



HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

Kruchenykh

Cendrars

Hofmannsthal

Ferit Edgü

Andrei Bely

Otto Dix

Gellu Naum

Pierre Senges

Pál Békés

Ahmad Shamlu

& MORE

Vol. IX, No. 1 (spring 2015)

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics



MAST HEAD

Publisher: Contra Mundum Press

Location: New York, London, Melbourne

Editors: Rainer J. Hanshe, Erika Mihálycsa

PDF Design: Giuseppe Bertolini

Logo Design: Liliana Orbach

Advertising & Donations: Giovanni Piacenza

(To contact Mr. Piacenza: info@contramundum.net)

Letters to the editors are welcome and should be e-mailed
to: hyperion-future@contramundum.net

Hyperion is published biannually
by Contra Mundum Press, Ltd.

P.O. Box 1326, New York, NY 10276, U.S.A.

W: <http://contramundum.net>

For advertising inquiries, e-mail Giovanni Piacenza:
info@contramundum.net

Contents © 2015 Contra Mundum Press & each respective author unless
otherwise noted. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Contra Mundum Press. Republication is not permitted within six months of original publication. After two years, all rights revert to each respective author. If any work originally published by Contra Mundum Press is republished in any format, acknowledgement must be noted as following and include, in legible font (no less than 10 pt.), a direct link to our site: "Author, work title, *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, Vol. #, No. # (YEAR) page #s. Originally published by *Hyperion*. Reproduced with permission of Contra Mundum Press."

Thoughts to the Purpose. . .

Les beaux livres sont écrits dans une sorte de langue étrangère. Sous chaque mot chacun de nous met son sens ou du moins son image qui est souvent un contresens. Mais les beaux livres, tous les contresens qu'on fait sont beaux. — Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve*

For a translator, the supreme authority should be the *author's personal style*. But most translators obey another authority: that of the *conventional version* of “good French” (or good German, good English, et cetera), namely, the French (the German, et cetera) we learn in school. The translator considers himself the ambassador from that authority to the foreign author. That is the error: every author of some value *transgresses* against “good style,” and in that transgression lies the originality (and hence the *raison d'être*) of his art. The translator's primary effort should be to understand that transgression. This is not difficult when it is obvious, as for example with Rabelais, or Joyce, or Celine. But there are authors whose transgression against “good style” is subtle, barely visible, hidden, discreet; as such, it is not easy to grasp. In such a case, it is all the more important to do so. — Milan Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed*

When you work, you are necessarily in absolute solitude. You cannot have disciples, or be part of a school. The only work is moonlighting and is clandestine. But it is an extremely populous solitude. Populated not with dreams, phantasms, or plans, but with encounters. An encounter is perhaps the same thing as a becoming, or nuptials. It is from the depths of this solitude that you can make any encounter whatsoever. You encounter people (and sometimes without knowing them or ever having seen them) but also movements, ideas, events, entities. All these things have proper names, but the proper name does not designate a person or a subject. It designates an effect, a zigzag, something which passes or happens between two as though under a potential difference: the 'Compton effect,' the 'Kelvin effect.' We said the same thing about becomings: it is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other, a single becoming which is not common to the two, since they have nothing to do with one another, but which is between the two, which has its own direction, a bloc of becoming, an a-parallel evolution. This is it, the double capture, the wasp AND the orchid: not even something which would be in the one, or something which would be in the other, even if it had to be exchanged, be mingled, but something which is between the two, outside the two, and which flows in another direction. To encounter is to find, to capture, to steal, but there is no method for finding other than a long preparation. Stealing is the opposite of plagiarizing, copying, imitating, or doing like. Capture is always a double-capture, theft a double-theft, and it is that which creates not something mutual, but an asymmetrical block, an a-parallel evolution, nuptials, always 'outside' and 'between.' So this is what it would be, a conversation. ... the conjunction AND is neither a union, nor a juxtaposition, but the birth of a stammering, the outline of a broken line which always sets off at right angles, a sort of active and creative line of flight. — Deleuze, *Dialogues II*

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

Vol. IX, No. 1 (spring 2015)

Aleksandr Kruchenykh, Declaration of the Word	[0–5]
Nancy Kline, Translating Éluard & Char	[6–12]
Blaise Cendrars, <i>I Killed</i>	[13–26]
Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Letters of the Returning One	[27–64]
Ferit Edgü, <i>No One</i> (excerpt)	[65–75]
Andrei Bely, Friedrich Nietzsche	[76–118]
Otto Dix, Selected Letters	[119–136]
Gellu Naum, Selected Poems	[137–158]
Gellu Naum, <i>Apolodor's Travels</i>	[159–175]
Pierre Senges, Library of Imposture	[176–182]
Pierre Senges, <i>The Last Judgment</i> (a detail)	[183–191]
Pierre Senges, <i>Major Refutation</i> (excerpt)	[192–202]
Pál Békés, A Lesson in Aspiration & Two Neglected Blooms in the Hungarian Woods	[203–235]
Ahmad Shamlu, Selected Poems	[236–251]
Jason Mohaghegh, <i>Omnicide</i> (excerpt)	[252–261]
Ágota Márton, "Archaeologies of the Future": A Review of Peter Boxall's <i>Twenty-First-Century Fiction</i>	[262–267]
Szabolcs Laszlo, A Review of David Williams' <i>Writing Postcommunism</i>	[268–276]
Erika Mihálycsa, Review of <i>Samuel Beckett & Musicality</i>	[277–288]

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

ALEKSANDR KRUCHENYKH A DECLARATION OF THE WORD AS SUCH



TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
BY ADAM SIEGEL

Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh (1886–1968): cubo-futurist, co-author of Russian Futurism's most provocative manifestoes ("A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," "A Trap for Judges") and its main theoretician. Poet and graphic designer, Zaumnik, leading figure among those futurists and fellow travellers committed to the zaumnyi (generally translated,

somewhat unsatisfactorily, as "transrational" or "trans-sense"), i.e., a poetics of pure sound, sound divorced from or devoid of intentional meaning, to further a poetry whose pleasure was derived from its purely synaesthetic and associative phonotactic properties.

Kruchenykh's "A Declaration of the Word as Such," as a rhetorical salvo and statement of purpose, encapsulates the poetics of Russian Futurism ("A new verbal form creates new content, not the other way around").

Kruchenykh's "Declaration" also anticipates the direction of his later poetics, his move beyond the parricidal excesses of Mayakovsky et al., and their call to hurl Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, "etc., etc." from the steamship of modernity. Here Kruchenykh signals his intention to pay a subtler form of attention to places in the verbal texture "where everything begins to slip."

Active throughout the twenties, (self)-publishing mostly in small runs (150 copies for a title was not atypical) of pamphlets and chapbooks, Kruchenykh the zaumnik advanced a poetics of "texture" and "shift," which arguably constitutes a significant component in a long-hidden or at least overlooked theoretical framework for the creative revolution in the early Soviet era: by proposing and refining an aesthetics of paratactic immanence, Kruchenykh's work informed that of his generation (cf., Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Shklovsky, Tret'yakov), indirectly exerting an (unrecognized) international influence over the course of the past century.

Kruchenykh published his last two books, Ironiada and Rubiniada, in 1930. Mayakovsky's suicide that same year and the Gleichschaltungen of Stalinist cultural politics silenced him. — Adam Siegel

A DECLARATION OF THE WORD AS SUCH

4) Thought and speech are unable to keep up with the experience of inspiration, and thus the artist is free to express himself not only through a common language (concepts) but even through a personal (the individual creator) one, a language that has no fixed meanings (un_frozen_), transrational. A common language binds, but a free one allows for fuller expression.

(Example: go osneg kayd...)

5) Words die, but the world is eternally young. The artist saw the world anew and like Adam gave names to everything. A lily is beautiful, but "liliya" is a hideous word: manhandled, "gang-raped." So I call the lily "euy" — and its original purity is restored.

2) Consonants form existence, nationality, weight; vowels on the contrary form a universal language. A poem solely of vowels:

o e a
i e e i
a e e e

3) Verse (unconsciously) forms series of vowels and consonants. These series are inviolable. Better to substitute one word for another, similar less in sense than in sound (bast — nast — gost). The same vowels and consonants, as they are replaced by lines, depict drawings that are themselves inviolable (for example, I-III-I-I-III). Thus it is impossible to translate from one language into another, one could simply write a poem in Latin characters and provide a gloss. U(p) t(il) n(ow), translations have been cribs; as works of art, they are the rudest form of vandalism.

- 1) A new verbal form creates new content, not the other way around.
- 6) Forming new words, I bring new content, where everything begins to slip.
- 7) In art there can be unresolved dissonances — "unpleasant to the ear" — for there is dissonance in our souls (bad-voice) as is licensed in the first example: dyr bul shchyl, etc.
- 8) In music, sound; in portraiture, paint; in poetry: letters (thought = insight + sound + line + paint).
- 9) In transrational poetry a supreme and definitive universality and economy is achieved — (eco-art). Example: kho-bo-po...
- 10) And so art, rather than tapering off, acquires new realms; rather than dying off, it is resurrected.

soothsayer poet-cubo-futurist
Aleks (Aleksandr) Kruchenykh
1913–1917
April–May

Декларация слова как такового

4) Мысль и речь не успевают за переживанием вдохновенного, поэтому художник волен выражаться не только общим языком (понятия) но и личным (творец индивидуален), и языком, не имеющим определенного значения (не застывшим), заумным. Общий язык связывает, свободный позволяет выразиться полнее.

(Пример: го оснег кайд...)

5) Слова умирают, мир вечно юн. Художник увидел мир по-новому и, как Адам, дает всему свои имена. Лилия прекрасна, но безобразно слово лилия, захватанное и “изнасилованное”. Поэтому я называю лилию еуы — первоначальная чистота восстановлена.

2) Согласные дают быт, национальность, тяжесть, гласные — обратное — вселенский язык. Стихотворение из одних гласных:

о е а
и е е и
а е е е

3) Стих дает (бессознательно) ряды гласных и согласных. Эти ряды неприкосновенны. Лучше заменять слово другим, близким не по мысли, а по звуку (лыки — мыки — кыка). Одинаковые гласные и согласные, будучи заменены чертами, образуют рисунки, кои неприкосновенны (например, I—III—I—I—III). Поэтому переводить с одного языка на другой нельзя, можно лишь написать стихотворение латинскими буквами и дать подстрочник. Бывшие д<о> с<их> п<ор> переводы лишь подстрочники; как художественные произведения — они грубейший вандализм.

1) Новая словесная форма создает новое содержание, а не наоборот.

6) Давая новые слова, я приношу новое содержание, где все стало скользить.

7) В искусстве могут быть неразрешенные диссонансы — “неприятное для слуха” — ибо в нашей душе есть диссонанс (зло-глас) которым и разрешается первый пример: дыр бул щыл и т.д.

8) В музыке — звук, в живописи — краска, в поэзии — буква (мысль = прозрение + звук + начертание + краска).

9) В заумной поэзии достигается высшая и окончательная всемирность и экономия — (эко-худ). Пример: хо-бо-ро...

10) Всем этим искусство не суживается, а приобретает новые поля, не умерщвляется, а воскрешается.

баяч-будетлянин-поэт-кубофутурист

Алексей (Александр) Крученых

1913–17

апрель–май.

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

TRANSLATING ÉLUARD & CHAR: THE BEAN JUMPS



Valentine Hugo, René Char and Paul Éluard, Gordes (1931)

NANCY KLINE

My mother had aphasia at the very end of her life and sounded, sometimes, like Gertrude Stein. Or a Surrealist poet. She was a writer, my mother, and even at the end she never lost her syntax. It was her words she lost — or found. Her most Surrealist utterance being:

Skillet! Skillet!
She has gone to an extent
To spread her trestle.

I don't know what this text means. But if I had the right dictionary, I could translate it.

An authentic Surrealist poem that I *have* translated — and that my mother's lament calls to mind, in its opacity — is Éluard's "Mascha riait aux anges." Here is his six-line text, in the original French and in my translation:

Mascha riait aux anges

L'heure qui tremble au fond du temps tout embrouillé

Un bel oiseau léger plus vif qu'une poussière
Traîne sur un miroir un cadavre sans tête
Des boules de soleil adoucissent ses ailes
Et le vent de son vol affole la lumière

Le meilleur a été découvert loin d'ici.

Masha was beaming

The hour trembling at the root of tangled time

A lovely feathery bird quicker than a speck of dust
Drags a headless corpse across a mirror
Spheres of sun soften its wings
And the wind of flight maddens the light

The best was discovered far from here.¹

¹ Paul Éluard, *Capital of Pain*, tr. by Mary Ann Caws, Patricia Terry, and Nancy Kline (2006) 124–125. Hereafter (CP).

I couldn't say what this text means; perhaps you can. But I translated it.

I can identify in its six verses a lexicon of Surrealist — and specifically Éluardian — substantives: a decapitated corpse (as we know, "exquisite corpses" were big with the Surrealists); a mirror; a bird, dust, madness. And flight, which recurs throughout Éluard's *Capital of Pain*, the book in which this poem appears.

That flight recurs so frequently in this collection is unsurprising, since the poet's wife at the time fled into various other people's arms and the poet himself fled from his pain.

And then came home to write about it. As we all do.

I can pick out the scattered alexandrines and assonances and rhymes, and the image that suggests Icarus: *Spheres of sun soften its wings*. And in the last line, "The best was discovered far from here," I can hear the echo of Baudelaire's "Anywhere Out of This World." I'm dazzled by the shimmer of light driven crazy by flight and the way the hour trembles in a tangle of time. But I can't say I understand the poem.

I have to pause here for a parenthesis about Éluard's friend and sometime colleague René Char, whom I knew, years after his brief association with Surrealism. When I said to him, once, that some of his own poetry — Char's poetry — might be seen as hermetic, he responded: How could *he*, a grandson of Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Scève — how could *he* be called *hermetic*?

Besides which, he said, poems *should* be mysterious.

He recounted a story from his Surrealist days. *There was a jumping bean*, he told me, *and that imbecile Caillois said, We have to open it to see what's inside. But Breton said, No! Breton was right, for once. Whether the worm inside is eating or changing place or trying to get out, what's interesting about that? What's interesting is that the bean jumps.*

*You have to enter into poems, Char said, listen to the verses that are mysterious to you as you would listen in a cathedral to Josquin des Pres or Monteverdi, music distant from us but full of hunting horns.*²

I'll settle for the hunting horns in Éluard's text.

But although I don't like to admit this, when it came to translating its title, I tripped. I didn't know the French idiom "rire aux anges," which — if translated word for word — means *to laugh or smile at the angels*. And because the phrase "Masha Smiled at the Angels" sounded no odder, to my ear, than the rest of the poem, it didn't even occur to me to check.

Happily, I learned the title's idiomatic meaning before we went to press, and I changed it to "Masha Was Beaming." Not without regret, I have to say, feeling that something — a touch of whimsy? of humor? — might have been lost in being correct!

Not to worry. Recently, I went looking for the text in the edition of *Capital of Pain* that Mary Ann Caws and Patricia Terry and I translated. I hadn't seen our book's Table of Contents since I'd corrected the title. And there it was: "Mascha riait aux anges/ Marsha was beaming."

Oh no! How did this happen?

I thought about it.

Our publisher is located in Boston, where I lived for many years; I can recognize a Boston accent when I hear it. And I can only speculate that somewhere along the line, somebody had a Boston accent. In that town, *Marsba* is pronounced "Masha."

I hope that Éluard, if he's listening, is smiling at the angels.

Here, then, is a pitfall of translating Surrealism — so many of its images make no rational sense (that's the whole point) that terms you would naturally scrutinize in translating, say, René Char, you risk

² René Char, *Furor and Mystery & Other Writings*, ed. and tr. by Mary Ann Caws & Nancy Kline (2010) 517. Hereafter (FM).

sliding past. Char's enigmas *demand* our scrutiny, seem always to encapsulate an authorial meaning, if only you can decipher it. Not so, all of Éluard's.

And then, you may be having too much fun to slow down. *Capital of Pain* is full of jokes. Éluard, like many of his colleagues — and like the Dadaists before them — loved to play.

However: as we know, Dada and Surrealism, for all their playfulness, arose out of the cataclysm of the First World War; they sprouted from the ruins that it left behind. Ruins on which the Second World War built. And the Surrealist (if he is that) whose work I know the best, Char, gives voice to the wreckage. In fact, much of his poetry might be said to take its form from the rubble:

“La quantité de fragments me déchire,” he wrote. “Et debout se tient la torture.” [The quantity of fragments tears me apart. And the torture is endured upright.] (FM, 54)

Whether or not Char was ever really a Surrealist — he denied it when I knew him, even though he'd spent five years as an official member of the movement — it is not, as is so often the case in Surrealist texts, the shock of juxtapositions or images originating in the dream or the unconscious mind that makes his poems difficult to translate. What makes *this* poet so difficult, it seems to me, is the quality of his language, its elliptical density — what's left after the explosion — coupled with his own avowed ambivalence about how much a poem *should* reveal:

“Tu es reposoir d'obscurité sur ma face trop offerte, poème,” he writes. [Poem, you are a wayside altar of darkness on my too freely offered face.] (FM 376–377)

For me, the quintessential experience of reading and translating René Char is to be suspended in transparency, in a lucid and radiant series of fragments or prose poems, only to be confronted, quite suddenly, with an enigma that clearly *means* — but what?

Mystery is central to Char's poetry. The book of his that I just translated with Mary Ann Caws is called *Furor and Mystery*.

And central, too, is “[c]et instant où la beauté, après s’être longtemps fait attendre surgit des choses communes, traverse notre champ radieux, lie tout ce qui peut être lié, allume tout ce qui doit être allumé de notre gerbe de ténèbres.”³ [That instant when beauty, having kept us waiting for so long, abruptly rises out of common things, cuts across our radiant field of vision, binds together all that can be bound, lights all that must be set alight in our sheaf of shadows.]

This illuminative flash of beauty is clearly akin to the Surrealists’ *marvelous in everyday life*. But it is more than that. For in Char’s universe, Beauty is a moral force. He wrote his wartime journal, *Leaves of Hypnos*, in the years 1943 to 1944, while actively plunged in the French Resistance to the Nazi Occupation of his country. *Hypnos* consists of 237 elliptical, fragmentary, poetic texts, some of them transparent, some *not*, all written, as he tells us, “dans la tension, la colère, la peur, l’émulation, le dégoût, la ruse, le recueillement furtif, l’illusion de l’avenir, l’amitié, l’amour.” [under stress, in anger, fear, emulation, disgust, guile, furtive meditation, the illusion of a future, friendship, love.] (FM 132–133) And this heartbreaking record of the war ends with the following verse:

“Dans nos ténèbres, il n’y a pas une place pour la Beauté. Toute la place est pour la Beauté.” [In our shadows, there is not one space for Beauty. The whole space is for Beauty.] (FM 214–215)

Thus, as the Occupation ends — the years of brutality and terror and loss — Char evokes freedom as it makes its slow way back into his devastated world: freedom returns, he writes, “along this white line.... a swan on the wound.” (FM 85)

Cygne sur la blessure.

This image of *la liberté* gliding silent, lovely and imperturbable as a swan, curative, over the wound the earth has become — this image strikes me as purely beautiful, and as astonishing in its

³ Char, *Oeuvres complètes* (Editions Gallimard: 1983) 757. Hereafter (OC).

unlikely juxtaposition of “swan” and “wound” as the most exquisite corpse.

Of course the French word for swan, “cygne,” sounds like — though it isn’t spelled like — “signe,” the French word for sign. Language returns to the poet in the same instant that his freedom does.

And *that* is lost in translation.

What isn’t lost in translation, even missing Char’s *double-entendre*, is the emotional weight of the image. An emotional weight that we encounter in so many of his poems, even the most (dare I use the word?) incomprehensible, which — like my mother’s anguished “Skillet! Skillet!” — cannot be understood “under the reign of logic.”⁴ Not with the mind, but with the heart.

⁴ André Breton, *First Surrealist Manifesto*. In *Surrealism: The Modern Artist and His World*, ed. by Patrick Waldberg (1971).

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

BLAISE CENDRARS

I KILLED



Otto Dix, *Totentanz anno 17 (Höhe toter Mann) / Der Krieg* (1924)

TRANSLATED BY RAINER J. HANSHE

INTRO: FROM POET TO APE

The dawning of a new century on the rise: construction of the Eiffel Tower, symbol of industrial and artistic progress and icon of the Enlightenment, concludes in 1889, the centenary of the French Revolution and founding of the First Republic. Not long thereafter, Freud & Jung will expand the fields of the mind and construct equally monumental conceptual structures, mapping the unconscious and the shadow, presaging the mapping by physicists of dark energy and dark matter in the late 20th century. In 1905, Einstein will publish his theory of special relativity, and in 1915 his theory of general relativity, exploding notions of space & time, consequently provoking a revolution as monumental if not greater than the Copernican. It is also the epoch of cinema, its birth oft considered to be December 28, 1895, the day the first film was screened at the Lumière brothers Cinématographe. Conversely, the terrors of WWI would bring to bear against the promise of a new century, the potential that is of an ever-more pacific and refined civilization, its first forbidding foil.

In the midst of these events, the Swiss-French writer Blaise Cendrars, who was born the year construction on the Eiffel Tower began, establishes himself as one of the most intrepid and iconoclastic figures of the 20th century. Nomadic writer par excellence, Cendrars began his writing life as a poet and would have his hand in almost every art and pen almost every kind of text, from poems to stories and novels to reportage, radio plays, ballet texts and film scripts. He also worked as a translator, anthologist (of African myths, legends, poems, and modern writing), and with Cocteau and Paul Laffitte, founded Les Éditions de La Sirène, co-editing and overseeing projects such as a monumental edition of Casanova's *Memoires*, reprints of Villon, Nerval, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, and Apollinaire, not to speak of, as he would have us believe, tracts, anthologies, mystical writings, Alexandrian and Byzantine novels, painters' sketchbooks and more. Cendrars's activities were not, however, restricted to the ateliers and editing rooms; he was active on battlefields, too.