzied dance. Seven days they would sit in the silence of thought or wonder;—and would open their mouths—to winged sentences. The senses and passions speak and understand nothing but images. All the wealth of human knowledge and happiness consists in images.⁴⁴

⁴² Edward Garnett, Introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Fyodor Dostoevsky (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1957), vi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁴⁴ Johann Georg Hamann, *Aesthetica in Nuce*, in *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, trans. & ed. Kenneth Haynes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63.



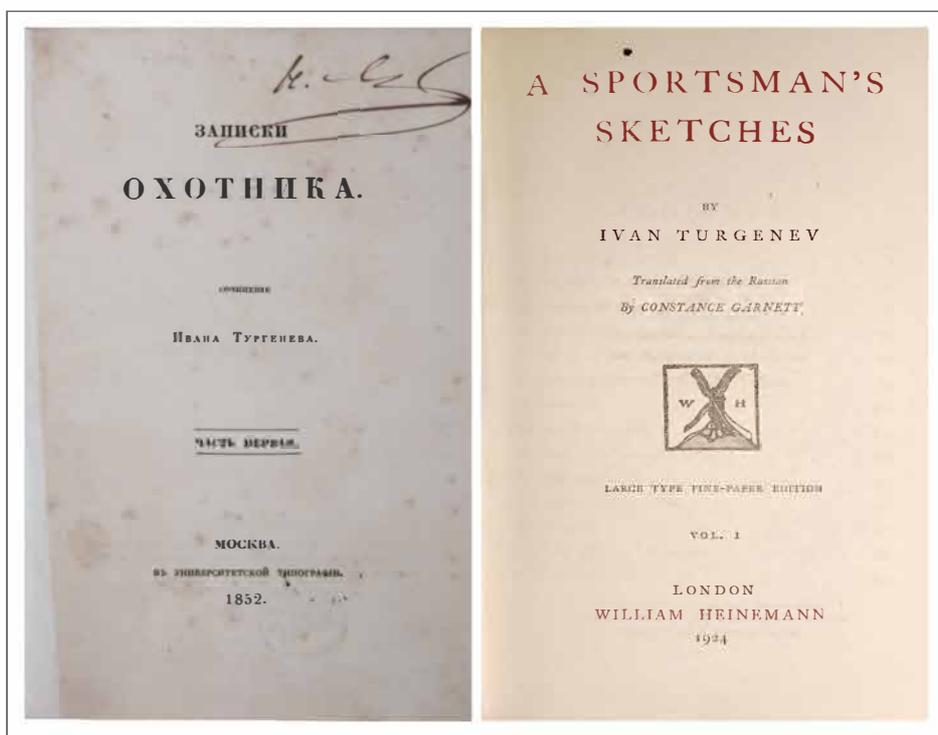


Image E5. Title Page for the first edition of Turgenev's «ЗАПИСКИ ОХОТНИКА» (Left). <http://www.pushkinmuseum.ru/?q=content/turgenev-zapiski-ohotnika>. Image E6. Title Page of English Translation of Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* (Right). Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *A Sportsman's Sketches*, vol. 1, trans. Constance Garnett (London: William Heinemann, 1924).

A SPORTSMAN'S SKETCHES «ЗАПИСКИ ОХОТНИКА»

Turgenev composed 'Hor and Kalinitch' when he was about twenty-nine and on the verge of giving up writing altogether.⁴⁵ The piece was for the 'Miscellaneous' section of *The Contemporary's* opening issue—with “from *Notes of a Hunter*” appended to the title by its editor, Nekrasov—the story's reception and success facilitated the author's return to literature and the creation of a cycle of similar stories.⁴⁶ Twenty-two stories were collected and published in the 1852 edition, and over the years he appended three more: 'The End of Tchertop-Hanov' (1872), 'A Living Relic' and 'The Rattling of Wheels' (both 1874). As Maurice Baring assessed in *Landmarks of Russian Literature* (1910):

Turgenev never wrote anything better than the book which brought him fame, the *Sportsman's Sketches*. In this book nearly the whole of his talent finds expression. One does not know which to admire more—the delicacy of the art in choosing and recording his impressions, or the limpid and musical utterance with which they are recorded.⁴⁷

These 'sketches', 'notes', or 'village tales' are in the vein of the new popular genre of peasant stories, which were variously labelled “*scène rustique, fable champêtre, paysannerie, Dorfgeschte*”; Turgenev referred to his vignettes and portraits—perhaps influenced by Dmitry Grigorovich's *The Village* (1846) and George Sand's novella *François le Champi*—as “the rustic story”.⁴⁸

According to Dale E. Peterson, it was Julian Schmidt who “first saw Turgenev as the finest exemplar of a poetic realism” and extolled his “lifelike representation of character, achieved through the presentation of significant gesture in place of lengthy narrative analysis”:

The German critic realized that Turgenev had built an aesthetic component into his very concept of physical reality. In a later essay, Schmidt referred to Turgenev, the author of realistic novels of manners, as fundamentally a “genre poet.” Much as a genre painter imposes a cast of mind, a coloration of

⁴⁵ 'Khor and Kahlinich' (1847) in Charles and Natasha Hepburn's translation first published in 1915. For the most part I will favor Constance Garnett's translations (1896) as they correspond to her husband's monograph *Turgenev: A Study* (1917), but some story titles are better known by the Hepburn's titles in *A Sportsman's Notebook*: C: 'Biryuk' / H: 'The Bear'; C: 'The Agent' / H: 'The Baliff'; C: 'Byezhin Prairie' / H: 'Bezhin Meadow' C: 'The Tryst' / H: 'The Rendezvous'; C: 'The Rattling of Wheels' / H: 'The Knocking', etc.

⁴⁶ Leonid Grossman, “Turgenev's Early Genre”, in *Critical Essays on Ivan Turgenev*, ed. David A. Lowe (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1989), 64.

⁴⁷ Maurice Baring, *Landmarks in Russian Literature* (New York: MacMillan, 1912), 101.

⁴⁸ Grossman, 67.

mood upon an empirically observable scene, so Turgenev possessed the talent to infuse a value-charged perspective, a private point of view, into a long narrative sequence dealing with quotidian life: “he depicts only what he deems will expedite the creation of a harmonious, integral canvas.”⁴⁹

In *Turgenev: A Study* (1917), **Edward Garnett** also depicts Turgenev as a ‘genre poet’ and skilled aesthete able to animate his portraits with “balance, contrast, grouping, perspective, harmony of form and perfect modelling, qualities in which Turgenev not only far surpasses Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but any nineteenth century European” (TUR 7). Through our **Herderian prism**, these observations of Garnett immediately rise to the foreground, especially the words and phrases emphasized:

[日] Turgenev’s fluid, sympathetic perceptions blend into a flow of creative **mood**, in which the relations of men to their surroundings, and the significance of their actions, their feelings, their fate are seen as **parts** of the **universal**, dominating **scheme of things** (TUR 46; emphasis added).

[木] His aesthetic method is so to place in **juxtaposition** the fine shades of human worldliness that we enjoy the spectacle of the varied strands composing a family or **social pattern**. In the sketch of Lavretsky’s ancestors, for two generations, the pattern is intricate, surprisingly varied, giving us the richest sense of all the heterogeneous elements that **combine** in a family stock. (TUR 77; emphasis added)

[水] [W]hen **music** flows from a distance to the listener over the darkening fields immediately the rough coarse earth, with all its grinding, petty monotony melts into **harmony**, and life is seen in its **mysterious** immensity, not merely in its puzzling discrepancy of gaps, contradictions and confusion. Turgenev’s work, at its best, gives us the sense of looking beyond the heads of the moving human figures, out to the **infinite** horizon. (TUR 77; emphasis added)

[土] [A]llegory is at the farthest pole from his method; it is that whenever he created an important figure in fiction that figure is necessarily a revelation of the secrets of the fatherland, **the soil, the race**. Turgenev, in short, was a psychologist not merely of men, but of **nations**. (TUR 98; emphasis added)

[火] Turgenev throws a ray of light **from the outer to the inner world** of man, and the two worlds are **revealed** in the natural depths of their **connection** (TUR 136; emphasis added).

[月] [T]he impassive forces of Nature, indifferent alike to human pain or human happiness, pursue their implacable way, weaving unwittingly the mesh of joy, anguish, resignation, in the breast of all sentient creation. It is in the **spiritual perspective** of the picture, in the **vision** that sees the **whole in the part**, and the part in the whole, that Turgenev so far surpasses all his European rivals. (TUR 136; emphasis added)

⁴⁹ Peterson, *Clement Vision*, 15; 17-18.

I would like to append two more descriptions of the poetic realist mode to those we highlighted by **Otto Ludwig** and Garnett; although written by different authors, these fragments will augment those and help us locate and contextualize the intersections between Turgenev and Toomer. The first is another principle of **poetic realism** identified by Baker relating to **Theodor Fontane**—the second half of the excerpt is relevant because it reveals Fontane’s view (similar to **Julian Schmidt**’s) that Turgenev’s style embodies the characteristic feature he describes:

[七] Fontane believed that fiction [should have] a distinct closeness to reality, maintaining that it should not be possible for the reader to distinguish between what is real and what he has read about . . . This ability to recreate reality is one of the attributes he later praises in the works of Turgenev . . . “He observes everything wonderfully: nature, animals and humans; he has something of a photographic apparatus in his eye and soul”. (*PR* 20)

The final critical observation is not offered by Edward Garnett, but rather K. Waliszewski from his book *A History of Russian Literature* (1900):

[金] By means of reticences, half-hints, special tenses, pauses, inflexions, introduced into his conversations, the artist builds up his sketch just as we have watched a painter build up his picture (*RUS* 292).

This description relates to Turgenev’s stylistic method of evoking a mood and atmosphere (*Stimmung*) through suggestion [**DEVICE ■ : INDIRECTION**], an approach outlined in **Theodor Storm**’s *Kunst des fragmentarischen Andeutens* (*Art of Fragmentary Suggestion*), which “endorses indirect and discursive *Romantik* techniques that gesture towards a creating a mood” (*PR* 41).

It is more than likely that Toomer was familiar with the writings of Garnett and Wright on **Turgenev**, as well as various books providing general overviews of literature and aesthetics. These critical writings, I believe, would have been essential in giving a framework and foundation to base his readings on. The difficulty of creating something fresh, dynamic, and new, while balancing intellectual and aesthetic developments past and present, and also in step with modern tastes—this constant search full of challenge and pressure, is what the young aspiring writer has in mind in the following note:

It does impose an immense burden upon the artist. He must be, while remaining the artist, as manifold and as diverse as his age. It imposes the power of comprehension, of selection, of organization on a scale hitherto unknown upon the direct capacity for aesthetic experience. [“**POE**” II : 4]

Ernest Hemingway confessed, “Education consists in finding sources obscure enough to imitate so that they will be perfectly safe”.⁵⁰ These references providing an overview of the various literatures of the world or a specific author’s oeuvre—like Appleton’s series on Russian and German literature or Goethe—not only provided instruction, but likely served as wellsprings. While not definitive, it seems possible that Waliszewski’s chapter on the Russian folk poet **Alexei Vassiliévitch Koltsov** might have been an ‘obscure source’ and jewel mine for the apprentice Jean—especially with the following endorsement by Turgenev immortalizing the poet: “As long as the Russian tongue exists . . . certain of Koltsov’s songs will retain their popularity” (*RUS* 243). Although a few identifiable images, symbols, and phrases of Anderson, Frank, and Benefield crop up in **CANE**, his narrative plots and themes have for the most part seem quite original—would it be too much to suggest that Waliszewski’s sparse outline of Koltsov’s titles and themes provided a great harvest of cane-seeds and jewels?

[1st]: [Turgenev] may have had in mind poems entitled *The Harvest*, *The Labourer’s Song*, *The Winds Blow*, and *The Forest* (*RUS* 244).

Are the parallels we find between the poems mentioned in the [1st] fragment and the themes of pieces in **CANE** merely coincidental? Although a stretch, is it not within the realm of conceivability that a connection exists between Koltsov and the titles and themes Toomer chooses for ‘**Harvest Song**’, ‘**Cotton Song**’, the refrain “wind is in the corn” from ‘**Carma**’, and even the shortest poem ‘**Nulló**’?

[2nd]: *The Little Farm and Night*—incidents of women surprised by jealous husbands or lovers, scenes of savage anger and murder, in which the author’s dramatic power strikes me less than the poverty and childishness of his execution (*RUS* 244).

This short synopsis offered of two of Koltsov’s poems in the [2nd] fragment, could they not double as apt descriptions of ‘**Carma**’ and ‘**Blood-Burning Moon**’? The husband Bane who “returned one day and hung around the town where he picked up week-old boasts and rumors. . .” (*C* 13), accuses Carma and tries to beat her when she becomes hysterical, then she runs off with a gun into the cane-break. The other story where Louisa is caught between two lovers, Tom and Bob—the jealousy of one as “[h]e bit down on his lips. He tasted blood. Not his own blood; Tom Burwell’s blood” (*C* 35), and the resulting fight

⁵⁰ Qtd. in Reynolds, 37.

³⁵ Robert Bone, *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story*, 224.

ending in a “[b]lue flash, a steel blade slashed across Bob Stone’s throat” (C 35). The violence culminating in the final scene of “savage anger and murder” as the white mob lynches Tom:

Torches were flung onto the pile. A great flare muffled in black smoke shot upward. The mob yelled. . . . Now Tom could be seen within the flames. Only his head, erect, lean, like a blackened stone. Stench of burning flesh soaked the air. Tom’s eyes popped. His head settled downward. The mob yelled. Its yell echoed against the skeleton stone walls and sounded like a hundred yells. Like a hundred mobs yelling. . . . Ghost of a yell slipped through the flames and out the great door of the factory. (C 36)

Although it is unclear whether the next fragment casts Koltsov in a pejorative light or celebrates his ability to balance simplicity with complex emotions, his poems are described as incorporating a similar dark tenor and mood as Russia’s most celebrated playwright, **Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky**:

[3rd]: He depended entirely on his ear and his intuition, and this could only serve him in simple subjects. Intellectually the poor prassol poet was always half-absorbed into that “empire of darkness” from which Ostrovsky was to draw his most powerful effects of gloomy terror and pity. (RUS 244)

This sense of darkness and terror—with its ties to the gothic and grotesque—runs through all of **CANE**, but is especially prominent in the final piece ‘**Kabnis**’.

[4th]: We see a poor ‘mower,’ . . . The daughters of rich peasants are not for penniless fellows such as he. He empties his scanty purse to buy a well-sharpened scythe. Is he going to kill himself? Oh, no indeed! He will go out into the steppe, where the harvest is richest. . . . He will come back with his pockets full. He will rattle his silver roubles . . . (RUS 243)

The backstory of the recurring character Barlo is told in ‘**Esther**’: “Best cotton picker in the county, in the state, in the whole world for that matter. Best man with his fists, best man with dice, with a razor. . . . Vagrant preacher. Lover of all the women for miles and miles around” (C 25). Esther’s love is kindled as he drives into town rechristened “King Barlo . . . made money on cotton during the war. He is as rich as anyone” (C 25)—drawing her towards her disastrous end.

[5th]: Season of Love, where a young girl’s white bosom is seen heaving tempestuously, though she will not betray her secret. (RUS 243)

This description of a distressed young woman hiding some dark truth has parallels to miscegenation in ‘**Becky**’ and the dead child of ‘**Karintha**’. It is worth considering whether the brief skeletons above—with or without reading the poems in translation—would have been enough for Toomer to *feel* into Koltsov’s poetry and string together the numerous thematic correspondences for **CANE**.

UNRAVELING THE TWO INTERWOVEN TEXTS

A Sportsman's Notebook provided unfamiliar readers with glimpses into the Russian countryside from many angles; the collection of elliptical stories form an intimate multi-layered portrait that reveals the hardship and beauty of the common serfs, while also clothing the thoughts and memories of the author, who was part of the landowning class and had conflicted attitudes towards the gentry. The text as a whole is more than simple collection of portraits or anecdotes: they are attempts to bridge the distances between artist, subject, and audience—to locate the universal within ‘the other’. For many contemporary European and American readers, Turgenev’s work was their first encounter with the world and customs of the impoverished native folk of Russia shown in such a sympathetic and realistic manner, while also revealing its **race-soul**.

The first question to answer is: *Did Toomer get his hands on a copy of Turgenev’s A Sportsman’s Sketches during his apprenticeship?* Similarities in strategy between **Jean Toomer** and **Ivan Turgenev** have been briefly noted in scholarship before. In his section on Toomer in *Novels of the Harlem Renaissance: Twelve Black Writers*, Amritjit Singh, citing **Alain Locke**, makes a general observation that “Toomer used the black American as Tolstoy or Turgenev had used the Russian peasant.”⁵¹ In *Harlem Renaissance*, Nathan Irvin Huggins remarks how “*Cane* combines mysticism—a lifelong source of Toomer’s inspiration—with a variety of literary naturalism . . . [like] the portrayal of human continuity with organic nature as in Turgenev.”⁵² While these two quotes point us in the right direction, they are very vague and seem reluctant to give us details or even a single stepping stone towards the how and why.

If I were to present material evidence to show that *A Sportsman’s Sketches* is indeed a major source of inspiration for **CANE**, I would point to two stories in the American text—‘**Becky**’ and ‘**Fern**’—choosing passages from each and then link those to three stories in the Russian text—‘**A Living Relic**’, ‘**The Singers**’, and ‘**The Tryst**’. I would explain the *Symkonstruction* undergirding these vignettes and then move on to the mirrored techniques and key images/symbols on the surface, linking the underlying themes and shared strategies.

⁵¹ Amritjit Singh, *The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 65.

⁵² Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 180.

[⊕]: 'A Living Relic' :

And there appeared among these people a holy virgin; she took a great sword, put on armour . . . went out against the Ishmaelites and drove them all beyond the sea. . . . she said to them: "Now burn me, for that was my vow, that I would die a death by fire for my people." (SS2 247-8) 'And I repeat the prayers too,' Lukerya went on, after taking breath a little; 'only I don't know many of them. . . . I mean. And besides, why should I weary the Lord **God**? What can I ask Him for? He knows better than I what I need. **He has laid a cross upon me**: that means that He loves me' . . . (SS2 239)

[⊗]: 'Becky' :

Becky had one Negro son. Who gave it to her? Damn buck nigger, said the white folks' mouths. She wouldnt tell. Common, God-forsaken, insane white shameless wench, said the white folks' mouths. . . . Who gave it to her? Low-down nigger with no self respect, said the black folks' mouths. She wouldnt tell. Poor Catholic poor-white crazy woman, said the black folks' mouths. White folks and black folks built her cabin, fed her and her growing baby, prayed secretly to **God** who'd **put His cross upon her** and cast her out. (C 7)

Both Turgenev and Toomer describe their protagonists as outcasts, who like **Cain**, were marked by God for their sins—they both draw from mythological figures in history and literature. Lukerya herself mentions Simeon Stylites and Joan of Arc, who the narrator recognizes from her folk retelling, which along with the title hint to her identity: she is the physical embodiment of a religious icon. The story from **CANE** does not explicitly say, but (like Thackeray's Becky Sharpe) its protagonist is scorned as a 'sinner', and like Hawthorne's Hester Prynne and Koltsov's [5th] heroine, Becky "will not betray her secret". Information about both protagonists are received second-hand from community members; and as each collapse into a half-dead spiritual existence, they live off the ritual offerings and prayers that their respective folk bring them—as both achieve semi-divine status in the eyes of their community.

[⊕]: 'A Living Relic' :

I drew near, and was struck dumb with amazement. Before me lay a living human being; but what sort of a creature was it? A head utterly withered, of a uniform coppery hue—like some very ancient holy picture, yellow with age . . . I looked more intently; the face . . . was positively beautiful, but strange and dreadful . . . struggling, and unable to form itself—a smile. (SS2 232)

I did not know what to say, and gazed in stupefaction at the dark motionless face with the clear, death-like eyes fastened upon me. Was it possible? This mummy Lukerya—the greatest beauty in all our household— (SS2 232-3)

'Who waits on you? Does anyone look after you?' 'Oh, there are kind folks here as everywhere; they don't desert me. Yes, they see to me a little. As to food, I eat nothing to speak of; but water is here, in the pitcher; it's always kept full of pure spring water. There's a little girl here, an orphan . . . now and then she comes to see me, the kind child . . . She brings me flowers. (SS2 235-6)

[⊗]: 'Becky' :

Her eyes were sunken, her neck stringy, her breasts fallen, till then. Taking their words, they filled her, like a bubble rising—then she broke. Mouth setting in a twist that held her eyes, harsh, vacant, staring. . . (C 7)

No one ever saw her. Train-men, and passengers who'd heard about her, threw out papers and food. Threw out little crumpled slips of paper scribbled with prayers . . . (C 7)

Folks from the town took turns, unknown, of course, to each other, in bringing corn and meat and sweet potatoes. No one ever saw her. The boy grew up and ran around. . . . But nothing was said, for the part of man that says things to the likes of that had told itself that if there was a Becky, that Becky now was dead. (C 8)

[⊕]: 'A Living Relic' :

Two minutes passed by. I did not break the silence . . . The cruel stony stillness of the living, unlucky creature lying before me communicated itself to me; I too turned, as it were, numb. (SS2 239) That day, before setting off to shoot, I had a conversation with the village constable about Lukerya. I learnt from him that in the village they called Lukerya the 'Living Relic'; that she gave them no trouble, however; they never heard complaint or repining from her. . . . Stricken of God,' so the constable concluded, 'for her sins, one must suppose; but we do not go into that. . . .we do not judge her. Let her be!' (SS2 249)

[☺]: 'Becky' :

Becky? Smoke curled up from her chimney; she must be there. . . . Folks began to take her food again. They quit it soon because they had a fear. Becky if dead might be a hant, and if alive—it took some nerve even to mention it. . . . O pines, whisper to Jesus. . . (C 8) It was Sunday. Our congregation had been visiting at Pulverton, and were coming home. . . . Barlo, mumbling something, threw his Bible on the pile. (No one has ever touched it.) (C 8-9)

Both stories are suffused with religious and ritualistic language: incense, smoke, and prayer. Both of the narrators are outsiders to the region and rely on the village- and towns-folks' accounts; additionally, each is escorted by a guide familiar with the locale: Yermolai ushers the first through an unknown property belonging to his mother, and Barlo leads the second narrator through a remote area between the towns of Pulverton and Sempter, Georgia, along the train tracks.

'Becky' also borrows heavily from Turgenev's 'The Singers' for its thematic setting that lays the groundwork for the aesthetic effect achieved as the story slowly culminates into a powerful climax.

[∞]: 'The Singers'

The village lies on the slope of a barren hill, which is cut in half from top to bottom by a tremendous ravine. It is a yawning chasm, with shelving sides hollowed out by the action of rain and snow, and it winds along the very centre of the village street; it separates the two sides of the unlucky hamlet . . . (SS2 39) At the very summit of the ravine, a few paces from the point where it starts as a narrow fissure in the earth, **there stands a small square hut. It stands alone, apart from all the others. It is thatched, and has a chimney; one window keeps watch like a sharp eye over the ravine,** and on winter evenings when it is lighted from within, it is seen far away in the dim frosty fog, and its twinkling light is the guiding star of many a peasant on his road. . . . this hut is a tavern . . . Nikolai Ivanitch is a shrewd, acute fellow, like the majority of tavern-keepers. . . . he has the art of attracting and keeping customers, who find it particularly pleasant to sit at his bar **under the placid and genial, though alert eye, of the phlegmatic host.** He has a great deal of common sense; he thoroughly understands the landowner's conditions of life, the peasant's, and the tradesman's. He could give sensible advice . . . by remote hints, dropped, as it were, unintentionally, to lead them into the true way. (SS2 39-41)

[☺]: 'Becky'

White folks and black folks built her **cabin.** . . . The railroad boss said not to say he said it, but **she could live,** if she wanted to, **on the narrow strip of land between the railroad and the road.** John Stone, who owned the lumber and the bricks, would have shot the man who told he gave the stuff to Lonnie Deacon, who stole out there at night and built the cabin. A single room held down to earth . . . by a leaning chimney. . . (C 7) Six trains each day rumbled past and shook the ground under her cabin. Fords, and horse- and mule-drawn buggies went back and forth along the road. No one ever saw her. Train-men, and passengers who'd heard about her, threw out papers and food. Threw out little crumpled slips of paper scribbled with prayers, **as they passed her eye-shaped piece of sandy ground. Ground islandized between the road and railroad track. Pushed up where a blue-sheen God with listless eyes could look at it.** . . . (C 7)

Turgenev places the huge ravine cutting straight through the village of Kolotovka to create a symbolic divide, which the ‘Welcome Resort’ tavern and its owner conjoin, as this host equally feels the plight of the landowners, peasants, and tradesmen of the village, keeping an watchful **eye** over all. However, as the opening paragraph states, “[the ravine] separates the two sides of the unlucky hamlet far more than a river would do, for a river could, at least, be crossed by a bridge” (SS2 39). This gap and division between the classes is the central theme which cuts through the entirety of the story and calls out to be filled and bridged. And as the tension of the song contest held in the tavern at the ravine’s summit builds—it peaks at the moment of Yakov’s song, reminiscent of an ocean and bird flying, which Turgenev then pours into the chasm. This folk song strikes the soul causing tears to well up—as everyone (including the upper-class narrator) is joined in this moment of communal *Sympathie* that bridges all differences.

[∞]: ‘The Singers’

The **song swelled and flowed**. Yakov was clearly carried away by enthusiasm; he was not timid now; he surrendered himself wholly to the rapture of his art; his voice no longer trembled; it quivered, but with the scarce perceptible inward quiver of passion, which **pierces like an arrow to the very soul of the listeners** . . . I remember I once saw at sunset on a flat sandy shore, when the tide was low and the sea’s roar came weighty and menacing from the distance, a great white sea-gull; it sat motionless, its silky bosom facing the crimson glow of the setting sun, and only now and then opening wide its great wings to greet the well-known **sea**, to greet the sinking lurid **sun**: I recalled it, as I heard Yakov. He sang, utterly forgetful of his rival and all of us; he seemed supported, as a bold swimmer by the **waves**, by our silent, passionate **sympathy**. He sang, and in every sound of his voice one seemed to feel something dear and akin to us, something of breadth and space, as though the familiar steppes were unfolding before our eyes and stretching away into endless distance. I felt the tears gathering in my bosom and rising to my eyes; suddenly I was struck by dull, smothered **sobs**. . . . I looked round — the innkeeper’s wife was **weeping**, her bosom pressed close to the window. (SS2 61-62; emphasis added)

Toomer takes and adapts this theme to highlight racial divisions in Georgia, but also to show the white and black communities coming together to condemn and cast out this transgressor of religious mores. Instead of a geological ravine, he places a train track right through the story, a symbol of the color line as it is tacitly understood white and black folks live on separate sides. However, like the tavern and its keeper, Becky and her cabin are also situated right along the boundaries of this divide—between the road and the train track, similarly marked with an **eye**. This also becomes a rare point of crossover where members from both sides congregate with their prayers, sympathy and offerings. Like Yakov’s song, this story too, calls out for a some unifying force to permanently bridge divisions, which it

finds in the symbol of the eclipse: the joining of the sun and moon. However, the whole tenor and mood (*Stimmung*) of the story is one of tension and spiritual danger: “Trains passing shook the ground. The ground shook the leaning chimney. Nobody noticed it. A creepy feeling came over all who saw that thin wraith of smoke and felt the trembling of the ground. . . O pines, whisper to Jesus. . .” (C 8). The prayers for reconciliation and mercy are dashed—“Uncanny eclipse!” signals the moment of impact, the “ghost train rumbling by” leads to the chimney collapsing—the eclipse signals not a merging but rather a crash . . . a splintering! The black and white spheres “of the light and dark worlds” collide as time fractures and stands still. The narrator and Barlo somehow manage to escape unscathed. A prayer is muttered. The horse buggy is left behind . . . We get flashes of the horse being whipped as they head to town to share the news. Becky’s fate is unknown—yet the townspeople, the narrator, and the readers all knew she was marked and cursed from the start, never really alive; Becky, through her transgression, is trapped in the liminal space of the color line symbolized by the railroad tracks, a “haunt” caught between material and spiritual realms.

Before continuing with our next story, a brief discussion about the different forms of borrowing may prove helpful. To supplement Hemingway’s admission about the need for an author to find obscure sources to imitate, we turn to Eliot for clarification: “One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different.”⁵³ To graduate from immaturity to mastery seems to involve some form of transformation, perhaps in keeping with Pound’s

[☺]: ‘Becky’

The autumn sun, the bell from Ebenezer Church, **listless** and heavy. . . . Before we turned the bend of the road that would show us the Becky cabin, the horses stopped stock-still, pushed back their ears, and **nervously** whinnied. We urged, then **whipped** them on. Quarter of a mile away thin smoke curled up from the leaning chimney. . . O pines, whisper to Jesus. . . Goose-flesh came on my skin though there still was **neither chill nor wind**. Eyes left their sockets for the cabin. Ears **burned** and throbbed. **Uncanny eclipse! fear** closed my mind. We were just about to pass. . . Pines shout to Jesus! . . the ground trembled as a **ghost train** rumbled by. The chimney fell into the cabin. Its **thud** was like a hollow report, **ages having passed since it went off**. Barlo and I were pulled out of our seats. Dragged to the door that had swung open. Through the dust we saw the bricks in a mound upon the floor. Becky, if she was there, lay under them. I thought I heard a groan. (C 8-9; emphasis added)

⁵³ Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, 245.

manifesto: “Make it new!” Of course, to define what is *new* necessarily involves a dialectical relationship to the *old* to provide distinction. Which brings us to the heart of the romantic drive discussed in **Chapter 1: *avant-gardism*** is not merely an “assertion of what is new” but a simultaneous rejection of the “old and conventional”⁵⁴—which when applied to Pound’s directive underscores the necessity of defining what the *it* is before endeavoring to re-make *it*. Knowing what and how to transform materials seems to be the all important skeleton key in the poets’ developmental toolkit, and we look to the second part of Eliot’s quotation from ‘**Philip Massinger**’ (1920) to draw inspiration:

The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.⁵⁵

The judgment of whether **Jean Toomer** was a good or bad poetic plunderer is a subjective one, but keeping this second yardstick of Eliot’s around will prove beneficial to gauge and qualify the success of each instance of borrowing.

In Turgenev’s story ‘**The Tryst**’, an outsider narrator happens upon a dramatic encounter between a peasant girl and a young man of higher standing who meets her in order to end their relationship, and he does so in a callous manner. The eavesdropping huntsman relates the scene to us, without overtly passing judgment, however, his concern and feeling for her is more than apparent in the manner the scene is narrated—mediated through his consciousness. Through **suggestion [DEVICE 2 : INDIRECTION]**, Turgenev presents his true feelings earlier by disguising them as his opinions of two types of trees:

[T]he birch-trees stood all white and lustreless, white as fresh-fallen snow . . . The leaves on the birches were still almost all green, though perceptibly paler; only here and there stood one young leaf, all red or golden, and it was a sight to see how it flamed in the sunshine when the sunbeams suddenly pierced with tangled flecks of light through the thick network of delicate twigs, freshly washed by the sparkling rain. (SS2 93)

I confess I have no great liking for that tree, the aspen, with its pale-lilac trunk and the greyish-green metallic leaves which it flings high as it can, and unfolds in a quivering fan in the air; I do not care for the eternal shaking of its round, slovenly leaves, awkwardly hooked on to long stalks. (SS2 93-4)

⁵⁴ Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, 681.

⁵⁵ Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, 245.

These symbolic descriptions of trees correspond not to individuals but to the classes they represent. Once one realizes these personifications are hints that **nature is being linked to man** (as in Garnett's [火]), then it does not take much to work out Turgenev's personal stance. The hunter is a meta-persona of the same class as the author, however his attention to the smallest details and the **mood** ([日]) created by his descriptions **suggests** ([金]) to the reader that there is deeper an emotional connection with this peasant girl. When she utterly breaks down into sobs on the ground, the narrator suddenly jumps into the frame to help her up, but she runs off frightened and emotionally distraught.

[☐]: 'The Tryst'

'I want nothing . . . nothing,' she answered falteringly, and she ventured to hold out her trembling hands to him; 'but only a word at parting.' And her tears fell in a torrent. . . .

Sudden heart-breaking sobs prevented her from finishing; she lay with **her face in the grass and bitterly, bitterly she wept**. . . . Her whole body shook **convulsively**, her neck fairly heaved. . . . Her long-suppressed grief broke out in a torrent at last. Viktor stood over her, stood a moment, shrugged his shoulders, turned away and strode off.

A few instants passed . . . she grew calmer, raised her head, jumped up, looked round and wrung her hands; she tried to run after him, but her legs gave way under her — she fell on her knees. . . . **I could not refrain from rushing up to her**; but, almost before she had time to look at me, making a superhuman effort she got up with a faint shriek and vanished behind the trees, leaving her flowers scattered on the ground. (SS2 93; emphasis added)

[☐]: 'Fern'

From force of habit, I suppose, I held Fern in my arms—that is, without at first noticing it. . . . I must have done something—what, I don't know, in the confusion of my emotion. She sprang up. Rushed some distance from me. Fell to her knees, and began swaying, swaying. Her body was tortured with something it could not let out. Like boiling sap it flooded arms and fingers till she shook them as if they burned her. It found her throat, and spattered inarticulately in plaintive, **convulsive sounds**, mingled with calls to Christ Jesus. And then she sang, brokenly. A Jewish cantor singing with a broken voice. A child's voice, uncertain, or an old man's. Dusk hid her; I could hear only her song. It seemed to me as though she were **pounding her head in anguish upon the ground. I rushed to her**. She fainted in my arms. (C 19; emphasis added)

The critic Percy Lubbock denigrated Turgenev's style for telling and not showing, for the intrusions and mediation he thought damaged the dramatization of the story: "Who and what is this communicative participator in the business, this vocal author? He does not belong to the book, and his voice has not that compelling tone and tune of its own".⁵⁶ The general consensus for years in the West, however, was that Turgenev is an unparalleled

⁵⁶ Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), 121. Lubbock also criticizes Thackeray for damaging effect the intrusion of the author's thoughts has on the story, whereby "the person in the story seems suddenly unreal" (88). Both authors that Lubbock criticizes are, of course, writing in a style long appreciated in German literature.

master of form and lyrical beauty—as heralded by writers like **Henry James**. **Ford Maddox Ford** even went as far as to place the Russian’s talents above that of William Shakespeare: “His personality was more attractive than Flaubert’s and his characters are more human than Shakespeare’s were. So we should give the palm of the supreme writer to Turgenev”.⁵⁷ It is understandable why **Sherwood Anderson** and **Jean Toomer**, two of the most lyrical of American writers, would be so inspired as to model their most beautiful works in a similar language, style, and genre—however, both had a keen understanding of the inter-workings below the surface of *A Sportsman’s Sketches*.

As is evident from the previous quotations laid side-by-side, Toomer would take the climactic scene of a woman crying uncontrollably and refashion and repurpose it for his story ‘**Fern**’. Even the first few lines of his vignette directly mentions the effect its author hoped to recreate: “Face **flowed** into her eyes. Flowed in soft cream foam and plaintive ripples . . . The soft **suggestion** of down slightly darkened, like the shadow of a bird’s wing might, the creamy brown color of her upper lip. . . . Her nose was aquiline.” (C 17; emphasis added) The imagery and lyricism is very Turgenevian, but with more compression than either the original or Anderson’s style; the story directly mentions the key features that are shared by all three writers: the flowing **mood** ([目]), the art of **suggestion** and indirection ([金]), and we see the **intertwining of man and nature**, with Fern’s description merging with the bird’s ([火]). These are the exact three features we flagged in ‘**The Tryst**’; furthermore, the visiting narrator of both stories, despite being of a higher class develops a deep emotional connection and concern for the character’s well being as the story progresses: others view Fern as a fallen woman to take advantage of, yet she is valued and described as a virgin (C 16-7). Even the endings of each respective story hit familiar notes: the huntsman narrator safeguards the cornflowers the beautiful Akulina drops before darting away, and the visitor to the South cherishes the name Fernie May Rosen and even years later remarks she is alive and well.

Before ending this chapter, I would like to focus on Toomer’s transformations of the Russian’s stories and the manner in which he bent the borrowed innovations to fit organically into the original shape of his expressions.

⁵⁷ Ford Maddox Ford, *Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911), 156.

The major **aesthetic devices** reconfiguring style, symbol, and theme into a cohesive new method conveying his own message are:

[**DEVICE Ƴ : NARRATIVE SHIFT**]: The method of having Turgenev’s unobserved narrator who is narrating from the eaves suddenly jumping into the frame to help the suffering Akulina, is refracted in ‘**Becky**’ when the third-person narrator, shifts to a first-person narrator without warning, transforming the observer into a participant in a similar manner—foreshadowed earlier in ‘*Karintha*’ as the sun/son going down (C 3)—one that Percy Lubbock would also have frowned upon. **Gogol** and **Dostoevsky** both incorporate narrative perspective shifts, however, this experimental technique was used earlier by **Jean Paul (Richter)**; although it is likely he lifted the device from sources in the oral tradition, in his nouvelle *The Invisible Lodge* (1793), “the storyteller becomes an actor in the story” by unexpectedly shifting the narrative tense.⁵⁸

[**DEVICE Ɔ : INTERLACING**]: The hunting guide Yermolaï is a repeated character and device that sporadically appears in seven of the twenty-two stories in *A Sportsman’s Sketches*.⁵⁹ This sets up a unique dynamic where the narrator is unfamiliar with the terrain as an outsider, but more importantly provides an intra-textual linking device, where the meaning of the stories would not be the same if you only read one or changed the order they are read in.⁶⁰ Toomer’s narrator is also an outsider, and like Yermolaï, Barlo reappears after ‘**Becky**’ in a more prominent role in ‘**Esther**’ providing his backstory like Turgenev gives in ‘**Yermolaï and the Miller’s Wife**’. Anderson also incorporates this method of having characters reappear, in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921)—however, his narrators lack the outsider dynamic mentioned and those other characters are not strictly guides, although they may be considered moral guides (like George Willard’s mother Elizabeth Willard). More interesting is how a repeated image or symbolic action in Anderson’s stories (such as a horse being whipped) provides the key for unlocking the essence of subsequent stories [**DEVICE »≡ : AUFHEBUNG**]. Jean Toomer carefully mixes both of their techniques to provide subtle clues or secret keys to unlock

⁵⁸ Dorothea Berger, *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter* (New York: Twayne, 1972), 45.

⁵⁹ ‘Yermolaï and the Miller’s Wife’; ‘My Neighbor Radilov’; ‘Lgov’; ‘Biryuk (The Wolf)’; ‘Tchertop-hanov and Nedopyuskin’; ‘A Living Relic’; and ‘The Rattling of Wheels’.

⁶⁰ The **short-story cycle** is also referred to as a **short story sequence** for this reason.

meaning in new ways. The reason that Fern has “an aquiline” nose is not merely because she is like a bird, Fernie May Rosen is a Jewish name, as the character is bi-racial, presumably half Black and half Jewish (though multi-racial might be more accurate). This will set up our next innovation:

Her nose was aquiline, Semitic. If you have heard a Jewish cantor sing, if he has touched you and made your own sorrow seem trivial when compared with his, you will know my feeling when I follow the curves of her profile, like mobile rivers, to their common delta. (C 16)

[**DEVICE** ☐ : **SECRET LINK**]: To fully unlock the secret of the story ‘Fern’, you have to notice a small puzzle fragment left in the previous vignette, ‘Carma’: “Hi! Yip! God has left the Moses-people for the nigger. ‘Gedap.’ Using reins to slap the mule, she disappears in a cloudy rumble at some indefinite point along the road” (C 16). The hint is that with the transplantation of the slaves from Africa, the ‘Negro spirit’ is in essence a hybrid one, with their folk songs expressed in a foreign language, to an adopted Judeo-Christian God. ‘**Negro spirituals**’ gravitated towards the Old Testament because of its parallels with the Jewish diaspora and enslavement in Egypt, and this mixture is what Fern represents, as her sorrow song channels the painful past of both traditions. As Robert Bone divulged in 1975, “Fern is a symbol, in short, of the Negro folk-spirit.”⁶¹

[∞]: ‘The Singers’

Yakov uncovered his face . . . and began to sing. . . . The first sound of his voice was faint and unequal, and seemed not to come from his chest, but to be wafted from somewhere afar off, as though it had floated by chance into the room. A **strange** effect was produced on all of us by this trembling, resonant note; we glanced at one another . . . I have seldom, I must confess, heard a voice like it. . . . it had **genuine** depth of **passion**, and **youth** and sweetness and a sort of fascinating, careless, pathetic **melancholy**. A **spirit of truth and fire**, a **Russian spirit**, was **sounding** and **breathing** in that **voice**, and it seemed to go straight to your heart, to go straight to **all that was Russian** in it. The **song swelled** and **flowed**. Yakov was clearly carried away by enthusiasm . . . He sang, utterly forgetful of his rival and all of us; he seemed supported . . . by our silent, passionate **sympathy**. He sang, and in every sound of his **voice** one seemed to feel something **dear and akin** to us, something of breadth and space, as though the familiar **steppes were unfolding before our eyes** and stretching away into endless distance. (SS2 61-62; emphasis added)

[☞]: ‘Fern’

I felt **strange**, as I always do in Georgia, particularly at dusk. I felt that things unseen to men were tangibly immediate. It would not have surprised me had I had **vision**. People have them in Georgia more often than you would suppose. . . .

When one is on the **soil of one’s ancestors**, most anything can come to one. . . . From force of habit, I suppose, I **held Fern in my arms**—that is, without at first noticing it. Then my mind came back to her. Her eyes, unusually **weird** and open, **held me**. **Held God**. He **flowed** in as I’ve **seen the countryside flow in**. Seen men. . .

And then she sang, brokenly. A Jewish cantor singing with a broken **voice**. A **child’s voice**, uncertain, or an old man’s. Dusk hid her; I could hear only her **song**. It seemed to me as though she were pounding her head in **anguish** upon the ground. I rushed to her. She fainted in my arms. (C 19 ; emphasis added)

⁶¹ Robert Bone, *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story*, 224.

[**DEVICE** ☉ : **VOLKSgeist**]: In Turgenev's story "The Singers", it is through Yakov's folksong that the "Russian spirit" is revealed; however, Toomer transforms Fern into the living embodiment of the 'Negro *Volksgeist*', expressing its double sorrow through song. In Turgenev's story, the union of the narrator with everyone present is made possible by the spiritual force present in the folksong, and this merging manifests itself as tears welling up in everyone's eyes which conjoins them in bonds of "passionate sympathy":

At the climactic moment . . . the aristocratic narrator coalesces with a motley assembly of provincial types who are in awe of an unassuming peasant's rendition of the aptly-named traditional song.⁶²

By personifying the **race-soul**, Toomer inverts the perspective: where the embracing of characters in the Russian story shows the *effect* of the sense of communion imparted, but his version personifies the moment of this coalescing when the narrator is unknowingly swept up into the 'Negro folk-spirit', the *source* of the emotion: "I held Fern in my arms . . . without at first noticing it" (C 19). And then the author relates the *effect* of that contact in personal terms, where Fern's eyes holding the narrator and God expresses the *Volksgeist's* power to join men to its soil and draw each into mystical union and **Sympathy**: "Men in her case seem to lose their selfishness. I lost mine before I touched her" (C 18); "I've seen the countryside flow in. Seen Men. . ." (C 19).

[**DEVICE** ∞ : **PARABASIS**]: Turgenev and Toomer rely on **romantic irony** as both their narrative structures are at once symbolic and allegorical in nature, like that of **Goethe** in *Wilhelm Meister*, as we shall see in the Chapter 5. The 'Welcome Resort' tavern, the place that bridges the chasm and where all strata of Russian society come together, symbolizes the text *A Sportsman's Sketches*; and the tavern-keeper Nikolai *Ivanitch*, who understands all community members and gives advice by dropping hints, is a meta-persona of *Ivan* Turgenev himself. Similarly, the encounter of the narrator meeting with Fern, allegorically and symbolically relates the experience of **Jean Toomer's** first contact or mystical intercourse with the folk spirit in Georgia. The broken sorrow and primitive child-like but age-old emotion of Fern's song is the inspiration and spiritual essence driving **CANE**, as it attempts to capture and preserve this very expression.

⁶² Dale E. Peterson, "Justifying the Margin: The Construction of 'Soul' in Russian and African-American Texts", *Slavic Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 754.

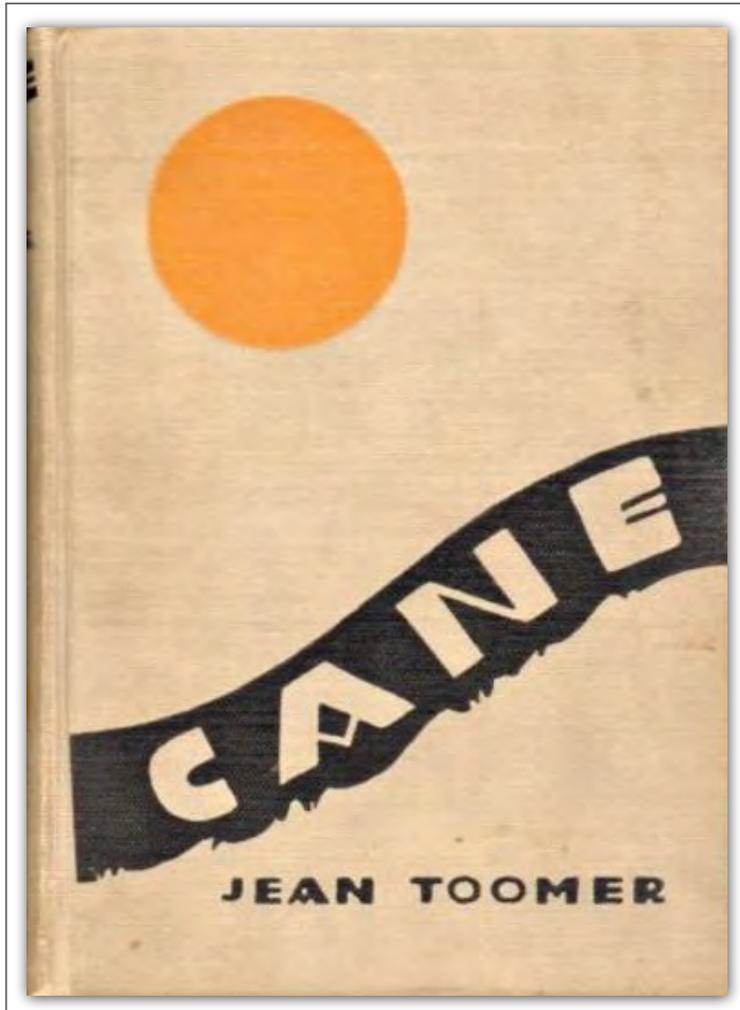


Image F1. Original Cloth Hardcover Design for *CANE*, 1923. Jean Toomer, *CANE* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).

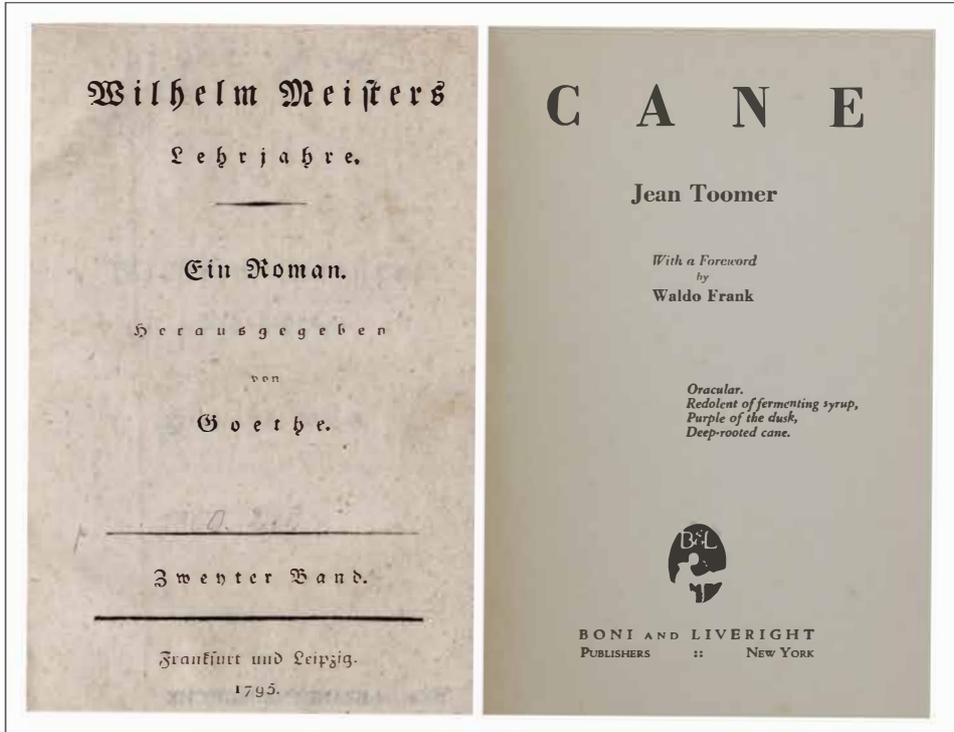


Image F2. Title Page of First Edition of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre: Ein Roman* (Left). https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Meisters_Lehrjahre#/media/Datei:Wilhelm_Meisters_Lehrjahre_1795.jpg. Image F3. Title Page for First edition of *CANE* (Right). Jean Toomer, *CANE* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923).

5. GOETHE & ROMANTIC IRONY

Meta-Structures Effecting a “Permanent Parabasis”

SCOPE [1795-1821 / 1921-1923] : GERMANY

POINTS [U : < - > : V : < - > : T : < - > : Z]

Imagination or creativity is higher;
it is the world-soul of the soul and the
elemental spirit for the other faculties . . .

If wit is the playful *anagram* of nature,
the imagination is its *hieroglyphic alphabet*,
which expresses all nature in a few images.

— Jean Paul Richter, §7 *School for Aesthetics*¹

So we gladly tear ourselves away from the
poet’s spell, after we have willingly let him
cast his enchantment upon us; what we love
most is to seek out what he has hidden from
our gaze or was reluctant to reveal at first,
what it is that most makes him an artist:
the hidden intentions he pursues in secret.
In a genius whose instinct has become will,
there are many more intentions
than we can take for granted.

— Friedrich Schlegel, ‘On Goethe’s *Meister*’²

In numerous autobiographical writings, Toomer identifies time and again **Walt Whitman** and **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** as being “pillars” of his development as a writer. He specifically points to *Wilhelm Meister* as being the seminal text that introduced him to “the world of cultural aristocracy” [**Image B2; JTP, Box 19, Folder 507**] based on notions of “spirit”, “character”, and “ideas”; Toomer additionally credits Goethe’s novel for his decision to become a writer rather than a musician, and describes the “tremendous” effect it had on him: “It seemed to gather together all the scattered parts of myself. I was lifted into and shown my real world. . . . And for the first time in years and years I breathed the air of my own land” (*W&S* 112). Like Goethe’s *Faust*, the story of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-6), or ‘Apprenticeship’, was followed by a sequel twenty-five years later, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821), translated into English as ‘Wanderings’, ‘Travels’ or ‘Journeyman Years’.

¹ Jean Paul Richter, *Horn of Oberon*, 28.

² Friedrich Schlegel, “On Goethe’s *Meister*”, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe*, ed. Kathleen M. Wheeler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 63.

Thomas Carlyle's translations were published as an abridged single volume titled *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*. It is not clear if Jean Toomer is also referring to the sequel when he mentions '*Wilhelm Meister*', but there is good reason to believe he was familiar with both. The influence of *Wilhelm Meister* on Toomer has been mentioned in critical works before, however, the extent of Goethe's influence has not been explored beyond brief mention. It merits being analyzed in greater detail as I believe it provides the framework for a central component of Toomer's aesthetic—aspects that also spotlight the underlying differences in literary style between his two closest mentors, **Waldo Frank** and **Sherwood Anderson**.

Frank identifies his major literary influences in his posthumously published memoir:

I list the books that have meant most to me . . . The Old and New Testaments, the plays of Aeschylus and the dialogues of Plato . . . Dante, Shakespeare, Rabelais, and Cervantes, Spinoza, Goethe, Stendhal, Balzac, Dostoevsky, Whitman. (*MWF* 142)

It is significant that Frank then goes on to revise this list by opting to replace **Goethe** and **Plato** with Tolstoy and Blake, admitting that they “never meant much to me” (*MWF* 142)—as our study seeks to show how both romanticism and Platonism, each movement influenced by the writings of these two forerunners, are at the core of Toomer's modernist aesthetics and **CANE**.

As for **Sherwood Anderson**, it is doubtful he read any of Goethe's works; **Paul Rosenfeld** writes in his introduction for *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*: “The thought that Anderson knew the work of the German romantics is not of course to be entertained” (*SAR* xviii). However, Rosenfeld goes on to note that Anderson's works do incorporate a key feature of German romantic literature, that of “the romantic whose tricks such as concentrating interest upon the very machinery of illusion and toying with that machinery” (*SAR* xviii). These “tricks” can be broadly labeled **romantic irony**, which is the defining stylistic and aesthetic feature this chapter will delve into as alluded to in the title. Rosenfeld goes on to posit an unlikely source for the influence of German romantic innovations on Anderson—his grandmother's German bloodline! He seems to be hinting one could inherit this knowledge unconsciously from one's **race-soul**—which is a fairly literal understanding of Herder's *Volksgeist*, shared

by many modernists. However, Rosenfeld's next statement points to a more reasonable explanation: "But it is plain [Anderson] knew his Turgenev and . . . *Memoirs of a Sportsman* was a steady favorite of his" (SAR xviii). Ivan Turgenev, of course, is the only major Russian writer who studied under tutelage of distinguished academics in Germany for an advanced degree in philosophy,³ and his works not only evince this *Weltanschauung*, they have been situated within the constellation of **German Poetic Realism**, as shown in **Chapter 4**. In reference to Sherwood Anderson's aesthetics and style, Rosenfeld's introduction repeatedly points out the prominent German influence—specifically discussing **Goethe, Jean Paul Richter, Stifter, and Nietzsche**.

What is perhaps most surprising about **Jean Toomer's** elevation of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*—out of all of Goethe's works—to such high esteem, is that it went against popular currents of his day. In *A History of German Literature* (1909), Calvin Thomas flatly declares that "no healthy boy of normal literary appetite was ever heard to praise Wilhelm Meister".⁴ Thomas further disparages the novel in his book *Goethe* (1917): "At present the cultural novel has so lost prestige that the majority of Goethe's admirers would probably vote 'Wilhelm Meister' to be the least engaging of his major works", additionally noting that "[f]or the sophisticated novel-reader of today the book is dull reading in parts".⁵ However, Thomas does provide a detailed account of the book's immense impact on the German romantic movement and writers in the forefront, like the younger Schlegel.

Friedrich Schlegel gave *Wilhelm Meister* the elevated status of embodying and exemplifying the spirit of romantic 'poetry': "if there is any book with an indwelling genius, it is this. . . . The marvellous prose is prose, and yet it is poetry".⁶ With Schlegel's concept of *Romanpoesie*, 'the poetry of the novel', we see the Herderian influence of casting off classical strictures of clearly defined genres, and we see the romantic definition of poetics shift

³ Turgenev studied for two years at the University of Berlin for a Master of Philosophy degree. He passed the oral and written examinations in 1842, but did not complete the dissertation. Frank Friedeberg Seely, *Turgenev: A Reading of His Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9.

⁴ Thomas, *A History of German Literature*, 316.

⁵ Calvin Thomas, *Goethe* (New York: Henry Holt, 1917), 112; 111.

⁶ Schlegel, "On Goethe's *Meister*", 64-65.

towards authenticity, novelty, and *Poiesis*, where ‘creative imagination’ in writing becomes the defining feature of what can be regarded as poetry, not genre. We can see this romantic notion reflected in the **imagist** aesthetic by looking to **Richard Aldington’s** essay in the *Dial*, ‘**The Art of Poetry**’ (1920):

Normally it is considered necessary to draw a distinction between prose and poetry. I am not at all sure that any such distinction is possible and I am inclined to believe that in literature there is only one art—the art of good writing, though this has innumerable forms. . . . If we say that poetry is the finest type of creative writing—and that is what I claim for it—then I want to call the *l’Education Sentimentale* a poem.⁷

The apprentice Jean would take issue with this line of reasoning, as evident in his response to Aldington in his early attempt at literary criticism:

Richard Aldington seeks personality. Where he finds that personality expressed in words, he is certain that he has found poetry. . . . What is and what isn’t creative writing? To my mind one of those brilliant sallies of Bernard Shaw is certainly creative. **And yet would we call it poetry?** There is quite a difference between Shaw’s *Man and Superman* and Shelley’s *Julian and Madalo*. Both are instinct with personality. [“**POE” II: 40, Section 2** ; emphasis added]

A few years prior to writing his assessment of Goethe’s work, even the younger Schlegel in his neoclassical phase would have agreed with Toomer’s distinction.⁸ And in a similar manner to the German, the young American writer’s understanding of what constitutes poetry would evolve beyond the constraints of genre within a few years. We can see this evolution complete by the time he wrote his letter to Waldo Frank praising his ‘lyric novels’:⁹

In design and style I think HOLIDAY to be a natural progression from your other works. You are budding to poetry my brother. Who ever heard of such a thing! Most writer give their poems first. Budding? My God! HOLIDAY and RAHAB and CITY BLOCK are tremendous *poems*. Hail, brother, deep great man that you are, POET! (*BM* 110, *LJT* 126 ; emphasis added)

Is this disregard for genres the only romantic aspect in *CANE*? As Monroe and Henderson state in the introduction to *The New Poetry* (1921), “This borderland between prose and verse is being explored now as never before in

⁷ Richard Aldington, “The Art of Poetry”, *The Dial* 69 (Aug., 1920): 167.

⁸ See Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 9-11.

⁹ While the letter is undated, Whalen approximates it to have been written late January/February 1923. This complete shift in Toomer’s position regarding “poetry” at some point before 1923, is perhaps one of the reasons he never finished the review; it seems to also suggest the “Poetry” Notebook, which begins and ends commenting on Adlington’s essay, was written much earlier, most likely concurrent to his “Memorandum” Pocketbook.

English”¹⁰—as we have covered the erosion and mixing of established genres earlier; we instead turn our focus upon the structures and devices that break down the wall between **Art** and **Life**. I hope to show that many of **CANE**’s core strategies, draw from **romantic irony** (*romantische Ironie*)—an umbrella term for the various modes of expression and aesthetic devices that play with perspective, “critical distance”, and “paradoxes intrinsic to language”¹¹—and that these “tricks” or devices are inherently tied to a Neo-Platonic mystical understanding of reality and the relationship between **God** and the **universe**.

ROMANTIC IRONY

In this chapter, we attempt to delve deeper into Goethe’s method to look for specific romantic structures adapted into **CANE**. **Friedrich Schlegel** proclaims in his essay ‘**On Incomprehensibility**’ (1800): “Whoever can’t find Goethe’s whole spirit in *Wilhelm Meister* won’t be able to find it anywhere else” (*FRS* 263). This, in essence, is the theme of this chapter: the methods by which an author can place his spirit within his work—to specifically point out how *Wilhelm Meister* exemplifies the following marked passages in Schlegel’s most famous *Fragment* §116 defining the features of romantic ‘poetry’:

Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. . . It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical; . . . **many artists who started out to write only a novel ended up by providing us with a portrait of themselves**. It alone can become, like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient world, an image of the age. And **it can also**—more than any other form—**hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer**, free from all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in **an endless succession of mirrors**. (*FRS* 175; emphasis added).

Martin Swales provides us with our first quotation by **Goethe** that connects with and provides context for Schlegel’s third feature highlighted above:

As a very great deal of our experiences cannot be straightforwardly said or directly conveyed I have for a long time now chosen the **technique of revealing** to the attentive reader the **secret meaning** by virtue of **structures which are linked to**, and as it were look at **and mirror**, one another.¹²

¹⁰ From the introduction of Monroe and Henderson’s *The New Poetry* (*MON* x).

¹¹ Johann Pillai, “Irony, Romantic”, 565.

¹² Qtd. in Martin Swales, “Goethe’s Prose Fiction”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, ed. Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 130. Emphasis Added.

Swales explains that under the calm and realistic surface of Goethe's narration is an intricate understructure that is "accompanied by a metaphorically sustained metatext".¹³ The method that allows for *Wilhelm Meister* to maintain this dual or multi-layered narrative is directly related to his important distinction between **symbol** and **allegory**, given in Goethe's 'Aphorisms on Art and Art History':

Allegory transforms the appearance into a concept, the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept may be captured definite and complete in the image, and may be expressed by it. Symbolism transforms the appearance into an idea, the idea into an image, and in such a way that the idea remains infinitely powerful and unattainable in the image, and even if expressed in every language, would remain unattainable.¹⁴

Goethe portrays **allegory** as an indirect mode of clearly communicating a concept, where there is a comprehensible one to one correspondence between the two objects or systems. **Symbol** on the other hand is portrayed as an indirect and indefinite mode of expression that does not point merely to one direct parallel, but rather suggests infinite links and connotations. In *Das Symbol* (1887), **Friedrich Theodor Vischer** maintains this distinction when he divides representation into the two modes of **magical-symbolical thinking** (based on empathy or Sympathy and found in primitive cultures) and **logical-allegorical thinking** (due to man's split with nature and found in modern society).¹⁵ We shall soon see that at the heart of the symbolic mode is **Omneity**, Plotinus' mystical concept of "**Universal Sympathy**":

There is infinity in Intellectual-Principle since, of its very nature, it is a multiple unity . . . in the one Intellectual design it includes within itself, as it were in outline, all the outlines, all the patterns. All is within it, all the powers and intellections; the division is not determined by a boundary but goes ever **inward**; this content is held as the living universe holds the natural forms of the living creatures in it from the greatest to the least, down even to the minutest powers . . . this is what is known as the **Universal Sympathy**. (*ENN* 573; VI.7.14; emphasis added)

This unity is the basis which underlies romantic irony and Goethe's complex symbolic-allegorical narrative structure in *Wilhelm Meister*.

¹³ Ibid. John A. McCarthy uses "polyvalence" to describe *Wilhelm Meister*. See McCarthy, 27.

¹⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Aphorisms on Art and Art History", in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe*, ed. Kathleen M. Wheeler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 229.

¹⁵ Nowak, 303-4.

Schlegel's essay 'On Goethe's *Meister*' (1798), points out the novel's presentation of characters "resemble the portrait" and that these figures are "more or less general and allegorical by nature."¹⁶ Although some critics claim that Friedrich Schlegel (like Herder) does not make a distinction between the two modes, perhaps the crux of the matter is not whether the characters in *Wilhelm Meister* are allegories or symbols, but as Ammerlahn suggests, the fact that Goethe opted to simultaneously utilize both.¹⁷ This relates directly to the middle passage we highlighted in Schlegel's *Fragment* §116, which shows he does understand and distinguish between these two modes: "it can also . . . hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer". The term "hover" (*Schweben*) is revealing as it suggests an oscillating between the two modes, while the different layers of the narrative structure simultaneously pull in opposite directions toward the symbolic and allegorical poles.

Both Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer adopt and utilize this multi-layered and ironic narrative structure in their short-story cycles, which might be characterized in a similar manner to what Schlegel claims as Goethe's achievement in *Wilhelm Meister*: "many artists who started out to write only a novel ended up by providing us with a portrait of themselves". This definition in *fragment* §116 we flagged explains why none of Waldo Frank's novels or stories are examples of self-portraiture in the romantic sense, even when the works include characters clearly modeled after himself. Now we will identify aesthetic devices and specific intersections between romanticism and modernism—examining *Wilhelm Meister* in relation to *CANE*, within the context of romantic theory and Neo-Platonist concepts allowing polysemic layers of narration and identity.

¹⁶ Schlegel, "On Goethe's *Meister*", 71.

¹⁷ Ammerlahn repeatedly makes it clear that both "multilayered symbolism and specific allegory" are incorporated together; and that Goethe's and Schiller's letters discuss "the relationship of discernment and integration, of 'ideas' and 'bodies' in the allegory of the Tower, an analogous ironic disguise, differentiation and marvelous complementarity . . ." Hellmut Ammerlahn, "Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: An Apprenticeship toward the Mastery of Exactly What?", *Colloquia Germanica* 30, no. 2 (1997): 115; see also 99, 111. Although Jane K. Brown's *Goethe's Allegories of Identity* is very helpful and points out how the technique of allegory, which had grown unfashionable for drama, was revived and utilized in Goethe's novel; I find Ammerlahn's unraveling of the symbolic and allegorical structures hidden in *Wilhelm Meister*, to be an especially insightful understanding of technique that is equally applicable to those mirrored in *CANE*.

PERMANENT PARABASIS

The traditional rhetorical concept of **irony** relies upon “a double consciousness on the part of speaker and recipient”, where both recognize the **surface** meaning spoken and the “inverted, ironic meaning” intended **below**—as Wellbery explains, the *Frühromantiker* transformed irony by “generaliz[ing] this split consciousness, to conceive of it not as a characteristic of local statements, but as a structure that suffuses the entire text”.¹⁸ This new understanding of irony, which later critics would term ‘**romantic irony**’ (*romantische Ironie*), has several components, and each of these will be examined throughout this chapter. This section zeros in on the aspect brought to the fore by **Oskar Walzel**’s observation: “The most obvious, most direct form of romantic irony and the one most freely used by the romanticists is the destruction of the illusion”.¹⁹

Friedrich Schlegel was the chief architect and “preeminent theoretician” of this new understanding of **irony**, which he describes as “a permanent *parabasis*”²⁰ and draws additional parallels for in his *Lyceum Fragment* §42:

There are ancient and modern poems that are pervaded by the divine breath of irony throughout and informed by a truly **transcendental buffoonery**. **Inwardly** [*Im Innern*], the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius; **outwardly** [*im Äußern*], in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian buffo.²¹

The *parabasis* (*Parabase*) is a device in ancient Greek drama inherited from earlier primitive forms of comedy, which creates a “distinct sub-structure” within the drama “where the chorus interacted directly with the audience with less concern for dramatic illusion”.²² The *parabasis* proper has a formal structure with repeated sub-sections and occurs between dramatic scenes when the actors are off stage—the chorus directly addresses the spectators “speak[ing] for the poet and his comedy” to fulfill any variety of functions, such as:

¹⁸ David Wellbery, “The Transformation of Rhetoric”, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, ed. Marshall Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 195.

¹⁹ Walzel, 224.

²⁰ Qtd. in Wellbery, 54. From *Philosophische Fragmente, Erste Epoche* II, §668.

²¹ Trans. by Frederick Burwick, “‘Transcendental Buffoonery’ and the Bifurcated Novel”, in *Narrative Ironies*, eds. Raymond A. Prior and Gerald E. Paul (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 51. Emphasis added.

²² Ian C. Storey, and Arlene Allan, *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 172.

[a] explain the appropriateness of their dramatic role and costume, [b] sing hymns to the gods, [c] indulge in sustained personal invective . . . , [d] give advice to the citizens, [e] and appeal to the judges, but always within its dramatic persona . . .²³

Schlegel's likening irony to the Italian *buffo*—"the aside to the audience that disrupts the narrative illusion of the play" in *commedia dell'arte*²⁴—is only the superficial half as underneath this lies a much more serious "transcendental" aim. Frederick Burwick reminds us that "metadramatic ploys have a history virtually as old as drama itself", and that central to Schlegel's concept of irony is not only "perpetuating the condition of being both 'inside' and 'outside' the role", but "permanent *parabasis*" also implies adopting a position *hovering* and vacillating between other "paradoxical oppositions—artifice and nature, intention and instinct, urbanity and naiveté, concealment and revelation, deliberation and spontaneity, jest and seriousness, self-propagation and self-annihilation".²⁵ In 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism' (1920), Walter Benjamin explains his "double concept of form", which sheds light on Schlegel's fragment claiming we must "annihilate what we adore" to gain a "sense for the infinite":

The particular form of the individual work, which we might call the presentational form, is sacrificed to ironic dissolution. Above it, however, irony flings open a heaven of eternal form, the idea of forms (which we might call the absolute form), and proves the survival of the work, which draws its indestructible subsistence from that sphere, after the empirical form, the expression of its isolated reflection, has been consumed by the absolute form. The ironization of the presentational form is, as it were, the storm blast that raises the curtain on the transcendental order of art, disclosing this order and in it the immediate existence of the work as a mystery. [. . .] Schlegel recognizes "limits of the visible work," beyond which the realm of the invisible work, the idea of art, opens up.²⁶

The "destruction of the illusion", or what Schlegel refers to as the "constant alternation of self-creation and self-annihilation", often occurs through moments of reflexivity or "meta-rhetorical awareness"²⁷—these can take the form an intrusion by the author or narrator, the commenting

²³ Ibid., 184-5. Lettering added to this list.

²⁴ J. M. Bernstein, "Poesy and the Arbitrariness of the Sign: Notes for a Critique of Jena Romanticism", in *Philosophical Romanticism*, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (London: Routledge, 2006), 160.

²⁵ Burwick, 54. Drawing from *Lyceum* §§ 37,42,48,108; *Anathäum* §§ 51, 116, 121, 238, 305.

²⁶ Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 163-5.

²⁷ Wellbery, 195.

within the text on the creation of itself, or characters referring to the text in which they appear—these “disruptions” have the “abruptly disjunctive” effect of pulling the reader out of “one mode of reality” into another, “signal[ing] the fictional status of literary artifacts”.²⁸

Goethe’s most straightforward example of destroying the dramatic illusion [**DEVICE** ∞ : **PARABASIS**], is visible in *Faust* (1790) with its meta-dramatic opening, ‘**Prelude on the Stage**’—where three aspects of the author, the “Manager, Poet-Playwright, and Player of Comic Roles”, discuss the drama and its creation as it is about to begin.²⁹ The ‘reality’ of the Faust narrative is punctured—revealing it to be merely artistic representation and ‘play’, and one not even fully completed. Wellbery suggests that the function of this “operative fiction” is to familiarize readers with the two main characteristics of *Faust*: “ironic self-commentary and the juxtaposition of heterogeneous stylistic and ideological registers”.³⁰

In *Wilhelm Meister*, the narrator often intrudes or acts in an unexpected manner departing from his traditional role, often at Wilhelm’s expense.³¹ One of the most innovative examples of **ironic disjunction** occurs in **Book II, Chapter X**, when the narrator informs readers that, “German chivalry-plays were new at this period, and had just excited the attention and the inclination of the public”, before Wilhelm and the acting troupe gather around a “punch-bowl” for the reading of a “pamphlet” (*WMI* 106), described in the following manner:

The harnessed knights, the ancient keeps, the true-heartedness, honesty and downrightness, but especially the independence of the acting characters, were received with the greatest approbation. The reader did his utmost and the audience gradually mounted into rapture. Between the third and fourth act, the punch arrived in an ample bowl; and there being much fighting and drinking in the piece itself [. . .] Each individual of the party was [drunk and] *inflamed with the noblest fire of national spirit*. How it gratified this German company to be poetically entertained, according to their own character, on stuff of their own manufacture!

²⁸ Handwerk, 207.

²⁹ Goethe, *Faust I & II*, 3-7. A similar frame is utilized by Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*.

³⁰ David Wellbery, Introduction to *Faust I & II*, by ed. Stuart Atkins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), xiii.

³¹ Curran notes how the narrator often presents scenes with “ironic and playfully critical remarks” aimed at “our hero”; additionally, the narrator’s asides, like the one in Bk. I Ch. 13 —“what usually happens only in plays and novels”—draws attention to the fact that the novel is a mere representation of reality. Jane V. Curran, *Goethe’s “Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship”*: *A Reader’s Commentary* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 32, 46-47.

In particular, the vaults and caverns, the ruined castles, the moss and hollow trees, but above all the nocturnal gipsy-scenes, and the Secret Tribunal, produced a quite incredible effect.³² (*WMI* 106-7; emphasis added)

By the time the narrator describes the climax towards Act V, where “the hero actually trampled down his oppressor, and the tyrant met his doom” (*WMI* 107), not only are the actors of the troupe **mirroring** the action and emotions of the play—enough clues are given to identify the work being read by Wilhelm as Goethe’s drama written in the manner of Shakespeare, *Goetz von Berlichingen* (1773).³³ This moment of **intertextuality** [**DEVICE** § : **INTERLACING**] and abrupt **merging** of reality and fiction—creating a **confusion** between the two—also occurs in Goethe’s *Italian Journey* (1816-7), where **Mignon** is suddenly thrust into several accounts of his travels, as if she were a living person:

[1] Dawn had just broken when we drove out of Fondi, and we were immediately greeted by **oranges** hanging over the walls on either side of the road. The trees are so loaded with fruit, I could hardly believe my eyes. **On top, the young foliage is yellowish, but below, a very lush green. Mignon** was quite right to yearn for this country. [...] [2] In the intellectual and art-loving circle of our Duchess Amalia it had been a tradition, of course, to consider Italy as the New Jerusalem for all truly cultivated persons, and **an acute longing, such as only Mignon could express**, had long been alive in their hearts and minds.³⁴

Like with *Goetz*, there is a mirroring and interlinking of the two works—as the descriptions in the top excerpt **correspond** to images in the first stanza of ‘**Kennst du das Land?**’ in *Wilhelm Meister*, while the second mention of **Mignon** is written in a way that **incorporates** her mysterious symbolic identity.

Sherwood Anderson’s and **Jean Toomer’s** short-story cycles are replete with moments of *parabasis* that provide meta-commentary about the author and the work in a manner similar to **Goethe**, and also **Cervantes** and **Sterne**. In ‘**The Book of the Grotesque**’, the opening piece of *Winesburg, Ohio*, readers are first introduced to an old writer and then a carpenter who “had once been a prisoner in Andersonville prison” (*WIN* 1)—this allusion to the

³² Thomas Carlyle, tr. *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship & Travels*, by Goethe (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), vol. I, 106-7. Emphasis added. Hereafter cited ‘*WMI*, II, III’.

³³ Curran remarks the “little joke” alluding to his own trendsetting work that brought him notoriety is also a clue that “Wilhelm’s development runs parallel to the historic development of the German stage”—which justifies and almost necessitates its inclusion, as even the novel points out the great role this dramatic work played in rekindling “national spirit”. Curran, 82.

³⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1786-1788*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Meyer (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982), 172; 411. Emphasis added.

author's surname disrupts the narrative mode and draws readers under the surface "operative fiction", where they are provided **meta-commentary** pointing to the **thematic frame** that **links** all the individual vignettes together:

In the bed the writer had a dream that was not a dream. As he grew somewhat sleepy but was still conscious, figures began to appear before his eyes. [. . .] You see the interest in all this lies in the figures that went before the eyes of the writer. They were all grotesques. [. . .] In the end he wrote a book which he called "The Book of the Grotesque". It was never published, but I saw it once and it made an indelible impression on my mind. The book had one central thought that is very strange and has always remained with me. [. . .] the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood. (*WTN* 3-5)

The narrator claims that the book was "never published", yet readers are in the midst of reading a story bearing the very same title—below the seemingly-contradictory surface, readers sense they are being provided information regarding the work's **creation**. In the second story in the cycle, 'Hands', the narrator states repeatedly that Wing Biddlebaum's story requires a **poet** to relate properly: "Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is the job for a poet. . . . Perhaps our talking of [the hands] will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story" (*WTN* 10, 13).

CANE incorporates similarly jarring moments of *parabasis* [**DEVICE** ∞] throughout its various pieces. In the final scene of 'Avey', as the first-person narrator "started to hum a folk-tune", he begins to prophetically describe his plans for what would ultimately become actualized in 'Avey' and in *CANE*:

I could understand her. I described her own nature and temperament. Told how they needed a larger life for their expression. . . . I talked, beautifully I thought, about **an art that would be born, an art that would open the way for women the likes of her**. I asked her to hope, and build up an inner life against the coming of that day. I recited some of my **own things** to her. I sang, with a strange quiver in my voice, a **promise-song**. (*C* 48; emphasis added)

In 'Bona and Paul', Paul cryptically proclaims to his white roommate, Art: "Some day, dear Art, I'm going to kick the living slats out of you, and you wont know what I've done it for. And your slats will bring forth Life . . . beautiful woman . . ." (*C* 74). The fact that Art is of Norwegian descent and can play Jazz piano, seems to suggest meanings that transcend the narrative layer of the scene—the character seems to oscillate between the fictional character Arthur and the personification of Toomer's *artistic* talent.

At certain disruptive moments, the story becomes **meta-fictional**, implying that Paul is not only a persona for the mixed-race author, he is an **allegorical** representation of Toomer's physicality, while Art **signifies** his artistic side—which, like the character, appears to be 'white'. The line, "Our Poets hung perilously" in the room, hints the author draws from various poets into a fused style being personified—Art playing on the piano slyly informs readers that his musical elements are in more of a black style of **Jazz**, although there is also something "Different" and "Curious" about his method (C 75). The poetic style and essence of '**Bona and Paul**' is suggested symbolically and allegorically within the story through an oscillation of the two, what both Paul and Art represent. I suspect that the Norwegian reference in the story is possibly an allusion to either **poetic realism**, or to his literary role models **Sherwood Anderson** and **Carl Sandburg**, who are both of Scandinavian descent. The text suggests to readers that its 'Art'—personified by the Jazz playing "pale purple facsimile of a red-blooded Norwegian friend" (C 75)—is of the 'Negro *Volk*', but written in the modernist vein of Sandburg's poetic realist verse celebrating the rural folk and Anderson's unique lyrical singing prose chronicling the spirit of Mid-America.

The **veil** between Art and Life is also torn during moments when meta-commentary—pulling readers away from the narrative and towards the text's creation—provides hints about its meaning, This is evident in the pieces written in verse, like '**Song of the Sun**' and the following stanzas in '**Georgia Dusk**':

A feast of moon and men and barking hounds,
An orgy for some genius of the South
With blood-hot eyes and cane-lipped scented mouth,
Surprised in making folk-songs from soul sounds.
O singers, resinous and soft your songs
Above the sacred whisper of the pines,
Give virgin lips to cornfield concubines,
Bring dreams of Christ to dusky cane-lipped throngs. (C 15)

Toomer positions himself as the "**Negro genius**" described by Du Bois and Locke—the artist in tune with the "**Negro Spirit**" and drawing from the "**race-gifts** as a vast spiritual endowment", as recorded and safeguarded in **CANE**.³⁵ An understanding of this relationship becomes key to making sense of later sections in '**Kabnis**' that allude to and build upon this **theme**:

³⁵ See **Forest of Correspondence 2** on pages 149-150.

Ralph Kabnis is a dream. [. . .] The body of the world is bull-necked. A dream is a soft face that fits uncertainly upon it. . . . God, if I could develop that in words. [. . .] If I could feel I came to the South to face it. If I, the dream (not what is weak and afraid in me) could become the face of the South. How my lips would sing for it, my songs being the lips of its soul. Soul. (C 83)

This moment in the text perfectly encapsulates Schlegel’s characterization of **romantic irony** as multiplication into “an endless succession of mirrors”. Readers are made privy to the birth of the **impulse** behind **CANE**—through a persona mirroring the author’s actual journey, recounting the **moment** in the journey where his desire (*dream*) for expression of the South manifested—from a later position where that dream has been **actualized** (*faced* to become the *face*)—in the form of the text (*songs* expressing its *Soul*) the readers are in the midst of reading.

Finally, the **choruses**, **refrains**, fragments of **song**, and even the chant-like **prayers** inserted into the individual pieces additionally play a **parabasic function**. These repeated sections work as framing devices providing structure to the narrative, as evident in the chorus of ‘**Blood-Burning Moon**’,

Red nigger moon. Sinner!
Blood-burning moon. Sinner!
Come out that factory door. (C 31; 33; 37)

However, these are not meta-dramatic incursions like those we find in the Greek *parabasis*, expressing the viewpoint of the poet when the actors are ‘off-stage’, rather, in **CANE**, these occur coterminously with the actions of the narrative—disrupting and working against the **dramatic illusion**, like in ‘**Becky**’ when we are told from the outset she is in her grave. The narration of that vignette interweaves a continuously disruptive **polyphony** of prayers: “. . . O pines, whisper to Jesus; tell Him to come and press sweet Jesus-lips against their lips and eyes. . .” (C 8). These **arabesque**-like lines alternating between the material and spiritual planes have a constant disorienting effect—which function as an eerie soundtrack augmenting and intensifying the dramatic **force** of the narrative. The result is the creation of “**romantic confusion**”,³⁶ as the readers hover and oscillate between two modes of reality. These various **parabasic devices** and romantic strategies of **mirroring**, help encode mystery—what Goethe calls “**secret meaning**”—within Toomer’s sphinx-like chimera, **CANE**, imagined as a dream-like face crowning the grotesque bovine-figure of the world.

³⁶ See **Glossary**, s.v. ‘*Arabeske*’.



A FOREST OF CORRESPONDENCE 5

[**HERDERIAN FLORA 5**] : Extract from *God, Some Conversations* (1789):

Theophron : God has imparted the ground of His own supreme happiness to entities, the smallest and the greatest, who take pleasure in existence, as God does. To use your simile, Theano, all beings, like branches, draw the eternal sap of life from his root. I think, Philolaus, that we have outlined the first natural law of sacred necessity.

Philolaus : 1. *The supreme existence [Dasein] knew nothing greater to give His creatures than existence [Dasein].*

Theophron : But, my friend, as simple as the concept is, one existence and another are very different in regard to their condition. Philolaus, what do you think designates their gradations and differences?

Philolaus : Nothing but *forces [Kräfte]*. We found no higher conception in God himself; all his forces, however, were but *one* force. The supreme power [*höchste Macht*] could be nothing but the supreme wisdom and goodness that is ever-living, ever-active.

Theophron : Now you yourself see, Philolaus, that the supreme one, or rather the all (for God is not the supreme being in a progressive scale of beings like himself), could reveal himself as active in nothing else but in the *universe*. [...] He is active in the smallest and in the largest, in every point of space and time, that is, in every lively force of the universe. [...] *He is before all things, and all things exist in him.* The whole world is an expression, an appearance of his ever-living, ever-active forces. [...]

Theano : [...] I am always satisfied with little, and it is enough for me to know that every organic whole is the appearance of a system of inner, living forces that, according to the laws of wisdom and goodness, form a kind of miniature world, a whole. I wish that I could charm the spirit of the rose, which is the object of my embroidering, so that it would tell me how it formed the roses beautiful structure; or since the rose is only a daughter of the rosebush, I wish that its dryad could explain to me how it animates the little rosebush from the root to its smallest branch. As a child I often stood quietly before a tree or a flower and gazed in wonder at the amazing harmony that is found from top to bottom in every living creature. I compared many of them and idled away several hours examining the leaves, branches, blossoms, stems, and entire development of trees and plants. The longing to draw such original, beautiful forms in a vivid way sharpened my attention, and I often entered into such an intimate conversation with the flower, the tree, the plant, that I believed its captured essence would have to enter into my small creation. But this was all in vain. My creation remained a dead imitation, and that beautiful, transitory creature stood there in all the fullness of its calm self-sufficiency and the fullness of, so to speak, *an existence complete in and for itself.* Please discuss this matter more fully, and help my stammering language about nature.

Theophron : Dear Theano, this language will probably always be stammering. We have no senses to see into the inner essence of things; we stand on the outside and have to observe. The clearer and calmer the eye with which we do this, the more the living harmony of nature reveals itself to us—a harmony in which everything is the most perfect unity, and yet everything is interwoven with every other thing in such a way in such multifarious and diverse ways. (*GOD* 128-9, 132; emphasis original)



[**TOOMERIAN FLORA 5**] : Our next tree is taken from Toomer's self-published pamphlet 'A Fact and Some Fictions' penned in 1932, where he puts forth the unlikely theory that his grandfather had passed as a *Black* person for political gain. It was written in response to the Cleveland, Ohio *Gazette's* satirical coverage of the marriage of "Gov. P. B. S. Pinchback's Grandson" to "Margery Latimer (white), novelist"—while also mocking Toomer's belief in "[a] new American race without creed or color barriers" [see **Image H9**; **JTP, Box 65, Folder 1489**].

In my view, and indeed in reality, the black race is a branch of the tree of human life, as is the white race a branch of the same tree, as are the yellow, brown and red race branches of this same tree. I am not concerned with any of these branches, as branches, except to do what I can to help them to overcome "branch-consciousness" to attain "tree consciousness". I am, however, vitally concerned with all these branches, and all equally, as integral members of the One Great Tree. I would have each and all work together and come to the realization that all are primarily members of the human race. All are Human Beings.³⁷



³⁷ Qtd. in Brian Joseph Benson and Mabel Mayle Dillard, *Jean Toomer* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 43.

What exactly was Toomer trying to express in his letter to Waldo Frank when he wrote “**Kabnis is Me**”? [see **Image A2**; **JTP, Box 65, Folder 1489**]. Most critics have simply taken his words at face value: as a flat pronouncement that the anti-hero of the final prose-dramatic piece of **CANE** is a representation of himself. This interpretation seems too simplistic considering that Frank was well aware of Toomer’s stint as vice-principal in Sparta, Georgia in 1921. As I have argued in my Master’s dissertation *Jean Toomer: Essentialist & Spiritualizer*, it would have been redundant to point out that the story ‘**Kabnis**’ was autobiographical to someone he shared and discussed his earliest drafts with—the very same person to whom he dedicated the piece to. It is genuinely curious to me why in all Toomer criticism referencing this line, its meaning has only been interpreted literally and never figuratively—to remedy this, we search for other paths within this forest that lead to more revealing answers.

Is the statement possibly echoing the sentiment of one of Frank’s literary heroes, **Gustav Flaubert**, who famously and cryptically exclaimed “Madame Bovary, *c’est moi!*”? The French author *is* referred to numerous times in their correspondence. However, as Anita Brookner pointedly asks “what does the morose and reclusive Flaubert have in common with the completely unsophisticated, even credulous Emma, on whom he lavishes such undeserved vengeance?”³⁸ Of course, the answer is: ‘not much, if anything’—as the pronouncement can only be read ironically, because the character does not mirror the author in the literal sense. Even acknowledging that the remark was meant to be provocative and that it succeeded in piquing the public’s interest in 1857, its meaning remains opaque and cryptic—unless, perhaps, Flaubert meant something along the lines of: *Madame Bovary* (my masterpiece), *c’est moi* (contains all of me as a writer)? However, proposing that Toomer meant ‘**Kabnis**’ is **Me**, is still equally ambiguous, and it ignores the curious capitalization and underlining of “**Me**”. We need to consider other avenues and possible keys that might unlock this mystery, and additionally provide insight into the concept of **romantic irony**—as unpacking the meaning behind Jean Toomer’s “One Great Tree” metaphor, will shed light on the elusive **Me**.

³⁸ Anita Brookner, Introduction to *Madam Bovary: Life in a Country Town*, by Gustave Flaubert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), v.

We start with **Plotinus**, who provides us with two keys in the *Enneads*: “For each of us is double; one is a sort of complex, and the other is the Self”.³⁹ Or, in McKenna’s more mystifying translation: “For every human Being is of twofold character; there is that compromise-total and there is the Authentic Man” (ENN 98; II.3.9). The concept of the “essential duality” of the soul’s “two natures” is expounded upon in ‘**The Fourth Ennead**’, describing its “unity standing midway between what the **lower** was and what it cannot absorb, and therefore a troubled unity; the association is artificial and uncertain, inclining now to this side and now to that in ceaseless **vacillation**; and the total **hovers** between high and low, telling, downward bent, of misery but, directed to the **above**, of **longing** for unison” (ENN 301-302; IV.4.18)—*This “longing”=Sehnsucht.*

This dual conception of identity, with its obvious link to romantic notions of *hovering*, *vacillating* and the **double motif** (*Doppelgänger*), was prefigured by **J. G. Herder** who adopted this dual sense of identity, evidenced by the term “*Doppel Ich*” in his writings, applying it to self-consciousness,⁴⁰ and his usage of “*Schweben*” in many of his poems. Herder may have gotten this concept from his teacher **Immanuel Kant**, who later writes in his *Critique of Reason*:

I am conscious of this time as belonging to the unity of my **Self**, and it is all the same whether I say that this whole time is in **Me**, as an individual unity, or that I am to be found with numerical identity, in all of this time. [. . .] The identity of person is therefore inevitably to be encountered in my own consciousness. But if I consider myself from the standpoint of another (as an object of his outer intuition), then it is this external observer who originally considers a **me** as in **me**; for in apperception **me** is properly represented only in **me**.⁴¹

Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood inform us that their translation of “Self” and “Me” reflects Kant’s nonstandard capitalization of “*Mir selbst*” in the original manuscript, and its usage as a noun rather than pronoun—these instances,

³⁹ Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., *The Enneads*, by Plotinus, trans. George Boys-Stones, John M. Dillon, Lloyd P. Gerson et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 154.

⁴⁰ See Sonia Sikka, *Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163: “In his *Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason*, Herder describes this ability, in relation to the self, as in turn the distinctive property of human beings, saying that ‘in me there is a double “I”; conscious of myself, I can and must become an object to myself,’ and that ‘this advantage raises us above animals; it is the characteristic of our species.’”

⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. ed. & trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 423. Emphasis added.

along with his usage of “Myself”, “Self” “Himself”, etc., were all standardized to lower case in the German fourth edition of Kant’s *Kritik*.⁴²

Although **Walt Whitman** could not read German, he discovered many “profound” and “wondrous” German writers through English translations⁴³—their metaphysics would provide the foundations for the mysticism found in his writings. We find the same Plotinian dual conception of **Self** in Whitman’s poetry and prose, expressed in the same manner as German thinkers, distinguishing ‘**me**’ from ‘**Me**’. This is evident in the second section of the poem ‘**As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life**’, dealing with the nature of identity:

Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon **me**
I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real **Me** stands yet
untouch’d, untold, altogether unreach’d,

(*WW* 185; emphasis added)

This distinction is also observable in ‘**Democratic Vistas**’, where he writes of **consciousness** and **identity**: “yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for **me**. [. . .] In such devout hours, in the midst of the significant wonders of heaven and earth, (significant only because of the **Me** in the centre,) creeds, conventions, fall away (*WW* 427; emphasis added). And pages later he speaks of a religious “**interior consciousness**” that—in a manner very reminiscent of the patient **spider**—“beams out its wondrous lines to the sense [. . .] exclusively for the noiseless operation of one’s isolated **Self**, to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable” (*WW* 432; emphasis added).

We see this mystical and romantic understanding of “Me” filtering into the philosophical and aesthetic writings of modernist thinkers, like **Henri Bergson**’s *Time and Free Will* (1889), which distinguishes between the two aspects of a “superficial self” (*le moi superficiel*) and a “deep-seated self” (*le moi fondamentale*), the latter melting conscious states into each other in a “ceaseless flux of *durée*”.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 416. See annotation.

⁴³ Qtd. in Robert P. Falk, “Walt Whitman and German Thought”, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 40, no. 3 (1941): 315- 330. See also, Mary Eleanor, “Hedge’s *Prose Writers of Germany* as a Source of Whitman’s Knowledge of German Philosophy”, *Modern Language Notes* 61, no. 6 (1946): 381-388.

⁴⁴ G. William Barnard, *Living Consciousness: The Metaphysical Vision of Henri Bergson* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 19-20. For Bergson’s Plotinian links, see George Boas, “Bergson and His Predecessors”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 4 (1959): 503-514.

In Chapter X of *Principles of Psychology* (1890), titled ‘The Consciousness of Self’, William James refracts the concept of Self into constituent parts—of a material Self, social Self, spiritual Self, and pure Ego—and provides an extensive discussion of differing notions of identity considered from various perspectives, concluding:

We may sum up by saying that personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, an **objective person**, known by a passing **subjective Thought** and recognized as continuing in time. Hereafter let us use the words **ME** and **I** for the empirical person and the judging Thought. . . . The consciousness of **Self** involves a **stream of thought**, each part of which as “**I**” can 1) remember those that went before . . . 2) emphasize and care paramourntly for certain ones among them as “**me**”, and *appropriate to these* the rest.⁴⁵

As we turn to twentieth-century sources, **Randolph Bourne’s** *Dial* article on Dostoevsky, shows that his understanding of consciousness and Self was grounded on an identical understanding of the “I” and “Me” as William James: “Dostoevsky has a strange, intimate power which breaks in your neat walls . . . He is introspection turned inside out. For self-analysis is only torturing . . . But suppose you can merge the **I** and the **Me** so that you get the full warm unity of emotional life without losing any of the detail of the understanding analysis of the soul. This astounding merngence Dostoevsky actually seems to achieve.”⁴⁶ A mystical and overtly Plotinian interpretation is given in **A. R. Orage’s** book *Nietzsche in Outline & Aphorism* (1907), where he presents the following maxim by the German philosopher—“The Me is only an interpretation of physiological complexities, resolved by the most powerful tendency”—followed by his explanation outlining a more esoteric context for ‘**Me**’:

Yet behind each individual . . . there is the Great Reason, the Mighty Lord, the Self. He or It—for it is the Man or Humanity—stands below and above and around all the apparently isolated fragments of itself. . . . Through and behind our insular consciousness, our fragmentary reason, our petty self and ‘**Me**,’ plays this world consciousness; and in its hand is the control of all the forces which we as fragments cannot yet consciously employ.⁴⁷

Finally, we examine **Waldo Frank’s** mystical writings in those books that follow in the tradition of Lawrence’s “philosophicalish” writings. In **Appendix B** of *The Rediscovery of Man*, we find a collection of Frank’s “germinal thoughts as they first appeared in [his] journals of many years ago”—where he writes:

⁴⁵ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1953), 239; 258.

⁴⁶ Randolph Bourne, “The Immanence of Dostoevsky”, *The Dial* 63 (June 1917): 25.

⁴⁷ A. R. Orage, *Nietzsche in Outline and Aphorism* (London: T. N. Foulis, 1911), 45;58. Emphasis added.

The earlier wording of the practice, *God is in me* instead of *God is in this self*, incurred a certain danger. “Me” of course includes the pride, fear, aggressive will of the ego. To pour this sense of “Me” into the image is too much like letting impure water flow into a pure well: all will be infected.⁴⁸

Now that we have traced how—the mystical understanding of identity as having a dual nature—filtered into Western philosophy through **Neo-Platonism**—was later reworked and reintroduced by **German intellectuals**—then embraced and taken as the basis for *Frühromantik* theories and poetry—eventually secularized under the guise of **psychology** and then assimilated into the modern fabric—perhaps we have located some of the **keys** we set out to look for in this **forest**. Maybe we can fully grasp now what Robert Bone was intimating when he stated: “Unless we grasp Toomer’s Neo-Platonism, with its basic commitment to noumenal reality, we cannot comprehend his attitude toward race”.⁴⁹

This seemingly innocuous phrase—“Kabnis is Me”—marked at the outset of our journey in our second image [**Image A2**] just after Jean Toomer’s passport—is the **sibylline mystery** we hope to finally **unravel** here, as it has been a source of confusion and misunderstanding. We take a dual approach to the **conundrum**: [**A**] We **start** with the psychological approach—applying what Bourne writes of Dostoevsky’s fiction: “For self-analysis is only torturing and unhealthy when you are conscious of an **I** which analyses a **Me**”.⁵⁰

**Toomer is the “I” [the subject] or judging Thought
self-analyzing—or—circumspecting
reflecting upon (*Besonnenheit*)
himself [the object]
the “Me”**

Kabnis is the part of himself that **self-consciousness**—analytical reasoning—allows Toomer to see. The process of **Analysis** is a dividing or breaking apart—this source of *splintering* and *fracturing* and *atomizing* in modern society, as defined by German thought, *and* what *romantik* aesthetics tried to circumvent.

[**Z**] We **end** by finding another way to the **cipher**—through Herder’s ‘back door’. This is given in Jean Toomer’s image of the ‘**One Great Tree**’ presented earlier, his variation of the **archetype** of the Axis Mundi, or World Tree, which we invert,

⁴⁸ Waldo Frank, *The Rediscovery of Man* (New York: George Braziller, 1958), 457; 464-5.

⁴⁹ Bone, *Down Home*, 205.

⁵⁰ Bourne, “Immanence of Dostoevsky”, 25. Emphasis added.

to overcome “**branch-consciousness**” to attain “**tree consciousness**”.

Each race is a *branch* on this World *Tree*, and each individual is a *leaf* on its branch—as hinted in our third Herderian ‘Tree’: “What a little *strand of foliage* of the tree I may be!” (PHL 337). Using Schelling’s axiom gives us the relationship of **each** to the **Absolute**—*selbst* to the *Urselbst*⁵¹—we extrapolate not only that Kabnis is the *leaf* and Jean Toomer the *Tree*, but that the *Unio Mystico* required to unify the former two is necessarily the exact method required to join the latter pair. “Kabnis is Me” is essentially the *Tree* (**Self**) looking outward at its *leaf* (**self**), however, it would not be correct to equate the Oak Tree with its leaf—any more than we could point to “a small comma or dash” and then call it *Hamlet* (PHL 337). The **World Tree** is inverted as its *root* is planted ‘**There**’ and its *leaves* are ‘**Here**’.

I will frame the entire *Frühromantik* endeavor within the following 3 Questions:

- [1] Question: How can the *leaf rise up* and *enter* the **Soul** of the **Tree**?
Clue: Reverse the process **God** used to have **His Son come down** to **Earth**.
- [2] Question: Why do shamans claim we need a *bird* to reach the **World Tree**?
Clue: Once **Mignon**’s identity is uncovered, unravel why the cruel showman that Wilhelm rescues her from is nicknamed “**The Great Devil**”.
- [3] Question: What is the **cipher** hidden beneath German *romantik* aesthetics?
Clue: Unlock how the finalé of the *Enneads* is woven into *Wilhelm Meister*.

‘**Nothing Divulged to the Uninitiate**’: the Supreme is not to be made a common story, the holy things may not be uncovered to the stranger, to any that has not himself attained to see. There were not two; beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended. The man formed by this mingling with the Supreme must if he only remember carry its image impressed upon him: he is become the **Unity**, [...] and all Intellection and even, to dare the word, the very self: caught away, **filled with God**, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation; [...] He belongs no longer to the order of the beautiful; he has risen beyond beauty; he has overpassed even the choir of the virtues; **he is like one who, having penetrated the inner sanctuary, leaves the temple images behind him**—though these become once more first objects of regard when he leaves the **holies**; for There his converse was not with image, not with trace, but with the very Truth [...] There, indeed, it was scarcely vision, unless of a mode unknown; **it was a going forth from the self**, a simplifying, a **renunciation**, a reach towards contact and at the same time a repose, a meditation towards adjustment. This is the **only seeing** of what lies within the **holies** . . . (ENN 624 ; VI.9.2 ; emphasis added)



⁵¹ J. Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), lxi.

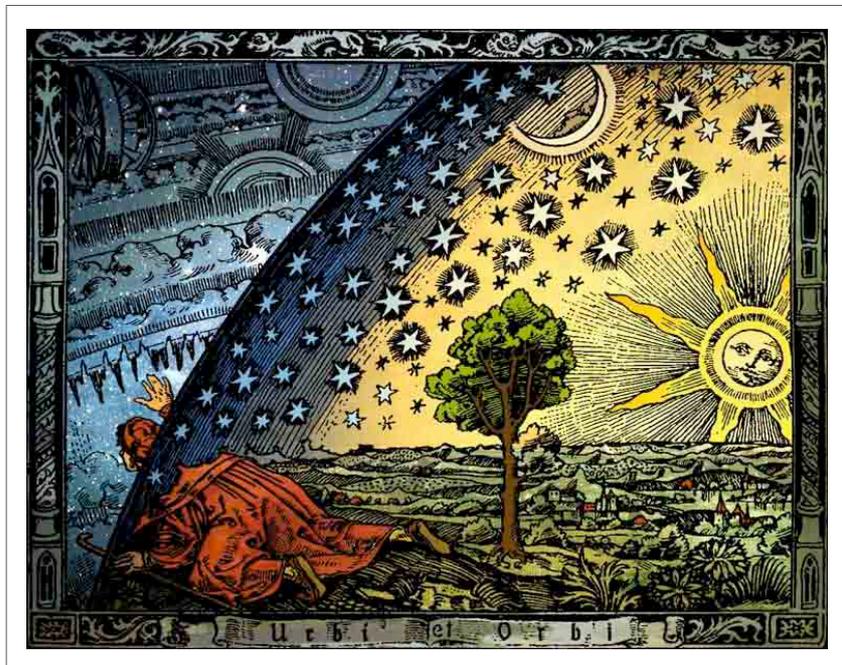


Image F5. *Flammarion Engraving*, circa 1888. Artist Unknown. First appeared in Camille Flammarion's book *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (1888).

GOETHE'S 'POLYVALENT' WILHELM MEISTER

Wilhelm's discussion of Shakespeare provides us with a hint or key to unlock the more hidden aspects of *Wilhelm Meister*: "His men appear like natural men, and yet they are not. These, the most mysterious and complex productions of creation, here act before us . . ." (*WM* 167). Goethe's symbolic/allegorical method of **characterization** and grounding of this aesthetic is best understood within the context of the following fragment from Plotinus' *Enneads*:

When we look outside of that on which we depend we ignore our unity; looking **outward** we see many faces; look **inward** and all is the one head. If a man could but be turned about by his own motion or by the happy pull of Athene he would see at once God and himself and the All. (*ENN* 536; VI.5.7)

In *Athenaeum* **fragment** §121, **Friedrich Schlegel** praises the ancients for their instinctive "great practical abstraction", which he identifies with "scientific wit", "higher criticism", and "the highest rungs of spiritual cultivation" (*FRS* 177). He posits that expressing the ideal of one's "species" is not possible in "isolation"—requiring the *relinquishing* of one's being—and transporting one's imagination and soul "arbitrarily now into this, now into that sphere, as if into another world" (*FRS* 177). It requires a mind that "contains within itself simultaneously a plurality of minds and a whole system of persons" (*FRS* 177). This mystical conception of identity—providing the foundation for our next device of romantic irony—is also key for **Novalis** as can be observed in his definition of a 'synthetic person' in his *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia*:

63. **THEORY OF PERSON.** A truly synthetic person, is a person who is many people simultaneously—a genius. Every person is the seed of an infinite genius. They may be divided into numerous people, and yet still be one. The true analysis of the person as such, brings forth people—the person can only be isolated, split and divided into people. A person is a harmony—not a mixture, not motion—not substance, like the "soul." Spirit and person are one. (Force is the cause.)⁵²

This paradoxical **Plotinian** understanding of identity with its simultaneous position of *outward* multiplicity and *inward* unity is what **romantic irony** attempts to capture. We shall see how Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* provides for Germany not only the blueprint for the *Bildungsroman*, but also the model for a "hovering" narrative structure that oscillates "now into this, now into that sphere" to achieve spiritual expression and *Bildung* on the "highest rungs".

⁵² Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 10. For those unfamiliar with Goethe's *Bildungsroman*, see *Metaphysical Exercitium* § 45—where the novel is recast as a puppet play.

[**DEVICE** *ffff* : **MULTI-LAYERED IDENTITIES**] : Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* achieves a complex *schwebend* narration through its aesthetic innovation of creating **symbolic-allegorical characters** with multiple-layers of meaning. The "genius" behind the novel is analogous to the invisible single face of God *within*—the All—and each of the various characters are akin to the **globe** of myriad faces seen when looking *outward*: (1) On the purely surface level, the story of *Wilhelm Meister* traces the development of the fictional character and protagonist, Wilhelm, as he interacts with other characters presented throughout the novel's various scenes. It is a narrative tracing the actions of an individual poet fumbling and "vacillating" through life trying to find happiness and his place in the world. (2) The actor Wilhelm's experiences and life story are additionally a **metonymic** portrayal of the history of German theater itself, where the individual's experiences contain allegorical references that mirror the nation's development: the marionettes that feature in Wilhelm's life in the opening chapters represent early German puppet plays; his disdain for the clown corresponds to **Johann Christoph Gottsched's** call to ban the "Hanswurst" figure from the German stage; and Wilhelm's progression from enacting Biblical plays like David and Goliath to putting on classical French-styled dramas, reflects the historic shifts that occurred on the German stage—as the characters and plots intermingle with those found in the 1740-5 anthology *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*.⁵³

(3) Wilhelm functions as a thinly-veiled **persona** for the author who weaves in elements from his early memories and life to drive the story. Goethe first began working on his autobiography *From my Life: Poetry and Truth* (the first three parts were published 1811-14) at the same time he was writing *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*; while the former seeks to record faithfully recount historic scenes and experiences, the latter attempts to translate and transform these—**allegorically** and **symbolically**—into a multi-layered novel capturing, in F. Schlegel's words, "Goethe's whole spirit". As the narrative progresses, the author achieves this through additional correlations and identities encoded within the different planes of the text, which are merely suggested and slowly unfolded for the readers.

⁵³ Jane V. Curran, *Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship"*, 12, 18, 23.

(4) After Wilhelm is introduced to **Shakespeare** by **Jarno**, and as the troupe prepares for their production of *Hamlet*, the thematic structure becomes meta-discursive, as parallels and distinctions are drawn creating a “confusion” between the actor Wilhelm and the role of Hamlet.⁵⁴ The meta-dramatic perspectives that the ‘**Mousetrap**’ provided to Shakespeare’s drama are multiplied as *Hamlet* plays a similar function in Goethe’s novel about the art of theater—within this “endless succession of mirrors” the interrelationship between **role** and **identity** constantly shifts blurring the distinction between **Art** and **Life**. In his book *The Life and Works of Goethe* (1855), George Henry Lewes gives comment:

Very artfully is Hamlet made as it were a part of the novel . . . not only because it illustrates the affinity between Hamlet and Wilhelm, both of whom are reflective, **vacillating** characters, but because Hamlet is further allied to Wilhelm in making the Play a touchstone, whereby to detect the truth, and determine his own actions.⁵⁵

However, Wilhelm’s identification with **Hamlet** along with his aspirations to become an actor—which had been the preoccupation of the first six books—are short-lived as they are both cast off following the culmination of the theater troupe’s performance. The parallel established between **Shakespeare** and **Goethe**, however, is maintained throughout the rest of the novel—as this foundation is hinted by the choice of the protagonist’s name and book’s title, perhaps even referenced in the following poem integrated into the narrative:

Know’st thou the land where lemon-trees do bloom,
And oranges like gold in leafy gloom;
A gentle wind from deep blue heaven blows,
The myrtle thick, and high the laurel grows?
Know’st thou it, then?
 ’Tis there! ’tis there,
O my **belov’d** one, I with thee would go!

Know’st thou the house, its porch with pillars tall?
The rooms do glitter, glitters bright the hall,
And marble statues stand, and look me on:
What’s this, poor child, to thee they’ve done?
Know’st thou it, then?
 ’Tis there! ’tis there,
O my **protector**, I with thee would go!

⁵⁴ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁵ Henry George Lewes, *The Life and Works of Goethe* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), 415. Emphasis added.

Know'st thou the mountain, bridge that hangs on cloud?
 The mules in mist grope o'er the torrent loud,
 In caves lie coil'd the dragon's ancient brood,
 The crag leaps down and over it the flood:
 Know'st thou it, then?
 'Tis there! 'tis there, Our way runs;
 O my **father**, wilt thou go? (*WMI* 124; emphasis added)

Placed at the opening of Book III, Chapter 1, '**Kennst du das Land?**' would come to be regarded as one of Goethe's most memorable and beautiful poems; it introduces new *identities* for readers to consider alongside the others—that of (5) **beloved**, (6) **protector**, and (7) **father**—challenging them to query the relationship between the protagonist and Mignon, but also to discover the ways these *identities* might apply to Wilhelm or the author. A further mystery is created by the framing of the poem as a folksong created by Mignon, but sung in a strange language that needed to be translated and transcribed by **Wilhelm**.

In the numerous scenes depicting **Mignon** (8) and the **Harper** (9), we begin to recognize these two are integrally linked to Wilhelm as their songs are meta-poetic in that they recontextualize the narrated scenes or are expressions of his state of mind. **Romantic irony** kicks in the moment the reader picks up on the fact that Mignon is the *inspiration* for the poem '**Kennst du das Land?**', which is created *through* Wilhelm—she expresses herself through dance, sounds Italian, cannot speak properly because she is linked to what the author experienced on his trip to Italy: she is an embodiment of the **spirit of poetry**. We learn she is the Harper's daughter born out of an incestuous relationship—the identity of this tragic figure and musician is not hard to surmise through a Herderian lens—he personifies the beauty and suffering of **folksongs** (*Volkslieder*). It should not surprise anyone to learn that the Harper was Herder's favorite character in *Wilhelm Meister*, although the Lutheran minister was displeased with the novel's lack of "delicate moral feeling": "In the book, as a whole, the old harper pleases me most. He's the man for me. There are besides very striking and acute remarks, but I cannot admire the web on which the whole is worked".⁵⁶ Herder's reaction of frowning on 'licentiousness' in literary works is understandable considering his occupation, but it is surprising that this would be enough to spoil for him a novel so firmly planted in his own aesthetic principles.

⁵⁶ Qtd. in Nevinson, *A Sketch of Herder & His Times*, 408-9.

For the final multi-identity we begin by identifying the passages in Herder's essay 'Shakespeare' (1773) that link to this *Bildungsroman*:

individual impressions of peoples, estates, souls, all the most various and independently **acting machines**, all the unwitting, blind instruments—which is precisely what we are in the hands of the **Creator** of the world—which **come together to form a single, whole** dramatic image, an event of singular grandeur that only the poet can survey. (*AES* 299; emphasis added)

For if you are a true artist, no clock strikes on tower or temple for you, because you **create your own space and time**; and if you are able to create a world that cannot but exist in the categories of space and time, behold, your measure of space and duration is there within you, and you must **enchant** all your spectators so that they believe in it . . . (*AES* 304; emphasis added)

It is plain Goethe had taken Herder's message to heart in his drama *Goetz von Berlichingen* (1773), which makes a point of obliterating all classical rules regarding "unities of time and space" with its main character *Gottfried* and over fifty scene changes throughout. In *Apprenticeship* we find once more that the author incorporates obvious references to Herder's influential essay⁵⁷—in the crucial scenes where Wilhelm comments on British dramatist's mastery:

in Shakspeare's writings . . . men appear like natural men, and yet they are not. These, the most mysterious and complex productions of creation, here act before us **as if they were watches, whose dial-plates** and cases were of crystal; which pointed out, according to their use, the course of the hours and minutes; while, at the same time, you could discern the **combination of wheels and springs** that turned them. (*WMI* 167-8 ; Bk. III, Ch. 11 ; emphasis added)

Even more poetic is the scene describing Wilhelm's first encounter with Shakespeare as it repeats and dramatizes the metaphors in Herder's essay:

Wilhelm . . . Shut up in one of the remotest chambers, to which Mignon and the Harper alone had free access, he lived and moved in the Shakspearean world, feeling or knowing nothing but the movements of his own mind. We have heard of some **Enchanter** summoning, by magic formulas, **a vast multitude of spiritual shapes** into his cell. The conjurations are so powerful that the whole space of the apartment is quickly full; and the spirits crowding on to the verge of the little circle which they must not pass, around this, and above the master's head, keep increasing in number, and ever whirling in perpetual transformation. . . . **Embryos expand themselves, and giant forms contract into the size of nuts. . . . a thousand feelings and capacities** awoke in him, of which he formerly had neither notion nor anticipation. (*WMI* 161 ; Bk. III, Ch. 9 ; emphasis added)

⁵⁷ "If any one would learn immediately what was thought, talked about, and discussed in this lively society, let him read Herder's essay on Shakspeare [sic], in the part of his works upon the German manner and art (*Über Deutsche Art und Kunst*) . . ." (*T&P* 428).

The ultimate identity is the one suggested in ‘Shakespeare’, that of (10) **Maker** and “**Creator of the world**”. Schiller reformulated Herder’s thesis to apply to all poets: “Like the Deity behind this universe, he stands behind his work; he is himself the work, and the work is himself”.⁵⁸ The boundaries of fact and fiction are blurred and we are given glimpses of the *Unity* within the text’s *Multiplicity*—the “vast multitude of spiritual shapes”, the “thousand feelings and capacities awoken” all coalesce to provide an outline of the invisible author behind the text—the *All* (∞). Throughout the novel’s oscillating narrative structure, readers are dropped hints to secrets at its deepest core: *Wilhelm Meister* is an “*Allbiographie*” or “poly-novel”⁵⁹—meaning that all of the characters contained are abstractions of different aspects of **Goethe’s** personality. In a certain sense, this is true for all novels, as Edmund Wilson recognizes in his book *Axel’s Castle* (1931):

The real elements, of course, of any work of fiction, are the elements of the author’s personality: his imagination embodies in the images of characters, situations and scenes the fundamental conflicts of his nature . . . His personages are personifications of the author’s various impulses and emotions: and the relations between them in his stories are really the relations between these.⁶⁰

Schlegel suggests, however, that *Meister’s* method differs from others in its “**manner of the representation**, which endows even the most circumscribed characters with the appearance of a unique, autonomous individual, while yet possessing **another aspect**, another *variation of that general human nature . . .*”⁶¹ Goethe’s technique relies upon the same **mythopoetic method** of abstraction and personification of forces *in the world* to create **myths** (embodiments of emotions and ideas)—however, applied *to the author* instead. Not only do **Mignon** and **Harper**—the two least grounded and most mysterious characters—represent abstract ideas of the ‘spirit of poetry’ and ‘mournful music’, the novel’s entire cast of characters functions in similar allegorical fashion, as often hinted by their names, their characteristics, or revealed through their actions.

⁵⁸ Qtd. in Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 238. From ‘On Naïve & Sentimental Poetry’ (1795).

⁵⁹ “Gerhart Baumann labels Jean Paul’s work a ‘poly-novel,’ or ‘Allbiographie,’ because Jean Paul represents himself in all his characters, splitting himself up in order to produce a multitude of characters who are all aspects of his own personality.” Dorothea Berger, *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter* (New York: Twayne, 1972), 43.

⁶⁰ Wilson, *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s and 30s*, 763.

⁶¹ F. Schlegel, ‘On Goethe’s *Meister*’, 60. Emphasis added.

Jane K. Brown refers to the system of names in *Wilhelm Meister* as an “**elaborated allegory**”—and she notes that the two characters **Narciss** “are self-involved without realizing it”; “**Philine** and **Philo** each teach their friends about love”; and “**Aurelie**, who leads Wilhelm to Lothario, in fact represents a *dawn* for him, and **Natalie** a *rebirth*. Natalie’s sister, the **Countess**, has no proper name . . . she represents the ‘shimmering appearance’ (*schöner Schein*) that characterizes aristocracy . . . and her aunt appears only as ‘the **Beautiful Soul**’.⁶² Friedrich Schlegel celebrates the novel’s “personality and **living individuality**”, remarking that “the more deeply [the reader] probes, the more **inner connections** and relations and the greater intellectual coherence he will discover in it”.⁶³

What, then, is the allegorical equivalent for the protagonist of the novel? What unique characteristic of the author does “our hero” embody? Of course, this is merely suggested and never explicitly stated—but the author relies upon discerning readers to glean where the central character sits semantically within the constellation of characters. Unlike traditional allegory, the assigned meanings in Goethe’s narrative **waver** between different polysemic valencies, making them harder to discern. The text discloses that **Wilhelm**—who is often described near the word “imagination” and narrative flights of fancy—is a personification of the **creative imagination**. The seemingly insignificant actions between characters occurring on the surface are often guided by **allegorical** correspondences with autobiographical elements, which ascribe **symbolic** meaning. For example, it is the surgeon **Jarno** (‘aligned’ with analytical **Reason**) who first introduces Shakespeare to **Wilhelm**, yet he reads the books in a locked room accompanied only by **Mignon** and the **Harper**—suggesting that Shakespeare’s works can only become *magically* animated (by spirits “whirling in perpetual transformation”), when approached through the **Imagination** aided by the spirit of **Poetry** and **Folksong**, with analytical **Reason** left outside.

⁶² Jane K. Brown, *Goethe’s Allegories of Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 103. Emphasis added. Brown provides additional keys to help decipher the ‘hieroglyphic’ pattern of Goethe’s naming schema: “the initial letter of ‘**Wilhelm**’ and his alter ego ‘**Werner**’ is an inverted *M*”—“**M**ariane, **M**ignon, **M**elina, Madame **M**elina, Lothario’s former beloved **M**argarete, and in book 1 alone, Wilhelm’s ‘**M**use’, his ‘**M**utter’ and his beloved ‘**M**arionetten’ . . . [a]ll the *M*s belong to the early stages of Wilhelm’s (or Lothario’s) careers in love, and the women in the group are all particularly lovable and particularly capable of passionate love that is not primarily selfish . . .” (103-104; emphasis added).

⁶³ F. Schlegel, ‘On Goethe’s *Meister*’, 60. Emphasis added.

Wilhelm—as the embodiment of Goethe’s Imagination—is the “**Father**” from which all the other characters have sprung and the “**Beloved**” creative force giving the unfolding *Arabesque*-like characters and events form; and his entering the Tower Society relates the process of harnessing one’s Imagination to focus and direct creative energy towards meaningful purpose—“**Master-y**”. Ammerlahn’s “multiple approaches” and his decoding of the Tower figures is particularly insightful—**Jarno** (logic), the **Abbé** (pedagogical guidance), and **Lothario** (“the dynamic combination of thought and far-reaching activity”)—as it brings him to the conclusion that the novel is “an ironically distanced and veiled inner autobiography revealing what Goethe himself desired, confronted and mastered”, supported by letters, diaries and other documents.⁶⁴ In his letter to Herder in May 1775, Goethe records his enthusiastic response upon reading parts of *Ideen*, and other writings his friend had sent him:

God knows how you make one feel the reality of that world! A compost heap teeming with life! And so thanks, and thanks again, . . . And I feel, too, the very essence of your being in these figures of the scene; you’re not the curtain from behind which your puppets slip but the same eternal brother, man, God, worm, and fool. Your way of gathering gold, not by just sifting it out of the dirt but by having the dirt itself brought to life again in the form of plants, is ever close to my heart.⁶⁵

These words could equally apply to *Wilhelm Meister*, of course, but we highlight Goethe’s allusion to Herder’s method—allowing the author to be magically infused within the work, appearing as one of the puppets, then God. **Ernst Cassirer** details what is behind his method of historical thinking: a **dual drive** “alternat[ing] between the two opposite poles of the ‘immanent’ and the ‘transcendent’; . . . [with the latter reaching] toward a **divine plan**, an act of Providence”.⁶⁶ During his conversations with Eckermann, Goethe is evasive when pressed for insight into the novel—claiming, “I myself scarcely have the key” and that it is misguided to look for a “central point”; however, he then proceeds to reveal: “the whole work seems to say . . . that man, despite all of his follies and errors, being led by a higher hand, reaches some happy goal” (*ECK* 84).

⁶⁴ Hellmut Ammerlahn, “The Marriage of Artist’s Novel and Bildungsroman: Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, A Paradigm in Disguise”, *German Life and Letters* 59, no.1 (January 2006): 40; 45.

⁶⁵ Qtd. in Ernst Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge: Philosophy, Science, and History Since Hegel*, trans. William Woglom & Charles Hendel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), 219.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 218. Emphasis added.

GOETHE REFLECTED IN TOOMER

Although multi-dimensional identities [**DEVICE** *ffff*] are similarly utilized by Anderson and Toomer for the narrative structures of ‘**Out of Nowhere into Nothing**’ and ‘**Withered Skin of Berries**’, we turn to the latter’s ‘**Kabnis**’ to examine how Goethe’s allegorical-symbolic method provides a blueprint for fusing characterization, plot, and theme. A brief look at Toomer’s notes for a future story written 9 Aug 1923, show his familiarity with the device:

As **many separate characters**, under individual names, as **are contained within the central character**. And then have him meet a lovely person, if imperfect, and **melt** into a **fuller self**, before her loveliness. [“LLN” III:17; emphasis added]

As I have argued previously in *Jean Toomer: Essentialist & Spiritualizer*, the author divulged his double motif to **Lola Ridge**, revealing that Lewis and Kabnis are *both* representations of himself: “I myself am frankly the source of both of them” (*LJT* 82). We can append Montgomery Gregory’s ‘A Review of *Cane*’, which brings the allegorical-symbolic narrative mode to the foreground:

Evidently the author’s implication is that there must be a welding into one personality of Kabnis and Lewis: the great *emotionalism* of the race guided and directed by a great purpose and a *super-intelligence*.⁶⁷

Toomer writes a letter in reply dated January 2, 1924, providing more clues:

“Your preference for the Georgia section is surely justified, for those pieces contain my purest emotions. . . . **You certainly caught one of the main, if not the main, implication of Kabnis**. In addition, just a few notes. Father John, the past the past, unless it articulates in the present, is mute. Carrie Kate, love and sympathy,—love and sympathy powerless unless coupled with knowledge and the means thereby, Etc. (*LJT* 188; emphasis added)

And for the final bit of confirmation that this device is indeed a central component of ‘**Kabnis**’ and that he toyed with the idea of providing hints to his readers, we turn to Toomer’s early draft of the dust jacket rider planned for *CANE* to examine the section ultimately removed from the final dustjacket:

Part Three (a single drama), Georgia again. But this is not a brief tale of peasant sorrow. It is a moving and sustained tragedy of spiritual suffering. For here a **nervous and dynamic northern sensitivity** comes to grips with the crude beauty and ugliness of the south, and a **northern intelligence** battles with southern Negro waywardness, oppression, and superstition. [“PRO” IV: Facsimile 1 & 2; the published version [Image H6] removes final line.]

⁶⁷ Montgomery Gregory, “Self-Expression in *Cane*”, in *CANE: A Norton Critical Edition*, 1st ed., ed. Darwin T. Turner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 168. Italics added.

This removed passage, along with the other revelations offered by the author, make it clear that he relied upon the meta-literary devices of **romantic irony** to create allegorical-symbolic characters with **multivalent identities**.

Although critics like to repeat the fact that Kabnis is a persona of Toomer, who similarly went to rural Georgia to serve as a teacher and assistant principal—they miss the larger point that Lewis and Kabnis are *doppelgängers*, not merely personas of Toomer, but allegorical personifications of aspects in conflict within himself. Kohlberg provides insight into this technique, when he points out that “Dostoevsky’s consciously ‘split’ characters . . . [are not merely] a separation of selves, [but] an obsessive unbalancing or undoing of one idea or force with its opposite”.⁶⁸ Toomer’s reply to Gregory’s letter validating his reading, also confirms that ‘Kabnis’ can be classified alongside *Wilhelm Meister*, using Baumann’s terminology of ‘poly-novel’ or ‘*Allbiographie*’. His reply decodes the symbols: “Father John, the past . . . Carrie Kate, love and sympathy . . . powerless unless coupled with knowledge [Lewis]” (*LJT* 187). Every character in the basement of the finalé are abstractions of different “forces” and components of Toomer’s aggregate personality (identity ∞). These **allegorical** valences and their correlation to autobiographical events assign **symbolic** meaning to the scenes depicting strange moments where the surface reality breaks down. This understanding provides new context to interpret the disorienting sudden urge for Kabnis to embrace Lewis:

In the instant of their shifting, a vision of the life they are to meet. Kabnis, a promise of a soil-soaked beauty; uprooted, thinning out. Suspended a few feet above the soil whose touch would resurrect him. [. . .] There is a swift intuitive interchange of consciousness. Kabnis has a sudden need to rush into the arms of this man. His eyes call, “Brother.” (C 98)

Or the scene where Lewis concludes that Carrie Kate could nurture Kabnis:

Her soft rolled words are fresh pain to Lewis. He wants to take her North with him. What for? He wonders what Kabnis could do for her. What she could do for him. Mother him. (C 104)

And finally, the scene between Carrie and Lewis where the narration again breaks into mythological language revealing some momentary spiritual epiphany—that clearly links Carrie’s identity with the ‘**Negro folk-spirit**’, just as with Fern before:

⁶⁸Qtd. in Malcolm V. Jones, *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin*, 40. Jones uses the term ‘**oscillation**’ to denote the “unbalancing and undoing” noted by Lawrence Kohlberg, 30.

Her **spirit-bloom**, even now touched **sullen**, bitter. **Her rich beauty fading**. . .
 He wants to—He stretches forth his hands to hers. He takes them. They feel
 like warm cheeks against his palms. The sun-burst from her eyes floods up and
 haloes him. Christ-eyes, his eyes look to her. (C 103; emphasis added)

These passages take on new meaning when the reader interprets them allegorically—viewing **Kabnis** to be an embodiment of “**sensitivity**”, the author’s emotional aspect or **soul**, and **Lewis** to represent his “**intelligence**” or cerebral side. How they respond to the South encapsulates Toomer’s own conflicted feelings about the ‘Negro racial **Past**’ (Father John)—grotesque and marred by the pain of slavery, yet also chaperoned by naïve **Beauty** (Carrie). The **Intellect** (Lewis) calmly takes notes but is too aloof to connect with the people he meets, but is aware of the truth and burden of the past. The **Soul** (Kabnis) is able to form bonds with the people (**Sympathy**), and is overcome by powerful emotions, he intuitively senses the sad meaning of folksong, pain animating the soil, and the spirits in the trees. The nocturnal scene of the basement is the *Noumena* of the text—“the Hole”—the subconscious where all the individualized personalities are gathered together.

The **Intellect** recognizes and takes in the significance of the various members—“Kabnis, Carrie, Stella, Halsey, Cora, the old man, the cellar, and the workshop, the southern town descend upon him” (C 112)—however, the **Intellect** alone is unable to achieve empathy (*Einfühlung*), and as a result his “glowing within” becomes a “dead chill”. He is “completely cut out” as the moment in the cellar becomes too intense for Lewis to remain: “Their pain is too intense. He cannot stand it. He bolts from the table. Leaps up the stairs” (C 112)—**Intellect** is unable to **reconcile** the fragments of experience and sensations into meaning, that becomes the task of the **Soul** as he attempts to come to terms with and heal the buried, conflicting emotions in the finalé.

Exactly what happens at the end of ‘**Kabnis**’ is only hinted at by the sun rising with its ray encircling **Father John** and **Carrie**. However, read allegorically, the nature of the **reconciliation** in the final scene is more apparent—the broken wheel upstairs will be repaired with this new understanding of the racial past joined with Beauty. The broken arcs representing the various experiences in Georgia and Washington, will be brought together—not just by the **Soul**, but all the elements drawn together—to **fuse** the fragments of **CANE**—into a circle.

THE MYTHIC INFINITE PERSPECTIVE

The full title of Goethe's sequel to *Apprenticeship* is *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre oder Die Entsagenden* (1795–96)—with “*Wanderjahre*” translated as ‘Travels’ or ‘Journeyman Years’—however, the alternative title is where I want to draw our attention: *or The Renunciants*. In his conversations with Eckermann, **Goethe** intimates that perhaps there is something hidden within his novel, without differentiating which he is referring to, or if it is both:

In the seeming trivialities of *Wilhelm Meister*, there is always something higher at bottom; and nothing is required but eyes and knowledge of the world, and power of comprehension to perceive the great in the small (*ECK* 122).

In fact, Goethe even places the image of a key [] within *Travels* (*WMIII* 170),⁶⁹ and plays with the symbolic lock and key motif throughout both ‘halves’, or installments of “*Wilhelm Meister*”. It is from deciphering Goethe's method that I discerned the “lock & key technique”, which I labelled [**DEVICE** □ : **SECRET LINK**] —(perhaps also where Faulkner drew inspiration for his coffin in *As I Lay Dying*). However, instead of the key, we focus on Goethe's technique—one of the most effectual uses of intertextuality that communicates *Meister's* inner secrets.

In the poem ‘**Kennst du das Land?**’—first sung by Mignon (the spirit of poetry) and then transcribed by Wilhelm (the Imagination)—there are images that specifically dovetail with the epiphanic moment of Plotinus' *Enneads*: “Know'st thou the house, its porch with **pillars** tall? / The rooms do glitter, **glitters** bright the hall, / And **marble statues** stand, and **look** me on” (*WMI* 124). My reading is that these images allude to the inner sanctum of the temple described by Plotinus where one attains a ‘higher’ mode of vision—Schlegel refers to **Mignon's** funeral scene in the final section of the book as the moment “where the curtain of the **holy of holies** is drawn back, and we find ourselves upon a height where everything is **god-like** and serene and pure . . .”⁷⁰

Ammerlahn makes the case that *Wanderjahre* is in essence, a veiled ‘critique of the senses’ written in response to Kant's three *Kritik*: “within the framework of one of the most influential and profound novels of world literature Goethe incorporated his self-reflexive ‘**Critique of Creative Imagination**’.

⁶⁹ Book III, Chapter 3 in Suhrkamp's unabridged version. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Collected Works*, vol. 10, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years or the Renunciants*, ed. Jane K. Brown (New York: Suhrkamp, 1989): 321.

⁷⁰ F. Schlegel, “On Meister”, 73. Emphasis added. Cf. *Enneads* VI.9.2 at the end of **Forest 5**.

It appears as a symbolically encoded **metatext**".⁷¹ This is an illuminating take on the novel, and following this line of reasoning has led to my own reading, that directly correlates to what Goethe reveals when describing his religion:

. . . I had often enough heard it said that every man has his own religion at last, so nothing seemed more natural to me than that I should form mine too, and this I did with much satisfaction. The **Neo-Platonism** lay at the foundation; the **hermetical**, the **mystical**, the **cabalistic**, also contributed their share, and thus I built for myself a world that looked strange enough. (*T&P* 300; emphasis added)

I will argue this Neo-Platonism underlies both *Wilhelm Meister* books—we have already identified these foundations through which the devices of **romantic irony** operate—*parabasis*, polysemic symbols, multivalent identities, hovering, polyphonic prose. These devices, by and large, rely on a shift in consciousness, which could generally be labeled “perspectivism”—but it is more accurately expressed as a shift towards an **infinite** perspective—*Sub Specie Aeternitatis*. This new vision is described in the climactic ending of the *Enneads* in this manner: “There, indeed, it was scarcely vision, unless of a mode unknown; it was a going forth from the self, a simplifying, a **renunciation**, . . . a meditation towards adjustment. This is the only seeing what lies within the **holies**” (*ENN* 624; VI.9.11). According to Plotinus, this new “mode” of vision requires *Renunciation*—the same sense of ‘relinquishing’ referred to earlier in Schlegel’s **fragment §121**—I view the *Enneads* as the source of Goethe’s doctrine of Renunciation,⁷² and we can surmise is what was being alluded to with the second title, *The Renunciants*.

In Mignon’s burial scene in *Apprenticeship*, she is described in the book as “*die bildende Kraft*”—not only the spirit of poetry, but also an embodiment of “the formative power” and “guiding force of the book”⁷³—she represents *Poiesis*. She is the human form of *die Goldene Gans*, and when she is laid to rest, she is returned below the surface of the narrative to its center—the place of the animating soul or *Geist*. As Cordula Grewe reveals, Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis went against the trend of interpreting **Mignon** as a pedagogical instrument (*Bildfaktoren*), opting instead for an allegorical approach that

⁷¹ Hellmut Ammerlahn, “Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: An Apprenticeship toward the Mastery of Exactly What?”, *Colloquia Germanica* 30, no. 2 (1997): 114; 99-115. Emphasis added.

⁷² See Lewes, *The Life and Works of Goethe*, 496.

⁷³ Eric A. Blackall, “Afterword” to Goethe’s *Collected Works*, vol. 9, *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (New York: Suhrkamp, 1989), 386.

positioned “Mignon as a **hieroglyph** for the **Romantic poetic** itself and, in this capacity, as the **representation of the realm of the aesthetic** in general”.⁷⁴ This understanding of Mignon recontextualizes the meanings and symbolism hidden within the third stanza of the poem ‘Kennst du das Land?’:

Know'st thou the **mountain bridge** that hangs on cloud?
 The **mules in mist** grope o'er the **torrent** loud,
 In **caves** lie coil'd the **dragon's** ancient brood,
 The **crag** leaps down and over it the **flood**:
 Know'st thou it, then?
 'Tis there! 'tis there, Our way runs;
 O my **father**, wilt thou go? (WMI 124)

The riddle and mystery of the song are not resolved until twenty-five years later, when the lyrics are reimagined as a painting in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*:

But, distinguished beyond all the other pictures, was one which the Artist, on his journey hither, and prior to his meeting with Wilhelm, had combined and painted with all its characteristic features. In the heart of the rude **Mountains** shines the **graceful seeming-boy**, encircled with toppling **cliffs**, besprayed with cataracts, in the middle of a motley horde. Never, perhaps, was a grim, precipitous, **primeval** mountain-pass more beautifully or expressively relieved with **living figures**. The particoloured, gipsy-looking group, at once rude and **fantastic**, strange and common, too loose to cause fear, too singular to awaken confidence. Stout **beasts of burden** are bearing along, now over paths made of trees, now down by steps hewn in the rock, a tawdry **chaotic** heap of luggage, round which all the instruments of a deafening music hang dangling to and fro, to affright the ear from time to time with rude tones. Amid all this, **the lovely child**, self-collected without defiance, indignant without resistance, led but not dragged. Who would not have looked with pleasure at this singular and impressive picture? Given in strong characters, frowned the stern obstruction of these **rock** masses, riven asunder by gloomy **chasms**, towered up together, threatening to hinder all outgate, had not a bold **bridge** betokened the possibility of again coming into **union** with the rest of the world. Nor had the Artist, with his quick feeling of fictitious truth, forgot to indicate the entrance of a **Cave**, which you might equally regard as the natural laboratory of huge **crystals**, or as the abode of a fabulously frightful brood of **Dragons**. (WMIII 105)⁷⁵

The images of the song in *Apprenticeship* are transferred onto canvass by the painter in *Travels*. Goethe's intertextual method of interlacing creates a **link** that bridges the distance between painting and poetry, connects Art and Life (how does the painter know Mignon or this song unless he read the book?), and

⁷⁴ Cordula Grewe, “Beyond Hegel's End of Art: Schadow's Mignon and the Religious Project of Late Romanticism”, *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 2 (August 2004): 191. Emphasis added.

⁷⁵ In Book III, Chapter 13 of Carlyle's *Travels*; Book II, Chapter 7, Suhrkamp edition, 255-6.

crosses the land of the Living and Dead—this **nexus** (‘vortex’) creates a **moment** (‘instant’) of **fusion** (‘complex’)—where *all the aesthetic devices coalesce*—into a moment of **revelation**. The mystery of Mignon’s place of origin and where she resides now—is the same answer to the riddle, ‘**Kennst du das Land?**’ . . . Not Italy, but rather—the place images (*Bilder*) originate—the mythic and transcendent realm of archetypes (*Ur-Bild*)—or *Noumena*. In the third stanza, the spirit of **Poetry** is singing about the land of images . . . from land of images . . . in the language of images, intuitively accessed and translated for us by the **Imagination**. This “land” is *imaged* in the painting using identical figures as those that appeared in the room when Wilhelm was reading Shakespeare.

In ‘**Carma**’, I believe Jean Toomer created a similar disorienting effect using Goethe’s method [**DEVICE ∞ : MYTHIC VISION**]. In the scene enclosed within the *lunulae*, the subconscious of the text is revealed, as twilight fades into dusk—the *Noumena* of spiritual reality, is envisioned in a similar **mythopoeic** manner:

(the **sun** is hammered to a band of gold. **Pine**-needles, like **mazda**, are brilliantly aglow. No rain has come to take the rustle from the falling **sweet-gum leaves**. Over in the forest, across the swamp, a sawmill blows its closing whistle. **Smoke curls up**. Marvelous web spun by the spider **sawdust pile**. Curls up and spreads itself **pine**-high above the branch, a single silver band along the eastern valley. **A black boy** . . . you are the most sleepest man I ever **seed**, **Sleeping Beauty** . . . cradled on a **gray mule**, guided by the hollow sound of cowbells, heads for them, through a rusty cotton field. From down the railroad track, the chug-chug of a gas engine announces that the repair gang is coming home. A girl in the yard of a whitewashed shack not much larger than the stack of worn ties piled before it, **sings**. Her voice is loud. Echoes, like rain, sweep the valley. **Dusk** takes the polish from the rails. Lights twinkle in scattered houses. From far away, a **sad strong song**. Pungent and composite, the smell of farmyards is the fragrance of the woman. She does not sing; her body is a song. She is in the forest, dancing. **Torches flare** . . . **juju men, greegree, witch-doctors** . . . **torches** go out. . . The Dixie Pike has grown from a goat path in **Africa**.

Night. Foeie, the bitch, slicks back her ears and barks at the rising **moon**.)

(C 12)

This vista of the crepuscular hour in Georgia, written from poetic fragments originally enmeshed with images of ‘Nullo’ and ‘Becky’, is a portrayal of the mythic realm where art, magic, and spirits dwell—past the **bridge** and **Cave** in **Mignon**’s realm. The **mule** is the link: the **Sleeping Beauty** and pun on **seed** is a riddle the author presents. Could we not surmise that the **black boy** is **Nullo**—unnamed, invisible, erased, and merely suggested? And just like Mignon who

later leaves the material realm but lives on, Nullo is the invisible yet present spiritual **force** tying all the fragments of **CANE** together. He is the *Volk seed* of the fading plum tree mentioned in the ‘**Song of the Sun**’—personified, his spirit suffuses the text as he lies buried under the pyramid-shaped sawdust mound, rising with the smoke in the mystical pines, floating on prayers to Jesus.

“THE DEITY BEHIND THIS UNIVERSE”

In her book *Germany (De l’Allemagne; 1813)*, Madame de Staël reveals that “Herder’s Rhapsody on Shakespeare . . . contains the key to many of the secrets of that new period of literature, which was inaugurated by Goethe himself . . .”.⁷⁶ We piece together these many fragments of ideas encountered and try to “pierce through” T. E. Hulme’s “**here** and **there**” to glimpse at the secret behind the veil. The poet—armed with his “infinite power of image production”, *Poiesis*—is able to extract the *Bild* from *Ur-Bild* and take an ascendent position—**hovering** from *selbst* to *Urselbst*, to envision and imprint this *Polyperspektive*—as both God and Puppet of his creations. The **renunciation** of self, is how one attains infinite sight of the **ONE**—leaving the *outward* ‘Puppet gaze’ (*Tendenz*) behind, and **wavering** towards an *inward* “divine central viewpoint”.⁷⁷

It seems that modernists have found this Herderian key as well—as we can follow Schiller’s essentialized thesis of ‘Shakespeare’, finding its way back to the British Isles and into the pages of Joyce’s *Portrait of an Artist* (1916):

The personality of the artist . . . finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak. . . . The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.⁷⁸

That is the ideal—to be like **Shakespeare**—“seated high atop some craggy eminence, whirlwinds, tempest, and the roaring sea at his feet” (*AES* 429)—yet, as our many descendants of Herder (*die Nachfabren von Herder*) have realized, a story becomes much more *interesting* if the poet steps down from the mountain to *play* the role of a Puppet, too—as in **CANE**, “When the sun goes down” (C 3).

⁷⁶ Madame de Staël-Holstein (Anne Louise Germaine), *Germany*, vol. 2, ed. Orlando Williams Wright (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864), 407.

⁷⁷ Marshall Brown, *The Shape of German Romanticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 46-7. “The individual is caught between the intellectual hubris of claiming a divine central viewpoint and the psychological extravagance of the nihilists who deny the center.”

⁷⁸ James Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1991), 269.

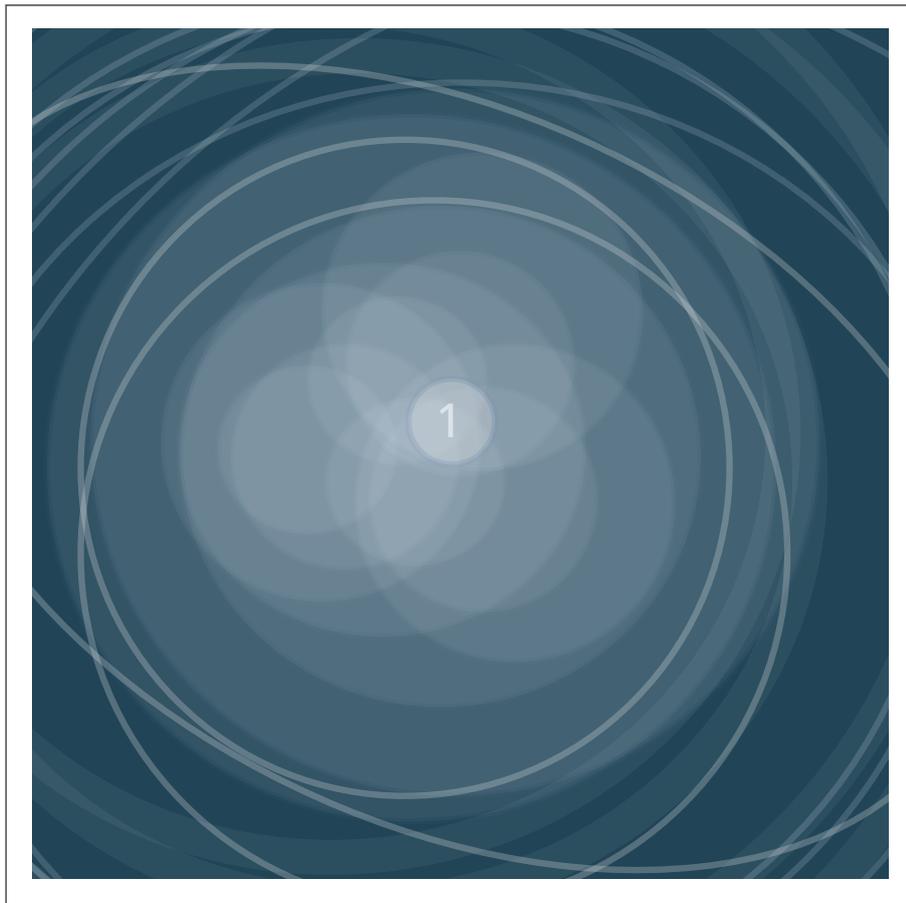


Image G1: τὸ Ἕν — The ONE (*der Eine*). John-Francis Kinsler. August 27, 2020.

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CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Spirals, Revolutions, & New Ventures

. . . by means of which that superiority is ascertained,
which *but* for them would never have been discovered—
this neighbor asserts that Shakespeare is a great poet—
the fool believes him, and it is henceforth his opinion.

This neighbor's own *opinion* has, in like manner,
been adopted from one above *him*, and so, ascendingly,
to a few gifted individuals, who kneel around the summit,
beholding, face to face, the master spirit
who stands upon the pinnacle.

— Edgar Allan Poe,
Letter to B——¹

The gate of dreams had reopened; in the train of religion
came little puffs of theosophy, mysticism, esoteric faiths,
occultism to visit the chambers of the Western mind.

Even philosophy was wavering. Their gods of thought,
Bergson and William James, were tottering. Even science
was attainted, even science was showing signs of
the fatigue of reason. We have a moment's respite.
Let us breathe. To-morrow the mind will awake again,
more alert, more free. . . .

— Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, Bk. III²

The *Dial* advert published in *Broom* in August 1923 prints the names of distinguished contributors in an ascending pyramid-shaped pattern. The advertisement has significance for modern readers not just because it showcases authors the modernist magazine held in high regard, but more so as a snapshot of the evolving literary canon at that point in time. The shape is significant as it creates a hierarchical scale and highlights the importance of positioning and posturing. For almost a century, about half of the sixteen figures have retained their standing in the literary tradition, and half of those still more or less retain their status at the apex of the 'canonical' pyramid. What is astonishing to consider is not how the editors of *Dial* were able to select and predict so many of our canonical authors accurately, but rather how much sway the editors may have had in ensuring this historical outcome. Four writers brought to the fore in the advertisement would receive the added distinction of receiving the *Dial* Award. Out of the eight recipients selected yearly (1921-1928), five awardees were part of the *Seven Arts* or *Secession* coterie; is relevant to our discussion of Toomer; as this 'coincidence'

¹ Edgar Allan Poe, *Poems and Prose* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 228.

² Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1996), 482.

underscores the fact that recognition for an artist is a delicate balance of talent and genius, *while* maintaining the right connections *and* aligning oneself with the proper group.³ Climbing up the ladder of success is not merely dependent upon an artist's ability, but also these relationships and the judgment of others.⁴

Edgar Allan Poe's 'Andes of the Mind' presents a similarly useful figure to describe each generation's relation to **Shakespeare**, hinting that most blindly accept that Shakespeare is a genius and lack the capacity to judge, adding that direct communion with this "master spirit" is relegated to a select few at the top—presumably poets. It is humorous because the fool at the foot of this mountain does not have a monopoly on ignorance, as the mountain seems littered with unwise neighbors. This raises the question: How high up must one be, then, to be intellectually capable of judging? The main point Poe is trying to make in the letter—"the less poetical the critic, the less just the critique, and the converse"⁵—has been echoed by others, like **Waldo Frank**:

The art that will articulate man's widening participation in life . . . come in the guise of forms and words for which the conventional criticism has no measure. . . . Criticism can only perform this function only when it contacts the work of art on a common plane of spiritual and philosophical vision. (*SAL* 27)

However, Poe's choice of metaphor and language is more subtle and powerful—hinting at the religious nature of art by alluding to **Mount Horeb**, where **Moses** came face to face with **God**, as an angel in a burning bush. Now here is a question begging to be asked: *Whose revelation is received by those kneeling at the summit?* Is Shakespeare the "master spirit"? Or is he kneeling too, awed and humbled by the flames of **genius** speaking through the bush with the voice of an angel? Shakespeare, like Poe, gives ascendancy to poets above all as creators:

The poet's **eye**, in a fine **frenzy** rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven; and as **imagination** bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name; such tricks hath strong imagination.⁶

The poet's **imagination** is the vehicle transporting forms from '**There**' to '**Here**'.

³ (1) Sherwood Anderson in 1921; (2) T. S. Eliot in 1922; (3) Van Wyck Brooks in 1923; (4) Marianne Moore in 1924; (5) E. E. Cummings in 1925; (6) William Carlos Williams in 1926; (7) Ezra Pound in 1927; (8) Kenneth Burke in 1928.

⁴ Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (New York: Viking, 1975).

⁵ From the same "Letter to B——", Poe, *Poe: Poems and Prose*, 228.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene 1. Emphasis added

LOOKING TO THE EAST

By 1924, Jean Toomer would decide to give up membership to that club of “nervous distraught . . . moderns” Sherwood Anderson said he belonged to, as he essentially abandons that pyramid, to climb a different mountain. Toomer’s unfinished response to **Richard Aldington’s** ‘**The Art of Poetry**’, discussed in **Chapter 5**, hold clues to Toomer’s aims and goals, but also his dissatisfaction with the aesthetic foundations of the **imagists**, whose style influenced his writing. In his earliest attempts at criticism, Toomer faults his literary rivals for their interest in mere images and the superficial aspects of Oriental art, while disregarding the core message below the surface:

We of the Western world . . . roll on our backs with our face towards China and the Chinese. Charmed by their pictorial, suggestive loveliness we no longer hear the mighty voices of the past. Or rather, we hear them, but as a tired man hears a symphony, there is an auditory titillation, but no soul expansion—the spirit is too weary to respond. [“**POE**” **II**: 40]

Then he goes on to exclude himself from the categorical “We” above, narrowing the generalization to apply to Aldington “and similar ones”. He takes issue in particular with Aldington’s disapproval of moralizing and preaching a “message” in poetry. Toomer, it seems, felt that despite the need to avoid didacticism and to take a *disinterested* stance avoiding *Tendenz*, it was still necessary for art to have a moral component, which his rivals made allowances for in literature of old, but renounce in favor of presenting an image. Like Herder, he views poetry as a vital spiritual link to “the mighty voices of the past”, which give the soul a sense of identity, continuity and community:

[The imagists] whose eyes are so charmed and fascinated by the gem, by its outward appearance, by its external form, that the spirit behind the gem is not perceived. An exquisite image is preferred to a rousing message. Which is perfectly all right. I simply say that I do not believe such an attitude characteristic either of the Western poets or of their readers. Overnight our voice and our hearing have not shrunk into an **eye**. The deduction is that “messages” are now as always measured by their merit; that a fine message beautifully expressed or a strong message vigorously expressed, will be accepted and appreciated now as much as in any former time.

After having relegated “message” poetry to the past, with seeming joy, in the very next paragraph Mr. Aldington seems to regret the fact that “literature seems out of touch with men’s lives, with their real interests.” . . . Precisely so. And it is strange to me that Mr. Aldington overlooks the obvious logic of his point. [“**POE**” **II**: 40].

Jean, at one time an aspiring musician, seems to also to take issue with the **imagists'** over-reliance on the visual—or in Pound's diction, *phanopoeia*—preferring instead the vocal and musical aspects of poetry, or *melopoeia*. Herder wrote that we can not “separate *ear* and *eye* in poetry” as “*speech* has something *infinite* in it” that “affects the inner sense” and “by the power of his penetrating speech” the poet paints on a “*spiritual*” and “*moral*” plane: “the *soul*” (*ADV* 168). Toomer's early notions about poetry, which aligns with Herder's aesthetics, is well-formed in his early criticism and would become the grounding and wellspring for his soon-to-blossom literary talent.

The most thought-provoking part of Toomer's extended quote above is his choice of the metaphor of a **jewel**. For years, I have wondered whether he was knowledgeable of the **Net of Indra**, which seems to encapsulate the mystic foundation at the heart of both **Neo-Platonism** and **romanticism**:

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each “**eye**” of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the **jewels**, glittering like **stars** of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.⁷

Jean Toomer's critique of the imagists takes on an added dimension when viewed through this mystic lens of a Buddhist conception of the universe. This poetic image from the Hua-yen school of **Buddhism** epitomizes Plotinus' **Universal Sympathy** (Coleridge's **omneity**) referred to throughout, expressing the infinite reflexive nature of all **Things**—an interconnection that embodies “*mutual identity* and *mutual intercausality*” that is central to **Neo-Platonism**. The notion underlying the Net of Indra is that expressed in the *Enneads* expanding upon the soul/star image in *Timaeus* (*PLA* 1245; 41d)—both texts overlay a second metaphor of stars: “And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, . . . all are mirrored in every other” (*ENN* 425; V.8.4).

⁷ Qtd. in Francis H. Cook, *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 2.

Is this what the twenty-eight-year-old Plotinus learned under **Ammonius Saccas**? **Porphyry** tells us that after becoming aware of these secret doctrines, that Plotinus “stayed continually with Ammonius and acquired so complete a training in philosophy that he became eager to make acquaintance with the Persian philosophical discipline and that **prevailing among the Indians**”, and that this motivated him to join Emperor Gordian’s campaign against the Persians and head eastward.⁸ Plotinus’ claims that ‘**The Three Initial Hypostases**’ central to his teachings are “not new; they do not belong to the present time, but were made long ago, not explicitly, and what we have said in this discussion has been an interpretation of them, relying on Plato’s own writings for evidence that these views are ancient”.⁹

Herder and many subsequent German thinkers like Friedrich Schlegel believed all religions and languages originated from a single source: **India**. Todd Kontje lays out the foundations that drove Germany’s fervent Orientalism:

Herder claims that Asian languages are the oldest, that Asians invented both writing and the alphabet, that they were the first to domesticate plants and animals, to cultivate the arts and sciences, to establish trade, and to set up governments. He even goes so far as to suggest that the Garden of Eden must have been located in the mountains of India and that the river surrounding it was the Ganges.¹⁰

Gorham Munson concludes *Destinations* by prescribing that modern writers seeking a blueprint to effect a revitalization should look to the East, pointing to the *Mahabharata* as a wellspring: “There is the Orient to explore and in particular India” (*DES* 204-9). This also coincides with what **Jean Paul** suggests was the direction of Herder’s lifelong path—a philosophical journey through the “heaven-reflecting ocean . . . [with] its movements from evening towards the East” (*JPR* 234). This trek *Eastward*, is the same direction we followed in the course of our journey through five chapters, as charted at the outset. Might we have saved a lot of time by ignoring Scruggs and Van DeMarr and simply beginning our search conceding the following? That Toomer came across

⁸ Porphyry, “The Life of Plotinus”, in *Plotinus*, vol. 1, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 9-11. See also Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 1.

⁹ Qtd. in Liebrechts, *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism*, 19. Also, (*ENN* 376 ; V.1.8).

¹⁰ Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 76. For several quotes by Herder about India, see *Metaphysical Exercitium* § 49.

various Indian ideas during his time spent with “Buddhist philosophy, the Eastern teachings, occultism, theosophy” (*W&S* 119), and that he—in a similar manner to early romantics—embraced and gave primacy to **Oriental** wisdom and its mystical view of the universe? Perhaps we can contextualize and view Jean Toomer’s conversion to Gurdjieffism, not as merely joining a cult or esoteric cabal, but a full embrace of the **East** and way of actualizing this commitment. His choice may also be viewed as a desire to act out the role of spiritual leader or shaman daily, rather than merely pretending through literary games of fiction enacted by climbing Poe’s ‘**Andes of the Mind**’. This is, in essence, the romantic endeavor: to shatter the wall between Art & Reality, Real & Ideal, Object & Subject, Self & Other, as well as Material & Spiritual—to conjoin philosophy, literature, and religion into a living aesthetic and way of life.

The French sinologist **Abel Rémusat** openly mocked this “collusion between Romanticism, Orientalism, and Germanism” in 1843:

Then let us seek, even if it be at the furthest ends of Asia, a mine that is rich and untouched . . . Let us endeavor to be allowed to gather what we may in the vast fields of the oriental imagination, to take anything that strikes our fancy, to leave behind everything considered unreasonable, and especially everything that seems too reasonable. . . . In this way there will be complete satisfaction: we will sail ahead on the ocean of romanticism.¹¹

Though these words were meant ironically, the underlying sentiment perfectly echoes **Munson**’s proposal quoted earlier; and as Raymond Schwab rightly points out about Rémusat’s satiric words, the path towards the **East** would ultimately lead to the fantastic jumble of words and ideas that become the fertile soil from which literary **modernism** would sprout and flourish:

We will have something new, something bold, something extraordinary . . . and it is impossible that we will not have, out of the jumble of so many varied hues, an abundance of mutually incomprehensible words, and associations of ideas that by their nature are incompatible.¹²

Are these words not apt descriptions of Jean Toomer’s **CANE**, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, or T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*? The modernist creed is one based on fusing “incompatible” fragments and multiple perspectives into an unstable composite, one that aspires to dynamic indeterminacy that oscillates between

¹¹ From *Mélanges posthumes d’histoire et de littérature orientales*. Qtd. in Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*. Translated by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 227.

¹² *Ibid.* For a single Indian text overlapping with **all** our themes, see **Metaphysical Exercitium** § 48.

contrary poles of meaning instead of a static solitary position—a coalescing flux on the verge of splintering. As Toomer claimed in his autobiographical notes: “I become increasingly dismembered, increasingly chaotic, I become **a veritable genius of chaos.**”¹³ Herder envisions the beginnings of humanity—imagining himself as that primal man—proclaiming that he is, in essence, just like a poet relying on **primitive** powers to schematize the quintessence of reality underneath the perceived surface of sensations to survive in the wild:

In the forest of sensual objects that surrounds me, I only find my way and become **lord and master of the chaos** of perceptions that I am confronted with by separating objects from one another, so that I give them outline, measure, and **form**, therefore creating for myself **unity** out of the manifold.¹⁴

This is the path each child takes to acquire language—distinguishing between the myriad sounds to **fathom** the semiotic structures and grammatical rules that lie behind communication—and **intuit** the methods for **expression** in a given language. It is the road a traveler takes when entering a new country—to **discern** the characteristic traits and mores, making **sense** of the strange habits and differences—to get a **feel** for the distinct culture shared by the people. It is the same course a poet takes—threading words, rhythm, and experience together, weaving man into the harmonious **pattern** of nature—to **create** meaning. This **esemplastic** power of the **imagination** and **soul** to bind together disparate parts into a **unity**, is what fuses **chaos** into **order** by giving it **form**. As Roy Pascal concludes in *The German Sturm und Drang* (1953):

Imagination is thus, for the *Sturmer und Dranger*, the counterpart in the individual of the creative force in the universe, operative in all essential human energies as in the process of nature. It is, in Herder’s word, an ‘**inward sense**’, which **synthesises** all the outward senses, which grasps what is meaningful in the world of daily experience and behaviour, and presents it ‘through a burning-glass’.¹⁵

Goethe’s metaphor of a “burning glass” concentrating light to a single point—the Divine *Kräfte* behind the spark of creation, or *Poiesis*—this has been the recurring leitmotif and true focus of our journey. It is, in essence, what Herder sought in his volumes of writings, spanning various disciplines, expounding the vast expanse of Human endeavor, *Sub Specie Aeternitatis*.

¹³ See [Image B2]; JTP, Box 19, Folder 507. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ Qtd. in Gaier, “Myth, Mythology, New Mythology”, 171. Emphasis added.

¹⁵ Pascal, 280. Emphasis added.

Jean Paul Richter praised and eulogized his mentor and friend in his book *School for Aesthetics* (1804) a year after Herder's death, with the following words:

This noble spirit . . . was misunderstood by opposed parties and ages. He himself was partly responsible, for it was his error not to be a star of the first or any other magnitude, but a cluster of stars, from which everyone could then spell out a constellation at will, one man the sign of the scales or autumn, another the sign of the crab or summer, and so forth. Men with manifold faculties are always misunderstood, those with simple faculties seldom; the former move all who are like or unlike them, the latter only their own kind. . . . I will do my best to exhibit the princely image of Herder, and to catch and focus the rays delineating his soul . . . this constellation set, like Lessing, pale and veiled by the cloud of the times. (*JPR* 305-6)¹⁶

THREADING POINTS INTO A PATTERN

This journey through the various forests of five chapters has been an extensive and exhaustive one. And as we come to its close, it is only fitting that we take a moment to step back and place our path of enquiry into proper perspective. In essence, our trek to disclose the innermost regions of a **text**, is a detour taken far beyond it—an expansive search for its wider **context**, or the invisible complex of foundations we might call its '**spirit**'. One might justifiably ask, *how far beyond the text is too far?* There is the danger of losing sight—to the extent that any connections made will be too tenuous to have any meaningful significance. In regards to **CANE**, my answer to this question has been: *until it makes sense*. Since my first reading, this text has fascinated and bewildered me. My engagement academically has been a striving to resolve unanswered questions, and various critics have provided insight that filled gaps in my understanding—yet a sense lingered that the mysteries at its core remained elusive. The drive to untangle this **inner confusion** is what prompted my search *beyond* traditional bounds, and the promise of deeper insight is what motivated me to expand the scope—“even mystical, even further”—into disciplines and territories deemed *too far*. Some might argue that this study is not really about **CANE** at all, and that its focus is misguided. To respond properly and provide justification for my method would require gauging the overall significance of pinpointed patterns of meaning in contexts uncovered.

¹⁶ The last sentence was appended in a note to the second edition of *School for Aesthetics*.

To do this, I will retrace my steps—descendingly—through lines of reasoning, and present a distillation of my chain of interlocking arguments. Delineating this web of ideas—and thus disclosing how answers unearthed at each stage link to subsequent queries—will illustrate what has been my course of discovery.

- The original query—into the meaning and origins of the mystical and romantic elements in *CANE* and that of the *Seven Arts* circle—initially lead to years of wandering, yielding only vague observations and tenuous links.
- To get below the surface it was necessary to redirect the search towards Germany—and fortunately, Abrams and Beiser served as early guides to *Frühromantik* aesthetics and to the writings of Walzel and Reiff in particular, where it was suggested that **Plotinus** was the ‘key’ to understanding romanticism.
- Despite reading the *Enneads* and volumes of books by various German thinkers, the context and clarity I sought would, for the most part—remain locked away. That is, until I read some writings of **Herder** and essays on his significance. In a letter to Chancellor von Müller, Goethe describes Wilhelm Meister’s role as being the “pole on which the tender *Epheu* [ivy] climbs”.¹⁷ Herder is similarly positioned at the center of this study, because his writings and innovations provide the structures upon which to frame and connect the multiplicity of intertwining ideas. This new vantage point allowed me to fulfill the following:
- I was able to discern the interrelationship between the primitivist, mystic, and aesthetic tendencies in *CANE* and set them as my mooring threads. Using these as my filter allowed me to narrow and identify the works within my scope.
- I identified where Platonic and Plotinian doctrines specifically intersected with Herder’s philosophical and aesthetic worldview, noting how they were refracted.
- I was able to pinpoint in Herder’s writings where and how this primitivism, mysticism, and aesthetics developed, and the primary texts from which the *Frühromantiker* adopted Herderian Spinozism, Neo-Platonism, Shakespearism—along with ideas relating to genius, ancient scripture, folksong, and *Volksgeist*.
- These writings afforded the perspectives and basis from which to contextualize the poetic strategies of Jean Toomer’s two key “pillars”—Goethe and Whitman.
- Through an in-depth analysis of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* and its links to Herder and Neo-Platonism, I could perceive **romantic irony** as the wedding of aesthetics with mysticism, and the starting point for modernism’s various impulses—what Pillai calls “a kind of aestheticization of the Heraclitean flux”.

¹⁷ Qtd. in Ammerlahn, “Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: An Apprenticeship toward the Mastery of Exactly What?”, 109.

- I was able to identify and schematize the numerous aesthetic devices in modernist writings under the umbrella of **romantic irony**—as variations of *Verfremdungseffekt*, Novalis’s strategy to achieve critical distance—and connect these to Herderian *Volk* aesthetics and principles grounded in Neo-Platonism: organicism, *Poiesis*, *Einfühlung*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, *Bild*, hovering, Soul, etc.
- These **devices** allowed me to trace these same **dynamics** found in *CANE* and modernist writings and link them to more immediate sources—like **Whitman**, Russian writers, and French symbolist poetics—in relation to the strategies of **poetic realism**. This term adopted by several European literary movements is the label used for Turgenev and his *A Sportsman’s Sketches*, but also applied to the aesthetics of similarly aligned “nativist” writers, including Jean Toomer. This shift in poetics to a suggestive lyricism could be examined against the backdrop of **imagism** and the modernist trends toward free-verse, **polyphonic prose**, experimentation, and a mythical method—as exemplified by Eliot and Joyce.
- Herderian notions of the folk, *Volksgiest*, folksong, and cultural nationalism provided a better understanding of the vernacularization of literature, especially in popular Russian novelists and stories expressing a distinct national **Soul**. This Russian influence on twentieth-century modernists helped me unearth the similar drives and methods utilized by nativist writers, by observing the overlap in strategy and style in specific vignettes of *A Sportsman’s Sketches* and *CANE*. This context also clarifies and highlights the reasons for incorporating *Spirituals*, folksong, and **Jazz**—and how these correlate to the ideas of Du Bois and Locke of ‘Negro genius’ able to encapsulate the essence of the African-American ‘Soul’.
- In the short-story cycles and ‘singing prose’ of **Sherwood Anderson**, I was able to find all these elements mentioned above realized more coherently and **poetically** than in **Waldo Frank**’s ‘mystical realist’ fiction—and I propose that following the form and method of *The Triumph of the Egg* was paramount to *CANE*’s creation.

The young Herder, who educated himself with his father’s **Bible** and **hymnal**, later discovered a prevailing attitude in intellectual circles dismissive of both—he would ultimately effect a ‘conversion’ by creating a new philosophical **context** upholding crude folk music and the Bible’s ‘natural’ poetry as *the* aesthetic ideal. In a certain sense, I feel this monograph does something similar—using the very same Herderian notions to (re)connect an extended **framework** of ideas—which (re)contextualizes Toomer’s ‘insignificant’ notes and casts the ‘irrelevant’ mystical aspects of modernist works like *CANE*, in a completely new light. There is no *too far*; if the path—*in time*—brings one out of the dark forest towards an **inner sense**.



Image G3: Karte der Namen—Kräfte & Schwärmer. John-Francis Kinsler.



[METAPHYSICAL EXERCITIUM]

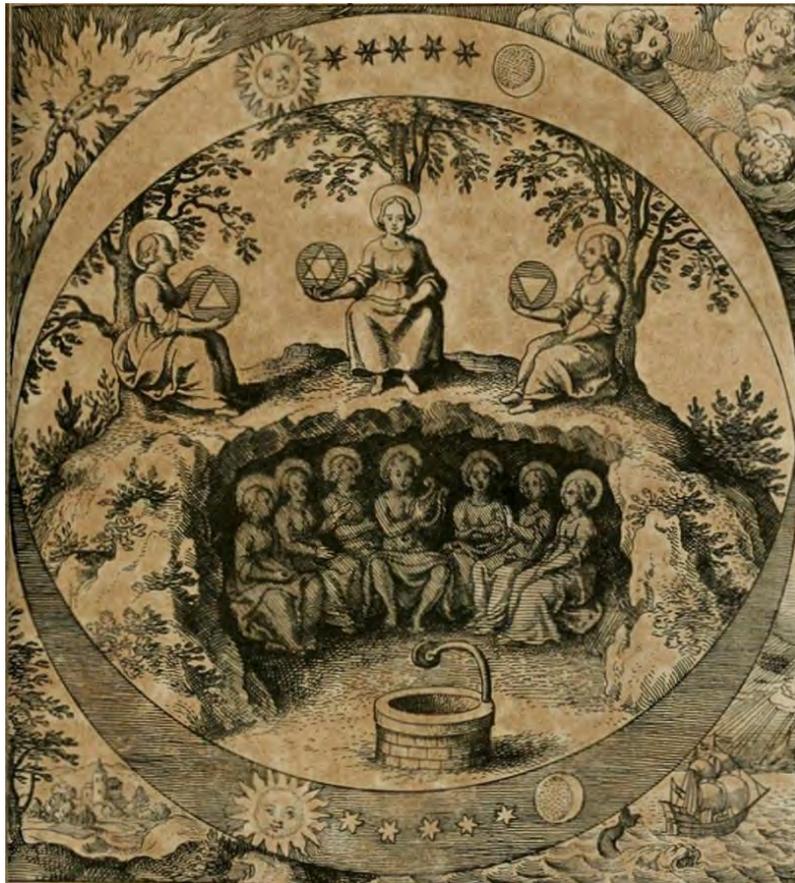


Image G4: *The Seven Hermetic Principles of The Kybalion*. Image from *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece* by Three Initiates. <https://joedubs.com/seven-hermetic-principles/>.



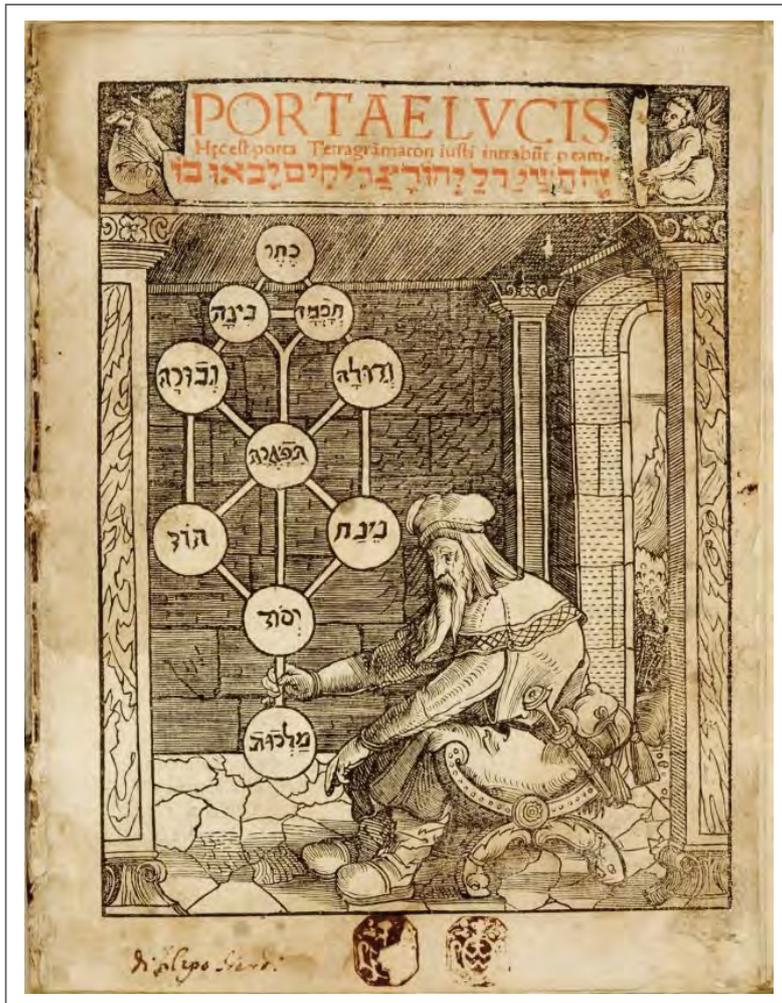


Image G5: Sefirotic "Tree of Life" in *Portae Lucis* ("Gates of Light") by Joseph Gikatilla, Germany, 1516. Cf. Image A5.2 Herder's Sefirot in *Älteste Urkunde* (1774). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portae_Lucis,_Joseph_Gikatilla.jpg

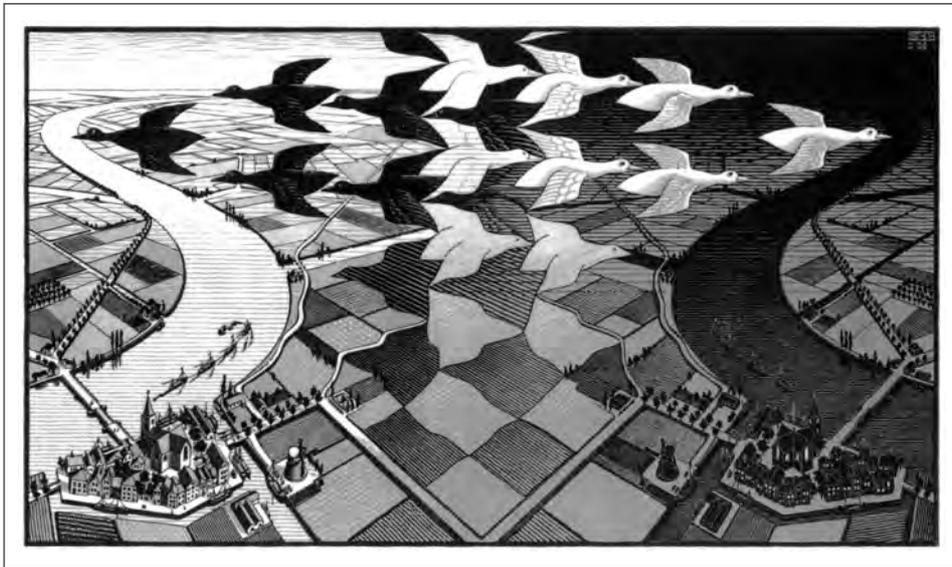


Image G6: *Day and Night* (1938), by Maurits Cornelis Escher. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Day-and-Night-1938-M-C-Escher_fig2_228108062

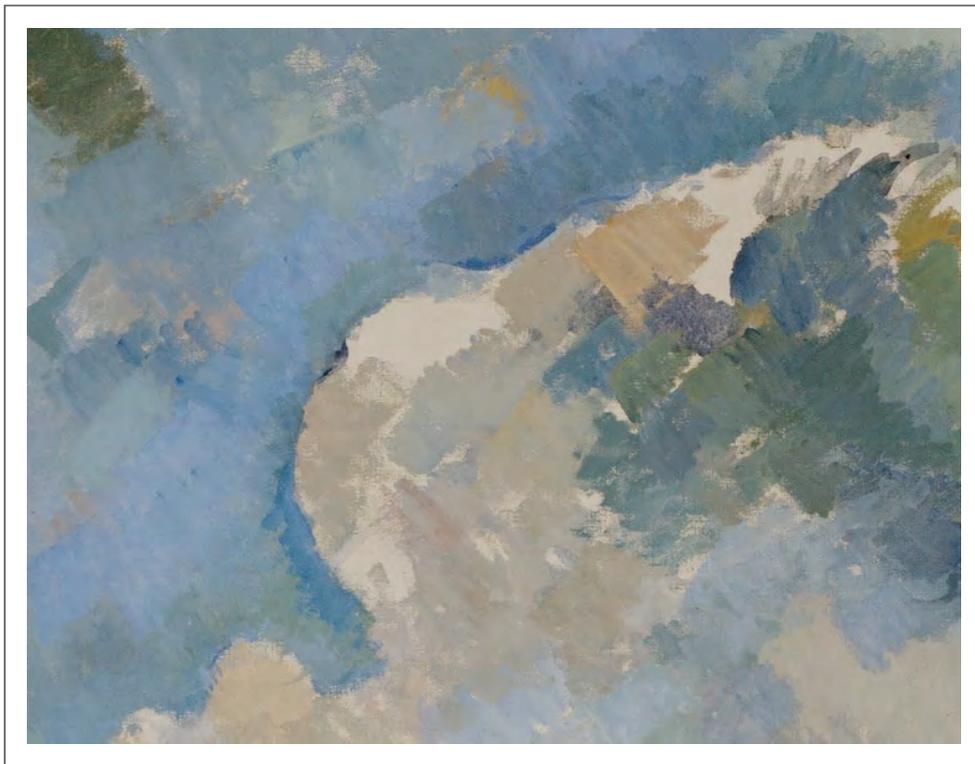


Image G7: Detail of "The Bathers" (1898-1905), by Paul Cézanne. <https://mymodernmet.com/paul-cezanne-paintings/>.

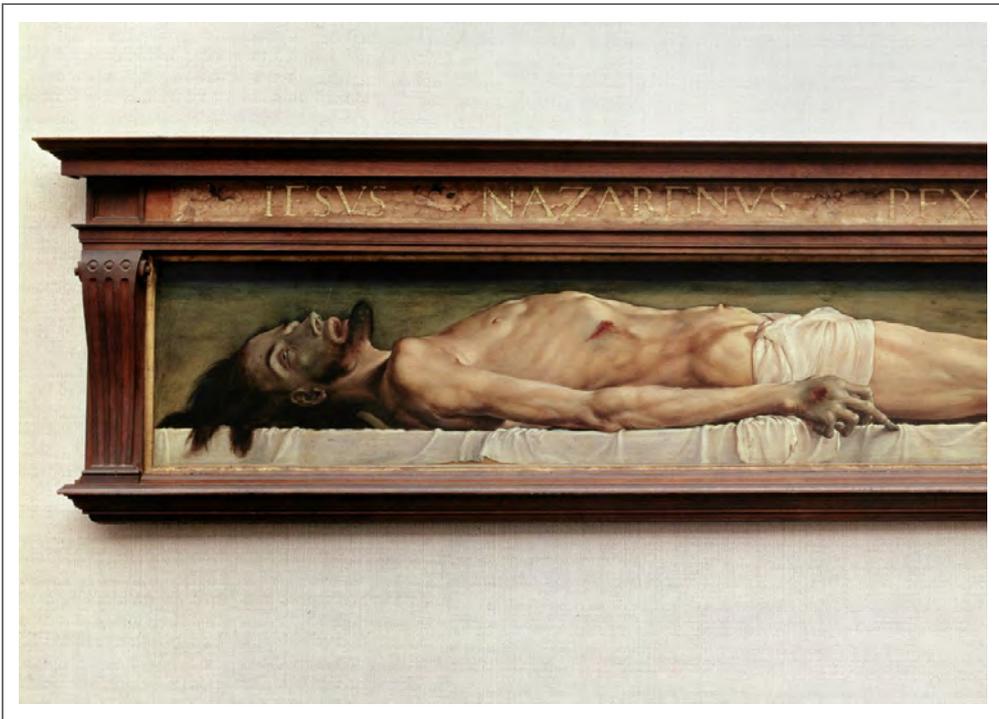


Image G8: *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521). Detail of painting by Hans Holbein. <https://medium.com/the-badlands/the-body-of-the-dead-christ-in-the-tomb-85a2b82ba2b6>.



Image G9: *Guardian Spirit of the Waters* (1878), Painting by Odilon Redon. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/odilon-redon/photograph-of-guardian-spirit-of-the-waters-1878-by-odilon-redon-in-the-public-domain>

[METAPHYSICAL EXERCITIUM]

:: 'ANCHOR THREADS' ::

[§1]: If I had to select a single image to encapsulate the idea most essential to this monograph—the unifying notion at the core of (c) Herderian philosophy, (b) *Frühromantik* aesthetics, and (a) Neo-Platonic mysticism—it would be the following organicist conception of the universe, expressed by Plotinus in the *Enneads*:

The secret is: firstly, that this **All** is one universally comprehensive living being, encircling all the living beings within it, and having a soul, **one soul**, which extends to all its members in the degree of **participant** membership held by **each**; secondly, that every separate thing is an integral part of this All by belonging to the total material fabric unrestrictedly a part by bodily membership, while, in so far as it has also some participation in the **All-Soul**, it possesses in that degree spiritual membership as well, perfect where participation is in the All-Soul alone, **partial** where there is also a **union** with a lower soul. But, with all this gradation, each several thing is affected by all else in virtue of the common participation in the **All**, and to the degree of its own participation. (*ENN* 315; IV.4.32; emphasis added)

And how could one illustrate that notion, while also reflecting what is described in *Timaeus*—how “the begetter of this universe” instructed the gods, “Weave what is mortal to what is immortal, fashion and beget living things” and within these creatures plant a **soul**, “something divine and ruling within”; And then the “maker and father” began “sowing that **seed**” taken from the “mixing bowl” where the “soul of the universe” was blended and divided “into a number of souls equal to the number of the stars and [then the maker] assigned each soul to a **star**” (*PLA* 1244-5; 41a-d; emphasis added). To encapsulate these conceptions of soul, organicism, and Universal Sympathy would require creating a **multivalent symbol** to express them properly. The **MAP** is this all-encompassing universal representation distilled in a **single figure**.

[§2]: Frederick Beiser describes how in 1770 Herder made a “remarkable discovery” while studying Genesis—a **sextogram** with a point in the middle:

At first Herder gave little thought to this sextogram, with seemed a convenient way of symbolizing the structure of the text. He assumed that it was only a mnemonic device among the ancient Jews, who used it to remind people of the Sabbath. . . . But Herder’s fascination with the strange sextogram grew. Then he made his discovery: that the sextogram was . . . indeed the basis of all oriental wisdom and theology! Since it symbolized the structure of the creation and the first revelation of God to man, Herder attributed the greatest religious significance to this “**rune**” or “**hieroglyph**”. He believed that it was the tool with which God first instructed man in the arts and sciences. Herder now began to see new meaning in Hamann’s theory that the creation is the language of God, the symbols with which God speaks to man. . . . Here, then, was **the source and soul of Herder’s new “mysticism”**. It came less from any religious experience than **the magical meaning he read into his hieroglyph**.¹

¹ Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 129. Emphasis added.

Herder believed this hieroglyph—which he termed the “hieroglyph of creation” (*Schöpfungshieroglyphe*) or “seven-step symbol” (*Denkbild*)—to be “God’s primordial revelation to humanity”, which symbolically imparted the secrets of Divine Creation.² In *Älteste Urkunde* Herder introduces this symbol and claims it communicates and unveils what is behind Divine creativity:

[The power] *binding together* the most disparate scenes without *confusing* them . . . showing how they *relate* to one another, *grow* out of one another, *lose* themselves in one another, all of them taken individually only moments, only through the progression *means to purposes*—what a *sight!*, what a noble *application of human history!*, what *encouragement to hope*, to *act*, to *believe*, even where one sees nothing or not everything.³

The monumental significance of this symbol for Herder is hard to overstate, as this is the same power he would ascribe to Shakespeare in his famous essay, and the basis for his mystical concept of *Kräfte*, as it relates to *Poiesis*, poetry, and the soul. Herder saw this symbol reappearing everywhere—in “literary traditions, in nature, and in world history”—applying its revelation even to the pattern of stages in human history, claiming this development of “*God’s course through the nations*” needed to be interpreted “in a higher sense than people have imagined it”.⁴

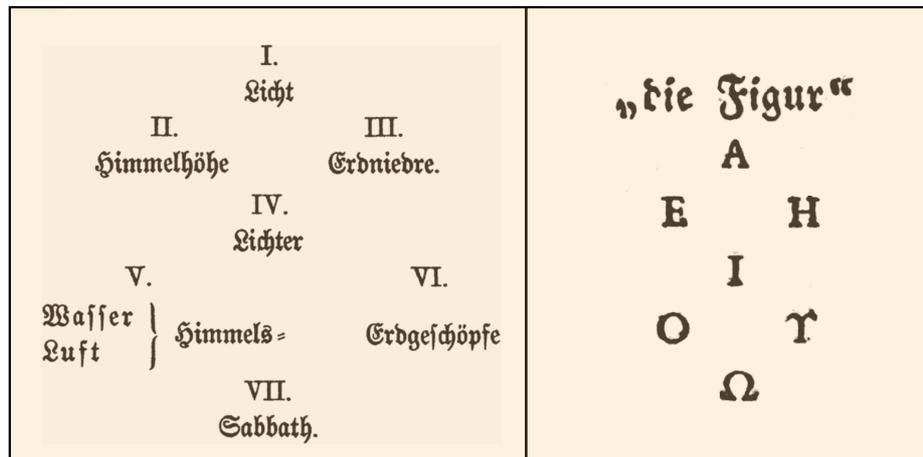


Image G11: The seven positions of the *Schöpfungshieroglyphe* (left) from Herder’s *Älteste Urkunde* (1774). Wildschut, “Hieroglyphic Historicism: Herder’s and Ranke’s Theology of History”, 11. Next to **Image A5.1:** “The Figure” sextogram (right).

² Niels Wildschut, “Hieroglyphic Historicism: Herder’s and Ranke’s Theology of History”, in *The Emergence of Relativism: German Thought from the Enlightenment to National Socialism*, eds. Martin Kusch, Katherina Kinzel, Johannes Steizinger, and Niels Wildschut (London: Routledge, 2019), 10-11.

³ Qtd. in Wildschut, 13. Emphasis original.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-12. Emphasis original.

[§3]: In *The Sociology of Art*, Arnold Hauser advocates a sociology based on “scientific character freed of all false metaphysics and vacuous mystification”—he rails against the irrational basis of “hypostasis of ‘higher’ principles—that is, essences like Platonic ideas or scholastic universals, Hegel’s *Weltgeist* or the romantic *Volksseele*”.⁵ He flatly proclaims “The folk-soul is simply a psychological construct . . . The concept of it as an indivisible unity belongs to that myth of the ‘genius of the folk’ . . . there is no supraindividual, unified, spiritually integrated creator to whom the origin of the individual parts of this property could be ascribed.”⁶ Hauser correctly identifies that notions of the “folk-spirit”, a collective “racial soul”, and “‘nature’ poetry in the sense of a spontaneous, naive, and unconscious communication by the folk” all “derive from the intellectual heritage of Herder”⁷—yet these concepts are categorically dismissed as misguided and unenlightened, despite the fact that these very ideas derive from and have held sway over our brightest and most creative minds scattered along the historical timeline and all corners of the world. Hauser is bound by his materialist and positivist perspective—he adopts a dismissive attitude like one pulling back the curtain to expose some trick perpetrated on stage, portraying followers only as dupes and frauds—unwilling to entertain the possibility that for many, the ideas on display might genuinely hold magical significance, as an inspired symbol of some greater Truth. More puzzling is the fact that a vast number of poets and artists who are given prominence in Hauser’s volumes of books on western aesthetics, literature, and art, are the very same individuals who are guilty of adhering to an irrational “hypostasis of ‘higher’ principles”. Is it possible to properly assess the creative achievements of artists completely divorced from the philosophical worldview from which their works sprang, no matter how misguided or “irrational” these core ideas may seem?

[§4]: In response to Isaiah Berlin’s characterization of **Hamann** as “the pioneer of anti-rationalism in every sphere”, John Betz counters with the words, “it should be noted that he [Berlin] is an intellectual heir of Hamann’s opponents and reads him accordingly”.⁸ Of course, Betz is referring to **Kant** and the subsequent followers of **Kantianism**, which Herder saw as the “Influenza from the North East” infecting German minds (including even his son, August). It was in the hope of neutralizing this fever that he wrote the *Metakritik* (1799)—which, as Goethe discloses, his friends all pinned their hopes on the book to “reduce the oracle of Königsberg to silence”, but it ultimately proved inadequate to fulfill that Herculean task.⁹

⁵ Hauser, *Sociology of Art*, 56.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 564.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 108, 573. Emphasis Added.

⁸ Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 2.

⁹ Nevinson, *A Sketch of Herder and His Times*, 419-20.

[§5]: In the *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant distinguishes **enthusiasm**, calling it a “delusion of sense”, from *Schwärmerei*, or “visionary rapture”, which he views as “a delusion of mind” and akin to fanaticism: “The former is a passing accident, which occasionally affects the most healthy understanding; the latter is a **disease** that destroys it.”¹⁰ Zuckert provides us with historical context and meaning behind Kant’s usage of the pejorative term:

[T]he etymological origins of “*Schwärmerei*” connote dangerous, disorderly group phenomena: “*Schwarm*” or “*schwärmen*” were (and are) used literally of bees. . . . Kant frequently uses this term to refer to those who make mistaken claims to knowledge superior to that of ordinary human beings, usually of supersensible reality. Kant often associates *Schwärmerei* with mysticism, but also criticizes as *Schwärmer* neo-Platonists who claim to have immediate, intuitive knowledge of the Forms, Spinoza and Spinozists, and even Locke, for claiming to garner a priori concepts (including that of God) from empirical evidence, thereby “opening the gates” to *Schwärmerei*.¹¹

[§6]: Borrowing Kant’s terminology, I have entitled the **MAP** populated with names, “*Karte der Namen—Kräfte & Schwärmer*”. The names form a partial list—a *swarm*—of the enthusiastic Neo-Platonists caught up in fervor of mystical ideas, alongside the various *forces* and movements acting upon this **flux**. The aesthetics and philosophy evident in the works of all these individuals betray a certain allegiance to “false metaphysics and vacuous mystification”, which Kant would certainly label “visionary rapture”—indeed, even the pre-critical Kant belongs to this cabal.

[§7]: The **MAP** concept started out as visual artwork, but suddenly grew into a multi-dimensional symbol that helped me better situate and understand the interrelations and the momentum of artistic movements and circles. I quickly realized that the various incarnations of this **MAP** were not merely diagrams or chapter images—they became the organizing framework throughout. This original function as a unifying structure allowing me to schematize the years of fragmentary facts and observations into a coherent and meaningful pattern—is now reversed—placed within the text itself to intelligibly convey these findings in compressed form to my readers, but recalibrated to spotlight new discoveries through suggestion and indirection, rather than straightforward, authoritative declarations. This **MAP**—along with the various perspectives, incarnations, and multiple analogies drawn by our ‘**Cartographer**’—is included as an educational device that encodes polysemantic layers of meaning into a single representation. These multiple correlations provide insight into ‘irrational’ and mystical modes of thinking by symbolically illustrating the conceptions operating on different planes.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. and tr. by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156-7. Emphasis added.

¹¹ Rachel Zuckert, “Kant’s Account of Practical Fanaticism”, 294-5. Emphasis added.

[§8] :: **Historical** :: The names populating the surface of this globe create a sort of mind map for this monograph highlighting the main intellectual forces that enter our discussion in relation to artistic movements and avant-garde coteries. The placement of individual markers are roughly geographical, while disregarding historical boundaries—these markers are weighted and color-coded with consideration given to where each is situated in relation to another and the **MAP** as a whole.

[§9] :: **Literary** :: the **MAP** applies Herder's organicism to literary creations as well, adopting the romantic stance that they are also living organisms. It can function purely on a surface level to visually situate characters and elements of a given folktale or novel. Its utility increases when functioning figuratively—Vischer's definition of symbolism as the primitive "magical" method of **Sympathy**—whereby "sensory objects" are infused with "spiritual elements"; and his corresponding belief that nature and works of art "manifest themselves as *emotional beings* that can be felt with empathy" (*Einfühlung*)¹²—these are both Herderian conceptions that rely on animistic principle:—that the material world is suffused with spirits and forces. Viewing works of art as organisms *animated* by a mind (*Geist*) and soul (*Seele*) like all other organisms, opens up new ways of understanding literary texts in relation to people and other works. This organic concept of the art has also carried over into the romantic notions and absolute idealism of **Novalis**, **F. Schlegel**, and **Schelling**, which views both nature and art as organisms: "The universe is nothing less than a *natural* work or art, and a work of art is nothing less an *artificial* organism".¹³ Herder considered **Poetry** to be the art form that took place in the **Soul** propelled by the metaphysical force of *Kräfte*. The **MAP**'s usefulness will further increase when used to illustrate certain aesthetic principles, and bring into consideration the role the author and imagination play in the creation of a literary text.

[§10] :: **Scientific** :: The **MAP** can also be viewed as a pedagogical instrument embodying Herder's scientific principles regarding astronomy, physics, and geometry: his animistic understanding of gravitational orbits and belief in "planetary souls" and animated stars, as **Plato** and **Plotinus** did;¹⁴ his mystical belief in "unity of the universe" expressed through his symbolic use of scientific terms "like light, equilibrium, harmony, the circle, the sphere, etc." (*NIS* 304); his "holistic principles" of organicism and *coincidentia oppositorum*, or "dialectical formula" (*NIS* 305); and finally his metaphysical concept of *Kräfte* and *geister Kraft* (spiritual forces), and God in relation to the Soul and the universal ladder or "Chain of Being" (*NIS* 144).

¹² Nowak, 303-4. Friedrich Theodor Vischer's book *Das Symbol* was published in 1887.

¹³ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 373-4.

¹⁴ Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, 143-4. Cited parenthetically as 'NIS'.

[§11] :: **Mystical** :: The **MAP** is based upon Plotinus’ method of conveying mystical concepts. Stephen R. L. Clark views the multiplicity of “recurring metaphorical images” that **Plotinus** incorporates into *The Enneads*—not as “superficial ornaments”—but rather, “spiritual or imaginative exercises”.¹⁵ A look at one of these ‘exercises’ makes it apparent that Plotinus’ and Herder’s metaphors operate on the same ontological plane—they not only share methodology but express the same metaphysical relationships and concepts:

Let us, then, make a mental picture of our universe: each member shall remain what it is, distinctly apart; yet all is to form, as far as possible, a complete unity so that whatever comes into view, say the outer orb of the heavens, shall bring immediately with it the vision, on the one plane, of the sun and of all the stars with earth and sea and all living things as if exhibited upon a transparent globe.

Bring this vision actually before your sight, so that there shall be in your mind the gleaming representation of a sphere, a picture holding all the things of the universe moving or in repose or (as in reality) some at rest, some in motion. Keep this sphere before you, and from it imagine another, a sphere stripped of magnitude and of spatial differences; cast out your inborn sense of Matter, taking care not merely to attenuate it: call on God, maker of the sphere whose image you now hold, and pray Him to enter. And may He come bringing His own Universe with all the gods that dwell in it. He who is the one God and all the gods, where each is all, blending into a unity . . . (*ENN* 429; V.8.9)

As these images—the **globe, sun, star, sphere**—are repeated in subsequent metaphors that reinforce, expand, and systematize one’s understanding in a symbolic rather than allegorical manner—creating a language of multivalent symbols conveying different layers of meaning; each “mental picture” becomes a fragment—which alongside all the others—are collectively able to mirror and point to **supra-rational** truths not communicable directly. Embedded within the spiritual exercise above are: **[+]** a Monist conception of reality where material and spiritual are one; **[-]** a prime illustration of animism, organicism, and the Soul (with God’s spirit within the physical sphere, which later exercises reveal to be the **Sun** at the center); **[x]** a universe of multiplicity within the vitalistic flux; **[÷]** and the essential unity of **All** expressed in Neo-Platonism as the **The One** (*τὸ Ἔν*), from which all things emanate. This monograph, like Herder, borrows from this well of images and vocabulary related to circles and planetary motion, in the hope that the **MAP**’s images will similarly gesture towards the essence of ‘magical thinking’—symbolically and sympathetically illuminating glimpses beyond the veil.

¹⁵ Stephen R. L. Clark, *Plotinus: Myth, Metaphor, and Philosophical Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), ix-x.

:: SCAFFOLDING & RADII ::

[§ 12]: Johann Pillai pinpoints the emergence of romantic irony to the late eighteenth century, defines it to be a reaction to the crisis between the various “currents of mystical and alchemical thought” and the rationalism of Kant’s philosophy and “the new analytical chemistry”. Herder is the central figure who was literally at the center of these opposing forces of Rationalism & Mysticism, as he lived out this dialectic each time he went from Herr Kant’s classroom to Meister Hamann’s, and vice versa. We might also visualize Herder’s mind full of conflicting concepts and ideas from each professor, tugging at the different hemispheres of his brain.

[§ 13]: Addressing the skeptical reception of Plotinus’ mystical ideas, J. F. Staal reminds us that: “if there is no sympathy for a certain way of thinking, or at least for the human beings who thought so, there can be no proper understanding in philosophy”.¹⁶ I believe a stance founded on humility and open-mindedness is necessary in our age indoctrinated to rely solely on scientific reasoning and dismiss anything ‘irrational’ or ‘mysterious’. Although positivism and science have led to innumerable advances—they have not been able to provide satisfactory answers to our most fundamental questions relating to the origin of the universe or consciousness. Viewed from the perspective of hindsight, our heralded scientific ‘laws’ and ‘facts’, in actuality, have been merely a series of revisions of errors that will continue to be overturned and recalibrated by future generations. Like early European colonizers who shunned ‘strange’ native dishes of various lands, or Western doctors who rejected the foundations and treatments of Eastern medicine as quackery or ‘superstition’—close-minded absolutism can lead to centuries of impoverishment and loss of benefits—as scientific evidence later reveals the true bearer of ‘ignorance’, and only then have these traditions been taken seriously, vindicated, and ultimately assimilated.

[§ 14]: Along with Plotinus’ “mental picture” from *Ennead V.8.9* quoted above in fragment §11, we take our inspiration for our cartographic project from Herder: “The whole world, the vision of God *at one moment*, an abyss.—Abyss in which I stand lost on all sides!, see a great work *without a name* and everywhere *full of names!*, full of *voices* and *forces!* (*PHL* 336).¹⁷ This schema will try to order the vast **chaos**, the **Heraclitean Flux** of ideas, by mapping the dialectical forces of attraction and repulsion to capture the **essence** of all interrelationships found in Nature and Reality, in the belief that this small **Part** can and does mirror the **Whole**: “every organic whole is the appearance of a system of inner, living forces that, according to the laws of wisdom and goodness, form a kind of miniature world, a whole” (*GOD* 132).

¹⁶ Qtd. in Clark, 19.

¹⁷ The full extract is given in the **Forest of Correspondence 3** on page 206.

[§15] : Herder's organic conception of the universe is indeed Plotinian in origin:

All the beings may be thought of as **centres** uniting at one central centre: we ignore the **radial lines** and think of their terminals at that centre, where they are at one. Restore the **radii**; once more we have lines, each touching a generating centre of its own, but that centre remains coincident with the one first centre; the centres all **unite** in that **first centre** and yet remain what they were . . . (*ENN* 535; VI.5.5)

In the middle of our **MAP** (representing a given system) we mark the absolute center as (**1**). That focal point will be the *center of gravity* or nucleus, around which we will situate all other forces. Our first point [**z**]—the birth of this map—is marked with a star and labeled [**1923**], to represent **CANE** (sometimes denoted by its author's name); and this too has a *center of gravity* being simultaneously attracted and repulsed by all the other surrounding forces of varying magnitudes as they all revolve around (**1**). We shall now locate the center of our other force [**Herder**], his point is marked by a double star [**1773**] & [**1787**] that correspond to three texts: 'Shakespeare' & 'Extract from a Correspondence about Ossian & the Songs of Ancient Peoples', both included in the *Sturm und Drang* manifesto, *Of German Character & Art*; the latter date corresponds to 'God, Some Conversations'—however this point represents the *force of inertia* of the totality of Herder's works and ideas contained within, those two dates are chosen for their relevance to our aims and relation to **CANE**, but they are arbitrary labels signifying the sum total. The same goes for [**1923**], the title, and author labels—those are merely signifiers pointing to the force of ideas contained within the text, which naturally draws from the ideas developed in the author's earlier fragments and notes.

[§16] : At this point some valid questions may naturally arise: If [**1855**] represents **Walt Whitman's** *Leaves of Grass*, why is it smaller than [**1923**] when its force of influence has obviously had a much greater impact than **CANE**? I have two versions of a single response: it is a matter of perspective—one, Whitman's star may indeed be vastly greater in size, but is situated much farther away from our vantage point; two, since this is a map for **CANE**, it is only natural that we chart relationships from a perspective foregrounding the central text. Another question: it logically follows why [**1855**] with its great impact on all the satellites of American writers is closer to [**1923**], but why is [**Herder**] so much larger when most of them did not even know who he was? That question goes straight to the heart of this monograph and its mode of enquiry. We shall see that the monumental force of [**Plato**], [**Plotinus**], and even [**India**] was funneled into [**Germany**] and refocused through that point, so that much of the force and spirit in *Leaves of Grass* owes its power to the energy generated by [**Herder**] channeling and refracting the great force flowing from [**t + s + r**].

[§ 17] : CARTOGRAPHER : [○] : (**textual : intratextual**) : *When we plunge into the text going beneath the surface, we adjust our frame of reference and adopt a view that the text is a world, a ‘universe unto itself’. Looking at our MAP, the center or nucleus is the soul of that text, its ‘mind’ or Geist—the organizing principle or sum of forces: kraft. Those different stars revolving around that core are the different characters, symbols, or ideas that are expressed through the story. The forces operating at this level are what concerns our focus of enquiry on this plane, but these nodes of principle forces in conflict and harmony. The forces of attraction and repulsion between those characters—the dynamics the action and momentum of each arc of each character—these are our concerns. Additionally, locating the axes of rotation and the centripetal totality of forces & the center of gravity of the story as well.*

[§ 18] : If we erase the person **Johann Gottfried Herder** completely from history and leave the other three forces, it is my contention that Whitman’s work would be completely of a different nature and unidentifiable to us; the same would apply to **Jean Toomer’s CANE**. My central argument is one with the following statement, “Herder was a force of the first magnitude in German literature, a force that it is impossible to overestimate.”¹⁸—expanded to show the seismic impact on Russian, French, and American literature generated by his brand of mysticism (wrapped up in his philosophy and aesthetics). Now we return to our **MAP** tracing the interplay of forces, Herder postulated in *God, Some Conversations*:

Whenever a system of similar forces acquires an axis, they settle around the axis and its center in such a way that according to geometric laws like flow to one pole, and the powers arrange themselves from this pole through all grades of progression to a culmination, and then arrange themselves through the point of neutrality to the opposite pole. In this way, every sphere would be a union of two half-spheres with opposite poles, just as every ellipse has its two foci... (*GOD* 134)

Before continuing, situating the German constellations around Herder, while explaining some of the features related to the cartographic design (colors, text sizes), will give us a partial key or legend to better utilize this tool.

¹⁸ John George Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (Edinburg: Blackwood, 1902), 296.

[§19] : **CARTOGRAPHER** : *Let us now look at our **MAP**. Do you see our familiar Herderian double star? On either side of this we mark a point for **Jean Paul** and a single star for **Goethe**. Of course, **Goethe's** star is manifold considering the influence of **Faust**, **Goetz von Berlichingen**, **Elective Affinities**, his poetry, and scientific studies—however, for our present journey charting **CANE** we will mainly concern ourselves with **Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship & Travels**. Beneath **Jean Paul** we situate **Novalis & F. Schlegel**, the latter—having exerted a greater force on this system—is written larger, and although both authors have written a novel each and poetry, the labels are yellow to show the nature of their force to be more **critical / aesthetic /philosophical than artistic**, which would warrant red labels. The marker for **Herder** should be yellow also, however, we upgrade the names of the major influencers regardless of type to blue. Well, now we have clearly delineated the subjects and perimeters of not only for those appearing in [**Chapter 1**], but also for [**Chapter 5**], the nodes & forces for (**u**). Around this inner circle we draw a wider circle to mark those influenced by **Herder's** force and influence, however, we place **Goethe** in the center to represent the fact that many of these ideas were attributed to or passed on through the younger protégé, who ended up completely overshadowing his friend and mentor. Why is **Kant's** marker in white you ask? Well, his force is almost diametrically opposed to the direction of **Herder's** thought and between these two, the various German philosophical ideas have germinated. According to the laws of attraction and repulsion laid out in **Gott, Kant** should be placed on the lower hemisphere directly opposite **Herder**. However, despite his claims of being rational and grounded there is a clearly Platonic undergarment under the surface of **Kant's** written letters. As **Schlegel's Athenaeum Fragmente** §3, §41, §104, & §298 also show, **Kantianism** had already become an institution in their day, meaning his force disproportionately affected the shape of all the other forces. These kinds of **Radial** forces like the various artistic movements are marked in white. And finally, regarding **Shakespeare**—he is one of those whose force was—for a time—greater in Germany, and after deliberation I came to the conclusion that he had transcended the map and so he is given an almost biblical status reserved for ancient and classical works.*

[§20] : **GOETHE**

Wenn im Unendlichen dasselbe
Sich wiederholend ewig fließt,
Das tausendfältige Gewölbe
Sich kräftig ineinander schließt,
Strömt Lebenslust aus allen Dingen,
Dem kleinsten wie dem größten Stern
Und alles Drängen, alles Ringen
Ist ewige Ruh in Gott dem Herrn.
—Goethe, “Der Untergang des Abendlandes
Zahme Xenien VI

If the same Infinite motion
Repeats and flows on forever,
The thousandfold Dome
Powerfully encompassing within All
Things streaming with Lust for life,
The smallest and the largest Star
And all Thrusting, all Striving
Is eternal Rest in God the Lord.
—“Decline of the West”

Translation J.F.K. & Rudi Ruegg

:: FOCAL CENTRE::

[§21] : Herder gives us three “simple laws, according to which all living forces of nature produce their thousandfold organic wholes”:

- [1] *persistence*, that is, the inherent continuance of every entity;
- [2] the *union* of likes and the separation of opposites; and
- [3] the *resemblance* of a being with itself, and the reproduction of its essence in another. (*GOD* 133)

[§22] : If Herder is correct, these apply to you and me, and all living organisms, including artworks. In advance of embarking on our journey, I would like to adapt and apply F. Schlegel’s principles of ‘creative imagination’ to our **MAP** itself, to outline the what this cartographic endeavor is trying to conceptualize:

- [a] This cartographic conceit is a form of *material aesthetic practice*: the activity of creating representations and allegories of the whole through the production of finite forms.
- [b] These maps are a form of **art** utilizing the powers of creative imagination (*Poiesis*) to enact an aesthetic activity that links the finite (our sensible map) with the infinite realm (invisible world of forces).
- [c] My mind (*Geist*), is the agent that produces these images (*Bilder*) to express the infinite forces of interplay in the intellectual realm by creating, organizing, & presenting determined objects of the physical realm (*Symbole*).
- [d] This cartographic project will never be completed and will forever remain in a *constant state of becoming* as we can never chart all the relationships *and* because these maps perpetually need to be revised as our understanding of the nature of individual relationships charted change, deepen, & evolve.¹⁹

[§23] : I feel at this point it necessary to prove the **Cartographic Analogue**’s worth. We will use one of the maps to resolve one of our earlier questions laid out in the introduction relating to Toomer’s spiritual blueprint of **CANE**: *What is the purpose or significance of the curve, and the plunging, and swinging upward?* To answer this we need to **Novalis** for guidance and although any one of the maps would suffice, but we shall reproduce a section with just the elements needed [**Image G10**].

Novalis gives us two fragments that may help us better contextualize the movements of dynamic forces represented in the **MAP**:

Every act of introversion—every glance into our interior—is at the same time ascension, going up to heaven, a glance at the veritable outward.²⁰

Centripetal force is the synthetic striving of the spirit—centrifugal force the analytical striving of the spirit. Striving toward unity—striving towards diversity. Through the mutual determination of each by the other—that higher synthesis of unity and diversity itself will be produced—whereby one is in all and all in one. (*NOV* 79)

¹⁹ Adapted from Schlegel’s aesthetic principles laid out in Schulte-Sasse, 168.

²⁰ Qtd. in Hedge, ed., *Prose Writers of Germany*, 497.

[§24] : **CARTOGRAPHER** : *Focus your attention on the center around which all points are organized, it is the **Soul** of the map and the organizing structure balancing the innumerable forces in this system or world from its single center of gravity. Imagine you are actually 'in' that center marked **ONE** . . . Can you see the other nodes or stars representing **Plato**, **Plotinus** and **India** revolving around you at different altitudes from the center? Now can you locate our two main subjects **Toomer** and **Herder** from the given dates? Both are hovering above you but from our perspective **Herder** is above us, and **Toomer** is in orbit on the 'darkside' of this sphere (what would not be visible if we were observing from outside the frame rather than from within the center of gravity) . . . Now . . . I wish to effect a shift in perspective according to the principles of **Gestalt** theory . . . Do you see our **3 mooring threads** converging at the center? Imagine where we are—**ONE**—is no longer the center of the sphere, but rather the apex of a 4-sided equilateral pyramid, with the mooring threads delineating the edges of this pyramid . . . Can you see that we are now situated high above all our points? And now imagine that in actuality all the stars are of equal size and force, would you not conclude that from your highest vantage point, that **India** [**r**] was the closest and highest to you, although still below us? And below that star would you not rank **Plato** [**s**] the next highest, and under him **Plotinus** [**t**], followed by **Herder** [**u**], and all the rest descendingly? Now imagine all these points not to be static but to be revolving, each in different orbits revolving at different speeds in different directions . . . Can you now see that **Herder** and **Toomer** are actually sharing the same path and orbit below you? And now I will reveal that where you are standing is actually the focal point and node where all these forces conjoin and aspire to . . . this nucleus is the **Mind** of this world and also its **Soul** . . . it is simultaneously the center but paradoxically also the world's apex . . . and each star or satellite which is a **Part** of our **Whole** and is in essence a complete world unto itself—with its own organizing principle, system of forces, and center of gravity called its **Geist**. It is natural for all satellites to be drawn to its soul or center, but the equilibrium of the sum of forces keeps all in movement but constantly equidistant from the center, although each satellite's orbit can change . . . From our pinnacle of the pyramid, let us imagine that the **Herder** star [**u**] is drawing closer to us in spirit towards the highest apex hovering above, while its orbit maintains its equidistance from the focal center materially . . . Would its movement not be considered an 'ascent', and if the **Plato** [**s**] star was drawing away from us, would we not label that path a 'descent'? Now, the secret of mysticism is that all smaller worlds have a natural inclination and desire to join and become one with the higher world, system, or 'organism'. Any movement in the direction of this communion, or unity on a higher plane, is labeled an 'ascent', and any movement away from this union we can call a 'descent'. Now locating **Toomer's** star [**z**], which is actually a representation of the forces in **CANE**, the drive towards the mystical union with **All**—with the **ONE**—can be described as 'swinging upward' or 'ecstasy', and any movement away from this merging with the higher spirit or soul towards an atomizing separation can be referred to as 'plunging' or 'degradation'. This is why **Novalis's** fragment captures the mystical paradox: looking inward towards the center, or the 'seat of the soul' provides the higher view ('higher' not as measured in space, but on a higher plane, i.e. through the consciousness of the higher organism or world perspective). This apex is the **Archimedean point**, or *Punctum Archimedis* . . .*

[§25]: **D. H. Lawrence confides** to Catherine Carswell:

Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky—mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest writers of all time. And now, with something of a shock, I realize a certain crudity and thick, uncivilized, insensitive stupidity about them, I realize how much finer and purer and more ultimate our own stuff is.²¹

The Neo-romantic Lawrence could not appreciate **Dostoevsky** as he had not grasped the true value of the *Volk*, or “the Divine average” of **Walt Whitman**. This nativist veneration of the **folk** as keepers of the **race-soul** is evident in Toomer’s “Poetry” Notebook: “The Whitman tradition is one of Life, inclusive. If emphasis has been placed upon the **mediocre**, this is because, perhaps, the mind needs a symbol of the average if it is to grasp the thing at all” [“POE” II : 26].

[§26] : CARTOGRAPHER : [⊙] : (**intra-circular** : *within coterie*) : *On the intra-circular plane we are tracking the bonds of **affinity** between writers or between works within a shared group identification (bond between like molecules). On our **MAP** we are tracing points of overlap and the threads that show the transmission of impactful **themes, techniques, and innovations**. Viewing these various individual **atoms** revolving around the **nucleus**, our search turns to those shared atoms, those combinations that create an instability to raise the **valence and atomic weight** of the entire system. Viewing their form from an ‘eternal glance’ above becomes the most important for us, but also **essentialization (compression and selection)**—to identify those movements and chemical **combinations** that directly relate with our three mooring threads that **intertwine** mystical, aesthetic, and mythological. We disregard most of the story, except for the **bold outlines**, the essential **progressive** movements and the specific **details** that **outlines** focusing on only those forces intersecting with our scope.*

TWO HERDERIAN KEYS

[§27]: *Poetic art* does not **represent** products; it is not one of the formative arts that **represent** works to be enjoyed in an eternal glance. It operates energetically, continuously. The poem, as a completed work, as a codex that one has finished reading or writing, is nothing; the succession of sensations experienced during its operation is everything. It is thus not an art of **representing products**. (AES 263)
Critical Forests: Fourth Grove

[§28]: The concept of succession is only half of the idea of an action; it must be a **succession through force**: thus arises an action. I imagine a being active in the succession of time; I imagine changes that follow one upon another through the force of a substance: thus arises the force of an **action**. And if actions are the subject of poetry, then I wager that this subject can never be defined with the barren concept of succession: **force** is the center of its sphere. And this is the force that cleaves to the interior of words, the magic power that affects my soul through the fancy and memory; it is the essence of poetry. (AES 142) *Critical Forests: First Grove*

²¹ Lawrence, *D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism*, 242. Letter dated December 1916.

[§29]: **Notes on Plotinus** : The **ONE** is like a sun shining on all the other things giving visibility to all intelligible things giving being (Plato):

- (a) The **ONE** is simple — like a geometric point ... that can not be broken apart.
- (b) The **ONE** is above being... Super-essential above true being.
- (c) The **ONE** is above knowing. . . It is above intellectual vision and understanding.

No intellectual vision can ever grasp its Incomprehensibility. We get to the One through absolute unification. Plotinus' secret is not that we unite but re-unite.

A return to flowing forth — emanation. There is **ONE SOUL** and many divided souls. All souls flow from the **ONE SOUL**. The soul is located between the intellect and the body. Unlike the intellect, the soul can be embodied, corrupted, and suffer.

First principle — ALL is illuminated by light of the central point (the sun).

The soul is like a hollow crystal ball, the center of this crystalline sphere is the intellect, the soul revolves around it. On the outside of this sphere are many faces, our individual souls (divided souls) Each person looks outward into the external world—darkness, death, mortality. We are all looking from a different perspective and so we think we are all different, we are many divided souls not in connection with each other but that is an illusion. If we can take the faces and turn them inside we would see that the inner world of all souls is one world. Ultimately all souls are **ONE**—that inner self is the **Divine Mind**. We share a common inside. Plotinus' philosophy of pure spirituality is more spiritual than religious traditions of the West.

From a lecture given by Phillip Cary.

[§30]: **CARTOGRAPHER:** *Let us turn to our **MAP**. This globe is now the **Earth** and each of the **Stars** represents cosmopolitan centers where forces are concentrated like the Blooms of yellow **Lights** we see from **Space**. Let us fill the **MAP** with water, to create the **Oceans**. Can you see [**z**] far left in the North-West sector? Let's make that into **Hemingway's Iceberg**, drifting through the North Atlantic . . . Only one-eighth of it is above water. Now, let's shift perspective— so we are now standing at point (**1**), at the tip of the **Iceberg**, similar to the pyramid we stood before. Only [**r**], [**s**] and [**u**] are above the surface of the **Ocean**. They respectively represent the **Setting**, the **Characters**, and the forces of interaction through the **Plot**—all the other **elements** are below the surface. Do you remember the **Flux** of colorful names of all the major **authors**? They are **All** here, too, underwater in the **Subconscious** and **inner workings** of the **Text**. The **aim** of every successful **Story** is for all the separate **Elements** & revolving **Forces**—to all coalesce and fuse giving readers access into the **Mind** or **Geist** of the **Text**. The sound of **Thunder** warns of an oncoming **Storm** . . . We suddenly find ourselves in the **Heart of the Iceberg** buried deep within the ice sub-marine . . . The (**1**) has been transported into the **Nucleus** . . . And the **Author** is standing **There**, too!! **Whispering a Message** . . . into each of our ears . . .*

:: LATERAL LINES ::

[§31] : CARTOGRAPHER : [☉] : (**inter-circular** : *between groups*) : *On the inter-circular plane we're tracking the forces between varying groups. Now on our MAP, each star represents the different artists/works belonging to artists of different groups—the bigger they are, the more force they exert, but we are then going to track the influence those ideas and techniques those shared aspects they have in common: the attraction. Is this affinity the transformational defining central characteristic? Tracking the differences and reasons for repulsion also becomes necessary. We are in essence, tracking the shared characteristics and unifying traits of two similar satellites, but each belonging to separate solar systems or organisms, while being a system in itself.*

[§32] : CARTOGRAPHER : *With our MAP, we shall attempt to make something new. If Herder's 3 Laws Governing Organisms holds true, we should be able to apply this map to any organism . . . For this exercise we choose Ezra Pound's Catholic Anthology published in [1915]. As the mind (Geist) that gathered and organized all these Parts into a Whole, we place the editor in the nucleus (1)—we give the biggest star [r] to Yeats not because of the quality of his opening poem, but because of the force his name brings. The next seat of honor goes to Eliot [u] who has a number of submissions—on the strength of his Symbolist-inspired Prufrock and Portrait of a Lady we give him [Plato's] second largest double-star [t]. The star [s] we give the poet half of Pound because his 9 Oriental poems exert a great multi-force. Unexpectedly, we give the coveted Herder-spot to Williams for The Wanderer interweaving 7 poems. You may place Monroe and Corbin within that orbit—but on the other side in CANE's [z] spot I place Masters and his Spoon River Fragments, with Carl Sandburg nearby within the previous [WHITMAN] orbit, although his contribution is meagre. The remaining poets you may assign to whichever star you wish . . . There are Radial forces at work here too—Imagism acting on those compressed short poems within; Poetic Realism over on the Masters-Sandburg side; and finally French Symbolism sweeping down from the India-side like a great Aurora borealis flow of green-tinted lights suffusing the entire landscape. . . If we fast forward just a few years, it is interesting to track the shifts in style: 20 months later Corbin would dramatically shift towards the VOLK TRADITION—unrecognizable, too, would be Williams's poetic makeover favoring Imagist compression—maybe a dislike of Amy Lowell would motivate Pound to abandon features seen here—T. S. E. would quietly be smashing these fragmented poems, to re-use these shards in a larger future work, Sandburg would channel more of the Whitmanian idiom—with Sherwood Anderson taking notes. And our post-war Yeats would transform himself into a modernist.*

[§33] : I could not grasp for years, what M. H. Abrams and Harold Bloom meant: that romanticism and modernism were somehow the **Janus-faced double representation of a single impulse**—that modernism was just the tail end of romanticism. Materially, the attitudes and themes and styles contained in representative respective texts seem to be poles apart, without much overlap besides the conscious allusion etc. However, *in time* . . . these poles seem to have drawn closer and closer to each other and the center (**1**), as I have come to better understand the dialectical relationship of contraries.

My understanding of **Romanticism** sees it as an attempt to reach and express that moment of synthesis—**Fusion**—when all the strands of the Many suddenly reach culmination in the One, into the nucleus or primal womb: where and when all dualities of subject/object, real/ideal, phenomena/noumena, material/spiritual, etc., are reconciled (the charges are neutralized).

I believe **Modernism**, tries to express the other side of this equation: the moment of impact—**Fission**—when the Whole is shattered and broken into discrete though is recognizable fragments that are strewn and scattered into and about the chaos of the universe. Modernism is about imposing form Form and order upon this ruptured chaos—or as Eliot expressed in *The Waste Land*, “These fragments I have shored against my ruins”.

[§34] : In the introduction, we appended an oft-used trope to **Jean Moréas’s** description of the evolutionary development of literary movements—one of an endlessly shifting pendulum to describe each successive group’s re-channeling of the inherited predecessor’s momentum into a reactionary swing in the opposite direction. However, such a **figure** implies a closed system where the force and impetus of the Tradition’s latent collective genius—expressed by an artistic movement of a given period—can be re-harnessed and redirected by successors. Although the direction may change, the force of energy is linear and constant—self-generating and perpetual—and free of outside influence save friction. To free this **analogy** from its sealed vacuum, a much more nuanced **metaphor** might serve us better to capture the true dynamics of the continuity and inter-relational nature of all literary traditions. Perhaps something akin to an enormous ocean—merging with other seas flowing in from all directions—powered by various tidal forces creating a constant ebb & flow of ideas—and mixing the old and new: a vast eternally-shifting single body spanning the entire globe. What about a universal **image (Bild)** that depicts a sun with revolving stars—a complete solar **system** showing the invisible but constantly shifting inter-relational push and pull of gravity upon this network of forces? Perhaps something in the shape of our **MAP**.

DIE GOLDENE GANS

[§35] : CARTOGRAPHER : *Let's use our MAP once more to sketch the outlines of a shadow play. Let it be German, and let it be simple. We turn to a Märchen by the brothers Grimm, who were devoted disciples of Herder. We shall choose the folktale first: Die Goldene Gans . . . Now let us plot the characters & narrative forces onto our MAP. This story has a King, we designate as the biggest 1st Star [r]—and his beautiful daughter the Princess, let's make her the 2nd Star [s] . . . She is stricken with such solemnity that she is unable to laugh. Her father, desperate to save her, promises her hand in Marriage to anyone who can cure her—let's make this Quest, or proposition propelling the entire narrative, the 3rd Star [t] . . . There was a father of three sons—the one straight above the princess the [1855] . . . He has an urgent need, a small re-quest: to chop wood from the forest. At the center of the German orbit we find a large a forest—and at its center there is a certain Tree [v] . . . As the oldest Son [x] goes into the forest to gather wood, he meets a gray Old Man—let's give him [u]—who is very hungry, but the oldest Son ignores his plea and injures himself while chopping wood. When the 2nd Brother [y] comes along and ignores the Old Man—in likewise manner he too gets injured. Finally, it is youngest brother's turn . . . His name is Dummling (or Simpleton)—who we mark as [z] . As our Protagonist treats the Old Man with kindness and generosity, he is repaid with a secret: an instruction where to find a certain Tree and to look underneath the roots after chopping it down . . . Our Dummling does as he is told and to his great surprise, what he finds underneath—(1)—a Golden Goose!*

Now, let us imagine 100 Stars scattered everywhere representing the various people of this village—it just so happens that whenever anyone tries to touch the feathers of this golden creature they would magically stick to it—unable to free themselves!! As days pass, we find Dummling carrying the Golden Goose with a long procession of people stuck behind it floating & tumbling head over heels . . . And can you believe that when the Princess sees this long ridiculous train of people attached one to another all spiraling after each other—she bursts out in joyous laughter! And the King who is noble & bound to keep his word, allows Dummling to marry his daughter—and that is how this Simpleton later inherits the Throne. . . . He is able to claim the highest seat overlooking ALL What happened to die Goldene Gans you ask? Where can we find it presently? Well, it happens to be . . . where it's always been—under the Tree. . . It has been underneath, in the Soul (1) of this Märchen all along. It is the Glue holding All characters & narrative Forces together, connecting each to every Star into an organic Whole.

[§36]: *And as we fall asleep by the fire, my thoughts drift . . . I envision Mary Shelly in Switzerland glimpsing her incredible tale as its Seed is inseminated and in the Womb of her Imagination . . . Daily this story draws sustenance demanding more from Imagination. . . And deep inside her the separate elements coalesce and combine—the myriad parts and forces drawn together developing . . . they begin to take shape, like a growing embryo or fetus, nourished through a life-line drawing force from her mind. I fancy this body of ideas to mirror that of her persona Viktor Frankenstein, who has brought together a similar body of disparate elements hoping to bind them and bring them to Life. The map now represents both their*

creations *simultaneously*. The **(1)** is the mind, the organizing principle—and each star is an appendage or vital organ. As Shelly **shapes and polishes** her story adding details and flowing forces of dramatic narrative into her work, she realizes, like her meta-persona Viktor does . . . that after all this hard work of assembling the **parts and pieces and stitching the creation is still a dead thing . . . lacking animation**. But as the **neural interconnections and channels of life-giving force** are made, there is still **Hope**. “If only I could achieve **Perfect Form . . .**” can be heard echoing in each of their studies as they mull over the **blueprints of design . . .** Then suddenly, a miracle . . . As the **shadow of a stork gracefully darts** by overhead—deep within the **nucleus, the mind of the creation is suddenly infused with a Promethean spark from the Soul of its creator . . .** As the disparate **Parts fuse into a Whole . . .** a **Magical Pulse of Energy** fills the room as the formerly dead creature . . . is now **Alive with Spirit and Force. Animated into a Living Being . . .** At that moment, both **figures enter the halls of Eternity & Immortality . . .**

WANDERLUST

[§37]: Due to the rigors of traversing vast distances and the disorienting hassles of transferring lines—as Alexandria is too far, and India we seek no more—a change of plans: we must choose between [**u**] & [**t**] for our vantage points: the first is a grand but nearly forgotten library/chapel in the Gothic style, and the other a great museum/temple with a huge dome arching over a multi-colored glass globe, surrounded by myriad faces eager to look in.

Due to its proximity and lack of crowds, we choose the first. Our visit finds a sphere here too, hanging from the ceiling, encircled by lights. And all along the walls are countless books side by side, containing wisdom collected from every Age & Land, stretching as far as one can see. Under the globe in the center is a collection booklets of varying shades of harmonizing colors, marked with a different plant drawn on each of its covers. Selecting just three of these pocketbooks titled **(a), (b), (c)**, we find a quiet spot to read in the vestibule. By candlelight we uncover truths hidden within one page after another.

When the light goes out we feel our way back, but instead of the library we find a strange room with circles of light sparkling through the windows on every side . . . each new ray, swelling and subsiding And each of these criss-crossing rays are sparkling through from a different window pane, and in each opening, a shining face peers in at you. One by one these faces alight with an expression of recognition. Of course—these are all the faces you met while on this journey from [**z**] to [**u**]. . . Standing in the very center of that room encircled by glass windows, you sense the visages and expressions on each individual start to swirl . . . as the room is bathed in light and covered by this heavenly glow. In that light you recognize this and *only* this truth: all these myriad faces and expressions, they are only different reflections of you, lit from different perspectives . . . And it suddenly dawns on you at that moment: the globe in the museum, and the sphere in the library are the same—and that **Circle** glowing with light from within, is you . . . and always was You, the **(1)**.

:: RADIAL INTERSECT ::

[§38] : CARTOGRAPHER : [✨] : (**radial** : *trans-historical*) : *On our MAP we track the forces on radial planes trying to pinpoint those ideas which transcend their historical timeframe, those forces exhibited and emanating that extend to and affect the orbits of later groups. These, in most cases, work on the level of movements, as individuals rarely effect this magnitude a force on their own. Each star tracked represents separate group in time—and the search is to find the elements that unite two separate movements at heart: the shared core, while noting differentiating characteristics. These trans-historical forces & bonds are in constant flux, with the forces & bonds exerted between each group constantly swirling and contracting affecting the orbit of all peripheral satellites on either side. This constant swelling and receding tide of forces are what we want to take a snapshot of—at single moments in time to track (where the forces between groups intersect) the positioning of all constellations in relation to the overall momentum of the flux.*

[§39] : CARTOGRAPHER : *On our MAP both of our Russian forces are within the Herder/Goethe orbit and each are given stars of the same size. Turgenev we situate alongside the stream of Poetic Realism, right up against the marker for Julian Schmidt and Otto Ludwig, with the date [1855] marking A Sportsman's Sketches. Dostoevsky's star we place further up—in the gutter between the currents of Symbolism and Expressionism, his marker is almost touching Nikolai Gogol's, and we mark the date [1866] for Crime & Punishment, yet any one of the major novels could designate this manifold force. Gogol's star is double—Dead Souls is flagged as [1842] in the furthest arctic regions of Expressionism—the light of Arabesques, written seven years prior, is Herderian in color. On the periphery we place the folk poet Aleksey Kolstov nearest the German orbit—with the writer of the influential rural tales, Dmitry Grigorovich, right above him. In that quadrant the dominant force is Nikolai Karamzin—whose was one of the earliest Russian writers so closely aligned with Herder stars, However, he is hidden from our perspective. We have set the subjects and boundaries of [Chapter 4], and the nodes & forces for our stopover (w).*

[§40] : **Sherwood Anderson**: “Honestly, old chap, can't you imagine the sweat coming on the brow of God when men set forth this analysis of song? I used to have for my dreams a thing I called the Sonnet God, a great face towered in the sky, more gigantic than the hills. In his two hands my god held the little round ball called the earth. He blew upon it and watched. Fire, death, and destruction ran over the land. The god smiled. In his sadness was all of sadness and of truth. In my own way, you see, Brother, I have hung onto the face of my god. I would like you to see it in your dreams. It would stop on your lips forever these pronouncements about song and prose. It is all devilish young and untrue like your unhappiness.” [Cf. Image G9]

Anderson's letter to Waldo Frank written May 1917, Jones and Rideout, eds., 13.

[§41]: Ivan Turgenev's 'A Tour in the Forest' was featured in Garnett's book, *Turgenev, A Study*. A few pages later, the traveler has a spiritual experience in the heart of the forest. The style of depicting the forest could almost serve as a definition for Herder's "invisible spiritual forces" & the ideal Mallarmé aspired to:

My heart sank. At that instant, at that spot, I had a sense of death breathing upon me, I felt I almost touched its perpetual closeness. If only one sound had vibrated, one momentary rustle had arisen, in the engulfing stillness of the pine-forest that hemmed me in on all sides! I let my head sink again, almost in **terror**, it was as though I looked in, where no man ought to look. [...] then the shadows began to grow and bear down on me, it was darker and darker about me, more dully and quietly the monotonous years ran by and like a stone, dejection sank upon my heart. I sat without stirring and gazed, gazed with effort and perplexity, as though I saw all my life before me, as though scales had fallen from my eyes. Oh, what have I done! my lips involuntarily murmured in a bitter whisper. O life, life, where, how have you gone without a trace? How have you slipped through my clenched fingers? Have you deceived me, or was it that I knew not how to make use of your gifts? Is it possible? is this fragment, this poor handful of dusty ashes, all that is left of you? [...] Or, perhaps, happiness, the true happiness of all my life, passed close by me, smiled a resplendent smile upon me and I failed to recognise its divine countenance. Or did it really visit me, sit at my bedside, and is forgotten by me, like a dream? Like a dream, I repeated disconsolately. Elusive images flitted over my soul, awakening in it something between pity and bewilderment . . . you too, I thought, dear, familiar, lost faces, you, thronging about me in this deadly solitude, why are you so profoundly and mournfully silent? From what abyss have you arisen? How am I to interpret your enigmatic glances? Are you greeting me, or bidding me farewell? Oh, can it be there is no hope, no turning back? Why are these heavy, belated drops trickling from my eyes? Oh heart, why, to what end, grieve more? Try to forget if you would have peace, harden yourself to the meek acceptance of the last parting, to the bitter words 'good-bye' and 'for ever'. Do not look back, do not remember, do not strive to reach where it is light, where youth laughs, where hope is wreathed with the flowers of spring, where dovelike delight soars on azure wings, where love, like dew in the sunrise flashes with tears of ecstasy' look not where is bliss, and faith and power—that is not your place!

[§42]: Turgenev learned from the pictorial, "scenic" modes of **Grigorovich**, who was also a painter. This extract from 'The Village', using second-person narration is also taken for Turgenev's most lyrical piece in *A Sportsman's Sketches*, 'Forest & Steppe':

Before her spread a broad, green meadow; over its surface the geese, white as snow, were gliding slowly; motley-colored ducks with their heads tucked under their grey wings were lying about here and there in motionless groups. Further on gleamed the river with its steep banks, overgrown with burdock and brushwood, from which in places there thrust out long, dry stalks of wild sorrel and the violet tops of prickly burdock. Beyond the river one could see a black, ploughed-up field. . . . Here and there the bluish hills in the distance were again interrupted by the silvery flashes of the river.

:: CAPTURE SPIRALS ::

[§43] : CARTOGRAPHER : [☉] : (**spiral** : *mystical*) : *Now for the final capture web or spiral plane the spiral represents the mystical (as in binding or unifying) ideas philosophic or aesthetic those echoes that repeat in time which infuse all works in all systems, though to a greater or lesser degree. These permeate all movements to differing discernible magnitudes and altitudes. These forces are linked to those universal mythical ideas that remain eternal and constant. These are the root concepts that describe archetypical, mythological, or 'racial' that must be viewed from beyond the individual perspective to be understood properly. Each race or culture thought of as organisms transcending time have different relationships to these forces of universal ideas drawing through time like the pull of a black hole or the fragmenting ricochet of forces impacting the various races or cultures in different ways—this constant barrage of different colored forces echoing, mirroring, and splattering a unique pattern onto each. How each organism was shaped and informed in relation to the defined universal flux of forces—these are what interest us most, and where we hope to find conclusions that are most meaningful . . .*

DOMINIE

[§44]: On our final stopover to meet with an acquaintance, who will take us back eight years on foot to introduce us to his friend and mentor, a notable scholar and priest. As luck would have it, he has traveled extensively through the the classical and ancient realms—he has met with all the greatest thinkers and has made written accounts of all his interactions. He has agreed to tutor us on almost every subject imaginable—*gratis!*—explaining, interpreting, and weaving together all he has learned from the various philosophers and distant places. Blessed fortune, indeed! These lessons and accounts, along with his album of illustrations, will prove to be an even more vivid and rewarding experience than if we had gone through with our original plans of visiting these destinations in person. Many thanks must be given to that **artist/scientist/poet** for that serendipitous introduction to this wonderful **traveler/historian/teacher/poet!** For upon our return home, each finds in their pocket a passport full of stamps recording each stage of the journey taken and a signed album full of detailed descriptions of each attraction we were not able to visit! Then we realize it is no coincidence that many of the writings and stamps include Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit letters, and that the handwriting and ink used in both documents are indistinguishable—they are from the same German pen and ink bottle, both bearing the initials: J. G. H.

WILHELM MEISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP

[§45] : CARTOGRAPHER : *We shall use our **MAP** to chart out the basic outlines of **Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship** as a child's puppet play. The author's mind as creator we place in the **nucleus**—(1)—and do you see [**u**]? Let's make that **Wilhelm**—the story opens in the company of his first love the actress **Mariana** [**t**] with whom he shares his childhood love of marionettes and puppet plays. She is actually in love with someone else, **Norberg**, who we will not mark as he is away on business, as well as her servant **Barbara** who is busy in the kitchen. **Werner** is a close friend and son of his **father's** business partner, who always takes the opposing view to **Wilhelm** whenever they discuss anything. As such we give him a star but as the **antipodal force** his orbit is directly opposite our **Apprentice** on the other side of the **Sphere**. Not having a set career and sensing his **love** is becoming more and more strained, our **hero** takes a business trip on behalf of his **father**.*

*It is on this trip where **Wilhelm** is lucky enough to meet a troupe of **actors** upon which he decides to follow his true passion **Theater**. Among this troupe we have theatrical manager **Serlo** and his sister **Aurelie** a dilettante actress, two actors **Laertes** and **Melina**, and the actress **Philine**—who we assign [**z**] and give [1855] to **Aurelie**, with the 3 men above her. There is another physician in their circle, **Jarno**—who introduces **Wilhelm** to **Shakespeare** and who we delegate to [1866]. If we jump ahead . . . this troupe will later join forces to prepare their rendition of **Hamlet** with our **protagonist** playing the **lead**, of course—But first we relate 3 amazing coincidences that occur in the story: (1) Our leader rescues **Mignon** from a cruel showman "**The Great Devil**" then adopts this strange, innocent boyish girl—who we assign to [**v**] along with another stray musician with a beautiful voice the **Old Harper**, who we commission to [1852]; (2) it appears **Mariana** had a baby out of wed-lock, and she sends our **hero's** son **Felix** to him to raise—he is the **Small Star** on top of his father [**u**]; (3) during a pleasant outing with the **acting troupe**, they are attacked by **robbers** and **Wilhelm** is shot in the **chest** . . . he is saved by **Mignon** and nursed by **Philine**—when a lovely **Amazon** appears at the exact midpoint of the story, mounted on a white horse—this mystery woman gets the largest star [**r**]. The narrative rotates through peaks and valleys, relating many incidents of fires and water, attraction and repulsion, beautiful songs and poetry, heartache and blossoms of Love. Suddenly the narrative turns into completely unfamiliar territory with **Book Six**—it relates the **confessions** of a beautiful soul belonging to an unnamed **fair saint**, we promote this countess to [**s**]. In the remaining two books we find out the mysterious **Amazon** is the pure and noble **Natalie** who is the niece of the countess! We meet her brother **Lothario**, and the **Abbé** who appears in various guises— Let's move **Jarno** into the **Tower Society** and assign these 3 aristocrats the seats (**a**), (**b**), and (**c**). As expected, **Wilhelm** falls head over heels for **Natalie** who becomes his sole object of desire. A double tragedy strikes our story in **Book Eight** as the interrelated poetic **Mignon** & the tragic **Harper** both die in the **Uncle's** castle! What happened to our **Bildungsroman**, or is this really a **Künstlerroman**? Is our beautiful and pure **Mignon** really dead forever? Is this a symbolic story or an allegory? Why exactly did this book become the **Bible of Romanticism**?*

KEY TO THE ENNEADS

[§46]: The epiphanic moment in the *Enneads*, which Plotinus begins with the words: “Nothing Divulged to the Uninitiate” (*ENN* 624; VI. 9. 11). The full passage is introduced in our **Forest of Correspondence 5**, and here we insert the explication and interpretation given by Frederic M. Schroeder:

... describing the progress of the soul to the One, Plotinus speaks of how a man enters a temple and passes through a series of rooms, each of which contains a statue of a god. At last he enters the inmost shrine, and sees, not a statue, but the god himself, who is not an object of vision (*horama*), but **another way of seeing** [...]. Although the objects seen are in a series rather than on the same plane, it remains true that the god, once seen, becomes the **organizing principle** of the whole piece. I take “another way of seeing” to represent the angle of vision belonging to the god.²²

[§47]: **CARTOGRAPHER** : *Now I am afraid that this will be our final journey together . . . Please look compare IMAGE F4 & IMAGE F5: First, do you see what they have in common? Yes, they are mirror Images. [F4] is inside-out because that is the view from the inside of the MAP—the view from Infinity. We can see all the wires and trapping upholding this entire device. And if you look closely in the corner, you may possibly spot the fingerprint left by its creator. . [F4] is the Perfect representation of romantic irony. All the gears and machinery of the World have been exposed when viewed from behind the curtain! Second, do you see the Mystic Priest in [F5]? He is tearing the material reality to get a true glimpse of the Universe. Actually, he is not looking Outward, he is looking Inward as that is the path. And his face is covered . . . Do you know the reason why? Actually, it is not covered . . . Can you see his face? . . . The moment you attain cosmic consciousness, you lose yourself and your identity to merge with the whole and the ALL. His face is the face of the Sun . . . And in closing I want to say that [F4] and [F5] are really One. Look at the top . . . Do you see the inverted India star? That is, at the moment, the mystic seeker . . . And then Who is the Sun? . . . That would be Plato, at this moment . . . And Plotinus? . . . He is the Moon. Now look at the Center, the Nucleus of the MAP . . . What is its counterpart below? If you guessed the Tree, then you are correct . . . That is the World Tree . . . The Axis Mundi . . . That is what Shamans and Priests use to climb into the Soul of the Universe . . . However, this photograph is upside down. The Heart and Soul is under the base of the tree. You need the Spirit of a Bird or other pure animal to climb the Heights . . . I leave you now to contemplate ALL I have imparted to you . . . We shall meet again in the Nucleus, in the eye of God, in the Sun.*

²² Frederic M. Schroeder, “Plotinus and Language,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 347. Emphasis added.

ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS

[§ 48]: The core principles running through **Plato, Plotinus, and German** thinkers—all the mystically-inclined major concepts encountered on our journey—seem to be reflections of those very same ideas first expressed in ancient Indian texts. Looking at fragments culled from a single section of the ‘**Sixth Prapâthaka**’ of the *Maitrâyana-Brâhmaṇa-Upanishad*, the number of corresponding core principles are overwhelming, and the breadth of overlap with this storehouse of images and concepts is enough to make us wonder what might remain hidden elsewhere within these troves:

1. He (the Self) bears the Self in two ways, as he who is *Prâna* (breath), and as he who is *Aditya* (the sun). Therefore there are two paths for him **within** and **without**, and they both turn back in a day and night. **The Sun is the outer Self, the inner Self is Breath.** Hence the motion of the inner Self is inferred from the motion of the outer Self.

7. When the knowledge is twofold (**subjective and objective**), then he hears, sees, smells, tastes, and touches (something), for **it is the Self that knows everything.** But when the knowledge is not twofold (subjective only), without effect, cause, and action, without a name, without a comparison, without a predicate—what is that? It cannot be told. . . .

8. And the same Self is also called Isâna (lord), . . . **Indra**, Indu (moon). He is also he who warms, the Sun, hidden by the thousand-eyed golden egg, as one fire by another. He is to be thought after, he is to be sought after.

Having said farewell to all living beings, having gone to the forest, and having renounced all sensuous objects, **let man perceive the Self** from his own body. (See him) who assumes **all forms, the golden, who knows all things, who ascends highest**, alone in his splendour, and warms us; the thousand-rayed, who abides in a hundred places, the spirit of all creatures, **the Sun, rises. . . .**

15. There are two forms of Brahman, time and non-time. That which was before the (existence of the) sun is non-time and has no parts. That which had its beginning from the sun is time and has parts. . . . Thus it is said: ‘Time ripens and dissolves all beings **in the great Self**, but he who knows into what time itself is dissolved, he is the knower of the Veda.’

16. This manifest **time is the great ocean of creatures.** He who is called *Savitrf* (the sun, as begetter) dwells in it, from whence the moon, stars, planets, the year, and the rest are begotten.²³

The Jean Toomer Papers do contain notes of vocabulary words with page numbers corresponding to the *Mababharata*, along with a typed list of various English editions along with the *Upanishads, Ramayana, Buddacharita, Vikaramorvasi* [“PRO” IV: Facsimile 6; JTP Box 60, Folder 1412].

²³ F. Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 15, *The Upanishads: Part 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 305; 311; 317. Emphasis added.

HERDER & SHAMANISM — FUTURE RESEARCH

[§49]: Herder summarized his intellectual preferences in catchy phrases that sounded like chants: “O holy land [India], I salute to thee, thou source of all music, thou voice of the heart”; and “Behold the East—cradle of the human race, of human emotion, of all religion.” Friedrich Schlegel was another prominent Romantic writer and philosopher who promoted the same perception. 13

Herder, who was among the first to soften the rationalist attacks of Enlightenment scholars on the “superstitions” of other cultures. In fact, the entire Romanticism project was a movement toward the intellectual rehabilitation of the religious and the spiritual, which earlier Enlightenment writers wanted to dismiss as vestiges of the “dark ages.” Herder pointed to the limitations of the Enlightenment and its obsession with reason. The philosopher wanted to validate the role of imagination, emotion, and all aspects of the irrational in human knowledge. In their art, poetry, prose, and, for some, lifestyles, Romantic intellectuals drew attention to things spiritual, mysterious, and what conventional Enlightenment wisdom could consider abnormal or weird. For example, in Herder’s eyes, to believe in spirits and to experience spiritual inspiration was natural and beneficial. Acknowledging native superstitions as a religion, he argued against calling their practitioners “deceivers.” The philosopher was able to see in the “bestial” and “insane” movements of the shaman the grains of creativity akin to those expressed in the work of artists, poets, and singers. From Herder’s viewpoint, **Orpheus**, a character from Greek mythology, European skalds and bards, and non-Western spiritual practitioners belonged to the same tribe because all of them were doing spiritual work. Herder pointed out to his contemporaries that classical Greeks had also been savages before their civilization flourished. Moreover, even after they “blossomed,” they still were close to nature and, therefore, he reminded, remained “noble Greek shamans [*edle griechische Schamanen*].” 22-3

Schlegel was among the first to trace the origin of the word shaman to Sanskrit. In his 1820s works, the philosopher indicated that shaman originated from **samaneans**, a classical antiquity expression that described Buddhist priests in ancient India. Therefore, as Schlegel stressed, **schaman** was a “pure Indian” word. Besides, he remarked, it contained “quite a philosophical sense.” In his lectures on world intellectual history, Schlegel speculated on the philosophical meaning of the expression. Draping this meaning in Hindu colors, he interpreted schaman as an “equability of mind” that is “requisite to the perfect union with the God.” Furthermore, Schlegel was seriously convinced that all Siberian natives used the expression **schaman** as a generic word for their spiritual practitioners. 13-14

Andrei A. Znamenski *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and the Western Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Herder had come to believe that enthusiasm, shamanism, and all aspects of the irrational had to be acknowledged openly and confronted. They were natural. Whenever the natural was disavowed, or ignored, or repressed, or imprisoned by predetermined codes, whether Franco-Roman neoclassicism or any other, the eventual result could, he maintained, only be an eruption of gigantic proportions. 149

Flaherty, Gloria. *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

HERDER'S POETRY

[§50]: 'The Prophets'

My inmost soul your sainted spirits greets;
Ye true and faithful messengers of God!
Take now, amidst your palmy groves, that rest,
Which Horeb, Zion, Carmel never gave.

How manifold the gifts ye gave of old
To your primeval ages! Laws and rites
Divine, and faith, and solemn services
Your mouths imparted free as living streams.

To states prosperity and steadfast rule,
And customs wise and good by you were given.
For great in soul, exalted far above
The present times, and freed from vulgar fears,

Ye stood superior to the idle cares.
And senseless turmoil of the busy throng,
And backward far and forward cast your view.
And saw the heavenly light of ages shine.

The light of ages, streaming through all time.
Enkindled in your souls a heavenly fire.
That, glowing long obscure, sent forth at length
A glorious light for nations yet unborn.

For ye applied, within your holy caves,
Your ear confidingly to catch the sound
Of that small voice, to which at dead of night
And early dawn, your wakeful hearts were tuned.

Like gentle showers from heaven, thus gently came
Those tones, which yet with all the tempest's force,
Awoke the slumbering world, as if the past
And future times had seat their murmurs there.

A gain I greet you, with exulting voice.
Ye guileless souls, that in the hands of God
Like harps responded, and expressed his will,
Revealed the future and his laws enforced.

Oh thou, who on the holy mount thyself
Didst lift above thy people and thine age,
And see, amid the thickest smoke, that light,
That wisdom now and glory gives to all.

And thou, whose kindling spirit summoned fires
From heaven, and from the dead the widow's son,
Thou too, who didst behold Jehovah clothed
With heavenly brightness and with glory crowned;

Ye mourners, who with deepest sadest tones
And tears of anguish uttered forth your griefs;
And ye, who at the Prophets' setting sun
In shadowy twilight saw the promised times;

Ye Prophets all, who now in purer light,
Escaped from inward and from outward thrall.
Breathe tranquilly in palmy groves that peace,
Which Horeb, Zion, Carmel never gave;

What now do I behold? In friendly guise
Commingled with you are the wise and good
Of other nations, friends of God on earth,
The Druids, Orpheus and Pythagoras,

And Plato, and whoe'er by wholesome laws
Has proved his people's father and their guide.
Has listened to the voice of God in truth,
And yeilded up to God a guileless heart.

(*HEB2 54*)

SPIRALING TOWARDS AN END

Let us close by returning the the flag we planted in our introduction, to answer what is perhaps the most important question: *Has our journey been a fool's errand and wild goose chase, or was it worthwhile after all?* I would answer definitively, 'Yes', that it has been a fool's errand and wild goose chase, if by 'fool' we mean the simpleton *Dummling* and if the wild goose is our *Goldene Gans*. And I would also answer, 'Yes', to the second part—that it *has* been worthwhile, after all the years of reading, of searching for clues in the dark, towards a suitable method of presentation—because, at some point along the way, the chaotic web of disparate ideas got channeled through Toomer's **maelström** and Pound's **vortex**—to be transformed into something *new* and meaningful—like a folksong, or painting, or an ingenious poem—a *Spiritual* merging. This project has been a search for Form—one able to stitch and present all these disparate fragments and concepts of various disciplines and perspectives into a comprehensive **Whole** that achieves a fusion—one that also able to provide a fresh, animated, and illuminating perspective into aesthetics, poetry, and mysticism.

What does Herder mean to me? As mentioned in the closing chapter, Herder has functioned like the pole supporting the various intertwining arabesques of ivy [*Epheu*] and ideas. As a great syncretist, synthesizer, and assimilator connecting various disciplines into a single “great pattern”—or as Jean Paul aptly described him, a great **Constellation**. Herder is not merely the old gray man of the *Märchen* pointing to this great treasure under the tree, but rather the living embodiment of the *Goldene Gans* itself. He showed me the way out of my dark forest by teaching me the method of alternating the movement and rhythm of each stitch—to *oscillate from left to right hemisphere*. He gave me the courage to draw upon more than just the academic in me. To channel all of *Me*—the graphic designer and the folk musician, the little Christian boy and the adult skeptic, the teacher and the aspiring poet, both the Oriental and the Occidental halves of my essence—to find a voice that might dare to say something of worth and to express this feeling with conviction and **force**. To be creative, as well as thoughtful, and express myself in a way that is comprehensible to both my colleagues and students, while sparking readers' interest and **Imagination** as well. To communicate in five chapters, all the knowledge and words I have been subconsciously wanting to say. To embrace what Herder claimed in his early work, *Essay on Being*, “I write not to teach, but to learn”—while also striving to realize what Socrates, Plutarch, and Yeats collectively expressed: “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

Stéphane Mallarmé likened artists to a 'sacred spider', weaving a marvelous lace from its own spiritual threads. Navigating these five chapters, three mooring threads, lateral lines of thought, countless leaves, and capture spirals—my mind has often felt to me like Whitman's “noiseless patient spider”:

Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.²⁴

In essence, the spider, too, delicately spinning and connecting its expansive intersecting threads into one “great pattern”, is another guise of *die Goldene Gans*—symbolizing the endless formative power of the **Imagination—Poiesis**. It was not lost on me while writing **Chapter 3** (the last to be written) that my Content & Form were beginning to merge—into this fragmented compendium of ideas molded into a polyphonic-prose structure balancing on a multi-hued whirlwind of romantic chaos.

What has this MAP, been to me? This **MAP** may look like frenzied meaningless lines and scribbles on paper to many, but most readers can probably guess that to me, it means so much more. I have never seen one or believed in one before, but I would have to admit it has been my *Dämonische*, my fiery shape-shifting **guiding spirit** all along. It represents that inspiration I hoped for but did not possess for years—yet one day *magically* appeared by my bedside, an epiphany hitting me with the shock of lightning. It was my burning bush with angel that kept on singing, giving me new keys to unlock and remove impediments—my **Mignon**. This spiraling arabesque-laden dynamically expanding **MAP** charts my journey the past nine years, and this final multivalent and polyphonic **monograph** is one I could not have possibly imagined at the start—I and glad that along the way, I was inspired and motivated by Walter Benjamin’s dissertation to do something comprehensive and creative, as well as by Herder to find a **Form** most ideal to present this vast sea of information. This fragmented and multi-layered **monograph** is the furthest vehicle for ideas I might have imagined myself creating for literary criticism. However, I do feel with *force* and *spirit* that somehow, that just like the revelation Herder discovered in the Hebrew symbol of the *Schöpfungshieroglyphe*, this **MAP** played a similar mystical function—allowing me to examine Jean Toomer’s **CANE** and its long train of relatives and ancestors *from the inside*, something I was unable to do fifteen years ago.

In the end, perhaps Herder was right, this force of all forces turning the chaotic **flux** of the entire procession of atoms and planets revolving in harmony—into what Plotinus calls the “great dance of the universe, a heavenly dance”—it is the secret **essence** behind the veil: the creative *Geist* & *Kräfte* we only get glimpses of. Which means that the old gray man’s gift to simpleton was much more than just a golden goose . . . When this man pointed to the **Omphalos** beneath the cosmic World Tree: this soaring, golden creature binding and assimilating everything with Its infinite poetic power of *uniformation*—he was gesturing towards nothing less than the **spirit of poetry**, the music behind everything—the **One**, and the **All** . . .

²⁴ Lines 8-10 of ‘A Noiseless Patient Spider’, in Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 564.



Image H1. Photograph of a young Jean Toomer with elementary school classmates. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.



Image H2. Photograph of Jean Toomer with classmates at the American College of Physical Training of Chicago taken 1916. JTP, Box 65, Folder 1491. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

APPENDIXES I — IV
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Facsimile & Typescript
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: [3A] : "Adolescent" Notes (1919) : 449 :
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TOOMER'S CANE-ERA FRAGMENTS

Jean Toomer's writings gathered in the Appendixes are a body of work that spans from 1919 until December 1923. They provide us with a unique glimpse into the mind of the author, from his formative stages as a writer, through the period just after *CANE* was published. It is a collection of the various seeds and images that would coalesce and evolve into a coherent aesthetic and philosophical worldview, while also a record of the poet's progression—glimpses of literary skills blossoming and the imagination being fired up. These writings are disjointed fragments and ideas jotted down haphazardly as inspiration and thoughts branched out in different directions—jumping from one genre or topic to the next—poetry, dialogues, stories, epigrams; literature, philosophy, religion, mysticism; race and social commentary, literary criticism, plans and methods, observations about authors, etc.

While I *am* making the argument that this relatively sparse collection of fragments contains immense value and can reveal much insight, I have decided that in order to function in the most effective manner of providing context, they need to be repurposed into a more focused tool that best serves the overarching aim of this dissertation. That goal is to uncover foundations within *CANE* that are linked to our three mooring threads—Neo-Platonism, Neo-romanticism, and Neo-primitivism—through our Herderian prism. Within this context, rearranging the order of Toomer's fragments makes sense for several reasons: (1) the “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook** of **Appendix I** starts with an exercise regimen, includes sporadic names, addresses, appointments, records of money owed, and miscellany throughout—in the middle is even a draft of a letter to some young lady named Clara [“MEM” I: FACSIMILE 30-31]—this small pocketbook obviously also doubled as a planner/address book. For this reason, I believe a strictly linear page-by-page transcription including notes like “yellow banana /1” [“MEM” I: FACSIMILE 40 ; Page 85], would distract and work against our goal. I chose to omit these unrelated elements from my transcription

TOOMER'S CANE-ERA FRAGMENTS

(while keeping them in the **FACSIMILE** section). (2) the “**Poetry**” **Notebook** of **Appendixes II** has many unfilled sections—**Page 1** begins with notes then skips to **Page 73** where Toomer has copied over a critical essay in neat handwriting [“**POE**” **II:FACSIMILE 4-8**], which skips to another part where the function of recording disjointed thoughts resumes. As the early essay has been included in **Robert B. Jones’s** publication *Selected Essays and Literary Criticism*—it makes more sense to include it in the rear of this appendix, after presenting the fragments. (3) the “**Loose-Leaf Notes**” of **Appendix III** contain a few notes that are dated, however, for the remaining pieces—the order written can never be determined, save a few cases where one page cuts off mid-sentence and the fragment continues on the next. This reveals the central conundrum inherent when dealing with collections of fragments—the absence of an authorial structure arranging the fragments into a particular order, necessarily requires that someone step in and determine the best method of presentation.

Is the order that the ideas have flowed out into a notebook *ipso facto* the ideal method of arrangement? In this case, I would disagree—for it would be like forcing someone to read through an unrelated page of personal ads or the finance section in a newspaper, before allowing them to access the sports page. Our thesis and **mooring threads** have already defined our interests, and much like a newspaper editor, I will argue for the need to move the consequential fragments towards the front while grouping related pieces near each other—or risk losing interest, trust, and focus. For this reason I have opted to rearrange the order of fragments according to relevance and significance, rather than maintaining the original sequence. Special care has been taken to ensure related fragments are not broken up and that the original line breaks are kept for poems (including corrections or additions/alternatives written in). I include facsimiles of all original material in the appendixes before the transcriptions, for each corresponding section. Hopefully, this will offset any objections readers may have regarding the rearrangement of order, and ultimately this

APPENDICES

ordering structure chosen for presentation of fragments will prove beneficial—far outweighing any potential downsides.

As mentioned at the outset, the system of citation incorporated for references to Toomer's unpublished writings in the Appendixes will be provided in brackets—an abbreviation of the section title, the roman numeral of the Appendix number, followed by the fragment number: for example, ["POE" II:2] correlates to the **"Poetry" Notebook, Appendix II : fragment 2**. Citations in brackets indicate material collected in the Appendixes. All the following materials from Toomer's **"Memorandum" Pocketbook**, **"Poetry" Notebook**, and various **"Loose Leaf Notes"** (1919-1923) are copyrighted and have been reprinted here with kind permission from the **Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library**. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

APPENDIX I :
"MEMORANDUM"
POCKETBOOK

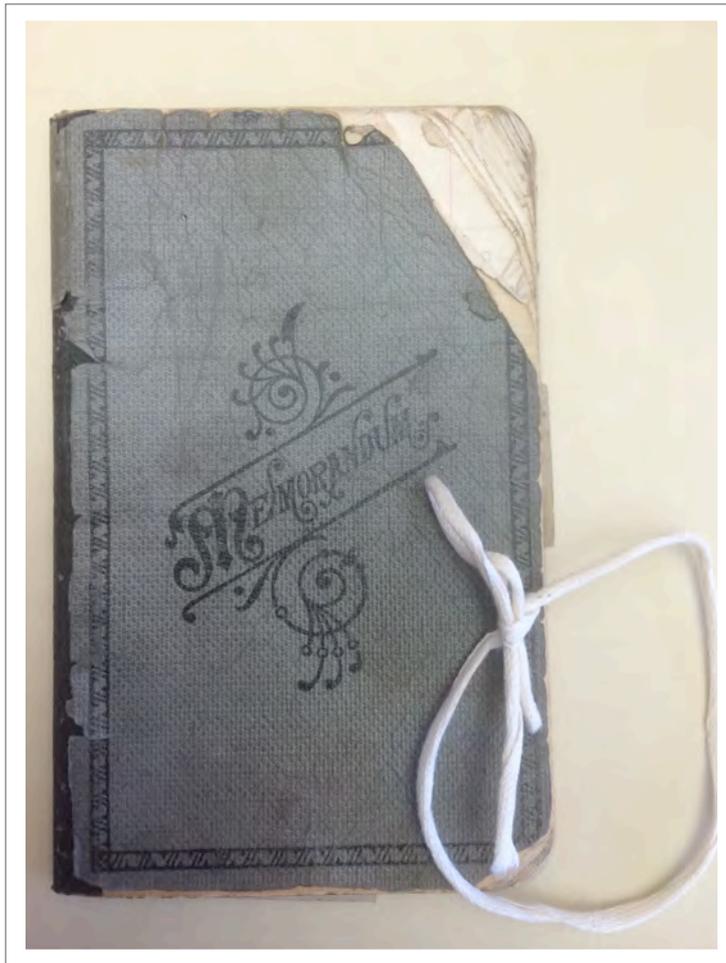


Image H3. Jean Toomer's "Memorandum" Pocketbook, c. 1921. JTP, Box No. 60, Folder 1410. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

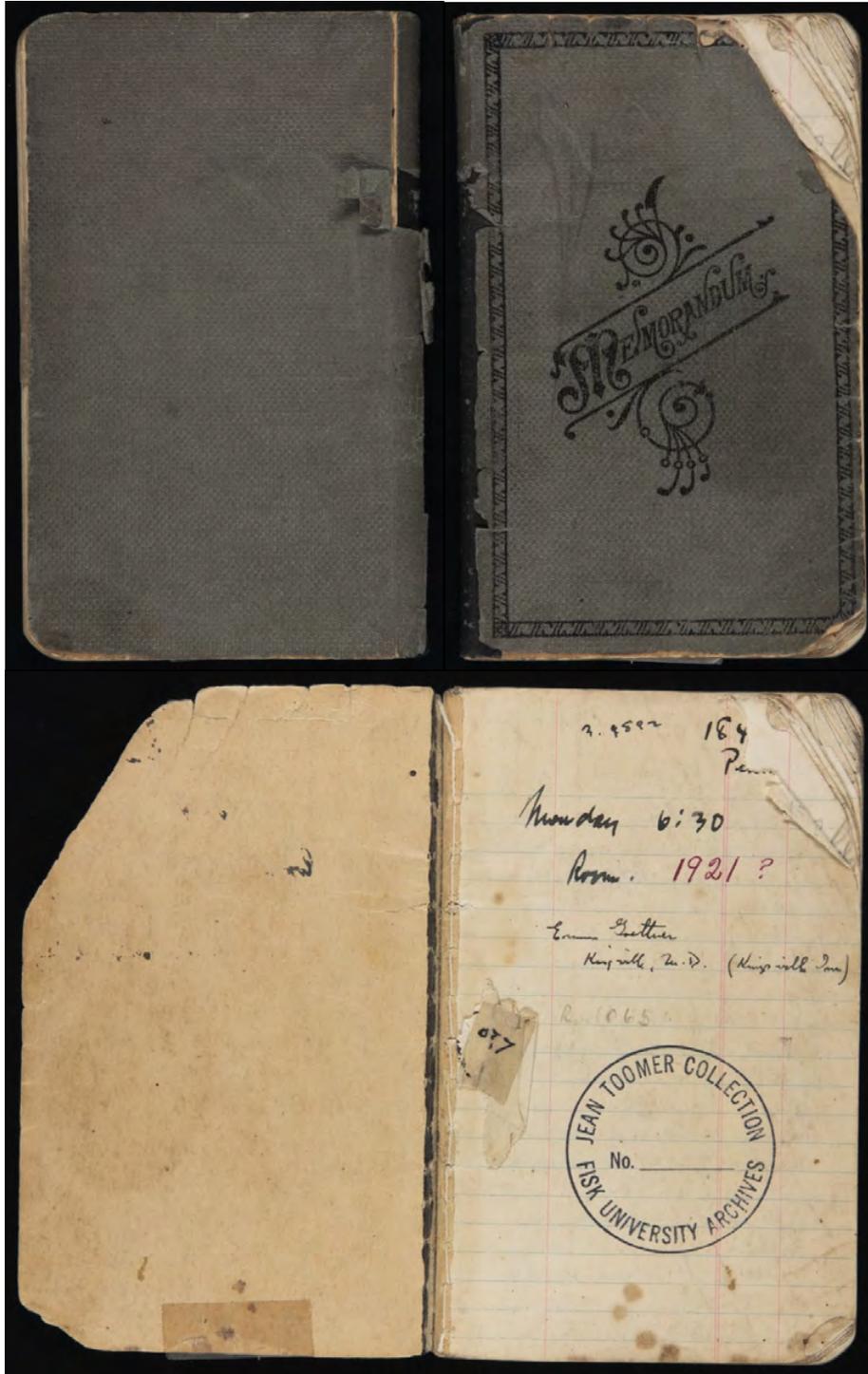
APPENDIX I

NOTES

The pocket-size “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook** has been approximately dated with the label “1921?” as it contains references to Georgia—along with early versions of poems and fragments that would evolve into ‘**Carma**’ and ‘**Reapers**’ or inserted into ‘**Kabnis**’—which would have been written after he went to Sparta, Georgia in the fall of 1921. The “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook** also shows Toomer’s interest in capturing the authentic voice of the rural folk as he develops and collects phrases in the southern Black vernacular—although many of these phrases would not be used, the style of speech and unique spelling of words are unmistakably incorporated into his stories.

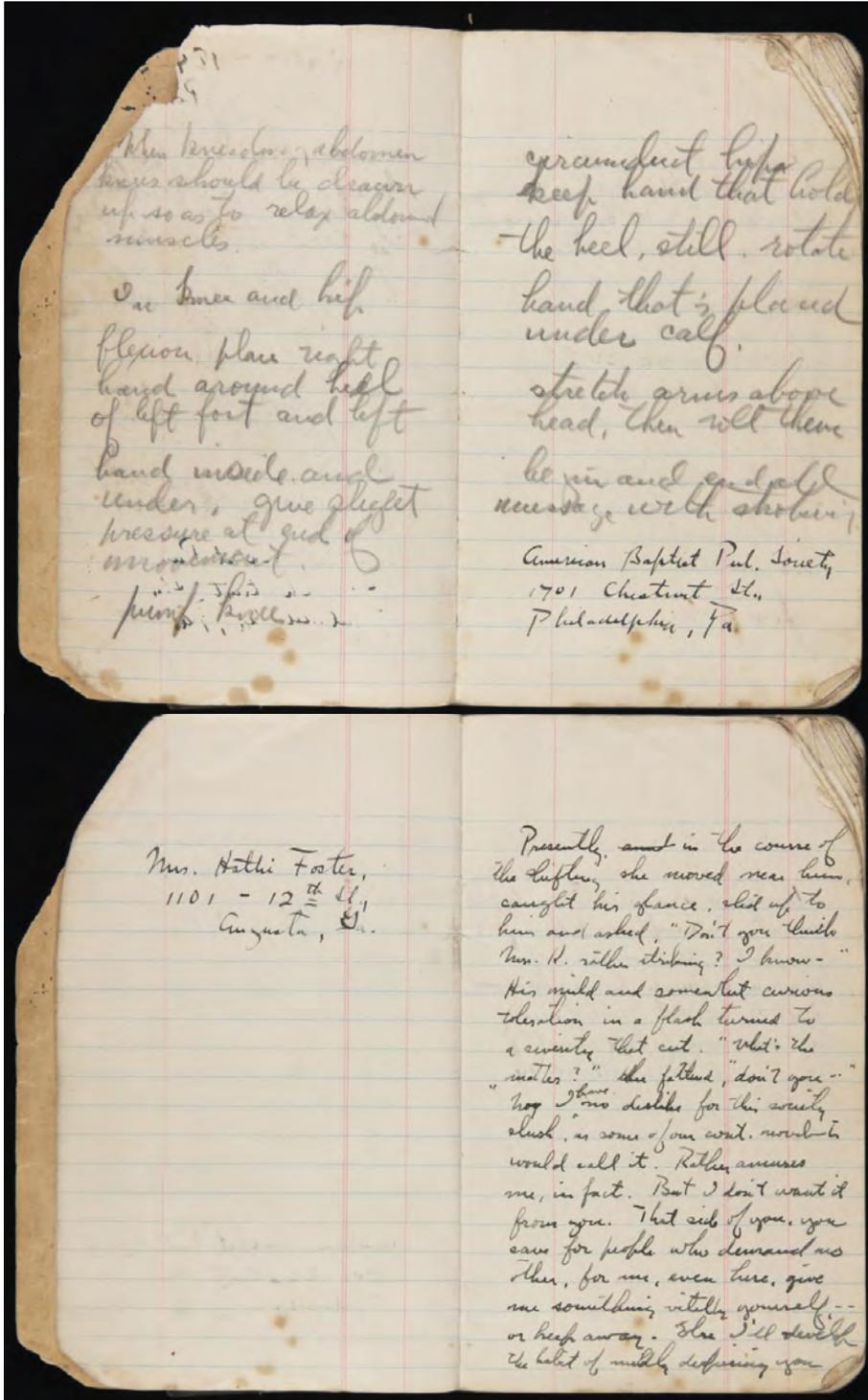
APPENDIX I — "MEMORANDUM" POCKETBOOK FACSIMILES

FACSIMILE 1 [TOP]: Covers; FACSIMILE 2 [BOTTOM]: Cover Backside & Page 1

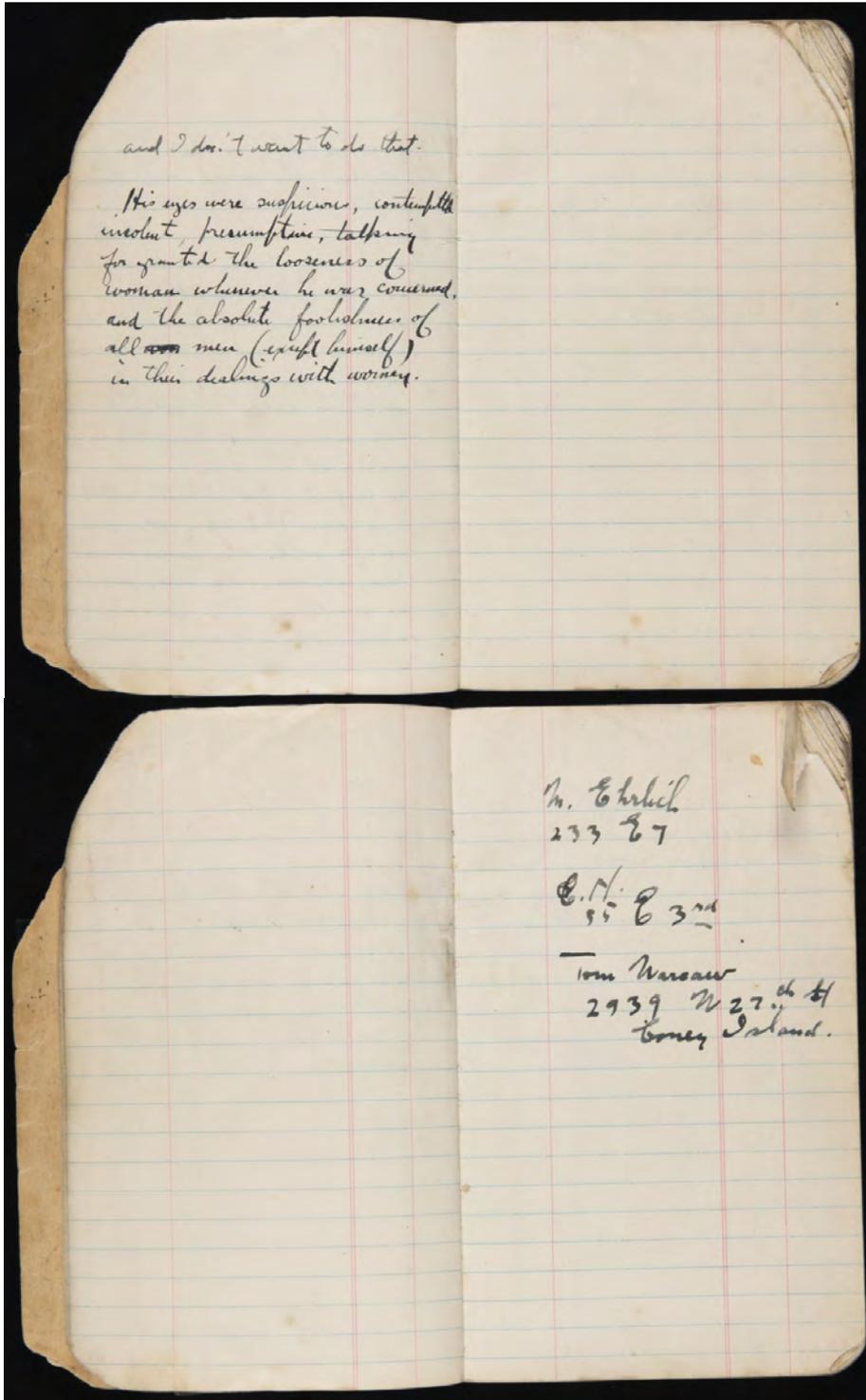


Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

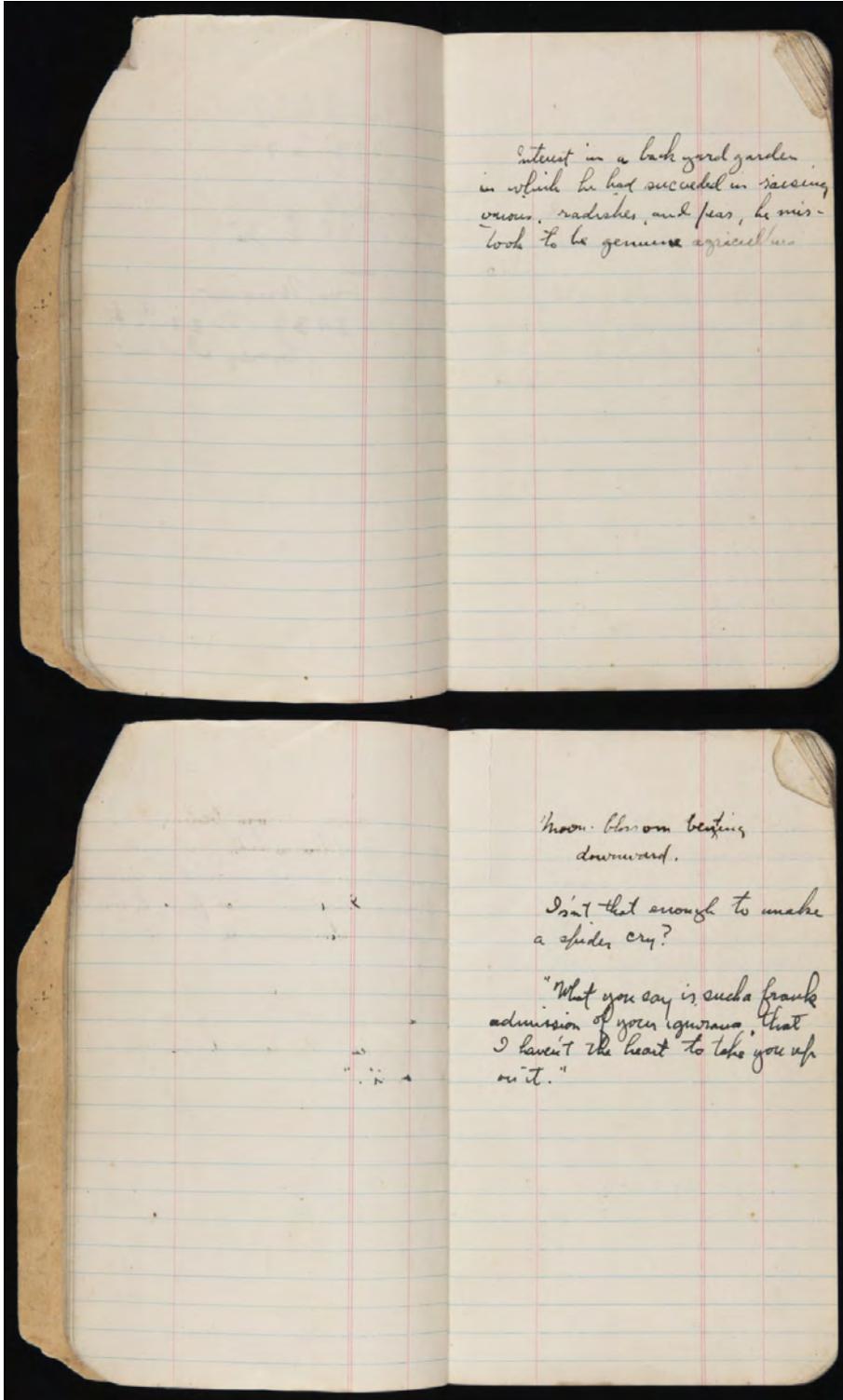
FACSIMILE 3 [TOP]: Pages 2-3; FACSIMILE 4 [BOTTOM]: Pages 4-5



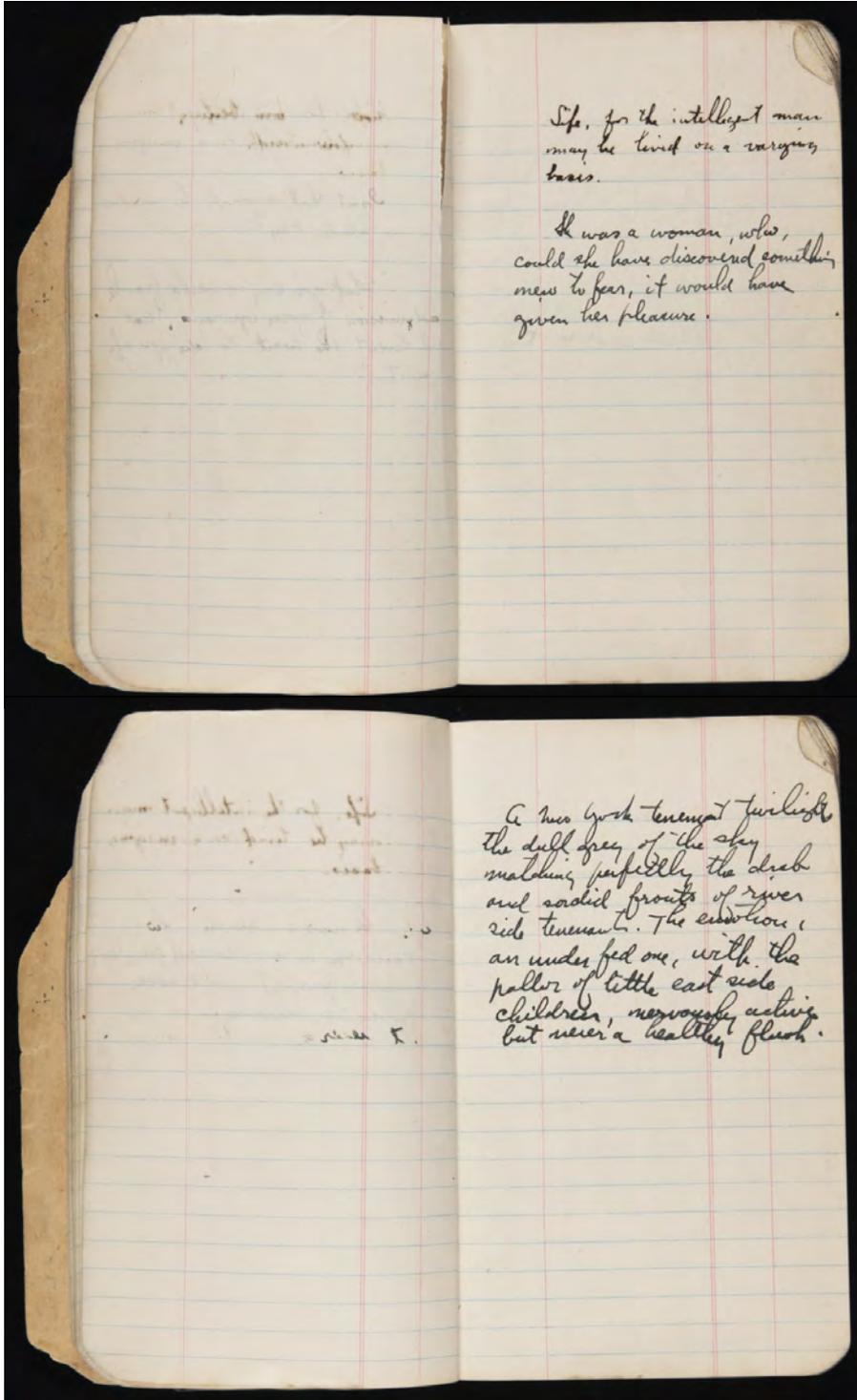
FACSIMILE 5 [TOP]: Pages 6-7; FACSIMILE 6 [BOTTOM]: Pages 8-9



FACSIMILE 7 [TOP]: Pages 10-11; FACSIMILE 8 [BOTTOM]: Pages 12-13



FACSIMILE 9 [TOP]: Pages 14-15; FACSIMILE 10 [BOTTOM]: Pages 16-17

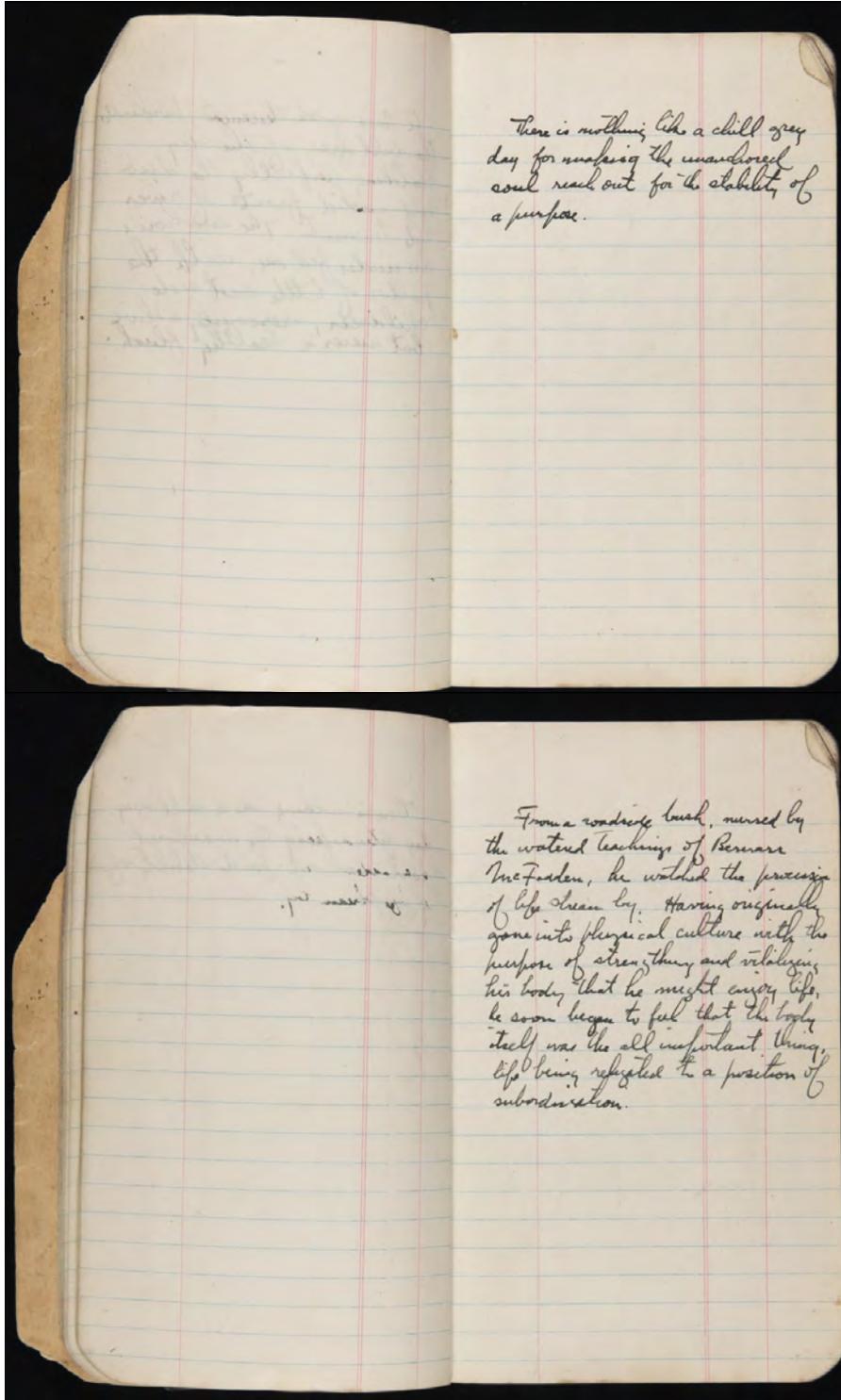


Life, for the intelligent man
may be lived on a varying
basis.

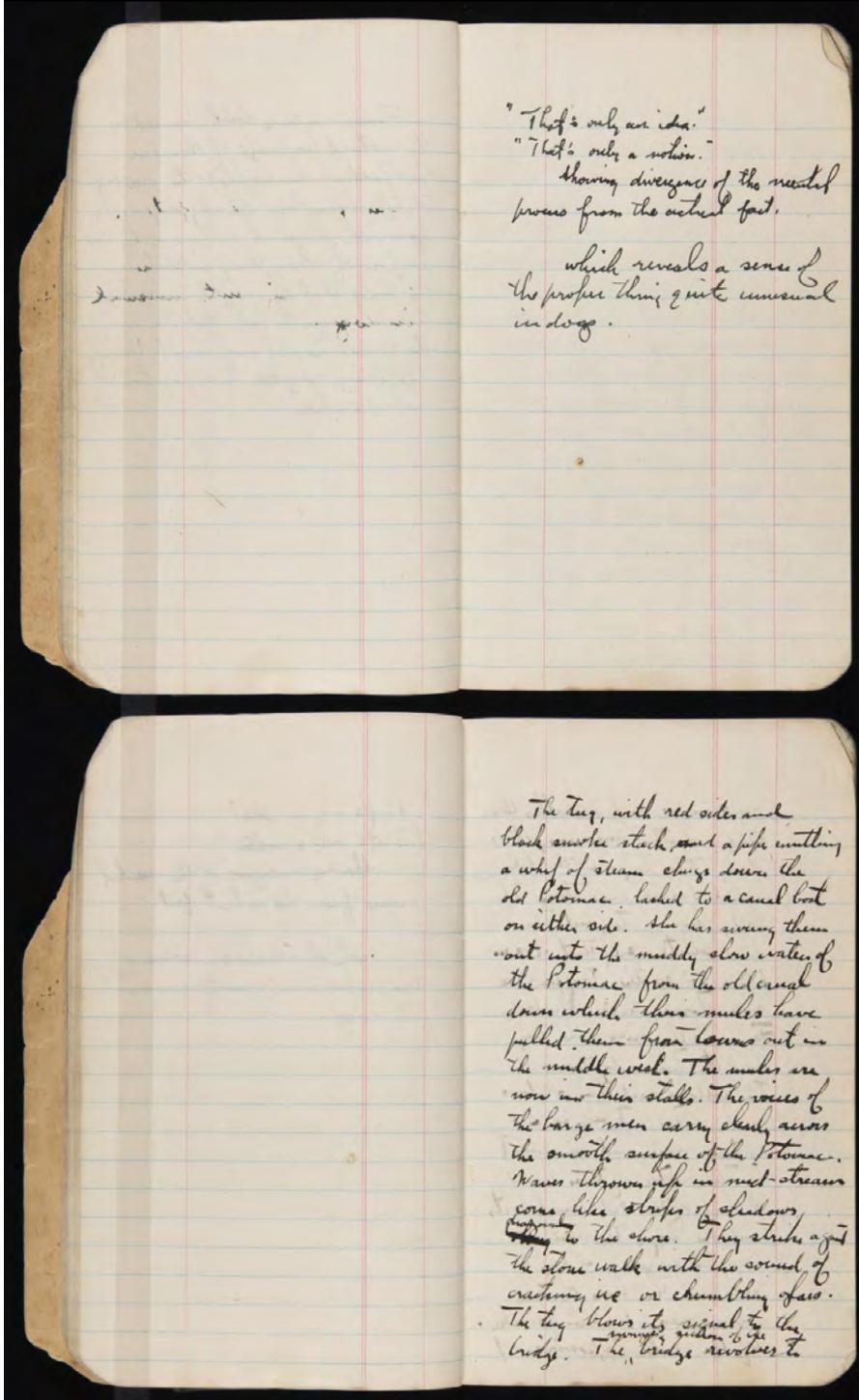
It was a woman, who,
could she have discovered something
new to fear, it would have
given her pleasure.

A New York tenement twilight
the dull grey of the sky
matching perfectly the drab
and sodid fronts of river
side tenement. The cubicles,
an under fed one, with the
pallor of little east side
children, nervously active,
but never a healthy flesh.

FACSIMILE 11 [TOP]: Pages 18-19; FACSIMILE 12 [BOTTOM]: Pages 20-21



FACSIMILE 13 [TOP]: Pages 22-23; FACSIMILE 14 [BOTTOM]: Pages 24-25

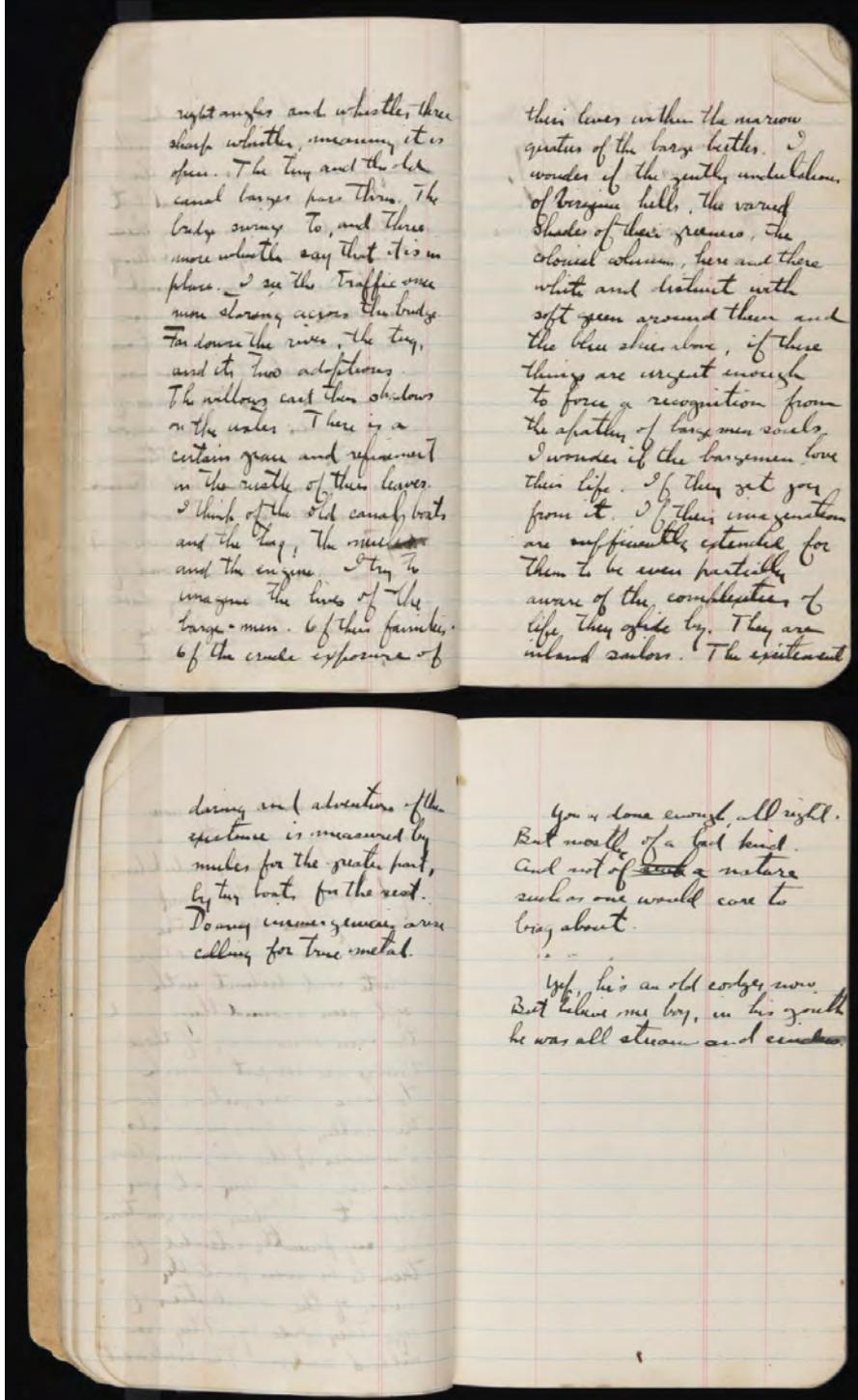


"That's only an idea."
"That's only a notion."
Showing divergence of the mental
process from the actual fact.

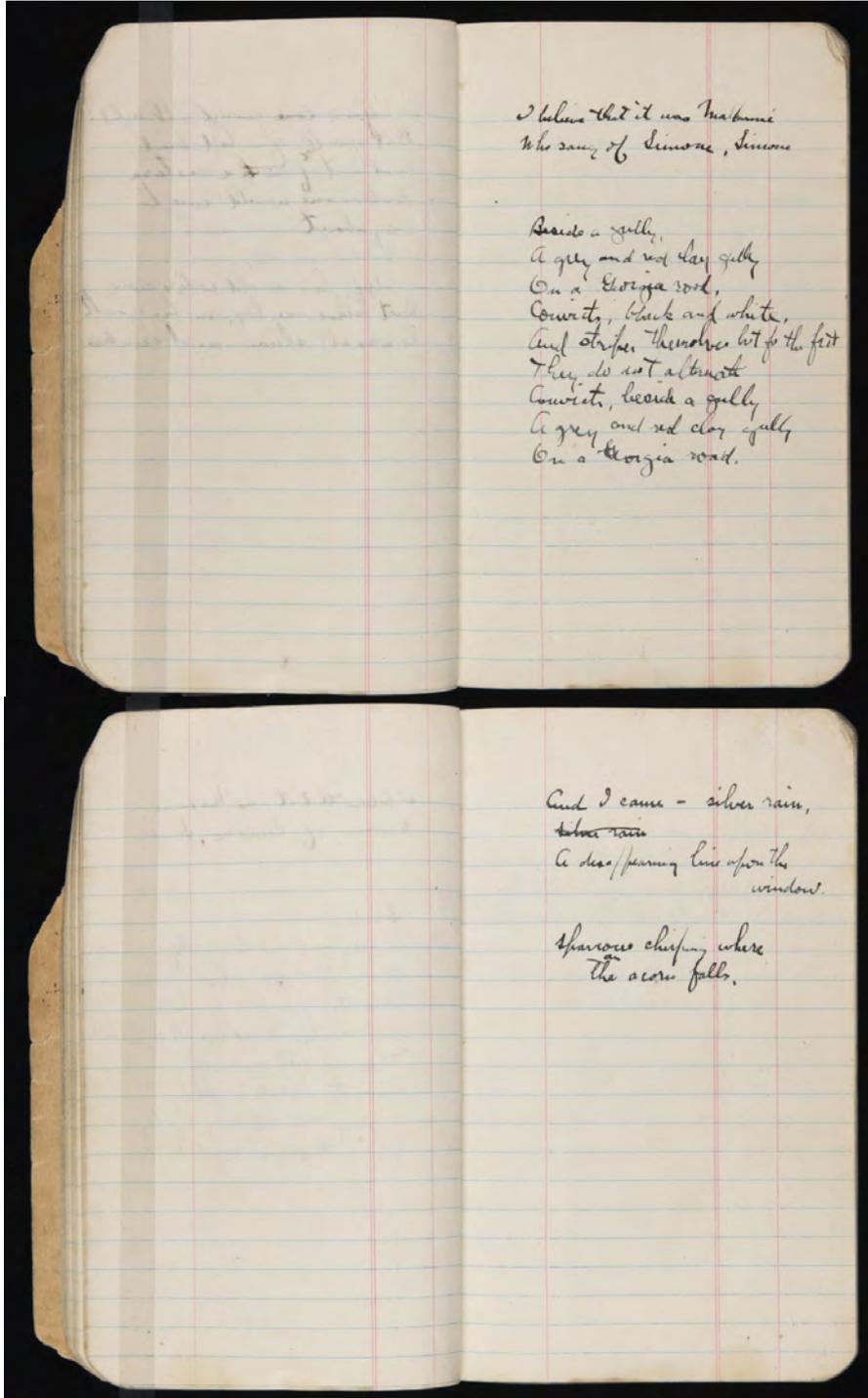
which reveals a sense of
the proper thing quite unusual
in dogs.

The tug, with red sides and
black smoke stack, and a pipe emitting
a whiff of steam, chugs down the
old Potomac, lashed to a canal boat
on either side. She has swung them
out into the muddy slow water of
the Potomac from the old canal
down which these mules have
pulled them from locks out in
the middle reach. The mules are
now in their stalls. The voices of
the barge men carry clear across
the smooth surface of the Potomac.
Waves thrown up in next stream
come like strips of shadows
along to the shore. They strike against
the stone walk with the sound of
cracking ice or churning grass.
The tug blows its signal to the
locks. The bridge revolves to

FACSIMILE 15 [TOP]: Pages 26-27; FACSIMILE 16 [BOTTOM]: Pages 28-29



FACSIMILE 17 [TOP]: Pages 30-31; FACSIMILE 18 [BOTTOM]: Pages 32-33



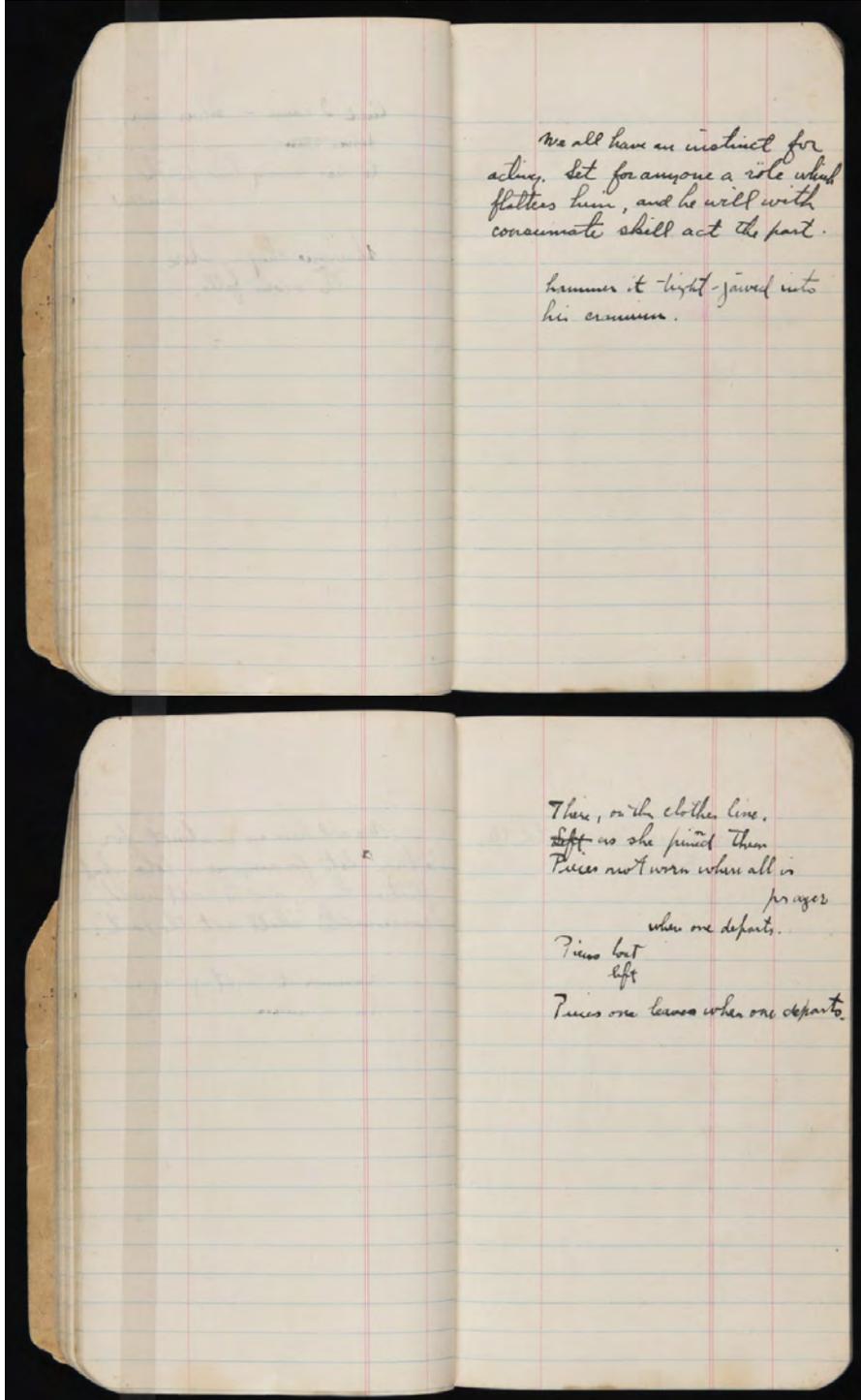
I believe that it was Makbani
Who sang of Simons, Simons

Beside a gully,
A grey and red clay gully
On a Georgia road,
Covington, black and white,
And stripes themselves lit for the first
They do not alternate
Covington, beside a gully
A grey and red clay gully
On a Georgia road.

And I came - silver rain,
~~silver rain~~
A deep/peering line upon the
window.

Sharrows chipping where
The acorn falls.

FACSIMILE 19 [TOP]: Pages 34-35; FACSIMILE 20 [BOTTOM]: Pages 36-37

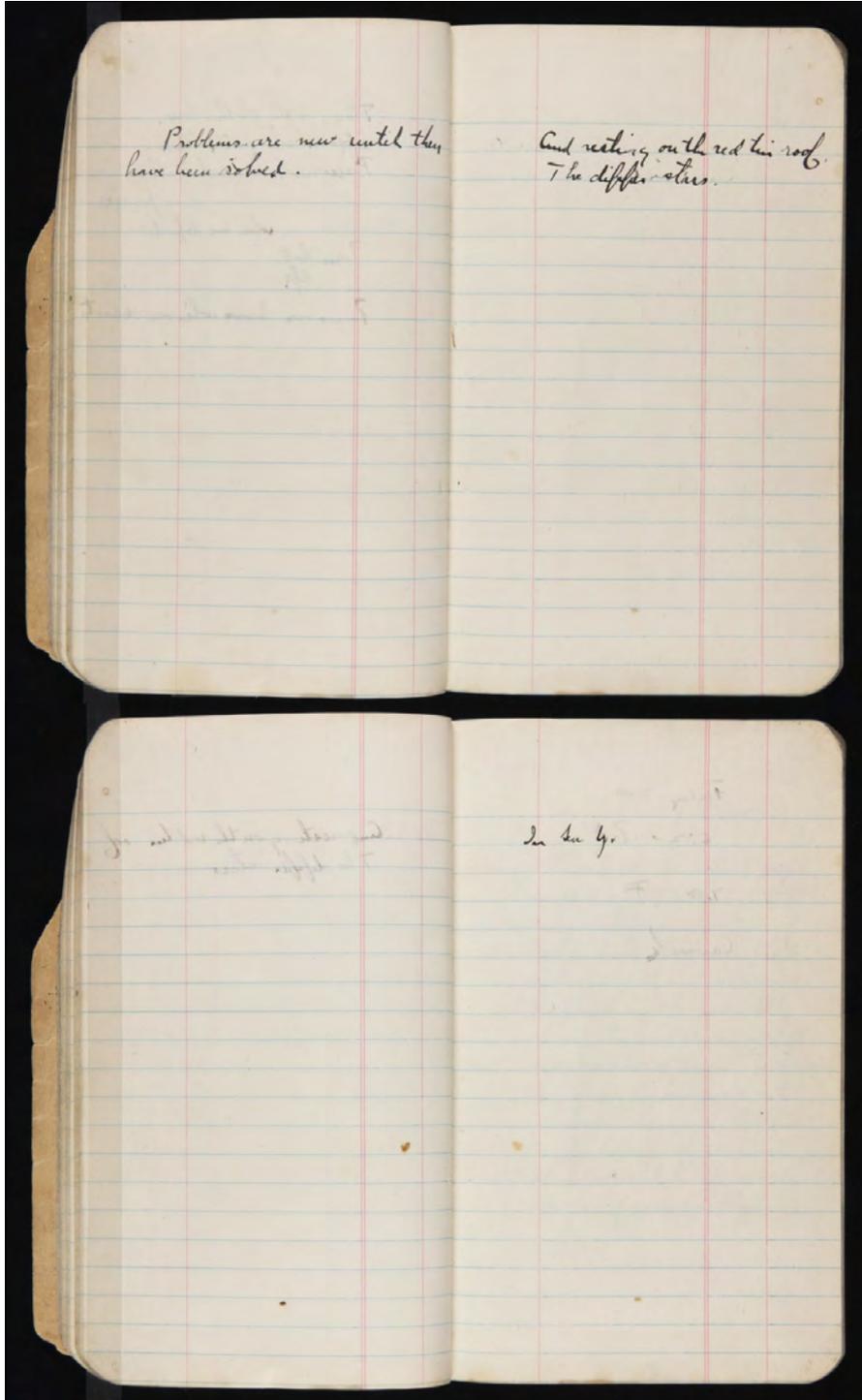


We all have an instinct for
acting. Set for anyone a role which
flatters him, and he will with
consummate skill act the part.

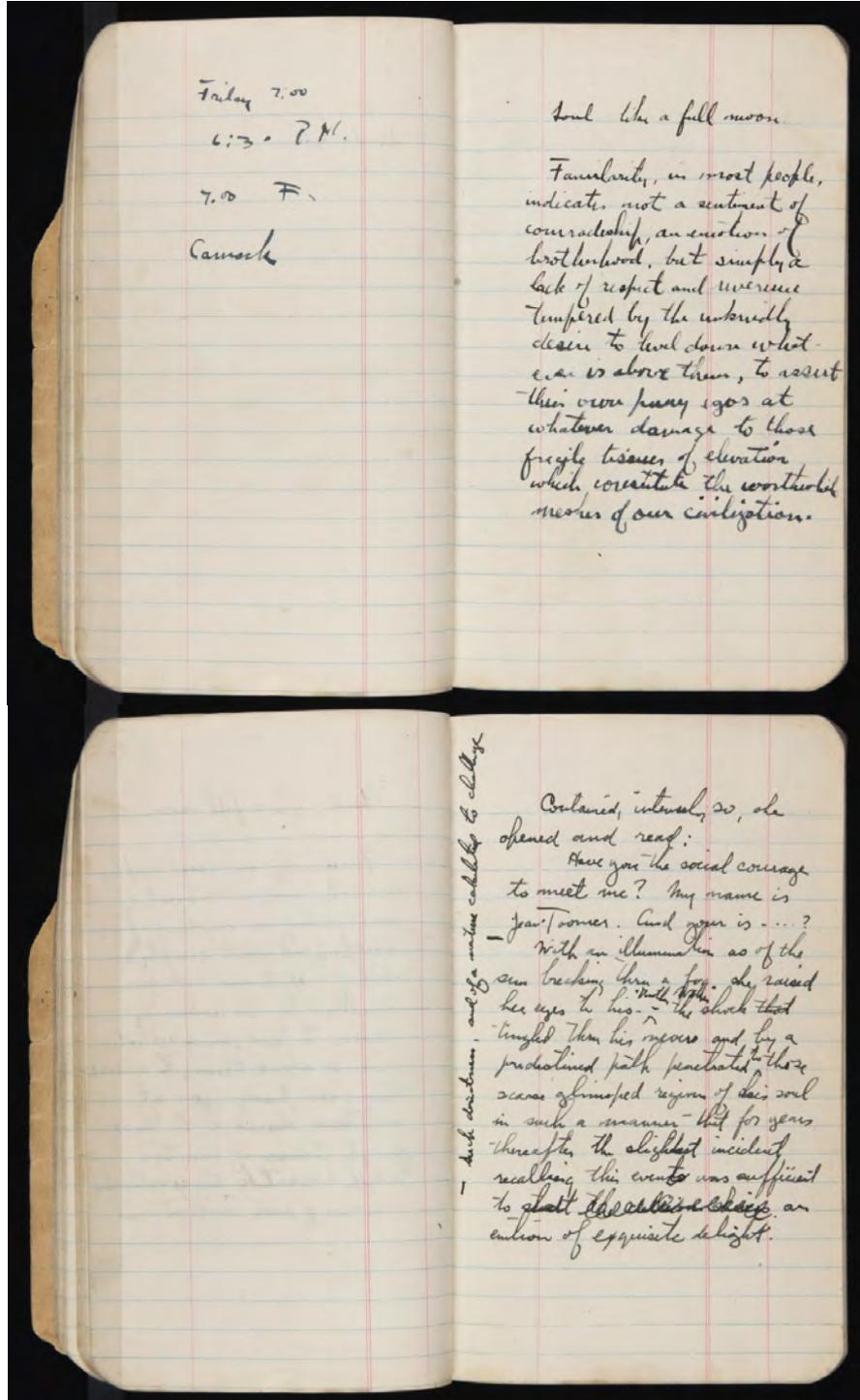
hammer it tight-jawed into
his cranium.

There, on the clothes line,
left as she pinned them
Pieces not worn when all is
proves
when one departs.
Pieces but
left
Pieces one leaves when one departs.

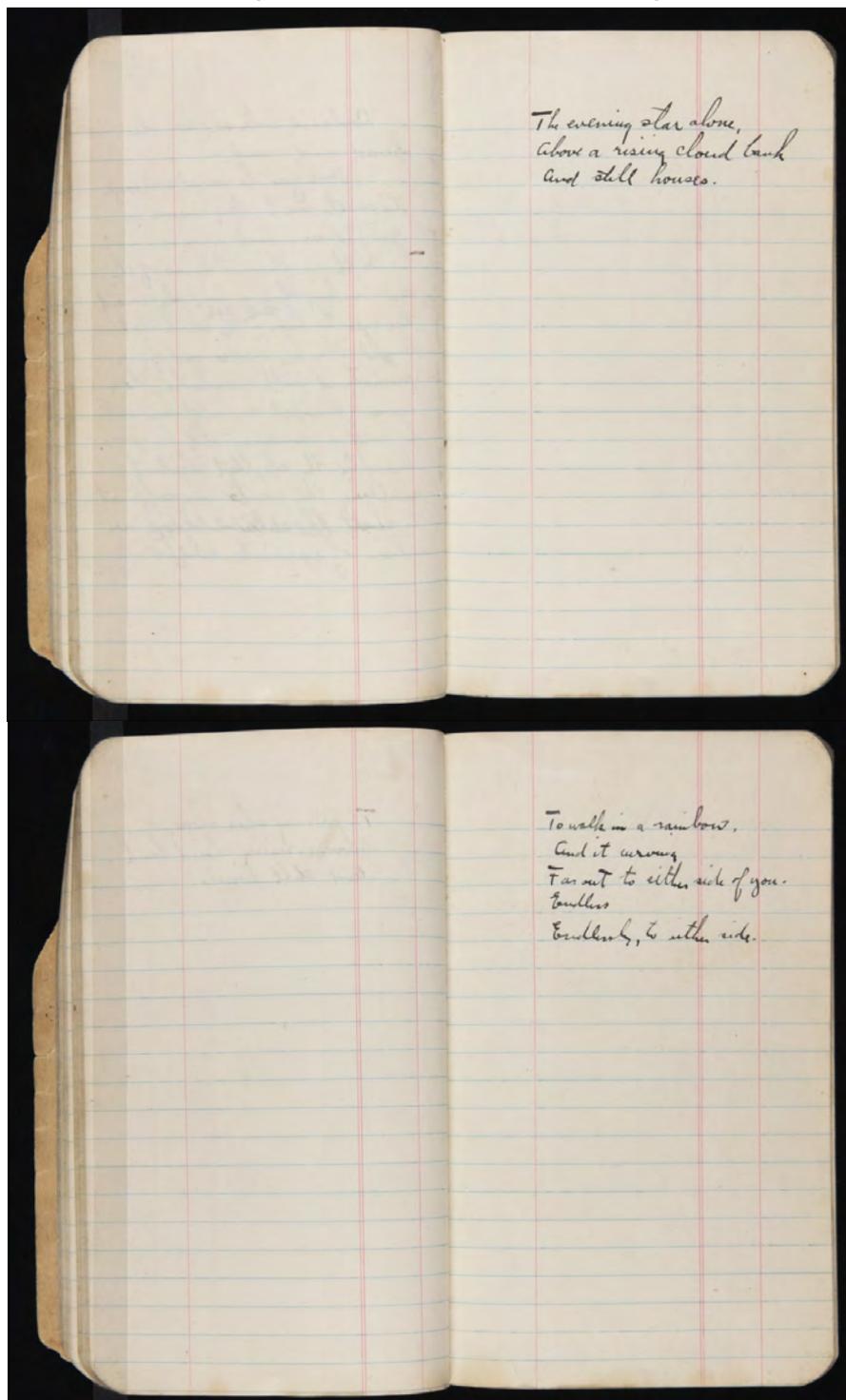
FACSIMILE 21 [TOP]: Pages 38-39; FACSIMILE 22 [BOTTOM]: Pages 40-41



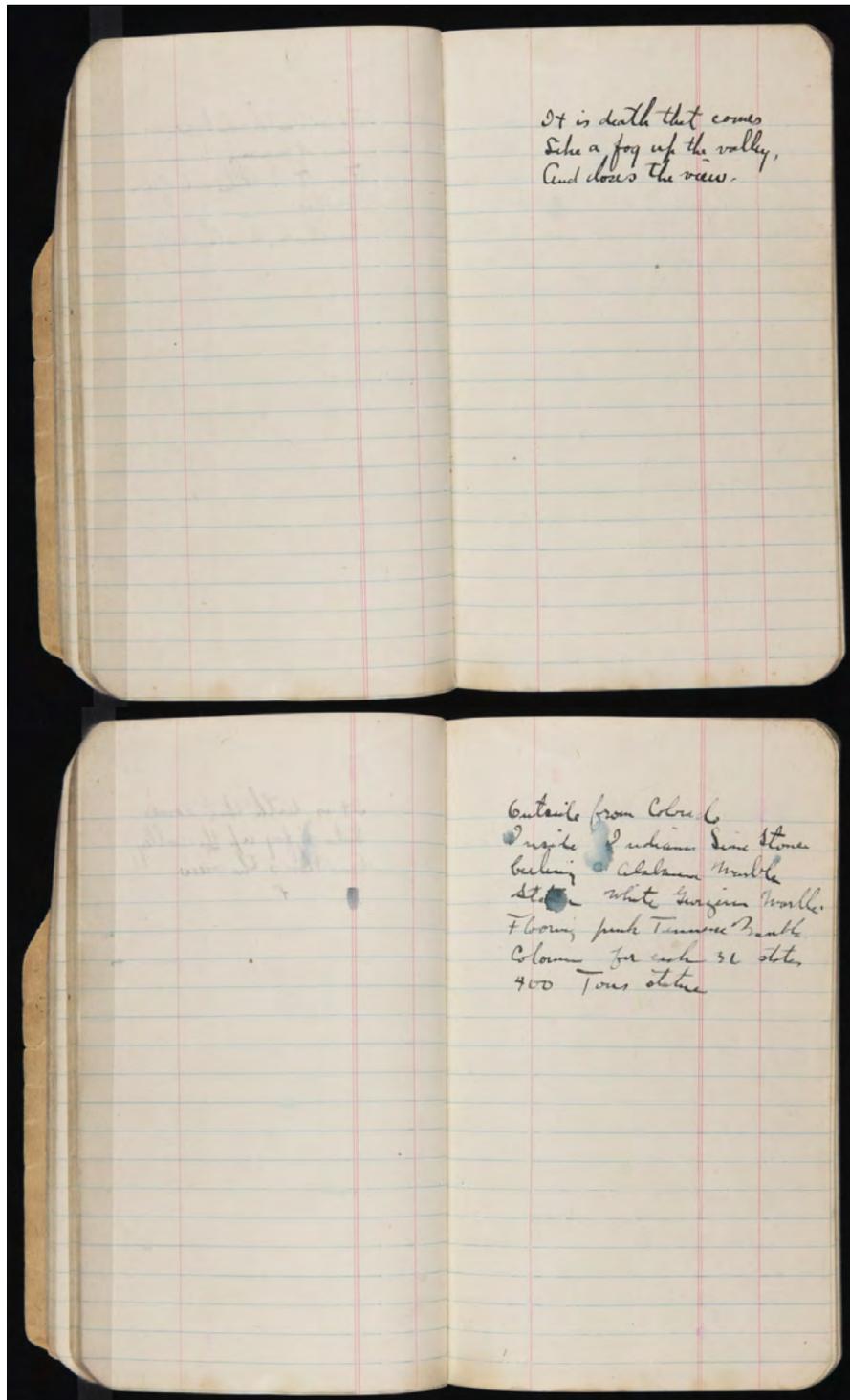
FACSIMILE 23 [TOP]: Pages 42-43; FACSIMILE 24 [BOTTOM]: Pages 44-45



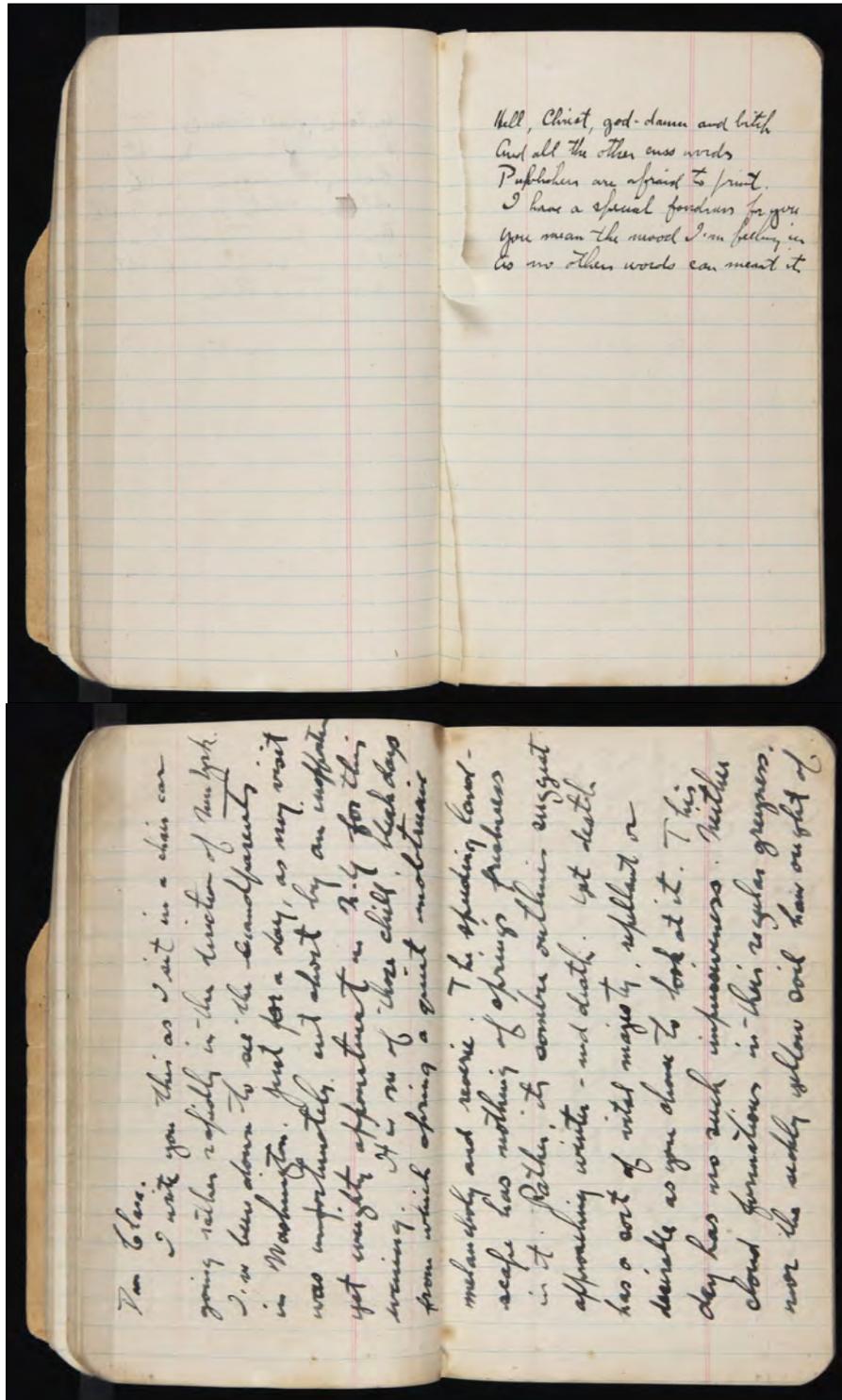
FACSIMILE 25 [TOP]: Pages 46-47; FACSIMILE 26 [BOTTOM]: Pages 48-49



FACSIMILE 27 [TOP]: Pages 50-51; FACSIMILE 28 [BOTTOM]: Pages 52-53



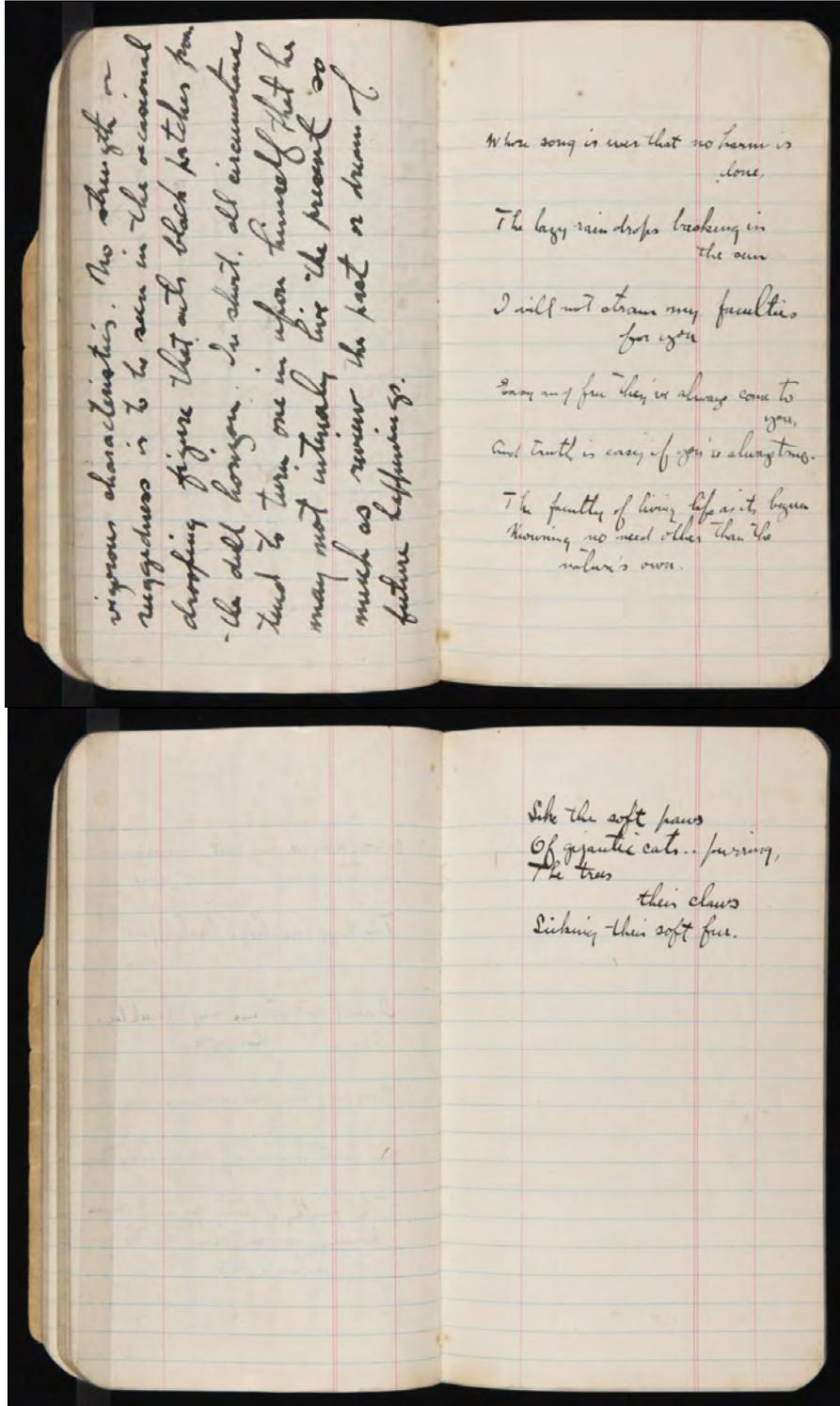
FACSIMILE 29 [TOP]: Pages 54-55; FACSIMILE 30 [BOTTOM]: Pages 58-59



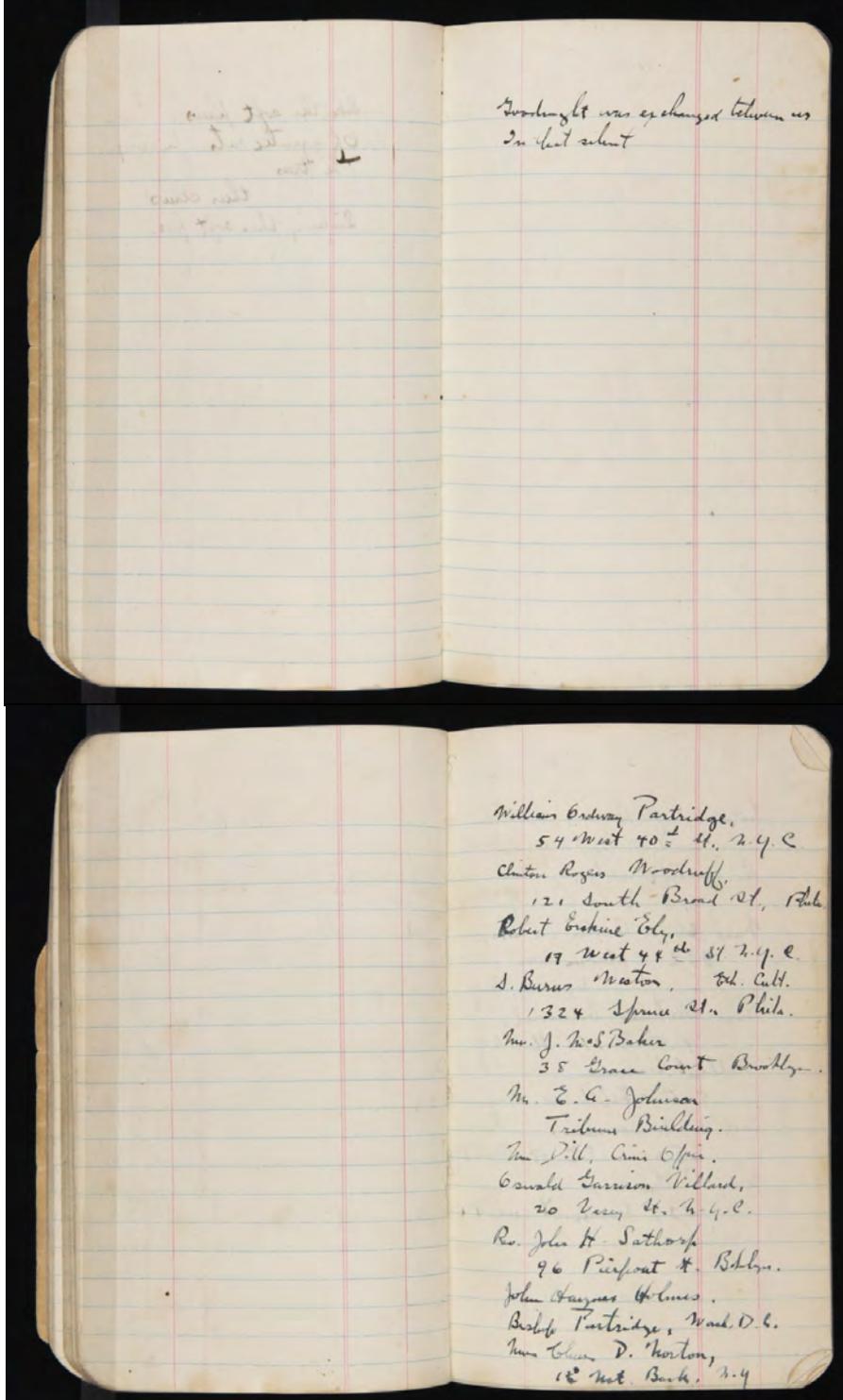
Hell, Christ, god-damn and bitch
 And all the other cuss words
 Publishers are afraid to print.
 I have a special fondness for you
 You mean the word I'm feeling in
 As no other words can mean it.

Tom Cole.
 I write you this as I sit in a chair can-
 going rather rapidly in the direction of New York.
 I've been down to see the Grandparents
 in Washington. Just for a day, as my visit
 was unfortunately cut short by an influenza
 yet mighty appointment in N.Y. for this
 evening. It is one of those chill, black days
 from which spring a quiet, molten
 melancholy and resolve. The speaking land-
 scape has nothing of spring's freshness
 in it. Rather, its sombre outlines suggest
 approaching winter - and death. Yet death
 has a sort of vital mystery, repellent or
 desirable as you choose to look at it. This
 day has no such impersonness. Rather
 cloud formation in his regular progress,
 nor the sully yellow soil how ought of

FACSIMILE 31 [TOP]: Pages 60-61; FACSIMILE 32 [BOTTOM]: Pages 62-63

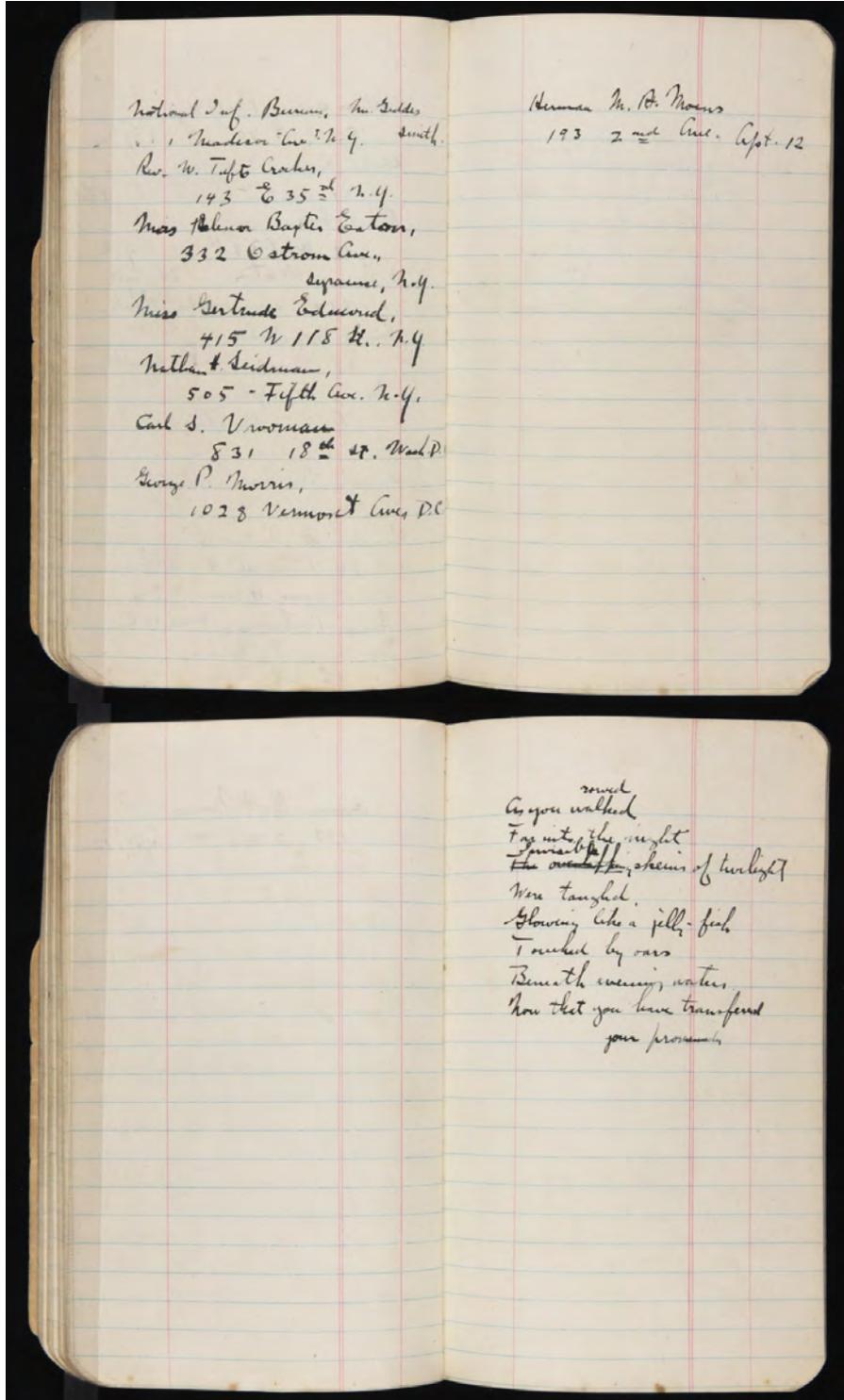


FACSIMILE 33 [TOP]: Pages 64-65; FACSIMILE 34 [BOTTOM]: Pages 68-69

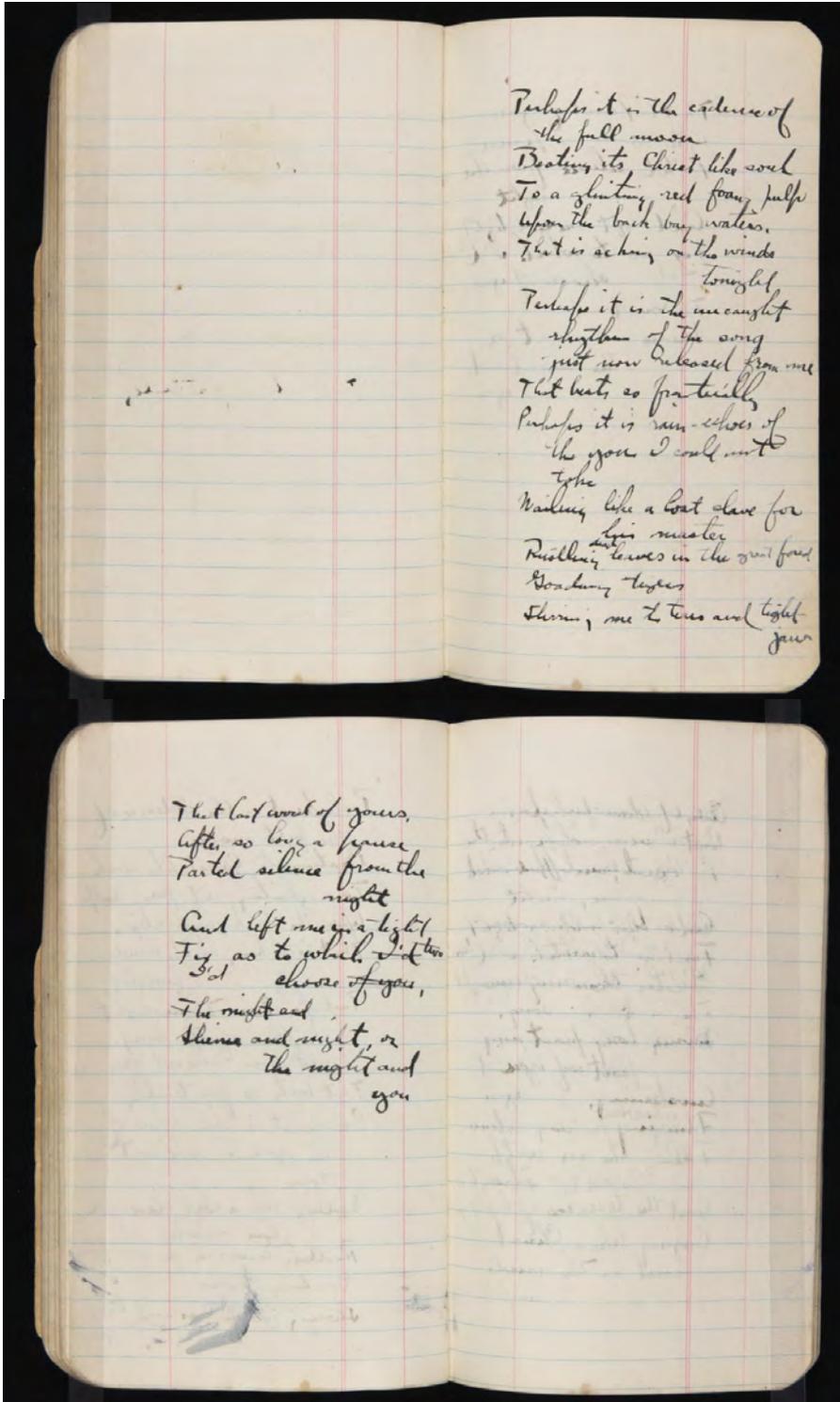


William Ordway Partridge,
 54 West 40th St., N.Y.C.
 Clinton Rogers Woodruff,
 121 South Broad St., Phila.
 Robert Eskine Ely,
 17 West 4th St. N.Y.C.
 J. Burrus Weston, Ed. Cult.
 132nd Spruce St. Phila.
 Mr. J. W. S. Baker
 35 Grace Court Brooklyn.
 Mr. E. A. Johnson
 Tribune Building.
 Mr. P. L. Amis Oppen.
 Oswald Garrison Villard,
 20 Vesey St. N.Y.C.
 Rev. John H. Sathorp
 96 Pierpont St. Boston.
 John Faynes Holmes.
 Bishop Partridge, Wash. D.C.
 Mrs. Clara D. Norton,
 18 West Bank, N.Y.

FACSIMILE 35 [TOP]: Pages 70-71; FACSIMILE 36 [BOTTOM]: Pages 72-73



FACSIMILE 37 [TOP]: Pages 72-73; FACSIMILE 38 [BOTTOM]: Pages 78-79



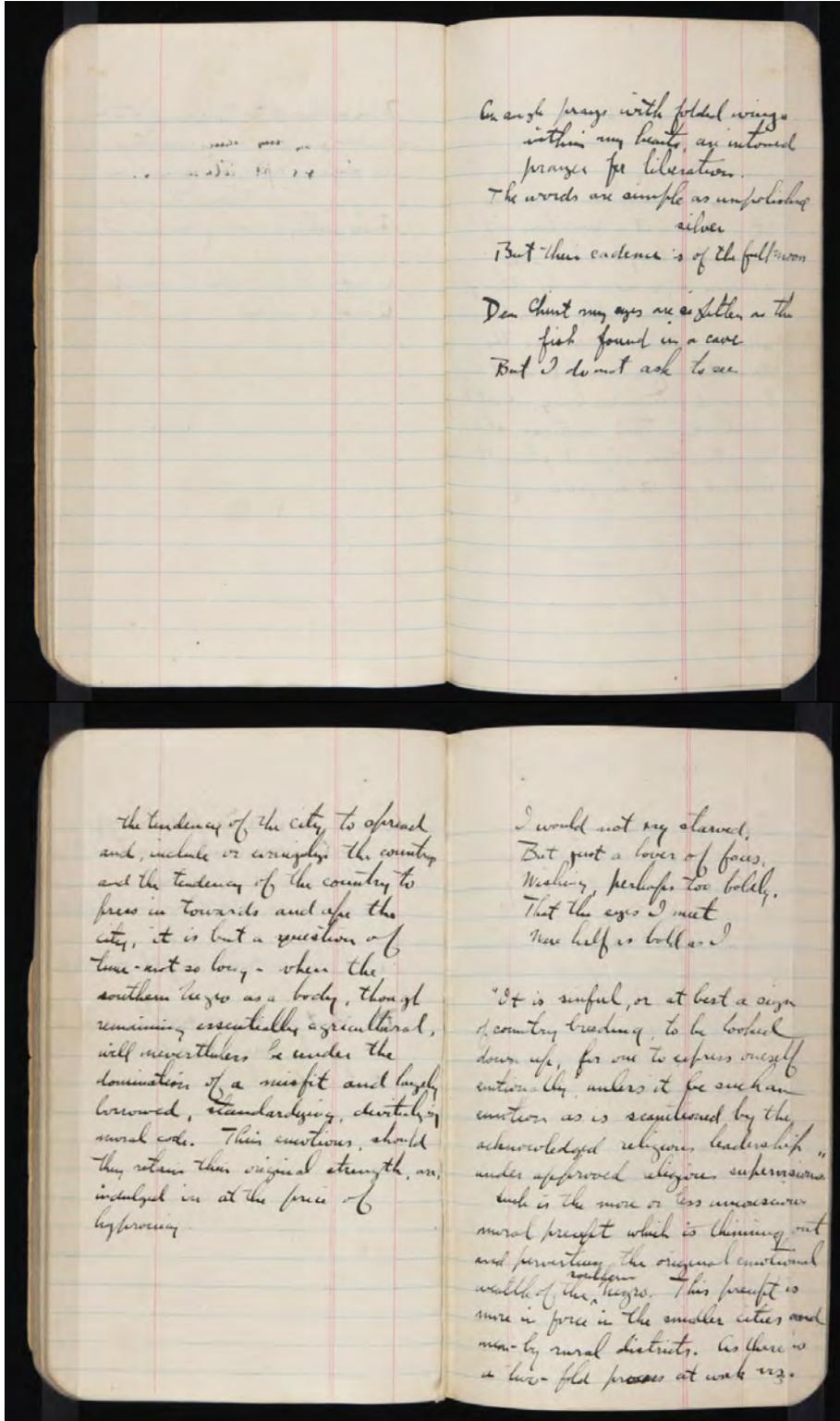
FACSIMILE 41 [TOP]: Pages 86-87; FACSIMILE 42 [BOTTOM]: Pages 88-89

Tramping down leaves,
 Feet that follow
 sweeper and rallobs, long thin blades
 Feet that perch on branches
 too fine for birds
 as blades too slender
 for the dragon-fly
 Feet that press the mud
 out of sand leaves

Drooping of rain in the forest
 is the dropping of feet,
 million-footed rain -
 Agile light rope dancer of the
 spider web
 Feet that walk across the brooks
 You've heard about the solution
 company ... how they stand
 on the corner and shout
 Hallelujah ... I'm afraid I'm
 in solution company. :

Life is diluted when one's
 companions are in solution.

Blade workmen with the sound of steel
 on stone
 are sharpening scythes, they swing them
 through the weeds
 mules pulling a mowing machine forward
 A rat with belly close to ground
 in mow machine



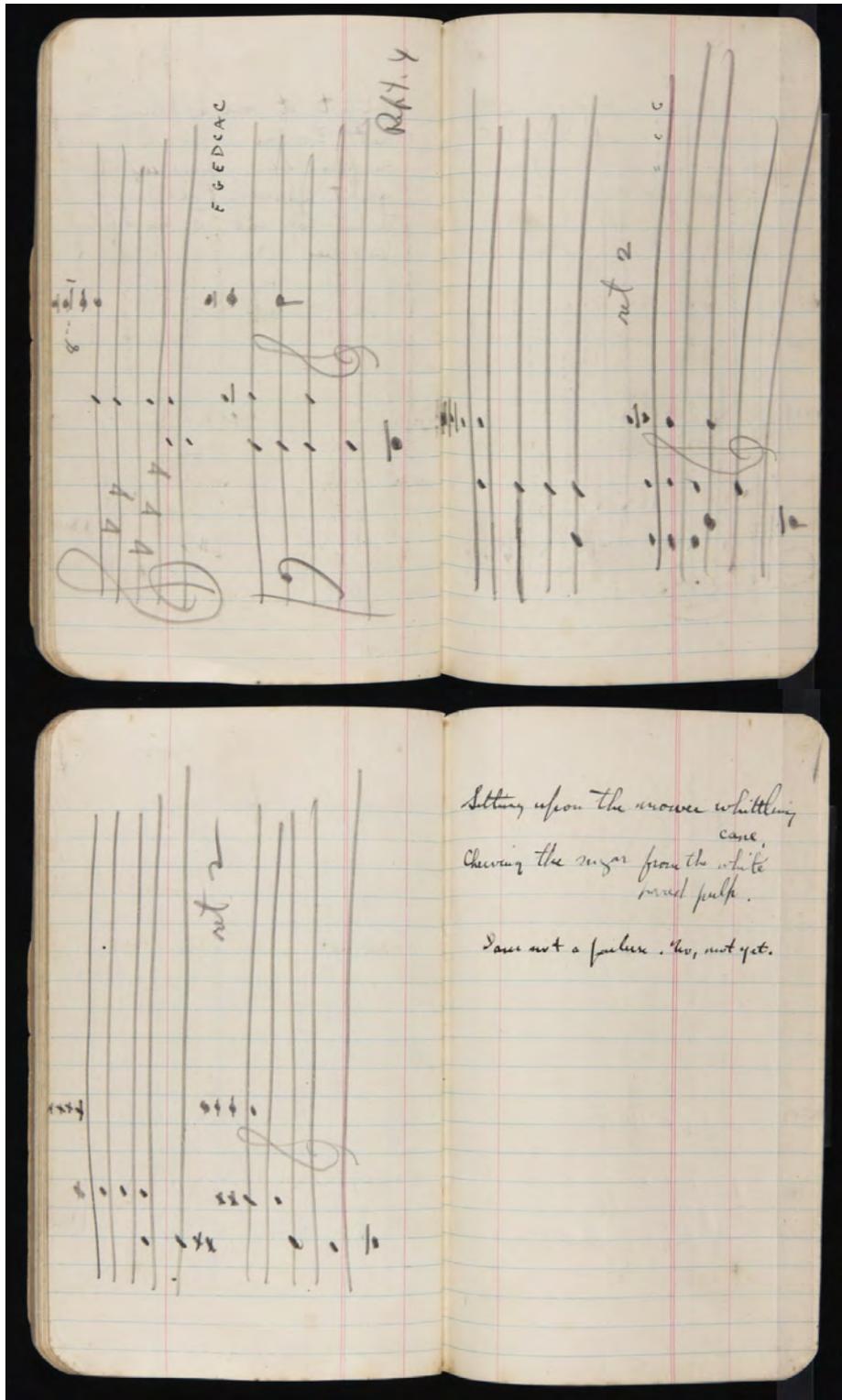
FACSIMILE 45 [TOP]: Pages 94-95; FACSIMILE 46 [BOTTOM]: Pages 96-97

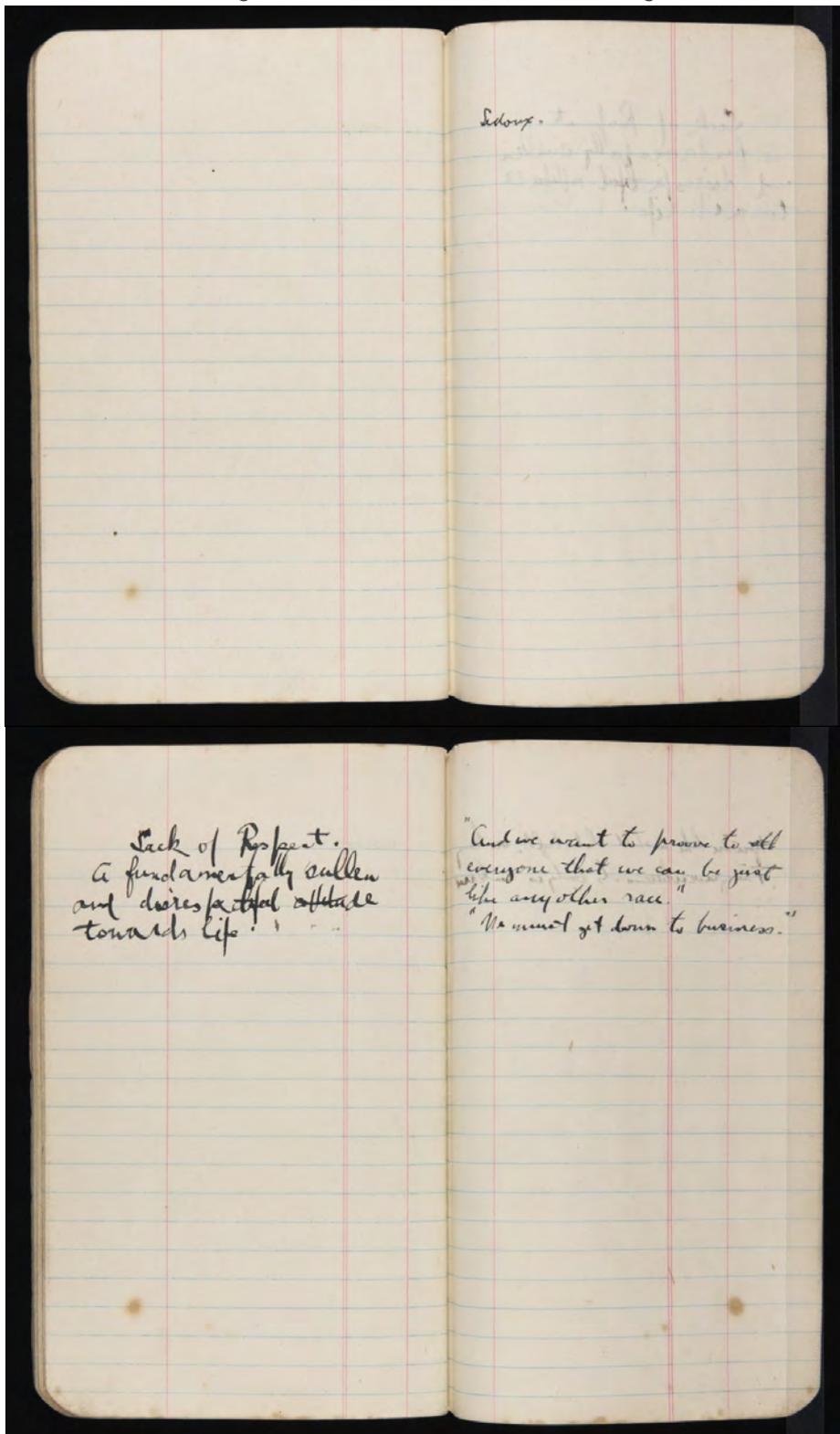
the sun, half-hour up.
 Foxe, the mother-bitch, slicks
 back his ears.
 - fresh and sweet the early winter
 wind
 and whistles thru the weeds
 dry weather thinned
 The sky, all lines of blue, and
 cloudless, clear,
 The birds, though birds, left
 still the horizon fringe of
 pines
 Pine needles spraying, glistering
 in the sun.
 And needles of the pine, sprayed
 in the sun,
 glistering like the sun; but a few
 needles

From north to south, across
 the west, an unbroken band of gold
 and there
 in quarter heaven shines the
 crescent moon
 A tangible enough of farm-
 yard odors to definitely prep
 to the front the sense of rural
 peasant life and all the
 scarcely perceptible impressions
 and visions and emotions that
 are the overtones of such a
 perception.
 The wind,
 surf-washing on the sandy needles of
 The pine the wind
 surf-beating on the needles of the pine
 Like shingled back around the
 long trunk.

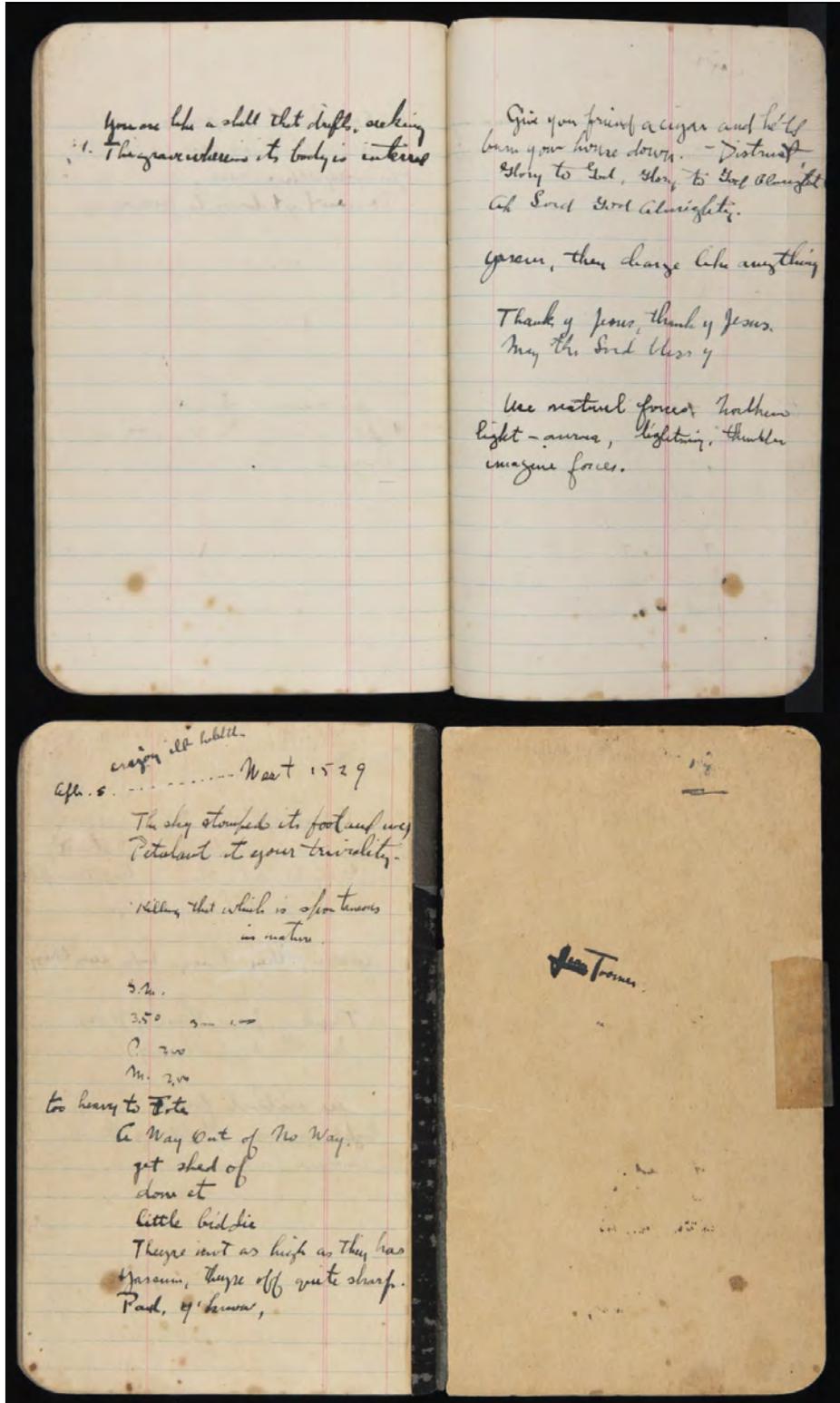
The wind is in the corn,
 and dry October leaves sway
 and creak, talking to it, talking
 to me, talking to the cloudless
 sky, complaining for the lack
 of rain - no, the corn leaves
 are orators, the demagogues of
 this quiet place talking for the
 love it, hoping to hear themselves
 talk. I listen to them for they
 are the only voices in this place.
 In fact, I've grown to love their
 symphony of scratches almost
 as much as they. At first I
 turned aside, for it seemed to
 me they were monotonously
 boastfully, repeating the same
 phrase, over and over, "Cotton is
 king, but we're the queens of
 cotton. And Georgia soil is
 The wind pushing so boldly
 against the door
 Drives thru carpet across the floor
 fertilized where we grow."
 Contented with their whistlings,
 voicing the "now" it vexed and
 irritated me that they gave heed
 neither to that soil of a part
 hundred years ago, nor to the
 rolling land that lost itself
 far, far to westward. And, of
 course, in a region where corn is
 the only voice, for life I had
 to seek by turns the past and
 future.

FACSIMILE 49 [TOP]: Pages 102-103; FACSIMILE 50 [BOTTOM]: Pages 104-105





FACSIMILE 51 [TOP]: Pages 110-111; FACSIMILE 52 [BOTTOM]: Pages 112-Back of Cover



You are like a shell that drifts, seeking
1. The grain where its body is centered

Give you friend a cigar and he'll
burn your nose down. - Distrust
Glory to God, glory to God Almighty
Oh Lord God Almighty.

you are, then change like anything

Thank y' Jesus, thank y' Jesus.
May the Lord bless y'

Use natural forces, walk on
light - aura, lightning, thunder
imagine forces.

Went 1529
The ship stomped its foot and was
Petulant at your triviality.
Killing that which is spontaneous
in nature.

5.2
3.5
C 2.0
M 2.0
too heavy to tote
A Way Out of No Way.
get shed of
down at
little birdie
They're not as high as they has
Harem, they're off quite sharp.
Paul, y' know,

Jean Toomer

APPENDIX I
"Memorandum" Pocketbook

JTP, Box No. 60, Folder 1410.

Reapers [Final Version]

Black reapers with the sound of steel on stones
Are sharpening scythes. I see them place the hones
In their hip pockets as a thing that's done,
And start their silent swinging, one by one.
Black horses drive a mower through the weeds,
And there, a field rat, startled, squealing bleeds.
His belly close to ground. I see the blade,
Blood-stained, continue cutting weeds and shade.

(C 5)

[early draft of "Reapers"]

Black workmen with the sound of steel
on stone

- 1 Are sharpening scythes, they swing them
through the weeds
Mules pulling a moving machine fills needs

A rat with belly close to ground
A motor machine

Sitting upon the mower whittling
cane,

- 2 Chewing the sugar from the white
pared pulp
I am not a failure. No, not yet.
-

- 3 We all have an instinct for acting. Set for anyone a rôle which flatters him,
and he will with consummate [sic] skill act the part.
-

- 4 Hammer it tight-jawed into his cranium.
-

- An I came — silver rain
5 A disappearing line upon the
window

11 There is nothing like a chill grey day for making the unanchored soul reach out for the stability of purpose.

12 Life, for the intelligent man may be lived on a varying basis.

13 She was a woman, who, could she have discovers something new to fear, it would have given her pleasure.

14 Moon blossom bending
 downward.

15 A New York tenement twilights
the dull grey of the sky
matching perfectly the drab
and sordid fronts of river
side tenements. The emotion,
an under fed one, with the
pallor of little east side
children, nervously active,
but never a healthy flush.

16 The sun, half-hour up
Foxie, the mother-bitch, slicks
 Back her ears.
— fresh and swat the early winter
 Wind
And whistles thru the weeds
 dry weather thinned

The sky, all hues of blues, and
 Cloudless, clear,

[Continued]

The wind, though brisk, left
 still thy horizon fringe of
 Pines.

Pine needles, spraying, glistening
 in the sun.

And needles of the pine, sprayed
 in the sun.

Glistening like the rays that upward
 run

From north to south, across
 the west, an unbroken band of gold
 and there

In quarter heaven shines the
 crescent moon

17

A tangible enough of farm-yard odors to definitely peep to the front the
 sense of rural peasant life and all the scarcely perceptible impressions and
 visions and emotion that are the overtones of such a perception.

 the wind,
 Surf-washing on the sandy needles
 The pine the wind,
 Surf-beating on the needles of the pine

18

Like shingled bark around the
 Long trunk

[Next page]

The wind pushing so boldly
 'gainst the door
 Drives thru [sic] carpet across the floor

The smoke curls up from the saw-dust
pile, curls up
Above the pines then settles down,
pine breast [~~blast-pine~~] high,
And stretches out, a thin and
Level band suspended
Miles along the valley

19

The knot at last give up its
Juice into the flames.

Barking of hounds, and shouts
A possum hunt under the
quarter moon.

I ain't doing well.

No, I dont play with God, no time.

The wind is in the corn,
And dry October leaves sway and creak, talking to it, talking to me, talking to
the cloudless sky, complaining for the lack of rain — no, the corn leaves are
orators, the demagogues of this quite [quiet?] place talking for the love [of] it,
loving to hear themselves talk. I listen to them for they are the only voices in
this place. In fact, I've grown to love their symphony of scratches almost as
much as they. At first I turned aside, for it seemed to me they were
monotonously boastfully, repeating the same phrase, over and over, "Cotton
is king, but we're the queens of cotton. And Georgia soil is fertilized where
we grow."

20

Contented with their whisperings, voicing the 'now,' it vexed and irritated me
that they gave heed neither to that soil of a past hundred years ago, nor to
the rolling land that lost itself for, far to [too?] westward. And, of course, in a
region where corn is the only voice, for life I had to seek by turns the past
and future.

- Dripping of rain in the forest
 Is the tramping of feet
 21 Million-footed rain —
 Agile tight rope dancer of the
 spider web
-
- 22 Feet that walk across the brooks
-
- Tramping down leaves,
 Feet that follow
 Snakes and Rabbits down their hole
 Feet that perch on branches
 23 too fine for birds
 On blades too slender
 for the dragon-fly
 Feet that press the rustle
 out of dead leaves
-
- 24 Isn't that enough to make a spider cry?
-
- 25 Use natural forces. Northern
 light-aura, lightning, thunder
 imagine forces
-
- 26 Killing that which is spontaneous in nature
-
- 27 The sky stomped it foot and wept
 Petulant at your triviality
-

An angle [sic] prays with folded wings
 within my heart, an intoned
 prayer for liberation
The words are simple as unpolished
 silver

28 But their cadence is of the full moon

Dear Christ my eyes are as [glitter?] as the
 fish found in a cave
But I do not ask to see

I would not say starved
But just a lover of faces
29 Wishing, perhaps too boldly,
That the eyes I meet
Were half as bold as I

30 You are like a shell that drifts, asking
The grave where its body is interred

Like the soft paws
Of gigantic cats . . . purring
31 The trees
 their claws
Licking their soft fur.

32 Give your friend a cigar and he'll
burn your house down. — Distrust
 Glory to God, Glory to God Almighty.

rowed
 As you walked
 Far into the night
 Invisible skein of twilight
 Were tangled
 Glowing like a jelly-fish
 Touched by oars
 Beneath evening waters
 Now that you have transferred
 your promiscuity

Perhaps it is the cadence of
 the full moon
 Beating its Christ like soul
 To a glinting red foamy pulp
 Upon the back bay waters.
 That is aching on the winds
 tonight

33

Perhaps it is the uncaught
 rhythm of the song
 just now released from me
 That beats so frantically
 Perhaps it is the rain-echoes of
 the you I could not
 take
 Wailing like a lost slave for
 dead his master
 Rustling leaves in the great forest
 Goading tigers
 Stirring me to tears and tight jaws

That last word of yours,
 After so long a pause
 Parted silence from the

[Continued]

34 “And then I’ll be able to attract a woman even if she be nothing more than a common prostitute.”

35 This life is sure hell. If she knew it would break her little heart

36 In fact, it would not stretch the truth too far to say that when one heard him mumbling, [buddies?] it wasn’t to himself at all he was talking to, but to his kitchen biddies.

37 You’ve heard about the Salvation Army . . . how they stand on the corner and shout Hallelujah . . . I’m glad I’m in [the] Salvation Army.

38 “What you say is such a frank admission of your ignorance that I haven’t the heart to take you up on it.”

39 Interest in a backyard garden in which he had succeeded in raising onions, radishes, and fear, he mistook to be genuine agriculture.

40 And resting on the red tin roof
The dipper stars.

41 The semi-educated display characters of that type the world over. Somewhat contemptuous of the “common people,” they no whit more revere their superiors. Conscious of opportunities greater than those of their less fortunate brothers they have absorbed a superficial *laisx faire* [sic] towards life, have suffered a contraction of generous human impulses, but as yet have not done far enough to meet the ‘closed door’ of their own philosophy. Having acquired a smattering of knowledge — which smattering serves no purpose so well as that *sarcophagus* [sic] for all true learning — they have

[Continued]

failed to reach that point from [where] they can see their own possessions for what they really are. Consequently, they are dogmatic and ready with opinions, positive of the God wise verity of what they say, condone laziness of mentality on the plea of "quite sufficient, I thank you," and will accept joke and jibe and fun-making in place of an earnest effort towards understanding.

"It is sinful, or at least a sign of country breeding, to be looked down up[on], for one to express oneself emotionally, unless it be such an emotion as is [sanctioned] by the acknowledged religious leadership under approved religious supervisions."

Such in the more or less unconscious moral precept which is thinning out and perverting the original emotional wealth of the southern Negro. This precept is more in force in the smaller cities and nearby rural districts.

42

As there is a two-fold process at work the tendency of the city to spread and include or evangelize the country and the tendency of the country to press in towards and ape the city, it is but a question of time — not so long — when the southern Negro as a body, though remaining essentially agricultural, will nevertheless be under the domination of a misfit and largely borrowed, standardizing, devitalizing moral code. Their emotions, should they retain their original strength, are, indulged in at the price of hypocrisy.

Soul like a full moon

43

Familiarity, in most people, indicates not a sentiment of comradeship, an emotion of brotherhood, but simply a lack of respect and reverence tempered by the unkindly [sic] desire to level down whatever is above them, to assert their own fancy egos at whatever damage to those fragile tissues of elevation which constitute the worthwhile meshes of our civilization.

44

And resting on the red tin roof
The dipper stars.

Lack of Respect.

45

A fundamentally sullen and disrespectful attitude towards life.

46

“And we want to prove [sic] to all everyone that we can be just like any other race.”

“We must get down to business.”

Which.

47

The body or the soul.

The bronze St. Gaudin [?] cast

you in

And which the cob web

48

Goodnight was exchanged between us

Im beat silent

Whose song is ever that no harm is
done,

The lazy rain drops basking in
the sun,

I will not strain my faculties
for you,

49

Easy and free they’ve always come to
you,

And truth is easy if you’re always true.

The faculty of living life as its begun
Knowing no need other than the [be?]
nature’s own.

Hell, Christ, god-damn and bitch
And all the other cuss words
Publishers are afraid to print.
50 I have a special fondness for you
You mean the mood I'm feeling in
As no other words can meant [sic] it

Outside from Colorado
Inside Indiana Lime Stone
Feeling Alabama Marble
51 Statue White Georgian Marble
Flooring Pink Tennessee Marble
Color for each 50 states
400 Tons [sic] statue

It is death that comes
52 Like a fog up the valley
And closes the view

To walk in a rainbow,
And it curving
53 Far out to either side of you.
Endless
Eventually, to either side

The evening star alone
54 Above a rising cloud bank
And still houses

55

Such directness, and of a nature calibrated to challenge

Contained, intensely so, she
opened and read:

Have you the social courage
to meet me? My name is
Jean Toomer. And your [sic] is . . .

With an illumination as of the
sun breaking thru the fog, she raised

^{“Dorothy” replies}
her eyes to his .. - the shock ~~that~~
tingled thru his nerves and by a
predestined faith penetrated to those
scarce glimpse regions of their soul
in such a manner - that for years
thereafter the slightest incident
recalling this event was sufficient
to start an
emotion of exquisite delight.

56

Problems are new until they have been solved.

57

You’ve done enough, all right
But mostly of a bad kind.
And not of a nature
such as one would care to
brag about

Yep, he is an old codger now.
But believe me boy, in his youth
he was all stream and circles

58

Presently, in the course of the drifting she moved near him, caught in his glance, slid up to him and asked, "Don't you think Mrs. K. rather striking? I know- -" His mild and somewhat curious toleration in a flash turned to a severity that cut. "What's the matter?" She faltered, "don't you - -" "No, I have no dislike for this society slush,⁶ as some of our [unreadable] would call it. Rather amuses me, in fact. But I don't want it from you. That side of you, you save for people who demand no other, for me, give me something vitally yourself - - or keep away. Else I'll develop the habit of mildly debasing you and I don't want to do that.

His eyes were suspicious, contemptible insolent presumptive taking for granted the looseness of woman whenever he was concerned, and the absolute foolishness of all men (except himself) in the dealings with women.

59

The tug, with the red sides and black smoke stack and a pipe emitting a whiff of steam chugs down the old Potomac, lashed to a canal boat on either side. She has swung them out into the muddy slow waters of the Potomac from the old canal barges which their mules have pulled them from towns out in the middle west. The mules are now in they stalls. The voices of the large men carry clearly across the smooth surface of the Potomac. Waves thrown up in mid-stream come like strips of shadows diagonally to the shore. They strike a ground the stone walk with the sound of cranking ire or crumbling glass. The tug blows its signal to the bridge. The bridge revolves to right angles and whistles three sharp whistles, meaning it is open. The tug and the old canal barges pass thru. The bridge swings to, and three more whistles say that it is in place. I see the traffic once more starting across the bridge. Far down the river, the tug, and its two adoptions. The willows cast their shadows on the water. There is a certain grace and refinement in the rustle of their leaves. I think of the old canal boats and their tug, the mules and the engine. I try to imagine the lives of the barge-men, of their families, of the crude exposure of daring and adventure of their existence is measured by miles for the greater part, by the boats for the rest. Do any emergencies arise calling for true metal.

⁶ **Slush**: a promiscuous female, who is easy to take to bed. (*The Online Slang Dictionary*)

“That’s only an idea.”

“That’s only a notion.”

Showing divergence of the mental

60 focus from the actual fact

which reveals a sense of

the proper thing quite unusual

in dogs.

[Phrases of Black Vernacular]

Yassur, they charge like anything

Thank y Jesus, Thank y Jesus.

May the Lord bless y

Too heavy to tote

61 *A Way Out of No Way*

get shed of

done et

little biddie

Theyre not as high as they has been

Yassur, theyre off quite sharp

Paul, y’know

APPENDIX II :
"POETRY"
NOTEBOOK

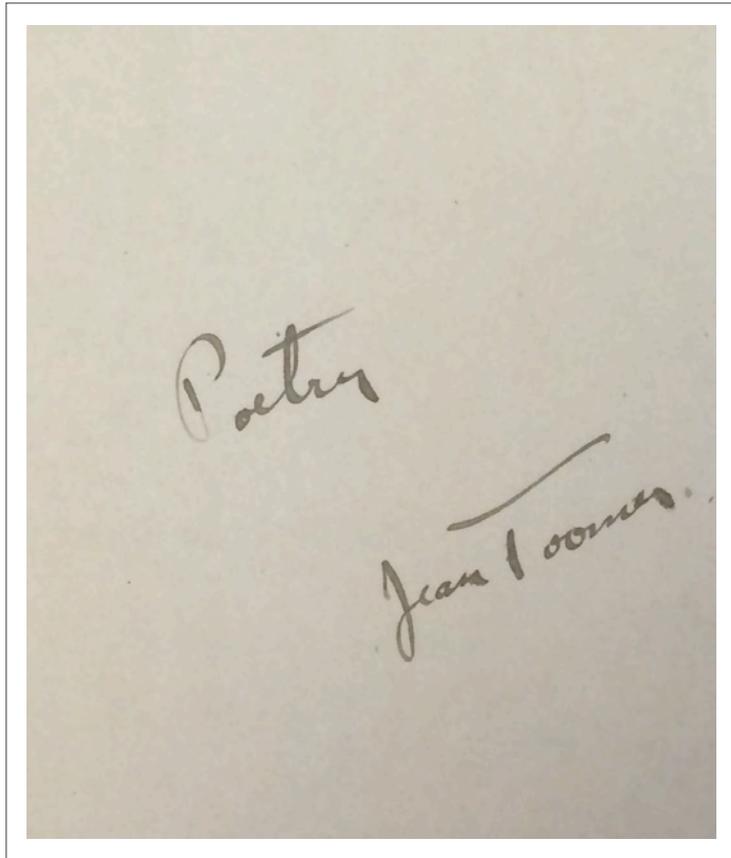


Image H4. Toomer's "Poetry" Notebook. First Page Inscription, c. 1921. JTP, Box 60, Folder 1411. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

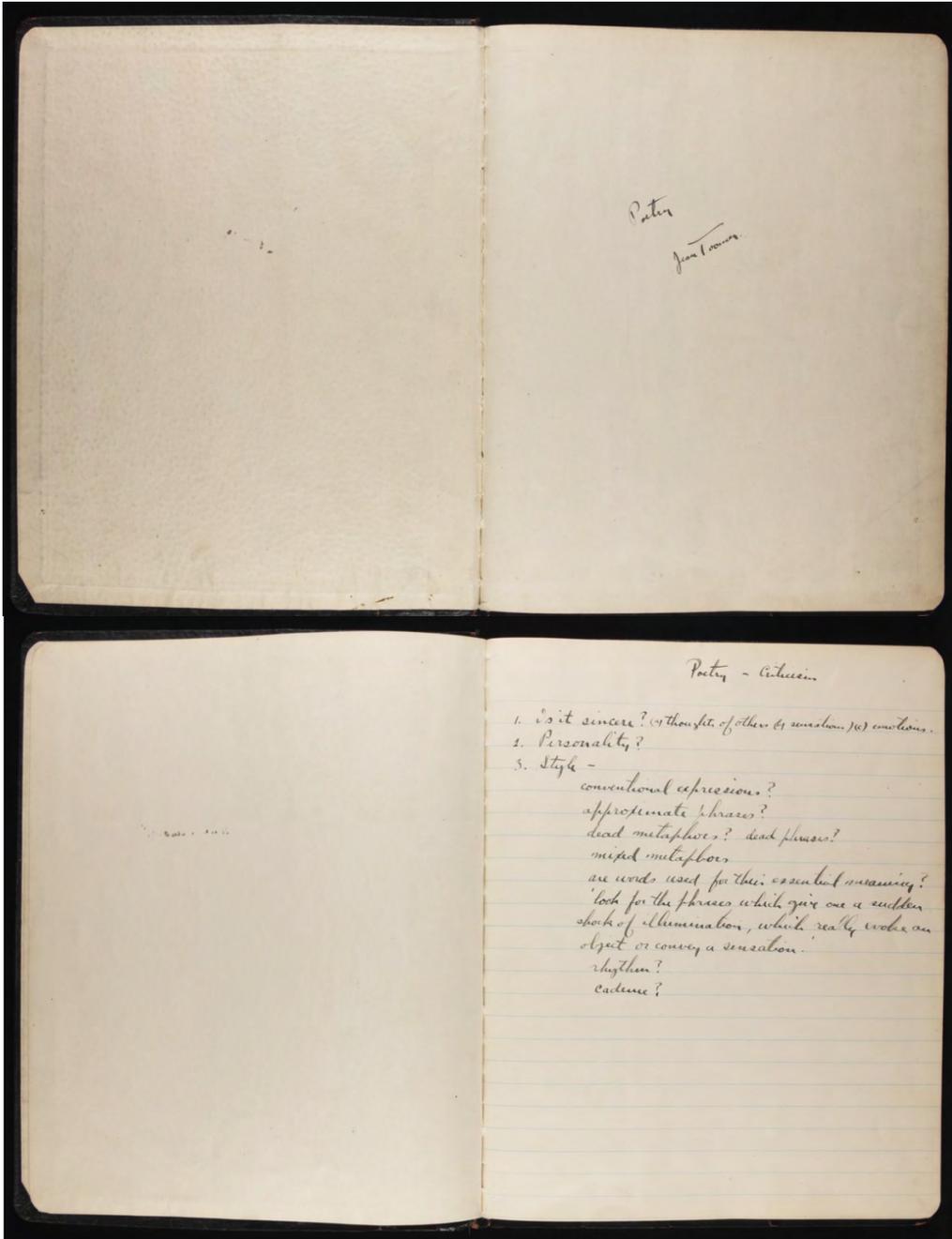
APPENDIX II

NOTES

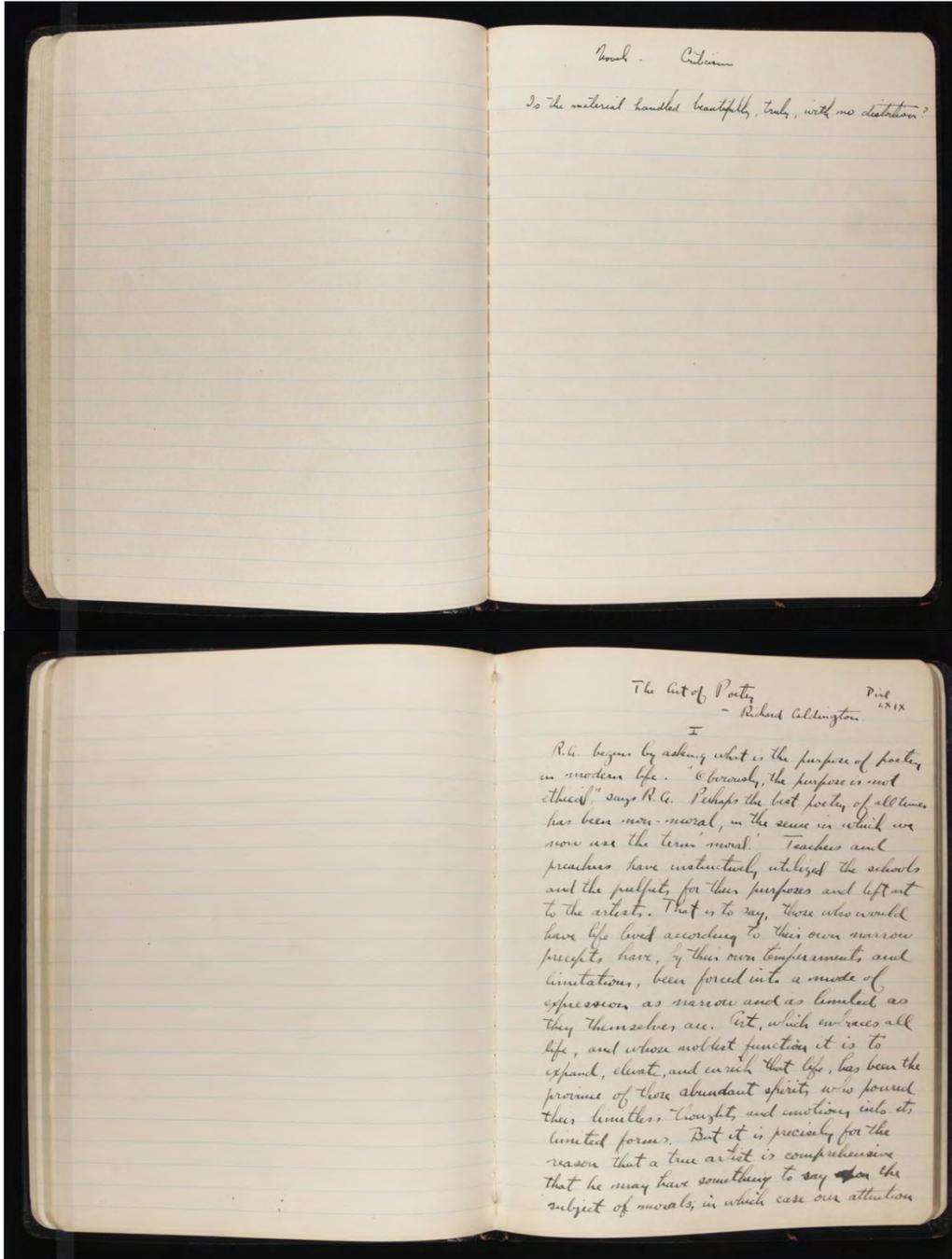
The larger “**Poetry**” **Notebook**, which was divided into sections that were never used, except the last section beginning with some notes about “Poetry—Criticism,” is dated in the Jean Toomer Papers as 1923. The notebook begins with a critical essay on **Richard Aldington**’s 1920 *Dial* article ‘**The Art of Poetry**’. The essay, written in a much different handwriting from the rest of the notebook, was never finished. Following this essay is a page of notes on Aldington’s piece, after which are Toomer’s various notes and ideas about literature and aesthetics. The contents of this notebook were most likely written around 1920-2. Closer inspection of the various writings show that the notebook contains early fragments of ‘**Natalie Mann**’, a longer poem that would later evolve into ‘**Conversion**’ and ‘**Karintha**’, and also phrases in the Black vernacular in the style of **CANE**, suggesting a date parallel to or coinciding with the “**Memorandum**” **Pocketbook** (as many phrases have been copied over).

APPENDIX II — "POETRY" NOTEBOOK

FACSIMILE 1 [TOP]: Front Endpaper; FACSIMILE 2 [BOTTOM]: Endpaper & Page 1



FACSIMILE 3 [TOP]: Pages 30-31; FACSIMILE 4 [BOTTOM]: Pages 72-73



FACSIMILE 5 [TOP]: Pages 74-75; FACSIMILE 6 [BOTTOM]: Pages 76-77

is attracted by the vigor of his thought and the beauty of his expression.

Moralists are generally determined to limit life. What they say is always in the nature of a prohibition. But this fact should not blind us to the ^{fact} that what is essentially a moral subject may be treated with exactly the opposite purpose in mind. Munster Smith may hold up to his congregation the rewards of celibacy and the salvation inherent in prohibition, but also may Walt Whitman fatten out the Puritan dogma in its culture and rear in its sickly stand, a vigorous, sleek growth. In so far as they deal with the rights and wrongs of human conduct, they are both moralists. For us, the question is not, *did he treat of morals?* but rather *how did he treat of morals?* In the difference of this treatment lies the difference between the artist and the preacher.

Let us admit that most poetry cannot afford to be moralistic. But the reason for this, we will have to seek in the poet rather than in

poetry. "The purpose of poetry is not ethical?" Certainly, not. Any single purpose would limit it, and thus degrade it from an art form to that analogous to the pulpit.

Mr. Allington says that "the old cant of a poet's 'message' is now completely discredited." These are certainly reasonable times, we are living in. Transformations occur that have the nature which produced a fish eye from mother's regard. We of the western world, whose thought have been shaped and moulded by the poets from Plato (Goethe, I ban it) to Whitman, suddenly roll on our backs with our face towards China. Charmed by their pictorial, suggestive loveliness we no longer hear the night voices of the past. Or rather, we hear them, but as a tired man hears a symphony; there is an auditory titillation, but no soul expansion - the spirit is too weary to respond.

I have said 'we.' I think it would be nearer the truth to say, 'they.' By 'they' I meanings R. U. and similar ones whose eyes are so charmed

and fascinated by the gem, by its outward appearance, by its external form, that the spirit behind the gem is not perceived. An exquisite image is preferred to a rousing message. Which is perfectly all right. I simply say that I do not believe such an attitude characteristic either of the western poet, or of their readers. Overnight, our voice and our hearing have not shrunk into an eye. The deduction is, that "messages" are ^{now} always measured by their merit; that a fine message beautifully expressed, or a strong message vigorously expressed will be accepted and appreciated now as much as in any former time.

After having relegated "message" poetry to the past, with seemingly joy, in the very next paragraph Mr. Allington seems to regret the fact that "literature seems out of touch with man's life, with that we inhabit." But "we are very far from the lines when a pamphlet by Chatterbox re-established at least temporarily the dynasty of the Beurons." Precisely so. And it is strong

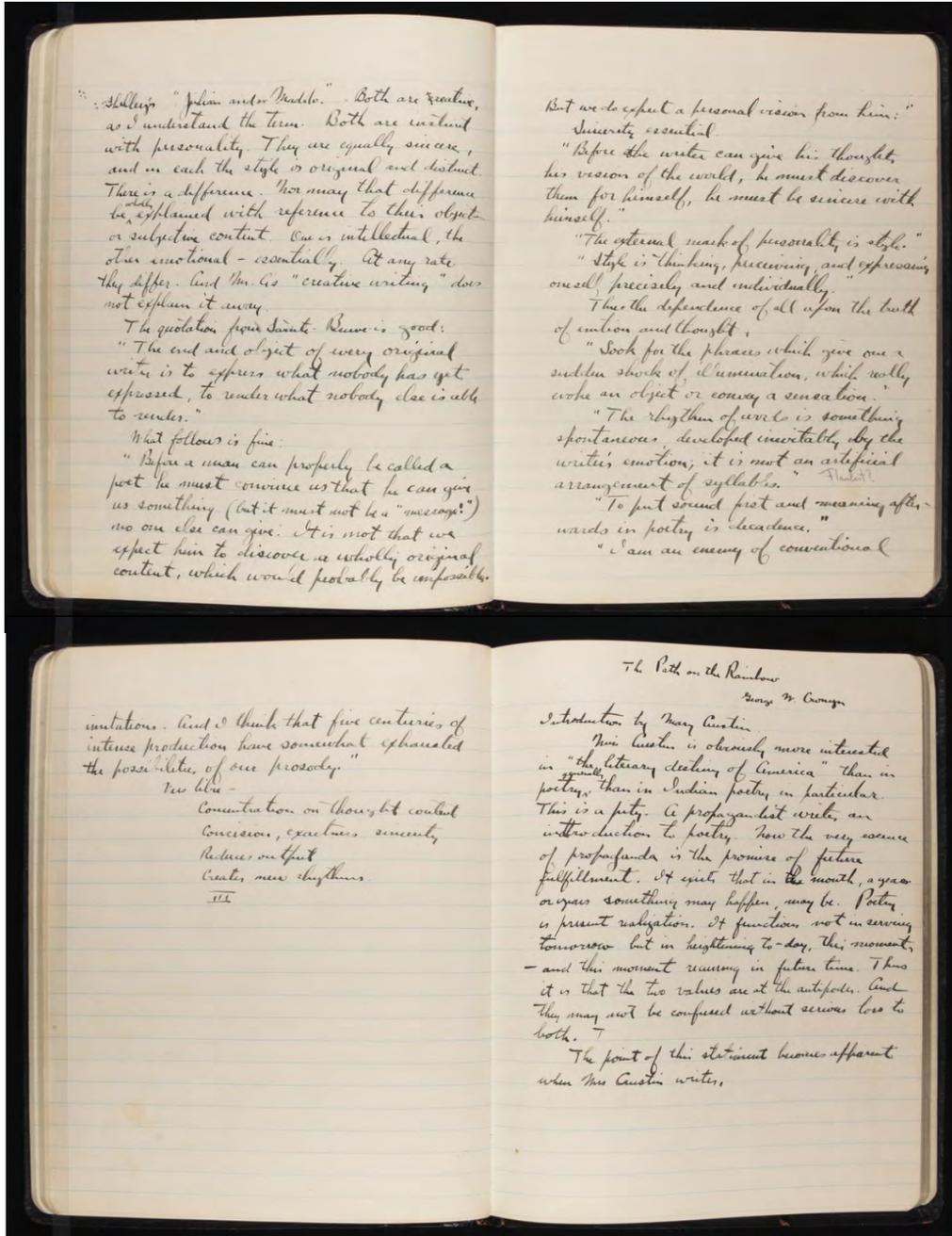
to me that Mr. A. overlooks the obvious logic of his point.

From Mr. A. point of view, I think we can agree with him "that poetry is neither a means of ethical instruction, an after-dinner amusement, nor the lawful prey of snobs and delinquents."

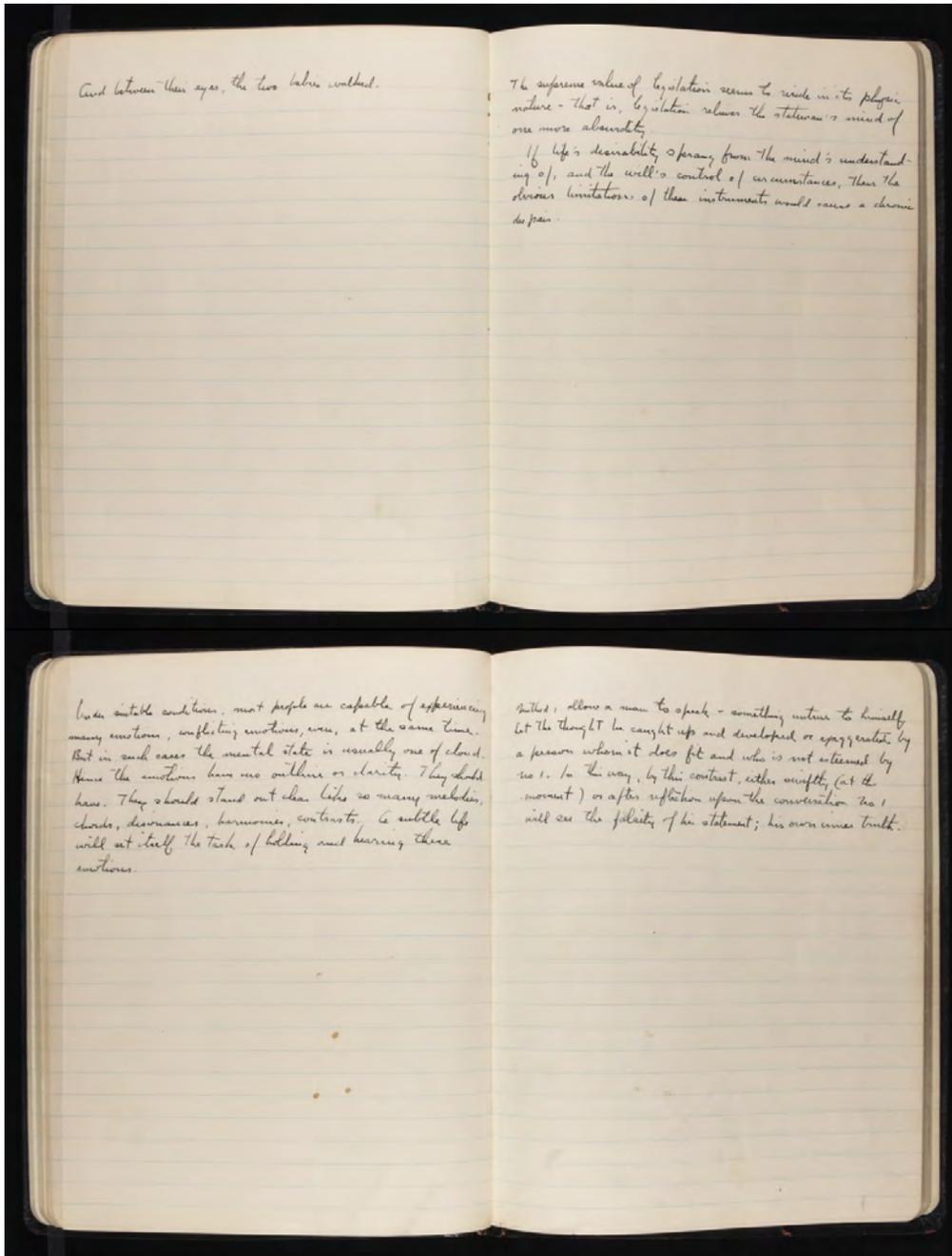
II

Richard Allington seeks personality. When he finds that personality ~~is~~ expressed in words, he is certain that he has found poetry. Whether prose or verse, or a mixture of them both, is made use of, is merely a matter of distinction. "May we not then say that all good creative writing is poetry though the poetry has many forms?" I dare say. But we only ~~let~~ ^{let} one mouse to get caught in another. What is and what isn't creative writing? To my mind one of those brilliant sets of Bernard Shaw is certainly creative. And yet would we call it poetry? There is quite a difference between Shaw's "Man and Superman" and

FACSIMILE 7 [TOP]: Pages 78-79; FACSIMILE 8 [BOTTOM]: Pages 80-81



FACSIMILE 9 [TOP]: Pages 84-85; FACSIMILE 10 [BOTTOM]: Pages 86-87



And between their eyes, the two labor walked.

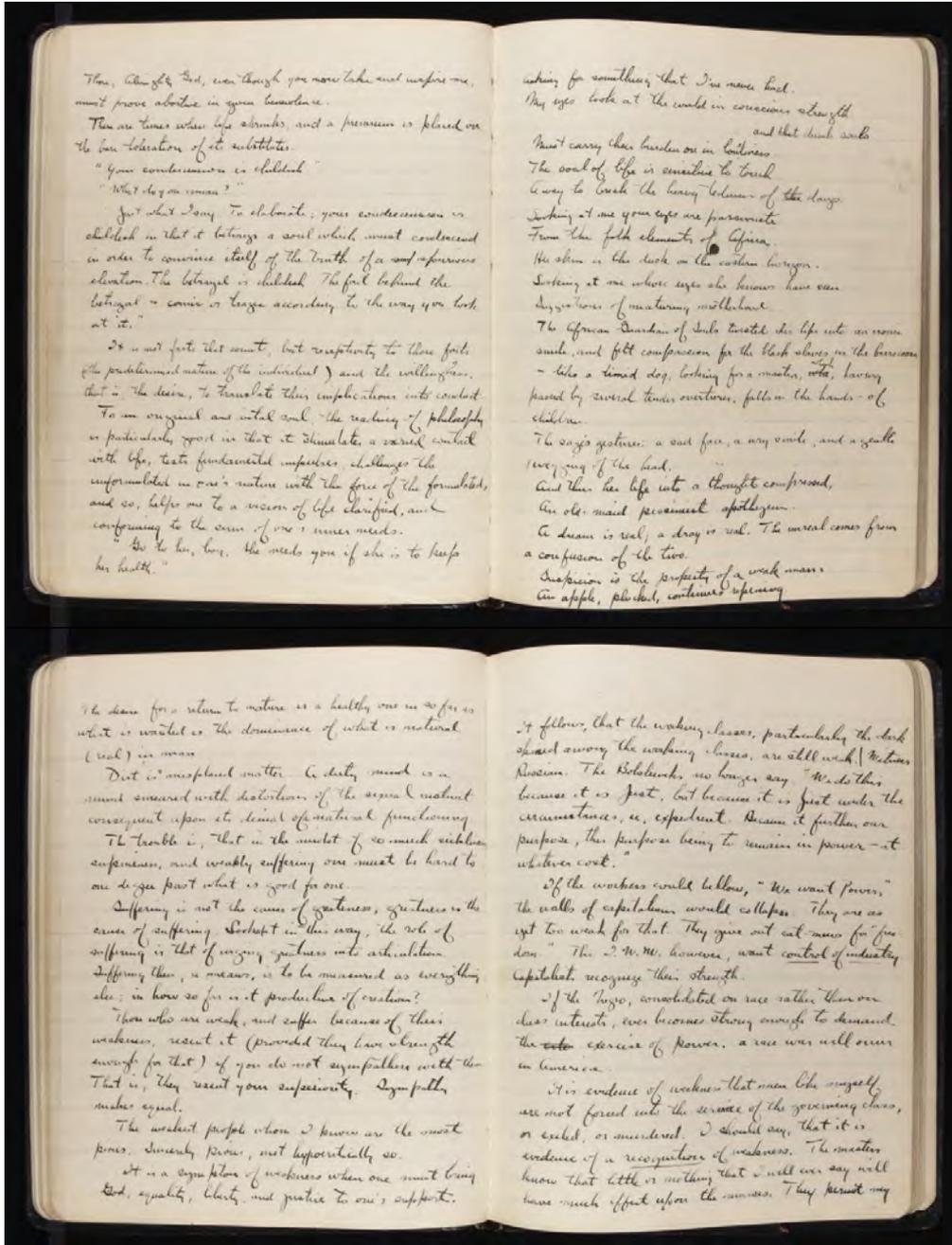
The supreme value of legislation seems to reside in its playful nature - that is, legislation releases the statesman's mind of one more absurdity.

If life's desirability sprang from the mind's understanding of, and the will's control of, circumstances, then the obvious limitations of these instruments would cause a chronic *de pain*.

Under suitable conditions, most people are capable of experiencing many emotions, conflicting emotions, even, at the same time. But in such cases the mental state is usually one of cloud. Hence the emotions have no outline or clarity. They should have. They should stand out like so many melodies, chords, dissonances, harmonies, contrasts. A subtle life will set itself the task of holding and hearing these emotions.

Butler: allow a man to speak - something nature to himself. Let the thought be caught up and developed or exaggerated by a person whom it does fit and who is not released by us. In this way, by this contrast, either swiftly (at the moment) or after reflection upon the conversation he will see the falsity of his statement; his own inner truth.

FACSIMILE 11 [TOP]: Pages 88-89; FACSIMILE 12 [BOTTOM]: Pages 90-91



Then, although that, even though you never take and inspire me,
must prove abortion in your lifetime.

Then are times when life shrinks, and a premium is placed on
the few labors of its substitutes.

"Your consciousness is shelled"

"What do you mean?"

Just what I say to elaborate: your consciousness is
shelled in that it betrays a soul which must be enclosed
in order to conserve itself of the truth of a self-empowered
education. The betrayal is shelled. The fact behind the
betrayal - comes to be true according to the way you look
at it.

It is not facts that count, but receptivity to those facts
(the predominant nature of the individual) and the willingness,
that is, the desire, to translate their complications into content.

To an original and vital soul, the reaching of philosophy
is particularly good in that it stimulates a varied contact
with life, tests fundamental impulses, challenges the
unformulated in one's nature with the force of the formulated,
and so, helps one to a vision of life clarified, and
conforming to the aim of one's inner needs.

As to her, boy, she needs you if she is to keep
her health.

waiting for something that I've never had.

My eyes look at the world in confusion, a bright

and that dark world

Must carry their burden on in loneliness

The soul of life is conscious to touch

A way to break the heavy burden of the days

Looking at me your eyes are passionate

From the folk elements of Africa

He often is the dock on the western horizon

Looking at me whose eyes she knows have seen

Signs of maturing intellect

The African burden of souls twisted her life into an ironic

smile, and felt compassion for the black slaves in the barrens

- like a timid dog, looking for a master, ~~with~~, having

passed by several times overtones, follow the hands of

children.

The boy's gesture: a sad face, a way smile, and a gentle

waying of the hand,

And then her life into a thought compressed,

An old maid pavement apothegm.

A dream is real, a dream is real. The unreal comes from

a confusion of the two.

Inspection is the property of a weak man.

An apple, plucked, contained ripening

The claim for a return to nature as a healthy one in so far as
what is wanted is the dominance of what is natural
(real) in man.

Dist is a misplaced matter. A daily mind is a
mind assumed with distortion of the original natural
consequent upon its denial of natural functioning.

The trouble is, that in the midst of so much rebellion,
superstition, and weakly suffering one must be hard to
one degree point what is good for one.

Suffering is not the cause of greatness, greatness is the
cause of suffering. Suffered in this way, the role of
suffering is that of urging greatness into actualization.

Suffering then, in measure, is to be measured as everything
else; in how so far as it produces of existence?

Those who are weak, and suffer because of their
weakness, resent it (provided they have strength
enough for that) if you do not sympathize with them.

That is, they resent your superiority. Sympathy
makes equal.

The weakest people whom I know are the most
pious. Sincerely pious, not hypocritically so.

It is a sign of weakness when one must bring
God, equality, liberty and justice to one's support.

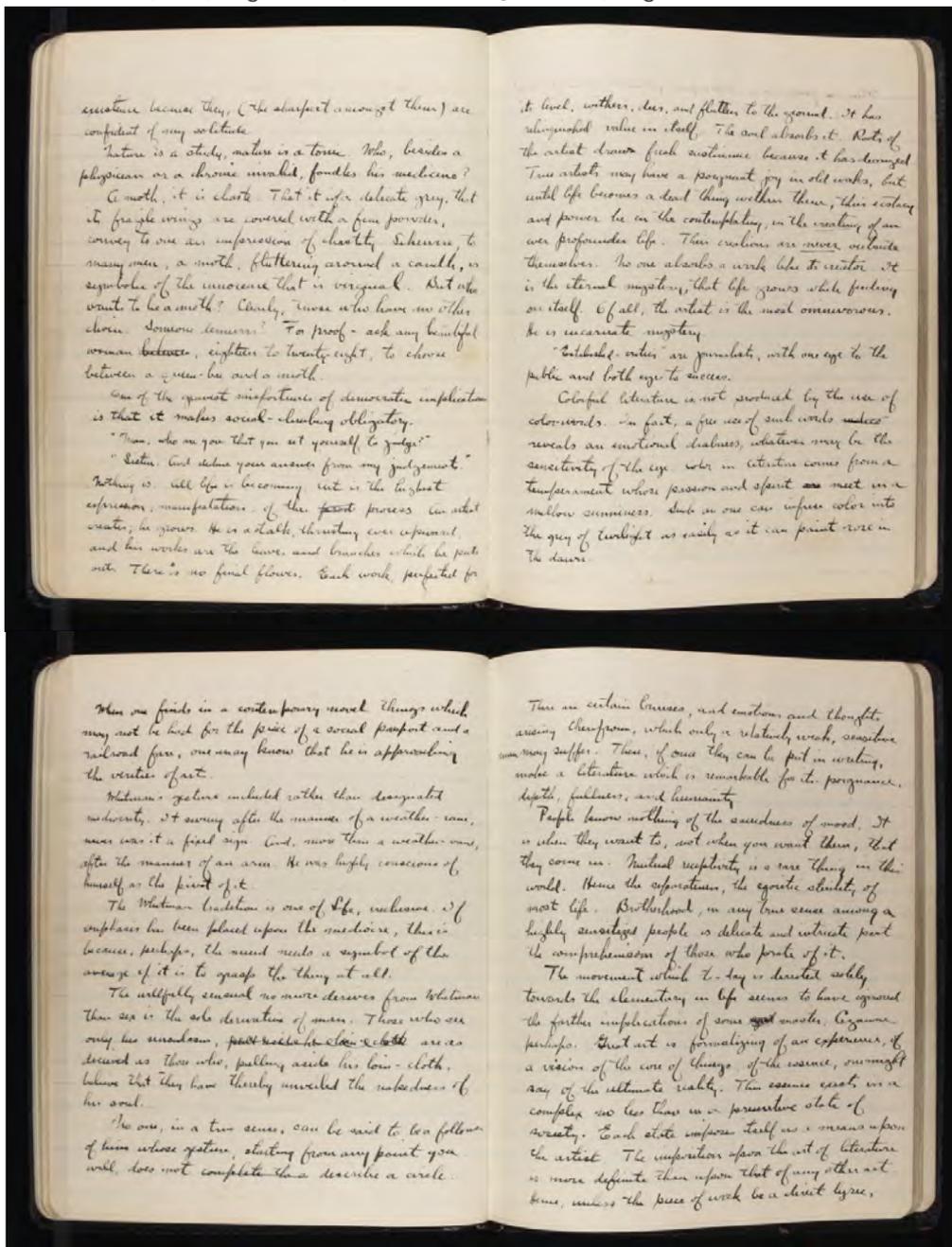
It follows, that the working classes, particularly the dark
skinned among the working classes, are still weak. ~~Victims~~
Reaction. The Bolsheviks, no longer say "We do this
because it is just, but because it is just under the
circumstances, i.e., expedient. Because it further our
purpose, the purpose being to remain in power - at
whatever cost."

If the workers could believe, "We want power,"
the walls of capitalism would collapse. They are as
apt too weak for that. They give out out money for free
don't. The I.W.O. however, want control of industry.
Capitalists recognize their strength.

If the Negro, consolidated on race rather than on
class interests, ever becomes strong enough to demand
the exercise of power, a race war will occur
in America.

It is evidence of weakness that men like myself
are not forced into the service of the governing class,
or exiled, or murdered. I should say, that it is
evidence of a recognition of weakness. The masters
know that little or nothing that I will ever say will
have much effect upon the masses. They permit my

FACSIMILE 13 [TOP]: Pages 92-93; FACSIMILE 14 [BOTTOM]: Pages 94-95



assistance because they, (the almost amongst them) are
 content of my solitude.

Nature is a study, nature is a tonic. Who, besides a
 physician or a chronic invalid, fumbles his medicine?

A moth, it is close. That it is delicate grey, that
 its fragile wings are covered with a fine powder,
 coming to one as imperious of health, Scherer, to
 many more, a moth, fluttering around a candle, is
 a symbol of the innocence that is original. But who
 wants to be a moth? Clearly, those who have no other
 claim. "Souris lemming?" For proof - ask any beautiful
 woman between eighteen to twenty-eight, to choose
 between a man-bee and a moth.

One of the greatest imperfections of democratic civilization
 is that it makes social-climbing obligatory.

"Then, who are you that you set yourself to judge?"

"Listen. And define your answer from my judgement."

Nothing is. All life is becoming. It is the highest
 expression, manifestation, of the great process. An artist
 creates, he grows. He is a stable, thrusting ever upward,
 and his works are the leaves and branches which he puts
 out. There is no final flower. Each work perfected for

its level, withers, dies, and flatters to the ground. It has
 relinquished value in itself. The artist absorbs it. But, of
 the artist drawn fresh sustenance because it has been
 true artist, may have a poignant joy in old works, but
 until life becomes a dead thing within them, their ecstasy
 and power lie in the contemplating, in the creating of an
 ever profounder life. Their creations are never outside
 themselves. No one absorbs a work like its creator. It
 is the eternal negation, that life grows while feeding
 on itself. If all, the artist is the most consciousness,
 he is inaccurate mystery.

"Cathedral" artists are generalists, with one eye to the
 public and both eyes to success.

Colorful literature is not produced by the use of
 color-words. In fact, a free use of such words under
 reveals an emotional disability, whatever may be the
 sensitivity of the eye. Color in literature comes from a
 temperament whose passion and spirit are met in a
 mellow summer. Such an one can infuse color into
 the grey of twilight as easily as it can print rose in
 the dawn.

When one finds in a contemporary novel things which
 may not be best for the peace of a social prospect and a
 railroad fare, one may know that he is approaching
 the writer of fact.

Whitman's gesture included rather than designated
 indelicacy. It arising after the manner of a weather-vane,
 was not a fixed sign. And, more than a weather-vane,
 after the manner of an arrow. He was highly conscious of
 himself as the point of it.

The Whitman tradition is one of life, inclusion. If
 emphasis has been placed upon the masculine, this is
 because, perhaps, the mind needs a symbol of the
 average of it is to grasp the thing at all.

The willfully sensual no more derives from Whitman
 than sex is the sole derivation of man. Those who see
 only his unadorned, post-~~reconstruction~~ ~~rebirth~~ are as
 deceived as those who, pulling aside his low-cloth,
 believe that they have thereby unveiled the nakedness of
 his soul.

He one, in a two sense, can be said to be followed
 of him whose gesture, starting from any point you
 will, does not completely describe a circle.

There are certain phrases, and emotions, and thoughts
 arising therefrom, which only a relatively weak, sensitive
 man may suffer. These, if once they can be put in writing,
 make a literature which is remarkable for its poignance,
 depth, fullness, and humanity.

People know nothing of the soundness of wood. It
 is when they want to, not when you want them, that
 they come in. Mutual respect is a rare thing in the
 world. Hence the opportunity, the egoistic stability, of
 most life. Brotherhood, in any true sense among a
 highly civilized people is delicate and intricate, and
 the comprehension of those who probe of it.

The movement which to-day is directed solely
 towards the elementary in life seems to have ignored
 the further implications of some ~~good~~ ~~made~~, ~~beginning~~
 perhaps. But art is formalizing of an experience, of
 a vision of the core of things, of the essence, overnight
 say of the ultimate reality. The essence itself, in a
 complex, no less than in a primitive state of
 society. Each state imposes itself as a means upon
 the artist. The imposition upon the art of literature
 is more definite than upon that of any other art
 form, unless the piece of work be a strict lyric,

FACSIMILE 15 [TOP]: Pages 96-97; FACSIMILE 16 [BOTTOM]: Pages 98-99

modern reality can only (or perhaps, one better) be conveyed in terms of the contemporary setting. Symbols, and not without, the complexities of thought and human emotion must be revealed the modern essence, which, of course, is similar to the essence of all things human. This involves an sacrifice. It does impose an immense burden upon the artist who must be, while remaining the artist, as manifest and as diverse as his age. It imposes the power of confessionalism, of isolation, of organization on a scale hitherto unknown upon the direct capacity for aesthetic experience. The purity of a piece of contemporary literature will depend not only upon its simplification but also upon its freedom and tolerance.

- The fresh, flat criticism, given by men in some world of life upon the achievement of another. Some, like the sturdiest prize potato will rot if kept too long under ground.

Method - to make two sensitive people cognizant of the only gestures and expressions, one of the other, introduce a third person, who, through he sees, is too frightened to keep what he sees to himself.

That most are nothing more than intellectual outlines filled with more or less well chosen characters, incidents, descriptions, thoughts, comments, studied creases and all such ~~intellectual~~ lapping. Very seldom does one find a design which is organic to the process which unfolds. In short, most novels are compilations, shovels, documents, and not art.

The will of a weak sensitive man becomes negative. It is largely concerned with what the man shall not do for this reason, will coincide with stubbornness.

"I cannot be to you."

"I will draw truth - though not so sharp and direct - on still denser steel. Some day, after you have forgotten that I have told you this, you will begin to unravel your life to me. You will tell me of your hurts and wounds. You will confesses and reasons. You will find these and then, for the first time, beneath your mind you will begin to feel the glancing of your soul."

- the mother, who, having given birth to a child, turns over, and cradles it in her sleep.

SA extracts the same essence from every thing. His work is essentially a monotone. Only one robe of his soul is stirring.

People return to home. They have been among our traps, reactions, interferences, perhaps. One look, it is as though they had never gone away, as if they had been in the houses thousands of years. They bring me fresh breath of the sea with them, no visible freshness of brass and rivers.

When I walk color jet is not because it is local, but because I love it.

- a deity life of hot bits and towels.

Smith - the white of white becomes usual. White becomes a shade, vaguely oppressive. A dominant shade smothered with moist. A cloud ~~clouds~~ near to one because I walk on mountains. When I look up from the darkness of the valley, it is so.

Education's real function is to render the necessary serviceable, wherever it may be in a young girl's dream, where it might be in an ideal society, less play but a small part in actual life, and its portion is still smaller in the life of an artist.

There lies the difference: that whereas most the opinions of most people arise from their effort to deny pain, the class of the woman spring straight from suffering.

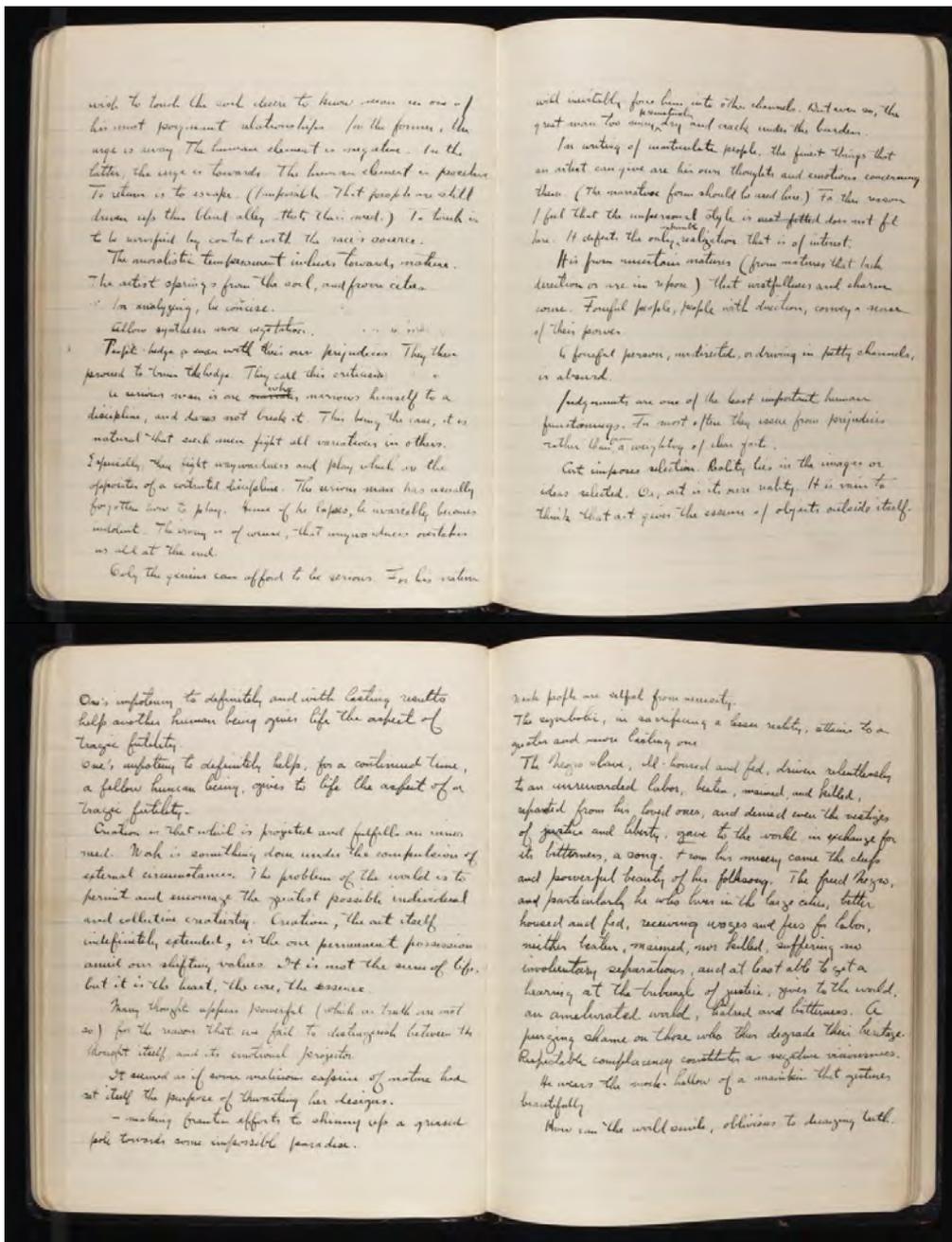
- as just beneath the finger tips man efforts, the hand is worn. The assumption of any critic is that he can or does understand the book he is going to write about. In most cases this is an important and unexamined assumption.

The creative critic slips rapidly from his art object into himself, and from himself into his art object. The transfer of consciousness sometimes becomes so rapid that it seems as though he were consulting the two existences simultaneously.

Method - the physical is to be brought into sharp relief whenever a spiritual force, abiding, distorts it.

A distinction should be made between the wish to return to nature, and the desire to touch the soil. Nature, as I have used the term, is a original touch of land. The soil is tilled land, saturated with the life of those who have worked it. In this definition will be found the distinction I refer to. Those who wish to return to nature wish to rid themselves of man as what we are pleased to term his modern associations. Those who

FACSIMILE 17 [TOP]: Pages 100-101; FACSIMILE 18 [BOTTOM]: Pages 102-103



man to touch the soul, desire to know man in one of his most poignant relationships. In the former, the urge is away. The human element is negative. In the latter, the urge is towards. The human element is positive. To return is to escape. (Impossible that people are still drawn up the blind alley that their mind.) To break in to be surprised by contact with the race's conscience.

The aesthetic temperament inclines towards isolation. The artist opening from the soul, and from others. In analyzing, he isolates.

allow synthesis more important. People judge a man with their own prejudices. They then proceed to blame the judge. They call this criticism. A serious man is one who narrows himself to a discipline, and does not break it. This being the case, it is natural that such men fight all variations in others. I specially, they fight irregularities and play which is the opposite of a cerebral discipline. The serious man has usually forgotten how to play. Hence of his lapses, he invariably becomes indifferent. The irony or of course, that irregularities outtake us all at the end.

Only the genius can afford to be serious. To his values

will inevitably force him into other channels. But even so, the great man too ^{eventually} cracks under the burden.

In writing of unarticulate people, the finest things that an artist can give are his own thoughts and emotions concerning them. (The narrative form should be used here.) For this reason I feel that the impersonal style is most-fitted does not fit here. It depicts the only realization that is of interest.

It is from uncertain motives (from motives that lack direction or are in reform) that wastefulness and charm come. Fearful people, people with direction, convey a sense of their power.

A fearful person, undirected, or driving in petty channels, is absurd.

Judgments are one of the best important human functions. In most often they come from prejudice rather than a weighing of clear facts.

Art imposes selection. Boldly lies in the images or ideas selected. Or, art is its mere reality. It is vain to think that art gives the essence of objects outside itself.

One's inability to definitely and with lasting results help another human being gives life the aspect of tragic futility.

One's inability to definitely help, for a continuous time, a fellow human being, gives to life the aspect of a tragic futility.

Creation is that which is projected and fulfill an inner need. Work is something done under the compulsion of external circumstances. The problem of the world is to permit and encourage the greatest possible individual and collective creativity. Creation, the act itself indefinitely extended, is the one permanent possession amid our shifting values. It is most the sense of life, but it is in the heart, the core, the essence.

Many thought appears powerful (which in truth are not so) for the reason that we fail to distinguish between the thought itself and its emotional projection.

It seems as if some malicious caprice of nature had at itself the purpose of thwarting her designs.

- making frantic efforts to shew up a grandiose path towards some impossible paradise.

rich people are selfish from necessity.

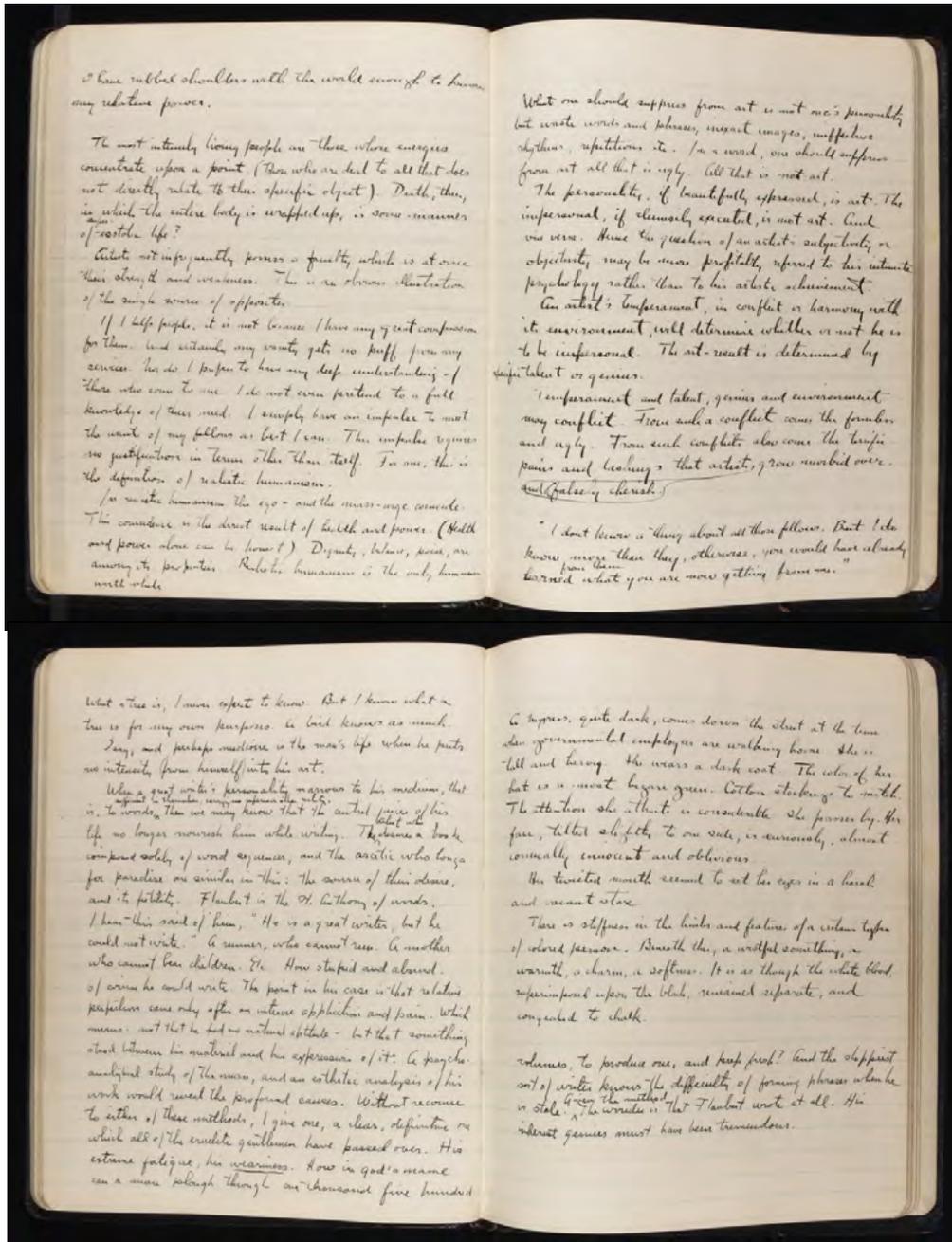
The symbolic, in representing a basic reality, attains to a quiet and more lasting one.

The Negro slave, ill housed and fed, driven relentlessly to an unrewarded labor, beaten, maimed, and killed, separated from his loyal ones, and denied even the vestiges of justice and liberty, gave to the world in exchange for its bitterness, a song. From his misery came the deep and powerful beauty of his folk-song. The freed Negro, and particularly he who lives in the large cities, better housed and fed, receiving wages and fees for labor, neither beaten, maimed, nor killed, suffering no involuntary separations, and at least able to get a hearing at the tribunal of justice, gives to the world, an ameliorated verbal, belated and bitterness. A paralyzing shame on those who then degrade their heritage. Respectable complacency constitutes a vulgar righteousness.

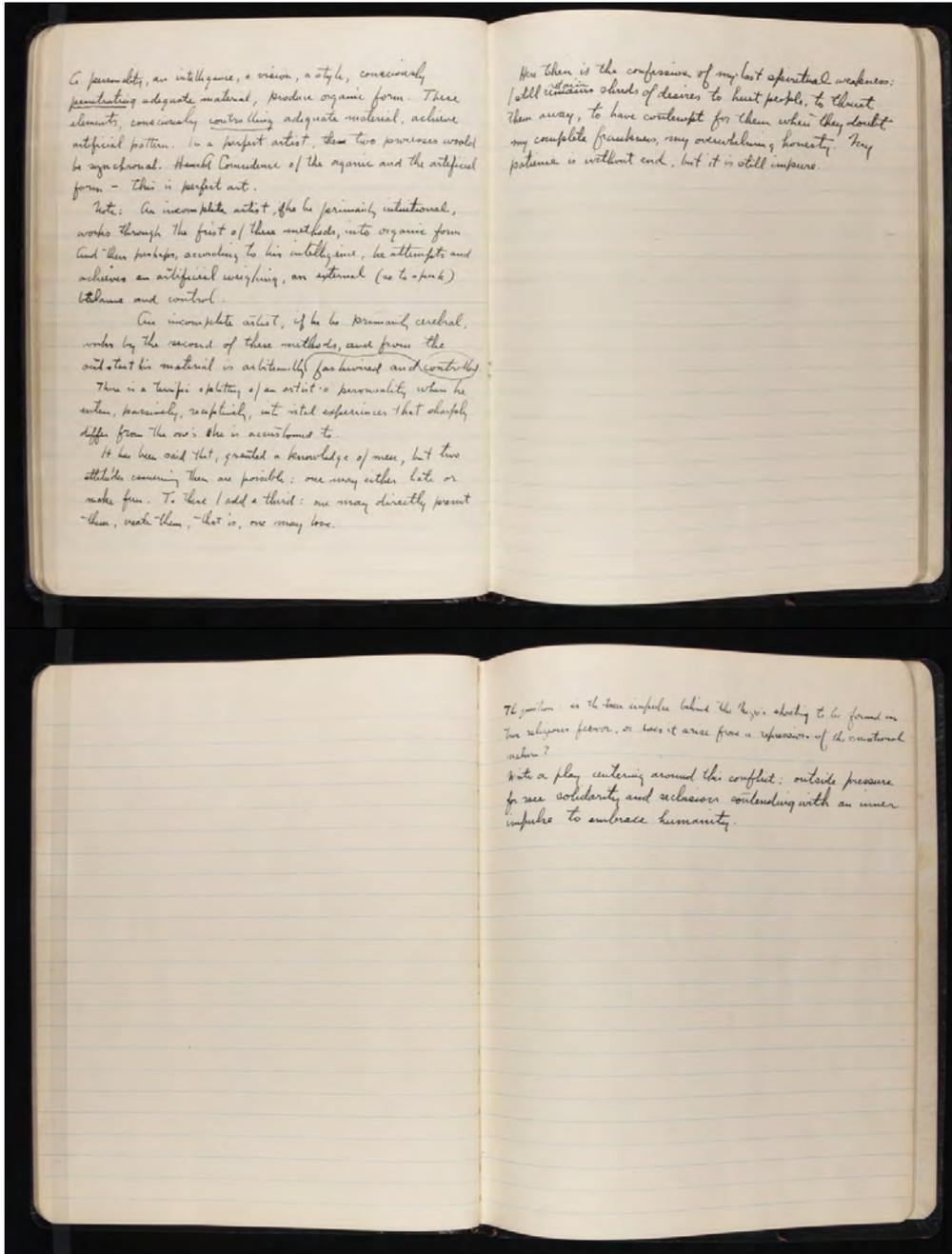
He wears the numb hollow of a man who gazes beautifully

through the world's veil, oblivious to changing truth.

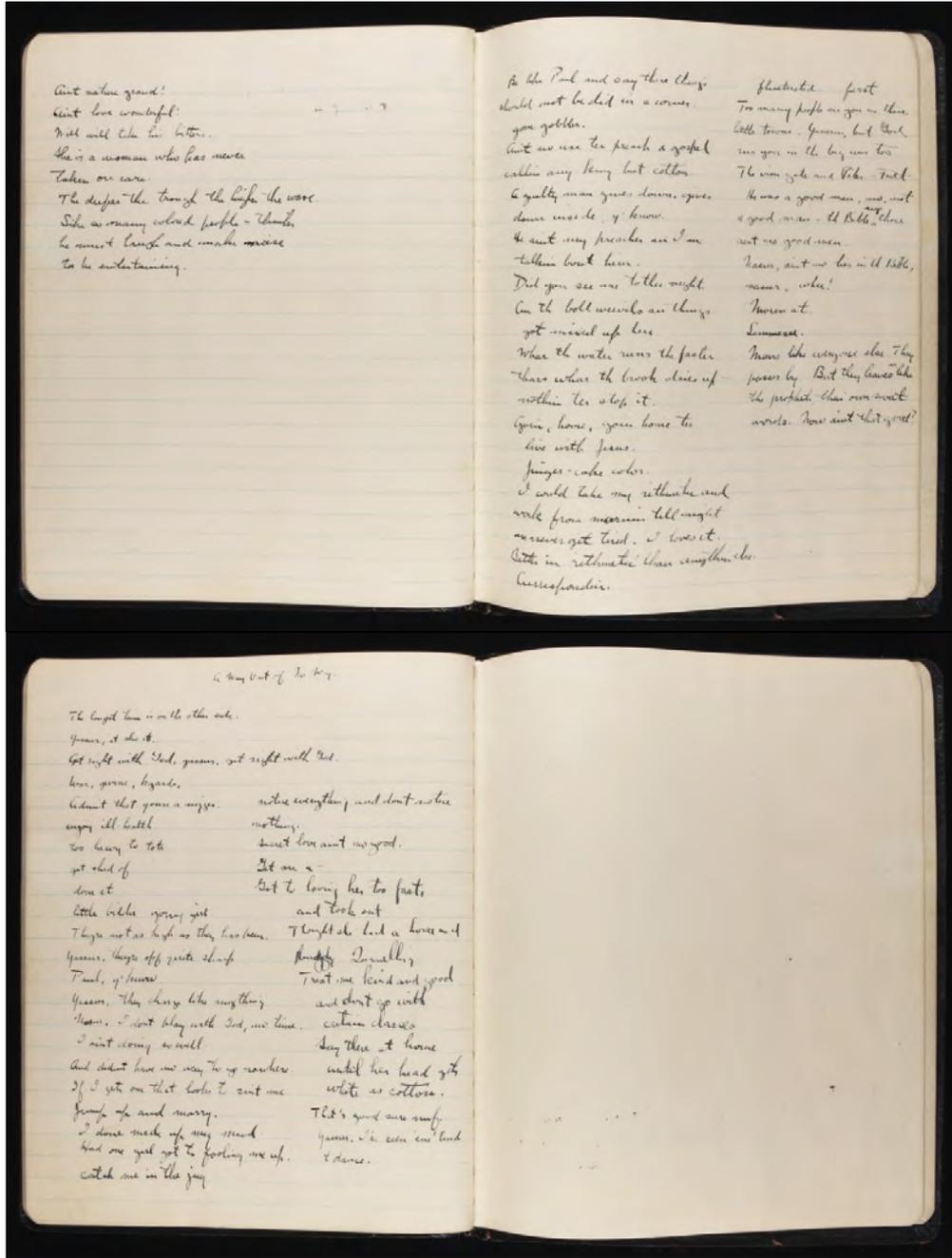
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FACSIMILE 21 [TOP]: Pages 108-109; FACSIMILE 22 [BOTTOM]: Pages 140-141



FACSIMILE 23 [TOP]: Pages 142-143; FACSIMILE 24 [BOTTOM]: Pages 144-145



APPENDIX II

"Poetry" Notebook

JTP, Box 60, Folder 1411

Poetry — Criticism

Is it sincere? (a) thoughts of others (b) sensations (c) emotions

Personality?

Style—

conventional expressions?

approximate phrases?

dead metaphors? dead phrases?

mixed metaphors

1

are words used for their essential meaning?

'look for the phrases which give one a sudden

shock of illumination, which really evoke an
object or convey a sensation.

rhythm?

cadence?

Nothing is. All life is becoming. Art is the highest expression, manifestation, of this process. An artist creates; he grows. He is a stalk, thrusting ever upward, and his works are the leaves and branches which he puts out. There is no final flower. Each work, perfected for its level, withers, dies, and flutters to the ground. It has relinquished value in itself. The soil absorbs it. Roots of the artist draw fresh sustenance [sic] because it has decayed. True artists may have a poignant joy in old works, but until life becomes a dead thing with them, their exstasy [sic] and power lie in the contemplating, in the creating of an ever profounder life. These creations are never outside themselves. No one absorbs a work like its creator. It is the eternal mystery, that life grows while feeding on itself. Of all, the artist is the most omnivorous. He is incarnate mystery.

2

3

Most novels are nothing more than intellectual outlines filled with more or less well chosen characters, incidents, descriptions, thoughts, comments, studied [crises] and all such naturalistic baggage. Very seldom does one find a design which is organic to a pervasive creative impulse. In short, most novels are compilations, chronicles, documents, and not art.

There are certain bruises, and emotions and thoughts arising therefrom, which only a relatively weak, sensitive, man may suffer. These, if once they can be put in writing, make a literature which is remarkable for its poignance, depth, fullness, and humanity.

People know nothing of the sacredness of mood. It is when they want to, not when you want them, that they come in. Mutual receptivity is a rare thing in this world. Hence the separateness, the egoistic sterility of most life. Brotherhood, in any true sense among a highly sensitized people is [a] delicate and intricate part of the comprehension of those who prate of it.

4

The movement which today is directed solely towards the elementary in life seems to have ignored the farther implications of some master. Cezanne perhaps. Great art is formalizing of an experience, of a vision of the core of things, of the essence, one might say of the ultimate reality. This essence exists in a complex no less than in a primitive state of society. Each state imposes itself as a means upon the artist. The imposition upon the art of literature is more definite than that of any other art. Hence, unless the piece of work be a direct lyric, modern reality can only (or perhaps be conveyed in terms of the contemporary setting. Beneath, and not without, the complexities of thought and human emotion must be revealed the modern essence, which, of course, is similar to the essences of all times. This involves no sacrifice. It does impose an immense burden upon the artist. He must be, while remaining the artist, as manifold and as diverse as his age. It imposes the power of comprehension, of selection, of organization on a scale hitherto unknown upon the direct capacity for aesthetic experience. The purity of a piece of contemporary literature will depend not only upon its simplification but also upon its fusion and balance.

5

S. A. Extracts the same essence from everything. His work is essentially a monotone. Only one rib of his soul is stirring.

6

The symbolic, in sacrificing a lesser reality, attains to a greater and more lasting one.

7

Colorful literature is not produced by the use of color-words. In fact, a free use of such words reveals an emotional drabness, whatever may be the sensitivity of the eye. Color in literature comes from a temperament whose passion and spirit meet in a mellow sunniness. Such as one can infuse color into the grey of twilight as easily as it can paint rose in the dawn.

8

The creative critic slips repeatedly from his art object into himself, and from himself into his art object. The transfer of consciousness sometimes becomes so rapid that it seem as though he were sounding the two existences simultaneously.

9

Method — the physical is to be brought into sharp relief whenever a spiritual force, aborting, distorts it.

10

Method — to make two sensitive people cognizant of the sly gestures and expression, one of the other, introduce a third person, who, though he sees, is to[o] forthright to keep what he sees to himself.

11

South — the white of white becomes unreal. Whiteness becomes a shade, vaguely oppressive. A dominant shade sheathed with moist [mist?]. A cloud is near to me because I walk on mountains. When I look up from the darkness of the valley, it is so.

In analyzing, be concise.

Allow synthesis more vegetation.

People hedge a man with their own prejudices. They then proceed to trim the hedge. They call this criticism.

A serious man is one who narrows himself to a discipline, and dares not break it. This being the case, it is natural that such men fight all variation in others. Especially, they fight waywardness and play which are the opposites of contracted discipline. The serious has usually forgotten how to play. Hence if he lapses, he invariably becomes indolent. The irony is of course, that waywardness overtakes us all at the end.

Only the genius can afford to be serious. For his nature will inevitably force him into other channels. But even so, the great man too may

12 prematurely dry and crack under the burden.

In writing of inarticulate people, the finest things that an artist can give are his own thoughts and emotions concerning them. (The narrative form should be used here.) For this reason I feel that the impersonal style does not fit here. It defeats the only impossible realization that is of interest.

It is from uncertain natures (from natures that lack direction or are in repose) that wistfulness [sic] and charm come. Forceful people, people with direction, convey a sense of their power.

A forceful person, undirected, ore driving in petty channels, is absurd.

Judgements are one of the least important human functionings. In most often they issue from prejudices rather than from a weighing of clear facts.

Art imposes selection. Reality lies in the images or ideas selected. Or, art is its own reality. It is vain to think that art gives the essence of objects outside itself.

13 The assumption of any critic is that he can or does understand the book he is going to write about. In most cases this is an imprudent and unwarranted assumption.

- 14 Genius, like the sturdiest prize potato will rot if kept too long under ground.
-

A distinction should be made between the wish to return to nature, and the desire to touch the soil. Nature, as I here use the term, is a virginal track [sic] of land. The soil is tilled land, saturate with the life of those who have worked it. In these definitions will be found the distinctions I refer to. Those who wish to return to nature wish to rid themselves of man in what we are pleased to term his modern associations. Those who wish to touch the soil desire to know man in one of his most poignant relationships. In the former, the urge is away. The human element is negative. In the latter, the urge is towards the human element is positive. To return is to escape. (Impossible. That people are still driven up this blind-alley attests their need.) To touch is to be revived by contact with the race's source.

- 15 The moralistic temperament inclines towards nature. The artist springs from the soil, and from cities.
-

The will of a weak, sensitive man becomes negative. It is largely concerned with what the man shall not do. In this phase, will coincides with stubbornness.

"I cannot lie to you."

- 16 "Truth draws truth—Though not so sharp and direct—as steel draws steel. Some day after you have forgotten that I have told you this, you will begin to unravel your life to me. You will tell me of your hurts and wounds. You will seek causes and reasons. You will find them. And then, for the first time, beneath your mind you will begin to feel the glowing of your soul."

— like a mother, who, having given birth to a child, turns over, and crushes it in her sleep.

- 17 Herein lies the difference: that whereas the opinions of most people arise from their efforts to deny pain, the ideas of this woman spring straight from suffering.

— As Dirt beneath the finger tips never affects the hand's warmth.

Education's real function is to render the memory servicable [sic].

18 Whatever it may be in a young girl's dreams, whatever it might be in an ideal society, love plays but a small part in actual life, and its portion is still smaller in the life of the artist.

19 People return to houses. They have been away on trips, vacations, honeymoons, perhaps. Once back, it is as though they had never gone away, as if they had been in the houses thousands of years. They bring new fresh breath of the seaside with them, no mobile freshness of travelous [sic] rivers.

— a dainty life of the tit-bits and tassels.

20 Under suitable conditions, most people are capable of experiencing many emotions, conflicting emotions, even, at the same time. But in such cases the mental state is usually one of cloud. Hence the emotions have no outline or clarity they should have. They should stand out clear like so many melodies, chords, dissonances, harmonies, contrasts. A subtle life will set itself the task of holding and hearing these emotions.

21 The facile, pat criticisms, given by men in some walk of life upon the achievements of another

22 Method — allow a man to speak — something untrue to himself. Let the thought be caught up and developed by a person whom it does fit and who is not [sic] esteemed by no [one]. In this way, by this contrast, either swiftly (at the moment) or after reflection upon the conversation no [one] will see the falsity of his statement; his own inner truth.

23 Weak people are selfish from necessity.

24 The Negro slave, ill-housed and fed, driven relentlessly to an unrewarded labor, beaten, maimed, and killed, separated from his loved ones, and denied even the vestige of justice and liberty, gave to the world, in exchange for its bitterness, a song. From his misery came the deep and powerful beauty of his folksong. The freed Negro, and particularly he who lives in the large cities, better housed and fed, receiving wages and fees for labor, neither beaten, maimed, nor killed, suffering no involuntary separations, and at least able to get a hearing at the tribunal of justice, gives to the world, an ameliorated, hatred and bitterness. A purging shame on those who thus degrade their heritage. Respectable complacency constitutes a negative viciousness.

He wears the mock-hallow [sic] of a manikin that gestures beautifully.
How can the world smile, oblivious to decaying truth.

25 When one finds in a contemporary novel things which may not be had for the price of a social passport and a railroad fare, one may know that he is approaching the verities of art.

26 Whitman's gesture included rather than designated mediocrity. It swings after the manner of a weather-vane; never was it a fixed sign. And, more than a weather-vane, after the manner of an arm. He was highly conscious of himself as the pivot of it.

The Whitman tradition is one of Life, inclusive. If emphasis has been placed upon the mediocre, this is because, perhaps, the mind needs a symbol of the average if it is to grasp the thing at all.

The willfully sensual no more derives from Whitman than sex is the sole derivation of man. Those who see only his sensual sin are as deceived as those who, pull aside his loin-cloth, believe that they have thereby unveiled the nakedness of his soul.

No one, in a true sense, can be said to be a follower of him whose gesture starting from any point you will, does not ~~complete the~~ describe a circle.

27

“Man, who are you that you set yourself up to judge?”
 “Sister. And deduce your answer from my judgement.”

28

“Established critics” are journalists, with one eye to the public and both eyes to success.

29

A dream is real. A dray is real. The unreal comes from a confusion of the two.
 Suspicion is the property of a weak man,
 An apple, plucked, continues ripening.

30

The question: is the impulse behind the Negro’s shouting to be found in true religious fervor, or does it arise from repression of the emotional nature?
 Write a play centering around this conflict: outside pressure for race solidarity and seclusion contending with an inner impulse to embrace humanity.

31

It is not facts that count, but receptivity to those facts (the predetermined nature of the individual) and the willingness, that is, the desire, to translate their implications into conduct.
 For an original and vital soul, the reading of philosophy is particularly good in that it stimulates a varied contact with life, tests fundamental impulses, challenges the unformulated in one’s nature with the force of the formulated, and so, helps one to a vision of life clarified, and conforming to the sum of one’s inner needs.

32

“Go to her, boy. She needs you if she is to keep her health.”

A personality, an intelligence, a vision, a style, consciously penetrating adequate material, produce organic form. These elements consciously controlling adequate material, achieve artificial pattern. In a perfect artist, these two processes would be synchronal. Coincidence of the organic and the artificial form — this is perfect art.

Note: An incomplete artist, if he be primarily intuitional, works through the first of these methods, into organic form. And then perhaps, according to his intelligence, he attempts and achieves an artificial weighing, an external (so to speak) balance and control.

An incomplete artist, if he be primarily cerebral, works by the second of these methods, and from the outstart his material is arbitrarily controlled and fashioned.

35

There is a terrific splitting of an artist's personality when he enters, passively, receptively, into vital experiences that sharply differ from the ones he is accustomed to.

It has been said that, granted a knowledge of men, but two attitudes concerning them are possible: one may either hate or make fun. To these I add a third: one may directly present them, create them, that is, one may love.

Thou, Almighty God, even though you now take and inspire me, must prove abortive in your benevolence.

There are times when life shrinks, and a premium is placed on the bare toleration of its substitutes.

36

"Your condescension is childish."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. To elaborate: your condescension is childish in that it betrays a soul which must condescend in order to convince itself of the truth of a spurious elevation. The betrayal is childish. The fact behind the betrayal — comic or tragic according to the way you look at it."

37

I have rubbed shoulders with the world enough to know my relative power.

[Phrases of Black Vernacular]

*Be like Paul and say these things
should not be did in a corner
gone gobbler.*

*Aint no use ter preach a gospel
callin any king but cotton*

*A guilty man gives down, gives
down inside, y'know.*

*He aint my preacher and I'm
talkin bout him*

Did you see me to ther night.

An th boll weevils an things

38

got mixed up here

*Whar the water runs the faster
thars whar the book dries up —
nothin ter stop it.*

*Goin, home, goin home ter
live with Jesus.*

Ginger-cake color.

*I could take my rithmetic and
work from marnin till night
an never git tired. I loves it.*

Better in rithmetic than anythin else.

Curresepondin

*Notice everything and dont notice
nothing.*

Secret love aint no good.

Get me a —

*Got to loving her too fast,
and took out*

*Thought she had a horse and
buggy. Quarelling*

Treat me kind and good

and dont go with

certain classes

Stay there at home

until her head gets

white like cotton

That's good sure nuff.

Yassur, I'se seen 'em 'tend t dance

*A Way Out of No Way*³

They forgot time is on the other side.

Yassur, it sho is . . .

Get right with God, Yassur, get right with God

War, gwine, kyards,

Admit that youre a nigger.

enjoy ill-health

too heavy to tote

get shed of

little biddie young girl

Theyre not as high as they has been.

39 *Yassur, theyre off quite sharp*

Paul, y'know

Yassur, they charge like anything.

Nasur, I dont play with God, no time.

I aint doin so well.

And didnt have no way to go nowhere.

If I gets one that looks to suit me

Jump up and marry.

I done made up my mind.

Had one girl got to fooling me up.

Catch me in the jug

flusterated. furst.

Too many people see you in these

little towns. Yassur, but God sees

sees you in the big uns too.

The iron gate and Peter — Faith —

He was a good man, no, not

a good man — th Bible says there

aint no good men.

Nasur, aint no lies in th Bible,

Nasur, whee!

Moren at.

Lemme see.

Mans like everyone else. They

passes by. But they leaves us like

the prophets, their own swat

words. Now aint that Good?

³ The phrases marked in red indicate those identical to phrases written down in the Memorandum small notebook, which were most likely copied and transferred to the "Poetry" Notebook. This would suggest the dates of these two notebooks are much closer to each other than previously thought.

40

Review of Richard Aldington's "The Art of Poetry"

I.

R[ichard] A[ldington] begins by asking what is the purpose of poetry in modern life. "Obviously, the purpose is not ethical," says [Aldington]. Perhaps the best poetry of all times has been non-moral, in the sense in which we now use the term "moral." Teachers and preachers have instinctively utilized the schools and the pulpits for their purposes and left art to the artists. That is to say, those who would have life lived according to their own narrow precepts have, by their own temperaments and limitations, been forced into a mode of expression as narrow and as limited as they themselves are. Art, which embraces all life, and whose noblest function it is to expand, elevate, and enrich that life, has been the province of those abundant spirits who poured their limitless thoughts and emotions into its limited forms. But it is precisely for the reason that a true artist is comprehensive that he may have something to say on the subject of morals, in which case our attention is attracted by the vigor of his thoughts and the beauty of his expression.

Moralists are generally determined to limit life. What they say is always in the nature of a prohibition. But this fact should not blind us to the truth that what is essentially a moral subject may be treated with exactly the opposite purpose in mind. Minister Smithy may hold up to his congregation the rewards of celibacy and the salvation inherent in prohibition, but also may Walt Whitman flatten out the Puritan dogma in its entirety and rear in its sickly stead a vigorous, electric growth. In so far as they deal with the rights and wrongs of human conduct, they are both moralists. For us the question is not "Did he treat of morals?" In the difference of their treatment lies the difference between the artist and the preacher.

Let us admit that most poetry cannot afford to be moralistic. But the reason for this we will have to seek in the poet rather than in the poetry. "The purpose of poetry is not ethical?" Certainly not. Any single purpose would limit it, and thus degrade it from an art form to that analogous to the pulpit.

Mr. Aldington says that “the old cant of a poet’s ‘message’ is now completely discredited.” These are certainly remarkable times we are living in. Transformations occur that leave the nature which produced a fish eye from nothing aghast. We of the Western world, whose thoughts have been shaped and moulded by the poets from Plato (Goethe, Ibsen, etc.) to Whitman suddenly roll on our backs with our face towards China and the Chinese. Charmed by their pictorial, suggestive loveliness we no longer hear the mighty voices of the past. Or rather, we hear them, but as a tired man hears a symphony, there is an auditory titillation, but no soul expansion—the spirit is too weary to respond.

I have used “we.” I think it would be nearer the truth to say “they.” By “they” meaning [Aldington] and similar ones whose eyes are so charmed and fascinated by the gem, by its outward appearance, by its external form, that the spirit behind the gem is not perceived. An exquisite image is preferred to a rousing message. Which is perfectly all right. I simply say that I do not believe such an attitude characteristic either of the Western poets or of their readers. Overnight our voice and our hearing have not shrunk into an eye. The deduction is that “messages” are now as always measured by their merit; that a fine message beautifully expressed or a strong message vigorously expressed, will be accepted and appreciated now as much as in any former time.

After having relegated “message” poetry to the past, with seeming joy, in the very next paragraph Mr. Aldington seems to regret the fact that “literature seems out of touch with men’s lives, with their real interests.” That “we are very far from the times when a pamphlet by Chateaubriand re-established at least temporarily the dynasty of the Bourbons.” Precisely so. And it is strange to me that Mr. Aldington overlooks the obvious logic of his point.

From Mr. Aldington’s point of view, I think we can agree with him “that poetry is neither a means of ethical instruction, an after-dinner amusement, nor the lawful prey of souls and dilettantes.”

II.

Richard Aldington seeks personality. Where he finds that personality expressed in words, he is certain that he has found poetry. Whether prose or verse, or a mixture of them both is made use of, is merely a matter of distinction. "May we not then say that all good creative writing is poetry though this poetry has many forms?" I dare say. But we only slip one noose to get caught in another. What is and what isn't creative writing? To my mind one of those brilliant sallies of Bernard Shaw is certainly creative. And yet would we call it poetry? There is quite a difference between Shaw's *Man and Superman* and Shelley's *Julian and Madalo*. Both are instinct with personality. They are equally sincere, and in each the style is original and distinct. There is a difference. Nor may that difference be wholly explained with reference to their objective or subjective content. One is intellectual, the other emotional—essentially. At any rate they differ. And Mr. Aldington's "creative writing" does not explain it away.

APPENDIX III : "LOOSE-LEAF NOTES"

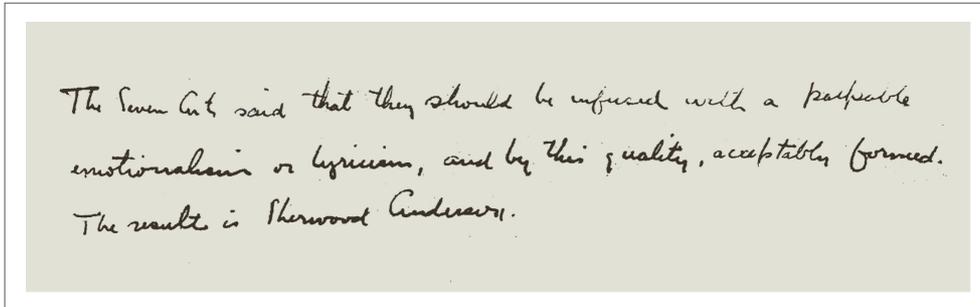


Image H5. Loose-leaf note on Sherwood Anderson & the Seven Arts. JTP Box 60, Folder 1412. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

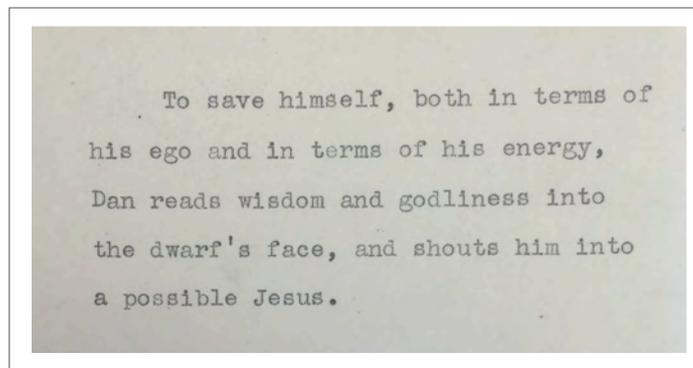


Image H6. Typed draft of Toomer's commentary his story 'Box Seat'. Later repeated in his December 1922 letter to Waldo Frank (see LJT 129). JTP Box 60, Folder 1412. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

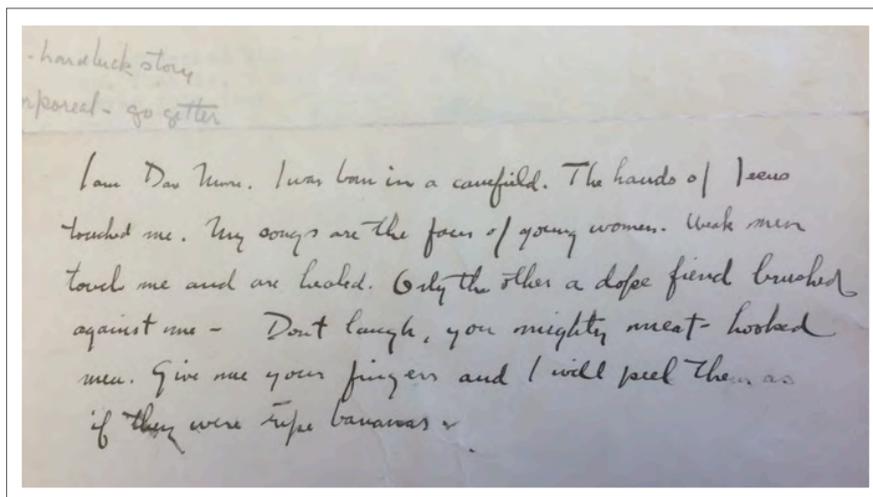


Image H7. Loose leaf early draft of 'Box Seat'. JTP Box 60, Folder 1412. Jean Toomer Papers © Yale University. All rights reserved.

APPENDIX III

NOTES

Toomer's "Adolescent Notes" are listed with the date "1912?" at the Beinecke Library (**JTP Box 60, Folder 1409**); however, these were most likely written around 1919-20. Although Toomer made several conflicting autobiographical outlines, the most accurate seems to be the one provided in **JTP Box 11, Folder 343**. There he states 1919-1922 to be his years of development as a writer. The reason for the titling these writings "Adolescent Notes" can be attributed to the poor grammar and notably different (juvenile) handwriting evident in the writings, perhaps why the date of 1912 has been given. However, the date attributed seems completely arbitrary as the contents of the notes show they likely coincide with his beginnings as a writer—these notes express the kind of pantheistic mysticism one finds in **Goethe** and **Whitman**, which he recounted as reading in 1919. It is not credible that Toomer would have written these lines in 1912 as he was just 17 years old at the time.

APPENDIX IIIA—"ADOLESCENT NOTES"

FACSIMILE 1-4 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]

In a very truthful way it is a fact that we are not only what we think of ourselves but equally what others think of us.

(Inevitably serious
(morally, prejudices))

A whiffed truth is tenfold more potent than a thousand shoddy fallacies.

The difference between similars is a matter of fine distinction. It challenges the best of our poet and philosophers. The higher faculties of the intuition and reason are challenged to a sense of the all pervading mystery and the dignity of man is concomitant of its discovery, it is unobtainable. The discernment of this difference but assures one of the essential unity underlying all.

It makes a God of man which at the same time revealing the divinity in everything.

Only he whose mental eye is blind, can see no deeper than the surface.

Mankind lies prostrate under a fatality more oppressive and insupportable than the immutability of the natural elements. I mean that fatality, conceived of the habits of childhood.

In the city, life has lost its simplicity, without perceptibly gaining in intelligence.

The small town, in this respect, is the city over again, supplying any obvious deficiency with provincial pretensions.

Only in detached contemplation may life in its elemental form be viewed.

God is the universe
The universe is God.
God is everything or nothing.

Instead of the "active and living faith" to be daily lived through, it may simply have been the husks of dogma bit for peasant loaves... However, missing a saint he remained a man, and as such was "godlike."

Like most people with a little brain, she has just enough intelligence to make her ignorance felt.

It is the common opinion that in life each one of us pursues a different path, that no two pathways are alike. But the more I observe the more does the conviction become set, that differences have been magnified while the essential sameness has been overlooked.

The Beethoven Association plays fantastically to deaf ears.

When death approaches, the inevitable desire, formulated in man's mind, the thought fabric of a future life.

APPENDIX III

Loose Leaf Notes

A.

Loose Leaf Pocketbook Pages Labeled “Adolescent Notes”

Dated “1912?”, More likely 1919-20.

JTP, Box No. 60, Folder 1409.

1 The difference between similars is a matter of fine distinction. It challenges the best of our poets and philosophers. The higher faculties of intuition and reason are challenged. A sense of the all pervading mystery and the dignity of man is a concomitant [sic] of its discovery; it is ennobling. The discernment of this difference but assures one of the essential unity underlying all. It makes a God of man while at the same time revealing the diversity in everything.

2 In the city, life has lost its simplicity without perceptively gaining in intelligence. The small town in this respect is the city over again, supplying any obvious deficiency with provincial pretensions. Only in detached communities may life in its elemental form be viewed.

3 God is the universe
The universe is God.
God is everything or
nothing.

4 When death approaches, then an irresistible desire formulates in man’s mind the though fabric of a future life.

5 Only he whose mental eye is blind, can see no deeper than the surface.

6 Instead of the "active and living faith" to be daily lived through, it may simply have been the husks of dogma fit for peasant love. . . .
However, missing a saint he remained a man, and as such was "godlike."

7 Like most people with a little brain, she has just enough intelligence to make her ignorance felt.

8 A whispered truth is tenfold more potent than a thousand shouted fallacies.

9 In a very truthful way it is a fact that we are not only what we think of ourselves but equally what others think of us.
unfavorably curious
(mildly prejudiced)

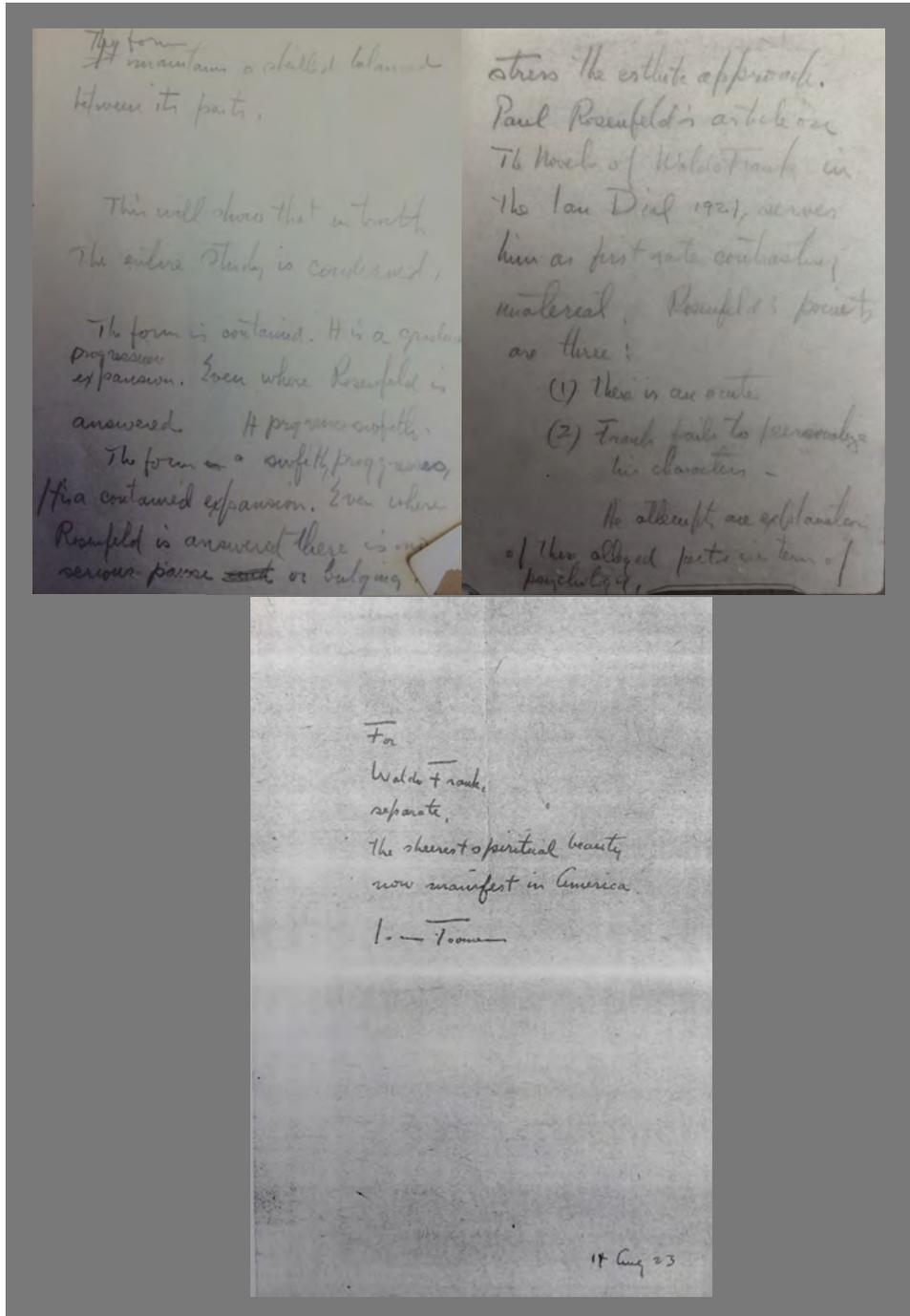
10 Mankind lies prostitute under a fatality more oppressing and inexorable than the immutability of the natural elements. I mean that fatality conceived of the habits of childhood.

11 It is the common opinion that in life each one of us pursues a different path. That no two pathways are alike. But the more I observe the more does this conviction become set, that differences have been magnified while the essential sameness has been overlooked.

12 The Beethoven Association plays fantastically to deaf ears.

APPENDIX IIIB—SELECTED FRAGMENTS (1922-1923)

FACSIMILE 1-3 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



FACSIMILE 4-6 [TOP TO BOTTOM]

The Sun Art said that they should be infused with a palpable
 emotionalism or lyricism, and by this quality, acceptably formed.
 The result is Sherwood Anderson.

-handbook story
 exposed - go after

I am Dan Nunn. I was born in a cornfield. The hands of Jesus
 touched me. My songs are the faces of young women. Weak men
 touch me and are healed. Only the other a dope fiend brushed
 against me - Don't laugh, you mighty meat-looked
 men. Give me your fingers and I will peel them as
 if they were ripe bananas.

To save himself, both in terms of
 his ego and in terms of his energy,
 Dan reads wisdom and godliness into
 the dwarf's face, and shouts him into
 a possible Jesus.

B.**Selected Loose Leaf Notes & Fragments [1922-1923]****JTP, Box No. 60, Folder 1412.****13**

The Seven Arts said that they should be infused with palpable emotionalism or lyricism, and by this quality, acceptably formed. The result is Sherwood Anderson. [Handwritten]

14

To save himself, both in terms of his ego and in terms of his energy, Dan reads wisdom and godliness into the dwarf's face, and shouts him into a possible Jesus. [Typed Draft Fragment]⁴

15

I am Dan Moore. I was born in a canefield. The hands of Jesus touched me. My songs are the faces of young women. Weak men touch me and are healed. Only the other [missing "day"] a dope fiend brushed up against me — Dont laugh, you mighty meat-hooked men. Give me your fingers and I will peel them as if they were ripe bananas. [Handwritten]

16

The form. It maintains a skilled balance of its parts.
 This will show that in truth the entire study is condensed.
 The form is contained. It is a gradual expansion. Even where Rosenfeld is answered. It progresses swfitly [sic]
 The form in a swfitly [sic] progresses,
 It is a contained expansion. Even where Rosenfeld is answered there is no serious pause or bulging.
 stress the esthetic approach. Paul Rosenfeld's article on the Novels of Waldo Frank in the Dial 1921, serves him as first rate contrasting material.
 Rosenfeld's points are:
 (1) there is an acute
 (2) Frank fails to personalize his characters
 He attempts an explanation of these alleged facts in terms of psychology.

⁴ Note: This note is repeated verbatim in a letter to Waldo Frank explaining reason for changes in his revised version of "Box Seat". See *BM* 111.

" LOOSE-LEAF NOTES "

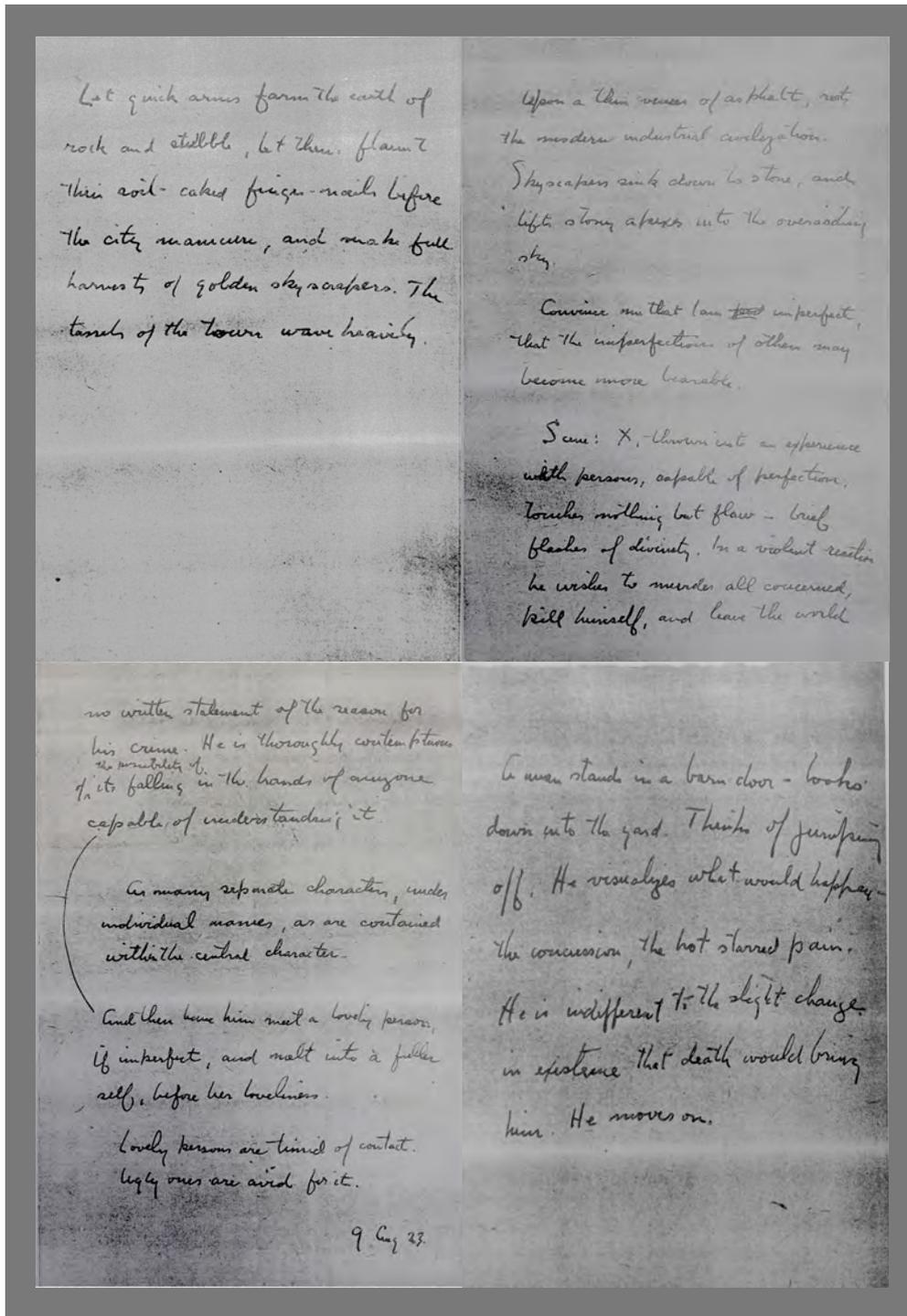
NOTES

Toomer writes in a fragment: "Let the evening of November 17, 1923 mark the time of my greatest illumination, of my purest vision, of the most comprehensive experience that has yet come to me" ["LLN" III:38]. Much of Toomer's writings after this date—although similar in addressing metaphysical themes—take on the tone of an awakened spiritual seer and a change in focus (he had been reading Ouspensky and would soon be introduced to Gurdjieff's pamphlets the following month). In an attempt to heed Scruggs and VanDemarr's warning, we separate Toomer's earlier writings from those written under the influence of Gurdjieff; only the loose-leaf notes discerned to have been written before 1924 will be included in **Appendix III**.

The various folders (**JTP Box 60, Folders 1412-13**) contain loose-leaf notes written on various sheets and envelopes are dated 1923-24, which seem to be correct for the most part (as many are dated or are fairly obvious)—however, among these papers one can also find an early fragment from 'Box Seat' which would be incorporated as the final manuscript was being completed in the winter of 1922, and other note fragments which could have been written even earlier (such as the note referring to **Sherwood Anderson** and *The Seven Arts*). For the notes included in **Section C**, the method used determining which notes were 'pre-Gurdjieff'—although perhaps less than scientific—relies upon a different fountain pen Toomer began using at this period where the handwriting is noticeably different—much "thicker" and less refined (also in part due to the absorbent scrap paper he used that caused the ink to bleed and blot). A number of notes include dates and it is fairly obvious from the penmanship and related themes they belong in the same family. For example, in this collection are a number of pages where Toomer lays out plans for a new short story, which would be written later and printed in *The Little Review* in the spring of 1925 under the title 'Easter').

APPENDIX IIIC — "INK BLOT" NOTES (Aug-Dec 1923)

FACSIMILE 1-4 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]

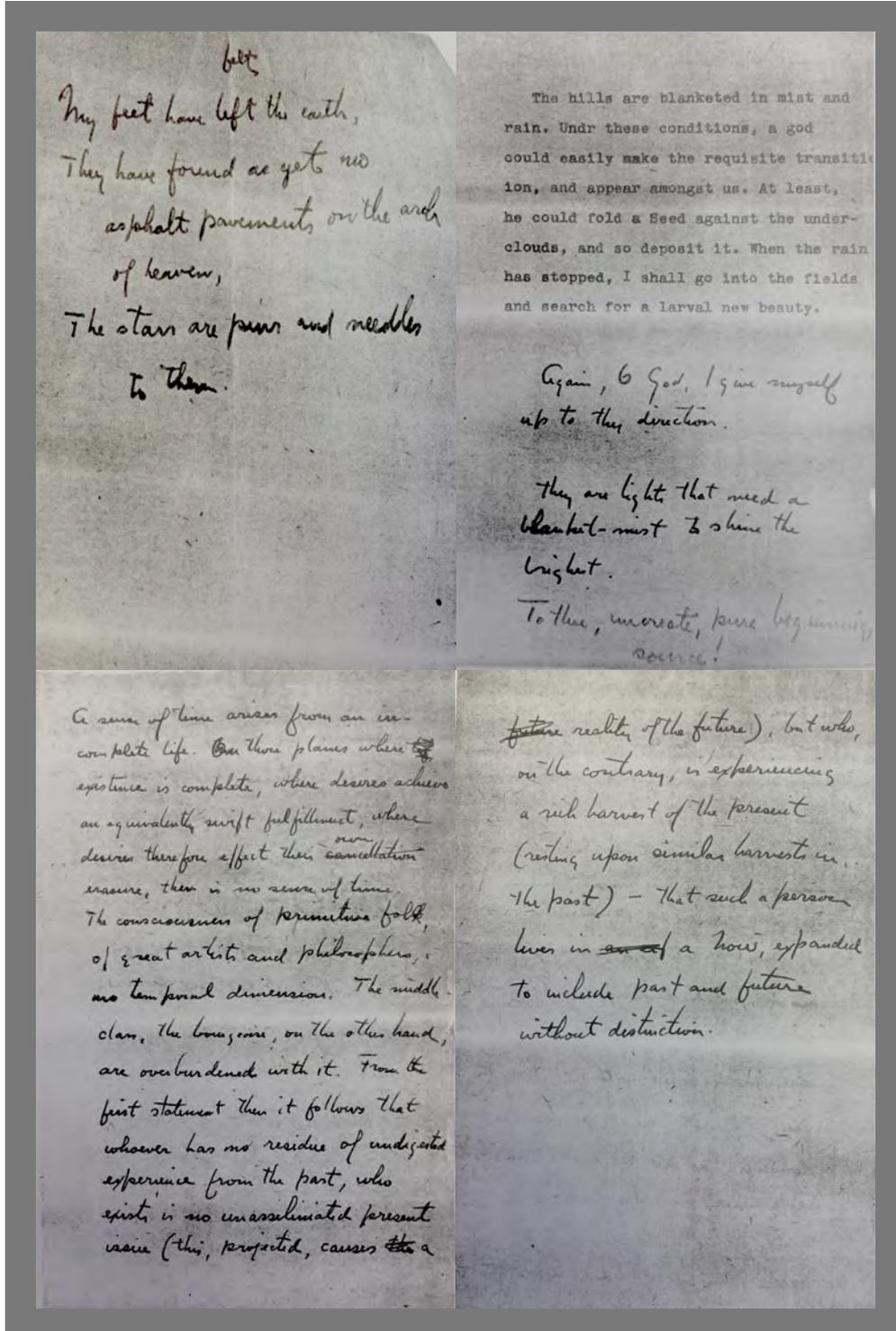


FACSIMILE 5

There is perfect ease and completion in the mind brooding behind level eyes that dip over the wind-swaying tops of trees into a valley and rise to a distant mountain ridge whose purple curves are level with them. No city vista can yield such a satisfying mental state. Skyscrapers are sensational, and the sight of them impels to actions which can in no way lessen spiritual hunger. They may thrill. They may distress. Confronted by them, one is never released to an immediate and self-fulfilling meditation. And the monotony of other buildings and homes is uniformly depressing. One becomes a reformer in their presence... Trees, valleys, and mountains are complete. They produce no sense-excitement. They need no touch of mind or hand to make them easefully significant and beautiful. Hence the human spirit, in their midst, suffers no drain upon its energies. The mind can be itself, and, in this pure state it experiences a spontaneous fulfillment, functioning.

All pure actions, of whatever form, are complete in themselves. The conjunction of several pure actions produces a life beyond their arithmetical sum. And, the conjunction of several impure actions produces a life diminished below their arithmetical sum. In proportion to his complexity then, a man's contrasting potentials expand. A genius may be most debased, or most exalted. And it is possible for him to alternate between the two states. An interesting speculation, and an arresting challenge arise in this connection. Every world force is moving the mass of people from a simple to a more complex level. Hence every force is increasing the general chance for degradation, or for ecstasy. (It takes genius to contain, and alternate between the two. Neither democracy nor any other known power will yield a race of geniuses.) The movement is swift. Will pure actions be generated in a number commensurate with our need of them?..

FACSIMILE 6-9 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



FACSIMILE 10-13 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]

Within my body I am dead. My body is alive. Learning one it, I vicariously partake of corporeal pain and pleasure.

I do not hate evil and rebaldry when these are natural to one's expression. But I hate that low vitality which indulges in conscious vice.

Ecstasy is life.

Then love is woman?

Men, and literary men especially, would do well to take their notice of the birds: that they sing when they are joyful; that they do not sing out of grief. If then, artists solved their conflicts first, and from the purified essences of these together with the pure essences of their mind and soul, composed, there would be achieved in our literature a lofty balance, clarity, and repose. These qualities are necessary to the highest beauty.

In the surgeon's knife which prunes you, your knife. Therefore? Has it not ~~also~~ cut other flesh?

Temporal Dimension

Down and up slopes of consciousness. Rapid demigration on all planes of the old slopes.

Swift synthesis on all planes (now, particularly on the conscious and intellectual) of the new slopes.

External manifestation of the new beauty when the opposing material powers check-mate, one the other.

To this end, the temporal ^{strategic} direction.

The end (beginning), timeless, into eternal reconciliation.

21 Sept 23

We now witness, in a few, the synthesis of the new consciousness. Perhaps we also see the gathering of a new intellectuality.

But are there at present any signs of emotions synthesizing into a new emotionalism?

If so, what is the discipline involved. What are the elements of this new emotionalism; and what are its tentative forms?

(The revolt from Puritanism is the demigration of the old.)

FACSIMILE 14

They are the ideas by means of which this stratum coalesced and grew articulate.

"Puritan dividedness" covers the revolt against Puritanism in this age. Puritanism is held to be a falsely protracted form. It is assumed to have generated the attack against it.

Assumptions:

That Puritanism generated a damaging divorce between body and soul, ~~the~~ practice and theory, soil and culture.

That this division, an unfortunate necessity at first, has been projected into a time when this necessity no longer exists, and hence its unfortunate nature is proportionally multiplied.

That this projection is nation-wide, and consequently that all American artists have been affected by it, more or less. And in direct proportion to this more or less have artists gone under or fulfilled their potentials.

Distinguish between an emotional nature, ample and vigorous in itself, and an emotionalism, rasped, distressed, and at war with itself, that has been stimulated by an unfortunate contact, or series of contacts with the external world.

If Puritan writers projected less emotion into the world, it is certain that the world thrust less pain and torture into them.

Pain and torture become positive values when a distressed emotionalism is taken as a good.

FACSIMILE 15-16 [TOP TO BOTTOM]

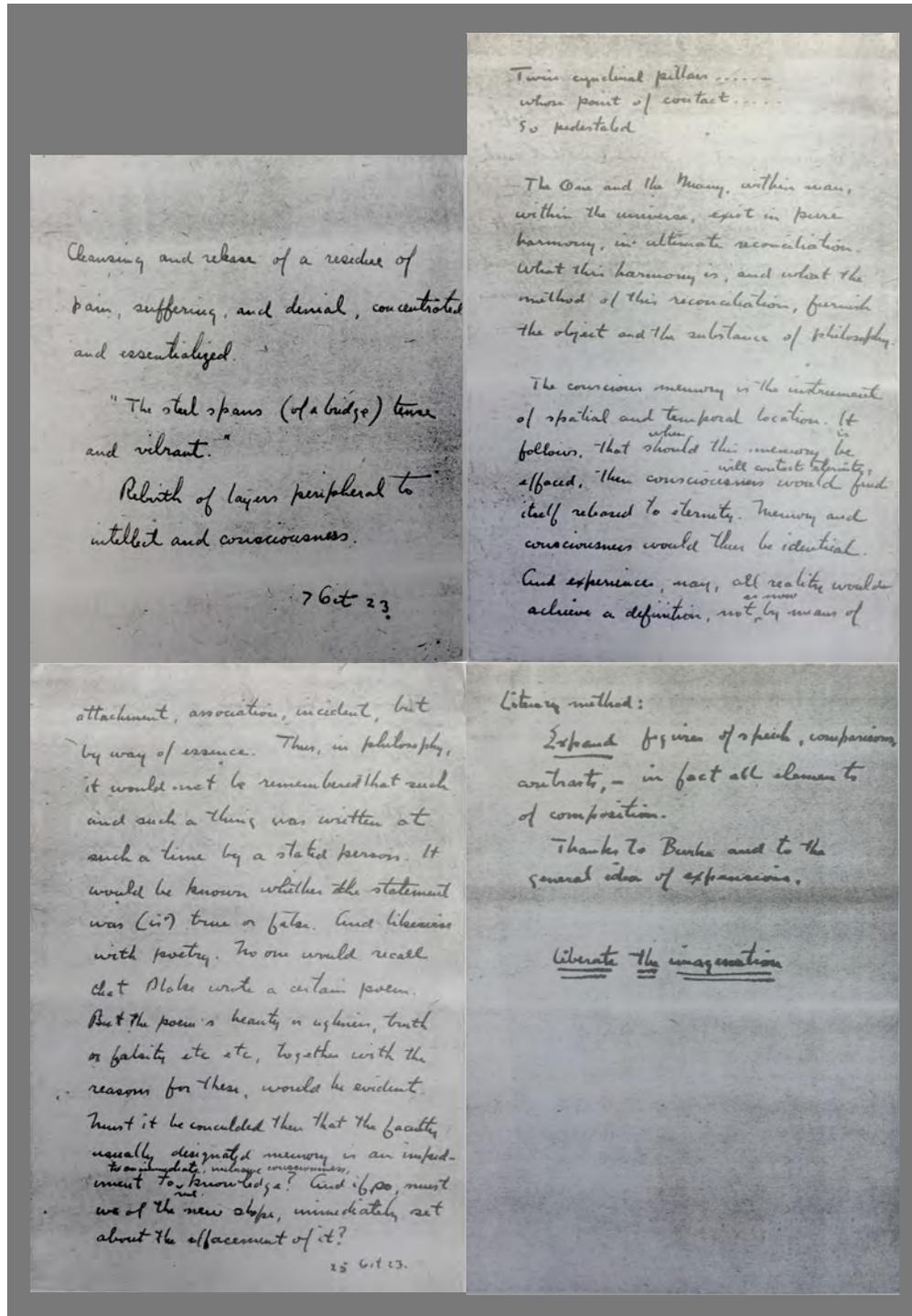
supernal being, whose body, penetrate with
mind and soul, reverberates to the touch
of fingers filed in their swift contact to
the white heat of stars

If thou hast willed it, I shall hold
The tortured half, mute, in contact
With numbers. Only, note I pray
Their sequence on no other fingers
Than her own.

And if, conscious of
The whole, thou wouldst still have me,
Sensibly straining in the absolute,
Project, in the last compassion
Asked of thee, the shadow of her flesh,
And let this shadow form
Her profile in the formless.

(For half is pure above, yet bound to half)
~~to be the essential part.~~

FACSIMILE 17-20 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



FACSIMILE 21-24 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]

Literature concerns itself with struggle, and this material, for an artist is subject to spiritual travail. Beyond struggle (in the sense of labor with experience) lie those provinces whose domain is philosophy.

Philosophy is the higher, the purer. Literature touches more planes, and more appearances.

How as to reality and essence?

beautiful and pure, organization, design
 impurity
 evil
 matter formless

Contraries are not banished from a timeless world. Hence it is possible for an expanded and a diminished life to be eternal, and for one to so experience them.

Robert, chess

Purity is not simply a lack of the impure. By an enormous labor Flaubert reeled out impurities from his literature. This was his method. And its result was a sterilized art.

An element in the general and necessary break-up, de Government dissociated ideas.

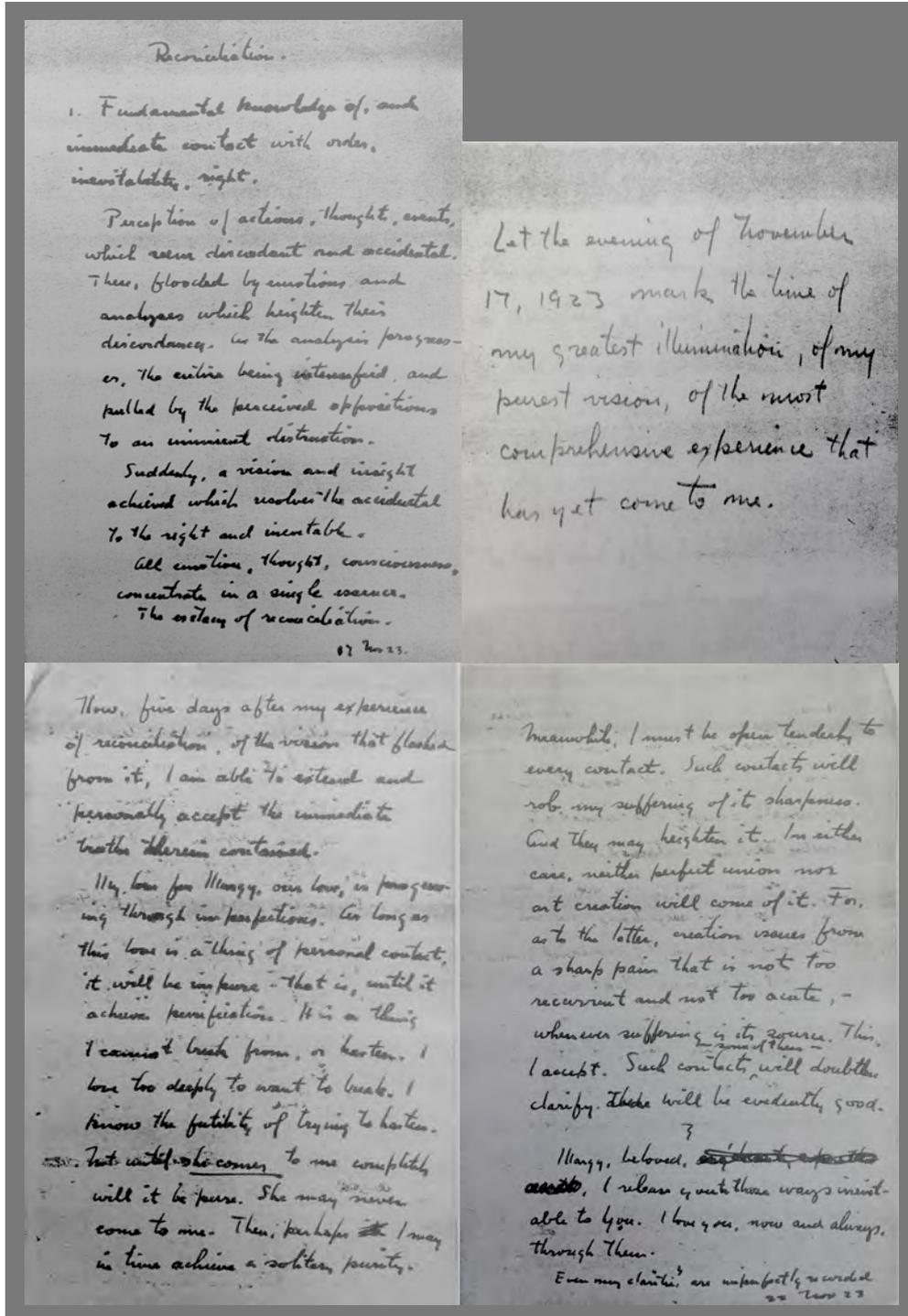
Freud, and the psychoanalytic method, dissociates emotions.

~~the actual moment~~
 a great emotion, when it finds immediate objects inadequate to its purposes, sweeps back, swings forward, and utilizes these past objects for its expression. This is right and natural, for past experience has contributed to its generation.

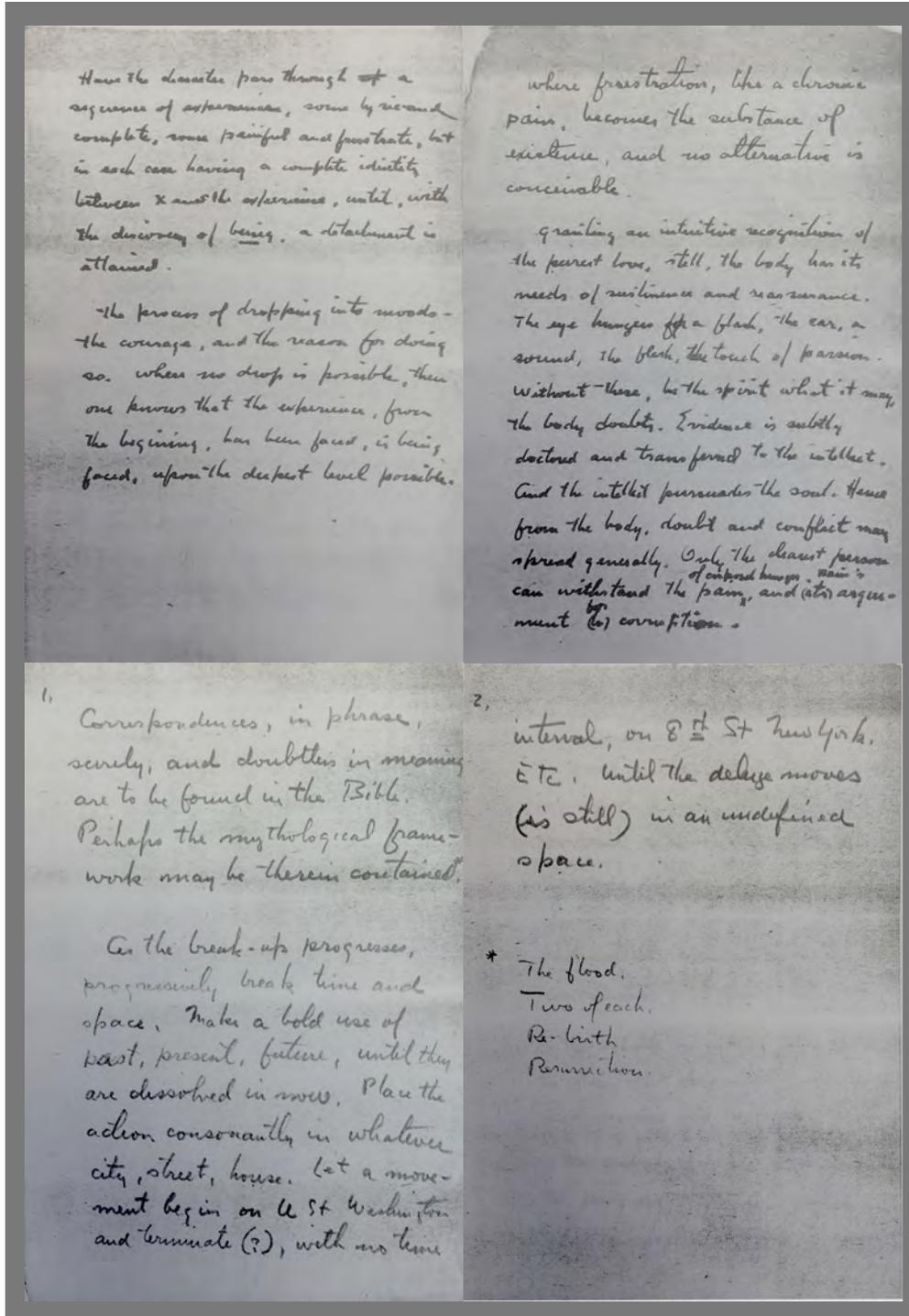
the actual moment, when all that is stray and discordant, wounds, and resolves into the purest harmony.

the central character (character?) to progress ~~there~~ by a sequence of reconciliations.

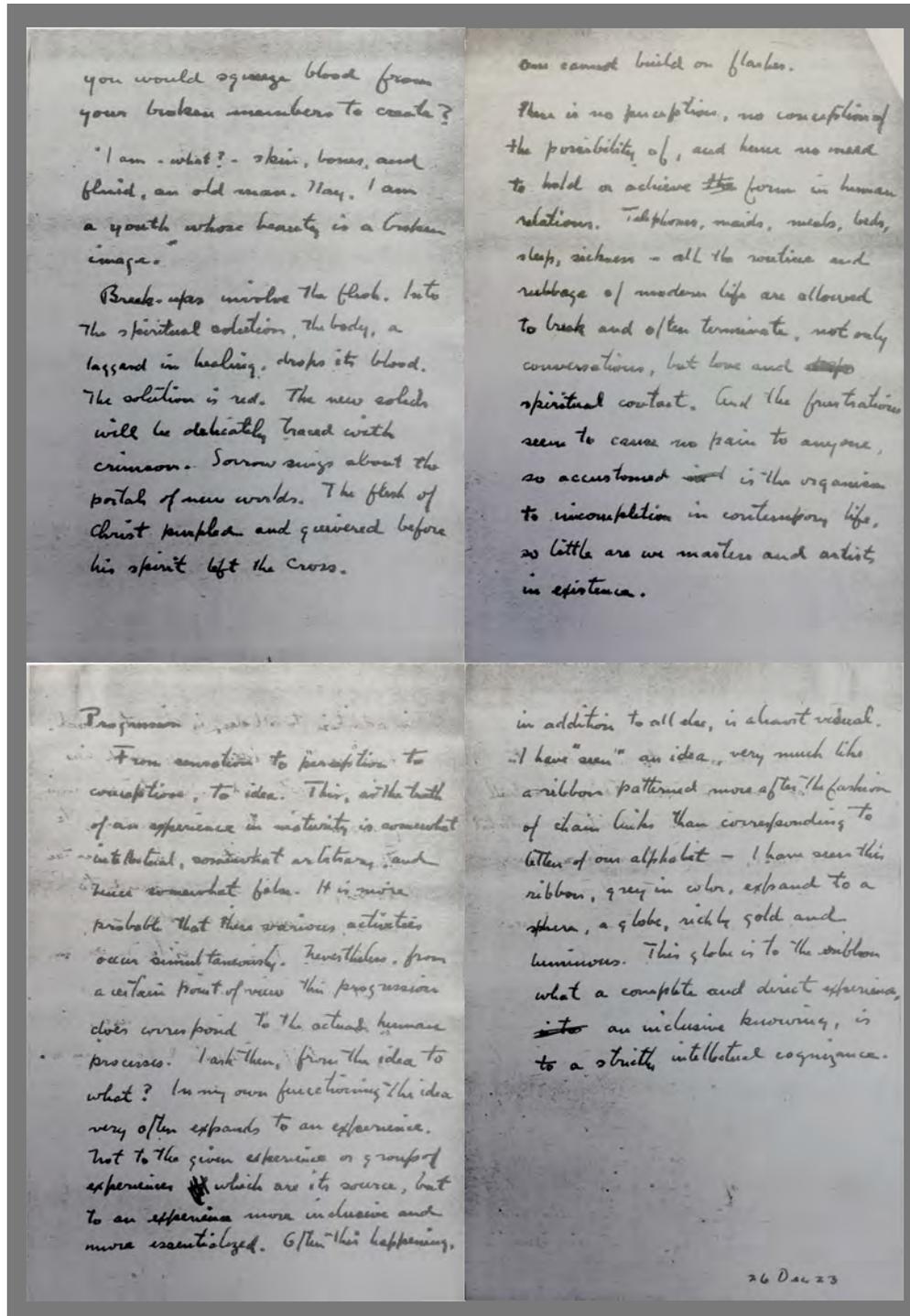
FACSIMILE 25-28 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



FACSIMILE 29-32 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



FACSIMILE 33-36 [TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT]



C.

**Selected Loose Leaf Notes [August 1923-November 1923]
JTP, Box No. 60, Folder 1413.**

Let quick arms farm the earth of rock and stubble, let them flaunt their soil-caked finger-nails before the city manicure, and make full harvest of golden skyscrapers. The hands of the town wave heavily.

Upon the thin veneer of asphalt, roots the modern industrial civilization. Skyscrapers sink down into stone, and lifts stony apexes into the overarching sky.

Convince me that I am imperfect, that the imperfection of others may become more bearable.

Scene: X, thrown into an experience with persons, capable of perfection.

17 Touches nothing but flow — brief flashes of divinity. In a violent reaction he wishes to murder all concerned, kill himself, and leave the world no written statement of the reason for his crime. He is thoroughly contemptuous of the probability of it falling into the hands of anyone capable of understanding it.

As many separate characters, under individual names, as are contained within the central character.

And then have him meet a lovely person, if imperfect, and melt into a fuller self, before her loveliness.

Lovely persons are timid of contact.

Ugly ones are avid for it.

9 Aug 1923

18 A man stands in a barn door — looks down into the yard. Thinks of jumping off. He visualizes what would happen, the concussion, the hot starred pain. He is indifferent to the slight change in existence that death would bring him. He moves on.

[Typed]

There is a perfect ease and completion in the mind brooding behind level eyes that dip over the wind-swaying tops of trees into a valley and rise to a distant mountain ridge whose purple curves are level with them. No city vista can yield such satisfying mental state. Skyscrapers are sensational, and the sight of them impels to actions which can in no way lessen spiritual hunger. They may thrill. They may distress. Confronted by them, one is never released to an immediate and self-fulfilling mediation. And the monotony of other buildings and homes is uniformly depressing. One becomes a reformer in their presence. . . Trees, valleys, and mountains are complete. They produce no sense-excitement. They need no touch of mind or hand to make them easefully [sic] significant and beautiful. Hence the human spirit, in their midst, suffers no drain upon its energies. The mind can be itself, and, in this pure state it experiences a spontaneous fulfillment, functioning.

19

All pure actions, of whatever form, are complete in themselves. The conjunction of several pure actions produces a life beyond their arithmetical sum. And, the conjunction of several impure actions produces a life diminished below their arithmetical sum. In proportion to his complexity then, a man's contrasting potentials expand. A genius may be most debased or, or most exalted. And it is possible for him to alternate between the two states. An interesting speculation, and an arresting challenge arise in this connection. Every world force is moving the mass of people from a simple to a more complex level. Hence every force is increasing the general chance for degradation [sic], or for ecstasy [sic]. (It takes genius to contain, and alternate between the two. Neither democracy nor any other known power will yield a race of geniuses.) The movement is swift. Will pure actions be generated in a number commensurate with our need of them?

My feet have felt
 left the earth,
They have formed as yet no

20

asphalt pavements on the arch of heaven,
The stars are pines and needles
to them

[Typed]

The hills are blanketed in mist and rain. Under these conditions, a god could easily make the requisite transition, and appear amongst us. At least he could fold a Seed again the underclouds, and so deposit it. When the rain has stopped, I shall go into the fields and search for a larval new beauty.

Again, O God, I give myself
up to thy direction.

21

They are lights that need a
blanket-mist to shine the
brightest.

To thee, uncreate, pure beginning,
source!

A sense of time arises from an incomplete life. On those planes where existence is complete, where desires achieve an equivalently swift fulfillment, where desires therefore effect their own ~~cancellation~~ erasure, there is no sense of time. The consciousness of primitive folk, of great artists and philosophers, [have] no temporal dimension. The middle-class, the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, are overburdened with it. From the first statement then it follows that whoever has no residue of undigested experience from the past, who exists is no [unassimilated] present issue (this, projected, causes a reality of the future), but who on the contrary, is experiencing a rich harvest of the present (resting upon similar harvests in the past) — that such a person lives in a now, expanded to include past and future without distinction.

22

Within my body I am dead. My body is alive. Leaning on it, I vicariously partake of corporeal pain and pleasure.

23

[Continued]

I do not hate evil and ribaldry when these are natural to one's expression.
But I hate that low vitality which indulges in conscious vice.

Ecstasy in life.
Then love is woman?

24

Men, and literary men especially, would do well to take this notice of the birds: that they sing when they are joyful; that they do not sing out of grief. If then, artists solved their conflicts first, and, from the purified essences of these together with the pure essences of their mind and soul, composed, there would be achieved in our literature a lofty balance, clarity, and repose. These qualities are necessary to the highest beauty.

In the surgeon's knife which pains you, your knife therefore? Has it not cut other flesh?

Temporal Dimension

Down and Up slopes of consciousness

Rapid disintegration on all planes

of the old slopes.

Swift synthesis on all planes

(now, particularly on the conscious

25

and intellectual) of the new slope.

Extend manifestation of the new beauty when the opposing material powers check-mate, one the other.

To this end, the temporal strategic direction/

The end (beginning), timeless, into
eternal reconciliation.

21 Sept 23

We now witness, in a few, the synthesis of the new consciousness.

Perhaps we also see the gather of a new intellectuality.

But are there at present any signs of emotions synthesizing into a new emotionalism?

26

If so, what is the discipline involved. What are the elements of this new emotionalism, and what are its tentative forms?

(The revolt from Puritanism is then disintegration of the old.)

[Typed]

They are the ideas by means of which this stratum coalesced and grew articulate.

"Puritan dividedness" covers the revolt against Puritanism in this age.

Puritanism is held to be a falsely protracted form. It is assumed to have generated the attack against it.

Assumptions:

That Puritanism generated a damaging divorce between body and soul, practice and theory, soil and culture.

That this division, an unfortunate necessity at first, has been projected into a time when this necessity no longer exists, and hence its unfortunate nature is proportionally multiplied.

27

That this projection is nation-wide, and consequently that all American artists have been affected by it, more or less. And in direct proportion to this more or less have artists gone under or fulfilled their potentials.

Distinguish between an emotional nature, ample and vigorous in itself, and an emotionalism, rasped, distressed, and at war with itself, that has been stimulated by an unfortunate contact, or series of contacts with the external world.

If Puritan writers projected less emotion into the world, it is certain that the world thrust less pain and torture into them.

Pain and torture become positive values when a distressed emotionalism is taken as a good.

[Typed]

28

supernal being, whose body, penetrate
with mind and soul, reverberates to
the touch of fingers filled in their
swift contact to the white heat of
stars

[Typed]

If thou hast willed it, I shall hold
The tortured hard, mute, in contact
With numbers. Only, note I pray
Their sequence on no other fingers
than her own.

29

An if, conscious of

The whole, thou wouldst still have me,
Sensibly straining in the absolute,
Project, in the last compassion
Asked of thee, the shadow of her flesh,
And let this shadow form
Her profile in the formless

(For half is pure above, ye bound to half)

30

Cleansing and release of a residue of
pain, suffering, and denial,
concentrated and essentialized.

“The steel spans (of a bridge) tense and vibrant.”

Rebirth of layers peripheral to intellect and consciousness.

Twin cynclinal [sic] pillars
whose point of contact
So pedestaled

The One and the Many, within man, within the universe, exist in pure harmony, in ultimate reconciliation. What this harmony is, and what the method of reconciliation, furnish the object and the substance of philosophy.

The conscious memory is the instrument of spatial and temporal location.
when
It follows, that should this memory be effaced, then consciousness
will contact eternity.
will find itself released to eternity.

31

Memory and consciousness would then be identical. as now

And experience, may, all reality would achieve a definition, not by means of attachment, association, incident, but by way of essence. Thus, in philosophy it would not be remembered that such and such a thing was written at such a time by a stated person. It would be known whether the statement was (is) true or false. And likewise with poetry. No one would recall that Blake wrote a certain poem. But the poem's beauty or ugliness, truth or falsity etc etc, together with the reason for these, would be evident.

to an immediate, inclusive consciousness,
Must it be concluded then that the faculty usually designated memory is an
real
impediment to knowledge? And if so, must we of the new slope, set about the effacement of it?

25 Oct 23

Literary method:

Expand figures of spirits, comparisons, contrasts, in fact all elements of composition.

32

Thanks to Burke and the general idea of expressionism.

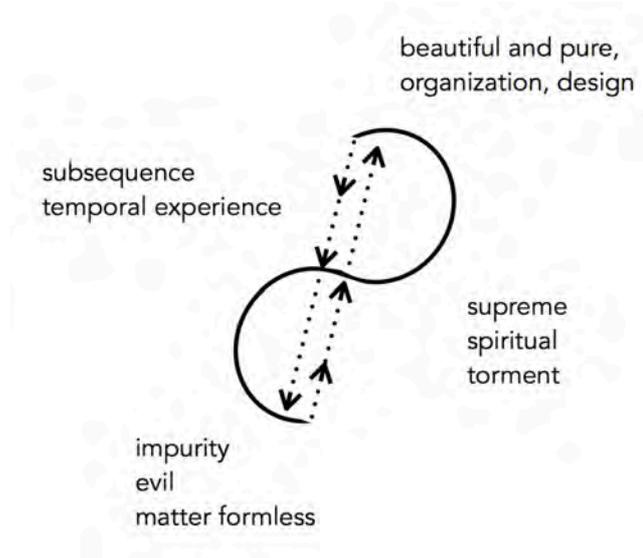
Liberate the imagination

33

Literature concerns itself with struggle, and this is natural, for an artist is subject to spiritual travail. Beyond struggle (in the sense of labor with experience) lie the provinces whose domain is philosophy.

Philosophy is the higher, the purer.
 Literature touches more planes, and more appearances.
 How as to reality and essence?

34



Contraries are not banished from a timeless world. Hence it is possible for an expanded and diminished life to be eternal, and for one to experience them.

~~X~~ Rebirth, clean ~~X~~

35

Purity is not simply a lack of the impure.
 By an enormous labor Flaubert ruled out impurities from his literature. This was his method. And its result was a sterilized art.

[Continued]

As an element in the general and necessary break-up [Remy] de Gourmont dissociated ideas.

Freud, and the psycho analytic method, dissociated emotions.

~~the actual moment~~

a great emotion, when it finds immediate objects inadequate to its purposes, sweeps back, swings forward, and utilizes these past objects for its expression. This is right and natural, for past experience has contributed to its generation.

36

The actual moment, when all that is stray and discordant, rounds, and resolves into the purest harmony.

The central character (characters?) to progress by a sequence of reconciliations.

Reconciliation.

1. Fundamental knowledge of, and immediate contact with order, inevitability, sight.

Perception of actions, thoughts, events, which seem discordant and accidental. These, flooded by emotions and analyses which heighten their discordancy. As the analysis progresses, the entire being intensified, and pulled by the perceived oppositions to an immanent distinction.

37

Suddenly, a vision and insight achieved which resolves the accidental to the right and inevitable.

All emotions, thought, consciousness, concentrate in a single essence.

The ecstasy of reconciliation.

17 Nov 23

Let the evening of November 17, 1923 mark the time of my greatest illumination, of my purest vision, of the most comprehensive experience that has yet come to me.

38

Now, five days after my experience of reconciliation, of the vision that flashed from it, I am able to extend and personally accept the immediate truths therein contained.

39

My love for Margy, our love, is progressing through imperfections. As long as this love is a thing of personal contact, it will be impure. That is, until it achieves purification. It is a thing I cannot break from, or hasten, I love too deeply to want to break. I know the futility of trying to hasten. Not until she comes to me completely will it be pure. She may never come to me. Then, perhaps I may in time achieve solitary purity. Meanwhile, I must be open tenderly to every contact. Such contacts will rob my suffering of its sharpness. And they may heighten it. In either case, neither perfect union nor art creation will come of it. For, as to the latter, creation issues from a sharp pain that is not too recurrent and not too acute, — whenever suffering is its source. This, I accept. Such contacts — some of them — will doubtless clarify. These will be evidently good.

Marg, beloved, I release you to those ways inevitable to you. I love you, now and always, through them.

Even my clarities are imperfectly recorded.

22 Nov 23

Have the character pass through a sequence of experiences, some by lyrical and complete, some painful and frustrate, but in each case having a complete identity between x and the experience, until, with the discovery of being, a detachment is attained.

40

The process of dropping into moods — the courage, and the reason for doing so. when no drop is possible, then one knows that the experience, from the beginning, has been faced, is being faced, upon the deepest level possible where frustration, like a chronic pain, become the substance of existence, and no alternative is conceivable.

[Continued]

Granting an intuitive recognition of the purest love, still, the body has its needs of sustenance and reassurance. The eye hungers for a flash, the ear, a sound, the flesh, the touch of passion. Without these, be the spirit what it may, the body doubts. Evidence is subtly doctored and transferred to the intellect. And the intellect purvades [sic] the soul. Hence from the body, doubt and conflict may spread generally. Only the clearest person can withstand the pain, ^{of corporal hunger} ^{main} ^{by} and (its) argument to corruption.

1. Correspondence, in phrase, ^[surety?] ^[surely?],⁵ and doubtless in meaning are to be found in the Bible. Perhaps the mythological frame — work may be therein contained.

As the break up progresses, progressively break time and space, Make a bold use of past, present, future, until they are dissolved in now. Place the action consonantly in whatever city, street, house. Let a movement begin on U St Washington and terminate (?) with no time

41

2. interval, on 8th St New York. Etc. Until the delay moves (is still) in an undefined space.

*The flood.

Two of each.

Re-birth

Resurrection

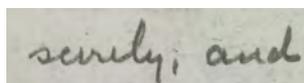
you would squeeze blood from your broken members to create?

“I am — what? — skin, bones, and fluid, an old man. Hey. I am a youth whose beauty is a broken image.”

42

Break-ups involve the flesh. Into the spiritual solution. The body, a laggard in healing, drops its blood. The solution is red. The new solids will be delicately traced with crimson. Sorrow sings about the portals of new worlds. The flesh of Christ purpled and quivered before his spirit left the cross.

⁵



One cannot build on flashes.

43

There is no perception, no conception of the possibility of, and hence no need to hold or achieve form in human relations. Telephones, maids, meals, beds, sleep, sickness — all the routing and rubble of modern life are allowed to break and often terminate, not only conversations, but love and spiritual contact. And the frustrations seem to cause to pain to anyone, so accustomed is the organism to incompleteness in contemporary life, so little are we masters and artists in existence.

Progression.

44

From emotion to perception to conceptions, to idea. This is the truth of an experience in maturity is somewhat intellectual, somewhat arbitrary, and hence somewhat false. It is more probable that these various activities occur simultaneously. Nevertheless, from a certain point of view this progression does correspond to the actual human process. I ask then, from the idea, to what? In my own functioning the idea very often expands to an experience. Not the given experience or group of experiences which are its source, but to an experience more inclusive and more essentialized. Often this happening in addition to all else, is about visual. I have seen an idea, very much like a ribbon patterned more after the fashion of chain links than corresponding to letters of our alphabet — I have seen this ribbon, grey in color, expand to a sphere, a globe, richly gold and luminous. This globe is to the ribbon, what a complete and direct experience, an inclusive knowing, is to a strictly intellectual cognizance.

26 Dec 23

45

The disassociation of the focal consciousness from centers, states, conditions peripheral to the I. The disassociation of the focal consciousness from the I: its absorption by the expansive consciousness which achieves identity between the I and Not-I.

[Start of Gurdjieffian Influence — Early 1924?]

APPENDIX IIID — 1924 Note & Back of Liveright's Letter
FACSIMILE 37-38 [TOP TO BOTTOM]

The disassociation of the focal consciousness
from centers, states, conditions peripheral
to the I.

The disassociation of the focal consciousness
from the I: its absorption by the
expansive consciousness which achieves
identity between the I and not-I.

When A stops projecting his imperfections into the world, the world
begins to dirty him with its impurities.

Impurity

Under contemporary conditions, impurities are constantly being intro-
duced into the human spirit. Then, the spirit must perpetually
transform. ~~Trans~~ The act of transforming is not perfection.

Is perfection then impossible?

Good and evil, each high-powered and intense, within one
body.

Chained by circumstances which lie without him. Vultures
become events which eat out his liver.

Whose tapers touched the morning and the dusk in one pure flame

Even the finest of our men are satisfied with a workable balance achieved
between their beauty and their viciousness. I - I shall never be satisfied with
less than a consonant and complete perfection.

The world is too tough a place for pure intuition. Intuition must
be ribbed with principle. The intellect must muscle and bind
the more phant faculty

D.**JTP, Box No. 1, Folder 16.**

[These notes were made on the back of a draft of Toomer's letter to Horace Liveright dated 5 Sept 23, hence its placement in a different folder.]

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APPENDIX IV :
CANE REVIEWS &
PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

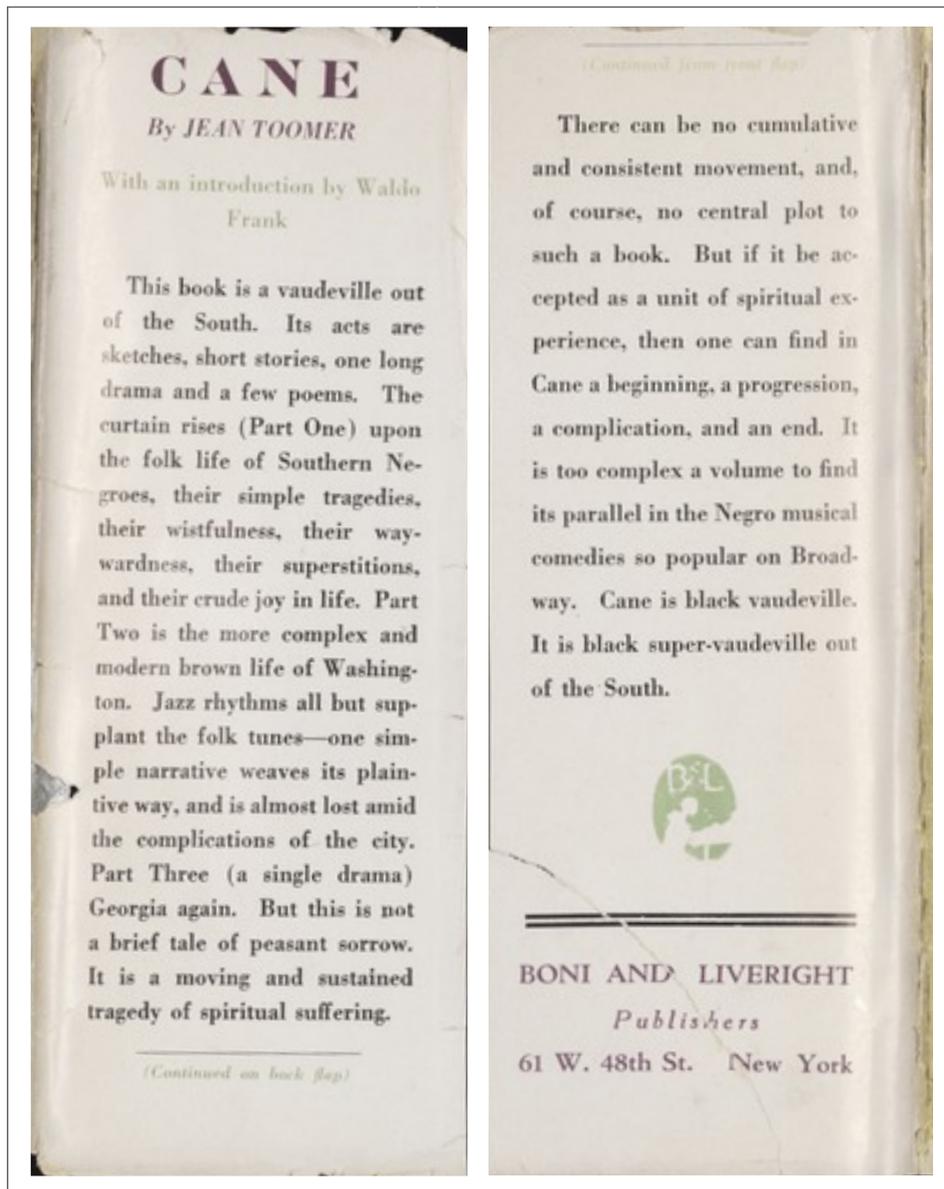


Image H8. Original Dust Jacket Inner Flap Text. Jean Toomer's two typed drafts of this blurb show quite convincingly that the copy was not written by Boni & Liveright's marketing team but by the author himself. The section that has been removed from the original drafts is of particular interest. Jean Toomer, *CANE* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).

APPENDIX IV — PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

FACSIMILE 1

Cane.

This book is a vaudeville ~~of~~ out of the South. Its acts are poems, sketches, short stories, and one long drama. The curtain rises (Part One) upon the folk life of southern Negroes. Their simple tragedies, their wistfulness, and their crude joy in life become articulate in prose and poems. The color of Georgia soil is in them. And the old folk songs are ever heard as overtones. Part Two is the more complex and modern brown life of Washington. Jazz rhythms all but supplant the folk tunes— one simple narrative weaves its plaintive way, and is almost lost amid the complications of the city.

Part Three (a single drama), ~~is~~ Georgia again. But this is not a brief tale of peasant sorrow. It is a moving and sustained tragedy of spiritual suffering. For here a nervous and dynamic northern sensitivity comes to grips with the crude beauty and ugliness of the South, and a northern intelligence battles with southern Negro waywardness, oppression, and superstition. There can be no cumulative and consistent movement, and of course no central plot to such a book. It is sheer vaudeville. But if it be accepted as a unit of spiritual experience, then one can find in Cane a beginning, a progression, a complication, and an end. It is too complex a volume to find its parallel in the Negro musical comedies so popular on Broadway. Cane is black vaudeville. It is black super-vaudeville out of the South.

FACSIMILE 2

C A N E

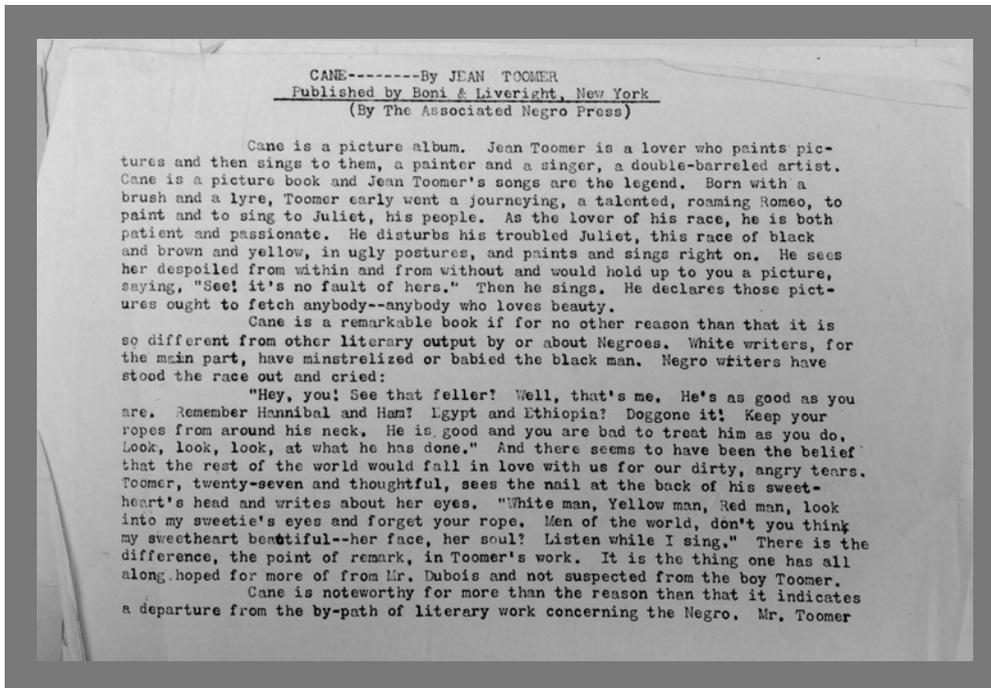
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FACSIMILE 3



FACSIMILE 4-5

PERISCOPE.....3

(continued)

seems to have had one grand fight with the so-called conventions. He has put his ear to the track. He has dug his kernels with a pen point. The truth as it has been his lure. He has had the urge to keep his eyes wide open and to be downright honest with others and himself in telling of what he has seen. As a photographer, he would spurn the use of a retouch artist, and as a writer, he is quite willing to let freckled, pimpled character show with all the rest.

Toomer's effort at truth has been resulted first in a language that is both simple and bold. *Cane* is a study and difficult to understand, but in the entire work there is scarcely a word to send a grammar school pupil to the dictionary. The characters are drawn in plain terms. That is different from Sherwood Anderson, Ben Hecht or Robert Keable, with whose school Toomer might be allied. However, he is more audacious than either of these in the transcription of a profane vocabulary to the printed page. Toomer's characters say what they want with no dashes or apologies. There are words in *Cane*, in everyday use that you would not want your mother to know you used, and that you could not repeat in polite society--the language one uses on the sly, or for which one picks one's company. Mr. Toomer serves it ungarnished, as the truth as he has heard it.

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How far can the relations of the sexes be pictured or suggested

without obscenity? Where does art end and obscenity begin? Does art comprise all truth? Toomer's boldness in detailing sex suggestion is sure to be questioned, truthful as he is and despite the beauty of his work. Many persons will not be able to see the necessity for having so many of his figures of speech envelope the sex idea. Thus: "Night, soft belly of a pregnant Negress, throbs evenly against the torso of the South. *Cane*--and cotton-fields, pine forests, cypress swamps, sawmills and factories are fecund at her touch. Night's womb-song sets them singing. Night winds are the breathing of the unborn child whose calm throbbing in the belly of a Negress sets them somnolently singing," is beautiful, but apt to be damned if there's too much of it.

How much more to order, these lines from "Georgia Dusk," one of the songs of the book.

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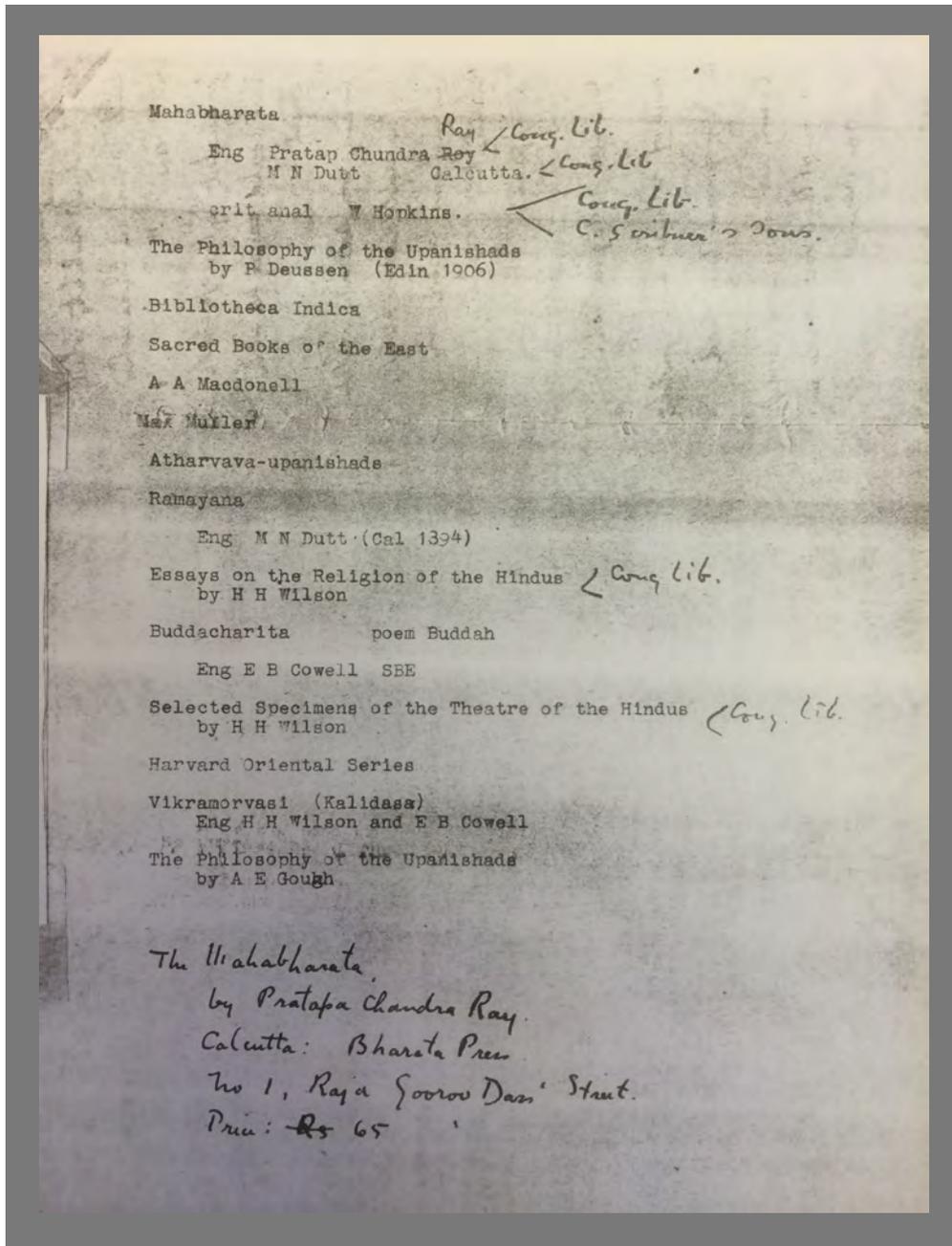
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(continued from Sport News Page)

line plunge very soon after the second team went in and the half ended with the ball on Hampton's 33 yard line and the score 25 to 0 in their favor. Hampton sent in her third team and after two minutes of play scored a touchdown after a 30 yard run. The first team went back and finished the game with plunges and passes and the verdict was 44 to 0, for Hampton.

FACSIMILE 6



APPENDIX IV

CANE Reviews & Promotional Material

1

Jean Toomer, *Draft of CANE Dust Jacket Rider*,
JTP Box 26, Folder 611.

C A N E

This book is a vaudeville [sic]* out of the South. Its acts are poems, sketches, short stories, and one long drama. The curtain rises (Part One) upon the folk life of southern Negroes. Their simple tragedies, their wistfulness, and their crude joy in life become articulate in prose and poems. The color of Georgia soil is in them. And the old folk songs are ever heard as overtones.

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There can be no cumulative and consistent movement, and of course no central plot to such a book. It is sheer vaudeville. But if it be accepted as a unit of spiritual experience, then one can find in *Cane* a beginning, a progression, a complication, and an end. It is too complex a Volume to find its parallel in the Negro musical comedies so popular on Broadway. *Cane* is black vaudeville. it is black supervaudeville [sic]* out of the South.

* Both “vaudeville” and “super-vaudeville” are spelt correctly in his earlier draft (See Image 22).

2

Roger Didier, *CANE* Review for The Negro Associated Press, JTP Box 26, Folder 611.

Cane is a picture album. Jean Toomer is a lover who paints pictures and then sings to them, a painter and a singer, a double-barreled artist. *Cane* is a picture book and Jean Toomer's songs are the legend. Born with a brush and a lyre, Toomer early went a journeying, a talented, roaming Romeo, to paint and to sing to Juliet, his people. As the lover of his race, he is both patient and passionate. He disturbs his troubled Juliet, this race of black and brown and yellow, in ugly postures, and paints and sings right on. He sees her despoiled from within and from without and would hold up to you a picture, saying, "See! it's no fault of hers." Then he sings. He declares those pictures ought to fetch anybody—anybody who loves beauty.

Cane is a remarkable book if for no other reason than that it is so different from other literary output by or about Negroes. White writers, for the main part, have minstrelized or babied the black man. Negro writers have stood the race out and cried:

"Hey, you! See that feller! Well, that's me. He's as good as you are. Remember Hannibal and Ham! Egypt and Ethiopia? Doggone it. Keep your ropes from around his neck. He is good and you are bad to treat him as you do, Look look, look, at what he has done." And there seems to have been the belief that the rest of the world would fall in love with us for our dirty, angry tears. Toomer, twenty-seven and thoughtful, sees the nail at the back of his sweetheart's head and writes about her eyes. "White man, Yellow man, Red man, look into my sweetie's eyes and forget your rope. Men of the world, don't you think my sweetheart beautiful—her face, her soul? Listen while I sing." There is the the difference, the point of remark, in Toomer's work. It is the thing one has all along hoped for more of from Mr. Dubois [sic] and not suspected from the boy Toomer.

Cane is noteworthy for more than the reason than that it indicates a departure from the by-path of literary work concerning the Negro. Mr. Toomer seems to have had one grand fight with the so-called conventions. He has put his ear to the track. He has dug his kernels with a pen point. The

truth as is has been his lure. He has had the urge to keep his eyes wide open and to be downright honest with others and himself in telling of what he has seen. As a photographer, he would spurn the use of a retouch artist, and as a writer, he is quite willing to let freckled, pimpled character show with all the rest.

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How far can the relations of the sexes be pictured or suggested without obscenity? Where does art end and obscenity begin? Does art comprise all truth? Toomer's boldness in detailing sex suggestion is sure to be questioned, truthful as he is and despite the beauty of his work. Many persons will not be able to see the necessity for having so many of his figures of speech envelope the sex idea. Thus: “Night, soft belly of a pregnant Negress, throbs evenly

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3

Matthew Josephson, "Great American Novels" *Broom: An International Magazine of the Arts* 5, no. 3 (October 1923): 179-180.

* * * * *

Toomer is close to his soil, his book is dripping of the Negro South, and beyond this, he writes with a prodigious intensity of sight and hearing. Hitherto this unconsciously gifted race has expressed itself in America through a superb folk-music and folk-poetry. *Cane* is unique in that it is the expression of an artist working deliberately in the literary medium, young, headstrong, unreserved, but ultimately faithful.

The hysteria, the passion, the madness and the great sweetness of his negroes recalls Dostoyevski and his possessed Russian characters. In the many moments of most perfect insight which occur in the book, these people speak and move with the same awful sense of revelation, and catharsis.

In a mood of great fear, Ralph Kabnis speaks to himself:

"Come now, Ralph, go in and make yourself go to sleep. Come now . . . in the door . . . that's right. Put the poker down. There. All right. Slip under the sheets. Close your eyes. Think nothing . . . A long time . . . nothing, nothing. Don't even think nothing. Blank. Not even blank. Count. No, you mustn't count. Nothing . . . blank . . . nothing . . . blank . . . space without stars in it. No, nothing . . . Nothing . . .

"Kabnis sleeps. The winds, like soft voiced vagrant poets sing:

White-man's land
Niggers sing.
Burn, bear black children

Till poor rivers bring
Rest and sweet glory
In Camp Ground."

This is remarkable sensuous writing. The lyric is unaffected and spontaneous poetry, and there are others in the book, such as *Karintha* and *Seventh Street* which startle by their unrestrained passion or anger.

The stories, sketches and lyrics which compose the books have been arranged with some attempt at architectural unity. But this is beside the

point. At bottom Toomer is fiercely emotional, vigorous—and how often one has wailed at the lack of energy in contemporary writers—at times fearfully impolite, by standards of recent English schools. Perhaps it were better for Toomer to follow his five or six rather than search for cerebral super-forms. Once he has forgotten his lessons in psychoanalysis and unanimism his own sensibilities will determine the simple artistic forms which will contain his huge spouting pages of American prose. M. J. [Matthew Josephson]

THE GAZETTE

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AMERICA, THE RACIAL MELTING POT!

BISHOPS?

Episcopal Church (A. M. E.)
Church (White),
B.

African Methodist Episcopal (White)	8,709	26,130
Methodist Episcopal	545,214	4,036,777
Episcopal	13	106
Episcopal	402,092,544	3,008,185,059
Episcopal	12	21
Episcopal	516	1,344
Episcopal	41,985	194,223
Episcopal	82,464,687	119,341,222

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BOOKS

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FRESH OHIO NEWS

WRITTEN BY "THE OLD RELIABLE" GAZETTE'S CORRESPONDENTS.

What Our People Are Doing Each Week—Church, Personal, Social, Lodge, Literary and Musical—Marriages, Deaths, Etc.

SPRINGFIELD.—Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Deon have a boy-baby, born recently. Clifford Carpenter of near here has located on a farm owned by Mr. Patterson's 91 acre farm in Champaign Co.—Miss Ruth Stovick is at San Mateo, Cal. of Mrs. Corrine Burnett.—Miss Naomi Robertson has pronounced the latter report, "The Reorganization" directed by H. H. Keller is now to be given at the Clark St. St. are L. H. Cooley, pres., Jerry Kessner, sec. sec., Wm. M. central board rep. The new board is being directed by W. P. Smith.—North St. A. M. E. Church revival here, Mar. 12. Evangelist by the pastor and a large group of choir.—Harry Robinson, sec. 23 and Mrs. Anna Johnson, sec. 24, died recently.—The body of "Tom" was buried last week Thursday and was in the funeral home and

JENKINS SUCCEEDS RICHARD C. BUNDY!

As Business Manager of the State Department of Wilberforce.—Prof. Newman to supervise the Educational Work.

Wilberforce, O.—C. C. Jenkins, business manager of the department, was elected last week, Friday, to succeed the late J. J. Hathorn, Cleveland, as temporary head of the state industrial department of Wilberforce University. The trustees board, in appointing Mr. Jenkins, stated the death of the late Richard C. Bundy, president of the board, and the appointment of Mr. Jenkins as a temporary measure, pending the election of a permanent successor. Mr. Jenkins is a native of Ohio and has been in the employ of the State Auditor

BORI AND GIGLI TO STAR IN "MANON"

With Them Will Be Tibbett, Rothier and Other Grand Opera Stars—Bori, Pons, Moore and Tibbett in "Tales of Hoffman" at Saturday Matinee—Marvelous Casts in All Operas.

Those two great lovers of grand opera, Lacerda Bori and Houshango Gigli, will be heard in a most popular opera, "Manon," on Friday night, April 22, during the ninth spring festival of grand opera in Cleveland's public hall. With them will be Lawrence Tibbett, the great young American baritone and screen star, and the famed French basso, Leon Rothier, supported by a large cast of the stars of the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York City. For nine years Bori and Gigli have sung the great love operas in the Cleveland seasons and their nights

GOV. P. B. S. PINCHBACK'S GRANDSON.



MR. AND MRS. JEAN TOOMER.

Carmel, Cal.—A new American religious or racial barriers, Toomer was envisioned, last Thursday, for the benefit of Carmel's artist colony by Jean Toomer, poet, of Chicago, and his bride, the former Margery Latimer (white), novelist. As exponents of a higher and better life—of which there are many in Carmel—the honeymooners were welcomed here. Just as Toomer foresees for all America at some distant date, there is no racial ostracism here. Post-Mayor Herbert Heron led the procession to the little cottage where the newlyweds have made their home.

There is no reason why Mr. and Mrs. Toomer should not be accepted into a colony of artists and writers, the mayor said. "Both are renowned

visions Super-Baco.

"Americans probably do not realize it, but there are no racial barriers here," he said. "Because there are so many Americans with tal blood. As I see America, it is like a great stomach into which are thrown the elements which make up the life blood. From this source is coming a distinct race of people. They will achieve tremendous works of art, literature and music. They will not be white, black or yellow—just American."

Mrs. Toomer, a graduate of Columbia University and a friend of

Image H9. Article in the Cleveland's Gazette mocking Toomer, identifying him as "Gov. Pinchback's grandson", for his views about race in America and taking issue with his marriage to "Margery Latimer (white) novelist". The front-page headline reads: "America, the Racial Melting Pot!" The Gazette, Cleveland, Ohio, March 26, 1932. JTP, Box 65, Folder 1489. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

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PHILOSOPHICAL & ÆSTHETIC TERMS GERMAN, CLASSICAL, & OTHERWISE

[*Anima Mundi*] : *Welt-seele*, world-soul, oversoul, universal ego, infinite spirit; *Gr. Logos*.

[*Animism*] : Belief that all natural objects are animated by ‘spirits’ or intelligent beings; primitive anthropomorphism. Herder’s concept of *Kräfte* endows “different degrees of consciousness” to “inorganic worlds” on the ‘ladder of natural forms’, which can be labeled “animism, pananimism, panvitalism, panpsychism, panspiritualism, panlogism, hylozoism”.¹

[*Anomie*] : **Atomism**, division between the self and others; alienation.

[*Arabesque*] : **Arabesque**. A form of artistic decoration based on rhythmic linear patterns—interlacing foliage, creatures, or lines—combined with other elements. Frederick Schlegel viewed *Arabesque* “the oldest and original form of human Fantasy”—*Poiesis*; this “chaotic form”, associated with *Märchen*, creates an “artificially regulated confusion” blurring the distinction between “the inner field of art” and “its exterior”; and this dynamic of *Naturarabesque* —“the frame circumscribing the frame obsession” is what propels “Romantic Chaos” and “the entire advantage of the so-called novel of the age”.²

[*Aufhebung*] : **Epiphany**; the moment of insight or intuition where the underlying essence is revealed.

[*Aufklärung*] : The Enlightenment; *Fr. siècle des lumières*.

[*Axis Mundi*] : “the center of the world” (*omphalos*); the cosmic **World Tree**—Tree of Knowledge in Genesis, *Yggdrasil* (World Ash) in Norse mythology, Mesoamerican world tree, the sefirot in Kabbalism.

[*Besonnenheit*] : Circumspection; self-reflection using the “Entire disposition of man’s forces”; the unitary human capacity encompassing “the total economy of his and cognitive, or his cognitive and volitional nature”.³

[*Bild*] : Form, Image, Idea, Symbol, Figure; *Gr. eide. Ru. Obraz*.

[*Bildung*] : Formation, Divine imprint, intellectual cultivation, Beauty, integration into society. As Forster notes, before Herder the term *Bildung* “was used almost exclusively of individuals, connoting an individual’s development and education. However, in 1774 Herder . . . applied the term to humankind as a whole in its historical development.”⁴ Running parallel to his multifaceted concept of *Humanität*, the concept of *Bildung* is takes on the broader meaning: education of humanity, developing all human powers into a whole—civilization. *Cf. Züchtung*.

[*Bildungsroman*] : Novel of formative education and integration into society.

¹ Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, 10-11.

² Menninghaus, “Hummingbirds, Shells, Picture-Frames”, 41-42.

³ Richard Bauman, and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 166.

⁴ Forster, *Herder’s Philosophy*, 253. This expanded notion of *Bildung* is laid out in Herder’s 1774 text, *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation [zur Bildung] of Humanity*.

- [**Conceit**] : An artistic device; an elaborate metaphor; or fanciful expression in writing.
- [**Concidentia Oppositorum**] : ‘coincidence of opposites’, the dualistic relationship of binary opposites, the inter-correlation of opposing dialectic forces.
- [**Daemon**] : *Dämon*; Ger. *Das Dämonische*. In Plato’s *Timaeus*, “the most sovereign part of our soul...god’s gift to us, given to be our guiding spirit” (*PLA* 1289). For **Plato** the **Daemonic** is the ‘Inspiration’ creating a “conduit, nexus, or crossing between the temporal, secular realm of phenomena [into] the divine realm of forms (*eide*).” For **Plotinus** “the function of the daemon is to connect the individual soul with the transcendent soul, which in turn is linked to the divine intellect or *nous*”.⁵ In *Kalligone* (1799) **Herder** links the Ancient concept of *Dämon* with modern notions of genius, calling it “this distinctive gift from heaven, spirit, genius. A spirit born with us, δαίμων, [daimon] *vis animi divini*”.⁶ Angus Nicholls unravels the complexities behind Herder’s logic:
- For Herder the *Dämon* represents that aspect of humanity through which the pantheistic *Kräfte* of nature come to expression. It is for this reason that he often uses the terms *Dämon* and *dämonisch* as synonyms for genius . . . the *Dämon* embodies for Herder the human capacity for *Bildung* or development, since it is through harnessing the natural *Kräfte* immanent within each individual that the full potential of humanity is realized.⁷
- [**Doppelgänger**] : Coined by Jean Paul to describe the motif of a double or quasi-double.
- [**Einbildungskraft**] : Imagination. Cf. *Poiesis*.
- [**Einfühlung**] : Empathy, sympathy, ‘feeling into’; mystical perception, interpenetration. The opposite of analytical *Abstraktion*. Nowak traces this concept to Herder who “endowed Nature with a consciousness which could be penetrated by man . . . Empathy leads to a mystical union of the subject and the object, Man and Nature”.⁸ In the theory of art and aesthetics developed by Wilhelm Worringer, “Abstraction involves some kind of anxiety and distance, and empathy is a convenient, friendly contact between the spectator and work.”⁹
- [**Ekstase**] : Ecstasy; “standing outside” and moving beyond the personal or egoistic self.
- [**Empfindung**] : Sensation; sense perception.
- [**Entzauberung**] : disenchantment. Max Weber’s belief that the “world was being systematically drained of higher meaning . . . through an instrumentalizing rationalism.”¹⁰ *Ant. Verzauberung, Bezauberung. Cf. Wiederverzauberung.*
- [**Fragmente**] : Fragments.
- [**Frühromantik**] : Early German Romanticism.

⁵ A. Nicholls, 75.

⁶ Qtd. in A. Nicholls, 98.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Nowak, 303.

⁹ Ibid., 313.

¹⁰ Roger Griffin, ed., Series Editor’s Preface to *Modernism and the Occult*, by John Bramble (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), x-xi.

- [*Geist*] : Spirit, mind, soul, intelligence, organizing principle, spiritual force: **consciousness**.
- [*Gestalt*] : Doctrine that the whole is more than the sum of its parts; *syn.* holism, organicism.
- [*Grotesk*] : The grotesque; deformed, misshapen. Compare with *Verbilden*.
- [*Humanität*] : Advancement of humanity. Herder's concept of *Humanität* is multilayered and we turn to parts of Forster's overview for our summary of its major components: "according to Herder it is somehow *because* [1] all human beings belong to a single species whose racial differences are only superficial . . . [3] and it is part of their nature to be kind to other human beings . . . [5] that all humans deserve moral respect . . . [6] and that this respect should include such things as not harming or deceiving them, but instead exercising moderation in relations with them and helping them . . . A representative passage for this line of argument, among many that could be cited, is the following one from [*Ideen*]:¹¹
- Neither the pongo nor the longimanus [i.e. species of animals—M.N.F.] is your brother, but the [native] American, the negro is. So you should not oppress, murder, rob him; for he is a human being, as you are.¹²
- Herder views humanity [11] not merely as "the center of the cosmos (as Irmscher notes), but also the goal of history, which is developing it ever more fully"; and he [12] sees God as "the ultimate source of our humanity" and religion as "the highest humanity of the human being".¹³
- [*Igel*] : Hedgehog. Frederick Schlegel's term used to describe the function of his *Fragmente*.
- [*Kraft — Raum—Zeit*] : **Force / Space / Time**—Herder's 3 Aspects of the Universe.
- [*Kräfte*] : Herder's multi-dimensional concept of *Kräfte* points to the creative and binding mystical force encompassing nature that also infuses poetry, soul & the universe. Herder envisions a direct correlation between nature's *Kräfte* and human *Kunst* in his sixty-third letter of the "*Sechste Sammlung*", which as Angus Nicholls explains,
- Herder sees the human individual as being akin to a mirror in which the various individual *Kräfte* of nature are brought together, ordered, and valued, and in which nature as a totality reflects upon itself. In this sense, nature sees through human eyes, thinks behind the human brow, feels in the human breast, and works with human hands. Nature is thus akin to a great "*Künstler*": it underpins all human creative activity, and it expresses itself in the artistic productions of human beings.¹⁴
- [*Kunstanschauung*] : Concept of arts; notion of art.
- [*Künstlerroman*] : 'Artist's novel' on the development of a poet, painter, or musician.
- [*Märchen*] : Fairy tale, folk tale. Herder calls *Feenmärchen* "flowers of arabesque".¹⁵

¹¹ Forster, *Herder's Philosophy*, 229. For a more detailed discussion see Chapters 7, 9, and 10.

¹² Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 229.

¹³ Forster, *Herder's Philosophy*, 230.

¹⁴ A. Nicholls, 97.

¹⁵ Menninghaus, "Hummingbirds, Shells, Picture-Frames", 43.

- [*Mythopoiesis*] : Creation of myth; or narratives dealing with the archetypal (*Ur-Bild*).
- [*Noumena*] : Plato's 'Intellectual' realm of Ideas & Forms, Plotinus called '**There**'.
- [*Omneity*] : Coleridge's term for the interrelation of all things. *Emanationslehre* or *Verbindung* in German. Plotinus calls this interpenetration **Universal Sympathy**.
- [*Parabasis*] : A type of chorus from classical Greek comedy that directly addresses the audience to reveal the thoughts of the poet/author without regard for preserving the dramatic illusion.
- [*Phenomena*] : The realm of the Senses. This 'world of sight' is 'the prison-house' Plato portrays in **Allegory/Myth of the Cave**. Plotinus referred to this realm as '**Here**'.
- [*Pblogiston*] : A substance supposed by 18th-century chemists to exist in all combustible bodies, and to be released in combustion.
- [*Poiesis*] : Creative Imagination. Ger. *Fantasie*. Creation not imitation (*mimesis*). Friedrich Schlegel defines *poiësis* [ποίησις] as "infinite power of image production, one that is all the more free as the figures of its infinity are freed from any linguistic categorization . . . *unendliche Fülle* [infinite plenitude] or *Arabeske*".¹⁶ A. W. Schlegel views the "free creative effective fantasy" as that which propels all forms art, a notion drawing from Neo-Platonic thought where "the human spirit emerges as poetry participates in the 'universal spirit'".¹⁷
- [*Qualitates Occultae*] : Having occult-like qualities; irrational. Kant similarly used the term '*Schwärmerei*' to denigrate Herder's obscure and fanciful "visionary enthusiasm".¹⁸
- [*Schematisierung der Welt*] : Schematization of the world.
- [*Schwärmerei*] : Religious fanaticism equated with superstition; and shunned by the *Aufklärer* as a denial of reason. Kant distinguishes **enthusiasm**, calling it a "delusion of sense", from *Schwärmerei*, or "visionary rapture", which he views as "a delusion of mind": "The former is a passing accident, which occasionally affects the most healthy understanding; the latter is a disease that destroys it."¹⁹
- . . . the etymological origins of "*Schwärmerei*" connote dangerous, disorderly group phenomena: "*Schwarm*" or "*schwärmen*" were (and are) used literally of bees. . . . Kant frequently uses this term to refer to those who make mistaken claims to knowledge superior to that of ordinary human beings, usually of supersensible reality. Kant often associates *Schwärmerei* with mysticism, but also criticizes as *Schwärmer* neo-Platonists who claim to have immediate, intuitive knowledge of the Forms, Spinoza and Spinozists, and even Locke, for claiming to garner a priori concepts (including that of God) from empirical evidence, thereby "opening the gates" to *Schwärmerei*.²⁰

¹⁶ Jean-Pierre Dubost, "Erzählen", in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 291.

¹⁷ Richter, *A History of Poetics*, 83-4.

¹⁸ De Quincey, 166; 179.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. and tr. by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156-7.

²⁰ Rachel Zuckert, "Kant's Account of Practical Fanaticism", 294-5.

- [*Schweben*] : Hovering; Novalis equates this state of being “neither this nor that” with the productive power of imagination (*Poiesis*): “From this luminous point of hovering all of reality streams forth—in it all things are contained . . . its cause, is the source, the *mater* of all reality . . .”²¹
- [*Sehnsucht*] : Yearning; wistful longing for reconciliation with the Infinite.
- [*Seele*] : Soul; *Gr. psyche*. For Novalis: “where the inner world & the outer world meet”. For Plotinus, the influence of Stoicism made him view soul as “a cosmic force that unifies, organizes, sustains, and controls every aspect of the world.”²²
- [*Sibylline*] : Characteristic of a sibyl or prophet; cryptic, mysterious, oracular; mantic.
- [*Stimmung*] : Mood, atmosphere, feeling, spirit, *Geist*.
- [*Sturm und Drang*] : Storm and Stress movement.
- [*Sub Specie Æternitatis*] : *Latin* for ‘under the aspect of Eternity’; viewed in relation to the eternal; from a universal perspective.
- [*Synthese*] : **Synthesis, uniformation, esemplastic; fusion.**
- [*Tendenz*] : Leaning; bias. Dominating point of view or purpose influencing the structure / content of a literary work.
- [*Ur-Bild*] : Archetype, *Ur-form*, schema, paradigm.
- [*Verbilden*] : Deformed, misshapen, miseducated; *Missbilden. Ru. Bezobrazie.*
- [*Verbindung*] : “the primordial interconnectedness of things”,²³ the realization of the self as Self. *Cf. Omneity.*
- [*Verfremdungseffekt*] : *Ostranenie*, “alienation effect”, defamiliarization, estrangement.
- [*Volksgeist*] : Spirit of the people; collective consciousness of a people; the ‘race-soul’.
- [*Wiederverzauberung*] : **Re-enchantment** away from material.
- [*Weltanschauung*] : Worldview, ideology.
- [*Weltgeist*] : Spirit of the world; or ‘life-force’; *Welt-seele*.
- [*Werden*] : **Becoming.** Leibniz method of overcoming Decartes’ dualism (separating body and soul) that relied upon the **dynamic principle of becoming**—by “positing a pre-established harmony since the birth of the universe between spirit and matter”.²⁴
- [*Wesen*] : **Being.**
- [*Wissen*] : True knowledge; experience or revelation of essential unity—the completion of thinking—which occurs at the point of intersection and reconciliation of universals and particulars.
- [*Zeit*] : **Time.**
- [*Zeitgeist*] : ‘Soul of an age’; gravitational center of all forces at work at a point in time.

²¹ McCort, 29.

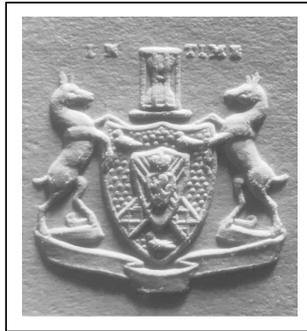
²² O’Meara, 17.

²³ McCort, 29.

²⁴ McCarthy, 23.

PARTIAL LIST OF AESTHETIC DEVICES:

- [DEVICE ◻ : **ARABESQUE**] : the interlaced frame—romantic “cipher of chaos”
- [DEVICE ≫ : **AUFHEBUNG**] : epiphany, moment underlying essence is revealed
- [DEVICE ✎ : **DEFORMATION**] : *Grotesk* portrayal, evocation of divine image
- [DEVICE ⊗ ⊕ : **DOPPELGÄNGER**] : the double motif; dialectical unbalancing
- [DEVICE ₣ : **FUSION**] : *Goldene-Gans* method; interpolation; syncretism
- [DEVICE ◻ : **INDIRECTION**] : suggestion; ambiguity; elliptical narration
- [DEVICE ₣ : **INTERLACING**] : inter- & intra- textuality; interweaving
- [DEVICE ✕ : **MISDIRECTION**] : ‘slight of hand’; obscurantism; red herring
- [DEVICE ₣₣ : **MULTIVALENT SYMBOL**] : polysemic figuration; superimposition
- [DEVICE ₣₣₣ : **MULTI-LAYERED IDENTITIES**] : personification + allegory + symbolism
- [DEVICE ∞ : **MYTHIC VISION**] : infinite perspective; *Sub Specie Æternitatis*
- [DEVICE ⚡ : **NARRATIVE SHIFT**] : sudden shift of narrative perspective or frame
- [DEVICE ∞ : **PARABASIS**] : meta-literary reflection; revealing sub-surface gears
- [DEVICE ◻ : **SACRED TEXT**] : religious allusion, veneration, mythic allegorization
- [DEVICE ~ : **SCHWEBEN**] : hovering; wavering; oscillating; double consciousness
- [DEVICE ◻ : **SECRET LINK**] : lock & key technique = ‘button-hole lacunae’
- [DEVICE ✕ : **STRANGENESS**] : *Ostranenie* = *Verfremdungseffekt* = defamiliarization
- [DEVICE ◻ : **TELEPATHY**] : unspoken consciousness, clairvoyance
- [DEVICE ☉ : **VOLKSGEIST**] : communion with folk spirit / race soul;
- [DEVICE ♪ : **VOLKSLIED**] : rhapsodizing; lyrical interpretation, spiritual expression



Mignon: "So let me seem till I become . . ."

Detail of The Woodruff Family Crest.
I dedicate this monograph to
Arthur Woodruff Kinsler [권오덕]
& the memory of my grandmother,
Dorothy Woodruff Kinsler [권도희].

[ã3]

SCHEMA FOR **CANE**

Inscription & Dedication

"To my grandmother . . ." [1923]



PART 1

GEORGIA-SET PIECES

"KARINTHA"

"REAPERS"
"NOVEMBER COTTON FLOWER"

"BECKY"

"FACE"
"COTTON SONG"

"CARMA"

"SONG OF THE SON"
"GEORGIA DUSK"

"FERN"

"NULLO"
"EVENING SONG"

"ESTHER"

"CONVERSION"
"PORTRAIT IN GEORGIA"

"BLOOD BURNING MOON"



PART 2

WASHINGTON PIECES

"SEVENTH STREET"

→ "RHOBERT"

"AVEY"

"BEEHIVE"
"STORM ENDING"

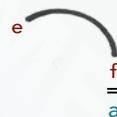
"THEATRE"

"HER LIPS ARE LIKE COPPER WIRES"

→ "CALLING JESUS"

"BOX SEAT"

"PRAYER"
"HARVEST SONG"



CHICAGO — "BONA & PAUL"

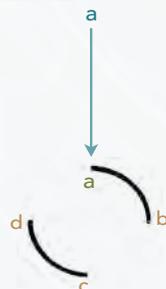
PART 3

Dedication "to Waldo Frank"

"KABNIS"

GEORGIA

PART 1 "Night winds in Georgia"
PART 2 "Parlor of Fred Halsey's home"
PART 3 "A scarecrow replica of Kabnis"
PART 4 "Halsey's workshop"
PART 5 "They descend into the hole"
PART 6 "The sun arises from its cradle"



CIRCLES OF CONFLUENCE

JEAN TOOMER'S *CANE*, 'MODERNIST'
AESTHETICS, & NEO-PLATONISM



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