



Revolutions

Ateliers organisés par Marie Laniel et Caroline Pollentier
Société d'Études Woolfiennes (SEW) et Société d'Études Modernistes (SEM)

Université Paris Ouest, samedi 9 juin 2018

Atelier III

9h – Adrienne Janus, Université de Tours
Stillness in the midst of revolutionary storms

Modernist revolutions have long been identified with temporalities of momentariness: the Benjaminian “instant,” The Futurist Moment (Perloff), “suddenness” in Woolf, Joyce, and the Surrealists (Bohrer). Little attention, however, has been paid to modernist efforts to locate forms of stillness in the midst of these revolutionary storms – forms of temporality characterised by the perception of an “enduring passing away” (Seel), an uneventful eventfulness. Whether considered a “residue of uncontained romanticism” (Adorno) that, in the wake of 1848, crossed the threshold of modernity, or a prophylactic against the repeated shocks of modernity (Benjamin), features marking this modernist temporality will be explored in their recurring transmutations across different spaces and media: the enduring passing away of flickering flames in Wagnerian opera and Italian Futurism; the trance-inducing stillness in movement of Dada performances and avant-garde cinema; the fractal patterns in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, Woolf’s *The Waves*, and the paintings of Jackson Pollock; white noise in the compositions of Samuel Beckett and Karl-Heinz Stockhausen.

9h15 – Discussion

9h30 – Olivier Hercend, Université Sorbonne – Paris 4
“The Society of the future”: new generations and the dynamics of change in the works of Virginia Woolf

In his essay “*Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’État*”, Louis Althusser criticised the “static” viewpoint of traditional Marxist thought. He argued that ideology is an ever-changing process, because it must reproduce the status quo in a constantly evolving

society, as every new generation subverts the outlook of its forebears. I think that this shift in perspective is necessary to understand Woolf's ideas on revolution. Indeed, she did not believe in an upheaval from the top, led by great leaders against a stable establishment. Instead, her texts, both fiction and non-fiction, reveal her profound faith in the creative powers of new generations. Throughout her works, she endows youngsters with a pervasive desire to question and understand, to take up the legacy of their society in their own manner. Finally, I will argue that this reflects on her own practice, as a self-proclaimed member of a new generation of "Georgian" writers.

9h45 – Discussion

10h – Xavier Le Brun, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 Virginia Woolf's "neo-realism" of the 1930s: revolution or counter-revolution?

Virginia Woolf's return to realism in the 1930s, especially in novels and short stories posterior to *The Waves* (1931), has long been the subject of critical attention. Although this return is nowadays seldom taken at face value, and is instead seen as a critical engagement with realism, we cannot but wonder whether it is more satisfyingly described as a counter-revolution directed at the high-modernist aesthetics of the 1920s or as a subtle continuation of the revolutionary agenda of modernism under the guise of a "relapse" into more traditional and straightforward techniques and preoccupations. Relying on David Herman's categorisation of realism and modernism as two different couplings between the subject and its environment, our intention is to show that works like *Flush* (1933), *The Years* (1937), or the short stories of the same period, remain intrinsically modernist through their intricate fusion of subject and world.

10h15 – Discussion

10h30-11h – Pause

Atelier IV

11h – Yasna Bozhkova, Université de Cergy-Pontoise Mina Loy's aesthetic revolutions: turning around/turning away

Through the chameleonic transformations of her aesthetics and her strategically brief engagements with various avant-gardes, Mina Loy embodies particularly well the ambivalence of the notion of revolution: the liberating rupture necessary for the emergence of new forms also has a destructive potential that may quickly lead to an aesthetic impasse. Loy's poetics was shaped by a double-edged response to the incendiary rhetoric of Italian Futurism and to the radical iconoclasm of New York Dada. In the 1920s she turned to a series of ekphrastic poems focusing on the works of her artistic contemporaries (Joyce, Brancusi, Stein, Lewis, Stravinsky) which

articulate a much more complex idea of aesthetic revolution— one that is predicated on an irreducible plurality of forms, arts and media. Loy's verse briefly revolves around each of these modernist forms before turning in a different direction; arguably, these abrupt shifts of paradigm create dialogic exchanges between disparate aesthetics, eschewing the risk of an aesthetic impasse.

11h15 – Discussion

11h30 – Naomi Toth, Université Paris Nanterre

L'ambivalence de l'ambition encyclopédique : James Joyce et Camille Henrot

Cette communication proposera une réflexion sur l'ambition encyclopédique dans les arts et la littérature à travers une étude des œuvres de James Joyce et de Camille Henrot. Il s'agira d'examiner, d'abord, leur emploi du cadre sériel et cyclique des jours de la semaine, qui fonctionne comme un principe organisateur et qui, en même temps, agit contre toute fermeture de la structure sur elle-même. Il sera aussi question de la manière dont ils convoquent divers mythes d'origine, de leur usage de la vitesse et de la saturation, et du rapport, souvent transgressif, qu'ils établissent à la loi classificatrice. Je m'intéresserai enfin à la manière dont la passivité et l'activité sont mobilisées pour placer l'artiste, ainsi que le lecteur/spectateur, dans une position difficilement tenable, entre impuissance et hyperpuissance. C'est par ce biais que sera entamée une réflexion sur la place ambivalente que tient le plaisir dans l'entreprise encyclopédique.

11h45 – Discussion

12h - Fin