



Subconscious Selling: Bertram Brooker and the Visual Culture of Couéism

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Introduction

This article situates the recently rediscovered first monograph by Canada's inaugural Governor General's Award-winning author, Bertram Brooker (1888–1955), within contested histories of Canadian modernism as well as Brooker's still largely misunderstood multi-disciplinary achievements.¹ The latter included the first solo exhibition of abstract paintings in Canada, at Toronto's Arts and Letters Club in 1927, as well as an extensive body of writings that anticipated, and may have indirectly informed, the media analyses of Marshall McLuhan.² Brooker's *Subconscious Selling*³ applies the psychological theories of the French pharmacist Émile Coué (1857–1926) to practical problems in salesmanship. The techniques of self-affirmation developed by Coué – repackaged for Canadian readers with a heavy dose of the French philosopher Henri Bergson added by Brooker – offer the key to a seminal group of semi-abstract canvases painted by the artist-advertiser in the mid-1920s.

This reassessment joins the current reevaluation of one of Canada's leading modernists in strengthening the case that Brooker's visual art and innovative advertising insights were inspired by the philosophy of Bergson, as well as related currents in early twentieth-century thought which, in the words of Bergson scholar Adi Efal, participated in “a revision of the ‘rationalist’ tradition.”⁴ In challenging the received portrait of Brooker as a mystic and Theosophist, this article simultaneously contributes to a growing literature on the Bergsonian sources of Canadian modernism, culminating in the globally-influential media speculations of McLuhan.⁵ This Bergsonian turn in Canadian studies participates in an ongoing reconsideration of the French thinker, taking a fresh look at his impact on modernist art and ideas for the first time since the influential Deleuzian “return to Bergson.”⁶

In foregrounding the Couéist and Bergsonian sources of Brooker's art and personal philosophy, *Subconscious Selling* also troubles literary scholar

Detail, Bertram Brooker, *Creation*, ca. 1927, oil on board, 61 × 43 cm, private collection. (Photo: Consignor Canadian Fine Art)

Gregory Betts's revisionist portrait of Brooker as a "Canadian Vorticist."⁷ "Canadian Vorticism" is Betts's term for a body of Canadian cultural theory, literature, and visual art that responded to the anti-humanist agenda of the Canadian-born British author and visual artist Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957). In contrast to the Bergsonian dynamism embraced by his Cubist and Futurist contemporaries, Lewis and peers aspired to occupy a fantasized still point at the centre of the modernist maelstrom. The Vorticists translated this detached perspective into the icy aesthetic of their experimental prose and works of geometric abstraction. McLuhan, who became Lewis's protégé during his early teaching appointment at Saint Louis University, is likewise central to this formation. As Elena Lamberti, Donald Theall, Glenn Willmott, and others have argued, Lewis was an enduring inspiration for McLuhan.⁸ However, Richard Cavell and Janine Marchessault have convincingly argued that McLuhan's mature writings increasingly distanced themselves from the stasis of the British artist-author's "spatial" philosophy, as the Canadian media analyst embraced a more dynamic conception of "spacetime," informed by the time-based thought of Bergson, among others.⁹

Lewis was certainly known to Brooker as well, making his first appearance in a 1927 talk on William Blake delivered by the artist-advertiser at the University of Toronto's Hart House that appropriated elements of Lewis's monumental work of cultural critique *Time and Western Man*, published the same year.¹⁰ Betts's likening of Brooker's multidisciplinary production to Lewis's "vortex of art, media, and advertising" is not unfounded.¹¹ But where Lewis presented advertising and Couéism in *Time and Western Man* as symptoms of a Bergson-mad modernity,¹² Brooker's contemporaneous advertising writings yoked Bergson and Coué to a participatory renovation of print media, then newly in competition with radio, that anticipates McLuhan's discourse on the "organic" and "involving" qualities of electronic media almost four decades later.¹³

At stake in the contested status of Vorticist influence on Brooker, then, is a longer trajectory of Canadian art and theory that includes the globally influential analyses of McLuhan. I have argued elsewhere that "Vorticism remains a largely unexplored influence on the development of abstraction in Canada and, in particular, on the evolution of Brooker's practice."¹⁴ But I followed Richard Lofthouse and other historians of Vorticism in identifying residual Bergsonian and vitalist currents in the later production of Lewis and colleagues, despite their official disavowals of the French thinker.¹⁵ Carole Luff had earlier suggested a possible Vorticist influence on Brooker, but cautioned that a fully-fledged Vorticist aesthetic only appeared following Brooker's 1910–11 trip to England.¹⁶ In suggesting a proto-Vorticist source for Brooker's abstractions in the Bergson-inspired experiments of British artists and writers grouped around the little magazine edited by John Middleton

Murry, *Rhythm* (some of whom later joined the Vorticists' ranks), I proposed a more plausible foundation for Brooker's oeuvre. Rather than the follower of Lewis and his anti-Bergsonian diatribes represented by Betts, it is imperative to recognize in Brooker an original thinker reading Lewis against the grain as a source of information about the very Bergsonian and Couéist theories condemned by the British artist-author. Betts's presentation of Brooker fundamentally obscures the primacy of Bergson and Coué to Brooker's foundational contributions to Canadian modernist art and theory (not to mention Lewis's own highly conflicted production, discussed below). Rather than Canadian Vorticists, Brooker and McLuhan are properly identified as participants in what I have termed a Canadian "vitalist modernism."¹⁷

Competing values of abstraction and empathy, mechanism and vitalism, which dominated cultural debates in the early decades of the twentieth century, were never cut-and-dry. Brooker and Lewis can be situated within a shared discourse network that Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass term the "vitalist controversy," and Antliff "the politics of time": a widespread debate about changing concepts of being and time that coloured the art and thought of numerous creative figures during the period of Bergson's popularity, in and around the First World War.¹⁸ Although Brooker and Lewis occupied opposite poles in this debate, their writings and art negotiate common coordinates in a highly fraught discourse on life and its instrumentalization. From the triangulation of Brooker, Coué, and Lewis traced by the present article emerges a transatlantic discourse on advertising and the pre-Freudian unconscious with important art-theoretical implications for the study of both British and Canadian modernisms. This discussion is grounded in a comparative analysis of paintings by Brooker and Lewis dating from the heyday of these forgotten but, in retrospect, influential debates, that reveal powerful traces of Coué's articulation of the imagination as a faculty of creative self-fashioning on modernist art theory and visual culture.

Brooker and Couéism

Born in England in 1888, Brooker emigrated to western Canada with his family in 1905. A return trip to London during the 1910–11 holiday season fed his interest in the geometric stage designs of British theatre innovator Edward Gordon Craig.¹⁹ In 1912, Brooker began an unlikely stint as an author of photoplay scenarios for the Brooklyn-based Vitagraph Company of America while co-managing a movie house in Neepawa, Manitoba. But it was Brooker's subsequent experience as a journalist and graphic designer for a variety of prairie newspapers that nurtured the remarkable series of works on paper preserved today in the archives of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, Ontario, discussed below.

Subconscious Selling was published in 1923 as a stand-alone volume by *Marketing and Business Management*, for which Brooker was then working as a contributing author following his move to Toronto from Winnipeg in 1921. The book's subject, Émile Coué, has secured a lasting, if dubious place in popular culture through the longevity of his mantra, "Day by day, in every way, I'm getting better and better."²⁰ The placebo effect associated with repetition of this phrase neatly digests Coué's method of induced autosuggestion, which purports to modify the unconscious mind through techniques of directed self-affirmation. Brooker's engagement with Coué identifies the French clinician's program for self-improvement with the fantasies of self-fashioning embraced by the historical avant-garde – notably Bergson's philosophy of creative evolution.²¹

Subconscious Selling adapts the presentation of Coué's ideas advanced by the psychologist's chief English-language proselytizer, C. Harry Brooks.²² For Brooks, the key feature of Couéism is its opposition of the subconscious mind, or "imagination," to the rational powers of the will:²³

Until recently the emphasis has been placed upon the controlling power of the will, upon the ability to make decisions of the 'right' kind. In other words, the emphasis has been placed upon the wrong end of the process of character-building.²⁴

Following Coué and Brooks, Brooker argued that memories accumulated in the unconscious function as just such a generative faculty of imagination: "our imagination," he wrote; "is nothing less than our whole life, fluid and enduring in the Subconscious Mind."²⁵ But where Coué developed his psychological theories for therapeutic application, Brooker seized upon the French clinician's techniques as a potential "method of changing, controlling or 'making up' the mind of prospects with regard to a given sales proposition."²⁶ Brooker's text thereby shifted the focus of Coué's system from therapeutic self-fashioning to social control. "The Subconscious is controllable," wrote Brooker; "and in what follows we hope to show how salesmen can develop and practise a method of control that will be of tremendous benefit to them."²⁷ Brooker's appropriation of Coué's theories to develop industrial techniques of persuasion thereby stands at the head of a history of applied psychology that, in the Canadian context, underwent a self-critical turn in the cultural commentary of McLuhan. For McLuhan, as earlier for the Couéist Brooker, the media operate through "hypnosis" and "subliminal awareness."²⁸

Recognizing that "the salesman's own attitude of mind, has an immense influence upon his selling effectiveness,"²⁹ Brooker's text opens by considering the implications of Coué's theories for the salesperson as well

as the potential for exploiting self-improvement for profit. My necessarily abbreviated presentation of *Subconscious Selling* is focused on (though not restricted to) the contents of these early chapters, which sketch the core tenets of Couéism. The contextual and comparative reading of Brooker's first monograph put forward here does not aim to summarize the specific techniques for reaching consumers that dominate the remaining chapters, which would be more pertinent to a history of marketing thought.

Central to Brooker's reworking of Coué is the notion that the salesman can bypass the consumer's rational powers of resistance by appealing directly to the prospect's subconscious.³⁰ Brooker adopts the terminology of Brooks, dubbing this "policy of non-resistance" the *Law of the Reversed Effort*.³¹ "In a conflict between your will and your prospect's imagination," he explains; "it will be his imagination that will win."³² Brooker's maxim is to "avoid conflict" at all costs, since reason has no bearing on the functioning of the imagination according to Coué.³³ Rather than formulating arguments addressed to the consumer's will, Brooker advocates a policy of "[v]isualiz[ing] for him the effects of the change [made by the product]."³⁴ The visual bias of this strategy echoes Coué's influential description of the visual mechanics of the imagination, in which "[e]very thought entirely filling our mind becomes true for us and tends to transform itself into action."³⁵

Brooker would return to arguments formulated in *Subconscious Selling* in columns for the leading American trade paper of the day, *Printers' Ink*, as well as for *Marketing*, which he owned and edited from 1924 to 1927.³⁶ Following the lead of other disciples of Coué such as Brooks, Brooker was soon adapting the tenets of Bergsonism to elaborate the mechanics of Coué's subconscious as "the whole fluid life of [the] prospect" preserved in memory.³⁷

In fact, a Bergsonian inflection is already legible in Brooker's rendering of the Couéist subconscious in *Subconscious Selling*. Recalling Bergson's neo-vitalist conception of memory as an embodied awareness of that which *endures*, Brooker writes in *Subconscious Selling* that, "A thought, a sensation, is a living thing. It has a life of its own. It *endures*. It becomes a part of us."³⁸ Similarly, Brooker's representation of the parallel operations of the conscious and subconscious mind as "two strata of mental activity" echoes Bergson's celebrated metaphor of the "cone" of memory in *Matter and Memory*, whose coexisting "sections" define different episodes in the psychic life of the subject.³⁹ Brooker's dualist division of mental labour – between a conscious mind directed toward the utilitarian imperatives of "action" and a subconscious characterized by a fluid accumulation of memories – mirrors the dualist structure of the Bergsonian psyche.⁴⁰

Brooker's fusion of Coué and Bergson in *Subconscious Selling* is reprised by a 1924 article, "Making Orders Flow Downhill," which explicitly appropriates Bergson's discourse on the "fluidity" of thought" in his



1 | Bertram Brooker, *The Dawn of Man*, ca. 1927, oil on canvas, 112 × 81 cm, © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada)

influential essay “Laughter,” to explain the “down-hill flowing tendency” of the subconscious.⁴¹ This text sets the stage for Brooker’s deepening engagement with Bergson of the later 1920s. He would appropriate Bergson’s reworking of Darwinian theory in *Creative Evolution* in the 1926 *Marketing* article “Are Statistics More Convincing Than Words or Pictures?” to argue that advertising is itself in a perpetual state of creative flux: “Advertising is alive! And being alive its development is in accord with those principles of ‘creative evolution’ which Bergson has postulated of all living things. It is in flux, it is in a constant state of becoming.”⁴²

Brooker’s interest in Coué offers a key to understanding some of his most important semi-abstract canvases of the 1920s. Among the earliest modernist works exhibited in Canada, these paintings have been consistently

misread as evidence of a Theosophical outlook for which Brooker's voluminous published and unpublished writings provide little basis for support.⁴³ Paintings such as *The Dawn of Man* (ca. 1927) (Fig. 1) are populated by simplified human figures situated against amorphous multicolour environments reminiscent of the fluid contours of Coué's subconscious mind. Engaged in ecstatic contemplation of their idealized surroundings, Brooker's figures personify the affirmative mentality promoted by Coué as a vehicle for creative self-fashioning. Brooker gives a complementary prose description of this visual faculty in *Subconscious Selling*: "An image, a picture, is more forceful than a thousand words. By concentrating upon the picture of energy the patient subconsciously enters into that state; the image is turned into reality in his mind."⁴⁴ The states of self-transformation represented by Brooker in *The Dawn of Man* and *Endless Dawn* bring into representation this visionary capacity of Coué's subconscious mind.

Brooker and Canadian Vorticism

What then to make of Gregory Betts's characterization of Brooker as the prototype for a "Canadian Vorticism"? Canadian Vorticism is Betts's term for the belated North American progeny of the short-lived, pre-First World War British avant-garde movement, for which Marshall McLuhan's friendship with its self-styled leader, Wyndham Lewis, acted as an improbable bridge. While the geometric abstraction of certain canvases by Brooker such as *Hope* (1929) (Fig. 2) does indeed suggest formal affinities with the angular idiom of Vorticism, it is more likely that Craig's minimal stage designs served as their primary inspiration.⁴⁵ We know Brooker to have been familiar with Lewis from at least 1927. However, he explicitly rejected the British artist-author as "cloistered and unadventurous."⁴⁶ Brooker identified, rather, with the neo-vitalist theories of Coué and Bergson, which he characterized as a "coming gospel of creative newness."⁴⁷ Brooker forcefully visualized this organicist ideology of autogenesis in works such as *The Dawn of Man* that – in contrast to the all-over abstraction typical of Vorticist canvases – subordinate geometry to the figure.

For Lewis, the 1920s fad for Couéism was symptomatic of a cultural threat that he associated with the rise of a metaphysics of flux, for which the "time-philosophy" of Bergson was synonymous.⁴⁸ Andrew Gaedtké cannily diagnoses Lewis's anxieties about changing concepts of being and time as the byproducts of a widespread "ontological crisis" triggered by the socio-technical upheavals of modernity.⁴⁹ This episode of cultural paranoia spawned forms of literary modernism resembling the features of psychosis and "psychotics' attempts to reinstall . . . failing ontological distinctions."⁵⁰ In Lewis's case, the trauma of serving as a bombardier, and later as a war artist,



2 | Bertram Brooker,
Hope, 1929, oil on canvas,
92 × 62 cm, The Robert
McLaughlin Gallery,
1994BB102. (Photo: courtesy
of The Robert McLaughlin
Gallery)

during the First World War, has conventionally been seen as precipitating a revaluation of the techno-utopianism he had embraced under the banner of Vorticism. Yet, Paul Edwards proposes a significant reconsideration of the years immediately following Lewis's wartime service, a period traditionally lumped together with the project of cultural critique that ensued as a moment of crisis and reassessment. As Edwards argues, during this transitional period, Lewis attempted to recuperate the constructivist perspective on technology of his Vorticist period to address the altered priorities of postwar society in such texts as *The Caliph's Design*. This pamphlet from 1919 envisioned a utopian city built on Vorticist principles of geometric design.⁵¹ Edwards draws

attention to the lingering “optimism and ambition of this postwar moment,”⁵² a mood also reflected in such Lewis-driven projects as the *Group x* exhibition of March 1920.

But following the resounding failure of these gambits, and a resulting loss of audience that led to Lewis’s inability to afford studio space beginning in October 1923, the former Vorticist was to launch a voracious campaign of cultural critique. His obsession with the ontological threat posed by Bergsonian philosophy and the mass media marks such writings as *Time and Western Man* as textbook illustrations of the paranoid formation mapped by Gaedtkke. Lewis’s anxieties about the potential for renewed hostilities with Germany, in particular, fuelled an irredeemable anti-Semitism and disastrous flirtation with nascent Fascist movements glossed over by Betts’s sanitized presentation of Lewis.

Beginning with a sprawling manuscript titled “The Man of the World,” Lewis set out to diagnose what he now viewed as the bankruptcy of mass culture and the corruption of liberal democracy. Broken down and reconstituted into component parts of publishable length and intelligible scope, *The Art of Being Ruled* was the first installment in a series of Lewis texts accusing parliamentary democracy of substituting an illusion of personal freedom for the reality of social transformation demanded by the pre-war avant-gardes. At the same time, Lewis indicted the postwar avant-garde as colluding with capital to market fashion as revolution.

In the sequel volume *Time and Western Man*, Lewis grounded his discussion of this condition of “permanent novelty”⁵³ in a metaphysical critique that approached the relentless cycles of fashion under capitalism as manifestations of an all-pervasive obsession with time. Lewis flatly rejected the “flux” of Bergsonian phenomenology and the stream of consciousness techniques developed by modernist peers, including James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, in an effort to capture and record the fluidity of consciousness as symptoms of this ideology of time. In its place, Lewis proposed what Reed Way Dasenbrock aptly describes as an “antitemporal and antivital view of art” founded on the stasis and clarity of an ideal vision.⁵⁴

For Lewis, the psychology of Coué was powerfully symbolic of the ontological threat posed by Bergsonian modernity. And, to be sure, Coué’s substitution of a malleable and decentered unconscious for the stable, rational ego presupposed by the idealist metaphysics endorsed by Lewis shares several features in common with Bergsonism, as early Coué commentators did not fail to note.⁵⁵ Paralleling Bergson’s central argument in *Creative Evolution*, Coué conceived of the unconscious as the product of humanity’s ongoing adaptation to its environment.⁵⁶ Likewise in common with Bergson (and anticipating later Freud), Coué argued that the disruptive agency of the unconscious leaves traces in behaviour and physiological functioning. Such

covert agency is in sharp contrast to the self-present and transparent “mind” of the classical metaphysical tradition defended by Lewis. Equally consistent with the tenets of Bergsonism, but in tension with the mature Freud, Coué believed that the unconscious was susceptible to self-directed modification.⁵⁷ In Coué’s writings, this capacity for creative evolution figures as a form of suggestion resembling the hypnotism practiced by Ambroise-Auguste Liébeault and Hippolyte Bernheim,⁵⁸ with whom he had trained while working as a pharmacist at Troyes. The residual hypnotic elements of Coué’s method of autosuggestion identify his psychology as an artifact of proto-Freudian theorizations of the unconscious.⁵⁹

In *Time and Western Man*, Lewis blasts Coué for nothing less than furnishing the psychological foundations of modern advertising – a topic that Coué’s published writings, and those of his disciple Brooks, in fact never discuss.

In the world of the Advertisement, Coué-fashion, everything that happens today (or everything that is being advertised *here and now*) is better, bigger, brighter, more astonishing than anything that has ever existed before. (Dr. Coué actually was embarked upon his teaching, so he said, by noticing, and responding to, an advertisement.)⁶⁰

In particular, Lewis attacks the cultural impact of Coué’s tactics of subliminal suggestion, which Lewis summarizes with typical concision as, “What you can make people believe to be true, is true.”⁶¹ However, the causal link between Couéism and the techniques of commerce posited by Lewis remains, characteristically, ungrounded in a discussion of the socio-economic conditions of emergence that would lend his analyses historical specificity.

In light of this gap, Brooker’s application of Coué and Bergson to practical problems in marketing constitutes something of a missing link between the cultural and metaphysical polemic of *Time and Western Man* and concurrent developments in industrial psychology. It is not implausible that *Subconscious Selling* – whose only known copy is now in the collection of the British Library – may have informed Lewis’s speculations on Couéism and advertising in *Time and Western Man*. Whether sparked by Brooker’s text or not, I want to argue that this gap in Lewis’s argumentation registers an internal inconsistency in the British artist-author’s approach to Coué that reveals deeper fault lines in his critique of visual culture and time-philosophy as a whole. Namely, there are disavowed affinities between the artist-author’s professed idealism and Coué’s likening of the unconscious to the traditional faculty of “imagination.”⁶² If, for Lewis, “people are only ‘walking ideas,’” similarly, for Coué, “[e]very thought entirely filling our mind

becomes true for us and tends to transform itself into action.”⁶³ (Likewise, Brooker writes in *Subconscious Selling* that, “Every thought which entirely fills the mind becomes true for us and tends to transform itself into action.”)⁶⁴ These affinities between the crypto-Bergsonian idealism of Lewis and the unconscious faculty of imagination described by Coué offer insights into the ambivalent status of advertising in the British artist-author’s theory of art and vision, and its implications for Canadian modernism.

Consistent with the logic of disavowal undergirding Lewis’s relationship to Coué, Paul Edwards observes submerged continuities between Lewis’s mature art and thought and the strategic dualism of Bergson’s philosophy, notwithstanding his manifest repudiation of the French thinker in *Time and Western Man*. Edwards argues convincingly that, “Lewis becomes in 1913 a more Bergsonian artist, though of a peculiarly perverse and rebellious kind.”⁶⁵ Rather than an outright rejection of Bergson, Edwards’s nuanced re-assessment encourages a view of Lewis’s anti-Bergsonian rhetoric as belying a subterranean Bergsonism that affirms all the negative values in the French thinker’s celebrated series of dualisms (“matter and memory, perception and recollection, objective and subjective”).⁶⁶ This covert Bergsonism turns the vitalist ideology of avant-garde fellow travellers inside out in a calculated maneuver consistent with Bergson’s influential formulation of the comic in his essay “Laughter.”⁶⁷ Lewis seizes on the logic of inversion proposed by that text to develop his satirical aesthetic of “the eye.”⁶⁸ The result is a comic “de-organicization” of Bergson’s phenomenology of intuition that, also influenced by Bishop Berkeley’s theory of vision, substitutes the coarse realism of external appearances for the inner experience of temporality valorized by the French thinker and his followers.⁶⁹

Ironically, it is also possible to draw parallels between Lewis’s optical alternative to Bergsonian flux, outlined in the concluding chapters of *Time and Western Man*, and the subconscious as a faculty of imagination elaborated by Coué (and Brooker). On a surface reading, Lewis’s program amounts to a near restatement of Aristotelian “common sense” anticipating the neo-Thomism of McLuhan.⁷⁰ Lewis views art, and especially the visionary imagination of the artist, as offering a “bridge to the transcendent”:⁷¹

To at once be perfectly concrete, we can assert that a God that swam in such an atmosphere as is produced in the music of a Bach fugue, or the stormy grandeur of the genii in the Sistine Ceiling, or the Judgment of Signorelli at Orvieto, who moved with the grace of Mozart – anyone may for himself accumulate such comparisons from the greatest forms of art – such a God would be the highest we could imagine.⁷²

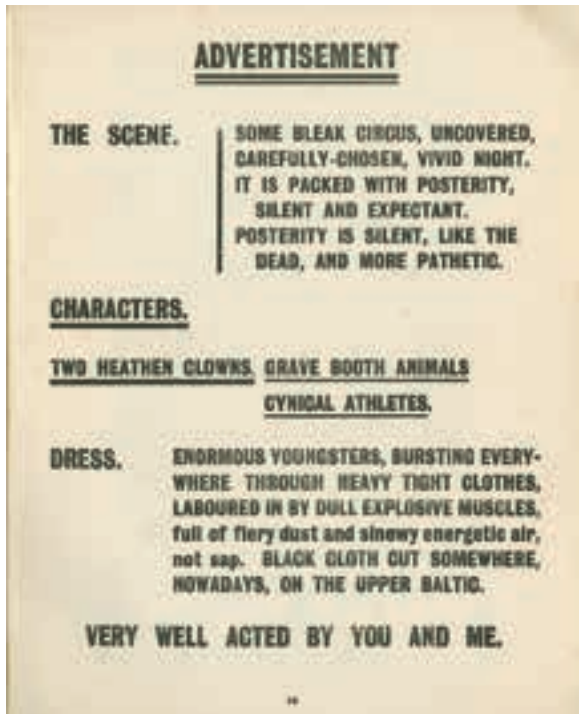
Yet the semi-divine powers which Lewis ascribes to the artist's imagination, as well as his belief that ideology is a product of ideation rather than material conditions or power relations,⁷³ also suggests striking parallels with Coué's representation of the subconscious, in which "[e]very thought entirely filling our mind becomes true for us and tends to transform itself into action."⁷⁴ If Edwards points to the hard-won, and always ephemeral unities of Berkeleyan perception as the basis for the virtuosic phantasmagoria of Lewis's 1928 novel *The Childermass*,⁷⁵ whose otherworldly protagonists are represented as embodied "ideas" struggling to achieve an elusive ideal ego, it is equally possible to read this text as satirizing the visual operations of the Couéist imagination and its placebo effects.

Although Lewis is quick to condemn Coué in *Time and Western Man*, as we have seen vis-à-vis the artist-author's ambivalent relationship to Bergson, the possibility of a disavowed influence should not be discounted out of hand. The encounter with Coué helps to explain the importance of "vision" within Lewis's theory of art and the metaphysics of *Time and Western Man* – for which the philosophy of Bergson, even when read against the grain, does not supply a key, given its emphasis on a dematerialized "intuition" that evades conventional visual paradigms.⁷⁶

Legacies of the Pre-war Avant-garde

The anxieties of influence informing Lewis's conflicted polemic were certainly not confined to his relationship to Bergson. In the words of Reed Way Dasenbrock, "[t]he critiques of Vorticism . . . are often most intense when they seek to conceal an indebtedness."⁷⁷ The commercial swagger of Lewis's Vorticist little magazine *Blast* similarly complicates the derisory tone of his subsequent comments on advertising in *Time and Western Man*, as several commentators have noted.⁷⁸

Recent decades have seen a widespread reassessment of Lewis's conflicted relationship to advertising and other media of mass communication, notably cinema.⁷⁹ With its eye-catching appropriation of the aesthetics and rhetoric of commerce, the short-lived journal *Blast* is central to this growing area of study.⁸⁰ Not only does *Blast* recall the strategies of advertising in its "poster-like" layout, attention-grabbing typeface and tactical deployment of "sensational language," its centerpiece – Lewis's telegraphic play, "Enemy of the Stars" – is brazenly styled an "ADVERTISEMENT" (Fig. 3).⁸¹ How do we situate this artifact of the pre-war avant-garde's embrace of visual culture in relation to the subsequent pessimism of *Time and Western Man* and other Lewis texts from the later 1920s? As Rod Rosenquist cautions, "[t]he two Lewises are difficult to reconcile."⁸² *Blast*'s conflicted attitude toward advertising anticipates the deeply divided argumentation of Lewis's



3 | From Wyndham Lewis, “Enemy of the Stars,” text published in *BLAST* I, 1914, © Wyndham Lewis and the estate of Mrs G.A. Wyndham Lewis by kind permission of the Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust (a registered charity) and Bridgeman Images. (Photo: courtesy York University Libraries)

subsequent works of cultural criticism. A similarly ambivalent appropriation of advertising conventions is brought into representation by the earliest surviving visual art by Brooker.

In a groundbreaking 1989 paper on the idiosyncratic sources of Brooker’s discrepant abstraction, Joyce Zemans advanced the compelling hypothesis that some of these early works on paper may be imaginative reinterpretations of works exhibited at the 1913 Chicago presentation of the Armory Show, including Brancusi’s *Mlle Pogany* (1912) and Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912). The future artist-advertiser could have encountered these artworks in reproduction through his coeval work as a journalist for various prairie newspapers.⁸³ Strengthening this possibility is the fact that several of Brooker’s studies explicitly satirize their modernist prototypes in a fashion reminiscent of contemporary newspaper cartoons lampooning the excesses of modern art. A similar tension between emulation and critique animates a series of drawings, likely executed somewhat later (though probably before Brooker’s move to Winnipeg in 1915) (Fig. 4),⁸⁴ which appropriate a combination of commercial trademarks and artists’ names (the latter of which are presciently treated as corporate brands), reworking these into dense patterns resembling the proto-Pop collage aesthetic of the American cubist Stuart Davis.

These early works on paper communicate an optimism about the potential for advertising to function as a conduit for the dissemination of



4 | Bertram Brooker, *The Romance of Trade Marks*, ca. 1912–1915, ink on paper, 22 × 28 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery. (Photo: courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery)

modernist aesthetics and ideals consistent with the rhetoric of a remarkable manifesto penned contemporaneously by Brooker, “Cosmic Patriotism.” In that text, the artist-advertiser prophesized a coming society regulated by commercial values. “Commercialism is here,” Brooker declared; “and Commercialism stands for construction.”⁸⁵ Betts proposes that this text “responds to the politics and popular aesthetics he found in England” during his 1910–11 visit.⁸⁶ I have noted that *Blast* bears the imprint of Bell & Cockburn, the Toronto agent of John Lane, suggesting that the little magazine may also have been available for purchase in Canada.⁸⁷ Whether or not they were inspired by *Blast*, Brooker’s early experiments engage in an analogous fusion of commercial and modernist genres that lends credence to Keith Tuma’s hypothesis of a general trend among the pre-war avant-gardes toward embracing popular forms.⁸⁸

These parallels between the Canadian and British artists re-emerges with altered meanings amidst Lewis’s critique of Coué in the 1920s, discussed above. Catherine Mastin was the first to observe a family resemblance between later examples of Lewis’s “creation myth” series, executed during his Canadian sojourn in the Second World War, and Brooker’s earlier



5 | Bertram Brooker, *Creation*, ca. 1927, oil on board, 61 × 43 cm, private collection.
(Photo: Consignor Canadian Fine Art)

canvas *Creation* (ca. 1927),⁸⁹ a work dating from the same period as the early figurative pieces introduced above, and visualizing the same thematic of Couéist ontogenesis (Fig. 5). Brooker's *Creation* depicts a sun-drenched globe immersed in a stylized cosmic wave evocative of the Bergsonian "rhythmic biomorphic energy and flow" that Zemans reads into the abstracted landscape of the contemporaneous *Green Movement* (ca. 1927).⁹⁰ The foregoing discussion suggests several plausible motivations for resituating Brooker's and Lewis's creation-themed paintings within a shared discourse on the Couéist imagination as an agency of self-fashioning. Where Edwards has difficulty placing Lewis's remarkable visual output of the later 1920s – while nonetheless proposing a laudably sophisticated reading of its "visual punning" as a witty play on Bergsonian dualisms⁹¹ – we can now connect the themes of imaginative ontogenesis represented by the creation myths, which culminate in the remarkable panel *Bagdad* (1927–1928) (Fig. 6), with the more "optimistic" outlook of Lewis's *The Caliph's Design* and other products of the misunderstood period of 1919 to 1923. These later works extend *Blast*'s earlier appropriation of the conventions of popular culture to re-imagine an aesthetically-motivated reconstruction of postwar society. Edwards reads *Bagdad* as a late representation of the "'Vorticist' Bagdad that Lewis had envisaged as replacing London" in *The Caliph's Design*.⁹² If we accept a Couéist interpretation of the metamorphic pile of architectural forms depicted by Lewis in this oil-on-board as constituting a virtual repository of "ideas" homologous with the structure of the Couéist subconscious (or the strata of the Bergsonian "cone" of memory with which Brooker conflates it), it becomes possible to locate *The Caliph's Design* and the creation myths within a fraught continuum of advertising-inflected representations – both satiric and strategic – of the Bergsonian and Couéist imaginary, connecting Lewis's projects from *Blast* to *Bagdad* and beyond.

Evidence has recently emerged of direct contact between Brooker and Lewis during the latter's self-exile in Toronto during the Second World War.⁹³ They are also known to have shared several acquaintances in common, including University of Toronto faculty member and amateur artist Barker Fairley (1887–1986).⁹⁴ It is plausible to identify a veiled portrait of Brooker in the figure of Charles Brooks, the "Proust-drunken parlour-treader" who serves as the protagonist's delusional guide to the human "marvels" of the bush city of Momaco in Lewis's thinly-veiled account of his time in Canada, *Self Condemned*.⁹⁵

Conclusion

This preliminary discussion of *Subconscious Selling* has complicated Gregory Betts's characterization of Brooker as a Canadian Vorticist, while historicizing



6 | Wyndham Lewis,
Bagdad, 1927–1928, oil
 on wood, 183 × 79 cm,
 Tate Gallery, London.
 © Wyndham Lewis and
 the estate of Mrs G.A.
 Wyndham Lewis by
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 Wyndham Lewis Memorial
 Trust (a registered charity)
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 (Photo: © Tate, London
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Lewis's idealist critique of advertising as an instrument of mass hypnosis and a vehicle of Bergsonian time-philosophy. But despite questioning the appropriateness of the Vorticist label for the Bergsonian and Couéist Brooker, this paper has nonetheless situated Lewis and the Canadian abstractionist within a common discourse on the imagination defined by competing, but

in many ways complementary, claims about being, time, and the crises of modernity. Advertising and the affirmative psychology of Coué are key sites in this formation that Brooker's *Subconscious Selling* brings into view for the first time. Highlighting the Bergsonian inflection of Brooker's presentation of Coué has both strengthened the case for a Bergsonian orientation to Brooker's visual art and for situating it within a broader narrative of Canadian vitalist modernism culminating in the thought of Marshall McLuhan.

NOTES

- 1 I located the only known copy of *Subconscious Selling* in early 2010, subsequently obtaining a photocopy from the British Library in August 2012. I first reported the discovery in 2014. See Adam LAUDER, "Bertram Brooker's Practice-based Advertising Theory," 2015. Assessed 7 June 2016, http://www.media.mcgill.ca/sites/media.mcgill.ca/files/Media_at_McGill_2015_Prize.pdf.
- 2 See Gregory BETTS, ed., "Introduction," in *The Wrong World: Selected Stories & Essays of Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009); Glenn WILLMOTT, ed., "Introduction," in *Think of the Earth* (Toronto: Brown Bear, 2000).
- 3 Richard SURREY [Bertram Brooker], *Subconscious Selling: An Application of Autosuggestion to the Problems of Salesmanship* (Toronto: Marketing Publishers, 1923).
- 4 Adi EFAL, "Art History, Less Its Conditions of Possibility: Following Bergson's 'Le Possible et le réel,'" in *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film*, ed. John Mullarkey and Charlotte de Mille (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 47. Brooker claims that Coué's "Subconscious Mind or Imagination . . . is indeed secret and beyond the probe of analysis." SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 2.
- 5 See Kenneth R. ALLAN, "Marshall McLuhan and the Counterenvironment: 'The Medium is the Massage,'" *Art Journal* 73:4 (2014): 22–45; Stephen CROCKER, *Bergson and the Metaphysics of Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Michael DARROCH and Janine MARCHESSAULT, "Anonymous History as Methodology: The Collaborations of Siegfried Gideon, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and the Explorations Group, 1953–1955," in *Place Studies in Art, Media, Science and Technology: Historical Investigations on the Sites and Migration of Knowledge*, ed. A. Broeckmann and G. Nadarajan (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2009), 9–27; Anna HUDSON, "Time and Image: Picturing Consciousness in Modern Canadian Painting," in *A Vital Force: The Canadian Group of Painters*, ed. Alicia Boutilier (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2013), 55–68.
- 6 Gilles DELEUZE, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 115. See also Paul ARDOIN, S.E. GONTARSKI, and Laci MATTISON, eds., *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013); John MULLARKEY and Charlotte DE MILLE, eds., *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
- 7 See Gregory BETTS, *Avant-garde Canadian Literature: The Early Manifestations* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 215–17.

- 8 See Elena LAMBERTI, *Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic: Probing the Literary Origins of Media Studies* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Donald THEALL, *The Medium is the Rear View Mirror: Understanding McLuhan* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971); Glenn WILLMOTT, *McLuhan, or Modernism in Reverse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
- 9 See Richard CAVELL, *McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Janine MARCHESSAULT, *Marshall McLuhan: Cosmic Media* (London: Sage, 2005).
- 10 Bertram BROOKER, "Blake," 1927, box 10, file 13, Brooker papers, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg.
- 11 BETTS, *Avant-garde Canadian Literature*, 217.
- 12 Chapter Two of *Time and Western Man*, "The Principle of Advertisement and Its Relation to Romance," condemns advertising as the prototypical artifact of the "romantic mind" of commodity culture, which Lewis alleges to be generating a new and distorting relationship to time. This emphasis on advertising is surprising, not only given that Lewis was writing four decades prior to the emergence of cultural studies as an academic discipline, but also considering the uncompromisingly elitist profile of the modernist literature, metaphysics, and theoretical science that dominates his analysis. In treating advertising as a serious object of study, Lewis certainly shows himself to be the "proto-media critic" portrayed by Andrew Gaedtke. Wyndham LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 11; Andrew GAEDTKE, "The Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Modernist Narrative," PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2009, 69.
- 13 See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964). See also BETTS, "'The Destroyer': Modernism and Mystical Revolution in Bertram Brooker," PhD thesis, York University, 2005, 118.
- 14 Adam LAUDER, "Marketing Subjects: Bertram Brooker and the Vitalist Construction of Consumer Subjectivity," MA thesis, University of Toronto, 2006, 89. Betts's 2005 dissertation on Brooker makes only passing references to Lewis and to Vorticism. See Gregory BETTS, "'The Destroyer.'" Betts's dissertation instead advocates a mystical reading of Brooker. In an unpublished 2004 paper included in Betts's bibliography, Lauder had earlier argued that, "Perhaps future study will elucidate the full extent of Brooker's knowledge of *Rhythm*, and the artists later associated with Vorticism in particular, thereby shedding new light on the 'futurist' aesthetic of Brooker's abstractions, first noted by Reid in his *Concise History of Canadian Painting*." Adam LAUDER, "Brooker and Bergsonism," unpublished paper (2004), 32. See also BETTS, "'The Destroyer,'" 343. Paul Douglass discusses Murry's "enthusiasm-followed-by-renunciation of Bergson." See Paul DOUGLASS, "Bergson, Vitalism, and Modernist Literature," in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, ed. Paul Ardoin, S.E. Gontarski, and Laci Mattison (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 113.
- 15 See LAUDER, "Marketing Subjects," 93. Lofthouse writes that, "There was of course much vitalism in Vorticism as well." Richard LOFTHOUSE, *Vitalism in Modern Art* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2005), 250. Charlotte de Mille has recently revisited this interpretation. See Charlotte DE MILLE, "'Blast . . . Bergson?' Wyndham Lewis's 'Guilty Fire of Friction,'" in *Understanding Bergson*.

- 16 See Carole Frances LUFF, "Progress Passing through the Spirit: The Modernist Vision of Bertram Brooker and Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald as Redemptive Art," MA thesis, Carleton University, 1991, 38.
- 17 Adam LAUDER, "It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism," in *The Logic of Nature, The Romance of Space*, ed. Cassandra Getty (Oshawa, ON: Robert McLaughlin Gallery and Windsor, ON: Art Gallery of Windsor, 2010), 95.
- 18 See Mark ANTLIFF, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Frederick BURWICK and Paul DOUGLASS, eds., *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 19 See Joyce ZEMANS, "First Fruits: The World and Spirit Paintings," *Provincial Essays* 7 (1989): 19.
- 20 C. Harry BROOKS, *The Practice of Autosuggestion by the Method of Emile Coué* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), 28.
- 21 See Hal FOSTER, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
- 22 See SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 20.
- 23 "[Coué] uses the word 'imagination' to epitomize the force of the Subconscious." Ibid., 7.
- 24 Ibid., 45.
- 25 Ibid., 10.
- 26 Ibid., v.
- 27 Ibid., 3.
- 28 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 32, 46.
- 29 SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, v–vi.
- 30 "[T]he salesman's own attitude of mind has an immense influence upon his selling effectiveness." Ibid.
- 31 See BROOKS, *The Practice of Autosuggestion*, 65, and SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 23, 36, 83.
- 32 "The best method, as we have seen throughout this book, is to forestall, as far as possible, the existence of an obstacle." SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 96.
- 33 Ibid., 87.
- 34 Ibid., 89–90.
- 35 Émile COUÉ, *Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion* (New York: American Library Service, 1922), 15.
- 36 See, for instance, Richard SURREY [Bertram Brooker], "Effortless Selling," *Marketing* 19:4 (1923): 120–22.
- 37 SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 113. In an important passage, Brooks appropriates the argot of Bergson's neo-vitalism to describe the unconscious: "From a preoccupation with the conscious [science] has turned to the Unconscious (or subconscious), to the vast area of mental activity outside the circle of awareness. In doing so it has grasped at the very roots of life itself, has groped down to the depths where the 'life-force,' the élan vital, touches our individual being." BROOKS, *The Practice of Autosuggestion*, 45. Similarly, Brooker writes in *Subconscious Selling* that, "All his life is [in the Subconscious], all his memories, his impressions, his loves, his hates, all that he has done and said and thought and seen. These memories of what he has been are not shut up in tiny cells – as we have been taught to think – tiny cells whose doors open

- only when a conscious train of thought demands admission. These memories, this life that has been peculiarly his, exists in a living fluid state below consciousness.” SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 4–5.
- 38 SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 11, emphasis added.
- 39 Ibid., 6; Henri BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (1908; repr., New York: Zone Books, 1988), 162.
- 40 “It is in this Subconscious area that we really *live*! We emerge from it only when we wish to *act*. In comparison with this reservoir of power the function of the Conscious Mind seems extremely insignificant. Its task is to select from the crude, fluid energy of the Subconscious whatever is needed at any given moment to provide the springs of action.” SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 5–6. This passage from *Subconscious Selling* is strikingly similar to Bergson’s representation of the brain in *Matter and Memory* as a “centre of action” facilitating the body’s “selection” among possible movements. BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, 20, 30. Bergson describes his philosophy, suspended as it is between the “utilitarian” orientation of the body and the spiritual activity of memory, as “frankly dualistic.” BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, 9.
- 41 Richard SURREY [Bertram Brooker], “Making Orders Flow Downhill,” *Printers’ Ink* 126:8 (1924): 3. Compare this language with Brooker’s earlier discussion of Coué in *Subconscious Selling*: “[The consumer’s] fluid subconsciousness has a tendency to flow down hill, to flow in certain channels.” SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 123.
- 42 Richard SURREY [Bertram Brooker], “Are Statistics More Convincing Than Words or Pictures?” *Printers’ Ink* 134:1 (January 7, 1926): 115.
- 43 See BETTS, “‘The Destroyer’”; Ann DAVIS, *The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Dennis REID, *Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1973). Zemans was the first to challenge this narrative of Theosophical affinity, arguing that, “Brooker’s approach to modernism, to the interrelatedness of the arts, to nationalism in art, and to Theosophy, differed radically from those of his colleagues. Brooker felt no need for Theosophy or any other formal movement.” See ZEMANS, “First Fruits,” 17, 21. Similarly, Carole Luff writes that, “Brooker did not espouse Theosophy as a belief system.” LUFF, “Progress Passing through the Spirit,” 10.
- 44 SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 119.
- 45 ZEMANS, “First Fruits,” 19.
- 46 Bertram BROOKER, “Prophets Wanted,” *The Adelphi* 2:3 (1931): 193.
- 47 Ibid., 192.
- 48 LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, xiv.
- 49 GAEDTKE, “The Machinery of Madness,” 17.
- 50 Ibid., 5.
- 51 Wyndham LEWIS, *The Caliph’s Design*, ed. Paul Edwards (1919; repr., Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1986).
- 52 Paul EDWARDS, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 218.
- 53 LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, 123.
- 54 Reed Way DASENBROCK, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 52.

- 55 See, for instance, Charles BAUDOUIN, *Suggestion and Autosuggestion: A Psychological and Pedagogical Study Based upon the Investigations made by the New Nancy School*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920).
- 56 “Derived from the Unconscious during the process of evolution, the conscious is, as it were, the antechamber where the crude energies of the Unconscious are selected and adapted for action on the world outside us.” BROOKS, *The Practice of Autosuggestion*, 51. See also Henri BERGSON, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (1911; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998).
- 57 “The imagination can be directed.” COUÉ, *Self Mastery*, 14.
- 58 “[A]utosuggestion is nothing but hypnotism as I see it, and I would define it in these simple words: *The influence of the imagination upon the moral and physical being of mankind.*” Ibid., 12; emphasis in the original.
- 59 After experimenting with clinical applications of hypnotherapy early in his career, Freud abandoned hypnosis in favour of psychoanalytic methods. See Lilian R. FURST, *Before Freud: Hysteria and Hypnosis in Later Nineteenth-Century Psychiatric Cases* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Andreas MAYER, *Sites of the Unconscious: Hypnosis and the Emergence of the Psychoanalytic Setting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- 60 LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, 12.
- 61 Ibid., 11.
- 62 COUÉ, *Self Mastery*, 7.
- 63 Wyndham LEWIS, *The Art of Being Ruled* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926), 8; *ibid.*, 15.
- 64 SURREY, *Subconscious Selling*, 30.
- 65 Paul EDWARDS, “Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism: A Strange Synthesis,” in *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, ed. Mark Antliff and Vivien Greene (London: Tate, 2010), 39.
- 66 DELEUZE, *Bergsonism*, 53.
- 67 See Henri BERGSON, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (Copenhagen and Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1999).
- 68 LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, 134.
- 69 DASENBROCK, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis*, 53. See also Branka ARSIĆ, *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (via Beckett)* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- 70 EDWARDS, *Wyndham Lewis*, 311.
- 71 Ibid., 312.
- 72 LEWIS, *Time and Western Man*, 370.
- 73 See Fredric JAMESON, *Fables of Aggression* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 17, 129.
- 74 COUÉ, *Self Mastery*, 15.
- 75 See Wyndham LEWIS, *The Childermass. Pt. 1* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1928).
- 76 See Craig Lundy’s discussion of Bergson’s metaphor of “melody” as “one of his earliest, and perhaps most compelling, illustrations of duration.” Craig LUNDY, “Bergson, History and Ontology,” in *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film*, ed. John Mullarkey and Catherine de Mille (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 24. See also John MULLARKEY, “‘For We Will Have Shown it Nothing’: Bergson as Non-Philosopher (of) Art,” in *Bergson and the Art of Immanence*:

- Painting, Photography, Film*, ed. John Mullarkey and Catherine de Mille (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
- 77 DASENBROCK, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis*, 29.
- 78 See, for instance, Mark S. MORRISON, *Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905–1920* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).
- 79 See Roger B. HENKLE, “The ‘Advertised’ Self: Wyndham Lewis’ Satire,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 13:1 (1979): 95–108; Scott W. KLEIN, “Modern Times against Western Man: Wyndham Lewis, Charlie Chaplin and Cinema,” in *Wyndham Lewis and the Cultures of Modernity*, ed. Andrzej Gąsiorek, Alice Reeve-Tucker, and Nathan Waddell (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011); Douglas MAO, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Alan MUNTUN, “From Charlie Chaplin to Bill Haley: Popular Culture and Ideology in Wyndham Lewis,” in *Wyndham Lewis The Radical: Essays on Literature and Modernity*, ed. Carmelo Cunchillos Jaime (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007); Anthony PARASKEVA, “Wyndham Lewis vs Charlie Chaplin,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43:3 (2007): 223–34; Mark PERRINO, “Marketing Insults: Wyndham Lewis and the Arthur Press,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 41:1 (1995): 54–80; Charles SUMNER, “Wyndham Lewis’s Theory of Mass Culture,” *The Space Between* 3:1 (2007): 29–45.
- 80 See, for instance, Julian MURPHET, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 81 Hugh KENNER, *Wyndham Lewis* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1954), 17; Wyndham LEWIS, “Enemy of the Stars,” *Blast* 1 (1914): 55; Paige REYNOLDS, “‘Chaos Invading Concept’: Blast as Native Theory of Promotional Culture,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 46:2 (2000): 240.
- 82 Rod ROSENQUIST, *Modernism, the Market and the Institution of the New* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 34.
- 83 “Brooker’s daughter notes that he regularly read the Chicago papers.” ZEMANS, “First Fruits,” 33n9.
- 84 Zemans observes that the drawings are executed on Neepawa Bond paper. *Ibid.*, 18.
- 85 Bertram BROOKER, “The Decay of Art,” ca. 1912–15, box 8, folder 2, Brooker papers, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.
- 86 BETTS, “Introduction,” xiv.
- 87 LAUDER, “It’s Alive!,” 102n35.
- 88 Keith TUMA, “Wyndham Lewis, *Blast*, and Popular Culture,” *ELH* 54:2 (1987): 403.
- 89 Catherine M. MASTIN, “‘The Talented Intruder,’” in *The Talented Intruder: Wyndham Lewis in Canada, 1939–1945*, ed. Robert Stacey (Windsor, ON: Art Gallery of Windsor, 1992), 59.
- 90 ZEMANS, “First Fruits,” 30.
- 91 EDWARDS, *Wyndham Lewis*, 369.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 379.
- 93 “To Bertram Brooker from Wyndham Lewis Sept 14/1939.” Wyndham LEWIS, *The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature* 2 (London: Arthur Press, 1927): 1. Brooker’s presentation copy, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Toronto.
- 94 MASTIN, “‘The Talented Intruder,’” 28.
- 95 Wyndham LEWIS, *Self Condemned* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1954), 221. “Charles Brooks” could be a conflation of Brooker and C. Harry Brooks, Coué’s English polemicist.

Le subconscient au service de la vente : Bertram Brooker et la culture visuelle de la méthode Coué

ADAM LAUDER

La psychologie d'Émile Coué (1857–1926) et l'influence de sa description de l'inconscient comme faculté visionnaire de l'imagination susceptible de modification rationnelle suggèrent une nouvelle approche au discours ambivalent sur la publicité et la « philosophie de l'œil » élaboré par la critique culturelle d'entre deux guerres de l'artiste multidisciplinaire canadien Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957). Une lecture attentive d'un manuel de publicité, découvert récemment, du « vorticiste canadien » né en Grande-Bretagne, Bertram Brooker (1888–1955), qui applique la méthode Coué à la résolution de problèmes pratiques de commercialisation, resitue la critique que fait Lewis de la méthode Coué et ses emprunts souterrains à cette méthode à l'intérieur de développements parallèles dans la psychologie industrielle et la culture visuelle. Cette analyse complique davantage les descriptions antérieures de la relation conflictuelle de Lewis avec la métaphysique bergsonienne du flux. Coué semble avoir offert à l'artiste-écrivain britannique un modèle de l'imagination auto-déterminante, alors même que sa compréhension décentrée de la psyché trouve une forte résonance dans l'ontologie de la multiplicité de Bergson.

La présente discussion repose sur une analyse comparative des peintures de Brooker et de Lewis depuis les belles années de ces débats, maintenant largement oubliés mais, en rétrospective, de grande importance, qui révèlent de puissantes traces du discours de Coué sur l'imagination comme moyen d'auto-détermination sur la théorie de l'art moderniste et la culture visuelle des deux côtés de l'Atlantique. Des toiles semi-abstraites de Brooker, du milieu des années 1920 – précurseurs des œuvres entièrement non objectives qu'il a exposées dans son exposition solo mémorable au Arts and Letters Club de Toronto en 1927 – révèlent à la fois des parallèles convaincants, mais aussi signifiants, et des points de tension, antérieurement sous-estimés, avec les sources et enjeux philosophiques des écrits critiques et de l'art visuel concomitants de Lewis. Par conséquent, cette étude contredit l'inclusion de Brooker dans la lignée vorticiste proposée par Gregory Betts. L'artiste se situe alternativement dans une contre-tradition de « modernisme vitaliste » canadien.

De nouvelles preuves confirment l'existence, que l'on soupçonnait depuis longtemps, de contacts personnels entre Brooker et Lewis. Brooker aurait servi de modèle au personnage de Charles Brooks dans le roman de Lewis publié en 1954, *Condamné par lui-même*, satire de son exil à Toronto pendant la guerre. Ironiquement, les premiers écrits de Brooker inspirés par la méthode Coué pourraient avoir influencé Lewis dans sa critique de la publicité et de la psycho-pop dans *Time and Western Man* – ce qui laisse supposer que Brooker et Lewis étaient engagés dans des échanges transnationaux.

À travers les sources des principaux textes originaux et d'œuvres en art visuel moins connues, la présente étude soutient que l'esthétique bergsonienne et les théories françaises du moi sont présentes depuis longtemps dans la culture artistique et visuelle canadienne anglaise. En vérité, et malgré ses vigoureuses protestations, le Lewis vorticiste (et post-vorticiste) faisait aussi partie de cette généalogie bergsonienne – quoique profondément conflictuelle. À son tour, la psychologie de l'autosuggestion de Coué émerge comme une contribution, jusqu'à maintenant sous-théorisée, à la culture positive de la modernité diffusée par la publicité (et objet d'une critique visionnaire par Lewis). En rétrospective, on peut reconnaître que l'appropriation par Brooker des spéculations de Coué sur la communication subliminale comme base de stratégies de commercialisation innovantes, ont ouvert la voie aux thèses influentes de son compatriote, l'intellectuel canadien Marshall McLuhan, sur le pouvoir hypnotique des médias sur l'ingénierie sociale.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette