Introduction

On 21 July 1879, Jules Laforgue – then eighteen years old – wrote to the administrator of the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris to request a library card. In his letter, he states that he has been frequenting the library's publicly accessible annexe in the rue Colbert 'avec assiduité' for the past two years, but has found it wanting 'quant aux ouvrages des philosophes, des poètes et des auteurs dramatiques contemporains'.[1] With a certain humility, he explains that he holds no position that might justify his request, although he does not mention that this was because he had recently failed his *baccalauréat* for the third and final time, his crippling shyness having scuppered his chances in the oral exam. Instead, he wants to use the library to read and study in order to become a writer: 'Mon seul but est de devenir littérateur' (*OC*, I, 684). Although formal and ostensibly banal, this letter offers an important insight into the symbiotic relationship between Laforgue's literary ambitions and his voracious appetite for reading. Indeed, his mature work presents a veritable *bricolage* of terms drawn from the various works he pored over in 'la salle Colbert' from 1877-79 and subsequently, having been granted the library card, in the *Bibliothèque nationale* itself. Within this array of lexical curios – picked, magpie-like, from medical, Classical, technical, ecclesiastical, and other vocabularies – there are some that have a privileged status in his aesthetics. Chief among these treasures are the terms taken from his reading of the German philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann.

The central importance of philosophy to Laforgue's writing is, indeed, evident from his letter, which places the works of 'philosophes' at the head of his *desiderata*. It is also clear from the earnest pessimism of his first, unpublished collection *Le Sanglot de la Terre* (written in 1879-82). But the special significance of philosophical terms in his later poetry and prose is not easy to discern, at least at first glance. This is because of the irony that imbues his mature work, from *Les Complaintes* (mostly written in 1883-84, but not published until 1885) to *Moralités légendaires* (1886) and *Derniers vers* (the title posthumously given to the free-verse poems he wrote in 1886), an irony that makes his references to philosophical concepts ('Inconscient', 'Absolu', 'Volonté' and so on) appear as unserious as his use of other jargons.[2]

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[1] Jules Laforgue, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Jean-Louis Debauve et al, 3 vols (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1986-2000), I, 684. Further references are given in the text as *OC*.

[2] Indeed, some critics argue that philosophy 'est moins une pensée, qu'elle n'est pour Laforgue un *registre*' (Philippe Bonnefis, 'Entre Laforgue et Hartmann: le monologue de

Indeed, there *is* a ludic aspect to his use of philosophical language: Laforgue himself states that he '[va] [s]'arlequinant des défroques | Des plus grands penseurs de chaque époque' ('Esthétique', *OC*, II, 168). Hartmannian garb is particularly prominent in this philosophical harlequinade, as J. A. Hiddleston has shown; ideas and images taken from Hartmann's work are 'transformed and given a new tonality, losing their philosophical or didactic solemnity and taking on that peculiarly strident and playful quality which characterizes Laforgue's irony'.[3] This playfulness might even be seen as parodic in nature.

In particular, the *Moralités légendaires* – where 'Laforgue's reworking of philosophy is most fully manifest'[4] – has been read as a parody of the use of philosophical lexis, the philosophising of various characters (Hamlet, Salomé, the dragon of 'Persée et Andromède', Lohengrin, Pan) being characterised by an absurdly overblown or convoluted rhetoric.[5] For example, Salomé's *vocéro* – which replaces the erotic dance of the hypotext – is delivered in 'a ludicrous prose replete with puns, alliteration, verbal play, periphrasis, and an abstract philosophical vocabulary', and for Michèle Hannoosh this wordplay undermines the hymn's proselytisation of Hartmannian thought.[6] But parody does not necessarily imply ridicule; it 'can be critically

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Salomé', *Lendemains*, 49 (1988), 57-69 (p. 62; author's emphasis); see also Jean-Pierre Bernard, *Les Complaintes de Jules Laforgue. Ironie et désenchantement* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1997), p. 66).

[3] J. A. Hiddleston, 'Laforgue and Hartmann', in *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, 1982*, ed. by Anna Balakian (New York, NY: Garland 1985), pp. 66-72 (p. 68).

[4] Madeleine Guy, 'Jules Laforgue, Hartmann and Schopenhauer: From Influence to Rewriting', in *Questions of Influence in Modern French Literature*, ed. by Thomas Baldwin, James Fowler and Ana de Medeiros (Basingstoke; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 58-70 (p. 59).

[5] See Michèle Hannoosh, *Parody and Decadence: Laforgue's 'Moralités légendaires'* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989).

[6] Hannoosh, p. 164.

constructive as well as destructive'.[7] The fact that Laforgue's references to philosophy are ostensibly jocular does not thus imply a lack of genuine engagement with philosophical ideas.[8]

It is in his private notes that we find the clearest evidence to show that he engaged with German philosophy sincerely, profoundly and persistently. In fact, these notes – collated in the third and final volume of his *Œuvres complètes*, published in 2000 – demonstrate that his reception of Schopenhauer and Hartmann was essential to the development of his aesthetics. Gustave Kahn, one of the poet's closest friends, emphasizes this point at the beginning of a pen-portrait of Laforgue in his 1902 work *Symbolistes et décadents*:

> La littérature, il la concevait non pas comme une chose par elle-même existante, mais comme un reflet, une traduction d'une philosophie.[9]

Kahn also indicates that for Laforgue, philosophy was a matter of both literary importance and deeply personal significance: 'il existait dans sa nature d'âme, un art, un besoin de saisir la philosophie comme une chose vitale'.[10] Although the story that Laforgue always carried a copy of Hartmann's *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten* (*The Philosophy of the Unconscious*) in his pocket[11] is almost certainly apocryphal (the two volumes of this work ran to more than six hundred pages each), there is no doubt that Hartmann's ideas were especially important to him. He even referred to the principle of the Unconscious as 'ma religion' (*OC*, III, 1149). His attitude towards the philosophy of Schopenhauer was more ambiguous, his notes showing that initial enthusiasm gave way to disillusionment; in his literary works, however, some of

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[7] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York, NY: Methuen, 2000), p. 32.

[8] On the role of philosophy in the *Moralités légendaires*, see Guy (2013) and Roger Pearson, 'The Voice of the Unconscious: Laforgue and the Poet as Lawgiver', *Dix-Neuf*, 20, no. 1 (2016), 125-44.

[9] Gustave Kahn, *Symbolistes et décadents* (Paris: L'Édition de Paris, 1902; repr. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), p. 181.

[10] Ibid., p. 181.

[11] See Fernand Vial, 'L'inconscient métaphysique et ses premières expressions littéraires en France: *Jules Laforgue*', in *Stil- und Formprobleme in der Literatur*, ed. by Paul Böckmann (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1959), pp. 358-66 (p. 361); and Graham Dunstan Martin, 'Introduction', in Jules Laforgue, *Selected Poems*, trans. by Graham Dunstan Martin (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. ix-xxxviii (p. xvii).

Schopenhauer's ideas continue to play an important role alongside those of Hartmann.[12] Indeed, the dominant themes of Laforgue's *œuvre* can be traced back to his reading of the two philosophers: pessimism in general and the sufferings of the body in particular; a nihilistic, atheistic view of the universe; the pervasive, almost inescapable presence of sexuality, accompanied by profound scepticism about romantic relationships. But despite the foundational importance of Schopenhauerian and Hartmannian ideas to his work, and despite his description of the philosophy of the Unconscious as his religion, Laforgue is far from being an unthinking devotee.[13] Indeed, he is always in dialogue with Schopenhauer and Hartmann, revealing himself to be a subtle and, at times, critical philosophical interlocutor: he redisposes

[12] Almost all of Laforgue's critics acknowledge the crucial role played by Hartmann's work (see, inter alia, David Arkell, *Looking for Laforgue: an informal biography* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1979), p. 140; Michael Collie, *Jules Laforgue* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), p. 11; Médéric Dufour, *Étude sur l'esthétique de Jules Laforgue: une philosophie de l'impressionnisme* (Paris: Vanier, 1904), p. 1; Marie-Jeanne Durry, *Jules Laforgue* (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 86; Daniel Grojnowski, *Jules Laforgue, les voix de la Complainte* (La Rochelle: Rumeur des Âges, 2000), p. 21; Hiddleston (1985), p. 66; Pierre Reboul, *Laforgue* (Paris: Hatier, 1960), p. 171; Henri Scepi, *Poétique de Jules Laforgue* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000), p. 14). Fewer refer to Schopenhauer, but his role in Laforgue's thought is still widely recognized (see, for example, Jeanne Cuisinier, *Jules Laforgue* (Paris: Albert Messein, 1925), p. 115; Edwin Morgan, 'Notes on the Metaphysics of Jules Laforgue', *Poetry*, 69, no. 5 (February 1947), 266-72 (pp. 269-70); T. S. Eliot, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. by Ronald Schuhard (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 215; Hannoosh, p. 50).

[13] As Warren Ramsey comments, Laforgue's theory of the Unconscious was 'half-borrowed, half-invented' (Warren Ramsey, 'Introduction', in *Jules Laforgue: Essays on a Poet's Life and Work*, ed. by Warren Ramsey (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. xii-xxx (p. xx)); for Arkell, it was so unorthodox that 'Hartmann would probably have disowned it' (Arkell, p. 140). Dunstan Martin argues that 'the disrespect with which he treats the great principles of Hartmann's philosophy' means that his approach is a kind of 'blasphemy' (Dunstan Martin, p. xxx). In a similar vein, Bonnefis states that the Unconscious may be 'le Dieu de Laforgue, mais Laforgue n'est pas son prophète' (Philippe Bonnefis, 'Faire parler l'inconscient', *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, 488 (16-30 June 1987), pp. 13-15 (p. 13)).

not only philosophical language but also philosophical ideas, moulding them to form his own idiosyncratic credo – albeit one that is never solidified as a manifesto, instead remaining elusive and shifting.

Laforgue's transfiguration of philosophical concepts and language is part of the broader question of what is at stake in the crossing of disciplinary borders, in the passage from philosophy to poetry. But another sort of crossing is also crucial to his reception of philosophy: that from one national culture (Germany) to another (France). This book explores how the 'othering' of Germany and German philosophy – the perception of it as in some sense fundamentally opposed or alien to the French way of thinking – informs Laforgue's reception of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, and how ideas of otherness are in turn woven into his aesthetic principles. The importance of Schopenhauer and Hartmann's philosophy to Laforgue has long been recognized, as has his free-thinking approach to it. But the ways in which this approach is imbricated with the broader intellectual and cultural context have been largely neglected. Laforgue's thinking is not merely shaped by this context, but actively intervenes in it. In and through his engagement with philosophy, he deploys a range of strategies to challenge the demonization of other cultures: he celebrates otherness as a source of inspiration, reappropriating metaphors of 'othering'; he demonstrates that otherness might, indeed, be contingent and thus fundamentally illusory given the immanent presence of an underlying unity; he locates otherness within the self in the form of the unconscious. Moreover, his uses of philosophy are closely connected to a critique of his own culture. His work thus thinks through not only notions of cultural otherness, but also ideas of how society might be otherwise.

Le pessimisme d'outre-Rhin: the Philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann[14]

[14] This summary draws on the critical guides of Christopher Janaway (*Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)) and Bryan Magee (*The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)) on Schopenhauer, and Denis N. Kenedy Darnoi (*The Unconscious and Eduard von Hartmann* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967)) on Hartmann, as well as Sebastian Gardner's chapter on Hartmann ('Eduard von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious', in *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, ed. by Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 173-99). For fuller discussions of these philosophers and their thought, see these sources.

In Laforgue's playful and parodic version of 'Salomé', the narrator describes the phantasmagorical cabaret provided for the amusement of the guests at the feast for the 'Tétrarque': it includes a 'jeune fille-serpent', 'une procession de costumes sacramentellement inédits, symbolisant chacun un désir humain', and 'des intermèdes d'horizontaux cyclones de fleurs électrisées', as well as clowns, some of them 'des clowns musiciens', others performing a kind of absurdist philosophical theatre:

> Et trois autres clowns jouèrent l'Idée, la Volonté, l'Inconscient. L'Idée bavardait sur tout, la Volonté donnait de la tête contre les décors, et l'Inconscient faisait de grands gestes mystérieux comme un qui en sait au fond plus long qu'il n'en peut encore. (*OC*, II, 441)

These three concepts – Idea, Will, and the Unconscious – are crucial to understanding Schopenhauer and Hartmann's philosophy. They are also, therefore, vital to Laforgue's literary project; but despite their fundamental importance for Laforgue, his published work only rarely makes reference to these philosophical terms directly (instead generally preferring euphemisms such as 'l'Un-Tout' or 'l'Absolu'). Their embodiment as clowns is, in a sense, a metonym for the parodic treatment of philosophy in Laforgue's work, a treatment that belies the underpinning role that philosophy plays for his thinking. For Ellen Sakari, the three clowns represent Hegel ('l'Idée'), Schopenhauer ('la Volonté'), and Hartmann ('l'Inconscient'); for François Ruchon and Pierre-Olivier Walzer, they represent the three principles of Hartmann's philosophy.[15] Both interpretations are valid. Hartmann's philosophy of the Unconscious is in fact an attempt to fuse the Hegelian concept of Idea and the Schopenhauerian concept of Will within his own concept of the Unconscious. This section explains Hartmann and Schopenhauer's systems and how they are related to one another, as well as sketching out – in a preliminary fashion – some of Laforgue's critical responses to his philosophical reading.

Both Schopenhauer and Hartmann base their philosophical systems on Kant's distinction between appearance (phenomena) and things in themselves (noumena). Kant argues that our knowledge of the world is limited to its phenomenal aspect, which we experience through the senses, and that the noumenal realm – the world as it is in itself – is fundamentally unknowable. But both Schopenhauer and Hartmann set out to discover the nature of this realm, the underlying principle governing our world. For Schopenhauer, this principle is Will: this is

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[15] Ellen Sakari, *Prophète et Pierrot: thèmes et attitudes ironiques dans l'œuvre de Jules Laforgue* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1974), p. 160; François Ruchon, *Jules Laforgue: sa vie – son œuvre* (Geneva: Éditions Albert Ciana, 1924), p. 146; Pierre-Olivier Walzer, *OC*, II, 584 n. 2.

the driving force of the universe, 'the force that shoots and vegetates in the plant, indeed the force by which the crystal is formed, the force that turns the magnet to the North Pole' and so on;[16] in human existence, Will is manifested as 'will to life (*Wille zum Leben*), a kind of blind striving, [...] which is directed towards the preservation of life, and towards engendering life anew'.[17] Will, then, is 'the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole' (*WWR*, I, 110). But this is not simply a variant of pantheism: Will is a *blind* force, governing the workings of living organisms and inanimate matter without any guiding purpose or rationality. The world cannot be divine, argues Schopenhauer, since its existence is meaningless. He asserts that 'there is no co-ordinated purpose to nature',[18] or, indeed, to history, which is merely an endlessly repeated cycle. Progress is thus chimerical. In this, he deliberately and belligerently opposes the Hegelian philosophy of history: as Andrew Bowie points out, 'Schopenhauer's main animus is directed against any attempt, like that of Hegel, to suggest that history can be understood teleologically, as the locus of the realization of reason.'[19]

In this sense, Hartmann's philosophy of the Unconscious constitutes an audacious philosophical enterprise: his explicitly stated aim is to reconcile Schopenhauer's Will with Hegel's concept of Idea, the very concept that entails a rationalist teleology. For Hartmann, Will and Idea are merely two aspects of the same force, the Unconscious. In this respect, he asserts that his most important philosophical predecessor is Schelling, whose *Philosophie der Mythologie* (*Philosophy of Mythology*) proves the inseparability of Will and Idea: without Will, Idea can only explain the logical essence of things, but not their existence, which is fundamentally irrational; without Idea, Will has no object, and is merely an empty striving for existence. However, Hartmann criticizes Schelling for failing to insist on the unconsciousness of the noumenon, which he deems to be essential to avoid lapsing into theism:[20] like Schopenhauer, Hartmann is atheist. Hartmann also argues that Schelling's principle is purely

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[16] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1966), I, 110. Further references are given in the text as *WWR*.

[17] Janaway, p. 29.

[18] Janaway, p. 39.

[19] Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 262.

[20] As Darnoi notes, Schelling in fact states that he has 'forsaken his earlier pantheistic position in his last or positive philosophy' (Darnoi, p. 18).

abstract, and requires experimental verification; this is the basis of his aim 'to restore again the proportion between the speculative and empirical aspects of philosophy'.[21] He thus deems it crucial to place his philosophy on scientific foundations, as the sub-title of *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* indicates: '*speculative results according to the inductive method of physical science*'.[22] Sebastian Gardner indicates the idiosyncrasy of this approach:

> In terms of his methodology, then, Hartmann is a naturalist, and his further peculiarity lies in his supposition that reflection on the results of the natural sciences is sufficient to warrant conclusions about the ultimate nature of reality which are thoroughly *anti*-materialist.[23]

The first part of *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* uses this natural-scientific methodology to posit a teleological metaphysics of nature, attempting to attribute purposiveness to all natural phenomena. Hartmann draws extensively on biological research into animal instinct and reflex actions in both flora and fauna, and he thereby argues for the existence of an unconscious will in every living organism (a kind of vitalism[24]). Indeed, even conscious actions require a process of which we are unconscious. This idea of unconscious will is comparable to Schopenhauer's notion of will to life, but it is crucial to note that for Hartmann, this will always has a definite aim, or idea; Will and Idea are both facets of the ultimate metaphysical principle, the Unconscious. Hartmann sees the operation of the Unconscious in every sphere of human existence: ethics, aesthetics, language, history and so on.

Laforgue's faith in Hartmann's philosophy is clear from the first 'complainte' proper, 'Complainte propitiatoire à l'Inconscient', which transfigures the Lord's Prayer as an appeal to the Unconscious. The poem's subversion of Christian doctrine also points to Laforgue's acceptance of the atheism propounded by both Schopenhauer and Hartmann, an atheism that is perhaps expressed most explicitly in his 1882 essay on Paul Bourget: here, he relates his belief that the garden of Creation has been 'débarrassé soudain de son Jardinier impénétrable' (*OC*, III, 127). However, Laforgue by no means endorses every aspect of Schopenhauer and

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[21] Darnoi, p. 19.

[22] Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: speculative results according the inductive method of physical science*, trans. by William Chatterton Coupland, 2nd edn (London: Kegan Paul, 1931). Further references are given in the text as *PU*.

[23] Gardner, p. 175; author's emphasis.

[24] J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 64.

Hartmann's philosophical systems. In fact, he expresses profound scepticism about the nihilistic eschatology that the two philosophers share; that is, both envisage the ultimate annihilation of human life or (in Hartmann's case) of the universe itself. For Schopenhauer, this annihilation is the logical end-point of his ethical doctrine of chastity (to which we shall turn shortly). It occupies only a minor role in Schopenhauer's magnum opus *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*), but gained (perhaps undue) prominence in late nineteenth-century France through a seminal 1870 interview he conducted with the journalist Paul Challemel-Lacour, in which Schopenhauer discussed how sexual abstinence would lead to the extinction of the human race. In Hartmann's philosophical system, on the other hand, eschatology plays a crucial role, rather than merely constituting a by-product of ethics. For him, 'the existence of the world is a *mistake*'[25] and the purpose of the world is thus to return to the state of nothingness that pertained before Will and Idea were joined to form the Unconscious; this is to be achieved 'through the development of a collective human consciousness which, upon achieving insight that the world ought not to be, brings itself and the world to an end'.[26] How, exactly, the end of the world will be brought about by such a collective consciousness is not entirely clear. However, Hartmann does offer a detailed vision of the necessary steps to reach this insight, arguing that we must pass through three stages of illusion: firstly, the illusion that we can achieve happiness in this lifetime; secondly, that we can achieve happiness in an afterlife; thirdly, that happiness is possible for the human race in the future. In his notes, Laforgue seems to endorse this doctrine of three-fold illusion (see *OC*, III, 1133), but he ridicules the idea of 'l'anéantissement universel' (*OC*, III, 1135) as utterly fantastical, as even more impracticable than Schopenhauer's vision of 'la suppression du commerce sexuel dans l'humanité' (*OC*, III, 1135).

This scepticism towards certain aspects of Hartmannian and Schopenhauerian metaphysics is symptomatic of Laforgue's critical attitude towards his philosophical reading. His approach is, indeed, idiosyncratic in some respects. Perhaps most notably, his vision of the Unconscious itself is far from being a dogmatic reflection of Hartmann's work; rather, he extrapolates from his philosophical material in various ways. For Laforgue, the Unconscious is both a force – sometimes blind, irrational and merciless, sometimes divinized as a source of wisdom and providence – and a domain. This domain is essentially utopian, and it is to be found, ultimately, within the self. In this sense, Hiddleston is perhaps right to say that what

[25] Gardner, p. 187; author's emphasis.

[26] Ibid., p. 187.

Laforgue took from Hartmann 'was not so much a philosophical system and a certain vocabulary, but the *idea* of the Unconscious which was to appeal not just to his intellect, but more felicitously to his visual imagination'.[27] Hartmann's idea of the Unconscious provided the inspiration for him to survey the 'inner domain [of the self]' and 'gave him the impetus to explore its extraordinary riches'.[28] But this exploration was not Hartmann's primary aim in writing *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*; he sought to provide, first and foremost, an account of the workings of the world at large rather than the internal world of the self. For Hartmann, the Unconscious is a metaphysical principle, and the unconscious life of the individual merely a manifestation of this principle. For Laforgue, on the other hand, the individual gains precedence over the metaphysical: he is fascinated, above all, by 'les richesses de tons bizarres changeants qu'on a en fermant les yeux', by 'Les symphonies orageuses, les chœurs d'océans en se bouchant les oreilles' (*OC*, III, 1158). As Hiddleston comments, in Laforgue's work there is often 'the sense of a breach which has been opened up affording a glimpse into another surreal, exotic or frighteningly alien world'[29] – although this world is, in fact, more often a source of wonder and yearning than of fear. Laforgue's concern with the individual is also evident in his focus on the ethical doctrines put forward by Schopenhauer and Hartmann; indeed, it is the ethical dimension of their philosophical systems that Laforgue engages with most intensely, more than metaphysics or (perhaps surprisingly) aesthetics.

Both philosophers' ethics emerge out of their metaphysical visions; both are, moreover, focused on the question of sexuality. Schopenhauer's notion of Will as the fundamental metaphysical principle is premised on his argument concerning the body: he maintains that 'the whole body is nothing but objectified will' (*WWR*, I, 100), that bodily existence consists purely of willing. The corollary of this is the dethroning of reason as humankind's dominant faculty, as the marker of our exceptionalism, an argument that constitutes Schopenhauer's most radical departure from his philosophical predecessors according to Bryan Magee.[30] Humanity's intellectual capacities are merely a function of the will to life: at a certain point in our development, knowledge was required 'for the preservation of the individual and the propagation of the species' (*WWR*, I, 150). But it remains subordinate: 'the intellect is the secondary phenomenon, the organism the primary' (*WWR*, II, 201). His challenge to

[27] Hiddleston (1985), p. 71; author's emphasis.

[28] Ibid., p. 71.

[29] Hiddleston (1985), p. 71.

[30] Magee, p. 158.

rationalism is made even more controversial by his assertion that the sexual instinct constitutes the most powerful manifestation of the will to life in our bodies (*WWR*, I, 329). In 'The Metaphysics of Sexual Love', he goes so far as to say that the impulse to sexual gratification represents 'the ultimate goal of almost all human effort' (*WWR*, II, 534). This dictatorial instinct is like 'a malevolent demon, striving to pervert, to confuse, and to overthrow everything' (*WWR*, II, 534), and it exerts such control because what is at stake is 'nothing less than the *composition of the next generation*' (*WWR*, II, 534; author's emphasis). Attraction to a particular person is simply the manifestation of the will to life of the future individual who would be born of that union (*WWR*, II, 535). We are thus slaves to the will of the species; sexual relations do not bring us happiness, and we only believe that they do because nature implants in us 'a certain *delusion*' (*WWR*, II, 538; author's emphasis). The striving for sexual satisfaction, which furthers the species, is 'at the expense of the individual' (*WWR*, II, 540). The proof of this is that after the sexual urge has been satisfied, 'everyone who is in love finds himself duped; for the delusion by means of which the individual was the dupe of the species has disappeared' (*WWR*, II, 540). The will of the species is thus the 'pursuer and enemy' of the individual, in that it is 'always ready ruthlessly to destroy personal happiness in order to carry out its ends' (*WWR*, II, 556). Women are complicit in this ruse: this is the key to Schopenhauer's notorious misogyny.

However, despite this bleak account of sexual love, Schopenhauer does offer some hope. He argues that there is a solution to the suffering caused by desire: the denial of the will to life. He sees this as a kind of pseudo-religious salvation and he 'is keen to link his philosophical discussion with Christianity, Brahmanism, and Buddhism, claiming that the core of all these religions [...] is really the same.'[31] In order to deny the will to life, we must turn against our own bodies and cease to seek egoistic ends, in particular sexual gratification. Asceticism is thus at the core of Schopenhauer's ethics, primarily in the sense of the denial of sexual desire – the strongest manifestation of the will to life – but also through poverty, fasting and so on. For Schopenhauer, suffering is caused not only by sexual desire, but by all forms of striving (needing, wanting, aiming), since striving for anything implies experiencing deficiency:

> All *willing* springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfilment is short and meted out sparingly. (*WWR*, I, 196; author's emphasis)

[31] Janaway, p. 91.

In short, willing dooms us to suffer:

> so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. (*WWR*, I, 196)

Even if we find ourselves with nothing to strive for, we are prone to suffering in the form of ennui (*WWR*, I, 312). For the majority of human beings, then, 'life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom' (*WWR*, I, 312). But asceticism offers a way out of this predicament, a way to get off the misery-go-round.

Hartmann concurs with many aspects of Schopenhauer's pessimistic vision. In particular, he echoes his cynical view of sexual love. For Hartmann, as for Schopenhauer, the sexual instinct is predominant in human existence, representing the most powerful manifestation of the Unconscious in humankind. He also agrees that sexuality is a pernicious force: 'in love one has not to do with a farce, a romantic drollery, but with a very real power, a demon who ever and again demands his victims'; this is a demon who 'makes the whole world dance on his fool's rope' (*PU*, p. 230). Love is merely an illusion, as demonstrated by its decline after sexual satisfaction: 'No passion of love very long survives enjoyment' (*PU*, p. 231). Again, Hartmann adopts the Schopenhauerian explanation for attraction to a particular person, maintaining that this shows how we are duped by the Unconscious into producing the ideal offspring: 'the dreamed-of bliss in the arms of the beloved one is nothing but the deceptive bait, by means of which the Unconscious deludes conscious *egoism*, and leads to the sacrifice of self-love in favour of the succeeding generation' (*PU*, p. 234; author's emphasis). But at this point Hartmann departs from Schopenhauer's theory of love, instead drawing on Darwinian thought to argue that the delusion of love is, in fact, '*indispensable*' (*PU*, p. 235; author's emphasis) because the 'welfare and most favourable constitution of the next generation' (*PU*, p. 235) is of the utmost importance:

> the *ennoblement of the species* is brought about, in addition to the succumbing of the more unfit specimens of the race through the struggle for existence, by means of a natural *instinct of sexual selection*. Nature knows no higher interests than those of the race, for the race is related to the individual, as the infinite to the finite. (*PU*, p. 234; author's emphasis)

Awareness of this process necessarily raises a conflict with selfish interests, but Hartmann holds that it is possible for conscious thought to 'disengage itself from the point of view of egoism' and even 'be brought by deeper insight passively to permit Nature's ends to be accomplished in preference to its own' (*PU*, p. 235). In other words, Hartmann takes the opposite point of view to Schopenhauer: rather than denying the will to life through sexual abstinence, we should embrace our instinctual urges, and particularly sexuality, since this is

essential to the development of the human race towards a state of enlightenment. While love causes suffering and is thus condemnable from the egoistic point of view, 'in the truly philosophical point of view [...] complete devotion to the process and welfare of the universal [...] is presented as first principle of practical philosophy, and thus also all instincts, absurd to conscious egoism but beneficial for the whole, are *fully justified*' (*PU*, p. 241; author's emphasis).

For Laforgue, this ethical dichotomy between Schopenhauer's asceticism and Hartmann's acceptance of sexuality is of central importance. Throughout his career, in both his published and private writings, he returns again and again to the question of whether the sexual instinct should be denied or embraced. Hailed as 'l'Unique Loi' by the male voice in the poetic dialogue of 'Complainte des formalités nuptiales' (*OC*, I, 578), the theme of sexual love dominates Laforgue's mature *œuvre*. It is generally treated with the same cynicism that characterizes both Schopenhauer and Hartmann's theorizations; this cynicism is encapsulated by 'Complainte du soir des Comices agricoles', where the post-coital disillusionment following a frolic in the fields is witheringly expressed: 'Dans les foins | Crèvent deux rêves niais' (*OC*, I, 594). Similarly, in 'Complainte à Notre-Dame des Soirs', the poet impugns 'ces vendanges sexciproques', declaring that 'moi, moi Je m'en moque!' (*OC*, I, 551). But while, for Laforgue, the sexual urge is unquestionably a trap – 'Le but du génie de l'espèce est de nous abuser par l'appât idéal sur les fins qui le servent[;] mieux absolument il nous dupe, mieux nous *aimons*' (*OC*, III, 955; author's emphasis) – the Schopenhauerian solution of self-denial is never wholeheartedly embraced; Laforgue never entirely believes in its practicability or, indeed, its desirability, even if he persistently considers it as a possible ethical path. He is equally ambivalent about Hartmann's call to engage in the life process through procreation, however. While his work registers a yearning for companionship, the domesticity of family life is only intermittently appealing, and is more often portrayed as a blind alley. Laforgue also rejects the fixed gender roles associated with such a life: although his attitudes towards women may seem, on a superficial reading, to be marred by Schopenhauerian misogyny, he in fact laments the way in which patriarchal society has reduced women to sexual objects and reproductive machines.[32] He dreams, rather, of making women 'véritablement nos compagnes égales, nos amies intimes, des associés d'ici-bas, les habiller autrement, leur couper les cheveux, leur tout dire' (*OC*, III, 1101). Moreover, he also hints at a vision of sexual relationality that involves

[32] See Claire White, 'Laforgue, Beauvoir, and the Second Sex', *Dix-Neuf*, 20, no. 1 (2016), 110-24.

mutual pleasure without the burdens of procreation, thus eluding the perils of both Schopenhauer and Hartmann's ethics.

For Schopenhauer, asceticism is not the only means of countering the tyranny of the Will; aesthetic experience also provides an escape, albeit only a temporary one (unlike renunciation, which offers a permanent solution). While reason is subservient to will in 'all animals and *almost* all men' (*WWR*, I, 152; my emphasis), for the select few it is possible for reason to 'withdraw from this subjection, throw off its yoke, and, free from all the aims of the will, exist purely for itself, simply as a clear mirror of the world' (*WWR*, I, 152). This disinterested perception – that is, a form of perception unconditioned by desire for something – is the source of art. In aesthetic experience, we do not see the world in functional terms: 'Raised up by the power of the mind, we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things' (*WWR*, I, 178). If we cease to see an object through the lens of our aims and desires, then 'what is thus known is no longer the individual thing as such, but the *Idea*, the eternal form' (*WWR*, I, 179; author's emphasis). Whether we are creating it or consuming it, art is the 'purest joy' of life; but it only offers a temporary release from willing, 'a fleeting dream' (*WWR*, I, 314). Despite this, aesthetics plays a central role in Schopenhauer's philosophical system. For Hartmann, on the other hand, the creation and contemplation of art are of relatively minor importance. In his chapter on aesthetics, Hartmann's main concern is to draw a distinction between the concept of genius and that of mere talent. He holds that the source of genius is the Unconscious, which bestows the work of art upon the artist in a single stroke; on the other hand, the ordinary artist proceeds in a laboriously piecemeal fashion, merely combining elements of perceptual experience in new ways. The artist of genius receives inspiration from the Unconscious without effort and without any understanding of how it is received, and Hartmann conveys the mysterious nature of this process by describing inspiration as 'a gift of the gods' (*PU*, p. 278).

Hartmann's aesthetics also aims to overcome the dichotomy between idealism and relativism, and in this sense Laforgue wholeheartedly endorses the philosopher's theories: the Unconscious is an ideal, but not a *fixed* ideal. Rather, it is in a perpetual state of flux, producing different forms of creative expression at different times and places. The (Classicist) notion of an eternally unchanging aesthetic ideal is therefore erroneous. However, as I have shown elsewhere,[33] Laforgue departs from Hartmannian aesthetics in at least one key respect: he does

[33] Sam Bootle, 'Jules Laforgue and the Illusion of Spontaneity', *Dix-Neuf*, 15, no. 2 (2011), 166-76.

not envisage the creative process as involving a single moment of inspiration (as Hartmann does for the work of genius), but as essentially improvisatory. In his brief critical notes on Rimbaud, whose poems he read near the end of his life following their 1886 publication in *La Vogue*, Laforgue makes a statement that applies equally well to his own poetry:

> Une poésie n'est pas un sentiment que l'on communique tel que conçu avant la plume – Avouons le petit bonheur de la rime, et les déviations occasionnées par les trouvailles, la symphonie imprévue vient escorter le *motif*. (*OC*, III, 194; author's emphasis)

Indeed, he uses similar phrasing in an 1885 review of *Les Complaintes* co-written with Charles Henry, remarking on the 'notes voulues ou raccrochées au petit bonheur de la plume' and the 'trouvailles de formules' (*OC*, III, 154) in the collection. Moreover, as Anne Holmes has shown, analysis of Laforgue's manuscripts demonstrates that his creative process was characterized not by spontaneity, but by a laborious process of drafting and redrafting.[34] Laforgue is perhaps closer, then, to Hartmann's picture of the ordinary artist (rather than the artist of genius); the suffering that the ordinary artist undergoes in his efforts to create is certainly foregrounded by Laforgue. In this sense, he also departs from Schopenhauer, who views creative experience as an escape from suffering, not as being inspired by it.

Laforgue's dynamic and, at times, critical engagement with his philosophical sources is largely the product of his own idiosyncratic thinking. But it is also closely connected to the reception of the two philosophers by late nineteenth-century French critics, as well as being embedded in a broader cultural context. For example, Laforgue's focus on Schopenhauer and Hartmann's ethical theories echoes the contemporary critical reception, which tended to emphasize their ethics (especially concerning love, sex and marriage) at the expense of other aspects of their thought. Both philosophers were also viewed as unremitting pessimists (even though both offer solutions to the problem of suffering). Moreover, their pessimism was portrayed as a disease-like force, a miasmatic stench wafting over the Rhine and infecting the minds of the French, especially young men. Schopenhauer's doctrine of chastity was also seen to be corrupting at a time when France's demographic weakness undermined the possibility of avenging its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. These metaphors of contagion cast German philosophy as fundamentally 'other' to the French body politic.

Ideas of Otherness and the Otherness of Ideas

[34] Anne Holmes, *Jules Laforgue and Poetic Innovation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 82-86.

While the notion of Germany as France's 'other' is established early in the nineteenth century, the idea that it is France's *ennemi héréditaire* gains prevalence in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. The contestation of the border between the two nations had been a prominent political issue before, notably during the Rhine crisis of the 1840s, but it was not until 1871 that the border was actually redrawn with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by the newly formed German Empire. In the early Third Republic, nationalism in France took on a particularly patriotic and xenophobic form, replacing the earlier 'humanitarian nationalism' that held up France as the paragon of an egalitarian political order (an idea that emerged after the first Revolution but that persisted well into the nineteenth century).[35] This new right-wing nationalism found its hero in the figure of Georges Ernest Boulanger – 'Général Revanche'– whose popularity in the late 1880s demonstrates the tenacity of irredentist sentiment in France.

But *revanchisme* was not the only ideology to emerge from the French defeat. New theories of nationhood as 'affective community' were put forward in response to German claims that Alsace-Lorraine was culturally and ethnically German, and thus rightfully theirs. In October 1870, Numa Denis Foustel de Coulanges argued that a nation was 'une communauté d'idées, d'intérêts, d'affections, de souvenirs et d'espérances';[36] twelve years later, Ernest Renan's *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (1882) expressed similar ideas:

> Dans le passé, un héritage de gloire et de regrets à partager, dans l'avenir un même programme à réaliser; avoir souffert, joui, espéré ensemble, voilà ce qui vaut mieux que des douanes communes et des frontières conformes aux idées stratégiques; voilà ce qu'on comprend malgré la diversité de race et de langue.[37]

The idea of nation as 'imagined community' thus emerges in prototypical form in the late nineteenth century. But Benedict Anderson's theory is distinct from Renan's in insisting on the importance of print capitalism, and thus language, in the imagining of nationhood. While for Renan linguistic diversity within France shows that language is not essential to national unity, for Anderson the emergence of standard print languages in the nineteenth century was crucial to the rise of the nation-state as the dominant geopolitical form.

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[35] Raoul Girardet, *Le nationalisme français, 1871-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966), pp. 13-14.

[36] Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *L'Alsace est-elle allemande ou française? Réponse à M. Mommsen, professeur à Berlin* (1870), quoted in Girardet, p. 62.

[37] Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (1882), quoted in Girardet, p. 66.

The importance of language to the imagined community lies principally in its role in the popular press, which constitutes a vector for 'deep, horizontal comradeship'.[38] But language is also important in the more rarefied sphere of philosophy, where it again plays its part in constructing national identity. From the early eighteenth century, Latin had been in decline as the 'language of philosophy', usurped by French[39] (which also held the status of diplomatic language). But from the late eighteenth century, German philosophers increasingly turned to their mother tongue; Kant, most notably, wrote his later works in German. From the early nineteenth century, then, German and French philosophers were increasingly perceived as belonging to distinct, even competing national philosophical traditions, rather than as a part of a transnational philosophical community. The notion of German philosophy as 'other', as fundamentally opposite to French philosophy, was popularized by Germaine de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*. A product of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, she was nonetheless seminal in constructing German otherness.

While the construction of the 'other' is not central to Anderson's idea of the imagined community, it is implicit in his statement that the nation is 'imagined as both *inherently limited* and sovereign'.[40] This limitation is crucial because 'even the largest [nation] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations'.[41] The obverse, then, of the imagining of community is the conception of who is *not* part of that national community – the imagining of otherness. This exclusionary thinking is central to Fredrik Barth's theory of the formation of ethnic groups.[42] For Barth, what is fundamental to the constitution of an ethnic group is not 'the cultural characteristics of the members' or 'the organizational form of the group', but rather 'the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders'.[43] In Daniele Conversi's words, 'Ethnogenesis is not an endogenous process' but rather requires the

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[38] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1991), p. 7.

[39] Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 39.

[40] Anderson, p. 6; my emphasis.

[41] Anderson, p. 7.

[42] Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. by Fredrik Barth (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1998), pp. 9-38.

[43] Ibid., p. 14.

construction of 'opposition, an external other'.[44] The invention of 'the other' is essential not only to *ethnic* nationalism, but to the imagining of nations in general: nationalism, as Michael Billig points out, 'constructs a constant and politically mobilisable sense of otherness',[45] affirming the self through a negation of what is not-self.[46] Differences between peoples and groups *within* the nation are, meanwhile, relativized and subordinated 'in such a way that it is the symbolic difference between "ourselves" and "foreigners" which wins out and which is lived as irreducible.'[47] The logic of identification is thus circular: membership of the national group is based on perceived similarity; and the perception of similarity is grounded in membership of the national group.

There is also a kind of doublethink at work in the construction of otherness. National 'others' (like Germany) can be subsumed back into a broader sense of self ('the West') in the name of establishing an opposition with a greater 'other' ('the East'). Edward Said hints at this dynamic, multi-layered process in *Orientalism*:

> The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, *is* finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'. Each age and society creates its 'Others'. Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of 'other' is a much worked-over

[44] Daniele Conversi, 'Reassessing current theories of nationalism: nationalism as boundary maintenance and creation', in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 420-33 (p. 427).

[45] Michael Billig, 'Socio-psychological aspects of nationalism: imagining ingroups, others and the world of nations', in *Nationalism, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Europe*, ed. by Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Maykel Verkuyten (Utrecht: European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations, 1995), pp. 89-105 (p. 100).

[46] Indeed, the idea of otherness is crucial to the formation of any social group: 'l'altérité est une catégorie fondamentale de la pensée humaine. Aucune collectivité ne se définit jamais comme Une sans immédiatement poser l'Autre en face de soi' (Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, 2 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1973), I, 18).

[47] Étienne Balibar, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 86-106 (p. 94).

> historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies.[48]

Indeed, a negative approach to the definition of identity – that is, defining 'self' through its opposition to 'other' – is less fraught than a positive approach, particularly for a large, diverse, and rapidly changing society like nineteenth-century France or (to an even greater degree) Europe. The essentialized 'other' serves as a fixed point to which self-identity, with all of its nebulosity and uncertainty, can be anchored: 'the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.'[49] The Orient represents the 'shadow side' of Western identity, emerging 'according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.'[50] Indeed, projection is crucial both to Orientalist discourse and to the construction of German otherness, the pathologization of German philosophy representing an attempt to disavow the internal factors involved in France's decline.

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The notion of German philosophy as 'other' has deep roots in the nineteenth century, as Chapter 1 shows. However, after 1870 German philosophical influence – especially that of Schopenhauer and Hartmann – is portrayed as not only alien, but also dangerous, invasive, corrupting. While the pathologization of Schopenhauer and Hartmann's influence is related to the actual invasion of French territory during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War, it also expresses broader anxieties about the decline of the French body politic, of which the French defeat is just the most prominent example. Chief among these anxieties was the weakness of demographic growth in France, which prompted deep concern about the fertility of the French populace. For the Decadent movement, however, national decline was a source of creative vitality, and Laforgue – who was sympathetic towards this movement – reconfigures illness and physical debility as aesthetic principles, as we shall see in Chapter 2. His redisposition of the discourse of disease and decline, which is used to demonize the influence of German philosophy, thus constitutes a form of political oppositionality. It also radically subverts the

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[48] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; repr. London: Penguin, 2003), p. 332; author's emphasis.

[49] Said, pp. 1-2.

[50] Ibid., p. 8.

aesthetics of Schopenhauer and Hartmann even as it draws on their pessimistic insistence on suffering, demonstrating the dynamic nature of Laforgue's engagement with his philosophical sources.

The notion of 'oppositionality', as theorized by Ross Chambers, suggests resistance to systems of power from within.[51] In this sense, it is premised on the Foucauldian notion that there is no 'outside', no exteriority, to power – no Archimedean political position from which a regime can be hoisted off its access. In arguing for the importance of ideas of otherness to Laforgue's reception of philosophy, I am not, then, asserting that there is in reality some 'other' that is outside of contemporary discourse; the 'otherness' of Germany and German philosophy is, of course, a socially constructed category. However, Laforgue appealed precisely to the possibility of this 'other' as a means of opposition, and in this sense he was very much typical of his era:

> If the dominant discourse was the speech and writing of a France resolutely middle class, self-absorbed, and certain of its self-sufficiency, then in our period one of the most prominent and most influential of the counter-discourses mobilized to subvert it was what we might term the discourse of *everywhere else* [...].[52]

Richard Terdiman is referring here to 'texts about the imagined or actual trips which would *remove* one from the place where the dominant so effortlessly exercised its domination',[53] and this desire to escape was certainly an important aspect of Laforgue's imagining of otherness. But the idea of German philosophy as 'other' also had a role to play in his critique of the prevailing bourgeois morality *within* France. In this sense, his reception of Schopenhauer and Hartmann conforms to Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner's argument that cultural transfers should always be understood in terms of their role 'à l'intérieur du système de réception';[54] and that within the receiving culture, they serve two functions, 'une fonction de légitimation et une

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[51] Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. xiv-xv.

[52] Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/ Counter-Discourse: the theory and practice of symbolic resistance in nineteenth-century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 227; author's emphasis.

[53] Ibid., p. 227; author's emphasis.

[54] Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner, 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France: genèse et histoire (1750-1914)', *Annales*, 42 (1987), 969-92 (p. 970).

fonction de subversion'.[55] In both cases, 'on cherche une caution extérieure destinée à étayer une argumentation qui n'a sa raison d'être qu'en fonction de la situation intérieure'.[56] While the transgressive qualities of Laforgue's formal experimentation (especially his pioneering *vers libre*) are widely accepted, the subversive nature of his thematics – most notably his treatment of the body and of sexual politics, which rejects contemporary nationalist visions of health and virility as the source of France's renewal – is not always recognized. These thematic concerns are rooted in his reading of philosophy.

Laforgue's engagement with German philosophy is not only based on opposition, but also on a search for a positive alternative, for a more meaningful existence that draws on the *élan vital* of the Unconscious – the ultimate metaphysical principle in Hartmann's philosophy. In the course of this search, Laforgue considers the possibility that other cultures, including Germany, might offer a privileged means of access to the Unconscious. In this sense, Laforgue's reception of German philosophy is informed by positive as well as negative discourses about German otherness, as Chapter 3 shows. He imagines Germany as 'la terre bénie' (*OC*, III, 343) of the Unconscious, thus recapitulating de Staël's exoticized vision of Germany as the land of poetry, philosophy and music. But since the Unconscious is the overarching principle of all existence, Germany's closeness to the Unconscious – its 'otherness' to the restrictive Latinate culture of France – can only be contingent. Ultimately, access to the Unconscious must be sought within the self, and more particularly in the deepest, most powerful human instincts. In Laforgue's work, the forest – long associated with myths of German national identity – emerges persistently as the locus where these instincts hold sway. The theme of sexuality is thus crucial to Laforgue's engagement with philosophy. Again, oppositionality is important here, since Laforgue repudiates the *fin-de-siècle* pro-natalist discourse that sees procreative sex as the key to national regeneration. Instead he imagines a liberated form of sexual expression that allows desires to be fulfilled without the burdens of reproductive consequence.

Germany's otherness was reinforced by its perceived association with India, as Chapter 4 shows: German philosophy was seen to be especially susceptible to the influence of Indian thought, which Europe had encountered through Britain's colonial rule and had studied with growing interest since the early years of the nineteenth century. Hartmann and (particularly) Schopenhauer were amongst those associated with Indian religion, especially Buddhism;

[55] Ibid., p. 978.

[56] Ibid., p. 978.

indeed, both explicitly drew parallels between their ideas and Buddhist doctrine. Laforgue's use of Buddhist terms in his poetry can be traced to his philosophical reading, and his notes demonstrate his fascination with Buddhist ideas. His work also explores how 'Eastern' cultures are related to those of Europe, and in this he again draws on his philosophical sources. Schopenhauer adopted a perennialist standpoint, arguing that there is an eternal source of wisdom that is periodically revealed in certain cultures at certain times; (true) Christianity and Buddhism are thus rooted in the same unchanging source. For Hartmann, by contrast, philosophy and religion – both Eastern and Western – are part of an evolutionary process that culminates in his own philosophy of the Unconscious, and Buddhism is a more advanced form of thought than Christianity, largely because it recognizes the illusory nature of selfhood. Laforgue's early work appears to propound a syncretistic approach to cultural relations that is reminiscent of Schopenhauer. His later work, however, bears the traces of Hartmann's philosophical evolutionism: India and Indian thought are celebrated as both profound and liberating, offering a model for the West.

Laforgue's view of India is thus informed by exoticism, which is also evident in his view of Germany. But while he sometimes indulges in this fetishization of otherness, at other times he undermines exoticist thinking. This is done both explicitly, through the parodying of literary exoticism, and implicitly, through the representation of cultural plurality: in recognizing the diversity of cultural forms, Laforgue moves away from the binary logic intrinsic to 'otherness' (which is one side of the self/ other opposition). The celebration of cultural difference, of the multiplicity of cultures and their interrelation, is premised on the notion that the disparities between cultures are not fundamental. This is a kind of cosmopolitanism, understood as entailing 'the positive recognition of difference' and 'a conception of belonging as open'.[57] For Laforgue, this heterogeneity is underwritten by the essential unity of all cultures, since all of human civilization is ultimately rooted in the Unconscious, the All-One. The contingent nature of cultural specificity challenges nationalist mythologies; and Laforgue's questioning of the idea that nations constitute distinct entities is part of a broader argument (drawn from Hartmann) that all forms of individuality are fundamentally illusory. This includes the human individual: the multiplicity of quasi-autonomous processes (both physical and mental) within each person implies that the notion

[57] Gerard Delanty, 'Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism: The Paradox of Modernity', in *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, ed. by Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (London: Sage, 2006), pp. 357-68 (p. 357).

of a unitary self is purely arbitrary. Laforgue's reflections on otherness are thus bound up with his thinking on selfhood.

For Laforgue, the multiplicity within the self might permit some sort of tentative harmony, but it might also entail disintegration, dispersal and, finally, dissolution. Chapter 5 shows how Laforgue explores the Buddhist idea of nirvana, which was contemporarily understood as equivalent to nothingness, and more specifically as self-annihilation. Nineteenth-century critics of Buddhism were almost unanimous in seeing it as a religion that worshipped the void, and for some this nihilism implied that there was a fundamental schism in human nature between East and West. At times, Laforgue appears to construct a similar opposition, drawing a dichotomy between 'la vie' and 'le néant' that seems to map onto a West/ East divide. But if in *Les Complaintes* he draws inspiration from 'la vie' – which is associated with (sexual) love and with Hartmann's philosophy –, in his next collection, *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune* (1885), he explores ideas associated with 'le néant', namely the obliteration of selfhood and of sexual desire. Semantic nothingness – a void of sense – also haunts his work. Ultimately, though, Laforgue commits to neither of these alternatives: his work is characterized by fluctuation between self-affirmation and self-annihilation, sexual fulfilment and chastity, meaning and nonsense; and, moreover, by *l'entre-deux*, by indefinable or even paradoxical states between such extremes.

Laforgue's treatment of ideas of otherness is complex and, at times, seemingly contradictory. In some of his texts, he seems to adopt an exoticist approach to foreign cultures, celebrating the 'otherness' of Germany and India. But in other texts, he critiques the idealistic pretensions of exoticism. This apparent tension can be at least partly resolved by the notion that the differences between cultures are merely contingent, that there is an underlying unity – a common source and a future reconciliation – to be found in the Unconscious. This notion, which emerges in various forms in Laforgue's writings, suggests that the apparent otherness of other cultures is not essential or eternal, but rather provides a model for the development of French society. Through his idiosyncratic engagement with the ideas of Schopenhauer, Hartmann and Buddhist doctrine, Laforgue thus offers a critique of his own culture, and in particular of the dominant pro-natalist discourse. The suffering body and the desiring body – prevalent in his thematics and crucial as aesthetic principles – have political import too: countering the nationalistic bourgeois morality of his age, Laforgue propounds the release of corporeal energies, both negative (illness and debility) and positive (a liberated, non-reproductive, mutually gratifying (hetero)sexuality).

Laforgue, poète philosophe (et 'dilettante et pierrot')

Laforgue's encounter with other cultures was not solely intellectual; it was also a lived reality, since he spent most of his adult life in Germany working as the French reader to the German Empress Augusta. During this period (November 1881 to September 1886), he was based at the *Prinzessinnenpalais* in Berlin, but also followed the Empress to her various residences in Wiesbaden, Baden-Baden, Koblenz, Hamburg and Babelsberg. His experience of Germany was somewhat limited by the fact that he never learnt German to any degree of proficiency, mainly because the Empress and her entourage were francophone; in a letter to Charles Henry he declares, 'je ne parle que le français ici' (*OC*, I, 758). Nonetheless, his expatriate status was a crucial factor in his approach to ideas of otherness. It was not, however, the sole factor: Laforgue's concern with otherness precedes his departure for Germany. Indeed, it spans his literary career.

This persistent concern goes hand in hand with his enduring interest in philosophy. But in the course of his career, there are numerous shifts in his approach to philosophy, and his interpretation of philosophical ideas. These shifts are evident both in his published work and his private notes, although the difficulty of exactly dating these notes means that a detailed chronology of how his thinking develops is unfeasible. Instead, a broad chronological distinction between the two phases of his career can be drawn, with 1877-81 constituting his early period, and 1882-87 his mature period.

This early period is dominated by his first, unpublished collection *Le Sanglot de la Terre*, his most derivative piece of work. Laforgue ultimately abandoned the collection: his first sign of disillusionment emerges in March 1881, when he states that *Le Sanglot* 'commence à me dégoûter parfois' (*OC*, I, 697). His definitive rejection dates to the early months of 1882, but it is not until May 1883, in a letter to his sister Marie, that he clearly expresses the reasons for this:

> j'ai abandonné mon idéal de la rue Berthollet, mes poèmes philosophiques. Je trouve stupide de faire la grosse voix et de jouer de l'éloquence. Aujourd'hui que je suis plus sceptique et que je m'emballe moins aisément et que d'autre part je possède ma langue d'une façon plus minutieuse, plus clownesque, j'écris de petits poèmes de fantaisie, n'ayant qu'un but: faire de l'original à tout prix. (*OC*, I, 821)

His repudiation of these 'poèmes philosophiques' does not imply that he also repudiates philosophy itself, however. It is, rather, the earnestness, even pomposity ('la grosse voix') of *Le Sanglot* that he has chosen to leave behind. In fact, he explicitly states his attachment to the philosophical aspect of the collection: in a letter to Kahn concerning his new collection *Les*

Complaintes, he justifies the inclusion of the poem 'Préludes autobiographiques' (against his friend's advice) precisely because the poem marks his 'philosophical' phase:

> J'ai sacrifié un gros volume de vers philo. d'autrefois parce qu'ils étaient mauvais manifestement, mais enfin ce fut une étape et je tiens à dire […] qu'avant d'être dilettante et pierrot j'ai séjourné dans le Cosmique. (*OC*, II, 729)

What Laforgue does not state here is that this new, more playful poetic mode ('dilettante et pierrot') is still deeply informed by his engagement with philosophy. Philosophical ideas and images are integrated into his work in a more subtle and ironic fashion, but their underlying importance is – if anything – even greater.

This book does not claim to trace every aspect of Schopenhauer and Hartmann's importance to Laforgue; neither does it seek to inventorize every reference to their work. My concern is, rather, to think in broad terms about how his reading of philosophy is related to contemporary discourses and to his ideas on aesthetics (even if I do also highlight some specific intertextual links, and draw on previous critics' work in this area). Suffering, desire, the fragmented self, the void: these are not only philosophically-inspired themes but also aesthetic principles for Laforgue, alongside the central doctrine of unconscious inspiration that is drawn from Hartmann's work. My focus is, therefore, on poems that might be read as in some sense meta-poetic, poems that constitute significant turning points in his *œuvre* (such as 'Préludes autobiographiques', 'Complainte du Sage de Paris' and 'L'Hiver qui vient'). It is in these poems, as well as in his private notes, that we see how deeply ideas of otherness inform his reception of German philosophy, and how tightly they are woven into his poetic project.