

**Three Women/Three Margins: Political Engagement and the  
Art of Claude Cahun, Jeanne Mammen, and Paraskeva Clark**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Introduction

### *Preamble*

This project began with the discovery that Claude Cahun, Jeanne Mammen, and Paraskeva Clark each had connections to avant-garde theatres in Paris, Berlin, and Petrograd, respectively. Each artist brought a theatrical sensibility to her work, and their practices exemplified points of intersection between the political and the artistic. My work on these three artists who had no connection during their lifetimes and whose works differ stylistically, was also motivated by new curatorial strategies that bring otherwise disparate works into contact with one another. Prior to embarking on doctoral work, I had begun to develop a curatorial practice. While I was working at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection I was exposed to Sharyn Udall's work connecting three famed artists of the Americas in her study *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of their Own* (2001). Udall's book and ensuing exhibition compared the art, lives, and achievements of Emily Carr (1871-1945), Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), and Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), all of whom had been recognised in their home countries. Udall organised the exhibition thematically, and explored similar issues in the paintings of these women. Although each artist's work is visually disparate, Udall's work connected the three artists by looking at how these women grappled with questions of identity. Udall noted that Kahlo, O'Keeffe, and Carr 'all created and modified identities that allowed them to make their ways as artists ... each negotiated the balance between originality and tradition.'<sup>1</sup> Through discussions of the commonalities Udall found in the works and lives of these artists including landscape and identity, 'the private self,' and a public career, Udall's work addressed issues

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1. Sharyn Rohlfsen Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). p. 4.



related to gender and nationality.<sup>2</sup> What I observed by engaging with curatorial interventions such as Udall's was the possibility for pushing the boundaries of critical studies of artists and artworks beyond those that established art historical narratives allowed.

Thinking about exhibitions led me to wonder why ostensibly different artists were not brought into a productive relationship with one another. Certainly there were other models beyond the conventional group survey show, where artists were brought together according to stylistic or thematic commonalities. I was concerned with the political potential and implications of artistic practices that had been relegated to the margins. Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's work on Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti was therefore of interest, for their exhibition began with a meditation on marginality. In contrast to a group survey show, this exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery (1982) allowed for the emergence of issues relating to the personal and the political. This was achieved by juxtaposing the work these women produced in Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s. Noting that neither Kahlo nor Modotti solely fitted into the categories of the 'personal' or the 'political,' Mulvey and Wollen's film and exhibition catalogue highlighted how each artist provoked and defied such classifications.<sup>3</sup> This type of exhibition

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2. See *Ibid.* These are the three main organising categories for the exhibition and book. In her discussion of landscape and identity, Udall considered nationality, region, and the cultural landscape of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In the section entitled '[T]he Private Self' Udall looked at self-portraiture, the artist's working spaces ('a Place of Her Own'), spirituality, sexuality, androgyny, and personal appearance. The book concludes with a chapter on the public self. Here the careers and legacies of these artists are discussed. The exhibition Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: *Places of Their Own* opened at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario, on June 30, 2001, and was on display until September 9, 2001. It then toured to the Santa Fe Museum of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Women in Art (Washington, D.C.), and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

3. Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti*, exh. cat. ed. by (Whitechapel Art Gallery, London: 1982). Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's discussion began with a meditation on artists '[O]n the Margins.' The issues of marginality were twofold, and stemmed from the fact that these were artists connected with the Mexican Renaissance and that the art in the exhibition was 'women's art.' See pp. 7-10. The idea that these artists were marginalized because of their nationality and gender connects to Udall's 2001 study. The film that Mulvey and Wollen subsequently produced made the connection between the personal and political in relation to Kahlo and Modotti explicit. See Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti*, DVD (Suffolk: Concord Films Council Ltd, 1983). The narration in the film cites the themes (History, Biography, and The Body) that organize both exhibition and film: 'Each defined herself differently in the face of the necessities and accidents of history and biography, and in relationship to her own body. Yet both were women artists

demonstrated how the political, historical, and personal interrelated, and in so-doing offered an alternative curatorial strategy.

The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), a premier art museum in Canada, has promoted new strategies of engagement when it recently re-hung its collection (2009). Known as 'Transformation AGO,' the interventions enabled new sites of encounter for the viewer. In the transformed AGO, contemporary work is displayed or interwoven with historical work throughout, highlighting themes across borders and time. Work by Canadian artists is installed alongside internationally renowned artists in an attempt to level the playing field for Canadian art making. This strategy aims to elevate the stature of Canadian art from its marginal position. The strategy employed by curators at the AGO allows artists whose works would not conventionally be installed alongside one another to dialogue, and for their works to confront one another. An effort has also been made throughout the gallery to make work by women visible. The AGO's installation 'History and Her Story' curated by Catherine de Zegher and drawn from the interventions she and artist Kara Walker conducted in the gallery (2008-2009) allowed for the recovery and re-presentation of Clark's *Self-Portrait* of 1925 in order to enable the artist to take part in an international 'conversation' between modern artists, not all of whom were women.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the practice of exhibiting virtually unknown works by women artists in different, international contexts underscores the importance of these types of interventions

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working consciously in the context of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath, a time of violent upheaval and cultural awakening.'

4. When Catherine de Zegher visited Leeds from the 4-6th March, 2010, I had the opportunity to discuss my work with her. She told me that she found Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) in the basement at the AGO. While this painting has formed part of the AGO's permanent collection since 1979, the canvas had only been exhibited as part of the retrospective focused on the artist's paintings and drawings from the 1920s - 1950s, curated by Mary MacLachlan in 1982. See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, exh. cat. ed. by (Dalhousie Art Gallery, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S.: 1982).

that demand a redress of narratives that position canonical artists at the fore and relegate others to the margins. It is for this reason that I looked to Anne Wagner's book *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (1996), which inspired the title of my project. Wagner's study gave new significance to three artists, with the aim of re-positioning them as modernists. By looking at the work and careers of these artists, Wagner demonstrated their invaluable contributions to three decisive moments in the history of American modernism: the avant-garde of the 1920s, the New York School of the 1940s and 1950s, and the modernist redefinition undertaken in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> What linked Krasner, O'Keeffe, and Hesse was gender and their position as marginalized artists in the history of American Modernism.

I had begun to question why artists such as Cahun, Mammen, and Clark whose art practices I had come to understand as politically engaged and whose marginal status stemmed from their positions not only as women in a gendered hierarchy, but also as artists who were political or in a sexual minority, had been dealt with in narrow terms that did not allow for these differences. As with these curatorial projects and strategies of intervention, this thesis aims to invite comparisons between artists and artworks without imposing them.

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5. Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

*(a) On Double Margins and Marginality*

As I read more theoretically informed criticism, I began to see the importance of Teresa De Lauretis' call for another perspective, for a 'view from elsewhere.' In 'The Technology of Gender,' she described 'the problem' feminist scholars faced almost daily :

namely that most of the available theories of reading, writing, sexuality, ideology, or any other cultural production are built on male narratives of gender, whether oedipal or anti-oedipal, bound by the heterosexual contract; narratives which persistently tend to re-produce themselves in feminist theories. They tend to, and will do so unless one constantly resists, suspicious of their drift. Which is why the critique of all discourses concerning gender, including those produced or promoted as feminist, continues to be as vital a part of feminism as is the ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective—a view from "elsewhere."<sup>6</sup>

Such a different perspective, a view from 'elsewhere,' one which is seen as being both inside and outside of ideology, is central to this work. De Lauretis' elaboration of her idea of a view from 'elsewhere' raises a point that relates to my work, namely, that these women were visible and active cultural producers in their own time.

It is the mechanisms of discourse that have subsequently rendered them invisible. Drawing on theories of marginality such as those articulated feminist literary scholar Susan Rubin Suleiman, I contend that Cahun, Mammen, and Clark are all situated in the space of a 'double margin.' Moreover, each of the women discussed occupies a place on a different margin, in relation to different modern art movements. In order, therefore, to talk about the real marginalization of Claude Cahun, Jeanne Mammen, and Paraskeva Clark, one must look at their individual cases in their historical and national specificity. I believe that employing a variety of theoretical vocabularies ranging from Walter Benjamin to Gilles Deleuze and Félix

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6. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). p. 25.

Guattari, has enabled me to produce innovative readings of the works of these three artists. Combining these vocabularies with those of feminism and the social history of art model that understands art as inherently connected to the social and political questions of the time, will allow for these 'new spaces of discourse.'

It is significant to make that 'elsewhere' which exists in the margins of hegemonic discourses and representations visible. It is this position on the margins—one that is occupied by these three women and consciously maintained—that I understand as a productive stance that is worthy of study. De Lauretis deemed this space on the margins as one where 'the terms of a different construction of gender can be posed—terms that do have effect and take hold at the level of subjectivity and self-representation: in the micropolitical practices of daily life and daily resistances that afford both agency and sources of power or empowering investments; and in the cultural productions of women, feminists, which inscribe that movement in and out of ideology, that crossing back and forth of the boundaries— and of the limits—of sexual difference(s).'<sup>7</sup> Considering the work of these three artists reveals that it is possible to posit a different construction of gender through resistance. The micropolitical practices of everyday life were also relevant to each of the artists posed here as case-studies for an examination of politically engaged art practices. Their works, as a result of being produced from a marginal vantage point, often attempt to de-familiarize the viewer by producing imagery that serves as a rupture effecting reflection and thought.

The question of margins and centres is not new territory for either studies of historical practices deemed to be *avant-garde*, or to women's studies that endeavour to bring those on the margins into the mainstream. My intervention, with its focus on marginality,

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7. Ibid. p. 25.

takes its lead from Susan Rubin Suleiman's work on the trope of the margin as it relates to both women and to avant-garde movements. Women and avant-garde movements both occupy a marginal position, as they are situated away from the centre, in the margins or on the edge. Suleiman's intervention into the debates regarding margins and centres alters the narrative of the history of the avant-garde first by introducing gender and the politics of gender into the theoretical discussion as major categories. Suleiman also raises a significant point with respect to historical avant-garde movements: while artists who invest themselves in avant-garde projects choose the margins because this position offers a better space from which to attack the centre, women are conversely relegated to the margins so that women's practice can be described as doubly marginal.<sup>8</sup>

By revising the role of women in the avant-garde who were hitherto viewed as central to the project in their role as *object* or muse, Suleiman has unravelled the 'woman'/avant-garde/marginality trope. As subjects and cultural producers, women and their work can be characterized by a double allegiance both to the formal experiments of the historical (largely male-dominated) avant-gardes, and to critiques of dominant ideologies, including the gendered hierarchies of those same avant-gardes. As Suleiman has noted, the general doublings in women's practice may be the most innovative aspect of experimental work by women.<sup>9</sup>

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8. See Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent : Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*, (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1990). pp. 11-32. Suleiman remarks on the difference between avant-garde movements that have wilfully chosen their marginal position and women who more often than not have been cast far away from the centres where subjects enact and invent their symbolic and material rites. She has also noted that 'It has become increasingly clear that the relegating of women to the margins of culture is not unrelated to the place accorded to "woman" by the cultural imaginary: ... "woman" has been the name for whatever undoes the whole, that which threatens the fullness of the subject, the wild zone that threatens the construction of reason, the dark continent that threatens the regions of light.' (p. 14).

9. See *Ibid.* In her discussion of contemporary feminist artistic practice, Suleiman argued for the recognition of both differences and joint allegiances 'between male avant-gardes and contemporary feminists, as well as for the multiple differences between and among women artists.' Her argument that contemporary feminists share a formal allegiance with the historical European avant-gardes can be applied to the case studies at hand. Similarly, what Suleiman has termed a 'double allegiance—on the one hand, to the formal experiments and some of the

I have taken Suleiman's concept of the 'double margin,' whereby women have been relegated to the margins of historical discourse, as something positive. Critical and political work can be the outcome of practices and lives lived in the space of the double margin. Suleiman has argued for a more positive and empowering understanding of the trope of the margin for feminine subjects, for there were ways in which:

the sense of being "doubly marginal" and therefore "totally avant-garde" provides the female subject with a kind of centrality, *in her own eyes*. In a system in which the marginal, the avant-garde, the subversive, all that disturbs and "undoes the whole" is endowed with positive value, a woman artist who can identify those concepts with her own practice and metaphorically with her own femininity can find in them a source of strength and self-legitimation.<sup>10</sup>

There is a sense in which we can positively understand Cahun, Moore, Mammen, and Clark as consciously inhabiting this space of the double margin so that their positions are so far out as to be elsewhere.

Suleiman's work on the double margin, women writers and the avant-garde (French Surrealism, specifically) revealed that because of their doubly marginal position women were in effect excluded from the narratives. This exclusion was in part due to the sexist bias of those writing the histories, but as Suleiman forcefully points out, '[T]he fact is that no women [including Claude Cahun] were present or active participants in the early years of the movement.'<sup>11</sup> Suleiman concludes that 'if women are to be part of an avant-garde movement, they will do well to found it themselves.'<sup>12</sup>

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cultural aspirations of the historical male avant-gardes; on the other hand, to the feminist critique of dominant sexual ideologies, including those of the very same avant-gardes—can be found ... in the work of women Surrealists ... [and] in that of other experimental women artists working today as well.' pp. 162-3.

10. Ibid. pp. 16-17.

11. Ibid. p. 30. my insertion.

12. Ibid. p. 32.

Artistic communities founded by women, which exemplified the double allegiance to the historical avant-garde, have been explored in Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank* (1986), a useful study of American and English expatriate women writing in Paris between 1900-1940. Although Benstock did not utilize the concept of the double margin, she examined the contributions of some two dozen women to the literary fabric of Paris, observing that many established powerful, and even avant-garde communities. To account for this fact, noting that it was not accidental that these communities were primarily established by lesbians, Benstock turns to Monique Wittig's writings on desire, explaining that the formation of these circles were 'not only the desire for one's own sex, "it is also the desire for something else that is not connoted ... this desire is resistance to the norm."<sup>13</sup>

Community and resistance are important concepts for a proper understanding of the work of Claude Cahun. In spite of the fact that she has become a more recognised artist as a result of work undertaken in the late 1980s and 1990s that identified a certain resonance between her work and performative theories of gender that were then prominent, Cahun remains something of an enigmatic figure whose practice has not been fully explored. Cahun is celebrated as an important surrealist photographer, one of a select few women affiliated with a movement otherwise dominated by men that has been labelled as misogynist.<sup>14</sup> Cahun's

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13. Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900 - 1940*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). p. x. Monique Wittig "'Paradigm": Homosexualities and French Literature' (1979) is quoted.

14. Rudolf E. Kuenzli discusses Surrealism as an inherently misogynist movement whose art and poetry was addressed to men, citing women as only a means to facilitate their work. See Rudolf E. Kuenzli, 'Surrealism and Misogyny', in *Surrealism and Women*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws and Gloria Gwen Raaberg Rudolf E. Kuenzli. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993), (pp. 17-26). Kuenzli states that Surrealism, like so many other avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, was a 'men's club.' Referring to the iconic photomontage of Surrealists around a painting by Magritte published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1929 Kuenzli wrote that "The Surrealists lived in their own masculine world with their eyes closed, the better to construct their male phantasms of the feminine. They did not see woman as subject, but as a projection, an object of their own dreams of femininity. These masculine dreams play a part in patriarchy's misogynistic position of women." (p. 18). Converseley, Penelope Rosemont praises the extent to which Surrealists rejected and avoided the misogynist climate of the postwar years, although she does acknowledge that they did reflect some of the political reaction to the chaos of the time, which was inherently linked to misogyny. Rosemont acknowledges the visual and poetic work that also appears to be



recognition can be understood as a fashionable assimilation into theoretically conscious art historical discourse. In order to avoid marginalization that understands this work solely in relation to these discourses, a more complete analysis of the specificity of a practice is needed, in particular one that attends to the fact that the artist consciously chose an overtly Jewish surname, Cahun, belonging to her 'obscure Jewish relatives.'<sup>15</sup>

While it may seem at odds to discuss Cahun's work in a study on marginality given that the artist has been recovered, in my view the scholarship that has thus far been produced has been largely limited by the theoretical frames and concerns of feminism and poststructuralism. It is my opinion that work remains to be done, particularly to produce readings such as the one that follows which contest the widespread understanding of her photographs as self-portraiture. Cahun worked with her partner Marcel Moore. In an effort to challenge the normative readings of Cahun's work, I will refer to the photographs as performative images produced by Cahun/Moore rather than simply self-portraits, thereby acknowledging the collaborative nature of Cahun and Moore's practice.

Cahun's political interventions that move beyond a critique of gender are neglected in analyses of her photographs focused on gender performativity and transgression, as is her Jewishness. Hannah Arendt's writings on Jewishness will be used to theoretically frame the exploration of Cahun's Jewish heritage, arguing that in Arendt's terms Cahun was a 'conscious pariah,' who was aware of her position on the margins and chose to remain there because of the critical potential such a position afforded.<sup>16</sup> In Arendt's view, the status of pariah—the

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misogynistic. See Penelope Rosemont's Introduction to *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, ed. by Penelope Rosemont, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998). pp. xlv-xlvi.

15. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (Paris: Jean Michel Place, 2002). p. 709.

16. See Hannah Arendt *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome and Ron H. Feldman Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007). pp. 264- 274; 275-297, and Arendt. Hannah *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern*

social outcast—characterized the position of the Jews in Western Europe following the Enlightenment and emancipation because they were never truly accepted by European society. To be a 'conscious pariah' rather than a *parvenu* trying to assimilate into culture, one can adopt the position Judith Butler described that is both inside and outside of ideology. In her discussion of performative failure, Butler claims that this failure drives the subject outside of discourse and thereby 'achieves a perspective from which to see itself as so formed, a perspective from which it is then able to understand the character and operation of discourse.'<sup>17</sup> As a conscious pariah, Cahun was able to view and understand the gendered and limiting social and political structures that disallowed the types of identities that she adopted and with which she played. It was from this vantage point that Cahun/Moore created their photographic work together, mobilizing their view from elsewhere into a powerful critique.

That Cahun was a prolific writer known during her lifetime for her experimental poetry and prose and not for her visual work is something that has been largely overlooked. The critique that I put forward regarding the scholarship on Claude Cahun, then, also engages in a process of viewing from another perspective, one that resists dominant narratives that have previously been produced. One must critique these discourses even if they are promoted as feminist. It is through this questioning and resistance that it becomes possible to avoid always producing and re-producing the same stories.

Each of the artists discussed in the following chapters are marginal figures, in spite of scholarship that exists pertaining to their respective lives and artworks. As Susan Suleiman has astutely phrased it, the question for feminist literary [and visual] theory is how to read the

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*Age*, ed. by Ron H. Feldman, (New York: Grove Press, 1978). These texts will be drawn upon in chapter 2.

17. Robert M. Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self*, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2002). p. 91.

works of the past critically, without simplifying them.<sup>18</sup> The analysis of the works intertwined with the lives of the artists that follows offers critical readings of this kind, ones that are not overarching or simplified. Although biography will not be entirely dispensed with—for it is necessary to understand the conditions of production—readings will be put forward that endeavour to move beyond monographic art historical narrative. In many cases, the works in question resist easy readings and this difficulty in deciphering meaning is respected in favour of highlighting the complexities and engaging in a process of reading that is historically grounded.

The question of marginality is not a simple one, given that each artist occupied a place on different margins. Jeanne Mammen's work for the mass illustrated presses in inter-war Germany, for example, has been marginalized by art historical discourse. This is in part but not only due to the fact that hers was a commercial practice as opposed to something that might be identified as Fine Art, experimental, or avant-garde. The question of marginality with respect to Jeanne Mammen, however, is more than simply the opposition between high and low culture given the nature of her practice. Mammen's position on the fringe is more complex than it initially appears. I will argue that in Mammen's case, the space she occupies in the margins of hegemonic discourse also owes something to the institutional practices of the archive. My time spent visiting that particular archive in Berlin uncovered a carefully controlled apparatus structured around power and knowledge. This experience prompted the discussion of how a scholar negotiates this type of resource, one which preserved a valuable resource but is complicit with the continued marginalization of Mammen's work. Mammen's legacy has suffered as a result of a deep personal investment on the part of those that maintain

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18. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent : Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*, (1990). p. xvi. Suleiman cautions against 'reducing every opposition to a qualitative difference between "masculine" and "feminine," for example; without reading (and writing) the same story, no matter how edifying or ideologically "correct" it may appear.'

her studio as she left it when she died in 1976.

To discuss Paraskeva Clark as an artist outside of mainstream Canadian art, as someone who exists on the margins of art historical discourse poses something of a special challenge. Although until recently little new scholarship had been produced relating to Paraskeva Clark, she is an artist who has generally been included in canonical studies of Canadian painting, albeit as somewhat of an aside for she represents an anomaly as one of the few artists who produced politically engaged work during the 1930s in Toronto. Normally, Clark is included in art historical surveys as a political artist, a 'Russian Red,' who produced work sympathetic with leftist ideology. This type of politically conscious art was more common in Montreal, particularly amongst Jewish artists. The fact that Clark produced such work in Toronto, which was the centre of the Canadian art scene at that time, contributed to her marginal status.<sup>19</sup> What is more, discussing those on the margin in relation to those in the mainstream in Canada poses a particular problem in the context of Canadian art. For, as curator Joan Murray has noted, Canadian culture is itself on the margins, trying to find a way to situate itself in the mainstream, defined as New York or Europe.<sup>20</sup>

Clark was an artist whose European training worked both for and against her.

Because she was familiar with European, avant-garde practices— notably Russian

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19. The fact that Clark also produced numerous self-portraits, which will be the focus of the first chapter where her work is discussed, also rendered her marginal. Several artists in Montreal painted portraits frequently as part of their practice including the women who formed the Beaver Hall Group. There were many political artists based in Montreal who claimed to be socialists or even communists, including Louis Muhlstock (1904-2001), and Alexander Bercovitch (1892-1951). Muhlstock is best known for his politicized images from the 1930s, whereas Bercovitch painted a mural bearing the same title as Clark's best known work *Petroushka* (1948). For a study of Jewish artists in Montreal, several of whom produced political work, see Esther Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs de Montréal: Témoins de Leur Époque, 1930-1948*, (Montréal: Éditions de L'Homme, 1987). For studies on Montreal's modern women artists known as the Beaver Hall Group see Barbara Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends: The Beaver Hall Women Painters*, (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1999). and Evelyn Walters, *The Women of Beaver Hall: Canadian Modernist Painters*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2005).

20. Joan Murray, *Confessions of a Curator: Adventures in Canadian Art*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996). p. 157.

constructivism— Clark became something of a curiosity amongst a community of artists in Toronto who were still deeply attached to the idea of developing a nationalist and uniquely 'Canadian' aesthetic. It was her allegiance to the European avant-garde movements that also rendered her marginal, however, for her work did not strictly adhere to the nationalist concerns of landscape painting that predominated in Canadian art at the time, especially in Toronto. As a woman, Paraskeva Clark was excluded from important discussions and activities in the local art community; the Arts and Letters Club did not allow women to enter or participate in events. Because Clark employed avant-garde tactics in her work, ones which were linked to her training in and connection to her native Petrograd (St. Petersburg) I will argue that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conceptualisation of the 'minor' offers a useful lens for a politically productive reading of Clark's artwork. What Deleuze and Guattari call 'minor literature,' corresponds to collective assemblages of enunciation through which practices of aesthetic creativity become directly indexed to the social and political forces inscribing them and inscribed within them.<sup>21</sup>

Each case-study will be discussed separately, with the intention of exploring the practices of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark while employing the trope of the margin as a central theme unifying the disparate array of artworks produced by these distinguished artists. The use of the term 'marginal' stems from an understanding of modernism as a selective tradition, and follows from the work of feminist scholars who have examined the ideologies at work in modernist canon formations that have defined what ought to be considered as significant art practice and what consequently has been overlooked or rendered marginal.<sup>22</sup> My

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21. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Translated by Dana Polan. foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

22. Both Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock are significant scholars of art history who have challenged modernism's exclusions, exposing the inherent sexism of ideological structures, and have both also initiated new

aim here is not to put forward a single theory of marginality as it relates to the artistic practice of women during the inter-war years, nor to produce exhaustive or monographic studies of each of the artists under discussion, but rather to engage in a process of critically reading a selection of works by each artist. Such an approach to the works of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark enables readings of their works that have not been produced so far. In terms of imagery, subject matter, and style, each artist's production constitutes a type of political engagement that embraces the politics of gender, and of the avant-garde.

*(b) Modern Women, Politics, and Artistic Practice*

In my analyses centred around Claude Cahun, Jeanne Mammen, and Paraskeva Clark, I am concerned with the ways in which ideas of modernity intersect with sexual difference, sexuality, and political beliefs at a specific historical moment: that of the inter-war period in Europe and Canada. Any study that explores the relationship between gender, sexuality and modernity during the 1920s and 1930s necessarily engages with previous scholarship on both modernism and the so-called modern woman. Tirza True Latimer and Whitney Chadwick have defined the modern 'new' woman as 'a trope for the perceived, if illusory, "freedoms" and hedonism of a generation of young women in Paris and elsewhere in the 1920s.'<sup>23</sup> Employing Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's taxonomy of the New Woman, Laura Doan has argued that a second generation of 'New Women,' who came of age during the opening decades of the

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forms of critical inquiry in the field of feminist art history. See for example, the 1971 article by Linda Nochlin in Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Amelia Jones. 2003), (pp. 229-233). For Griselda Pollock's important initial interventions see and Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

23. See the authors' introduction to *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris Between the Wars*, ed. by Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer, (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003). p. xv.

twentieth century 'plunged into creative and artistic fields and "fused their challenge of gender conventions with a repudiation of bourgeois sexual norms."<sup>24</sup> The idea of the New Woman, who both represented change in the perception of normative gender roles and challenged the cultural autonomy accorded to men, was of critical use to each of the artists under discussion here.

I argue that we ought to understand the respective practices of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark and the artwork they produced as political. My use of the concept of 'political engagement' stems from the fact that the work produced as a result of the three practices under discussion here effected a rupture, and that their lives and work constantly engaged with the immediate social and political realities of their respective locations. Not all of the work produced by each artist is overtly political in its imagery, nor does it seek to represent political solutions, yet each of the works under consideration encourages critical reflection on the part of viewers by rendering the ordinary or familiar strange.<sup>25</sup> Here I echo Walter Benjamin's remarks on montage and Brecht's Epic Theatre, which will be addressed in the following chapters. In 'The Author as Producer' (1934) Benjamin refers to Brecht's Epic Theatre and the alienation effect that engenders critical distance for the audience, encouraging them to reflect on social, political and/or economic circumstances determining their spectatorial role. Also of interest, therefore, is an exploration of the political potential and

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24. Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). pp. xv-xvi.

25. See Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 2, 1931-1934*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Gary Smith. Michael W. Jennings. Translated by Rodney Livingstone and Others (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), (pp. 769-782). Howard Eiland has also offered a helpful discussion on Benjamin's view that Epic Theatre has the capability to engender critical reflection by rendering the familiar strange. See Howard Eiland, 'Reception in Distraction', in *Walter Benjamin and Art*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin. (London: Continuum, 2005), (pp. 3-13). Réda Bensmaïa has elaborated on the connection between Benjamin's work on Kafka relating to both the gestus and the alienation effect and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the minor, and the minor usage of language that renders it unfamiliar. See Reda Bensmaïa 'Foreward: The Kafka Effect' in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). pp. xii-xiii.

implications of these respective artistic practices.

Common elements in the practice of each artist were the importance of the theatre and theatricality together with the use of the avant-garde technique of montage. Walter Benjamin's writings on montage are especially useful in attending to the practices of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark that I have identified as politically engaged, and will be referred to throughout the thesis. Benjamin defined montage as 'the superimposed element [that] disrupts the context in which it is inserted.'<sup>26</sup> Benjamin believed that montage, as a technique premised on interruption, was 'concerned less with filling the public with feelings, even seditious ones, than with alienating it in an enduring way, *through thinking*, from the conditions in which it lives.'<sup>27</sup> The works of all three women also evince a certain degree of political awareness, which, however, is conveyed through visual means rather than overtly ideological discourse.

Claude Cahun is conceivably the only one out of the three artists whose work might be classed as forming part of the historical avant-garde movement of Surrealism. Yet I will argue for a broader understanding of the term avant-garde, given that my readings of the works acknowledge the critical potential inherent in each image under discussion. That both Jeanne Mammen and Paraskeva Clark can be said to have produced work that resonates with an avant-garde sensibility stems from an understanding based on Suleiman's definition that, 'the hallmark of an avant-garde practice or project attempts to effect radical change and innovation both in the symbolic field (including what has been called the aesthetic realm), and the social and political field of everyday life.'<sup>28</sup> Mammen, Clark, and Cahun/Moore attempted

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26. Walter Benjamin *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008). (79-95) p. 90.

27. *Ibid.* pp. 90-91 (my emphasis).



to engender critical reflection and effect change through their work, and this I maintain constitutes political engagement.

*(c) Reading the Case-Studies*

The question of the political nature of the photographs produced by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore attests to the idea of creation as a political instrument. While the collaborative work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in particular their concept of a minor literature will be drawn upon in the discussion of the political paintings of Paraskeva Clark, it is useful to point to the fact that these French philosophers openly discussed the nature of political art by positing minor literature as an art with political commitment and creation as a political instrument. These ideas form the core of Deleuze and Guattari's political analysis with respect to art and literature.<sup>29</sup>

Cahun and Moore's intervention into the politicized debates of feminine representation and sexual identity take form in their attempt to create a new visual vocabulary for themselves using the means available to them in culture at large. Shortly after the pair began their collaboration, Lucy Schwob adopted the gender neutral yet Jewish pseudonym of 'Claude Cahun.' Cahun chose this particular surname at a time when anti-Semitism was on the rise in the wake of the 1906 exoneration of Alfred Dreyfus, an event which revived the debates surrounding the scandal of the Dreyfus Affair. Few scholars have addressed Cahun's relation to a heavily freighted ethnic-religious background beyond taking note of it as a biographical

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28. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent : Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*, (1990). p. xv.

29. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986).

detail because they have viewed her project as one focused on the dissolution of fixed identity. I will show that in both the texts and the images that Cahun, and Cahun/Moore produced the trace of the affect of Cahun's involvement with 'Jewishness' surfaces. In addition to the politically engaged performative images Cahun/Moore produced, the two women actively resisted the oppressive forces of fascism through performative interventions when they lived under Nazi occupation in Jersey. Finally, the work and interventions the women staged as 'The Soldier With No Name' highlight what is rarely focused on in scholarly discussions of their work: that Cahun and Moore transitioned from making art amongst themselves largely intended for a small, private audience to political activists who employed art in their two-woman resistance campaign against the Nazi occupation of Jersey. Political engagement that was present from the beginning of the artistic practice of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore is brought sharply into focus here, as creative practice was courageously mobilized as a political tool, putting their lives at risk.

The question of how art can be used to engender conscious, critical reflection is raised in the chapter dealing with Jeanne Mammen's role in constructing the iconic image of Germany's New Woman, the *Neue Frau*. I argue for an understanding of Mammen as an observer who produced nuanced visual critiques of contemporary society that were markedly different from those of her contemporaries such as Otto Dix or George Grosz, who were also working in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) style. Mammen's images of fashionable women explore the ways in which the realm of mass-produced fashion functioned as a site for self-expression and experimentation. As Laura Doan has noted in her study of modern English lesbian culture—or what she has termed Sapphic modernity—the fluidity of gender roles spilled into various realms, including fashion, and contributed to the heightened

confusion and cultural anxieties of the period.<sup>30</sup> Mammen's images are considered in this context, when gender deviation was enmeshed with fashionable clothing and hairstyles. As I read them, Mammen's images demonstrate the value of images circulated as part of popular culture. As cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer noted of the mass-cultural artifact, it was the image or object's 'cultural marginality [that] warrants its truth value.'<sup>31</sup>

Several of Mammen's watercolours functioned as ruptures to the traditional roles offered to women, even though Jeanne Mammen herself was critical of this culturally constructed icon of the New Woman that her images helped promote. Mammen's work engaged with the highly politicized debates around sex and women's roles, thus raising the question of how to read the paintings she produced as a commercial illustrator. Her practice involved drawing and painting from what she observed on the streets as she roamed through the metropolitan spaces of Berlin. Jeanne Mammen's practice is, therefore, considered in relation to current debates concerned with alternate ways that women participated in city life, and whether or not the solitary and independent life of the *flâneur* was available her. Her images as well as her art practice shed light on the ways in which women were visible and how their practice of looking was incorporated into city life.

Finally, the case study devoted to an analysis of Paraskeva Clark's begins with a discussion of a selection of her self-portraits, produced between 1925 and 1933. Here I argue

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30. Doan devotes a chapter to fashion in relation to lesbian culture entitled 'Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s' which will be drawn upon in the case-studies devoted to both Cahun/Moore and Jeanne Mammen. See Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, (2001). p. xviii and pp. 95-125.

31. See Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. by Thomas Y. Levin, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). p. 15. It is also significant that Walter Benjamin also lauded the merits of mass culture in both *The Arcades Project* and his famed 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999) (211-244).

that Clark's self-portraits present viewers with political works that function as a counter-discourse. Analysing these paintings as political works expands the ways in which women's self-portraiture has been written about. I conclude the study by reading three works that I identify as Paraskeva Clark's political paintings, two of which have previously been referred to simply as 'whimsical still-life paintings,' thus missing the subtly sophisticated critique the artist presented to her audience. The use of the avant-garde technique of montage, I argue, connects her to the Russian avant-garde, and it is this minor usage of a major visual 'language'—in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense—that enables a political reading.

My reading of these case studies aims to develop a more subtle and complex picture of the politically engaged practices of each of these artists. I have endeavoured to expand Susan Rubin Suleiman's concept of the double margin to include sexuality, political engagement, and national or ethnic minority. The thesis addresses the ways in which marginality might be negotiated, in particular to redress specific works of art so they become politically readable. The critique inherent in the works of art produced by these women, therefore, can be made visible, for each piece of art embodies a reflection on the context to which it relates. While artists like Claude Cahun and Paraskeva Clark may not appear marginal in the contexts of Queer or Canadian art history respectively, I suggest that both women appeared in these discourses at certain moments but much work remains to be done to sustain their presence in the collective imagination. The goal is not to integrate them into canonical art history but to shift the terms of understanding to position these artists in an expanded history of the inter-war period. The discussions that follow examine this expanded history to include the phenomenon I am tracking, that of the double margin. Above all, I have taken up De Lauretis' challenge to resist, to be critical and to rewrite cultural narratives.

## I. Claude Cahun (1894-1954) & Marcel Moore (1892-1972)

The photographer known as Claude Cahun (*née* Lucy Schwob, 1894-1954) was first recognised or recovered as an important woman Surrealist in the exhibition *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, curated by Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston.<sup>1</sup> Krauss and Livingston included six photographs attributed to Claude Cahun in their exhibition, which was on view from July to September, 1986, at the Hayward Gallery in London. As virtually nothing was known about her at the time, Cahun's entry in the biography section of the exhibition catalogue listed her date and place of birth and death as unknown and erroneously stated that she was deported to, and died in a concentration camp.<sup>2</sup> Since her 1986 'discovery,' the artist has become something of a cult figure for scholars and audiences alike who are interested in feminist and queer discourses centred around identity politics, and those women who trouble ideas of gender and sexuality. She has been the subject of no less than two films, and her work has been included in numerous exhibitions devoted to women, Surrealism, or self-portraiture, to name a few conceptual areas that fit Cahun's oeuvre. There is also a substantial body of critical literature devoted to her work, in addition to two biographical volumes in French authored by the leading Cahun expert, François Leperlier. Her collected writings have been published in full in the French collection *Écrits* (2002) and her artist's book

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1. I will primarily refer to Lucy Schwob and her partner Suzanne Malherbe using their chosen artist names, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. I will, however, refer to images taken prior to the adoption of these pseudonyms by naming the artists by their birth names, names which they used to refer to themselves in correspondence and that they never legally changed. The use of the name Lucy Schwob becomes particularly relevant in the discussion that follows that is focused on Cahun's Jewishness.

2. See Winifred Schiffman, 'Artists Biographies and Bibliographies' in Rosalind Krauss, *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, with Jane Livingston and Dawn Ades. exh. cat. ed. by Rosalind Krauss (Arts Council of Great Britain, London: 1986). p. 205.

*Aveux non Avenus* (1930) has been translated into English as *Disavowals— or Cancelled Confessions* (2009).

As Claude Cahun has already been recovered as an important photographer and writer, it may seem paradoxical to discuss her work in a thesis which tracks the practices of artists who occupied a position that I will argue was doubly marginal. Cahun's recovery, however, coincided with a particular moment in feminist art historical discourse and the post-structuralism of the 1980s and 1990s. As Lucy Lippard has rightly pointed out, had Cahun been rediscovered in the 1970s, the discussion around her work would have been quite different.<sup>3</sup> Miranda Welby-Everard's more recent work on Cahun (2006) has tried to reposition the artist in an effort to rescue her from analyses that 'have tended to confine her to the surrealist canon or the ahistorical forum of feminist/postmodernist theorisation tying her sexual ambivalence to the gender/identity frame, and leaving the discipline of theatre unrecognised as the essential language of the artist.'<sup>4</sup>

I believe that what is needed now to prevent Claude Cahun from slipping to the margins of the theoretically fashionable is to shift the terms of our understanding of her practice. That practice has been seen as one focused on a self-portraiture, and the art is understood as a precursor to performative theories of gender. Cahun's work has been read in this way in light of Judith Butler's groundbreaking *Gender Trouble* (1990), specifically the chapter where drag is addressed.<sup>5</sup> Although there certainly is a theatrical element to Cahun's

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3. See Lucy R. Lippard, 'Scattering Selves' in *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*. exh. cat. ed. by Shelley Rice (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1999). (27-42) p. 36.

4. Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor: The Theatre of Claude Cahun', *Oxford Art Journal*, 29 (1) (2006), (1-24). p. 3.

5. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1999). especially the last two chapters: 'Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions,' and the conclusion 'From Parody to Politics.'

performances in front of the camera that is likewise characteristic of Butler's theory of performativity, there are marked differences as well. Drag ought not to be understood as a reflection of the performer's intent, as Butler makes clear. One does not, to employ Butler's own later example (1993) choose an gender as one selects clothes from a wardrobe.<sup>6</sup> I will refer to the photographs as performative images, however, and I will ground this in a revision of Butler on performativity and drag.

Cahun has also been constructed as a reclaimed author/artist, and this overlooks the collaborative nature of her art practice. In order to contest that conventional view, I will begin first by mapping out how Claude Cahun has surfaced in scholarly discourse. I will then present readings of some of the photographs attributed to Cahun in order to demonstrate that her collaborative project was one intended to elaborate a new visual vocabulary in order to articulate something that had hitherto not been representable. I will show how culturally legible signs present in France in this period were mobilized to that end. Finally, I will address a completely neglected aspect of Cahun's practice, namely the political interventions that went beyond gender transgressions. Cahun's sense of herself as belonging to an ethnic minority—her sense of her Jewishness—led to her collaborative resistance work that culminated in *Der Soldat ohne Namen*

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6. Butler revised or rather clarified her example of drag in an essay published in 1993, 'Critically Queer.', which was published in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1): 21.

## 1. Revisiting Encounters with Claude Cahun

Claude Cahun's visual work first resurfaced following the death of Suzanne Malherbe in 1972 when their work was auctioned in Jersey. Book and photograph collector John Wakeman, of Jersey, purchased the lot (contained in tea chests and cartons) for £21, outbidding art historian John Berger.<sup>7</sup> When her sculpture known as *Objet*, a work which was included in the 1936 Surrealist exhibition of objects at Gallerie Charles Ratton, was shown in the 1978 exhibition *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* at the Tate Gallery in London, it was listed as 'Anonymous' since nothing of the artist Claude Cahun was known at this time.<sup>8</sup> As previously noted, the photographs were first exhibited in 1986 in the exhibition curated by Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston. Cahun's work then appeared in *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* curated by Sidra Stich at the University Art Museum, UCLA Berkeley in 1990.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, Cahun was not featured in the comprehensive survey exhibition of 1987-88. *La Femme et le Surréalisme*, nor was she included in Whitney Chadwick's *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985).

Cahun's work has been understood as a series of representations that expose the socially constructed nature of gender, and hence appeared to anticipate the theories of thinkers such as Judith Butler, author of *Gender Trouble* (1990).<sup>10</sup> These types of analyses contend that

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7. Louise Downie, 'Introduction' in *Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*. exh. cat. ed. by Louise Downie (Tate Publishing, London: 2006). (7-9) p. 7.

8. See Laurie J. Monahan, *Radical Transformations: Claude Cahun and the Masquerade of Womanliness, Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art In, Of and From the Feminine*. ed. by Catherine de Zegher (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1996). (124-133). p. 133.

9. Sidra Stich, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art*. with essays by James Clifford, Tyler Stovall, and Steven Kovács. exh. cat. ed. by Sidra Stich (University of California Press, Berkeley: 1990). In the section of the catalogue devoted to 'Surrealist Figures' Stich discussed Cahun's sculpture *Objet* (1936) in an examination of how Surrealist art challenged views about the body and body hierarchy. A close up image of Cahun is also included later in the chapter where the photographic technique of doubling is addressed, for in the image we see Cahun looking away from her reflection in the mirror. This image is cited as an example of the use of repetition and superimposition of the same figure using photography. See pp. 32, 56.

10. This is now the conventional interpretation of Cahun's project. Aspects of her practice that have been



the artist's images interrogated any notion of a stable subject position through autobiographical enquiry, since, as both subject and object of the images, Cahun was understood to be performing a series of both masculine and feminine personae to illustrate the multiple and varied aspects of her 'self.' It has been argued that through these multiple self-representations, Claude Cahun presents the self as nothing but a series of constructions, taking her own subjectivity as a means of revealing the impossibility of a fixed or static self.<sup>11</sup> Cahun's own words have been invoked to bolster and fix this interpretation, rendering it absolute, for she wrote in her experimental work *Aveux non Avenus* (1930) that '*Sous ce masque un autre masque. Je n'en finirai pas de soulever tous ces visages.*' This statement, 'Under this mask, another mask. I'll never finish removing all these faces.' is incorporated into the photomontage created by Marcel Moore (*née* Suzanne Malherbe, 1892-1972), which acts as an introductory image to the ninth and final chapter of *Aveux* entitled I.O.U. (self-pride).<sup>12</sup> [Fig. 1.1]

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understood or framed in this way include: Georgiana M. M. Colville, 'Self-Representation as Symptom: The Case of Claude Cahun', in *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, ed. by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2003), the essays in *Inverted Odysseys*, (1999)., Julie Cole, 'Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, and the Collaborative Construction of a Lesbian Subjectivity', in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), ; Carolyn J. Dean, 'Claude Cahun's Double', *Yale French Studies*, 90 (1996), (71-92); Katy Deepwell, 'Uncanny Resemblances', *Women's Art Magazine*, no. 62 (1995), (p. 18); Katy Kline, *In or Out of the Picture: Claude Cahun and Cindy Sherman, Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*. exh. cat. ed. by Whitney Chadwick (MIT Press, Cambridge Mass.: 1999). (66-81).

11. See for example Katy Deepwell, 'Uncanny Resemblances', (1995). See also essays by Lynn Gumpert, Shelley Rice, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau in *Inverted Odysseys*, (1999). Therese Lichtenstein, 'A Mutable Mirror: Claude Cahun', *Artforum*, 30 no. 8 (April, 1992), (64-67). Carolyn J. Dean, 'Claude Cahun's Double', (1996). These scholarly contributions represent but a few examples where this interpretation is given.

12. Claude Cahun, *Disavowals—or Cancelled Confessions*, with contributions from François Leperlier, Agnès Lhermitte and Jennifer Mundy. Translated by Susan de Muth (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2009). p. 183.



Figure 1.1: Cahun/Moore, No Title (I.O.U. self-pride) (c. 1930)

The handwritten sentences incorporated into the photomontage are written around images of Cahun's head collaged from various performative images taken in the 1920s and are placed in two columns rising out from a single neck, the faces layered one on top of the other. The statements frame or encircle Cahun's many masks/faces. The image along with the text seemed to support the idea that Cahun was challenging the notion of a stable self. In their analyses of the photomontages, Honor LaSalle and Abigail Solomon-Godeau invoke Cahun's words from a passage on 'self-love' in *Aveux non Avenus* (1930) where she wrote that 'to mirror' and 'to stabilize'—these are words that have no business here.<sup>13</sup> Yet this phrase is taken out of context. The passage is one of several dedicated to the subjects of self love and the myth of Narcissus in the second chapter of Cahun's 1930 book entitled 'Myself (self-love)' This rumination on self love revolves around mirrors, Narcissus, and the scopophilic joy derived from looking. 'The myth of Narcissus is everywhere. It haunts us.' Cahun wrote, 'It

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13. Claude Cahun quoted in Honor LaSalle and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Surrealist Confession: Claude Cahun's Photomontages', *Afterimage*, 19 (1992), (9-13). p. 10.

has never ceased to inspire the things that make life perfect since the fateful day ... For the invention of polished metal derives from a clear narcissian etymology.' Cahun concludes with: "'Mirror", "fix," these are words that have no place here. In fact what troubles Narcissus the voyeur most is insufficiency, when his own gaze is interrupted.'<sup>14</sup> What we are dealing with is not the unravelling of a stable or fixed identity, but, rather, the workings and interruption of the narcissistic gaze. This is one of many examples where the Cahun/Moore project has been misread in order to fit theoretical concerns.

In a 1992 article written for *Artforum* that focused on Claude Cahun, Therese Lichtenstein asserted that Cahun's project was to present the viewer with an idea of 'a divided, multiple self.'<sup>15</sup> Noting that the work contained what she has identified as an overtly feminist subtext because it examines issues of feminine subjectivity before any such concepts were really invented, Lichtenstein concluded that Cahun's autobiographical explorations prefigured postmodern concerns. She then proceeded to draw comparisons between this work and the photographs of Cindy Sherman which are not autobiographical but do feature Sherman as subject.<sup>16</sup> Both Cahun and Sherman are understood to present viewers with multiple, shifting identities that are assumed at will by the respective photographers who then perform for the camera.<sup>17</sup>

Interpretations similar to Lichtenstein's are typical of the sorts of analyses that misunderstood Cahun's project, in part because they failed to take account of the actual

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14. Claude Cahun, *Disavowals*, (2009). pp. 32-33.

15. Therese Lichtenstein, 'A Mutable Mirror', (April, 1992). p. 64.

16. In Hal Foster's review of the 1986 *L'Amour Fou* exhibition he described Cahun as 'a Cindy Sherman *avant la lettre*'. See Hal Foster, 'L'Amour Faux', *Art in America*, (January 1986), (117-128). p. 127.

17. Therese Lichtenstein, 'A Mutable Mirror', (April, 1992). p. 66.

conditions of production of the work. The photographs produced by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore were not publicly exhibited, and only one portrait was ever published, appearing in the Surrealist publication *Bifur* in April, 1930. The photographs for which Cahun is now celebrated only appeared in her lifetime in the limited edition print of Cahun's artist book *Aveux non Avenus* (1930) as part of the photomontages created by Marcel Moore (with 'instruction' from Cahun) that were used to illustrate the book. Given their small size—most of the portraits were smaller than a 4x6" print—it is conceivable that if these images did circulate beyond Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's artistic community of two, they may have been passed around as a type of *carte visite* amongst close friends.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, Cahun's project is presented to current viewers as a consciously constructed representation of 'a divided, multiple self.'

After her 'recovery' and inclusion in the exhibition *L'Amour Fou*, Cahun and Moore were featured in an exhibition at the Jersey Museum called *Surrealist Sisters*, which was mounted in 1993 when the Jersey Heritage Trust acquired the Cahun/Moore archive. Cahun was then featured in the Institute of Contemporary Art's exhibition *Mise-en-Scène: Claude Cahun, Tacita Dean, Virginia Nimkaroh* held in April, 1994. The ICA exhibition presented Cahun alongside two British contemporary artists, Tacita Dean who is associated with the Young British Artists and who works primarily in film, and Virginia Nimkaroh whose practice incorporates photography, writing, and curating. Cahun's work was then included in the major 1996 exhibition initially held at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston curated by Catherine de Zegher called *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse Through 20th Century Art, In, Of, and From*

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18. Carol Mavor has remarked on the intimacy and pleasure derived from the possession and circulation of such small photographs. See Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995) p. 119.

*the Feminine*. The exhibition was structured in terms of recurring cycles and themes: 'Parts of/for,' 'The Blank in the Page,' 'The Weaving of Water and Words,' and 'Enjabment: "La donna è mobile."' Each section was then subdivided to cover three periods, the 1930s-1940s, the 1960s-1970s, and the 1990s, addressing questions with regard to why some artists were rendered invisible and were only now being recognised.<sup>19</sup> An effort was made to address overlapping themes such as gender and sexuality; the intersection of racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional identities; and the nature of the relationship between work and viewer. A chapter on Cahun by Laurie J. Monahan was included in the first part of the exhibition catalogue 'Parts of/for' alongside essays devoted to the work of Hannah Höch, Louise Bourgeois, and Carol Rama, covering the historical period of the 1930s-40s.

Monahan located Cahun's practice of the inter-war years as one that explored identity and gender through her own image and autobiography.<sup>20</sup> Monahan noted the irony that the most extensive scholarly work on Cahun to date was François Leperlier's biography *L'écart et la métamorphose* (1992) since this book appeared to *fix* Cahun's identity by the very means that she employed in her own critical project. It is equally problematic for Monahan to claim Cahun's was an autobiographical project since she herself wrote in a letter to publisher Adrienne Monnier when the bulk of her book *Aveux non Avenus* was completed that an autobiography or 'confession' was not something she could undertake. Nor was an autobiographical project something she was interested in producing.<sup>21</sup> Cahun wrote:

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19. *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art, In, Of, and From the Feminine*. exh. cat. ed. by Catherine de Zegher (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1996).

20. Laurie J. Monahan, *Radical Transformations*, (1996). p. 125.

21. See Jennifer Mundy 'Introduction' in Claude Cahun, *Disavowals*, (2009). (vii-xvii) p. xii.

You told me to write a confession because you know only too well that this is currently the only literary task that might seem to me first and foremost realisable, where I feel at ease, permit myself a direct link, contact with the real world, with the facts ... But I believe I have understood what sort and what form you mean this confession (in short: without any cheating of any sort).<sup>22</sup>

Cahun concluded by telling Monnier: 'don't get your hopes up,' acknowledging that her work could not be purely autobiographical. Monahan acknowledged that *Aveux non Avenus* did undercut the seemingly revelatory nature of the material, as Cahun departs from what is identified as an 'autobiographical "diary," losing its coherence as a narrative of specific events and imaginary dialogues and encounters. Cahun takes her own subjectivity as the means of revealing the impossibility of fixing the self; her text and images speak of its dissolution, fragmentation, and transformations, as biography itself becomes suspect, another mask among many.<sup>23</sup>

Whether or not Cahun's photographs are accepted as autobiographical the work is always seen as contributing to the debates centred around identity formation. Monahan began her chapter with a quote from Butler's *Gender Trouble* so that identity is framed as 'a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience' and that a coherent identity is governed by regulatory practices and 'are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility by which persons are defined.'<sup>24</sup> It is understood then that gender is an attribute that is ascribed to an individual through culture and not something that is inherent. This idea is one that is seen to underpin or structure Cahun's work. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argued that gender is inseparable from the cultural and political

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22. Ibid. Jennifer Mundy cited the letter written by Cahun to Adrienne Monnier dated 23 July, 1926. Mundy also noted that the theme of confession was associated with the Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who published *Les Confessions* in 1782-9. p. 217.

23. Laurie J. Monahan, *Radical Transformations*, (1996). p. 128.

24. Judith Butler quoted in Ibid. p. 125.

spheres within which it is produced and maintained such that gender is not derived from one's sex. Moreover, gender is here identified as a matter of performativity. According to Butler, gender ought to be understood as an 'act' that 'is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.<sup>25</sup> Butler's explication is relevant to Cahun and Moore's photographic practice for, as I will later suggest, the artists were experimenting with coded images and personae available to them in inter-war France, which they then used to try to articulate aspects of identity that were unintelligible in that culture more generally. It is in this specific way, I argue that Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore used theatricality to produce what Butler has termed a 'dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.'

Cahun's work was subsequently included in two exhibitions in 1999 that were both initially held in Boston, Massachusetts: *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman* curated by Shelley Rice, and *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* curated by Whitney Chadwick. In her essay included in the *Mirror Images* exhibition catalogue, Katy Kline reiterated the line of reasoning that claimed that Claude Cahun's images serve as a prescient precursor of postmodern examinations of feminine subjectivity. Kline deviated from Lichtenstein, however, by demonstrating that any comparisons between Cahun and Cindy Sherman are superficial at best.<sup>26</sup> Kline argued that Cahun's work ought to be read as a project that presented viewers with mutating, and even contesting identities. Of the photo-portraits attributed to Cahun alone Kline wrote that they:

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25. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (1999). p. 139.

26. Shelley Rice also remarked that 'in the continually reedited film of art's history ... anyone who has seen one of Cahun's tiny, black-and-white prints next to gargantuan, garish color photographs by Sherman knows that there's more to this comparison than meets the eye.' See *Inverted Odysseys*, (1999). p. 24.

posit a self and a reality that are ultimately unknowable ... The striking contraposed profiles of *Que me veux-tu?* for example, construct doubles who are nonetheless not quite mirror images. This poignant hybrid is one of the few images for which the artist provided a title. Both image and title pose the question "What do you want of me?" and underscore Cahun's uncompromising self-interrogation in her quest for identity. The interrupted narcissistic dialogue signified by the broken eye contact implies the impossibility of any answer.<sup>27</sup>

Kline's analysis approached the themes present in *Aveux non Avenus* by highlighting the importance of the mirror and narcissism, tropes which continually resurface in both the artist's visual and written work. Something of a departure in Kline's work was the suggestion she put forward in the conclusion of the essay that Cahun presented aspects of an authentic self in every image she produced.<sup>28</sup> Kline read the photographs as staged *mise-en-scènes* and thereby drew attention to the deliberate theatricality of the images.

Although Claude Cahun continued to produce photographs in collaboration with Marcel Moore throughout her life, scholars have primarily focused on the photo-portraits of the 1920s and early 1930s for they appealed to the idea that identity is mutable, that it is continually performed and contingent upon socially understood norms. In turn, theories of gender as socially constructed support much of the current understanding of Cahun's work.<sup>29</sup> The importance of the existing literature on Cahun is that it points to the fact that her art was meant to disrupt ideas about gender, social identity and femininity that were too restrictive for

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27. Katy Kline, *In or Out of the Picture*, (1999). p. 73.

28. *Ibid.* p. 80.

29. Claude Cahun's photographic work has appeared in exhibitions devoted to Surrealism including: *Surrealism: Desire Unbound* (2001-2002), *Surreal Things* (2008), and *Angels of Anarchy: Women Artists and Surrealism* (2010). Several international exhibitions have been devoted solely to Cahun or Cahun and Marcel Moore including *Don't Kiss Me: Disruptions of the Self in the Work of Claude Cahun* (Canada, 1998-1999), *Claude Cahun - Retrospective* (Spain, 2001-2002), *I am in Training, Don't Kiss Me* (USA, 2004; also installed as *Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, UK, 2005), and *Acting Out: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore* (USA & UK, 2005-2006). Cahun has also been the subject of two films, the feature drama/documentary *Playing a Part: The Story of Claude Cahun* dir. Lizzie Thynne (2005) and the avant-garde documentary *Lover Other: The Story of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore* dir. Barbara Hammer. The two films acknowledged Marcel Moore as a collaborative partner in the artistic process.



her and Moore in the context of France in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, in a significant way these analyses fail to recognize the complexities of Cahun's work and art practice within its own historical and political moment. My discussion considers the possible readings that Cahun/Moore's photographic work opens up by reading the images with a view to retaining the personal, political, and historical specificity of the conditions under which these works were produced.

## 2. A New Visual Vocabulary

*Make myself another vocabulary, brighten the silver of the mirror, blink an eye, swindle myself by means of a fluke muscle; cheat with my skeleton, correct my mistakes...to play with ourselves can change nothing.*

- Claude Cahun (1930)<sup>30</sup>

The strategy of making the photographs attributed solely to Claude Cahun fit with theories of gender performativity has its limitations. As a woman who was openly lesbian and Jewish in France during the inter-war years, Cahun's identity was troublesome, for when she was producing her now celebrated photographs in the mid-teens through to the late 1930s, her identity was something that had not yet been represented. In other words, Claude Cahun was working in an historical, cultural, and political context that did not yet possess the language—visual or textual—to articulate or represent the identificatory positions that she inhabited. In order to represent, critique, deconstruct, or dissemble her 'self' Cahun would need to establish a new visual vocabulary. The analyses of the 1990s that hinged on performative theories of gender and the idea of identity as something mutable or fluid privileged the idea that a 'self' that could be interpellated, articulated or represented and made intelligible existed. For Claude Cahun, I believe, there were no representations in the culture of inter-war France through

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30. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 235. (translation, mine).

which she could recognize herself.



Figure 1.2: Cahun/Moore, No Title (*L'Image de la Femme*) (1915)

Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's project to intervene and radically revise representations of normative femininity was set out in an early and largely neglected photograph of 1915 [Fig. 1.2] that depicts a young Lucy Schwob with Armand Dayot's volume *L'Image de la Femme* (1899). I view this photograph of Schwob alongside a photograph of Suzanne Malherbe [Fig. 1.3] also taken c. 1915 as images that ought to be read together as a semantic proposition, introducing us to a collaborative practice that had already begun by the time these images were made.



Figure 1.3: Cahun/Moore, *No Title* (Suzanne Malherbe) c. 1915

The collaborative role I will argue Marcel Moore (Suzanne Malherbe) played is still a contested one, but the partnership was suggested in the c.1915 photograph of Malherbe. The photograph of Malherbe was likely taken at the same time as the early photograph of Lucy Schwob, for both women are represented in the interior setting, posed in front of the same cloth drapery.<sup>31</sup> These images set up an interesting relationship between the two women as subjects and producers of the photographs. In the c.1915 photograph, Suzanne Malherbe is shown leaning against the curtain. With one hand on her hip and the other resting on her thigh, she looks off to the side beyond the picture plane. Photographed with her long hair pinned back, wearing a skirt and blouse, she does not engage the viewer/photographer.

The pair of photographs taken in 1915 pose interesting challenges to the

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31. The setting of both photographs was likely the Schwob home in Nantes. Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe met in 1909 at the Lycée where the two went to school and shared an interest in books. Kristine von Oehsen's introductory essay 'The Lives of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore' details how Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe met, and cites a letter (1913) held in the Nantes archives written by Maurice Schwob to Alfred Rebelliau introducing both Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe so that they may obtain permission to use the library at a literary institute in Nantes. Schwob and Malherbe began living together from 1917, at the same time as Maurice Schwob married Suzanne Malherbe's mother Marie-Eugénie Rondet, making the two girls step-sisters. The two artists moved into a flat above the office building of *Le Phare de la Loire*, the newspaper which the Schwob family owned and edited. Maurice Schwob, Lucy Schwob's father, objected to the intensifying relationship between Lucy and Suzanne. See Oehsen's chapter in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). pp. 11-13.

conventional readings of Claude Cahun's photographic output. Considered together, these images suggest a partnership at work. Establishing that these two images are probably of the same date and the same sitting raises the question of authorship. Although it is unclear whether a self-timer was used, this photograph of Lucy Schwob has hitherto been attributed to 'Claude Cahun.' There is, however, a sort of reciprocation when the portraits are viewed alongside one another so that the most probable conclusion is that each photographed the other.<sup>32</sup> Each image presents us with the photographer being photographed. There is a particular way that these two images are composed. Like most of the early images of Schwob/Cahun and Malherbe/Moore, these are staged in intimate, interior spaces, and function dialogically as a *pas-de-deux* between the sitters/photographers. Nevertheless, Cahun's work has traditionally been understood as self-portraiture.

The 1915 images not only outline the collaborative practice at work, but in the representation of Lucy Schwob reading, the artists have encoded a self-conscious marginality. First, by revealing the title of one of the books as Armand Dayot's 1899 publication *L'Image de la Femme*, Cahun/Moore were referencing both the notion of *image* and an idealized femininity. Armand Dayot's book *L'Image de la Femme* was a compendium of sorts that depicted stereotypical representations of normative femininity by celebrating the image of woman as the ultimate symbol of beauty. The book was intended as a record of images of women through the ages as well as a book of art that focused on beauty. Since the image of woman was considered the ultimate mirror of beauty that reflected both the spirit of the age and the aesthetic ideals of the time and the artist, images of women were ideal for showcasing the

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32. It is possible that Lucy Schwob/Claude Cahun set up the images herself and either used a self-timer or simply asked Suzanne Malherbe/Marcel Moore to take the photograph. It is known that Cahun sent her photographs to be developed commercially. For more on the methods used to produce these photographs see James Stevenson 'Claude Cahun: An Analysis of her Photographic Technique' in *Ibid.* (46-55).

talents of canonical artists.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 1.4: Frontispiece, *L'Image de la Femme* (1899)

The frontispiece of Armand Dayot's 1899 book features cameo portraits of six exemplary women from various points in history as they have been represented in visual art [Fig. 1.4]. The singular '*L'image*' of the title suggests woman as monolithic, yet, the compendium contained various different images of women. The book chronicled idealized representations of women and femininity from antiquity in Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome through the Italian Renaissance, culminating in a study of *L'Image de la Femme* in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Dayot claimed that the 18th century was a revolutionary period, known as the *siècle de la Femme*.<sup>34</sup>

A compendium of idealized portraits such as the one found in Armand Dayot's book serves as an example of what Teresa De Lauretis has named as the 'technology of gender.' De Lauretis argued that gender both as representation and self-representation is the product of

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33. Armand Dayot, *L'Image de la Femme*, (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1899). Introductory note (no page numbers).

34. It is in this chapter—the longest in the book—that the only women artists are discussed: Mme. Vigée Lebrun's self-portraits and one painting by a lesser known artist, Mme. Morin are included in the survey. Ibid. Chapter 6 (no page numbers).

various technologies, including drawing, photography, or institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and the practices of daily life. Gender understood as representation is therefore socially and historically constructed:

The representation of gender *is* its construction—and in the simplest sense it can be said that all of Western Art and high culture is the engraving of the history of that construction. . . . The construction of gender goes on, if less obviously, in the academy, in the intellectual community, in avant-garde artistic practices and radical theories, even, and indeed especially, in feminism.<sup>35</sup>

The production of gender is therefore a dual process whereby it is carved into the subject while it is also continually produced in a variety of ways and is dependent upon numerous 'technologies,' including the camera, which produce normative representations.

The artful use of props in the *L'Image* photograph was both striking and meaningful, as Cahun/Moore have created a photographic representation of a subject who is reading a compilation of representations of femininity. The camera shown [Fig. 1.5] was the means by which Cahun/Moore began to radically revise the oppressive stereotypes of femininity catalogued in such volumes. Together with Cahun's writing practice, photography allowed the pair to resist the feminine ideals of the sort that Dayot's book portrayed, and which were then available as part of the cultural imaginary. Photography as an artform challenged the representation of the 'real' and was the chosen instrument for Cahun/Moore's project. I believe that the inclusion of the camera—a reference to new technology that offered radical potential for avant-garde interventions—along with the challenge to normative representations of femininity and sexuality can be read as an inscription of a self-conscious marginality. As we shall see, their reworking of images of femininity opened up other representational spaces.

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35. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (1987). p. 3.



Figure 1.5: Cahun/Moore, detail, (*L'image*, 1915)

Illustrations and photographs created as early as 1915 by Marcel Moore and Claude Cahun offer alternate representations of femininity, some approaching androgyny and others that were decidedly anti-feminine. These challenges to normative femininity can be seen for example in Marcel Moore's fashion illustration from 1915 [Fig. 1.6] and early photographs featuring Cahun dated c.1915-1917 [Figs. 1.7-1.9]. One should particularly note those where Cahun is shown for the first time with a shaved head in 1917. The 1915 photographs mark the beginning of the pair's research into the relationship between '*L'Image*' and '*la femme*' as their work strove to dislocate itself not only from the oppressive stereotypes of normative femininity, but also from an existing vocabulary of gendered representation.

At the time Cahun/Moore began producing their images, theories on sexuality and sexology were emerging, and a lesbian subject was being made visible not only in the subcultural realms or underground clubs and salons, but also in novels.<sup>36</sup> The pair's interest in theories of homosexuality is evident for Cahun later translated Havelock Ellis' 'The Task of

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36. Honoré de Balzac's multi-volume *La Comédie Humaine* (1833-47) features a gay character, the criminal Vautrin. Balzac also wrote a novella, *La fille au yeux d'or* (1835) that was part of *La Comédie Humaine* sequence. The story focused on a lesbian relationship. Claude Cahun was an avid reader who read a substantial amount of the literature in the family's *La Phare de la Loire* library as biographer François Leperlier has noted, and it is likely that she read Balzac. She also went on to study literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne. See François Leperlier, *Claude Cahun: L'écart et la métamorphose*, (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1992).

Social Hygiene' (1912), which appeared in *Mercure de France* in 1929.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 1.6: Cahun/Moore, Marcel Moore, Fashion Illustration c. 1915

Figure 1.7: Cahun/Moore, No Title c.1917



Figure 1.8: Cahun/Moore, No Title (With Ivy Garland) No date

Figure 1.9: Cahun/Moore, No Title (Brick Wall) c.1917

Ellis developed the psychological concepts of narcissism and auto-eroticism, both of which were later taken up by Freud, and, as we have seen, narcissism was a subject that Cahun

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37. Cahun also translated into French works by Oscar Wilde and Lewis Carroll. See Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006). p. 3.



addressed frequently in her writings, in particular in *Aveux non Avenus*. That Cahun and Moore were intrigued by the androgynous type—frequently associated with lesbianism—is evident in the numerous portraits featuring Cahun with shaved or closely cropped hair, along with Moore's masculinized figures in her fashion illustration [Figs. 1.6-1.9]. The articulation of a lesbian subject involved representations of androgyny, but the couple also played with coded visual tropes associated with homosexuality, especially the figure of the sailor.



Figure 1.10: Cahun/Moore, No Title c.1920

Cahun/Moore presented Cahun dressed as a sailor as early as c.1910 [Fig. 1.11]. This is an instance where they adapted homosexual signifiers to their own purposes, for the sailor was a coded visual trope. Sailors represented homosexual men who were readily available.<sup>38</sup> As Adrian Rifkin has explained, one of the key figures in Parisian gay street culture was the sailor. Sailor suits would have been common and likely readily available in Nantes—a port city—where Cahun and Moore lived in 1910. Since the top of the sailor suit appears to be the

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38. Adrian Rifkin, *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure, 1900-1940*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). pp.165-168.

same one Cahun posed in again in 1915 in the *L'Image* photograph, we can assume the figure of the sailor is being referenced again in that photograph. Instead of assuming that she and Moore were destabilising something already fixed when they had Cahun pose in the



Figure 1.11: Cahun/Moore, No Title (In Sailor Uniform) c. 1910

sailor suit in the c. 1910 image, we should interpret this and later representations as ones where the artists were playing with visual types that represented sexual inversion, perversion, dissidence, or marginality.

In the c.1910 photograph, Cahun (Schwob) appeared costumed in a dark sailor suit, although she retained her long, feminine hair. The fingers of her right hand rest atop a pile of newspapers placed on a table. It is conceivable that the newspapers are a reference to the Schwob family's business and their role in French publishing. After moving from the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, Claude Cahun's grandfather Georges Schwob acquired the regional Nantes newspaper *La Phare de la Loire* in 1876. His eldest son, Maurice Schwob (Cahun's father) took over as editor of the paper in 1892 after Georges Schwob's death. Marcel Schwob, Claude Cahun's uncle, was the renowned symbolist writer and co-founder of *Mercure de France*. Marcel Schwob was a great influence on both Cahun and Moore (whose pseudonym

is believed to be a tribute to him) and was also a friend of the poet Oscar Wilde.

Cahun and Moore would later refer to the Schwob family and employ the trope of the sailor again in images produced c. 1920. The images where Cahun appears either in a sailor suit or in a heavy cardigan, cap, and, corduroy trousers [Fig. 1.10] can be read as instances where the artists Cahun and Moore are playing with understood markers of sexual identity. These images do not necessarily or solely represent instances where gender is being destabilized. The trope of the sailor indicates that the Cahun/Moore works must be understood and read as historically contingent for they employ visual motifs and tropes such as the sailor which become legible once the historical context is considered.

Teresa De Lauretis' work provides a conceptual model through which one can conceive of the representation of gender as something created in the social sphere that produces recognizable typologies and conventions through which we recognize ourselves. De Lauretis' work followed Michel Foucault who argued that subjectivity ought to be viewed as an effect of discourse since subjectivity is constituted by the subject positions which discourse obliges us to take up.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, her theory argues for the possibility of self-determination.<sup>40</sup> She wrote:

To assert that the social representation of gender affects its subjective construction and that, vice versa, the subjective representation of gender—or self-representation—affects its social construction, leaves open a possibility of agency and self-determination at the subjective and even individual level of micropolitical and everyday practices which Althusser himself would clearly disclaim. I, nevertheless, will claim that possibility<sup>41</sup>

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39. See the essays 'Subjectivity and Truth' and 'Technologies of the Self' in Michel Foucault *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1. Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, (New York: The New Press, 1997). (pp. 87-92 and pp. 223-251).

40. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (1987). p. 9.

41. Ibid.

This possibility that self-representation can affect the social construction of gender coincides with my view that Cahun and Moore's practice was one where the artists tried to create a new visual vocabulary to represent subject positions that were hitherto unrepresentable. This work of re-fashioning subject positions so that the ones Cahun and Moore inhabited might become visible and legible was carried out in the space of the double margin. The artists were conscious of their doubly marginal position as women and lesbians, and in Cahun's case additionally as Jew, and it was precisely this marginality which motivated their practice

It was c. 1915-16 that Lucy Schwob first adopted the gender neutral and overtly Jewish pseudonym of 'Claude Cahun'.<sup>42</sup> This gesture of self-naming, in addition to the use of the camera as a means to stage their interventions, marks theirs as a doubly marginal space of artistic creation. What emerged in the Cahun/Moore photographic collaboration was analogous to what De Lauretis terms 'the subject of feminism' and was likewise both inside and outside the ideology of gender:

[T]he discrepancy, the tension, and the constant slippage between Woman as representation, as the object of the very condition of representation, and, on the other hand, women as historical beings, subjects of "real relations," are motivated and sustained by a logical contradiction in our culture and an irreconcilable one: women are both inside and outside gender, at once within and without representation.<sup>43</sup>

The space of the double margin was a productive space for Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore where subversive and critical work could be produced. While their photographs strove to destabilize normative representations of femininity, their creation of a new visual vocabulary was also simultaneously a deconstruction as well as an instance of production. Cahun and

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42. See François Leperlier, 'Chronologie' in Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). (11-15). p. 11. The significance of adopting the Cahun name will be discussed at length in the following chapter. Cahun adopted a series of pseudonyms, notably Claude Courlis, under which she wrote *Vues et Visions*, first published in *Mercure de France* (1914); Daniel Douglas (after Lord Alfred Douglas), under which she wrote for the journal *La Gerbe* (1919). After 1918, Cahun published as either Lucy [alternately spelled Lucie] Schwob or Claude Cahun.

43. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (1987). p. 10.

Moore were also part of an extended technology that was theatrically staging, producing, and refashioning what was understood as the experience of certain kinds of social and sexed subjects.

*(a) Visual Spectacle: A Theatre Without Words*

Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's photographic project borrowed from cultural signifiers in order to elaborate a new visual vocabulary so that alternate subject positions could be represented and made visible. The images the pair produced during the 1920s featured makeshift stage-curtain backdrops (as was the case with the cloth drapery in the c.1915 photographs), and these works have specific links to French avant-garde theatre. I believe that the Cahun/Moore performative images must be examined in the context of a specifically French avant-garde theatrical tradition, in particular experimental theatre trends that have been classed as Symbolist. As Miranda Welby-Everard has noted, in spite of the wealth of literature devoted to Claude Cahun, the centrality of theatre to her practice has received scant attention. Although I do not believe theatre was in Welby-Everard's words, 'the essential language of the artist,' I do think theatre was fundamental to her practice.<sup>44</sup>

Claude Cahun's theatrical career as an actress was surprisingly brief. Her contract with Pierre-Albert Birot's theatre company, *Le Plateau* (The Stage), spanned three months beginning in March, 1929.<sup>45</sup> The photographs that do not actually document roles Cahun

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44. Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006). p.3.

45. Ibid. p. 4. Welby-Everard has documented that Cahun's work at *Le Plateau* was (to date) her main acting experience: 'Her personal negation is probably the main factor for her discontinuance, as revealed in her self deprecating letter to fellow cast member Roger Roussot of 19 April 1931. Both Georges Pitoëff and Ivan Mosjoukine reputedly invited Cahun to join their respective troupes, but this never materialized due to health reasons.'

played on stage witness a strong element of acting that also resonates with principles used in avant-garde theatre. Cahun/Moore's adoption of the symbolic curtain in several of the theatrical images worked as an overt dramatic strategy. The curtain quotes from the minimalist aesthetic of the theatrical avant-garde and literally sets the stage for the performances the artists staged for the camera. Cahun and Moore would have been familiar with these theatrical elements, in addition to which, theatricality has been explicitly coded in the images through the frequent use of masks, makeup and costume.

The Jersey Heritage Trust archives that hold the majority of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's work, personal possessions, and correspondence attest to the women's connection to the theatrical avant-garde community in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. Cahun and Moore frequented several theatres in Paris, including a performance of *Parade*, a ballet which was a collaboration between Erik Satie, Jean Cocteau, Serge Diaghilev, Pablo Picasso, and Léonide Massine.<sup>46</sup> Cahun was also linked to avant-garde theatre through her uncle, Marcel Schwob, who was married to the actress Marguerite Moreno.<sup>47</sup> In 1923 Claude Cahun became an associate of *Théâtre Ésotérique*, a theatrical company which focused on spirituality. As Miranda Welby-Everard has explained: "The professed aim of this company was to reintroduce to the public unknown works of a philosophical or theosophical nature, hence the wealth of oriental influences such as Japanese Noh, Sufi poems and sacred Indian dance."<sup>48</sup>

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46. *Parade* was a ballet that was first performed at Théâtre Châtelet in Paris on May 17, 1917. The story was based on a one-act play by Jean Cocteau with music composed by Erik Satie. It was choreographed by Léonide Massine who was also the principle dancer. The ballet was composed for Serge Diaghilev's *Ballet Russes* with costumes and sets designed by Pablo Picasso. Curator Jean Clair explored the importance of the circus and this production in Jean Clair, *The Great Parade: Portrait of the Artist as Clown*. exh. cat. ed. by Jean Clair (Yale University Press, New Haven: 2004). François Leperlier has stated that Cahun retained a number of Ballet Russes programmes but regrettably they are not to be found in the archive in Jersey. Welby-Everard has noted that their location remains unknown. See Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006). p. 9.

47. Marguerite Moreno was an actress with the *Comédie Française* who kept up a friendship with Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore while they lived in Paris. Correspondence between Moreno and Cahun can be found in the archives in Jersey. See <http://www.jerseyheritagetrust.org/#JHT/1995/00046/> (last accessed January 03, 2008).

The theatre was also devoted to *L'Esprit Nouveau* of the Symbolist theatres that dominated the theatrical world of *La Belle Époque* (c. 1885-1895). *Théâtre Érotique* was in fact one of the main venues that staged productions adhering strictly to a Symbolist aesthetic.<sup>49</sup>

It was at *Théâtre Érotique* where in 1926 Cahun made her debut as an actress playing 'Une Femme' in Constant Lounsbery's play *Judith*. Moore designed the set for this production. Claude Cahun appeared in the first act of the play, which was set in the Jewish city of Bethlehem (*Béthulie*) and Nadja (Beatrice Wanger) featured in the second act, performing a seductive dance for the general Holofernes.<sup>50</sup> In Lounsbery's play, the Judith

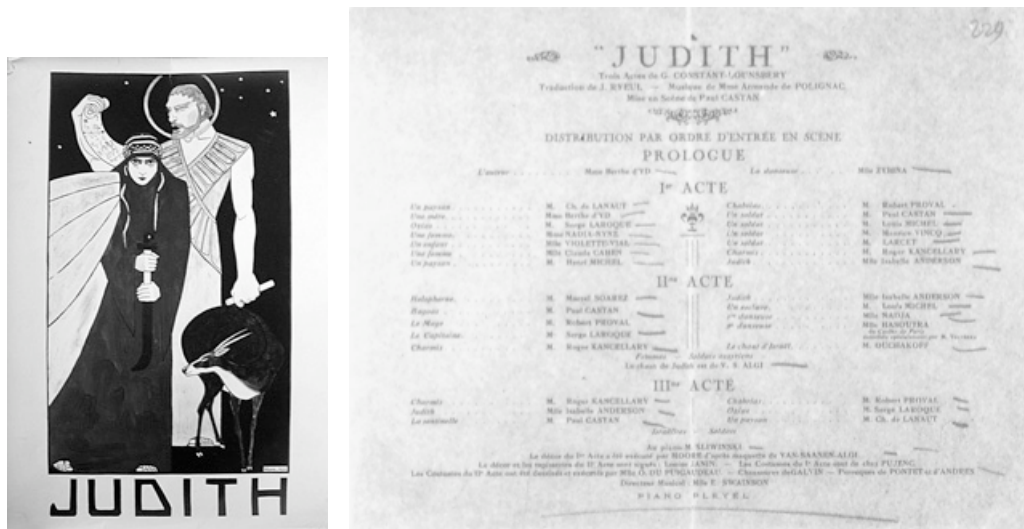


Figure 1.12: Marcel Moore's poster illustration for Judith (1926)

Figure 1.13: Programme for G. Constant Lounsbery's play Judith (1926), with Claude Cahen listed as 'Une Femme'\*

and Holofernes story was modified. Contrary to the traditional story, Judith is in love with Holofernes, who is depicted here as a model of virtue rather than a tyrant. Judith's love for

48. Ibid. p. 10.

49. Frantisek Deak, *Symbolist Theatre: The Formation of an Avant-Garde*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). p. 4.

50. The programme for this production of *Judith* can be found in La Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. See 'Programme - *Judith* Réaliser Par Paul Castan', *Département des Arts du Spectacle*, La Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Auguste Rondel, Paris <<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=8491545>> [(September 13, 2010)]

Holofernes complicated her murderous beheading of the general.<sup>51</sup> It is noteworthy that Claude Cahun had herself similarly reworked the Judith story in '*La Sadique Judith*' in her work *Héroïnes* (1925). In Cahun's version, Judith leads a secluded life and appears to desire Holofernes. She murders him at the behest of the people. Judith's engagement with the people is written as scripted dialogue, underscoring the theatrical nature of Cahun's work.<sup>52</sup>

It was likely that Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore met director Pierre-Albert Birot while they were involved with productions at *Théâtre Ésotérique*. They were introduced by a mutual friend, the sculptor Chana Orloff.<sup>53</sup> The pair then began to work at Albert-Birot's theatre, *Le Plateau*, where Cahun performed in three plays during the 1929 season. Marcel Moore designed sets, posters, and theatre bills. She also photographically documented Cahun's performances.<sup>54</sup> The most notable role that Cahun played was as 'Elle' in a production of *Barbe Bleue*, an adaptation of the 'Bluebeard' story. She received favourable reviews for her work in the production. Cahun also performed in the role of '*Monsieur*' in a contemporary play written by Albert-Birot called *Banlieuse*, and as '*Le Diable*' in Albert-Birot's adaptation of the twelfth century play *Le Mystère d'Adam*.<sup>55</sup> All three roles were documented photographically by Marcel Moore.

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51. Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006). p. 11.

\* It is noteworthy that Claude Cahun's name is spelled Cahen – a typical francophone spelling for the name of the Jewish priestly class, Cohen. The adoption of the Cahun (Cahen) surname will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

52. See Claude Cahun, 'Héroïnes' translated by Norman MacAfee in *Inverted Odysseys*, (1999). (43-94) 'The Sadistic Judith' pp. 51-54.

53. François Leperlier, *L'écart et la métamorphose*, (1992). p. 93.

54. Ibid.

55. Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006). p. 4.





Figure 1.14: Cahun/Moore, No Title (Claude Cahun as Elle in *Barbe Bleue*, 1929)

Symbolist ideas of theatricality were centred around the notions of transformation and artifice. Character types such as Harlequin and Pierrot of the Commedia dell'Arte were taken up in Symbolist and avant-garde theatres. The First Manifesto of Theatrical Symbolism was outlined by Gustav Kahn in 1889 in the article '*Un théâtre de l'avenir: Profession de foi d'un moderniste*' published in *La Revue d'Art Dramatique*.<sup>56</sup> It was here that Kahn cited Greek Tragedy, Shakespeare, and Goethe's *Faust* as exemplary forms of theatre for their use of poetry, which was integrated into the plays. For Kahn, the new Symbolist theatre had to be based on principles of poetry as outlined by Mallarmé. Kahn outlined five genres of Symbolist theatre: poetic drama, character comedy (always occurring in an undefined setting), modern and clownish pantomime, circus comedy, and visual spectacle.<sup>57</sup> This concept of visual spectacle is extremely relevant to Cahun/Moore's photographic practice.

Visual spectacle as practised by Symbolist dramatists consisted of a series of short and expressive images that conveyed the narrative. This form of drama functioned in lieu of a

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56. Frantisek Deak, *Symbolist Theatre*, (1993). p. 29.

57. Ibid.

text, forming in effect a type of textless theatre. Cahun/Moore's images that can be read as a group, for example the Elle series, or the set of images where Cahun represented a circus performer or 'strong man' [Fig. 1.15] taken c. 1927, can be viewed as visual spectacle, or a theatre without words. This coincided with the Symbolist aesthetic that called for a complete absence of human form or gesture onstage so that the artificial nature of the theatrical performance was emphasized. To achieve these ends, shadows, images, or puppets sometimes replaced the actors.<sup>58</sup> The ideology of dramatic artifice was one that Pierre Albert-Birot put into practice at *Le Plateau*. His *Barbe Bleu* was originally intended as a puppet play.



Figure 1.15: Cahun/Moore, No Title (c. 1927)

When the idea of a puppet play was replaced with a cast of live actors, including Cahun in the role of Elle, the performers were instructed to appear wooden, as if they were in fact marionettes. These strategies emphasized the artificial nature of the performance, which

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58. Ibid. pp. 29-30.

Albert-Birot had stressed in his theatrical journal *SIC*: 'the actor (must) be an actor ... [never forgetting] that he is on the stage.'<sup>59</sup>

Cahun as Elle [Fig. 1.14] successfully portrayed a figure who resembled a marionette. She appeared costumed in a floor-length dress with a corseted bodice. Her whitened face makeup stresses the artificial nature of the character. She wore a thick braided wig, and as another series of images attest, occasionally the eyebrows were stencilled on, her eyes were heavily shaded with dark makeup, and two small hearts appeared stencilled on each cheek [Fig. 1.16]. All of these helped render Elle's appearance as doll-like. François Leperlier has suggested that Cahun had input in creating Elle's costume and makeup.<sup>60</sup> In her book *Bachelors* (1999), Rosalind Krauss used the Elle images to build her argument that when Cahun appeared as 'feminine,' she did so in an exaggerated way that was mediated through costume, mask, and makeup, signalling artifice.<sup>61</sup> Krauss argued that since Cahun appeared 'doll-like' and highly made-up, the artist's comment on the artificial and unnatural state of femininity is evident. Understood, however, as a documentation of her stage role, these photographs of Cahun costumed as Elle take on different meanings altogether. Since these images were taken for private use as well as to document the play, we must consider how Cahun/Moore actually used the role of Elle as source material for their work.

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59. Pierre Albert-Birot quoted in Miranda Welby-Everard, 'Imaging the Actor', (2006).p. 16.

60. François Leperlier, *L'écart et la métamorphose*, (1992). p. 103.

61. Rosalind E. Krauss, *Bachelors*, (Cambridge, Mass.: OCTOBER, The MIT Press, 1999). pp. 29-37. Krauss acknowledged Cahun's work as an actor in the first chapter of *Bachelors*, however, only her work playing men's roles is mentioned. Krauss does not concede that Cahun was costumed as her character 'Elle' from Pierre Albert-Birot's production of *Barbe Bleue*.



Figure 1.16: Cahun/Moore, No Title (Claude Cahun as Elle, 1929)

Figure 1.17: Cahun/Moore, Claude Cahun and Roger Roussot in *Barbe Bleue*, Mar.- May, 1929

The Elle series captured Claude Cahun in precise poses. It is clear from written notations from *Barbe Bleue* and other plays that Cahun performed in at *Le Plateau* that she had to enact specific movements with great precision. Cahun was required to turn her head slowly to the side in response to a sound, for example. The photographs may be something more than historical documents, for they could have aided Cahun the actress in executing the precise movements required of her as the character Elle. It is conceivable that Cahun experimented with different positions by photographing them to see which pose would convey the character's emotional state. As preparatory work, the photographs functioned as cinematic stills, and they could also have functioned as a storyboard that could be altered as needed, to ensure that Cahun played her part as a marionette with the precision required of her.

The photographs of Cahun in costume for the roles she played on stage are, in my view, central to understanding a project intent on creating a new visual vocabulary. As previously discussed, Cahun's photographic work, of which her theatrical roles form an integral part, was understood as illustrating performative theories of gender. Judith Butler has

recently revisited the themes and claims expressed in the book, and her comments bear thinking about in relation to Cahun/Moore's project:

When I wrote [*Gender Trouble*] ... I had two aims at the time: the first was to expose what I took to be a pervasive heterosexism in feminist theory; the second was to try to imagine a world in which those who live at some distance from gender norms, who live in the confusion of gender norms, might still understand themselves not only as living, livable lives, but as deserving a certain kind of recognition.<sup>62</sup>

Butler intended her idea of 'gender trouble' to allow for the recognition of those who were previously not recognizable. Her reformulation is less about performing roles than it is about making the invisible visible. In that sense, 'gender trouble' resonates with Cahun/Moore's project to cite from culturally coded signifiers—the sailor, the circus performer, the *femme* marionette—in order both to produce and contest gendered norms. I have characterized Cahun/Moore's images as 'performative images' in so far as they are representations of positionalities that are complexly produced through identificatory and performative practices. As performative images, they function as a production as well as a critique. The images were not self-portraits intended to demonstrate the inherent instability of a fractured subjectivity, but rather they were enactments for the camera whose purpose was to try to articulate new subject positions that could be recognised.

Cahun/Moore's performative images function as critique, and this role is linked to the idea of culturally recognizable norms. As Butler pointed out, citing Foucault, the question of who is recognised or considered real is a question of knowledge and power. Cahun/Moore's photographs function as ruptures to what is knowable or acceptable. The sailor was first transformed into a sign for the (homo)sexual availability of men and then into a signifier for same-sex desire suggesting a lesbian subject position in the images of Lucy Schwob dressed

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62. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (New York: Routledge, 2004). p. 207.

in a sailor suit. The limits of 'femininity' were further challenged through the exploration of artifice as Cahun enacted her character as Elle as if she were a marionette. Critique is implied in the performances that Cahun/Moore staged for the camera, for these images constitute an exploration of the limits of representation.

Butler demonstrated the implications for gender in Foucault's idea of critique. She noted that it was important to understand how the terms of gender were naturalized, or established and it was also necessary to challenge culturally accepted norms.<sup>63</sup> Cahun/Moore's practice tried to establish a new vocabulary that destabilized and challenged normative representations of femininity. Butler's comments that reassess the concepts of drag and performativity in *Undoing Gender* (2004) allows us to position Cahun/Moore's project as one in which 'reality is produced and altered in the course of that reproduction.' As Butler argues:

If gender is performative, then it follows that the reality of gender is itself produced as an effect of the performance. Although there are norms that govern what will and will not be real, and what will and will not be intelligible, they are called into question and reiterated at the moment in which performativity begins its citational practice. One surely cites norms that exist, but these norms can be significantly deterritorialized through the citation. ... through the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is produced and altered in the course of that reproduction. The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested.<sup>64</sup>

Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore quoted from culturally available, intelligible, and historically situated representations in order to alter and make visible that which was then unrecognizable. The pair tried to envision ways to represent their position, which was lived at a distance from culturally accepted norms, so that they could understand themselves. It was through their

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63. Ibid. p. 216.

64. Ibid. p. 218.

citations that Cahun/Moore radically re-fashioned and in so doing contested representations of normative femininity. Their work was something beyond 'subversive spectacle' for it can be seen as a form of resistance and political intervention. Their personal and largely private collaborative 'subversive spectacle' of the 1920s and 1930s set the stage the stage for their all too real resistance and political intervention under the conditions of the German occupation of Jersey in the 1940s.

## Chapter 2. Claude Cahun as 'Conscious Pariah'

*As soon as the pariah enters the arena of politics and translates his status into political terms, he becomes perforce a rebel.*

- Hannah Arendt<sup>65</sup>

Lucy Schwob adopted the pseudonym 'Claude Cahun' circa 1915-1916.<sup>66</sup> While she continued to publish for a time using the pseudonym 'Claude Courlis' and 'Daniel Douglas,' eventually, she would only use either Lucy (alternately spelled Lucie) Schwob or Claude Cahun as a pen name.<sup>67</sup> The gender neutral pseudonym has been used to bolster the idea that Cahun's project was proto-feminist. Tirza True Latimer has noted of Cahun and Marcel Moore's use of pseudonyms that 'Choosing the gender neutral "Claude" and masculine "Marcel," they extended a tradition of dissimulation by women aspiring to the professional echelons of a cultural production. Such pseudonyms, a literary form of travesty, affirm a time-honored feminine career strategy while renouncing patriarchal notions of lineage'.<sup>68</sup> Even though Claude Cahun was an artist who was self-consciously Jewish, nothing has been written

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65. Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, (2007) 'The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition' (pp. 275-297). p. 284.

66. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 11.

67. In the 1914 issue of *Mercure de France*, Vol. 109, No. 406, she published 'Vues et Visions' as 'Claude Courlis' while all subsequent pieces in the journal from 1918-1927 are published under the pseudonym 'Claude Cahun.' The translation of Havelock Ellis' *'La femme dans la société, I. Études de psychologie sociale'* was credited to Lucie Schwob. Prior to the assumption of the pseudonym Claude Cahun, she also signed her works as 'S.M.' and 'M.' See *Mercure de France* CXXVII edition vols. May, 1914; July-Aug. 1918; 15 March, 1921; 1 Jan. 1927. See also 'Bibliographie' in *Ibid.* (774-775). The texts are reprinted in *Écrits* (2002).

68. Tirza True Latimer, "'Narcissus and Narcissus': Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore", in *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), (pp. 68-104). p. 74. Of the use of pseudonyms for the artists' book *Aveux non Avenus* Latimer contended that they performed yet another function: "The pseudonyms of Cahun and Moore, ... served to falsify the already "disavowed" testimony that constitutes their "confessions." The false signatures not only detached the authors from the paternal structures of kinship; they disarticulated the speaking subjects from the ideological operations of realism. (p. 81).



about the significance of the gesture of self-naming in relation to Jewishness. The name 'Cahun' (a French variant of 'Cohen') refers to the Jewish priestly class, *Cohanim*, and was of autobiographical significance for the artist. In order to discuss Cahun's relationship to her ethnic background and the extent to which this figured in her artistic practice as a practitioner situated in the space of the 'double margin', I will introduce Hannah Arendt's categories of the pariah and the *parvenu* to considerations of marginality.

Lucy Schwob never legally changed her name, and she continued to use her birth name throughout her life. But for her *nom d'artiste*, her *nom de guerre*, it is significant that the artist settled on 'Cahun' for her artistic endeavours, be they literary, visual, or theatrical.<sup>69</sup> In a letter to friend and colleague Paul Lévy dated 1950, Lucy Schwob gave the clearest account of her Jewish heritage and she also explained her act of self-naming:

So, you'll see elsewhere in the letter that I'm not at all attached to the memory of my father, or even that of Marcel Schwob. I always used a pseudonym to write, the name of my obscure Jewish relatives (Cahun) with whom I felt more affinity.<sup>70</sup>

Here Lucy Schwob stated that she took the name of her 'obscure' Jewish relatives, in contrast to her more 'famous' Jewish relatives: her uncle, the renowned Symbolist writer Marcel Schwob, her father Maurice Schwob, and her grandfather Georges Schwob, who were prominent publishers in France and editors of *Le Phare de la Loire*. The distinction here was between 'obscure' and 'famous,' while the Jewishness remained constant. Moreover, she attested her greater affinity to the paternal side of her family, and especially the Cahun

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69. It is noteworthy that Cahun's name is listed misspelled as 'Cahen' (c.f. Fig. 1.13). Cahen is a common French spelling for Cohen (a Cohen is a member of the Jewish priestly class).

70. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 709. Never published in her lifetime, this letter was written in response to Lévy's *Journal d'un Exilé* (1949), which Cahun had evidently read for she refers to this text in detail. Paul Lévy contributed to the Schwob-run newspaper *Le Phare de la Loire*, and also published Claude Cahun's early writings (1921) while he was director of *Le Journal Littéraire*. He helped Cahun and Moore after they left France for Jersey in 1937 by ensuring that they received their capital assets, which they were forced to leave behind. All translations are my own.

grandmother who raised her and who likely instilled her with a Jewish identity. In the letter to Paul Lévy, Lucy Schwob continued to give a detailed genealogical account of her Jewish family. These statements that speak to a self-conscious Jewishness should be considered when reading a performative image that Cahun/Moore produced c. 1925, in which both women are pictured. In this photograph, Claude Cahun is represented wearing a large, sequined six-pointed star tied around her neck. It must be noted that a six-pointed star was not an exclusively Jewish symbol in France at this time; however, one cannot exclude the possibility that Cahun was referencing this as a star of David.<sup>71</sup>

Claude Cahun's gesture of self-naming along with later statements pertaining to her family speak of 'Jewishness.' Few scholars have addressed Claude Cahun's relationship to a heavily freighted ethnic-religious background beyond taking biographical note of her Jewish relatives. This lack of attention to a potentially significant detail is largely due to the fact that her artistic project has been viewed as one focused on the dissolution of identity. It is, however, tempting to speculate on what it meant for 'Claude Cahun' to be Jewish. Or to consider, based on these traces—including the c.1925 photograph where Cahun is shown wearing a large, six-pointed star—whether a meaningful component of her artistic practice was informed by a relation to 'Jewish origin' or Jewishness in a political context.

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71. See Carol Ockman, 'When Is a Jewish Star Just a Star?', in *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, ed. by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), (pp. 121-139). The problematic nature of looking or reading for Jewishness must be noted. Looking for Jewishness seems to leave open the possibility for racist assumptions, reducing people to stereotypical essentials. It assumes that Jewishness is something that is visible and can be detailed or identified by a variety of legible signs or symbols. As Ockman has noted, therefore, it works against assimilationist strategies, but there remains the possibility 'that Jewishness cannot be identified, is not recognizable.' (pp. 122-123).



Figure 1.18: Cahun/Moore, No Title (star) c. 1925

In the c.1925 portrait, Cahun is positioned leaning away from the camera and viewer wearing a large sequined or beaded star fastened around her neck. Tirza True Latimer has identified this 'huge star' as 'a star of David, partially eclipsed'.<sup>72</sup> Latimer names the light that frames Cahun as 'comet-like reflections bracketing her head'.<sup>73</sup> I believe Cahun's face and the star are brought into focus through what appears to be a bell jar formation that has been superimposed over the image. The bell jar was used as a motif in a series of photographs also taken c. 1925 that featured Cahun's head as subject or object of scrutiny beneath the glass [Fig. 1.19]. The Jewish star effectively becomes the centerpiece of the image. The use of the bell jar shape points to contemporary social and scientific discourse where the human subject was

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72. Tirza True Latimer, 'Women Together/Women Apart', (2005). p. 102.

73. Ibid.

studied. Here Cahun literally wears her ethnic identity on her chest as she is offered for study.



Figure 1.19: Cahun/Moore, No Title c. 1925

Tirza True Latimer and Janet Harrison have read this image as a form of plural address due to Marcel Moore's presence. Harrison analyses the photograph as one of several examples of images in Cahun's oeuvre, stating that the c.1925 image where Cahun wears a star signals a bifurcating gaze, indicating 'the split subject and the modernist notion of the fragmented self' and the presence of Cahun's other half (*l'autre moi*) or other self, Marcel Moore.<sup>74</sup> Latimer also draws attention to the importance of Moore's presence in the image, claiming that she peers over the black backdrop to look at Cahun's mirror reflection (not pictured) upon which the photographic lens is also trained. Latimer maintains that Cahun/Moore's work is inherently plural: 'It is explicitly for Moore that Cahun "stars" in this picture. Yet the "you"—the collaborator, the audience—addressed by the "I" represented here (and throughout the oeuvre) could be understood implicitly as a plural form of address.'<sup>75</sup> Although

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74. See Janet Harrison, 'Women Surrealist Photographers: Claude Cahun and Lee Miller' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Leeds, Fine Art, History of Art, and Cultural Studies : 2006) Harrison understands this image as one where 'Malherbe presides over and enables the multiple selves, personas and masks that Cahun takes on'. Marcel Moore enables these facets of Cahun's identity to be played out for the camera in her capacity 'above and behind Cahun' (and behind the camera). Harrison uses Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's theories to argue that 'the images and the selves are co-emergent in the 'border-link' between the two. See p. 24.

Latimer does identify the star as a star of David, she does not say anything beyond this, nor is any consideration given to the significance of the star as a Jewish star.

Carol Ockman's question 'When is a Jewish Star just a star?' is relevant here. In her discussion of images of Sarah Bernhardt, Ockman noted that six-pointed stars were not necessarily incontrovertible symbols of Jewishness. Ockman learned that six-pointed stars, along with five-pointed stars, were icons used in representations of popular entertainers in the nineteenth century. Both the six-pointed and five-pointed star symbolized '*la grande étoile.*' Cahun was photographed wearing a five-pointed star in an undated passport-type image circa 1936. Ockman also noted that her research into the history of the six-pointed star suggested that it was surprisingly ecumenical.<sup>76</sup> Ockman concluded that in spite of the complex and contradictory status of the the symbol in the nineteenth century, the hexagram in images of Bernhardt would have functioned as signs of Jewishness.<sup>77</sup> I believe that the six-pointed star would have functioned in a similar manner for Claude Cahun, as a representational marker of Jewishness.

In these photographs that include the eyes of another, Cahun and Moore point to the ways in which subjects were interpellated or marked as subjects by others who view and labelled them. In the photograph, Cahun leans away in distrust from the spectator, with her body slightly turned, an arm shielding her in a gesture of protection. This indicates that the scrutiny placed on Jews, particularly through physiognomy and dress, was something that was applied to Jewish subjects by a hostile culture that socially marked those Jews. The gaze of the

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75. Tirza True Latimer, 'Women Together/Women Apart', (2005). p. 102.

76. Carol Ockman, 'When Is a Jewish Star Just a Star?', (1995). pp. 130-135.

77. Ibid. p. 135. Ockman also states that caricatures of Bernhardt's nose and her unruly, wavy hair would have similarly functioned as signs of Jewishness. Ockman argues that invoking the actress's Jewishness was only one of many strategies to convey her inappropriate behaviour.

other is necessary in the observation and marginalization of Jewish subjects. The marking of the Jewish subject through use of a star of David was a chilling precursor to the ways Jews were identified in Nazi Germany, being made to wear yellow stars on their outer clothing. Cahun and Moore's image of c. 1925 must not, however, be understood in that context. That Cahun was represented wearing a large and highly decorative Jewish star functions in much the same manner that her adoption of a Jewish surname did: the artist can be said to have flaunted her 'Jewish origins.' That Cahun chose to work almost exclusively using the name of her 'obscure' paternal Jewish relatives is now rendered especially significant.<sup>78</sup>

The act of consciously adopting an overtly Jewish surname at a time when anti-Semitism was once again on the rise in post-Dreyfus affair France was a bold statement. Lucy Schwob had been the victim of anti-Semitic attacks in 1906 following the exoneration of Alfred Dreyfus, who had falsely been accused and convicted of treason in 1894. That Dreyfus had allegedly communicated French military secrets to the Germans caused a political scandal in France, dividing the country into 'Dreyfusards' (those who supported Dreyfus) and 'anti-Dreyfusards.' The anti-Semitism that became evident in France, even at the governmental level, persisted through the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> As a result of abuse suffered at her *lycée* following Dreyfus' reinstatement into the army, an event which sparked

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78. According to Jewish law, it is maternal lineage that legally produces Jewish identity. Since Lucy Schwob's mother, Victorine Courbebaisse, was a Catholic (who later converted to Protestantism), she was not halachically Jewish.

79. Emile Zola's famous open letter 'J'accuse!' published in the newspaper *L'Aurore* in 1898 was addressed to the president Félix Fuare, and accused the government of anti-Semitism for jailing Alfred Dreyfus without sufficient evidence. For an examination of the visual and print culture in response to the Dreyfus Affair, see *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice*. exh. cat. ed. by Norman L. Kleeblatt (University of California Press, Berkeley: 1987). Gen Doy has documented the anti-Semitic remarks levied at Marcel Schwob during the Dreyfus affair after he wrote an article in *Le Phare de la Loire*. Some right-wing critics saw him as writing in French but perverting it in a kind of barbarous, devious way. Marcel Schwob, they implied, was a Jewish writer. Mobile, tricky, unable to be pinned down, he was not a 'true' French writer. Cahun's own writings would also be described as tricky. See Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun: A Sensual Politics of Photography*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007). pp.27-28.

anti-Dreyfusard rhetoric and attacks, Lucy Schwob was sent to England where she was privately educated for two years. Her subsequent choice of 'Cahun' as a pseudonym was a political gesture that echoed Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) who likewise made 'a number of comments bearing on her attitude toward the Jewish question and more generally, on the connections among personal, political, and the intellectual dimensions of her life.'<sup>80</sup>

Claude Cahun, like Arendt, worked using a specifically Jewish name. Arendt's retention of her familial name is analogous to Cahun's choice of pseudonym in so far as both women's actions were political. Writing to Karl Jaspers from America in 1946, Hannah Arendt remarked: 'I continue to use my old name. That's quite common here in America when a woman works, and I have gladly adopted this custom out of conservatism (and also because I wanted my name to identify me as a Jew).'<sup>81</sup> As Morris Kaplan has pointed out, this choice of a professional, Jewish name did not reveal some essence of personal identity and ought to be viewed within certain historical circumstances where Jews were targeted and subject to anti-Semitic attacks. Kaplan's comments regarding Arendt's use of her maiden name can be applied to Claude Cahun as well:

The decision to retain her "own name" is a political one; it is a way of identifying herself as a Jew under historical circumstances when being a Jew had become a fateful and dangerous condition. By announcing herself as a Jew, Arendt is neither revealing some deep truth about her personal identity nor making a declaration of religious faith. Retaining her "Jewish name" is a sign of affiliation and solidarity with a people who have suffered mightily the burdens of twentieth-century European history.<sup>82</sup>

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80. Morris B. Kaplan, 'Refiguring the Jewish Question: Arendt, Proust, and the Politics of Sexuality', in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. by Bonnie Honig. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), (pp. 105-134). p. 107.

81. Hannah Arendt *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. by Peter Baehr, (New York: Penguin, 2000). pp. 25-26. See also Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers *Hannah Arendt—Karl Jaspers, Correspondence 1926-1969*, ed. by Lotte and Hans Saner Köhler, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992). p. 29.

82. Morris B. Kaplan, 'Refiguring the Jewish Question', (1995). p. 107.

One must seriously consider Cahun's choice of a pseudonym, particularly given that she adopted this name when identifying as a Jew had become dangerous. In this context, the choice of pseudonyms can be viewed as political. What can be read for, therefore, in both the texts and images that Cahun produced is the trace of the affect of the artist's 'Jewishness.'

Hannah Arendt's work offers a useful model for thinking through questions of Jewish positionalities. Arendt's work addressed questions of 'Jewish origin,' 'Jewishness,' and political identities precisely because much of her own political analysis as well as her writing more broadly stemmed from her thoughts on Jewish matters in relation to, but not distinct from, world politics. The first part of Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which examined the historical origins of modern anti-Semitism, was a political analysis in which Jewishness was posited as a question of belonging. Arendt explored the rise of anti-Semitism alongside the birth of the nation-state, the emancipation of the Jews, the rise of the Jewish financiers, the roles of Jews within society, and the infamous Dreyfus affair.<sup>83</sup> In Arendt's analysis of the emergence of anti-Semitism as a political ideology, she tracked the position of the Jews in Western Europe following the Enlightenment and emancipation and discusses their 'outsider' status, for she noted, they were never truly accepted by European society. This outsider status gave rise to two particular types: the 'conscious pariahs' who were aware of it, and the 'parvenus' who tried to assimilate but could never escape their Jewish roots.<sup>84</sup> For

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83. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism: Introduction by Samantha Power*, (New York: Schocken, 2004). An earlier and previously unpublished manuscript written in the 1930s called 'Antisemitism' where Arendt attempted to understand how anti-Semitism developed into a political ideology is useful to consider in addition to the texts where she outlines her dichotomy of Jewish 'types', the pariah and the parvenu. See Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, (2007) pp. 46-121.

84. Hannah Arendt first used the categories of pariah and parvenu in *Rahel Varnhagen: Life of a Jewess*, which she completed in 1933 but because of the rise of National Socialism the work was not published until 1958. The categories surfaced again in her analyses of Jewish history. The pariah and parvenu categories were concepts she adopted from the works of Bernard Lazare (recommended to her by Kurt Blumenfeld). During the late 1920s and early 1930s Arendt received an informal education in Zionism from Blumenfeld who was at the time chair of the Zionist organization in Germany.



Arendt:

those who really did most for the spiritual dignity of their people, who were great enough to transcend the bounds of nationality and to weave the strands of their Jewish genius into the general texture of European life ... those bold spirits who tried to make of the emancipation of the Jews that which it really should have been—an admission of Jews *as Jews* to the ranks of humanity, rather than a permit to ape the gentiles or an opportunity to play the parvenu.<sup>85</sup>

By affirming their Jewishness and their place in European life, the conscious pariahs became marginal. As Ron Feldman has noted, 'The parvenus—the upstarts who try to make it in non-Jewish society—are the products of the same historical circumstances and are thus the pariahs' counterparts in Arendt's typology. While the pariahs use their minds and hearts, voluntarily spurning society's insidious gifts, the parvenus use their elbows to raise themselves above their fellow Jews into the "respectable" world of the gentiles.'<sup>86</sup>

Julia Kristeva has taken Arendt's paradigm of the pariah and parvenu in her own consideration. Kristeva examined how 'Jewish origin' was transformed into a psychological quality that could then be viewed as either virtue or vice.<sup>87</sup> Kristeva's work on Marcel Proust, which was informed by a reading of Arendt, considered Proust's writing in relation to the author's ambiguous relationship to his own Jewish heritage. Both Kristeva and Arendt analysed Proust's work against the historical backdrop of the Dreyfus Affair in France. Hannah Arendt's reading of Marcel Proust also critically tracked the racialization and

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85. Hannah Arendt 'The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition' in *Ibid.* (275-297) p. 275. Ron Feldman has written that 'According to Arendt, the conscious pariah is a hidden tradition: "hidden" because there are few links among the great but isolated individuals who have affirmed their pariah status—such as Heinrich Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka, and Walter Benjamin—nor ties between them and the rest of the Jewish community; a "tradition" because "for over a hundred years the same basic conditions have obtained and evoked the same basic reaction' (p. 276). See Ron Feldman's 'Introduction. The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) reprinted in *The Jewish Writings* (pp. xli-lxxvi). p. xliii. We can understand Claude Cahun as forming part of this 'hidden tradition.'

86. *Ibid.* p. *xliii*

87. Julia Kristeva, 'Proust: In Search of Identity', in *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, ed. by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), (pp. 140-155). p. 151.

naturalization of homosexuality and Jewishness as identities rather than as contingent, historical sets of practices.<sup>88</sup> Kristeva's investigation was premised upon an understanding that 'national' identity was conceived of in terms of 'psychic and historical experience which transforms identity into belonging: "I am" becomes "I am one of them," "to be" becomes "to belong."<sup>89</sup> How Jewish belonging (or non-belonging in the case of Proust, Arendt herself, and Claude Cahun) is played out in both political and aesthetic terms is a useful question to reflect upon in relation to the inscriptions made by Cahun/Moore that gesture towards Jewishness.

As Kristeva's work demonstrated, the concept of 'Jewish origin' when separated from religious or political meaning becomes a psychological quality, and is transformed into what she has termed *Judaïcité*. For Hannah Arendt, 'Jewish origin' could be transformed into a political identity (Zionist) and consequently she was able to avidly engage with secular Jewish matters and not with the religious aspects of Judaism.<sup>90</sup> Claude Cahun was not performing a Jewish identity for the camera, but like Arendt she used her Jewishness for political and artistic ends. Arendt's conscious pariahs were those that realized the limitations of emancipation and assimilation, for they were cognizant of the fact that they did not enjoy political freedom. Arendt stated that 'these men [sic] yet achieved liberty and popularity by sheer force of imagination.'<sup>91</sup> Those that Arendt termed 'conscious pariahs,' in her analysis, started an emancipation of their own. Claude Cahun's re-visioning of a subject who was Jewish, a woman, and a lesbian can be classed as the work of a conscious pariah. It was from their

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88. Bonnie Honig, 'Introduction' *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. by Bonnie Honig, (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995). p. 6.

89. Julia Kristeva, 'Proust: In Search of Identity', (1995). p. 140.

90. Jerome Kohn 'Preface, A Jewish Life: 1906-1975' in Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, (2007) (ix-xxxii)

91. Ibid. p. 276.

position as outcasts, and out of their own experience that these conscious pariahs could create.

In *Aveux non Avenus* (1930) Cahun repeatedly referenced the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament. Several of the fragmentary passages are in fact reworkings of Biblical stories, and Cahun was evidently fond of inverting Biblical phrases. Jewishness is addressed in the text. Although the book ought not to be read as an autobiography grounded in 'fact,' Cahun frequently references her own Jewish heritage. A passage is included early on, thought to be a reference to Cahun's father, Maurice Schwob and her feeling that she resembles him. Cahun and Moore created an image circa 1928 the year of Maurice Schwob's death that is thought to mirror an image of Schwob taken in 1920 [Figs. 1.15, 1.16]. Cahun included the following declaration in the second chapter entitled 'Myself (for want of anything better)': 'I, Jewish to the point of using my sins for my salvation, of putting my by-products to work, of always surprising myself, my eye hooked over the edge of my own waste-paper bin.'<sup>92</sup>

Claude Cahun was raised in part by her grandmother, Mathilde Schwob *née* Cahun. Mathilde Schwob was one of the Jewish relatives with whom the artist felt affinity, especially as she lived with her grandmother between 1898-1904 at a time when her mother first succumbed to psychiatric crises prior to being committed to a clinic in Paris.

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92. Claude Cahun, *Disavowals*, (2009). pp.26-27.

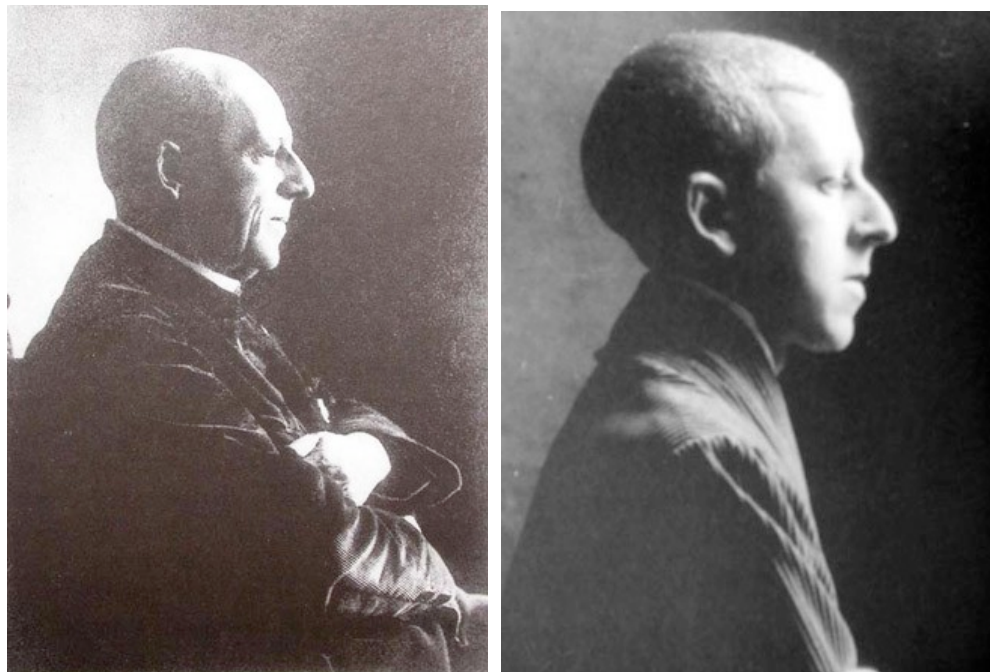


Figure 1.20: *Maurice Schwob*, 1920 (photographer unknown)

Figure 1.21: Cahun/Moore, No Title c.1928

Both of Lucy Schwob's great-grandfathers were rabbis: Léopold Schwob, George Schwob's father, was a rabbi in Rouen, and Anselme Cahun, father of Mathilde was a rabbi in Frankfurt-am-Main.<sup>93</sup> It is therefore inconceivable that she was not familiar with some religious Jewish practices.

The title *Aveux non Avenus*, which has been translated as *Disavowals—or Cancelled Confessions* (2009), resonates with the Jewish *Kol Nidre* prayer 'all vows are not vows.'<sup>94</sup> Honor

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93. An undated handwritten family tree with notes on the family including Anselme Cahun, his wife Julie Rosenfeld, and their daughter Mathilde Cahun who married Georges Schwob. Léopold Schwob is indicated as Georges Schwob's father and it is noted that he was 'rabbin à Rouen'. See item JHT/1995/00045/81 'Claude Cahun / Marcel Moore Archives', Jersey Heritage Trust, Jersey <<http://jerseyheritagetrust.jeron.je/>> . In 'Lettre à Paul Lévy' Cahun refers to the family papers, citing letters between great-grandfather who was 'rabin [sic] à Francfort-sur-le-Mein', and his daughter Mathilde, who was then a teacher in England. She then wonders how others can conclude, without a doubt, that her religious background was indecipherable ('indéchiffrables'), the implication being that her ancestry was quite clear. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 750.

94. *Kol Nidre* literally translates in French as 'tous les vœux.' The *Kol Nidre* prayer ends with an act of disavowal as the words in Hebrew '*Nidrenu lo Nidre*,' translated as 'Our vows (to God) shall not be vows' are spoken. From the introduction to the Kol Nidre Prayer (translated from French), with thanks to the Kehilat Geshar Synagogue in France: 'The Kol Nidre is the prayer of those that are not free in their choices and that sometimes are obliged to consent to the decisions imposed by others. This prayer unites us to our ancestors that had to obey while they

LaSalle and Abigail Solomon-Godeau had previously offered the translation of 'Confessions Null and Void' for Cahun's book in their 1992 discussion of the photomontages. Cahun herself likely provided an English title for the work, for a 1929 profile of both her and Marcel Moore written for the European edition of the *Chicago Tribune* listed the title as 'Denials.'<sup>95</sup> *Kol Nidre* is an Aramaic prayer recited as night falls preceding Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During the *Kol Nidre* service the following is chanted, addressing vows made only to God for which atonement is sought:

All vows, bonds, promises, obligations, and oaths [to God] wherewith we have vowed, sworn and bound ourselves from this Day of Atonement unto the next Day of Atonement, may it come unto us for good; lo, of all these, we repent us in them. They shall be absolved, released, annulled, made void, and of non effect; they shall not be binding nor shall they have any power. Our vows [to God] shall not be vows; our bonds shall not be bonds; and our oaths shall not be oaths.<sup>96</sup>

Cahun appears to have taken the theme of the *Kol Nidre* service as an organising principle for her avant-garde writing. It is the title of the book, *Aveux non Avenus* with its referent to the *Kol Nidre* chant, however, that sets the agenda. In Cahun's text, all 'confessions' are annulled or retracted. The enigmatic title suggested at the outset that any 'truths' are not to be taken as necessarily authentic, but rather as 'confessions null and void.'

*Aveux non Avenus* had a limited impact when it was first published. Only 500 copies

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would have wanted to withstand. It is also the confession (*aveux*) that we distanced ourselves from the divine, but now we are in search of pardon and reconciliation. For our errors and for our faults, for our inconsiderate engagements and for our forgotten promises, for our guilty silences and for our erroneous affirmations, could we find the pardon and the reconciliation with others and with God.'

95. Newscuttings for the *Chicago Tribune*, European edition, of articles entitled 'Who's Who Abroad', about the work of Lucie Schwob and Suzanne Moore [sic], 1929. JHT/2003/00001/27. See 'Claude Cahun / Marcel Moore Archives,' Reprinted in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). p. 226.

96. Rabbi Morris Silverman, *High Holiday Prayer Book: Rosh Hashanah—New Year's Day. Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement*, (Hartford: Prayer Book Press, 1951). p. 207. It should be stressed that the atonement is addressed to God, for sins committed against God. All sins committed against specific people must be atoned for by personally asking forgiveness from those one has sinned against. *Kol Nidre* and *Yom Kippur* are festivals where one strives for ethical renewal. What is being atoned for is the individual's and the community's failure to lead an ethical life.

were printed, and in the 1950 letter to Paul Lévy, Cahun expressed disappointment with the work's initial reception by her peers: 'Ostracism was more or less the general response – aside from silence (ignored), [the book was met with] the basest of insults. Witness how “literary criticism” [ . . . ] received the “prose and poems” of this undesirable Cassandra'.<sup>97</sup> She lamented that her efforts to shake her contemporaries out of their complacency through the use of black humour and provocation were in vain. The link to Yom Kippur as noted also suggests the possibility of renewal and atonement, while the line 'using my sins for my salvation' reflects the idea of ethical renewal that is at the heart of the Day of Atonement. Cassandra likewise reflects the spirit of Kol Nidre, for those who worship renounce their hypocrisies through prayer. Cahun's text was collaborative in spirit, demanding the participation of the reader.<sup>98</sup> Readers were not to be passive or complacent but rather they ought to actively engage with the text. The year that *Aveux non Avenus* was published also marked the start of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's involvement with Surrealism. The couple also became increasingly involved in politics. It was this new found call to political activism where Cahun's Jewishness was again mobilized or transformed into a political identity. As Hannah Arendt observed, once the pariah enters the political arena, s/he becomes a rebel. So it was with Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore in the 1940s, when together they assumed the role of the *Soldat ohne Namen*.

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97. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 710.

98. Readers were meant to collude with Cahun. In another unpublished text, Cahun wrote of readers that 'collaboration is indispensable'. See *Ibid.* p. 770.

(a) *The 1930s: Signing on to Surrealism*

When Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore signed a wooden 'screen' placed in the 1936 exhibition *Exposition Surréaliste d'Objets* held at Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris, the couple were marking a growing affiliation with the Surrealist movement.<sup>99</sup> By the 1930s, Cahun and Moore had begun associating with André Breton, Georges Bataille, Chana Orloff, Robert Desnos, and Henri Michaux.<sup>100</sup> In April, 1930, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore published a photograph that would be the only performative image the couple publicly showed during their lifetimes. The photograph appeared in *Bifur* no. 5, a journal that was published by Éditions du Carrefour, the same imprint that published *Aveux non Avenus*. While not as central to the Surrealist movement as journals such as *Minotaure*, *Bifur* was a recognised publication that accepted surrealist work. It was also edited by Georges Ribemont Desaignes.<sup>101</sup> Cahun had provided a lithograph based on a Cahun/Moore photograph as the cover illustration for Ribemont-Desaignes book *Frontières humaines: n'ayez pas peur d'être devores* (1929). The *Bifur* image was an anamorphic, distorted image of Cahun. The stark photograph did not offer viewers any expected indications of normative femininity, or even any markers of gender. The image was manipulated in the darkroom. This was something that Cahun and Malherbe engaged in

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99. The signatures Claude Cahun and Suzanne Malherbe appear on the wooden screen, which was exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum as part of the exhibition *Surreal Things* (on view in London until July, 2007). Cahun's signature is near that of Salvador Dalí's.

100. Cahun met Breton in 1932 after becoming involved with a small Marxist group called *groupe Brunet*. See Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun*, (2007). pp. xvi, 111. She had already befriended Henri Michaux and Robert Desnos in the 1920s through her association with *Mercure de France* where she had published her writing since 1914. Cahun/Moore photographed Michaux as early as c.1925, and also produced a portrait series of Robert Desnos in 1930. The Jersey Heritage Trust holds copies of the issues of *Mercure de France* in which Cahun's work appeared. For Suzanne Malherbe's copy of the 1914 issue: Vol. 109, No. 406, see item JHT/1995/00045/63 'Claude Cahun / Marcel Moore Archives.' The archive also holds prints and negatives of the images of Michaux and Desnos. These images are reprinted in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). pp. 167, 172-173.

101. François Leperlier, *L'écart et la métamorphose*, (1992). p. 118.

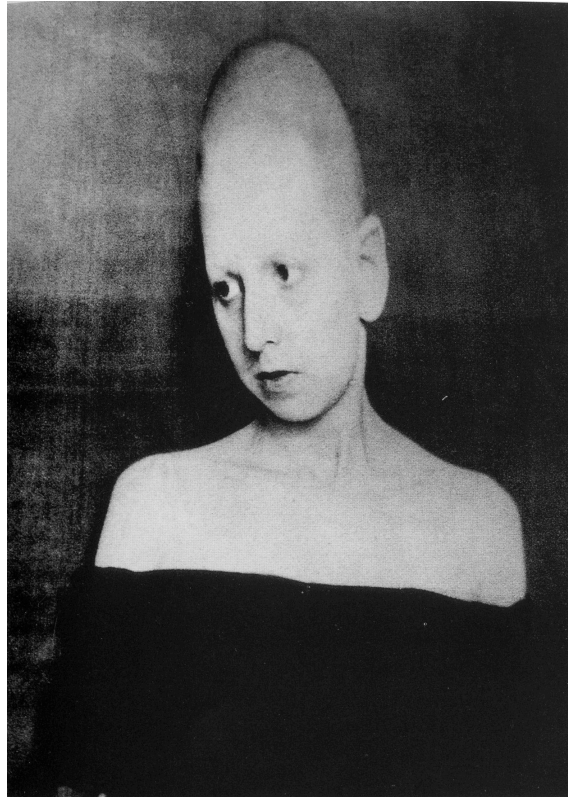


Figure 1.22: Cahun/Moore, No Title (*Bifur* No. 5, April, 1930)

relatively rarely instead opting to engage photographic processing laboratories to carry out all of the developing and printing of the images.<sup>102</sup> Cahun and Moore would leave developing instructions on the negative envelopes, traces which confirm that the pair relied on photographic laboratories for the processing and printing of images. Distortion of this kind was something Surrealist photographers such as André Kertész often employed. The distortion in the image published in *Bifur* is appropriate, considering the audience for the publication, and would have worked to place this photograph firmly in the context of French Surrealist art. What is noteworthy is that Cahun's confrontational gaze, a trademark of most images taken at this time, was absent in this photograph. Although her appearance with a

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102. See James Stevenson, 'Claude Cahun: An Analysis of her Photographic Technique' in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). (46-55) p. 51. Stevenson has stated that the use of a laboratory would leave the choice of the developing time, printing paper and even possibly the size of the print up to the technician charged with processing and printing the image.





Figure 1.23: André Kertész, *Distortion #6* (1932)

shaved head is provocative and certainly unconventional, Cahun does not aggressively engage the viewer as subject in these images.

In the anamorphic portrait, Cahun's breasts are cut off from view by the dark cloth that covers them. The subject of the photograph is a seemingly almost disembodied head or bust, and the emphasis on the face is surely a marker of a unique individuality. Drawing attention to the elongated cranium and denying the viewer any access to the gendered parts of her body functions as a response to Surrealist photographers such as Man Ray, André Kertész, and Brassäi who often portrayed women by focusing on their naked torsos—objectifying them—without concentrating on or even depicting their faces.

Rosalind Krauss compared Cahun's anamorphic portrait to *Distortion #6* (1932) by Kertész [Fig. 1.23] that depicts an elongated female figure seated in a chair, against a dark background. She points to both artists' use of distortion in their images.<sup>103</sup> With its focus on the elongated head and the denial of any feminine features that could be fetishized, Cahun/Moore's image could have functioned as a response to the ways in which Surrealists like

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103. Rosalind E. Krauss, *Bachelors*, (1999). p. 37.

Kertész continually depicted the feminine form as disembodied, cropped, or even dismembered. Readers of *Bifur* would have been familiar with Freud's writings, but that does not mean that the image was intended to be read as Cahun presenting her head as phallus as David Bate has suggested.<sup>104</sup> Julie Cole has also suggested that to those viewers who knew Cahun as part of a lesbian couple, she may have already been marked as an 'unnatural' woman. Cole has suggested that the image may have been meant to underscore a commonly held conception of the lesbian as grotesque, to further unsettle the homophobic viewer.<sup>105</sup> As outsiders because of their gender and sexual orientation, Cahun and Moore's project was always one that set out to query and challenge theories and stereotypical representations of 'women.' The absence of gendered signifiers in this photograph underscored how the body was socially coded. This image continued the couple's project that aimed to create new systems of representation and meaning.

In 1932 Cahun joined the politically outspoken group of Surrealists by involving herself in the *Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires* (AEAR). This organization was the French section of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers that was founded by the Comintern in the Soviet Union in 1930. It was here that they, along with several other Surrealists, hoped they could promote a revolutionary, anti-bourgeois art while aligning themselves with French workers. In 1934, Claude Cahun published *Les paris sont ouverts* (All Bets are Open) a polemic text that argued for revolutionary art and against propaganda. By this time, Cahun had become critical of Stalin and the Communist Party and was sympathetic to Leon Trotsky. Cahun dedicated *Les paris sont ouverts* to Trotsky, stating later in life that she

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104. David Bate, 'The Mise-en-Scène of Desire', in *Mise-en-scène: Claude Cahun, Tacita Dean, Virginia Nimkaroh*, exh. cat. ed. by François Leperlier. (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1994), p. 8.

105. Julie Cole, 'Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore', (2005). p. 354.

did so because she sympathized with his politics and his plight as 'a wandering Jew'.<sup>106</sup> The dedication was suggested to her by a medical student, Nicholas Coutouzis, a member of the Marxist discussion group she belonged to, *Groupe Brunet*.<sup>107</sup>

*Les paris sont ouverts* begins with a quotation from Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847). The inclusion of the quotation situates Cahun politically, and also underscored her belief in dialectical thinking, which was also stated outright in her description of what she felt was a 'really dialectical poetry' later in the text.<sup>108</sup> The first section of *Les paris sont ouverts* was based on a report Cahun prepared for the literature section of the AEAR, where she considered the tensions caused between a Surrealist aesthetic that promoted abandoning 'reality' and the new order from the Soviet Communist Party that promoted socialist realism. The Communist Party advocated that artists 'depict reality in its revolutionary development' and called for them to become 'engineers of the human soul'.<sup>109</sup> Cahun promoted poetry in the first half of the political tract, calling it an 'inherent human need' that was linked to sexual desire. Stating that satirists and journalists were the most suitable sorts of political writers, Cahun advocated revolutionary poetry that expressed political sentiments unconsciously.<sup>110</sup> The unconscious was positioned here as the ultimate creative source for writers and artists, a view which fitted the avant-garde, Surrealist doctrines of the time. This approach that unconsciously communicated political ideas to an audience is the preferred way to rouse

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106. François Leperlier, *L'écart et la métamorphose*, (1992). pp. 149-150.

107. Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun*, (2007). pp. 113, 184.

108. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002).

109. Stalin (1932) quoted in Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun*, (2007). p. 113.

110. Gen Doy has noted that poetry was not well suited to overt political content. She surmised that Cahun's position was that manifest political content could only be revolutionary in a fugitive way, since circumstances change. Imposing ideological constrictions on poetry could only lead to trickery or deceit. See *Ibid.* pp. 113-114.

people into political action. This impetus to awaken others into political action fits with Hannah Arendt's belief that in the twentieth century the pariah must become political. The pariah as one who stands outside of both Jewish tradition (although maintains a connection with the Jewish people) and mainstream Western society must waken others to a similar state of consciousness.<sup>111</sup>

The second part of Cahun's *Les paris sont ouverts* was an attack on Louis Aragon, who had abandoned the Surrealist principles he had promoted in his support of Stalinism. In this section, Cahun also argued against the Communist Party's view that art should be overtly political. She wrote that the role played by the unconscious in both viewing and producing work yielded unexpected results, regardless of the intention of the producer. She favoured this type of work over what she felt was a dictatorial approach taken by Stalinists. Cahun later recalled that the ideas that she put forward in *Les paris sont ouverts* were put into practice when she and Moore carried out their own propaganda campaign in Jersey during the Occupation.<sup>112</sup>

It was the rift between the Surrealist artists and the direction of the Communist Party under Stalin that promoted Socialist Realism and overtly political art and writing that caused Claude Cahun to join with Georges Bataille, André Breton, Roger Caillois and others to co-found the radical political and cultural group '*Contre Attaque*' in 1935. This anti-Fascist group was short-lived, however, in part due to the enforced marginalization of those who criticised the newly elected Popular Front, who were supported by Stalin. In spite of these obstacles,

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111. See 'The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition' in Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, (2007) pp. 284-285. Here Arendt writes that 'politically speaking, every pariah who refused to be a rebel was partly responsible for his own position ... From such shame there was no escape, either in art or in nature'. Ron Feldman has noted of this call to political action that 'the first consequence of becoming conscious of one's pariah status is the demand that the Jewish people "come to grips with the world of men and women." The duty of the conscious pariah is to waken one's fellow Jews to a similar consciousness so as to rebel against it.' See *Ibid.* p. lvi.

112. Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun*, (2007). pp. 114-115.

Cahun remained a strong advocate of the unification of art and politics. She continued her involvement with the small Marxist group *Groupe Brunet*, although she was marginalized within the group for her views on art, culture, and her opposition to homophobia and discrimination.<sup>113</sup> Gen Doy has noted that Cahun lamented the role women played in this group, stating that she was the only one to participate in ideological discussions while the others 'effaced themselves'.<sup>114</sup> This commitment to political activism would become paramount for Cahun and Moore during the war years of 1940-1945 while they lived in Occupied Jersey. The pair moved to Jersey where they had vacationed since Cahun's youth and where the family owned property. They moved in 1937 amidst a growing concern for Cahun's safety as a Jewish woman living in France during the rise of Fascism.

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113. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 722.

114. Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun*, (2007). p. 119. Doy has cited archival documents in a private collection (UK) dated 1945. In these documents Cahun described her appointed role as 'Lunacharsky' in the group. Lunacharsky was the Bolshevik in charge of art and culture following the revolution of 1917, and was a supporter of the avant-garde.

(b) *The Rebellious Pariah: Resistance as 'Der Soldat ohne Namen'*

*It all started in 1940 in a small way and grew as time went on. We always listened to the BBC and any other news we could get which was not tainted by Boche propaganda, and it made us perfectly sick to hear the "news" put out by Radio Paris, so we decided to run a news service of our own for the benefit of the German troops. We were inspired by the broadcasts by "Colonel Britton" on the European service of the BBC.<sup>115</sup>*

- Suzanne Malherbe (Marcel Moore)

On July 1st, 1940, one month after continental France, the channel island of Jersey where Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore had been living under their birth names since leaving Paris in 1937 was occupied by the German forces. Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore had forgone the opportunity to evacuate to mainland Britain in advance of imminent Nazi occupation. In an unpublished document written between November 16th and November 22nd, 1944, Claude Cahun explained their decision to remain in Jersey:

The deep truth is that on our side, on the side of democracy, I would have had to do whatever I did (speaking or writing) even more against my conscience than here. Let me explain: when I tried to induce the German soldiers to lay down their arms, I was quite true to my principles, was I not? 1st, against war; 2nd, against the regression represented by our enemies. Perhaps Jersey was almost the only place where that luxury could be indulged in.<sup>116</sup>

It was under the guise of *'der Soldat ohne Namen'* (the soldier with no name) that Claude Cahun continued to combine avant-garde and Surrealist principles in service of their political beliefs in the fight against Fascism.

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115. Suzanne Malherbe interview in the *Jersey Evening Post*, June 30, 1945 p. 4 quoted in Claire Follain 'Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe: *Résistantes*' in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). (83-95) p. 83.

116. Lucy Schwob 'Testament' quoted in *Ibid.* p. 84.

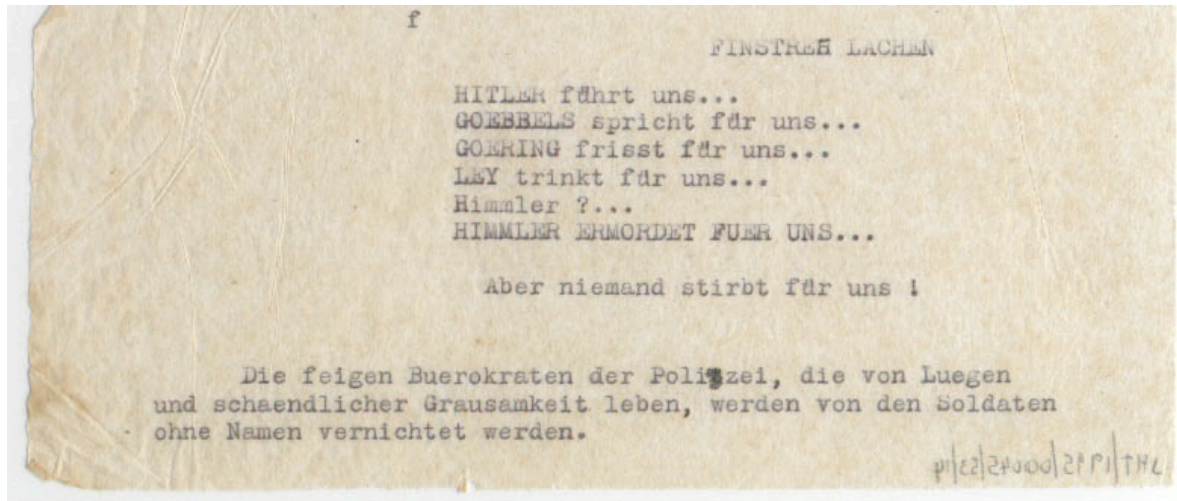


Figure 1.24: propaganda tract signed 'von den Soldaten ohne Namen'

In *Lettre à Paul Lévy* (1950) Schwob said that their resistance work began almost immediately, although it is difficult to ascertain exactly when their campaign began.<sup>117</sup> Their campaign was twofold: first, as Malherbe recounted, they began a news service with the purpose of distributing information amongst German soldiers and civilians in Jersey via their tracts, which the pair referred to as '*unsere Zeitung*' (our newspaper). Second, they believed that not all German soldiers stationed in Jersey were Nazis so it remained possible to encourage these soldiers to desert and help overthrow the Nazi regime.<sup>118</sup> In June of 1942, it is documented that the women handed in their radios according to the law forbidding the possession of radio sets. The couple then obtained a radio illegally after it was forbidden to be in possession of a radio set, which they hid, along with their camera. Malherbe failed to disclose that she was fluent in German, and Schwob likewise failed to comply with a German order in October of 1940, requiring Jews to register with the authorities. The women both typed and produced handwritten notes, letters, and poems onto sheets of paper approximately

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117. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 714.

118. *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006).

A5 in size. Malherbe used her proficiency in German to translate news that was broadcast on the BBC, while Schwob composed verse and turned the news into literary texts [Fig. 1.24]. Malherbe also used her graphic skills to illustrate the tracts [Fig. 1.25]. The pair frequently altered the format to maintain interest. Schwob later described their adoption of the pseudonym '*der Soldat/die Soldaten ohne Namen*' to Lévy, stating that signing the German tracts this way implied that the notes were written by German officers who opposed the Nazi regime.

The women would distribute their 'newspaper' around Jersey, making special trips into the Island's capital of St. Helier. They would often employ theatrics in the distribution of the tracts by assuming various costumes or disguises. In busier locations such as St. Helier, they were able to place the notes into the soldiers' coat pockets.<sup>119</sup> They also placed the tracts inside cigarette packets, surmising that with the rationing of tobacco the notes would be more likely to be read. The woman who supplied them with the cigarette paper and packages was probably the one who betrayed them.<sup>120</sup> Schwob and Malherbe also placed the tracts in officer's cars, a risky venture that they undertook close to their home which was situated opposite the St. Brelade's Bay Hotel that the German soldiers used as a *Soldatenheim*, a combined barracks and social club. They also distributed the messages while the Germans attended funerals for their fallen comrades, since the women's house, *La Rocquaise*, was adjacent to the St. Brelade's cemetery. Of their recklessness, Schwob recalled:

Did our proximity to the cemetery on one side and the Soldatenheim on the other expose us to suspicion? In my opinion, it also served as a safeguard. Who would imagine such recklessness?<sup>121</sup>

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119. Ibid. p. 85.

120. Lizzie Thynne, *Playing a Part: The Story of Claude Cahun*, DVD (Brighton: Sussex University, 2004).

121. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 739.



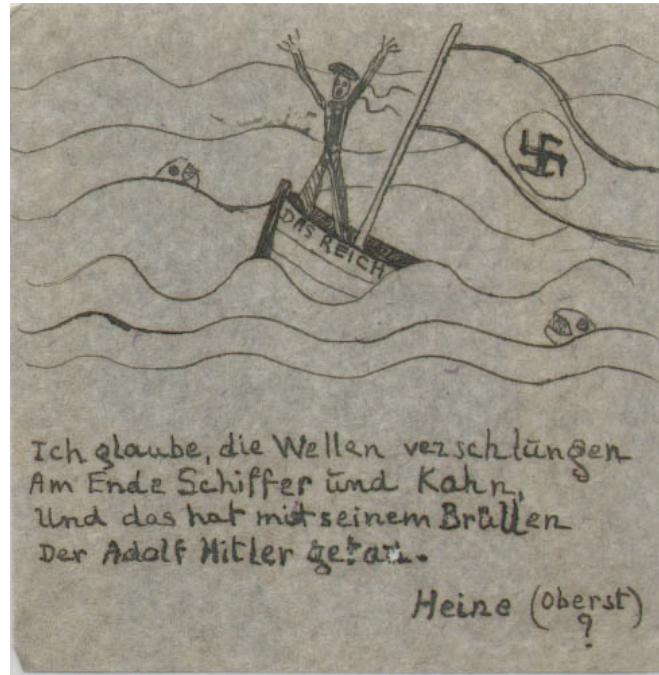


Figure 1.25: Propaganda Tract

Schwob and Malherbe also staged interventions when they hung a banner in the nearby church that read: 'God is Great, but Hitler is Greater. Jesus died for Man, but Men Die for Hitler!'<sup>122</sup> They also continued to place messages in the cars and coats of the Germans who attended funerals at the adjacent church and cemetery. Schwob recounted one of their interventions at the cemetery for Paul Lévy, describing how after nightfall she placed a handmade cross that displayed the message '*Für sie ist der Krieg zu Ende*' (For them the War has Ended) written in gothic script on the grave of *Oberleutenant W. Zepernick* in October, 1943 [Fig. 1.26].<sup>123</sup> Claire Follain has remarked that it was not surprising that the couple maintained their resistance activity for almost four years:

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122. Lizzie Thynne, *Playing a Part: The Story of Claude Cahun*, 2004.

123. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 739.

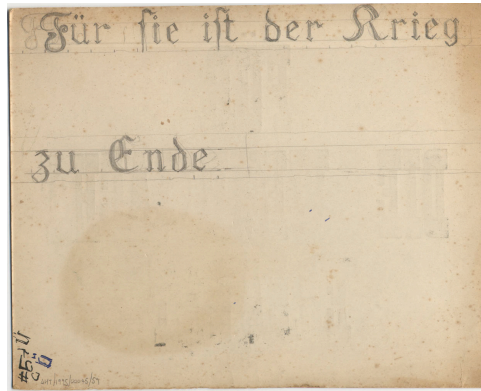


Figure 1.26: Handwritten note on the back of a notice for armed forces permits. Thought to be a design for the tract Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore placed on Oberleutenant W. Zepernick's grave in October, 1943.

They were foreigners, and recent arrivals by Island standards. They had deliberately avoided social integration with all but a handful of locals. Before the war, the women acquired a reputation for walking their cats on leads on the beach and sunbathing in the nude in their garden. Their reputation for 'odd' behaviour had meant that residents in the area were not suspicious when Schwob and Malherbe set out to distribute their notes whilst continually changing their appearance.<sup>124</sup>

Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore were arrested at their home on July 25th, 1944.

The *Geheime Feldpolizei* officers found a portable typewriter, a radio, and a camera and immediately arrested the women. In the event of an arrest, they had decided to commit suicide, and always carried barbituates with them.<sup>125</sup> Following provisional questioning after their arrest, the couple attempted suicide, but failed. This ultimately saved them from deportation to the concentration camps in Europe.<sup>126</sup> The *Feldpolizei* were convinced that Schwob and Malherbe were working as part of a larger organization, and wanted to question them thoroughly in order to apprehend the man they were working for. The Germans had discovered 'only around 350 notes, which represented only one-seventh (at the lowest

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124. Claire Follain 'Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe—*Résistantes*' in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). p. 86.

125. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 724.

126. *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). p. 87.

estimate) of those that we had distributed ... (Four years ... it's a long time!).<sup>127</sup>

Approximately ten days after their arrest and first suicide attempt, Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe were questioned separately. Their house was searched and their artworks and writings, including a diary they kept detailing their resistance campaign, were confiscated and later destroyed. It was during her extended interview conducted in English that Lucy Schwob announced her Jewish heritage. She recounted the events for Paul Lévy:

It was me, acting alone, who caused everything. The typewriter belongs to me and Suzanne doesn't know how to use it. I made the photomontages. I composed all the texts. I organised everything. Suzanne only translated my texts into German and accompanied me when I distributed the papers. You have to understand this: My family suffered in the war of 1870 and in the war of 1914-18. Finally, I am, by my father, of Jewish origin ... I am absolutely certain that, without me, Suzanne would have calmly awaited the liberation like the loyalists in Jersey. She never doubted the victory of the Allied Armies.<sup>128</sup>

In an effort to claim sole responsibility and absolve Suzanne Malherbe, Lucy Schwob/Claude Cahun identified as a Jew. It was under duress that she made the statement 'I am, by my father, of Jewish origin.' Knowing that the officers had read the diary detailing their collective acts of resistance, Cahun appealed to the Nazi concept of 'Jewish Origin' because she knew that her 'race' would have already rendered her reprehensible within the framework of Nazi ideology.<sup>129</sup> Self-identifying as a Jew under these circumstances can also be understood as a political gesture. Although Cahun's admission that she was of Jewish origin was uttered under duress, her remarks resonate with comments Hannah Arendt made in a letter to Karl Jaspers, written in 1946: 'Politically, I will always speak only in the name of the Jews when

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127. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 739.

128. Ibid. p. 747. My translation. Cahun recalled that she gave the interview in English, but recounted the confession for Lévy in French.

129. That Cahun immediately qualified her statement of Jewish origin by underscoring the difficulties her Jewish family endured as a result of the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and the First World War indicate both an anti-German position as well as one of Jewishness.

circumstances force me to give my nationality.<sup>130</sup> Cahun here demonstrated an understanding of the mechanisms of internalizing 'Jewishness' or *Judaïcité* as either a virtue or a vice. By confessing that she was of Jewish origin, Cahun offered up the conception of vice that she knew was already in play in this instance. We can also understand this utterance as an occurrence of Cahun negotiating a sense of Jewish subjectivity that was inflected by the ways in which she experienced a Jewish positionality.

In spite of Cahun's efforts to absolve Moore who, but for her association with Lucy Schwob/Claude Cahun was untainted, the women were tried and convicted. Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe were convicted of political crimes, and in recognition of their four years of resistance, they were sentenced to death for distributing propaganda that undermined the morale of the German troops. They were subsequently sentenced to six years in prison for listening to the BBC and to a further six months for possession of a firearm and a camera.<sup>131</sup> In a typical display of her flair for black humour Cahun reportedly asked the judge which of the sentences was to be carried out first.<sup>132</sup>

Cahun and Moore were imprisoned from July 25, 1944 until the island was liberated in May, 1945. They were initially held separately in the political wing (C Block) of the jail in St. Helier, where they were constantly in fear of being executed. After it became clear that they would not be killed, the threat of deportation remained. It is a testament to their commitment to both their artistic practice and their resistance efforts that they continued to produce

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130. Hannah Arendt quoted in Morris B. Kaplan, 'Refiguring the Jewish Question', (1995). p. 107.

131. *Jersey Evening Standard* quoted in *Don't Kiss Me*, (2006). p. 89. In an appendix to the letter to Paul Levy, Cahun recalled what they were told during their trial: 'You are francs-tireurs [partisans] ... even though you used spiritual arms instead of firearms. It is indeed a more serious crime. With firearms, one knows at once what damage has been done, but with spiritual arms, one cannot tell how far-reaching it may be.' (720) quoted in *Ibid*.

132. Claude Cahun, *Écrits*, (2002). p. 721.

drawings, poems, and a diary while they were imprisoned. Drawings were produced by both women using pencils clandestinely obtained and toilet paper that was smuggled from the officers' toilets. Here they recorded their conditions in the prison through text and image.<sup>133</sup>

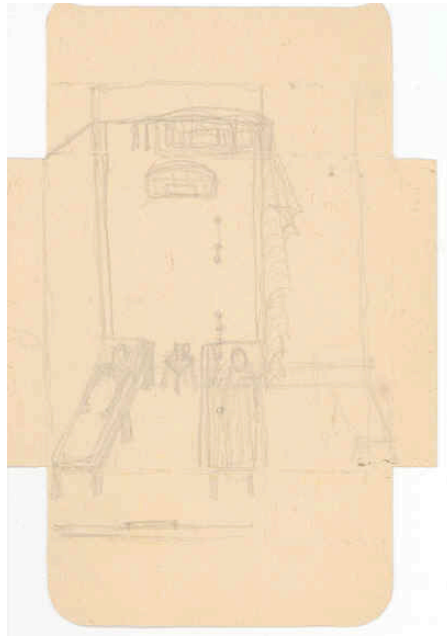


Figure 1.27: Marcel Moore, Sketch of an interior of a cell, depicting the ventilation system used for distributing clandestine messages.

Cahun and Moore remarkably managed to continue their resistance campaigns from within the prison. They learned and made use of the 'postal' system in the prison, where prisoners passed messages covertly through a system that relied on using string and the ventilation tunnels that connected all the cells. It is a credit to their ingenuity that they were able to exchange between two and three letters a day, while they were in solitary confinement. They managed to send messages outside of the prison by both circulated written messages and they also made use of sign language in order to communicate with Nurses and other prisoners held in adjacent cell blocks.<sup>134</sup> Cahun said of the resistance notes they produced while in

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133. I met a woman while I was researching at the archives in Jersey who owned a small drawing produced by Claude Cahun depicting a view of a keyhole through which a guard is represented outside of the cell.

134. Detailed accounts of the various systems of communication are given in Claire Follain's chapter in *Don't Kiss*

prison:

Being unmasked, we could use more direct methods. The soldier prisoners knew why we had been condemned, and we continued our propaganda close to them for the overthrow of the Nazi regime and capitulation without combat.<sup>135</sup>

That they were able to carry out resistance activities, including Marcel Moore's translation of the Allied Newspaper *Nachrichten für die Truppen* that was dropped by the RAF and smuggled into the Gloucester Street Prison, validated their interventions throughout the occupation. As she told Lévy, 'It was in some ways an official consecration ... belatedly ... of our initiative from 1940, of our independent action. It was a relief.' By maintaining their stance on the margins, outside of mainstream society, the conscious pariahs had succeeded in finally rousing others to a similar state of consciousness.



Fig. 1.28: Cahun/Moore *No Title* (Portrait of Claude Cahun) May, 1945

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*Me*, (2006). pp. 91-92.

135. This account was taken from a postwar letter to the French Consulate in Jersey written by Lucy Schwob, undated, and quoted in *Ibid.* p. 92.

## II. Jeanne Mammen (1890-1976)

### Chapter 1.

### Negotiating the Archive: Jeanne Mammen's *Wohnatelier*



Figure 2.1: Jeanne Mammen (date unknown)

#### 1. Reading the Archive: Biographical sketches

Any attempt to explain Jeanne Mammen's (1890-1976) art practice and her marginal status in the history of Weimar art must begin with the Jeanne Mammen archive, the atelier in Berlin lovingly preserved by close friends. Reading the archive itself is vital, for while the object is not to derive meaning or interpret the work solely in view of the life lived, shedding light on the artist's influences, and the milieu in which she worked enables a deeper understanding of Jeanne Mammen's practice and the work she produced. In this chapter, I will not only explore those influences and that milieu, but also the problematic of the archive itself as a contributor, however inadvertent, to her marginal status. Subsequently, I will argue for

her position as a chronicler of the metropolis in Weimar Berlin. The artworks that will be discussed date from the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) when Jeanne Mammen was working as a freelance commercial illustrator.

In my view, what is needed is to read the archive with particular attention to historical context in order to engage with the artworks it contains. The *Förderverein Jeanne Mammen Stiftung e.V.* (Sponsoring Association for the Jeanne Mammen Foundation), which now maintains the artist's studio (*Wohnatelier*) in its original state that can be visited upon appointment, has largely tried to control the narrative surrounding the artist. The Jeanne Mammen archive is housed in the two rooms that once served as the artist's studio and living quarters, and is managed by her friends Marga Döpping, Lothar Klünner, Felicitas Rink and Cornelia Pastelak-Price who, in 1976, set up the *Jeanne Mammen Gesellschaft e.V.* (Jeanne Mammen Society), now the *Förderverein Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung e.V.*<sup>1</sup> While Jeanne Mammen's watercolours from the Weimar Republic do not offer up interpretations easily or definitively, the works will be read to explore how meaning is produced. In contrast to the model of art historical scholarship where the artist is viewed as a subject who creates meaning, which in turn can be interpreted by the art historian with recourse to the artist's biography, the discussion that follows attempts to explore the kinds of readings that are made possible. Before proceeding to my analysis of the archive and its politics, I will begin with an outline of Mammen's early life, art training and influences, as traces of these are embedded in the archive, and will outline her position as a marginal figure in the existing literature.

What is known of the artist's biography is that Jeanne Mammen was born Gertrud Johanna Louise Mammen in Berlin on November 21, 1890 to Gustav Oskar Mammen and his

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1. Marga Döpping was actively involved in the maintenance of the *Förderverein Jeanne Mammen Stiftung* until December 2009. She passed away in March, 2010.



wife Ernestine Juliane Karoline des Haes. Although Mammen was born in Berlin to an upper-middle class family, she grew up in Paris after the family moved there around the turn of the century. There is little information regarding the artist's earliest years spent in Berlin. In Paris, French became Jeanne Mammen's language, which was why she adopted the francophone name that she used for the rest of her life. The linguistic duality of her name is but one marker of the importance of French culture in her work. Letters found in Mammen's archive describe these years as '[a] carefree childhood and youth in Paris.' In conversation with art historian Hans Kinkel, Mammen described her interest in drawing and painting from an early age:

Already as a small child I painted everything I could get my hands on. I always had big stacks of paper in front of me which I completely covered with my paint (...) I never wanted to do anything else, wished for anything else, did anything else.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2.2: Jeanne Mammen (r) and her sisters in their Paris Atelier c.1907

In 1906, Mammen began to study at the Académie Julian, which one of the few art schools that accepted women and allowed them to study life drawing.<sup>3</sup> In a letter dated 1972,

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2. Hans Kinkel, *Begegnung mit Jeanne Mammen/ Encounter with Jeanne Mammen, Jeanne Mammen 1890-1976*. exh. cat. ed. by Jeanne Mammen Gesellschaft and Berlinische Galerie (Jeanne Mammen Gesellschaft and the Berlinische Galerie, Edition Cantz, Stuttgart: 1978). p. 93.

3. The Académie Julian was founded by Rodolphe Julian (1839-1907) in 1868 and became recognised as an outstanding private academy in France, which was internationally renowned. The academy accepted women from the start, in contrast to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which only began accepting women in 1897. Women were allowed to participate in life drawing, and women are seen drawing from the nude model at the Académie Julian in student Marie Bashkirtseff's oil painting *In the Studio*, (1881). That Jeanne Mammen studied at the famed Académie Julian follows a trend, for many well-known artists who were women also trained at this institution. For a study of the school's first thirty years and the many women who studied there and went on to have careers as artists see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Overcoming All Obstacles: Women of the Académie Julian*, exh. cat. ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker (Dahesh Museum and Rutgers University Press, New York: 2000). See also Catherine Fehrer, 'New Light on the Académie Julian and its Founder (Rodolphe Julian)', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, vol. 103 (1984), (207-216). and Catherine Fehrer, 'Women at the Académie Julian in Paris', *Burlington Magazine*,

Mammen recalled her disappointment at the lack of attention she and other students received at the Académie Julian: 'After curiously perusing the students' work he [the professor] always said two words, either 'continue' or 'start over' and was completely finished with the entire class, consisting of thirty-six students, in half an hour.'<sup>4</sup> Jeanne Mammen continued her training at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, from 1908 until 1911, when she won a scholarship to study at the Scuola Libera Academica, Villa Medici in Rome. In an interview given late in her life, Mammen recalled her time studying at the Brussels Academy:

Things got serious. There we had lessons in anatomy and mythology, and architecture and aesthetics, and literature. We had to work terribly hard: from eight in the morning to ten at night. The Academy was in an old cloister with gigantic rooms and huge coal ovens for winter. One spent the entire day on one's feet: painting in the morning, drawing evenings, afternoons painting, like that the entire course. There was a marvelous library where we were enthusiastic guests. I was the youngest in the class. As an eighteen year old I received the medal for composition: I was given a kiss and 150 francs.<sup>5</sup>

Jeanne Mammen's intention to pursue a career as an artist became evident after she completed her studies. In 1912, Mammen returned to Paris where she organised her first exhibition with her sister Mimi at their studio apartment. Mammen's work was also included in the *Salons des Indépendents* in Brussels in 1912, and in Paris in 1913.<sup>6</sup> What is clear is that Mammen brought her graphic skills to bear on the subject of women (both bourgeois and working-class, French, Belgian and German) and the social struggles they faced. Her earliest surviving works, a series

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136:1100 (1994), (752-757).

4. Letter from Jeanne Mammen to Hans Thiemann dated 1972 found in the atelier and also referenced in Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin: The Case of Jeanne Mammen' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southern California, College Department of Art History : 2006) p. 37.

5. Interview with art historian Hans Kinkel (1978) quoted in Hildegard Reinhardt, '*La Tentation de Jeanne - Jeanne Mammens symbolistisches Frühwerk*' (1908-1914) in *Jeanne Mammen: 1890-1976 Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*, exh. cat. ed. by (Berlinische Galerie Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Berlin: 1997-1998). pp. 34-35.

6. See Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). p. 41. Royal noted that Mammen's name did not appear in the Paris exhibitions catalogue, although the artist included this exhibition on a handwritten curriculum vitae which can be found in the archive.

of sketchbooks from her student days in Brussels attest to her interest in contemporary women and particular attention centres around fashion and women in public urban spaces.

One reason Jeanne Mammen chose to continue her studies at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels was that she had developed an interest in symbolism through French literature. Her library at the *Wohnatelier* contained volumes by Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, Stéphane Mallarmé, Pierre Louÿs, Marcel Proust, Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud. In her biography of the artist, Annelie Lütgens has noted that the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels was known for its study, support and production of symbolist works, for there work could be seen by important symbolists such as Gustav Moreau, Fernand Khnopff, Aubrey Beardsley, Jan Toorop, Georges de Feure and Jean Delville.<sup>7</sup> Mammen kept a framed poster by Aubrey Beardsley for the play *Lorenzaccio* featuring Sarah Bernhardt, which remains in her *Wohnatelier*.<sup>8</sup>

Mammen held weekly discussions in Berlin regarding French literature with Lothar Klünner, one of the co-founders of the archive. Mammen spoke of the importance she placed on two volumes, Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1874) and Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), which she re-read several times. Mammen said that 'these two books have been fundamental for my entire development.'<sup>9</sup> The artist also recalled that in addition to seeing art at the museums in Brussels, she saw Richard Strauss conduct the operas *Salome* and *Elektra*,

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7. Lütgens' biography is referenced in Ibid. pp. 38-39. See also Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', *Women's Art Journal*, 9 (1988-1989), (28-31). p. 28.

8. *Lorenzaccio* was a French play written by Alfred De Musset in 1834, and this production was adapted by M. Armand D'arthis, as Beardsley's poster makes clear. The production starring Bernhardt was staged at Théâtre de la Renaissance.

9. See Hildegard Reinhardt, 'La Tentation de Jeanne — Jeanne Mammens symbolistisches Frühwerk (1908-1914)' in *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). p. 36. Suzanne Royal has included a partial list of works found in Jeanne Mammen's library, now held at the atelier. See Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). pp. 315-316.

and went to the cinema at least three times a week.<sup>10</sup> Jeanne Mammen's formative years spent in Brussels allowed her to develop her interest in Symbolism, and afforded her opportunities to take part in cultural life. The artist also began to sketch scenes from life in small books that she always kept with her. This was a practice Mammen continued throughout her life, and it was especially significant to her artistic process during the Weimar Republic.

Jeanne Mammen's experience of the metropolitan city changed drastically in 1914. As a German national, the outbreak of the First World War meant that Jeanne Mammen and her family were forced to flee France. The Mammen family faced the possibility of internment, and they lost their home, Gustav Oskar Mammen's business and assets. The family first fled to Holland, but after a year Jeanne Mammen and her sister Mimi returned to Berlin. Jeanne Mammen lived on Motzstrasse, and tried to earn a living through graphic design and illustration. Mammen later recalled having to take whatever jobs were available: she earned a 'meager income through retouching photographs, fashion illustration, designing movie posters and cobbling shoes.' Life was hard, and Mammen recalled 'food coupons and rations, the English hunger blockade, the War's end, inflation. The situation eventually improved through my work for *Simplicissimus* and several other magazines.'<sup>11</sup> The themes that Mammen had begun to explore in her work in Paris, Brussels, and in Berlin during the war years found their full voice during the height of the Weimar Republic.

The Weimar Republic was a period marked by political enthusiasm, uncertainty, utopian visions that infused society with both deeply promising and starkly conservative

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10. See Hildegard Reinhardt, 'La Tentation de Jeanne — Jeanne Mammens symbolistisches Frühwerk (1908-1914)' in *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). p. 35.

11. Jeanne Mammen quoted in Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). pp. 43-44; cf. *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). p. 30.

attitudes as Germany embarked on its first experiment in republican democracy. Many visual artists aligned themselves with social critics and revolutionaries in their efforts to revise, overcome, and transcend the institutional structures within which they worked. Stylistic practice shifted in Germany from the dominant Expressionism to the more objective and utilitarian aesthetic known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity or New Sobriety, 1923-1933). Rooted in the urban experience of modernity, the style implied objectivity in the sense of a sober, matter-of-fact approach to reality.<sup>12</sup> German Expressionism was no longer at the forefront of fine art practice, having been substituted by *Neue Sachlichkeit*. This style coincided with a period of economic stability in Germany, and this aesthetic was also well suited to modes of mass communication. Although *Neue Sachlichkeit* was a relatively small movement, many artists including Jeanne Mammen were working in this vein. It must be stressed, however, that Mammen did not evolve as an artist within the German context of Expressionism.

As the Weimar constitution was being finalised in 1919, Jeanne Mammen and her sister Mimi moved into the atelier on the Kurfürstendamm, one of the main fashionable boulevards in Berlin. Numerous fashion boutiques, revues, cafés such as the famous Café Kranzler, and cabarets were located here. Mammen was ideally situated to produce work which reflected modern urban culture, particularly as she could easily observe street life and participate in café culture. Based in one of the most modern sections of Berlin, Jeanne Mammen was able to produce work that explored the experiences of contemporary urban women.

Jeanne Mammen now had to earn a living, and she chose to do so as an artist selling

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12. John Willett, *The New Sobriety, 1917-1933: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978). p. 74.

her work on a freelance basis to the many publications that formed part of the mass illustrated presses. During the Weimar Republic women's roles were being redefined, as the 'Woman Question' was a hotly debated topic. This meant that spaces that were inaccessible to women artists prior to this period could be frequented, so Mammen's imagery could widen in scope. In Berlin in particular, women became more visible on the streets and more numerous in the workplace.<sup>13</sup> Mammen was also able to frequent the nightclubs and produced a large number of illustrations of the patrons and dancers at revues.

Images such as the one catalogued as *Transvestitenlokal* (c. 1931, Fig. 2.7) would not have been possible had the public, urban spaces of modernity remained difficult to access for women. Mammen also produced images of prostitutes in works such as *Nutten* (Hookers, c. 1930), where two streetwalkers glare at each other as they pass on the sidewalk, or *Brüderstraße* ('*Zimmer Frei*') ('Free Room' c. 1931 Fig. 2.3), which depicts three women selling themselves next to a sign offering free rooms. Mammen was able to move freely in most sections of the city and was thus able to produce representations of the perceptions of both respectable and 'fallen' women.

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13. There is a growing literature on women in Weimar Germany. For a useful interdisciplinary study see *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For a volume dedicated to the study of women and the visual arts see *Visions of the 'Neue Frau': Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, ed. by Meskimmon Marsha and Shearer West, (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, Ashgate Publishing, 1995).



Figure 2.3: Jeanne Mammen *Brüderstraße* (c. 1931)

The archive as repository of documents consists of all writing on the subject of Jeanne Mammen and her practice. The literature on Jeanne Mammen is limited, to say the least, and only a slight body of scholarly work has been produced in English. A major retrospective of her work was organised by the *Berlinische Galerie* (Berlin) and it travelled throughout Germany in 1997-1998. A catalogue raisonné was produced to accompany this exhibition and the volume includes a listing of more than 2,000 of Mammen's surviving works as well as a collection of scholarly essays. In 1991, Annelie Lütgens published a biography of Jeanne Mammen. Neither of these important works have been translated into English.

Jeanne Mammen's work from the Weimar period was first exhibited outside of Germany in 1990 when it was included in an exhibition in Des Moines, Iowa entitled *Art in Germany, 1909-1936— From Expressionism to Resistance: The Marvin and Janet Fishman Collection*. Here Mammen's watercolours were exhibited and discussed in relation to artists from Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, including Mammen's more famous contemporaries George Grosz, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Ludwig Meidner, and Otto Dix. Following this exhibition,

Jeanne Mammen's art was considered alongside her well-known contemporaries Hannah Höch and Käthe Kollwitz in the travelling exhibition *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen* (1994). Jeanne Mammen has not to date received the same level of recognition as either Höch or Kollwitz—who have each had solo retrospective exhibitions devoted to their work in the United States—in Germany or elsewhere. I will compare Jeanne Mammen's watercolours to that of her contemporaries in the following chapter to highlight the difference between her practice and theirs, particularly in the treatment of women.

The remaining literature on Jeanne Mammen written in English consists of a handful of chapters included in volumes devoted to the subject of women and Weimar Germany (1919-1933).<sup>14</sup> To date Annelie Lütgens has published most extensively on the subject of Jeanne Mammen's life and work, while Marsha Meskimmon has included discussions of Mammen's work in chapters devoted to the *Neue Frau* (New Woman) and the *garçonne* in her book *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (1999). Meskimmon never visited Mammen's archive in Berlin, whereas the *Stiftung* endorses and recommends Lütgens' biography. One unpublished PhD thesis has been written by Suzanne Royal (USC, 2007), also focusing on Mammen's art from the Weimar period. We can therefore establish Jeanne Mammen's place on the margins of art historical discourse.

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14. See Annelie Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), (pp. 89-105). The chapters devoted to the *Neue Frau* and the *Garçonne* in Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1999). and Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', (1988-1989).





Figure 2.4: Installation Shot of Jeanne Mammen's *Wobnatelier*

*(a) Personal Encounter with the Jeanne Mammen Archive*

After climbing five flights of stairs and entering 29 Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, one encounters two rooms filled with art that served as the former living and working quarters of the artist Jeanne Mammen.<sup>15</sup> Installation shots of the space [Figs. 2.4, 2.5] attest to the fact that this space is not like that of a typical archive, replete with boxes containing documents, and spaces in which an historian might work. This space has been maintained as Jeanne Mammen left it, with her personal belongings filling the small room, her artist brushes and pencils can be seen on the desk and windowsill, cushions on the leather couches, as if she might return at any minute. The installation shot of the atelier resembles an archival photograph of Jeanne Mammen taken there c. 1947 [Fig. 2.5]

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15. That the space is maintained as Mammen left it indicates that it functions as a type of shrine. The archive as a place of worship will be discussed in relation to Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996).



Figure 2.5: Jeanne Mammen in her *Wohnatelier* c.1947

Mammen's artworks hang on the wall along with other keepsakes, posters, photographs and mementos. The watercolours are also stored in drawers for visitors to study, however, the space is set up as a kind of shrine to Jeanne Mammen. There are traces of the artist present throughout, and the room emits a feeling that some kind of denial of death has taken place on the part of those who are entrusted to the archive and the atelier's care and upkeep. What kinds of knowledge can an art historian glean from such a space that is both a symbolic shrine of sorts and the material remainder of Jeanne Mammen's life and work? The archive contained at the atelier comprises all of the artist's works that are not in private or public collections, as well as her sketchbooks, scrapbooks, and personal library, along with magazines, fashion journals, objects and documents that were important to her practice. The small room which once was Mammen's bedroom serves as a small office and a library containing publications about the artist or volumes which are relevant to her practice. What kinds of readings of this archive are made possible for a feminist art historian interested in social history and questions of sexual difference?

This chapter aims to consider the story of this specific archive in relation to the continued marginalization of Jeanne Mammen. What follows is a discussion of the authority of the archive, the consequences of how it is constructed and how its politics function to

create what Jacques Derrida termed 'archival violence'. In recent decades, scholars have become concerned about or suspicious of archives and view them as something other than simply a tool for historians. Derrida famously declared archives to be fever, trouble, patriarchy, violence, even 'radical evil.'<sup>16</sup> Discussing Freud in relation to the concept of the archive, Derrida locates what he terms '*le mal d'archive*' or archive fever between Thanatos and Eros, associating it with the death drive. The death drive can, according to Derrida, destroy or disrupt the archive; it can 'radically contest its power: radical evil can be of service ...'<sup>17</sup>. Derrida explains that 'There is not one archive fever, one limit or one suffering of memory among others: enlisting the in-finite, archive fever verges on radical evil.'<sup>18</sup> Archives seduce us or at the very least confuse us, for as Derrida claimed, 'Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive.'<sup>19</sup>

That English speaking scholars have chosen to focus their studies on Mammen's work from the Weimar period and her involvement in *Frauenkultur* (women's culture) is noteworthy particularly in light of the fact that members of the board of directors of the *Stiftung* who control the archive feel that Mammen's commercial output from the 1920s does not represent her 'true art' and they are wary of the interest in gender issues, specifically with respect to sexual difference or sexuality.<sup>20</sup> A contentious and debated topic was Jeanne

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16. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Translated by Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). pp. 3, 7, 20, 90.

17. Ibid. pp.12-13.

18. Ibid. p. 20.

19. Ibid. p. 90.

20. Suzanne Royal noted that Mammen stated late in life that her commercial art from the Weimar period was created solely so that she could earn a living and therefore did not represent 'true art.' Mammen gave few interviews in her lifetime, and the source for these claims remains Marga Döpping, who came to know Mammen only in the last seven years of her life. See Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). p. 120 Royal testified to difficulties she encountered while researching in the archive, as Ms. Döpping remains wary of English-speaking scholars who take an interest in Mammen in relation to gender issues and her work of the

Mammen's sexuality.<sup>21</sup> While evidence of the artist's sexual orientation might add another layer of intelligibility to a reading of the work, what remains of utmost importance is reading the archive with particular attention to historical context in order to engage with the artworks it contains.

This case study devoted to Jeanne Mammen's art focuses exclusively on the work she produced, which was circulated in the mass illustrated presses in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Due to the complex issue of titling Mammen's work, the paintings under discussion will be considered as having no title unless the artist herself assigned a title to the work. My personal experience encountering Jeanne Mammen's work over the course of five days in March, 2008 in her former *Wohnatelier* in Berlin, which now houses the archive, prompted the discussion which follows. An encounter with an archive of this kind yields a range of questions relating to the role it plays as a repository of knowledge to be mined, its relationship to institutions, and the overdetermined character of its multiple interpretative possibilities.

Archives are by nature authoritative institutions, which help to shape the objects of representation. More than simply a 'repository of facts,' archives are something that ought to be 'read,' as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us with her project to read for the traces of the Rani of Sirmur.<sup>22</sup> Spivak had to negotiate an archive that contained only traces of her

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1920s. This reluctance to help English language scholars with their research into these themes will be further discussed in this chapter. To my knowledge Marsha Meskimmon, the only English speaking scholar to include Mammen in a major study of artists who were women in Weimar Germany, did not conduct research in Jeanne Mammen's atelier.

21. Ms. Döpping maintained that Jeanne Mammen was not a lesbian, despite only having known the artist from 1969 until her death in 1976. Döpping was displeased by the attention Mammen's watercolours from the Weimar period received particularly from scholars who were interested in issues of sexuality and lesbian representation. When I visited the archive in March 2008 I learned that Ms. Döpping had, on several occasions, become angered with scholars, and in particular English-speaking scholars, who were interested in lesbian representation in relation to Mammen's artworks and physically removed at least one scholar and barred them from further consulting the archive. It is for this reason that I did not meet Ms. Döpping while I was in Berlin. The role of the archive and the issue of sexuality will be addressed later in this chapter.

22. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, Vol.

subject, the Rani of Sirmur, who is not in fact present or represented in the archive in any concrete sense. In the case of Jeanne Mammen, the archive is by no means entirely empty, but elements remain absent. What has been found is now collected and preserved in the *Wohnatelier*, but the archive is not complete. One must remain skeptical of privileging the archive, and recognise its hegemonic structure.

The board of directors of the Jeanne Mammen archive, however, subscribe to the view that archives as 'repositories of facts' contain documents that allow for access to an accurate reconstruction of the past. Housing the archive in the artist's atelier and maintaining the space as it was when it was occupied by Jeanne Mammen works to fetishize the archive and its contents. As Dominick LaCapra noted when cautioning against the uncritical view of archives:

The archive as fetish is a literal substitute for the "reality" of the past which is "always already" lost for the historian. When it is fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself — an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions.<sup>23</sup>

The custodians of the Jeanne Mammen archive housed in the *Wohnatelier* have invested the documents in their care with the authority to reconstruct the past and provide the researcher with an accurate picture of the artist. One has the sense when dealing with the administrators of the *Stiftung* that they can grant you access to a real, living past, particularly given that they were friends with Mammen. One must accept, however, that the archive is simply a repository of traces as LaCapra suggests, and the scholar can use those traces or inscriptions to infer meaning from events past.

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24, No. 3 (Oct., 1985) (1985), (247-272).

23. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, NY, 1983) quoted in *Ibid.* p. 249.

While the principals involved in setting up the Jeanne Mammen *Stiftung* have preserved a valuable resource, there are several problematic facets that one encounters when negotiating the Jeanne Mammen archive in Berlin. The authority that has been established by this institution is significant, in particular for it rests on the personal investment of the principals who established the fonds housed in the atelier and who also remain on its board of directors. The *Jeanne-Mammen-Gesellschaft e. V.* was set up by the artist's friends Marga Döpping and Lothar Klünner, although Jeanne Mammen herself appears to have been ambivalent about the concepts of archive and legacy. Mammen destroyed much of her own work along with other potentially valuable archival material.<sup>24</sup> Art historian and critic Professor Eberhard Roters was also a founding member of the *Gesellschaft* and at the time was the director of the Berlinische Galerie for Modern Art, Photography and Architecture. The *Stiftung* has maintained a close relationship with the museum and Mammen's works form part of their permanent collection. One of the claims to authority with respect to Mammen's practice as an artist is the fact that the archive was set up and continues to be managed by the artist's close friends.

When I visited Berlin, Lothar Klünner, a writer and poet who discussed French literature and philosophy with Mammen on a weekly basis while she was alive, was ailing and was no longer involved in the running of the atelier. Marga Döpping, who at the time was in her mid 80s and in ill health, still had a strong investment in the daily running of the archive and the maintenance of Jeanne Mammen's legacy. Her claim to authority including the ability to reconstruct the artist's past and interpret her artworks is problematic, however, as Döpping

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24. In conversation with Cornelia Pastelak-Price, who deals with all English language correspondence as well as the daily administration of the atelier and who is also Marga Döpping's daughter, I discovered that Mammen destroyed artworks, sketchbooks and other materials, and at one time towards the end of her life burned her belongings in a large fire in the courtyard of her building, 29 Kurfürstendamm.

only befriended Mammen in the last decade of her life.<sup>25</sup>

In her discussion of the fabrication of the Imperialist representation of Empire, Gayatri Spivak turns to Freud's key concept of over-determination as outlined in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1905). Spivak's discussion of over-determination is useful to an examination of the experience of negotiating Jeanne Mammen's archive for it underscores the possibility that there are numerous causes for the works in question, ones which may elicit multiple interpretations. This is contrary to how the *Stiftung* would like to promote Jeanne Mammen's artwork, with their authoritative interpretations serving as an example of the idea of 'determination.' As Spivak explains:

In the classic chapters on the dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud develops the notion of "over-determination" as the principle of fabrication of the images in the dream-text. When one reads a dream-text one cannot hold to a simple theory of a text as expression, where the cause of the expression is the fully self-present deliberative consciousness of the subject. It can therefore be suggested that in extending the notion of "determination" Freud is working within the philosophical tendency that focuses on determination rather than causality. When we are attempting to deal with as heterogeneous a fabrication as the imperialist representation of the empire, the notion of determinate representations is much more useful than that of deliberate or deliberate(d) cause. ... Freud customarily speaks of the over-determination of images in a dream-text as a telescoping of many determinations: mehrfach determiniert.<sup>26</sup>

It is therefore not possible to interpret dream-texts by appealing to the conscious intent of the subject. Similarly, when one reads the works contained in the archive, one cannot expect to

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25. Marga Döpping met Mammen in 1969 through Lothar Klünner, with whom she was involved at the time. Döpping cared for Mammen after she returned to Berlin in 1969 after falling ill on a trip to Morocco where she was travelling with her close friend the German-American scientist Max Delbrück. The authors of *Jeanne Mammen and Max Delbrück: Record of a Friendship* have noted that Marga Döpping became one of Mammen's closest friends. See Felicitas Rink and Lothar Klünner, *Jeanne Mammen und Max Delbrück: Zeugnisse einer Freundschaft Record of a Friendship*, Translated by Carol Oberschmidt. (Berlin: Förderverein der Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung e.V. and Max Delbrück Centrum für Molekulare Medizin (MDC) Berlin-Buch, 2005). pp. 50-51. Cornelia Pastelak-Price, Döpping's daughter, was skeptical of the reliability of this statement in correspondence dated 14 June, 2010. She did confirm that Marga Döpping did visit Jeanne Mammen at the atelier once a week from 1969-1976.

26. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', (1985). p. 257.

interpret them by reconstructing the past to ascertain the intentions of the artist. The authority the custodians of Jeanne Mammen's archive seek to exert over the interpretation and meaning of the artworks is certainly troublesome, for no matter how one preserves her *Wohnatelier*, Jeanne Mammen can no longer be found there to provide causal answers to questions concerning the meaning of her work and it becomes impossible for her friends to provide definite answers when the works themselves remain overdetermined.

Jacques Derrida demonstrated that archives work on many levels, and of particular concern to him was the relationship archives have to ideas of authority. In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), Derrida began his lecture with an examination of the word 'archive' whose origin can be found in the Greek word, *arkhē*. Derrida defines *arkhē* as both 'commencement' and 'commandment' thereby establishing the concept of the archive as associated with origins as well as the idea of order, law or authority.<sup>27</sup> The association of the archive or *arkhē* with 'commandment' derives from the Greek *arkheion*:

[i]nitially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law. On account of their publicly recognised authority, it is at their home in that place which is their house ... that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. *They have the power to interpret the archives.* (my emphasis)<sup>28</sup>

Setting up the Jeanne Mammen archive in the artist's *Wohnatelier* invests it with authority. That the custodians of the archive were personal friends of the artist lend credence to the view that they are like the citizens who are empowered and 'represent the law'. The members of the

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27. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, (1996). pp. 1-2.

28. Ibid. p. 2.



board who knew Jeanne Mammen personally now control the narratives surrounding the artist, her life, and works; they purport to be able to facilitate access to the past and claim they are able to reconstruct an accurate, truthful picture of the artist. More problematically, they maintain that their interpretation of Jeanne Mammen's artworks are authoritative. This conforms to Derrida's description of the 'archons', the guardians of the archive's documents. They can be understood as individuals who not only maintain the documents and the domicile in which they are housed, but they also have the power to interpret the archive.

One of the contested issues pertaining to the Jeanne Mammen archive is the issue of sexuality. While there is no documentation contained in the archive with respect to Mammen's own sexuality, it is clear from her artwork that the artist took an interest in and sympathized with women engaged in same-sex relationships. It is known that Mammen's primary subject matter during the Weimar period, which the artist spent in Berlin, was contemporary women including the *garçonne*, the so-called 'third sex', and the *Neue Frau* (New Woman) whose visual iconography was drawn from and often conflated with sartorial signifiers associated with a lesbian aesthetic.<sup>29</sup>

After a successful one-woman exhibition at Galerie Gurlitt, Jeanne Mammen was commissioned in 1931 to produce a series of lithographs illustrating Pierre Louÿs' (1870-1925) *Chansons de Bilitis* (1894) for a German translation, *Lieder der Bilitis* (Songs of the Bilitis). The seven out of twelve colour prints that the artist produced would prove to be her last illustrations dated to the Weimar period, for during the completion of the project the Nazi party assumed power in 1933 and subsequently banned publication of Mammen's *Bilitis* series.

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29. This is a complex issue, as Laura Doan has demonstrated in her study of lesbian culture in Great Britain. While Doan does not attend to the more visible presence of lesbians during the Weimar Republic, her work is a useful point of comparison, in particular her chapter devoted to reading female masculinities in the 1920s. See Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, (2001).

The Nazis also shut down the journals for which Mammen had worked as they were either too 'leftist and destructive' or too 'bourgeois and decadent.'<sup>30</sup> Louÿs' poem was a melodramatic account of a Turkish princess and contemporary of Sappho, Bilitis, who travels to the island of Lesbos whereupon she embarks on a series of erotic love affairs with the local nymphs. The original text was divided into three sections, each one detailing Bilitis' life. Mammen chose to illustrate the middle section of the text, the *Élégies à Mytilène* that refers to sleeping, bathing, touching and kissing.<sup>31</sup> Instead of illustrating the text with classical imagery, Mammen drew upon contemporary scenes of lesbian life, creating a 'modern' Bilitis or Sappho figure. By using contemporary rather than classical imagery, Mammen related her images to fashion, mass media, and the Berlin lesbian underground scene. The monograph, intended for a broader audience that was not exclusively homosexual, offered a sympathetic portrayal of a variety of lesbian couplings that defied any normative conclusions about lesbian identity or subjectivity.

Although Mammen had always taken women as her subject matter, it was not until the 1920s that she began depicting lesbian relationships or lesbian locales such as the all-women dance clubs. Scenes of lesbian venues such as the bars and dance clubs appear frequently in images such as those catalogued as *Zwei Frauen, Tanzend* (Two Women, Dancing, c. 1928) *Transvestitenlokal* (Transvestite locale, c. 1931), and *Damenbar* (c. 1930-32), suggesting that Mammen was familiar with these types of locations. Suzanne Royal has speculated that Jeanne Mammen derived pleasure from viewing this type of imagery, and would have frequented the clubs and bars where women engaged in such social activities.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', (1988-1989). p. 30.

31. See Hildegard Reinhardt, 'Die Lieder Der Bilitis', Förderverein Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung e.V, Berlin <<http://jeanne-mammen.de/>> and Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). p. 221.

32. Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). p. 242. Royal has noted that although no written documents exist in the archive to attest to Mammen's enjoyment of lesbian activities in such venues, her basis for

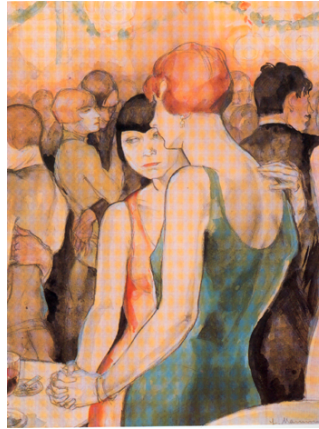


Figure 2.6: Jeanne Mammen *No Title* (Zwei Frauen Tanzend) (no date; c. 1928)



Figure 2.7: Jeanne Mammen *No Title* (Transvestitenlokal) (no date; c. 1931)

That Jeanne Mammen likely frequented the locations where one could observe two women dancing, or where a woman might appear 'in drag' in a bar or club that catered to homosexuals and transvestites does not, however, amount to evidence of the artist's sexual preferences. It must be recalled that images of lesbians were timely and were a popular trope in the media.<sup>33</sup>

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this assertion is Mammen's obvious interest in contemporary culture. Statements Mammen made regarding visiting movies or other entertainments, her collection of magazines and contemporary imagery that are contained in the archive suggest it is not implausible that the artist would have also visited women-only clubs for enjoyment or inspiration for her art. To my knowledge, no one to date has attempted to identify the particular venues from Mammen's work. This point of discussion also begs the question: if she *didn't* go to these places, how did she compose her images?

33. Marsha Meskimmon discusses the role of visual culture in promoting a change in public opinion toward sexuality during the Weimar period. She notes that while the nature of changing gender roles was debated in a host of scientific and sociological studies, Weimar's popular media fuelled public debates through their circulation of images that both glamorised and demonized the New Woman, her masculinized counterpart, and the spectacle of contemporary sexuality. She writes: 'Films, revues and countless pages of pictorial magazines explored



Figure 2.8: Jeanne Mammen *Damenbar* (c.1930-1932)

During the Weimar Republic, sexuality became more visible, and gendered identities could be tried on and played with in nightclubs or at popular masked balls.<sup>34</sup> It appeared that homosexuality and lesbianism shifted from a subculture to the forefront of fashion, film, and literature. The iconic *Neue Frau* style can be understood as a modification of lesbian aesthetic. Judith Williamson has noted that, "The bourgeois always wants to be in disguise, and the customs and habits of the oppressed seem so much more fascinating than "his" own."<sup>35</sup> What became known as the 'masculine' or androgynous look for women consisted of a tailored skirt, button-down shirt, and mannish jacket. This outfit would occasionally be accompanied with a tie, a cigarette in a holder, and a monocle. A *Bubikopf* or page-boy hairstyle, and later a *Herrenschnitt* (man's hairstyle) completed the androgynous look. The subversive potential for incorporating lesbian aesthetics into mainstream fashion offered both heterosexual and homosexual women alternative choices and ways of identifying. As Danae Clark has noted,

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androgyny, the neue Frau and the dangerous new sexual terrain which these crossed-boundaries made possible.' See Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). p. 200.

34. Although her study centres on lesbians during the Third Reich, Claudia Schoppmann's work on ten different women sheds light on the lesbian scene in Germany during the inter-war years as well. See Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also Lillian Faderman and Brigitte Eriksson, *Lesbians in Germany: 1890's-1920's*, (Florida: Naiad Press, 1990).

35. Judith Williamson, 'Woman is an Island: Femininity and Colonization', in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. by Tania Modleski. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (pp. 99-118). p. 116.

'[gay advertising and fashion] appropriates lesbian subcultural style, incorporates its features into commodified representations, and offers it back to lesbian consumers in a packaged form cleansed of identity politics.'<sup>36</sup> While lesbians could 'pass' as straight, heterosexual women were offered alternatives as well.

Jeanne Mammen's imagery often emphasized contemporary fashion where the blurred lines of sexual difference appeared to surface sartorially. It is difficult to ascertain whether some of these images of contemporary women, for example the *garçonne* figures that often appear in Mammen's watercolours and drawings, are heterosexual women playing with gendered identities or in fact women who are choosing lesbianism as a sexual preference while wearing the stylish clothes of mainstream or 'straight' culture. The lithographs Mammen produced for the *Bilitis* series, with their subject of contemporary lesbian women who are fashionably dressed, offer a variety of positive subject positions for viewers.

The lesbian couple portrayed as the subject in *Damenbar* (c. 1930-1932; Fig. 2.8), produced as part of the *Bilitis* series, offer the viewer an image of a couple that fits the *Bubi/Dame* pairing. The *Bubi* or butch figure is dressed in a tailored suit and wears her hair in a *Herrenschnitt*, in adherence with the 'masculine' or androgynous fashions, while the *Dame* is more femininely dressed in a sheer dress and wears her blonde hair long. The couple are represented dancing cheek-to-cheek. Another lithograph from the *Bilitis* series, *Freundinnen* (Girlfriends; c. 1930-1932. Fig. 2.9) offers a similarly tender portrayal of two lovers. The emphasis in this image is more explicitly centred on the women's sexuality.

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36. Danae Clark, 'Commodity Lesbianism', in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. by Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin. (New York: Routledge, 1993), (pp. 186-201). p.197.



Figure 2.9: Jeanne Mammen *Freundinnen* (c.1930-1932)

Both women are nude, and are represented touching or embracing as the redheaded woman kisses her partner on the cheek. Mammen's minimal use of line to articulate the bodies works so that the focus of the image becomes the heads and faces of the women. The work is one that is in extreme contrast to other sensationalist images of lesbian sexuality produced by Mammen's contemporaries. Christian Schad's painting, also entitled *Freundinnen* (1928) offers viewers a titillating scenario of two women masturbating, presumably for the gratification of a masculine viewer. Schad's painting is an example of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) style that was prevalent during the Weimar Republic. Jeanne Mammen's work, although markedly different from Schad's verist painting technique has been classed as *Neue Sachlichkeit*.<sup>37</sup>

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37. An exhibition at the Neue Galerie in New York (2003) explored Schad's early photographic work and his verist paintings of the 1920s, positioning him as a central figure in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement alongside Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Max Beckmann. See Michael Peppiatt Jill Lloyd, *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, exh. cat. ed. by (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, New York: 2003).



Figure 2.10: Christian Schad *Freundinnen* (1928)

Schad's *Freundinnen*, with its voyeuristic display of women shown pleasuring themselves while looking disengaged and displeased with the situation, is an example of the cold, objective depictions of female sexuality that were prevalent in Weimar visual culture. Conversely, Jeanne Mammen's lithographs from the *Bilitis* series do not focus on or even depict women in graphic sexual situations. Instead, Mammen's images provide the viewing public with images of contemporary women in private moments with their lovers.

The sympathetic and inoffensive portrayal of lesbians in Mammen's illustrations for the *Bilitis* translation were also to be found in the artist's largest completed commission of lesbian imagery, produced for social scientist and cultural critic Curt Moreck's *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (Guide to "Naughty" Berlin, 1930). It is notable that amongst the images of homosexuals produced for this text, Christian Schad's are the closest to Mammen's. Although Schad is noted for his highly eroticized paintings, the images commissioned for Moreck's guide are sensitively rendered with their primary focus the depiction of (mostly) homosexual bars. The illustrations for Moreck's guide created by both Schad and Mammen do not make a

spectacle out of their subject matter, rather both artists chose to depict same-sex couples caught in tender moments of affection.



Figure 2.11: Christian Schad, *Bürger-Casino an der Friedrichgraacht* (1930)

Mammen was recognised for her images of women together and was subsequently commissioned to create lesbian imagery. Her watercolour illustrations also appeared in another guidebook, *Einführung zu Berlins Lesbischen Frauen* (Guide to Berlin's Lesbian Women) written by Ruth Margarete Roellig, and published with an introduction by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld in 1928. Additionally, one of Mammen's watercolours appeared as a colourplate illustration in Hirschfeld's 1931 publication *Sittengeschichte der Nachkriegszeit* (Moral History of the Postwar Period) with the title *Die Garçonne*. That Mammen was known for her sympathetic lesbian imagery has led to speculation that the artist herself was a lesbian.<sup>38</sup> It is important to recall that Jeanne Mammen was providing images for a media culture interested in making same-sex desire visible. This has worked to fuel both speculation and denial with regard to her

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38. A Google search for Jeanne Mammen results in the glbtq (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer) encyclopedia entry for the artist in which she is interpellated as a lesbian who dedicated her art to the production of 'sympathetic, representations of Berlin's diverse constituencies, particularly the newly visible lesbian.' See Andres Mario Zervigon, 'Jeanne Mammen (1890-1976)', <[http://www.glbtq.com/arts/mammen\\_j.html](http://www.glbtq.com/arts/mammen_j.html)> . Most reliable scholarly publications devoted to the artist at best only hint at or speculate on the subject of the artist's sexual orientation. See for example, Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). and Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006).



own sexual orientation. Assertions with regard to the artist's sexual orientation, which have their basis in the art she produced during the Weimar Republic when homosexuality became more visible and was the subject of much discussion and analysis, has resulted in anxiety for the custodians of Jeanne Mammen's archive and legacy.

The archive contains no evidence one way or the other with regard to Jeanne Mammen's sexual preference. Her biography offers little trace of relationships beyond a select group of friends. It is also known that the artist was extremely close with one of her sisters, Adeline Maria Louise (Mimi) with whom she shared a studio in Paris and the *Wohnatelier* in Berlin until Mimi, who signed her illustrations using an artist's pseudonym, M.L. Folcardy to avoid confusion, moved to Tehran in 1937. Those in control of Mammen's archive are careful in the reconstruction of the artist's biography to avoid any suggestion of homosexual relationships, and instead prefer to narrate the artist as an introvert who preferred a solitary life devoted to art making. The picture of the artist Jeanne Mammen, as reconstructed by the guardians of her archive, has moulded her in the image of lone artist/genius, casting her in a similar light to many 'great' artists.

One must consider the extent to which the control the archive maintains with regard to the artist's biography in constructing Jeanne Mammen as a figure who worked in solitary isolation, apart from her contemporaries such as Hannah Höch, George Grosz, Lotte Laserstein or Christian Schad to name but a few examples of artists who have received wider recognition, has done the artist a disservice. To what extent has reconstruction of the artist's biography and tight control of the interpretation of her work and labelling the illustrations from the Weimar period as 'commercial' and not her 'true art' had the effect of relegating Mammen to the margins of art history?

(b) *The Practice of Naming: Probing the Archive to Read Works with No Title*

There is a certain logic imposed by archival methods, where works are classified according to title, date, or style. Jeanne Mammen's work poses methodological problems for archivists and scholars, as the artist generally did not date or title her work. Mammen's watercolours, with their focus on women, were ideally suited to publications that targeted modern women as their readers. Her main buyer was *Simplicissimus*, a publication also reminiscent of *The New Yorker*, to whom she 'sent a large packet of sheets every week' and they 'had to be suitable for jokes as subtitles.'<sup>39</sup> Mammen sent most of her work to her publishers as untitled pieces in order to maximize her chances for sales. Titling the work, and thus giving it a fixed meaning, limited the chance that the image would be used, as the editor could not easily incorporate the image into any one article. Moreover, Mammen's images had to conform to the culture of coldness (*Kältekult*) that characterized the modern in Weimar Germany, and was also associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* aesthetic.<sup>40</sup> As this cult of coldness was everywhere, it is necessary to realize that Jeanne Mammen's work, in order to sell, had to conform to these conventions so that a casual reader could instantly tell what sort of publication s/he was perusing.

Mammen's illustrations began appearing in magazines and pamphlets around 1924.<sup>41</sup> In addition to appearing in well-known magazines, her work had previously and continued to be published as film posters and advertisements, and her work also appeared in pamphlets,

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39. Jeanne Mammen quoted in Eva Züchner, 'Langweilige Puppen: Jeanne Mammens Großstadt-Frauen' in Züchner, Eva, *Langweilige Puppen: Jeanne Mammens Großstadt-Frauen, Jeanne Mammen: 1890-1976, Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*. exh. cat. ed. by (Berlinische Galerie, Berlin: 1997). (51-56). p. 52.

40. *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). u228?lde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen p. 52.

41. Annelie Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women', (1997). p. 91.

books, and city guides. Drawing images from the streets of Berlin, her representations can be understood as the work of a *flâneuse*.<sup>42</sup> Mammen's work also offers a visual representation of the spaces of the conspicuous and thoroughly modern figure of the *Neue Frau* (New Woman). *Berliner Straßenszene* (Berlin Street Scene c. 1927-29) [Fig. 2.12] offers an example of Mammen's work based on her observations of city life. This watercolour, which was originally published in the magazine *Ull* (October, 1929), depicts an urban street crowded with people, many of them women, where a dense background of abstractly rendered buildings can be seen.



Figure 2.12: Jeanne Mammen *Berliner Straßenszene* (c. 1929)

Curator Reinhold Heller has located the street scene in Jeanne Mammen's watercolour by identifying it as a sidewalk café on the fashionable Kurfürstendamm. In the foreground, centre-left, two women are seated together, and one is drinking while the other is smoking. On the extreme right of the painting, another woman who wears a fox stole turns to look seductively at the viewer. Heller has suggested that this figure as an allusion to prostitution, which occurred in fashionable areas as well as more disreputable sections of the city. One of the reasons Heller reads this painting as an allusion to the traffic in women is that it was

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42. Katharina von Ankum has observed that Jeanne Mammen's life in Weimar Berlin epitomized that of a pioneering female *flâneuse*. See Katharina von Ankum *Introduction*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). p. 8. A more extensive discussion of Mammen's practice and its relationship to concepts of *flânerie*, as well as the debates in art history centred around the *flâneur/flâneuse*, public/private dichotomies will be discussed in the following chapter.

published under another title when it appeared in sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld's study on morality in the postwar period with the title *Die Straße dient dem Verkehr* (The Street is There for the Traffic). The alternate title raises issues that pertain to the structure of the archive, discursive formations and their practical institutionalization.<sup>43</sup>

The original watercolours and lithographs are now catalogued at the archive maintained by the *Förderverein Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung* in Berlin as titled works of art. In the catalogue raisonné the works are usually listed according to titles given by publishers. Consequently, primary titles are designated by referencing the title of the publication where the work first appeared. Alternate titles are listed as notes in each catalogued entry. Eva Züchner has remarked that the titles given to the works by publishers are not always fitting, as was the case for the image catalogued as *Zwei Frau Tanzend* (c. 1928) [Fig. 2.6], which was published with the title *Wirrnisse* (Confusion) in *Jugend* in February, 1928. Züchner wrote the following in relation to this watercolour, noting the discrepancy between Mammen's images and the titles assigned by editors:

Another contradictory impression is given by Two women dancing. It is a dance with no eroticism whatsoever; the two women are dragging themselves along - possibly both left out, having to make do with each other disappointed because of lack of male interest, possibly also cooled down lovers who dance the foxtrott to continue dragging out the relationship through other means. The bent back of the one who has taken the male part reproduces the boredom in the face of the other one. Despite their physical closeness the two women seem to be eons apart.<sup>44</sup>

The journal *Jugend* published the work in 1928, and interpreted what they perceived was a sad

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43. Michel Foucault's analyses of historical writing, of discursive formations and their practical institutionalization, and his reading of the archive have been useful and will be referred to in the following section. Foucault's probing of the archive has provided feminist questioning of evidence, of the selective resources of historical research which secure masculine hegemony in the recirculation by one generation of a previous generation's ideological structuring of knowledge. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, A.M. Sheridan Smith. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). pp. 142-148.

44. See Züchner. Eva, *Langweilige Puppen*, (1997). p. 54. With thanks to Cornelia Pastelak-Price for the translation of this passage. On occasion Marga Döpping or Lothar Klünner assigned what they felt were more fitting titles, as was the case with *Zwei Frau Tanzend*.

scene as Bavarian-polygamy. They assigned the title *Wirrnisse* (confusion) along with the following dialogue: 'Does your groom not dance with you Toni?' - 'Well he has to watch out for his other bride so that she doesn't start something with my other groom.'<sup>45</sup> Much of the analysis produced by English language scholars hinges on these assigned titles, and subsequent research has not contested a particular understanding of these works as titled.

Thus, Reinhold Heller's reading of *Berliner Straßenszene* is informed by the title presumably given by Magnus Hirschfeld. In the catalogue notes, Heller contends that it is not known whether or not the double-entendre of the alternate title 'The Street Is There for the Traffic' was something that Mammen intended, or as Heller puts it, 'whether this [title] reflects Jeanne Mammen's own title, since Hirschfeld frequently adapted titles to suit his text.'<sup>46</sup> Heller does acknowledge the complex issue of titling in Jeanne Mammen's case:

In periodicals of the 1920s, however, Mammen's works often bore similar humorous explanatory quotations and titles, supplied by the artist or at times by her editors. The scenes are thus designed to receive supplementary verbal accompaniment, to be suggestive of narrative potential in terms of brief aperçus, often with comic overtones as befitted the satirical journals for which Mammen worked.<sup>47</sup>

I would add only that it was rare that Mammen provided her own title, preferring to maximize her chances for sales, and leaving the work untitled and undated. If one reads Jeanne Mammen's watercolour of a Berlin street scene c. 1927-29 with Hirschfeld's title in mind, two interpretations can be put forward. First, the throng of pedestrians that pass by the sidewalk café below the tram and box-like buildings serve as a representation of a typical Berlin street scene. Women and men are visible in the scene, and it is notable that all the women pictured

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45. Ibid.

46. Reinhold Heller, *Art in Germany 1909-1936: From Expressionism to Resistance- The Marvin and Janet Fishman Collection*, exh. cat. ed. by (Prestel Verlag and the Milwaukee Art Museum, Munich; Milwaukee: 1990). p. 198.

47. Ibid. pp. 198-99.

here are modern-looking and fashionably dressed. While they are all individually distinguishable, they are all also dressed to conform to the fashions and trends of the period, and are each evocative of the so-called *Neue Frau*. The *Neue Frau* was seen on city streets not unlike the one captured in Mammen's watercolour, as women adopted the styles promoted in popular entertainment and mass media.

The second interpretation understands the term 'traffic' as an allusion to women offering themselves in the traffic of prostitution. Reinhold Heller has identified the woman wearing the fur as the most likely candidate to be proffering herself to passerbys, as she glances seductively over her shoulder. Heller also speculated that several other single or paired women in the scene may also be prostitutes.<sup>48</sup> As Hirschfeld's study reported, it was not uncommon for middle-class women to turn to prostitution part-time as a means to improving their financial situation:

Appalling is the growth of prostitution in all countries in the decade from 1919 to 1929. It consisted not only of the women registered and hygenically supervised by the police, but also of all those girls and women who escaped police supervision and followed the "horizontal profession" under various more or less successful disguises. ... Not a few housewives sold their bodies in order to improve their economic situation. ... The number of "the secret" stood in glaring disproportion to the "official ones." Numbers are usually boring, but, nonetheless, it should be mentioned that, besides the 6,000 registered prostitutes in Berlin, an army of 60,000 of "the secret" ... were on the street.<sup>49</sup>

The second reading might be reinforced considering that the watercolour was also published with the title *Der verkehrte Teint* (The Wrong Complexion) in 1929, conceivably a reference to syphilis. One might infer the allusion to the traffic in women without recourse to any of the paintings designated titles, however, if cinematic imagery from Weimar is also taken in to

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48. Ibid. p. 199.

49. Magnus Hirschfeld 'Zwischen Zwei Katastrophen' in *Sittengeschichte der Nachkriegszeit* vol. 2 ('Between Two Catastrophes' in *Moral History of the Postwar Period*) quoted in Ibid. p. 199.

account. The street film was a popular genre that featured street scenes and narratives analogous to the one featured in Jeanne Mammen's watercolour, and as Patrice Petro described, these films can be 'summarized as a genre that displaces male anxieties about class identity onto anxieties about women and sexual identity.'<sup>50</sup> Thus, viewed as an equalizing space, the street can also be interpreted as a social space where sexual excitement was sought, and also one where woman's presence was viewed as a threat to both masculine authority and bourgeois morality. Whether intentional or not, Jeanne Mammen's watercolour that highlights women on a crowded boulevard can be read as a representation of 'hidden prostitution' as much as it simultaneously serves as a record of the life of Berlin's streets just prior to the onset of the Great Depression.

This additional layer of intelligibility recalls Walter Benjamin's writings on the *flâneur's* observations of a typical Parisian street, where assimilation or a social equalization is made possible.<sup>51</sup> Citing Valery Larbaud's writing from 1926, Benjamin includes the following in the section devoted to the *flâneur* in *The Arcades Project*:

In this crowd, the inferior is disguised as the superior, and the superior as the inferior— disguised morally, in both cases. In other capitals of the world, the disguise barely goes beyond the appearance, and people visibly insist on their differences, making an effort to retain them in the face of pagans and barbarians. Here they can efface them as much as they can. Hence the peculiar sweetness of the moral climate of Parisian streets, the charm which makes one pass over the vulgarity, the indolence, the monotony of the crowd.<sup>52</sup>

Although Larbaud's comments are specific to Paris, the blurring of morality can be applied to Jeanne Mammen's watercolour of c.1927-29, particularly if one reads the work as a reflection

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50. Patrice Petro, *Joyless streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989). pp. xxi.

51. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). p. 418.

52. Valery Larbaud, '*Rues et visages de Paris: Pour l'album de Chas-Laborde*' (1926) quoted in *Ibid.* p. 418.

of the secret traffic in women that might be taking place. Thus, the representation can be understood as one reflecting 'the wrong complexion' of the city, however muted the critique may be. The sidewalk is bustling and the café is crowded with well-dressed clientele taking pleasure in their drinks, cigarettes and companions. Whereas the artist's contemporaries depicted scenes of busy city streets lined with cafés as markers of the decadent and degenerate culture that supposedly permeated Berlin during the Weimar period, Mammen's Berlin appears to be a city in which misery is kept at a distance from this scene of consumption and the pleasure derived from seeing and being seen.

In all of the discussions of Mammen's watercolour archived as *Berliner Straßenszene*, no one has observed that the only sympathetic depiction is the red-haired waitress pictured in the middleground on the left. The waitress is the only feminine figure that Mammen has rendered sympathetically. This class based difference between waitress and the others suggests a subtle critique and gestures toward the idea that Jeanne Mammen's sympathies are with those on the margins. This sympathetic rendering of the waitress therefore becomes notable, and is easily missed when the image is read in deference to the assigned titles. While Mammen's image of a Berlin street may be understood as a critique of Weimar society, it does not necessitate a reading that represents the metropolitan city as one that is 'decadent or degenerate.' When compared to a work representing a café by George Grosz entitled *Caféhaus* (1915) [Fig. 2.13], one can see the differences between the two artists' style; Grosz's critique of the decadence of Weimar society is clearly articulated, and the inhabitants of the city appear diseased, the women lurid and degenerate.





Figure 2.13: George Grosz, *Caféhaus* (1915)

*Caféhaus* centres around a couple engaged in frottage. In keeping with Grosz's visual style the women's red nipples can be seen through their blouses. The man is represented as a 'fat cat' or businessman type, complete with red face, who is depicted fondling the breasts of his companion while she rubs his groin. The idea that modern German society was degenerate is communicated much more clearly in Grosz's image when compared to the sidewalk café represented by Jeanne Mammen's *Berliner Straßenszene*. Reading Mammen's scene as one that is decadent and degenerate is certainly aided by the alternate titles for this work. It is, therefore, beneficial to read as if the work had no title, so that all elements can be observed and analysed. This opens the image up to a variety of interpretations, and multiple readings that account for sexual or class difference are made possible.

The archive necessarily sets up a relationship of concordance between image and title. How do you read against the archive/discipline? The titles of the works represent the positivity of a discourse. As Foucault explains, different oeuvres that belong to a discursive formation, in this case the Jeanne Mammen archive and the related literature pertaining to this

artist, can be understood through the deployment of enunciative statements.<sup>53</sup> Foucault writes that the positivity of a discourse 'defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translation of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed.'<sup>54</sup> Without assigning titles to the works of art, and organising them according to approximate date produced, or style, a discourse surrounding Jeanne Mammen's practice would not be intelligible. The Jeanne Mammen fonds, however, demonstrate that in this case, the basic archival 'fact' of a title is highly problematic. Where titles are listed, and were not given by the artist, one must consider the context in which the works have received these titles. It can be argued that the archive commits violence to the work by assigning these paintings titles, therefore, the art historian ought to consider these works as having no title, and attempt to read them accordingly.

Following Foucault's probing of enunciative statements and the archive, we must take in to account the history and formation of the discourse concerning Jeanne Mammen. The vested interest of the founders of the archive—personal friends of Jeanne Mammen—dictate how the artist will be remembered and narrated, as well as to an extent, how her works are to be interpreted. Relying on their personal relationships to the artist, the administrators of the archive ventriloquise the person that they knew, and invoke the traces of that figure in order to invest themselves with the authority to produce the archive.<sup>55</sup> In conclusion, it is useful to refer to Foucault's description of the archive as a discursive formation in order to

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53. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (2002). p. 143.

54. Ibid.

55. Derrida refers to the structure of the archive as *spectral*: 'It is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor absent "in the flesh," neither visible nor invisible, a trace referring to another whose eyes can never be met ... the spectral motif stages this disseminating fission from which the archontic principle, and the concept of the archive, and the concept in general suffer, from the principle on.' See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, (1996). pp. 84-5.

understand how changes in discourse, or statements, arise:

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; ... The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability.<sup>56</sup>

It is the archivists who seek to police or control the enunciative possibilities for all that concerns the life and work of Jeanne Mammen. In creating and maintaining the Jeanne Mammen archive—a labour of love—the archivists have shaped the narrative and in so doing have inadvertently rendered her a marginal figure. It is these guardians of the documents and artworks attributed to Jeanne Mammen that have carefully avoided the issue of sexual difference as it may figure in the artist's biography as well as her art practice. They have deemed that Mammen's work from the Weimar period was not her 'true art' but rather a commercial enterprise. Thus, in order to mark a change in discourse it is important to bear the history and structure of the Jeanne Mammen archive housed at her atelier in mind, and, where necessary, read against it.

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56. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (2002). pp. 145-146.

## Chapter 2. The Modern and the Fashionable: Jeanne Mammen's Neue Frauen

### (a) *Sketching the City: Jeanne Mammen as Flâneuse*

*The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito.<sup>1</sup>*

-Charles Baudelaire (1863)

*I have often wished: to only be a pair of eyes.  
To go unseen throughout the world only seeing others.  
Unfortunately, one was seen.<sup>2</sup>*

- Jeanne Mammen

In echoing Charles Baudelaire's (1821-1867) admiration for the *flâneur*, Jeanne Mammen added the caveat: 'Unfortunately, one was seen.' Was the manner in which Mammen constructed aspects of her practice equivalent to the wanderings and observations of a *flâneur*? How was seeing and being seen a new, modern phenomenon in post World War I German culture? In an effort to challenge marginalizations of her work, this chapter sets out to present Mammen's practice as a case study examining the intersection between fashion, illustration, and fine art practice, as well as a critical approach to Weimar Germany's ubiquitous

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1. Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. by Jonathan Mayne. Johnathan Mayne (New York, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1986), (pp. 1-40). p. 9.

2. Annelie Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen oder die Kunst des Verschwindens' in *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). p. 9.

icon of modernity, the *Neue Frau*, the so-called 'New Woman' or 'Modern Girl'. Mammen's images that represent the *Neue Frau* in the metropolis will be discussed in relation to the debates regarding the newly acquired freedoms and visibility of women during the Weimar Republic.<sup>3</sup> The recent reconfigurations of modern, metropolitan life that argue for the existence of a *flâneuse* will be examined here in order to assess the extent to which we might understand Jeanne Mammen's practice as employing methods akin to those of the *flâneur* who recorded observations of city life by idly wandering its streets, arcades, department stores, bars and cafés.<sup>4</sup>

During the Weimar Republic women became more visible in the public spaces of the city. They entered the city in greater numbers as both workers and consumers, troubling the ideology that assigned women's place to the limited spaces of the private sphere.<sup>5</sup> The avant-garde film *Menschen am Sonntag: ein Film ohne Schauspieler* (*People on Sunday: a Film without Actors*, 1930) attests to this fact as its principal characters were played by amateur actors who held the jobs they portrayed in the film, including the three women: a model, a film extra, and a

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3. For an anthology of primary sources relating to the debates concerning women, including the notorious 'Woman Question' see Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For a cogent discussions detailing these debates see Renate Bridenthal, 'Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women at Work', *Central European History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June, 1973), (148-166)., *Visions of the 'Neue Frau': Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, (1995) and Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999).

4. The collection of essays edited by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough is a useful source for recent scholarship that revisits the possible existence of the *flâneuse*. The volume includes an essay by Janet Wolff revisiting her earlier assertion of the impossibility or invisibility of such a figure. See *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

5. Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution appeared to offer women social gains, stating that 'Men and women have fundamentally the same civil rights and duties.' Article 119 granted them equal status as partners in marriage while article 128 accorded them professional emancipation, declaring that 'all citizens without distinction are to be admitted to public office' and 'all discriminatory provisions against female civil servants are abolished.' The 1925 census reported that 35% more women were working than in 1907. The approximately two million women who worked represented one third of the workforce. See Frank B. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). and Uta Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

salesgirl.<sup>6</sup> The film follows four central characters who arrange to spend a Sunday together at Nikolassee where they relax at a beach by the lake, and in the woods where they picnic and play records on a portable gramophone. The film also suggests the perceived decadence of the Weimar period, alluding to the sexual availability of young women. This is suggested from the outset, as Wolfgang picks up Christl on the street, buys her an ice-cream, and invites her to join him and his friend Erwin in Nikolassee the following day. Christl brings her friend Brigitte, whom Wolfgang flirts with and subsequently chases into the woods where they begin to make love. The 'Woman Question' was a hotly debated topic during the Weimar period, and was addressed in films as well as by artists, including Jeanne Mammen, who participated in these conversations through her visual representations.

Modern Girls or *Neue Frauen* were seen strolling Berlin's fashionable boulevards, patronizing cafés, frequenting bars and women-only dance halls, walking in parks, and shopping in department stores. Ruth Iskin has argued for the importance of the material culture of *fin-de-siècle* posters in demarcating a space that can be understood as one occupied by a *flâneuse*.<sup>7</sup> Posters that were addressed to women—cosmetics advertisements that were found in *fin-de-siècle* Paris as well as in Weimar Berlin—encouraged looking as well as loitering. In his work on Weimar culture, Walter Benjamin recognised the link between *flânerie* in the work of Charles Baudelaire and contemporary consumer culture. Baudelaire described the experience of modern, urban life in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) in a section entitled 'Modernity' as follows: 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the

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6. See Billy Wilder, Robert Siodmak and Curt Siodmak, *Menschen Am Sonntag: Ein Film Ohne Schauspieler*, DVD (London: BFI, 1930).

7. See Ruth E. Iskin, 'The *flâneuse* in French fin-de-siècle posters: advertising images of modern women in Paris', in *The invisible flâneuse? Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), (pp. 113-128).

half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.<sup>8</sup> Critics and proponents of modernity observed that cities took on new characteristics and that urban experience was drastically changed by the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly as a consequence of economic and industrial advancement. Modernity was something that was specifically located in urban experience, and consequently, cultural theorists such as Benjamin who were writing during the Weimar period looked to Baudelaire's writings on the phenomena of modernity and the experience of modern, urban life. For, as Baudelaire wrote in 1859-60, "This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with."<sup>9</sup>

Baudelaire's writing on the experience of modernity, including fashion and the quintessentially modern figure of the *flâneur* is influential, but has also been critiqued by feminist scholars, notably Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock, for narrowly defining the modern experience as solely that of the experience of men.<sup>10</sup> Both Pollock and Wolff have argued for the invisibility or indeed the impossibility of an equivalent figure for women, a *flâneuse*, who could also wander the streets, get lost in the crowd, or partake in the shock and intoxication of the city while idly wandering and observing. Pollock's critique of the ideology of modernity with its separation of public and private, precluded the existence of the *flâneuse*. Recent scholarship, however, has argued for the importance of shopping among other things for providing a space where women could partake in something akin to *flânerie*.<sup>11</sup> Mila Ganeva has

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8. Charles Baudelaire and Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, (New York, N.Y: Da Capo Press, 1986). p. 13.

9. *Ibid.* p. 13.

10. See Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity\*', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2:37 (1986), (37-46). and chapter 3 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, (1988). pp. 50-90.

11. See *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, (2006) The essays

also pointed out the central role of fashion and travelogue writers in providing opportunities for *flânerie* both for the women writing the articles as well as their readers.<sup>12</sup>

Although women were afforded new freedoms and were able to navigate public spaces in cities such as Berlin, they could not idle for long. As gas lamps, electric and neon lights began to populate the city, more spaces for men were opened up while women were provided with the ability to work around the clock as prostitutes or be subjected to greater surveillance.<sup>13</sup> While for men it was considered normal to loiter, this was not true for women, who could not stand around for too long, not even to window shop. Although Weimar Germany did afford women new opportunities for *flânerie*, however, they were still subjected to inherent misogyny and discrimination for it was often assumed that women alone in the streets were prostitutes.<sup>14</sup>

Mila Ganeva has analysed the work of Helen Grund (1886-1982), an influential and well-known writer on fashion and travel whose work appeared in *feuilletons* and the illustrious *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Although Grund is not widely known today, Ganeva proposes that her work serves 'as an example of the representation of a specifically feminine experience in the modern metropolis and can be read as a testimony of the German flâneuse.'<sup>15</sup> Grund, along

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by Aruna D'Souza and Ruth E. Iskin argue for the importance of shopping in relation to the practice of feminine *flânerie*. For a study of the phenomenon of women engaging with the city in new ways as walkers, watchers, workers, café patrons, observers of the city, and frequenters of women's clubs see Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

12. See Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933*, (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House (NY), 2008).

13. Katharina von Ankum, "Gendered Urban Spaces in Irmgard Keun's 'Das Kunstseidene Mädchen,'" in *Women in the Metropolis*, (1997) p. 172.

14. This becomes evident in reading contemporary criticism from the Weimar period. Siegfried Kracauer's interpretation of scenes featuring women walking the streets in Walther Ruttmann's film *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* is a case-in-point, and will be addressed later in this chapter. Kracauer's analysis of Ruttmann's film can be found in Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, revised and Expanded Version Edited by Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).



with other women writers of the twenties created textual images of the modern world around them, as they 'constantly engaged in the incessant and conscious process of 'reading' the street and deciphering the signs of electric city lights, old facades, or display windows.'<sup>16</sup> Such as engagement with, and processing of, modernity is central to Jeanne Mammen's work, as she too traversed the metropolitan city, observing and recording scenes drawn from everyday experience.

As opposed to artists who were women working in the nineteenth century, Jeanne Mammen's movements in public space were less restricted. It is evident from her early sketchbooks that Mammen was afforded a degree of freedom of movement in both Brussels and Paris, which was previously unknown to artists who were women, and thus she was able to observe and sketch scenes of people about in the metropolitan cities.<sup>17</sup> Mammen's sketchbooks from her time in Paris and Brussels document that she wandered through the city, and in Paris she rode the train, making quick sketches of people. Women featured prominently in Mammen's sketches from this time, such as the fashionably dressed women found in a drawing from one of her sketchbooks, which has been archived as *Place Broukère*,

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15. Ibid. p. 1, 84-110. Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno were interested in fashion photography and illustration, and both commented on the fashion journalism of Helen Grund, which was published primarily by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the women's magazine *Die Dame* between 1925 and 1935. Both cultural analysts of the Frankfurt School felt the stylized representations 'revealed some of fashion's hidden implications for an understanding of modernity and mass culture.' See Mila Ganeva, 'Fashion Photography and Women's Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva', *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 15:3 (Fall 2003) (2003), (1-25). p. 2.

16. Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, (2008). p. 4.

17. Recent scholarship has debated the claim that freedom of movement was previously unknown to women artists. Miranda Mason's work on Louise Abbéma indicates this not to be the case. See Miranda E. Mason, 'Making Love / Making Work : The Sculpture Practice of Sarah Bernhardt' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, Fine Art, History of Art, and Cultural Studies : 2007) . The custodians of Mammen's archive in Berlin have titled the work from the sketchbooks, although there is some indication in Mammen's writing so that the places where she sketched in Paris and Brussels can be identified. The *Stiftung* has produced facsimiles of these sketchbooks. Titles have been included for some of these sketches in the catalogue raisonné. See *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). pp. 132-135.

and thought to have been produced c. 1913. Contemporary art at this time demanded views of the street, the cafés, concert halls, bordellos, and the arcades. While some of these settings



Figure 2.14: Jeanne Mammen Sketchbook drawing, Place Broukère c. 1913

remained off-limits for women, Mammen was able to walk through the city observing life and sketching. It can be argued that Mammen adopted the role of the *flâneuse*, who as a stroller of city streets participated in the representation of city life while remaining an observer.

Yet, the *flâneur* that Charles Baudelaire described in *Le Figaro* in 1863 is clearly masculine. Since women in the nineteenth century were restricted from experiencing city life in the same way as their masculine counterparts, they could not occupy the position of the *flâneur*, who stood for the freedom and privilege of one who could move about the city in a leisurely fashion, 'observing but never interacting, consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as the goods for sale.'<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, I would argue that we should understand Jeanne Mammen as an artist who

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18. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, (1988). p. 67.

engaged in the quintessentially modern activity of strolling the streets, experiencing the city. Artists such as Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt were restricted in the subject matter they could paint. They could not access many of the spaces that Baudelaire deemed modern, such as the folies, the brothels, the cafés, or backstage at the theatre, however, Mammen's experience of Paris forty years later included some of these spaces, and Weimar Berlin would afford even greater opportunities. We shall see the importance of a distinctly feminine gaze in Mammen's work, of seeing and being seen.

With Mammen's interest in symbolist literature and her extensive library including works by Charles Baudelaire, one can argue that her knowledge of the city was deepened through reading. Walter Benjamin noted the importance of literature for the *flâneur*. He wrote:

That anamnestic intoxication in which the flâneur goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowledge—indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through. ... in the course of the nineteenth century, it was also deposited in an immense literature. ... The study of these books constituted a second existence, already wholly predisposed toward dreaming; and what the flâneur learned from them took form and figure during an afternoon walk before the apertif.<sup>19</sup>

It is also likely that Mammen would have been more inclined to wander the streets of Paris in a similar manner to 'the dreaming idler', drinking in the sights of the city and the people populating its streets. The art Mammen produced in Berlin during the Weimar Republic consisted of numerous representations of scenes from revues, bars, nightclubs and significantly, she created representations of fallen women or prostitutes.<sup>20</sup> Even that

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19. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). p. 417.

20. Some of the locations of Mammen's watercolours have been identified, particularly by looking at the original place where the images were published. Scenes from the popular Kurfürstendamm, Café Kranzler and Café Nollendorf have been identified, in addition to which the images that appeared in Curt Moreck's guidebook all contain specific locations, such as the watercolour labelled as 'Café Reimann' (c. 1931). This painting is now lost, but is catalogued in the archive as A397.

quintessential figure of modernity, the *flâneur*, critiqued the 'New Woman' about the streets:

[the flâneur's] ambivalence toward women in the street had been traditionally associated with the dangerous attraction of the prostitute and the rise of commodity consumption in modern societies. Yet even as they were blaming women for the modern condition, flâneurs considered their own wanderings as something of an erotic adventure marked by the vague yearning to meet the gaze, albeit for a fleeting moment, of a strange woman. Therefore, as a new type of woman emerged in the 1920s — independent, working, with a rational attitude, functional attire, and smart makeup— she had a disenchanting effect on the erotic imagination of the flâneur, and provoked ... an adverse reaction.<sup>21</sup>

In Weimar Berlin, the figure of the *Neue Frau* emerged as an ambivalent figure to be found in the streets and in public spaces, and this new modern type was often conflated with the figure of the prostitute in such iconic imagery produced by both George Grosz and Otto Dix. Moreover, as Benjamin has observed, the decadence of Weimar society was associated with consumerism and the *Neue Frau*. As Mila Ganeva has noted, 'the overwhelmingly negative perception of femininity [was] mapped directly onto the smooth, lifeless body of the mannequin, envisioned as a stand-in for the New Woman.'<sup>22</sup>

Walter Benjamin also observed that:

The phantasmagoria of the flâneur. The tempo of traffic in Paris. The city as a landscape and a room. The department store as the last promenade for the flâneur. There his fantasies were materialized. The flânerie that began as art of the private individual ends today as necessity for the masses.<sup>23</sup>

In order to demonstrate how this transposed across the gender divide, Ruth Iskin argued for the importance of the nineteenth century of department stores that catered primarily to women. Iskin paraphrased Benjamin as follows: 'the department store became the promenade for the *flâneuse*. There her fantasies were materialized.'<sup>24</sup> Thus, the ubiquitous presence of

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21. Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, (2008). p. 152.

22. Ibid. p. 152.

23. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). p. 895.

24. Ruth E. Iskin, 'The *flâneuse* in French fin-de-siècle posters: advertising images of modern women in Paris',

women both in front of and on display in storefront windows opened up new possibilities for women, for their presence on the streets was no longer restricted to the functional, where they walked directly from home to the shops or the workplace, for example. Women could wander, and like Jeanne Mammen, an artist of the metropolis, they could record their experiences of the city. In situating the department store or the shop display window as a space inviting *flânerie*, let us consider two small watercolours by Jeanne Mammen that appeared printed in the illustrated press c. 1931, which are now lost but cut-outs of the images can be found collected in the artist's scrapbook in the atelier in Berlin. The works are catalogued as *Vor dem Schaufenster I* and *II (Before the Shop-Window)* [Figs. 2.15, 2.16].

## 2. Truth Value in the Marginal, Everyday: Mass Culture and the Illustrated Presses

*For it may indeed be maintained that no phenomenon of modern culture has more substantial relation, objective as well as ideal, to art than advertising. ... Advertising gave many brave young photographers, letterers, and graphic artists a chance to place their work before the public, and it also sustained them materially.*

- Wolf Zucker (1929)<sup>25</sup>

Jeanne Mammen's watercolours catalogued as *Vor dem Schaufenster I* and *II* document what Mammen observed on the fashionable boulevards such as the Kurfürstendamm. These illustrations feature women on the street in front of a display window with mannequins, and mark this space as one occupied by modern, fashionable young women. Katharina Sykora and Mila Ganeva have discussed spaces such as the window display as liminal spaces or 'urban

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(2006). p. 114.

25. Wolf Zucker 'Art and Advertising,' First published as 'Kunst und Reklame. Zum Weltreklamekongress in Berlin' Reprinted in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, (1994). pp. 668-669.

threshold spaces' which allowed women to occupy multiple positionalities. Women in the spaces in front of and behind the store windows were not simply understood as consumers, commodities, or objects of a masculine gaze. We can understand women as taking part in something approximating *flânerie*, even if they were not not analogous to the figure of the *flâneur*. Despite their newfound freedoms, women were still subject to the potential violence of the streets and were often mistaken for prostitutes. The *Neue Frauen* of Jeanne Mammen's Weimar Berlin could, however, be understood as consumers and also as 'subjects of a complex, ambivalent, and constantly shifting experience of metropolitan modernity.'<sup>26</sup>



Figure 2.15: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Vor dem Schaufenster I*) c. 1931

Figure 2.16: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Vor dem Schaufenster II*) c. 1931

Jeanne Mammen's watercolours that feature brightly lit shop windows with mannequins on display and women on the sidewalk in front of the windows, presented an enlightened viewer with the realities of modern consumption. As in subsequent watercolours, Mammen has rendered the mannequins with their exaggerated poses so that they appear

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26. Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, (2008). p. 153.

animate rather than simply lifeless, inanimate objects. In the watercolour catalogued as *Vor dem Schaufenster II*, the viewer is presented with a lively display of mannequins modelling dresses, lingerie, a coat, hat, and variety of accessories, all with price tags attached. A woman is shown on the sidewalk, her back to the artist/viewer, contemplating the goods on display for purchase and consumption. A man exits hastily in the left of the frame, with only his left leg visible to viewers. If the two images are reversed and placed side-by-side, the sequence becomes readable as a montage. For the sake of clarity, I will re-label these images as 'Display window 1 and 2' [Fig. 2.17, 2.18]. Read as a cinematic montage that suggests the passage of time, the woman in *Display Window 2* is represented leaving the shop having bought all the items on display in *Display Window 1*.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that these images be understood as a montage,



Figure 2.17: Jeanne Mammen 'Display Window 1'

Figure 2.18: Jeanne Mammen 'Display Window 2'

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27. Annette Michelson explains the editing processes involved in montage where a series of short shots are edited into a sequence to condense space, time, and information. In Mammen's watercolours, I am suggesting that a similar technique is employed to suggest the passage of time rather than to create symbolic meaning, as it does in the Soviet montage theory which Michelson discusses. See Annette Michelson, 'The Wings of Hypothesis: On Montage and the Theory of the Interval', in *Montage and Modern Life: 1919-1942*, ed. by Matthew Teitelbaum. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), (pp. 60-81).

creating a cinematic-like narrative where we see the woman pictured contemplating the goods on display in 'Display Window 1' next represented leaving the shop having bought all the items priced and pictured in the window. It is possible, however, that the women in each watercolour are different women, one contemplating the goods on display or reflecting on the ideas of consumption and exchange that these priced goods represent, the other buying up all the fashionable products on display and leaving the store in the attire of a quintessentially modern *Neue Frau*. Regardless, the images placed together in a montage-style sequence, attest to the commodification prevalent in Weimar Berlin.<sup>28</sup>

What appears to be a minor detail—the inclusion of a masculine figure in each image—is in fact significant to Jeanne Mammen's critique. While ostensibly addressing consumer culture in the Weimar Republic, these images also represent the effects of a masculine and hegemonic gaze, one which is crucial to understanding these two small illustrations particularly if they are read in sequence. Mammen seems to present the viewer with a before-and-after sequence where the drab woman in the image I have labelled as 'Display Window 1' refashions herself by buying all the items on display and this time the man in the image gazes at her instead of swiftly passing by without a second glance. In effect, the fashionable *neue Frau* in 'Display Window 2' is subjected to the masculine gaze. It must be remembered, however, that Jeanne Mammen was a critical observer, and like the *flâneur* she was ambivalent. Reading the image in this way suggests that Mammen was not ambivalent or

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28. The editors of *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* have dedicated a chapter to mass consumption and commodification. The primary source material included here include a polemical (anonymously authored) article originally printed in the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* in March, 1925 warning that both commodification and fashion were responsible for 'the Masculinization of Woman.' See chapter 27, Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, (1994). pp. 655 - 672. John Willett among others discusses the growing consumerism in Weimar. See John Willett, *The Weimar Years: A Culture Cut Short*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984). Rachel Bowlby's work examines the role of advertising and the department store in relation to literature. See Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola*, (New York & London: Methuen, 1985).



suspicious about the *Neue Frauen* being on the streets and in a position to usurp the *flâneur's* spaces but about consumer culture itself and the promises of advertising because the man's look in 'Display Window 2' may be unwelcome. Re-fashioned as a *Neue Frau*, the woman in 'Display Window 2' can now attract the looks of men passing by on the streets. The man Mammen has represented who is represented looking at the *neue Frau* in the painting is shown with a phallic-looking walking stick, and she may now be seen as available.

Commodities were seen displayed as objects of desire, and as Rachel Bowlby has noted in her book *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (1985) these new commodities and displays appealed primarily to women. As seen in Jeanne Mammen's images of a woman before the shop window in the watercolours titled *Vor dem Schaufenster*, women were enticed by the displays and invited 'to procure [the] luxurious benefits and purchase sexually attractive images for themselves'.<sup>29</sup> The centrality of the shop-window display can be seen in an early shot of Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin, Die Symphonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*) (1927) where the first figurative images or 'human' figures shown are of mannequins wearing fashionable dresses and slips displayed in a shop window. The shot occurs approximately six minutes into the first act of the film, appearing in a montage sequence of shots conveying Berlin, the *Großstadt* (metropolis), as the day begins. Both the advertisements and the window display of mannequins are positioned here as integral to the metropolitan city's fabric as the skyscrapers, trams, and factories.

Department stores spared no expense to lure customers in the 1920s, and their

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29. Rachel Bowlby *Just Looking*, quoted in Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). p. 46. Rowe also references Georg Simmel's observations regarding the Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896, where he noted that the displays at the trade exhibition resembled shop-window displays, which contributed to their attractiveness. The 'shop-window quality of things' enabled 'consumerist desire [to] take place in the modern department store that also displayed all the tactics of seductive display.' [Simmel quoted in Rowe, p. 46].

window displays have been described as a 'feast for the eyes.'<sup>30</sup> This type of advertising display or spectacle targeted women, who were viewed as little more than mindless shoppers.<sup>31</sup> The fashionable goods on display could be seen along with the people on the streets. People were reflected in the windows, and could be seen observing themselves as well as looking at others. This type of display and consumption is captured in Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* in a much analysed short sequence in the third act where a woman who is walking alone turns a corner and stops to look in a department store window. In 1947, Siegfried Kracauer wrote about Ruttmann's street scenes and concluded that: 'The many prostitutes among the passers-by also indicate that society has lost its balance.'<sup>32</sup>

Anke Gleber, however, has proposed a new reading of these women who walk the streets, while at the same time signalling their equivocal status:

A new reading of this metropolitan text might indeed discover a literal, female streetwalker, a new figure of subjectivity free of any professional purposes other than her own processes of walking, seeing, and, potentially, recording these actions: a femme flaneur. As the critical reception of the female image in *Symphony of the City* reveals, however, any woman walking the streets on her own, even in the presumably emancipatory age of Weimar Germany, has to first justify, assume, and establish her stance of flanerique. When a woman signals the flaneur's aimless and purposeless drifting along the streets, she risks being perceived as a "streetwalker," as the object of a male gaze not usually characterized by the flaneur's disinterested attitude.<sup>33</sup>

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30. An exhibition pamphlet contained in the Jeanne Mammen fonds, *Die Elegante Berlinerin: Graphik und modisches Beiverk aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (1962) translated by S. Royal and cited in Suzanne N. Royal, 'Graphic Art in Weimar Berlin', (2006). p. 168.

31. Marsha Meskimmon discusses women (as well as artists) as being viewed as nothing more than 'mindless consumers.' See Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). pp. 179-181.

32. Siegfried Kracauer From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film quoted in Anke Gleber, 'Female Flanerique and the *Symphony of the City*', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997), (pp. 67-88). p. 76. In his 1982 analysis, William Uricchio understood this scene to be a one involving streetwalkers, noting that a prostitute and potential customer encounter one another whereas Sabine Hake saw a different action taking place as the camera tracks several young women in the streets.

33. Ibid. p. 76.

While women were visible on the metropolitan streets of Berlin during the Weimar period, their status remained uncertain as readings of Ruttmann's film suggests. Yet the spaces that emerged in Weimar Germany, including those in front of the display windows on fashionable boulevards like the Kurfürstendamm, opened up the potential for women to wander more freely and potentially recording their experiences of the modern metropolis.

The scenes in the images known as *Vor dem Schaufenster* can be read as a subtle critique of the pleasure derived from consumption in addition to the potential dangers of re-fashioning oneself as the desirable *Neue Frau*. The watercolours function as a representation of the contemporary situation in Weimar Berlin which is defined by the structures of the capitalist system. These images of the everyday encounter and transaction that might take place before a shop window display are significant, however, as they provide a mass audience with an opportunity to become a consciously critical observer.

Considering the context in which Jeanne Mammen's watercolours and graphic work appeared, as illustrations, advertisements, and fashion plates in the mass illustrated presses is important, for her audience was a mass audience that was not limited to academics or the realm of the fine art world. Mammen's watercolours circulated as part of mass culture, and therein lies their value particularly for engendering critique amongst enlightened viewers. Both Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin recognised the potential forms of mass culture created for democratization and eventual social transformation. Kracauer noted that mass culture, in spite of its focus on surface and distraction, had something significant to say :

Educated people—who are never entirely absent—have taken offense at the emergence of the Tiller Girls and the stadium images. They judge anything that entertains the crowd to be a distraction of that crowd. But despite what they think, the aesthetic pleasure gained from ornamental mass movements is legitimate. Such movements are in fact among the rare creations of the age that bestow form upon a given material. The masses organised in these movements come from offices and factories; the formal principle according to which they are molded determines them in reality as well. When significant components of reality become invisible in our world, art must make do with what is left, for an aesthetic presentation is all the more real the less it dispenses with the reality outside the aesthetic sphere. No matter how low one gauges the value of mass ornament, its degree of reality is still higher than that of artistic productions which cultivate outdated noble sentiments in obsolete forms—even if it means nothing more than that.<sup>34</sup>

As representations of the everyday, which circulated in the mass illustrated presses, Jeanne Mammen's images should be understood as what Benjamin called 'thought-images,' and this so-called 'low-culture' functioned as accurate reflections of society. Kracauer read the mass-cultural artifact as a metaphysical index that is historically situated, 'whose cultural marginality warrants its truth value.'<sup>35</sup>

Jeanne Mammen's watercolour imagery of women in front of shop windows stands in stark contrast to Otto Dix's treatment of the same subject. Dix painted *Three Prostitutes in the Street* in 1925, focusing on three grotesquely rendered women positioned in front of a decorative storefront window.

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34. Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (1995) p. 79. Walter Benjamin's most sustained reflections on the value of mass culture can be found in *The Arcades Project*, and he advanced similar arguments to Kracauer in his famed essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1937). See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). and Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), (pp. 211-244).

35. Thomas Y. Levin, 'Introduction' in Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (1995) p. 15.



Figure 2.19: Otto Dix, *Drei Dirnen auf der Strasse* (Three Prostitutes in the Street) (1925)

As with Mammen's images, Dix's painting can be read as a representation of the commodification and degeneracy of Weimar *Großstadt*. Each woman holds an attribute of her sexuality and availability, from the small dog to the suggestive red clutch and the fur wrap. In fact, the woman who engages the viewer on the far right of the painting exhibits two further sexual symbols in addition to the fur wrap. She holds a phallic looking umbrella, and the brooch that fastens the ribbon to her hat resembles a vagina. These symbols were well-known and were discussed in contemporary analyses of the painting. Dix's image of the three prostitutes is a comment on commodity culture that was so prevalent during the Weimar republic, and it works to shred the image of Weimar glamour to reveal its dark underbelly. The three women are represented trying to sell themselves on the city street in front of an elegant, gold and marble adorned department store window displaying a fragment of a mannequin's leg modelling a high-heeled shoe.

Mammen's images of the women before the shop window in *Vor dem Schaufenster* clearly suggest a critique of consumerism, yet it is important to consider the relation between the women pictured on the streets and the magical, illuminated space of the display window. Walter Benjamin described the phantasmagoria of the shop window when he wrote about the

experience of the arcades in Paris, rendering them as dream-spaces.<sup>36</sup> These metropolitan spaces served as a stage for modern women, who were highly visible. Benjamin even described the illuminated shopfronts as eyes, and included a quote in the convolute dedicated to Baudelaire in *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin included the following fragment from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857):

Comparison of eyes to illuminated shopwindows: "Your eyes, lit up like shops to lure their trade/ or fireworks in the park on holidays,/ insolently make use of borrowed power" ("*Tu mettrais l'univers*")<sup>37</sup>

Reading the images placed together in the sequence I have posited suggests that the shop window is a seductive space such that the passer-by, in this case the drab woman represented in *Vor dem Schaufenster II*, imagines herself transformed by the objects on display. The woman redressed by the objects in *Vor dem Schaufenster I* has certainly fallen for the fetishism of commodities. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain how the image presents the phantasmagoria of the shop window to us. Is the audience meant to share the woman's enjoyment of the goods she sees displayed and then subsequently purchases in order to transform herself? Or are we critical of the woman for being duped by the lure of the commodities? Is it possible to be 'illuminated' by the phantasmagorias of the marketplace, here represented by the shop window, and to become critical of commodity culture and the spaces in which people appear only as types?<sup>38</sup>

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36. In several of the Convolutives as well as in both versions of 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century' <Exposé of 1935>. Margaret Cohen has suggested that Benjamin's view of phantasmagoria is a reworking of Marx's use of the term and is deeply linked to nineteenth century technological advancements and visual spectacle. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). and Margaret Cohen, 'Walter Benjamin's Phantasmagoria', *New German Critique*, No. 48 (1989), (87-107). pp. 87, 99.

37. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). p. 354.

38. In 'Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century: Exposé <of 1939>' Benjamin states that people appear only as types in accordance with the phantasmagoria of the market. See *Ibid.* p. 14. Esther Leslie also refers to Benjamin's catalogue of types found in the arcades. She quotes Benjamin: 'Feminine fauna of the arcades: prostitutes, grisettes, old-hag shopkeepers, female street vendors, glovers, *demoiselles* - this last was the name, around 1830, for incendiaries dressed as women.' Leslie adds to those feminine types who populated Benjamin's

Writing about women and the fetish in relation to Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* and his conception of the *flâneur*, Esther Leslie has reflected on Benjamin's remarks regarding women who get caught up looking at themselves reflected in shop windows. A conflation occurs in the act of looking, where women 'confuse themselves with the hard bodies of shop-window mannequins. 'The mannequins' rigid but exquisite forms fuse with the dream-egos of women, providing perfect, but stiff, role-models. And fashion draws them further into 'the universe of matter'<sup>39</sup> The particular way of displaying fashion thereby allows women to enter into the dreamscape of artifice. Lulled by the commodities displayed in the shop window, women can disrupt the roles and the realms in which they have been previously confined, specifically those relating to reproduction and domesticity. Jeanne Mammen's watercolours invite viewers to look critically at the spectacle of consumption, however, they also posit the potential of self-fashioning and 'the commodity, with its luster of distraction.'<sup>40</sup> A rupture is made possible by the distraction of the everyday, which in turn has the potential to enable critical reflection.

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phantasmagoria of 19th century Paris by listing 'widows, sex-murder victims, fashion mannequins, lesbians, female factory workers ...' The *flâneur*, the dandy, and the rag-picker are also referenced here as 19th century modern types. See Esther Leslie, 'Ruin and Rubble in the Arcades', in *Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project*, ed. by Beatrice Hanssen. (London: Continuum, 2006), (pp. 87-112). p. 98.

39. Ibid. p. 101.

40. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). p. 7.

(c) *On the Themes of Boredom and Distraction*

*The world exhibitions glorified the exchange values of commodities. They created a framework in which their use-value receded into the background. They opened up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry made that easier for them by lifting them to the level of commodity. They yielded to its manipulations while enjoying their alienation from themselves and from others.*<sup>41</sup>

- Walter Benjamin (1935)

*... the movie theatres ... should rid their offerings of all trappings that deprive film of its rights and must aim radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it. It could be done in Berlin, home of the masses—who so easily allow themselves to be stupefied only because they are so close to the truth.*<sup>42</sup>

- Siegfried Kracauer (1926)

Jeanne Mammen's numerous watercolours of people frequenting bars, theatres, carnivals, dance halls, revues and the cinema attest to the many forms of entertainment that one could engage in during the Weimar period in Berlin. It was such leisure activities, along with shopping, that constituted the cult of distraction that encapsulated the fragmented experience of the everyday in modern urban life. For Georg Simmel (1858-1918), leisure and consumerism were bound up with the idea of how the individual copes with the increasingly fragmented character of metropolitan life.<sup>43</sup> The concept of distraction was one that preoccupied Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer. Both Benjamin and

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41. Walter Benjamin *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, quoted in Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, (2003). p.45.

42. Siegfried Kracauer 'Cult of Distraction' in Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (1995) (pp. 323-328). p. 328.

43. See Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, (2003). pp. 49-50. As Rowe describes it, Simmel's critical writing on amusement is similar to the views on distraction later articulated by Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht.



Kracauer posited that distraction could work productively to engender a realization amongst viewers confronted with the reality of everyday occurrences.

Writing on cinema and the picture palaces [*Lichtspielhäuser*] as the most spectacular examples of spaces where distraction is disclosed, Siegfried Kracauer described the images projected onto the screen that the audience receives as a 'fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions' whereby it becomes possible to recognize the imperfect qualities of modern society.<sup>44</sup> Cinema served as but one example of a cultural art-form where the truth of modernity is revealed, for Kracauer mentions that images reprinted in the illustrated presses may have the same effect, however, it is through the mass circulation of film that the true nature of the contemporary situation could potentially be revealed. In the essay 'Cult of Distraction' (1926) Kracauer noted the significance of such a realization and the fact that it was more likely to occur through cinema where the masses could enjoy:

the surface glamour of stars, films, revues, and spectacular shows. Here, in pure externality, the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed ... Were this reality to remain hidden from the viewers, they could neither attack nor change it; its disclosure in distraction is therefore of moral significance.<sup>45</sup>

If the audience's own condition could be revealed through the spectacular, fragmentary images projected in rapid succession on screen, the same may be said for images that circulated in the illustrated presses, such as Jeanne Mammen's two images catalogued as *Vor dem Schaufenster I* and *Vor dem Schaufenster II*. Although it is not known in which publication the two watercolours appeared, or whether or not they were shown together or printed separately, the scenes or images of a bourgeois woman positioned before a shop-window filled with desirable

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44. Siegfried Kracauer 'Cult of Distraction' Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (1995) (pp. 323-328). p. 326.

45. Ibid. p. 326.

commodities and the image of the same woman wearing these items pausing before the now-emptied display window 'encourages critical awareness of the ... cult of commodities'<sup>46</sup>

The distinctive feature of montage lies in the interruption or the disparate nature of scenes whose effect is to shock the audience.<sup>47</sup> Although it is impossible to discern the woman's reaction to the spectacle of commodity display in Mammen's 'Display Window 1' because the image lacks an economy of gesture on the part of the subject, when the image is presented alongside *No Title (Vor dem Schaufenster I* [Display Window II]) they can be read as montage, such that the images displayed in sequence have the potential to transform how we see. In Benjamin's later writings, notably *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (1932-34), and 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1935), a more productive conception of distraction emerges. Eiland argues that what Benjamin's third draft of his famous essay on technological reproducibility makes clear is that distraction in a modern context must be understood dialectically. In a fragmentary note entitled 'Theory of Distraction', Benjamin offers the following formulation: 'Reproducibility—distraction—politicization.' Thought of dialectically, 'Educational value and consumer value converge, thus making possible a new kind of learning. Art comes in to contact with the commodity; the commodity comes into contact with art.'<sup>48</sup>

Boredom and distraction have been understood as cornerstones of modernity,

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46. Howard Eiland, 'Reception', (2005). p. 9.

47. Walter Benjamin's view of the concept of distraction is, as Howard Eiland has demonstrated, difficult to define and has been described as elusive and slippery particularly in relation to their theory of montage. In Benjamin's earlier writings 'The Author as Producer' and 'Theatre and Radio', both which address Brecht and Epic Theatre, the notion of distraction is negatively defined and associated with *Bildung* and the 'theatre of convention.' Conventional theatre lacks elements that might instruct the audience to consider certain social or political concerns, whereas epic theatre engenders critical distance by virtue of the alienation effect, which renders ordinary or familiar scenarios or objects strange thereby encouraging the audience to reflect. See *Ibid.* pp. 3-4.

48. See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, (2008) p. 57.

associated with the technological advancements made in the twentieth century, as well as with consumerism, and the leisure pursuits of this historical period. Jeanne Mammen's images of the 1920s and 1930s focused on the new social obsession with consumption and leisure, for in addition to shopping, her watercolours featured the fashionable, modern people who frequented the cafés, dance halls, revues and cabarets of Weimar Berlin. Yet despite the leisure activities that permeated the modern lifestyle that emerged in the Weimar period, boredom ensued, and this state featured in several of Mammen's watercolours. Boredom was also approached as a critical concept by both Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, for what it might divulge about the modern, urban condition. Mammen's watercolour, catalogued as *Langeweile* (Boredom, c. 1925) is one of several instances where the theme of boredom is represented.

The viewer is presented with two women seated in a café, one yawning while the other rests her head in her hand, confronting the viewer with a bored or tired expression. Far from a scene of the lively, fashionable cafés one might expect, the viewer is presented with a not uncommon scene of boredom —from consuming too much wine, or from too much time spent lingering in one of the many bars or cafés.



Figure 2.20: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Langeweile*) (c. 1925)

Walter Benjamin noted that such tedium was deeply attached to the modern, urban condition, for in *The Arcades Project*, he included the following quote that is useful when considering Mammen's image known as *Langeweile* (boredom): 'Moreover, in no other society so much as in this one, and by reason of fashion no less than real conviction, is the unbearable boredom so roundly lamented.'<sup>49</sup>

Benjamin observed that boredom was associated with quintessentially modern types such as the dandy and the *flâneur*.<sup>50</sup> Siegfried Kracauer similarly contemplated the positive effects of boredom, by remarking that those who do not find themselves yawning or bored, risk being without their critical faculties. These people, who are described as 'unhappy types, 'are pushed deeper and deeper into the hustle and bustle until eventually they no longer know where their head is, and the extraordinary, radical boredom that might be able to reunite them with their heads remains eternally distant from them.'<sup>51</sup> Boredom, then, was conceptualized as an integral part of the urban landscape, replete with the lights, advertisements, and leisure activities that constitute the modern. It is significant that contemporary social theorists also associated it with thinking.

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49. Ferdinand von Gall quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (1999). p. 106.

50. Both Benjamin and Kracauer felt that boredom was a concept with critical potential. For Benjamin, he wondered how one might approach this concept dialectically in order to yield something positive or progressive. He wrote: 'We are bored when we don't know what we are waiting for. That we do know, or think we know, is nearly always the expression of our superficiality or inattention. Boredom is the threshold to great deeds. — Now, it would be important to know: What is the dialectical antithesis to boredom?' See *Ibid.* p. 105.

51. Siegfried Kracauer, 'Boredom' in Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (1995) p. 331.



Figure 2.21: Potsdamer Platz at Night (c. 1920s)

The leisure pursuits that were promoted in the 1920s in Berlin offered the cosmopolitan citizen a chance to escape the drudgery of everyday life. Cinema, the illustrated presses, sports, and shopping all played a part in the culture of distraction that was prevalent during the Weimar Republic. Kracauer described a typical scene much like the one captured in the photograph of Berlin at Night in the 1920s [Fig. 2.21]:

In the evening, one saunters through the streets, replete with an unfulfillment from which a fullness could sprout. Illuminated words glide by on the rooftops, and already one is banished from one's own emptiness into the alien advertisement. One's body takes root in the asphalt, and, together with the enlightening revelations of the illuminations, one's spirit—which is no longer one's own—roams ceaselessly out of the night and into the night. If only it were allowed to disappear! But, like Pegasus prancing on a carousel, this spirit must run in circles and may never tire of praising to high heaven the glory of a liqueur and the merits of the best five-cent cigarette. Some sort of magic spurs that spirit relentlessly amid the thousand electric bulbs, out of which it constitutes and reconstitutes itself into glittering sentences.<sup>52</sup>

An alienation can be felt, as represented in Jeanne Mammen's chalk drawing published in the journal *Jugend* in April 1928 titled as *Heimfahrt* (The Journey Home) [Fig. 2.22].<sup>53</sup> Mammen has represented an elegantly dressed couple in the back of a car on their way home from a night

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52. Ibid. p.332.

53. Interestingly, this image also appeared with the title *Frommer Wunsch* (Pious Wish).

out at the theatre, a party or ball as suggested by the man's formal wear and top hat.



Figure 2.22: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Heimfahrt*) (c. 1928)

The woman's expression appears to register both boredom and disdain. Reinhold Heller has remarked that this fashionably clothed woman with her chic hairstyle and fur-trimmed coat serves as an example of one of Mammen's frequent themes, that of the unequal pair. Heller has noted that the man appears to be a one-dimensional collection of 'disjointed, powerless, body parts and clothing fragments ... deprived of individuality.' The image is here interpreted by Heller as one of 'psychological distance, demonstrating the alienation apparent between the woman, who addresses the viewer directly as she confronts the brightly lit night-scenes of the city, and the man slumped beside her.' Heller interpreted the scene as one where 'The façade of elegance and glamor is pierced, and the couple's intimacy is characterized as one of proximity alone.'<sup>54</sup>

This type of relationship between men and women can be found again in Mammen's

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54. See Reinhold Heller, *Art in Germany 1909-1936: From Expressionism to Resistance*, (1990). p. 198.

watercolours catalogued as *Er und Sie* (He and She, c. 1930) [Fig. 2.23]. Similarly, expressions of ennui can be found in numerous representations of fashionably attired women who are pictured in nightclubs, theatre galleries or cafés such as the famed Café Kranzler, which had a location on the Kurfürstendamm [Fig. 2.24].

How might one read Jeanne Mammen's representations that allude to boredom as a condition that is quintessentially modern? Given that so many of Mammen's representations of boredom centred around the *Neue Frauen* she no doubt encountered during her wanderings of the city, I would argue that her images subtly function as a critique, mobilizing the ennui felt



Figure 2.23: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Er und Sie*) (c. 1930)



Figure 2.24: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Bei Kranzler*) (c. 1929)

by those entrenched in modern society in order to to critically examine contemporary social conditions. Mammen's use of boredom to provoke thought is nowhere more evident than in her 1929 work, *Langweilige Puppen*.

(d) Jeanne Mammen's *Langweilige Puppen*

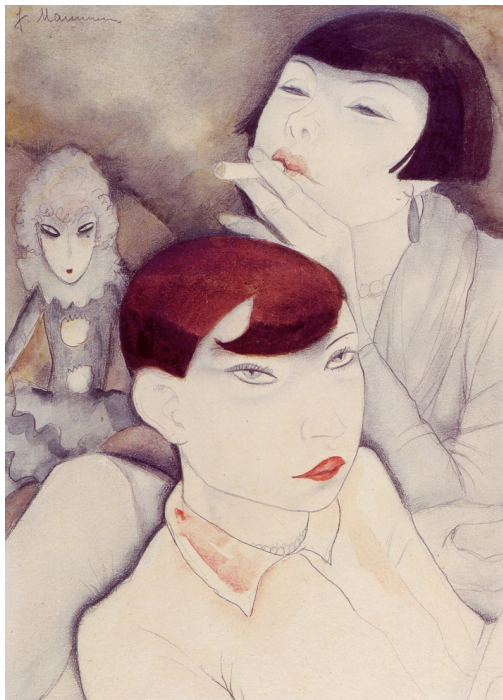


Figure 2.25: Jeanne Mammen *Langweilige Puppen* (c.1929)



The *Neue Frau's* ubiquitous presence in the mass illustrated presses, and in popular culture more generally, signalled both anxiety and the promise of progress. In other words, the *Neue Frau* paradoxically encapsulated feelings of utopia and despair that were prevalent in Germany during the tumultuous inter-war period. Given that Mammen's images where the theme of boredom surfaces centre around this figure or type, it is important to examine the potential for the *Neue Frau* to be understood as both a celebration of the fashionable and modern as well as a culturally constructed icon. I read a portion of Mammen's output as work that exposes the concept of the *Neue Frau* as little more than a product of consumer culture, despite the fact that her paintings and drawings centred around this modern figure. Mammen's work had to conform stylistically in order to appeal to publishers who were looking for images that would be consumed by a readership that was well versed in all things 'modern'. Consider Mammen's painting *Langweilige Puppen* [Fig. 2.25]. The watercolour was produced around 1929 at the time when the artist had found success and her images were in wide circulation.

Uncharacteristically, the artist herself titled this painting (verso) as *Lanweilige Puppen* (Boring Dolls) a noteworthy exception to her usual practice. *Langweilige Puppen* appeared in *Jugend* in August of 1929. This periodical was aimed at youth, and the editors titled the image *Plauderei* (chit-chat or small talk) as it was used to accompany a joke. The two *neue Frauen* were given the following dialogue: One girl asks the other "What purpose can marriage still serve?" Her companion replies: "So that the children will believe they have the same father." The dialogue or 'joke' about men's anxiety suggests that the women are chatting superficially about sex. The humorous chatting combined with the fashionable appearance of the two principal figures raises issues of ambivalence and anxiety that accompanied the iconography of the *Neue Frau*, and her more radical counterpart, the *garçonne*. The *garçonne* aesthetic quotes from the decadent attire of the 19th century dandy, as it was a trend that saw women shocking the

public by appearing dressed in men's formal attire. As Sabine Hake explains, women who adopted the *garçonne* style did so:

often with the explicit goal of scandalizing their surroundings. ... the flirtation with masculinity involved playful staging of identities that was predicated on the full achievement of gender equality, and given the imaginary nature of such assumptions, often highly ironical and self-reflexive in its effect.<sup>55</sup>

The relationship to politics and the fashionable was made clear when women's roles were debated, often in relation to shortening hemlines, and the adoption of bobbed or pageboy hairstyles (known as the *Bubikopf*) and later the *Herrenschnitt*, or man's hairstyle.

Discourses with respect to women's changing roles as evidenced by their increasing visibility in public spaces and in new forms of representation 'had to be couched in terms of both liberation and repression.'<sup>56</sup> Notions of modernity at this time included a troubling new discourse of sexuality, projected onto the iconography of the 'new woman'. As Gaylyn Studlar remarked on cinema and women's consumer culture in the 1920s:

By actively seeking sexual pleasure ... women of the 1920s were widely believed to be usurping a male privilege more powerful and precious than the vote. In response countless social commentators accused ... women of destroying the norms of heterosexual relations, eroding the boundaries between the sexes and sending ... masculinity into rapid decline. Universal suffrage and female employment were not cited as the chief culprits in these distressing trends: women's assertion of their right to sexual gratification was.<sup>57</sup>

Mammen's watercolours, in particular *Langweilige Puppen* captures the fascination with and the ambivalence towards this supposedly emancipated 'new' figure. Furthermore, *Langweilige Puppen* takes up modern themes that are in keeping with 19th and early 20th century aesthetic

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55. Sabine Hake, 'In the Mirror of Fashion', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), (pp. 185-201).. p. 196.

56. Laura Mulvey, 'Close-ups and Commodities', in *Fetishism and Curiosity*, (London: British Film Institute, 1996), (pp. 40-50). p. 42.

57. Gaylyn Studlar quoted in *Ibid.* p. 42.

concerns by representing the fragmentary, the contingent, and the everyday.

The watercolour connects to a certain kind of new modernity that was made visible by consumer culture and by the popularization of cinema. The *Neue Frau* with the dark hair that is coifed into a *Bubikopf*—the bobbed hairstyle made famous by American dancer and actress Louise Brooks in G.W. Pabst's film *Pandora's Box* (1929)—signals the glamour and desirability of the flapper as pictured on screen. It must be acknowledged that Mammen's



Figure 2.26: Louise Brooks as Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (1929)

work also had to conform to the culture of coldness (*Kältekult*) that characterized the modern in Weimar Germany. A cool person is one who deliberately shows interest in—and engagement with—as little as possible. Since this cult of coldness was everywhere it is necessary to realize that Mammen's work had to conform to the conventions of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) so that a casual reader could instantly tell what sort of publication s/he was perusing.

Given that most of Mammen's work was almost always circulated with a title assigned by editors to fit the context of the publication, we ought to engage in an exercise of reading that ignores the title and dialogue associated with 'chit chat'. The woman in the foreground has her reddish hair styled into a *Herrenschnitt* or man's hairstyle and she is

represented staring off towards the right of the picture plane. She is propped up against the crossed legs of her companion, who sits dragging on a cigarette of some sort with her eyes half closed. The figures are both immediately identifiable as modern, for in the 20s desired body types changed from the hourglass figure to a boyish, athletic, small-breasted, small-hipped ideal. Waistlines of dresses and skirts dropped, creating a tubular look, and hemlines became shorter. The new fashions were usually accompanied by flesh-coloured silk stockings. Daytime fashion in the twenties was connected to productivity and work, which 'invariably introduced the question of gender transgressions.'<sup>58</sup>

Both of the women represented in Mammen's painting mirror the iconic *Neue Frau* and her more masculine and deviant counterpart the *garçonne*. Mammen has linked the women stylistically to a third figure in the composition, a doll which you see just behind where the two girls are seated. She has rendered the eyes of all three figures in a similar fashion as variations of the same almond shape, the eyes of an exoticized ethnic (Asian) other. This was not unusual, as combinations of older motifs from East Asian art can be found in advertisements of the period and also in the work of Aubrey Beardsley, and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec.<sup>59</sup> Both artists are known to have influenced Mammen's practice.<sup>60</sup>

Annelie Lütgens has argued that the Asian-eyes in *Langweilige Puppen* signal lesbian sexual difference.<sup>61</sup> Reading the use of 'Asian eyes' is not straightforward, however, and while

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58. Sabine Hacke, 'In the Mirror of Fashion', (1997). p. 173.

59. Beardsley's stylized advertisements were models for commercial artists in Weimar Germany, and his art nouveau woodcuts had themselves been influenced by Japanese art. Toulouse-Lautrec's work offers another antecedent where Japanese influenced iconography is used to underscore the element of difference these women communicate as 'modern types.' Both Beardsley and Lautrec were known influences for Mammen, who kept a reproduction of an art nouveau poster promoting one of Sarah Bernhardt's performances at Le Théâtre de la Renaissance.

60. Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', (1988-1989). p. 28.

61. Annelie Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women', (1997). p. 102.

it is tempting to read for racialized exoticism it must be remembered that this was a trope commonly deployed in both advertising, and fine art practice. The 'almond shape eyes' appear as a frequent motif in Jeanne Mammen's watercolours, thus it is problematic to suggest that this symbolizes lesbianism. If this were the case, the argument would need to extend to numerous representations the artist produced being understood as images of lesbians.



Figure 2.27: Kiki Montparnasse. Still from *Ballet Mécanique* (1924)

Moreover, Mammen was not the only artist to use this sort of stylization in her images. Hella Jacobs has also rendered the eyes of her women in her painting *Variété* (1929) [Fig. 2.28] using a similar shape, which is accentuated with dark shading suggesting the application of kohl eyeliner. In terms of the processes of painting, the reoccurrence of the Asian eyes motif in Mammen's work may be due to her subject's of self-presentation where she made her eyes appear 'Asian' by using kohl eyeliner.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Man Ray's muse and companion from the 1920s was represented with heavily lined eyes, indicating that this was stylish at the time [Fig. 2.27].<sup>63</sup> With regard to the racial aspect of this motif, Uta Poiger has noted that in Weimar visual culture:

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62. It is unclear whether Mammen used models in her painting practice. It is known that she sketched scenes while she traversed Berlin and later worked them up into watercolours. This motif could be a result of fashions of the time, where women made themselves up using heavily applied kohl eyeliner..

63. French painter Marie Laurencin also rendered the eyes of women in a similar fashion, employing the almond shape and dark lining. I agree with Uta Poiger that this was used to indicate that the subjects were unambiguously modern.

The combination of brown hair and stylized, almond shaped eyes marked the representation as a possible composite of white and East Asian features. Such hybridity and the marking of different racial groups as unambiguously modern were two characteristics of the cosmopolitan aesthetic of the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>64</sup>

There were plenty of ethnically ambiguous advertisements in circulation, and the aesthetic was clearly part of international business initiatives as much as the trope was used to signal modernity, exoticization, and otherness.<sup>65</sup>



Figure 2.28: Hella Jacobs, *Variété* (1929)

It is the figure of the doll in *Langweilige Puppen* that diverts our attention from the girls.<sup>66</sup> While the focal point remains the two women in the foreground, the doll interrupts the viewer's engagement with these figures. The disruption forces the viewer to consider the relationship of the doll to the women. I would argue that this relationship is crucial to reading

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64. Uta G. Poiger, 'Fantasies of Universality? *Neue Frauen*, Race, and Nation in Weimar and Nazi Germany', in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. by Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong and Tani E. Barlow. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), (pp. 317-344). pp. 326-327.

65. Japanese graphic art was reported on in the German presses in 1927, and the following year, Japanese advertisements were part of an international exhibit on the press, *Pressa*, held in Cologne. For a discussion of the influence of Japanese aesthetics and advertisements see *Ibid.* Poiger discusses the importance of the exhibition *Pressa* on p. 326.

66. I use the term 'girl' here, which was interchangeable with the term *Neue Frau*, since this discussion is centred around women and dolls.

the work, especially in light of *Mammen's* title. Annelie Lütgens has suggested that the painting is an allegorical representation of *three* dolls, one that 'blurs the difference between the painted doll and the painted doll-like woman.'<sup>67</sup> Likening the women to dolls also refers to the frequent use of the terms 'girl' and 'doll' in relation to modern women. Interestingly, fashion journalists who were women claimed that associating modern women with dolls was antithetical to what was 'modern.' Johanna Thal, a regular editor for Ullstein Verlag's fashion centred magazines *Die Dame* and *Mode-Notizen* attempted to clarify the difference between what was modern and what had become antiquated by clarifying that likening beautiful women to dolls was outdated. In her 1919 essay entitled '*Puppen und Frauen*' (Dolls and Women), Thal wrote that:

This comparison [between women and dolls] is not modern. Because such faces are out of fashion, for women and for dolls. Today we women have our individuality, which describes the spirit of the independent women and has begun to influence her appearance as well. Fashion in its many forms supports this drive for individuality; every women can dress differently and still be in fashion.<sup>68</sup>

Likening the *Neue Frauen* in *Langweilige Puppen* to dolls undermines their status as modern. The doll in *Mammen's* watercolour is not, however, any old 'bland china doll' as Marsha Meskimmon has suggested.<sup>69</sup>

The figure is outfitted in a Pierrot costume. Pierrot, as the 'sad clown' was one of the more famous characters or 'masks' of the Commedia del Arte. As the character that was

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67. Annelie Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women', (1997). p. 101.

68. Johanna Thal '*Puppen und Frauen*' *Die Dame* Dec. 1919 quoted in Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, (2008). p.69.

69. Marsha Meskimmon argues that the work is a comment on the 'mannequin-woman' of fashion illustration, and that by associating the women with the dolls works to homogenize them, and in effect strips them of their individuality and originality. She wrote: "They are made into "dollies", rather than women, by the very consumer products designed to make them "special". See Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). p. 184.

viewed as a fool, Pierrot was known for his naivité and was often portrayed as oblivious to reality. We may read *Langweilige Puppen* as an analogy between the typologies of theatrical artifice and Weimar's *Neue Frau* and *garçonne* figures. Mammen appears to be alluding to the vacuous stereotype of the *Neue Frau*—here represented as oblivious herself— for in this watercolour, modern women can be read as boring. They are presented as vacant and ultimately foolish as a consequence of how they were interpellated in popular imagery. Perhaps the modern, emancipated new woman that was encouraged to covet the latest styles, and who was constantly subject to the rapidly changing fashions that signified beauty, was duped into a consumerist fantasy of feminine emancipation. Consequently she could be positioned as a sad figure who was distant and oblivious.

Mammen has rendered the doll so that it appears more animate than either of the women. The dark shading around the eyes of the doll gives it an uncanny appearance, especially in contrast to the vacant and half-closed eyes of the girls. Eva Züchner has suggested that based on the shape and size of the cigarette, along with the vacant expressions of the women, it is conceivable that they have been smoking hashish.<sup>70</sup> Not only are these women likened to a lifeless object, they are described as boring, *Langweilige*. Typifying the *Neue Frau* as a boring figure suggests that she is not, in fact, a vivacious modern entity, as media representations tried to put forward. Given that the image of the *Neue Frau* was circulated in countless forms of popular culture in Weimar Germany, her presence produced a visual tedium. *Langweilige Puppen* emphasizes the boredom of the *Neue Frau*, both visually, and as a character type. The painting also offers a subtle critique of the 'culture of cool' that emphasized disengagement.

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70. See Züchner, Eva, *Langweilige Puppen*, (1997). p. 52.



It is important not to be misled by the fact that Jeanne Mammen became a most successful commercial illustrator, in a large part due to the subject matter that was inspired by women she observed in the streets of Berlin. This should not be misinterpreted. I maintain that even though her practice was one that operated within the conventions and constraints of commercial practice, Mammen was an artist whose watercolours reached a mass audience, and consequently her work had the potential to function critically. It is from within the frames of commercial advertising and illustration that Jeanne Mammen can be considered as an artist who exercised agency.

Agency is to be understood not in the sense of someone who has 'mastery' over their actions and by extension their productions, but rather akin to the subject Judith Butler describes as one who is 'constituted through the address of the Other [but who] becomes then a subject capable of addressing others.'<sup>71</sup> If we understand Mammen's production during the 1920s as one that was governed by the fashionable trends of what was understood as unequivocally modern in the 1920s, it becomes possible to read her work for aesthetic or ideological challenges, subversions, or critiques. Mammen was an artist who operated in a field of production that resides between art—understood as the individual, who is self-producing and promoting—and marketed consumer culture. Her painting practice paradoxically connects and is indebted to both. I question whether Mammen was compromised as a practitioner, and suggest that a feminist reading that refuses modernism's gendered dichotomies be put forward.

Did Jeanne Mammen mobilize the discursive language of commercial illustration to

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71. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, (New York: Routledge, 1997). p. 26. Butler asks 'Who speaks when convention speaks?' This question is a useful one to think with when trying to approach Mammen's commercial illustrations, particularly in terms of the degree of agency the producer of such images is able to exercise.

offer her visually literate public a subtle critique of the emancipation of women? At the very least *Langweilige Puppen* suggests that the question is more complicated than simply either vilifying or celebrating the icon of the new woman. The *Neue Frau*, a subject produced the visual language of fashion, film, advertising and mass consumer culture, was created in part through the circulation and consumption of images. These representations can be allocated, regulated and refused. This is how Judith Butler addresses interpellation; she notes that we are offered some form of social existence, yet: 'a critical perspective on the kinds of language that govern the regulation and constitution of subjects becomes all the more imperative once we realize how inevitable is our dependency on the ways we are addressed.'<sup>72</sup> Butler remarks that agency becomes a possibility once the terms set out by a system are recognised. That Jeanne Mammen was self-aware of the terms set out by the system of fashion illustration was made evident when she remarked: 'I tried to camouflage: A woman working in advertising, that was a good mask; I was looked at as if I was only capable of designing pretty flower arrangements.'<sup>73</sup> Jeanne Mammen assumed the position of a critical observer, even though she herself helped fashion the ambivalent icon of the *Neue Frau*.

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72. Ibid. p.27.

73. Jeanne Mammen quoted in Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', (1988-1989). p. 30.

(e) *Representing 'Die Garçonne': Jeanne Mammen's illustrations and the Discourse of Sexology*

*Modern society is perverse.*<sup>74</sup>

- Michel Foucault

As Michel Foucault has pointed out in *The History of Sexuality* (1976-1984), sexuality was a fundamental aspect of modern culture. This was the case, particularly in Weimar Berlin, and with the emergence of the *Neue Frau*, sexuality was hotly debated. In fact, processes of discursive mapping reveal that sexuality was viewed as a marker of identity in the modern period, and Weimar Germany was no exception. Sexuality and sexual perversions or deviance were widely discussed, and the discourse of sexology became linked to the fashionable representations of women who adopted the look of the *Neue Frau* and especially the masculine variant known as *Die Garçonne*. In *The Gender of Modernity* (1995) Rita Felski has considered the relationship between avant-garde art and the discourses of sexology and psychiatry in the shaping of a distinctly modern conception of sexuality and desire.<sup>75</sup> Given that Jeanne Mammen provided illustrations for sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld's *Moral History of the Postwar Period* (1931) and her watercolours appeared in both Curt Moreck's *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (Guide to "Immoral" Berlin) and Ruth Margarete Roellig's *Einführung zu Berlins Lesbischen Frauen* (Introduction to Berlin's Lesbian Women), her images helped to shape representations of the so-called 'in-between' or 'third-sex', as well as types such as the *garçonne*. Thus, it is important to consider Mammen's work in the context of the debates regarding sexology. Since the discourse of sexology was also a public one, and women were actively fashioning

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74. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, Translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 47.

75. See Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). pp. 174-206. For another useful collection of essays that examines the role of sexology in early modern European culture see *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

themselves in relation to the styles promoted by the media, popular reception of such imagery will also be examined.



Figure 2.29: Jeanne Mammen No Title (*Die Garçonne*; *Dirne auf Grüner Couch*) (c.1931)

Renowned sex-reformer and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld used Jeanne Mammen's image catalogued as *Dirne auf Grüner Couch* (*Whore on a Green Couch*) [Fig. 2.29] as a colourplate illustration in his 1931 study entitled *Moral History of the Post-war Period*, assigning the image the title *Die Garçonne*. The blonde woman depicted on the yellow-green couch, smoking a cigarette, can in this context, be understood as a representation of the so-called third-sex, which was a type that Hirschfeld promoted. The 'third-sex' model proposed that homosexuals were an androgynous 'in-between' and Mammen's image gives a visual form to Hirschfeld's well-known ideas. Hirschfeld also wrote the introduction to Ruth Margarete Roellig's 1928 guide to Berlin's lesbian locales, a text in which both authors insisted that lesbians were not inferior to heterosexual women. Roellig's guide was important for lesbians since they lacked such a publication whereas there was a wider variety of texts aimed at homosexual men. Hirschfeld had in fact shifted focus away from the third-sex model by the time his three-

volume history of the post-war period was published in 1930, with Mammen's colourplate illustration. The shift away from the third-sex model tended to promote the idea of constructed identities in favour of the biologically determined theories centred on androgyny.

Although she understands Mammen's image *Die Garçonne* as a visual representation of what Hirschfeld termed the 'third-sex', Marsha Meskimmon has written cogently on the shift towards the social-construction of sexual identity and ideas on bisexuality that were replacing the third-sex model:

The debates about lesbian identity in the women's press of the period were increasingly moving away from biology and into the realm of the construction of various roles. For example, primary bisexuality was asserted for women which developed into the concept that each individual woman was, in varying degrees, 'masculine' and 'feminine'. In 1929, *Die Freundin* published excerpts from the 1904 text 'The Love of the Third Sex' (*Die Liebe des Dritten Geschlechts*) by Johanna Elberskirchen to begin a debate in its pages on the topic of defining homosexuality. Significantly, Elberskirchen began: 'There is no absolute man. There is no absolute woman. There are only bisexual variations'. Although when Elberskirchen wrote the text, it linked these 'variations' to biology and asserted that homosexuals belonged to a 'third' sex, in the context of its reprint in *Die Freundin* it participated in the dismantling of such biologically-fixed gender stereotypes. Since there could be no natural 'men' and 'women' and only a whole host of variations, each instance would be unique. For the readers of *Die Freundin*, as evinced in the letters to the journal, there were no 'natural' womanly heterosexuals and 'unnatural' manly lesbians, but a whole range of women identifying along a gender and sexual spectrum.<sup>76</sup>

The shift from an evolutionary theory of biological determinism to a model of differentiation from a common sameness, such as the idea that 'There are only bisexual variations' helped erode the concept of absolute gender oppositions.<sup>77</sup> As Rita Felski has pointed out, such a model allowed for the recognition of women as sexed subjects within a general economy of

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76. Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). p. 222.

77. For a discussion of the shift toward such a model mapped from the sexological revolution beginning with Darwin and ending with Freud, and a discussion of the links between sexology, psychiatry and art see Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, (1995). pp. 176-185.

desire.<sup>78</sup>

How does Mammen's image, which Hirschfeld labelled *Die Garçonne* in 1931, figure within these discourses? Reading the image in the context of Hirschfeld's pioneering work on sexuality leads the viewer to the conclusion that the painting is a representation of a lesbian, however, recalling that both the *Neue Frau* and *garçonne* aesthetic were drawn from lesbian subculture such an interpretation is not necessarily clear. That women were choosing to self-identify in a range of ways blurs an easy reading of the *Neue Frau* represented in Jeanne Mammen's watercolour. Felski has also noted the link between avant-garde artists drawing from the emergent disciplines of sexology and psychiatry from *fin-de-siècle* France onwards in an effort to articulate their opposition to the constraints of bourgeois society. The association of art with deviance or perversity worked to create 'an aesthetics of negativity and transgression [that] has shaped much of our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and modernity.'<sup>79</sup>

Viewed within the traditions of modernist painting, other readings of Mammen's image of a woman lying languidly on a couch can be opened up, yielding interpretations which draw on the discourses of sexuality as well as those of art history. It must be recalled that Mammen's work necessarily had a certain amount of ambiguity that rendered it commercially viable. While the watercolour that appeared in Hirschfeld's text evoked contemporary arguments concerning women's sexuality, it is also reminiscent of the work of modern artists who challenged the conventions of body representation. I would argue that this work specifically refers to Manet's *Olympia* (c.1863), which is an image of a prostitute.

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78. Ibid. p. 182.

79. Ibid. p. 177.

The woman in Mammen's *Die Garçonne* is evocative of *Olympia* in both her positioning on the couch and her placement in a contemporary domestic setting. The most obvious difference from *Olympia* is that Mammen's figure is clothed. There are examples of such figures (odalisques) who are clothed in painting, for example, Suzanne Valadon's *The Blue Room* (1923) which depicts a woman wearing striped pyjama bottoms (or perhaps harem pants) and a camisole. The odalisque in Valadon's painting is shown smoking, which was also a euphemism for lesbianism.<sup>80</sup> She lounges languidly on her couch outfitted in a negligee, stockings, and high-heeled shoes. One could argue that her outfit is indicative of the clothing of a prostitute, however, it could also just as easily be the everyday undergarments of the *Neue Frau*. On the chair adjacent to the couch hangs a pair of suspenders that could belong either to the garçonne herself or to someone—a man or a woman—who is in the space that is not seen by the viewer.

Despite these visual hints, Mammen's work remains ambiguous. Unlike Manet, Mammen does not clearly articulate this woman's identity or occupation. Knowing that this painting is catalogued as *Dirne auf Grüner Couch* (Whore on a Green Couch) facilitates a reading of this woman as a prostitute, yet the similarities with Manet's work are also apparent. Mammen has constructed the work so that it plays with the ambivalent position of the contemporary modern woman. If this woman is indeed a prostitute, she could be servicing both men and women. The sexual orientation of the subject also remains uncertain. The multiple meanings embedded in this picture speak to the sort of open-ended possibilities and freedom from constraints and conventions that are typical of Mammen's treatment of the *Neue Frau*.

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80. I am grateful to Miranda Mason for reminding me of the Valadon's work, and also for this insight regarding smoking as a code for lesbianism. See Miranda E. Mason, 'Making Love/Making Work', (2007).



Figure 2.30: Jeanne Mammen *No Title (Sie Repräsentiert)* (c.1928)

Jeanne Mammen's watercolours from the Weimar period appear to represent or open up a space of multiple identifications for women. An example of this that draws from the popular culture of the time as well as the different libidinal economy that had been established in the city during the Weimar period is the watercolour catalogued as *Sie Repräsentiert* (c.1928) [Fig. 2.30]. The watercolour was published with this title of '*Sie Repräsentiert*' in the February 1928 issue of *Simplicissimus*. The image, alternately titled 'Ballfest' (Carnival) in Curt Moreck's guide to 'immoral' Berlin, locates two women attending a ball amongst a crowd of dancing partygoers. Although the image was used to illustrate the popular satirical publication and Moreck's guide, like many of Mammen's watercolours it was not commissioned, but was accepted by the publishers of the periodical and appropriated by Moreck.

The principal subject of the work appears dressed in men's formal attire, complete with top hat, vest, and scarf. The clothes could potentially be an adaptation of men's clothes,



or what Miranda Mason has termed 'masculinised clothes'.<sup>81</sup> A cigarette dangles from her mouth. Any viewer of this illustration must remember that it was fashionable for women to wear masculine clothing in Weimar Berlin, and not assume that by dressing like men, these women were in 'drag'. Although I recognize the tradition of 'cross-dressing' in theatre, as an icon who represented this trend on film, Marlene Dietrich performed a seductive act in her first American film, *Morocco* (1930) wearing a tuxedo similar to Mammen's *garçonne* of c. 1928. Mammen's representation clearly draws from fashion and popular culture. It must also be recalled that women who adopted this style did so often with the explicit goal of scandalizing their surroundings. The look of the *garçonne* emphasizes the aesthetic and superficial aspects of sexuality and gender, thereby underscoring the element of performativity inherent in both.



Figure 2.31: Marlene Dietrich, Still from *Morocco* (1930)

Consequently, to quell public anxieties, critics 'found a convenient stereotype in the lesbian "butch" and the rituals of homosexual subculture where, so it seemed, gender was reduced to a

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81. Ibid. pp. 78-85.

choice of costumes.”<sup>82</sup> By making the *garçonne* an embodiment of lesbianism rather than a signifier of sexual equality, this figure became a less palpable threat. As well, since the prime vehicle for articulating this identity was through dress, like the *Neue Frau*, the *garçonne* could be easily dismissed as simply a fashion phenomenon.

While Mammen’s watercolour can be read as a visual representation of the performative, suggesting that gender and sexuality are socially constructed, such an interpretation must not be contingent on the painting’s title. Both Marsha Meskimmon and Katharina Sykora have misidentified this painting, confusing it with another watercolour that is now catalogued as *Maskenball* (Masked Ball).<sup>83</sup> This error is perhaps due to the title “Ballfest” assigned by Moreck. Nevertheless, Meskimmon’s analysis of the painting relies heavily on the title ‘Masked Ball’ to argue that the subjects are masquerading or performing identity in the form of ‘carnavalesque display’.<sup>84</sup> Discussing the painting with an erroneous title, *Masked Ball*, Meskimmon wrote:

Significantly, the work was also titled by the artist as *She Represents* and subtitled *Carnival Scene*. The subtle connotations of these alternate titles along with the multiplicity of 'roles' played out on the lesbian scene link the 'performance' (or 're-presentation') shown in the work with the critical category of 'performativity', marking the debates about female sexuality in the Weimar Republic as very modern indeed.<sup>85</sup>

It must be remembered that Mammen did not title this work, as Meskimmon claims. The

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82. Sabine Hacke, ‘In the Mirror of Fashion’, (1997). p. 196. It is important to employ the terms used at the time so as to not anachronistically conflate contemporary ideas and project them on the historical past. As Laura Doan has pointed out in her work on English lesbian culture, the word 'butch' did not come into use until the 1950s. 'Bubi' and 'Dame' were in use, however, in Weimar Germany, and roughly translate to 'butch' and 'femme.'

83. See Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). p. 217 and Katharina Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', (1988-1989). p. 29. I am indebted to Cornelia Pastelak-Price of the Jeanne Mammen Society for confirming this information, who concluded that the title *Maskenball* was given to this work by scholars. The painting that appeared in *Simplicissimus* in 1932 as *Maskenball* is part of the Des Moines Art Centre in Iowa, and was also published as *Taktgefühl* (Tactful). The painting I am discussing here as *No Title (Sie Repräsentiert)* is held at the Jeanne Mammen atelier in Berlin. For catalogue information including alternate titles see *Jeanne Mammen catalogue raisonné*, (1997-1998). pp. 199, 201.

84. Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, (1999). pp. 216-220.

85. *Ibid.* pp. 216-217.

watercolours are archived according to approximate dates largely based on when the images were first published and are listed with primary titles assigned either by the publishers or the archivists.

Reading the painting as 'Masked Ball', Meskimmon argues that these women are a couple in a lesbian bar performing butch/femme identities. She uses the locale of the masquerade, with the appreciation that lesbian masquerades in Weimar Berlin were spaces where notions of fixed gendered and sexual identity were thrown into flux. While this is true, Meskimmon assumes that these women are in a specifically lesbian locale—at a masquerade—based on the incorrect title. Meskimmon contends that the pair must be read in the context of performance as butch/femme so that they are not 'neutralised as a ... copy of what is natural.' but signs of enacted roles.<sup>86</sup> Meskimmon's mislabeling of this painting, and subsequent analysis of it, places these women into a heteronormative economy of signs.

Considered without the constrictions of a title that places the figures in a specific public space, the painting is an illustration of a woman in masculinised dress. She is not in 'drag' nor is she a transvestite in the sense that she does not appear to be *like* a man, despite her attire. There is no doubt that this figure is a woman. These women are situated in a space where gendered identities were assumed and experimented or played with. This image must be read within this cultural context, where gendered identities like the 'Bubi' and the 'Dame' were appreciated in their capacity as roles. The redhead is in a traditionally feminine outfit: she wears a dress, costume jewelry and large clip in her hair. Together they seem to create the archetypal butch/femme (*Bubi/ Dame*) pair. This *garçonne*, however, is frontally positioned with her hands on her hips, confronting the viewer with an alluring expression. She is clearly posing. She

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86. Ibid. p. 218.

looks out at the viewer, enticing him/her with a lascivious look.

This painting could easily be called 'flirt,' as the woman is positioned so that she is paired with the viewer, rather than the woman resting her hand on her shoulder. Both men and women could be seduced by this figure. This undermines the idea that the women in Mammen's watercolour are simply a representation of the butch/femme pairing. Instead of reading the primary figure as a 'butch' we must acknowledge that she is a visual code for the *Neue Frau*, a representation of one who is seemingly liberated from gendered social constraints. It is important to look at how these images received their respective titles, and to consider by whom they were titled and for what context or purpose. My critique of scholars like Meskimmon is that in effect, they are not reading the image as much as they are reading the *title*. Consequently, their analyses consider the historical and cultural context of the title and not the image.

Mammen's work offered women women multiple positionalities while presenting the *garçonne* figure in a positive light. Her work offers an alternative to the negative representations so prevalent at the time, for example Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (1926) [Fig. 2.32]. Dix's image of Sylvia von Harden portrays her in an unflattering light as a masculinized *garçonne*, and although she is not wearing men's clothing the markers of masculine woman are signalled with the short *herenschnitt* hairstyle, monocle, and cigarette. Dix was known at this time for his work which was highly critical of Weimar society. As with *Three Prostitutes on the Street* (1925) Dix drew attention to the bleaker aspects of modern urban life.



Figure 2.32: Otto Dix, *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (1926)

As Shearer West has noted, Dix's portrait of his friend Sylvia von Harden stresses the personality of the sitter while also functioning as a caricature.<sup>87</sup> The painting in its exaggeration undermines or mocks the *Neue Frau* or *garçonne* iconography that was meant to advertise her emancipation and fashionability. Mammen's images, in contrast, draw attention to the positive, liberatory qualities that such role playing allowed.

The sexual culture in Weimar Berlin is contained in Mammen's representation of a social type that was infused with specific connotations, both positive and negative. Mammen's *garçonne* in the image archived as *Sie Repräsentiert* is consciously representing the positive, emancipatory ideals by posing for the viewer. Although Sue-Ellen Case is critical of 'feminist critics who metaphorize butch-femme roles, transvestites and campy dressers into a "subject who masquerades", as they put it, or is "carnavalesque" ... ' she has argued that such a subject

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87. West noted that Sylvia von Harden changed her surname from Lehr to von Harden 'as a cynical bid for aristocracy.' She is represented as a stereotypical new woman, courtesy of her bobbed hair, ubiquitous cigarette and glass of spritzer. See Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). p. 166.

could inhabit the position of 'Teresa De Lauretis' 'feminist subject'.<sup>88</sup> De Lauretis described a subject emerging from feminist criticism as one who is 'at the same time inside *and* outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that division, that doubled vision.'<sup>89</sup> Case takes De Lauretis' subject as her starting place to argue for a subject who is empowered in her efforts at self-determination.<sup>90</sup>

As a feminist subject who consciously performs a socially constructed persona in a theatrical setting, the central figure in *No Title (Sie Repräsentiert)* actively engages the viewer. She not only poses provocatively for the viewer, but also challenges him/her to enter her space. The *garçonne* is positioned not as a sexual object but as a subject free to perform a role that was seen as emancipatory even though Weimar society remained ultimately patriarchal. What Jeanne Mammen had doubtlessly observed was that women were only capable of expressing their freedom by assuming masculine attire, however, it is conceivable that the figure in the watercolour invites viewers to likewise adopt a persona in order to experience the freedom that she represents. What is also noteworthy is that Mammen's watercolour, which depicts gendered subject positions as artifice, offers a response that challenged the notions of objective realism that was so prevalent in Weimar culture. Mammen was using the *neue Sachlichkeit* mode of representation together with the common trope of the *Neue Frau* to subvert that which they

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88. Sue-Ellen Case, 'Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic', in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. by Henry Abelove and David M. Halperin Michèle Aina Barale. (New York: Routledge, 1993), (pp. 294-306). p. 299.

89. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (1987). p. 10. This also accords with Judith Butler's analysis of Joan Rivière's text 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' (1929) where Rivière stated that there was no difference between the performance of 'womanliness', the masquerade, and the real thing. Butler notes that the desire on the part of the subject who acts coquettishly or masquerades as a reaction-formation after appearing more 'masculine' is for the space 'in public discourse as speaker, lecturer, writer—that is, as user of signs rather than a sign object, and item of exchange. This castrating desire might be understood as the desire to relinquish the status of woman-as-sign in order to appear as a subject within language. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (1999). p. 66.

90. Sue-Ellen Case, 'Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic', (1993). p. 299.

effect, a truthful objectivity. In this and other watercolours, Jeanne Mammen used the means offered to women through fashion and visual culture in the Weimar Republic to present her public with a feminist subject, a subject who could fashion her own identity. Mammen was also herself a feminist subject, an artist who was both inside and outside the ideology of gender of her day, and consciously so.

Jeanne Mammen's interventions into the highly politicized sexual debates of the Weimar Republic raise numerous questions that bear considering. Questions with regard to how to read, interpret, and understand the work arise in light of the problematic issue of titling the paintings to facilitate archival work. As such, the readings they produce ought not to be understood as definitive, but rather they should remain overdetermined. Secondly, there is the question of the nature of Jeanne Mammen's practice in relation to current debates centred around the '*flâneuse*.' We need to consider the extent to which the solitary and independent life of the *flâneur* was available to Mammen, for her practice involved observing and recording people and events in the city. I believe that Jeanne Mammen's images that circulated in the magazines and illustrated journals of the period function in a manner similar to the *fin-de-siècle* advertising posters that Ruth Iskin analyses, which she claims were crucial in selling to women a new set of possibilities for their own experience of the city. Mammen's images presented viewers with a range of activities from frequenting cafés and dance halls, and theatres to window-shopping that were deemed respectable. Her images as well as her art practice shed light on the ways in which women were visible and how their practice of looking was incorporated into city life. Finally, Mammen's images also offer viewers multiple points of identification for women, for they play on representations found in popular culture and present an alternate view of the contested figure of the *Neue Frau*. Several images function as a rupture to the roles offered to women that centred around traditional roles, and this rupture

was in keeping with the emancipatory figure of Weimar's *Neue Frau*, even though Jeanne Mammen herself was critical of this culturally constructed icon that her images helped promote. Jeanne Mammen must be understood as an artist of the metropolis, whose interest in women attempted to shift the dominant accounts of the urban experience offered by artists and intellectuals who were men, accounts which rendered women as disreputable or marginal figures.



### III. Paraskeva Clark (1898-1986)



Figure 3.1 Paraskeva Clark: *Self-Portrait* (1925)

## Chapter 1. Paraskeva Clark - Self-Portraits 1925-1933

### Introduction: Reading Paraskeva Clark

Given that Paraskeva Clark (1898-1986) appears in surveys of the history of Canadian art, she remains a painter whose entry into the canon contributes to her marginalization as the 'Russian red,' a socially conscious painter of the 1930s known primarily for the anti-capitalist painting *Petroushka* (1937). This discussion questions the treatment of Paraskeva Clark as a 'canonical' artist since the recovery projects in the 1980s, by examining the factors that have rendered her an artist whose practice operated on the margins. In spite of these conditions, or *perhaps because of them*, Clark is an artist who can be understood as politically engaged. This chapter focuses on analyses of self-portraits completed in both oil and watercolour that Paraskeva Clark produced between 1925 and 1933. One of the main issues raised is the method of reading of these self-portraits, particularly in light of studies completed with regard to women's practice and the art of self-portraiture. The current discussion aims to understand these works as something other than signposts that depict the artist at various points in her life. In other words, this analysis aims to read these works for more than their biographical value. Biography will not be entirely dispensed with, for it is necessary to understand the conditions of production, however, I will produce readings that endeavour to move beyond monographic narrative in favour of critical, historically situated analysis of these works of art.

Paraskeva Clark first resurfaced when her self-portrait *Myself* (1933) appeared on the cover of the exhibition catalogue for *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (1975) curated by Charles

C. Hill. This exhibition was presented across the country by the National Gallery of Canada (NGC). An innovative study of the period, this exhibition documented the development of Canadian modernist painting, from the nationalism of early schools of landscape painting in the 1920s to the international trends of the 1940s. Clark's work was included in the sections that explored the social and political factors that influenced artistic practice in Canada during the 1930s, for she was one of the few artists to produce politically challenging work in Toronto in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

Clark's work then came into focus with Mary MacLachlan's retrospective exhibition, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (1982). MacLachlan opened the exhibition catalogue saying that when *Myself* graced the cover of Hill's exhibition catalogue, it seemed like a revelation.<sup>2</sup> The National Film Board of Canada's (now defunct) women's division released the documentary *Portrait of the Artist—As an Old Lady* in 1982 as part of their mandate to highlight the contributions of women to culture. The documentary was directed by Gail Singer and was shown in conjunction with MacLachlan's travelling exhibition. Both Singer's film and MacLachlan's exhibition constitute the feminist recovery projects centred around Paraskeva Clark. These recovery strategies of the retrospective (monograph) and the documentary biopic raise methodological questions, for they represent an instance where the artist Paraskeva Clark could appear; however, the mechanisms did not exist for maintaining that appearance.

One consequence of these recovery projects was that Paraskeva Clark's entry in the second edition of Dennis Reid's survey text, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* was expanded

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1. Charles Hill, 'Canadian Painting in the 30s',

2. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 9.

to include a discussion of the artist's best-known work, *Petroushka* (1937).<sup>3</sup> Clark's work was subsequently included in a handful of minor exhibitions focused on either the art of the 1930s and 1940s or Canadian women artists.<sup>4</sup> Clark's *Petroushka* continued to receive attention in new survey texts, including Anne Newlands' *Canadian Art: From its Beginnings to 2000* (200) and A.K. Prakash's review of women's work, *Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists* (2008). Aside from Reid's review of Clark's work in his survey text, no critical scholarship devoted to Clark emerged until two chapters appeared in the 2006 collection *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*. This anthology aimed to deal with painting, photography, sculpture, graphic art, and politics in a hemispheric context. One chapter in the volume by Natalie Luckyj was devoted exclusively to Paraskeva Clark, while Marilyn McKay's contribution considered political art in Canada in the 1930s more broadly. As the editors of the volume noted, Clark had become a marginal figure in spite of, or *because of*, her efforts to merge avant-garde practice with leftist ideology.<sup>5</sup> A recent biography has been published, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* (2009) written by Jane Lind. This examination of Clark's life, which is not an academic book, offers no critical readings of her paintings. A great weakness of the book is that much of the narrative in *Perfect Red* remains speculative. Lind

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3. Clark received only a brief entry in the first edition of Dennis Reid's *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Oxford University Press, 1973) which is only slightly fleshed out in the second edition where her most famous painting, *Petroushka* (1937) is discussed. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1988). pp. 184-185. Furthermore, her work is not discussed in any detail in J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History* (University of Toronto Press, 1977), whose study, along with Reid's offer a definitive survey of the History of Canadian Art.

4. See, for example, Christine Boyanoski, *The 1940s : a decade of painting in Ontario*, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1984)., Christine Boyanoski, *Permeable Border : Art of Canada and the United States 1920-1940*, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1989). or *The Female Perspective: Emily Carr to the Present: Selected Canadian Women Artists from the Permanent Collections of Gallery Lambton and Other Public Art Galleries*, (Sarnia, ON: Gallery Lambton, 1998).

5. Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden and Jonathan Weinberg, 'Introduction', in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. by Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden and Jonathan Weinberg. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), (pp. xiii - xxii). p. xiv. Luckyj's chapter on Clark is included in the section of the book entitled 'Voices in the Margins' and the editors cite her as a 'forgotten artist' in the abstract of the book.

attributes thoughts and emotions to the artist throughout to support her claims, however, one wonders how she could have known of Paraskeva Clark's thoughts and feelings.

*Petroushka* continues to be the work for which Clark is best known. Because of this painting's now iconic status, Clark appeared in an exhibition catalogue where she seemingly did not belong: Esther Trépanier's *Peintres Juifs de Montréal: Témoins de Leur Époque, 1930-1948* (1987). Even the most recent reconsiderations of Canadian art history, such as the edited collection *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century* (2010) include Clark as a 'Russian Red' and centre discussions almost exclusively around *Petroushka*.<sup>6</sup> These discussions of Paraskeva Clark's work attest to the fact that she has received more recognition than most Canadian women artists, however, much like Claude Cahun, she has been confined to a single category and remains known primarily for the political allegory painting *Petroushka*. This treatment ignores Clark's sustained practice of self-portraiture. Clark returned to the self-portrait for twenty-five years and even included one in *Petroushka*. This chapter will redress these omissions, and will demonstrate that her practice of self-portraiture in fact marginalized her in her own time. Ironically, it was in fact her choice of genre that was political in nature.

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6. *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Brian Foss, Anne Whitelaw and Sandra Paikowsky, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Lora Senechal Carney's chapter 'Modern Art, The Local and the Global c. 1930-1950.' See pp. 99-108. Here Clark's work is discussed in relation to the artists associated with the left-wing periodical *New Frontier*, which was published from 1936-37. *Petroushka* is addressed on page 108. Sandra Paikowsky's chapter, 'Modernist Representational Painting before 1950' considers Clark's work more broadly, although *Petroushka* is once again given the majority of the attention. Paikowsky does briefly discuss *Myself* (1933) noting that this is an instance of self-representation of the artist. Only two artists have chapters dedicated solely to their work: Tom Thomson and Emily Carr.

*The text is not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, a traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. ...since the text is that social space which leaves no language safe, outside, not any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder. The theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing.*

- Roland Barthes (1971)<sup>7</sup>

## Portraits of Paraskeva Clark

As a member of the Toronto community of painters, to adopt AGO curator Anna Hudson's terminology, Paraskeva Clark has been acknowledged as an artist who contributed to 'a socially-conscious modern movement in Canada' in the period under discussion here c.1931-1947. Hudson's doctoral work (1997) identified a gap in knowledge for she noted that '[A] self-effacing insistence on community identity, geared to collective well-being, ultimately compromised the historical recognition of these artists'.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the term 'Toronto community of painters' must now be used self-consciously, since Hudson's study attended to the problems that have arisen from the nature of specific practices under discussion. As with studies that are methodologically grounded by strategies of difference, positioning the discourse around ideas of communal practice can be understood as having the potential to open up alternate ways of encountering these artists.

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7. Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image/Music/Text*, Translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 158, 164

8. Anna Hudson, 'Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters, 1933-1950' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, Graduate Department of History of Art : 1997) p.3. Hudson focuses on painters working in Toronto as opposed to the more broad organisation the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP) and clearly specifies her use of classificatory terms in the development of her thesis. Prior to her adoption of the Toronto community of painters, she remarked that 'The post-Group of Seven generation of painters in Toronto positioned themselves as a community of like-minded individuals engaged in an international effort to recognise the modern artist's vital role in social reconstruction and reform'. Of course, social-consciousness in art occurred elsewhere in Canada. See Marilyn McKay, 'Canadian Political Art in the 1930s: "A Form of Distancing"', in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930's in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. by Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden and Jonathan Weinberg. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), (pp. 71-94).

Paraskeva Clark sought out a community of like-minded practitioners in Toronto. She later lamented the lack of opportunity for collaboration and discussion.<sup>9</sup> Clark was also acutely aware of the role gender played in the conditions of production of artworks. Paraskeva Clark came to believe that it was not possible for women to become 'great artists' both anticipating and inadvertently answering Linda Nochlin's famous rhetorical question of 1971, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?'. Clark lectured on the subject of women and art at Ridley College in St. Catherine's, Ontario in 1958, and although no record of her remarks survive, she was quoted in a Toronto newspaper on the same subject: 'But painting is not a woman's job—If I were a man I could be hard-hearted, selfish, and paint modern art. But I'm not and I can't'.<sup>10</sup>

The current examination aims to address both the visual and written work of the artist, Paraskeva Clark, in context and taking in to account both personal and historical specificities. Since Paraskeva Clark was born and educated in Russia, prior to emigrating to Canada in 1931, I draw attention to the history of Russian art in relation to questions of gender. Notably, the Russian avant-garde and specifically Russian constructivism has been studied in such a way that 'woman' and 'artist' were not rendered mutually exclusive terms. Names such as Rodchenko are more widely recognised as opposed to Varvara Stepanova,

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9. Charles Hill and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist)', National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa <[http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/enthusiast/thirties/interviews\\_e.jsp?idocumentid=8](http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/enthusiast/thirties/interviews_e.jsp?idocumentid=8)> [(18/10/1973)] p. 38.

10. Paraskeva Clark quoted in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p.42 These remarks were originally published in Edna Usher's Article, 'Salute to These Women', Toronto Daily Telegram, 25 April, 1959. The artist was fond of repeating these assertions (often to comic effect) in later interviews conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. See Judy Stoffman, 'The Rediscovery of Paraskeva Clark', in *Chatelaine*, (Toronto: August 1983), pp. 40, 102-106. p. 106, and Gail Singer and National Film Board of Canada., *Portrait of the Artist—As an Old Lady*, DVD ([Montreal]: NFB, 1982). Clark responds to prompts to discuss being an artist who is a woman by saying: 'There's just cooking, cooking, cooking ... Loblaws, Dominion, Loblaws, Dominion, Loblaws [Canadian supermarket chains] ... What's a woman's fate? What did the Lord create us for? Just to produce more men. I can't forgive Him for that.'

Rodchenko's wife and colleague, or Luibov Popova a fellow catalyst in the development of the Russian avant-garde centred in Moscow. Camilla Gray's groundbreaking study of 1962 *The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922*, written and published at a time when there was growing interest in but limited access to archival material and artworks in the Soviet Union, clearly demonstrates the seeming equality among artists irrespective of the sex of the practitioner.

Clark was likely familiar with Aleksander Mikhailovich Rodchenko's slogan 'Art into life!', and Vladimir Tatlin's call for artists to become active builders in society using 'real materials and real space.' It is hardly surprising that, once settled in Canada, Paraskeva Clark attempted to integrate into a community that endeavoured to address questions pertaining to the social value of art.<sup>11</sup> It is likewise understandable that she would come to lament the marginal role women played in the nationally recognised arts groups that existed in Canada at the time.

Paraskeva Clark's practice remained one that was committed to representation at a time when abstraction was being touted as 'modern' and 'pure abstraction' was valued. The work of Walter Abell (1897-1956), Professor of Art at Acadia University, Nova Scotia (1927-1943) is significant here. Abell applied Marxist and psychoanalytic theories to his writing on aesthetics and the history of art. Paraskeva Clark would have drawn support from Abell's ideas, as the two were friends, and his work was known amongst artists working in Canada. Abell was an influential figure in Canada at this time, as founder of *Maritime Art Magazine* (which later became *Canadian Art*) and of the Maritime Art Association. Abell has been discussed in Canadian art history primarily in relation to his art criticism and his

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11. This need to collaborate was most evident through Clark's participation and contributions to the collaborative projects of the *New Frontier* artists and writers. This will be discussed at length in the following chapter dedicated to Clark's more overtly political paintings and drawings dating from 1937.



institutional work as founder of the Maritime Art Association, as fellow of the Barnes Foundation. His work for the Carnegie Corporation was also important.<sup>12</sup> He has not been considered as an aesthetic theorist to any degree, although his book *Representation and Form* (1936) engages and contributes to existing debates related to the philosophy of art.

Walter Abell's contributions to the discipline of art history have not been widely recognised. Notably, Abell aimed to position himself in opposition to Clive Bell in particular and distinct from both Roger Fry and Herbert Read, while acknowledging the usefulness of the criticism produced by the latter two. Abell himself found resonance between his thinking and John Dewey's *Art as Experience*—a work of philosophical pragmatism emphasizing art's situated and experiential aspects—although according to Abell, the two thinkers arrived at their conclusions independently.<sup>13</sup> Research for Abell's first major study, *Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art* (1936) that began in the early 1930s is significant for it addresses contemporary representational painting in both the Americas and Europe, while also taking historical or 'ancient' art and craft practice into consideration.

Abell argued for the legitimacy of representational art in opposition to criticism that valued abstract art above all other types of aesthetic experience. Abell's theoretical frame

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12. For a discussion of Walter Abell's institutional work see Sandra Paikowsky, "FROM AWAY" The Carnegie Corporation, Walter Abell and American Strategies for Art in the Maritimes From the 1920s to the 1940s', *Journal of Canadian Art History/ Annales d'histoire de l'art Canadien*, XXVII ((2006)), Gemey Kelly's essay in the exhibition catalogue *Full Space: Modern Art From the Firestone Collection* discussed Walter Abell's work with that of art critic Graham McInnes, another champion of Paraskeva Clark's work. See Gemey Kelly, 'A Definite Image: The Representation of the Social in Canadian Art of the 1930s and 40s', in *Full Space/ Plein Espace: Modern Art from the Firestone Collection of Canadian Art*, exh. cat. ed. by Esther Trépanier, Gemey Kelly and Emily Falvey. (Ottawa: Ottawa Art Gallery, 2004),

13. Walter Abell, *Representation and form : a study of aesthetic values in representational art*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971). p. xvi; pp.1-18. Abell's second volume of note, *The Collective Dream in Art: A Psycho-Historical Theory of Culture Based on Relations between the Arts, Psychology, and The Social Sciences* (1957) was derided by Eugène W. Kleinbauer for its application of application of psychoanalysis and Gestalt psychology. See Eugene W. Kleinbauer, *Modern Persepectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Writings on the Visual Arts*, Medieval Academy of America, 1989). p. 74.

suggests that it is the psychology or the position of the observer that is paramount to aesthetic experience.<sup>14</sup> As an advocate of a 'middle position' in the debates that position abstraction as the highest form of aesthetic achievement, Abell was unwilling to abandon representation as aesthetically significant, and claimed that all formal elements in a composition or geometric design give rise to associations and consequently were not purely abstract. According to Abell, visual artworks can be understood as 'literary' works to be read, whether abstract or representational:

The ... most common objection against which associative effects have to defend themselves is the charge, current in recent decades, that they are "literary" rather than pictorial. ... To use the term "literary" in ... [a] comparative sense is merely to say, in figurative language, that both pictorial and literary art are representational and that, since ultra-plastic representation reaches its greatest extension and achieves its greatest dominance in literature, all such representation can be conveniently described in terms of its most developed type as "literary". The ultra-plastic elements of representation are also visual. Though we must have non-visual experience to be able to read them, they are an integral part of the significance of visual stimuli.<sup>15</sup>

Abell argued that formal elements in a visual art work could be understood as associative form, for they required a viewer to apply *extravisual* knowledge in order to comprehend the work. In addition, plastic elements were inseparably linked to associative elements in a work of art and the interrelationship between the two was what gave rise to form. Abell applied the term 'representational' form to visual artwork since form then can be understood as combining

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14. Abell's work serves as a curious precursor to what cultural analysts have termed 'the linguistic turn'. Arthur Pope's introductory remarks offer a cogent summary of Abell's thesis, and the links to contemporary theories that consider cultural products, including painted images, as texts to be read or decoded. See Arthur Pope 'Introduction' in Walter Abell, *Representation and Form : A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art*, (1971). pp. viii-ix : It might be said, indeed, that there are two types of painting. In one the work is designed for a particular place and must primarily satisfy its function as part of a whole architectural scheme. In another type it is designed to represent certain objects or certain scenes, supposedly of interest to the painter and the predicated observer, in which the representation and expression are the primary functions. Such a painting serves something of the same purpose as a book. It describes certain real or imaginary scenes and may express ideas of various kinds—lyric, dramatic, and so on. It is, like a book, an entirely independent affair—a thing to be read.'

15. Ibid.p. 98-99.

plastic and associative elements to be decoded or 'read.'

While Abell's work is not concerned with the intentions of the artist, or questions relating to the psychology or life of the practitioner, my discussion will refer to the lived experience of the artist in order to enable or continue the process of becoming visible that Paraskeva Clark commenced when she painted a study of herself, a portrait that is signed dated, and reproduced here as *Self-Portrait* (1925). My discussion attempts to consider the kinds of readings that might be elicited from encounters with a series of early self-portraits painted by the artist after she emigrated from Russia, works which span a period of production of roughly ten years c. 1923-1933.

### **Names in Paint — Artist Functions? Or, Who and What was 'Paraskeva Clark'**

Paraskeva Clark's painting of 1925 [fig. 3.1] is the earliest known surviving oil painting attributed to the artist Paraskeva Clark and functions as a trace of a painting practice that formally began in Russia c.1916. The painting of 1925 registers as jarring or striking as it seems at odds to viewers somewhat versed in the history of Canadian art and to those who are familiar with Clark's albeit limited position in that canon. Given that it is widely accepted that so few Canadian artists, and in particular those who are women, have received satisfactory scholarly attention it is conceivable that the artist's name may be recognised, and the painting might passively register or elicit an engagement with the viewer based on skill, style, or reciprocated glance.<sup>16</sup> It is also conceivable that the artist's name and the body of work

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16. I am thankful to Dr. Kristina Huneault, co-founder of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI) based at Concordia University in Montreal, who in response to my initial critique of how Canadian Art History has dealt with Paraskeva Clark, pointed out that while the critique was justified, and certainly accepted within CWAHI circles, it almost went with out saying given that irrespective of the sex of the artist, research on historical Canadian Art and artists who are Canadian remains an area in need of rigourous scholarly development.

associated with that name may not register at all. With respect to Paraskeva Clark's painting practice, one must consider this painting/text of 1925 in relation to other paintings she produced as well as whole other fields of iteration or inscription. In employing this transdisciplinary approach, I am adopting the premise offered by feminist writings that posit that paintings function analogously as text. This is why Walter Abell's work on aesthetics is significant to the current discussion, although I will primarily refer to the work of Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, and subsequent critiques of authorship with respect to canon formation.<sup>17</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that in relation to his pronouncement of the 'death of the author' Roland Barthes posits that texts can only be understood in relation to other texts. This is the concept of *intertextuality*, a term which was coined by Julia Kristeva, and for Barthes as well as Kristeva, every text is part of a larger network of texts that provide a dynamic, shifting context of meaning. Every text is in dialogue with other texts. As Mieke Bal and others who apply semiotics to their study of art have demonstrated, so it is with paintings.

In his 1968 essay, 'The Death of the Author', Barthes famously placed the onus upon the reader by declaring in his often cited conclusion that, 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.'<sup>18</sup> It is the act of reading which is of importance; however,

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17. Griselda Pollock's work with respect to canon formation and the histories of art has been particularly helpful, in addition to Vanessa Corby's work on Eva Hesse. See Vanessa Corby, 'Don't Look Back: Reading for the Ellipses in the Discourse of Eva Hesse', *Third Text*, 57(Winter 2001-02) (2001), (31-42).Griselda Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh', in *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, ed. by Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), (pp. 315-342). Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon : Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (London: Routledge, 1999). Nancy K. Miller has written extensively on canon formation see for example, *Nancy K. Miller, 'Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing, and the Reader', in Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies: Issues, Terms, and Contexts*, ed. by Teresa De Lauretis. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), (pp. 102-120).; and *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, ed. by Joan E DeJean and Nancy K Miller, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). In the spirit of critique, these scholars acknowledge the usefulness of work done by what are considered canonical thinkers in order to build their own arguments that advocate a different approach rather than simply being critical in the colloquial sense. Both Hilary Robinson and Griselda Pollock acknowledge Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's explanation of feminist practice as critique. *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968-2000*, ed. by Hilary Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). p. 164; Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, (1999). p.199.

18. Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', (1977). p. 148

Barthes makes a clear conceptual designation of the reader as a 'space' or 'place' rather than an actual or specific person. It is the space occupied by the reader and the practice of reading that allows any individual reader to bring his/her knowledge to bear on the text while performing interpretative acts. It is important to bear in mind that Barthes' early structuralist work, which centred around questions of authority with respect to authorship and the production of meaning, was specifically rooted in literature, and that his critique attends to literary works by Mallarmé, Proust, Balzac and others associated with canonical modernism.<sup>19</sup> As Griselda Pollock has noted: 'The real significance of Barthes' text is the differences drawn out between two systems of literary production and their ideological effects.'<sup>20</sup> Barthes argued that traditional conceptions of the author stem from rationalist and empiricist thought that attributes a central importance to the individual as creator. The structures embedded in the literary works in question themselves displace traditional notions of authorship by divesting the author of authority such that it becomes difficult if not impossible to ascribe textual authority with the writer, thereby constituting 'an effect of a historically determined loss of faith amongst writers in their right/ability to claim authority, to masquerade as author –the knowing Subject.'<sup>21</sup> This in turn enabled the production of what Barthes termed readerly and writerly texts. Although Barthes' critique of authorship stems from literary analysis, the effect of Barthes' formulations extends to the space or place of encounter with the painted image. Barthes' structuralist critique enables viewers/readers to engage with Paraskeva Clark's painting of 1925 in myriad ways, thus opening up several avenues for discussion, questions regarding what

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19. see Roland Barthes and Honore de Balzac, *S/Z*, Translated by Richard Miller. (London: Cape, 1975), and Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', (1977).

20. Griselda Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh', (1996). p. 324

21. Ibid. p. 323

Foucault termed the author-function and the centrality of the author/artist to the discourses of art history.<sup>22</sup>

*(a) New Strategies of Engagement in the discursive fields of Art History and Curatorial Practice*

Shifts in methods in the conjoined fields of art history and curatorial practice have signalled divergent approaches as to how works of art may be understood and engaged with. Traditional models of interpretation, analogous to those found in literature which Barthes critiqued, persist in both the museum/gallery setting as well as in certain forms of art historical writing, particularly monographical writing. There are now two monographical texts devoted to Paraskeva Clark's life and work: the exhibition catalogue *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings*, and the biography *Perfect Red*. MacLachlan's 1982 exhibition methodologically structured its narration of Paraskeva Clark chronologically so that the paintings and drawings functioned as indexical of biography. The catalogue text considers the artworks according to a traditional linear progression of artistic development, while providing a chronology of biographical details. Consequently, after a brief introduction, the catalogue begins with a black and white reproduction of *Self-portrait* 1925, although the painted work itself is not addressed until later in the narrative as it is listed as Fig. 6 and is preceded by a relatively lengthy discussion of the artist's life and training in Russia.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Stephanie Walker's work on Emily Carr provides a bridge between these concerns and Canadian art history. Walker's work questions biographical constructions of an historical Canadian woman artist. See Stephanie Kirkwood Walker, *This Woman in Particular: Contexts for the Biographical Image of Emily Carr*, (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996).

23. I will follow MacLachlan and refer to the city of Paraskeva Clark's birth according to the name it held at the time. Paraskeva Clark was born in 1898 when the city was known as St. Petersburg. The name was later changed to Petrograd (1914) and subsequently changed again to Leningrad after the death of Lenin (1924). Since 1991 the city has been known as St. Petersburg, after a the city's population voted in a referendum where voters chose to restore Czarist name the city held prior to World War I. It is noteworthy that Paraskeva Clark left Petrograd in 1923; therefore, when she completed biographical questionnaires in Canada and listed Leningrad as her city of birth, this could be construed as both an historical inaccuracy and a political gesture signalling her left wing affiliations. Issues pertaining to how the artist narrated herself are significant and will be raised subsequently in the discussion.

MacLachlan opened her exhibition catalogue by stating that, '[I]n the history of Canadian art, Paraskeva Clark is an important figure who has been overlooked.'<sup>24</sup> With this statement, and through her introduction, MacLachlan indicates that her project is one of recovery, but her methods are in keeping with the traditional model of art historical and curatorial practice where art practice is collapsed with biography. MacLachlan's introduction firmly invests authority with the Artist as she relies upon interviews and archival documents that lend credence to her psycho-biography, methods which also enable her to infuse her catalogue with statements such as the following, found in the introduction: 'It would appear that much of this contradiction in Paraskeva's personality stems from her strong inclination towards the dramatic and a need for dynamic tension in order to function.'<sup>25</sup> In other words, MacLachlan exemplified the Author/Critic model that Barthes' critiqued.

In the spirit of *interdisciplinarity* that Barthes refers to in his 1971 essay 'From Work to Text,' several branches of art history have emerged in recent years and discursively engaged with critical and philosophical discourses to productively and critically re-think the discipline's assumptions and methods. Consequently, art's histories are being written self-reflexively, as scholars explore the important implications with regard to commonly held notions of art, and artist. Curatorial practices have also had to re-think strategies of engagement in light of ever-expanding and shifting fields of scholarship and for more practical reasons that pertain to the role and efficacy of museums as cultural institutions.

Discussing the importance between content and interpretation of a work of art, or in

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Transliterated spelling of Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin taken from *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art: 1890s to Mid-1930s*, ed. by Ilia Dorontchenkov, and consulting editor Nina Gurianova, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Most scholarship consulted uses the Anglicized spelling Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin.

24. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 9.

25. Ibid. p. 9.

Barthesian terms the denotation and connotation of an image or sign, Matthew Teitelbaum the current Director and CEO of the AGO made the following remarks:

Community is not simply about access, it engages questions of interpretation: who tells the stories that we read, and who makes the images we see? To deepen the tie, we need to create forums for the presentation of ideas, and discover and develop ways to share these ideas. We need to do so by making this journey public. And, importantly, we have to do so in terms of sustainable initiatives. The great opportunities for museums today is the meeting place of cultures. To do this the point of meeting has to be made explicit. In the new AGO we will be creating these points of meeting (where one art form confronts another, one artist dialogues with another) in such a way that difference is celebrated. The voice in the institution will be varied: many voices, opening up varied interpretations...<sup>26</sup>

By putting works of art in dialogue with one another, in some instances irrespective of traditional classifications such as national schools, style or medium,<sup>27</sup> Teitelbaum is advocating a strategy that accords with Barthes' argument that endeavours to eschew interpretative practices that enclose a text within a single meaning and denies intertextuality.

Seeing Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925), an oil on canvas measuring 28.3 by 22.2 centimetres [Fig. 3.1], on display in the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto since November 2008 elicited a lengthy engagement. The painted surface that appeared to quietly

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26. Matthew Teitelbaum, 'Online Question and Answer Between Matthew Teitelbaum, Director & Ceo of the Art Gallery of Ontario and Globe and Mail Readers', *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto <<<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/matthew-teitelbaum/article820794/>>> [(2009)] [Accessed July 24 2009].

27. The new installation at the AGO has taken measures to ensure that work made by women artists has an impact, although only 11% of artists collected by the institution are women. There are galleries devoted to women in Canadian art called, 'Women Artists in the McLean Centre for Canadian Art', which is curated with the themes of power, myth and memory in mind. The new Canadian Installation in the museum is also thematic, but this does not include the Thompson Collection of Canadian Art & Artifacts, which is installed separately. Paper given by Alicia Boutilier and Georgiana Uhlyarik, 'Women and the New Permanent Collection Galleries of the Art Gallery of Ontario', (Montreal: October 3, 2008), at the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI) Inaugural Conference. Matthew Teitelbaum addressed some of these issues pertaining to the importance of new curatorial strategies in discussion with William Thorsell, Director and CEO of the Royal Ontario Museum, Lisa Rochon, Architecture Critic for *The Globe and Mail*, and Greg Sorbara, Liberal MPP (member of provincial parliament), moderated by Steve Paiken. See podcast Steve Paiken, *The Debate: Cultured Clash*, DVD (Toronto: TV Ontario, 2008). <[http://www.tvo.org/cfm/tvoorg/theagenda/index.cfm?page\\_id=7&bpn=779170&ts=2008-04-07%2020:00:45.0](http://www.tvo.org/cfm/tvoorg/theagenda/index.cfm?page_id=7&bpn=779170&ts=2008-04-07%2020:00:45.0)> [Accessed August 11 2009].



hint at artistic influences due to the affinity with traditional painting techniques raised questions both in relation to the producer of the image and with regard to the canvas' place in specific historical contexts. The small scale portrait employs a dark colour scheme using pinks, browns, and reds, and thus the painting bears a resemblance to the Dutch Masters or Vincent Van Gogh's early work. Great emphasis and attention has been placed on the subject's face, and the flesh tones, defining angles and features appear to have been carefully worked over. Pink hues have been used as a motif most apparent on the cheeks and lips, giving the subject a flushed or rosy appearance, and upon close inspection, one can detect that the colour has been used throughout, recurring as a highlight and blended with the flesh tones on the nose and left ear. The lighter tones offset the sombre background, and the similarly dark colouring of the artist's complexion and hair. A portion of red clothing is visible in the lower right corner of the canvas, pure white paint is used to render a beaded necklace, and this application of paint appears to be the only evidence of gestural brushwork employed.

After viewing the portrait hung in a gallery installation, I am no closer to ascertaining what may have motivated the producer of this *Self-Portrait* to create this image, nor can I be certain as to what influences may have prompted her to execute the painting or apply paint in this manner. Certain details still remain unclear; for example, it is difficult to determine whether the subject's hair is partially covered under a dark brown kerchief, or whether her hair is closely cropped in a bob as was the fashion particularly amongst women artists and intellectuals in Paris in the 1920s. The hair may be long and the artist may have pulled it back into a bun of some sort that is not made visible in this rendering. What becomes clear, however, is that the work can sustain prolonged reflection and can be opened up to several avenues of discussion.

The canvas is one of the earliest known works painted in oil that is attributed to

Paraskeva Clark, and it is a small study where the artist has engaged in processes of self-reflection. MacLachlan's text attends to this work in the context of narrating Paraskeva Clark's early life in Russia.<sup>28</sup> The painting is discussed in relation to the artist's mentor Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin whom she began to study with at the Free Studios (*Svomas*) in Petrograd c.1920.<sup>29</sup> MacLachlan's text aims to contextualize Paraskeva Clark's artistic practice by placing the painting within a European tradition.

The Art Gallery of Ontario acquired the painting in 1979.<sup>30</sup> Prior to the AGO's transformation and the museum's reopening in the fall of 2008, Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) languished in the vaults in the basement. I relied on the black and white reproduction included in MacLachlan's retrospective catalogue since during the gallery's renovation it was difficult to arrange a viewing of the painting. Consequently, much time was spent contemplating the reproduction, and an encounter with the work was not made possible until I was able to visit the museum in the autumn of 2009.

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28. *Self-Portrait* (1925) does not figure in MacLachlan's curatorial essay until the end of the first chapter, for the author has chosen to frame her discussion following chronological events in the artist's life. The work is labelled as Fig. 6, and is not discussed at any length, nor is it described in detail. MacLachlan discusses the conditions of production of the work and situates it stylistically in comparison to Petrov-Vodkin's teachings. See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 14.

29. Paraskeva Clark commenced full time artistic training at the Svomas when the Art Academy reopened after the 1917 Revolutions as the Petrograd Free Studios in October, 1918. Prior to studying with Petrov-Vodkin, Paraskeva Clark studied with Vasily Shukhayev. The Free Studios were regulated by the new Bolshevik government under the auspices of the Department of Fine Art, a branch of the Commissariat for the People's Education (IZO). See Camilla Gray and Marian Burleigh-Motley, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1986).; Most literature regarding Paraskeva Clark mentions her three respective teachers, although the exact dates of study are only approximated in both Mary MacLachlan and Jane Lind's respective studies of the artist. When the artist began full time study at the Free Studios she worked with painter and set designer Vasily Shukhayev, and only transferred to Petrov-Vodkin's studio when Shukhayev emigrated to Paris. See Jane Lind, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark*, (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2009). pp. 27-28.

30. *Self-Portrait* (1925) was purchased with assistance from Wintario, which began in 1975 and was the first lottery game sanctioned by the province of Ontario. Game proceeds were dedicated through the Ministry of Culture and Recreation to promote cultural activities, among other things. Documentation regarding the provenance of Paraskeva Clark *Self-Portrait* (1925), grant application can be found in the E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario (John Boyle Fonds).

Paraskeva Clark's oil portrait of 1925 is not included in the galleries devoted to the exhibition of Canadian art. Installed in one of the rooms designated as the Tanenbaum Centre for European Art, *Self-Portrait* (1925) is included in the Frank P. Wood Gallery, which is organised thematically under the heading 'History and Her Story.' Paraskeva Clark's painting hangs beside James Tissot's *The Shop Girl* (c. 1883-1885) and a painting by Laura Knight, *Tights and Tarlatan*. Fellow Canadian artist Betty Goodwin's, *Vest* (1974) is installed nearby. The 'History and Her Story' installation also features works by noted painters Edgar Degas, Maurice Denis, George Agnew Reid, and Édouard Vuillard. The curators aimed to organise the works thematically instead of by period, nationality or style in order to 'explore the roles of model-muse-mistress and mother often ascribed to women in society and art.'<sup>31</sup> The curators have noted that women have progressed in the last two centuries from being simply passive subjects of representation to active producers of art. Thus they aim to highlight women's artistic agency by displaying 'images *of* women next to images *by* women'. While it is admirable that under the directive of 'transformation AGO' the curators, especially the then-director of exhibitions Catherine de Zegher who conceived the rehang, have endeavoured to break with convention and address gender issues, the curatorial thesis in this particular gallery is undermined, for as the interpretative panel states, the installation is also meant to demonstrate that 'women artists have often made art that embodies the values of empathy, inclusion and interdependency in human relationships' regrettably employing female stereotypes in their analysis. It is noteworthy, however, that the placement of Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) restores the artist's place within a European tradition of painting.

Therefore, to encounter Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) in the Art Gallery of

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31. Interpretative panel installed in the Frank P. Wood Gallery, Room 123, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Visited November 11, 2009.

Ontario (AGO) in Toronto, a viewer may read the work in the following way, first by descriptive reading: the painting depicts a close-up view of a head, with emphasis placed on the face which is turned in three-quarter profile. There is only a little indication of clothing and what might be a necklace in the lower right hand corner of the painting. The painting is signed and dated, 'Paraskeva Allegri 1925.' lower left. This is an example of a minimal reading of the painting. One might add that the facial features appear carefully worked over such that they constitute the focal point of the image here inscribed in paint. The viewer might continue to read the painting by considering any interpretative materials provided in the gallery space in addition to the other works that hang nearby. Depending on curatorial choices, there may be an extended label or the option of an audio guide, providing commentary or explanation. At this point, the act of reading is mediated, or to put it another way, the viewer is engaging in intertextual reading, however, not quite in the Barthesian sense for Barthes envisioned no privileged mediation on the part of critics, art historians, or curators.<sup>32</sup>

If the painting is encountered in a gallery setting, as described above, there is a discrepancy between the artist-name 'Paraskeva Clark' and the signed inscription 'Paraskeva Allegri'. Does this matter? In his controversial lecture 'What is an Author?' given at the Collège de France in 1969 that was subsequently published and proliferated in full in English in the late 1970s, Michel Foucault articulated a space of reading, which serves as a critique of Barthes and subsequent theorists who have held semiotic tendencies that privilege Text over other forms of artistic, interpretative or intellectual practice.<sup>33</sup> This critique allowed for

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32. Griselda Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh', (1996). p. 323.

33. Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), (pp. 101-120). Foucault made the following remarks in relation to the privileging of text: 'This usage of the notion of writing runs the risk of maintaining the author's privileges under the protection of writing's a priori status: it keeps alive, in the gray light of neutralization, the interplay of those representations that formed a particular image of the author. The author's disappearance, which, since Mallarmé, has been a constantly

historical analysis of discourses by examining the what was termed the 'author-name' and 'author function.' Foucault set the groundwork for exploration of the complexities that studies of authors in their historically contingent and institutional or institutionalizing frames enable. In response and opposition to Barthes, Foucault would not accept what he saw as the enigma or chimera of literary anonymity. The Author or author-function is identified as a major category of discourse that allows for historical analysis and study

[a]ccording to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each. The manner in which [discourses] are articulated according to social relationships can be more readily understood ... in the activity of the author-function and in its modifications than in the themes or concepts that discourses set in motion.<sup>34</sup>

While he was not interested in biography or specific authors and artists per se, or modes of criticism that rely on these elements either, Foucault does notes that, "The text always contains a certain number of signs referring to the author."<sup>35</sup> Foucault's thoughts in relation to author names as distinct from proper names, and his examination of author-functions in relation to discourses is applicable here in order to examine the extent to which Paraskeva Clark has functioned or might function as an author/artist in the institutionalised practices of art history, bearing in mind that it is 'the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning and [the] systems of dependencies.'<sup>36</sup> that are of interest.

Foucault's work also leaves open the possibility of deepening discursive art historical

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recurring event, is subject to a series of transcendental barriers. There seems to be an important dividing line between those who believe that they can still locate today's discontinuities (ruptures) in the historico-transcendental tradition of the nineteenth century, and those who try to free themselves once and for all from that tradition.' p. 105.

34. Ibid.. p. 117.

35. Ibid. p. 112.

36. Ibid. p. 118.

practices of writing and exhibition display. The concluding remarks of 'What is an Author?' if read positively, prove useful to the study of art production that occurred in a position that can be described as constitutive of 'a double margin' or minor:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking?<sup>37</sup>

In concluding the discussion with a refrain that refers back to the Samuel Beckett quote employed at the beginning: 'What does it matter who is speaking,' someone said, 'what does it matter who is speaking.'<sup>38</sup> Foucault signals that it does, in a sense, matter who is speaking, by indicating a critical obligation stating that one must examine contexts or discourses where author-names perform or subvert what has been termed by Foucault as the author-function. Therefore, who is telling stories, how those stories are being told, and furthermore how subjects are narrating themselves and under what conditions becomes significant. Moreover, Foucault instructs us to pose questions that are in opposition or in difference to those dominant or prevalent questions and modes of expression so that gaps can be exposed and sites of transgression explored. Indifference in the sense of lack of interest or attention to prescriptive methods in discourse or forces in culture more generally all of which are ideologically mandated or inscribed can therefore be useful, strategic, and instructive.<sup>39</sup>

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37. Ibid. p. 120.

38. The exact quote from Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*: 'Leave, I was going to say leave all that. What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking.' can be found in Samuel Beckett, 'Texts for Nothing', *Grove Centenary Edition* (New York: Grove, 2006), *IV: Poems, Short Fiction, Criticism* (295-339). p. 302, and slightly modified perhaps in translation in Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', (1984). p. 101.

39. I am aware of deconstructionist debates with regard to indifference in relation to marginality, but for the purposes of the current discussion I will be drawing from other scholars whose work attends to questions of difference. For a central text at the centre of this debate see Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*,

This type of indifference underscores both Barthes' and Foucault's arguments as each cautioned against investing too much authority in authors themselves or authoritative criticism. Foucault's own indifference to Barthes in 'What is an Author?' where he never explicitly refers to his colleague by name but rather through an elliptical exposition of quotations and invocations of both a nameless narrator and author-names such as Beckett, exposes a paradox that the term indifference, as used here, encapsulates. For Foucault, Barthes *is* of interest as an author operating in a discourse (literary criticism) in a historically specific set of contexts and conditions, by virtue of the statements he has made. The *énoncé* or statement is that which marks a change in discourse, according to Foucault, and as such is deemed important. Being indifferent carries the implication of being neither good nor bad, and it also signals critique, which as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us, functions as an acknowledgement of its usefulness when understood in the European philosophical tradition.<sup>40</sup> For Foucault, whose project attempts to create a certain amount of distance from that of the Enlightenment, critiques must be historicized.

Foucault himself wished to remain indifferent (or in a committed state of indifference) by trying to remain invisible in his work.<sup>41</sup> In his re-examination of modes of privileging the subject/author Foucault gestures toward an archeological-cum-genealogical analysis of a work, whereby one must recognise the limitations imposed by progressive 'systems of constraints'. In his concluding remarks that take up the theme of origins and an

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Translated, with additional notes, by Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), (1-28).

40. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's clarification of her use of the word in an interview given in 1994, where she said her use of the term, 'should not be seen as being critical in the colloquial, Anglo-American sense of being adversely inclined, but as a critique in the very strong European philosophical sense, that is to say, as an acknowledgement of its usefulness.' See *Feminism-Art-Theory*, (2001) p. 164.

41. In keeping with this aversion to valorization of authors, the introduction of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in French in 1969, concludes with Foucault articulating his wish to write 'in order to have no face.' See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (2002). p. 19.

originating subject, it is 'the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning and systems of dependencies' that must be analysed.<sup>42</sup> If it is desirable to remain committedly indifferent to certain elements when exploring questions of difference or marginality when writing art historical texts, how might a reading of *Self-Portrait* 1925 be written?

The signature 'Paraskeva Allegri' appears in this painting of 1925. It is but one marker or 'point of reference' of the artist whose work is made visible, first by the practitioner, and secondly through institutional and discursive frames. Specifically, the history of the AGO offers a structural example of a space governed by mechanisms that previously enabled the emergence of 'Paraskeva Clark' as a person engaged in making art, for her work was exhibited and purchased by the gallery throughout her working life in Toronto. To invoke Beckett's words once again: 'I was going to say leave all that. What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking?'

Feminist criticism has engaged with the practical and politicized problem succinctly posed by the question as to whether or not it makes sense to efface the author/artist if s/he had no discursive role to play in the first instance? Furthermore, there exists a large body of literature with respect to questions of authorship that has sprung out of criticism that has been inflected by the politics of feminism.<sup>43</sup> In the paradoxical spirit of indifference, it is important to bear our own relationship to discourse in mind, or as Joan Borsa has said, 'I cannot forget the different social location I occupy, and my relationship as reader and critical consumer of those texts.'<sup>44</sup> If we bear our own position as critical consumers of images and text in mind,

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42. Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', (1984). pp.117-118.

43. For example, see *Displacements*, (1991)

44. Joan Borsa, 'Frida Khalo: Marginalization and the Critical Female Subject (1990)', in *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968-2000*, ed. by Hilary Robinson. (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), (pp. 257-273). (257-258).



and proceed with the objective of exposing and examining gaps as they arise in discourse, how does one analyse the author/artist/work as an ideological product?<sup>45</sup> What can be evoked in a viewer in relation or response to the painted statement, which is signed 'Paraskeva Allegri' and has been labelled with an artist-name, 'Paraskeva Clark'?

*(b) A Matter of Indifference: the biograph*

'Parasekva Allegri' is a mark of the biograph. It tells us something of the artist who applied paint to canvas independently of the fact that a viewer registers that the representation is itself one of the artist, despite the fact that no materials that hint at self-representation are made visible on the canvas' surface. The use of the term biograph follows the work of Fred Orton and John Christie who used it to distinguish between a certain type of art historical writing (inflected by social history, Marxism, and materialist concerns) and monographical writing.<sup>46</sup> To examine the statement is to not remain entirely indifferent to the name here inscribed. The type of biograph that Christie and Orton argue for centres on a 'multitudinous individual' that is narratable in place of biography, where the art object as material must also be considered within a broader field that takes in to account the conditions of its making.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Foucault rightly points out in relation to written texts, works contain the marks of their authors.<sup>48</sup> These marks are precise, sometimes overtly personally specific, and ought to

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45. What kinds of readings of *Self-Portrait* (1925) are made possible when the painting is encountered in an institution that has re-shaped itself in the context of multiculturalism that has come to dominate Canadian society and rhetoric since the 1970s? The AGO, for example, underwent a transformation which was completed in 2008 and is now committed to making art accessible and celebrating difference in its exhibition spaces and education/outreach programmes.

46. J.R.R. Christie and Fred Orton, 'Writing on a Text of the Life', in *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, ed. by Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), (pp. 295-314). pp. 309-310.

47. Ibid.

48. Foucault offers an instructive reading in the opening chapter of *The Order of Things* of Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez painting *Las Meninas* (1656), which includes a self-portrait of the artist. Foucault's discussion of

be considered and understood not as universal; rather their condition of possibility is historically situated. In painting we have brush strokes, a particular handling of paint, and composition. It is important to at least feign indifference, as Foucault does, as *knowing* who the artist was will not expose a complete truth or origin. Moreover, pondering questions of meaning in the name of the omniscient author is not desirable for doing so results in an analysis that can be limited or closed down.

The producer of this painted self-portrait dated 1925 was born Paraskeva Avdyevna Plistik in St. Petersburg, Russia, on October 28, 1898. By the time she married Oreste Allegri Jr. in 1922, Paraskeva Plistik had been working as a scene painter at the Maly Theatre for at least a year, having been recruited by the theatre in conjunction with The New Economic Policy introduced by Vladimir I. Lenin in March, 1920.<sup>49</sup> Her new husband accidentally drowned in July of 1923, leaving 25-year-old Paraskeva Allegri a widow with a four month old son. Shortly thereafter, the widowed scene painter managed to leave Russia in the autumn of 1923, and emigrated to Paris to live with the Allegri family in France. The Allegris were an artistic family of Italian extraction, running theatres in Paris, Moscow and Petrograd, and had ties to Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. *Self-Portrait* 1925 was, therefore, painted while Paraskeva Allegri was living and working in the Parisian suburb of Chatou.<sup>50</sup> Paraskeva Allegri continued

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the work pertains to power and the spaces of sovereignty, touching on themes of visibility and invisibility. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970). pp. 3-16.

49. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). pp. 9; 12-13; 48.

50. Paraskeva Allegri had difficulty arranging paperwork for her infant son, Benedict, as he was considered an Italian national born in Petrograd, whereas she was able to travel more freely from Russia to Europe as a Soviet national. Some additional personal details were gleaned in conversation with the artist Panya Clark Espinal, granddaughter of Paraskeva Clark (Toronto, October, 2009). cf. Ibid. pp.12-13; Although Paraskeva Clark did not cite August Renoir as an influence, it should be noted that the Impressionist painter was inspired by the scenery along the Seine in and around Chatou. Renoir's work was known in Russia. His paintings were collected by both eminent Russian collectors Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov who each avidly collected the work of contemporary French masters. Renoir's painting *In the Garden (Under the Arbour of the Moulin de la Galette)* (1876-1880) was part of Ivan Morozov's private collection in Moscow from 1907 until 1919 when it was

to live with her in-laws in Chatou until 1931 whereupon she emigrated again, this time to Canada. The discrepancy between 'Paraskeva Clark' now understood as producer of this canvas and the inscription 'Paraskeva Allegri' is significant for it suggests possible avenues for consideration that widen the scope of analysis. For instance: if all paintings involve process of production that necessarily involve a series of negotiations, whether between artist and patron or social and artistic conventions, what broader cultural influences might the artist have been responding to or drawn upon when applying paint to canvas?

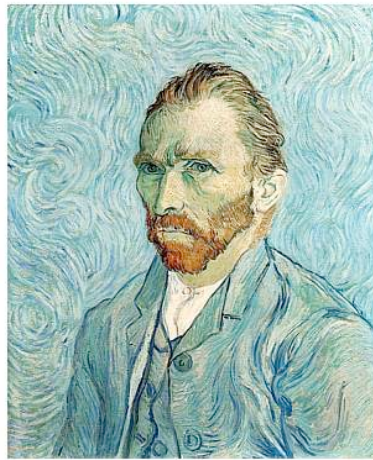


Figure 3.2: Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait, Saint-Rémy* (1899)

Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* appears to be a skilled and conventional painting that can be written about using entrenched modes of aesthetic analysis for it can be said that the canvas is intelligible as a portrait and with appeal to formalist methods, the work can be placed within canonical narrative structures. In its focus on the sitter's face turned in profile, the

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nationalized by decree and transferred to state museums. See Irina Tokareva and Galina Maximenko, *From Russia : French and Russian Master Paintings, 1870-1925, From Moscow and St Petersburg*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008), pp. 319. p. 74. *Le Déjeuner des Canotiers* (Luncheon of the Boating Party, 1881) was painted on the balcony of the restaurant La Maison Fournaise, and the canvas depicts Alphonsine Fournaise, her father Alphonse Fournaise, and the painter Gustave Caillebotte. For an interactive painting that lists all the people depicted in Renoir's canvas of 1881 see the Musée Fournaise website, Musée Fournaise, 'Musée Fournaise - City of Chatou - Renoir', Chatou <[http://www.musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/us/canotiers.asp?limage=http://www.musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/img/dejcanotiers\\_m.jpg](http://www.musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/us/canotiers.asp?limage=http://www.musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/img/dejcanotiers_m.jpg)> . In *Le Déjeuner des Canotiers* one can see the boats on the river and the bridge connecting the railway from Chatou to Gare St. Lazare in Paris. Renoir also painted Alphonsine Fournaise, and several landscapes in Chatou.

painting is reminiscent, for example, of Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait Saint-Rémy* (1889), a work which is owned by *Musée d'Orsay* in Paris. Whether or not Clark had knowledge of or saw Van Gogh's self-portrait is immaterial in so far as both paintings were produced in artistic contexts where certain stylistic conventions existed. Clark's self-portrait dated 1925 is painted in a sober style with careful attention focused on the facial features. Unlike Van Gogh's unique brushwork that is immediately discernible in the background of the canvas he painted in September of 1889, *Self-Portrait* 1925 belies a more uniform application of paint. There appears to be the greatest emphasis on the modelling of the artist's face, for one can see a variety in brushwork that is carefully applied so that light and shadow is captured. Light is cast, for example, on the subject's left cheek and bridge of the nose. Assuming that she was employing more traditional working methods, painting using a mirror, the representation shows that Paraskeva Clark's eyes are positioned to reflect the artist scrutinizing herself. This commonality is shared with *Self-Portrait Saint-Rémy*, for Vincent Van Gogh's eyes are positioned as if glancing sideways. While this detail renders Clark's painting as one that potentially is comparable to Van Gogh's self-portraiture, and perhaps likewise opens itself up to readings regarding the life and psychological state of the artist, more pressing questions arise with regard to the processes of painting a portrait, particularly given that the artist was a woman, a young mother, and a person who did not consider herself an artist of any description at the time this painting was made.

Although this painting can be understood within established discourses as a self-portrait and be written about conventionally where formal qualities are discussed, the work leaves itself open to multiple readings for it is not wholly intelligible. There are advantages to remaining less than intelligible, however, as Judith Butler has argued in relation to recognition

and the role gender plays in categorical understandings of what comprises the 'human'.<sup>51</sup> Whereas Paraskeva Clark's painting of 1925 is intelligible in one sense, it is worth bearing in mind that portraiture of this kind was overlooked for specific ideological reasons. It is a common critical trope to reject the importance of portraiture when attending to art production that occurred at a time that is usually associated with the cultural and aesthetic period of technological modernization that accompanied the Industrial Revolution.<sup>52</sup> Given that Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) has not received attention beyond its position as an early work and as a marker of the artist's time in Europe prior to her migration to Toronto—a move which enabled her to pursue a process of becoming a Canadian Artist—this work too has been subject to devaluations, in part because portraiture was also dismissed to a degree in the context of Canadian modernism. Portraiture was more common amongst practitioners in Montreal, as opposed to Toronto, a milieu which remained dominated by landscape painting.

In attempting to unpick the complexities of portraiture generally, Shearer West states that 'portraits can be placed on a continuum between the specificity of likeness and the generality of type, showing specific and distinctive aspects of the sitter as well as the more generic qualities valued in the sitter's social milieu ... all portraits represent something about the body and face, on the one hand, and the soul, character, or virtues of the sitter, on the other.'<sup>53</sup> Although she does not discuss self-portraiture in her exposition, West offers useful remarks in relation to structures governing historical production of representational likenesses in order to rethink issues surrounding representation and artistic interpretation:

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51. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (2004). p. 3

52. Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). p. 187.

53. Ibid. p. 21.

The etymology of the term 'portraiture' indicates the genre's association with likeness and mimesis. Portraiture expresses the likeness of a particular individual, but that likeness is conceived to be a copy or duplication of his or her external features. ... However, likeness is not a stable concept. What might be considered a 'faithful' reproduction of features relates to aesthetic conventions and social expectations of a particular time and place. Different approaches to likeness can also be taken by artists working within the same context and conditions.<sup>54</sup>

Artists working in a modernist style, notably artists who considered their practices as contributing to an avant-garde, often rejected mimetic strategies for their association with an aesthetic viewed as belonging to the Classical Age.<sup>55</sup> The mimetic associations appear to be unassimilable to avant-garde projects and the quasi hegemonic aesthetic order that resulted from the creative freedoms sought by artists invested in these movements. How then, might we reconcile or situate Paraskeva Clark's portrait of 1925 within the broader discourses that enabled a multitude of art practices in Europe to become visible?

In Russia, portraiture figured in a variety of ways in the development of modern art as one would imagine would be the case in a period of at least sixty years. The dates marking the beginning of this development are not dissimilar to parallel antecedents for a modern aesthetic found in art that evolved in Western Europe, notably France c.1860. Camilla Gray has positioned her study between two axioms that she sets out by way of well-known statements that capture, as a manifesto might, a consistent trope that was developed: the idea

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54. Ibid. pp. 21-22.

55. Jacques Rancière notes that what he terms the poetic or representative regime of the arts, is a governing regime that designates the substance of art as relating closely to *poiēsis/mimēsis*: 'The mimetic principle is not at its core a normative principle stating that art must make copies resembling their models. It is first of all a pragmatic principle that isolates, within the general domain of the arts ... certain particular forms of art that produce specific entities called imitations. These imitations are extricated, at one and the same time, from the ordinary control of artistic products by their use and from the legislative reign of truth over discourse and images.' See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Translated by Gabriel Rockhill. (London: continuum, 2004). pp. 21, 91. Shearer West also notes that, 'Artists who saw themselves as part of the avant-garde declared their rejection of portraiture's associations with the representational traditions of the past.' Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (2004). p. 187

of a renewal of art as a socially active force. This idea appears to have been brought to a vociferous crux by artists now recognised as *the* Russian avant-garde: the Constructivists of the 1920s.<sup>56</sup> A rejection of portraiture as too intrinsically formal and mimetic for modernism existed in Russia. Notably, Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), shifted his register from influential art theorist in Germany to attend to cultural development in Russia.

By 1918 Kandinsky was vocal in advising the Department of Fine Art (IZO) set up by Soviets under the Commissariat for People's Education. As a member of the IZO Kollegia, and the Museum Kollegia that was directed by Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956) Kandinsky had enough purchase to influence what works were to be selected and exhibited in accordance with ideas about aesthetics that were deemed to be proletarian. The famed Institute of Artistic Culture —known as INKhUK—was initially designed by Kandinsky, although his pedagogical philosophy was later modified.<sup>57</sup> Mimetic painting was considered a less significant mode of expression in the established hierarchies of art and Kandinsky, like other modernist artists working elsewhere in Europe who increasingly adhered to an ethos of total abstraction, or 'non-objectivity' dismissed the activity of painting portraits and self-portraits.<sup>58</sup> Although

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56. Grey cites the following in the introductory remarks that opened the original edition: 'Reality is superior to its imitation in art' — wrote Chernishevsky, the aesthetic propagandist of the 1860s in Russia. 'Let us tear ourselves away from our speculative activity [easel painting] and find a way to real work!' — was the cry of the Constructivists in the 1920s.' Camilla Gray and Marian Burleigh-Motley, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, (1986). p. 280. Several studies have attempted to define the phenomena of cultural vanguardism in the early modern period. Renato Poggioli and Peter Bürger's work continue to be sources that are relied upon for newer scholarship in the area. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Michael Shaw. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). and Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1968).

57. Camilla Gray and Marian Burleigh-Motley, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, (1986). pp. 228-234; 262: Kandinsky's INKhUK programme 'embraced Suprematism, Tatlin's 'Culture of materials' as well as Kandinsky's own theories. It was an attempt to systematise these various experiences into a pedagogical method. ... [Kandinsky's INKhUK programme] was divided into two parts: the 'Theory of separate branches of art' and 'Combination of separate arts to create a monumental art'.

58. Shearer West cites Kandinsky as an example of an artist who held similar views to noted British art critic Clive Bell. It is noteworthy that Walter Abell stakes out his position in direct opposition to Bell's formalist position exemplified in what is known as 'significant form'. West writes: 'A disparagement of portraiture was entrenched in much modernist critical theory. For example, ... Clive Bell coined the phrase 'aesthetic emotion', which he defined as a feeling that was stimulated by what he called 'significant form'. Significant form was the

influential, Kandinsky's ideas were not autocratic.

Paraskeva Plistik received her formative education and training as an artist in the *Svomas* or Free Studios that were established in 1917 following the October Bolshevik Revolution. It was there that Paraskeva Clark was able to pursue full time artistic study, and received a stipend to do so. The structure of the Studios had been radically revised such that the artist was able to choose her mentor, and thus she studied with a member of the Russian symbolist 'Blue Rose' group, Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin, an influential professor in Petrograd — as St. Petersburg was renamed— whose work and instruction informed the first generation of Soviet painters.<sup>59</sup> Petrov-Vodkin studied in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Munich and Paris, and was associated with the 'World of Art' movement that emerged in the early 1890s, which came to stand for the *avant-garde* in Russia at this time. The artists associated with this movement published a magazine of the same name and as a movement they are comparable to the French Nabi. They have also been understood as paralleling not only to the symbolists but also 'the English and European 'Art Nouveau' movements, and constituted the *avant-garde* through the early years of the twentieth century, and their work was not restricted to painting alone for the magazine had a broader scope that included theatre and ballet.<sup>60</sup>

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basis of Bell's formalist theory, and he saw it as the defining characteristic of art.

Although he did not reject representational art entirely, subject matter was irrelevant to him. Because portraiture was felt to be dominated by the likeness of the subject rather than purely formal qualities, Bell conceived of portraits as alien to his definition of 'significant form':

Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations ... belong to this class [of descriptive painting] ... According to my hypothesis they are not works of art. They leave untouched our aesthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or conveyed by their forms that affect us. - Clive Bell

See Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (2004). pp. 187-188.

59. Camilla Gray and Marian Burleigh-Motley, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, (1986). pp. 89-91. Formal art instruction was re-conceived as part of the Academy of Sciences in 1922 according to a programme developed by Vassily Kandinsky under the rubric of the Soviet regime.



As Mary MacLachlan has noted in her study of Paraskeva Clark's life and work, it is significant that in the years prior to her study with him, Petrov-Vodkin painted and drew several self portraits. *Self-Portrait* (1925) signed Paraskeva Allegri is indebted to the instruction she received in Russia prior to her own 'French period' such as it was. While Petrov-Vodkin exhibited with Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962) and Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964) —both prominent Russian modernist painters recognised for, among other artistic achievements, their contributions to the World of Art collective— he did not affiliate solely with any movement or style. Petrov-Vodkin may be viewed as pivotal figure in the development of Russian modernism, as his work offers a marker of a painterly practice that is situated somewhere between a tradition of Russian realist painting, and art making that was shaped by the influence of developments of European painting. Described as a humanist painter, and a practitioner that was concerned with the cerebral and imaginary elements of representation above depicting objects as they were found in nature, Petrov-Vodkin has been understood as a painter who valued the idea of transmitting abstract ideas in a way that was recognisable, if not wholly evident or easily understandable.<sup>61</sup>

Although early in his career he was affiliated with the World of Art society, who stood for the artistic *avant-garde* in the 1890s through until the early years of the twentieth century, Petrov-Vodkin's preoccupation with the 'problem of the real' placed him at odds with

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60. Ibid. pp. 37-92.

61. Petrov-Vodkin's early works can be divided into two categories: fact and fantasy, a duality that the artist was critical of, although such divisions in style were typical of the intelligentsia at this time. The painter took to exploring fantasy and the imaginary in *A Dream* (1910), which created controversy between two artistic groups, the more conservative Academicians and those who followed Alexandre Benois, one of the founders of the 'World of Art' society. As with *A Dream*, *Boys Playing* (1911), does not emphasize naturalism, nor was Petrov-Vodkin concerned with capturing light effects or perspective on canvas. He rejected the idea of painting as 'windows on the world,' and consciously re-thought representational principles that had prevailed since the Renaissance. Consequently, his compositions do not conform to the laws of three-dimensional space. For a discussion of Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's career and paintings see Lev Mochalov, *Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin*. exh. cat. Translated by Anna Jacobson and Richard Doran ed. by (Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad: 1980).

the technical concerns of his contemporaries, who constituted the avant-garde. The Rayonism of Mikhail Larionov or Suprematism as practised by Kasimir Malevich offer examples of work that serve as antithetical to Petrov-Vodkin's own production. Paraskeva Clark often referred to Cézanne as an important antecedent in painting that she admired, and historians of Canadian art have speculated the extent to which the artist would have encountered his work while she was a student in Petrograd.<sup>62</sup> Thus by the time Paraskeva Plistik studied with him in Petrograd, Petrov-Vodkin was, however, not a revolutionary practitioner, although he was one who was knowledgeable of the trends in modern European, particularly French and German, painting, and he developed influential theories in relation to artistic making.<sup>63</sup>

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62. Both Mary MacLachlan and Charles Hill imply that Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin was influenced by Cézanne's approach to form in order to position Paraskeva Clark within the development of modernist traditions of painting, however Russian scholars of art note that the painter's writings on art distinguish him from and place him in opposition to Cézanne and Cézannism in Russia. This line of argument could be indicative of a conscious move to position Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin as a unique painter, and one who fits the artist/genius model characteristic of traditional writing on art. For an example illustrating this approach, see *Ibid.* pp. 4, 12-13, 16. Petrov-Vodkin's paintings may be historically situated alongside those painters whose works were classed as 'Post-Impressionist' and constituted Cézannism in Russia, although the debt to *The Wanderers* and the interest in folk iconography and symbolism distinguishes his painting from theirs. Some of his paintings, for example *Boys Playing* (1911) may be linked to Henri Matisse, whose work was supported by Russian patron of arts Sergei Shchukin (1854-1936). Shchukin also avidly collected paintings by Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin, among others. Matisse painted *The Dance* (1910) specifically for Shchukin, and this painting can be compared to Petrov-Vodkin's *Boys Playing* (1911). For introductory remarks and primary sources discussing Cézannism in the Russian context see *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art*, (2009) pp. 168, 234-5.

Paul Cézanne's independent production of self-portraits is relevant to this discussion, for these works offer an important reference point in the histories of modern art. The artist's self-portraits have influenced artists interested in engaging in self-reflection in constructing their own self-image. Cézanne's contribution to the historical development of modern art is generally considered pivotal for the artist's analytic approach reshaped the visual plane of painted representation. Steven Platzman's work on the artist's practice of self-representation identifies Cézanne's self-portraits as a neglected area of study, a claim which underscores Shearer West's view that as a consequence of both artists and critics, portraiture has fallen outside the realm of mainstream modernist art production. Paul Cézanne, *self-portrait* (1879-1882) offers a potential comparative example for Paraskeva Clark, *Self-Portrait* (1925). See Steven Platzman, *Cézanne: The Self-Portraits*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

63. These theories were later published in the form of autobiographical literature, however one may assume that Petrov-Vodkin developed and articulated his concepts while working and giving instruction in his studio in Petrograd. His notebooks are now held at the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. His ideas on what became known as 'spherical perspective', and thoughts in relation to the handling of 'the subject' in painting were later elaborated in his book *Euclidean Space* (exact date of publication unknown). Lev Mochalov, *Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin*, (1980).



Figure 3.3: Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, *Self-Portrait* (1918)

Petrov-Vodkin aspired to a painterly style that was in essence a synthesis of imagination and observation. Paraskeva Clark recalled that as students working in his studios in Petrograd, she and her colleagues focused on painting the human head using basic geometric shapes, in combination with particular emphasis on the use of colour.<sup>64</sup> Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's *Self-Portrait* (1918) offers an instructive point of comparison to the painting Paraskeva Allegri produced while living in Chatou. In this oil on canvas, Petrov-Vodkin's pose is similar to that chosen by Paraskeva Allegri, and both painters have carefully examined their own facial attributes. The canvas that Paraskeva Allegri produced in 1925 employs a different colour scheme, and the background surface of the canvas appears to be created through an even application of paint in contrast to Petrov-Vodkin who has broken up the space in a fashion not dissimilar to cubist or futurist's fragmentation of objects. The positioning of Paraskeva Allegri's head is slightly different for a viewer has the impression that the creator of this

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64. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 12 Clark recalled that they were instructed to paint using primary colours, or to create an image using simply one colour. This is no doubt a reflection of Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's own ideas relating to colour theory, and the artist's preference for painting in monochrome or favouring primary colour schemes is evidence in his paintings from 1910 onwards.

painting was gazing down at her image reflected in a mirror, possibly placed on a table or work surface. Both artists have chosen realistic flesh tones to render their respective likenesses, yet the attention to the background may attempt to signify the artist's inner psychological state. My aim here is not to echo writers like Jane Lind who read the sombre tones of *Self-Portrait* (1925) as evidence of the pain that the widow and single-mother Paraskeva Allegrì must surely have experienced while living in Chatou. I raise this point in light of Petrov-Vodkin's ideas concerning representation, the imaginary and the importance of translating the 'model's spiritual essence.'<sup>65</sup>

Given the milieu that she was working in prior to the completion of this canvas it is significant to examine the work for traces of aesthetic markers, compositional elements which might shed light on the conditions of production. An engaged analysis of the work might bring the subject/artist into greater focus, particularly bearing in mind West's formulation regarding portraiture as a continuum between specificity and generality that is inherently linked to the social. Considered alongside Christie and Orton's idea that we live biographically or more specifically that we live pluri-biographically, the possibility arises for '[a] ... detailed causal account of the production of the text as specific to a particular kind of person in a particularised social, ideological formation at a particular time, and any genuine analysis of how and why texts get produced as effects of impersonal and personal historical agencies.'<sup>66</sup>

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65. This point is raised with reference (source unspecified) to Petrov-Vodkin's writings in a discussion relating to the painter's *Portrait of Anna Akhmatova* (1922). Anna Akhmatova was a Russian poet who lived and worked in both St. Petersburg and Paris, and had a reputation for being melancholic in temperament. See Lev Mochalov, *Кухня Петров-Водкина*, (1980). p. 16 and for information regarding Anna Akhmatova and a portrait painted of her by fellow Russian artist Nathan Altman see Vladimir Kruglov 'Nathan Altman: Portrait of Anna Akhmatov' in Ann Dumas and Sir Norman Rosenthal et. al, *From Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings 1870-1925*. ed. by Ann Dumas and Sir Norman Rosenthal et. al (Royal Academy of Arts, London: 2008). p. 262; Biographer Jane Lind makes a few brief remarks in relation to Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925), interpreting the canvas as an expression of the 'pain and sadness' of the artist, which captures a sense of loss. Lind writes that the artist here portrays herself as a 'broad faced peasant, who, in the Russian manner, endured stoically the hardships life brought her.' Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). pp. 29-30.

This accords with Marx and Engels' remarks on artistic talent in *The German Ideology* (1845-6).<sup>67</sup> Here it is understood that the relations of production and consumption is what enables the artist. In their observations on Raphael, Marx and Engels observe that the identity of the artist is generated out of historical circumstances. It is the division of labour that allows for the formation of the identity of the artist and the production of the artwork.<sup>68</sup> Thus the biography of the artist in relation to historically specific conditions of production is integral to understanding both the identity of the artist and the artwork produced.

We know something of the artist, Paraskeva Plistik [Allegrì] Clark who painted a self-portrait in 1925 while living in Chatou, France. Discursive statements can and have been produced in relation to this canvas, situating the work in relation to the artist's biography, and simultaneous remarks arise that resonate with aesthetic and stylistic conventions both in my text and in Mary MacLachlan's monograph. Having interviewed the artist extensively in preparation for her monographic exhibition, MacLachlan's assertions carry a certain weight. Of the portrait of 1925 MacLachlan had this to say:

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66. J.R.R. Christie and Fred Orton, 'Writing on a Text of the Life', (1996). pp. 309-310.

67. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The German Ideology*, ed. by C.J. Arthur, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970). pp.108-109.

68. Marx and Engels use the example of Raphael and the division of labour in Rome at the time his works were produced: 'If [Sancho] were to compare Raphael with Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, he would know how greatly Raphael's works of art depended on the flourishing of Rome at that time, which occurred under Florentine influence, while the works of Leonardo depended on the state of things in Florence, and the works of Titian, at a later period, depended on the totally different development of Venice. Raphael as much as any other artist was determined by the technical advances in art made before him, by the organisation of society and the division of labour in his locality, and, finally, by the division of labour in all the countries with which his locality had intercourse. Whether an individual like Raphael succeeds in developing his talent depends wholly on demand, which in turn depends on the division of labour and the conditions of human culture resulting from it.' Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*. p. 108.

Only one oil painting survives from this French period and significantly it is the first in a series of self-portraits a theme she was to explore in greater depth over the next seventeen years. It was from her former teacher, Petrov-Vodkin, that she had learned what could be gained by study and analysis of one's own features and character. Paraskeva claimed she painted these few small pictures almost unconsciously, that is to say with no thought that they might be good or even admired. She painted simply because she always had, and in the Allegri family where everyone was an artist of some sort, her dabbings at the kitchen table in the evenings would have gone unnoticed.<sup>69</sup>

This narrative offers one frame, to employ a photographic and film metaphor, with regard the artist's practice of production: that she worked at the kitchen table in the evenings. The portrait itself offers no indication that the subject is a practising artist, for no materials related to a painting practice are pictured, nor are the conditions of production revealed in this particular oil painting. That Paraskeva Clark herself recounted working in stolen moments hints at the axes of gender and class that are the muted frame lines, not visible but present in *Self-Portrait* (1925).

Paraskeva Clark worked in France, not in the theatre business alongside her in-laws, but as the Allegri's housekeeper. According to the artist's statements, she insisted on working to earn her keep, and one might read the austerity of Clark's 1925 representation as indexical to relations of production and social roles inflected by gender and class positions. Because Paraskeva Clark had little time to work and produced very few pictures while in France, she could have painted this oil for practice and used herself as model for lack of any other sitter. This is a common motivation for artists to produce self-portraits.<sup>70</sup> It is, however, worth bearing in mind what information is known of the artist's class background for when

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69. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 14.

70. Borzello notes that both Rembrandt and Mary Beale produced self-portraits for practice, study and improvement, and often focused on their own images when other models were not available. See Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998). p. 26.

Paraskeva Clark recounted her time spent in France she clearly indicated that at this time she did not consider herself to be an Artist. The fact that she chose to paint herself should not be discounted for the artist could have equally chosen to paint a still-life or a landscape. One must therefore consider what self-reflexive processes might be involved in the creation of a work of this kind when examining the effects such a canvas can potentially produce.

Paraskeva Clark's *Self-Portrait* (1925) marks the beginning of a practice of self-representation that continued for the next twenty-two years.



Figure 3.4 Paraskeva Clark: *Self-Portrait* c. 1929-1930

Although *Self-Portrait* (1925) is the only surviving oil portrait of that period in the artist's life, a watercolour was inscribed to her future husband, Philip Clark and sent to Canada by the artist, where it remains in the family's collection. Paraskeva Clark's own view regarding issues of art practice and authorship/artistry are present in the watercolour *Self-Portrait* c.1929-1930. The painting is not signed or dated, but it is inscribed in a combination of

English and French although the script is primarily in French, for when Paraskeva Allegri met Philip Clark she was only beginning to learn and practise her English. The watercolour reads:

[c]e n'est pas a portrait of the artist done by "the artist" mais un petit croquis a peine touché avec couleur mais je veuz l'envoie — car il me ressemble pas mal ... Je suis si difficile a dessiner— autant qu'y photographier – mes traits sont tous a la limite entre beauté et laideur.<sup>71</sup>

The inscription raises questions with regard to its author's view of herself as practitioner, in addition to opening up lines of inquiry that relate to Clark's own ideas and understanding of notions of (self) portraiture as an aesthetic, personal or political exploration, for portraiture has been traditionally viewed as an inferior genre. Curator Marielle Aylen has considered this work in light of theories dealing with modes of consciousness. Working with concepts of Collective and Unique identity formation, Aylen interprets the words of the artist as a disavowal of this self-portrait for the watercolour did not fulfill Clark's artistic standards nor did it meet 'an ideal conception of self as a feminine subject.'<sup>72</sup> This analysis does not take into account the milieu in which it was produced, nor the context that the artist inscribed these words, for Paraskeva Allegri sent this image as a token to a potential suitor. Precisely because she was writing to a potential suitor Clark might have been especially conscious of how she 'held up' against ideals of feminine beauty. These self-representations narratively presented by means of image and script comprise the existing figurative works that date to the artist's time in France. Paraskeva Clark later spoke of painting works at that time, which link thematically to a trope: that of memory. Specifically, Clark began painting memories of her life in Russia.

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71. Paraskeva Clark, 'Self Portrait C.1929-1930', in *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings*, reprinted in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 51, now in collection of the artist's son and daughter-in-law, Clive and Mary Clark.

72. Marielle Aylen, *Making Faces: Canadian Portraiture Between the Wars*. exh. cat. ed. by (Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa: 1996). p. 12.



(c) *Memories of Leningrad*

Narrative memory is significant to Paraskeva Clark's practice, and significantly relates back to the biograph. The artist recalled painting from memory while she was living with the Allegris, however, no works survive from this period that suggest scenes from her formative years in Russia.<sup>73</sup> Paraskeva Clark's narrative includes the assertion that it was in Chatou where she began painting a double motif that would appear in several later works, that of mother and child. One of these works dated 1941, a watercolour alternately titled *Memories of Leningrad* and *Mother and Child* also suggests the conditions under which Clark worked while living in Chatou. In *Memories of Leningrad*, which is not designated as a self-representation, the artist depicts a woman seated at a table, cradling an infant. Her free hand supports her resting head and the figure's eyes are focused on an open book on the table; the room is illuminated by light from an oil lamp placed in front of the book. Artist's materials: a rolled up sheet of paper, another folio, and cup containing brushes or pencils is discernible in the middle-ground of the composition.

This work suggests two themes related to Paraskeva Clark's lived experience in France and/or Russia. Although the artist does not necessarily depict herself when taking up a common representational device, that of mother and child, the inclusion of the artist's materials may gesture towards a reading of the artist as mother. Interestingly, the artist painted an earlier version of this theme that also bears the title *Memories of Leningrad* (1923). This watercolour appears more sketch-like than the 1941 watercolour of the same name. This earlier, smaller painting, created using watercolour and pencil, depicts the same scene of

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73. Gail Singer and National Film Board of Canada., *Portrait of the Artist—As an Old Lady*, 1982 and Charles Hill and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist),' (18/10/1973)

mother cradling an infant while seated at the table immersed in reading by lamplight, but in this version the rolled up paper and artist's brushes are absent.<sup>74</sup> The scene appears more hastily sketched in with a more crude handling of paint, and the features of mother and child are suggested in the brushwork, but not as finely rendered in the later version, which in comparison appears more worked up as a painting. The woman represented in the 1941 watercolour is shown pursuing intellectual and artistic interests at the kitchen table while cradling an infant removed from its bassinet that is placed by the stove. Given one of the titles of the work, *Memories of Leningrad*, this painting could be read literally as the artist's memories of what she witnessed mothers doing: caring for infants, and reading by lamplight. The title of both works was likely given after-the-fact, particularly since the earlier version of this motif was painted in 1923 and the city of Petrograd was not renamed until 1924 following Lenin's death. According to biographer Jane Lind, the watercolour sketch was painted in 1923 in Riga, Latvia, where Paraskeva Allegri had to travel to obtain papers for her infant son to travel to France. Due to his father's nationality, Benedict Allegri was considered Italian, and the nearest consulate was in Riga. Lind notes that the preparations and the paperwork needed to leave for Paris took between two to three months, after which mother and child packed a few belongings, including the pencil and watercolour sketch, and left Petrograd.<sup>75</sup> Although Lind writes with purported authority, the conditions of production for the earlier painting, now catalogued as *Memories of Leningrad* (1923) remain ambiguous. The subject of both paintings could also relate to the the artist's own mother, Olga Fedorevna Plistik who had an artisan's

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74. The early painting, also referred to as *Memories of Leningrad* (1923) is in the private collection of Clive and Mary Clark. It is a watercolour on paper, with the inscription (added later, at the bottom of the painting) 'Paraskeva Clark to Anne,' and measures 16 x 16 cm. *Memories of Leningrad* (1941), watercolour on paper, 41.1 x 50.4 cm is held by the Winchester Galleries in Victoria, British Columbia. See Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). Plates 3 and 25.

75. Ibid. p. 40.

practice making cloth flowers in St. Petersburg.

Paraskeva Clark grew up in one of the factory districts of St. Petersburg, the eldest of three children, and her background was unequivocally working-class. In order to attempt to eschew the assumptions that 'working-class' often connotes, I draw attention to the brief remarks in Mary MacLachlan's exposition that attest to the cultured upbringing Paraskeva Clark in fact had. MacLachlan's research recounts that Olga Plistik formally apprenticed in the craft of artificial flower making, a folk art practice that was comparable to millinery. This opportunity was provided by a middle-class godmother, and helped the family supplement their income, which came from Paraskeva Clark's father, Avdey Plistik's factory job.<sup>76</sup> Avdey Plistik was literate and Paraskeva Clark recalled that he was an avid reader, buying Russian classics second hand as well as other books that filled the family's one room apartment. Thus, a picture of a self-educated household emerges from Paraskeva Clark's narrative as recounted by Mary MacLachlan's exhibition catalogue. Clark was the eldest child and it is conceivable that the mother and child drawn from memory re-constructs or re-envisions motherhood and artistry in St. Petersburg. *Memories of Leningrad* could represent the conditions of artistic and intellectual practice in Paraskeva Clark's imaginary, and the painting gestures towards a possible locus of inspiration based on the visual referents.

Conditions of possibility were not, however, favourable for Paraskeva Clark to pursue a life or career in the arts. With the extra income from Olga Plistik's flower-making, the family acquired a small grocery store in a tenement building where Avdey Plistik was also working as a caretaker. This enabled Avdey Plistik to leave his factory job and afforded the

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76. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 9 Here Clark recalled her trips to the countryside to visit Avdey Plistik's family. These trips were taken with her siblings, and the artist described her visits staying with her grandparents in their thatched wooden house and her experience of the Russian peasantry as constituting 'most beautiful memories of nature and woods and enormous wheat fields.'

family to send Paraskeva, their eldest child, to secondary school. While she did receive more than the basic primary education provided by factory proprietors, the educational prerequisites that middle-class children received from the gymnasiums remained inaccessible. She did, however, have an advantage over most girls of her class-background for this education allowed her to qualify for office work. Although Paraskeva Clark found clerical work in a shoe factory, she dreamed of something more:

I finished that [school] and by that time I really wanted to be an actress. I was absolutely crazy about the theatre and my parents by that time had a grocery store with hot dogs and what-not in the basement and very often I had to work there and help them. I remember sometimes I would swipe some money and the store was two or three blocks before the theatre, so I would get a taxi and I would go in a grand manner to the theatre. I lived in a romantic world as most kids do, particularly girls.<sup>77</sup>

After a failed attempt to enrol in in the state dramatic school and the loss of her mother to pneumonia, Paraskeva Clark began pursuing her interest in visual art, and began taking evening classes at the Petrograd Academy in 1916 on the advice of a colleague at the shoe factory. The historical events that would determine the course of the country during these early years of the First World War would have a lasting impact on the artist.

In addition to *Memories of Leningrad*, the theme of memory resurfaces in several works produced in the 1930s and 1940s and serve as visual referents to Paraskeva Plistik's childhood in St. Petersburg while also gesturing back to the formative artistic years of her young adult life in pre and post-revolutionary Russia. Paraskeva Clark was a self-described Russian 'red' who, once settled in Canada, was fond of insisting that she was born in Leningrad. In recorded interviews in her later years Clark refers to her native city under the name it held throughout most of her adult life, Leningrad.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, the census forms she filled out for the various

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77. Interview between Paraskeva Clark and Joan Murray, Director/Curator at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, 29, May, 1979 quoted in *Ibid.* p. 10.

78. See Gail Singer and National Film Board of Canada., *Portrait of the Artist—As an Old Lady*, 1982, Charles Hill

arts organisations she was affiliated with support this narrative. This statement is, however, historically inaccurate for Paraskeva Plistik Allegri never lived in 'Leningrad' for the city of her birth did not assume this commemorative name until 26 January, 1924 when it was renamed three days after the death of Lenin. It is tempting to interpret the utterances and the inscriptions made by the artist with regard to her place of birth as political gestures indicative of her political sympathies that might be described as Bolshevik.

In an interview with Charles Hill conducted in 1973 in preparation for the National Gallery of Canada's exhibition *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (1975) Paraskeva Clark reflected on her practice and specifically discussed work informed by memories of Leningrad.<sup>79</sup> Two additional motifs recur in these works: the public bathhouses, and street puppet theatre, are scenes drawn from memory and to a degree render the visual work elliptical for in effect the artist has added a layer of legibility that is only accessible if something of her biography is known.

What is noteworthy, also, are the written inscriptions Paraskeva Clark made on biographical questionnaires and census documents that are contained in various archives, and were collected by the numerous galleries and artists' societies with which Paraskeva Clark was affiliated. Clark answered the questions regarding the city of her birth and the city where she studied in a consistent fashion: by writing 'Petrograd' and then crossing this name out and substituting the city name of 'Leningrad'. This may seem a small or even insignificant detail, however, numerous forms covering a ten year period are filled out in this manner.

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and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist),' (18/10/1973) and Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982).

79. The exhibition was recently re-envisioned by the NGC as an online exhibition in 2008 and curatorial and educational materials are permanently available @cybermuseum. See Charles Hill, 'Canadian Painting in the 30s',

Documentation files of Paraskeva Clark's life lived in Canada covering the period of 1933-1982 confirm that in various correspondence including forms and grant applications, which supply biographical and contact details that were completed by the artist herself, Paraskeva Clark's place of birth is written as Leningrad in her own handwriting and one can see that 'Petrograd' has been crossed out by the artist. When required to submit information regarding where she studied, the artist repeated the gesture by replying 'In Leningrad' with Petrograd legibly crossed out.<sup>80</sup> Paraskeva Clark referred to the city of her birth by inscribing the name it held at the time when she acquired the skills that enabled her to pursue a life and career in the arts by answering the question initially, perhaps instinctively, by writing 'Petrograd'.

Although this name was crossed out in favour of Leningrad, the city the name held at the time when she filled out the forms, and the name it was know by until her death in 1986, 'Petrograd' remains visible and legible. This identification is also curious, and it raises the question: why did it not occur to Paraskeva Clark to list the actual name of the city of her birth, St. Petersburg, particularly considering that in the early 1930s in Anglophone Canada this name would have been as recognisable if not more comprehensible to administrators working at national and local arts organisations? Given that most national arts groups that Paraskeva Clark associated with were either based in Toronto or Ottawa, the English pronunciation of St. Petersburg is not dissimilar from the Russian.<sup>81</sup> The gesture of inscribing multiple names is of interest to the present discussion as it alludes to motifs of layering and legibility

Negotiating the artist's own narrativisation of her life and the discrepancy between St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad also raises methodological questions for the art historian.

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80. Paraskeva Clark 1898-1986 – Artist File National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

81. Sankt-Peterburg would be a transliteration of the Russian.

Mary MacLachlan is careful to refer to the city of Paraskeva Clark's birth according to the historically accurate name it held in a given context. In those instances where she chronicles the birthplace of the artist, MacLachlan is writing in deference to the pressures and limits of historical accuracy and scholarly practice and consequently is indifferent to Paraskeva Clark's own utterances. As I have similarly stated, Paraskeva Clark was born in 1898 in St. Petersburg, even though in both written and spoken form the artist/subject clearly affirms the city of her birth by deliberately and repeatedly referring to it as Leningrad. MacLachlan is conversely working within a framework where her project is one of recovery, not only of an artist who was a woman, but also her 1982 exhibition aimed to reposition a significant *Canadian* artist who was actively shaping a nascent modernist aesthetic in an adopted country. For as the artist herself acknowledged it was Canada that enabled her to become an artist.

It was and is not uncommon for Canadian artists to train abroad; Clark's case was different, however, in so far as she did not set out to train as an artist any more than she intended to settle in Canada. Her habitual way of narrating the events of her life for authorities in the depression years in Canada offers a curious material trace for the researcher in the archive. The repeated crossing out of 'Petrograd' is an odd, interesting and noteworthy choice on the part of the artist given the complexities involved in answering a seemingly simple question. The question for Paraskeva Clark was not simple, however, for it was complicated by her lived experience in Russia during a time of tremendous social and political upheaval.

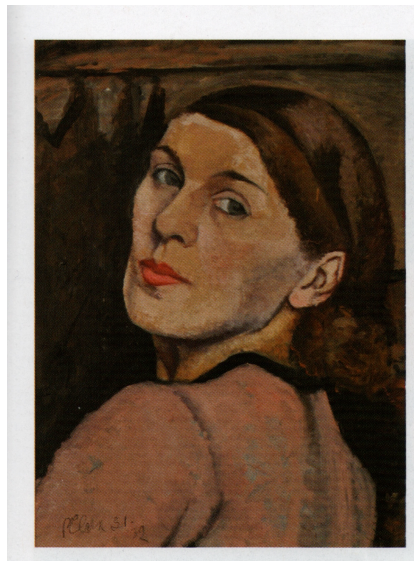
One might infer that in writing 'Leningrad' Paraskeva Clark was merely correcting herself and using the current name of the city at the time she completed the form, which was Leningrad, although having left Russia in 1923 when the city was still referred to as Petrograd one might also say that Paraskeva Clark was indifferent to historical accuracy. It is tempting to suggest that the artist was consciously employing the city name Leningrad to underscore her

own personal and political ties to that specific city and its cultural and ideological connotations. Yet, memories of, and gratitude for Petrograd remained.

### **From Avant-Garde to Arrière-Garde**

After settling in Toronto in the summer of 1931, Paraskeva Clark embarked on a process of becoming an artist. *Self Portrait* (1931-32) [Fig. 3.5] marks a third painting where the artist has engaged in self-reflection by painting herself as subject. This oil on canvas marks the second painting Clark completed after arriving in Canada, the first being a still life entitled *Fruit* (1931). *Self Portrait* (1931-32) was one of the first paintings Paraskeva Clark ever exhibited. It was included in the annual exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy held at the Art Gallery

Figure 3.5 Paraskeva Clark: *Self-Portrait* (1931-32)



of Toronto (now the AGO), thus the small oil on cardboard painting marks a beginning of her career as an artist. She later inscribed the following on the back:

Painted in winter of 1931-32/ Toronto — invited by Many [sic] Hahn to Exhibit in Academy/ was accepted by jury and thus it became a 'foot/in the door' into the Temple of Canadian Art.<sup>82</sup>

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82. Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). p. 87 Many Hahn refers to Emmanuel Hahn, German-born Canadian sculptor.



Her disappointment with Canadian artists, particularly English Canadian artists based in her newly adopted home of Toronto, is a known fact and part of the narrative surrounding Paraskeva Clark. Although she remained critical of the artists with whom she associated, she was grateful for the opportunities afforded to her by her adopted country. 'I have been lucky, really and truly, for a woman painter and for a housewife. I had much more, really, than all big shots here.' remarked Paraskeva Clark in 1973 when asked to share her recollections with regard to her painting practice from the 1930s.<sup>83</sup> One notes the modesty with which Paraskeva Clark speaks in relation to her success as a practising artist, for she self-identifies as a woman painter and a housewife, drawing attention to the conditions of her artmaking. It is equally noteworthy that Clark's comments elsewhere in this interview with curator Charles Hill reveal a deep reverence for European traditions. The work of Cézanne and Picasso in particular are praised, as are any trace of their influences in the work of her Canadian contemporaries.

In a sense, Paraskeva Clark sustained a practice of self-examination that functioned independently of a painting practice that evolved in Canada once she began to integrate into the art world where she participated in artists' societies, exhibiting and selling work. Clark also produced a number of landscape paintings, conforming to the sensibilities of her colleagues. She remarked that in order to sell, one had to produce such pictures. It is important to understand that Paraskeva Clark was caught between a deep respect for European modernist painting and a profound disappointment verging on disdain for Canadian modernist art with its nationalist agenda that was centred around landscape painting. That she sustained a

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83. Charles Hill and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist),' (18/10/1973) p. 8; See Ibid pp. 3-4, 19, 31, 35 for the artist's comments with regard to Paul Cézanne or Pablo Picasso, and pp. 7, 9-11, 20, 28, 40-41 for comments pertaining to Clark's understanding of European influences in relation to Canadian painting in the 1930s.

practice of self-representation must be viewed in this context, and consideration ought to be given to the fact that she did not simply conform and begin to work in a style that was more attuned to the Canadian modernist painting tradition.

Modern painting in Canada is thought to have come to fruition in the decade prior to Paraskeva Clark's arrival in the country. The 1920s were dominated by the success of the then Toronto-based Group of Seven. As an artistic collective, the members of the Group were the embodiment of the nationalist cause. Their mythic status as purveyors of Canada's self-image as one that is deeply tied to the land persists in the Canadian cultural imaginary and attests to the influence their paintings and ideas have had. The Group formed out of the offices of the Grip Limited, a design firm in Toronto, where J.E.H. MacDonald (1873-1932), Tom Thomson (1877-1917), Frank Carmichael (1890-1945), Frank Johnston (1888-1949), Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) and Fred Varley all worked as commercial artists.

The artists at Grip Ltd. were drawn to the ideas of an indigenous aesthetic that Lawren Harris and MacDonald, who had abandoned commercial art practice to take up painting full-time, hoped to develop. Regular discussions took place at the Arts and Letters Club regarding the state of painting in Canada. Together these men later embarked on regular sketching trips into Northern Ontario in an effort to connect with the landscape of the 'mystic north'. The artists who formed the Group of Seven were able to embark on their ambitious project of fostering and promoting a distinctly Canadian aesthetic with the support of patron Dr. James MacCallum who aided them financially and created the Studio Building of Canadian Art.<sup>84</sup> Although their collaboration commenced in 1914, The Group of Seven officially formed in 1920, after Lismer, Jackson, Johnston, and Varley returned from Europe where they

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84. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973). pp. 139-144.

had served as war artists.

The canvases shown at the first Group of Seven exhibition marked a radical shift away from the sombre, Dutch inspired paintings that had dominated the Canadian art world prior to the 1920s. Lawren Harris clearly and emphatically stated the aims of the group at their first Group exhibition. In addition, he derided and challenged the 'so-called Art lovers', those well-to-do Canadians who 'collected like cigarette cards' the sombre pastoral scenes that were in fashion. Harris wrote in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied their inaugural exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in May, 1920:

An Art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people. ... [Our painting] sincerely interprets the spirit of a nation's growth. ... [We challenge] so-called Art lovers who refuse to recognize anything that does not come up to the commercialized, imported standard of the picture sale room. ... [We urge Canadians to] accept the production of artists native to the land whose work is more distinctive, original and vital, and of greater value to the country.<sup>85</sup>

Canadians rose to the challenge set them by these painters, for no artists since have captured the public's imagination so completely. For the Group of Seven appeared to articulate an understanding of the essence of Canadian nationality.

It is somewhat of a myth to contend that the transformation that the Group of Seven spurred on was in direct opposition the intellectual and artistic developments that were occurring in Europe. Many Canadian artists trained abroad, especially in the art academies in France and England, even though it was common to also make use of the educational frameworks in place in the art schools and studios in Montreal and Toronto. Furthermore, the Group's now iconic style and treatment of the northern landscape was inspired by an exhibition of contemporary Scandinavian painting that Harris and MacDonald had seen in

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85. Excerpts from Lawren S. Harris' catalogue text quoted in John Herd with Allen Seager Thompson, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985). p. 162.

Buffalo in January, 1913.<sup>86</sup> The rhetoric of cultural nationalism combined with the heavily design oriented elements in Canadian painting of the 1920s and early 1930s prompted a trend described as 'artistic isolationism,' which was premised on the insistence that artists preserve and develop a set of Canadian social or cultural values that would ensure a distinctive character especially in comparison to the United States. Thus, artists focused their attention

Figure 3.6: Frederick H. Varley, *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (1921)



on local developments within insular communities in an effort to minimize being influenced by how non-Canadians made art. As curator Christine Boyanoski has noted, "This tendency probably began with the Group of Seven whose promotion of a distinctly Canadian art meant "artistic isolationism," which obfuscated their origins in the Post-Impressionism of Cézanne, Van Gogh, certain Scandinavians, and the London-based Camden Town Group."<sup>87</sup>

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86. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (1988). p. 141. Reid notes, "There was a shock of recognition in the terrain of northern Europe, so similar to Canada, and there was elation in the direct expression of the exhilarating clarity and expansiveness of the lonely North. The paintings seemed to the two Torontonians, as MacDonald remembered, 'true souvenirs of that mystic north around which we all revolve.' Reid also documents the influence that this exhibition had on other members of the group, notably A.Y. Jackson. Although Jackson did not see the Scandinavian work himself, the account of the work provided by Harris and MacDonald proved important and Reid has written of the use of pure colour in the canvas *Terre Sauvage* (1913) was a direct result of the enthusiastic reports of the Scandinavian exhibition. (p. 144)

87. Christine Boyanoski Christine Boyanoski, *Permeable Border : Art of Canada and the United States 1920-1940*, (1989),p.2. See also Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart,

Within the new post-war pan-American context, the need for a distinct national identity was fulfilled in the visual arts by the work of the Group of Seven and its successor, the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP), of which Paraskeva Clark became an active member. A promoter of 'amateurism' as an ideal mode of art-making, art critic Fred Housser ensured the amateur movement—that promoted an essential idea that art relate above all else to 'human consciousness' rather than professionalism—would be included in the CGP.<sup>88</sup> In his promotion of amateur practice, Housser also echoed the artistic isolationism sentiment in expressing the belief that Cézanne's influence 'shackled' contemporary painting. Housser was a strong advocate of the importance of developing an indigenous aesthetic, as evidence in his writing of 1926:

Our British and European connection in fact, so far as creative expression in Canada is concerned, has been a millstone about our neck ... For Canada to find a true racial expression of herself through art, a complete break with European traditions was necessary ... The modern European schools have been largely influenced by Cézanne. The modern Canadian so-called school was inspired as the result of a direct contact with Nature herself.<sup>89</sup>

The landscape imagery of the Group of Seven and the aesthetic ideal that was premised on 'direct contact with Nature' appears to account for the ambivalent sub-genre status accorded to portraiture. Canadian artists were indeed slower than European and American counterparts to take up portraiture as an aesthetic exploration. Canadian artists did respond to their

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1986). pp. 120-121.

88. Amateurism was promoted through an experiment in art education developed in Toronto in the mid to late 1920s at the Art Students' League. Founded in 1926 and inspired by the principles of the famous New York School of the same name, the school was administered by students and was run as a 'free school' that promoted the relation of art to life: 'the essential idea of Art [is] a quality of human consciousness, rather than professionalism, or commercialism.' Field sketching trips and studio visits that fostered a familiarity with the work of prominent Canadian artists was at the core of the educational programme at the Arts Student's League. See Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (1988). p. 181.

89. Fred Housser quoted in Christine Boyanoski, *Permeable Border: Art of Canada and the United States 1920-1940*, (1989). p. 3.

environment by engaging in portraiture and self-representation in an effort to articulate a variety of concerns, nevertheless, that Paraskeva Clark chose to work seriously as a portrait painter in a style that resonated with her European training and modernist sensibilities, and that she also regularly produced self-portraits defined her career as that of a minor artist.<sup>90</sup>

In Montreal, however, a group of artists known as the Beaver Hall Group weighed in on the debate surrounding traditionalists and modernists, yet circumvented the issue of the status of portraiture. Artists affiliated with the Beaver Hall Group were trained in local art schools and followed a French tradition that focused on figure work rather than landscape. Thus, the preoccupation of these painters was inherently different from the nationalist aims of their Toronto colleagues, and as Charles Hill has noted, '[W]hile Montreal boasted several excellent landscape artists, observant art reviewers in the early thirties remarked upon the development of an independent school of artists primarily concerned with painting the human form.<sup>91</sup> Of the works produced by the ten women who became known as the Beaver Hall women, many were portraits.<sup>92</sup> At the time of the formation of the Beaver Hall Group in 1920, the artists who shared studio space in Beaver Hall square in Montreal were in frequent

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90. Marielle Aylen, *Making Faces*, (1996).

91. Charles Hill, 'Canadian Painting in the 30s', p. 38.

92. Not a 'group' in the sense that art historians typically tend to use the term, the ten women met while at art school, and came together in Montreal in the 1920s to form a network that allowed them to exchange ideas. These artists who were women are now recognised as the Beaver Hall Group, but as Barbara Meadowcroft notes in her book devoted to the women of Beaver Hall, *Painting Friends: The Beaver Hall Women Painters*, only five out of the ten belonged to the Beaver Hall Group, a society of artists that included members of both sexes. There are ten women who participated in the community of painters: Nora Collyer (1898-1979), Emily Coonan (1885-1971), Prudence Heward (1896-1947), Mabel Lockerby (1882-1976), Mabel May (1877-1971), Kathleen Morris (1893-1986), Liliás Torrence Newton (1896-1980), Sarah Robertson (1891-1948), Anne Savage (1896-1971), and Ethel Seath (1879-1963). See Barbara Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, (1999). p. 13 For a discussion of Prudence Heward, Emily Coonan, Mabel May, and their role in shaping the tradition of women's artistic practice in Canada see A.K. Prakash, *Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists*, (Toronto: Firefly Books, 2008). pp. 80-103. The volume also includes brief illustrated entries as well as biographical information on other members of the Beaver Hall network Ethel Seath, Mabel Lockerby, Sarah Robertson, Anne Savage, and Liliás Torrence Newton in addition to Paraskeva Clark.

contact with A.Y. Jackson who had proclaimed that their goals were similar to those of the Group of Seven. Through his close contact with the artists of Beaver Hall, in particular the landscape painters Anne Savage (1896-1971) and Sarah Robertson (1891-1948), Jackson supported exchange between the two artistic communities and ensured that their work was included in Group exhibitions.

Of interest to this discussion is the influence of Edwin Holgate (1892-1977) on the development of art in Montreal in light of his exposure to artistic practice and education in France. Holgate's paintings were respected in particular for the artist's use of colour, and portraits were a central part of his production. In an interview with Hill, Holgate recounted that soon after the formation of the Beaver Hall Group, he returned to Paris to study under Adolf Milman, a Russian expatriate artist. 'Holgate had been interested in Russian theatre and folk art since his first visit to Paris before the First World War; but what especially interested him was the Russian's concentration on draughtsmanship and strong colouring.'<sup>93</sup> It was in part because she picked up on the affinity with European practice that Paraskeva Clark remained less critical of the practitioners based in Montreal, with whose work she became increasingly familiar.

In addition to the work and influence of Edwin Holgate, Montreal's artistic community was transformed with the return of John Lyman (1886-1967), a painter, professor and theorist of art. Lyman had spent twenty four years studying and working in Europe, and had been connected to James Wilson Morrice, a notable Canadian artist, while studying at the Académie Julian in Paris, and later with Henri Matisse. The impact of these artists' work on Lyman's practice was evident, for he valued 'pure art' by focusing on colour, line, and form and

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93. Charles Hill, 'Canadian Painting in the 30s', p. 93.

omitting 'non-artistic' or anecdotal details.<sup>94</sup>

Lyman set up a regular salon at his apartment in Montreal after his return to the city in 1931, and it was there that a community of likeminded artists broadened their appreciation and understanding of contemporary European art. Taking up the concerns of Modern European and specifically French art, the Montreal practitioners fostered a milieu that would have been closer to Paraskeva Clark's sensibilities, however, circumstances dictated that the artists that Clark came into close contact with were those that formed the Canadian Group of Painters in 1931 and who became 'consciously identified as an expansion of the Toronto-based Group of Seven.'<sup>95</sup>

While the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1931 as a national body without an explicitly stated ideology, and attempted to include artists from across the country so that their opportunities to circulate their work were greater, the CGP remained a Toronto-dominated group during the 1930s. All meetings and opening exhibitions were held in Toronto. The legacy of the Group of Seven was strongly felt; Tom Thomson's *West Wind* remained the symbol of the Canadian Group of Painters according to Arthur Lismer, and the members believed that their mandate ought to be a more inclusive extension of that of the Group of Seven. Arthur Lismer and A.Y. Jackson remained principal figures, which was of particular significance after the departure of Lawren Harris in 1936.<sup>96</sup> Only André Biéler of the Montreal Atelier joined the CGP in 1936, the same year that Paraskeva Clark became a member.

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94. National Gallery of Canada, 'John Lyman Biography', <[http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/search/bio\\_e.jsp?artistid=3403](http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/search/bio_e.jsp?artistid=3403)>

95. Charles Hill, 'Canadian Painting in the 30s', p. 89.

96. Ibid.



Paraskeva Clark was at odds with the dominant discourse in Toronto for her work had stronger resonances with the type of work that had a more profound impact on the community of painters working in Montreal. Her choice of subject matter did not fit with the rhetoric of 'artistic isolationism' that Toronto-based painters espoused in their quest for indigenous painting that expressed the uniqueness of Canada. Her choice to engage in a practice of self-portraiture is significant, for it functions not only as a self-reflexive investigation on the part of the artist but also as a critique of the hegemonic discourse of Canadian nationalism that was being expressed in contemporary painting. Although Paraskeva Clark wanted a 'foot in the door,' she chose a marginal genre with which to make her presence known. The choice of genres must therefore be interrogated. The continued study of her own reflection and the construction of her persona signals the means by which Paraskeva Clark came into being through representation. The stylistic handling of the paint and subject matter connected Paraskeva Clark to Petrograd for she continued to paint according to the instruction she received there under Petrov-Vodkin.

The choice of self-portraiture also links Paraskeva Clark's painting practice to the legacies of modernism and in particular the work and influence of Cézanne and Van Gogh respectively. That Clark's paintings from the early 1930s function in critical opposition to that of her contemporaries in Toronto one may conclude that the interrogation of the representation of the self as an exploration of one's identity serves as a counter-discourse to that promoted by the Group of Seven and their followers. As a counter-discourse, Clark's work functions against the dominant landscape painting tradition that hoped to highlight Canada's unique national consciousness, for her practice of self-portraiture, a marginal genre, was overtly tied to the European modernist traditions and as such breaches the doctrine of artistic isolationism.

The stylistic disparity between Paraskeva Clark's treatment of the figure in comparison to the artists she discovered working in Canada no doubt reflects her education and exposure to training in Petrograd. The criticism Paraskeva Clark levied at the work of the art practitioners she began to associate with was not unfounded. As Eric Brown, then director of the National Gallery of Canada remarked:

It can be said that anywhere else in the artistic world this movement would be considered almost unduly conservative and only at home, and because of its partial break with tradition does it appear to some people to be at all radical.<sup>97</sup>

Even though Group of Seven member A.Y. (Alexander Young) Jackson had announced the dissolution of the Group of Seven at their exhibition in 1931 in an effort to expand the discourse of Canadian painting, concerns about the exclusiveness and reach of their influence on the development of Modernism in Canada had been raised by fellow artists as well as the press.<sup>98</sup>

Although Paraskeva Clark levied valid criticism of the emblematic style, heavily focused on landscape painting by chiding the members of the Group and their followers for being too design-orientated, she did acknowledge the importance of their intervention into the

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97. Eric Brown (1932) quoted in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 17. Eric Brown was the National Gallery's first full time curator, and was appointed to this position in 1910. Brown's influence on the history of Canadian art should not be underestimated, for he championed the Group of Seven and was integral in their rise to national importance. As the National Gallery of Canada notes regarding its history: 'Brown's consistent efforts to balance the educational and cultural importance of Old Masters with an unwavering support for contemporary Canadian Art, particularly the work of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, were to have an enduring impact on both the Gallery and Canadian art in general.' See National Gallery of Canada, '1910: All Hail the 'Group' (You Know Who We Mean)', *gallery history: interactive timeline*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa <[http://www.gallery.ca/english/2143.htm#year\\_1910](http://www.gallery.ca/english/2143.htm#year_1910)>

98. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (1973). p.174 Reid quoted Jackson's announcement that the Group's wish to widen their membership: 'The interest in a freer form of art expression in Canada has become so general that we believe the time has arrived when the Group of Seven should expand ... ' By 1928 resentment towards the Group of Seven was becoming more widespread, with an anti-modernist attack emerging from Vancouver that also suggested that dislike of the Group's nationalist ethos and aesthetic was tied to regionalism. Clarence Gagnon, a noted French Canadian painter who had studied in Europe, publicly criticised the 'Seven Wise Men' for their exclusivity.

traditions of Canadian painting. In her polemical article published in 1937, Clark chastised her contemporaries for their narrow focus of subject matter when she labelled them collectively as 'the Artist of the Pre-Cambrian Shield', who, she wrote: 'twenty, perhaps even ten years ago might have been performing a valuable function in arousing your people to a sense of their country's beauty. But that has been done and it is time to come down from your ivory tower.'<sup>99</sup>

(d) *Situating Myself (1933): The 'Woman in Black' on the Margins of the Canadian Group of Painters*



Figure 3.7 Paraskeva Clark: *Myself* (1933)

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99. Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', *New Frontier Magazine*, 1 no. 12 (April 1937), (16-17).

A woman dressed elegantly in a black dress and hat, arms folded across her midriff, is represented framed by a dark wooden doorway, and her figure occupies the majority of the picture plane. The red lipsticked mouth offers the slightest touch of bold colour. This is how Paraskeva Clark chose to represent herself in her self-portrait of 1933, that is now part of the National Gallery of Canada's permanent collection catalogued under the title *Myself*, the title that the work was exhibited under at the first exhibition that the Canadian Group of Painters held in Toronto in 1933. Clark, a diminutive woman just over 5 feet tall, appears larger as a result of how she has chosen to frame herself in front of the door that is slightly ajar, and as a result of the unusual angles the opened door creates an illusion such that the subject of the painting appears to fill the space of the doorway and the picture plane. Paraskeva Clark is depicted frontally, her gaze evenly returning that of the viewer, or perhaps returning the painter's own gaze if one considers that a mirror may have been used in the production of this painting.

As a painting, an oil on canvas measuring 101.6 x 76.2 cm, *Myself* appears to function as a visual statement. Paraskeva Clark confronts viewers directly, and by constructing the image in this fashion, the artist has refused to allow the act of viewing to become the privilege of those who encounter the painting. In other words, Paraskeva Clark's self-image of 1933 does not become subject to the voyeuristic gazes of others. The exact nature of the statement remains unclear, however, for Clark has composed the portrait so that viewers are presented with a likeable image of an elegant and seemingly self-possessed woman. As Whitney Chadwick has observed with regard to women's self-portraiture, it was common for artists who were women to avoid making strong psychological demands on the viewer when producing their self-portraits, and more significantly, the images themselves are often difficult to interpret even though the viewer or scholar may have information regarding the lives or working

methods of the artist in question.<sup>100</sup>

*Myself* was the second self-portrait that Clark exhibited, and the Canadian Group of Painters show of 1933 was only the second exhibition in which she had ever participated. With the exception of the Canadian Group of Painters first exhibition, which was held in the United States in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the summer of 1933, the Group exhibited collectively in November of each year. Paraskeva Clark was invited as a guest contributor to exhibit work alongside the official members of the Canadian Group of Painters at their inaugural exhibition held in November, 1933, at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Her contribution to the exhibition involved two portraits painted in oil, one a canvas that captured her husband, *Portrait of Philip* (1933), and the other painting shown was *Myself* (1933). The self-portrait was subsequently exhibited in 1936 with the title 'Woman in Black'.<sup>101</sup>

It is telling that Clark also chose to exhibit a portrait of her husband, Philip Clark who was then relatively well known amongst the Canadian cultural elite for his involvement in the Arts and Letters Club that served as a base for artists, musicians, and writers including the Group of Seven. Biographer Jane Lind has speculated whether Paraskeva Clark's decision to exhibit both portraits was strategic, for introducing herself as a competent portraitist and wife of a prominent figure in Toronto could have worked in her favour and garnered commissions or other opportunities to exhibit work.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to her own self-representation, *Portrait of*

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100. Whitney Chadwick, *How Do I Look?; Mirror Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists*. exh. cat. ed. by Liz Riddeal (National Portrait Gallery, London: 2001). (8-21). pp. 8, 12.

101. *Myself* (1933), oil on canvas, 101.6 x 76.2 cm was purchased from the artist by the National Gallery of Canada (acquisition 18311). In the exhibition catalogue for *The Canadian Group of Painters* exhibition held in November, 1933 at the Art Gallery of Toronto, this painting is listed as *Myself*; catalogue number 89. It is signed and dated Paraskeva Clark/33, and was exhibited at the Galleries of J. Merrit Malloney from 4-18 January 1936 as part of the group exhibition *Roddy Keny Courtice, Isabel McLaughlin, Kathleen Daby, Yvonne McKague, Paraskeva Clark* with the title *Woman in Black* (catalogue no. 44). See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 53.

*Philip* presents viewers with a seated Philip Clark whose glance is askance, and not engaging. Because the subject is seated, one adopts a viewing position that looks down on Philip Clark, whose figure fills both the blue chair he is seated in and also the majority of the canvas. His body appears still and contemplative, and although Clark has chosen to construct her own image in an alternate manner which emphasises her physical stature and confident gaze, equal attention has been paid to rendering the facial features of both her husband and herself.



Figure 3.8 Paraskeva Clark: *Portrait of Philip* (1933)

As with her earlier self-portraits and in keeping with her training under Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin at the Free Studios in Petrograd, Paraskeva Clark has skilfully painted her own

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102. Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). p. 88.

facial features as well as that of her husband's. Compositionally both portraits painted and exhibited in Toronto in 1933 speak of the studious draughtsmanship and the abilities with regard to the handling of oil paint and the use of colour that were traits of Russian-trained practitioners. These skills were appreciated by Montréal artists such as Edwin Holgate and John Lyman, and interestingly Paraskeva Clark's experience and first hand knowledge of European traditions also made her somewhat of a curiosity and garnered her a certain amount of respect within the Toronto community of painters.<sup>103</sup>

As a statement of introduction to an arts community into which Paraskeva Clark had just entered, and as another self-representation created by a practitioner who had only recently begun to engage in the act of painting seriously as a professional artist, what might *Myself* reveal, and how might the painting be read? Can anything further be understood with regard to the subject here represented? If it is possible to access something of 'an 'other', a self defined in and through representation' to apply Whitney Chadwick's formulation, we must attempt in so far as possible to engage with a practice that involves certain processes of self-reflection as well as conscious stylistic or compositional strategies. Further consideration must be given to the context in which this particular painting was produced and the milieu in which it was exhibited.

The literature that discusses self-portraiture by artists who are women centres around questions of identity and representation. Careful to avoid reductive conclusions by making assumptions about women's practices that depend solely on gender in her introductory essay for the exhibition *Mirror Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists* held at the National Portrait Gallery in London (2001), Whitney Chadwick accounts for historical specificities and divergent

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103. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 20.

styles in her discussion of women's self-portraiture. The question of identity continues to surface, however, and Chadwick points out that:

This tension between identification and otherness contributes to the difficulty of interpreting the self-portrait. As viewers we are both seduced into assuming a kind of 'intimacy' with the sitter, and distanced by the fixity of a representation so at odds with the fluidity of our normal social relationships. A number of artists ... have chosen to emphasise the signs of social life in their representations, or to engage directly with the difficulty of reconciling images of femininity as something-to-be-looked-at with representations of the artist, historically produced around attributes signifying masculinity: ambition, daring, individualism.<sup>104</sup>

The self defined in and through representation that is presented in *Myself* suggests two divergent aspects of identity as a result of the stylistic pictorial choices that the artist has made in constructing this self-representation.

The elegant 'Woman in Black' shown gazing out from the picture plane emits Clark's modern and fashionable sensibility. Paraskeva Clark has represented herself adorned in fashionable black attire, with curls showing at the shoulders suggesting that her hair was coiffed beneath the hat, and she is made up wearing the bright red lipstick that her in-laws, the respectably conservative Clark family, found distasteful.<sup>105</sup> There is no question that Paraskeva Clark puts forward the image of a respectable bourgeois woman in her well-made clothing, and this would have been underscored by the accompanying exhibition of *Portrait of Philip*. Both Paraskeva and Philip Clark were presented to a viewing public as a respectable pair. The air of refined taste conveyed by *Myself* was a consequence of the socially determined fashioning of the body in this self-representation. The other representational layer of intelligibility at work in this painting appears to be at odds with conventions of femininity that permeate art historical discourse.

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104. Whitney Chadwick, *Mirror Mirror*, (2001). pp. 12-13.

105. Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). pp. 66-67.



As previously noted, Paraskeva Clark refused to cede the act of looking solely to the viewer, for while Clark is the subject of this representation, her painted likeness returns the gaze and in so doing the feminine figure is not one that can easily be objectified. While the black dress is tailored, low-cut, and fashionable, it is not provocatively sexual. In spite of the neckline, no bosom is suggested, and what appears to be a blouse or a camisole prevents any curious peering. It is the hands that function as another plane of representation and suggest an alternate to the conventions of femininity. Paraskeva Clark's hands were in fact quite large, particularly considering that she was a small woman. The flesh tones work as the main bright areas of the canvas, and attention is given equally to the modelling of the face and to the left hand, which is shown cupped around the right elbow. It is the hand of a working artist.<sup>106</sup> Although the painting lacks any indication beyond the titling of the work that the figure shown is in fact an artist, Clark has represented herself as a strong individual. Conventional indications of femininity beyond fashion are absent in this painting.

Moreover, the position of the folded arms with the large hands visible, one resting prominently at the elbow and the other resting at the left hip, seems at odds with traditional representations of women, particularly when one considers that folded arms across the belly often signifies maternity and passivity. Paraskeva Clark was in fact three months pregnant when she painted this self-portrait. Pregnancy was not something to draw attention to publicly in the early 1930s, as women were expected to conceal their condition, and it was not explicitly a subject of representation at this time. The artist has chosen to represent herself as a fashionable and respectable woman, yet one who is not passive or delicate. Instead, the artist

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106. Sandra Paikowsky had read what she has also observed as 'masculine hands' as an indication that this is a self-presentation of the artist. See Sandra Paikowsky, 'Modernist Representational Painting before 1950' in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, (2010).

has constructed herself employing tropes that blur the binary distinctions of masculinity and femininity, thereby disrupting the gendering of subject positions.

Biographer Jane Lind has made much of the fact that the artist was pregnant when she painted the canvas, reading the work as an introductory statement that simultaneously refuted tradition by representing herself with child. Lind states that the unconventional subject matter also broke class lines for Paraskeva Clark, a Russian 'peasant', was having a child with an upper middle-class husband.<sup>107</sup> I would argue, however, that it is actually difficult to determine that Paraskeva Clark was pregnant for her condition is not actually discernible in this image, in spite of the fact that the subject's arms partly encircle her belly. The only real indication that the subject of this canvas was pregnant would have been communicated to an audience familiar with the artist when the work was exhibited or if biographical information including this fact was offered alongside any exhibition or reproduction of the painting.

*Myself* resurfaced in Marsha Meskimmon's extended study, *The Art of Reflection* (1996) in the discussion of women's self-representation as part of a thematic consideration of women, art, and politics. Meskimmon briefly discussed the work, drawing links between this painting and the European avant-garde traditions, stating that Clark's painting bears a resemblance to Vladimir Tatlin's *The Sailor* (1911-12). Even though Tatlin's early work, of which *The Sailor* is an example, is also indebted to Van Gogh and Cézanne, I would argue that Paraskeva Clark's self-portraits owe more to the direct influence of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin. Stylistically, *Myself* bears little resemblance to *The Sailor*, the latter being more modernist or avant-garde and

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107. Jane Lind, *Perfect Red*, (2009). p. 88. Lind reads the work as a dramatic declaration: 'I am here! Not only am I here, but I am my own person, a woman of style and elegance to be reckoned with ... I'm pregnant.' Lind notes that Clark's contemporaries in Toronto would have known that the representation was breaking a social taboo by presenting viewers at the exhibition with an image of a pregnant woman for the artist exhibited the work about five months after giving birth.

closely linked to French and Russian Cubism or Rayonism.

Clark's portrait is indebted to Petrov-Vodkin's instruction, with the 'concentration on the subject' so that the painter can represent an ideal. Petrov-Vodkin clarified his idea of the subject in a letter written in 1914 by stating that:

It is necessary to search for those changes which [the subject] produces in us ... if we know how to transfer it on canvas, our subject becomes an artistic image, assuming a new form of life which is more alive to us than the thing of nature. ... The more abstract the idea, the more material the representation of this idea on canvas must be, that is, it must be seen as something corporeal, clear cut and substantial.<sup>108</sup>

Clark's self-representation of 1933 accords with Petrov-Vodkin's ideas, for the work is not a straightforward naturalistic representation. *Myself* offers an enigmatic presentation of an elegant woman dressed in black, who also happens to be a practising artist and the producer of this canvas. The self-representation is a mediated one, and it was self-consciously painted. The work can be understood within the framework of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's thought, which stressed the use of the imagination above all else, and valorized the role of the artist. Petrov-Vodkin declared of painting that: 'a picture interpreted as a screen on which the artist may simultaneously project what he sees and what he wants to represent, what he imagines and what he thinks. There is no doubt that a true artist refracts nature through himself.'<sup>109</sup> *Myself* offers an instance where the artist Paraskeva Clark has fashioned herself as a respectable woman who appears larger than she actually was and the construction of her likeness in this manner conforms with Petrov-Vodkin's idea that the artist ought to strive to represent abstract ideas as reality such that what is seen and what is imagined are seamlessly combined into one coherent image.

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108. Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin quoted in Lev Mochalov, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, (1980). p. 6

109. Ibid. p. 4

Marsha Meskimmon rightly draws parallels between Clark's work and that of her Russian mentors and contemporaries, even though the portraits exhibited in Canada in the early 1930s appear more traditional than the modernist works of European painters who were producing art at this time. Noting that she worked in a 'modified modernist style', Meskimmon comments that it was Clark's style which 'maintained her position as part of the European avant-garde while integrating her into the more realistic Canadian tradition. Her 1933 self-portrait is the perfect accommodation between these two poles; she is rendered as fashionable and part of a socially elite Canadian circle as well as a woman modernist.'<sup>110</sup> It is by situating herself through this visual articulation that *Myself* may be read as a politically engaged work, for the artist has consciously fashioned herself as entering into an art world governed by the politics of gender and nationalism.

The exhibition of *Myself* is noteworthy and should be accounted for. The significance of including this work in the first Canadian Group of Painters exhibition to be held in Toronto has been noted, particularly in light of the important position this grouping of artists held in the still-emerging Canadian art world. Paraskeva Clark became a full-fledged member of the CGP in 1936. Membership in this inclusive yet still elite group of Canadian painters would have afforded Paraskeva Clark the opportunity to exhibit with notable peers, even though the central meeting place for artists, the famed Arts and Letters Club, was accessible only to men. While Clark was an active and vocal member of the CGP, attending the meetings that were held in Toronto, she later complained of the lack of collegial atmosphere and communication amongst artists.<sup>111</sup>

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110. Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Scarlet Pressa, 1996). p. 156.

111. Charles Hill and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist),' (18/10/1973) p. 37-8.

The year that Paraskeva Clark became a member of the Canadian Group of Painters, her self-portrait was exhibited in a private gallery in Toronto as part of the group show, *Rody Keny Courtice, Isabel McLaughlin, Kathleen Daly, Yvonne McKague, Paraskeva Clark*. Here the work was exhibited with the title *Woman in Black*. The work was praised for its skill by a critic who had recently arrived in Toronto, Graham McInnes, a writer who would prove to be an important voice in the Canadian art world and who would promote and befriend Paraskeva Clark. *Myself* was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in 1974, and was used as the frontispiece for the 1975 exhibition *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* curated by Charles C. Hill. The aims of this exhibition were to expose the Canadian public to artists who had previously been marginalized on account of the fact that as a group, the Canadian Group of Painters were situated between two major movements in the narrative of Canadian art history: the nationalist Group of Seven, and the avant-garde artists based in Montréal known as the Contemporary Arts Society. Hill's exhibition also attempted to shed light on a group of artists who worked in the socially challenging milieu of the Depression era, and in particular hoped to showcase those few artists whose work was committed to social and political engagement.

Hill's work curating this exhibition successfully presented Clark's painting in its historical context, and the prominent place accorded to *Myself* as the exhibition catalogue's cover illustration worked as a 'revelation' for it re-introduced Paraskeva Clark as a prominent historical Canadian painter.<sup>112</sup> *Myself* has recently re-emerged in an online re-installation of the 1975 exhibition devoted to Canadian painting in the 1930s. The painting does figure in the new survey of Canadian art in the twentieth century, although it is not discussed in any detail.

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112. In her introductory remarks in the exhibition catalogue *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* curator Mary MacLachlan states that when *Myself* appeared as the cover illustration for *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* in 1975 it seemed like a revelation. For this then obscure artist became visible and as a result MacLachlan attempted to address the fact that Paraskeva Clark had been 'overlooked' as an important participant in the history of painting in Canada by curating the first and only retrospective exhibition to date.

So Clark is still best remembered not as the confident, elegant *Woman in Black*, but as the Russian agitator who painted *Petroushka*.

The case of Paraskeva Clark and her practice of self-portrayal does, however, allow us to expand our understanding and analysis of women's self-representation. Paraskeva Clark's self-portraits operate as bold statements, and in particular her painting *Myself* works as an oppositional work that, as counter-discourse, is inherently political. The portrait is not political in the usual sense of the word nor in its general application with respect to the artist who is viewed as 'Red' for her support of communism during the 1930s and 1940s, but rather this painting is an example of the subversive intent of its producer who composed herself so that she appeared larger and positioned herself against the dominant Canadian discourse of painting. The Paraskeva Clark of 1931-1933 was already politically engaged for her practice attempted to dismantle or disturb conventional ways of thinking and representing. It is within this context that an examination of the political paintings of the later 1930s can be undertaken and the political potential of these artworks considered.

## Chapter 2. 1937: 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield' — Art and Politics

*The throb of the people's struggle toward a better life appears to be of no importance to art and the artist. Who is the artist? Is he not a human being like ourselves, with the added gifts of finer understanding and perception of the realities of life, and the ability to arouse emotions through the creation of forms and images? Surely. And this being so, those who give their lives, their knowledge and their time to social struggle have the right to expect help from the artist. And I cannot imagine a more inspiring role than that which the artist is asked to play for the defence and advancement of civilization.*

- Paraskeva Clark,

(1937)<sup>1</sup>

1937 marked a significant point in Paraskeva Clark's practice for she began to produce a series of drawings and paintings that addressed the social and political conditions of the time. The paintings that Paraskeva Clark began producing in 1937 can be understood as a continuation of the counter discourse the artist began with her self-portraits earlier in the decade, in particular *Myself* (1933). All of these works can be understood as components of an assemblage, one that functions as an immanent critique. Paraskeva Clark's work during this period indicates that hers was a practice that disturbed conventional ways of thinking and representing in the Canadian context and in so doing prompted viewers to think differently. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the minor and their discussion of how Franz Kafka's writing can be understood as an example of 'minor literature' will be discussed in relation to Paraskeva Clark's practice. As work that was socially conscious and politically engaged, Clark's practice was one of the few in Canada that dared to draw a connection between art and politics.

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1. Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', (April 1937). p.16.

With the exception of newspaper cartoons and a few works on paper there was relatively little overtly political art being produced in English Canada in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Clark's paintings along with her writing must be viewed as exceptional, particularly because they attempted to push representational boundaries to their limits and encouraged viewers to *think*. Clark's style evolved from her early portrait work of the 1930s, as she began to experiment with composition and colour. Her work, which became increasingly politically engaged in the late 1930s, continued to draw upon the language of European modernism, and employed unusual strategies such as bricolage and montage. These techniques effectively rendered the work's meaning opaque or enigmatic, and often obscured the work's political qualities.

There was legitimate fear of expressing overt political beliefs in Canada at this time, particularly if they were ideologically sympathetic to Communism. The Communist Party of Canada was declared illegal in December of 1931 when section 98 of the Criminal Code was invoked against the party. Section 98 was a statute that extended the definition of revolutionary activity by making 'it illegal to *advocate* "governmental, industrial, or economic change within Canada by the use of force, violence, or physical injury to person or property, or by threats of such injury," even if the accused did nothing to bring about such changes. The controversial section placed the burden of "proof to the contrary" on the accused, not the Crown;<sup>3</sup> This anti-communist statute was repealed but was replaced with the 'Act to protect the Province Against Communistic Propaganda,' known as the Padlock Law, which was a law passed in Québec that made it illegal to use a house or hall 'to propagate communism or

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2. For an insightful discussion into the lack of overtly political art that argues that some of the landscape painting produced in the 1930s by a younger generation of painters functioned as covert political critique, see Marilyn McKay, 'Canadian Political Art in the 1930s: "A Form of Distancing"', (2006).

3. John Herd with Allen Seager Thompson, *Decades of Discord*, (1985). p. 227.



bolshevism' or to publish or distribute literature 'tending to propagate communism.'<sup>4</sup>

*Presents from Madrid* (1937) marked Clark's first visual foray into the political arena with a composition that references a contemporary political event, the Spanish Civil War, which is represented as subject. *Presents from Madrid* is a watercolour that is arranged in an overlapping fashion. It is this feature that links the watercolour to montage, broadly defined as an aesthetic practice of combination, repetition, and overlap that prompts viewers to engage in a new ways of seeing and can be said to be intervening in perceptual mechanisms in ways that can be apprehended. As Christopher Phillips has noted:

The term montage has been used to refer to the formal principle at work in many of the most distinctive cultural products of the early decades of the twentieth century: the hybrid Dada images of George Grosz, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, and Raoul Hausman; the fragmented literary narratives of Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* and Doblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*; the cinematic editing techniques of Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Walter Ruttmann; the episodic theatrical structure of Erwin Piscator's *Trotz Alledam*; the multilayered exhibition spaces conceived by Frederick Kiesler, El Lissitzky, and Herbert Bayer; and the multiple-exposure photographs of Edward Steichen and Barbara Morgan. ... montage served not only as an innovative artistic technique but functioned, too, as a kind of symbolic form, providing a shared visual idiom that more than any other expressed the tumultuous arrival of a fully urbanized, industrialized culture. ... montage encompassed original artwork produced by recognised artists as well as a panopoly of popular, commercial, and political montages that often sprang from unknown hands. These objects include commercial and political posters, books jackets and illustrations, magazine covers and page layouts, advertisements, maquettes for photomurals, exhibition catalogues, industrial-product brochures, department store pamphlets, film publicity montages, and documentation of exhibition installations utilizing montage effects.<sup>5</sup>

Montage as a practice also connects visual art to advertising and film, and the technique was used here as well as in other areas of creative practice. The focal points in *Presents from Madrid* are multiple, yet two items immediately engage a viewer and are identifiable as a cap, and a red

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4. Ibid. pp. 284-85.

5. See Christopher Phillips, *Introduction, Montage and Modern Life 1919-1942*. exh. cat. ed. by Matthew Teitelbaum (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1992). (21-35). p. 21-22.

cloth depicting three masculine figures. The cap has been understood as belonging to the Canadian component of the 15th International Brigade.<sup>6</sup> The Canadian volunteers were known as the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, or Mac-Paps, so that Canada's position in relation to that international conflict is also alluded to. The green tassel, however, is unique to the citizen's militia fighters, as we can see from Canadian volunteer and Mac-Pap photographer Bill Williamson's image from the Basque region taken in July, 1936, just as the war began.



Figure 3.9 Paraskeva Clark: *Presents From Madrid* (1937)

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6. See Natalie Luckyj, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity in the Art of Paraskeva Clark', in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930's in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. by Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden and Jonathan Weinberg. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), (pp. 223-258). p. 227 Mary MacLachlan identifies the articles as follows: 'a soldier's hat from the International Brigade, a red scarf with the figures of three men representing the Spanish Popular Front, a magazine and an ancient piece of Spanish music manuscript.' See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 26.



Fig. 3.10 Arriving in Spain one day after the war began, Canadian Bill Williamson encountered citizens' militias that included women and old men. Bill Williamson, *Citizens' Militia*, 1936.

The cloth pictured in the painting is draped over a musical score that has been identified as part of a 16th century Spanish gradual. The lettering on the cloth opens up two strata of signification. Without knowing what the lettering stands for, the viewer could interpret the red cloth combined with the pictured workers as signalling sympathy for a left-leaning or communist position. Natalie Luckyj has read the cloth as 'a red scarf with three men representing the Spanish Popular Front'<sup>7</sup> In fact, C.N.T is the Spanish acronym for the National Labour Confederation (*Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo*), an anarcho-syndicalist revolutionary labour union in Spain which is a section of the International Workers Association (IWA). It strikes me that the elements in Paraskeva Clark's watercolour underscore the magnitude of this international conflict, and the fact that so many 'ordinary people' —the local citizens who spontaneously formed themselves into militias, international workers' unions, and volunteers—chose to fight and support the cause when their own governments in Britain, Canada, and the United States abstained from any intervention.<sup>8</sup> The

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7. Natalie Luckyj, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 227.

8. Over 1,700 Canadians defied the government by volunteering to fight in the Spanish Civil War, and there is some suggestion by scholars of this relatively unexplored aspect of Canadian social or military history that the majority of partisan fighters ascribed to the values espoused by the CPC who supported them. See Michael Petron, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008). p.

remaining object in the composition is a Republican pamphlet, with the lettering *nova Iberia* legible in the lower left corner.<sup>9</sup> I read this conscious layering of objects as indicative of the co-existence and tensions between the old and the new: the 16th century music, the ancient name for Spain, Iberia, the militia cap and the CNT cloth.

The painting has further significance with respect to Paraskeva Clark as the items were sent to her by Dr. Norman Bethune, when he was volunteering in Spain. Bethune was a noted Canadian physician and early champion of socialized medicine in Canada, as well



Fig. 3.11 Dr. Norman Bethune photographed standing in front of a vehicle attached to the Canadian Blood Transfusion Service c.1936

as an amateur artist with important connections to the Montreal arts community. Paraskeva Clark and Bethune met in 1936 through mutual friend, painter Pegi Nicol.<sup>10</sup> This was a

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9. Natalie Luckyj, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 227. Luckyj notes that: "The Mackenzie-Papineau Brigade was formed in August 1937 to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of populist uprisings in Upper and Lower Canada led by William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau and resulting in the establishment of responsible government. The "Mac-Paps" consisted of thirteen hundred Canadians who joined forces with the English-speaking International Brigade to fight Franco's fascist regime in Spain.' See (n. 13) p. 338.

10. Pegi Nicol married Norman MacLeod in 1937. In keeping with referring to place and person names according to historical context, I will refer to Nicol by her maiden name, which was also her professional name until this date. It is common for scholars to refer to Ms. Nicol using both surnames, however, she is alternately also cited anecdotally as well as discursively as simply Pegi Nicol. cf. Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of an Artist*, (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1966). and Charles Hill, 'Paraskeva Clark in Conversation With Charles Hill, October 18th, 1973', National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa <[http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/enthusiast/thirties/interviews\\_e.jsp?idocumentid=8](http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/enthusiast/thirties/interviews_e.jsp?idocumentid=8)> [(Transcription Date: 31 March, 2008)]

meeting that coincided with the beginning of Bethune's volunteer work with the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, a committee which Paraskeva Clark subsequently worked with.

*Presents from Madrid* was exhibited as part of a 1942 exhibition organised by Paraskeva Clark to raise funds in support of Canadian aid to Russia. A news clipping dated December 1942 in the AGO archive offers evidence that critics dismissed the painting as a whimsical still life: 'Mrs. Clark excels particularly in still life. ... But sometimes whimsy seizes her, and she throws at you a bunch of civil war knickknacks from Madrid.'<sup>11</sup> Natalie Luckyj read the work as an intervention in the genre of still life painting, which she claimed was traditionally associated with 'domestication and female accomplishments' and concluded that the painting can be understood as 'a poignant metaphor for the realities of everyday existence in a war zone.'<sup>12</sup>

It is my view that the painting not only works as a political intervention but also draws from the grammar of European modernism and consequently forms part of a tradition of politically engaged art practices that were less visible in Canada than they were in Europe and the United States. The Spanish Civil War captured the world's imagination, as print journalists, photographers and filmmakers circulated their impressions of the events. Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), which was exhibited in Paris at the 1937 World's Fair exhibition, is no doubt the most well known visual work that specifically references the destructive effects of the Nationalist campaign led by Francisco Franco.<sup>13</sup> Paraskeva Clark had long admired Picasso's work, as analytic cubism in particular had been integral to the development of

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11. unidentified newspaper clipping, December, 1942, from the AGO archive quoted in Natalie Luckyj, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 227.

12. Ibid. p. 227.

13. Franco was supported by the Spanish fascist party (the Falange), the Catholic Church, Spanish businessmen and wealthy landowners, as well Germany and Italy under Hitler and Mussolini respectively.

Russian modernism, and the avant-garde practices in post-revolutionary Russia prior to the imposition of the aesthetics of socialist realism.

In an interview with Charles Hill conducted in 1973 in preparation for the National Gallery of Canada's exhibition *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (1975) Paraskeva Clark briefly discussed *Presents from Madrid*, although her recollections focused less on the painting itself and more on personal and specific affective influences, both visual and ideological. I draw attention to the practical qualities of her statements as they centre around her process as an artist working in Toronto, a milieu that she described as isolationist even though she did have access to structurally important Canadian circles that consisted of artists, patrons, and dealers. Revisiting *Presents from Madrid* Clark said simply in response to Hill's attempts to return her focus to the painting that she didn't know exactly how or why the personal correspondence had started with Bethune, and remarked that the watercolour did not represent for her: 'any serious attitude to politics. It's purely kind of Spain.'

Paraskeva Clark's allusion to her lack of political consciousness prior to the 1930s seems disingenuous, as she did articulate her own attempts to draw attention to the situation in Spain.<sup>14</sup> Denying any 'serious attitude to politics' may have also been a strategic move on the artist's part, for saying that she was 'not political in those days' is in direct contradiction to the call to action published in 'Come Out Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield' where she urged her colleagues to engage with current social and political issues and produce art that was in service

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14. Charles Hill, 'Paraskeva Clark in Conversation With Charles Hill, October 18th, 1973,' (Transcription Date: 31 March, 2008). There are a variety of interviews where Paraskeva Clark reflected on her past by saying that she 'wasn't political in those days.' see, for example, Ibid. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). and Gail Singer and National Film Board of Canada., *Portrait of the Artist—As an Old Lady*, 1982 for variations on this narrative thread. In Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', (April 1937). the artist invokes the position of 'red or dead' as a possible subject position available to those engaged in cultural practice.

to those who were struggling.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, from my reading of this painting, Canada and any Canadian involvement becomes a muted subtext, therefore the painting comes to *connote* Spain, or as she said '[I]t's purely kind of Spain.' Although she adamantly denied any affective relationship to her own political consciousness, Clark's remarks are inflected by the ideologies she no doubt encountered in Russia, ideas and discourses which she continued to follow after she emigrated, and which were invoked when she claimed that she was a 'Russian Red'.<sup>16</sup>

Features of Paraskeva Clark's practice recall Liubov Popova, Alexandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and Vladimir Tatlin and other well-known figures who were integral in furthering Russian avant-garde practice in a dialectical fashion. They rejected an aesthetic approach that focused on the personality of the artist and ideals of beauty and emotions in favour of a practice of 'Construction'. This method was meant to be more impersonal and was to be dictated by the materials at hand.

While Paraskeva Clark was living in a suburb of Paris from 1923-31, films by Soviet filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, [dir. *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)] received wider release in the West. As well, Rodcheko's designed the workers' club contribution for the *Exposition Internationale des arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* held in Paris in 1925 where constructivist graphic works such as this montage poster from 1924 were on display in the Soviet pavilion [Fig. 3.12]. I would like to consider Paraskeva Clark as an artist who embodied multiple positions, with the aim of reading her artistic practice as one akin to

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15. Clark asserted that she was 'not political in those days' in interview with curator Mary MacLachlan. See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982).

16. The 'reds' in the context of the October revolution refer to the more radical Bolsheviks and the Soviets [workers' party] who overthrew the moderate socialist provisional government that had been instituted in the capital city country after Czar Nicholas II abdicated power in February, 1917. The events of the Bolshevik victory were narrativized by Sergei Eisenstein in his silent film *October* (1927), a film which was made as a retrospective piece of cinema to mark the 10th anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, employing montage techniques with the aim of fusing political ideas that relate specifically to Marxist-Leninist dialectics.

the technique of montage. In a 1934 public lecture, Walter Benjamin defined montage in relation to Brecht's Epic Theatre as follows:

Epic Theatre, as you see, takes up a procedure that has become familiar to you in recent years from film and radio, literature and photography. I am speaking of the procedure of montage: the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 3.12: Alexandr Rodchenko, Untitled Poster (1924)

Benjamin believed that the interruption technique in epic theatre was, 'but the restoration of the method of montage decisive in radio and film', and as with theatre, Paraskeva Clark was, to invoke Benjamin on epic theatre, 'concerned less with filling the public with feelings, even seditious ones, than with alienating it in an enduring way, *through thinking*, from the conditions in which it lives.'<sup>18</sup> I will also employ these strategies of montage metaphorically to discuss Paraskeva Clark's art practice as it evolved in Canada in the 1930s.

Benjamin's remarks on montage are instructive. The technique is described as a process employed in film, radio, literature and photography, and was also prevalent in drama in

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17. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, (2008) p. 90.

18. See *Ibid.* pp. 90- 91. (my emphasis).



the form of Brecht's Epic Theatre. Benjamin wrote:

But here [montage] has a special right, perhaps even a perfect right, as I will briefly show. The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theatre as “epic,” constantly counteracts illusion on the part of the audience. For such illusion is a hindrance to a theatre that proposes to make use of elements of reality in experimental rearrangements. But it is at the end, not the beginning, of the experiment that the situation appears—a situation that, in this or that form, is always ours. It is not brought home to the spectator but distanced from him. He recognizes it as the real situation—not with satisfaction, ... but with astonishment. Epic Theatre, therefore, does not reproduce situations; rather, it discovers them. This discovery is accomplished by means of the interruption of sequences. Yet interruption here has the character not of a stimulant but of an organising function. It arrests the action in its course, and thereby compels the listener to adopt an attitude vis-à-vis his role. [Epic Theatre and] Brecht's discovery and use of the *gestus* is nothing but the restoration of the method of montage decisive in radio and film ...<sup>19</sup>

Benjamin's description of montage underscores its role as an interruptive device that casts readers and spectators in a collaborative role, challenging them to think about the situations being presented.

Benjamin's view of alienation as a device that encourages the audience to think is analogous to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the minor. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the deterritorializing 'line of flight' that prompts us to think differently or to sense anew. To what extent might we understand Deleuze and Guattari's work on minor literature as providing a model to the visual arts and specifically Clark's practice? Deleuze and Guattari posit that the cultural production of outsiders or 'minor' writers (and artists) can be identified by features that mark their work as categorically distinct from the cultural practices of the dominant or majority.<sup>20</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

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19. Ibid. pp. 90-91.

20. Abigail Solomon-Godeau extends Deleuze and Guattari's literary model of the minor literature to the visual arts in her discussion of the work of Tracey Moffat, Carrie Mae Weems, and Zoe Leonard. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau *Taunting and Haunting: Critical Tactics in a “Minor” Mode*, ed. by Carol and Catherine de Zegher Armstrong, (Cambridge, Mass.: OCTOBER BOOKS, The MIT Press, 2006).

(1975): 'A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.'<sup>21</sup> Paraskeva Clark was working in the major visual language of European Modernism, which when reproduced in the Canadian milieu where such approaches were shunned in favour of a more indigenous style, constitutes a minor usage of a major language.

Deleuze and Guattari go on to explain that minor literature is comprised of three characteristics, which are summarized as follows: 'the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.'<sup>22</sup> The third characteristic of minor literature suggests that there is no room for individual enunciation, that everything must take on a collective value. Since no individual enunciation is possible, minor practice cannot be understood as belonging to the 'literature of masters'. Minor literature allows for something other than the literature of the masters.<sup>23</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari state:

[W]hat each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement (énoncé). But above all else, because collective or national consciousness is "often inactive in external life and always in the process of breakdown," literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility;<sup>24</sup>

The work produced by one who is minor is necessarily political, and it is made clear that

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21. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). p. 16.

22. Ibid. p. 18.

23. Ibid. p. 17.

24. Ibid. p. 18.

writers do not write or address themselves to an already existing people. The task of minor literature is therefore to imagine 'another possible community'. The minor evokes a people who are missing. As Daniel W. Smith has remarked, when artists evoke a people and discover that 'the people are missing' this '[F]or Deleuze implies a new conception of the 'revolutionary' potential of literature.'<sup>25</sup>

The 'people who are missing' to whom the political art of the minor is addressed are a people in a state of becoming where they do not pre-exist as a definable group or entity. What is important here is the process of becoming, which is one of collective transformation. To speak of one's subjectivity individually and collectively in itself becomes transformed in a process of collective enunciation. For Deleuze and Guattari, language is a vehicle for becoming, as the analysis of Kafka's writing as minor literature demonstrates:

[I]t has become becoming - the becoming-dog of the man and the becoming-man of the dog, the becoming-ape or the becoming-beetle of the man and vice versa. We are no longer in the situation of an ordinary, rich language where the word dog, for example, would directly designate an animal and would apply metaphorically to other things. ... Instead, it is now a question of a becoming that includes the maximum of difference as a difference of intensity ... Furthermore, there is no longer a subject of the enunciation, nor a subject of the statement. It is no longer the subject of the statement who is a dog, with the subject of the enunciation remaining "like" a man; it is no longer the subject of enunciation who is "like" a beetle, the subject of the statement remaining a man. Rather, there is a circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming, in the heart of a necessarily multiple or collective assemblage.<sup>26</sup>

Different groups can be implicated in a mutual or collective becoming. For example, in post-Revolutionary Russia, artists could strive to become workers, and vice versa. The idea of

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25. Daniel W. Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence": Deleuze's "Critique et Clinique" Project', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, (London: Verso, 1998), (pp. xi-liii). p. xli. Deleuze discusses the idea of appealing to the people in relation to the minor and theatre by stating that this appeal is made in the name of the majority language, but that the people are missing. See Gilles Deleuze, 'One Less Manifesto', in *Mimesis, Masochism, and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), (pp. 239-258). p. 254.

26. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). p. 22.

different struggles, social struggles, institutional struggles would be mutually implied in a collective becoming. Therefore, both the creative practices and the political practices are struggles which can be mutually transformed.

The becoming-minor is not restricted to language or literature as it pertains to different kinds of expression, as Deleuze's writing on the theatre of Carmelo Bene demonstrated. In his essay 'One Less Manifesto', (1979) various terms are implicated in this becoming-minor. Deleuze distinguishes the two meanings of 'minority', which are inter-related:

[M]inority denotes a state of rule, that is to say, the situation of a group that, whatever its size, is excluded from the majority, or even included, but as a subordinate fraction in relation to the standard of measure that regulates the law and establishes the majority. ... There follows a second meaning: minority no longer denotes a state of rule, but a becoming in which one enlists. To become-minority. This is a goal, a goal that concerns the entire world ... In the second sense, it is obvious that the minority is much more numerous than the majority. For example, women are a minority in the first sense. But, in the second sense, everyone is a becoming-woman, a becoming-woman who acts as everyone's potentiality. In this context, women are no more becoming-women than men themselves. A universal becoming-minority. Minority here denotes the strength of a becoming while majority designates the power or weakness of a state, of a situation. Here is where theatre or art can surge forward with a specific, political function. This is on the condition that minority represents nothing regionalist, nor anything aristocratic, aesthetic, or mystical.<sup>27</sup>

The minor or minority in the first sense is comprised of those who are subordinate in relation to the law, for example. That Paraskeva Clark identified herself as primarily a housewife rendered her minor in the first sense that Deleuze outlines, but she produced these kinds of representations as seen in *Presents from Madrid* that are more ostensibly political. I suggest that Paraskeva Clark made an ethical choice and entered into a becoming-minor. In this manner, Clark's art became a vehicle for expression for these minor struggles. Clark's art assumed a

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27. Gilles Deleuze, 'One Less Manifesto', (1997). p. 255.

political function for it was in opposition to the mythic language employed by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries who produced nationalist landscape paintings. What distinguished Clark in her work of the late 1930s was that she was using art to establish a sense of the political. Clark's art and writing had a political function, but one that was minor. In the context of Canada in the 1930s, what is implicated by Clark's art, which was politically engaged was a collective becoming.

Clark's dissatisfaction with what she perceived to be an 'old order' of artistic practice in Canada and her wish to introduce new or at least different methods and means of communication is evident in the 1973 interview with Charles Hill. Clark's recollections reveal that she lamented what she saw as a lack of a sense of community with social purpose. As an outsider who continued to inform herself by reading books in Russian and French that were often purchased in New York but also in Canada, Clark was dismayed by the lack of public discourse in Canada regarding artistic practice and the role of the artist in societal structures. This concern was evident when Clark published a polemical piece of writing, 'Come out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield' in the leftist publication *New Frontier* in 1937. She called for a reconsideration of the role and efficacy of the artist in Canada. Hers was a passionate response to Elizabeth Wyn Wood's article that defended more traditional ideas regarding artistic practice conceived as operating in the realm of formalism and centred around ideas of beauty.<sup>28</sup> The dialogues Clark opened up point to a continuous thread that the artist herself kept pulling up to the fore.

In her article, Paraskeva Clark imagined a community of artists who would produce art in service of the people and their social struggles. For this reason Clark implored her

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28. Elizabeth Wyn Wood, 'Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield', *Canadian Forum*, 193 (16) (Feb. 1937), (13-15).

colleagues in Canada to take part in their own times and 'dirty your gown in the mud and sweat of conflict.'<sup>29</sup> For Clark, artists constituted a collective and were part of a wider struggle. There is a sense in which a community of artists would participate in a wider undefined collective of for example, artists and workers, who could share in a mutual 'becoming' as they had done in Russia after the Revolutions of 1917. In the interview conducted with Charles Hill, Paraskeva Clark recalled her dissatisfaction with what she perceived as a lack of communal working relationships amongst her colleagues. Clark observed that although there were groups and societies of artists, there was a lack of community, particularly for her given that she viewed herself as primarily a housewife. In addition to a lack of a communal atmosphere, Clark was disappointed that artists did not discuss their own practices in terms of ideology or politics.<sup>30</sup> She recalled of her involvement with the Canadian Group of Painters that:

[The Canadian Group of Painters] had very few meetings. But always they had monthly meetings ... There was never ideological discussion, just straightforward remitting of the month before and this and that, and just straightforward business. There was never any ideological discussion on Canadian artists. That's really true. Unless they are between themselves too afraid, maybe. Otherwise, that's how Canadians are. I mean, Lawren Harris, ... he thought of abstract art and philosophy of art and so on. ... But the rest of them, ... You never had that all-embracing interest in art.<sup>31</sup>

Paraskeva Clark sought with her writing and her art to participate in a collective artistic practice that interfaced with larger political struggles. I suggest that Clark sought a community of practitioners similar to those she had known in post-Revolutionary Petrograd, who were committed to political struggle that was transformative such that artists and workers could

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29. Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', (April 1937). p. 17.

30. Charles Hill and Paraskeva Clark, 'Interview With Paraskeva Clark (Artist),' (18/10/1973) pp. 37-38.

31. Ibid. p. 38.

enter into a mutual becoming.

In her passionate call to her fellow artists to put their art in service of social struggle and politics, published in a co-operative venture that focused its monthly issues on art, literature and social criticism, Paraskeva Clark openly addressed art and the function of the artist.<sup>32</sup> Written in response to her colleagues who recoiled at the idea put forward by Frank H. Underhill, a critic, historian and political thinker, that like the European artists, 'the [Canadian] artist must be 'red or dead.' Clark chastised fellow artists for being blind 'to the forces which approach to destroy that relative security in which [the artist] is permitted to exercise his individuality.'<sup>33</sup> Clark called for artists, particularly those who either did not want to be bothered with cries of 'red or dead' or who looked down on those who produced art that was politically and socially engaged, to join the struggle for a new social order. She cautioned these artists who refused to be socially conscious in their practice that if the new order were to come: 'you might be outside; your welcome would be useless, for you would not understand the language of this new order.'<sup>34</sup>

Clark's remarks recall Walter Benjamin's lecture, 'The Author as Producer', which was to be delivered at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris in April, 1934, where writers and artists were urged to forgo autonomy and choose to work in service of certain class

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32. *New Frontier* was published from 1936-1938. The periodical was a co-operative venture, and it featured monthly issues on art, literature, and social criticism. Its aims were twofold: 'to acquaint the Canadian public with the work of those writers and artists who are expressing a positive reaction to the social scene, and to serve as an open forum for all shades of progressive opinion.' The editors of the publication, many of whom were friends of Paraskeva Clark's, reinforced the artist's assertion that more artists and writers needed to take part in their own times. As their inaugural editorial states, 'Though technically adequate, so many interpretations of the Canadian scene in creative writing, criticism, and art, have been singularly disregardful of or unfaithful to the social realities of our time.' See 'Editorial', *New Frontier Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1936), p. 3. Clark's article was told to art critic Graham Campbell McInnes and published in April, 1937.

33. Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', (April 1937). p. 16.

34. Ibid. p. 17.

interest. Cultural producers were to side with the proletariat. They were to create work that was useful to the proletariat in the class struggle.<sup>35</sup> Artists and writers needed to do more than create work with a correct political message. Benjamin warned that, 'a political tendency, however revolutionary it may seem, has a counterrevolutionary function so long as the writer feels his solidarity with the proletariat only in his attitudes, not as a producer.'<sup>36</sup> In addition to offering the correct political message, a work ought to be technically innovative, according to Benjamin, and ideally, there was a demand for intellectuals to change the apparatus of production in favour of socialism. Of particular value was technical innovation that also produced an effect whereby the audience was called to think, and to collaborate, as was the result of the alienation that resulted from the interruption and alienation in Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre.<sup>37</sup> In graphic work, this could be achieved through the superimposition of images, words, or forms.

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35. Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', (1999). p. 768

36. Ibid. p. 772

37. Ibid. 774-778



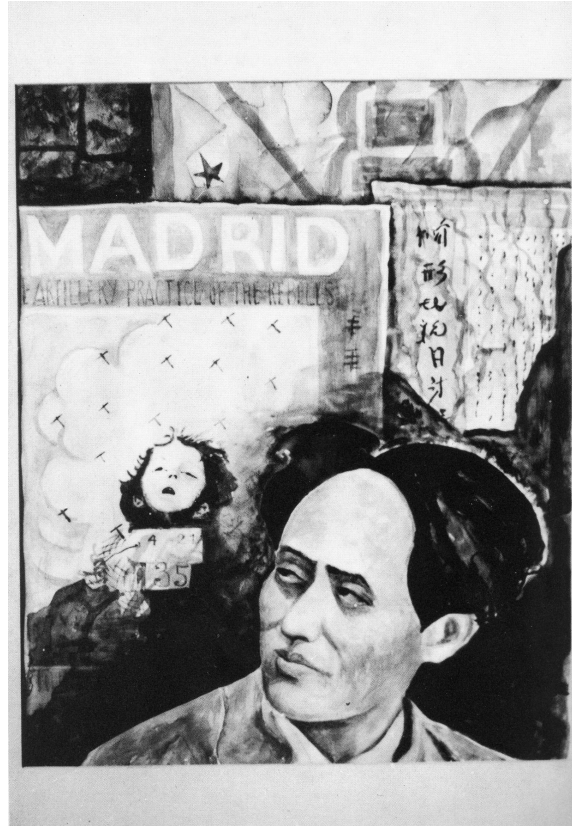


Figure 3.13 Paraskeva Clark, Paraskeva Clark, *Portrait of Mao* (1938)

In *Portrait of Mao* (1938) Paraskeva Clark adopted similar methods to those used in *Presents from Madrid* as well as Rodchenko's *Untitled Poster* (1924). Clark employed the techniques of montage strategically in her painting practice by utilizing objects she had to hand, effectively attempting to depict them in a non-hierarchical fashion. The readings *Portrait of Mao* elicits are not dissimilar to what was intended by artists like Rodchenko who employed constructivist principles in their practice when they produced their graphic montages.<sup>38</sup>

Paraskeva Clark assembled the elements in the watercolour so that it is the constructed process of arranging and presenting the images in two dimensions that distinguishes the painting. It is

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38. In addition to artists associated with INKhUK such as Popova, Rodchenko, Stepanova El Lissitzky, Gustav Klutskis advocated the de-individualized hand of the producer that worked in service of the people. Rodchenko and other INKhUK artists stood in contrast to Klutskis along with the subsequent group of Agit Prop artists who worked with photomontage for they actively decided demonstrate solidarity with the proletariat. See Ibid. pp. 778-9.

exceptional not only for the unconventional use of the medium but also because the work functions as an interruption such that a viewer is called upon to think about what is being represented in this collection of imagery.<sup>39</sup>

In *Portrait of Mao* we encounter a representation of Mao Zedong painted from a photograph, alongside a poster from Madrid with text that reads: 'Artillery Practice of the Rebels' [sic]. Natalie Luckyj identified the poster as depicting a dead child killed at the hands of Franco and fascist/ Nazi-assisted bombing campaigns.<sup>40</sup> What appears to be a window pane or a wire enclosure is included in the upper left of the composition beside what may be another flag or cloth, which is denoted by the number 8, which I suggest is a reference to Mao's Eighth Route Army.<sup>41</sup> A five-pointed star, symbol of the Chinese Communists, is discernible, as is a poster with calligraphy.

Although print and photo-based art was filtering into the art world by the 1930s, such practices were derided in Canada as unequivocally low-brow. By drawing on her knowledge of both formal and more commercial artistic practices, Paraskeva Clark intervened in an established arts community whose ideological focus still centred around questions of nationalism.<sup>42</sup> In the United States, montage and photomontage in particular was used in

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39. The choice of watercolour also attests to Paraskeva Clark's interest in processes. In the interview with Charles Hill, the artist speaks in deference to David Milne's abilities in the medium of watercolour. Although Clark served as president of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour for a short period (1948-50) before resigning the post in frustration over narrow-minded exhibition policies regarding appropriate subject matter for watercolour paintings, she considered watercolour to be a useful medium especially for preparatory work in done in paint. Watercolour, traditionally defined, seems an odd choice for the practice of montage as it is more commonly found in film/photo based media, although as Walter Benjamin eloquently points out the technique was used in sound, (radio), and in literature and the important elements are processes and the ability to provoke thought. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, (2008)

40. Natalie Luckyj, "'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 229.

41. Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990). p. 460 The 8th Route Army was the wartime name for the Red Army.

42. By the late 1930s after the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters, the prevalent discourse with

advertising as a central means of connecting to mass audiences. In Europe, montage techniques were employed prior to World War I in postcards that satirized political personalities, and notably in Russia Gustav Klutsis claimed to have been the first to employ photomontage in 1919 by stating his intent that the technique ought to be viewed as a political tool rather than a new formal method.<sup>43</sup> These methods, which disrupted the viewing process by fragmenting any narrative, underscore the need for a viewer's participation to actively read the image. This returns us to the idea of immanent critique, where the questioning comes from within.

An informed reading of the watercolour *Portrait of Mao* might lead a viewer to think about contemporary world events. Given that this image was completed in 1938, four years after the beginning of the Long March when Mao Zedong emerged as the Communist leader in China, one would be guided toward considering the situation in China, and in particular the ongoing conflict with Japan that began with the Japanese invasion of mainland China in 1937. Viewed alongside the poster of Madrid that depicts a dead child killed as a result of the ongoing Spanish Civil War one would consider the two major world conflicts, and the political ideologies associated with each: Fascism in Spain, Germany, and Italy and Communism in

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respect to artistic practice still centred around questions of nationalism as expounded by the Group of Seven, whose members, ironically, initially worked as graphic and commercial artists. Landscape painting was promoted by exhibiting societies as well as by the National Gallery of Canada in spite of the fact that the CGP strove to encompass 'the amateur movement' in order to enable 'a wide appreciation of the right of Canadian artists to find beauty and character in all things ... to extend the creative faculty beyond the professional meaning of art and to make of it a more common language of expression.' Canadian painting would be seen to consequently include a broader range of subject matter beyond 'landscape art', as 'figures and portraits have been slowly added to the subject matter, strengthening and occupying the background of landscape ...' These statements from the first Canadian Group of Painters' exhibition, held in 1933, can be found in the AGO library and archives and are quoted in Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (1973). p. 174.

43. Margarita Tupitsyn, *From the Politics of Montage to the Montage of Politics, Montage and Modern Life 1919-1942*. exh. cat. ed. by Matthew Teitelbaum (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1992). (83-127). p. 83. Christopher Phillips cites John Heartfield's photomontage '*Jedermann sein eigener Fussball*' (Everyone His Own Soccerball), cover for *Illustrierte Halbmonatsschrift* vol. 1, no. 1, 15 February, 1919 as an early example of the artist's use of montage in this illustration that satirizes a group of German political figures. See Christopher Phillips, *Introduction*, (1992). p. 26

both Europe and Asia. The juxtaposition of Mao Zedong's image against one that evokes the Spanish Civil War would have also had personal significance for Paraskeva Clark, for each conflict references Norman Bethune.

After returning to Canada in 1937 from his service in the Spanish Civil War, Bethune joined the Communists in China in 1938. In China, Bethune continued his work with mobile blood transfusion clinics performing surgeries on the front lines and training doctors, nurses, and orderlies. Bethune died of blood poisoning from a cut received during surgery while working with the Eighth Route Army in 1939.<sup>44</sup> The troubling element in the composition of *Portrait of Mao* is the depiction of the dead child victim of Franco's Nazi-assisted bombing campaigns, which is the central image included in the poster from Madrid. A subtle yet forceful critique of the brutal tactics of the Fascists can be detected in this watercolour montage.

Natalie Luckyj reads the work as a representation that conflates 'personal intimacy and the public discourse of male action, signified overtly by Mao and covertly by Bethune's pervasive emotional presence. The representation is nuanced and elegiac.'<sup>45</sup> The presentation of Chinese and English texts layered over what Luckyj understands as a Republican banner with the star of the International Brigade allowed Clark to present multiple elements and narratives that were also personally significant. In addition to the production of a politically engaged work that encourages viewers to sift through the various images represented here and to arrive at interpretations for themselves, the watercolour contains a dominant and muted narrative.

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44. Roderick Stewart, *Norman Bethune*, (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd, 2002).

45. Natalie Luckyj, "'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield': The Politics of Memory and Identity", (2006). p. 229.

Paraskeva Clark's work may be understood in terms of the tetralinguistic model employed by Deleuze and Guattari to describe the various functions of language in relation to various mechanisms of power. Using Henri Gobard's work that distinguishes four types of language: *vernacular*, the maternal or territorial language that is rural in origin or use; *vehicular*, primarily urban languages used in commerce and government, which is described as 'a language of the first sort of deterritorialization;' *referential*, the language of sense and culture, and national languages that operate through a recollection or reconstruction of the past; *mythic*, the language of spiritual, religious, or magical realm.<sup>46</sup> Deleuze and Guattari further explain that:

The spatiotemporal categories of these languages differ sharply: vernacular language is here; vehicular language is everywhere; referential language is over there; mythic language is beyond. But above all else, the distribution of these languages varies from one group to the next, and, in a single group, from one epoch to the next (for a long time in Europe, Latin was a vehicular language before becoming referential, then mythic; English has become the worldwide vehicular language for today's world.) What can be said in one language cannot be said in another, and the totality of what can and can't be said varies necessarily with each language and with the connections between these languages. Moreover, all these factors can have ambiguous edges, changing borders, that differ for this or that material. One language can fill a certain function for one material and another function for another material. Each function of a language divides up in turn and carries with it multiple centres of power.<sup>47</sup>

If we think of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts as extending to visual language the tetralinguistic model may be applied to images. Considered in the context in which Paraskeva Clark was working, Canadian painting exemplified by the Group of Seven and their followers can be categorized as mythic, for the spiritual qualities and feelings the work engenders. The landscapes of the Group of Seven might also be classed as vernacular for the rural origins and

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46. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). p. 23. See also Daniel W. Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence", (1998). p. xlvi.

47. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). pp. 23-24.

subject matter. The art historical canon, replete with traditional modes of representation could be understood as the vehicular language, along with the institutional language of museum curators, for example. The visual language of European modernism has a cultural and referential function. As Daniel W. Smith notes, 'the more a language acquires the characteristics of a major language, the more it tends to be affected by internal variations that transpose it into a "minor" language. ... Minor languages are not simply sublanguages (dialects or idiolects), but express the potential of the major language to enter into a becoming-minoritarian in all its dimensions and elements.'<sup>48</sup> Thus, by employing a referential language, that of European modernism, in the context of Canadian cultural practice, Paraskeva Clark reworks the visual language of watercolour painting by taking it further.

The pushing of a language to its limits constitutes a line of flight, which prompts sensing anew or thinking differently. We may understand Paraskeva Clark's use of montage, a technique belonging to the grammar of European modernism, as innovative, particularly given that both of her montage paintings, *Presents from Madrid*, and *Portrait of Mao* are painted using watercolours. The innovative use of the medium functions as a line of flight, for it pushes the compositional organization to the limit and forces viewers to think. If you do not read either *Presents from Madrid* or *Portrait of Mao* as still life paintings in the conventional sense, but rather consider them as montages that provide a non-hierarchical presentation of images that allow people to read in spite of the lack of an overarching narrative, new possibilities are opened up, and an intensive micropolitics of the image is engendered through montage.

Deleuze and Guattari speak of 'impossibilities' in relation to the work of Franz

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48. Daniel W. Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence", (1998). p. xlvii. Smith writes: 'English, because of its very hegemony, is constantly being worked on from within by the minorities of the world, who nibble away at that hegemony and create the possibility for new mythic functions, new cultural references, new vernacular languages with their own uses.'

Kafka, whose work they consider as exemplary of a minor literature. Kafka wrote of a set of linguistic impossibilities that his situation as a bilingual or multilingual writer imposed on him: the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing other than in German.<sup>49</sup> As a Czech Jew writing in German, Kafka deterritorialized language and appropriated it for minor uses. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, Prague German is a deterritorialized language, for it is a language that is 'cut off from the masses, like a "paper language" or an artificial language;<sup>50</sup> Writing in this form of language represents an impossibility. With the creation of a set of impossibilities, one also creates possibilities.<sup>51</sup> Considered in context, where montage techniques were not employed in fine art both of Paraskeva Clark's watercolour montages represent impossibilities, particularly in terms of the representational conventions in place in Canada at this time. Clark's watercolours are to a degree illegible, and thus were mistaken as 'whimsical still-life paintings', yet new possibilities become evident when a viewer engages with the visual components presented here so that they operate as a line of flight.

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49. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, (1986). p. 16

50. Ibid. p. 16

51. As Deleuze remarked in *Negotiations*: 'We have to see creation as tracing a path between impossibilities ... A creator who isn't grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator's someone who creates their own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities. ... Without a set of impossibilities, you won't have a line of flight, the exit that is creation, the power of falsity that is truth.' Gilles Deleuze quoted in Daniel W. Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence", (1998). p. xlviii.



Figure 3.14 Paraskeva Clark, *Petroushka* (1937)

Paraskeva Clark first addressed a social and political subject in a large-scale oil painting when she produced *Petroushka* in 1937. Clark described this canvas as her 'most important' work, one which brought her 'great satisfaction in having struggled in the directions of ideals ... in my soul.'<sup>52</sup> *Petroushka* is the only painting of Paraskeva Clark's that is included in the Canadian art historical canon, and it appears in some survey texts on the subject.<sup>53</sup> The

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52. Paraskeva Clark quoted in Natalie Luckyj, "'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield?': The Politics of Memory and Identity", (2006). p. 230

53. Although Paraskeva Clark appears in both editions of Dennis Reid's survey text on Canadian painting, *Petroushka* is only addressed in the second edition, published in 1988 (p. 185). Clark receives only a passing reference as one of the many women painters working in the 1930s in J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History*, and *Petroushka* is not discussed. Harper and Reid's books constitute the major survey texts devoted to Canadian painting. See J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,



political implications of this work are not immediately apparent, and while this is understandable in light of the repressive context in which this painting was produced with laws such as Section 98 of the Criminal Code and the Padlock Law that instilled real fear for expressing views sympathetic to Communist ideals, the allegorical quality of the painting demands that viewers engage in a process of deciphering and thinking about the scene. The modernist style employed is in keeping with Clark's watercolour montage paintings and may be described as not easily legible.<sup>54</sup> As a result of the layer of unintelligibility in this painting, the political import of this work was lost on a reviewer who described *Petroushka* as 'near-primitive fantasy' in the *New York World Telegram* after the work was exhibited in New York in 1939.<sup>55</sup>

Contrary to the unidentified reviewer, *Petroushka* is a real and incisive critique. It was painted in response to an incident that took place in Chicago where five striking steel-workers were brutally killed by police. Some of the imagery used was based on newspaper images, and Clark attached a clipping from the *Toronto Daily Star* reporting the events that took place in South Chicago on Memorial Day, 1937, when police suppressed striking workers at the Republic Steel Corporation.<sup>56</sup> In contrast to both the actual images affixed to the back of the

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1977). p. 312 and Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, (1973). The painting is now part of the National Gallery of Canada's permanent collection, and the virtual gallery, cybermuse, contains an audioguide discussion in relation to *Petroushka*, citing the canvas as an example of work that is committed to social justice. See National Gallery of Canada, 'Cybermuse: Artwork Page - *Petroushka*', National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa <[http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork\\_e.jsp?mkey=14957](http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork_e.jsp?mkey=14957)> [(March 22, 2010)]

54. Natalie Luckyj identifies *Petroushka* as a covert approach to political subject matter, and attributes the concealment of the source material to the fear in the climate when Tim Buck, leader of the Communist Party of Canada was jailed along with seven others charged with sedition under section 98 of the Criminal Code. Clark recounted in interview in 1979 how she feared being arrested and jailed. Luckyj also attributes the covert handling of subject matter to gender and Clark's 'outsider' status: 'Clark's status as an outsider and a woman, in addition to being a Communist sympathizer, made her especially wary of speaking openly in *Petroushka* or elsewhere. The complex depiction of ethnicity and modernity we see in *Petroushka* was Clark's way of presenting herself as a communist-leaning Russian émigré to an Anglo-Canadian audience. Natalie Luckyj, "'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 233.

55. The remarks of the unidentified author of the review are quoted in *Ibid.* p. 339 n. 38.

56. Below the images depicting the clash with police, the first line of the article 'Five Steel-Strikers Killed in Clash With Chicago Police' is legible: 'Five men were killed and 75 injured in the clash between police and raged to a

canvas and the scene depicted in American artist Philip Evergood's oil on canvas *American Tragedy* (1937) that render the same conflict between the Chicago police and the striking steelworkers more clearly, Clark has concealed the reference to the specific event by turning the scene into a puppet theatre. Drawing from the street puppet theatres of her youth in St. Petersburg, Clark has added a layer of unintelligibility to the painting and the specific reference to the strike and ensuing clash with police in Chicago remains covert.

The scene represented in *Petroushka* was inspired by the street performances of the wandering troupes of musicians and puppeteers that took place in the cobblestone courtyards of the working-class tenement areas in St. Petersburg. Paraskeva Clark recalled partaking of this type of entertainment while she was growing up, and in the canvas we see an audience of working people—including mothers, children, and workers—who have all gathered to watch the puppet show. The scene depicts three puppets: one fallen worker, a policeman holding a billy-club that has been used to beat the worker in one hand and a revolver in the other, and finally a robber-baron figure holding bags of money in each hand. The fallen worker is 'Petroushka', a beloved Russian folk-character who was a symbol for suffering humanity.<sup>57</sup>

The gathered crowd appear displeased with the scene on display or at best unsure of how to react. In the lower right corner, an older man looks down with a worried expression while the figure to his right scowls and also looks away from the puppet show. The elderly man has his hand placed on the back of worker, who raises a clenched fist in the recognizable

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climax. Officers allegedly drew ... and fired into the crowd.'

57. Petrushka is a Russian Punch or Pulcinella figure. The folk character's story was told in Stravinsky's ballet, *Petroushka*. Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 27. Performed in 1911, Stravinsky's *Petroushka* was one of the most successful and influential of the Ballet Russe's productions. Alexander Benois, whom Paraskeva Clark's future father-in-law Oreste Allegri worked with, contributed to the development of the scenario, and designed the costumes and sets for the original production. See *Early Twentieth-Century Russian Drama* (Northwestern University).

workers' salute. This demonstration of solidarity with the fallen worker has a double function, for it stands in for the artist's own allegiance with the striking workers and more broadly with the leftist activists who most commonly raised their fists in an expression of strength, defiance and unity. The symbol was most often used by Marxists, Communists, anarchists, and trade-unionists, particularly during and after the Spanish Civil War, although it was first used more broadly as a symbol of the workers movement and was associated with the Comintern during the 1920s and 1930s. Although Paraskeva Clark has concealed the political force of the composition by, as she said, '[making] the dolls ... [the] main social characters: Capitalist, police [and] worker.'<sup>58</sup> that she was a Communist sympathizer becomes apparent in this painting. She has possibly inserted herself into the scene as well, underscoring her political beliefs, for the woman holding a baby in front of the large red building and to the left of the puppet stage is believed to be self-portrait. Furthermore, in painting *Petroushka*, Clark was putting into practice her challenge to her fellow artists, which she had clearly articulated in her article 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield'.

*Petroushka*, like *Portrait of Mao* and *Presents from Madrid* marked a stylistic departure for the painter. Clark recalled that her work with fellow European emigré René Cera creating 'huge stage like decoration panels' for Eaton's department store in downtown Toronto gave her the confidence to tackle 'new problem[s] which gave me the nerve to try experimentation

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58. Paraskeva Clark quoted in Natalie Luckyj, "'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield': The Politics of Memory and Identity", (2006). p. 232

Figure 3.15 Paraskeva Clark, *Drawing for Eaton's Window* (1935)



in my easel painting [and] watercolours.<sup>159</sup> These paintings of 1937 in both watercolour and oil are indications of Paraskeva Clark's technically innovative use of both media. As Walter Benjamin noted when discussing technique in relation to the 'correct political tendency' of works of writing and art, it was through technical innovation that truly political art could be achieved. For as Benjamin remarked, political tendency was necessary but not sufficient. The work must demonstrate correct or revolutionary technique, and it must be of quality. That Paraskeva Clark began to experiment in her work is significant particularly in light of the more socially and politically conscious subject matter. As Benjamin stated: 'technical progress is for the author as producer the foundation of his political progress.'<sup>160</sup>

The depiction of space in *Petroushka* is one of the markers of the technically innovative approaches to composition that Paraskeva Clark was developing. Clark was perhaps drawing on her knowledge of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's theories in relation to space,

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59. Paraskeva Clark quoted in *Ibid.* p. 230

60. Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', (1999). p. 775

which he felt was 'one of the main narrators' in his paintings.<sup>61</sup> Petrov-Vodkin developed a theory of perspective that was contrary to that of the traditional three-dimensions represented in painting that observed the laws of geometry and had been prevalent in painted representations since the Renaissance. Petrov-Vodkin developed a system that deviated from the laws of geometry, which he termed 'spherical perspective.' Petrov-Vodkin's spherical perspective dispensed with traditional composition that followed horizontal and vertical lines. The aim of his system of spatial thinking was to change the vantage point of the viewer such that what was observed was altered.<sup>62</sup>

In *Petroushka* the buildings are represented at angles so they do not follow a vertical axis, and function so that viewers are drawn to the makeshift stage and the spectacle of the puppets. The distortion of the buildings recalls the use of montage in films, specifically Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) where images of trains and buildings, to list but two examples, are shot at extreme and shifting angles. The cinematic stills are superimposed so that one shot dissolves into another to create a vertiginous image of the city. While Paraskeva Clark did not juxtapose images as she had done by layering the objects and images in the watercolours of 1937-38, the dizzying scene of the urban courtyard in *Petroushka* is central to the notion of movement in the image. The element of movement is important to montage theory as it evolved in Russia roughly between 1924 and 1930. In *Petroushka*, the spectator's gaze is guided from the angled buildings to the podium where the street theatre is being performed. Vertov argued that intervals, or the transition from one movement to another, was central to montage and was what drew the elements of the cinematic narrative to a kinetic

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61. Lev Mochalov, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, (1980). p. 12.

62. Ibid. pp.10-11 Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's notebooks that describe his theories on perspective and his system of spatial thinking are held in the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.

resolution.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein developed a theory of the interval in which movement played an important role in directing the thought process of the viewer. Eisenstein wrote:

the strength of montage resides in this, that it involves the creative process, the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame creative path that the author traveled in creating the image (idea). The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image (idea) just as it was experienced by the author.<sup>64</sup>

The angling of the buildings direct the viewer to the puppet show taking place in the courtyard, and also instil a sense of instability and disorientation. The composition Clark employed directs viewers through the spatial elements to the crowd and the puppets in the foreground of the image.

The podium or stage where the puppet show takes place appears larger than life, especially in comparison to the audience and the figure with a drum who perhaps serves as a narrator for the scene enacted with the dolls. For Cézanne and his followers, an object was above all an essential element in composing the picture plane. The enlargement of the podium where the puppets play out their scenes is reminiscent of Petrov-Vodkin, for he also often enlarged his objects so that viewers were encouraged to engage in a process of refocussing.<sup>65</sup> The disorienting effect of the angled buildings may have also contributed to this process. The enlargement of objects was meant to draw a viewer in to the scene as they tried to work out the conflict between space and surface. The large fence separating the cobblestone courtyard

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63. Sergei Eisenstein quoted in Annette Michelson, 'The Wings of Hypothesis: On Montage and the Theory of the Interval', (1992). p. 61.

64. Sergei Eisenstein, 'Word and Image' quoted in Ibid. pp.63-64. It should be noted that Michelson understands Eisenstein as deeply implicated in the tradition of Russian symbolist aesthetics as they had developed in the pre-Revolutionary era as opposed to the commonplace view that he was a constructivist innovator. Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin was associated with the Russian Symbolist Blue Rose group. Michelson noted that music played an important role in the development of Eisenstein's theories on montage and the interval in cinema. See p. 69.

65. Lev Mochalov, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, (1980). p. 13.

is painted diagonally, and emphasizes the drama that is the central part of the composition. With the exception of the podium, a few of the figures, and the fallen worker, nothing is composed along vertical or horizontal lines. It is conceivable that Paraskeva Clark was putting Petrov-Vodkin's theories of spherical perspective to use as she faced new technical challenges in her politically oriented paintings.

The oblique angles of the buildings that direct attention toward the puppet theatre and the crowd assembled to watch the scene play out can be understood in terms of Bertolt Brecht's concept of the *gestus*. Brecht defined the 'gest' or *gestus* as the expression of an attitude as opposed to 'gesticulation: it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movements of the hands, but of overall attitudes. A language is gestic when it is grounded in a *gest* and conveys particular attitudes adopted by the speaker towards other men.<sup>66</sup> In relation to artistic principles, Brecht noted that *gestus* allowed for the artist (or musician) to adopt a political attitude. For this to be achieved, the artist should employ a social *gest*, which is explained as follows:

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66. Bertolt Brecht, 'On Gestic Music', translated by John Willett <<http://www.english.emory.edu/DRAMA/BrechtGestic.html>> [(May 17, 2010)]

Not all gests are social gests. The attitude of chasing away a fly is not yet a social gest, though the attitude of chasing away a dog may be one, for instance if it comes to represent a badly dressed man's continual battle against watchdogs. One's efforts to keep one's balance on a slippery surface result in a social gest as soon as falling down would mean 'losing face'; in other words, losing one's market value. The gest of working is definitely a social gest, because all human activity directed towards the mastery of nature is a social undertaking, an undertaking between men. On the other hand a gest of pain, as long as it is kept so abstract and generalized that it does not rise above a purely animal category, is not yet a social one. But this is precisely the common tendency of art: to remove the social element in any gest. The artist is not happy till he achieves 'the look of a hunted animal'. The man then becomes just Man; his gest is stripped of any social individuality; it is an empty one, not representing any undertaking or operation among men by this particular man. The 'look of a hunted animal' can become a social gest if it is shown that particular manoeuvres by men can de-grade the individual man to the level of a beast; the social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances.<sup>67</sup>

In keeping with Brecht's theory of the gestus, Paraskeva Clark's *Petroushka* allows conclusions to be deduced about the social and political circumstances in spite of the fact that the action is represented through the guise of the puppet theatres. A puppet show is not in itself political; but when it becomes a puppet show in the context of the Chicago steelworkers who were brutally killed by the police in 1937, as it is portrayed in *Petroushka*, it may be recognised as social gest. Viewers can register the isomorphic relationship between the actual struggle that occurred in Chicago and the struggle that Clark represented in the puppet show being presented to the assembled audience in the cramped courtyard. The relationship between the actual struggle and the one represented by the puppets is underscored once the presence of the newspaper clipping affixed to the back of the canvas is known. Furthermore, the audience is made aware of the social circumstances and the attitude of the artist.

Paraskeva Clark continued to produce socially conscious and politically engaged work throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Her watercolour entitled *Evening Walk on Yonge Street*

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67. Ibid.



(1938), while more conventional in its composition than either *Presents from Madrid*, *Portrait of Mao*, or *Petroushka*, the painting is more explicit in its social message. The watercolour depicts a couple in shadow walking down the major Toronto street as they pass an elegant department store that is lit up. It is the light from the window display showcasing women in elegant gowns that casts the couple in shadow. Both figures walking in the street appear to struggle as they navigate the darkened street; the woman is hunched forward, and the man walks on crutches.<sup>68</sup> Clark has contrasted the harsh realities of the 1930s, where many people were struggling economically and physically, against a backdrop of glamour and wealth signified by the fashionable dresses on display in the storefront window. The garments on display would have been available only to a minuscule few, and consequently Clark has aligned herself against the bourgeoisie in the class struggle.

That Clark's sympathies were with the disenfranchised members of society, and that her images were in service to the proletariat in the class struggle, is evident in her drawings *Image of the Thirties* (no date) and *It's 10 Below Outside* (1940). *Image of the Thirties* again employs the device of an angled door-frame that opens up to a scene of a man down on his luck, struggling to stay warm against the cold. In contrast to the enlarging effect of the angled door-frame in *Myself* (1933), the subject of *Image of the Thirties* appears smaller as his slight frame huddles against an austere and presumably cold outdoor scene sketched in the background. *It's 10 Below Outside* also draws attention to the cold climate that the economically disadvantaged had to contend with, as the image depicts a large room filled with figures huddled together,

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68. Natalie Luckyj understands the figures as a family group, as she believes that the woman is holding a child, however, when examined carefully, it appears that there are only the two figures and the woman has her arms bent. Luckyj reads the image as one in which the couple 'brace themselves against an unseen force and struggle bravely to move forward, oblivious to the glittering, luminous world of bourgeois fashion on display in the store window behind them.' See Natalie Luckyj, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield": The Politics of Memory and Identity', (2006). p. 234

taking shelter from the cold. The figures sleep, some wrapped in blankets, and in creating this drawing, Clark draws attention to the number of people affected by the hard times following the stock market crash of 1929. These works again demonstrate that Clark was producing work in service of those affected most by the class struggle, and meets the criteria set out for revolutionary art by Walter Benjamin in 'The Author as Producer.'

Clark's work of this period also reflects her political beliefs with regard to the function of the artist in modern society. In particular, both *Image of the Thirties* and *It's 10 Below Outside* also serve as a challenge to Elizabeth Wyn Wood, who in her defence of the Canadian artist's right to paint landscapes wrote in her article 'Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield' that:

There is everywhere a general tendency toward the creation and maintenance of well being among the people as a whole. ... Utter desperation such as is prevalent in Europe today is practically unknown to us by actual experience. ... On the American continent the peculiar contribution of our way of life has been some measure of classlessness and of racial co-operation.<sup>69</sup>

Wood's remarks are naive and demonstrate the sculptor's ignorance of the social and economic realities of Canada at the time. Clark responded to Wyn's remarks, stating that they reflected 'careless thinking' and an 'absolutely unexpected lack of insight'.<sup>70</sup> Clark sided with Frank Underhill who wrote that Canadian artists ought to follow European artists who 'have been compelled to rethink the whole question of the relation of the artist to society ... [they] are deciding one after another that in our troubled generation the artist must be red or dead.'<sup>71</sup> From 1937 onwards Paraskeva Clark produced works in which she fulfilled her expressed commitment to an art that serves a social function.

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69. Elizabeth Wyn Wood quoted in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 25.

70. Paraskeva Clark, 'Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield', (April 1937). p. 16.

71. Frank Underhill quoted in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark : Paintings and Drawings*, (1982). p. 25.

Clark continued to produce socially engaged work throughout the 1940s. In a canvas documenting the celebrated Russian army sniper Ludmilla Pavlichenko's visit to Toronto in 1943 entitled *Pavlichenko and Her Comrades at the Toronto City Hall* (1943), Clark commemorated the Russian revolutions of 1918 with the following inscription: 'February 21, 1943/25th Anniversary of the Heroic Red Army.' In contrast to compositions such as *Petroushka*, the painting marking Pavlichenko's visit to city hall is rendered in a legible style. The crowds Clark represents coming to celebrate Pavlichenko's arrival at city hall are rendered in quick gestural brushstrokes and no faces or figures are actually discernible in the masses gathered in the streets below the podium where Ludmilla Pavilchenko is shown alongside a fellow soldier and an unidentified figure addressing the throngs of people who have filled the streets. Pavlichenko and her comrade are the only figures who are clearly rendered, while the rest of the composition has been painted in a gestural style. Also in contrast to *Petroushka*, the buildings are painted along vertical axes and accord with the rules of perspective. In *A Toronto Streetcar* (1942), now in a public collection in St. Petersburg, Clark documented the public support for the Russians against the Germans during the siege of Leningrad. The canvas depicts a crowded Toronto streetcar filled with passengers reading newspapers, whose headlines announce a victory over the Germans at Leningrad.

Paraskeva Clark's work did alter the apparatus of visual production in Canada, and in turn the stance she took resonated with some of her contemporaries. Clark sent a copy of her *New Frontier* article along with Russian theoretician and Marxist Georgi Plekhanov's essay *Art in Society: A Marxist Analysis* (1912) to the critic Walter Abell, who responded enthusiastically:

I share entirely the ideas which you express. They are, I feel sure, the ideas of a new generation. The combination of these ideas as an impelling force with your technical equipment as a painter must certainly make you one of the creative centres in Canadian art at this time.<sup>72</sup>

Abell's response to Paraskeva Clark's written and visual production attest to the exemplary character of her work. Clark attempted to enlighten the Canadian intelligentsia for the need to produce work that was politically engaged and she also altered the apparatus of visual production by employing the techniques of montage and gestus with the aim of encouraging viewers to think about social conditions and political events.

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72. Walter Abell, New York, to Paraskeva Clark, Toronto, dated 21 August 1938, in the National Gallery of Canada archives.

## Coda: Some Concluding Thoughts

### *Deterritorializing the Refrain*

My work marks a beginning; an effort to produce a more nuanced and complete investigation into the working methods and artworks produced by Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, Jeanne Mammen, and Paraskeva Clark. In each case study, I have attempted to track a practice and analyse the artistic processes and works alongside an idea of marginality that takes as its starting point Susan Rubin Suleiman's concept of the 'double margin.' Throughout, I have held in mind how this thesis might be reworked into an exhibition so that the artists in question could enter into a productive dialogue. To stage this 'curatorial scene,' where one could encounter Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, Jeanne Mammen and Paraskeva Clark, as individual artists but where the commonalities between their working methods, their influences and political concerns could be highlighted alongside their individual achievements, would require a more integrated engagement than I have provided here. I chose to attend to these artists separately in three distinct case-studies, inviting comparisons without imposing them, however, I could have presented their works thematically. Presenting these artists and their works as distinct case studies allowed me to employ a method similar to Catherine de Zegher's 'curatorial procedure' in the exhibition *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art, In, Of, and From the Feminine* (1996). This working method was prompted by an observation of 'multiple convergences in aesthetic practice both in time ... and in space (in different parts of the world)', and my project also aims to unfold in an open-ended process.

De Zegher likened this type of curatorial work 'to an excavation of material traces and fragmentary histories, which would be recombined into new stratigraphies or configurations to produce new meanings ...'<sup>11</sup> Thus by bringing Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark into proximity with one another, the historian/curator is able to tease out commonalities

while respecting the difference and specificities of their respective practices. By employing a variety of theoretical vocabularies, I have been able to begin an investigation into the operations that tend and continue to marginalize certain kinds of artistic production while centralizing others.

How might one curate this project and at the same time deterritorialize the refrain?<sup>2</sup> By attempting to analyse the material traces of certain histories and practices that have been marginalized in order to produce new meanings marks an effort to participate in the 'performance' that Judith Mastai identified as 'a continually emerging institutional subjectivity.'<sup>3</sup> Mastai's practice of 'performing a new institutional subjectivity' strove to develop new strategies of engagement in the museum. This call for performative strategies of engagement, in my view, accords with Teresa De Lauretis' call to produce 'new spaces of discourse.'<sup>4</sup> As art historians and curators who work within the frames of feminism, we are called upon to read and present works differently, so that we are not caught in the trap of always writing and re-writing the same stories.

Through an examination that is historically grounded and which employs a variety of theoretical vocabularies, I have tried to read for what has previously been muted in the photographs, paintings and graphic works these respective women produced. It is my belief

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1. (1996). p. 20.

2. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write on music and its potential to deterritorialize the refrain or operate as a line of flight. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Translated by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004) pp. 330-332.

3. Judith Mastai, 'Performing the Museum: Education, Negotiation, Art Galleries and their Publics' (unpublished manuscript) quoted in *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*, ed. by Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). p. xix. I first came across Mastai's work as an MA Student in attendance at the international conference 'Museums After Modernism' held in Toronto in 2002. Here I learned that Mastai had described her work as an educator at the Vancouver Art Gallery as a performance, one which reflected the change, which she described as a condition of her work.

4. Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (1987). p. 25.

that these new strategies of engagement, including my own practice of reading and bringing disparate artists together, enable us to see previously overlooked issues concerning both modernism and gender.

My work in turn has tried to underscore the specificity of the encounter between work and viewer/scholar/curator to illustrate that the aesthetic experience can continually be renewed. Encounters with the works of these artists, whether in museum, archive, or secondary source materials such as the exhibition catalogue also illuminated the institutional mechanisms at work in the continued marginalization of certain practices. Three separate encounters with the material in actual archives in three different countries influenced my intellectual relationship and necessarily informed my readings of the artworks under discussion. My experience visiting the Jeanne Mammen *Fordeverein* in Berlin housed in Jeanne Mammen's former *Wohnatelier* highlighted the authoritative structure of the archive. Here the artist's legacy is tightly controlled, as amateur archivists determine the 'correct' interpretations of artworks, while also controlling who gets access to the material. Prior to this particular encounter, I was aware of the trappings of archival structures and methodology due to the complex issue of titling in Mammen's case. My experience shed light on the archive and art history's complicity in what Derrida termed *le mal d'archive*.

Acknowledging the instrumental role of such theoretical work facilitated a means for thinking through questions that are bound up with processes through which women's work has become marginalized. Moreover, by reading case studies through the theoretical prisms of contemporary feminist and philosophical thought, I have attempted to interrogate visual representations from the historical period between the wars for insights into conventional formations of modernism. My examination of artists who had no connection in their lifetimes—and seemingly only had the fact that they each were in Paris at crucial, formative

moments either before or during the 1920s—has yielded a picture of modernism that is transdisciplinary and transnational in nature. Despite having no ostensible connection, certain common threads have emerged through the analyses of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark that supports this view.

For each artist, theatre and theatricality, fashion, design, cinema, and French literature (notably Symbolist poetry) were of great importance. The realm of fashion illustration afforded women artists such as Marcel Moore and Jeanne Mammen new opportunities to produce art. Similarly, Paraskeva Clark was able to work in the theatre as a set designer. Their art practices were, therefore, transdisciplinary in nature, as their graphic work blurred the boundaries between so-called 'high' and 'low' art forms. Claude Cahun's practice was also one that was inherently transdisciplinary, for she was a writer and actress as well as a photographer who was part of a collaborative partnership. The interdisciplinary nature of Cahun's practice was exemplified in her artist's book *Aveux non Avenus*, for it is apparent that there text and image have a transversal relationship.

My examination of the artistic careers and influences of these artists, who were each linked to the city of Paris, contributes to a revision of the conventional view that Paris was the centre of modernist development, whose influence radiated outward. The transnational character of modernism in Paris is indicated by the absorption of international influences ranging from the avant-garde formations in Zurich and Berlin (Dada), Belgian and English Symbolism, Japanese wood-block prints and advertisement, to the Ballet Russes. Especially important was the exchange with the Russian avant-garde. Paris was therefore engaged in a dialogic process with other cultural centres.

It must be recognized that Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, Jeanne Mammen, and



Paraskeva Clark's work shares something with a variety of avant-garde movements. Moreover, this idea of 'elsewhere' resonates with avant-garde practice, for it gestures toward the famous concluding sentence of the 'First Surrealist Manifesto' (1924). Here André Breton declared the radical nature of the new movement by stating that its existence is elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Although these women were not invisible practitioners in their own time, both the conditions of their practices and a complete picture of their works have not been fully explored. I have taken the notion of the 'double margin' as an organizing concept in an effort to rewrite cultural narratives. In so doing, I have also attempted to make visible alternate pictures of these artists by writing from another perspective, one which De Lauretis identified as 'a view from elsewhere.'

Such an approach to the works of Cahun/Moore, Mammen, and Clark has allowed me to present readings that have not been produced thus far. My thesis has offered readings of these artists' work that correlates certain aesthetic choices exemplified by the 'double allegiance' with alternative forms of political allegiance. Through an expansion of Susan Suleiman's concept of the double margin such that ethnicity, sexuality, nationality as well as politics itself, is included in addition to gender, I have demonstrated that the position of being doubly marginal can be viewed positively and productively. This space enabled the political and subversive critiques that each artist put forward through their work. In turn, my interpretive praxis, which is informed by the social history of art, and feminist theory, while employing concepts such the pariah/*parvenu* dichotomy, minor literature, and the Frankfurt School writings on modernity and politics has enabled these innovative readings. I see this as a viable approach since the present study has traced encounters that most readings and critiques

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5. See André Breton 'First Surrealist Manifesto' (1924) reprinted in Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997). Although Breton's 'First Manifesto of Surrealism' has nothing to do with De Lauretis' conception of a 'view from elsewhere,' that the position of being 'doubly marginal' resonates with the avant-garde's chosen position on the margins, or as Breton put it *'l'existence est ailleurs'*, underscores Suleiman's point of a double-allegiance, or at least a formal allegiance to the avant-garde project.

of these artists' works have so far failed to explore in detail.

I have identified and read these practices as politically engaged in tandem with a social history of art model whereby artworks are understood as being connected to the social and political milieu in which they were created. Each of the practices considered here was deeply embedded in the historical events of the time. By reading the artworks that are not necessarily overtly political with the understanding that art does connect to the social and political structures in society allows us to expand our understanding of politics and art as well as our view of women as politically engaged artists. All the artists examined in this thesis applied their concern with social and political issues of the 1920s and 1930s to their art practice as well as in their lives. Each made political gestures that demonstrated a belief in leftist politics, in some cases dangerously so. Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore turned their performative practice into one of political resistance against the occupying Nazi forces in Jersey from 1940-1945 while Jeanne Mammen joined the Communist Party in Germany in 1931. Paraskeva Clark continued to produce and argue for political work in a climate where laws such as the infamous Padlock Law in Québec were passed to prevent the dissemination of so-called Communist or Bolshevik Propaganda.

It becomes possible, therefore to deterritorialize the refrain, both in writing and through a curatorial 'procedure' that employs new strategies of engagement, one which excavates material traces, and fragmentary histories in order to re-present artworks and artists. Writing about Claude Cahun's Jewishness, for example, or thinking about Jeanne Mammen as engaging in a critical practice akin to *flânerie*, and reading Paraskeva Clark as an artist whose work connected to the Russian avant-garde and who produced political paintings and portraits beyond *Petroushka*; all this produces interventions in art historical discourse that enable a

broader understanding of these artists.

The archives associated with these artists contain much more material than was possible to address within the constraints of the case-studies outlined here. There remains work to be done using both the concepts of the double margin and political engagement as a prism through which the work and archival material relating to each artist may be analysed. Moreover, the method of bringing multiple theoretical approaches to bear on these artists and their works while retaining a sense of the historical context will continue to yield new readings. This type of approach will also enable the performative strategies of engagement, deterritorializing the refrain so that further dialogues between artists and artworks may continue to unfold.

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