

The Pleasures of Daldaldal: Freud, Jokes, and the Development of Intersubjective Aesthetics

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Preamble: A Joke Happens

Here I invite you to imagine a particular Freud. Not that familiar image of bearded omniscience with receding hair; not even the dark visionary, propounding a disquieting theory of human endeavours as a regressive progression. Instead, I invite you to imagine Freud the collector of jokes – a jocular Freud, so to speak; and, also, to imagine Freud the writer and interpreter of texts, forging his own artistic expression alongside his insights about joking. Dialogically inflected with several other figures and texts, the following pages are dedicated to this complex joker-figure and the repercussions that his early twentieth century theory of joking has had on both modernist production and our understanding of it. I investigate in detail the Freudian intersubjective theory of jokes and its diverse contexts, and suggest some avenues for assessing his book on jokes as a meaningful participant in a discourse and practice of modernist artistic engagement with the comic. Freud's account of joking in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* must be reclaimed for modernist studies, I submit, for at least two reasons. First, his contribution to modernist (theories of) laughter presents an important threshold in intellectual history—one that sees the emergence of contemporary notions of intersubjectivity, language, and art-production. Second and consequential to the first, Freud's 1905 assessment of joke-work deserves to be recontextualized as a modernist text in its own right. Freud's reflections on joke-work amount to a seminal modernist theory not only because of their purposeful departure from

and reworking of both traditional and contemporary assessments of humour, but also because of their particular position in relation to modernist discourse-practice as such.

Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*, 1905) appeared in print at the time of Freud's intense publication activity. Those few years saw the production and publication of principal Freudian texts dealing with the everyday, sexuality, gender construction, (creative) performance, and language: the reprint in the book form of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901, 1904), and publications including *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1905), "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" (1905), and "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (delivered as a public lecture in 1907, published in 1908). The common ground for these seemingly disparate discussions is provided by the question of social interaction. It is this issue that also decisively shapes Freud's inquiry into the dynamics of joke-production. In *Jokes* Freud outlines three types of laughter situation that he deems particularly important for our understanding of the way in which individuals and social groups operate: joking (activities ranging from punchline-driven storytelling to making spontaneous witty comments, punning, and passing repartees); the comic mode (situations which necessitate mimetic representation, projection, and understanding, and where logical thinking is suspended; e.g., engaging with/in clown performance), and humour (applied to circumstances in which, by taking a humorous attitude, we spare ourselves the trouble of an affect; a topic revisited in Freud's 1927 article on humour). The most "social" of these three activities, joking (*der Witz* - joke, joking), attracts maximum attention in Freud's book. Outlining the reasons for his choice in the Introduction, Freud passes swiftly over "personal motives"—the phrase which references both his passion for collecting jokes and anecdotes and Wilhelm Fliess's criticism that *The Interpretation of Dreams*

contains too many jokes¹—and even over the usefulness of this investigation for other domains of psychoanalytic inquiry. For him, the chief incentive for examining jokes is sociological—the ubiquity of joking and “the peculiar and even fascinating charm” exercised by jokes in society. “A new joke acts almost like an event of universal interest,” Freud enthusiastically stresses, “it is passed from one person to another like the news of the latest victory.”² The last phrase (“die neueste Siegesnachricht,” literally, “the news of the latest triumph”) was not incidentally selected to describe the dynamic of joking. In Freud’s model of joke-production the affect/projection of “being triumphant” is, we shall see, a key ingredient.

At the same time, though, it is vital to recognize that jokes, their incentives, and their production serve in Freud a far greater role than either that of the denigration of the object or simple amusement—the two theories of humour and joking which Freud specifically targets in his study. It was, rather, the multifaceted character of the joking process, the complexities of economy and the pleasure derived, and the artisanal skill that joking involves that first attracted Freud to the topic. But this subject-matter evolved and overflowed beyond a focused scholarly account, creating a peculiar textual edifice, replete with jokes, fragmented arguments, and unsettled dialogues with past and contemporary thinkers; a content that is supposed to both propose and perform an intersubjective aesthetics. The latter impulse can be noticed first in Freud’s working definitions of jokes charted in his Introduction. Rather than being a means of castigation, the joke is described here (Freud ventriloquizes Kuno Fischer) as “a playful judgment,” a brief statement of “sense beyond non-sense” which acquires its social significance precisely by the artful treatment of the seemingly non-vital needs.³ Formally, the joke is unique in that it relies on the joking subject’s *artistic* ability to bring out concealed content. The joke’s future life, its realization in social exchange, directly depends upon the success of its artistic

presentation. In short, the joke is an artwork. Not incidentally, Freud's subsequent interrogations of the dynamic of creative writing bear striking resemblances to his early model of joking.

The last is the motive for my own revisiting of Freud's book on joking more than a century apart. Scholars cagily use Freud in current reappraisals of modernist laughter, satire and humour; and yet, as Justus Nieland reminds us, Freud's theory of joking is quintessential for our understanding of modernism's laughter and its efforts to describe and re-inscribe the limits of the social world.⁴ The reasons for this scholarly lacuna are complex. On the one hand, Freud's problematically gendered and hostility-peppered explanation of joke-production does not square well with the liberated gender consciousness that modernist scholars would like their subjects of inquiry to display. On the other hand, the status of this unusual book in Freud's oeuvre is also debated by psychoanalytic scholars: exactly how jocular was Freud when he decided to dedicate a full-length book to the subject of jokes? Most importantly, perhaps, the very relevance of investigating Freud's discussion of jokes in the context of modernist discourse on laughter has been overlooked. Holly Laird, for instance, perceptively suggests that, rather than being spontaneous, modernist laughter and nonsense were learned through both long practice and "overseriousness and disillusionment;" it is a stance that echoes, presumably unwittingly, Freud's focus on the artisanal skills he finds in the joke-production of disenchanted twentieth century humans.⁵ More recently, Sara Crangle astutely traced in modernist laughter an impulse to intersubjectivity and interpreted it in the context of Emmanuel Levinas's thought; yet, remarkably, she did not comment on Freud's own insistence on intersubjective components in the joke-work.⁶ In his seminal assessment of late modernism in terms of the deauthentication of the world through mirthless, self-reflexive laughter, Tyrus Miller, though, puts Freud to a specific use: Freud's discussion of ideational mimetics and the subcategory of jokes that we call

smut provides Miller with an insight into how we might imagine the transitivity between disembodied textual forms and laughter as a bodily and social response.⁷ Although limited to a few paragraphs, Miller's engagement with Freud's joke-text provides one with further food for thought. While Freud (in 1905 as well as in 1927) was interested in self-reflexive laughter and was more than aware of the loss of an "authentic" social ground in the proliferation of mimetic practices, his actual discussion of jokes seems to offer a picture of laughter situations that is diametrically opposed to Miller's account: for Freud, laughter and the comic, even when automated, reflexive, and deliberately detached from the body, are fundamentally linked to the processes that foreground, rather than attenuate, the subject-in-society. This particular paradox will be taken up in what follows and used to illuminate the complex dialogues between the theories of intersubjectivity, language, and joking, and their specific implications for modernist practices.

"Daldaldal—daldaldal?" Social Dynamics of Jokes

Freud's discussion of jokes may have been seen – sometimes by Freud himself – as an oddity in his opus, but it was a representative intellectual inquiry in 1905. To approach this moment in cultural history and the history of modernism (whilst simultaneously inflecting Freud's text with a female perspective), I will start this section by briefly correlating *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* and another contemporary modernist take on laughter. Freud's account of the laughter situations was published in Vienna, with Deuticke, in late spring 1905. A few months later, in August 1905, an aspiring writer by the name of Virginia Stephen (later Woolf) equally enthusiastically espoused the investigation of laughter in the British newspaper *The Guardian*. Although Freud and Woolf would meet some thirty years later, it is reasonable to assume that

neither of them knew much about the other's efforts in 1905.⁸ Surprisingly, though, the two developed theories of the laughter situation which are markedly similar in intention. Notably, neither of them finds the dignified, decorous mode of humour serviceable in their arguments; instead, they profess interest in jokes and comedy, and everything else that may bring about "peals of laughter," grins, giggles, joyful wags, and even, in Woolf's proposal, the condition of *risus puris*, "pure laughter."⁹ Both Freud and Woolf seem to cherish the circumstance that, generally speaking, laughter situations produce little knowledge or ennoblement of the humankind, and yet they are worth celebrating. Importantly, though, this exultation of mundane hilarity makes neither of them blind to the tendentiousness, and sometimes downright aggression, that the generation of social laughter also implies—the fact that "the keen blade of the comic spirit probes to the quick."¹⁰

Contextually speaking, Freud's and Woolf's preference for the lowly sort of laughter is curious, as philosophizing on humour (rather than laughter) had become an almost topical intellectual endeavour at the turn of the century.¹¹ But Freud's and Woolf's 1905 accounts of laughter situations also follow in the tracks of Henri Bergson's 1900 study of laughter (which both authors have read or appropriated through ventriloquism), and narrowly precede Luigi Pirandello's "On humour" ("L'umorismo," 1908). Like these texts, Freud's book and Woolf's article present a watershed moment in the history of modernism. They point to the fermentation and imbrication of several modernist dynamics that found best expression in the study of laughter: the relegation of attention from the "high," solemn, and reputable, to the "trivial," mundane, and disreputable, and from the hegemonically articulate to the irreverently ill-/inarticulate; the consequent interest in the limitations, faults, and ambivalence of humans; and, importantly for my subsequent discussion, a move away from the psychological dynamics that

involve only one or two entities (as humour does in Freud's and Woolf's interpretations) to what both the psychoanalyst and the writer describe as a paradigmatically inter-human communicative transfer. Informed by different geocultural, disciplinary, intellectual and gender contexts, both Freud and Woolf extol the generation of laughter as a quintessential social activity which sets into motion the wheels of dialogic interaction. Retrospectively, this coincidence provides modernist scholars with a particular mandate: to establish bridges between our understanding of the early twentieth century assessment of laughter and contemporaneous developments in the theorization of language interaction, dialogicity, and intersubjectivity. The task of the unfolding pages is to answer this directive by mapping the intertextual terrain of Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.

As the joke's disposition towards being contagious is allotted a special significance in Freud's Introduction to *Jokes*, it may be apposite to begin our enquiry here. "No one can be content with having made a joke for himself alone," Freud stresses.¹² Joking necessitates the participation of three parties: the teller, the addressee, and the super-addressee/subject. If the joke succeeds and laughter is elicited from the listener, the latter will transport it on, bringing forth further laughter. This laughing discharge rises from the unbinding, if only temporarily, of the energy that is cathected to an interiorly frustrating psychological path.¹³ Freud's infamously gendered scenario of joke-production, then, reads as follows: a man encounters a desirable woman with whom he engages in a "wooing talk," perhaps in a presence of another man; the woman rejects or resists acknowledging the speaker's sexual intentions, and, once she has left the room, the man jokes about her with another male; the other acts first as an obstacle and, subsequently, as an audience for/accomplice in joking. The joke's aim of generating pleasure can thus be realised only in this third person, the listener, rather than in the joker or in the butt of the joke.¹⁴ The

psychic energy that has been used to repress emotions such as sexual desire and hostility is released in laughter and economically realigned. We derive pleasure from, simply, being more economical in our expenditure of psychic energy. The final result is a triumphant, if temporary, retrieval of the euphoric mood of childhood.¹⁵

It is not hard to detect that sexist aggression underpins this dynamic, a circumstance of which Freud was conscious.¹⁶ As many feminist critics and some psychoanalytic scholars have commented, “the third [female] term” in Freudian account of the joke-work seems to be “invoked only in the interest of the original [male] rivalry”: the female subject is discarded and petrified in representation as soon as male exchange has been initiated.¹⁷ These accusations are no laughing matter; and, as such, although they are not the focus of this article, they deserve to be addressed – especially if, in turn, they help us map a further social and conceptual territory of Freud’s discussion. In response to these objections, then, one is reminded, first, that Freud’s book on jokes, just like his other texts of this period, communicates the thinker’s aspiration to develop a theory that would not only reposition our general understanding of human nature and address some fundamental questions in intellectual history, but also, perhaps primarily, speak meaningfully to his contemporaries. The “everyday life,” the observation of which forms the basis of so many of Freud’s theories, underwent profound changes during his lifetime. Many of the jokes assembled in *Jokes* or anecdotes scattered in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* have thus been selected precisely for their capacity to reflect – often through a symptomatic articulation – the modifications in daily functioning of society. The “disappearing woman” joke, one may argue, belongs precisely to this category: it is a joke that brings to the surface the male subject’s anxiety to negotiate the contemporary rise of female agency and visibility. It is not incidental that Freud’s gendered joke appeared in print in the same year that the suffragettes’

militant campaign began. The British suffragettes' activities resonated with particular force in Vienna in the groups around journals *Dokumente der Frauen* and *Neues Frauenleben*. Freud had long been an acquaintance, a therapist, and a mentor for a few individuals associated with these circles, most notably, Emma Eckstein (the patient whose dream is analysed as that of “Irma’s injection” in *The Interpretation of Dreams*) and Rosa Mayreder. The latter published one of the most radical feminist treatises of the time precisely in early 1905: Mayreder’s collection of philosophical and sociological essays *Towards a Critique of Femininity* (*Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit*) was noted for its specific attack on the misogynist discourse in Otto Weininger’s 1903 best-seller *Sex and Character* (*Geschlecht und Character*) and a contrastingly positive appraisal of Freudian psychoanalysis.¹⁸

This context sheds a new light on Freud’s discussion, and merits further investigation. For my purposes in this article, however, another objection to the criticism of Freud’s gendered joke is more consequential. Examining this scenario in relation to Freud’s other “economic” theories, scholars like Jerry Aline Flieger emphasize that, while the constituents and remainders of the jocular distribution of desire in the “vanished woman” joke may seem predestined, Freud conceived of these roles as interchangeable; and that the position of the woman in the tendentious joke-work is also exchangeable, potentially filled by an authority-figure or an institution in those jokes which are not based on sexual aggression.¹⁹ This argument helpfully relegates focus from the content of the joke to the dynamic field of joking, likely Freud’s chief interest. But it also draws attention to yet another perspective from which the whole question may well appear displaced: the inflexible female super-addressee of the joke could also be seen as the most active agent in the dynamic, one who effectively enables joke-formation. To understand this turn properly, we need to chart a further patch of intertextual terrain.

As mentioned, our pleasure in joking derives from an economy in psychic expenditure, where the pain of repressing desiring or hostile impulses is alleviated and the previously bound energy is converted into a socially acceptable form—a joke. This ludic triologue is thus both a consequence and a precipitate of the circulation of desire, and, as such, and with a specific intertextual lens, it may be viewed as life-giving, life-continuing, and life-shaping. I am recasting my discussion in these terms for a few reasons here: to draw attention to the indebtedness of Freud’s model to an obscure work by Franz Brentano; to indicate some points of comparison between Freud’s conceptualization of the joke-work and Valentin Voloshinov’s and Mikhail Bakhtin’s early models of the speech act and the developing theory of the comic; and, finally, to contextualize Freud’s model as a modernist aesthetics based on intersubjectivity and, more specifically, the concept of intersubjective intentionality. These strands coalesce in one mystifying footnote to *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. In this footnote Freud quotes at length a few riddles published anonymously by the well-known Austrian philosopher and Freud’s former professor, Franz Brentano.²⁰ Even though his paraphrase of Brentano’s riddles is long, gauche and even inaccurate, Freud never considered revising or removing this particular footnote. This uneasy prominence indicates that Brentano’s unsigned work may have wider importance for our understanding of Freud’s theory of jokes.

I find it intriguing that, among many specimens in Brentano’s *New Riddles (Neue Räthsel, 1879)*, the category of so-called “fill-up riddles” [*Füllräthsel*] particularly attracts Freud’s attention. These difficult (and not entirely humorous) riddles are quoted in support of Freud’s discussion of the technique of jokes in which the same word is used twice, once as a whole, and once in part, that is, cut up into syllables or replicated sounds. Brentano’s typical fill-up riddle consists of a story which closes with a statement-question; the latter ends with a

semantic omission to be filled up. The omission is indicated by the sound “dal;” the number of times the expletive “dal” is repeated corresponds to the number of syllables in the omitted phrase; and the introductory statement contains the actual semantic elements of the omitted phrase in a (split, joint, and/or recombined) concealed form. It is the respondent’s task, then, to guess the omitted phrase on the basis of two “leads”—the number of syllables (i.e., “dals”) and the letters/sounds that comprise the first half of the statement. The following is Freud’s chosen example, one that he insisted being reproduced in every edition of *Jokes*: a doctor whose Indian patient has suddenly died of poisoning asks himself in horror: “Was hast du getan? Hast du dich vielleicht gar, indem du den Trank dem daldaldaldaldaldal—daldaldaldaldaldal [literally: “What have you done? Is it possible that when you the potion for the daldaldaldaldaldal-daldaldaldaldaldaldal?!” The answer to be semantically assembled is: “wie du dem *Inder hast verschrieben, in der Hast verschrieben*” (“...the Indian prescribed, made a slip of the pen in your haste”). The last sentence contains the repetition of the same sound group in two different semantic contexts: “Inder hast” (“for the Indian [prescribed]”) and “in der Hast” (“in haste”). The intuited meaning of the sentence, the phonic contents of the adverbial clause, and the number of omitted syllables should all lead the respondent to guess the occluded phrase, spelling out possibility that, in a rush, the doctor may have misprescribed the medicine.²¹

What Brentano—and Freud following him—find significant in this riddle is arguably not its entertainment value; rather, it is the circumstance that the subject’s words (riddle) acquire their meaning only in the mind of the receiver, a riddle-solving entity that completes the communicative act, i.e., makes it into a whole (solution). In this way the reception and responsive action become constitutive of the act itself. While this process is generally characteristic of riddles, “cut-up” riddles like this one are of special interest to Brentano—and

Freud—because they foreground the relations of dependence between parts (participants) and a whole (a speech act, a riddle). This is a topic which Brentano had previously explored in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, 1874), and which Freud may well have engaged when attending Brentano’s lectures the same year. It is on the basis of this conceptualization of part-whole relations that, a few years later, another of Brentano’s students, Anton Marty, would develop his own hypothesis about the discursive realization of intersubjective relations—a theory that, in turn, would vitally influence the work of Voloshinov and Bakhtin.²² I suggest that these bifurcating discussions also present the crux of Freud’s communicative model of joke-work. For Freud, jokes, like riddles, are based on semantic intention and demand: they “intend” and they require a response. Intersubjective and transmissible via social chains, Freudian jokes, like riddles, are shaped by what Freud calls, variably, a “conceptual connection” and a “method:” namely, a subtended term, which is either a direct allusion to the hidden/absent object of the joke (the woman who left the room, for example), or, else, a form of encircling that object analogically.²³ Intention, rather than (self-)reflection, is at the heart of joking.²⁴ The deepest, yet unrealizable, intention of joking is to provoke the absent object’s (the hidden addressee’s) reaction; this being impossible, the joke-work finds its realization in the listener’s laughing response, and *only in his/her response*. As Freud never tires of repeating, the act of joking is realized *only in reception*.²⁵ It is this “interdependence paradigm” for the joke-work that relates most profoundly Freud’s model to the dialogical theory of the utterance developed in the late 1920s by Voloshinov and Bakhtin.²⁶

What I have outlined above says little about the psychological content and effects of this intersubjective exchange, though. To shed light on these, I will now take a Freudian détour, an inflection through a third figure. Like many other texts in Freud’s opus, *Jokes and Their Relation*

to the Unconscious is based on the discursive procedure of implicit critique. One of the most important interlocutors in Freud's book is Henri Bergson, whose study *Laughter (Le Rire: Essai sur la signification du comique, 1900)* is frequently mentioned in Freud's volume, invariably in a positive context. What Freud and Bergson share is the understanding of joking and laughter as a "social gesture" with a specific function in society,²⁷ a conception which, parenthetically, one may also recognize in Bakhtin's work on the comic. The arguments of all three thinkers converge in the assessment of the socially subversive nature of tendentious jokes: like Bergson before him and Bakhtin after him, Freud highlights that this type of joke is "highly suitable for attacks on the dominant, the dignified, and the mighty," and the glorified collective extensions of the subject (e.g., nation).²⁸ These productive correlations notwithstanding, though, Bergson's and Freud's assessments of humour are based on unlike, even contrasting, premises. Freud does not address this disparity of ideas directly, but I would suggest that this particular divergence is constitutive of the Freudian theory of jokes.

According to Bergson, laughter is provoked by the recognition of rigidity (of gestures or thought), that is, the identification of "something mechanical in something living."²⁹ Laughter serves to correct, indeed castigate, this social inelasticity; it is the function of laughter, Bergson says, "to intimidate by humiliating" those who are less apt in their adaptation to the demands of ever-fluctuating societal currents and *élan vital* itself.³⁰ In its redemption of the flexibility of life as a moral paradigm, laughter itself is inflexible: it knows only the "absence of feeling" and "indifference," Bergson emphasizes.³¹ This vitalist-mechanistic vision of joke-formation appealed to some modernists bent on satire, most notably, Wyndham Lewis.³² But Bergson's negative definitional exercises, however persuasive, has not always been greeted with enthusiasm. In a sketch of a 1930s article on the comic and avant-garde poet Vladimir

Mayakovsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, for one, critically remarks that “Bergson’s entire theory knows only the negative side of laughter.”³³ It is precisely this “negative” differential and Bergson’s denial of the affective basis for the laughing situation that also inform Freud’s implicit critique of Bergson’s theory in *Jokes*. Like Bergson, Freud recognizes that joking may take on an aggressive form; nevertheless, he (similarly to Woolf and, later, Bakhtin) proposes a vision of jokes that, for all the violence implied, does not end in abnegating derision. Grounded in emotion, joking, according to Freud, effects a healthy “compromise . . . between the demands of reasonable criticism and the urge not to renounce the ancient pleasure in words and nonsense.”³⁴ This compromise makes the hidden, inhibited sources of comic pleasure accessible again. Yet, unlike humour, where the alleviation of anxiety is realized through an individual’s refusal to suffer—a process which can be completed within a single person—joking can accomplish its therapeutic function only in a community of at least three persons/entities.³⁵ The joke-work is “healing” not because it cathartically cancels its own incentives in the working out (since the incorrectness of a joke is precisely what transports it on), but because it assures the continuance of communication and ludic activity. The persistence of joking thus amounts to nothing less than the dynamic continuing of life, or the “continuation of the world,” to adopt a fortunate phrase recently used by Caryl Emerson to describe the effect of Bakhtin’s “carnival laughter.”³⁶

How does it all reframe, then, our vision of that woman who had to leave the room in order for the joke to materialize? The lady may have vanished from sight yet she has anything but disappeared from the story; in fact, she is the story itself. As an important sideline to the argument I have drawn about the social function of jokes, her location in the joke triad reveals that we should understand the “gendering” in Freud’s example of joke-work in a more nuanced way: as a repositioning which allots to woman a more significant social and creative role than a

cursory reading of the notorious joke-scenario might suggest. On this interpretation, the super-addressee, or the “butt” of the tendentious joke (whatever its gender may be), could be seen as the real catalyst of social bonding, even the therapeutic “continuation of the world”, and, as I shall argue in what follows, the lever of aesthetic functioning under new conditions.

Joke-work and Aesthetic-work

Although the tendentious joke provides Freud with the most adequate exemplification of the joke-work, it is not its sole representative. As Freud emphasizes, tendentious jokes, in particular those belonging to the category of exposing or obscene jokes, are the “lower” class of jokes; with them, laughter gets thinner, and after the initial burst of pleasure, a new dissatisfaction sets in. In contrast, a joke of a higher class—an “innocent” or “conceptual” joke—has “an aim in itself,” in its own technique: it disseminates pleasure and negotiates aggression via formal means, rather than through its object.³⁷ Thus another, complementary model of the joke-work is also espoused in Freud’s text: an artistic joke. In fact the most thoroughly discussed joke in Freud’s book comes from a literary text, Heinrich Heine’s “The Baths of Lucca” (“Die Bäder von Lucca”), in the third volume of his *Travel Pictures (Reisebilder, 1826-31)*. As re-related by Freud on several occasions in his book, the joke goes as follows: Hirsch-Hyazinth, a poor lottery agent, boasts to a friend how the great Baron Rothschild had treated him as his equal. Hirsch-Hyazinth says: “I sat beside Salomon Rothschild and he treated me quite as his equal—quite famillionairely.”³⁸ The laughter after this joke is generated by what one may call the aesthetic aspect of joke-formation: the artful composite of an apparently intended word (“familiar”) and an occluded word (“millionaire”), which exteriorizes a suppressed thought. This joke-dialogue is thus also a zero-degree of aesthetic activity for Freud.

Despite Freud's claim that "it is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics,"³⁹ his opus is replete with discussions that trespass into aesthetics. One such encroachment is actually announced in the opening sentence of *Jokes*, where scholarship on aesthetics (or "the literature of aestheticians"; "der Literatur bei Ästhetikern"⁴⁰) is explicitly invoked as one of the two chief sources of knowledge on joking (the other one being psychology). In the book itself Freud consistently amalgamates the two types of inquiry and their respective discourses, undoubtedly conscious that he was not alone in taking such interdisciplinary liberties. The intellectual climate of the turn of the century was marked by the coupling of two distinct sets of discourses/practices, both relevant for Freud's decision to focus on jokes: the debates on (aesthetic or linguistic) *form* as a paradigm for the discussion of almost all realms of knowledge, and the emergence of modernist artistic *production* which, under the flagship of "making new," effectively responded both to these form-related requests and to the condition of urban modernity per se. The situating of Freud's early writings within these two developments helps us unveil the dual nature of the Freudian text itself, as, on the one hand, a response to an introjected methodological requirement—a discussion of form and language—and, on the other hand, an enterprise which engages with and even mimics (if unsystematically) contemporary artistic practices.

Following the first of these tendencies, then, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* may be also read as a treatise on aesthetic form. In particular, Freud devotes substantial attention to Kuno Fischer's assertion that the enjoyment derived from joking "is the purely aesthetic one, [lying] only in itself, [having] its aim only in itself and [fulfilling] none of the other aims of life."⁴¹ Freud subjects Fischer's proposition to his own terms of inquiry, *en route* half-jokingly re-writing him: "We shall scarcely be contradicting this statement of Fischer's—we shall perhaps

be doing no more than translating his thoughts into our mode of expression—if we insist that the joking activity should not, after all, be described as pointless or aimless, since it has the unmistakable aim of evoking pleasure in its hearers.”⁴² While he rejects Fischer’s manifestoic aestheticism, Freud playfully rescues from it the concept of pleasure which orients his own inquiry, and in turn uses it to distinguish between different sources and ways of obtaining pleasure. He cogitates:

If we do not require our mental apparatus at the moment for supplying one of our indispensable satisfactions, we allow it itself to work in the direction of pleasure and we seek to derive pleasure from its own activity. I suspect that this is in general the condition that governs *all* aesthetic ideation [my emphasis], but I understand too little of aesthetics to try to enlarge on this statement. As regards joking, however, I can assert [...] that it is an activity which aims at deriving pleasure from mental processes, whether intellectual or otherwise.⁴³

What facilitates this important turn in Freud’s argumentation is not only Fischer’s invocation of pleasure (the latter is anyway given a different treatment in Fischer) but the recognition of a correspondence between aesthetic production and the joke-work. Freud acknowledges the commensurability of the two activities, or—as the qualifying “all” may suggest—the subsuming of both activities under one general category, that which he would later label “phantasy activity.”⁴⁴

At the end of this paragraph, Freud puts off the consideration of aesthetic activity in a characteristically self-conscious manner. In point of fact, he had already initiated this inquiry: Freud’s essay “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage,” a text which discusses the workings of another aesthetic-social activity, theatre performance, had either already been written or was in

the process of being written in 1905.⁴⁵ One easily recognizes the major characteristics of the joke-work in Freud's account of drama performance. The latter, according to Freud, requires three main constituents: the conflated instance of the performer-dramatist; the audience; and the subject-matter, or the object/super-addressee. In theatre performance the suppressed impulses struggle into consciousness, but, instead of being named, they are transformed, rendered in circuitous, formal ways.⁴⁶ Pleasure, whose nature is that of a fore-pleasure, results from this temporary lifting up of a psychic repression path.⁴⁷ Here, the pleasure is derived from an economy in expenditure similar to that found in joking: the spectacle-play ("*Schau-spiel*") saves us the expenditure on repression and opens up the occluded sources of enjoyment, doing for adults what play (*Spiel*) does for children.⁴⁸

The performative nature of both activities makes their affiliation palpable. This association was soon to be expanded into a general theory of correspondence between the joke-work and creative writing. In "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming" Freud revisits the notion of formal "disguising" as the key element in the communication of phantasies. According to Freud, the process of creative writing starts when an experience in the present awakens in the writer a memory of an earlier personal or even transgenerational experience/phantasy. This situation creates, or awakens, a wish, the fulfilment of which the writer finds in creative work. The product, a work of art, "exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as the old memory," and it is this capacity of the arts to bear a "date-mark" [*Zeitmarke*], i.e., string together the present, past and future, that leads Freud to view art and literature (in both their popular and high forms) as the privileged keepers of the "screen memories" of humankind.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Freud argues, a piece of creative writing overcomes repulsion which the disclosure of the writer's (or universal) phantasies would have otherwise produced by the aesthetic means of

“altering and disguising.” These grant readers aesthetic pleasure whose nature is that of an “incentive bonus,” or a fore-pleasure. Our actual enjoyment in a literary work, then, proceeds from the deeper strata of our psyche—from “a liberation of tensions in our minds” and the chance to “enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame.”⁵⁰ Just like jokes, the arts are here arrogated a therapeutic role, based on their capacity to generate a non-(or less-)neurotic substitute satisfaction.

This dynamic is remarkably similar to the operation of joking. Specifically, there is a coincidence between the preliminary stages of the joke-work and creative writing and the two major groups of wishes, ambitious and erotic, to be fulfilled by these activities. The nature of the pleasure derived through joke-work and art-work is comparable, too: it is a technique-derived fore-pleasure, which serves as a necessary incentive for a deeper instinctual pleasure. In both cases, the result of activity is a more or less creative product, bearing traces of the unconscious drives and the phantasies and internalized object relations that gave rise to it. The psychological outcomes of writing, performing, and joking can all be subsumed under the category of “release” and/or relief mechanisms, although in each of these cases—and contrary to common perception—there is no direct, or properly cathartic, release of subconscious desires themselves. Finally, all of these types of artistic expression are pre-eminently social acts, aimed at communication and sharing (in the context of jokes, the distribution of phantasies as much as sharing of the sheer enjoyment in a ludic play). The last correspondence relays the gist of Freud’s intervention in Fischer’s thought: that even a seemingly innocent joke, revolving around a play of sense and nonsense, *is* tendentious, or purpose-driven; that its aim is deriving pleasure (including taking pleasure in its own composition); and that its ultimate function is always social, that is, eliciting some response from the other. Perhaps no example in Freud’s collection of jokes

testifies to this state of affairs more than Heine's literary joke itself. While such "famillionaire" exercises in social networking may be interpreted differently (as nonviolent or aggressive, innocent or tendentious), ultimately, jokes are always connected to a disinhibition, to an attempt to address a limitation, or a "lack of proportion" (as Woolf would have it),⁵¹ through a human game. The most important affiliation between creative writing and joking thus concerns the ludic nature of the two activities: a joke and a piece of creative writing are a continuation of, and substitute for, what was once the playful mood of childhood, an invitation for game-playing.⁵²

Before I close this section, I would like to briefly remind the reader of a further correspondence between joking (and performing, writing, and day-dreaming) and the dynamics of perversion, discussed in Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, a text written and published at the same time as *Jokes*. According to these two simultaneous accounts, the aesthetic, the jocular, and the perverse, are companion modes in that all of them rely on the strategies of détour, derailment, side-tracking. Scholars like Peter Brooks have emphasized this definitional commensurability and its (un)intended consequences: the work of art may be considered "perverse" because it relies on the deflection or side-tracking of desire and the substitution of an original unattainable object by a surrogate.⁵³ This idea of the displacement of the object of desire into a socially acceptable formal feature is, at the same time, the basis of Freud's general take on sublimation. The particular vibrancy of deflection or side-tracking of desire in jokes, however, highlights even further an always active ludic mode in a joke- or art-production. Why was this particular aspect of joking of such interest to Freud? To approach this question, I suggest that we revisit Freud's personal investment in both joking and creative writing, and its relation to that second tendency of the turn-of-the twentieth century practice and thought—"making new."

Freud the Modernist (Writer)? “Daldaldal” Again

In his Introduction to the Penguin Books translation of Freud’s writings on creativity, Hugh Haughton correctly observes that Freud’s works, especially his early books, “offered the twentieth century a radically new account of the aesthetics of everyday life.”⁵⁴ This assessment is subtle because it works well in the opposite direction, too: the everyday of the early twentieth century offered Freud, even demanded from him, an engagement with a new aesthetic. Mindful of Freud’s later insistence that the book on jokes has led him “*aside* from his research path,”⁵⁵ I would now like to expand my proposition that Freud reconfigured previous theories of humour, and to argue that he had similar aspirations with respect to the preceding *artistic manifestations* of those theories. While we may debate Freud’s success in making us laugh with his never-ending series of jokes, it is conspicuous that his peculiar performance in *Jokes* is well thought out. Freud’s text itself assesses - and even suggestively performs - a new type of writing, befitting his new theory.

The juxtaposition of Freud’s theory and Bergson’s concept of the comic will provide another illuminating entryway here. In *Laughter* Bergson describes the “comic” as highly gestural, linking it explicitly to the physical humour of *commedia dell’arte*. Additionally, Bergson’s examples of the comic owe much to the early nineteenth century novel and drama; his analysis focuses on the comedy of manners, and he singles out “vanity” as the most commonly laughable character trait. By contrast, and related to his general aspiration to speak to the contemporary and the everyday, Freud professes his intention not only to revisit the jokes already presented in literature, but also “to turn to fresh material.”⁵⁶ He finds this “fresh material” in situational jokes drawn from Jewish folklore, behind whose discursive edifice one

may recognize the sentimental slapstick mode of the urban Yiddish theatre;⁵⁷ riddles, Brentano's fill-up riddles in particular; snippets of urban communication; conceptual and sceptic jokes which question truth-value while insisting on the intentionality of utterance; and, finally, jokes and anecdotes derived from a variety of literary sources, past and present, whose common denominators are linguistic experimentation and the activation of a rapport between the textual and the reading subject.

For all its eclectic nature, this selection is not incidental. What intrigues Freud in this assortment are the "fresh" ways to articulate jokes and obtain aesthetic pleasure. While traditional narrative strategies such as analogy, allusion, and exaggeration receive brief treatment in Freud's book, much attention is paid to new, psychoanalytic-tenets-compatible, techniques such as condensation, displacement, contrast, and the forging of composite structures in which meaning and non-meaning coincide. A majority of jokes in Freud's volume are thus based on the principles of displacement, condensation and inflection rather than on the allegorical layering of the conventional satire. When the satiric happens in a "Freudian joke", it seems to be a by-product of an effort to produce other, more significant effects. This dynamic is most visible in Freud's category of tendentious jokes that attack "the dominant, the dignified, and the mighty,"⁵⁸ a type of joke that also abounds in overtly satirical modernist texts like Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*, 1921-23) and Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God* (1930). Common to joke-formation in these different novels and Freud's tendentious jokes is, predictably, the desire to reverse some hierarchies through the discursive deflation of the augmented and the unobtainable. What interests me here, however, is the specific narrative effect through which this questioning of received hierarchies is achieved: the proliferation of joking ludically reorganizes these texts into intersubjective conspiracies

between the recipient/reader and the narrator, where the protagonist serves as the ostensible “butt” of the joke while the implicit target of the joke is, in fact, a figure or a system of authority. This disguised target is narratively intimated through the simultaneous use of ideologically marked language such as officialese, military jargon, or elevated discourse. This marking of language can take a variety of forms: from the replication of specific jargon or reified vocabulary, through unnecessary repetition, oxymoronic sentence construction, and mixing of registers (often in the form of ironic distancing in parenthesis), to deliberately misplaced modifiers and mixed metaphors. In all these cases, the apparent “butt” of the joke serves as a facilitator of joke-work/language-work, which in itself points to the unspoken object of jocular critique.

The recognition of this specific function in turn helps us understand Freud’s tendentious jokes, including his infamous sexual joke, in a new light, namely, as an operational speech triad. As activities in which the deflection of libido enables creativity, joke-work and artistic production are connected precisely through this triadic functioning. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise, then, that the dialogic pattern of joke-formation finds expression in a wider variety of modernist texts, and even in those that, at the surface level at least, do not use parody or satire. The activation of intersubjective joke-work in modernist fiction often relies on the specific figuration of the narrator as a droll interlocutor, who is overly sensitive to the limitations of their own practice and exuberantly appropriative of social discourses. This active narrator then both effectuates and embodies a reading-joking contract that we may see in operation in many modernist texts: readers recognize (and, ideally, accept) the invitation to collaborate in joke-making implicit in the verbal wink of Virginia Woolf’s narrator in *Orlando* (1928); they join the intertextual games of the rambling narrator in Andrei Bely’s *Petersburg* (1913; 1916; 1922);

and they assist the narrator-protagonist of Luigi Pirandello's *The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904) as he composes and decomposes the narrative of his own life (and two deaths) in a succession of comic vignettes and stylistic perambulations.

The questions of style and verbal performance seem to hold particular significance for Freud himself. His almost too meticulous examination of joke-techniques testifies that the thinker's chief interest lies in the formal properties of the joke-work, what he calls the "joking envelope,"⁵⁹ that is, narrative organization and language use. Correspondingly, many jokes included in Freud's volume rely on condensation and semantic tension, the hyphenation of opposite meanings, resembling, for example, Franz Kafka's narrative practice. A closely related group of jokes, like the "Cracow joke" which served Jacques Lacan's theory so well,⁶⁰ deploys language games in order to dialogically question truth and logic, similarly to Ion Luca Caragiale's, Alfred Jarry's and, later, Eugene Ionesco's theatrical treatments. A further cluster of jokes exteriorizes the fraught temporalities of modern times by using repetition, stutter, oxymoronic delay, and then sudden acceleration towards the pleasures of the portended punchline; these may be properly associated with the comic practice of one Samuel Beckett, as recently described by Laura Salisbury.⁶¹ And because the joke-work, like creative writing and theatre performance, preserves and transmits in a disguised form the phantasy or social aberration that lies at its core, a corresponding artistic manipulation of the text, one which simultaneously occludes and sustains the social paradox, may be recognized in many Freudian jokes. Hilarious as they may be at times, these narratives and snippets of discourse often provoke an ambivalent response: we are uncertain whether we should laugh or cry at them. This discursive strategy is well known to the readers and scholars of modernist texts; modernist witticisms are more often than not inflected by pains and absurdities, historical and personal. The

comic mode and jokes in texts such as Kafka's and Beckett's, as Yael Renan reminds us, qualify the tragic.⁶²

At the same time, although Freud devotes substantial attention in his volume to examples of "conceptual wit" (as the highest class of jokes), it is the feasts of "verbal wit" that are celebrated with particular gusto: the multiple use of verbal material (through repetition with modification, fragmentation, and polysemic bifurcation), compounds, the treatment of words "as things" or the jokes in which the sound-presentation of a word takes priority over its meaning. Not surprisingly, it is condensation that occupies the foremost position among the jocular language strategies covered by Freud. In jokes like the one about being treated "famillionairely", combination and amalgamation of disparate images for comic effects, including the coupling of the exulted and the bathetic, enable the nonchalant questioning of hierarchies (of scale, level, value, or tone); this dynamic replicates closely the comic challenges to hierarchies that scholars like Renan identified in the language of modernist poetry and Rosello and others have appreciated in the manifestations of the surrealists' "black humour".⁶³ Yet, as Bakhtin insisted in relation to Vladimir Mayakovsky's awkwardly hectoring, jocularly rhapsodic concoctions, comic images in modernist poetry seem also to operate differently from Bergsonian "negative" satiric laughter, since they reverse hierarchies not through a simple denigration but through a challenge to the reader. Here condensation is intentional: it "intends" and celebrates an intersubjective exchange. Such is also the case of compounds in Freud's examples of jokes.

Finally, it may be out of sheer (jocular) enjoyment in repetitious verbal play that Freud cherishes the daldaldal riddle. In the Brentano-footnote the clarity of argumentation is exchanged for the rhythmic effect of the daldaldal. The parasemantic properties of the repeated sound "dal" overflow Freud's footnoted text to such an extent that this "aesthetic riddle" acquires more

vivacity and remains more memorable than the tendentious sexual joke “O, na, nie,” to which it is a note.⁶⁴ Such a wilful surrender to the rhythmic repetition of monosyllables, wherein the semantic fill-up is both invited and rendered absurd, became a signature trait of a range of modernist avant-garde practices, not the least the one whose name so closely resembles Brentano’s riddle—DADA. From their earliest performance pieces, like Hugo Ball’s *A Nativity Play* (*Simultan Krippenspiel*, 1916) or *Gadji Beri Bimba* (1916), dadaists exulted in the emancipation of rhythm and sound for jocoserious effects. In plays like Tristan Tzara’s *The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine* (*La première aventure céleste de Mr. Antipyrine*, 1916) the repetitive patterns act as riddles that both invite and obstruct semantic appropriation: these riddles extend from characters’ names (Mr. Shriekshriek, Mr. Blueblue, Mr. Bangbang, Pipi) to the brainteasers in their speech, like Pipi’s proposal, “bitterness without church let’s go/ let’s git synthetic charcoal camel/ bitterness upon the church/ ururuch the curtains/ dodododo”.⁶⁵ While scholars readily appreciate such linguistic feasts in avant-garde pronouncements, it is worth mentioning that the same strategies, aimed at comic or seriocomic effects, could be detected in a much wider range of modernist texts; one notes, in passing, that the name of the mysterious owner of the bastion in Kafka’s *The Castle* is also a repetitive—Graf Westwest.

These correspondences between Freud’s selection of jokes and modernist jocular puzzles also suggest that *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* is not a simple ethnographic project. While the consideration of Freud as a modernist writer would be well beyond the remit of the present article - and this topic has been engaged successfully by other scholars - it merits taking a note, at this point, of the singular form(at) of Freud’s book on jokes itself. Freud, we know, was recognized as a good writer, and hailed, even awarded, for his clear and engaging delivery of thoughts.⁶⁶ But the simplicity and orderliness of Freud’s discourse are deceptive; the

more one reads a text like *Jokes*, the more one becomes aware that the multiple inflections and convolutions, seemingly unintentional corollaries of the book's rich contents, are, in fact, a set up. Adequately described by Lacan as simultaneously the most transparent and the most subtle ("confined") of Freud's works,⁶⁷ *Jokes* boasts a neat tripartite structure (analytical, synthetic, and theoretical parts), but its pages are populated with what may appear at first as a haphazard blend of joke-fragments, close reading, digressions, and non sequiturs. Similarly to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Jokes* strategically relies on an initial outpouring of textual fragments (dreams, jokes) to establish a force-field within which different narrative frames will coalesce and clash in the ensuing pages. The dissemination and perpetual reanimation of these fragments—jokes in their various narrative modes—dialogizes the greater narrative, Freud's study itself. The latter now appears as a polyphonic text with strong intentionality and orientation towards reader-response. The triadic organization of the text, one suddenly notices, holds the key to our understanding of Freud's thoughts on intersubjective processes in general, and the joke-work in particular.

There is much evidence that Freud was conscious of the innovativeness of his discursive practice, but one of his meta-textual statements is particularly illuminating in the present context. In a self-reflexive moment in "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920) Freud warns that "linear presentation is not a very adequate means of describing complicated mental processes going on in different layers of the mind."⁶⁸ This is probably as close as someone like Freud—a thinker who did not shower modernist and avant-garde literature with praise, but whose exposure to it was probably greater than commonly thought—can come to pronouncing a modernist credo. Invested in the depiction of the subtle movements of psyche, modernist writers renounce, first and foremost, the linear mode of presentation: they abandon cause-and-effect narrative procedures in favour of a new, vibrant technique afforded by

psychoanalysis itself—the stream of consciousness. A comparable presentation of overdetermined and temporally unpredictable images marks Freud’s own writings: as a true performance of his theory, the organization of a typical Freud’s text exteriorizes the reversed temporality of analysis (effect-cause). Steven Marcus correctly identifies this procedure as a *modus operandi* of modernist narrative:

The general form of what Freud has written bears certain suggestive resemblances to a modern experimental novel. Its narrative and expository course, for example, is neither linear nor rectilinear; instead its organization is plastic, involuted, and heterogeneous and follows spontaneously an inner logic that seems frequently to be at odds with itself...⁶⁹

Similarly, beneath the surface of traditional discursive procedures, one may find in *Jokes* a complex narrative structure that constantly reshapes itself, wittily blending temporal planes, withdrawing information with a giggle, indicating omissions with a wink. Far from being linear, the expository course of Freud’s analysis of joking resembles the Rubik’s cube: joke fractals are skilfully combined in vibrant analytical wholes, only to be questioned, dispersed, summoned again, and re-evaluated in their marked textuality. Marcus has suggested that Freud’s “continuous innovations in formal structure seem unavoidably to be dictated by [the text’s] substance, by the dangerous, audacious, disreputable, and problematical character of the experiences being represented and dealt with.”⁷⁰ This is undoubtedly true of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, too. But Freud’s excessively intertextual “modernist” text is also a performative which enact the very theory of intersubjectivity that the book espouses. Regardless of the amount of laughter or puzzlement his collection of jokes elicits, Freud’s genuine enjoyment in the diverse, unruly matter that he has summoned is palpable; as is his invitation to

the reader not only to share but also to constitute this enjoyment. For, this text, a combustive network of accretions, revisions, occlusions, and recognitions, where hermeneutic ambivalences dangerously converge with humour, seems to be galvanized precisely by a conscious desire to stimulate, appeal to or challenge, an invisible recipient—put simply, to engage in conversation.

It is in this demand for exchange that the continuity between Freud's re-visioning of joke-work, modernist artistic practices, and contemporary debates about intersubjective intentionality and speech acts becomes tangible. What underlines this elective affinity is a specific vision of not only the text, but also the human, as triangulated through semantic intention; as realized only in a response. One conclusively identifies in the tripartite structure of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* and its polyphonic inflections the most appropriate formal exteriorization of thus conceived subject-matter: the tale of intersubjective desire, evolving in triads. This story itself, in turn, facilitates Freud's recognition of, even engagement with, a new aesthetics: intersubjective, deflective, replete with omissions, and finally resuscitated in (the other's) laughter.

¹ See Freud's reply to Wilhelm Fliess of 11 September 1899, where Freud also references his regular reading of a satirical weekly magazine *Simplicissimus*, and quotes a gender triangle joke from it; Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters Of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, trans. and ed. by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 370-71; see, also, *The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), IV, pp. 297-98.

² Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, SE, VIII, p. 15.

³ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 10-11.

⁴ Justus Nieland, "Editor's Introduction: Modernism's Laughter," *Modernist Cultures*, 2.2 (2006), 80-86 (p. 80).

⁵ Holly Laird, "Laughter and Nonsense in the Making and (Postmodern) Remaking of Modernism," in *The Future of Modernism*, ed. by Hugh Witemeyer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 79-100.

⁶ Crangle does mention Freud on a few occasions in her book, and contrasts his theory with Bergson's take on jokes in a brief overview; see Sara Crangle, *Prosaic Desires: Modernist Knowledge, Boredom, Laughter, and Anticipation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 111-12. On the conceptual proximity between Levinas and psychoanalysis see Simon Critchley, "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis," in *Questioning*

Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 230-42.

⁷ Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 55-7.

⁸ For the history of this relationship, see Sanja Bahun, "Woolf and Psychoanalytic Theory," in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. by Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 92-109. For the first-hand account of their meeting in London in 1939, see Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Penguin, 1979-85), V, p. 202.

⁹ Virginia Stephen (Woolf), "The Value of Laughter," *The Guardian*, 16 August 1905; reprinted in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, 6 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), I, pp. 58-60 (p. 58). Despite Woolf's evocative exultation of the "voice of folly and frivolity inspired neither by knowledge nor emotion" (p. 59), her essay is absent from Tyrus Miller's account of modernist "risus puris" in *Late Modernism*. Miller insightfully considers Woolf in relation to some other characteristics of late modernism, but, in his account of laughter, she mainly serves as the butt of (Wyndham Lewis's) joke.

¹⁰ Woolf, "The Value of Laughter," p. 60.

¹¹ Woolf ludically denounces humour as "masculine" ("The Value of Laughter," p. 58), already setting the stage for the discussion of gender in "A Room of One's Own" in 1929; Freud would return to the topic in his 1927 essay "Humour" (*SE*, XXI, pp. 159-66).

¹² Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 143-44.

¹³ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 147.

¹⁴ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 97-99.

¹⁵ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 236.

¹⁶ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 97, 99, *et passim*.

¹⁷ Mary Jacobus, "Is There a Woman in this Text?" *New Literary History*, 14.1 (1982), 117-141 (p. 117); Jeffrey Mehlman, "How to Read Freud on Jokes: The Critic as Schadchen," *New Literary History*, 6.2 (1975), 439-461 (p. 449).

¹⁸ Rosa Mayreder, *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1905), translated and published in English by Hyperion Press as *A Survey of the Woman Problem* in 1913. Mayreder had published segments from this discussion previously in *Neues Frauenleben*, 14.1 (January 1902): 1-5; 14.2 (February 1902): 1-5; 14.3 (March 1902): 1-6. Mayreder's husband was undergoing psychoanalytic treatment with Freud, which contributed to her positive view of psychoanalysis at the time; she would alter her opinion later. See Marianne Springer-Kremser, "Rosa Mayreder und die Psychoanalyse," *Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Frau?: Rosa Mayreder und der Feminismus in Wien um 1900* (Ausstellungskatalog) (Vienna: Eigenverlag der Museen der Stadt Wien, 1989), pp. 84-89.

¹⁹ Jerry Aline Flieger, *The Purloined Punchline: Freud's Comic Theory and the Postmodern Text* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Freud, *Jokes*, p. 144, *et passim*.

²⁰ Änigmatias [Franz Clemens Brentano], *Neue Räthsel* [New Riddles] (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1879). Freud took three courses with Brentano at the University of Vienna in 1874/1875, and these modules represent Freud's only academic training in philosophy. Brentano published his major work, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, the same year, and the collection of riddles in 1879, by which time he was sufficiently acquainted with Freud to recommend him as a translator for a volume of John Stuart Mill's collected works (Philip Merlan, "Brentano and Freud," *Journal of History of Ideas*, 6.3 [1945], 375-77 [p. 375]). Freud's response to Brentano must have been ambivalent, though, since some of Brentano's concepts (e.g., the mental in-existence of the object, or the notion of intentionality) attracted him, while others (e.g., Brentano's refutation of the existence of an unconscious part of the mind) did not. The few scholarly texts that address this affiliation have focused on Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology" and the proximity of Brentano's notion of intentionality to some ideas in Freud's papers on metapsychology; see J. Barclay, "Franz Brentano and Sigmund Freud," *Journal of Existentialism* 5 (1964), 1-35; R. E. Fancher, "Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* and Freud's early metapsychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 13 (1977), 207-227; Jerome C. Wakefield, "Freud and the Intentionality of Affect," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 9 (1992), 1-23. Surprisingly (given that the only mention of Brentano in Freud's opus occurs precisely here), Brentano's influence on Freud has never been assessed in relation to Freud's study of jokes.

²¹ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 32; pp. 237-38; cf. Brentano, *Neue Räthsel*, XXVIII.

²² Craig Brandist, "Voloshinov's Dilemma: On the Philosophical Roots of the Dialogic Theory of the Utterance," *The Bakhtin Circle: In the Master's Absence*, ed. by Craig Brandist, David Shepherd, and Galin Tihanov (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 97-124 (p. 99).

²³ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 32, 75.

²⁴ On the primacy of the intentional over the reflective as the key and necessary principle of psychoanalysis as well as the binding thread between Husserlian phenomenology and Freud's thought, see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (Yale: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 378-83.

²⁵ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 97-99, and throughout.

²⁶ See Valentin N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Valentin N. Voloshinov, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics," trans. by N. Owen, in *Bakhtin School Papers*, ed. by Ann Shukman (Oxford: RTP Publications, 1983), pp. 5-30; Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Texas University Press, 1986).

²⁷ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. by Cloudeley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1935), p. 20.

²⁸ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 105, 111.

²⁹ Bergson, *Laughter*, pp. 9, 77.

³⁰ Bergson, *Laughter*, p. 198.

³¹ Bergson, *Laughter*, p. 4.

³² Cf. Wyndham Lewis, "The Meaning of the Wild Body", *The Complete Wild Body*, ed. by Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982), p. 158; and Lewis, *Men without Art*, ed. by Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p. 93. See, also, Rebecca Beasley, "Wyndham Lewis and Modernist Satire," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. by Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 126-36.

³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, "K voprosam teorii romana, k voprosam teorii smekha <O Mayakovskom>" ["Towards a theory of the novel and of laughter <On Mayakovsky>"], *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, ed. by S. G. Bocharov and L. A. Gogotishvili (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo russkie slovari; Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 1997), V, p. 50. First published in 1997, Bakhtin's manuscript of this unfinished article is tentatively dated in the late 1930s-early 1940s. See *ibid.* 424-26.

³⁴ Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 203-4.

³⁵ Freud, "Humour," pp. 161, 163; *Jokes*, p. 229.

³⁶ Caryl Emerson, "Coming to Terms with Bakhtin's Carnival: Ancient, Modern, sub Specie Aeternitatis," *Bakhtin and the Classics*, ed. by R. Bracht Branham (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp. 18-19. See, also, Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), a text dedicated to the Renaissance but informed by Bakhtin's "modernist" take on laughter.

³⁷ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 96.

³⁸ "... ich saß neben Salomon Rothschild, und er behandelte mich ganz wie seinesgleichen, ganz famillionär"; Heinrich Heine, *Reisebilder* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Adamant Media Corporation, 2000 [c. 1826-31]), p. 262; also qtd. in *Jokes*, pp. 12-13; pp. 16-20; pp. 140-42. Freud later complements this interpretation with a reference to Heine's personal history: the name "Hirsch-Hyacinth" appears to Freud as a metonymical displacement of Heinrich Heine's own name, and the figure of Baron Salomon Rothschild as a stand-in for Heine's uncle, Salomon Heine.

³⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *SE*, XVII, p. 219.

⁴⁰ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 9; Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden* (London: Imago Publishing, 1948), VI, p. 5.

⁴¹ Kuno Fischer, *Über den Witz*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1889), p. 20; qtd, also in *Jokes*, p. 95. Cf., also, Fischer's structural analogy between aesthetic contemplation and axiology of jokes: while "aesthetic freedom lies in the playful contemplation of things" (p. 50), "a joke is a playful judgment" (p. 51); qtd. also in *Jokes*, p. 10.

⁴² Freud, *Jokes*, p. 95.

⁴³ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 96.

⁴⁴ See Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," *SE*, IX, pp. 9, 141-54.

⁴⁵ The dating of Freud's "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" is still under dispute. The text was allegedly written and presented to Max Graf in 1904, yet, as Strachey observes, Freud could not have written the text's concluding remarks on Hermann Bahr's modernist play *Die Andere* before its premiere in November 1905 (James Strachey, Editor's Note to "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," *SE*, VII, p. 304). It is also possible that Freud consulted the printed edition of the play which appeared only in 1906 (Hermann Bahr, *Die Andere* [Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1906]).

⁴⁶ Freud, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," p. 309.

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- ⁴⁷ Freud, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," p. 310.
- ⁴⁸ Freud, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," p. 305.
- ⁴⁹ Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," p. 152.
- ⁵⁰ Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," p. 153.
- ⁵¹ Woolf, "The Value of Laughter," p. 59.
- ⁵² Freud, *Jokes*, p. 236; "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," p. 152.
- ⁵³ See Peter Brooks, "Freud's Masterplot," *Reading for the Plot* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp. 90-112.
- ⁵⁴ Hugh Haughton, "Introduction," *The Uncanny* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. vii.
- ⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures (1915-1916)*, *SE*, XV, p. 235 (my emphasis).
- ⁵⁶ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 15.
- ⁵⁷ Elliott Oring, *The Jokes of Sigmund Freud: A Study in Humor and Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).
- ⁵⁸ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 105, p. 111.
- ⁵⁹ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 110.
- ⁶⁰ The "Cracow" joke, as Freud presents it, goes as follows: "Two Jews met in a railway carriage at a station in Galicia. 'Where are you going?' asked one. 'To Cracow', was the answer. 'What a liar you are!' broke out the other. 'If you say you're going to Cracow, you want me to believe you're going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you're going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?'" (Freud, *Jokes*, p. 115). The joke re-appears in a variety of contexts in Lacan's work; cf., Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by J-A Miller, trans. by A. Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 139; Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses*, ed. by J-A Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 37.
- ⁶¹ Laura Salisbury, *Samuel Beckett: Laughing Matters, Comic Timing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
- ⁶² Yael Renan, "'Angelfaces Clustered Like Bright Lice': Comic Elements in Modernist Writing," *Comparative Literature* 35 (1983), 247-61 (p. 247).
- ⁶³ Renan, "Angelfaces"; Mireille Rosello, *L'Humour noir selon André Breton* (Paris: José Corti, 1987). André Breton traced the surrealist category of black humour to Freud's 1927 discussion of humour and F. W. Hegel's dialectics in André Breton, *Anthologie de l'humour noir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940).
- ⁶⁴ Freud, *Jokes*, p. 32.
- ⁶⁵ Tristan Tzara, *The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine, Fire Extinguisher, DADA Performance*, ed. by Mel Gordon (New York: PAJ Publications, 1987), p. 53.
- ⁶⁶ Freud was awarded the 1930 Goethe Prize for Literature, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936.
- ⁶⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), I, p. 148.
- ⁶⁸ Sigmund Freud, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," *SE*, XVIII, p. 160.
- ⁶⁹ Steven Marcus, "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History," *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 56-91 (p. 64).
- ⁷⁰ Marcus, "Freud and Dora," p. 64.