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Nietzsche's Spider: Forging and Furnishing the Revolution of the Word

> Winter had scampered away and Spring was waiting at the gates.
> Strange things were stirring in the soil and in our hearts.
> We were made drunk with the vision of Krishna and Christ.
> The spiders of despair shook themselves out of our souls in a trace of fear.
> We bowed our heads before the magic of an awakened beauty and thrilled to life […]
>
> —Eugene Jolas (1924)[1]

"The plain reader be damned." So ends the "Proclamation" of "The Revolution of the Word", a twelve-point manifesto printed in Eugene and Maria Jolas's seminal interwar modernist magazine, *transition* (1927-1938). The 1929 document—frontispiece to a new segment of experimental writing—heralded an age of new forms. Tired of what it called the "hegemony of the banal word", a striking emphasis of the provocation lay in its repeated insistence that "the literary creator" can "fashion" a new type of language. "Autonomous and unconfined", "disintegrat[ing]" the "primal matter of words", the Proclamation was a celebration of self-formation: an aspiration to an "a priori reality within ourselves alone".[2] Adorned with references to Blake, to Rimbaudean "hallucinations" in language, it also overlapped with the Francophone Surrealist movement, sharing a fascination with the unconscious "and its relation to the eternal mythos", as Jolas would later write.[3] Its fifteen signatories—Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, and Robert Sage among them—shone a light on a community of writers who often worked

[1] Eugene Jolas, "Nocturne at Press-Time", *Rhythmus* 2.2 (May-June 1924): 46-8 (p. 48).

[2] Eugene Jolas with Kay Boyle, Whit Burnet, Hart Crane, Caresse Crosby, Harry Crosby, Martha Foley, Stuart Gilbert, A. L. Gillespie, Leigh Hoffman, Elliot Paul, Douglas Rigby, Theo Rutra [Eugene Jolas's nom de plume], Robert Sage, Harold J. Salemson, and Laurence Vail, "Proclamation", frontispiece to *transition* 16/17 (July, Spring-Summer 1929): 13.

[3] Eugene Jolas, "Literature and the New Man", *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 13-19 (p. 15).

with that "primal matter" of language, and took aim squarely at the language of Anglophone advertising, insipid telegraphese, Midwestern realism, and ultimately the novel itself. The "Word", with its Biblical allusion to John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God"), is here forged as if in a smithy, and can be read as part of a wider articulation set out by Eugene Jolas of resistance to what he repeatedly referred to as "false humanism"—"[u]tilitarian metaphors", "[p]seudo-tranquility", and "normalization". [4] A powerfully transatlantic affirmation of modernity, then, the Revolution of the Word brought with it a new iteration of the materiality of language in an American-European context. How do we approach this "primal matter" of language, and get beyond its glitzy and laconic superciliousness? From where did the *transition* circle draw their inspiration? After all, the "Proclamation" is somewhat distracting—a preface, in effect, too easily shorn from the contents of a journal of major importance in our histories of literary modernism.

A useful way to approach this history, I contend, arises in two threads of analysis. First, it is essential to understand much of the journal's energy in a post-Nietzschean sense. The malaise of language felt by Jolas *et al.* in the late 1920s is deeply connected to Nietzsche's language philosophy from the 1870s onwards, as I will outline. Second, a major example of the philosopher's writing on the subject emerges from an animal metaphor that gains traction in the magazine in a number of telling ways. Strange as it may seem, it is Nietzsche's famous metaphor of modern man's self-generative, linguistic, aggrandising anthropomorphism as a spider—an image which finds articulation in both *transition*'s range of questionnaires, commentary, and editorial dicta, but also in its creative works. This recurring arachnid metaphor—spinning, inscribing, and forgetting language—opens the door to a distinctly anti-anthropocentric aspect to this disparate circle of artists.

[4] Eugene Jolas, "Depth and the Chthonian Image", in *The Language of Night* (The Hague: Servire Press, 1932), reprinted in Eugene Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951*, ed. Klaus H. Kiefer and Rainer Rumold (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 140-61 (p. 153).

Arachnids in a "compact, bulky magazine"

We might best understand the "primal matter" of language so celebrated in the "Proclamation" as brushing up against the limits of the human. *Transition* was part of what Margot Norris identifies as a biocentric tradition: a profound critique of the sovereignty of humanist progress "at the hands of beasts—writers whose works constitute animal gestures or acts of fatality". Broadly opposed to anthropocentrism—the measure of man in all things—biocentric artists share in a post-Darwinian articulation of "disanthropic and misanthropic" animal gestures. They inherit a revolutionary perception of form in nature that Darwin opened up, and are united in an anti-idealist, anti-metaphysical vision of the world. With an inherent hostility towards mimesis itself, Norris argues, the biocentric tradition is all but over after the 1930s, with the advent of the Second World War. The history of the Third Reich, with its appropriations of both Darwin and Nietzsche, is for Norris a falsification of biocentric thought, which is itself an "affirmation of the animal" forever open to its own reanthropomorphization, to its own destruction via the cultish notions of prowess, racial destiny, and genetic constitution. Yet somewhere in its self-nullifying orbit, the biocentric sensibility reveals a consciousness in interwar art and writing of the inescapable traces of metaphor in language.[5]

Transition, though not part of Norris's study, offers clues to this history, both in the influence of Nietzsche and his reception, and in the spider figures explored below. The magazine is therefore a rich source for investigation of what Tim Armstrong has called one of modernism's definitive "others", the animal.[6] Yet where animal studies tends to focus on the ethics of these othered, non-human subjectivities—talking parrots in D. H. Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), or the dogs in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* (1933) and Thomas Mann's *Bashan and I* (1923), for example—here we find the arachnid as an interpretive lens precisely for its metaphoric potential, and for what Armstrong notes as a "flight from mind,

[5] Margot Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst & Lawrence* (Baltimore, MA and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1, 20, 1-25, 2, 23, 143, 224.

[6] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), pp. 149-52.

into the primitive, visceral and communal"—a key concern of Jolas and his circle.[7] The eight-legged beast is a difficult creature indeed: an ever-expanding metaphor stretching from antiquity to our globalized, interconnected age for all that is venomous or ensnaring, networked or predatory. From Olidon Redon's *Crying Spider* (c. 1881) to Joseph Roth's prophetic novel about the formation of Nazism, *The Spider's Web* (1923), it is a metaphor for melancholy and "the metaphysical anguish in each of us", as Katarzyna and Sergiusz Michalski put it when describing Victor Hugo's spider image in his *Légende des siècles* (1857).[8]

Before turning to Nietzsche as an imprimatur for *transition*, it is important to consider another moving scholarly field, that of modern periodical studies, within which this investigation is situated. With the advent of digital humanities and scholarly conversations over the last decade, it is now irrefutable that the study of periodicals ("high", "low", coterie, pulp, and a myriad more forms) sits at the heart of modernist studies. Through expanded coverage by resources such as ProQuest, and major academic projects designed to establish and disseminate the magazine archive such as the Modernist Journals Project at Brown University, the Blue Mountain Project at Princeton, and the avant-garde titles housed at Monoskop, it is now possible to read hundreds of magazines online, from a two- or three-issue title such as Wyndham Lewis's 1914-1915 *Blast*, to the *Listener*, a sizeable generalist periodical designed to document BBC Radio broadcasting.[9] As well as a growing body of research addressing key issues in the study of print culture, from economic and market-driven understandings of commodity culture to bibliographic and biographical questions relating to a title's editorial formation, magazine studies has a more globalized, transnational scope than ever before. Between 2009 and 2013, Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker's *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* began the work of offering

[7] Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History*, p. 150. For two important animal studies of modernist literature, see Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (Chichester and New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), and Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[8] Katarzyna and Sergiusz Michalski, *Spider* (London: Reaktion, 2010), p. 89.

[9] The Modernist Journals Project at Brown University: http://www.modjourn.org/; Blue Mountain Project: Historic Avant-Garde Periodicals for Digital Research, at Princeton University: http://bluemountain.princeton.edu; Monoskop, a Wiki for Collaborative Studies of the Arts, Media and Humanities: https://monoskop.org.

introductory essays and an ever-expanding map of a wide range and geography of magazines, and the inauguration of Penn State University Press's *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* has been galvanizing the field since 2010.[10]

As Patrick Collier writes in a recent *JMPS* editorial, studies have evolved across a broadly bi-polar spectrum, from the vast projects preserving and disseminating a magazine archive, sometimes using network theory and visualization tools, to the "micro-study" of a single title, an individual, an art movement, or even a paratextual feature such as an advertisement.[11] Such methodological breadth is welcome, and due in large part to the range of approaches advocated in Robert Scholes's and Clifford Wulfman's ground-breaking *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (2010). There are many ways in which we might proceed when studying a magazine, after all. We might look at a single issue, turning each fragile page in order, or thumbing back and forth from the table of contents. Reading in this way might well throw up motifs, as in Scholes's and Wulfman's example of a December 1910 issue of *The New Age*, with its own critical discussions of Nietzsche. Such a close reading reveals the need to assess an editorial ethos across a title's evolution, as well as the things that only the eye can see, albeit helped with OCR technology and the preparatory work of data mining.[12] It also invites the reading of what Andrew Thacker has called "periodical codes", a nuancing of previous thinking on "bibliographical codes" in the work of Jerome McGann and George Bernstein.[13] These are "the material features that are at play in any magazine", ranging from page layout to price, typeface, periodicity (weekly, quarterly, etc.), use of illustrations, economics, and range of content (editorials, illustrations, verse, prose, etc.). Such codes are both internal and external, ranging

[10] Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-2013).

[11] Patrick Collier, "What Is Modern Periodical Studies?", *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 6.2, "Magazines and/as Media: Periodical Studies and the Question of Disciplinarity" (2015): 92-111 (pp. 94, 96).

[12] Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 159, 166.

[13] Andrew Thacker, "Crossing Borders with Modernist Magazines", *Variants: The Journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship* 9 (2012): 199-210 (p. 204). See, also, Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1991), and George Bornstein, *Material Modernisms: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

from the paper and typeface to a title's distribution in a bookshop or its patronage. What is pressing, Thacker suggests, is the relationship between these internal and external codes. On top of this critical requirement, I suggest, is the need to identify our reading practices as either synchronic—the assessment of a static entity, such as a poem, in a particular line-up, in a particular issue—or diachronic, examining the shifting sands of manifestoes and schools of thought that develop over time.[14]

Considering this situation, I turn to Jolas's "Revolution" with a diachronic approach based on a careful chronological reading of the many spiders and Nietzsches across *transition*'s c. 5,000 pages. I am motivated by a desire to productively span the spectrum Collier invokes—a method that might map an intellectual legacy and line of influence across *transition*'s eleven-year run, while also offering the "micro-study" of the spider as a synchronic focus. What follows is thus a thought experiment. What happens when we read a magazine as if it were a communal, singular text? What is revealed to us by tracing animal, metaphorical tropes? To be sure, *transition* has still received comparatively little critical focus, despite its size (the largest of the "little" magazines, we might say), and it offers the reader a staggering number of contradictions, for example its championing then shunning of Gertrude Stein, or its volte-face with regards to French Surrealism.[15] It was physically confounding, too. As Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich's pioneering 1947 study of little magazines puts it, *transition* was both neat and expansive, minimal yet sprawling: a

[14] For essential further reading in the field of modern periodical studies, see Suzanne W. Churchill and Adam McKible, *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). See, also, Ann L. Ardis and Patrick Collier, eds, *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Mark Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); and Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). For two highly illuminating recent studies addressing the transatlantic dimensions of both magazine culture and expatriate modernism, see Eric B. White, *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), and Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

[15] For an early biographical study of *transition*, see Dougald McMillan, *transition: the History of a Literary Era, 1927-1938* (London: Caldar and Boyars, 1975).

"compact, bulky magazine of around 150 pages" a month.[16] Beyond redressing the paucity of criticism on *transition*, I wish to nuance a common view of the magazine as something of a last gasp—the end of the "happy avant-garde", as it has been characterized. I want to offer an alternative approach to what some critics have regarded as its conservative implications.[17] This is more than a case of "Nietzsche among the modernists", to echo Shane Weller.[18] This is a striking constellation of spider metaphors, of which Nietzsche's is an early and important example, and which share aspects of his articulation of pathos in humanity's illusory, amnesiac spinning. I will first outline Nietzsche's crucial text, before surveying his reception in *transition*. I will then explore the various post-Nietzschean spider metaphors not as direct engagements with the philosopher but rather as a proliferation of images that can help us understand *transition*'s unique cultural history.

Webs and words

In his 1873 unpublished essay, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense", Nietzsche takes aim at a western metaphysical tradition whereby perception is understood as accessing a fixed reality. Instead, he argues, our perception cannot properly access nature, which can only ever be "inaccessible and undefinable". The construction of truth rests on the forgetting of its constituent illusions, or metaphors. Language is no more than a "movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms" that humans experience mindlessly (in an amnesiac contract) as concrete. Nietzsche speaks in a proliferation of metaphors, whilst simultaneously foregrounding the great obscuration of all figurative language.

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[16] Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 173-4. Over time *transition* switched to a quarterly production schedule, with a ten-year anniversary issue published in 1938.

[17] Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Joyce and Jolas: Late Modernism and Early Babelism", *Journal of Modern Literature* 22 (1998-99): 245-52 (p. 246); Jean-Michel Rabaté, review of Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951*, *Modernism/modernity* 18 (2011): 455-8; Rainer Rumold, "Archeo-logies of Modernity in *transition* and *Documents* 1929/30", *Comparative Literature Studies*, 37 (2000): 45-67; and Rainer Rumold, *Archaeologies of Modernity: Avant-Garde Bildung* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

[18] Shane Weller, "Nietzsche Among the Modernists", *Modernism/modernity* 14 (2007): 625-43.

Amid many animal metaphors, the most vivid is Nietzsche's use of *die Spinne*, the spider:

> [O]ne may certainly admire man as a mighty genius of construction, who succeeds in piling up an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation, and, as it were, on running water. Of course, in order to be supported by such a foundation, his construction must be like one constructed of spiders' webs: delicate enough to be carried along by the waves, strong enough to be blown apart by every wind. As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself.[19]

Already we can see the "self-forging" idea celebrated in *transition*, albeit here a problematic, rather than a cause. Nietzsche doesn't "escap[e] from the kind of error [he] denounces", in Paul de Man's words, and it's certainly an oxymoronic portrayal of truth, as J. Hillis Miller has shown.[20] Yet this is part of the essay's force. The spider offers Nietzsche an image of man simultaneously spinning and unspinning a solidly grounded truth: remembering and forgetting the constructedness of language at once. This is profoundly unlike the bee, whose blinkered accord with an organic continuum of nature is akin to an unquestioning hand, writing with golden ink. Friedrich Kittler has theorized Nietzsche as the philosopher of a tectonic shift between "discourse networks", between nineteenth- and twentieth-century visions of knowledge production. The text moves towards the "1900 discourse network", a profound uprooting of the organic continuum. Origin cannot so easily be mystified into an inherently harmonious system: Nietzsche's thought opens a chasm whereby the terror of non-origin, non-consciousness, and non-being is glimpsed at, as part of an apprehension of "pure

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[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense", in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 79-97 (pp. 83-4; 85).

[20] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 111, and J. Hillis Miller, "Dismembering and Disremembering in Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense'", *boundary 2* 9 (Spring-Autumn 1981): 41-54.

differentiality".[21] The spider's self-forged complexity of conceptual knowledge is here imbued with pathos: a loss of the more romantic writing or speaking subject.

Critics have interrogated the central tautology of an argument that states that all truth is illusion, yet illusion is the only site of truth.[22] But despite Maudemarie Clarke's positioning of the work as "juvenilia", as an assemblage of figures it can tell us something in relation to *transition*'s subsequent biocentric experiments in language, and in relation to the animal as a structuring principle of aesthetic renewal.[23] For the real motor of the prose, in Michael Bell's words, is Nietzsche's burning insight into the inherent "metaphoricity of thought".[24] Gregory Moore takes up the essay as Nietzsche's most polished unpublished work, and puts its aesthetic physiology in a nineteenth-century context, inheriting the romantic notion of the *Kunsttrieb*, in which all living things aspire to the production of art. "Truth and Lies" is therefore a statement in which the web of concepts, albeit envisioned with a pathos of the inescapability of the linguistic system, is fundamentally connected to *artistic* metaphoricity.[25] Nietzsche "questions the referential stability of language by positing that a lost 'primitive world of metaphor', the world of myth and art, has been displaced by modern, ossified metaphors that proclaim truth", as Chet Lisiecki has argued.[26] He mourns the loss of the "primitive" imagination, which returns so forcefully in the Revolution of the Word.

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[21] Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1900), p. 189.

[22] Peter Heckman, "Nietzsche's Clever Animal: Metaphor in 'Truth and Falsity'", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 24 (1991): 301-321; Breazeale, Introduction to Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth,* pp. xvii-liii.

[23] Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 65.

[24] Michael Bell, "Nietzscheanism: 'The Superman and the All-too-human'", in David Bradshaw, ed., *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2003), p. 57.

[25] Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 99.

[26] Chet Lisiecki, "'A Sort of Metaphor': Dynamic Figurative Language in Nietzsche, Pound, and H.D.", *Modernism/modernity* 22.2 (2015): 255-77 (p. 256).

Nietzsche's spider is a versatile figure for man's imprisoned position in the web as well as his puffed-up perception of power over the world. It draws attention to "the conceited nature of human knowledge", "deflating its pretensions", as Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large put it.[27] In the philosopher's later texts one encounters a *Kreuzspinne*, a garden spider with an implicit reference to the *Kreuz*, the cross or crucifix. Exploiting this allusion, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* refers directly to a spider-priest.[28] In the "Third Essay" in the *Genealogy of Morals*, God himself is the universal spider, an entity with which we must wrestle because our attitude is to a divine spinner of morality and purpose "behind the huge fishing net of causality".[29] As João Constâncio and Maria João Mayer Branco observe,

> [t]he sense impressions and sensorial horizons that encircle our bodies and depend on our sense organs are the cobwebs that we ourselves spin, and our conscious thoughts, our words and judgements, our "truths" and pieces of "knowledge" are no more than developments of those cobwebs and hence part of what we ourselves spin ("we spiders").[30]

Nietzsche's spiders are thus fluid symbols, with numerous paradoxical elements. The universal spinner, or God as *master* spider, is an idea which sits alongside the

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[27] Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large, eds, *The Nietzsche Reader* (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Victoria, Australia: Blackwell, 2006), p. 39.

[28] Alan D. Schrift, "Spider: Arachnophobe or Arachnophile? Nietzsche and his Spiders", in Christa Davis Acampora and Ralph R. Acampora, eds, *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp. 61-70, and João Constâncio and Maria João Mayer Branco, eds, *As the Spider Spins: Essays on Nietzsche's Critique and Use of Language* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), p. 3: "Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the spider that spins its cobweb to express his critique of the metaphysical and 'sick' use of language—but he also suggests that human beings ('we spiders') are in principle able to spin different, life-affirming, non-metaphysical cobwebs."

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 82. For reference to the "*Kreuzspinne*", see Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life", in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 108-09. For a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's spiders in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, see Schrift, "Spider", pp. 63, 65.

[30] João Constâncio and Maria João Mayer Branco, "'As the Spider Spins': Introduction", in Constâncio and Branco, eds, *As the Spider Spins*, pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

deeper metaphor, in the later *Dithyrambs of Dionysus,* of Ariadne in the labyrinth, caught in the very threads of her essence—and humanity's ascetic ideals.[31] The German word *Spinne*, significantly, also means "crazy". Though these later versions of the metaphor all play on the spider as a figure of might and mastery easily unravelled to dislocation, the spider in "Truth and Lies" effects a prior engagement, with language itself.[32]

"to quote Nietzsche"

Nietzsche's general influence and presence can be felt throughout *transition*, and there is even a trace of the essay on "Truth and Lies", available as it was in both German and English by the late 1920s.[33] As early as the second issue, the philosopher adorns a much-hyped text entitled "The Young European" by Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, the first chapter of which, released in *transition*, was a major publishing event. The narrator muses on whether or not he is a cosmopolitan, and enters a bookshop to buy "Bergson, Claudel, Gide, Barres, d'Annunzio, Kipling, and Nietzsche". The philosopher's mere name signifies the modern European mind, with a shade of irony: he's referred to as a "sensual fakir" that keeps La Rochelle's central character from sleep, acting as one in a roster of intellectual accoutrements.[34] The reference was not lost on *transition*'s co-editor Elliot Paul. Reviewing "The Young European" in an essay entitled "The New Nihilism", Paul diagnoses an abject "amorality that finds futility everywhere". Nietzsche is denounced, Paul insists, "as if [he] were [a] schoolboy".[35] Robert Sage also picks out this quality as a new hardiness in Drieu La Rochelle's narrative voice. Where an American is "whirled from his balance by the abstractions of […] Nietzsche",

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[31] For further discussion of Nietzsche's Ariadne, the tarantula, see Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p. 102.

[32] Schrift, "Spider", p. 62. For an account of the parodic play Nietzsche seems to be making here between *die Spinne* and Spinoza, by resting an arachnid at the heart of the Spinozan "geometric order", see Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor* (1972)*,* trans. Duncan Large (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 69.

[33] For more on Nietzsche's twentieth-century reception, see Bell, "Nietzscheanism", pp. 57-60.

[34] Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, "The Young European", trans. Elliot Paul, *transition* 2 (May 1927): 9-18 (p. 10).

[35] Elliot Paul, "The New Nihilism", *transition* 2 (May 1927): 164-8 (p. 164).

the titular European, by contrast, operates "with cold logic and senses alert, eager[ly] exploring the realities".[36] Such early articulations in the history of the magazine reference the philosopher in a suggestive manner: both an agent of a new narrative perspective, but also somewhat passé. Rather than a true engagement, however, these references signal the instrumentalization of the philosopher, as well as his important place in the contemporary imagination. It is pertinent to note that Drieu La Rochelle went on to become a vocal proponent of French fascism and later Nazism during the 1930s, before committing suicide in 1945.

Transition's early editorials evinced an earnest, indeed naïve vision of the philosopher-poet in its program to transcend the contemporary erosion of the word. In "Literature and the New Man", published in June 1930, Jolas speaks directly to Nietzsche's concept of "the will to illusion", rooted in the "Truth and Lies" piece. "In Nietzsche's sense", he writes, reiterating the 1929 manifesto, this is a "will to penetrate into the darkest recesses of the human spirit". The writer of the future will "make his own laws": he will "*invent* a new world in which appearance blends with reality, and in which the delusional mechanism is a voluntary act".[37] Jolas is here picking up on an exclusive English translation of an essay, released in the same issue, by Carl Jung. Jolas procured the text during a visit to the psychoanalyst's offices in early 1930, and wrote proudly in his memoirs about leaving the building with the manuscript in his pocket.[38] Entitled "Psychology and Poetry", the essay makes numerous references to Nietzsche as a visionary, a forerunner of what Jung calls the modern "convulsive outlook into beyond-human abysses", an outlook which "unveils itself as illusion, and the poet as deceived deceiver". The poet's "primal experience", Jung adds, "was human-all-too-human—so much so, that he was unable to take an attitude towards it, but to hide it from himself". Defining psychological and visionary forms of artistic

[36] Robert Sage, review of Drieu La Rochelle, "The Young European", *transition* 5 (August 1927): 150-54 (p. 154).

[37] Eugene Jolas, "Literature and the New Man", pp. 18, 19 (emphasis original). As Norris writes, "[t]he machine, as the emblem of the rational, obsesses the thinkers of the biocentric tradition and becomes the perennial target of their critiques" (*Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, p. 7).

[38] Eugene Jolas, *Man from Babel*, ed. Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 129.

creation, Jung describes "abysses of pre-historic epochs", "light-worlds and dark-worlds"—"a primal experience to which human nature almost threatens to succumb through weakness and incomprehension". From such abysses, Jung continues, in unusually purplish prose, there "rises, strange and cold, out of the timeless depths, a glittering, demonic-grotesque thing, bursting human values and beautiful form, a ghastly-ridiculous skein of the eternal chaos". This demonic-grotesque thing is, says Jung, "a '*crimen laesae majestatis* [crime that violates sovereignty] humane', to quote Nietzsche". Further references to Nietzsche describe his "hymnal style", his position as a "legendary seer", and his announcement of "the death of God," all as part of Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. Nietzsche is here a beacon, definitively a poet, who spoke "with the voice of thousands and tens of thousands, predicting changes in the contemporaneous consciousness".[39] The poet as deceived deceiver bears a strong resemblance to man as the spider, caught in the web of concepts, manufacturing inescapable anthropomorphisms, but here with a renewed vigour.

As Paul Bishop's meticulous work on Jung's readings of Nietzsche has shown, the original "Psychology und Dichtung" was an essay, based on a lecture, published in Emil Ermatinger's *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft* the same year as Jolas's translation. An extension of Jung's thinking on art from 1922, itself strongly informed by Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, Jung's rhapsodic text discusses what he terms the "Urvision" or the "Urerlebnis": a "primordial experience which he describes in terms that are remarkably similar to Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*", as Bishop observes.[40] This is in turn part of Jung's famous notion of the "primordial image", a concept he borrowed from Jacob Burckardt and which developed in Jung's later writings into the idea of an "archetype".

"Psychology and Poetry" is a major text in *transition*'s history, with direct influence on the magazine's development. Jung infused the archaic with a sense

[39] Carl Jung, "Psychology and Poetry", *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 23-45 (pp. 32, 28, 37, 39).

[40] Paul Bishop, "Jung's Annotations of Nietzsche's Works: An Analysis", *Nietzsche Studien: Internationales Jahrbuch Fur Die Nietzsche-Forschung* 24 (1995): 271-314 (pp. 293-4).

of poetic creation as delving into the primal state of *participation mystique*, a concept derived from Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. As Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold confirm, this blend of ideas was to inform Jolas's vision from 1930 onwards.[41] Indeed, as Céline Mansanti has argued, Jung's appearance marks something of a watershed moment, after which the previous emphases on Freudian, Surrealistic texts, artworks, and translations shifted towards the search for "la définition d'une nouvelle collectivité visant à la construction d'une communauté internationale d'humanistes" ["a definition of a new collective aimed at building a community of international humanists"].[42] But Jung's essay is also a site of influence where the psychoanalyst lost track of his readings of Nietzsche somewhat. As Bishop explains, "Jung had assimilated Nietzsche's ideas to a much greater extent than he was prepared to admit (or even than he himself might have realized)".[43] Such assimilations—Jung's of Nietzsche, Jolas's of Jung—are bound to be slippery, and difficult to pinpoint. But when we turn to the magazine, the legacy of the "Truth and Lies" piece is clear.

In July 1935, Jolas included a direct quotation from *The Birth of Tragedy* in a selection entitled "Malady of Language". This same "malady" also haunts Nietzsche in the "Truth and Lies" essay. "Language everywhere has become a power for itself", Nietzsche writes, "which now seizes men with spectral arms", with "pure word-sounds".[44] Nietzsche is selected as one of nine "princes of the imagination", Jolas writes, whose voice "bear[s] witness to the disquiet with which the progressive decline of symbolical language was viewed by them".[45] Along with Johann Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Walter Raleigh, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and P. D. Ouspensky, Nietzsche becomes a standard bearer of the "Malady"—a sickness for which Jolas prescribes what Juliette Taylor-Batty terms a "creolising" of language forms, a transformation of immigrant speech, and a commitment to the ever-changing character of English

[41] Kramer and Rumold, "Notes", *Man from Babel*, p. 309.

[42] Céline Mansanti, *La Revue Transition, 1927-1938, Le Modernisme Historique En Devenir* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009), p. 285.

[43] Paul Bishop, "Jung's Annotations", p. 296.

[44] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth", as quoted in Eugene Jolas, "Malady of Language", *transition* 23 (1935): 175-80 (p. 178).

[45] Jolas, "Malady of Language", p. 175.

as a world language. The "Malady" selection is therefore a platform from which Jolas mobilizes his wider "preoccupation with the polylingual resonances within the English language", a preoccupation which was so significant within modernism more generally.[46] The "spectral arms" Nietzsche figures as a contemporary phenomenon of language are thus a central image of Jolas's project in its broadest sense. One would be forgiven for identifying the philosopher-poet as the godfather of the Revolution of the Word.

Nietzsche does not simply arrive in *transition* as gospel, however. As early as February 1929, in an editorial entitled "Super-Occident", Jolas writes prophetically of the all too easy appropriation of the philosopher of the *Ubermensch*. The editor turns from T. S. Eliot's religious dogma and looks to "mass man", to Surrealism's "desperate" fight "for the purity of spirit", and to Russian, functional rationalism. In America, conversely, Jolas locates a "groping tendency" towards a "new life-sense" beset by "superficiality" and an "abdication of the better spirits". We are living in an age of crisis, he continues, where all around the literary creator, indeed the individual, can but confront a "more or less transitory democracy desperately struggling to hold on to a frail kind of reality, a desiccated humanitarianism, and fascism envisioning a Nietzschean utopia". This Nietzsche is hardly a "prince of the imagination", but an invocation of the problem of the age. Yet Jolas writes with a peculiarly romantic idealism as to "a new type of man—not a collective being, but a universal being, an harmonious being, synthesizing himself in the impulsions of the spirit and the social sense of the twentieth century". Here Jolas writes without the trace of pathos in Nietzsche's spider-like man of conceptual creation, and goes so far as to call for an "All-Mensch" (via Max Scheler). This "modern man" "has at his disposal new instruments", a "lever for his vision" of "a plastic feeling of life" with an "urge for totality of being and becoming" accessible only through "subversive action" against the "fraudulent ideologies of the modern world". With the benefit of having read Nietzsche, therefore, Jolas truly believed that the new Word might challenge mechanistic thought. This Word would oppose the "delusion of American prosperity, speed, mass-action", and reject the "Americana" of wealth

[46] Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 20.

and stability, of high finance and the Sunday supplements, celebrated by H. L. Mencken, the generalist editor of the *American Mercury*.[47]

Jolas's enthusiasm for Nietzsche—double-edged as it was between his prescient sense of a proto-fascist "utopia", and the seer of new "word-sounds"—chimes somewhat with Thomas Mann's suggestion of Nietzsche's "lowest readers", as John Burt Foster Jr. has noted, referring largely to those readers who took up certain of Nietzsche's ideas detached from their proper contexts. The misunderstanding of Nietzsche's ideas is a huge topic, of course, but in terms of literary modernism it is important to note that the philosopher was all the rage, thanks largely to Anthony Ludovici's and Alfred R. Orage's early editorial work and translation.[48] This extended readership considered Nietzsche's latter writings as those of a man who went insane, without necessarily seeing that in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Nietzsche turns away from the Ubermensch. Lawrence and W. B. Yeats are the most famous of Anglophone readers who took up Nietzsche's dualisms, drawing on his sense of a cultural crisis and decadence in the West. The will to power was understood by such figures as both self-creating, and self-destroying.[49] Indeed, it is almost a critical commonplace to call the philosopher of dual forces the father of modernism, whereby Nietzsche's vision "set the agenda for the whole of modernist and postmodernist art and thought",[50] a positioning Helen Carr extends by calling Nietzsche "the father of deconstruction".[51] Although Jolas clearly read the philosopher in German, and thus escapes Mann's

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[47] Eugene Jolas, "Super-Occident", *transition* 15 (February 1929): 11-16 (pp. 12, 13, 15).

[48] For readers interested in Nietzsche's Anglophone reception, see Anthony Ludovici, *Nietzsche: His Life and Works* (London: Constable, 1910); Anthony Ludovici, *Nietzsche and Art* (London: Constable, 1911); Alfred R. Orage, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Dionysian Spirit of the Age* (London: Foulis, 1906); and Alfred R. Orage, *Nietzsche in Outline and Aphorism* (London: Foulis, 1907).

[49] John Burt Foster Jr., *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 44, 82, 85, 112-3, 117, 139.

[50] Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 1. See also Robert Gooding-Williams, "Nietzsche's Pursuit of Modernism", *New German Critique*, Special Issue on the Critiques of Enlightenment, 41 (Spring-Summer 1987): 95-108.

[51] Helen Carr. "T. E. Hulme and the 'Spiritual Dread of Space'", in Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek, eds, *T. E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 93-112 (pp. 95-6).

charge somewhat, he nonetheless imbues Nietzsche's thought with some power to transcend a modern malaise in the written and spoken word. If anything, Jolas's faith in such transcendence was astute, picking up, as it did, Nietzsche's preservation of what Paul de Man calls "the spirit of modernity" against the "calcification of that spirit".[52] In "Super-Occident", moreover, the issue is one of an internationalist power of "the Word": nothing short of a transatlantic revolt, whereby a "Super-America" inclusive of North, Central, and South America might offer the "idealistic intensification and sublimation of the Occident" as opposed to the "present plutocratic materialism". This "fight" for the "duality of the infinite and the material, the hallucinatory and the concrete" means, finally, "an 'autochthonous' art".[53]

A raft of other contributors to *transition* also mention Nietzsche, in a spectrum ranging from slurs and journalistic sound bites to an understanding of his thought as a gateway to today, as registering epochal change, and as standing against his age. Harold J. Salemson's "Paris Letter" of February 1929 reports that the French writer Julian Benda has made an enemy, in his writing, of the Germans. "Nietzsche, for one, is *ipso facto* a traitor".[54] In the same issue, Murray Godwin's "Enfilade" takes aim at a piece from Matthew Josephson by employing a reference to the philosopher as an attack. Josephson "is strutting his stuff", Godwin writes. "Like a sanguine drum major he steps to the front and strikes a Nietzschean rhythm with his baton, all set for the forced march to the Promised Land".[55] In a piece entitled "Ballats and Compass", published in the following issue, Joseph Kling extends this "veneer" of Nietzsche, in more positive terms. Nietzsche, Montaigne, Spinoza are thinkers who dwarf contemporary intellectuals, Kling writes, with their "modern evangelis[m]".[56] Two issues on and the philosopher reappears, this time in a piece by Stuart Gilbert, a central figure in the *transition* circle. In "The Creator is not a Public Servant", Gilbert reinforces a sense of Nietzsche as an oppositional thinker: "All the great creators, Beethoven in his last phase, Wagner, Blake, Lautréamont, Nietzsche […], moved against their age. […] Their art, that

[52] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, p. 116.

[53] Jolas, "Super-Occident", p. 16.

[54] Harold J. Salemson, "Paris Letter", *transition* 15 (February 1929): 103-112 (p. 105).

[55] Murray Godwin, "Enfilade", *transition* 15 (February 1929): 113-20 (p. 113).

[56] Joseph Kling, "Ballats and Compass", *transition* 16/17 (June 1929): 124-5 (p. 124).

daimon, had set them free from the *profanum vulgus*".[57] Later in the same issue we find Nietzsche again, in a similar vein. Max Rychner's "Divigation" brings the thinker into modernity, into a new era. "Every epoch is a transition-epoch", he writes:

> [O]ur epoch, when everything seems free, would be happier if it had achieved anything fundamentally important for man with its kind of liberty. Nietzsche's word, that it seemed to him unessential, *from what*, but essential, *for what* a man is free, can be applied today to the general condition.[58]

Friedrich Marcus Huebner, finally, makes mention of Nietzsche in a direct question about the nature of language. In "The Road Through the Word", Huebner makes a direct allusion to "Truth and Lies" by framing a similar issue. "Can we grasp the world through words", Huebner wonders, where "[m]an thirsts for certitudes"? The magical realm, Huebner claims, reinforcing Jolas's program, is lost in the *langue* and *parole* of signification. "In the luminosity of the perception the things evaporate to mere counter-reflections: they become signs". Who would exclude from poetry Nietzsche's "Aphorisms", he asks, where "the words go beyond their purely rational tasks", "appeal[ing] to the magic faculty of seizure in the reader"?[59] In all these examples one can sense the influence of Jolas, moved as he was by Jung, and translating and collating the voices of a generation. These allusions reveal a generation that called upon Nietzsche as a signifier, in various shades. They were both "low readers", in Thomas Mann's sense, and idealists, as in Jolas's editorials. They were sometimes prone to journalese, with the thinker a byword for revolutionary genius, or, like Huebner, careful, inspired close readers. They were also more than just a generation "after" Nietzsche. *Transition*'s reception of his thought invites further consideration of what a post-Nietzschean

[57] Stuart Gilbert, "The Creator is Not a Public Servant", *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 147-50 (p. 148).

[58] Max Rychner, "Divagation", trans. Eugene Jolas, *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 358-9 (p. 359).

[59] Friedrich Marcus Huebner, "The Road Through the Word", trans Eugene Jolas, *transition* 22 (February 1933): 110-13 (pp. 110, 111, 112).

text is and does. The legacy of the "Truth and Lies" essay, as I will now explore, can be found, indirectly but tellingly, in the magazine's various spider tropes.

"A spider sprawled"

Transition's spiders reveal a taxonomy of metaphors which we might usefully call post-Nietzschean, biocentric, and distinctly anti-anthropocentric. Forming a constellation of creaturely visions, *transition*'s instances of the arachnid metaphor might be usefully grouped into three types, each evocative of the imagery and force of "Truth and Lies". First, spiders of lamentation, or forgetting; second, of inscription and language; and third, of erosion, even anti-humanist feeling. An exhaustive account goes far beyond the scope of the present discussion, although notable among the many authors to employ the image are Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, Paul Bowles, Bob Brown, Robert M. Coates, Hart Crane, Harry Crosby, Marcel Jouhandeau, Peter Neagoe, and James Johnson Sweeney.[60] In what follows I will outline some pertinent examples in the hope of reflecting further on *transition*'s Nietzschean legacy.

First, then, are arachnid figures of loss. In Léon-Paul Fargue's French Symbolist poetry, sorrow is a "veil of tears", "suspended on my / brow and hurting me", "like a spider's web in a cellar". His poetic voice articulates a torment directed to "My Father", begging for forgiveness: a repeated anguish, felt before "the drums of Death opened and closed the doors".[61] A related image returns in Fargue's

[60] Antonin Artaud, "The Shell and the Clergyman", trans. Stuart Gilbert, *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 63-9 (p. 65); Samuel Beckett, "Sedendo et Quiesciendo", *transition* 21 (March 1932): 13-20 (p. 19); Paul Bowles, "Spire Song", *transition* 12 (March 1928): 120-22 (p. 121); Bob Brown, "Sub-Tropical", *transition* 21 (March 1932): 27-36 (pp. 30-32); Robert M. Coates, "In Memoriam", *transition* 6 (September 1927): 47-51 (p. 49); Hart Crane, "The Mango Tree", *transition* 18 (November 1929): 95; Harry Crosby, in Eugene Jolas, Gertrude Stein, Hilaire Hiler, Robert McAlmon, Leigh Hoffman, George Antheil, Kay Boyle, A. Lincoln Gillespie Jr., Walter Lowenfels, Pierre Loving, Emily Holmes Coleman, Berenice Abbott, Lansing Warren, Ivan Beede, Harold J. Salemson, Kathleen Cannell, and H. Wolf Kaufman, "Why Do Americans Live in Europe?", *transition* 14 (Fall 1928): 97-119 (p. 114); Marcel Jouhandeau, "Prudence Hautechaume", trans. and ed. Elliot Paul, *transition* 7 (October 1927): 18-30 (p. 24); Peter Neagoe, "The Village Saint", *transition* 21 (March 1932): 75-81 (p. 77); and James Johnson Sweeney, "Lemon Tree", *transition* 27 (April-May 1938): 136.

[61] Léon-Paul Fargue, "Aeternae Memoriae Patris", trans. Eugene Jolas., *transition* 2 (May 1927): 149-50 (pp. 149, 150).

"Exile", where the speaker beholds scenes of a city which "peers through its web / with dusty resin portraits", where "the news woman weeps / in her dark shawl for her dead son". At the end of a passage, the speaker sees a shadow "sitting / tailorwise. I saw it waiting / beneath the arm-pit of a spider". The creature here holds a blank space, facilitating the unnerving imagery of "the deep and greasy pit / where night grumbles and drips". The poem concludes with a realization: "I recognize that all my sorrow / was the result of my desires". A plaintive plea to the lover or addressee moves through yet more gruesome detail, in an image of solitude whereby the loss of the lover's company renders the speaker a "corpse of an unknown man, / his hair slimy with sweat / matted upon his lead-blue brow […] in the midst of a great gathering which cannot understand his face".[62] The symbolist economy of the poem grants the spider a key role: a marker of a moment of recognition and a harbinger of darkness, it encapsulates the vision of sorrow. Similarly, Rafael Alberti's "From 2 to 3" gives the spider a signifying power in a scene of loss. At the portrayal of a child "with no cradle", animals stand in for his or her silence: "a blackbird in mourning: / The spinning spider". The arachnid presence offers the only movement in the poem, which closes on a deliberate tolling of a clock at a priory. Alberti's spider offers a sense of time and sadness: a still and quiet spinning.[63] Though not directly related to Nietzsche's spider, there is a shared pathos here: a shared poetic deployment of the image as one of isolation and sorrow.

The spider as loss appears in Jolas's "Nocturnes", too, where "stranger's eyes are fixed on shadowy walls / on numbers that bleed / on names spidery with forgetting". This image recurs in Jolas's "Carrousel": "letting myself whir into huge spaces, deflecting into dialogues, on shifting continents, it all ends in censorship, spider webs, tombs. […] My memories splinter against the syllables of prophets". The web as a site of forgetting is reversed in yet another of Jolas's works, "The Friend", where an unknown presence "follows me […] in the dim

[62] Léon-Paul Fargue, "Exile", trans. Edouard Roditi, *transition* 18 (November 1929): 106-8.

[63] Rafael Alberti, "From 2 to 3", trans. Marquise D'Elbée and Eugene Jolas, *transition* 4 (July 1927): 144.

sky. Spiders weave remembrances around his letters and the flies tumble silvery through the loops. The word is the obsession that is always on my lips".[64]

Already we can see the metaphor's link to both memory and the word. This link appears twice in March 1928. In Benjamin Péret's "In a Clinch", "little crystal spiders play their customary game of whist", a card game based on memory, and in Roger Vitrac's essay about Raymond Roussel, Roussel's verses are said to "apply themselves as might an entomologist". Vitrac compares Roussel's art to Arachne: a "spider capable of catching in its web waves, fleets, groups, crowds".[65] It is no coincidence that these texts juxtapose language and forgetting with the eight-legged spinner of webs. They are part of a twentieth-century expression of the Nietzschean primer. In that text, the human is only not animal because s/he spins illusory "truth" in language, like a spider, or "master builder". Language's construction lends solidity and structure; but in order to function, humanity *forgets* the essential conceit. The animal is within the metaphor, but outside of knowledge: an absolute difference which in turn exists *in* humanity.[66] Fargue's Symbolist solemnity is very different to Péret's Surrealist playfulness, but the nexus of a spider and both loss and memory places them in a continuum.

A second cluster of spider figures links explicitly to modes of inscription and of silence. Charles Recht's September 1927 "Fire Fanfare", a cycle of six poems, grafts the spider to the very unit of language, the single letter. In "Invocation", the first of these poems, Recht calls up a confrontation with the sun, the creator, "multifarious sorcerer, fountain of fables":

> I, the brandisher of the Mazda lamp,
> shall not genuflect nor supplicate,
> I am not a spider sprawled across the Roman letter "V"

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[64] Eugene Jolas, "Nocturnes", *transition* 4 (July 1927): 132-3 (p. 133); Eugene Jolas, "Carrousel", *transition* 9 (December 1927): 57-61 (pp. 60-61); Eugene Jolas, "The Friend", *transition* 13 (Summer 1928): 205-6 (p. 205).

[65] Benjamin Péret, "In a Clinch", *transition* 12 (March 1928): 54-61 (p. 59); Roger Vitrac, "Raymond Roussel", trans. Kathleen Cannell, *transition* 12 (March 1928): 148-62 (p. 159).

[66] Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense", pp. 85, 84, 88, 86, 83.

> On the Arch of Constantine in the Forum.
> I am a creator of figures myself.[67]

This sentiment is a telling rejection of the spider linked to language—here to inscriptions on classical architecture—but it still capitulates to Nietzsche's notion of man as the manufacturer of conceptual material from within himself, as well as to that celebrated image of self-forging the Word in the "Proclamation". Rather than a "master builder", the spider serves as a foil to the electrical modernity of the light bulb, almost sycophantic in its "sprawl" on the Arch and its illustrious dedication. Recht's speaker parodies solar worship, moving through various scenes of creation and religious dogma, and arrives at an explicit, diminutive reference to "Ecce Homo", the words of Pontius Pilate as he presented Christ at the Crucifixion, as well as the title of Nietzsche's last work:

> Images have I made, laws, round words and melodies
> Out of air, cell-life and waters …
> Prometheus pinned like a butterfly against the rock
> Is hunched and enigmatic.
> "Ecce Homo"—a fearful, sliding Jesus—
> All this have I fashioned of that and more, and more.
> I, electron splitter, the fetcher of fire, the pitcher and catcher of sparks
> Having smouldered this earth-cloud with which I curtain the sun,
> I let my eyes dance with the leap and crackle
> And trail the climbing of its child's hair smoke
> Which puffs and edges like the compass of human aspirations
> Along the corridors of the Imbecile Void….[68]

The spider is not the central entity, but the poetic voice is indeed a spinner of origin myths, of "human aspirations" occupying nothing more than a "void", boastful of its stories yet also the object of ridicule (the closing poem is entitled "Grandioso"). The speaking subject draws attention to its own inscriptive bad faith, piling narrative upon narrative on a "smoke / Which puffs" to nothingness.

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[67] Charles Recht, "Fire Fanfare", *transition* 6 (September 1927): 147-53 (p. 147).

[68] Recht, "Fire Fanfare", p. 153.

Jolas's "Marabimini: A Metallic Fairy Tale", published two years later, also confronts an exhausted master narrative. "In vain did I seek the aid of dogmas", it begins; "The editorial room began to whirl". The speaker moves through the city, the subway, the movement of the L train to Brooklyn, all the while imagining the lives of the people around him: "I heard their dialogues pipe. I heard the clink of their wishes. […] Great Red Way. Electric lights. Posters. Buy Cadillac Big Car Value. The church with the flaming cross. Come to Jesus". The text then turns to the neologisms and the fantastical which will become a hallmark of the editor's creative writing. It also draws on the arachnid metaphor as an essential symbol for language: "Silence. Words slingered chaos. But our thoughts crashed through the empty space at the intersection of a spider's web".[69] Stuart Gilbert uses this same imagery in the following issue, describing Jolas's published poems as "light as a strand of gossamer, as the spider's web of silken ideograms […] new words for old for new worlds for old—how can the utterly new be described in the old way?"[70] A "silken ideogram" is a beautiful, pertinent image: like a road sign or a hieroglyph, it is both with and without words.

"The silken ideogram" returns in another key example whereby the spider is intimately linked to articulation and an interlinguistic space. Jolas's "Monologue", firstly, offers a scene of inscription: a literal coupling of the spider and the word. The narrative voice whirls around Paris, racing "through arcades and alleys", with "scattered white words over the ecstatic girls". The streets hold dreams which "glide with bitter words", and the speaker turns to a cellar holding "grotesques", where "the spiders have created all the witcheries". Though a fleeting use of the metaphor, the spider here depicts some of the speaker's hallucinatory journey through the words and sounds of the city.[71] Additionally, in Jolas's "Paramyths from a Dreambook: Musique de la Syntax Endormie" one finds an extraordinary scene of the eight-legged beast closely linked to a scene of writing, forgetting, and the speaking subject. This piece was published in July 1935 as part of a segment (also called "Paramyths") with pieces by Wayne Andrews, Dorothy Boillotat, Franz Kafka, Jean Paul, Georges Pelorson, Hans Schless, and Margaret Shedd, in

[69] Eugene Jolas, "Marabimini: A Metallic Fairy Tale", *transition* 18 (November 1929): 52-8 (pp. 52, 53-4).

[70] Stuart Gilbert, "Astropolis", *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 196-200 (p. 197).

[71] Eugene Jolas, "Monologue", *transition* 6 (September 1927): 133-5 (pp. 133-4).

a subsection entitled "The Grala". Jolas's speaker beholds a spider, here overtly Nietzschean, and again—this is a thematic of Jolas's writing—a creature connected to the writing scene and to a primal vision of language.

> I looked up from the table and saw, opposite me, on the studiowall a large, white animal that was slowly moving glittering in the lamplight's shaft. It's a spider, I mused. As I looked more carefully I noticed that it was not of flesh, but of marble or skullbone. […] Now the animal seemed to grow bigger. It continued to slowroam on the wall […]. I tried to ask a question about it. But my words lipstuck. I could not, try as I might, recall the French word for "spider". I grew iresome. Finally I stammered, more to interrupt this intolerable silence than to get any information:.. Die Weisse Spinne.

Watching his friend scribbling endlessly on a page, the speaker again breaks the interminable silence, now "terrordark":

> I tore the inkburdened paper out of my friend's hand and read in endless repetition:
>
> GRALA GRALA GRALA GRALA GRALA GRALA GRALA….
>
> I flashsaw. I was face to face with the apocalyptic beast. I awestared into the past and into the future. The room turned vertigomad around me.[72]

In this highly suggestive dream sequence, the speaker's *forgetting* of the French word for spider (*arraignée*) recalls Nietzsche's essay in its emphasis that we are forgetful of our artistically creating subjectivity—we forget that our perceptual metaphors are just that.[73] This is a strikingly corporeal multilingualism, and a jarring one at that, although not without a strained sense of hope. *Die Spinne* is joined with a wordplay on "grala", a Jolasian compound of the German *gral* (as in *der Heilige gral*, the Holy grail) and "la", the French indefinite article. Repeated seven times, "grala" inscribes that which spins and produces itself, as well as that which saves, with the grail as an object of a valiant mission. That slew of words,

[72] Eugene Jolas, "Paramyths from a Dreambook: Musique de la Syntax Endormie", *transition* 23 (July 1935): 15-25 (pp. 22-3).

[73] Pearson and Large, p. 40. It is useful to note that the English word "arraign" is derived from Old French and Latin, *to reason*. The "reasonable" spider in Jolas's text is therefore lost to him, linguistically and emotionally.

uncannily repetitive, trails off into a gobbledygook "la la la la la la" interspersed with the guttural "gra gra gra gra"—a text coming undone at the seams. (Jolas may well be hinting at "Dada", in both its meanings as an art movement and as nonsense, here too.) Despite the crazy-making job of reading Jolas's spider, the effort is well worth it. Following Claude Lévi-Strauss's now ubiquitous statement that animals are "good to think with", *transition*'s spiders, in this case, are good to think with about post-Nietzschean, international, modernist play at the fringes of language.[74]

This takes us to a third, and perhaps most suggestive, type of spider metaphor in *transition*: articulations of erosion and anti-humanism. Dorothy Boillotat's "Decaying" offers an elegant image we might locate as directly responsive to the Revolution of the Word's call to "disintegrate" language. In a scene of geological corrosion, of "winds of the desert slowly eras[ing] the sculptures of ancient bands", a spider "spins his web carelessly with primal design and a stone falls, shattering it, and the stone is fragile in the cold eternal eye as the silken firmament". The text unfolds an unpeopled landscape, and creates an uncannily silent scene which follows the fall of a petal—a perpetual "sameness", or irrevocable wearing away of human civilization. "When the last vestige shall have disappeared only liberated idea [*sic*] will remain—and the fragile memories of men will corrupt that".[75] The spider's thread, both spun and smashed, evokes Nietzsche's representation of conceptual knowledge as an amnesiac contract and of language as a prison, a "silken firmament" forever separating us from nature. Boillotat's text is distinctly anti-anthropocentric, and invites an ecocritical reading of its quietly post-human terrain.

This idea returns, in a more brutal form, in what is arguably *transition*'s most forceful spidery text, and with which I wish to conclude. In his "Notes from a Diary", published in English in 1932, Hans Arp writes of the "rotting civilization"

[74] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 204-8.

[75] Dorothy Boillotat, "Decaying", *transition* 19/20 (June 1930): 48-52 (p. 52).

that is such a thematic across the journal and that features so often in its repeated calls to transform the "malady" of language:[76]

> spiders flee into the cracks in the earth in the face of man's ugliness and human thinking. from his eight curl-ringed holes he shoots off a lot of hot air. man wants what he can't do and despises what he can. the trick is his goal and its achievement. he feels himself a god when he roars up to heaven with a clockworks under his behind. […] only as a murderer is man creative. he covers with blood and mud everything in his reach.[77]

Man simply "jaws", Arp writes. "[W]hen man thinks and jaws even the rats have to vomit".[78] The human spider, with its "eight holes", is now a monstrous entity: a symbol of Arp's Dadaist rejection of bourgeois culture. Here is an inscription of a distinctly Nietzschean anti-humanism: an invocation, as Elizabeth Kuhn frames it, of "the separation of life force and will to power from the individuals or subjects to which the Enlightenment connects them". This separation, Kuhn continues, "has enduring ramifications for human agency in both local and grand historical senses. This anti-humanism values uncertain futures highly and also places the cancellation of subjectivity at a premium".[79] The spider here stands at the centre of the scene of man's degradation and self-formation, his production of filth and empty language.

There's a vitriolic, brittle kind of humour here—a feature of late modernism as characterized by Tyrus Miller. Miller focuses on what he regards as late modernist types of mimetism and authorial positionality—structures that jar one into (*pace* Beckett) "mirthless laughter", grotesque corporeality, and, perhaps most relevant

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[76] Jolas writes, for example: "We need the word of sleep, the word of half-sleep, the word of chemistry, biology, the automatic word of the dream, etc. With this must go the attempt to weaken the rigidity of the old syntactic arrangements. The new vocabulary and the new syntax must help destroy the ideology of a rotting civilization" (Jolas, "Super-Occident", p. 15).

[77] Hans Arp, "Notes from a Diary", *transition* 21 (March 1932): 190-94 (p. 190).

[78] Arp, "Notes from a Diary", p. 190.

[79] Elizabeth Kuhn, "Towards an Anti-Humanism of Life: The Modernism of Nietzsche, Hulme and Yeats", *Journal of Modern Literature* 34.4 (Summer 2011): 1-20 (p. 7).

to Arp's "Notes", a presentation of the subject as confronting its own decline. Late modernism is thus a presentation of

> an image of subjectivity "at play" in the face of its own extinction. It prepares the literary ground for the anthropological "endgame" Beckett would reveal to the world in the 1950s—the theatricalised gestures of the Western subject, rehearsing its final abdication.[80]

Such "abdication", such "extinction"—might this be a way of thinking about the tropological spiders in *transition*'s late modernist texts? The difference between Beckett's later writings (and, as Miller groups them, other canonical postmodernisms) and late modernism is that in late modernism there still remains a sense of that which may yet redeem a human subject, the maintenance of "a tenuous hold in the borderland of 'mirthless laughter': a mortifying jolt that may yet work to stiffen and resolve".[81] Jolas's veiled hope, Boillotat's stillness, and Arp's audacious laughter all resonate in this sense, suggestive of a newer kind of post-Nietzschean legacy that finds an answer to the "malady" of language by confronting an abyssal, anti-humanist vision, albeit through a strained laugh, or forgotten word, or spider smashed by a stone. The question of periodicity is a useful one, too. Mansanti sees *transition*'s widest legacy in these periodizing terms: she suggests that the magazine "sheds light on the crisis of […] 'historical modernism' at the end of the 1920s and can be seen to have helped shape a new, minor form of 'late modernism'".[82] As the title of this paper suggests, Nietzsche furnishes and forges this late modernism. His ideas are a baton with which the Revolution of the Word ran, fast and loose, and frequently through the imagery of *Die Spinne*: Nietzsche's spider scuttles into view.

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[80] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 64. See also Tyrus Miller, "Dismantling Authenticity: Beckett, Adorno, and the 'Post-War'", *Textual Practice* 8 (1994): 43-57.

[81] Miller, *Late Modernism*, p. 64.

[82] Céline Mansanti, "Between Modernisms: *Transition* (1927-38)", in Brooker and Thacker, eds, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, 2.718-36 (p. 720).

What remains is a sense of *transition* as a markedly "primordial" text, to come back to Jung, which demands new ways of reading in the field of modern periodical studies. "What I hope to see," writes Collier, "in the next decade of modern periodical studies is a lot of this, that, and the other: close reading, surface reading, distant reading, theorization, and more, ideally in close and constant dialogue".[83] The primordial image, as Jung's archaic "Urvision", demands a wider study that goes beyond Jung to the more delicate primary texts, as I hope the above has shown. There are more than spiders in this extraordinary magazine. The reader can find insects, amoeba, fish, lizards, molluscs, birds—all manner of non-talking, non-mammalian creatures that might offer an extended history: a surface-and-depth, synchronic and diachronic approach that lets the animal illuminate the text, from Gregor Samsa's *Ungeziefer* in Kafka's "Metamorphosis" to Joyce's famous grasshopper in the "Work in Progress" that was to become *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Thacker's call for more scrutiny on the internal and external periodical codes would find purchase in such a study: confluences of animal metaphors are internal; what they facilitate for the reader in terms of psychoanalytic, spiritual, even biological discourse are external, intellectual histories. To adapt the title of George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's book, these are metaphors the modernists lived by, during the crisis years.[84] As Norris points out, too, the biocentric tradition tended to flourish in minor works, and non-traditional forms. What better place to look than a modernist magazine? To read *transition*'s riches as it was read at the time is to encounter a body of bestial gestures that demand what Norris calls, as inherent to this intellectual lineage, "a philosophical reeducation of the reader". Perhaps it is this very "reeducation"—rather than the easily mocked, parochial, Americanist provocation—that the editors had in mind when they declaimed that "the plain reader be damned".[85]

[83] Collier, "What Is Modern Periodical Studies?", p. 108.

[84] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[85] Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, p. 20.