Walter Benjamin, Advertising, and the Utopian Moment in Modernist Literature

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In a well-known entry in Convolute G of the *Arcades Project* ("Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville"), Walter Benjamin describes the violent impression made upon him many years before by an advertisement for *Bullrich Salz* seen on a streetcar in Berlin, as well as his loss of memory of all details of this advert and their sudden return in full force upon seeing a sign bearing the words "Bullrich Salz" in the window of a "miserable café" in the same city.[1] No one since seems to have been able to locate the original advert—Max Pensky admits he spent ten years searching for it—but it is described by Benjamin as follows:

> In the foreground, a horse-drawn wagon was advancing across the desert. It was loaded with sacks bearing the words "Bullrich Salt." One of these sacks had a hole, from which salt had already trickled a good distance on the ground. In the background of the desert landscape, two posts held a large sign with the words "Is the Best." But what about the trace of salt down the desert trail? It formed letters, and these letters formed a word, the word "Bullrich Salt." Was not the preestablished harmony of a Leibniz mere child's play compared to this tightly orchestrated predestination in the desert? And didn't that poster furnish an image for things that no one in this mortal life has yet experienced? An image of the everyday in Utopia? (*Arcades*, 174).[2]

A better translation of this final question, whose German original is "ein Gleichnis für den Alltag der Utopie," is "A likeness for the everydayness of utopia?," as provided by Susan Buck-Morss in *The Dialectics of Seeing* (1989).[3] As well as "likeness," *Gleichnis* can be translated as "image," "allegory," or "parable," so the

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770   precise nature of the link between the poster and utopia, which Benjamin in any case phrases as a question, remains open. It is the nature of this relationship, and where it might lead in terms of analyzing advertising in modernist literature, that I aim to explore in this article.[4]

Benjamin's fragment has been analyzed by critics in various ways, including by Ruth Iskin as part of a discussion of late nineteenth-century poster design; the authors of *Benjamin's Arcades: An unGuided Tour*, who read it as an "imitation of Proust" akin to surrealism in the way it tears objects from their normal setting and juxtaposes them with others in order to illuminate the everyday; Esther Leslie, who also reads it as a Proustian involuntary memory, which connects personal and collective history and is dependent on the modern city as a place of meeting points and thresholds; and Max Penksy, whose extended reading associates it with Benjamin's Berlin texts of child-hood memory, as does Leslie, and positions it as a combination of dialectical image and commodity image in which heterogeneous times "telescope together" and "inter-mingle image-contents of a primaeval past with those of a utopian future" (Buse et al., *Benjamin's Arcades*, 113; "Geheimmittel," 123).[5]

While I find these analyses useful, especially Pensky on the play of presence and absence in the passage, I want to move away from previous readings and instead take Benjamin's fragment as a spur to explore what I would like to call the "utopian moment" in modernist literature. I focus not on Marcel Proust or French surrealist writing, but on a selection of English and American modernist texts concerned with urban life, in which advertising confronts city dwellers with something like the everyday utopianism Benjamin describes. The examples I choose come from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), and Hope Mirrlees's *Paris: A Poem* (1919). The politics of these texts varies (though it is worth noting that both Dos Passos and Wright were involved with com-munism at the time of writing), but all of them share the insight that when advertising suddenly and unexpectedly writes or rewrites the urban landscape, it turns language into a set of hieroglyphs that exert a transformative pressure on both conventional communication and the wider environment. The advert exceeds what it means to say, and this excess can be registered as what I propose to call an "affective" rather than "systematic" utopianism. By this I mean a utopianism that is partial, not fully formed, similar to what David Bell categorizes as "a utopianism without utopia," another term for which might be "contentless utopia."[6] Reading such moments through Benjamin's Bullrich Salz fragment and related writings allows us to see that they pull in two direc-tions, towards both the proliferation and the annihilation of meaning, evoking a world where either everything signifies or nothing does; a doubleness already inherent within utopia, which is typically both the dream of a world where everything fits together, hence from which meaninglessness is excluded, and a no-place, where history itself has been abolished. This duality can alternatively be understood as a dialectic of uto-pia and dystopia, in which the fullness and desirability of the advertisement (the idea that we can all have "the best" every day, even in the desert) coexists with a dystopian perversity and nightmarishness (there is a mockery in being offered a stomach and

heartburn medicine typically taken for excess consumption amidst the barrenness of the desert; especially when, like Bullrich Salz, it is designed to be dissolved in water).

The cultural interface between advertising and modernist literature has been discussed by a number of critics, including Franco Moretti and Jennifer Wicke, who share the view that there is a deep engagement between these two modes.[7] Wicke aims to demonstrate not only that "advertisement is inextricable from the modern notion of literature," but more significantly that in the nineteenth century advertising becomes "a new mode of writing in its own right," exerting a "'heteroglossic' pressure on the novel" that drastically reshapes it, for instance by introducing a desire to compensate for "[v]anished human relations of exchange and barter" (*Advertising Fictions*, 9, 15, 16). She is critical of Benjamin, however, claiming that "his visionary prediction of the liberating potential of new mass art technologies would be shattered by acknowledging that advertising had already installed itself in the forefront of those techniques" (13). In fact, such an acknowledgement is deeply in keeping with Benjamin's thinking, which refuses to hold apart politics and mass culture, and which sees utopian potential as well as ideological enclosure within advertising. Moretti's account of advertising turns on a reading of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), which has been a privileged text in discussions of advertising and modernism, not least thanks to Leopold Bloom's job as an advertising agent. For Moretti, advertising in the early twentieth century seeks to colonize "the entire social universe," including the novel, where it manifests itself as stream of consciousness narration, which replicates formally, in its parataxis, the endless interchangeability of commodities (*Signs*, 196). Wicke also finds such a homology in *Ulysses*, writing that the "characteristics of advertising become the enabling situation of modernist prose," which offers a fallen glimpse of "the utopian powers of collective consciousness in a mass age" (*Advertising Fictions*, 121).[8] While my argument acknowledges the hegemonic potential of advertising identified by Moretti and Wicke, it also sees advertising as capable of fracturing the flow of experience to which it undoubtedly contributes. These previous engagements tend to read the pressure exerted on literature by advertising pessimistically, at least partly because they gravitate towards *Ulysses* as their primary focus. In this article, by contrast, I turn to a more eclectic archive, which in turn allows for a more ambivalent theorization of both advertising's and modernism's ability to produce utopian moments.

To begin to explore these questions, I will first look a little more deeply into the relationship between utopia, language, and place in Benjamin, and suggest that Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia can help better articulate the operation of advertising as utopian moment that I want to describe.

From Utopia to Heterotopia

A slightly later text by Benjamin that casts light on the Bullrich Salz passage is a diary entry of March 6, 1938, where he records several dreams, including one that he relates to "suffering greatly from the noise in my room":

> I found myself standing in front of a map and, simultaneously, standing in the landscape which it depicted. The landscape was terrifyingly dreary and bare; I couldn't have said whether its desolation was that of a rocky wasteland or that of an empty gray ground populated only by capital letters. These letters writhed and curved on their terrain as if following mountain ranges; the words they formed were approximately equidistant from one another. I knew or learned that I was in the labyrinth of my auditory canal. But the map was, at the same time, a map of hell.[9]

Doubles and mirrorings multiply here, as in the Bullrich Salz passage.[10] Benjamin is both in front of a map and within the landscape it depicts, and this landscape is at once an empty rocky wasteland and populated by capital letters. Eventually he realizes (or perhaps he knows from the start) that he is both inside his own ear and looking at a map of hell; a map which, we already know, he is both inside and outside. This synesthetic dream builds on the earlier fragment, where language was integrated with image and environment, but now the landscape simultaneously resonates with linguistic meaning (the letters form words) and stands entirely empty (it is "dreary and bare"). Absence of meaning is already there in the Bullrich passage, most prominently in Benjamin's lack of memory, but it is temporally distinct from the plenitude of meaning associated with the poster (since meaning follows and replaces forgetting), whereas in the diary entry presence and absence of meaning occupy the same space and time. The movement towards utopian harmony indicated in the earlier passage has also been reversed here into a dystopian collapse, since the landscape is a map of hell rather than a divine scene of "tightly orchestrated predestination" (although one can of course be predestined for hell). Yet as Pensky points out, the image of the desert and the self-referentiality of the slogan written upon it already led towards the "hellish interior" of the commodity, which "can only unceasingly signify its own internal lack of significance or the impossibility of meaning" ("*Geheimmittel*," 124). His observation draws attention to the utopia/dystopia dialectic I mentioned above, which is another form of the dual excess/absence of meaning found in advertising. We might ask, then, whether Benjamin has now entered into this hellish interior of the commodity. Has he *become* (or become entrapped by) the commodity, since he finds himself within his own head?

Such a condition might be read allegorically, as a response to living through a massive capitalist expansion and consolidation in the United States and Europe, what Alan Trachtenberg calls "the incorporation of America," in which a newly professionalized advertising industry helped to generate what Jackson Lears describes as a "disembodied vision of abundance" that seemed to have no outside.[11] In this increasingly monopolistic and hegemonic stage of capitalism, advertising turned its focus towards the "consumer rather than the product," beginning more concertedly to work on the subject from within rather than only without, simultaneously drawing the viewer within the space of advertising (which now has no obvious outside) and relocating advertising "within" the viewer, as a function of their perception and a feature of their affective world.[12] It is these processes which are at once recorded and reflected upon in Benjamin and the literary examples discussed below.

To return to the diary entry, in Benjamin's situation of being both inside and outside the map/landscape, which at once signifies and does not signify, he is in the position Foucault assigns to heterotopias, the domain of those "other utopians" such as prisoners, sailors, prostitutes, and colonizers.[13] Heterotopias, according to Foucault, sit on the border of society, both inside and outside, a position that gives them a critical potential, although this may not always be fully realized. Heterotopias act like mirrors, being poised between full utopias, on one hand—which, like reflections, are "fundamentally unreal spaces"—and "places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society," on the other.[14] A mirror, Foucault explains further, "is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself"; yet at the same time the mirror really *does* exist, it has material substance ("Other Spaces," 24). Mirrors figure heterotopias, then, because they involve a partial intrusion of the unreal into reality, and because heterotopias reflect, perhaps critically, upon the society which has generated them. Kevin Hetherington's work on heterotopia and social ordering develops this utopia-heterotopia connection further, arguing that heterotopias can be produced by utopian drives, which are themselves central to "social ordering processes within modernity."[15] Hetherington links Foucault's analysis to Louis Marin's work on utopia, especially Marin's concept of "the neutral," which is poised between the two sides of utopia's punning name: the ou-topia (no place) and eu-topia (good place). The neutral, like heterotopia, is associated with similitude, a term taken from Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), and like Foucault's concept has the potential to play either an ordering or a critiquing role in society. What I take from these discussions, and what Benjamin's work draws out particularly clearly, is that advertising, especially in the modernist period (which coincides closely with the transformation of advertising into a recognizably modern form), has the capacity to act as just such a heterotopic mirror, bringing about a partial intrusion of utopia into reality while at the same time straddling the border between social critique and social ordering.[16]

Jacques Rancière picks up on the critical potential of heterotopia, arguing that under the aesthetic regime, which he dates from the early-to-mid-nineteenth century, both literary language and political enunciations have the capacity to "reconfigure the map of the sensible by interfering with the functionality of gestures and rhythms adapted to the natural cycles of production, reproduction and submission," making them "heterotopias rather than utopias."[17] Rancière sees the sensible as a "map" that can be reconfigured through language, which is indeed what takes place in both Benjamin's dream and his description of the poster (*Politics*, 39). Rancière also points to the play of absence and presence in utopia, so that "utopia is, in one respect, the unacceptable, a no-place" which breaks down what is obvious around us, while on the other hand "it is also the configuration of a proper place" (40).

This duality of no-place and configuration-of-place is present in Benjamin's more messianic orientation towards the transformation of the sensible, except that for Benjamin the two dimensions seem sometimes to collapse into one another, so that the

774 utopian-messianic becomes in effect the configuration-of-place *as* no-place, or, more simply, the "configuration-of-no-place." His short but provocative "Theological-Political Fragment," for instance, finds that although "nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground, to anything messianic," the messianic nonetheless promises to completely transform history and nature; categories which should be understood in their conjunction as "natural history," given as the basis for allegory in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) (*Selected*, 3:306).[18] The messianic reconfigures the sensible so dramatically, however, that it does away with history and nature entirely, so that the introduction of immortality "corresponds to a worldly restitution that leads to an eternity of downfall" (*Selected*, 3:306). Despite this correspondence with eternal "downfall," the messianic is also implicitly a form of utopia, since Benjamin approvingly cites Ernst Bloch's *Geist der Utopie* (1918), which has "repudiated with utmost vehemence the political significance of theocracy," rejecting the idea that "the Kingdom of God" can be "the telos of the historical dynamic" (3:305).[19] Here we can detect Benjamin implicitly opposing Carl Schmitt, whose *Politische Theologie* (*Political Theology*), published in 1922, argued for the implementation of theological concepts in politics, and extended ideas about sovereignty and the state of exception that Benjamin had already interrogated in the "Critique of Violence" (1921).

By making the messianic a form of utopia, but breaking with any possibility of messianism acting as historical telos, Benjamin reimagines it as a reconfiguration of place and time, history and nature, but one which, strangely, can have no content at all, since all content risks being co-opted by current political interests. For this reason, all that is left to aim for is contentless reconfiguration, hence the final claim of the fragment that "the task of world politics" is to pursue "nihilism." We could read this as a rewriting of Nietzsche's observation at the end of *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) that "man will wish *Nothingness* rather than not wish *at all*."[20] Wishing or willing nothingness—which Nietzsche sees as the ultimate mark of *ressentiment*—becomes, for Benjamin, the only possible political gesture of messianic utopianism, which he associated not with *ressentiment* but rather a vaguely-defined "happiness" (*Glück*): "The secular order should be erected on the idea of happiness"; "in happiness all that is earthly seeks its downfall" (*Selected*, 3:305). What we are left with is a drive towards a messianic utopia which reconfigures meaning (in the sense of history), but which can have no meaning assigned to it.

The combination of the utopian, affective, contentless, and radically transformative outlined in the "Theological-Political Fragment" is also what advertising offers up in the Bullrich Salz passage. To complete the picture, we can turn to "On the Concept of History" (1940), Benjamin's last known text, which ends by observing that "for the Jews . . . every second was the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter" (4:397). Along with the prospect of absolute messianic transformation erupting at any time, this raises the possibility of a messianism or utopianism that is momentary rather than permanent, which enters through a "small gateway" and then departs again. Such a utopianism would be partial, lacking time and space for realization as a full utopia, but, on the other hand, it might be an everyday occurrence. What the "Theological-

Political Fragment" presents in grand, metahistorical terms is here opened up as the ground on which advertising, which is after all based upon a secular drive towards a "happiness" for which the advertised product is a surrogate, can operate.

Language as Nonsensuous Similarity

I have not yet properly considered the role of language in the Bullrich fragment and Benjamin's dream, but it is central to these passages, as it is to the literary moments I will go on to explore. Most basically, we see language's significance when Benjamin relates how the signboard of the Berlin café which bore the legend "Bullrich Salt," "contained nothing else besides the words; but around these written characters there was suddenly and effortlessly configured that desert landscape of the poster. I had it once more" (*Arcades*, 174). It is the sight of the words that activates the vision through which everyday utopia enters, providing an example of Benjamin's claim, made elsewhere in the *Arcades Project*, that "[o]nly dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language" (462). The image is dialectical because it combines the present (here the moment of observation, but also the moment of relating the story) with the past (the original experience of seeing the poster) in such a way that the two form a new complex, so that the image "attain[s] to legibility only at a particular time," which for Benjamin is always the case with "genuine images" (462). Importantly, the image enters through language, which becomes a door—or small gateway—through which it effects a transformation of both external landscape (the desert appears to be "configured" around the words) and internal landscape (this is a returning memory, and it introduces a sense of something "no one in this mortal life has yet experienced"). The dream described in Benjamin's 1938 diary also makes language the key to a transformation of internal and external landscape, since the capital letters drifted between writing, image and landscape, as they "writhed and curved" on their terrain, forming a map of hell.

The authors of *Benjamin's Arcades* suggest that utopia in the *Bullrich* passage is "glimpsed in the miraculous appearance in the desert of the banal commercial name," and that utopia might therefore be described as "the impossible convergence of word and thing, the closing of the gap opened up by language" (Buse et al., *Benjamin's Arcades*, 114). In support they cite Benjamin's remarks on "calligrams," a figure in which "the letters of a word are made up of the very substance that the word signifies," such as the name of jeweler's shop spelled out in imitation gems that is mentioned in entry A1,2 of the *Arcades* (114). A calligram breaks with the Saussurean view of language as an arbitrary system of differences, instead insisting that word and thing are made of the same stuff. This is what advertisements want to achieve, since they "constantly attempt to disguise the arbitrary nature of the bond they establish between product and 'lifestyle'" (115).

For Benjamin, unlike for Adorno, such a non-arbitrary relationship between word and thing is not pure deception. His early essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" (1916) argues for a direct, non-accidental relationship between

776   word and object, and this idea is later developed in the short essays "Doctrine of the Similar" and "On the Mimetic Faculty" (both 1933, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime). These texts explore the concept of language as "an archive of nonsensuous similarities," meaning that it preserves, in submerged ways, the kind of direct relationship between humans and their environment that was once expressed in "reading from stars, entrails, and coincidences," but has now been lost (Benjamin, *Selected*, 2:697). As anthropology this is highly speculative to say the least, but it provides a suggestive account of language in which all words have the capacity to act as calligrams, to "flash up," as Benjamin puts it, and reveal the presence of a mimetic relationship between oneself and the world which exists in addition to, or in excess of, the normal semiotic functioning of language. This idea helps to explain how language can exceed what it seems to say in Benjamin's thinking, and so produce dialectical images; and why when it does so the excessive, mystical meaning (or rather sense of meaning without positive content) that arises seems to come from within us, since the nonsensuous similarities contained within language are fragments or traces of a capacity for mimesis that was once directly ours. As Benjamin expresses it: "Our gift for seeing similarity is nothing but a weak rudiment of the once powerful compulsion to become similar and also to behave mimetically" (2:698). This capacity of language is close to the surface in advertising, which seeks to erase the differences between word and thing that conventional linguistics identifies as constitutive of language, and to make the advert a surrogate experience of the thing advertised and a route to happiness (so long, of course, as we buy the advertised product).

   Advertising, to put it another way, is like sacred script in seeking to overcome the "profane" nature of alphabetical writing which prevents word and thing becoming one. Wicke draws attention to this combination when she finds that, in *Ulysses*, "[t]he sacred and the profane magic of spoken word, of political debate and of the tradition of Irish letters flowers amid a language that inexorably supplants and realigns them"; that language, of course, being advertising (*Advertising Fictions*, 145). In the *Trauerspiel* book of 1928, Benjamin makes the relationship between the sacred and the profane within language central to Baroque allegory, stating that:

> sacred script always takes the form of certain complexes of words which ultimately constitute, or aspire to become, one single and inalterable complex. So it is that alphabetical script, as a combination of atoms of writing, is the farthest removed from the script of sacred complexes. These latter take the form of hieroglyphics. (*Origin*, 175)

Hieroglyphics are here understood as writing in which language and image coincide, putting it close to the calligram, or the rebus, a form of pictorial writing in which images are used in place of words.[21] In order to capture the sacred character of language that divine script and advertising both desire, writing must try to become hieroglyphic, a combination of word and image. In capitalism we can see this in the fetishism of branding—the words Coke, Nike, and Apple want to be hieroglyphs, to speak a complex of meanings with the voice of a fixed, divine truth. Their success is evident in the way Apple's apple or Nike's swoosh are as ubiquitous as the brand names themselves, and

indeed interchangeable with them, the word made image. The problem with hiero-glyphics, however, especially as they were understood in the Baroque era, according to Benjamin's account, is that they are allegorical, meaning that unlike symbols they can never in fact become an "image of organic totality" (*Origin*, 176). Allegorical script always remains a form of *writing*; it does not exist in isolation, but means different things in different combinations, as we see for instance in the various levels of meaning assigned to the Bible by medieval scholars.[22] Allegory, unlike symbol, is never only one thing; indeed one of its principles is that, as in Rancière's aesthetic regime: "Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (*Origin*, 175). Despite retaining some link to pictorial reference, once established as part of a system of signs hieroglyphs become both flexible and open, creating the space for both a surplus of meaning and a draining out of meaning (allegory is like ruin, says Benjamin, in being a sign of absence more than of presence). This hieroglyphic and allegorical character of advertising is ultimately what allows the utopian moment to occur, since it enables the simultaneous production of multiple meanings and erasure of meaning, a double movement encompassed by what I have called the configuration-of-no-place.

Paralleling Benjamin, an interest in the visuality of language, and in language's status as seeming to replace a God whose death it also mourns, has been ascribed to modern-ist writers such as W. B. Yeats, Gertrude Stein, and Laura (Riding) Jackson by Jerome McGann. For McGann, these writers were "exploring the transformational resources of language as a literal event (an event of letters). The psychological and symbolic explorations of language carried out in the romantic tradition had left the acoustic and visual aspects of language—the physique of its meanings—badly neglected."[23] The best-known example of modernist interest in calligramatic writing, however, must be Ezra Pound, who often used Chinese characters to encompass complexes of meaning, including in *The Pisan Cantos* (written in 1945), and produced his own translations of Confucius. Imagism, too, was an exercise in condensation that aimed to bring lan-guage, image, and sensation as close as possible to one another. Pound's early desire for "sudden liberation," for a "sense of freedom from time limits and space limits," as recorded in his 1913 article "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," comes close to describing the utopian moments of modernist advertising, though he strongly rejected any such connection, writing in the same article, "Consider the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap."[24] Pound's objection to advertising fits with his rejection of the superfluous word—since what is advertising if not a world of superfluous words?—but advertising is also the unconscious other that uncomfort-ably haunts imagism, because it in fact competes on the same ground, revealing that imagism's tightly-wrought complexes of poetic meaning are only the other side to the frivolous or empty advertising slogan.

To proceed further, I want to consider why the utopian (and at times dystopian) capacity of advertising—or more precisely of the advert that suddenly and unexpect-edly writes upon the landscape—might be particularly strongly registered in modernist literature. Of significance here is the fact that in the early twentieth-century Western world, advertising moved beyond practical descriptions of products towards what Ray-

mond Williams calls "*magic*," the production of "fantasy" rather than mere use-value, a development which, as mentioned above, Moretti and Wicke also trace (Williams, *Problems*, 185, italics in original). As Gary Cross notes of this period, citing the advertising designer William Dwiggins, the idea of the product is becoming more important than the product itself.[25] An interesting side note here is that patent medicines such as *Bullrich Salz* were at the forefront of this development of consumerist fantasies, having been associated with fantastical and deceptive claims since at least the nineteenth century.[26] During the modernist period, then, modern advertising had become part of everyday life, yet it was still new enough to be registered as exceptional, outside the world of quotidian experience. Paula Geyh puts this shift in a literary context, arguing that between *Sister Carrie* in 1900 and *Manhattan Transfer* in 1925, the American city, in both its reality and its representations, turned from a "*city of things*" into a "textualized *city of signs*," a move linked to the development of capitalism and advertising.[27] This shift opens up a new mobility of signs which means that urban "inhabitants are the subjects of a relentless semiotic address issuing from the agencies of capital," creating a fertile ground for the emergence of utopian moments ("Cities of Things," 415).

To take these thoughts a step further, we might say that the utopian capacity of advertising is felt within modernist writing because such writing itself tends to adopt a heterotopic posture, reflecting on a world which it stands both inside and outside. The advert, as both part of the everyday world and yet somehow beyond it, echoes (or speaks through) narrative voices that are themselves both caught up in the stream of everyday experience and in search of some ground from which to reflect upon that experience. In this vein, Michael Schudson's description of modern advertising as "capitalist realism" (as distinct from Mark Fisher's more recent use of that term) provides a useful basis for seeing it as heterotopic.[28] Such advertising relies on "portraying social ideals, representing as normative those relatively rare moments of specialness, bliss, or dreamlike satisfaction," so that it is not completely separate from society, but neither does it represent its typical aspect ("Advertising"). Rather, it stands on the border of society, as a semi-separate sphere that reflects back elements of the real, and is "obliged to be relatively placeless and relatively timeless." These characteristics are heterotopic, and give advertising, as modernist literature often recognizes, the ability to open up a sense of utopianism within everyday life. This is what takes place in the examples I turn to now, where in each case an advert that writes upon the landscape is felt as both an intrusion from outside and as generative of an affective, utopic response that seems to arise from within the observing subject.

Mrs Dalloway: Skywriting as Affective Utopianism

One such intrusion comes early in *Mrs Dalloway*, when Mrs. Coates and Mrs. Bletchley witness an airplane "coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which curled and twisted, actually writing something! Making letters in the sky! Everyone looked up."[29] The plane creates a demand to be interpreted—it must mean something!—but the letters it leaves behind seem mysterious, even mystical:

But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, an E, a Y perhaps?

"Glaxo," said Mrs. Coates in a strained, awe-stricken voice, gazing straight up, and her baby, lying stiff and white in her arms, gazed straight up.

"Kreemo," murmured Mrs. Bletchley, like a sleep-walker. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 16)

For a moment, the landscape is reconfigured into language. Everything speaks, as Ran-cière says of the aesthetic regime. What is said, however, appears at once meaningless and profound, generating a moment of affective utopianism that persists, at least for a while, even after the brand names "Glaxo" and "Kreemo" have been identified by the women. There seems to be more meaning here than is contained by the prosaic real-ity of branded products, but the nature of this excessive meaning remains undefined. The sky-writing plane temporarily puts everyone into the position of Mrs. Coates's baby, "gazing straight up," seeing the world as if for the first time and being unable to interpret it. The other subject position offered is that of the dreamer, with Mrs. Bletchley speaking like a "sleep-walker." In assuming this dream-state, described by Alissa Karl as a "somnambulant fixation upon the advertising image as a site of shared meaning," she has in effect entered the interior of the commodity, which makes the whole world its domain as it reshapes the landscape around her (*Modernism and the Marketplace*, 65).[30] The boundary between internal and external space breaks down as she murmurs the brand name "Kreemo," which has been written in the sky, as if it is not only something she is reading but a fragment of dream-thought, or a repressed memory, called out of her unconscious by the action of the plane.

The suspension generated during this episode is made explicit in the text:

As they looked the whole world become perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there among the gulls. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 17)

There is a momentary utopia in this suspended instant, with its silence, peace, and pu-rity, though also pallor, a word which hints at the deathliness that utopia, as a dream of finality and completion, always entails. Fredric Jameson offers a way of thinking through such suspension in "The Politics of Utopia," where he uses the term "utopian moment" slightly differently from how I am using it, to describe historical periods when politics is suspended from daily life, so that impetus towards social change is not fully devel-oped into action but remains largely unconscious, emerging through utopian fantasy:

I am trying to characterize the situation of Thomas More, on the eve of capitalism (in Louis Marin's account) . . . ; to characterize the eighteenth century . . . and Rousseau's endless fantasies about new constitutions . . . I am thinking, too, of the great utopian production of the populist and progressive era in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century; and finally of the utopianism of the 1960s.[31]

Jameson sees the utopian moment as a phenomenon in which the political unconscious is not able to attain clear expression, so that it comes out incompletely through utopian visions. My utopian moment is similar to this suspension of the political and the historical, but on a micro-scale; it is an eruption from within capitalism that asks us to forget what capitalism is and to see only a landscape reconfigured by and through language. In Woolf, this reconfiguration is extended in the way the flight of gulls seems itself to become a kind of writing that demands to be read.

A suspension of the political and historical has the capacity to rob us of the reference points we need to read the language-scapes we find ourselves in, leaving only a sense of meaning without positive content, often accompanied by a state of heightened affect. In *Mrs Dalloway*, it is Septimus who feels the affective force of the moment most strongly:

> So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky. (*Mrs Dalloway*, 17)

This is the arena in which ideology operates. Yet, as Jameson argues:

> [Utopia's] function lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future—our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity—so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined. ("Politics of Utopia," 46).

If advertising is utopian in this sense it is not only productive of ideology, but able to reveal to us our own non-utopianism and ideological closure. In Benjamin's terms, ideological closure is the entrapment within history that only the messianic is able fully to shatter. The utopian moment, which punctures run-of-the-mill experience, might then be interpreted as an indication that our particular historical condition is not the only way things can be, that there is a chance for "things that no one in this mortal life has yet experienced." The affective utopianism of such moments can cut two ways then: it can either point to the possibility of a reconfiguration of the sensible that will challenge social ordering, or fall back into capitalist structures as part of the promised magic of consumer goods.

Native Son: Skywriting as Destructive Utopianism

If Woolf's characters relate to the skywriting plane in an infantile or dreamlike mode, in which the fantasies it generates are left undefined, a similar moment in Wright's 1940 novel *Native Son* sees a comparable naïvety being inflected, as is everything else in the novel, by the racial tensions of prewar Chicago. Bigger and Gus, two poor Black youths, are smoking on the street when Bigger spots a plane writing high in the air:

They squinted at a tiny ribbon of unfolding vapor that spelled out the word: USE. . . .
The plane was so far away that at times the strong glare of the sun blanked it from sight.
    "You can hardly see it," Gus said.
    "Looks like a little bird," Bigger breathed with childlike wonder.
    "Them white boys sure can fly," Gus said.
    "Yeah," Bigger said, wistfully. "They get a chance to do everything."[32]

The ambiguous unfurling of an advertising message—which proves to be "Use Speed Gasoline"—provokes "childlike wonder" in Bigger, but also envy at the privilege of white pilots, living a life that seems radically utopian to the two witnesses from their racially and economically constrained position. This form of utopian wonder tips more easily into destructiveness than anything in Woolf, in a way that carries an affective weight yet lacks any developed content or practical goal: "'Maybe they right in not wanting us to fly,' Bigger said. ''Cause if I took a plane up I'd take a couple of bombs along and drop 'em as sure as hell . . .'" (*Native Son*, 47). Bigger's fantasy of flight quickly becomes a dream of destroying the world that has oppressed him, but this act is not configured as part of any wider political project, a point Wright makes of Bigger in "How 'Bigger' was Born," which notes that Bigger "carried within him the potentialities of either Communism or Fascism" but "is not either" (15). Rather, "he is a product of a dislocated society; he is a dispossessed and disinherited man" (15). The destructiveness that is glimpsed in the skywriting scene will however later play out in Bigger's unintentional killing of Mary Dalton, a communist and daughter of the wealthy white family Bigger works for, whom he cannot help but angrily resent. In a similar way, the overt message of the advert, "use Speed Gasoline," not only promotes a lifestyle the watching boys cannot access, but also gestures towards the job Bigger will soon take as a chauffeur. In addition, gasoline was the most monopolized of the major American industries in the early twentieth century, with Rockefeller's Standard Oil being broken up in 1911 into thirty-four separate companies, so that this advertising message allegorically indicates the hegemonic and dystopian nature of consumer capitalism that conditions Gus and Bigger's society—whether or not we buy Speed Gasoline is ultimately irrelevant, because our alternative is thirty-three other similar companies that can easily substitute for one another.

    In Wright's utopian moment, destruction and alienation come to the fore, but still accompanied by the sense that full meaning lies just beyond reach, as in *Mrs Dalloway*. Bigger's eyes show a "pensive, brooding amusement, as of a man who had been long confronted and tantalized by a riddle whose answer seemed always just on the verge of escaping him, but prodding him irresistibly on to seek its solution" (47). The status of the advertisement as a "riddle" points towards the bigger riddles of Bigger's existence: the gaps between the wealth he sees and the poverty he experiences, and between white and black. The possibility the airplane hints at is that the world is a hieroglyphic landscape which can be rewritten, either by skywriting or by bombing, an idea indirectly picked up by Bigger when he invites Gus to "play 'white,'" a "game of play-acting in which he and his friends imitated the ways and manners of white folks" (47). This game registers both the casual power of white Americans (Gus: "This

782   Mr J. P. Morgan speaking . . . I want you to sell twenty thousand shares of U.S. Steel in the market this morning") and the complicity between capital and political power ("J. P. Morgan" is imagined to be expecting a personal call from the president) (48). Yet in allowing for the performability of "whiteness" it also shows an awareness that this power and the identities it fosters are allegorical rather than symbolic, not fixed for all time but part of an apparatus that might be reshaped, even if the tools for such reshaping are not immediately present at hand.

Manhattan Transfer: Advertising, Myth, and the Commodity-Soul

Although Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* is suffused with the language of new media, particularly newspapers and advertising, I want to focus on one moment in the chapter "Great Lady on a White Horse" with a similar utopic structure to the texts I have considered so far. This chapter sees Ellen Oglethorpe, an actress in New York, coming across a girl advertising Danderine, an anti-dandruff shampoo, as she passes through Lincoln Square, sometime around 1914:

> a girl rode slowly through the traffic on a white horse; chestnut hair hung down in even faky waves over the horse's chalky rump and over the giltedged saddlecloth where in green letters pointed with crimson, read DANDERINE.[33]

Danderine Scalp Tonic was first marketed in the 1890s, and its packaging and advertising typically featured women with long wavy hair, displaying the benefits of the product. In this instance, the hair becomes a Lady Godiva-like attribute of the girl who seems detached from the crowds around her. She becomes, along with the mysterious word "Danderine," a floating signifier that gathers new meanings as she moves, including with reference to Ellen. Geyh even suggests that "[t]he primary sign defining Ellen's subjectivity and its economy of desire is the Danderine lady, a roving advertisement for Danderine, a popular dandruff shampoo" ("Cities of Things," 429). For Geyh, such identification with the language of capitalism is ultimately a failure, since "Although Ellen easily adapts to and adopts the signifiers of consumerism, this doesn't produce a satisfying sense of her self or enable her to love the men who love her" (431). John Conder offers a more generalized reading, arguing that the Danderine Lady represents "the meretricious fictions devised by a civilization to ensure its own perpetuation."[34] These fictions, which are those of consumer capitalism, take over the psyches of the characters in the novel and metaphorically "blind" them, in an echo of what is supposed to have happened to "Peeping Tom," the figure who furtively spied on Lady Godiva as she rode naked through the streets of Coventry.

The girl and the word reverberate through the chapter, most notably in snatches of song: "All in green on a white stallion rode the Lady of the Lost Battalion . . . Green, green, danderine . . . Godiva in the haughty mantle of her hair . . ."; and later, "With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, And she shall make mischief wherever she goes" (Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, 130, 133, ellipses in original). The word

"Danderine" seems to carry an important but inarticulable message here, even while it is being included in apparently frivolous rhymes. The chapter concludes with the Danderine lady's reappearance, where she is again described using exactly the same words quoted above ("a girl riding slowly through the traffic on a white horse; chestnut hair hung down" and so on), so that she seems to be untouched by the world around her, whose presence she does not register (135). This untouchability is adopted by Ellen as a defense against the objectifying male gaze, Geyh suggests, and might also explain her distance from the men with whom she is intimate, such as Jimmy Herf. Advertising and utopia share this absolute disregard for any particular person, even when they seem to address us personally and intimately; a phenomenon for which Benjamin's comments on Marx's concept of the "commodity-soul" can serve as a commentary:

> If there were such a thing as a commodity-soul (a notion that Marx occasionally mentions in jest), it would be the most empathetic ever encountered in the realm of souls, for it would be bound to see every individual as a buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle. Empathy is the nature of the intoxication to which the flâneur abandons himself in the crowd. "The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else, as he sees fit. Like those roving souls in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; and if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth visiting." [Charles Baudelaire, "Les Foules"] The commodity itself is the speaker here. Yes, the last words give a rather accurate idea of what the commodity whispers to a poor wretch who passes a shopwindow containing beautiful and expensive things. These objects are not interested in this person; they do not empathize with him.[35]

Benjamin first sketches an image of the commodity as a flaneur-poet who empathizes with everyone as a potential buyer, but then turns this concept around completely with the acknowledgement that the commodity does not empathize with those who are unable to buy it, so alienating them from a society which it has come to dominate. A character like Bud in Dos Passos's novel, who arrives in New York because he wants to get "to the center of things," but ends up struggling to live and eventually committing suicide, provides an example of such a subject position (*Manhattan Transfer*, 16). For Bud, the utopian promise of New York turns hellish when he dwells in the center of a commodified world that absolutely disregards him; he dreams of an everyday utopia, but finds a terrifyingly dreary and bare landscape. Since this ability to exclude individuals from the sphere of its empathy is latent in *all* of the commodity's relationships (we are all at least potentially poor), its empathy is always provisional, existing always against a ground of possible disregard and indifference.

There is something else taking place in this passage too, related to the commodity's indifference and the Danderine Lady's status as a floating signifier, but going beyond these things. In moving slowly through the traffic but not interacting with it, and in the way her description does not vary when she reappears, so that it seems detached from the rest of the text, the Danderine Lady reconfigures the busyness of the crowded city into emptiness. From her point of view, the city might as well be empty. This is why the Lady Godiva myth is particularly relevant. The legend is that she saved the people

of Coventry from her husband's oppressive taxation by riding naked through the city, but only on the condition that no one came out to see her, so that in effect Godiva is both there and not there, passing through a utopically empty space that is broken only (in later versions of the legend) by "Peeping Tom." The Danderine Lady similarly rewrites the overpopulated, overdetermined space of early-twentieth century New York as empty and meaningless. She is the sign of the absolute dominance of capitalist signification that simultaneously transforms that landscape into an empty, dystopian desert, but one which, precisely through this configuration-of-no-place, is potentially utopian in the possibility it offers of writing the city anew.

Paris: A Poem: Advertising, Myth, and the Parisian Underworld

Somewhat less well-known than the texts I have discussed so far is Hope Mirrlees's 1919 *Paris: A Poem*, published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in 1920. Mirrlees grew up in Scotland and South Africa before going to Newnham College, Cambridge in 1910, where she became close to the classical scholar Jane Harrison. Mirrlees also visited Paris several times between 1913 and 1919, trips that inspired her 450-line poem, which is irregular and varied in its form, and written in a mixture of English and French. Julia Briggs calls it "[h]ighly allusive and typographically original," suggesting that "it has claims to be the missing link between French avant-garde poetry and Eliot's *The Waste Land*."[36] In 2000 Mary Beard could still write that Mirrlees is "one of those writers forever on the brink of being 'discovered,'" but by 2017 Laura Winkiel was able to claim that "[o]nly recently has Mirrlees's work begun to receive the critical attention it deserves."[37] Broadly speaking, the poem tracks an experience of moving through Paris in the wake of World War I, registering a series of impressions, voices, and fragments of other texts. As one review of Mirrlees's *Collected Poems* (2011) puts it, "Sound and meaning are broken down into their bare components: there are different fonts, different languages; words are split into separate words and put into lists. The poem spirals and sprawls across the page."[38]

The part of the text I want to focus on is its striking opening, which is also the most frequently discussed section:[39]

<div align="center">

I want a holophrase

NORD-SUD

ZIG-ZAG
LION NOIR
CACAO BLOOKER

Black-figured vases in Etruscan tombs

RUE DU BAC (DUBONNET)
SOLFERINO (DUBONNET)
CHAMBRE DES DEPUTES

</div>

Brekekekek coax coax we are passing under the Seine

DUBONNET

The Scarlet Woman shouting BYRRH and deafening
St. John at Patmos[40]

As one of Mirrlees's own notes points out, Nord-Sud is an underground railway line
in Paris (though she may also have in mind Gino Severini's 1913 Futurist painting of
the same name), while Dubonnet, Zig-zag, Lion Noir and Cacao Blooker are posters.
Rue du Bac and the names that follow are stations on the Nord-Sud line.[41] She does
not mention that Byrrh is also a reference to an advertising poster, for a wine-based
aperitif marketed as a "tonique hygenique," a similar product to Dubonnet, which in
turn seems to have been the most advertised product on the train line, since it becomes
a kind of alternative name for both Rue du Bac and Solferino, and then stands in
place of a station name when the train passes under the Seine, before it arrives at the
Place de la Concorde. In this way, Dubonnet registers the monopoly problem of early
twentieth-century capitalism, overwriting variation in favor of repetition: wherever you
go in Paris, the posters tell us, you are always at "Dubonnet."

The phrase "brekekekek coax coax," meanwhile, refers to the chorus of the frogs
in Aristophanes's play *The Frogs* (405 BC), who sing this refrain to Dionysus as he
crosses the river Lethe with Charon the ferryman, so implying that the poet's journey
under the Seine is also one into the underworld, reshaping the coordinates that oper-
ate above the ground and hinting at the experience of forgetting associated with the
journey over the Lethe.[42] The phrase also serves as an onomatopoeic rendering of the
sound of the train's rails as it rolls over the rails, a repetitious sound that seems to echo
the capitalist monotony also evident in the ubiquity of Dubonnet. Advertising in this
passage combines with, and at times replaces, the familiar reference points of the city,
so that a journey on the Metro becomes a journey into the commodity's interior—and
through the reference to Aristophanes into Hell as well—so bringing the passage close
to Pensky's reading of Benjamin's Bullrich fragment.

In addition to these features, however, there is also utopianism in the vision of "The
Scarlet Woman shouting BYRRH and deafening St. John at Patmos." This line alludes
to the Whore of Babylon, who appears in the Book of Revelation (authored by John
of Patmos), sitting "upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having
seven heads and ten horns" and "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour."[43] At the same
time, it refers to an advert for Byrrh, probably a poster from 1907 "featuring a woman
in red with a drum . . . in mid-shout against an urban industrial background under
a night sky" (Skoulding, *Contemporary Women's Poetry*, 11). In reinterpreting this
poster as the scarlet woman "deafening" St. John with the word "BYRRH," Mirrlees
turns an advertising image into a weapon against misogynist Christianity, raising a vi-
sion of female independence and mastery of noise (the drum) and language (the word
"Byrrh") that is appropriate to this poem of the flaneuse. The hellishness of Revelation
passes through the world of advertising to become a utopic and carnivalesque fantasy

of power inversion, a less extreme version of Bigger Thomas's dream of destroying the world that has oppressed him.

That words are vital here is signaled not only in the play of product names and underground stations, but also in the opening line, "I want a holophrase," which as several critics have pointed out is a term used by Mirrlees's friend (and possibly lover) Jane Harrison in her work on linguistics, especially in her book *Themis* (1912).[44] The *OED* gives the earliest citation of the term as E. J. Payne in *History of the New World* (1899), which Harrison acknowledges in her discussion of the idea.[45] As Harrison defines it: "Language, after the purely emotional interjection, began with whole sentences, *holophrases*, utterances of a relation in which subject and object have not yet got their heads above water but are submerged in a situation" (*Themis*, 473–74, italics in original). A simple example would be a small child saying "up" in order to convey the meaning "can you pick me up?" For Harrison, the holophrase emerges in a condition of "*holopsychosis*," a presubjective state in which "primitive man, submerged in his own reactions and activities, does not clearly distinguish himself as subject from the objects to which he reacts, and therefore has but slight consciousness of his own separate soul" (475, emphasis in original). Whether this holds up as anthropology is questionable (it effectively designates some non-European languages as "childlike"), but as a way of thinking about language it gives us an account in which, as for Benjamin, language has fallen away from the wholeness and intimacy it once expressed, what Benjamin calls "similarity." A holophrase is like a calligram in that it is completely unalienated, a form of words that captures a particular thought or situation but cannot be broken down into separate components, so that it is "quite unanalysable."[46] For Harrison, this form of language is doomed to break down however: "As civilization advances, the holophrase, overcharged, disintegrates, and, bit by bit, object, subject and verb, and the other 'Parts of Speech' are abstracted from the stream of warm conscious human activity in which they were once submerged" (*Themis*, 474).

Mirrlees's opening line, then, expresses a desire to overcome the broken and fallen language of modern urban life, to restore a lost unity of meaning. Yet in framing this demand as poetry, Mirrlees draws attention to the sound of the word "holophrase," a homonym for "hollow phrase," in which case it denotes not full meaning but a complete absence of meaning. Like Freud's *unheimlich* (Freud is in fact mentioned in l.414), the word falls apart into two opposites. We can therefore read the opening part of the poem as the search for *both* a holophrase and a hollow phrase; for a word which simultaneously gives a sense of complete meaning and is meaningless, which is perhaps both utopian and dystopian. The names of the products on the advertising posters—Zigzag, Lion Noir, Cakao Blooker, Dubonnet, Byrrh—are all proposed as holophrases of this kind. In the context of advertising posters, these names are attempts to capture ideas or feelings that would do away with the distinction between subject and object, so that we feel incomplete without them; but at the same time, when encountered in a disjointed way in the city, and even more so when recontextualized within the lines of the modernist poem, they are emptied of meaning, so that they become strange complexes of peculiar sounds; hieroglyphics to which we lack the key, but which form

their own semiotic language that defigures and refigures the underground spaces of the city. These names should be understood as allegorical hieroglyphics in Benjamin's sense, in that they want to become ideograms, complexes of complete meaning, but also form the components of a new language, threatening to break away from their intended meaning and start, utopically, to mean anything—even to become a challenge to the phallogocentrism of Christian scripture and its continuing legacy. Despite this complexity, they are encountered only momentarily, glimpsed from the windows of the train as it passes by.

The poem hints at this holophrase/hollow-phrase duality in the line "brekekekek coax coax," which is on the one hand completely meaningless, not even language at all but an attempt to capture the sound made by a chorus of frogs, while on the other hand it expresses a whole cluster of ideas concerning the underworld, the river Lethe, the journey of Dionysus, and the connection between classical Greece and modern Paris; doing so in a relation of similarity, or dialectical image, in Benjamin's terms. Once again, brand names become the means for a utopian moment to arise, hanging between complete meaning and meaninglessness, momentarily reconfiguring the landscape.

Conclusion: Advertising as Second Nature Utopianism

By way of conclusion, I will briefly mention Benjamin's fragment known as "A Different Utopian Will," written in 1935 or 1936 and associated with the "Work of Art" essay. Benjamin writes here that "The more widely the development of humanity ramifies, the more openly utopias based on the first nature (and especially the human body) will give place to those relating to society and technology" (*Selected*, 3:134). Advertising can be taken as part of this "second nature" utopia, another example of which is given as the fascist desire to "[ascend] into the stratosphere in order to drop bombs," as Bigger wishes to do, so that we again see utopia turning into its dystopian and hellish opposite (134). This is the danger of a self-alienation through technology in which humankind "can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure" (122). But Benjamin suggests that in revolutionary consciousness, "the collective appropriate[s] the second nature as its first in technology, which makes revolutionary demands" (135). To read this claim through Jameson, we might say that in the utopian moments I have mentioned, the advert takes the form of a writing that brings the subject into affective relationship with the technologized, but also mythologized, landscape of modernity, turning second nature into first in ways that are both intimate and alienating, thereby opening up a sense of utopianism that nonetheless lacks revolutionary content. Even though the political is suspended in these moments, in favor of a state of dreamlike contemplation, I side with Benjamin in believing that they nonetheless allow the space for a utopian drive that goes beyond the scope of the meanings ordinarily ascribed to advertising by capitalism.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 174.

2. For Penksy's comment, see "*Geheimmittel*: Advertising and Dialectical Images in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*," in *Walter Benjamin and "The Arcades Project*," ed. Beatrice Hanssen (London: Continuum, 2006), 125.

3. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the "Arcades Project"* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 462n135.

4. Peter Buse, Ken Hirschkop, Scott McCracken, and Bertrand Taithe point to these multiple meanings in *Benjamin's Arcades: An unGuided Tour* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University of Press, 2005), 115.

5. Iskin makes the error of claiming that Benjamin "encountered it [the poster] again," rather than remembering it (Ruth E. Iskin, *The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s–1900s* [Hannover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014], 242). She is also, I think, too quick to state that Benjamin makes a mistake in referring to the product as a "food seasoning" rather than a patent medicine (*Poster*, 242). Benjamin's comment that he knew only "that the original warehouse for this seasoning was a small cellar on Flottwell Street, where for years I had circumvented the temptation to get out at this point and inquire about the poster" comes in the context of his failure of memory, so that his reference to the salts as "seasoning" is a guess under a condition of repressed memory, and does not necessarily tell us what he thinks about the product once his memory has returned (*Arcades*, 174). It may even be a joke, an ironic indication of Benjamin's complete forgetfulness for anyone familiar with the rather common (both then and now) Bullrich Salz. Pensky makes similar comments about the term "seasoning" ("*Geheimmittel*," 127). Esther Leslie's reading is in "Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin: Memory from Weimar to Hitler," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 123–35, 130–31.

6. David M. Bell, *Rethinking Utopia: Place, Power, Affect* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 13. "Utopianism without utopia" is one of three categories into which Bell groups critical approaches to utopia, associated with Ernst Bloch. Bell argues that this approach leaves the spaces which utopia produces undertheorized. His other categories are "utopian method," where utopia serves as social critique of the here-and-now (e.g. Fredric Jameson and Ruth Levitas) and "utopian spatial arrangements" (e.g. David Harvey). Bell's own approach is to insist that "*utopia is a place*," so that place-making should be at the center of how we understand it (*Rethinking Utopia*, 5, emphasis in original).

7. See Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: on the Sociology of Literary Forms*, (London: Verso, 2005); and Jennifer A. Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). On the relationship between modernist writing and capitalist culture more broadly, see for instance John Xiros Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Alissa G. Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace: Literary Culture and Consumer Capitalism in Rhys, Woolf, Stein, and Nella Larsen* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

8. More recently Matthew Hayward has returned to *Ulysses* and advertising, arguing that "Bloom's role has been misinterpreted in almost every respect" (Matthew Hayward, "Bloom's Job: The Role of the Advertisement Canvasser in Joyce's Dublin," *Modernism/modernity* 22, no. 4 [2015]: 651–66, 652).

9. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3:335–36. Benjamin left Berlin for Paris in 1933 and describes the return of the Bullrich memory in Berlin as happening "four years ago," suggesting the piece was written in 1937 at the latest (*Arcades*, 174).

10. On this topic, see Penksy's analysis of "the distinctive visual *doubling* of the dialectic of myth and anti-myth" in the piece ("*Geheimmittel*," 124).

11. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 113.

12. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xxi.

13. I allude to the first part of *History of Sexuality Volume I*, named "We 'Other Victorians'" after Steven Marcus's *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

14. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27, 24.

15. Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 56.

16. Raymond Williams's still-useful "Advertising: The Magic System," first published in 1961, observes that "The half-century between 1880 and 1930 . . . saw the full development of an organized system of commercial information and persuasion, as part of the modern distribution system in conditions of large-scale capitalism" (Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* [London: Verso, 1980], 179). Gary Cross identifies 1890–1930 as "the seminal years of modern US advertising," coinciding with a consumerism boom (Gary Cross, "Origins of Modern Consumption: Advertising, New Goods, and a New Generation, 1890–1930," in *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture*, ed. Matthew McAllister and Emily West [New York: Routledge, 2013], 11–23, 11).

17. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 39, 41.

18. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. Walter Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998), 47.

19. Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky and Hans Wisskirchen argue that the opening lines of the fragment are actually "spoken against Bloch's text," which Benjamin thought did not separate God and the world sufficiently (Hans Wisskirchen quoted in Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, "Walter Benjamin's 'Theological-Political Fragment' as a Response to Ernst Bloch's 'Spirit of Utopia,'" *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 47, no. 1 [2003]: 14). The dating of the text is uncertain. As usual, Gershom Scholem and Adorno disagreed, the former dating it to 1920–21 and the latter to 1937–38.

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Horace B. Samuel (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 118.

21. The rebus is discussed for instance in Benjamin, *Origin*, 169.

22. On medieval religious texts and systems of meaning, see for instance Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2002), 19–50; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), 13–21; Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 243–71.

23. Jerome McGann, *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 179.

24. Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 1, no. 6 (1913): 200–6, 200, 203.

25. See Cross, "Origins of Modern Consumption," 13.

26. See Williams, *Problems*, 175–76; and Nicholas Holm, *Advertising and Consumer Society: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 21–22.

27. Paula Geyh, "From Cities of Things to Cities of Signs: Urban Spaces and Urban Subjects in *Sister Carrie* and *Manhattan Transfer*," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 52, no. 4 (2006): 413–42, 413, emphasis in original.

28. Michael Schudson, "Advertising as Capitalist Realism" (1984), *Advertising and Society Review* 1, no. 1 (2000).

29. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage, 2004), 16. Michael Whitworth uses the sky-writing as a way into discussing Woolf's modernism, but suggests that she maintained a critical

790   distance from modernism's politics ("Virginia Woolf and Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 146–63, 146–47).

30. Karl emphasizes the relationship between the skywriting and the motor car that appears a few pages earlier, possibly carrying the Queen. In both cases, she argues, consumerism and display are "generative of collective national consciousness" (*Modernism and the Marketplace*, 65).

31. Fredric Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," *New Left Review* 25, no. 4 (2004): 35–54, 45. Jameson's extensive engagement with utopia includes also "Utopianism after the end of Utopia," in *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 154–80; and Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005).

32. Richard Wright, *Native Son* (London: Vintage, 2000), 46.

33. John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (London: Penguin, 1987), 129.

34. John J. Conder, *Naturalism in American Fiction: The Classic Phase* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 127.

35. Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 46–133, 85–86.

36. Julia Briggs, "Mirrlees, (Helen) Hope," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/62695.

37. Mary Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 138; Laura Winkiel, *Modernism: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2017), 147.

38. Matthew Mitton, "Rediscovering Hope Mirrlees," *Women: A Cultural Review* 24, no. 4 (2013): 368–70, 369.

39. See for instance Beard, *Invention*, 139; Peter Howarth, who uses it as a route into discussing modernist poetry in general in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2; Winkiel, *Modernism*,146–51; Zoë Skoulding, *Contemporary Women's Poetry and Urban Space: Experimental Cities* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 10–11.

40. Hope Mirrlees, *Paris: A Poem* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1920), 3. The title page of this work gives 1919 as the publication year, and "St" is added by hand in the first edition, presumably after being accidentally missed in the printing of the poem.

41. See Mirrlees, *Paris*, 23.

42. In his translation of "The Frogs," Paul Roche gives the line as "brekekekex koax koax" (Aristophanes, *Aristophanes: The Complete Plays*, trans. Paul Roche [New York: New American Library, 2005], 550–52).

43. Rev. 17.3–4 (King James Bible).

44. See Beard, *Invention*, 139; Skoulding, *Contemporary Women's Poetry*, 11; Melissa Boyde, "The Poet and the Ghosts Are Walking the Streets: Hope Mirrlees—Life and Poetry," *Hecate* 35, no.1/2 (2009): 32.

45. See *OED Online*, s.v., "*holophrase*, n." accessed October 3, 2020, oed.com/view/Entry/87812/; and Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 473n4.

46. Jane Harrison, *Aspects, Aorists and the Classical Tripos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), 16.