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**SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK: THE ZENITH YEARS, 1906-1914**

**by**

**Ann Hill Albritton**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, the City University of New York**

**1997**

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

### SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK: THE ZENITH YEARS, 1906-1914

by

Ann Hill Albritton

Advisor: Professor Rose-Carol Washton Long

The “Zenith” era, a term first used by Blaise Cendrars, encompasses Sonia Delaunay-Terk’s earliest years in Paris--from 1906 to 1914. Her explorations of art as drawings, easel paintings, book covers, clothing, and advertising poems all began during these particular years when she was experimenting with the ideas of relating art and life--the critical concept of Simultaneism--for her and her husband, Robert Delaunay. The themes and ideas that were her focus from 1906 to 1914 were central to her work for the remainder of her career as an artist.

My primary explorations in this dissertation will be of Sonia Delaunay-Terk’s early paintings of women; collaborations, especially with

her husband, Robert Delaunay and her friend, Blaise Cendrars; the Bal Bullier period, including her 1913 dress; the poster-poems; applied arts in an embroidery, a quilt, and bookcovers; and briefly, her life and ideas in the context of gender issues as well as certain misconceptions about her career that need clarification.

Delaunay-Terk applied the concepts of Simultaneity she and Robert developed in 1912-1913—to her the quintessential element of the modern—to works for everyday use, not just to oil canvases.

Juxtapositions of colors and shapes in her work imply the dynamic movement of urban life. In dresses, lamps, book covers, illustrations, and publicity-type paintings, she integrated art and life.

By closely examining this short period of Delaunay-Terk's life and work, I hope to bring a clearer definition of her contributions to the continuing development of the avant-garde.

**This dissertation is dedicated to my children:**

**Leigh Carraway Neilson  
F. Wilson Carraway, III  
Edward Hill Carraway  
Caroline Carraway Sutton  
Laura Elizabeth Albritton  
Rachel Ann Albritton**

**A. Brian Albritton  
Gary C. K. Albritton**

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information left in Delaunay-Terk's profusion of papers which now are preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Centre Pompidou.

Besides Schneider-Maunoury I also want to thank the Delaunays' grandson, Jean-Louis Delaunay, who allowed me to handle and photograph many works by Delaunay-Terk, including her dress from 1913. I have talked with Jacques Damase, Miriam Cendrars, Delphine Bière, Elaine Lustig-Cohen, Mary Toulouse, and André Zarre and thank them for their assistance. Ruth Eisenstein, editor of Cohen's *Sonia Delaunay*, generously offered out-of-print books and wise encouragement. I am grateful to Bradley Nickels who introduced me to Delaunay-Terk in a class on 20th-century art at the University of South Florida. I am indebted to Edwin Stein for his invaluable suggestions on style for the dissertation. I thank Anca Oroveanu, Martin Daughtry, and Angela Noroc for their translations of Russian letters. Florence Callu, chief conservateur in the manuscript room of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and Nathalie Schumann, chief conservateur of the documentation center of the Centre Pompidou, aided the research process by providing necessary permission to

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**SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK: THE ZENITH YEARS, 1906-1914****INTRODUCTION**

*Record! Noon strikes its solar anvil with rays of light. Zenith!*<sup>1</sup>

The term “Zenith”—the name and logo of a Swiss watch company—comes from a card sent to Sonia Delaunay-Terk in 1913 by the poet Blaise Cendrars with this poetic message inscribed: “Record! Noon strikes its solar anvil with rays of light. Zenith!”<sup>2</sup> With this inspiration, in the summer of 1913 she began creating what she termed “poster-poems,” using commercial logos as art.<sup>3</sup>

From 1906 to 1914 Sonia Delaunay-Terk searched for the zenith, trying to embody this metaphor by synthesizing and dramatizing the world around her, in a variety of art forms and media. The young emigrée from St. Petersburg, Russia, began her artistic career in Paris—a career that spanned seven decades. The “Zenith” era—from 1906 to 1914—encompasses her earliest years in Paris up to World War I.<sup>4</sup> Her explorations of art as drawings, easel paintings, book covers, clothing, and advertising poems all began during these particular years when she

was experimenting with the ideas of relating art and life—a concept critical for her and her husband, Robert Delaunay.<sup>5</sup> The themes and ideas that were her focus from 1906 to 1914, these “Zenith” years, were central to her work for the remainder of her career as an artist.

My primary explorations in this dissertation will be the following: Sonia Delaunay-Terk’s early paintings of women; her collaborations, especially with her husband, Robert Delaunay and her friend, Blaise Cendrars; her Bal Bullier period, including her 1913 dress; her poster-poems and her use of the applied arts in an embroidery, a quilt, bookcovers, and a box. In addition, I will briefly discuss her life and ideas in the context of gender issues and attempt to clarify certain misconceptions about her lifework.

Delaunay-Terk applied the concepts of Simultaneity she and Robert developed in 1912-1913—to her the quintessential element of the modern—to works for everyday use, not just to oil canvases. Juxtapositions of colors and shapes in her work imply the dynamic movement of urban life.<sup>6</sup> In dresses, lamps, book covers, illustrations, and publicity-type paintings, she integrated art and life. To her no barriers existed between what is now labeled “high” and “low” art.<sup>7</sup> She

moved freely from one medium to another, creating notable paintings and engravings, and with them small works called poster-poems. She created unusual collage bookbindings, designed costumes for both the Ballet Russe and a Dada play; and designed textiles, tapestries, furniture, and clothing that incorporated the simultaneous movement of color into modern life. All of these fresh, innovative outpourings served as affirmations of her strong conviction that every aspect of life should meld with art. This attitude moved beyond Delaunay-Terk's familiarity with the Arts and Crafts movement out of her Ukrainian and Russian heritage, toward Art Nouveau, and in accordance with her desire to celebrate the potential of contemporary life. Russian artists of the avant-garde, both male and female, moved comfortably from canvas to so-called crafts. In her memoirs, published in Paris in 1978, Delaunay-Terk elaborated: "there was no hiatus for me between my painting and my "decorative" work . . . the 'minor genre' was never an artistic frustration but a free expansion, a conquest of new space, an application of the same research."<sup>8</sup>

Although Delaunay-Terk contributed significantly to the philosophy and direction embraced by the early modernist movement, she has still

not been given the place she merits in the Paris avant-garde. Several of Sonia Delaunay-Terk's pivotal works of this period illustrate this connection between the avant-garde and mass culture particularly well.

The *Bal Bullier* series, which has elements that can be considered proto-Dada,<sup>9</sup> centers on her dress of 1913, the large painting, *Bal Bullier*, as well as smaller versions, and photographs of Delaunay-Terk wearing the dress, together with the same dress recently photographed in color with details,<sup>10</sup> presented with advertisements and social criticism of the period. The dress has been referred to many times—the earliest in 1914—but has not been accorded its place as art.<sup>11</sup> With its Simultaneous planes of color, implied shapes, and suggested motion, the dress has a life of its own. In old black-and-white photographs it loses its “aura” or quality, but comes alive as art when it can be seen as a participant in the dance hall, worn on her body by the artist. In the chapter on the dress I also examine the dress as body art and as Delaunay-Terk's celebration of her own body as a surface to explore.

Bookcovers and a large box, made for her son Charles's toys, provided her with another arena for exploration with abstract shapes. While Delaunay-Terk's work can now be seen as feminist, that is,

working out of a feminist idiom and the home, at the time making clothing and decorative objects seemed to indict her as a domestic decorative artist, even though she was also working at the same time in the modernist mainstream.

Her collaboration with Blaise Cendrars on “The Prose of the Transiberian and Little Jeanne of France” is her best-known work; I will discuss it further as collaboration and examine its reception, a reading in St. Petersburg, and a performance in Paris.

Why has such a formidable talent been relegated to a secondary position in the ranks of the Paris avant-garde? Why was she overlooked for years, especially in comparison with the attention devoted to Robert Delaunay? There are several factors to consider: first, she was a woman, and the achievements of women artists in general, no matter what the century, have not been accorded unbiased evaluation. She also was the wife of Robert Delaunay, an eccentric, flamboyant artist who relished being the center of attention, and she expended much of her energy in promoting his work, even long after his death in 1941.<sup>12</sup> She has often been called his disciple, yet more enlightened critics acknowledge that theirs was a collaborative, interdependent relationship-

-his contribution being more legitimized, hers less so. The art historian Michel Hoog has observed, "the devising of a plastic language founded upon the grammar and syntax of color led Delaunay-Terk to the development of abstract painting by a process that accompanied and sometimes preceded that of Robert."<sup>13</sup> Sherry A. Buckberrough, in her book on Robert Delaunay, *The Discovery of Simultaneity*, writes that in 1912 Sonia Delaunay-Terk painted a nearly abstract painting of the sun and the Eiffel Tower, *Simultaneous Contrasts* (Pl.1), which influenced Robert Delaunay toward abstraction.<sup>14</sup> Robert Delaunay did experiment with commercial words in his *Cardiff Team* (1912-13) which included billboard-sized logos and could have inspired Delaunay-Terk, along with a post card from Cendrars, to create the commercial word poems she called "poster-poems."

After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, when the couple suddenly found themselves cut off from Sonia's family income, which had sustained them, it was Sonia, not Robert, who was able to apply a practical side to their art and gain financial success and international recognition with the decorative arts.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, it is the association with the "decorative" or "applied" arts (so necessary for the couple's

survival) which has led to an inadequate assessment of Delaunay-

Terk's impact on twentieth century art. Her involvement with the

decorative arts has, in the words of the late Arthur A. Cohen, "resulted

in a narrow interpretation of her contribution as a painter—an

interpretation that has not been wholly rectified."<sup>16</sup> Her positive attitude

toward the intermingling of the decorative and the so called "fine" arts

is related to her Russian background, where many experimental artists

gave equal importance to both. But in France, Delaunay-Terk's work

as a designer flourished at a time of diminishing prestige for the

decorative arts.<sup>17</sup>

In the literature on Cubism, Orphism, and abstraction Delaunay-

Terk is overlooked or relegated to a single sentence, although the

work of Robert Delaunay is often discussed. Usually when Sonia is

mentioned, it is as Robert's wife, and credit for many of her ideas is

given to him.

Delaunay-Terk is hardly mentioned in the Cubist literature and

then only in connection with Robert Delaunay or Blaise Cendrars. In

itself this would not be a slight, since she did not consider herself a

Cubist painter. And yet, Robert Delaunay, who similarly insisted that

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he was not a Cubist, is discussed in all the major books on Cubism.<sup>18</sup>

In further contrast to Delaunay-Terk, her contemporary, Marie Laurencin, who can be considered even less of a Cubist painter than she, is discussed in most of the earlier Cubist literature, most likely because of her association with Guillaume Apollinaire, who included her in his writings on Cubism.

Delaunay-Terk fares better in the scholarship on abstraction than that on Cubism, which might be expected. Nonetheless, she is often mentioned primarily as Robert Delaunay's follower.<sup>19</sup>

In Virginia Spate's major work, *Orphism*,<sup>20</sup> Sonia Delaunay-Terk is not included as an "Orphist" painter. Writing on Simultaneity, from 1910 to 1914, Spate discusses the juxtaposition of complementary colors and geometric shapes to evoke movement, mood, and ideas, a principal area of interest of Robert and Sonia Delaunay. In addition she includes Robert Delaunay, Vasillii Kandinsky, Frantizek Kupka, Fernand Léger, and Marcel Duchamp, but dismisses Delaunay-Terk and writes that she "adopted her husband's ideas on color construction."<sup>21</sup> Spate explains that Delaunay-Terk was omitted because she was not an active painter during this period of time.

However, some of Delaunay-Terk's most important works were created during 1913-1914. In fact, she exhibited twenty-six works (including paintings, bookbindings, a quilt, and several unusual experiments) at the *Der Sturm, Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, in Berlin from September to November 1913.<sup>22</sup> In 1912 Delaunay-Terk painted the abstracted *Simultaneous Contrasts* and in 1914 *Electric Prisms*, which she exhibited at the *Salon des Indépendants* that spring. Spate does write, however, that "The Delaunays seem to have been the first twentieth-century painters to attempt to apply a pictorial discovery to all forms of expression . . ." and she further credits Delaunay-Terk, whom she calls an "able and ambitious woman," with conceiving the idea, "for it was she who first put it into practice as a natural continuation of the handicrafts which occupied her in the years during which she was not painting."<sup>23</sup> Spate also uses Delaunay-Terk's dress and room decorations, the *Bal Bullier*, a design for "Zenith," and her bookcover for Cendrars' poem "Easter in New York" as illustrations.

A *RILA* entry<sup>24</sup> even discusses her significant work with Blaise Cendrars as understandable in the light of Cendrars' friendship with

Robert Delaunay. This implication that Sonia's work was utterly dependent on Robert's is absurd since the Delaunays met Cendrars at the same time and they were equally good friends. Delaunay-Terk made a bookcover for him the day after they met. She and Cendrars collaborated together in 1913-1914 and remained life-long friends.

Several scholars do discuss Delaunay-Terk. In *Kandinsky*, Rose-Carol Washton Long<sup>25</sup> mentions her as a friend of Elisabeth Epstein<sup>26</sup> (who had lived in the same boarding house as Sonia Terk on her arrival in Paris), and, then, in the assertion that Sonia might have been the means for Robert to discover the works of Ciurlionis,<sup>27</sup> the Lithuanian painter, whose work Sonia had seen in St. Petersburg.

Despite her neglect in books about Cubism and Orphism, two monographs have been written about Sonia Delaunay. In 1972, Jacques Damase (poet, publisher, art dealer, friend, and former executor of her estate) wrote a biographical monograph.<sup>28</sup> His work is a poetic appreciation instead of an historical analysis of her oeuvre. The introduction is by Michel Hoog, curator at that time of the Jeu de Paume and now at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Hoog has also written critiques of Delaunay-Terk's work and a short

monograph on Robert Delaunay. He acknowledges Delaunay-Terk's importance and says that she preceded Robert in her experiments with color and influenced him to begin his studies in Simultaneism. Another monograph, by Arthur A. Cohen, was published in 1975 and contains very good color plates, including a fold-out of the Delaunay-Cendrars prose-poem, "La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de la France." Cohen discusses Delaunay-Terk's life, work, and ideas about art, and tries to place her in the mainstream of modern art. Cohen also published a valuable resource, writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay, in *The New Art of Color*, 1978. Included in this book are letters, essays, and an address by Delaunay-Terk at the Sorbonne in 1925.<sup>29</sup> Bernard Dorival, a French art historian who has written on both Delaunays, wrote in 1980 a chronological discussion of Delaunay-Terk, *Sonia Delaunay. Sa vie, son oeuvre 1885-1979*.<sup>30</sup>

An exhibition with a small catalogue, *Simultaneity*, by Virginia Spate,<sup>31</sup> uses Sonia Delaunay-Terk's and Blaise Cendrars' book-poem as well as Robert Delaunay's *Les Fenêtres*, with Apollinaire's poem of the same name, to illustrate the idea of Simultaneity

creatively with reproductions of the original works. The imaginatively arranged exhibition displayed a facsimile of "The Prose of the Transiberian" placed horizontally around the gallery walls.<sup>32</sup>

Majorie Perloff, in *The Futurist Moment*,<sup>33</sup> links Delaunay-Terk and Cendrars with the Futurist movement in that the "futurist moment" belongs to all the avant-gardes, not only Futurism. "The very names Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay are emblematic of the anomalies that characterize the Futurist ethos,"<sup>34</sup> She further explains that she does not call "The Prose of the Transiberian" a Futurist poem, but states rather that "it furnishes us with a paradigm of Futurism in the larger sense, as the arena of agitation and projected revolution that characterizes the 'avant-guerre.'"<sup>35</sup>

Perloff acknowledges that neither Cendrars nor Delaunay-Terk called themselves Futurists;<sup>36</sup> their ideas and methods are not related to Futurism. Clearly there are ties to the Italian Futurists. She and Robert knew Gino Severini; they belonged to the same circles of friends. The Delaunays, like the Futurists, were fascinated by developments in electric lights, the speed of the automobile, the developing modern city, and simultaneous movement. They had seen

the Futurist exhibition in Paris at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris, February 1912 and also exhibited with several Futurists at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon in Berlin, 1913.<sup>37</sup> Robert Delaunay so wanted to distinguish his work as original, and to prove that his ideas were not influenced by Futurism, that he actually broke his friendship with Apollinaire over the poet using the name "Simultaneism" in connection with the Futurists in 1914.<sup>38</sup>

Later in her career, Delaunay-Terk participated in Paris Dada performances and meetings in collaboration with her friend Tristan Tzara. The recent catalogues about Dada exhibitions in Rome and Zurich also suggest that Delaunay-Terk's works prefigure 1916 Dada. Giovanni Lista, in the catalogue for the Rome exhibition, *L'arte della negazione Palazzo delle Esposizioni*, discusses artists and writers (including poets Blaise Cendrars and Guillaume Apollinaire) as having a Dadaesque attitude because they assumed a libertarian philosophy to "affirm a liberty of the mind capable of rejecting any and all norms imposed on art and the behavior of the artist." Lista further asserts that the "Dada-libertine" outlook is one of deconstructing languages and practices, exalting playfulness, the ephemeral, and chance, ideas which Delaunay-Terk

developed with her poster-poem logos and costumes.<sup>39</sup> Marianne Martin discusses certain concepts in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *L'Immaginazione senza fili e parole in libertà*,<sup>40</sup> a radical venture of free words and the visual arts, as having certain Proto-Dada characteristics. Delaunay-Terk's poster-poems, with their dropped letters, and deliberately misspelled words, which subvert the idea of advertising, fit this profile.<sup>41</sup>

In the past fifteen years several exhibition catalogues have focused on Delaunay-Terk. The most important is the catalogue, *Sonia Delaunay: A Retrospective* at the Albright-Knox Gallery, written primarily by the art historian, Sherry A. Buckberrough, in 1980, shortly after the death of Delaunay-Terk. Buckberrough wrote her dissertation on Robert Delaunay and is currently writing on the decorative arts of Sonia Delaunay-Terk. The format for this major catalogue is biographical and chronological. Buckberrough's published dissertation, *Robert Delaunay. The Discovery of Simultaneity*, 1982, clearly explores Robert Delaunay's ideas concerning Simultaneism. Buckberrough further explains and clarifies these ideas in an article, "The Simultaneous Content of Delaunay's

*Windows*.<sup>42</sup> She explores in greater detail than any other writer Delaunay's paintings, graphics, and collaborations.

The major French catalogue on Delaunay-Terk is from the Sonia and Robert Delaunay exhibition in Paris in 1985 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.<sup>43</sup> This catalogue has excellent color plates and brief discussions of the Delaunays' life and work; it is introduced by their son, Charles, a prominent French jazz historian who died in 1987. The most recent catalogue is *Sonia and Robert Delaunay*, from the Kunstmuseum, Bern, 1991-92, written by Sandor Kuthy and Kuniko Satonobu.<sup>44</sup> Kuniko Satonobu has the distinction of being the first to complete a doctoral dissertation on Delaunay-Terk.<sup>45</sup> Her work is largely a formal analysis of the major paintings, a valuable resource. For the Bern Kunstmuseum catalogue she contributed one essay, ". . . que pour une chose que j'aime: la peinture."<sup>46</sup>

In spite of the limited research on Delaunay-Terk, some areas have received more attention than others. Her work with Cendrars, "The Prose of the Transiberian and the Little Jeanne of France", is most often discussed. Besides the aforementioned books and catalogues, which all mention this work, an article appeared in *Fine*

*Print* magazine, July 1987, by Monica Strauss, following an exhibition at La Boétie Gallery in New York.<sup>47</sup> In 1991, at the New York Public Library, an exhibition on books included "The Prose," which was unfortunately divided into four parts and framed separately, instead of being left in its original format.<sup>48</sup> The book-poem is best discussed by Antoine Sidoti, Marjorie Perloff and Jay Bochner,<sup>49</sup> but the methods, developments, and reception still need further explication. The most useful is Sidoti's work, in French, which contains previously unpublished materials on the reception of the work.

Since the Albright-Knox Gallery Sonia Delaunay retrospective exhibition in 1980, with the catalogue by Buckberrough,<sup>50</sup> three biographies have been written and increased interest in her work has developed. In French, *Sonia Delaunay magique magicienne* by Dominique Desanti, is a gossipy book taken mostly from published materials.<sup>51</sup> The second, by biographer and filmmaker Axel Madsen, *Sonia Delaunay, Artist of the Lost Generation*, was written after several taped interviews with Charles Delaunay. This book offers material from the point of view of Charles, and is particularly interesting for that reason.<sup>52</sup> Delaunay-Terk's autobiography, *Nous*

*irons jusqu'au soleil*,<sup>53</sup> is taken from interviews for a film by Patrick Raynaud, with commentaries by Damase. A recent biography entitled *Robert et Sonia Delaunay: Naissance de l'art abstrait* by Georges Bernier and Monique Schneider-Maunoury in 1995 offers engaging facts about the couple as well as some information from journals and letters written by and to Sonia Terk.<sup>54</sup> Letters and documents were rescued by Monique Schneider-Maunoury after the death of Delaunay-Terk and are in the collection of the Centre de Documentation at the Centre Pompidou.<sup>55</sup> An autobiography by Charles Delaunay, *Delaunay's Dilemma: De la Peinture au Jazz*, offers Charles Delaunay's side of the family story in part, and portrays Robert Delaunay as an unsympathetic, egotistic father.<sup>56</sup>

Damase has published several books on Sonia Delaunay-Terk which principally offer interesting plates, some of which have not been published before. His most recent book, *Sonia Delaunay: A Life in Art*, written with Stanley Baron, claims to give new insights from letters and journals, although the letters are catalogued in public files and are mostly from the 1960s. It contains significant biographical data on the relationship of Delaunay-Terk and Damase. Another book by

Damase, *Sonia Delaunay, Mode et Tissus imprimé*, offers images of many of the fabric patterns designed by Delaunay-Terk.<sup>57</sup> Damase's work has been essential in establishing Delaunay-Terk as an important artist.

Even feminist books on twentieth-century art do not fully explore the work of Sonia Delaunay-Terk. Usually she is mentioned briefly as a participant of the early modernist period. In *Women, Art, and Society*,<sup>58</sup> Whitney Chadwick, drawing upon Buckberrough's research, discusses Delaunay-Terk's involvement with the decorative arts and Dada artists. In *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership*, Chadwick devotes a chapter to Sonia and Robert and states that feminism contributed to "disentangling Sonia and her work from Robert and his."<sup>59</sup> Chadwick sets the relationship between the two artists on a more equal footing. The entry on Sonia Delaunay-Terk in *Women Artists 1550-1950*, by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, remains among the most insightful.<sup>60</sup>

In 1983 in *L'avant-garde au féminin*, a catalogue published by Artcurial, with a text by Jean-Claude and Valentine Marcadé,<sup>61</sup> Delaunay-Terk is given due attention along with work of Russian

women. Since she is often treated as a French artist and disciple of Robert Delaunay, it is important in this text that she is acknowledged as a product of a Russian background and sensibility.<sup>62</sup> A few of the letters from A. A. Smirnov to Sonia Delaunay-Terk were published in *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, by Marcadé.<sup>63</sup> But many of the letters, which comment on developments in Russia, are still neither translated nor published.<sup>64</sup>

Numerous articles and reviews about Delaunay-Terk offer general information taken from the monographs and the Albright-Knox catalogue. An especially interesting one is "Les inventions simultanées de Sonia Delaunay ou l'heure avant l'heure," in *XXe siècle* by Daniel Abadie, who was a curator at the Centre Pompidou, and who recognizes Sonia Delaunay-Terk as an important creative and neglected figure in the modern movement. In the exhibition catalogue for "Art et publicité" in 1990 at the Centre Pompidou, Abadie wrote that in 1913-1914 Sonia began making multiple studies of the same work for the first time: in her posters for Smirnov's talk in St. Petersburg, in the prospectus for "The Prose of the Transiberian," and in the poster-poems for Zenith, Printemps, and Exposition de Blanc.<sup>65</sup>

Even the “High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture” exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art in 1990 neglected Delaunay-Terk. Although Delaunay-Terk's work was not included in this exhibition, her method of making art is more relevant to these categories than that of the work of many other artists of the twentieth century.

Statements regarding Delaunay-Terk's exhibitions need to be clarified.<sup>66</sup> In 1979 Joan M. Marter wrote that Delaunay-Terk did not begin exhibiting her paintings until after her husband's death.<sup>67</sup> Chronologies in *Sonia Delaunay* by Cohen and in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery retrospective catalogue call her first exhibition in 1908 a one-person exhibition. That exhibition at the Notre-Dame-des-Champs gallery in 1908, however, seems to have been a joint one with several artists, including Picasso, Braque, and Pascin (Pl. 3).<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the 1953 exhibition at Galerie Bing was her first one-artist exhibition.<sup>69</sup> She also exhibited twenty-six items in the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon at Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm gallery between September and November, 1913 (Pl. 4) and must have been working most of the year on those projects. My chapter on her collaboration with Blaise Cendrars shows that they were working together by March or April 1913 on “The

Prose of the Transiberian.” She entered the large painting *Electric Prisms* and “The Prose of the Transiberian” in the Salon des Indépendants of 1914; she participated in a large Stockholm exhibition in 1916 as well as in exhibitions in Spain and Portugal. These exhibitions are listed in several books on Sonia Delaunay-Terk, including the chronologies mentioned above. Still, myths are being repeated. She participated in many smaller exhibitions in which she exhibited throughout her lifetime which fits her penchant for collaboration.

Delaunay-Terk’s promotion of Robert’s career over her own, her efforts to establish Robert as a principal artist in the avant-garde, plus her own work in the area of crafts, fashion design, and interior decoration, have contributed to her being designated merely a decorative artist. Nancy Troy, in her significantly informative book discussing the coming together of modern art and decorative art including fashion, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France*, asserts that the decorative arts are vitally important to an understanding of the development of modernism in the early 20th century.<sup>70</sup>

Troy discusses distinctions between painters and sculptors and the desire to differentiate between them and “decorators.” To do so

she analyzes definitions of the French terms, *décorative* and *décoratif*, from a turn-of-the-century *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, by Henry Havard who defined decoration as the "Ensemble of ornamentation that decorates a room, a townhouse, a house, an edifice."<sup>71</sup> Havard defines *décoratif* as follows: "One says of an object that it is decorative when it ornaments the place it occupies . . . In recent years the custom has developed of designating as decorative arts ornamental sculpture, wallpaper, ceramics, glassware, woodwork—in a word, all the industrial arts, which have as their particular aim the interior and exterior ornamentation of a dwelling."<sup>72</sup> Thus Troy asserts that *décoration* and *décoratif* designated a field where art and industry—the production of marketable commodities—met openly. She further states that while "the decorator had to work within constraints imposed by prevailing production practices and market conditions, the fine artist could guard the illusion of his total creative freedom."<sup>73</sup> Troy points out that decoration remains controversial. She quotes Rioux de Mailloux from the same period as Havard, to whom the term "decorative" "implies a subordination, the necessity of staying within a

given boundary, or orienting oneself in a direction, determined by the manner of being and the character of the object being decorated.”<sup>74</sup>

Defining these terms demonstrates how high art “was associated with an intellectual tradition and viewed as the appropriate vehicle for the fine artist concerned with the expression of profound truths.”<sup>75</sup> Troy’s exegesis of the terms helps in understanding the absence of in-depth analysis of Delaunay-Terk’s work in the literature. Delaunay-Terk called herself the “intuitive” artist and Robert the intellectual<sup>76</sup>--which seems contrary to her earlier patterns of reading philosophy in three languages. Delaunay-Terk defined herself in these very limiting boundaries after becoming involved with Robert Delaunay. She placed herself in the role of intuitive artist, which prohibited her from joining the ranks of the “high” or intellectual artist. Art history in the early modern period joins in placing her there if it places her at all.

Toward the end of her life she realized that she had contributed to this eclipsing of her own reputation with her intense support of Robert’s work and her insistence on his high standing in the avant-garde.<sup>77</sup>

Now with the support of feminist scholarship and with the greater acceptance of the concept of visual culture in the contemporary art world, Sonia Delaunay-Terk's ideas and work can be better reassessed. My desire is to continue explorations into the subtle connections and interconnections between paintings and her decorative work, to help bring her art into the current dialectic and discourse, and to assert, as did Delaunay-Terk herself along with many other artists, that art does indeed belong in all parts of life.

My approach is informed by feminism and embedded in cultural studies, using comparisons, examining decorative elements in Delaunay-Terk's work that have been overlooked or ignored, and investigating collaborations with Robert Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars.

Much work remains to be done to secure a place in the modernist avant-garde for Delaunay-Terk. This study will demonstrate that Sonia Delaunay-Terk, in working in different media throughout this "Zenith"—1906-1914—by collaborating with artists and poets, in making fashions that moved in simultaneous colors, by working both in decorative arts and easel paintings, can only be appreciated and understood by the more pluralistic attitude in contemporary culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Cendrars' poetic note to Delaunay-Terk, September 1913, and the only reference to "Zenith" in their correspondence. "Record! Midi bat sur son enclume solaire les rayons de la lumière. Zénith!" on a postcard from Cendrars with a sticker advertising the "Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon" in Berlin, September 1913. Postcard in the Delaunay archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> This period can also be seen as the zenith of high modernism with the development of Cubism by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, Expressionism in Germany with the Brücke and the Blaue Reiter, Futurism by Marinetti and the Italian Futurists, Rayism by Russian artists Nathalia Goncharova and Mikail Larionov, Synchronism by Americans Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Morgan Russell, and proto-Dada stirrings by Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia.

<sup>4</sup> This is a term used by Blaise Cendrars which I am appropriating for this study, beginning with the year 1906, because although Sonia Terk went to Paris in 1905 she did not remain there.

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter on the Delaunays' collaboration for a discussion of Simultaneism.

<sup>6</sup> For the most complete discussion of Simultaneism see, Sherry A. Buckberrough, *Robert Delaunay. The Discovery of Simultaneity* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982). Buckberrough first published "The Simultaneous Content of Robert Delaunay's Windows," *Arts*, September 1979, 102-111. Simultaneity is discussed more fully in the chapter, "The Delaunays' Collaboration," 12.

<sup>7</sup> Much like artists in the Art Nouveau movement and especially in Russia where Terk grew up. She was well acquainted with two artist colonies, Abramtsevo and Talashkino, where art encompassed everything from architecture and furniture to clothing and paintings.

<sup>8</sup> As told to Patrick Raynaud and later included in Delaunay-Terk's autobiography, *Nous irons jusqu'au soleil* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1978), 96, "il n'y avait aucun hiatus chez moi entre ma peinture et mes travaux dits 'décoratifs' et que le 'genre mineur' n'avait jamais été une frustration artistique, mais une expansion libre, une conquête d'espaces nouveaux, c'était l'application d'une même recherche."

<sup>9</sup> Many artists were working c. 1913 in a style anticipating Dada, but Delaunay-Terk's work is not acknowledged as such. Dada can also be seen as works of chance, of play,

of subverting norms, and of the unexpected. The Dada artists, Tzara, Arp, and Tautberg-Arp, later included both Delaunays in their circle.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Louis Delaunay, grandson of the Delaunays, assisted me in photographing the dress in July 1992, and photographing many paintings on two different occasions. He also provided professional photographs of the dress worn by a model and photographed in color.

<sup>11</sup> The dress is first pictured in "De la mode esthétique vivante," *Montjoie!*, April-May-June 1914, 23-24, along with Robert Delaunay's *Disk*.

<sup>12</sup> Note that during this same time period Kandinsky promoted the work of his lover, Gabriele Münter, and that of Marianne von Werefkin. Apollinaire encouraged and arranged exhibitions of Marie Laurencin's work, including an exhibition with Robert Delaunay in 1912. Uhde promoted Terk's work; later Robert did also. She, in turn, was the propagandist for Robert Delaunay. See Annegret Hoberg, *Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter: Letters and Reminiscences 1902-1914* (Munich and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1994). Later, for her autobiography, Delaunay-Terk described Robert: "Robert était le grand orage. Il allumait des querelles épiques. J'essayais d'arrondir les angles, d'être l'élément modérateur pour éviter les brouilles avec tout le monde . . . Je me demande si ce n'est pas sa violence éruptive qui m'a conquise avant tout . . . J'ai aimé tout de suite son côté un peu violent qui prouvait qu'il tenait à ses idées. Il combattait pour modifier la vision des gens qui gravitaient autour de lui et qui recouraient toujours à ses compromis. Comme il devenait vite très agressif dans toutes les discussions, on l'avait surnommé: 'Coup de poing.'" *Nous irons*, 63.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *Sonia Delaunay*, a monograph by Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Co. 1975): 61.

<sup>14</sup> Buckberrough, in *Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneism*, 186.

<sup>15</sup> Although Robert Delaunay's mother promised a comparable income for them it apparently was short-lived. She might have given them the *Snake Charmer*, which she commissioned from Henri Rousseau and which the Delaunays owned until they sold it to Jacques Doucet in 1922, but she did not send a regular income. Her own income was erratic and supplemented by writing newspaper columns, some of which are in the Delaunay-Terk archives. Also Delaunay-Terk commented several times that Robert didn't have the temperament to earn money or to work, as if painting were not work. In interview with Cindy Nemser, *Art Talk: Conversations with 12 Women Artists* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> In Cohen, *Sonia Delaunay*, 82.

<sup>17</sup> This is not true for the decorative arts themselves; as a so-called decorative artist Delaunay-Terk was accorded great recognition, but in a somewhat pejorative manner, as "decorative."

<sup>18</sup> See Douglas Cooper (Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Phaidon 1970). discusses four types of Cubism and who was involved in each type. Edward Fry (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966 reprint 1978). Theoretical and historical texts (many are ordinarily inaccessible). Organized in chronological order with Fry's notes on each. John Golding (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, 1968). Detailed analysis of the evolution of the Cubist style plus that of offshoots of Cubism including Simultaneism by Lynn Gramwell (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980) which provides information on Robert Delaunay and Apollinaire.

<sup>19</sup> For further information see the catalogue from the Los Angeles Museum of Art, organized by Maurice Tuchman, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986); Anna Moszynska, *Abstract Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990); Michel Seuphor, *Fifty Years of Accomplishment from Kandinsky to the Present*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Harry N. Abrams, n.d.); Harold Osborne, *Abstraction and Artifice in Twentieth-Century Abstract Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Virginia Spate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Period 1910-1914. Discusses Simultaneity, Bergson, R. Delaunay, Kandinsky, Kupka among others. In my brief discussion with Spate at the College Art Association conference, 1993, she affirmed her admiration for Delaunay-Terk's work, but said she didn't feel Delaunay-Terk fitted into her criteria.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47. Spate does say that Delaunay-Terk painted earlier Fauve works of some power and uses the *Young Finnish Girl* to illustrate this. She does not acknowledge that Delaunay-Terk is responsible for changing Robert's palette from a Cubist one to the brightly colored Simultaneist palette.

<sup>22</sup> It seems likely that the collage-type patchwork began with the baby quilt in early 1911 and continued in 1912, when Delaunay-Terk mentions that in the fall she made curtains and a pillow and decorations for Apollinaire's new apartment.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> *RILA* Vol. iv/2, 1978. Walter Babst, *Der Contraste simultane im Spiegel der Dichtung. Blaise Cendrars und seine poetischen Delaunay-Paraphrasen*, 487, asserts that Cendrars' friendship with Robert Delaunay made Delaunay-Terk's work understandable.

<sup>25</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, *Kandinsky: The Development of an Abstract Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). In Long's course on Abstraction at the Graduate

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Center of the City University of New York, Delaunay-Terks development as an artist is discussed.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Damase, *Sonia Delaunay: Rhythms and Colors*, (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1972). Damase does not own work from the early period and in June 1994 auctioned part of his Delaunay-Terk collection.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, *The New Art of Color, The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978). In part a reprint of *Robert Delaunay, Du Cubisme à l'art abstrait, Documents inédits publiés par Pierre Francastel et suivis du catalogue de l'oeuvre de Robert Delaunay par Guy Habasque*. (Paris: Bibliothèque générale de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes-Etudes).

<sup>30</sup> Dorival, Paris, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Spate, created by members of the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, Cambridge, Homerton College, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Chelsea School of Art. Conceived and organized by Spate. In this exhibition, Spate demonstrates "Simultanism" by illustrating (1) Cendrars' poem, "La Prose," with a horizontal room wrapping version of the Cendrars-Delaunay-Terk collaboration; (2) the Cendrars-R. Delaunay collaboration using a construction of an Eiffel Tower.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Perloff, *The Futurist Moment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). She quotes Renato Poggioli from *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, regarding this. Perloff also comments on the "Futurist moment" as the "brief phase when the avant-garde defined itself by its relation to the mass audience," 38.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>35</sup> I will discuss this further in a chapter on "The Prose." At the same time Delaunay-Terk always argued that her ideas and methods were not related to Futurism; but it must be acknowledged that Simultaneism, Synchronism, Futurism, and Rayism all come after the experiments of Braque and Picasso with Cubism and probe different aspects of the ideas evolving at that time – but all of the above use brilliant colors in their explorations.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>37</sup> Perloff uses this term for the Salon that Walden modeled after the Paris Salon D'Automne, 11.

<sup>38</sup> In *Les Soirées de Paris*, 15 November 1914, Apollinaire wrote, "Delaunay qui par son insistance et son talent a fait sien le terme du simultané qu'il a emprunté au vocabulaire des futuristes, mérite qu'on l'appelle désormais ainsi qu'il a signé; le Simultané." Under "Chronique mensuelle," p.3, Apollinaire makes it clear that he knew Robert Delaunay's feelings about the name "Simultané" to which Delaunay claimed exclusive rights; he must have known that he would cause a hostile reaction.

<sup>39</sup> From *L'arte della negazione Palazzo delle Esposizioni*, catalogue for a Dada exhibition in Rome which also traveled to Zurich. Taken from an extensive review of the catalogue in *Art\_Press* 195, October 1994, v. After their return from Spain and Portugal in 1921 the Delaunays collaborated with the Paris Dada group, including Tristan Tzara, Jean Arp, Sophie Taueber-Arp. Delaunay-Terk participated at the "Grand Bal Travesti-Transmental" with fashion and costumes, designed costumes for Tzara's play, "Le Coeur à Gaz," and collaborated with Tzara on so-called "dress-poems." Discussed in the monographs on Delaunay-Terk and also by Buckberrough in the Albright-Knox catalogue, 60-63.

<sup>40</sup> In Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 135. Marinetti, in the more radical version of his technical manifesto, expresses ideas that correspond to later Dada concepts. Some of the same ideas are found in Delaunay-Terk's poster-poems.

<sup>41</sup> Discussed further in "Sonia Delaunay-Terk's Signs: The Poster-Poems."

<sup>42</sup> In *Arts Magazine*, September, 1979, 102-111. Buckberrough uses Robert Delaunay's "Window" series to define Simultaneity as that place where the interior and exterior meet - and a synthetic and ultimate reality take place. Simultaneism is discussed more fully in the chapter on the Delaunays' collaboration.

<sup>43</sup> Written by Danielle Molinari, conservateur. In June 1992, Molinari told me that this work was taken from already published works, and not from original materials.

<sup>44</sup> Kuthy and Satonobu, *Sonia & Robert Delaunay* (Kunstmuseum Bern, 1991-92). The exhibition displayed the 1913 dress for the first time since 1914. The photograph in the catalogue, however, is of another 1913 dress worn by Delaunay-Terk and not the dress used in the exhibition (Pl. 2).

<sup>45</sup> Kuniko Satonobu, "Cercle, triangle, carré: analyse des formes élémentaires et des procédés dans l'oeuvre abstraite de Sonia Delaunay," Paris I Sorbonne-Panthéon - Université de Lille III, 1992.

<sup>46</sup> Kuniko Satonobu, Bern Kunstmuseum catalogue, 44-59.

<sup>47</sup> Strauss, "The First Simultaneous Book", *Fine Print*, 13: 3 (July, 1987): 139-40.

<sup>48</sup> From this exhibition an excellent poster was issued of the lower section of the painting.

<sup>49</sup> Antoine Sidoti, *Genèse et dossier d'une polémique: La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France* (Paris: Archives des lettres modernes, 1987). Jay Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars, Discovery and Re-creation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> Delaunay-Terk's first retrospective opened shortly after her death (December 5, 1979) and traveled from the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo to the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Grey Art Gallery, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal during 1980 and 1981.

<sup>51</sup> Desanti writes in a chatty, personal style, but the work has obvious errors. (Paris, Ramsey, 1988).

<sup>52</sup> Axel Madsen offered the tapes to me but during a move destroyed them. The book, *Sonia Delaunay: Artist of the Lost Generation*, contains facts not known before. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989). Sherry Buckberrough reviewed this biography in conjunction with one on Louise Nevelson for *Woman's Art Journal*, Spring/Summer, 1993: 37-43.

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Damase and his colleague Patrick Raynaud explained to me, somewhat apologetically, that this text was taken from interviews made by Raynaud with Delaunay-Terk for a film on her life.

<sup>54</sup> Georges Bernier and Monique Schneider-Maunoury, *Robert et Sonia Delaunay. Naissance de l'art abstrait* (Paris, Editions Jean-Claude Lattès, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Jean-Louis Delaunay allowed me to photograph many paintings, drawings, and the 1913 dress which he had recently found, at Delaunay-Terk's studio in July 1992. Jacques Damase has responded to questions and been helpful, although his expertise is from a later period in Delaunay-Terk's's career.

<sup>56</sup> Delaunay, Charles, *Delaunay's Dilemma: De la Peinture au Jazz* (Macon, France, Editions W., 1985).

<sup>57</sup> Stanley Baron with Jacques Damase, *Sonia Delaunay: A Life in Art*, (Paris, Jacques Damase, 1991 and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991). Damase's main goal seems to be to promote Delaunay-Terk.

<sup>58</sup> Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, New York and London: Thames & Hudson, 1990, reprinted 1996.

<sup>59</sup> In *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 30-49. While this is an

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excellent discussion of the Delaunays, there are small errors in dates, and here too Robert Delaunay is treated as the intellectual and Sonia is considered intuitive—inaccuracies which Delaunay-Terk herself promoted.

<sup>60</sup> From a catalogue of an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, later published in (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 60-61, 63, 65, 97, 291-94, 357.

<sup>61</sup> Published in Paris in 1983. Marcadé has also translated several letters from Delaunay's Russian friend, Smimov, mostly concerning Robert Delaunay and competition between the two. I am also planning an edition of some of the letters.

<sup>62</sup> My discussion of the Russian influences, Art Nouveau and avant-garde are included in my chapter entitled "Transformations: Common Ground".

<sup>63</sup> "La Correspondance d'A. A. Smimov avec S. I. Terk (Sonia Delaunay): 26 Septembre 1904- 8 Avril 1905," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 1983, 289-327.

<sup>64</sup> Copies of unpublished letters from Alexander Smimov to Sonia Terk were given to me by Monique Schneider-Maunoury in Paris, May 1995.

<sup>65</sup> In "Sonia Delaunay, à la lettre," *Art & Publicité 1890-1990* (Paris, Centre Pompidou, 31 October 1990-25 February 1991). This is the only in-depth discussion—about 2 pages—of the poster-poems other than the Buckberrough retrospective catalogue and my master's thesis, at the University of South Florida, unpublished 1988. Abadie writes, "Sonia va, pour la première fois, multiplier les projets—affiches pour la conférence de Smimoff, . . . prospectus pour *La prose du Transsibérien*, annonces publicitaires pour Michelin, Zénith, Printemps, Exposition de blanc. . .," 344. .

<sup>66</sup> The Sonia Delaunay-Terk retrospective catalogue lists a one-artist exhibition at Uhde's gallery in 1908, p. 214, which probably comes from Cohen's *Sonia Delaunay*, 44, 187. I can find no evidence of a one-artist exhibition; it seems there was just the joint exhibition November 1908-February 1909. Madsen writes that "in October Willy gave Sonia her first exhibition." He adds that she shared the walls with "five Braques, three Picassos, three Derains, three Dufys, two paintings by Jean Metzinger, and ten drawings by Pascin," 76. Madsen is usually accurate about dates; the single-sheet list of the exhibition, however, lists other dates. See plate 3.

<sup>67</sup> In this otherwise excellent article, Marter takes information from chronologies that show Delaunay-Terk had no one-person exhibition until 1953 and apparently believed she had had none. In "Three Women Artists Married to Early Modernists: Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Sophie Taüber-Arp, and Marguerite Thompson-Zorach," in *Arts*, September 1979, 89. It is also true that she exhibited her own work much more often after Robert Delaunay's death.

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<sup>68</sup> In an exhibition at Notre-Dame-des-Champs, November 1908-January 1909, curated by Uhde, she exhibited with these artists and others. See Pl. 3 for the exhibition list.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Nancy J. Troy, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), uses as examples the work of Le Corbusier.

<sup>71</sup> As cited in Troy, 1. She quotes from Havard, *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, 4 vols. (Paris, Ancienne Maison Quantin, Librairies-Imprimeries Réunies, May and Motteroz, 1887-1890).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. From Havard, cols. 47-57.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>74</sup> In Troy, 2 and fn. 3, 229, from Rioux de Maillou, "Les Arts décoratifs et les machines," *Revue des Arts Décoratifs* 15, February-March 1895, 225.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Delaunay's main reading seemed to be Chevreul's color theories. See Buckberrough, "Robert Delaunay," 179-80.

<sup>77</sup> Damase reports that near the end of her life she said, "I have had three lives: one for Robert, one for my son and grandsons, a shorter one for myself." Baron and Damase, 201.

Transformations: Ukraine, St. Petersburg, Karlsruhe, and Paris--  
Common Ground

*I am attracted to pure color. Colors of my Ukrainian childhood.  
Souvenirs of peasant weddings where red and green dresses,  
ornamented by numerous ribbons, flew while dancing.*

Delaunay-Terk<sup>1</sup>

Sonia Terk was interested in and influenced by artists associated with the periodical, the *World of Art*. But the works of Alexander Benois and Leon Bakst, or other international artists were less important than the folk-type work of Maria Yakunchikova and the Princess Tenisheva,<sup>2</sup> who were models for the making of art and the development of art colonies. The examination of the beginning of Terk's career clarifies some misconceptions, shows that Yakunchikova and Tenisheva would have been familiar to her, and also offers insight into the development of her artistic beginnings.

Often in later years, Delaunay-Terk referred to her love of color, particularly from fields of flowers as well as from handicrafts made by women, as an influence of her first five years growing up in Ukraine. Traditionally, Ukrainians embellished every object of daily life with

colorful motifs, including clothing, dishes, kitchen utensils, tools, trappings for horses, furniture, musical instruments, books, and exterior walls of buildings.<sup>3</sup> The designs were usually stylized floral patterns, not the geometrics employed later by Delaunay and many in the Russian avant-garde; nevertheless they were all abstracted from nature.

Born November 14, 1885 as Sarah Stern and at times called by the Russian diminutive "Sofie," Terk left Gradizhsk, Ukraine--which was then part of the greater Russian Empire--when she was five years old. Two different stories tell of the small child's trip to St. Petersburg from Gradizhsk, which is located about one hundred fifty kilometers southeast of Kiev: In one, Henri Terk, after a business trip to Odessa, detoured to visit his sister, Hannah Stern, and left taking the five-year-old Sarah with him on a long train ride to St. Petersburg. There her life changed radically from that of the poor daughter of a factory worker to the only child of rich and powerful step-parents.<sup>4</sup> The other story suggests that on a trip to visit her rich brother and sister-in-law at their summer house in Finland,<sup>5</sup> Hannah Stern left the young Sarah there to be reared by the Terks but never allowed them to adopt her legally.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless, little Sarah Stern became Sonia Terk; she never saw her mother again. She apparently never forgave her mother, whom she later referred to as a whiner and complainer.<sup>7</sup> Without discussing how and when, she mentions seeing her father only once more; but she did see her brothers who visited the Terks during her childhood and adolescence in St. Petersburg. Terk then lived in St. Petersburg until 1903 when she first studied art in Karlsruhe, Germany.<sup>8</sup> After that she lived in St. Petersburg intermittently, during the summers or holidays--which she spent with the Terks in Finland or traveling--until 1908 when she finally arranged to stay in Paris by marrying Wilhelm Uhde.<sup>9</sup>

During her childhood in St. Petersburg, Sonia Terk was reared in a privileged atmosphere, as were many of the women who became prominent in the Russian avant-garde.<sup>10</sup> Henri Terk, a lawyer involved in international banking, had gained his fortune by funding gold and platinum expeditions in Siberia, building railroads in the Urals, and paper mills along the Dnieper.<sup>11</sup> His wife, Anna, was the daughter of Abraham Zack, an important banker in St. Petersburg; she was also a talented, independent woman who was an accomplished singer as well as speaker in the feminist movement.<sup>12</sup> Although Terk's uncle

and aunt seemed to her incredibly “bourgeois,”<sup>13</sup> they collected art and besides there was ample opportunity for her to see the works of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists, especially in the “World of Art” exhibitions organized by Sergei Diaghilev and his colleagues. She also read the *World of Art* journal which Diaghilev sponsored.<sup>14</sup> Besides these exhibitions, the Hermitage and the Russian museums offered enormous collections of Russian as well as European art to feed her early enthusiasms. With her adoptive parents the young Sonia Terk also traveled in Finland, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, where she later mentioned being fascinated with light in paintings of Veronese at the Uffizi in Florence.<sup>15</sup> She lived the life of a privileged young woman in a rich family; her journals show no concerns she might have faced as a Jew in St. Petersburg.

Up to age five, in the Ukrainian village of Gradizhsk, Sarah Stern must have been reared as an observing Jew; it would have been rare for a Jewish family in a small community not to be culturally, if not religiously, involved. There is no evidence that she experienced the pogroms or any of the discriminations that plagued and persecuted many Russian Jews during her childhood. In St. Petersburg many

Jews who wanted to become part of the important business or government class assimilated.<sup>16</sup> Much of the young Jewish intelligentsia was hostile to religion: Around the turn of the century a young Jewish writer from St. Petersburg wrote, "My grandfather would rather submit to martyrdom seven times a day than yield one letter of the [Jewish] law, while as for myself, if there remain but one letter for me to observe, I shall completely disregard it if it will any way prove burdensome."<sup>17</sup> Sonia's friend, Lev Rosenberg, changed his name to Leon Bakst, but whether it was to escape the Jewishness of his family name or to take a more artistic one has not been determined.<sup>18</sup> Delaunay-Terk's biographer Axel Madsen suggests that Henri Terk and his circle of Jewish friends were opposed to any religious or cultural affiliation as Jews considering such views anti-modern, although his father-in-law, Abraham Zack, had refused the position of assistant minister of finance if he would embrace Christianity.<sup>19</sup> Sonia's adopted family always celebrated Christmas and Easter, but as social, not religious, holidays and invited mixed groups of Jews and Gentiles to functions in their home.<sup>20</sup> Arthur Cohen writes that many Russian Jews, including Sonia Terk, were drawn to Paris because of

the freedom to study wherever they chose, which they could not do in Russia.<sup>21</sup> To add to our confusion, in 1911 the Delaunays' baby, Charles, was baptized in the Madeleine Church in the Chevreuse valley.<sup>22</sup> Although not a practicing Catholic, Robert Delaunay, like most French citizens, observed certain rites of the church. Moreover, she slept with an icon over her bed throughout her life but to her this could have been "Russian" rather than Christian. Nonetheless, she is included in *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris 1905-1945*.<sup>23</sup> She and Robert fled to the south of France in 1941 because she was a Jew, and although her papers presented her as the wife of a Frenchman her maiden name was still listed as "Sarah Stern," and that name marks her tombstone.<sup>24</sup> At her burial next to Robert at Gambais, their country home outside Paris, the parish priest said a prayer at the service.<sup>25</sup> While it is clear she was neither an observing Jew nor religious at all, there is no evidence that she converted. She simply followed the approach of her adopted parents rejecting tradition, then followed Robert Delaunay--doing what was fashionable and "modern."<sup>26</sup>

As a teenager Terk read Doestoyevsky, Tolstoy, and other Russian writers. In addition her heritage included Russian fairy tales, folk tales, as well as theater, costumes, and music.<sup>27</sup> This heritage of formal education and folklore enriched her life and ideas. Her correspondence with the philosopher Alexander Smirnov, reflects their shared interest in profound questions regarding the self and freedom.

She recalled, in her reminiscences in 1978, that her hero at the age of fifteen was Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, the seventeenth-century philosopher and lens grinder, whose work inspired her and whom she quoted throughout her life:<sup>28</sup> "I was very interested in philosophy. Spinoza was my master."<sup>29</sup> Whether Spinoza's ideas on metaphysics or mathematics attracted the young Terk is not known, but his ideas on freedom, for example, refusing a chair in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg so as not to compromise his liberty seem to provide a model for her life.<sup>30</sup> She visited her stepmother's sister in Heidelberg often during her student years at Karlsruhe and then decided while living in Germany that she must be free to live in Paris.

Some of Spinoza's ideas on freedom in *Ethics* seem to have influenced her significantly: Among them were the idea of necessity as the more we see things as necessary (through the medium of adequate ideas) the more are we free,<sup>31</sup> or that the description of a free person is one who avoids hatred, envy, contempt, and other negative emotions and is unaffected by fear, hope, and superstition.<sup>32</sup> Spinoza's concerns with organized knowledge and rational control--all things necessarily determined by Nature--also attracted her. Although Terk was not religious, she found sustenance in Spinoza's doctrine of the intellectual love of God, which establishes religion upon knowledge rather than ignorance.<sup>33</sup> His argument that reason demands that one love oneself, seek that which is really useful, desire everything which really leads to a greater perfection, and absolutely that everyone strive to preserve his [her] authentic being, became a philosophy espoused by Terk.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately these ideas are not further developed in her journals. She considered Spinoza her master, however; his ideas influenced and governed her life, and his philosophy pervaded her "culture." In hindsight, Spinoza's occupation

as a lens grinder (and an expert one) seems interesting in view of Delaunay-Terk's eventual interest in the refraction of light.<sup>35</sup>

In discussing influences on her work Delaunay-Terk usually referred to Ukrainian handcrafts but not to Russian painters. She emphasized the artists Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Manet and the Impressionists. She had seen their work in St. Petersburg and in the *World of Art*. Then while studying in Karlsruhe she read Meier de Graefe's works on the Impressionists, which included Manet, Van Gogh, and Gauguin.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the desire to assimilate into the French art community and become "French" as quickly as possible was part of reason she did not discuss Russian influences.<sup>37</sup> Later her son Charles thought it odd that she never sang Russian lullabies or told him Russian fairy tales, although she had many Russian friends and spoke Russian often with them.<sup>38</sup>

Sonia received her first paints from Max Liebermann, the founder of the Berlin Secession, whom she met on a trip to Berlin with Henri and Anna Terk in 1900 when she was fourteen.<sup>39</sup> Henri Terk knew Liebermann and arranged the visit for his talented daughter, who

actually had requested to meet Boecklin instead.<sup>40</sup> She never forgot her visit to Liebermann's studio.

Delaunay-Terk described herself as being a precocious child reading and speaking Russian, French, German, and English and quoting Spinoza. A journal entry from 1904 in Finland shows that she was studying Italian as well. She also discussed the cultural climate of her aunt's and uncle's home in St. Petersburg<sup>41</sup> where the Terks' taste in art tended toward naturalism, with large engravings of famous paintings by Ilya Repin and works by Henri Terk's favorite, Isaak Levitan. Sonia recorded that she loved the large engraving after Arnold Boecklin's famous *Isle of the Dead* which hung in the study. Books of reproductions of Russian paintings as well as those of the Barbizon school provided hours of interesting browsing. But their friends and visitors included Savva Mamontov, who like Henri Terk, had profited in minerals and railroads; perhaps this was their common bond and how they knew each other.

Savva and Elizaveta Mamontov were involved in several movements which attracted attention during Sonia Terk's formative years, principally their artists' colony at Abramtsevo and their financial

support of the *World of Art* journal and World of Art exhibitions.

Although Mamontov owned a private opera house in Moscow and was a patron of the art community there, he spent time also in St.

Petersburg and was a friend of Henri Terk, probably through their similar business interests. Sonia recounted that Mamontov often

dined at the Terks in their hundred foot long dining room, on food prepared by their chef who was second only to the Tzar's.<sup>42</sup> By 1874

Savva and Elizaveta Mamontov had assembled a group of artists at Abramtsevo, a short distance from Moscow, to establish a community

of experimenters in painting, sculpture, and the applied arts. Artists at Abramtsevo, a precursor of the Art Nouveau movement, came to

know the work of William Morris, Henry van de Velde, and Charles

Rennie Mackintosh. Throughout the years workshops were organized

to teach techniques of Russian crafts and folk arts.<sup>43</sup> Other organizers

of Abramtsevo included well-known painter and founder of the

Wanderers, Ilya Repin, as well as Vasilii Polenov, and Valentina

Serova.<sup>44</sup> Later principal artists at Abramtsevo included Mariia

Yakunchikova and Mikhail Vrubel, who, like the others involved, not

only painted but experimented in many types of decorative and applied

arts, taking motifs from nature. At the end of the nineteenth-century in Russia interest in the decorative arts and folk art heightened;<sup>45</sup> there had been a resurgence of interest probably stemming from the Wanderers (as well as from Leo Tolstoy's ideas on societal reforms and art and literature) and from the Art Nouveau movement. While Sonia Terk may not have visited the colony at Abramtsevo, she certainly knew of the work there through her uncle's connection with the Mamontovs and through Diaghilev's publication, *The World of Art*, supported by the Mamontovs and the Princess Mariia Tenisheva until 1899, then supported by Tzar Nicholas II until 1904.<sup>46</sup>

Among the early exhibitions which would have been important for Sonia Terk were those sponsored by the *World of Art* magazine, organized by the artists Alexander and Albert Benois, and Leon Bakst, along with Diaghilev. One of their first informal exhibitions in 1898 included the works of Russian artists and the Finnish artists Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Albert Edelfeldt. Gallen-Kallela's work is especially noteworthy since it consisted not only of paintings of folk themes and fairy tales but also of woven textile designs. The first large international exhibition in January 1899, organized by the *World of Art*

journal, included works by German and French artists as well as leading Russian artists, Repin, Vasnetsov, Bakst, Benois, Serov, and Yakunchikova.<sup>47</sup> Although works of many artists establish important references, the art of Yakunchikova appears to be a primary example of work by a woman which encompassed every part of life: painting, embroideries, every sort of craft, furniture, and decoration.

Terk would have known of Mariia Yakunchikova from these exhibitions in which this artist exhibited regularly between 1898 and 1902 in St. Petersburg at the Museum of the Stieglitz School and the Academy of Art. In January and February of 1901 and again in 1902, special works from Abramtsevo, particularly pottery and the embroideries of Yakunchikova are listed as part of the exhibition (Pl. 1).<sup>48</sup> Yakunchikova designed a cover for *World of Art* in 1899 which combined Russian folk art with international styles of modern art<sup>49</sup> and which helped lead the journal into a more modern approach with its distinctive graphic style of “clarity, severity, and regularity of line.”<sup>50</sup> In 1900 the work of Yakunchikova was one of the primary exhibitions at the World’s Fair in Paris, and she received a medal from the French; Diaghilev featured her work in an edition of *The World of*

*Art*. Sonia Terk must have seen these journals when she and Alexei Smirnov, a philosophy student whom she had recently met, and who would remain her confidant and friend, went to look through back issues in the *World of Art* offices in St. Petersburg on their first date before she left for Karlsruhe in 1903, if not before.<sup>51</sup> Besides the journal, the bringing together of artists from the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg for exhibitions was one of the important contributions of the *World of Art*, presaging developments in art exhibitions and ballet throughout Diaghilev's career.

In addition to Yakunchikova, another woman working in the same manner was Mariia Klavdievna Tenisheva (1867-1928) who, earlier with Diaghilev, supported the *World of Art* journal. Besides a school, where orphans could learn basics of design, and an art colony at Talashkino, Tenisheva opened a store in Moscow in order to sell decorative objects made by students.<sup>52</sup> A book on the Princess Tenisheva's art colony, *Talashkino* (1906) was among the books donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale from Delaunay-Terk's personal library (Pl. 2).<sup>53</sup> Tenisheva moved to Paris in 1905 where she organized exhibitions of antique Russian crafts at the Musée des Arts

Décoratifs from May to October, 1907 and again in 1911. She later opened a school of jewelry design<sup>54</sup> in Paris but continued to travel back and forth to St. Petersburg.

Alison Hilton discusses the importance of folk art on the work of sophisticated, professional artists as more than just superficial attraction. The value of the folk art to the painter was not so much in the visual quality of the work as in a “folk art ethos”—a sense of “community, tradition, truth to the material and the environment, and a harmony encompassing the makers, users, and objects themselves.”<sup>55</sup>

Two other artists, who died young and whose work was known by Sonia Terk but rarely discussed in connection with her, are the Russian Mariia Bashkirtseva, and the German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker. According to Madsen, Sonia Terk read the diaries of Mariia Bashkirtseva, a rich and talented young Russian artist, who had left Russia to study in Paris in 1877 and had died there of consumption when she was twenty-four years old.<sup>56</sup> While Bashkirtseva’s work never developed to maturity, her courage in going to Paris and her desire to succeed are projected in the diaries.

Bashkirtseva expected to become famous. In her early journals the young Sonia Terk also wrote, "I'm ready to sacrifice everything for a piece of fame. Fame is the best thing in life because it is the symbol of your merits in front of humanity, the symbol of strong personalities."<sup>57</sup> This seems to connect directly with the writings of Bashkirtseva, which allude to desiring fame, and might have been made about the time Terk read the diaries. Ironically, Bashkirtseva's primary recognition and influence comes not from her paintings (Pl. 3) but from her posthumously published diaries.<sup>58</sup>

In Karlsruhe, Terk met and became friends with Georg Tappert, Adolf Erbsloh, and Arnold Schoenberg the first year, and Alexander Kanoldt the second. Tappert was also studying with Ludwig Schmidt-Reutte<sup>59</sup> and spent a month in Worpswede during the summer of 1905 when he wrote Terk a five- page letter about Modersohn-Becker and Clara Westhoff.<sup>60</sup> Part of Terk's interest seems to have been that they were women artists working in an art colony and that Westhoff was involved with the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, but it was Modersohn-Becker's work that especially interested her. Flattened planes of color outlined in black, similar to that in Modersohn-Becker's

paintings and to the work of Paul Gauguin, can be seen in Terk's work of 1906 through 1908. Modersohn-Becker's studies in Paris may have also contributed to Terk's desire to go there and also to her style. Terk's paintings of strong women during this period, *Philomène*, *Yellow Nude*, *The Young Finnish Girl*, *Young Italian Girl*, *Young Girl Sleeping*, and *Madame Minsky*, as well as drawings of herself, her aunt, the laundress, and other women, can also be seen in the same light of experimentation with the female portrait, flattening of the form, and the use of strong vibrant color.<sup>61</sup> Rather than of professional models, several of the portraits were of household help, whose domestic world was simply more available to her. After this period and beginning with her liaison with Robert Delaunay, she never returned to the portrait but instead began an abstracted exploration of the female body in her experiments with clothing, color, light, as Simultaneist experiments, while Robert, throughout his career, continued to explore his Simultaneist ideas in portraits as well as in experiments with light and movement.<sup>62</sup>

Terk's studies with Schmidt-Reutte from 1903 until 1906 were the most important and most lengthy studies of her career.<sup>63</sup> In her

memoirs she discussed his instruction as “solid basics and knowledge, and approach to art without false academism . . . Having left the bourgeois opulence of St. Petersburg, I began to breathe, to discover the ‘joie de vivre.’”<sup>64</sup> Classmates Tappert, Erbsloh, Schoenberg, and Kanoldt became friends and remained friends throughout their lives. Delaunay-Terk recounted in her autobiography that Erbsloh tried to act unimpressed when she said she knew Liebermann.<sup>65</sup> Kanoldt and the others talked to her about Munich and their desire to study there. Painters in Munich were “exploring the connection between life and conscience.”<sup>66</sup> Kanoldt discussed revolutionary painters in Dresden, according to Madsen.<sup>67</sup> Drawing seemed to be Terk’s primary classes; at least drawings are the works that exist from that period of time. If Terk met Elisabeth Epstein or Vassilii Kandinsky during her stay in Karlsruhe she never mentioned it and it is unlikely that she did. It is more probable that she had been introduced to Kandinsky and Münter by Epstein, a Russian living in the same house, during their stay in Paris in 1906 or 1907, but she never refers to such an encounter. We can assume, however, that she knew of their work by 1905 or 1906 through Epstein or earlier through

Kanoldt's discussions of art in Munich. During this time Terk also traveled often to visit an aunt (her adoptive mother's sister) in Heidelberg and back and forth to Finland and Russia.

She began her art studies in Karlsruhe in 1903 when she was seventeen years old and continued them until at least March or April 1906. In later years Delaunay-Terk emphatically stated that she moved to Paris in 1905. While it is true that she might have spent time in Paris that year, she was still in Karlsruhe in March of 1906. Letters, dated May through September, from Smirnov place her in Finland at the family dacha. Smirnov, who was in France, refers to Karlsruhe, to Germany in general, and to Finland in several letters dated 1906.<sup>68</sup> He wrote to Terk during her school years in Karlsruhe, when she returned to St. Petersburg, on vacation in Finland, and later from St. Petersburg to Paris. One letter of January 26, 1906, from Smirnov in Paris to Terk in Karlsruhe, apparently in response to Terk's request for information about André Simon<sup>69</sup> and others as teachers, strikes a discouraging chord:

I would like to make one observation regarding your plans, with the objective of warning you of the possibility of disappointment. It concerns the schools and professors here: are you not excessively idealizing them? Could your opinions of them possibly be too high? Of course, we are very well supplied

here. But I tend to think that in Germany, where the trades and, in this sense, pedagogical side of things is so high, the difference (if there is one) is not all that great.<sup>70</sup>

In another letter, dated May 30, 1906 to Finland, Smirnov wrote to Terk, telling her that André Simon, at Académie de la Palette, would probably not accept her for classes based solely on work sent to him, but only on a personal interview and someone's patronage. Smirnov further advised her against trying to work with Simon:

My conclusion: if Simon was the only thing for you in Paris, perhaps it would be worth it to take these heroic measures. But considering that Paris itself is more important than Simon, I wouldn't do it if I were in your place . . . Paris, aside from the mass of delights it offers, will contribute a great deal toward your education and cultural outlook. A year (or more, perhaps?) spent here in your youth will stay with you throughout your whole life.<sup>71</sup>

Shortly after her arrival in Paris, Terk frequented exhibitions of Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, which she discussed as strong influences in her work. The Fauve exhibition also made an impression on her, and for years Henri Matisse was the artist with whom she "competed" and compared herself.<sup>72</sup>

Despite Smirnov's warning, Terk worked to be admitted to Simon's classes. Patronage for Terk to study with Simon probably came through Elizaveta Kruglikova, who was teaching at the

Académie de la Palette in 1906 along with Simon. Smirnov admired Kruglikova, writing to Terk June 20, 1906. "I 'got wrapped up' in a very pleasant circle, at the head of which stands Kruglikova. We go somewhere every evening--to one of the public balls (*Bullier* or *Tabarin*) or to the *foire* or to a *café concert*."<sup>73</sup> A week later, Smirnov wrote to her that the main characteristic of Paris is that "everything is great--work, art, science, recreation--in a word, everything . . . It takes less energy to be productive here than in Russia."<sup>74</sup>

Despite Smirnov's warnings, along with Epstein and Mariia Vassilyeva, Terk studied at the Academie de la Palette with art teachers Georges Desvallières, Simon, Jacques-Emile Blanche, and Kruglikova.<sup>75</sup> Desvallières had studied with Gustave Moreau, Simon stressed sketching and painting nudes and portraits.<sup>76</sup> Kruglikova, also teaching there, befriended the young Russian women and introduced them to Sergei Diaghilev.<sup>77</sup> Kruglikova, along with Rudolph Grossmann, is credited by Schneider-Maunoury with introducing Terk to print-making techniques.<sup>78</sup> Smirnov's comments, however, proved to be prophetic; Terk soon tired of the type instruction she was receiving and ended formal studies. In her autobiography she

recalled, "The canvases were successively corrected by each one of them, which created a veritable confusion in the students' spirits. From that time I worked alone."<sup>79</sup> Just after the end of her formal studies she painted her strongest portraits.

Through Rudolph Grossman, Sonia Terk met his neighbor on the Ile Saint-Louis, the German art dealer, Wilhelm Uhde. Terk and Uhde, both immigrants in Paris, became friends. Their relationship soon provided a way for Terk to break loose from parental and societal control.

Smirnov's letters to Terk, again in Russia and Finland during the spring, summer, and fall of 1907, before her liaison with Uhde, illustrate her difficulties in obtaining permission to remain in Paris. Finally convinced to let her stay one more year, her aunt, Anna Sergueevna Terk, went with her to Paris to help arrange housing and a studio.<sup>80</sup> Although Delaunay-Terk later maintained that she had lived in Paris since 1905, she actually began living there permanently in the fall of 1908.<sup>81</sup> The opposition of her adoptive parents to her living in Paris might have pushed Terk to extreme measures, including an unconsummated marriage. Later, in her autobiography, she

commented: "My childhood was spent in absolute stability, the profound reason for which I left Russia."<sup>82</sup> She never commented on problems in Russia that caused her to leave; she emphasized her desire to remain in Paris for her work.

Anna Terk attended an engagement luncheon for Sonia at Uhde's apartment and then, in December 1908, she and Henri Terk traveled from St. Petersburg to London to attend the wedding.<sup>83</sup> Many letters, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, arrived from Russia congratulating the couple. Uhde's lover and manservant, Constant, lived with them and had even served the luncheon when Anna Terk visited.<sup>84</sup> There are no journals nor are there letters describing Sonia Terk-Uhde's reactions to this possibly awkward situation. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu writes that in Russian customs a "white" marriage (meaning to a homosexual partner) offered liberty to the married woman.<sup>85</sup> This seems to have been the case with Terk and Uhde: Terk gained her freedom and Uhde an income.<sup>86</sup> She later used the term "white marriage" in reference to her relationship with Uhde. During the marriage she continued her friendships with the Russian poet, Tchouika, and Smirnov, both of whom had been suitors.

Uhde was critical not only for Terk's living arrangements but even more important for introducing her to the Paris art community. As a dealer, Uhde exhibited the work of many avant-garde artists, with Braque, Derain, Dufy, Metzinger, Pascin, and Picasso from November 1908 to January of 1909, in his gallery, Note-Dame-des-Champs where he also exhibited Sonia's works. (Pl. 4).<sup>87</sup>

The bourgeois attitudes of her family and of middle-class society in Russia, Germany, and France in general, were those that Sonia Terk challenged. She was free, in her marriage to Uhde, to continue and begin relationships. Diaries do not exist from this period. Several writers have commented on Terk's naiveté at this time, and on her lack of sexual experience, although some letters from Smirnov suggest a more intimate relationship between them. Regarding visiting cafés, bistros, and dance halls in Paris, Uhde's sister commented when she saw a photograph of Uhde in front of the Dome in Paris, 1903, that "I passed in front of the Dome, but I never entered. A girl didn't go into those places at that time."<sup>88</sup> But Sonia Terk, later as Uhde, then as Delaunay, was able to attend regularly.

Sonia Terk first met Robert Delaunay in a group of artists gathered at Wilhelm Uhde's apartment sometime in 1907. When she met him again in late 1908 or early 1909 his intensity about art overwhelmed her. Shortly after she and Uhde were married in December 1908, she and Robert Delaunay became inseparable; his first painting of the Eiffel Tower is dedicated to her in April 1909.<sup>89</sup> Their unconventional relationship resulted in marriage in November 1910 after her arranged divorce from Uhde, who agreed to have Sonia file for divorce after "finding" letters from a fictitious lover.<sup>90</sup>

Delaunay-Terk was ill during her pregnancy, complicated by scarlet fever in 1910. Letters from Berthe de Rose, as Robert's mother called herself, and his aunt, Marie Damour, show their concern for her health. Later, Sonia, who did not keep a journal during these years, discussed Robert's passion for birds and nests and nature. He left her in bed to spend his days looking for birds and their nests. Their vacation apartment was full of birds, and while Robert was the ideal companion for her as an artist, he did nothing to help her and throughout her illness left the birds in her care.<sup>91</sup>

Her struggle to remain in Paris was more intense than Delaunay-Terk ever admitted in later years, but this struggle might explain her intense feelings toward her aunt. Recently translated letters from Alexei Smirnov show that turmoil surrounded the vague and mysterious manner in which Sonia maneuvered her new marriage. Although she and Robert Delaunay regularly received income from her adopted family until 1917, there must have been grave doubts in 1910 as to whether it would continue. Letters from Smirnov offer the best insight into the situation with her aunt, Anna Terk.<sup>92</sup> Smirnov, the constant friend and rejected suitor, acted as an intermediary between Terk and her aunt in difficult situations, such as helping convince her aunt that Terk should be able to live in Paris in 1906 through 1908. He continued in this intermediary capacity during and after her divorce in 1910 when Anna Terk realized that Sonia had married Uhde as a way to begin receiving her inheritance and to escape her family.<sup>93</sup> We hear of this in letters from Smirnov to Uhde-Terk:

I visited of course Anna Sergueevna . . . We had a very difficult talk about you and [blank] and it was very hard on me because I didn't know what to say. Listen to my advice, which is totally sincere and should be persuasive . . . when you see A.S. tell her everything honestly--that this was on your part

[blank] in truth altogether fictional. Tell her that this wasn't hypocrisy on your part, as at that time you couldn't imagine that any other choice would ever be possible for you. I assure you that A.S. is deeply troubled by your incomplete sincerity and openness, so that the way she now sees it all (that is, that you were in love with him knowing or supposing other things about him) is much worse than if she knew the entire truth.<sup>94</sup>

Letters from Berthe de Rose and Marie Damour show only warmth and sympathy for the young Russian artist and intimate of their son and nephew, which seems contrary to social mores of the time.<sup>95</sup> His mother and aunt appeared content with the arrangement, possibly because Terk was a stable support for Robert Delaunay, besides having a substantial income from her family.<sup>96</sup> In contrast, letters from Russia, which when Sonia Terk married Wilhelm Uhde the previous autumn were numerous and full of compliments, decreased in 1909 and 1910, except for those from Smirnov.<sup>97</sup>

Letters from Smirnov also complain that Terk-Uhde did not tell him, her close friend and confidant, that she was divorcing Uhde. On January 22, 1910 he writes:

I have to confess I was a little hurt to learn the news at first as a rumor from Jenya Kaplan, then almost as an official statement from Sasha Terk, when you might have written at least a few words. I was hurt by the fact that in answer to the news I had to say: "I know nothing about this"--not out of vanity, but because I read in their eyes what they wouldn't say

in so many words: "Sonia must have forgotten you, she probably doesn't think too much about you." So, you are divorcing Uhde and are getting married to the painter [indecipherable...presumably Delaunay]. This is probably the friend you were writing me about in the spring? Do you know that by shutting up about this you could have put me in a very awkward position? I hear from Sasha that I am considered the "cause of the misfortune," that I knew something about which I should have warned Anna Sergueevna or even you, who knew nothing about this(!) What is the meaning of this? I hope you yourself are not the source of "knowing nothing"! But if you are, I might have betrayed you without knowing . . . What if my version didn't coincide with yours? Tell me at least now what and how . . . <sup>98</sup>

Smirnov is referring to Uhde's homosexuality, which Delaunay-Terk was aware of before their "white" marriage and which had provided a way for her to avoid returning to Russia while allowing her at the same time to receive her inheritance from the Terks. Smirnov again urged Sonia to tell the entire truth to her aunt in a letter dated January 30, 1910:

I hasten to answer your letter, which consoled and reassured me enormously. I'm very pleased for you that everything seems to be settling, as I firmly believe, to the best, and I'm also happy that you didn't forget me and your feelings toward me didn't change . . . Thank you for sending the letter to A.S.[her aunt]. But there are still some things not clear to me. You refer all the time to a certain kind of rumors as "gossip," but you never say if they are lies or the truth. The word "gossip" seems to indicate that they are lies. A.S. probably also took it to mean this. Now imagine that she'll try to verify these rumors, or will find out in another way that in fact these are not lies but the truth. What

will you say then? That you knew from the beginning, or on the contrary, that you have been misled? Then it will appear as if I, who knew these things for certain, am guilty for not warning you . . . this has to be cleared up.<sup>99</sup>

Later, in the summer, Smirnov wrote again of the need to clear up the situation with her aunt:

...I am very happy that your spirit is at peace. I am waiting with the greatest sympathy for the next act. I never expected anything else than that Anna Sergueevna would find out everything and sooner or later put the question to you in the most direct way possible. I always told you that and I wondered how you could think that everything will “sort itself out” without explanations. I would also like to tell you that only Anna Sergueevna’s very special, rare character explains the exceptional and amazing fact that she consented to an incomplete explanation.<sup>100</sup> It’s so hard to imagine a mother who wouldn’t ask a daughter to cross the “t’s” in such matters. Believe me, I know something about people and “family relationships.” In any case, I am happy for you that this is finished, that the explanation is done with and doesn’t hang over you like Damocles’ sword. The only thing is, I can’t imagine what I might say if A.S. ever opens the subject of my involvement in this affair.<sup>101</sup>

Sonia apparently never completely reconciled with her aunt, nor did she return to St. Petersburg when Anna Terk died in 1911, and in later years she referred to her as an angry woman, contrary to Smirnov’s description.

Smirnov, who had been one of Terk's romantic interests, became an important liaison not only with her family in St. Petersburg, but also with the art world in Russia. His voice is the only record available asking about her work at that time: On February 25, 1910, he wrote:

I would like to know how it's going in your work. What's happening with your painting? I sent Kisselev's *Geometry* to you today.<sup>102</sup>

Although Terk had won a prize in mathematics, the mention of a geometry text during this relatively unproductive period raises questions as to whether or not she was looking at geometry as a new approach to her work. If so, the baby's quilt of 1911 and experiments with geometrical abstraction may be related.

On July 19, 1910, Smirnov wrote again, providing the date for her illness with scarlet fever, to which she refers later in her interviews but which had been unconfirmed as to time:

Poor Sonia, ill with scarlet fever! I hope the illness is now gone for good. You surely know that one has to be very careful afterwards, because it tends to provoke all kinds of complications . . . let me know the news . . . about your health and so on, which is of the utmost interest to me.<sup>103</sup>

From the beginning of her relationship with Robert Delaunay, Sonia Terk's money provided the most stable income and continued to do so until 1917, when her income from an apartment house in St. Petersburg (given as her dowry by Henri Terk) stopped because of the Russian Revolution, the year Henri Terk died. From that time on she worked in textile and fashion design to provide a living for their family. At the time of their marriage, November 10, 1910, Robert's mother had promised an equal amount of money for the newlyweds, but since she was often in financial trouble she never provided it. De Rose's letters from her to both Robert and Sonia show her concerns with making money, including writing for newspapers and making interesting decorative clothing.<sup>104</sup>

For a video interview in 1978, when asked about marrying Uhde and if she knew of his homosexuality, Delaunay-Terk responded, "It was I who proposed the game. And, in fact, it worked out all right."<sup>105</sup>

Through this arrangement Sonia Terk attained her goal of remaining in Paris, perhaps driven by the sad example of Modersohn-Becker. In her art she incorporated lessons learned from observing the paintings of Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Matisse. During her early

career she kept constantly informed about the Russian avant-garde-- through her friends Alexandra Exter, Smirnov, and Diaghilev and later through Kandinsky, Alexei Jawlensky, Marianne von Werefkin, and the Munich circle around Kandinsky. Although, as an immigrant she assimilated again completely into another country and society, her Ukrainian and Russian roots continued to inform her work.

The young Sonia Terk's knowledge of the Russian artist colonies with their embracing of the decorative arts, her instruction for over two years in Karlsruhe and for a short time in Paris, and her exposure to the constantly changing art world in Paris, laid the groundwork for her collaborations with Uhde, Delaunay, and then Blaise Cendrars. These collaborations became the common ground from which she simultaneously made art throughout her world and her life.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nous irons*, 17, "Je suis attiré par la couleur pure. Couleurs de mon enfance de l'Ukraine. Souvenirs des noces paysannes de mon pays où les robes rouges et vertes ornées de nombreux rubans, volaient en dansant."

<sup>2</sup> Later Nathalie Goncharova and Mikail Larionov would paint so-called primitive folk figures in their work and the return to Russian folk tales and folk art can also be seen in the work of Kandinsky, Chagall, and Malevich.

<sup>3</sup> From "Femmes d'avant-garde sur fond russe: 1907-1930" in *L'Avant-Garde Au Féminin*, Jean-Claude et Valentine Marcadé (Paris: Artcurial, 1983), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Recounted in Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Madsen, 17. He writes of another, "more likely, version" where the little girl was taken by her mother in a buckboard to the train station to travel to Kiev; then by train to Moscow and St. Petersburg; then to the Terks' summer home in Finland, where her mother left her with them.

<sup>6</sup> Although she never changed her name; she remained Sarah Stern on legal papers throughout her life. The name on her tombstone is also Sarah Stern Delaunay.

<sup>7</sup> *Nous irons*, 12: "Je détestais ma mère autant que j'aimais mon père." There seemed to be no understanding of possible psychological conflicts regarding her being given away nor did Delaunay-Terk offer any sympathy for her mother, who must have had a difficult life. Whether Hannah Stern's brother, Henri Terk, offered financial help to the Stern family is not known, although Sonia's brothers visited in St. Petersburg.

<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the date is given as 1902, but the confusion seems to lie in the fact that Terk's birthday was in November, so she was still 17 in the summer of 1903. Her last year in the gymnasium in St. Petersburg was 1902-1903. Until early 1908 she only lived in Germany or in Paris during the academic year and returned to St. Petersburg or to vacation with her family in Finland. St. Petersburg at this time had threats of revolution, war with the Japanese in 1904, and the 1905 Revolution.

<sup>9</sup> Correspondence from Alexandre Smirnov shows that this was a more difficult project than has been discussed previously. Sonia Terk apparently arranged her marriage to Uhde to guarantee her staying in Paris.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Bashkirtseva, Nathalia Goncharova, Vavara Stepanova, Olga Rozanova, Liubov Popova, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Alexandra Exter, and the Enders were all from well-to-do families. This makes sense in that these women

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had the opportunity to travel, to leave Russia, to study, and time to explore these opportunities. However, until 1918 Russian women could not attend universities in that country. *Moscow: 1900-1930*, ed. Serge Fauchereau (New York: Mallard Press, 1988), 35.

<sup>11</sup> Madsen. He also married Anna Zack, daughter of a rich, well-known banker.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> From journal entries June 12, c. 1902, regarding attitudes toward some of her friends: "This comes from a bourgeois habit that, with complacency, looks down at everybody. Maybe I'm too radical and discontented, but it always hurts when they have such an attitude . . ." Trans. Anca Oroveanu. Delaunay-Terk refers to the Terks, her step-parents as "ours."

<sup>14</sup> Sergei Diaghilev was convinced that Russian art had a role of global significance to play and began helping Russian artists make their way in Europe and to exalt Russian art in the eyes of the West. From *The World of Art Movement in Early 20th Century Russia*, introductory essays by Vsevolod Petrov and Alexander Kamensky, trans. Arthur Shkarovsky (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1991), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Delaunay-Terk remained interested in Italy throughout her life, vacationed there many times, and exhibited there as well. Several catalogues and articles have been written in Italian.

<sup>16</sup> Discussed in Louis Greenberg, *Jews in Russia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 173.

<sup>17</sup> David Frishman, *Kol Kitbe*, VIII, p. 32, quoted in Greenberg, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Actually Bakst's father's name was "Bakst"; the mother wanted to carry on the Rosenberg family name when naming her son "Lev Rosenberg". Also Leon Bakst was probably a more theatrical name. See Charles Spencer, *Leon Bakst*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 13-14. The name "Terk" is actually not particularly Jewish and Henri Terk had changed his first name "Gherman" to the more French "Henri." Discussed in Madsen, 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> In Arthur Cohen, "From Eastern Europe to Paris and Beyond," *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris 1905-1945* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1985), 65.

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<sup>22</sup> *Nous irons*, 33. The Delaunays were spending the summer there with her friend Smirnov visiting, "qui dans le temps voulait m'épouser." She further states that Smirnov would become one of the defenders of Robert Delaunay's work.

<sup>23</sup> Which shows that Delaunay-Terk was known as Jewish in Paris. Cohen, *Circle of Montparnasse*.

<sup>24</sup> See note 7. For her marriage license to Uhde she used the name "Sarah Stern, daughter of Elie Stern, factory manager." Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 47.

<sup>25</sup> Madsen, 332. This could have been Charles Delaunay's preference; he also said a few words.

<sup>26</sup> Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury write that Mlle Uhde, the sister of Wilhelm Uhde, did not realize that Terk was Jewish until ten years after Terk's and Uhde's divorce, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Among her Russian friends were Bakst, the Benois brothers, and later Diaghilev.

<sup>28</sup> Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 18. "Sonia, qui, sa vie durant, aimait citer Spinoza . . ."

<sup>29</sup> *Nous irons*, 14: "J'étais très intéressé par les philosophes. Spinoza était mon maître." Monique Schneider-Maunoury, who worked for Delaunay-Terk, reports that her stepfather, Henri Terk, gave Delaunay-Terk books, including *Histoire de la Philosophie*. She loved to cite Spinoza. (Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 18). Schneider-Maunoury also writes that Delaunay-Terk never forgave her brother, who borrowed *L'Ethique* and did not return it. Recounted also in *Nous irons*, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Letters between Terk and Smirnov are philosophical in tone at times, discussing the self, life, freedom, and ideas in general.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ethics*, Part 5: 6. In Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, ed. Seymour Feldman, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1982). *The Ethics* was first published in 1677.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Part 4: 4, 17.

<sup>33</sup> My information on Spinoza comes from Joseph Ratner, ed., *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1927); Roger Scruton, *Spinoza* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Robert Misrahi, *Spinoza* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1964), and see n. 32.

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<sup>34</sup> From "Spinoza's Moral Philosophy" by E. M. Curley in *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marjorie Grene (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973 rpt. 1979), 369. Another artist who abstracted work from nature and the spiritual and used bright, expressive color, Barnett Newman, also studied Spinoza and based his first aesthetic manifesto on Spinoza's ideas. Newman's name, "Barnett Benedict Newman," came from his translation of the "Barnett" into "Benedict" in high school Latin classes. Thomas Hess discusses Newman's ideas "for an art that would be radically modern, informed by an epic subject matter, and treat with the issue of man in the universe on the level of world thought" in his monograph on the artist. Gilles Deleuze writes that Spinoza rediscovered (together with G. W. Leibniz) the concept of expressionism in philosophy. See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 321-35.

<sup>35</sup> Her paintings, in particular *Electric Prisms*, relate to refraction of the new street lights on the Bd. St. Michel.

<sup>36</sup> She read Julius Meier-Graefe's book on Manet and the Impressionists while she was in Germany and felt that Paris was where she needed to study. *Nous irons*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Delaunay recounted that his mother never told him Russian fairy tales nor discussed Russian relatives. Madsen, 97. Madsen's biography contains information from hours of interviews with Charles Delaunay. She did, however, participate in benefits for Russian emigrés and have friends among them. Bernard Dorival, in his introduction to a catalogue for La Galerie Nationale du Canada Ottawa, 1965, fn. 1, writes, "Sonia Delaunay was, without question, of Russian birth. But it happened as with so many other foreign artists who have become utterly French in spirit, that her work emanated from the purest French tradition."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. Charles Delaunay also told Madsen that his mother was sensitive about anyone examining her papers, with the Russian birthplace and name. Perhaps she might not have wanted to acknowledge any influences at all. And too, many of her comments regarding origins of ideas came later during the years of the Cold War when it would not have been popular or helpful to proclaim one's Russian origins or Russian stylistic attributes. In the struggle for recognition of Robert Delaunay's and her own work, which occupied Delaunay-Terk after World War II in her reminiscences in 1978 and into the fifties and sixties, she would hardly have been willing to call attention to this.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30. Madsen, whose information must have come from Charles, writes that Liebermann entertained the Terks with "stories of unappreciative sitters,

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brewers, and the nobility." Delaunay-Terk also remembered that a painting of fisherwomen mending a net was on his easel.

<sup>41</sup> Most of this information is included in *Nous irons*, and quoted in Buckberrough as well as in Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury. Journal entries also show that she studied Italian as well and read psychology and philosophy. From Delaunay-Terk's journal, Monday 28 June 1904, trans. Martin Daughtry.

<sup>42</sup> *Nous irons*, 15. The information that the dining room was one hundred feet long comes from Madsen, p. 25, probably told him by Charles Delaunay.

<sup>43</sup> *World of Art*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. The Wanderers' relevance is particularly important in bringing back to Russia an interest in Russian art and ideas instead of a concentration on the arts in Europe, particularly Paris. Developed along the same lines as Leo Tolstoy's ideas in *What is Art?* their approach stressed a type of social realism with a message. This interest influenced many of the young artists in the avant-garde, perhaps more in style -- using folk imagery -- than in message. *Moscow: 1900-1930*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> *World of Art*, 54. Artists in St. Petersburg also knew and had seen the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

<sup>46</sup> Tzar Nicholas also sponsored an art colony at Talashkino. Delaunay-Terk owned a book on Talashkino which is now in the collection of the Bibliothèque National in Paris. The same issues would have been important here with the idea of the artist making a total environment experimenting with every type of media. In 1901 the Mamontovs and Tenisheva withdrew support in a row with Diaghilev over content and the fact that Mamontov was bankrupt, and Serov approached the Tzar Nicholas II for funds. They were given enough money to allow *World of Art* to continue for a short time. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>47</sup> For extensive information regarding the "World of Art" exhibitions, see, *ibid.*, pp. 291-99.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 291-92. Most likely Yakunchikova exhibited these type works each time.

<sup>49</sup> From "Graphic Design and Russian Art Journals of the Early Twentieth Century" by Mikhail Kiselev, *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Winter, 1989.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. She also possibly saw the memorial issue to Yakunchikova, no. 3, 1904, mentioned by Kiselev, while back in St. Petersburg on holidays.

<sup>51</sup> Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 22.

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<sup>52</sup> It was not successful and closed soon after. Biographical information in *Art Nouveau*, Lara-Vinca Masini, trans. Linda Fairburn (New York: Arch Cape Press, 1987, original Italian edition, 1976).

<sup>53</sup> Serge Makowsky, *Talachkino. L'Art décoratif des ateliers de la princesse Ténichief* (St. Petersburg, Ed. Sodrougestivo, 1906), in the Département des Livres Imprimés, in the catalogue *Sonia et Robert Delaunay*, Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, 1977), 172. This was also called to my attention by Emily Goldstein in an unpublished paper, "Sonia Delaunay's Projects in the Applied Arts: The German Connection," Spring 1991, p. 3. submitted for a class at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

<sup>54</sup> She wrote a thesis on jewelry at the University of Moscow in 1916, but continued to live in Paris after the revolution until her death in 1928. Masini, 391.

<sup>55</sup> Alison Hilton, "The Peasant House and Its Furnishings: Decorative Principles in Russian Folk Art," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (Winter, 1989), 10.

<sup>56</sup> Madsen, 38. Madsen talked for several hours with Charles Delaunay and must have learned this through him. Maria Bashkirtseva's diaries were published in installments beginning in 1887 under the title *Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff*, and then *The Journal of a Young Artist* (New York, Cafell, 1889). Now the entries in this edition are thought to have been embroidered nevertheless Modersohn-Becker commented on them and Delaunay-Terk read them. They seemed to have been the rage at the beginning of the century and were inspiring for young women artists. See *Paula Modersohn-Becker: The Letters and Journals*, 462 n. Becker's journal entry from November 11, 1898.

<sup>57</sup> From an untranslated journal entry of June 12, 1905. Delaunay-Terk was discussing the difficulties of losing friends when they move away or marry out of this desire for fame. Trans. Anca Oroveanu.

<sup>58</sup> John E. Bowlt discusses Bashkirtseva, noting that she was beginning to gain fame before her untimely death for her "salon and eccentric behavior as well as for her art, although her genre scenes such as *The Meeting* can be accommodated within the general Realist movement with its didactic social documentation." From "Some Very Elegant Ladies," in *Women Artists of the Russian Avant-Garde 1910-1930* (Köln: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1975), 35.

<sup>59</sup> Among Terk's friends along with Tappert, were Adolf Erbsloh and Arnold Schoenberg, Although they were all only in Karlsruhe for her first year, she kept up with the Schoenbergs throughout her life. On the friendships at Karlsruhe see Madsen, 46-47.

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<sup>60</sup> Cited in Madsen, 41-42 and in Bernier et Schneider-Maunoury, 23. Tappert left Karlsruhe the following year and joined the artist colony at Worpswede in 1906 where he started an art school. He later became an illustrator for *Aktion* and other periodicals. Orrel P. Reed, *German Expressionist Art* (Los Angeles: Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, 1977), 64.

<sup>61</sup> Discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>62</sup> Some say Robert Delaunay left the portrait at the height of his work during the pre-war period, but if so only for a two year period.

<sup>63</sup> These dates are supported by heretofore untranslated letters showing that Terk was still studying in Karlsruhe in 1906 and can be found listed in Addenda 1. Discussed further on 19.

<sup>64</sup> In *Nous irons* "Il me donne des bases et des connaissances solides, et l'approche de l'art sans faux académisme. Le professeur lourd et droit ressemble à Léger . . . Sortie de l'opulence bourgeoise de Saint-Pétersbourg, je commence à respirer, à découvrir la joie de vivre," 16. Schmidt-Reutte (1863-1909) studied in Munich in 1890 with Friedrich Fehr. He began teaching in Karlsruhe from 1899 until 1907. From *Kunst in Karlsruhe 1900-1950*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Ausstellung im Badischen Kunstverein (Verlag, C.F. Muller, 1981), 159.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-48.

<sup>66</sup> Madsen, 46.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>68</sup> On 8 March 1906, Smirnov wrote warning Terk about smoking opium: "You mentioned that you smoke cigarettes with opium? For the love of God or the Devil or whoever you like, quit. I say this not for the sake of health, but for something else. You can lose the best of what you have, gain several new shades and lose the entire world." Smirnov further states that he has stopped drinking, is walking more, and feels wonderful. Trans. Noroc and Daughtry.

<sup>69</sup> [Tchouiko, a Russian poet whom Terk painted] gave Simon high praise and strongly berated Blanche." Letter to Terk from Smirnov, n.d. but probably March 1906, to Terk in Karlsruhe, which changes her stated chronology. See Appendix 1. Trans. Martin Daughtry.

<sup>70</sup> Unpublished letter from Smirnov to Terk dated 26 January 1906, from Paris to Karlsruhe. Trans. Martin Daughtry.

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<sup>71</sup> From unpublished letter dated 30 May 1906 to Terk in Finland. Trans. Martin Daughtry.

<sup>72</sup> The so-called competition will be discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>73</sup> Unpublished letter dated June 20, 1906, trans. Martin Daughtry. Smirnov also writes, "I pity you with all my heart, although I don't think it should be all that bad to be in Finland."

<sup>74</sup> Letter from June 27, 1906, translated Martin Daughtry.

<sup>75</sup> In *Nous irons* Delaunay-Terk recounted in 1978, 19. "Sagement je m'inscris au cours de la Palette. Cinq maitres, aussi néo-classiques que 'consacrés,' y enseignent: Cottet, Aman Jean, Desvallières, Simon, et Jacques-Emile Blanche. She doesn't mention Kruglikova, which could have been an oversight since she was 92 years old.

<sup>76</sup> From Madsen, 53.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54 and Bernier, 30.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56. In several places Terk mentions Grossmann, but not Kruglikova. Schneider-Maunoury and Bernier mention Kruglikova's etchings and Apollinaire's critique of the Salon des Indépendants of 1910: "Les gravures de couleur de Mlle Krouglikova sont parmi les plus belles que l'on ait faites de nos jours." From "Le Salon des Artistes Indépendants," March 20, 1910, in *Pléiade*, vol.II, p. 91, Gallimard, 1991. Kruglikova introducing Terk to printmaking must have come from Delaunay-Terk to Schneider-Maunoury.

<sup>79</sup> *Nous irons*, 19, "Les toiles sont corrigées successivement par chacun d'eux, ce qui crée une véritable confusion dans l'esprit des élèves. A partir de ce moment, je travaille seule."

<sup>80</sup> The letters show that Smirnov was an intermediary between Terk and her aunt-step-mother. Terk was determined to live in Paris (and was aware of Modersohn-Becker's lesson). Discussions of her spending too much money, sharing or not sharing a studio, and deceiving her aunt are discussed. Unpublished letters, trans. from Russian by Angela Noroc into French. My translation into English.

<sup>81</sup> Letters from Smirnov, living in Paris, to Terk in St. Petersburg and in Finland show her whereabouts at that time. See Appendix for Terk's whereabouts letter by letter.

<sup>82</sup> From *Nous irons*, discussing her liaison with Robert Delaunay, 31.

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<sup>83</sup> They were married December 5, 1908. Madsen suggests they were married in London to avoid problems with French immigration officials since both were aliens. They all stayed at Bucker's Hotel in Finsbury Square. Madsen also writes that Terk and Uhde visited the Tate Museum and the National Gallery, 78.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., Uhde's account of the luncheon reported by Madsen, 79.

<sup>85</sup> "A la jeune fille gagnée à la cause on offrait un mari pour lui donner la liberté de la femme mariée . . . quelquefois c'était un inconnu requis pour la circonstance," in Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *L'Empire des tzars et les Russes*, (Paris, 1881; Réédition Paris: Robert Laffont, Coll. Bouquins, 1980). Quoted in Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 46.

<sup>86</sup> Uhde explained to Terk that although his distinguished Prussian family still owned two or three castles there was no money. P. 33-34. References to her "white marriage," *Nous irons*, 20. Payment of her dowry began at the time of her marriage.

<sup>87</sup> See catalogue with lists of exhibitors.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Bernier, 36, "Je passais devant le Dome, je n'y entrais jamais. Une jeune fille n'allait pas dans de tels endroits à l'époque."

<sup>89</sup> Robert Delaunay dedicated his first *Eiffel Tower* to Sonia. Sandor Kuthy discusses this Eiffel Tower and the inscription, "Exposition Universelle 1889 [but written to look like 1885, which was the birth year of both] La Tour à l'univers s'Adresse mouvement profondeur 1909 France-Russie," and "Le tremblement de terre" in the catalogue for the *Sonia & Robert Delaunay* exhibition, Kunstmuseum, Bern, 44-46.

<sup>90</sup> Uhde arranged to have letters from a fictitious female lover "discovered" by Sonia, who then filed for divorce. See Madsen, 92.

<sup>91</sup> From interviews in later years and in particular in her autobiography from interviews.

<sup>92</sup> Delaunay-Terk referred to Anna Terk as her aunt and as her mother.

<sup>93</sup> Unpublished letters from Smirnov to Delaunay-Terk dated January 22, 1910 show his concern over Delaunay-Terk not telling her aunt the truth, or even discussing the situation with Uhde. Then again on January 30, 1910 he thanks Delaunay-Terk for writing her aunt, but criticizes her for calling rumors "gossip," which implies that they are lies. Translated Anca Oroveanu. Letters from Smirnov to Sonia tell of discussions with her aunt over sending money to her in Paris. If they send "500 francs it isn't enough or 700 it isn't enough, no matter

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what they send." Dated the 24 (no month) (depending on the old or new calendar) 1906. Trans. into French by Angela Noroc from copies of the Smirnov-Terk letters given to me by Schneider-Maunoury.

<sup>94</sup> Unpublished letter from Smirnov to Delaunay-Terk September 26, 1910. Trans. Anca Oroveanu.

<sup>95</sup> It is also evident that they knew of her family's wealth; Berthe de Rose (as she called herself) spent money lavishly but had to earn it at times. She might have been very glad to have a daughter-in-law with an income, regardless of the social improprieties. De Rose really didn't care what people thought and lived a rather bohemian life herself. Letters from De Rose and Damour are in the archives of the Centre de Documentation at the Centre Pompidou.

<sup>96</sup> Robert's mother was considered "bohemian" and, in fact, nothing is really known of Robert's father. Berthe de Rose wrote a newspaper column, entertained at her salon, and traveled extensively, leaving Robert with her sister, Marie Damour, and her husband, Charles Damour.

<sup>97</sup> These letters are in the Delaunay-Terk archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Centre de Documentation of the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

<sup>98</sup> From an unpublished letter from Smirnov to S. Terk 22 September 1910, trans. Anca Oroveanu. Smirnov is referring to Uhde's homosexuality, which Delaunay-Terk and Smirnov knew about but had not told her parents.

<sup>99</sup> Unpublished letter from Smirnov to Delaunay-Terk. 30 January 1910. Trans. Anca Oroveanu. Smirnov seems to be referring to Uhde's homosexuality and Sonia's knowledge of it prior to their marriage. In same letter Smirnov asks if she has read *Apollon* and tells her about interesting articles on Bakst's painting. He often signs, "I kiss your dear hands." Addressed to Madame S. Uhde-Terk, 19, rue des Sts. Pères.

<sup>100</sup> In later years Delaunay-Terk professed dislike for her aunt and her own mother. Earlier letters and journals do not give cause for these feelings, expect that at times she called the Terks "bourgeois." Perhaps the feelings for her aunt developed from the severe questioning about the divorce and whether Delaunay-Terk knew that Uhde was gay when they were married. As Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury suggest, Terk probably married Uhde to obtain her dowry and inheritance which came to her at the time of her marriage, not only to stay in Paris.

<sup>101</sup> Unpublished letter from Smirnov to Madame S. Uhde-Terk, Chez Mme Meliodon, Port par la Cluse (Ain), dated 19 June-1 July 1910. Trans. Anca Oroveanu.

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<sup>102</sup> Unpublished letter from Smirnov to Delaunay-Terk February 25, 1910, trans. Anca Oroveanu.

<sup>103</sup> Unpublished letter from A. Smirnov dated July 19, 1910, trans. Anca Oroveanu. Later Sonia commented that she thought because of the scarlet fever that she could not get pregnant. Actually she became pregnant in April or May 1910; Charles Delaunay was born January 11, 1910. She was already pregnant when she became ill with scarlet fever.

<sup>104</sup> Letters from De Rose to the Delaunays are in the Centre de Documentation of the Centre Pompidou.

<sup>105</sup> Interview by Patrick Raynaud for her autobiography, *Nous irons*. Quoted in Madsen, 77.

**WOMEN LOOKING AT WOMEN: PORTRAITS AND  
INTERPRETATIONS BY SONIA AND OTHERS<sup>1</sup>**

*Thank God that . . . portrait turned out all right . . . [this] is so important to me, especially now, as I prepare to sacrifice my personal life in its entirety in the name of my future studies.*  
Sonia Terk<sup>2</sup>

Sonia Terk, like several women in the avant-garde between 1906 and 1909, painted strong, expressive portraits of women in her quest to liberate herself and her work from her traditional bourgeois background. This chapter will examine Terk's paintings of women during the period 1906-1909 in comparison with contemporary works of other women artists in the avant-garde whose work she knew: Paula Modersohn-Becker, Gabrielle Münter, Marianne von Werefkin, Natalia Goncharova, and Elisabeth Epstein. A primary concern is how these women artists from similar circumstances moved out of their bourgeois situations into a different cultural context and if, and how, it affected their portraits of themselves and other women. Their changing conceptions of living out the ideology of liberated women developed as they broke away from their traditional lifestyles. Terk's

connection with her female contemporaries, except in the decorative arts or fashion, has not been duly examined.<sup>3</sup> Unlike their mentors, these women were visually examining themselves and other women in distinct contrast to the avant-garde portraits of them by men. While they would not have called themselves feminists, they exhibited the idea of a “feminist consciousness” in their lives and in their work. By feminist consciousness, I mean the way in which they transformed the concepts of male artists in the avant-garde while incorporating their own cultural attitudes.<sup>4</sup> Lacking role-models, they, nevertheless, struggled to attain liberation in their lives and in their art.

By 1906, before she met Robert Delaunay, who is often credited with being her mentor, Sonia Terk was painting portraits of women which represent some of the strongest, and certainly the most expressive, works of her career.<sup>5</sup> Crude, powerful, colors and patterning on several nude portraits of women become, in themselves, subversive. Many of the portraits were of household help--not the paid models or family members who were the usual subjects for portraits.<sup>6</sup> Through these works Terk asserted her power of formal and psychological expression. She was to abandon portrait painting in

1909 with the commencement of her relationship with Robert

Delaunay, except for an abstracted catalogue cover which she called *Self-Portrait* for a Stockholm gallery (1916; Pl.1),<sup>7</sup> painted as a Simultaneous experiment in portraiture. Elements of the figurative continue in her work occasionally during the teens, but she never returned to painting the portrait except for several versions of the 1916 self-portrait.

During the years 1906 to 1909 other women artists of the avant-garde were also experimenting, like Sonia Terk, with new ways of looking at and painting women, especially as a means of investigating gender identity. Works of Mary Cassatt or Berthe Morisot have been discussed in terms of the difference in the way in which women paint women as compared with paintings of women by men.<sup>8</sup> Cassatt's and Morisot's paintings of women reading or intellectually engaged (made obvious by a look of concentration or gesture), instead of sitting as objects of the gaze of male desire, have been the subject of several articles and books. Terk's paintings are of women who, while not engaged in reading or any other activity, like Cassatt's and Morisot's, are at the same time not portrayed as objectified females.

Modersohn-Becker, at the time of her death in 1907, was already becoming known as a promising painter; Terk was aware of her work as early as 1903-04 from a German friend, Georg Tappert, with whom she studied in Karlsruhe.<sup>9</sup> Münter and Werefkin were painting and exhibiting with Kandinsky's group, which later became the Blaue Reiter; Werefkin in particular was actively painting portraits which Terk would have known through Elisabeth Epstein.<sup>10</sup> Epstein was the mutual friend of both Terk and Kandinsky. She and Terk lived in the same house in Paris during part of 1905-06, with Mme de Bouvet at 64 bd. de Pont Royal. Terk makes no mention of knowing Epstein earlier in Germany. Kandinsky and Münter were living in Paris part of this time and possibly knew Terk. While she also was aware of, and indebted to, the work of Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso by then, there has been more discussion of her debt to these fathers of twentieth century art.<sup>11</sup>

Although Terk did not often discuss art or other women artists in her early letters and journals, she commented on her desire to escape an ordinary bourgeois life and to live freely and make art

outside of Russia, especially in Paris, much as Paula Modersohn-

Becker wrote in her letters and journals at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

The earliest evidence of Terk's depiction of women actually began with drawings about 1903 when she was studying in Karlsruhe with Ludwig Schmidt-Reutte.<sup>13</sup> In her autobiography Terk spoke of him as the one who "gave me solid basics . . . and an approach to art without false academism."<sup>14</sup> In 1904 two self-portraits, one in sepia ink on canvas, from which she glances warily at the viewer (Pl. 2), and the other a more highly developed drawing with white chalk highlights (Pl. 3), demonstrate her skill at the time. A drawing of her aunt (Pl. 4) from the same period is a sympathetic one in charcoal and chalk. Her *Tante's* eyes sparkle with white chalk highlighting and give this portrait a radiance not found in many of Terk's drawings.<sup>15</sup> Their laundress, in another drawing, portrays a tired, strong face in darker, somber tones (Pl. 5), and a young Finnish child stares at the viewer with luminescent eyes (Pl. 6). These drawings are similar to those of many young developing artists, and while they demonstrate her skill in drawing, formed in Schmidt-Reutte's classes, only one or two (the drawings of her aunt and an old peasant) show extraordinary ability.

Terk's work at this time is similar in style to that of Elisabeth Epstein, who exhibited a portrait of a woman in the Blaue Reiter exhibition and almanac (1912; Pl. 7). A naturalistic view of a woman looking out at the viewer wearing a plumed hat and lacy jabot and titled simply, *Portrait*, gives no indication as to the identity of the sitter.

In *Berthe Morisot: Images of Women*, Anne Higonnet discusses Morisot's early work in the context of the amateur tradition of painting for women. Women of the middle class and upper middle class often studied drawing and painting to connect them to the "genteel tradition of a cultivated (preindustrial) bourgeoisie."<sup>16</sup> Higonnet also points out that amateur pictures were meant for a secluded family life, given to family and friends, while professional paintings were meant for sale and exhibition. This would have been one of Terk's principal dilemmas: she had an income and did not need money; therefore it was not necessary to paint for the art market, and this might have hindered her career.<sup>17</sup> Terk's work from this period of time corresponds to the same genre of trained amateur artist presented by Higonnet, which included both men and women.

Portraits painted by Terk, however, show promise of escaping from these limitations even from the beginning.

Some of the earliest painted portraits of sitters created during vacations in Finland are of the housekeeper, the cook, and the seamstress, who took time from their work to pose for the young artist. The year 1907 was one of her most prolific years for the production of portraits. By this time her family had accepted her as an artist,<sup>18</sup> although they continued pressuring her to marry one of her suitors, principally Alexei Smirnov, and to remain in Russia.

Philomène, the family seamstress, was the subject of several portraits during summer vacations in Novaya-Kirka, Finland<sup>19</sup> in 1907 and 1908 that demonstrate Terk's developing flattening of forms and bold outlining, and relate her work to the impact of Gauguin, Matisse, and Modersohn-Becker. She painted at least four versions of the Philomène series (Pl. 8, 9, 10, 11) and each shows the formal concerns facing the artist.<sup>20</sup> In none of these portraits does the model look at the artist or viewer. Instead, in each case Philomène is painted in three-quarter view with flattened planes of color, little modeling and then only in other flat planes of darker and

complementary colors. Terk's treatment of the subject's mouth demonstrates her experiments with color and form as well as expression: in one painting a thin line signifies a taut mouth--much as one holding pins during a dress fitting (Pl. 8); the largest *Philomène* has a rather pretty, ordinary mouth and is Terk's first large painting<sup>21</sup> (Pl. 9); another *Philomène*'s mouth is a dramatically startling, unexpected splotch of red, painted over the outlined red mouth (Pl. 10). In two of the portraits flowered backgrounds provide more decorative stimulation, reminiscent of the decorative floral backgrounds in works of Van Gogh and Matisse, and in the starker portrait with the thin-lined mouth the background is also plain and simple and the entire work is dark, suggesting Terk's use of color to communicate a mood. Of the other women artists discussed in this chapter, only the portraits painted by Werefkin approach the drama and intensity of the paintings of *Philomène*. Sherry Buckberrough refers to the portraits as having "harsh" brushstrokes as well as color, reminiscent of contemporary works by Kandinsky and Jawlensky.<sup>22</sup> Buckberrough also points out that in their vigor Terk's paintings of women were as genuine as those of Matisse in 1905 and surpassed

those of Matisse in 1907.<sup>23</sup> She quotes Robert Delaunay, who in 1938

wrote about Delaunay-Terk's early works:

. . . these portraits have a slightly barbarous, slightly caricatured expression which contrasts with the academic flatness of the time and introduces a sort of spice into the art then existing in France. This was at the peak of fauvism and Gauguinism, when exoticism flourished at the Salon des Indépendants, for which Matisse carried the banner of French taste by channeling this whole avalanche of Slavic painting, mainly of oriental origin, and seasoning it to the Parisian literary taste of the time: the neo-Baudelairian period, the *Femme au Chapeau Vert*, the era of everything is order and beauty . . .<sup>24</sup>

Terk was consciously competing with Matisse. In her late memoirs she recounted:

In our group of young Russian women, we critiqued Matisse. I find his vision too bourgeois, with the exception of his great still lifes. He wasn't advanced enough for us, and we, we wanted to go beyond that. Further than Matisse who made a bourgeois compromise. It was through this strong desire to go beyond Fauvism that my works of that epoch were born.<sup>25</sup>

In this challenge to Matisse, Terk was bringing full circle the ideas developed by him from 1905 to 1907--through her eyes and own experience and exposure. When she first became aware of Matisse is not evident, but it might have been when she saw the Fauve exhibition in Paris in 1905. Jack Flam writes that Matisse and the Fauves were criticized for their "excessively bright colors, eccentricity, and alleged

structural incoherence."<sup>26</sup> Her work in the portraits is a combination of Matissean color and style adapted through exposure to German color and style. It also anticipates the works from 1910 of Goncharova with their primitivized flattened forms of bold color.

Primitivizing in Terk's work takes a different form than in many of the avant-garde, particularly Picasso, whose facial characteristics can be compared with specific tribal masks. Although she appropriates indirectly from such masks, she uses the idea of a generic mask to make her own stylization, more in the tradition of Gauguin, Matisse, or Modersohn-Becker. Münter and Kandinsky appropriated from German *hinterglasmalerei*, Kandinsky also from Russian *lubki* and folk tales, and Goncharova utilized folk art in her work in her efforts toward developing a modern style. Terk's paintings, however, do not develop in this manner, except for the use of bright folk art colors. In her needlework she appropriated from traditional folk quilting and embroidery, but not from the fairy tales that attracted Kandinsky nor in the peasant scenes that Goncharova developed in her work about 1910.

Terk painted working class women in portraits which can be compared with those of the same genre by Modersohn-Becker, whose work Terk knew of since 1904 or 1905. *The Old Peasant Woman* (1905-1907; Pl.12) by Modersohn-Becker, while not Fauve-like and brightly colored like Terk's painting, portrays an old woman seen without sentimentality or prettiness and depicted in strong solid colors.<sup>27</sup> Terk's portraits of family servants show women posed simply as the focus of a portrait. Modersohn-Becker's portraits of working class women also offer neither a narrative nor the romanticization of her subjects. However, several of Modersohn-Becker's paintings of peasants from Worpswede resemble those of Van Gogh in spirit: poor and deprived. Terk's laundress, on the other hand, could as easily be a grandmother or an aunt and the aunt could be a governess.

Portraits which may demonstrate Modersohn-Becker's interest in Gauguinesque color and form are her *Self-Portrait with Blue and White Striped Dress*, 1906, and *Self-Portrait with Hat and Veil* of the same year (Pl. 13, 14). In these paintings the artist uses blocks of color in flattened forms to define shadows. Her interest in Gauguin

had intensified after her trip to Paris in 1905.<sup>28</sup> With Otto Modersohn she had seen Fayet's Gauguin collection.<sup>29</sup> Writing from Worpswede April 21, 1905, her principal requests were for books by and about Gauguin.<sup>30</sup> Modersohn-Becker's work, informed by Gauguin and Cézanne, is hard to categorize; it is neither Post-Impressionist nor is it fully Expressionist. She has been referred to as a Proto-Expressionist, and this might be the best term to describe it. Nude women, often Modersohn-Becker herself, staring at the viewer correspond somewhat to Gauguin's portraits of women who look out directly from the canvas in an unselfconscious manner.<sup>31</sup> These unconventional self-portraits portray the artist healthily regarding herself. Modersohn-Becker and Terk claimed Gauguin as inspiration, and Modersohn-Becker has left letters and documentation regarding exhibitions she saw of his work in Paris, particularly the Fayet collection and then in the Salon d'Automne of 1906, the "great Gauguin retrospective."<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Terk's *The Young Girl Sleeping* (Pl. 15) portrays a teenage girl, closest to a Gauguinesque-type Tahitian woman, with full lips, broad nose, and closed eyes. Avoiding the voyeuristic quality of

even Gauguin's most beautiful works, Terk's painting simply renders a woman asleep. Strikingly simple planes of color provide a smooth pattern for Terk's analysis of a young servant or schoolgirl. Portraying her asleep seems to suggest the model's vulnerability.

One of the most provocative and best known of her paintings of 1907 is the nude torso of the *Young Finnish Girl* (Pl. 16), now in the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Shockingly bright Fauve colors, pale luminescent greens and blues, still vibrate from the nude form of a young girl and foreshadow Terk's later use of complementary colors to provoke simultaneous contrasts and abstracted shapes. Another smaller version, a bust of a clothed Finnish girl in the collection of Jacques Damase, is almost as shocking with its mask-like face of intense colors: two shades of green, bright blue, reds, ocher, and vermillion (Pl. 17).<sup>33</sup> On the back of this rarely exhibited painting is a self-portrait of Sonia Terk in 1906 (Pl. 18), and while it is recognizably Terk, she treats herself in much the same way, although her face is more clearly delineated, with mask-like modeling in reds and blues. Floral stars spread from her face into the background. Terk's manner and three-quarter profile are

carefully looking at the image of herself as she paints; the daubs of paint seem much like a child playing with grownup makeup--of Fauve quality. She is studying herself as subject, unlike the other portraits where she paints flattened and exaggerated forms of female models. The application of color and flattening of forms in her self-portrait brings to mind her desire to be more modern than Matisse, but this self-portrait appears to be "tamer" than the wild Fauve coloration of *Mme Matisse*, also called *The Green Line*.<sup>34</sup>

Modersohn-Becker's *Self-Portrait with an Amber Necklace* (Pl. 19), in flattened forms and subdued flesh-toned colors, shows a nude woman examining herself carefully, in a mature, reflective pose with her eyes glancing away from the viewer. In several self-portraits Modersohn-Becker looks at herself with critical eyes and a positive self-assessment (Pl. 20, 21), and in one paints a mother and child, portraying the woman with a masked-like face. (Pl. 22). Terk's self-portrait portrays a self-conscious young woman, with an apprehensive look, who seems to be exploring, or looking at, the world rather than her own personality. Despite these differences, both artists chose to paint their self-portraits without providing a narrative for the viewer.<sup>35</sup>

They are examining their own faces and bodies rather than using models. Another self-portrait which could be compared with those of Terk and Modersohn-Becker is a 1907 self-portrait of Natalia Goncharova (Pl. 23), who became a member of the Russian avant-garde, and, although four years older than Terk, participated in the same milieu.<sup>36</sup> Staring at the viewer and wearing a simple Russian-style blouse, Goncharova holds a bouquet of flowers, instead of a palette often seen in self-portraits, but at the same time identifies herself as an artist by depicting paintings hanging on the wall behind her.<sup>37</sup>

Another provocative female portrait, by Terk in 1907, in a long narrow format, is *The Young Italian Girl* (Pl. 24). The thin shape of the figure imitates, and nearly fills, the whole canvas. With her solid, dark hair and brilliant red dress, the triangular-faced young woman holding her hand to her heart demonstrates again an experiment with a masked face, strong color, and flattening of planes. Terk's treatment of this portrait corresponds to works by Werefkin, especially her *Self-Portrait* of 1908-1910 (Pl. 25). The colors and brisk, rough brushwork in the Werefkin portrait vibrate; glowing red eyes glare from

an expressive face looking at the viewer (and in turn, herself) from a three-quarter pose. Her personality radiates from the rough dynamic strokes and the strong complementary colors. Werefkin's expressive portraits create a similar mood to those of Sonia Terk and situate Terk more in the milieu of German Expressionism than of Paris.<sup>38</sup> Another portrait by Terk which might be compared to Werefkin's is *Mme Minsky* (1907; Pl. 26). Mme Minsky and her husband were Russian friends of Terk's. This straightforward woman, dressed in evening clothing--not one of the servants--is comparable to Werefkin's self-portrait with its heavy brushstrokes, strong colors, and the sitter's intense stare.

Werefkin's self-portrait corresponds to Terk's in the use of freedom of color as well as in the application of paint with loose, textural brushstrokes. It also portrays certain sentiments of angst, fear, or self-examination often seen in the work of German artists.<sup>39</sup>

Werefkin wrote,

Freedom is the root of my self. Freely I serve. I am free and pure in the deepest part of my being. Rigid form makes life congeal and halts the movement. Feelings and thoughts are constantly in flux. And movement is the essence of life. Accordingly I turn into art everything around me.<sup>40</sup>

Like Werefkin and many of these artists, Sonia Terk espoused a similar philosophy about turning everything into art, and throughout her long career she decorated everything around her as well as participating in making art, creating a simultaneous environment. Werefkin also saw herself as something of a prophet for women commenting that people always came to her for advice and treated her as their star: “. . . they couldn't progress in life without me . . . I held the light of ideals high, I illuminated the way for them.”<sup>41</sup>

A colleague of Werefkin's, Gabrielle Münter,<sup>42</sup> who like Delaunay-Terk and Werefkin, is best known for her relationship with a better-known male artist, painted a portrait of Werefkin in 1909 which pictures a woman with a straightforward gaze, staring at the artist or viewer (Pl. 27). Wearing a mound-shaped cloak and a hat bedecked with flowers in brilliant colors with a gold background, Münter's handsome portrait of Werefkin is a work related to the same Fauvist-type Expressionism practiced by both Terk and Werefkin.<sup>43</sup> An earlier Münter woodcut of a woman, *Aurelie* (1906; Pl. 28), naturalistically portrays a woman pictured in both light and deep shadows providing dramatic contrasts.<sup>44</sup> The face of the woman is expressive, showing

pleasure or surprise, and demonstrates Münter's skill with the medium and corresponds to Terk's drawings of her aunt and the laundress from 1904. Münter's *Self-Portrait* (1909-1910; Pl. 29) relates to Terk's but also explores a darker, perhaps psychological, mood in half of her face, while in 1909 a more naturalistic self-portrait of Münter (Pl. 30), gazing intently or even nervously, wearing a broad-brimmed hat with flowers, points to herself as an artist with canvases, brushes, and palette--which neither Terk nor Modersohn-Becker had portrayed in their self-portraits.<sup>45</sup> Another full-length self-portrait of 1909 by Münter purposely leaves her face blank--featureless--without clues as to why.

Terk's strongest proto-Expressionistic painting of 1907-08, is *Yellow Nude* (Pl. 31). Situated on the patterned background of an Oriental, Turkish, or even Native American rug, the stark nude, painted with yellow flesh, is a portrayal of a young prostitute wearing long black stockings.<sup>46</sup> Liberation of color, as in Gauguin's *Yellow Christ*, might have been her aim, since Gauguin was one of her influences. The face is mask-like and harsh; colors appear to be slashed on almost like warpaint. But her competition with Matisse can best be seen in comparison with Matisse's *Blue Nude, Memory of*

*Biskra* (1906; Pl. 32).<sup>47</sup> Terk's painting lacks the tonality of Cézanne's

or Matisse's work--her figure is harsh yellow--but the willed

awkwardness is exaggerated, not in the way of the extraordinarily

exaggerated hip of Matisse's blue female nude, but as a more

prepubescent awkwardness akin to developing German

Expressionism.<sup>48</sup> Modersohn-Becker painted several mother-and-

child works in 1906 and 1907--with warm, heavy nude, nurturing

mothers (Pl. 33). But the attitude of Terk's nude figure is like neither

of these. Her yellow nude differs from those of Modersohn-Becker in

several ways: the colors in Terk's work are strong and dynamic; her

female nude is not that of a nurturer but rather a young woman,

powerful in her own right, staring at the viewer like a brassier Olympia,

and also more like nudes painted by the artists of Die Brücke.

Primitivizing war paint masks her face, reflecting markings only

beginning to be realized in *Young Finnish Girl*, and demonstrates

Terk's awareness of Matisse's paintings of women with facial

masking. Outlined in blue with a colorful umber background bordered

by zig-zags of color, this nude, and *The Young Finnish Girl*, are Terk's

major paintings of 1907-08.<sup>49</sup> Her portraits portray decidedly stronger

elements of so-called “primitivism” from African and Oceanic sources than either Werefkin’s or Münter’s works. Buckberrough writes that by fusing Russian characteristics such as color and surface decoration and “fusing it with contemporary style, she could achieve the individuality which Robert saw as the ‘anarchic spirit’ in her early oils.”<sup>50</sup> *Yellow Nude*, along with *The Young Finnish Girl*, best exemplify Robert Delaunay’s appraisal of his future wife’s work.

Modersohn-Becker, in journal entries and letters, depicted her work with female nudes as an intense preoccupation: “I love to fall asleep among my paintings and wake up with them in the morning . . . I’m painting life-size nudes and still lifes.”<sup>51</sup> Sketches of a nude figure exercising, possibly Becker herself, depict the female with her feet gripped under a chest-of-drawers doing sit-ups, and in another sketch doing push-ups (Pl. 34).<sup>52</sup> In addition Modersohn-Becker painted herself nude even when seemingly pregnant (Pl. 35). In her desire for liberation, earlier as a student, Terk painted a nude (most likely herself) stretched on the rocks on the Finnish coast (Pl. 36). She liked to boast that she brought nude sunbathing to Finland,<sup>53</sup> which whether it is true or not demonstrates her interest in “nature” and affinity with

ideas of naturism of that period, including the Brücke artists who also practiced nude bathing and sunbathing and painted their versions of these freedoms and rejections of the constraints of bourgeois society. Regardless, her nude sunbathing figure is in the category of “amateur,” and the subject matter is not avant-garde for a young female artist. In Paris in 1908, Terk created engravings of nudes (Pl. 37) which look as if they were inspired by Matisse’s startling *Bonheur de Vivre* (1906), although they also bear an affinity to Gauguin’s Tahitian figures, as well as to Modersohn-Becker’s curved, supine mothers. However, Terk’s figures demonstrate her aggressive distortion of the figures, using a less naturalistic, more dynamic line.

Primitivizing in the work of Terk shows her understanding of the process that the principal male artists were involved with at the same time. She appropriated colors to resemble facial masks; she used decorative elements like tribal motifs in backgrounds of paintings, in the manner in which many artists in the avant-garde were experimenting at the time, especially in her *Yellow Nude*. In this painting, and both of the *Young Finnish Girls*, Terk borrowed from the

tribal mask tradition that Picasso, Derain, and Matisse were exploring in their own work.

The paintings of women by both Terk and Modersohn-Becker, however, relate to the early modernist milieu. Each of them used the nude female form to break with past depictions of women by female artists. Higonnet writes that by painting nudes women offer their own bodies to the gaze of a male viewer. By refusing to paint traditional nudes both Modersohn-Becker, with her nurturing mothers or self-examining portraits, and Sonia Terk, with her aggressive, colorful, definitely not pretty, young women, subverted the process.<sup>54</sup> This is significant because other women were painting portraits of women and even nude women in a traditional manner. Whether the process was conscious or unconscious, each of these women found a way to avoid exploiting women and to create a new way of looking at them.

Modersohn-Becker's nudes and Terk's *Yellow Nude* express strong psychological presences which assert the power and agency of each female model as if to establish ownership of their bodies no matter how others may see them. Carol Duncan writes that "the problem of women of the avant-garde was not to invert the existing social-sexual

order, not to replace it with the domination of women; the new woman was struggling for her own autonomy as a psychological, social, and political being."<sup>55</sup>

Today this can be interpreted as a feminist consciousness, which none of these women would have claimed. But each of them evidences a feminist sensibility: each, except for Münter, traveled to a foreign city to study art, fought to stay there, and determined to make a way for herself and her work.<sup>56</sup> This behavior alone is an astounding accomplishment. The treatment of the nude female figure by Terk and Modersohn-Becker adds to the overall sense of achievement. Modersohn-Becker, with several paintings of herself as primarily woman and mother, and Sonia Terk, with her *Young Finnish Woman* and *Yellow Nude*, are not making narrative paintings like those of many nineteenth-century artists. Modersohn-Becker's work fits more closely the nineteenth-century narrative paintings than do Terk's, because of the involvement of the figure with beads or her baby, and with herself, but each woman is exploring new territory. Modersohn-Becker portrays herself and other women as intelligently, carefully observing themselves in an unselfconscious manner, denoted by raised

eyebrows, a turn of the head, and penetrating eyes. Neither painter's work was likely to inspire sexual arousal and delight from a male viewer of that day; none of the subjects seem helpless or exploited; each has her own space and power. The only figure on a bed is Terk's flat-chested nude of a young woman painted yellow; and she is possibly as uninviting to a male viewer as one of the women in *Les Femmes d'Alger*, which she had not seen but knew about from Wilhelm Uhde at that time.<sup>57</sup> Terk's harsh exaggeration with warm and cold colors seems as aggressive as Picasso's angular and lozenge forms. The contrast of colors alone would most likely be too harsh in relation to the female nude for the masculine taste of that time. I am not asserting, however, that Terk and Modersohn-Becker were inventing the idea of subverting the system with their depictions of nude females but that they were in the forefront of the avant-garde refusing to participate in the ploy of portraying women as psychologically weak, or available, or dependent.

It is clear from what has been said that Sonia Terk's paintings place her centrally in the avant-garde, along with these other women of her generation. Powerful paintings of women by a woman--who

used colors freely without thought of fleshtones or what was considered proper portraiture of the most advanced woman painter models; primitivizing in her own version of appropriation from African masks or Native American warpaint; daring to make herself or other women (mostly servants) garish and bold--help define Terk's determination to work as an artist, neither female nor male at this period. Later, in her evolution into abstraction, she continued this path: escaping from accepted forms of making art. Her portraits of women between 1906 and 1909 offer a glimpse into the strong beginnings of a long and innovative career.

Although she did not know him at the time, Sonia Terk's portraits differ radically from those of Robert Delaunay. His 1906 self-portrait is in a pointillist style, although like Terk he also used Fauvist colors. Throughout his career, with the exception of the years 1912 to 1916,<sup>58</sup> Robert Delaunay painted rather naturalistic portraits on commission, often with Simultaneous backgrounds or stylistic decor.<sup>59</sup>

Terk abandoned portrait painting for several reasons, some of which are discussed in the chapter on her collaboration with her husband, Robert Delaunay. In her evolution as an artist, like many

others of the period, she was also conscious of trying to make a new kind of art which would provoke her to leave behind a style she perceived to be traditional, since these portraits combine elements of Fauvism and Neo-Impressionism.<sup>60</sup> In Delaunay-Terk's struggle to liberate herself from her country and from her bourgeois past (see my chapter, "Transformations"), she abandoned portrait painting to search for new ways to express her art. Later she devoted herself to the development of an abstracted style in addition to her increasing work in fashion.<sup>61</sup> The portraits from this period still vibrate with color, anticipating her experiments with Simultaneism a few years later.

<sup>1</sup>Two books, Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot: Images of Women* (Cambridge and London: Yale University Press, 1992), and Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), provided useful ideas. Although the period of time is earlier and the theses are different they offer groundwork for ideas in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> From Terk's journal, June 26, 1904. Trans. Martin Daughtry.

<sup>3</sup> Valentine Marcadé has written on Sonia Terk in connection with the Russian avant-garde but does not discuss stylistic or social aspects of the work. In an article for *Arts* magazine, September 1979, 88-95, Joan M. Marter discusses Delaunay-Terk's work in connection with Sophie Tauber-Arp and Margaret Zorach.

<sup>4</sup> For a study of feminist consciousness, see Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> She also made drawings of men and several interesting paintings of a Russian friend and poet, Tchouiko (or Chouiko) during 1908 but I do not focus on them. Most of Terk's portraits were of women and focusing of these portraits provokes questions regarding her difficult relationships with many women in her life, including her mother, adopted mother, and later her daughter-in-law.

<sup>6</sup>She did paint portraits of family members but many of her portraits are of household help.

<sup>7</sup> She designed a self-portrait for the cover of the catalogue of an exhibition in Stockholm in 1916 and painted it in gouache originally, then reproduced it in screen printing.

<sup>8</sup> By Anne Higonnet, Griselda Pollock, and Linda Nochlin among others.

<sup>9</sup> Already discussed in chapter on influences, George Tappert wrote Terk about Modersohn-Becker in 1905. She knew of Worpswede even earlier and was curious about Modersohn-Becker and Clara Westoff. Interest in the art colony was also from her interests in the Russian art colonies, Abramtsevo and Talashkino.

<sup>10</sup> Terk certainly was aware of their work through Epstein. Epstein also was an artist; the only work of hers I have seen is an Impressionistic style portrait of a woman.

<sup>11</sup> She acknowledged debts to and interest in Gauguin and Van Gogh, and while she admired Matisse's work she only barely admitted any influence and wrote of

trying to surpass him. Terk admitted to no influence at all from Picasso and in fact disliked him intensely.

<sup>12</sup> Also as Terk's countrywoman, Mariia Bashkirtseva wrote and worked thirty years earlier. Both Delaunay-Terk and Modersohn-Becker read Bashkirtseva's diaries, published posthumously.

<sup>13</sup> In her autobiography *Nous irons*, 16, "A l'Université, en 1903, j'ai la chance de rencontrer un très bon professeur, Schmidt-Reuter. Il me donne des bases et des connaissances solides, et l'approche de l'art sans faux académisme. Le professeur lourd et droit ressemble à Léger. J'étudie avec lui deux hivers; de loin, je vois Schönberg, ce musicien qui, comme moi, travaille à l'académie de la ville. Sortie de l'opulence bourgeoise de Saint-Pétersbourg, je commence à respirer, à découvrir la joie de vivre."

<sup>14</sup> Il me donne des bases . . . solides, et l'approche de l'art sans faux académisme." Also, "Le professeur lourd et droit ressemble à Léger." From *Nous Irons*, p.16. Recently translated letters show that Terk probably studied in Karlsruhe longer than had been thought; she was there in March 1906. Previous reports had her living in Paris by 1905. She probably spent a few months in Paris each year until 1908, when she moved there permanently.

<sup>15</sup> The warmth and beauty of this drawing is surprising in comparison with Terk's often hostile feelings about her aunt who raised her.

<sup>16</sup> Higonnet, p. 98. She also quotes John Stuart Mill who wrote in 1869 in the *Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 100, that, "Women in the educated classes are almost universally taught some branch or other of the fine arts . . . their education, instead of passing over this department, is in the affluent classes mainly composed of it." Many women took classes or sketched all their lives. This was also true in the United States.

<sup>17</sup> After her marriage to Uhde, who also acted as her dealer, she had no dealer again until the 1950s.

<sup>18</sup> Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, "Sonia travailla beaucoup et ce qu'Anna et Henri virent de sa nouvelle manière leur montra que leur nièce comptait maintenant parmi les artistes d'avant-garde," 45.

<sup>19</sup> The Terk family *dacha* was in Finland which is relatively close to St. Petersburg. Many Russians still maintain a retreat or *dacha* away from the city. Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury call Philomène the family *couturière*, 44. Letters to Terk in 1907 show that she left Paris in June, stayed in Heidelberg en route to Finland; she was still in St. Petersburg October 1, 1907. The first

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evidence of her return to Paris is a note to her December 2, 1907. Many of the paintings from 1907 must have been painted in Finland and St. Petersburg.

<sup>20</sup> One is aware of a debt to Matisse, Gauguin, and Van Gogh in these works but Terk's developing style is also evident.

<sup>21</sup> Damase, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Buckberrough in *Sonia Delaunay: A Retrospective*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, and from Robert Delaunay in Cohen, *The New Art of Color*, : 133, from essay on Sonia Delaunay-Terk (1938). Matisse's title for his painting *Luxe, calme, et volupté* comes from this line also, Buckberrough in the Albright-Knox catalogue, 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Nous irons*, 20, "Dans notre groupe de jeunes filles russes, nous critiquons Matisse. Je trouve sa vision trop bourgeoise, à l'exception de grandes natures mortes. Il n'est pas assez avancé et nous, nous voulons aller au-delà. Plus loin que Matisse qui fait un compromis pour bourgeois. C'est de ce désir très fort de dépasser le fauvisme que sont nées mes oeuvres de cette époque.

<sup>26</sup> From Flam, *Matisse: The Man and His Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 140.

<sup>27</sup> Modersohn-Becker was also interested in style and her own "mentors" or collaborators included two who most interested Terk: Gauguin and Van Gogh. Although the pose of Modersohn-Becker's figure is more Gauguinesque the brushstrokes are closer to those of Van Gogh in this self-portrait. While Terk also owed allegiance to both of the Post-Impressionist artists, here her style seems closer to that of Matisse. But more important for this study is the way in which the women painted themselves and other women.

<sup>28</sup> In *Paula Modersohn-Becker: The Letters and Journals*, eds. Gunter Busch and Liselotte von Reinken, edited and translated Arthur S. Wensinger and Carole Clew Hoey (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1983, pub. Frankfurt, 1979), 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 367-368. While waiting for her baby to be born, October 17, 1907, Modersohn-Becker wrote to Rainer Maria Rilke that as he ascended the same staircase that Gauguin had ascended "the thought that Gauguin once ascended the same staircase illuminate your way. Even if he only did it for three months."

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p. 424. After the birth of Becker's baby, her mother writes that Paula "reclines on snow-white pillows beneath her beloved Gauguins and Rodins," 426.

<sup>31</sup> This could have come from Gauguin's admiration for Manet's *Olympia*; he kept a copy of this painting with him in Tahiti and the Marquesas and painted a copy in 1890 for Noa Noa. From conversation with Linnea S. Dietrich.

<sup>32</sup> Modersohn-Becker's letters, 512, notes. The Gustave Fayet collection was from the museum of Béziers in the south of France and consisted of twenty canvases, several watercolors, more than twenty drawings, and sculptures of ceramic and wood. It was later included in the Gauguin retrospective exhibition.

<sup>33</sup> Many artists of this period were experimenting with ideas from masks, taken from collections of African and Oceanic masks in museums and of private individuals. Terk was participating in the same milieu.

<sup>34</sup> In other parts of the dissertation Terk's knowledge of, and competition with, Matisse at this period is discussed. She seems to be more concerned with likeness in this portrait. But the idea of the likeness and lack of strength might be the reason she painted another portrait on the canvas, and considered the other work the "right" side.

<sup>35</sup> Background flowers are similar to those in the background in the Delaunay self-portrait.

<sup>36</sup> Although Goncharova lived in Russia until 1914 at which time she moved to Paris with Mihail Larionov, her lover and later husband.

<sup>37</sup> During this period Goncharova introduced peasant themes into her work. She was four years older than Terk and had not been in Paris at this time. Whether Terk knew her work by 1907 is debatable; there is no evidence one way or the other. She surely knew it by 1911. This portrait was included in a article on the Diaghilev exhibition in London, *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1996, 22. Although later, by 1910, Gonchorova painted primitivized works of peasants working or dancing and is credited with leading Kasimir Malevich and Mikhail Larionov into primitivizing their own works, her 1907 portrait relates more to Post-Impressionism than do Terk's paintings.

<sup>38</sup> Both Delaunays always felt their work more akin to Kandinsky and that of the German Expressionists. It should be noted that this quality was in Terk's work before her association with Delaunay.

<sup>39</sup> Artists associated with what became German Expressionism by 1912 and also the Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch.

<sup>40</sup> From *Briefe an einen Unbekannten* (Cologne, 1960), 15, printed in Hans Roethel, *The Blue Rider* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 134.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Münter is best known as Kandinsky's lover and student. See Annette Hoberg, *Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter: Letters and Reminiscences 1902-1914* (Munich and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1994). Modersohn-Becker is the only artist discussed here who has been accorded more acclaim than her husband or partner.

<sup>43</sup> The colors and brushstrokes of both Terk and Werefkin correspond to Fauvist painting and are very similar to later works of German Expressionist artists, partly inspired by the expressionist-type works of Vincent van Gogh.

<sup>44</sup> Included in Reed, *German Expressionist Art*, The Robert Gore Rifkind Collection, Orrel P. Reed, pl.163, 114.

<sup>45</sup> Possibly since artists, including women, had painted themselves holding brushes and palettes for centuries, Terk and Modersohn-Becker considered it a traditional style and avoided it.

<sup>46</sup> This model is not identified as a prostitute, but her appearance in the painting is that of one: nude, wearing long black stockings, in a erotic pose.

<sup>47</sup> Flam writes that this was Matisse's first major painting after Cézanne's death in 1906 and discusses the *Blue Nude* as having "Cézanne-like blue tonality and willed awkwardness....and personifies voluptuous growth in North Africa"<sup>47</sup> Matisse owned Cézanne's *Three Bathers* (1879-82); he was examining Cézanne's anxiety and style. Flam, 192. Flam also writes that *Blue Nude* was the only painting Matisse sent to the Salon des Indépendants in 1907 and was bought by Gertrude and Leo Stein and hung in their apartment, 196. Terk might have seen it there when she visited with Uhde. Flam further calls this painting symbolic of the intensity and violence of the land that Matisse perceived in Africa, a convincing metaphor for dynamic growth, a kind of modern Venus, 195.

<sup>48</sup> For a full explication of German Expressionism, see Rose-Carol Washton Long, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1993). Long discusses Expressionist artists as those who experimented with color, line, space, and texture in an antinaturalist way, xxi. She defines the term, *Expressionism*, as art involved with "the relationships between art and society, art and politics, and art and popular culture," xxii.

<sup>49</sup> The date has been disputed but could have been done no later than 1908 since it was shown that year.

<sup>50</sup> Buckberrough, *Sonia Delaunay*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Modersohn-Becker, 401 from letter dated May 21, 1906 to Martha Vogeler. M-B also wrote about her model Frau Hoetger, "The woman interests me, and I like her more and more. There is something very grand about her, and she is quite magnificent to paint. If only I can get something of what I sense about her into my picture." From a letter to Otto Modersohn dated August 3, 1906. And later on August 12, concerning Mme Hoeger again, "She can look absolutely magnificent, and grave; with an enormous crown of hair, blond, splendidly shaped . . ." My quoting these letters is to show that while Modersohn-Becker discussed her work, Terk did not.

<sup>52</sup> Modersohn-Becker letters, 1905, 373.

<sup>53</sup> *Nous irons*, 14-15.

<sup>54</sup> Higonnet writes that by painting a successful nude a woman artist painted a version of her own body and offered it completely to masculine viewers, p. 173.

<sup>55</sup> From "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982, 302.

<sup>56</sup> The well-known story of Modersohn-Becker's life demonstrates that when she finally gave up her fight to stay in Paris and to reconcile with her husband, Otto Becker, she became pregnant and died shortly after childbirth. This is not to say that husbands and childbirth are irreconcilable with art for women, just that Modersohn-Becker's life was determined by her actions, which when pushed to be "normal" helped bring about an untimely end. Terk's struggle to remain in Paris might have been influenced by Modersohn-Becker's decision to reconcile with Becker and return to Worpswede, where she died. Terk knew Modersohn-Becker's work and story. There is no information regarding this and only slight information that she knew about Modersohn-Becker: through her friend George Tappert, telling her about Modersohn and Worpswede, and mentioned earlier in the chapter.

<sup>57</sup> Although Terk was obviously conscious of Matisse's *Blue Nude*, the awareness of Picasso is also there; this painting was included in an exhibit with Picasso and Braque at Uhde's gallery, Notre Dame des Champs, in 1908. It did not really challenge *Les Demoiselles* but shows that she was not afraid to compete in the larger arena.

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<sup>58</sup> Even, then, for one of his best known paintings of 1912. *The City of Paris*, Robert Delaunay used friends as models, including Annette Coutrot, wife of his friend, Jean Coutrot who later was Delaunay-Terk's backer in her fabric design business in Lyon. He painted portraits of friends as well as portraits on commission. (This information comes from interviews with Mary Toulouse, who is writing on the Coutrot-Delaunay relationship.)

<sup>59</sup> An abstract self-portrait in gouache and pochoir was made for an exhibition catalogue in Stockholm in 1916, but is not in the tradition of portraits nor was it made with the same purpose; it was to advertise her work in the exhibition and relates more appropriately to the poster poems she was making between 1913 and 1916. The date of her relationship with Robert Delaunay begins in 1909; no portraits of women exist after 1908 and few works from 1909-11. Some of her paintings during her years in Spain and Portugal do contain Simultaneous-type figures, however they are not portraits.

<sup>60</sup> As well as a use of Gauguin's synthesist flattening of planes, outlining in dark colors, and freedom in using color. Van Gogh's liberating use of color also provided an important aid in developing her style. Both Delaunay-Terk and Robert Delaunay were accused of merely continuing an Impressionist style in their later work with Simultaneism.

<sup>61</sup> Originally Delaunay-Terk made a baby quilt, dresses, and vests that I deal with later in this dissertation. A forthcoming book by Buckberrough explores Delaunay-Terk's design, patterns, and decorative work of the twenties and thirties.

## THE DELAUNAYS' COLLABORATION

*Robert was the great thunderstorm. He fired up epic quarrels. I tried to smooth out the sharp corners, to be the moderating element in order to avoid misunderstandings with everyone.*

Delaunay-Terk<sup>1</sup>

*On awakening the Delaunays talk painting.*

Apollinaire<sup>2</sup>

One of the principal questions regarding the work of Sonia Delaunay-Terk during her earliest years with Robert Delaunay is why she stopped painting her powerful portraits in 1908 or early 1909, just as they were beginning to be noticed. There is, of course, no simple answer. She insisted, in later years, that she was always making art and explained that she also began making needlework at that time. But certain circumstances in her life changed the course of events from 1909, when she fell in love with Delaunay and stopped painting, until 1912, when she started to paint again: At first being swept off her feet by the effervescent Delaunay during much of 1909; then a troubled relationship with her step-parents during 1910, which has not been examined before and which might have threatened the income

on which she and Robert depended, in addition to the emotional stress of that situation<sup>3</sup>; her illness with scarlet fever in 1910 during her pregnancy while her arranged divorce with Uhde was taking place; and too, Robert Delaunay's mercurial temperament, which she described nearly seventy years later with emotion and admiration. She made an informed choice in her relationship with Robert Delaunay. She knew, from her experience with him during 1909 and early 1910, that he was not someone who would support her or help her when she was ill. In spite of that, she knew he shared her passionate commitment to make art. Robert Delaunay was clearly such an overpowering figure in her life that the consuming ambition and desire for fame of the young emigrée was transferred for a time to her dynamic lover and husband.

Soon after her liaison with Delaunay began, Terk-Uhde's artistic working patterns changed. The dramatic shift from her being a prolific, competitive young painter, painting in a strong Fauvist style somewhat reminiscent of works soon to be called German Expressionism, to one using craft techniques from her Russian or Ukrainian heritage, is a puzzling one. Sherry Buckberrough discusses

Robert Delaunay's admiration for Terk-Uhde's early Fauvist paintings, as well as for those of Henri Rousseau, when he first met her at Uhde's apartment. To Robert Delaunay her works embodied

a whole reserve of pictorial energy in its raw state: ancient means of expressing oneself, in the sense that they are never disengaged from a primitive aspect of known means-- somewhat barbaric, somewhat caricatural, the expression of these portraits, which contrast to the academic platitudes of the epoch and bring a certain salt to the art world of France.<sup>4</sup>

Buckberrough points out that Robert's occluded remarks refer to Terk-Uhde's Russian artistic traditions as primitive in their decorative, non-spatial style, and that this would have been a positive, rather than pejorative, statement (illustrations in chapter 3).<sup>5</sup> Robert Delaunay clearly found Delaunay-Terk's work powerful and they were both engaged in trying to break with traditional work, as were many of their friends.

Writing about Delaunay-Terk's work in 1938, Robert Delaunay points to her breakthrough in their collaboration to make a new kind of art:

In painting, it is the means, the craft which are seen and which act directly on the viewer. These methods were necessarily limited and their variety quickly exhaustible. Basically, color was handicapped by subservience to line: the latter limits color, paralyzes it, makes it rigid and sacrifices it,

so to speak, to an archaic stability.

The break, however, was to come in 1909. Delaunay-Terk made some satin-stitch wall hangings which, by means of their expressiveness, were to bring into view the prospect of liberation. About 1912, we helped inaugurate the birth of color, completely freed from its links with the past and expressed in book bindings of modern poets, in lampshades of regulated colors. With these experiments she set out toward a form of art as yet unknown.<sup>6</sup>

Here, Robert Delaunay gives his wife credit for breaking from traditional methods of making art and for their breakthrough into Simultaneism.

Other possibilities contributed to the change in her work at that time. One of the simplest of these is that with Robert her development of early influences of community and of working together came to fruition. Like the art groups that interested her--Abramstevov, Talashkino, Worpswede, and Kandinsky's group in Munich--she and Robert worked together, inspiring each other. Then too, Fauvism had been explored--the style of her strong paintings of women--and all of the artists involved were looking for further ways to break with tradition and the past. Another explanation could be that Robert Delaunay's strong, egotistical personality was intimidating to Terk and that she simply chose not to compete with him.<sup>7</sup>

At any rate, Delaunay-Terk's artistic production between 1909 and 1913 changed radically and began to encompass the process of collaboration. She credited Robert with encouraging her to make a large embroidery in 1909, the first we know that she made even though she apparently learned needlework in Russia. It is the only surviving embroidery of this period and the work to which Delaunay refers in the above statement (Pl. 1).<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this was his way of delegating to his wife more "womanly" work, eliminating competition, but his remark cannot be seen simply as a competitive or sexist attitude; it is rather that the shift in media allowed for experimentation in another medium with color and shapes.<sup>9</sup> At the same time he was encouraging Delaunay-Terk in her endeavors, and in his statement some years later, as mentioned above, he credits this work as their breakthrough. Unusually large, the embroidery of autumn leaves (which suggests they were made in autumn 1909) was created by Sonia in order to learn to paint without drawing, that is, to eliminate line in her work, possibly because of her use up to that point of heavy, dark outline similar to that of Paul Gauguin or Paula Modersohn-Becker, whose work she admired. She had seen Art Nouveau

abstract ornamentation in exhibitions in Russia, Germany, and France. The large embroidery of leaves reflect this awareness and marks the beginning of her artistic collaboration with Robert.

Soon after, Delaunay-Terk created a baby quilt for her son Charles, who was born January 18, 1911. It continued the new direction in her own work (Pl. 2). Whether the quilt was made before or just after the birth of Charles is not clear. In the 1970s Delaunay-Terk claimed to have made it in anticipation of Charles' birth but it probably dates from late 1911 or early 1912. The first time it was shown as an art object was at Herwarth Walden's Herbstsalon in Berlin, September 1913, although she often commented that Paul Klee was impressed with it when he visited the Delaunays' Paris apartment in April 1912.<sup>10</sup> Still astounding today after eighty years, the juxtaposition of fur, different woolen fabrics, and silks--nubby, rough, and smooth textures--encourages the viewer to touch it. Faded now, but created with strong colors--reds, pinks, browns, flesh, and beige--this work has consistently been seen as an art object since it was first made.

Delaunay-Terk referred to Ukrainian handwork when discussing the quilt. However, much of the Ukrainian and Russian handwork from this period is of floral or paisley patterned decorative folk art such as one finds in the theater sets and costumes of Nathalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov (Pl. 3). Patchwork was also used in quilts for the home; quilting with pieces of silk and velvet in geometric patterns continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Even a dress worn in a portrait painted by Karl Bruilov, discussed in the chapter on the dress, is in a geometric patchwork design. The quilt may also mark Delaunay-Terk's exploration of Cubist-type collage, although unlike Cubist works, her experiments incorporated vivid colors.

She continued the appliqués throughout 1912 and 1913 covering their apartment with lampshades, curtains, tablecloths, a toy box for Charles, bookcovers for poets, with Robert's paintings on the walls, thereby achieving their joint goal of creating an entire Simultaneous environment (Pl. 4).

Delaunay-Terk often referred to collaborations as her favorite way of working. She began collaborating with other artists and poets

between 1909 and 1913—the very period in which she was no longer painting. At times the so-called collaborations were merely suggestions for a creative project. She credited them, and other artists as well as collaborators, when in fact, their contribution was not specifically an artistic one, but a creative exchange nonetheless. To her a collaboration could be as little as making bookcovers for a poet's work, simply discussing and sharing ideas, or, as in the case of Delaunay's suggestion, making an embroidery to work out a problem with line.

Delaunay-Terk also credited Robert Delaunay with suggesting, in 1914, that she add the advertisement for "The Prose of the Transiberian" (her collaboration with Cendrars) to the lower left corner of her largest painting, *Electric Prisms* (Pl. 5),<sup>12</sup> exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1914, and promoted that work as collaborative. In fact this painting reflects her fascination with the modern Paris streets, talked about by Cendrars, Apollinaire, and earlier Romain, and the advertisement contains the names "Cendrars" and "Delaunay-Terk." Several studies of the effect of light on color demonstrate her attack, with her brush of vivid colors, to explore the way colors react to

light making haloes around the white globes of the exciting new street lights. Broad strokes of primary colors helped her form abstract shapes while working through the problem of how to paint “electric prisms.”

Looking back over the century at the claim for complete originality by some of the modernists, it is now easier to see how ideas have sparked and fed new movements; how beginnings of many of the great “masters” look like those of many other artists; and how a number of artists were working in tandem, so to speak, to develop a new style or movement. Such emphasis on originality, now at the end of the century, has been relegated to a backstage, and the current focus on collaborations and borrowings is clearly visible in Sonia Delaunay-Terk’s work. During the early years of her career--the peak of high modernism--this interest in collaboration caused her work to be considered inferior, derivative, or, at best, not original. However, Delaunay-Terk was ahead of her time in embracing collaborations and was also strongly influenced in this, as I have already pointed out, by her Russian heritage, by the Art Nouveau movement which was at its height during her teenage years, and by Russian and German artists’

colonies. It is significant that such a shift in opinion about the value of collaboration or even appropriation, consequently reverses attitudes about the value of an artist's work.

The Delaunays' collaboration, or joining forces, to begin their investigation into Simultaneism, can be compared to that of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the invention of Cubism. However, neither Picasso nor Braque is considered a disciple of the other. They made use of each other's ideas, they shared each other's enthusiasms, they developed radically new art, and both are esteemed.

Vassilii Kandinsky, and the group that was to become the Blaue Reiter in Munich, also fit into this category of artists working in communities, as did the Brücke group in Dresden and later in Berlin.<sup>13</sup> Although Kandinsky was obviously the leader of the Blaue Reiter, Gabriele Münter, Auguste Macke, and Franz Marc engaged with him in making and exhibiting art using an interchange of contemporary ideas. Art Nouveau influences on art in every facet of daily life can be seen in Kandinsky's designs for household items, including china, and

in dresses he designed for Münter, and also in Münter's decorative designs on furniture.

The Delaunays worked in a somewhat similar manner; their method seems to have been a back and forth daily sharing. The Delaunay collaboration lasted from 1909, when they began working together, until Robert's death in 1941.<sup>14</sup> And the fact remains that their work is similar, that they worked from the same ideas and theories, and that they were working together and influencing each other. Yet there are no doubts about whose work is whose, as is sometimes the case with Picasso and Braque.

With his series of Eiffel Tower paintings, Robert Delaunay explored multiple viewpoints using ideas developed by Braque and Picasso from Cézanne's exploration of objects from different perspectives. In 1912 he developed these ideas in his series on windows, complemented by Apollinaire's poem, also called "Les Fenêtres" which Apollinaire probably wrote when he was living with the Delaunays.<sup>15</sup> By spring and summer of 1912 he was discussing his ideas as "Simultaneous"<sup>16</sup> and Delaunay-Terk's visual demonstration of the idea of Simultaneism began with the creation of posters

utilizing her husband's ideas (Pl. 6) to advertise the idea of Simultaneism in a talk by Alexei Smirnov in St. Petersburg, January 4, 1914.<sup>17</sup> Through the process of creating illustrations for her Simultaneous posters (Pl. 7) and from her familiarity with Robert Delaunay's "Window" series, she arrived at painting *Simultaneous Contrasts* (1912-13; Pl. 8), which Buckberrough suggests led Robert Delaunay further toward abstraction.<sup>18</sup> In this manner the influences went back and forth.

About the same time Apollinaire applied the term "Orphism" to an exhibition of artists at the Salon de la Section d'Or in October 1912 in Paris. Exhibitors included Robert Delaunay, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, and perhaps Frantizek Kupka.<sup>19</sup> Although these artists were not completely oriented toward abstract art at this period, Virginia Spate asserts that through them we can see that each of them was interested in abstraction in 1912-13.<sup>20</sup> Robert and Sonia Delaunay often talked about their work as "pure painting." Spate interprets "pure painting" as that which had its own "internally coherent structure independent of naturalistic structural devices" and which allowed artists great freedom of expression and functions on

different levels from consciousness of pure sensation to “consciousness of man’s psychic depths.”<sup>21</sup> She further concludes that Orphism gave the artist, and even the viewer, an “awareness of the functioning of his own consciousness.”<sup>22</sup> Spate, however, divides the Orphic world into that of “constructive” Orphism and “decorative” Orphism, i.e., Orphism in the world of painting or Orphism in the world of design.<sup>23</sup> She acknowledges that Delaunay-Terk made decorative objects during the period 1910 to 1913, but asserts that “she does not seem to have painted between the time of her marriage to Robert Delaunay in early 1910 [November 1910], and 1913.”<sup>24</sup> Throughout her career Delaunay-Terk declared that she made art in all parts of life, that she used her ideas from paintings in the decorative arts and took ideas from decorative art for paintings, in effect, a collaboration between media. Spate proposes that the Delaunays

seem to have been the first twentieth-century painters to attempt to apply a pictorial discovery to all forms of expression (although they may have been influenced by the Puteaux Cubists’ scheme to relate the new painting to architecture in the ‘Maison cubiste’ in the Salon d’Automne of 1912). It is probable that it was Sonia Delaunay, an able and ambitious woman, who conceived the idea, for it was she who first put it into practice as a natural continuation of the handcrafts which had occupied her in the years during which she was not painting.<sup>25</sup>

The Delaunays, especially Sonia, incorporated the Simultaneous into every aspect of their lives. Spate's mention of the Raymond Duchamp-Villon's and the Puteaux Cubists' *Maison cubiste* is appropriate. Duchamp-Villon exhibited the *Maison cubiste* at the Salon d'Automne in 1912.<sup>26</sup> Applying Cubist principles to a house might well have further inspired Delaunay-Terk in her efforts to apply Simultaneism everywhere as well as to reconcile "masculine" forms with so-called "feminist" forms.<sup>27</sup> Her ideas were never expressed in those terms, but now are understood in that light. The application of geometric and abstract designs to enliven and redefine surfaces in the home environment; to spread easel painting beyond the picture frame; and to place art in the dance hall and, later, even on automobiles, reinforces the ideas of incorporating feminine-masculine concepts. Spate's argument, however, supports the idea of Nancy Troy's thesis in *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France*, discussed in my introduction, of the pejorative attitudes in France toward artists who engaged in the decorative arts and the differences in the discourse on painting and crafts in France as compared with that in Russia.<sup>28</sup> Again, Delaunay-Terk's creativity has been minimized because of her

connection to “craft” and because she did not limit herself to the modernist high art of painting.

Despite Apollinaire’s label, Orphism never became an actual movement. Most of those included rejected the designation<sup>29</sup> and shortly afterwards Robert Delaunay’s use of “Simultaneism” became the banner under which he and Delaunay-Terk worked.

Buckberrough, in her work on Robert Delaunay, develops an analysis of his complex ideas on Simultaneism. “He envisaged all ideas at once without hierarchy”—his ideas did not follow a linear order of development, she explains in discussing the difficulty of following Delaunay’s writings on art.<sup>30</sup> In the Delaunays’ works the serious viewer must collaborate/participate, since the theory of Simultaneity requires the contemplation of the viewer to complete the work:<sup>31</sup> “By making the window the equivalent of the eye, Delaunay theoretically merged the spectator and the painting.”<sup>32</sup> Buckberrough relates this merging to the Futurist essay, “The Exhibitors to the Public” (February 1912) which reads in part: “we have declared that [the spectator] *must in the future be placed in the center of the picture.* He shall not be

present at, but participate in the action,"<sup>33</sup> and shall discover the content of the work in its form.

This also corresponds with the idea espoused by Kandinsky in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* that in order to avoid becoming merely decorative a work of art must engage the viewer.<sup>34</sup> In *Kandinsky*, by Rose-Carol Washton Long, the discussion of "hidden" imagery in his so-called abstract paintings examines Kandinsky's ideas of luring the viewer to remain in front of the work of art--by using signs not easily read--to experience the spiritual concepts.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, in the Delaunays' works, juxtaposed contrasting colors bring to mind other vibrating colors of the spectrum which imply the modern idea of dynamism and movement, as well as juxtaposed forms implying other shapes, forms, and shifting planes. Together the colors and shapes also resonate with an abstract spirituality.

Contemplation of the work by the viewer is required to complete the idea of the painting, thereby causing the work of art to be still another collaboration--of artist and viewer.<sup>36</sup> In this manner the viewer comes to experience the work, but at the same time the commitment of the viewer is required.

In 1912 Delaunay-Terk began making bookcovers for poets, including Apollinaire, Cendrars, and Romain, all of whom were writing poems about the modern city. Both Delaunays as well passionately loved, and were inspired by, the city with its new signs of modernity: electric lights which produced simultaneous haloes around their globes, the automobiles which Robert drove full-throttle, the Boul' Mich and other Paris streets where they took long walks, crowds of people in the streets, poets who shared the same enthusiasms and ideals, and for Robert Delaunay, the Eiffel Tower. The focus on the modernity of the city in the poems of Romain, Cendrars, and Apollinaire confirmed in both Delaunays their own ideas of modern life. Buckberrough describes Romain's "La Vie Unanime" with Robert Delaunay's *The City No. 1* (Pl. 9), comparing the "dislocation, of movement, or of agitation, among the buildings."<sup>37</sup> Delaunay-Terk created a bookcover for Romain's *Puissances de Paris*, which was published in 1911.<sup>38</sup> Romain, with Henri Martin-Barzun, was called an apostle of Unanimism, in which Romain, also interested in the city, tried to find rhythms that characterized different parts of city life.<sup>39</sup> Virginia Spate equates his idea of *aura* with the "almost palpable

substance which fused the individual with the group or united him to the larger rhythms of the city or of nature."<sup>40</sup>

Cendrars, whom the Delaunays met in the fall of 1912, had recently completed his "Easter in New York," a startlingly modern poem set in a modern city, New York, not Paris. He writes:

The subways run and thunder underground.  
The bridges shake with the railway's sound.

The city trembles. Cries and smoke and flames,  
Steam whistles give out screechy screams . . .<sup>41</sup>

Cendrars' Bohemian life as well as his work, attracted the Delaunays. His life, like Apollinaire's was partly self-constructed, and like Sonia Delaunay-Terk, he was an immigrant.<sup>42</sup> Although Swiss, Cendrars' travels had taken him to many countries including Russia and the United States. Both Delaunay and Apollinaire had not known their fathers, and their mothers lived unorthodox lives; both were attracted to the exotic. The Delaunays, Cendrars, and Apollinaire were living a "Simultaneous" life, that is, art in every part of it.

Delaunay-Terk's earliest bookcover for Apollinaire was for *L'Hérésiaque et Cie* (1910), a collection of stories, many of which had

been published in *La Revue Blanche* between 1899 and 1910, and which André Breton later credited with giving *sumaturalisme* “its formula.”<sup>43</sup> She covered the small book with fragmented patterns of circles spouting forth calico patterned scraps of collaged fabrics to make an abstract Simultaneous cover (Pl. 10). Although the cover does not address the content of the stories, it promotes the poet as part of Simultaneous modernity.

Apollinaire, who wrote about Robert Delaunay’s work in Paris critiques and also at the Sturm gallery in Berlin in January 1913, displays something of the new modernist form in his poem of the modern city, “Zone”:

Evenings in Paris drunk on gin  
Flaming electricity  
The tramways burn green on the spine  
Making music along the doors  
Of rails their madness for machines<sup>44</sup>

He called Delaunay one of the leading young artists; he never discussed Delaunay-Terk except as the collaborator with Cendrars for “La Prose,” which he termed “the first Simultaneous book,”<sup>45</sup> combining as it does, the poetry with Delaunay-Terk’s painting.

Delaunay-Terk did not illustrate the works of these poets; rather, she conveyed her artistic and spiritual response to their poetry with her bookcovers. Using cut papers, and sometimes paint, she made the covers vibrate with Simultaneous contrasts in geometric shapes and strong colors. Paris also vibrated with lights, machines, and street life which the poets and the Delaunays incorporated in their work and thereby inspired each other.

By 1913 Delaunay-Terk's vision for a Simultaneous world resulted in what I call her principal performance piece, the Simultaneous dress she made and wore to the dance hall in 1913 and 1914 and completing the performance, her large painting, *Bal Bullier*. Here, the viewer participates through the imagination with the artist, who is wearing the dress—a form of body sculpture—in a performance of her work as conveyed in the painting of the dance hall. Robert also wore Simultaneous clothing, probably designed by both of them and made by his tailor. Together they epitomized their Simultaneous life at the dance hall. Whether with painting or decorative arts Delaunay-Terk actively encouraged the viewer to be aware and engaged.

Herwarth Walden invited Delaunay-Terk to exhibit a combination of her decorative work and painting at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon in Berlin, September 1913, the second exhibition of her career. She exhibited twenty-six items, including paintings and decorative works. Exhibiting together at the Herbstsalon confirmed the work of the Delaunays as a joint endeavor and substantiated Delaunay-Terk's role in the development of Simultaneism.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately Robert Delaunay has been seen as Delaunay-Terk's mentor during the period of their marriage and Delaunay-Terk, who had been second in her class, reading philosophy in four languages, suddenly became the "intuitive" partner with Robert the "intellectual."<sup>47</sup> But this is a misconception of their relationship: Theirs was a rich joint venture with each contributing to the dialogue of creating new ways to make art. Robert Delaunay tried to imbue his vibrant paintings with theoretical meanings; Delaunay-Terk covered the world with forms of their Simultaneous inventions. Their long sojourn in Spain and Portugal from 1914 to 1921, while providing another fascinating chapter in their lives and work, put them outside

the mainstream of modern art in France and caused a break in the rhythm of their Simultaneous work that was difficult to close again.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nous irons*, 63. "Robert était le grand orage. Il allumait des querelles épiques. J'ai essayais d'arrondir les angles, d'être l'élément modérateur pour éviter les brouilles avec tout le monde . . . Je me demande se ce n'est pas sa violence éruptive qui m'a conquise avant tous."

<sup>2</sup> Delaunay-Terk recounting Apollinaire's comments in her autobiography, *Nous irons*, 34. "En se réveillant les Delaunay parlent peinture."

<sup>3</sup> Discussed fully in the chapter, "Transformations: Ukraine, St. Petersburg, Karlsruhe, and Paris."

<sup>4</sup> From Buckberrough, "Robert Delaunay," 63, and discussed also in "The Simultaneous Content of Robert Delaunay's Windows," 103. In fn. 6 Buckberrough discusses differences in her translation and that of David Shapiro and Arthur Cohen. She points out that in spite of the difficulty of the statement Delaunay's attitude toward the primitive was generally favorable and his attitude toward traditional art was negative. See also in Cohen, *The New Art of Color: The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay*, 133, from Delaunay, *Du cubism à l'art abstrait*, 200-201.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199. This seems to date bookcovers and other collaged or applied household items, but the statement is from memoirs written years after the fact. The earliest photographs of these works date from 1913 and several were exhibited at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon in September 1913.

<sup>7</sup> Delphine Bière (interview, Paris, May 1995) finds a different personality in Robert Delaunay. He cared for Charles for several months when Delaunay-Terk returned to Paris from Portugal and wrote loving letters about Charles. Bière is completing a dissertation on Robert Delaunay at the University of Paris I, Sorbonne-Panthéon.

<sup>8</sup> Now in the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne in the Pompidou Center in Paris.

<sup>9</sup> Buckberrough develops this ideas in the Albright-Knox Retrospective catalogue. Then, too, one of the artists Delaunay-Terk admired, Paul Gauguin, learned to paint flatter images by painting on ceramics. So-called primitivizing was crucial in Gauguin's work.

<sup>10</sup> Discussed in Madsen, 103.

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<sup>11</sup> Recently, in St. Petersburg and Moscow (June 1995) lines of patchwork quilts were displayed at markets, mostly in geometric patterns similar to quilts in the United States. Jeannette Lasansky, *In the Heart of Pennsylvania: 19th & 20th Century Quilt Making Traditions*. I also discuss a patchwork ballgown, in a portrait by Bruillov, 1842, in the chapter on the dress and the Bal Bullier.

<sup>12</sup> In the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, at the Centre Pompidou, *Prismes électriques* measures 93 3/4" x 98 3/4," from Buckberrough, *Sonia Delaunay*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> An earlier artists' colony was Worpswede, which ST heard about from Tappert in about 1903-04. This practice seemed to be more common in Germany and Russia than in France although Gauguin had tried to create a community at Le Pouldu and Van Gogh in Arles.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Delaunay also discussed their work together as discovering together.

<sup>15</sup> Apollinaire wrote "Les Fenêtres" or "Windows" while Robert Delaunay painted one of his "Window" series in December 1912. Originally published in an exhibition catalogue for Robert Delaunay. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Oeuvres Poétiques* (Paris, edition Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965), chronology by André Billy, p. LXVIII.

<sup>16</sup> In "Light," written by Robert Delaunay in 1912, translated into German by Paul Klee after he visited the Delaunays in Paris, April 1912, and published in *Der Sturm* (No. 144-145) February 1913. He wrote: "This reality is endowed with *Depth* (we see as far as the stars) and thus becomes *rhythmic simultaneity*. Simultaneity in light is the *harmony*, the *color rhythms* which give birth to *Man's sight*." From Cohen, ed. *The New Art of Color*, 81.

<sup>17</sup> This talk is commonly believed to have taken place in the summer of 1913. Sidoti shows that the talk about Simultaneism took place at the same time as Smirnov's talk on "The Prose of the Transiberian." They were one and the same. Other sources place the talk on December 22, 1913. Delaunay-Terk's posters were most likely displayed during the talk; there is no information regarding the length of time they were displayed. See Sidoti, 118.

<sup>18</sup> Spate, in *Orphism*, writes that *Simultaneous Contrasts* probably was not painted until 1913. Buckberrough sets it at 1912 through studying Robert Delaunay's work at that time. The work is actually small enough that it might have been considered a study and was not exhibited until later in her career.

<sup>19</sup> Spate, 1.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2. This corresponds with their evolution of painting abstracted forms from nature.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 48. Spate does credit Delaunay-Terk with creating decorative objects during these years.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 56. Here Spate illustrates the differentiation between "painting" and the "decorative," dividing the categories into "high-low."

<sup>26</sup> Delaunay-Terk's files contain a newspaper clipping featuring the *Maison cubiste*.

<sup>27</sup> Suggested by Jeffrey Weiss, *Popular Culture of Modern Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 197-198.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter on "Transformations" for further discussions of arts and crafts in Russia and their influence on Delaunay-Terk. Troy also discusses the "Maison cubiste," 79-96.

<sup>29</sup> See Spate, 1: "The name was given by a poet to a rather mixed group of painters, none of whom was particularly happy about it . . ." She goes on to discuss several artists who rejected the designation outright.

<sup>30</sup> In "The Simultaneous Content of Robert Delaunay's Windows," *Arts*, September 1979, 102.

<sup>31</sup> I use the term "serious" since obviously one can glance at a work without really exploring or understanding it. Meaning in Delaunay-Terk's works seem to continue to unfold, much as Kandinsky suggests abstract works should avoid becoming merely decorative.

<sup>32</sup> Buckberrough, *Arts*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 108, and from *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 28.

<sup>34</sup> For a full discussion see Rose-Carol Washton Long, *Kandinsky*. Long found that instead of his paintings being completely abstract Kandinsky's work contained "hidden" imagery, which the viewer had to ponder for some time to be enlightened. Kandinsky discusses these ideas in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

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and warned against the merely decorative in creating art abstracted from nature. Robert Delaunay asked Kandinsky about this book in one of his letters and Elisabeth Epstein translated it from German to French for him.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 137 and discussed throughout the book in greater depth.

<sup>36</sup> It was surprising to me in experimenting with looking over a long period of time at a reproduction of an Delaunay-Terk painting that new forms and colors took shape. The forms seem to unfold into patterns I had not noticed originally; rhythms and colors seemed to actually move. Layered dimensions also appeared with certain colors receding and others appearing to move forward into space. This phenomenon only occurs when I spend time looking; I cannot bring it about quickly. Only with this occurrence did I understand the idea of movement of colors and shape implied in the idea of Simultaneism.

<sup>37</sup> Buckberrough, 104. She also discusses Romains and the Abbaye de Créteil where Delaunay and Romains had mutual friends. Delaunay attended soirées of the continuing meetings of the group in 1910 *fn.* 15, p.111, from Golding, 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Puissances de Paris*, Paris, E. Figuière, 1911. (Collection "Oeuvres et jours") in the Delaunay collection, the Bibliothèque Nationale. Her main connection with Romains would have been through Robert Delaunay.

<sup>39</sup> Discussed in Spate, 185-186. Spate relates how Robert Delaunay's work is affected by Romains' ideas.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> "Déjà un bruit immense retentit sur la ville. Déjà les trains bondissent, grondent et défilent. Les métropolitains roulent et tonnent sous terre. Les ponts sont secoués par les chemins de fer." *Selected Writings of Blaise Cendrars*, ed. Walter Albert (New York, New Directions, 1962, reprinted 1966), 62, 64. Translated poem from *Blaise Cendrars Complete Poems*, translated by Ron Padgett (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>42</sup> Cendrars' collaboration with Delaunay-Terk is discussed further in the chapter on "The Prose of the Transiberian." He was born in Switzerland but, like a vagabond, traveled around the world from his late teens.

<sup>43</sup> From *The Heresiarch and Co*, trans. Rémy Inglis Hall (Cambridge: Exact Change, 1991), publisher's note.

<sup>44</sup> Apollinaire, "Zone," *Oeuvres Poétique* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965), 59. Originally published April 1913.

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<sup>45</sup> His espousal of the work of Marie Laurencin as a Cubist artist during the same time period placed Laurencin in a position to be noticed and reckoned with as an artist of the Paris School. Ignoring Delaunay-Terk contributed to her difficulties in attracting critical attention during her career.

<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, this did not change the perception of her work in Paris.

<sup>47</sup> Conversation with Robert Delaunay scholar, Delphine Bière, Paris, May 1995: we discussed the pseudo-intellectualism of Robert Delaunay. Bière feels that Robert Delaunay probably never read Chevreul but that like Bergson, the ideas of Chevreul were everywhere at the time and there was much discussion of his ideas. Robert Delaunay was not a reader, had never finished school, and on the other hand, Delaunay-Terk was considered an intellectual as a young woman. She received the second medal in her class when graduating and read and wrote in four languages, later in perhaps seven. Arthur Craven, in 1913, when attacking Robert Delaunay in a letter to the editor writes that Delaunay has been ruined by his intellectual Russian wife. See Schneider-Maunoury, 150-154.

## SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK'S SIMULTANEOUS DRESS AS A FRAGMENTED BODY

*On her dress she wears a body.*

Blaise Cendrars<sup>1</sup>

### THE DRESS

Sonia Delaunay-Terk and her husband Robert Delaunay often attended the rowdy Bal Bullier during 1913 and 1914 wearing their spectacular Simultaneous clothing.<sup>2</sup> Their friend Guillaume Apollinaire, who loved the activities of the avant-garde artists, wrote in 1914:

**M. and Mme Delaunay are the innovators. They do not burden themselves with the imitation of antiquated fashion, and since they want to be of their own time, they don't innovate in the cut of clothing (in that they follow contemporary fashion), but rather seek to influence it by employing new fabrics which are an infinite variety of colors. There is, for example, an outfit of M. Robert Delaunay: purple jacket, beige vest, black pants. Here is another: red coat with a blue collar, red socks, yellow black shoes, black pants, green jacket, sky blue vest, little red tie.**

Here is the description of one of Mme Sonia Delaunay's simultaneous dresses: purple dress, wide purple and green belt, and under the jacket, a bodice divided into brightly colored zones, delicate or faded where the following colors are mixed: dusty rose, yellow-orange, Nattier blue, scarlet, etc. appearing on different materials, so that wool, taffeta, tulle, cotton flannel, moiré, and peau de soie are juxtaposed.<sup>3</sup>

In 1978, near the end of her life, Sonia Delaunay-Terk commented, "I myself wore my first simultaneous dresses. Apollinaire loved that tailored purple outfit, with a long green and purple belt and harlequin bodice."<sup>4</sup> This comment was made after a period of sixty-five years, when Delaunay-Terk was ninety-three years old, upon rereading Apollinaire's critique of the Delaunays' clothing. She had been trying for several years to establish her place in posterity, so the statement can only be used in support of Apollinaire's earlier one. Unfortunately Delaunay-Terk diaries from 1905 to the late 1920s are missing, and her ideas from that time are not available to us now. The dress she and Apollinaire described no longer exists, even in a photograph. But photographs of other dresses do exist and one dress survived two wars. She was often photographed in the dress in 1913 and used those photographs in brochures for exhibitions. The dresses that astonished Apollinaire and Cendrars, and were thought to be lost,

are among Delaunay-Terk's major works, and prefigure interest in fashion as art--and as body art--today.

In 1913, with her baby's quilt of 1911<sup>5</sup> (Pl.1) as a precedent, Sonia Delaunay-Terk created at least three dresses, skirts, and vests which initiated a new concept of the female body and established her ideas of Simultaneism, which she and her husband Robert Delaunay, developed beginning in 1912.<sup>6</sup> At the same time she began a synthesis of art and fashion--of a dress not simply as fashion or costume but as a vehicle for a work of art.<sup>7</sup> Her achievement was, as Adrienne Rich later expressed it, to "take the female body as a starting point for gaining grounds from which to speak with authority as women, not to transcend the body, but to reclaim it."<sup>8</sup>

Throughout history costumes have been popular, especially with artists. Sherry Buckberrough, in a book review for *Women's Art Journal*,<sup>9</sup> equates the wearing of costumes by Sonia Delaunay-Terk as camouflage, arguing that she used her Simultaneous clothing to "cover" her timidity when entering Parisian dance halls.<sup>10</sup> Delaunay-Terk's distancing in relationships and timidity in certain situations can also be understood in part through Robert Delaunay's eccentricities.

The Simultaneous dress of 1913 fits into this proposed category and tradition of costume; it was not created for street wear, but for a dance hall frequented by artists and other bohemians. Costumes always played an important role in Delaunay-Terk's life and work. Already in two photographs from her childhood she is dressed in exotic Egyptian costumes for parties in St. Petersburg (Pl. 2, 3). Later, she would design costumes for Sergei Diaghilev, Leonide Massine, René Crevel, and Tristan Tzara, as well as for herself, Robert, and other friends.

Sonia Delaunay-Terk's appropriation of elements of decorative art and design informed her work throughout her career, but her own experiments began after her liaison with Robert Delaunay in 1909. This seems to have been a calculated measure, taken to avoid competition in painting and, eventually, in a collaborative spirit, to develop their forms of the Simultaneous.<sup>11</sup> She began including decorative objects and clothing in her desire to cover her world with Simultaneous motion and at the same time create art in a way that took it beyond the accepted framework.

Delaunay-Terk was photographed in three different outfits and several vests (Pl. 4, 5, 6) during that period. She discussed them much later in the seventies as part of her involvement in the Parisian avant-garde: "I myself wore my first Simultaneous dresses."<sup>12</sup> In 1985 the Delaunays' grandson, Jean-Louis Delaunay, found a dress in the barn at their country home at Gambais, about a half hour from Paris.<sup>13</sup> Wrapped in plain brown paper, the dress had been left there at some time before the Delaunays fled the city in 1941.<sup>14</sup>

Delaunay-Terk designed the dress to wear to the dance hall drawing upon ideas from Russian and Ukrainian art as well as Art Nouveau handwork. Artists created costumes throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; later Art Nouveau artists created clothing to adopt looser, flowing styles and to make a complete environment. The Ballet Russe of Sergei Diaghilev offered artists opportunities to design costumes and stage sets. Delaunay-Terk's friend Léon Bakst (Pl. 7) designed costumes for Diaghilev, as did Michel Fokine. An exhibition in London, "Diaghilev: Creator of the Ballet Russe," has called attention to costumes which might have inspired dance-hall fashions (Pl. 8).<sup>15</sup> Dancers, Isadora Duncan and

Loie Fuller, added to the fascination with dance costumes through their use of flowing scarves, twirling skirts, and contemporary design.<sup>16</sup>

Delaunay-Terk was not a dancer. Nor did she create a new style of dress; rather she designed a radically different body pattern. Through her ideas of Simultaneous contrasts, she generated colorful

movement on her own body, which when the body moved created its own rhythmic gesture. In her memoirs Delaunay-Terk recalled that:

“The continuous undulating rhythm of the tango incited my colors to

move.”<sup>17</sup> She then painted the wide painting, in a billboard format, *Bal*

*Bullier*, to further her ideas of Simultaneism and to demonstrate

motion involved with the body of the dancer—herself—wearing her

dress. Whether or not Delaunay-Terk recognized at the time she

created her first Simultaneous dress that this was indeed “body art” is

not clear. Instead she talked about the complete experience of

making art everywhere. But later in her memoirs she commented that

“Cendrars understood . . . not fashion or style . . . not great couturiers,

only the bodies of women on the dress.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in February 1914

Cendrars, her favorite poet and collaborator, confirmed the idea of

Delaunay-Terk’s dress as her female body:

### She Has a Body on Her Dress

A woman's body is as bumpy as my skull  
 Glorious  
 If you're embodied with a little spirit  
 Fashion designers have a stupid job  
 As stupid as phrenology  
 My eyes are kilos that weigh the sensuality of women  
 Everything that recedes, stands out comes forward into the depth  
 The stars deepen the sky  
 The colors undress  
 "She has a body on her dress"  
 Beneath her arms heathers hands lunules and pistils when the waters  
 flow into her back with its blue-green shoulder blades  
 Her belly a moving disk  
 The double-bottomed hull of breasts goes under the bridge of  
 rainbows  
 Belly  
 Disk  
 Sun  
 The perpendicular cries of the colors fall on her thighs  
The sword of St. Michael  
 There are hands that reach out  
 In the train the animal all the eyes all the fanfares all the regulars at  
 the Bal Bullier  
 And on her hip  
 The poet's signature<sup>19</sup>

This sexually charged poem was published first by Sonia  
 Delaunay-Terk for a 1916 exhibition in Stockholm, including the dress  
 with a self-portrait poster in gouache and silk screen (Pl. 9, 10), in a  
 Simultaneous style. This infuriated Cendrars, who apparently wrote it

for her personally.<sup>20</sup> But by February 1914, shortly after she began wearing the dress to the Bal Bullier, and at the height of her collaboration with Cendrars, he had identified it as an artful body display—a body on a dress—or body art.<sup>21</sup>

The dress is mentioned in all the Delaunay literature, but never given the attention it warrants, except in the context of Russian or Ukrainian peasant handwork or quilts.<sup>22</sup> The style is more in the “Crazy Quilt” tradition, that is, random piecing of small pieces of materials, than in traditional quilting patterns. Her work is obviously not a random patterning, but a planned and sophisticated one. In addition, it is also acknowledged as a change in fashion, from the drab, dark colors of the period to a bright celebration of color, which had become the Delaunays’ trademark.<sup>23</sup>

The need to establish Sonia Delaunay-Terk as a serious artist causes historians to often look at her easel paintings rather than crafts or simply to regard her as a gifted designer, which can relegate her to the arts and crafts movement in a somewhat pejorative fashion. Unlike Robert Delaunay, who never participated in making crafts or decorative arts, Delaunay-Terk’s methods today are becoming

recognized as serious innovations toward a completely artful life. Her desire to “overthrow old conceptions” motivated her work throughout her long career.<sup>24</sup> Although her great oil paintings are heralded as her participation in “high” art, she abhorred such distinctions.<sup>25</sup> It is within smaller interconnections—or interstices—often seen as women’s work and decorative—that the complexity and diversity of her oeuvre is best understood.<sup>26</sup>

The first needlework ever mentioned by Delaunay-Terk is a large embroidery of autumn-colored leaves discussed in the chapter on the Delaunays’ collaboration. She often commented that Robert encouraged her embroider—to fill in spaces with colored thread—to learn to avoid drawing in her paintings and to paint directly on canvas.<sup>27</sup> This work marks the beginning of her experimentation with the decorative arts. She was taught handwork in Russia and mentions being inspired by Ukrainian handwork and colors, which influenced her to involve various methods in her art making.<sup>28</sup> But she left Ukraine when she was only five years old and never returned. The influence would come mostly from her early childhood memories and from colorful Ukrainian embroideries she had seen later (PI.11).<sup>29</sup>

In the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, a painting by Karl Briullov, a well-known Russian nineteenth-century artist, of a woman wearing a ballgown with a patchwork skirt of large rectangles of color, trimmed in ermine, entitled *Portrait of Yulia Samoilova and Her Adopted Daughter, Amacillia Paccini*<sup>30</sup> (c.1842; Pl. 12) must have been known to Sonia Terk, since she visited this museum often. She makes no mention of ever having seen it, but it is still well-known in St. Petersburg and establishes that such dresses existed; and since the young Sonia Terk was aware of art and fashion, she probably had seen the painting and had some idea of patchwork used in fashionable clothing. On a June, 1906 cover of *Le Théâtre*, in a photograph entitled "Le Clown"<sup>31</sup> (Pl. 13), a woman is shown wearing a dress of harlequin-type patchwork design. It might have been seen by Terk, and although she was not in Paris at that time, her friend Alexei Smirnov kept her informed of much that was happening in the city. Jeffrey Weiss, in *The Popular Culture of Modern Art*, mentions Delaunay-Terk's dress for the Bal Bullier in comparison with a costume for a revue at the Théâtre des Capucines, two years before the Bal Bullier dress, fall 1911, in which the director of the Capucines,

M. Armand Berthez, wore the costume of a Cubist painter (Pl. 14).

Berthez's costume consisted of a man's suit with painted and constructed geometrical elements to convey a Cubist idea and to satirize Cubism.<sup>32</sup> Gino Severini began wearing differently colored socks by November 1911.<sup>33</sup> One of the Futurists reportedly noticed the Delaunays' clothing at the Bal Bullier and wired Milan to tell the other Futurist artists:

[He] sent a telegram to Milan, describing our general getup and especially, very precisely and in detail, Mrs. Sonia Delaunay's "simultaneous dresses." Milan spread this information through the world as a Futurist manifestation, so that our behavior, gestures, and harlequin costumes . . . were known to the entire world, particularly the avant-garde, which wanted to be up with the latest Paris fashions. Our extravaganzas especially influenced the Moscow Futurists, who modeled themselves after us.<sup>34</sup>

The first Simultaneous dress was created in 1913 outside Paris during a burst of creative energy, where she was painting, designing poster-poems, bookcovers, and a large coffer, preparing for her major exhibition in Berlin. With Poiret's sister,<sup>35</sup> Mme Bongard, the Delaunays rented a house during this busy spring and summer of 1913 at 1 rue du Pont, in Louveciennes, a small town outside Paris. Although Delaunay-Terk's recollections were recorded long after the

time, many letters to both Delaunays addressed to "1 rue du Pont, Louveciennes" still exist in their documentary files.<sup>36</sup> From Louveciennes they continued to frequent the Bal Bullier in the city on Thursday nights. About this time the idea was conceived for the Simultaneous dresses which were created before the Erster Deutsche Herbstsalon which opened in September, 1913.

The style of the dresses was not particularly innovative. Somewhat straight—with a fitted, natural waistline—the dress could be worn with a more relaxed corset already designed by Paul Poiret in 1908. Poiret caused a revolution in fashion design when he created loose tunic-style dresses with a Turkish influence for his wife, Denise, which became popular with a small group of artists and others interested in haute couture<sup>37</sup> but also influenced the entire fashion industry (Pl.15). Although Poiret claimed that he liberated the woman's figure from tight corsets, the liberation was mainly from the waist cincher women had been wearing since just after the directoire fashions of the nineteenth century. One corset was even advertised as the "Tango" corset in *L'illustration* (Pl.16).<sup>38</sup> Some of Poiret's "liberated" corsets were so long, however, that they inhibited

movement of the legs, and to dance the tango many women chose not to wear them at all.

Not only Poiret, but earlier between 1895 and 1900, Henry van de Velde designed large numbers of what he referred to as “reform dresses”<sup>39</sup> decorated with Art Nouveau style embroidery (Pl. 17, 18). Loose dresses, flowing from the shoulders and ending in trains freed the woman’s figure from the strictures of corsets.

Vasilii Kandinsky too, before 1905, had designed a few dresses for Gabriele Münter (Pl.19). His loose fitting Art Nouveau style dresses also freed the figure from corsets. Kandinsky embroidered his designs with motifs abstracted from nature. Whether Delaunay-Terk had seen Münter’s or Van de Velde’s dresses by 1913 is not known, although she probably was familiar with Kandinsky’s work through Elisabeth Epstein, whom she knew in Paris, from about 1905. Since Epstein, Kandinsky, Münter, and at times Terk, lived in Paris during 1906 and 1907, it’s possible that Terk met Kandinsky and Münter then, but neither she nor Kandinsky mention meeting at that time. She also knew Poiret and his innovative fashions; however the actual style of the dress was not of particular interest to her.<sup>40</sup>

Experimentation with Simultaneism and color—as well as continuing to push her artwork and compete in an arena that did not include Robert Delaunay—were her goals. The shaping and adorning of her body became the way for her to present her self-image to others.<sup>41</sup>

Besides using the more relaxed style of Poiret, Delaunay-Terk appropriated his outrageous and popular hobble skirt, which he had first designed in 1910 and which was considered worthy of a papal condemnation.<sup>42</sup> Since hobble skirts were very narrow and allowed only mincing steps, Delaunay-Terk placed long, vertical, dark-blue pleats down the right back of the skirt to allow movement so that she could walk and dance freely (Pl. 20). On the left rear, black silk gathers cause an exaggerated swell of the hip which swerves around the front, creating a line down the center of the right leg to suggest the undulating movement of the Tango. This bizarre, almost bustle-draping at first looks like a style from several decades earlier, but it is so exaggerated with its frontal swoop as to be a relative caricature. The swell extends onto the back bodice carrying the line of the skirt upwards. The juxtaposition of black and navy blue in the skirt, and of the soft and angular styles, transforms ordinary colors into provocative

forms, ready to move, signifying liberation for the wearer and for the viewer. The juxtaposition of textures adds elements of mystery. Why place wool, taffeta, fur, and silk together (Pl. 21). Images of childhood quilts probably best explain this piecing of fabrics, but the effect is sensual and inviting, causing the viewer to desire to examine it closely, to touch, and to feel the different textures. Whether Delaunay-Terk was aware or not, the use of beaver brings to mind sexual connotations and adds to the provocative nature of the dress.<sup>43</sup> For still more freedom she opened the narrow bottom of the skirt with a long slit which could be fastened with hooks, situated in a band of sheared beaver at the bottom. She created a narrow, dynamic, and elegant look when standing still, but allowed for the necessary movement to dance the tango. Then she transformed the dress to function not only as art but also in a style modified to allow more freedom of movement for her own body.

On the back of the bodice Delaunay-Terk juxtaposed geometric patterns in dusty rose, violet, ochre (perhaps this was a soft gold color in 1913), taupe, black, and white topped by a ruff of clipped beaver which fastens as a neckband (Pl. 22). The colors and design bring to

mind her posters on Simultaneism made during the summer of that year, 1913 (Pl. 23). These posters and the dresses were created during the same period and demonstrate her interest in showing how the idea of the Simultaneous in art could work in all parts of the environment. Delaunay-Terk could lay claim to her own body, her landscape on which to work, and continue presenting her concept of the Simultaneous<sup>44</sup> in much the same manner as the decorating of her apartment or painting on canvas.

While the back of the dress begins to explore Simultaneism and liberates the movement of the figure--through its style and design--the front of the dress reveals the body, a body meant to be seen in motion in this dress designed to enhance the concept of simultaneous motion. Arcs, shields, bands, even rectangles of red, white, rose, violet, and gold are startling even today. The colors--juxtaposed as they are--continue to vibrate vividly, in the Delaunays' way of manipulating color to imply motion and new forms--and even in the manner of color field paintings. The surprising use of white, in a diagonal movement across the bodice and on the perhaps pubic shield of the skirt, adds drama. This shield might even suggest the movement of a leg. A soft rose

color indents the waistline on the left side; at the same place on the right an arc of white explodes, pushing the viewer's eye to see movement or an expansion of the waist. A white arc also swathes the mid-bodice like a white exposed breast (Pl. 24). Delaunay-Terk recalled for her autobiography, "For me the abstract and sensual married."<sup>45</sup>

In a photograph from the period, Delaunay-Terk is seen wearing the Simultaneous dress and appears to be somewhat matronly and perhaps very full-figured. This is deceptive for in reality the dress is very small, perhaps a size two or three in today's measurements, and would not have been matronly looking at all.

The summer of 1913 must have been one of the most rewarding of her entire career: it culminated with the Herbstsalon in the fall and it included working with artists and friends at Louveciennes and dancing at the Bal Bullier. The Great War was also about to begin, ending this prolific period of Delaunay-Terk's career and beginning another epoch with a style only related in part to the earlier one.

## THE DANCE HALL: BAL BULLIER

Café society and dance halls in Paris were firmly established by the time Sonia designed the Simultaneous dress. At the end of the century there were nearly three hundred café-concerts alone. Cheap, colorful entertainment flourished. Charles Rearick writes about the democratic spirit of the cafés and dance halls in *The Pleasures of the Belle Époque*. Unlike the aristocratic or bourgeois grand balls, the dance halls were a mixing place for all levels of society. In 1924, a few years after the Delaunays' experiences at the Bal Bullier, George Wharton recreates the mood of Paris night life:

Here at the Bal Bullier, the rendezvous of the foreign tourist who would be real devilish and seeks the bedevilments of the Latin Quarter, thinking them really French, the sound of laughter and the babel of voices blending with the "jazz" music of the orchestra, is as unreal as one can imagine . . . The place is haunted by the ghosts of bygone crowds and years. Beyond this is nothing of a real bohemia, nothing but glare, cheap gabble, and Gehenna—a sort of "danse Macabre" . . . The hall is enormous; the music is good of its kind and the waiters are active and efficient in collecting francs from the crowd that gives this renowned old dance hall its vogue.<sup>46</sup>

On Thursdays, and sometimes on Sunday nights, the Delaunays attended the Bal Bullier, where students, writers, artists, and prostitutes gathered several times a week to dance the new dances,

the tango and fox-trot, and experiment with wildly exotic clothing at occasional costume balls.

Since 1910 the ballroom tango had been known in Paris, but by 1913 it was the rage. Originally the tango was a solo dance in the Andalusian area of Spain, which was then modified for couples dancing and walking while using castanets. Later it was danced in shady brothels and dives in Argentina during the nineteenth century but had also been adopted by the upper classes for their dances. As in 1913, the tango is still today associated with sexuality.<sup>47</sup>

Tango-teas, tango-exhibitions, tango-dinners, tango-conferences, tango lessons, and tango corsets were advertised everywhere (Pl. 25).<sup>48</sup> The tango was not allowed at the Elysée Ball, but at the Opera Ball, private dances, and dance halls it was extremely popular. Articles and humorous pieces appeared in many gossip columns; some called it lascivious and also frivolous because of the impending war.<sup>49</sup>

While the fox-trot seems tame today, it, as well as the tango, provoked comments that characterized it as being immoral, causing

and contributing to the delinquency of women in New York, Paris, and London, where they were out dancing even in the afternoons.<sup>50</sup>

Advertisements in several Parisian newspapers mention the tango and especially the dance halls, Bal Tabarin and Magic City (Pl. 26).<sup>51</sup>

In *Gil Blas* of January 10, 1914, a small notice appeared, announcing at the Bal Tabarin "5 o'clock to 7:30, apéritif Tango"(Pl. 27).<sup>52</sup> The Bal Tabarin was a relatively new dance hall; it opened in 1904 in Montmartre and was even rowdier than the Bal Bullier. Montmartre was fast becoming a pleasure factory, but the Delaunays were never associated with the Montmartre clubs, possibly because of where they lived or from personal choice.

A group of friends, including her fellow Russian, Barinov Rossiné, the Americans Patrick Henry Bruce and his wife, Arthur Frost, and Alice Bailly, joined Sonia and Robert Delaunay at the Bal Bullier where they watched and also danced the stylish new dances. Robert loved to dance; Sonia reputedly did not, but she loved the music and enjoyed becoming part of the scene in her radical clothing. In 1978 she said: "The rhythms made us want to make those colors dance too. Everyday clothes as well as those for Sundays were really

monotonous and dull. We wanted to put an end to this general state of mourning. It was up to us . . .”<sup>53</sup> This must be considered in the light of an older artist trying to establish her own identity in the art world and to arrange “her story”<sup>54</sup> before her death. However, it does fit well with the earlier critique by Apollinaire, and supports his statement about her use of simultaneous colors.

The dance hall was not a new theme for artists. During the nineteenth century Manet, Degas, Renoir, and Toulouse-Lautrec presented varying views of Paris social life through their paintings of bars, cafés, and dances. Picasso, in 1900, painted *Moulin de la Galette* partly in reference to Renoir’s painting of 1876. Later, Delaunay-Terk reminisced that “the Bal Bullier was for me what the Moulin de la Galette had been to Degas, to Renoir, to Toulouse-Lautrec.”<sup>55</sup> But the most interesting comparison with Sonia Delaunay-Terk is that of Gino Severini, one of the Italian Futurist painters who lived in Paris and who, between 1911 and 1914, experimented with several dance hall paintings. The Delaunays were aware of the work of Severini and the Futurists although their ideas were basically at odds. The Futurists’ concern with implied movement in space and the

use of bright colors, unlike those of the Cubists, provide a foundation from which to compare their works to the Delaunays and also promoted intense competition. Since both Simultaneism and Futurism involve the idea of dynamism and movement of colors and shapes, and since Futurism also incorporated ideas of simultaneous movement, Robert Delaunay's rivalry toward the Futurists escalated.<sup>56</sup>

Severini had arrived in Paris in 1906, a year after the twenty-one year old Sonia Terk. When they first met is not documented, but by the first Futurist exhibition in Paris in February 1913, the Delaunays and Severini knew each other and saw each other rather frequently.<sup>57</sup> Severini's paintings attracted the attention of the Delaunays, Picabia, and Metzinger,<sup>58</sup> and the artists belonged to similar and overlapping circles within the Paris art community. While Severini was an active Futurist painter, his work differed from other Italian Futurists; until the war it mostly involved the exciting life of Paris, more like the Delaunays'. However, Delaunay-Terk's *Bal Bullier* (1913; Pl. 28) is directly related to Severini's dance-hall paintings only in subject matter. While Severini painted *The Pan-Pan at the Monico* (1911-1912; Pl. 29) depicting a room full of dancers with forms reminiscent of

Francis Picabia's dancing forms (Pl. 30), or the *Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal Tabarin* (Pl. 31) with a single dancer sequined and shown in a series of movements to imply motion, Delaunay-Terk painted a room full of dancers in motion, but abstracted from nature so that only three couples are discernible. The whole canvas is a field of motion. Unlike Futurist paintings where the illusion of movement is created through multiple repetitive body parts, as in Severini's *Blue Dancer* (Pl. 32), Delaunay-Terk's juxtaposition of shapes and colors causes the eye to see layers of movement particularly in the figure-like shapes interweaving on a dance floor. Both Delaunays experimented, in their *Simultaneous* works, with colors that appear to move. Kandinsky's transparent colors, arranged to give a sense of movement in immeasurable space, as he explained in his discussion of colors that advance or recede from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, might have helped the Delaunays give movement to their abstracted shapes.<sup>59</sup>

Delaunay-Terk, further, created a *Simultaneous* dress to complete the painting—as if she, the artist, were also part of the scene. She combined dance, costume, sculpture (her body in the dress), in an almost mural-sized painting, *Bal Bullier*, as performance. By

wearing her dress at the dance hall, Delaunay-Terk expanded her field of art from the canvas into three-dimensional space.<sup>60</sup> By wearing her dress, Delaunay-Terk also resisted “framing” her body.<sup>61</sup> Frames provide borders, and can be said to control women’s bodies; set limits; reinforce where femininity begins and ends. By putting her own body in the work of art, that is, the dress, she avoided placing a border or frame usually found on easel paintings of women. This “unity of experience” also expresses the Delaunays’ ideas of Simultaneism as projecting a new coherence which assumes a significant relationship between all objective and subjective coincidental happenings.<sup>62</sup>

A friend of the Delaunays, N. Minsky, wrote in Russian for a Russian readership about Apollinaire and the Delaunays’ experiments in color and light. He discussed Simultaneity, “whereby measures and proportions touch the soul . . . Simultaneity is life itself. The new artistic school seems the most daring among those already in existence . . .”<sup>63</sup>

In the same genre as *Bal Bullier*, two other paintings need to be discussed: *Tango Magic City* (Pl. 33) and *Electric Prisms* (Pl. 34). Each of these also addresses issues similar to those in *Bal Bullier* .

Simultaneous motion and abstracting from nature, mainly lights of the city of Paris and the Tango Magic City dance hall, are principal ideas in these two works. In *Tango Magic City* (1913), a theme from another dance hall in Paris which advertised “tango teas” in the Paris newspapers, a figure can be discerned in complementary colors, to suggest a dancer there.<sup>64</sup> In *Electric Prisms* (1914), her largest canvas,<sup>65</sup> Delaunay-Terk began *Prisms* by painting several studies of street lights (Pl. 35) which are in the collection of Jean-Louis and Eric Delaunay, as well as in other private collections. Figures can be seen, in *Simultaneous movement*, in the center of the painting, in what appears to be refracted lighting. Like the *Bal Bullier* these paintings actually engage in issues of Simultaneism--implied movement of colors and forms--with the ever-present figures in *Simultaneous clothing* which later became Delaunay-Terk’s trademark. They represent a continuation of the same experiments as the dance-hall painting and the dress design of 1913. Delaunay-Terk, throughout her career, used whatever means at hand to explore the ideas of color and shapes, whether abstracted forms in clothing, objects, or paintings.

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Working in other media, needing to constantly adjust--provided for Delaunay-Terk the means to make art related to her Russian heritage and linked to the attitudes of Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, and later in the twentieth century, Dada, and Pop Art. Unlimited possibilities reveal, in the work of this artist, unlimited potential for creating--dresses, fabrics, furniture, paintings, bookcovers--as well as covering every surface with art.

The dress that survives from 1913, and the *Bal Bullier* painting, offer today a fuller understanding of Sonia Delaunay-Terk's special contribution to her pre-World War I period. Although other artists were also using a variety of means, her dress and large painting celebrating the dance hall, the tango, and the dress, present a paradigm for her entire oeuvre: art everywhere, on the body as sculpture, in the dance hall for moving colors to music representing the Simultaneous movement of color and form in the entire universe. The dress is also performance--the artist in the dress dancing.<sup>66</sup>

Through the dress and the *Bal Bullier* performance, Delaunay-Terk participated in the liberation of women's fashion and in the breaking of media boundaries by the avant-garde. By taking control of

her own body through fashion and the dance hall through painting, she brought about a fusion of the dance hall and the fashion runway.

Perhaps, because of this, the Paris Dadaists embraced her as one of them along with Robert.<sup>67</sup> The dress and costumes must have been the central focus of their interests. At the same time Sonia, with Robert, enlivened the dance hall scene at the Bal Bullier, causing the two modernist poets with whom both Delaunays collaborated and counted as friends, to extol the dress and the idea.<sup>68</sup> Whether she took the idea of the dress from an academic Russian painting, from her memories of a brief Ukrainian childhood, or from Russian tradition in general, or Art Nouveau or Jugendstil, she made it her own at the Bal Bullier.

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<sup>1</sup> Cendrars' poem, written in 1914, published 1919, about Delaunay-Terk's Simultaneous dress.

<sup>2</sup> When Terk returned to St. Petersburg from Paris in 1906 her friend Alexei Smirnov wrote her of attending the Bal Bullier and the Tabarin, He wrote of drinking absinthe and grog there and staying out until at least 3 a.m. From Smirnov letter of June 20, 1906. This is the first time the Bal Bullier is mentioned in her letters or journals. Trans. Martin Daughtry.

<sup>3</sup> By Guillaume Apollinaire quoted in Arthur A. Cohen's *The New Art of Color*, 180. from "The Seated Woman," 1914. Delaunay-Terk designed and made her own clothes; Robert Delaunay's were designed by Delaunay-Terk but made by his tailor. A comparison of Robert Delaunay's clothing with that designed by Kasimir Malevich for "Victory Over the Sun" would be interesting and appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> Delaunay-Terk in *Nous irons*, 36. This dress apparently has not survived and there is no photograph of it. There are photographs of three dresses, however.

<sup>5</sup> Charles, the Delaunays' only child, was born January 18, 1911. Delaunay-Terk made the quilt for him and remembered it being made early in 1911. However, there is no mention of the quilt in literature of the period; later Delaunay-Terk discussed how impressed Paul Klee was with it when he visited the Delaunays in 1912.

<sup>6</sup> Sonia and Robert Delaunay began working on ideas of Simultaneism about 1912, i.e., the juxtaposition of complementary colors and shapes. Buckberrough, in her article discussed in my review of the literature, defines most clearly the meaning of Simultaneism. I discuss this in greater depth in the introduction.

<sup>7</sup> Later, J. Tugencholyed, in *Soviet Textile Design of the Revolutionary Period*, I. Yasinskaya (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 636, Supporting the attitude toward fashion as art, Tugencholyed even discusses the idea of "cotton" as art, "Cotton cloth is a product of artistic cult just as much as painting; there is no reason to distinguish one from the other." At the turn of the century, Art Nouveau artists in Great Britain, Germany, Russia, and other countries used clothing as part of their overall effort to incorporate all of life into art. This became an emphasis in Delaunay-Terk's work. Kandinsky made loose, medieval-type dresses for Gabriele Münter inspired by Art Nouveau and decorated them with motifs abstracted from nature.

<sup>8</sup> Adrienne Rich in "Notes Toward a Politics of Location", in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), 213-215.

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<sup>9</sup> Buckberrough in a book review of *Sonia Delaunay: Artist of the Lost Generation* by Axel Madsen, in *Womens' Art Journal*, Spring/Summer, 1993, 42, comparing biographies of Delaunay-Terk and Louise Nevelson. Using Julia Kristeva's psychological theory of immigration [--] "The space of a foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping." Buckberrough proposes that the foreigner in this instance is Sonia Delaunay-Terk, who since age five had been the "foreigner" in her transition from Ukraine to St. Petersburg, then to Karlsruhe and Paris. Also as a Russian Jew, although assimilated, she was always wanting affiliation.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. This might be why she preferred collaborations.

<sup>11</sup> I say this because there is no written evidence, only works of art. Before Robert Delaunay, Delaunay-Terk painted primarily portraits; after Robert Delaunay, she stopped painting them entirely and turned to the more decorative arts which she had never participated in before. Although drawing from her heritage, it seems to have been a calculated move, whether to gain recognition in another way or avoid competition with Robert .

<sup>12</sup> "The rhythms made us want to make those colors dance too. Everyday clothing as well as those for Sundays were really monotonous and dull. We wanted to put an end to this general state of mourning. It was up to us. I myself wore my first simultaneous dresses. Apollinaire loved that purple outfit, with a long, green and purple belt and harlequin bodice." From *Nous irons*, 36. This dress has apparently not survived and there is no photograph of it. There are photographs of three dresses.

<sup>13</sup> Where both Delaunays are buried with a Brancusi headstone (Robert Delaunay design) marking their graves.

<sup>14</sup> Recounted to me by Jean-Louis Delaunay, July 1992, in Paris, and he recalls the year he found it as 1985. He also assisted me in photographing the dress in Delaunay-Terk's studio on the rue St. Simon in Paris. Later he had the dress worn by a model and photographed by a professional photographer. Sonia and Robert , who was seriously ill with terminal cancer, fled to the south of France, where Robert died in October 1941 and where she remained for the rest of the war. In the exhibition, "Art/Fashion," at the Soho-Guggenheim Museum, May-June, 1997 another dress and a vest from a private collection in Geneva, Switzerland was exhibited. I had not been aware of the existence of this dress.

<sup>15</sup> In the *New York Times*, Sunday, February 18, 1996, 7, John Russell discusses the exhibition and uses a photograph of Tamara Karsavin, dancing in "Dieu Bleu."

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<sup>16</sup> Fuller, in particular with her flowing skirts, was a favorite subject for artists, especially Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who painted her in an Art Nouveau style and also in very abstract styles.

<sup>17</sup> "Le rythme continu et ondulant du tango incitait mes couleurs à bouger." *Nous irons*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> From *Blaise Cendrars vous parle*, 64. This poem was written by Cendrars in February 1914 but not published by him until 1919 in a collection entitled "Dix-neuf poèmes électriques." Delaunay-Terk, however, published the poem in her catalogue for the Stockholm exhibition in 1916, to Cendrars' dismay. She assumed that since he had given it to her in 1914 it was already published. Too, she was living in Portugal; Cendrars was on the battlefields in France. In the early twenties Delaunay-Terk created "robe-poèmes" from poems about her and her clothing by Tristan Tzara, but these do not directly relate to her own body.

<sup>20</sup> He published the poem in his collection, "Dix-neuf poèmes électriques" published 1919.

<sup>21</sup> And Delaunay-Terk continued the idea with the publication of it in her Stockholm catalogue containing a photograph of herself in the dress.

<sup>22</sup> Much of the Ukrainian and Russian quilting incorporates floral patterns and decorative appliqués like quilting in the United States. What have been called "Crazy Quilts" are the genre from which Delaunay-Terk takes the patterning for the baby quilt and the dress, however. These were made from bits and pieces in geometric, random patterns.

<sup>23</sup> Their experiments with contrasting colors, which make all colors react simultaneously, is discussed in further detail in the introduction. Delaunay-Terk often said that her use of color was intuitive; Robert Delaunay's was from scientific theory. Whether Robert really read color theory is debatable, according to Delphine Bière, in an interview in Paris, May 1995. Bière is writing a dissertation on Robert Delaunay from University of Paris II, Sorbonne-Panthéon.

<sup>24</sup> She recalled in the seventies, "We were on the verge of a new vision, which, in the visual and poetical world, was going to overthrow the old conceptions. This intensive creation was such a part of our life . . . when I was going out with my simultaneous dresses made of little pieces of assembled materials, creating sensational spots of color." From *Nous irons*, 56. This statement was made in

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an interview with Patrick Raynaud (who wrote her "autobiography" from interviews for a video and film).

<sup>25</sup> Avant-garde artists often worked against the accepted traditions of easel painting as art acceptable for museums and galleries; crafts were considered for decorative purposes and not accorded space in most exhibitions. In fact, in the exhibition "High-Low" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1989-90 where "low" art or craft was given a venue, it was used to demonstrate how 'low' art informs "high" art, not seen in its own right as art. Criticism leveled against the exhibition ranged from that of "elitist" to simply not understanding the problem. Again, French artists were favored, as were male artists of the accepted establishment. The problems which existed in 1906-1914 still remain a problem. Feminist and other ideas challenge this perspective, causing exhibitions to be more aware at least of the very real problems.

<sup>26</sup> At times in the history of art the work of Gauguin and Matisse have been considered "decorative" in a pejorative. When I saw women's work I do not mean that men did not participate in the same genre, just that women have traditionally been seen as those who do needlework and crafts, although those who attain fame in this area are often men.

<sup>27</sup> Particularly in Cohen's *New Art of Color*, 198-99 and in other interviews. There is no reference of it during the preWorld War I period. Whether this was thought of long afterwards or not is not possible to tell. One of Robert Delaunay's artistic "heroes" was Georges Seurat and the pointillist technique had been important to him. Perhaps this is one of the reasons. In some ways it might have undermined Delaunay-Terk's confidence in her own painting. Her painting production clearly decreased at the beginning of her relationship with Delaunay. Although she had been taught needlework she never mentions it before this period. In the chapter on Influences I discuss art nouveau influences and arts and crafts in Russia which she would have known. She owned books on Russian arts and crafts which are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, including one on the Princess Tenisheva's Talashkino art colony. The Russian traditions, especially as espoused by the art colonies, as well as her knowledge of Kandinsky and art in Germany during this period.

<sup>28</sup> Discussed in the chapter on "Transformations."

<sup>29</sup> From books on Ukrainian design most seem to be stylized floral patterns which resemble those used by Natalia Goncharova in her designs for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Some geometric designs also can be found. Delaunay-Terk's design in her "Leaves" is more in the style of William Morris or other British designers. She possibly saw his designs in books and might have visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in December 1908 when she married Uhde in

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London. They were also published and known in Russia. She might have also seen works of turn-of-the-century Viennese design in Germany.

<sup>30</sup> From a book on portraits of women in Russia, *The Female Portrait in Russian Art* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1974), plate 23 and hangs in the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. Called *Portrait of Yulia. Samoylova Leaving the Ball*. Zeraida Serebryakova's work *Woman at Her Toilet* is in the same collection as is a later self-portrait of 1911. Decorative embroideries on clothing is seen in several of these paintings of women, but only two others show geometric patterning.

<sup>31</sup> From the cover photograph of *Le Théâtre*, no. 179, June 1, 1906. The couple photographed are appearing in a play entitled, "Le Clown" portray M. and Mme Barbazan. The female actor wearing the dress is a Mlle Margyl. Found in the special collection of theater magazines at the University of South Florida library.

<sup>32</sup> Weiss, 3, only mentions that this preceded Delaunay-Terk's dress by two years and Picasso's music-hall costumes by six years. Weiss points out that just at that time the music hall began to appear in Cubist painting, notably, *Ma jolie* by Picasso.

<sup>33</sup> In Buckberrough's dissertation, "Robert Delaunay: The Early Years," p. 349, from Apollinaire, "La Vie Anecdotique, Peintres futuristes," *Mercure de France*, vol. 94, November 16, 1911, 346.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Buckberrough, *Robert Delaunay*, 349, 450, fn. 30. From Gustav Vriesen and Max Imdahl, *Robert Delaunay: Light and Color* (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1969), 60, quoting from *Blaise Cendrars vous parle*, "Entretien de la Radiodiffusion Française" series, M.Mannoli (Paris, 1952), 141-142. Buckberrough felt that this was a direct interview relating to Cendrars' memories, therefore reliable.

<sup>35</sup> Delaunay-Terk wrote that "with Poiret's sister we rented a house at 1 rue du Pont in Louveciennes." "Aux premiers jours du printemps, nous sommes allés nous installer, avec la soeur du couturier Poiret et un autre couple, dans une belle maison de Louveciennes." From letters in the archives at the Centre de Documentation at the Centre Pompidou and the Delaunay archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>36</sup> In both the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Centre de Documentation at the Centre Pompidou. A very large house still stands at this address. During the same summer A.A. Smirnov and Georges Yakulov visited the Delaunays at Louveciennes. Patrick Henry Bruce was also invited but had already rented a house at Belle Isle.

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<sup>37</sup> Charles S. Mayer in "The Impact of the Ballet Russes on Design in the West, 1909-1914" discusses Léon Bakst's influence on Poiret after 1910 with looser, more Eastern styles and more exotic colors. In *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West-1910-1930*, ed. by Gail Harrison Roman and Virginia Hagelstein Marguardt (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1992).

<sup>38</sup> In Diane de Marly, *The History of Haute Couture 1850-1950* (London: The Anchor Press, 1980), 81, also believes that the liberation of the figure was already "happening" with Isadora Duncan dancing without corset or stockings by 1907. In *L'Illustration*, March 28, 1914, several corset advertisements display the new style undergarment; one calls the corset "Le Tango", p. 18 (Pl. 4).

<sup>39</sup> In Klaus Jurgen Sembach's *Henry van de Velde* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 38.

<sup>40</sup> In *Nous irons*, 36, she responded to a question about the clothing, "La mode du jour nous intéressait pas, je ne cherchais pas à innover dans la forme de-la coupe, mais à égayer et animer l'art vestimentaire, en réutilisant les matières nouvelles porteuses de nombreuses gammes de couleurs."

<sup>41</sup> This idea about fashion in general from Joanne Finklestein in *The Fashioned Self* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 5. 1913 fashions shocked clergy and in fact, German bishops attacked fashion in a pastoral letter that year. From *Die Mode: Menschen und Modes im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. iv, 1878-1914, Munich, n.d., [1919] cited in *Fashion and Reality* by Alison Gernsheim (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), no. 224.

<sup>42</sup> Marly, *Haute Couture*, 90. The hobble skirt was popular from 1910 to 1915. It created a scandal receiving even a papal condemnation. Women were warned against wearing them. They contributed to the delinquency of women.

<sup>43</sup> The word "beaver" or *castor* in French, in slang can signify a woman's pubic area.

<sup>44</sup> Sally Peters, in "From Eroticism to Transcendence! Ballroom Dance and the Female Body," from *The Female Body - Figures, Styles, Speculations*, ed. Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 148. Peters discusses the ballroom as a landscape and calls it one of the domains from which human movement receives significance.

<sup>45</sup> In *Nous irons*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> Edwards, C., *Paris* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Publishing Company, 1924), 14. Roger Shattuck, in *The Banquet Years*, only briefly mentions the Bal

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Bullier, which is unfortunate since it played an active role in the Paris Shattuck describes. In the 1920s and '30s Brassai photographed dancers and entertainers at the Bal Bullier, wearing scanty clothing, or even nude, with jazz players, and smoke filled rooms. Georges Bernier also writes about the Bal Bullier in *La Revue blanche* (Editions Hazan, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> See Richard M. Stephenson and Joseph Iaccarino, *The Complete Book of Ballroom Dancing* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 32-35. A recent film, "Scent of a Woman" features a tango as an extremely provocative dance even in 1992. See also Simon Collier, Artemis Cooper, Maria Susana Azzi, and Richard Martin, *Tango, the Dance, the Song, the Story*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> In *L'illustration*, March 28, 1914, 18, is an advertisement (see illustration) for "Le Tango" – "Silhouette Normale et souple ainsi que l'exige la mode actuelle"; at Augustine Thomas, 18 rue Daunou, Paris 2e. The advertisement also mentions "le soutien-gorge" (brassiere) et "la ceinture tango." Although difficult to tell from the illustration, there seems to be a divided leg which would allow movement.

<sup>49</sup> In *La Vie Heureuse*, November 1913, p. 310, published in "Réflexions sur l'esthétique de la vie quotidienne en 1913" in *L'Année 1913*. Another journal, *Luxe de Paris*, 932, reported gossip and fashion, but no art or literature, but much on the tango.

<sup>50</sup> In *La Vie Heureuse*, *L'Année 1913*. It is interesting to note that women were the problem; nothing was said about men dancing the tango. Women were going to desert their families and become degenerate, in Stephenson and Iaccarino, *Ballroom Dancing*, pp. 32-35.

<sup>51</sup> The Bal Tabarin is mentioned earlier as a rowdy dance hall in Montmartre.

<sup>52</sup> In *Gil Blas*, January 10, 1914, 5 and in unidentified newspaper cutouts in Delaunay-Terk's files from October 3, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> From *Nous irons*, 36. This is from 1978, and must be looked at in that light.

<sup>54</sup> Feminist histories of women are at times called "herstories."

<sup>55</sup> "Le Bal Bullier était pour moi ce qu'avait été le Moulin de la Galette à Degas, à Renoir, à Lautrec." *Nous irons*, 36.

<sup>56</sup> Although Delaunay's competition with the Futurists was intense, Delaunay-Terk seems to not have been as concerned with them. In later accounts she discusses negative reactions to other artists but not the Futurists.

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<sup>57</sup> From Buckberrough, "Robert Delaunay," 438, fn. 30, from an interview with Sonia Delaunay, August 1, 1974.

<sup>58</sup> Discussed in *Futurism and Futurisms*, exh. cat. Palazzo Grassi (Venice, New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 573.

<sup>59</sup> In Spate, 194-195. She actually refers to Robert Delaunay but the same ideas could apply to Delaunay-Terk's ideas of movement. The Delaunays would have seen several Kandinsky *Improvisations* at the Salon des Indépendants of 1912. Kandinsky actually writes of the vibrations of colors and sensations of various colors, i.e., the horizontal movement of yellow and blue, with warm colors approaching the spectator, and cold ones retreating. Colors can be made colder or warmer by introducing shading. From *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 36-42.

<sup>60</sup> Delaunay-Terk gave up painting nudes and by 1909 stopped painting portraits of women. Ideas on "framing" could apply in this move from easel painting to other media. See Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 9. T.J. Clark writes about *Olympia* that "it is a picture for men to look at in which woman is constructed as an object of somebody else's desire." *Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Age of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), 131. Delaunay-Terk stopped putting her body in a frame.

<sup>61</sup> Further ideas on framing can be found in Lynda Nead's *The Female Nude*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991). T.J. Clark writes about Manet's *Olympia* that "it is a picture for men to look at in which woman is constructed as an object of someone else's desire. London: Thames & Hudson, 1985, 131. Delaunay-Terk avoided putting her body "in a frame." I will continue to explore ideas about framing in relation to Delaunay-Terk and her work.

<sup>62</sup> An idea about Robert Delaunay's work expressed by Roger Shattuck, 345-346. Shattuck relates Simultaneist ideas to James Joyce's *Ulysses*' new coherence, new unity of experience as can be seen in the dress, dance hall, and painting.

<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately this Russian language account is from Delaunay-Terk files with the date of March 1911 penciled in by her. In efforts to prove their being "first" dates have been manipulated at times; this could not have been written before 1912, after Robert Delaunay began painting his "Window" series, and probably follows Apollinaire's review of the exhibition he called "Orphist." Therefore a date of 1911 would have been impossible. Minsky also discusses Robert Delaunay's "Window" series and connections between them and Henri Bergson's theories on "creative evolution." Trans. Anca Oroveanu.

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<sup>64</sup> Advertisements appear in every issue of *L'illustration* during this period, for Tango Magic City. Little material is available on this particular dance hall, but they regularly advertised tea-dances.

<sup>65</sup> Exhibited in the Salon des Indépendents in Paris, Spring 1914. That this painting was included in the Salon is rarely mentioned; today it hangs in the Pompidou Center in Paris. It was Delaunay-Terk's last large painting (93 3/4" x 98 3/4") before World War I.

<sup>66</sup> Delaunay-Terk did not like to dance as much as she like to wear costumes and participate in the crowds at the dance halls. Cohen, *Sonia Delaunay*, 65.

<sup>67</sup> After the Delaunays returned from Spain and Portugal in 1921 they became involved with the Paris Dadaists. In 1923 Delaunay-Terk created costumes for Tzara's "Le Coeur à Gaz;" she and Tzara created what she called *robes-poèmes*, or dress designs celebrating short poems written by Tzara for her; Philippe Soupault and others wrote poetry that the Delaunays painted on their walls, and one of Soupault's poems Delaunay-Terk embroidered on a curtain that she also wore as a shawl. Buckberrough discusses this period in the *Sonia Delaunay Retrospective* catalogue, 54-63.

<sup>68</sup> Apollinaire and Cendrars as already discussed. Although Cendrars was Swiss and Apollinaire born in Italy, both were working in Paris at that time. They, too, were foreigners.

**DELAUNAY-TERK AND CENDRARS: THE FIRST  
SIMULTANEOUS BOOK-POEM**

*It is first a poem for the eyes...not only one of the first truly modern poems, but a modern multimedia object as well.*

Jay Bochner<sup>1</sup>

*Cendrars represented for me one of the most luminous moments of my life . . . Cendrars is the most true and the most important poet of our time.*

Delaunay-Terk<sup>2</sup>

Inspiration flowed back and forth between Sonia Delaunay-Terk and poet Blaise Cendrars during 1913 and 1914 while they created "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian and Little Jeanne of France."<sup>3</sup> Their project, and the focus of this chapter, was a two-meter-long folding poem written by Cendrars and sparkling with Delaunay-Terk's Simultaneous colors, which they completed in time to exhibit at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon, September 1913.<sup>4</sup>

The Delaunays first met Cendrars at Apollinaire's salon, where Cendrars read his poem, "Easter in New York," on a Wednesday, in October 1912.<sup>5</sup> Shortly afterwards the relationship between Cendrars and the Delaunays accelerated. Delaunay-Terk recalled years later, that at their first meeting Apollinaire was stunned by Cendrars' poem

about the alienation and victimization of immigrants in the modern city. Cendrars, nevertheless, celebrated city life, but comparing himself with Christ, lamented that he, Cendrars, lacked the compassion of Christ for the urban destitute.<sup>6</sup>

Delaunay-Terk remembered that in her excitement over “Easter in New York” she rushed to her supplier to buy materials for a bookcover when Cendrars brought the Delaunays a booklet of the poem the following day.<sup>7</sup> She rebound the poem, using a stiffer board for a backing, then covered it with a buff-colored chamois on which she placed colored papers of geometric shapes. In the seventies she recounted, “On suede I placed motifs of paper collage. Inside I did the same with big, colored paper squares. It was a tangible response to the beauty of the poem.”<sup>8</sup> Beige suede with papers of red, blue, yellow, and gold form a lyrical exterior cover reminiscent of a human figure-- the narrator of the poem--whose abstracted form seems to float through the city (Pl. 1). The interior papers are divided into rectangles reminiscent of later “Chance” collages by Jean Arp or many of the works of Paul Klee or Pieta Mondrian,<sup>9</sup> and Delaunay-Terk later referred to their having seen her work in 1912 in Paris and in 1913 at

Herwarth Walden's Sturm exhibition in Berlin. Small overlaps and irregularities of rectangular cut papers distinguish the interior bookcover and imply that Delaunay-Terk may have been aware of the collages of Braque and Picasso. (Pl. 2).

Although a bookcover for a poet might not be considered a collaboration, she considered it one.<sup>10</sup> In an undated letter from the period Cendrars writes Robert Delaunay inviting both Delaunays to dinner; and regarding bookcovers for Mme Delaunay, since the book is not ready, "I am sending her the proofs, the manuscript, and a copy of 'Easter' for my wife,"<sup>11</sup> presumably asking for another book cover for the copy of his poem for his wife, Féla.

From the creation of the bookcover to their work together on "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian and Little Jeanne of France," and through the collaboration on the poster-poems, she and Cendrars were in almost daily contact for a year. Letters and one-line notes poured back and forth from Cendrars to either one, or both, of the Delaunays. Messages describing the frustrations of waiting for the printer, of arranging meetings, of publicizing their work, and later of defending it, have been published in Antoine Sidoti's edition of

letters.<sup>12</sup> A massive publicity campaign to promote “Prose-Poem of the Transiberian” kept both Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk involved in clearing disputes with critics in letters to the editor, while trying to meet deadlines and prepare editions of the book-poem.

Cendrars writes in a brash style—speaking in prose, not poetry—of a young jewelry salesman and “little Jeanne of Montmartre,” who traveling on the Transiberian Railway, in refrains asks repeatedly, “Tell me, Blaise, are we far from Montmartre?” Landscape flies past in abstracted forms that Delaunay-Terk created to correspond to the movement of the train. For her, who as a young child had left her parents and siblings in Ukraine for a long train ride with her uncle to St. Petersburg, and had often made the twenty-eight hour train trip between Berlin and St. Petersburg,<sup>13</sup> the poem must have stirred and transformed memories and childhood experiences. Strong, primary reds, blues, and yellows evoke long past images of Ukrainian colors. The abstracted figurative shapes seem to be not only figures from Cendrars’ prose-poem but also universal memories from a long-ago journey. The stencil or *pochoir* using vivid colors, along the left side of the written text, simultaneously points to the passing landscape,

passengers on the train, and to the text. The abstracted figures, in a similar style to those incorporated in Delaunay-Terk's painting, *Bal Bullier*, also convey a sense of movement.

In their two-meter-long prose-poem (Pl. 3), the viewer must read from written text to painted text with the sensation of one's eyes being drawn back and forth by the artist's juxtaposition of colors to words. This juxtaposition of splashes of color over and between the word with twelve different type faces, next to the long *pochoir* of her abstracted "impression" of the poem, causes the viewer to read simultaneously word and image, and for this reason the work was called the first "Simultaneous book."

Book illustration in Russia and Ukraine would have been familiar to Delaunay-Terk and provided important precedents, from early medieval books of days to the Symbolist poets. In Russia, artists with whom Delaunay-Terk might have had contact, such as Nathalia Goncharova designed a collage cover, including words and image, of a book by V. Khlebnikov and A. Kruchenykh (1912; Pl. 4).<sup>14</sup> Olga Rozanova in "The Duck's Nest of Dirty Words" (early 1913), mixed words and images for the poetry of her husband, Alexei Kruchenykh,

including colored lithographs with images superimposed over words. She exhibited these in a montage in 1916. Made up of sixteen pages of colored black and white lithographs, Rozanova's work appears to be a series of individual illustrations representing her reaction to the poems (Pl. 5). Also in 1916 she created tissue paper collages responding to Kruchenykh's poem "Universal War" (Pl. 6). Although daring and distinctive book art, none of these had the format, the striking juxtaposition of color and words, or the publicity campaign of the "Prose-Poem." Delaunay-Terk knew the writing and illustrations of her friends, Benois and Bakst, and probably knew Goncharova by this time through Smirnov and other Russian friends, including Alexandra Exter and Elizaveta Kruglikova,, who traveled back and forth to Russia.<sup>15</sup> Whether any of the Russian artists other than Exter knew Delaunay-Terk's and Cendrars' work is not known.

Cendrars was said to have inherited money which he used for producing the book-poem. However, Miriam Cendrars, the poet's daughter, has written that her mother, Féla, earned the money which she gave to Cendrars to enable him to produce the poem.<sup>16</sup>

Delaunay-Terk apparently believed the story of the inheritance since

the poor Cendrars was always looking for money.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps had she known the money came from Féla she would not have joined the usually impoverished Cendrars in using it.

Cendrars' letters to Delaunay-Terk regarding the "Prose-Poem" concern appointments at the printers and other mundane details of working together. The earliest mention of the poem in Delaunay-Terk's files is an undated card from 1913: "Here are the 6 pages of my new poem like I promised you. What do you say about it?"<sup>18</sup> Cendrars dated the first manuscript of the poem, February 18, 1913, and wrote, "These last weeks I have, from the point of view of art, really suffered. But I have begun to work. Enough! It's good! I will tell you more about it shortly." In the second letter, from Paris, dated, March 15, 1913 he wrote, "[F]or the moment I'm a little better, physically, morally, and materially."<sup>19</sup> He and Delaunay-Terk were discussing the poem by April 1913, according to Miriam Cendrars and Sidoti.<sup>20</sup> They actually sent out a "subscription bulletin" from the Editions des Hommes Nouveaux for "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian," in April 1913.<sup>21</sup> In other letters and cards Cendrars asked the Delaunays about issues of *L'Intransigeant* which discussed art and literature.<sup>22</sup> Although they

were advertising “Prose-Poem” for sale, the edition had not yet been printed. On a hand-delivered postcard dated November 1913, eight months after the initial draft, Cendrars wrote:

Dear Madame,<sup>23</sup>

The silk screen is being done. The first sheet is nearly ready. It will take 15 more days. I am leaving you this sheet in order to make the silk screen of the text—more transparent—like we said. I will come by your house tomorrow after lunch.<sup>24</sup>

This note shows that decision-making regarding the transparency of colors concerned both artist and poet. On another postcard (undated) Cendrars, frustrated by delays, wrote:

Dear Madame,

Crété has done nothing! He is hunting. He hasn't returned since Thursday. I left him all the necessary instructions.

1. to send you the subscription bulletin
2. to send you the colored strip
3. a last proof to establish the colors of the text.

I hope that you already have them in hand.

If you will bring all that Thursday, we can finally pull it.<sup>25</sup>

In *Der Sturm*, November 1913, Cendrars wrote exuberantly:

“Prose-Poem of the Transiberian” is certainly a poem, since it's the work of a libertin. We can say that it's his love, his passion, his vice, his grandeur, his vomit. It's a part of himself. His Eve. The side that is all wrung out of him. A mortal work, wounded from love, pregnant . . .

Mme Delaunay made such a beautiful book of colors that my poem is more drenched with light than my life. This makes me happy. Still more, this book is two meters long! And plus, the edition reaches the height of the Eiffel Tower.<sup>26</sup>

The prose-poem was finally printed with silk screening in November 1913, but original proofs had been seen before that. The chronology, according to Sidoti, asserts that Cendrars had completed the poem by the beginning of March, 1913 and that Delaunay-Terk designed the *pochoir* in March and April. By April the poet and artist were planning a "subscription" for selling it; then the canvas-painted maquette for it was shown at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon in Berlin by October, in the exhibition which had opened in September.<sup>27</sup> The poster (Pl. 7) Delaunay-Terk painted to advertise "Prose-Poem" was also exhibited at that time.

Newspaper accounts and letters to the editor concerning "the first Simultaneous book" were prompted by Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk, who sent out a prospectus and subscription bulletins to advertise their collaborative work. Critics responded with reviews and comments before the work was actually printed and while the maquette was being exhibited in Berlin.<sup>28</sup> The first critic to do so was Ludwig Rubiner in a review for *Die Aktion*, under the title "Manuscripts," which he wrote after hearing Cendrars speak about "Prose-Poem" in Paris.<sup>29</sup> One

wonders if he saw the work, since he mentions neither Delaunay-Terk's contribution nor the unusually long two-meter format.

On half of the first leaf of the "book" on the left side (the recto), in a rectangular format, Delaunay-Terk and Cendrars placed the following information:

**BLAISE CENDRARS**

**Prose-Poem of the Transiberian and of Little Jeanne of France**

**Simultaneous colors of Mme DELAUNAY-TERK**

**DELUXE PRINTING No.**

**From 1 to 8 for the parchment**

**From 9 to 36 for Japan paper**

**From 37 to 150 for the simulated Japan paper<sup>30</sup>**

Despite the number advertised, the edition did not reach one hundred-fifty, and therefore would not have achieved Cendrars' dream of reaching the top of the Eiffel Tower. The best estimate of the number of completed works is sixty-two, by both Delaunay-Terk and Cendrars.<sup>31</sup>

"Prose-Poem" was called the first Simultaneous book by the critic, André Billy, writing under a pseudonym, when he reacted to the initial announcement of the publication, but still before it was published. He wrote:

We have received a strange prospectus. It is in a box and presented in a very elongated format. On the back is printed in six different colors these words: First Simultaneous Book.

.....

Blaise Cendrars is the name of a talented poet who last published the curious *Sequences*. Mme Delaunay-Teyk [sic] is the woman "orphist" painter.

We know nothing more except that the smallest copy of the book announced by the above prospectus will not cost less than five hundred francs and will measure two meters high.

Good business for book binders.<sup>32</sup>

. . . Jean de L'Escritoire<sup>33</sup>

The prospectus actually mentioned "simultaneous painting" not "simultaneous book" and Cendrars reacted to having his poem called that. In fact, Billy wrote of information not included in the prospectus but in the subscription bulletin. Sidoti argues that Billy's text is mocking the idea of the Simultaneous book and presents it as a "bizarre, complicated, and suspect object." Sidoti further points out that Billy had neither read nor even seen this work.<sup>34</sup> I would argue that instead of not having seen the work he had seen the actual book-poem with its presentation box, but had misinterpreted it and assumed that an actual book would be published later. His remark, "We have received a strange prospectus. It is in a box and presented in a very

elongated format,” demonstrates that what he saw was surely an actual edition or maquette of an edition of “Prose-Poem” in its small presentation box.

In response to the confusion about materials, size, shape, and price, Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk set about to clarify their purpose (and to further advertise their enterprise). Published in *Paris Midi* Saturday the 11th of October 1913 was the following:

### The “First Simultaneous Book”

We have received this letter:

Dear Colleague,

You probably do not have the prospectus for the *first simultaneous book* in hand.

We know that you would like to make the following rectifications:

1. The prospectus is not on cardboard but on paper;
2. There are not sixteen quadrilaterals on the first page but *the simultaneous contrasts of colors*;
3. The exact title is: *Prose-Poem du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*;
4. There is not a “smallest” copy; – all of them are two meters long.
5. The announced prices in the prospectus are 500 francs for the works on parchment; 100 francs for the works on Japan Imperial; 50 francs for the works on simulated-Japan;
6. This is not a good business for book binders since all the works are already bound.<sup>35</sup>

Best to you.

Sonia Delaunay-Terk

and Blaise Cendrars<sup>36</sup>

Also on October 11, André Salmon wrote in *Gil Blas* under “Letters” and called *The latest invention*, the idea that from “certain signs we are able to say that the *Prose-Poem of the Transiberian* is something in the ‘Orphist’ style.” He further writes that “This book will be illustrated not by images, prints, but in ‘simultaneous colors’ by Mme Delaunay-Terk.” Salmon describes the absence of punctuation in the poem as making it like a poem by Guillaume Apollinaire. He concludes by stating: “It is obvious that the text has these particularities which claim such an original commentary on the part of the illustrator.”<sup>37</sup> Salmon’s point of view is not obvious but does call attention to the book-poem, even if while calling Delaunay-Terk an illustrator.

In the newspaper, *La Route*, October 15, 1913, and signed “Les Sept,” the critic writes of the subscription bulletin and the idea of no punctuation that “all this without a comma, a semi-colon, or a period” seemed to be a main concern of the author. Then he asks if this “is a new school, derived from Futurism?”—which surely rankled Robert Delaunay—and gives the necessary information to order one, including prices.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the month of October articles appeared

daily discussing the new work. Delaunay-Terk's files are full of clippings from small town and large city newspapers, many without names or dates. She even copied some of them in longhand.

Under "Notes parisiennes" of the "Journal de Paris" section of *La Liberté*, D'Antin, a critic who obviously had not read the description well, wrote that it would be "impossible to take it ["Prose-Poem"] on a trip, even less possible to put it on luggage racks . . . It could come in handy in the countryside: as a really portable house."<sup>39</sup> In reality, the long book-poem folds into an amazingly small-sized packet.

On October 17, 1913, Roger Allard, in *La Cote*, heralded as the "major daily independent political and financial paper," discusses Delaunay-Terk more fully than anyone before him had:

Looking at the gracious Synchronist, Mme Sonia Delaunay-Terk, it's the same wife of the painter Robert Delaunay, and one of the occult and mysterious magicians of the newest feminine fashion. Will we see at Paul Poiret's, the simultaneous dress and at Mme Carleir's the synchronist hat?<sup>40</sup>

Allard also asks if Messrs. Marinetti and Martin-Barzun, "inventors of the most recent aesthetic systems," will "cast a satisfied look at this audacious endeavor,"<sup>41</sup> perhaps to stir up more controversy.

*Paris-Journal* on Friday, October 17, under "Courier" and unsigned, named the authors Blaise Cendrars and Mme Sonia Delaunay-Ferk [sic] and wrote that the work would have four hundred verses, adding that "there is no reason why it shouldn't have four thousand or forty thousand."<sup>42</sup> Then the writer declared:

And the two practical jokers hope that their contemporaries, who will see it at the Salon d'Automne, will at least give them the acclaim given to the futurists or the cubists. The two collaborators know their epoque.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the sarcastic tone, Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk must have reveled in the constant, but short-lived, publicity. Under the heading "Art Nouveau" in *La Vie Parisienne*, October 18, 1913, the critic wrote:

here is orphism recommending to us a new form: orphist literature is being born. The first orphist volume, which is appearing next, ....which is printed without any punctuation--is composed without intelligible phrases, without words entirely in order. ...It is decorated with illustrations where all outlines, all sketches of figures have become strictly taboo: they are simply colors placed, without any studied care, one on the other. This seems to make it charming.<sup>44</sup>

The pejorative tone places the work in the realm of the simply decorative or "charming" rather than the serious work of art.

Also on October 18, 1913 in *The New York World*, a review appeared stating that Mme Sonia Delaunay, “a talented Russian painter and the wife of Robert Delaunay, the leader of the so-called Orphist movement, is applying her husband’s system of painting—in square spots of color without drawing—to bookmaking.” (my emphasis). The account continues:

Already she has turned out a handsome and unique volume of poems. The pages are differently colored; no two consecutive lines of type are of the same color, and sometimes the color is changed in the middle of a word, getting an effect similar to the ancient illuminated texts. She does not obey Maxim Gorky’s dictum to vary the color of the text—scarlet ink for passionate passages, gray for dull, &c.—but she merely puts each page in color as a separate composition to please the eye. It costs \$100 to produce one volume.<sup>45</sup>

Delaunay-Terk’s abstracted figures and bold strokes of strong color—not at all “square spots of color”—while adhering to the same ideas that she and Robert developed, show her evolution toward her work of about the same time, *Bal Bullier*. One wonders if this reviewer even saw the work, since the review states that each “leaf is in color as a separate composition,” while, in fact, there were no single pages. The description of lines and words changing colors is accurate, however, and supports the observations made in the review.

On October 19, 1913, in *La Gazette Franc-Suisse*, appeared these words:

We have spoken of a book by Mr. Blaise Cendrars and of Mme Delaunay-Terks [sic], the first simultaneous book. Here are some details.

This book will have the look of a painting, a canvas of 2 meters by .36 meters. It will not be illustrated, but each part of the phrase will overlap the number of colored parts, the words will be painted other colors. The authors explain: The simultaneism of this book is in its simultaneous representation, not illustration. *The simultaneous contrasts of colors and the text form the movements which are the new inspiration.* [Cendrars] further calls it a poem in four hundred verses, and that there will be two hundred copies.<sup>46</sup>

Although this critic understood that the representation “is simultaneous not illustrative,” he was not aware that the work does not have the “look of a painting” and was not on canvas but paper, and would fold instead, making it book art.

Newspaper accounts, which appeared daily in the French newspapers before the printing in October, had almost ceased by the month of November. In contrast, in November, *Der Sturm* in Berlin, published a long article about the book-poem, in German, written by Cendrars. Then, again in November and regularly through February, *Der Sturm* published a notice advertising it.<sup>47</sup> The collaborators

continued sending out subscriptions and Delaunay-Terk designed a poster to sell the "book" (Pl. 8).

On October 18, 1913, her close friend, Alexei Smirnov, wrote to her that he was thrilled to return to St. Petersburg, the magnificent city, after being in France for several months. And he added, "I dream of your coming, you and Robert."<sup>48</sup> Smirnov had taken another poster (Pl. 9) by Sonia with him and proposed a reading of the poem at the Stray Dog Cabaret, a popular gathering place for intellectuals, on Mikhailovsky Square in St. Petersburg. If she agreed he would need more information:

1) Barzun's books.<sup>49</sup> It's not a big thing, I will speak of him only in passing, without great praise.

2) Among Robert's works, I would like to have those which are on postcards. I have an old *Eiffel Tower*. Is there any advantage in new works on post cards? In any case, an album could suffice.

3) Indispensable!!! : the posters!!!! of Simultané in colored pencils! I will hang them at the Dog several days before my presentation. That will be awfully chic. If there are drawings, that would be formidable. Even if they are in the style of those on cardboard in which you enveloped the subscription for the Transiberian, that would be equally fine. The important thing is to produce an effect.

The minimum, 2 posters, but 4 would be better.

4) perhaps Apollinaire has again written something else interesting on the painting? Can't I have the prints separately in this case? Now tell me: is it necessary to speak of Apollinaire? The place of Cendrars? If yes, I will need verse other than *Alcools* . . . Give me your advice *after reflection* and

*seriously*. Be aware that it is no good to just accumulate documents. It's only necessary to take those which relate strictly and directly to simultaneity.

5) Are there poets who are students and comrades of Cendrars? If yes, I need to have in hand their works. *It is important*.

6) I possess the works of Cendrars: *Pâques* and *Sequences*.

I need the rest, above all the copy of the *Transiberian*! I can't buy it: I don't have any money (I am chronically broke). Could Cendrars (or the editor) send one copy to me? It's necessary to have some of copies for publicity. I have shown several people the subscription bulletin. But none of them have 50 available francs without knowing what they are like. But when they have seen them they will buy several of the copies! Finally: I am officially invited by the review *Apollon* to write an article or a review on the book. You could really give [me] a copy for the talk and the article!

7) Your counsel: it's very important!

8) I think that's all, that I haven't forgotten anything. If I have forgotten something remind me.

How to expedite it? You can either put it in one single packet or in several. You must hurry since the censors can hold things up. Reply to me without delay to tell me how you see my project and if I need to get to work.<sup>50</sup>

Delaunay-Terk hurriedly sent the packages to Smirnov, since a postcard dated November 27, 1913 thanked her for the two packages brought by Madame Fridlandskia. He also queried the choice of title, "Prose-Poem' of the Transiberian," since he might be asked that question. On December 19 he wrote again that the work for the conference is underway. Then December 23, 1913 Cendrars responds to questions asked by Smirnov regarding the

**“Prose-Poem”:**

The role of the new poetry is to throw treasures out the windows, among the people, in the crowd, into life. I throw money out the windows.

The windows of my poetry are open wide on the boulevards and in the store windows.....

As for the word “prose”: I used it in the Transiberian in a low Latin sense like “prosa,” “dictu.” Poem seems to me too precious, too closed. Prose is more open, popular . . . <sup>51</sup>

Smirnov sponsored the reading at the Stray Dog cabaret on January 4, 1914. Bénédict Livshits called it a “famous club” and “the only islet in the St. Petersburg night where the young literati and artists, who in general have no money, feel at home.”<sup>52</sup> He also described the audience as “divided into two unequal categories: the representatives of art and the ‘pharmacists.’”<sup>53</sup> Marinetti, the Italian Futurist leader and poet, attended the cabaret in 1914, and other Russian poets such as Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, and Vladimir Mayakovsky read their work there.<sup>54</sup>

The day after the Cendrars-Delaunay-Terk reading, January 5, 1914.<sup>55</sup> Smirnov sent a postcard:

Dear Friend Sonia, Happy New Year!  
 Yesterday, I made my lecture (Delaunay-Cendrars). I had a total success! I crushed my adversaries like little children. I am totally satisfied. Some details in a big letter tomorrow.  
 Greetings to Robert, Cendrars, and the friends.  
 Your Sacha<sup>56</sup>

On January 8, 1914 Smirnov sent a long letter to Delaunay-Terk, describing the conference: He wrote that the conference was a smashing success on "Simultané." 160 people attended, but unfortunately a good many critics and artists did not come, although there were some interesting people, including " . . . the Tolstoys [Alexei], Rostislavov, Kulbin, Chervachidzé, Tchoudovskaia, Kruglikova [who also lived in Paris and probably helped Delaunay-Terk learn engraving], Bielkine, the poet Piast, A. Terk, . . . Rozekoer, the relative of Cendrars." He told her about his careful preparations for his talk, and then wrote,

You haven't really come to Russia for a long time and you have forgotten how our public is. They like to mock everything! turn all into ridicule, above all that which is foreign. Now, under the influence of the Futurists, there is a terrible wave of chauvinism. They want to show that they are better than Europe, that only stupidity comes from Paris, and that it's possibly stolen from us, the Russians.

He adds that "the young painter Altman told me that all this had been borrowed by the Delaunays from Burliuk who showed his work in Paris two years ago. (!!!) I responded to that in a very sarcastic way while saying that they could take part in the debate on the condition of bringing proofs."

Smirnov continued:

All said, I consider that I had a great success. The paintings pleased [everyone] very much. The book, in all evidence, pleased everyone *very much*. But the things didn't do well regarding sales,—for the instant, nothing. Many asked me questions during the break; I told them that they could write me, I gave them my address. *It was impossible* to publicly proclaim that the album (and the paintings) was for sale by me, and the book by my middleman, *that was inconceivable*, —it would have resulted in a frightful scandal. They already tried to goad me or to show me up while saying that “they took out a patent”, etc. And then they would have screamed that under the banner of philosophy Smirnov and his friend Delaunay have opened a boutique. You know our “public has the idealist mentality.” Let's wait.<sup>57</sup>

Regardless of Smirnov's talk of showing the poem to encourage sales, apparently, as an intellectual, he could not bring himself offer to sell the book-poem at the Stray Dog. Those who asked for information, therefore, were told to write him later. He was a philosopher, not an art dealer. No information exists on what, if any, sales resulted from the talk.

Smirnov finished by writing:

I showed, and with facts and with reasons, that painting can exist without representation of objects. What charming sentiments the combat against idiocy produces! It's a fact that, for example, the terrain is prepared here for a Delaunay exhibition. I think that I did all in my power! I thank you infinitely for Robert's and Cendrars' notes.<sup>58</sup>

In a postscript he asks again for Barzun's books, saying they would be helpful, but there is no indication that Delaunay-Terk sent them.<sup>59</sup>

The Russian review *Apollon* reported on the conference in an article entitled, "A Series of Exhibitions on the Latest Tendencies in Art." Along with reviews of other events, the critic writes that a talk was given by A. A. Smirnov on "Simultané" (in French) with photographs and original works, interesting in what he communicated of information on the latest issues in France from Robert Delaunay. Amazingly, neither Sonia Delaunay-Terk nor Cendrars are mentioned at all. Near the end of the review the critic concluded that:

The non-figurative, which appeared already under other foundations in the paintings of Kandinsky, is in a sense logical. It is curious to show that in the Paris review, *Hélios*, (no.1) in a note entitled "Simultaneity" exposed completely different foundations of the new direction without mentioning the name of its founder, Delaunay.<sup>60</sup>

Smirnov, although not mentioning "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian" by name, does say that he put up the posters on Simultaneism several days before the talk, which supports Delaunay-Terk's account. Still, it seems that in spite of her remarkable collaboration with Cendrars in "Prose-Poem" and her close friendship with Smirnov, the talk centered on Robert Delaunay, as did the review.

But even Robert's name was not mentioned in the French review, *Hélios*. This information supports Sidoti's view that only one lecture on Simultaneism took place in St. Petersburg: the lecture on Simultaneism, which has at times been reported to have taken place in 1912 or the summer of 1913,<sup>61</sup> and "Prose-Poem" were at the same time, that is, January 14, 1914.

Twice in the letters Smirnov refers to Barzun's books, which implies (for lack of further evidence) that he associated the Cendrars-Delaunay-Terk work with that of Henri Martin-Barzun. Neither Delaunay-Terk nor Cendrars seem to have responded to his requests.

On October 17, 1913, however, Cendrars had written Barzun, the founder of literary Dramatism, telling him that he, Cendrars, and some friends had gone by to see Barzun to discuss an article in *Gil Blas*, but had not found Barzun in. He invited Barzun to come by and look at Cendrars' letter regarding the "First Simultaneous Book" that had not been published in its entirety in the newspaper.<sup>62</sup> Shortly after the invitation was issued, Barzun, who did not respond to the letter, attacked the Cendrars'-Delaunay-Terk work and claimed that he, not Cendrars or Delaunay-Terk, was the inventor of literary

Simultaneism.<sup>63</sup> From then on discussions regarding “Prose-Poem of the Transiberian” centered on the argument with Barzun. Heated discussions in newspapers show the intensity of the debate.<sup>64</sup>

Robert Delaunay had frequented the circle of Jules Romains and Henri Martin-Barzun. Although Sonia Delaunay-Terk apparently had not, she created one of her earliest bookcovers for Romains’ *Puissances de Paris* (Pl. 9) in 1911. Barzun and Romains both published works related to the idea of simultaneism in 1907, in which they related the individual to the collective and to the universal—to express modernity, to declare that the unifying principles of a group are more significant than personal individualities.<sup>65</sup> But it was 1911-12 before they actually wrote simultaneous poems.<sup>66</sup> The Delaunays, Romains, and Barzun were all fascinated with modernity: the city, fast cars, and all that was new. The difference between Cendrars’ and Delaunay-Terk’s “Simultaneous book” and Barzun’s poetry, is that Barzun used word-images while “The Prose-Poem of the Transiberian” consists of words and color which the eye takes in simultaneously and which actually demonstrates the manner in which Simultaneism functions. Also unlike Barzun’s work, it does not

function like an ordinary book; it cannot be held and read easily.

There are no pages to turn. Instead the long format, with its pochoir down the left side, and with colors spreading between lines of poetry, revolutionized the very idea of a book.

Finally, on June 15, 1914, in *Les Soirées de Paris*, Apollinaire, who had probably originally sparked the argument in his lecture at the Sturm gallery where he connected Orphism to Barzun's Dramatism, asserted that Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk had created the first Simultaneist book, which seems to have settled the argument, at least in the press.<sup>67</sup>

Blaise Cendrars and Mme Delaunay-Terk have made a first attempt at written simultaneity and the contrast of colors like a scene from life, causing the eye to read in a single glance the whole poem, like as a conductor of an orchestra reads in a single look the notes superimposed in the score, as one sees in a single look the plastic elements and words in a poster.<sup>68</sup>

In the same lengthy article Apollinaire also comments that

It is useless to ask Mr. Barzun where he took the name of simultaneism; did he find it himself, or did it come from Delaunay?<sup>69</sup>

The competition to be recognized as "first" and "best" continued however, and later in 1914 Robert Delaunay broke off his friendship

with Apollinaire when the poet linked Simultaneism with Italian Futurism.<sup>70</sup>

Besides the newspaper critiques, at the first public “performance” of “Prose-Poem” in Paris on February 24, 1914 reported in *L’Intransigeant*, on February 25th, Mme Lucy Wilhelm, holding a lighted candle, began reading the long format standing on a chair, continued while sitting down, and finally bent down low to read the bottom lines of the poem.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, no comments on the audience’s or critics’ response to this reading were recorded. The performance was possibly inspired by the earlier reading in St. Petersburg at the Stray Dog Saloon and by Delaunay-Terk’s love of theater and performance.

Sidoti points out that for all the publicity about “The Prose-Poem,” by the end of the year in reviews of important works of 1913 there was no mention of it. Apollinaire’s *Alcools* (for which Apollinaire had thanked Cendrars for inspiration) was the only poetry discussed.<sup>72</sup> As mentioned above, sales of the book-poem never reached the projected number of one hundred fifty (the number needed to reach the height of the Eiffel Tower). In fact, for several years, Delaunay-

Terk and Cendrars corresponded about single sales of the remaining copies.

Despite the misspelling of her name in several reviews, the attributions of inspiration and “discoverer” of the Simultaneous movement to Robert Delaunay—even by Alexei Smirnov in his talk to Russian artists and intellectuals at the Stray Dog Saloon—and to mixed reviews, for a brief period of time in 1913 and 1914 Sonia Delaunay-Terk gained recognition in Paris through her art. But it was through her collaboration with Blaise Cendrars, not through Robert Delaunay, or even Apollinaire, who had promoted Robert and other artists. Cendrars, from the beginning of their friendship, became an inspiration or muse for Delaunay-Terk and she regained her earlier momentum after meeting him in late 1912.

The collaboration with Cendrars on “Prose-Poem of the Transiberian” provided for Sonia Delaunay-Terk more publicity and more “fame” than any other pre-War endeavor and continues to be exhibited more than any of her other works.

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<sup>1</sup> From the introduction of *Blaise Cendrars Complete Poems*, xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> In *Nous Irons*, 59. Cendrars représentait pour moi un des plus lumineux moments de ma vie . . . Cendrars est le plus vrai et le plus grand poète de notre temps.

<sup>3</sup> Letters and newspaper critiques, in French in a collection by Antoine Sidoti, *genèse et dossier d'une polémique, La Prose du Transsibérien*, explore the critical reception and provide illumination on the early presentation of the book-poem. Quotations from letters and reviews are taken from Sidoti and from letters from Cendrars to Delaunay-Terk and photocopies of reviews from the Delaunay files in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Comparing the Sidoti reviews with those in the Delaunay-Terk files shows them to be the same. Copies of original newspaper accounts, which I have reproduced, come from the Bibliothèque Nationale files also. The French translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Several of the Cendrars-Delaunay letters are not reproduced in Sidoti.

<sup>4</sup> Actually, Delaunay-Terk might have exhibited a mock-up or pochoir of "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian" and the first completed copies were distributed by November 1913. Later in this chapter the complexity of dating this project is discussed. The poem measures 78 3/4" x 14".

<sup>5</sup> Jay Bochner sets this date; there has been much discussion of it. Delaunay-Terk remembered the date as about January 1, 1913, but at the time she was in her eighties or nineties. The October date seems most plausible in view of the Cendrars-Apollinaire exchange. Bochner suggests that Apollinaire had to have read "Easter in New York" before he wrote "Zone" in early 1913.

<sup>6</sup> See Jay Bochner for discussions of "Easter in New York," xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Recollected by Delaunay-Terk in Cohen's *Sonia Delaunay*, 22, as January 1, 1913 and recounted by her in *Nous Irons*, 54. See fn. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Cohen, *The New Art of Color*, 198

<sup>9</sup> Delaunay-Terk referred to Paul Klee having seen her work in 1912 and 1913 regarding his own later work. Like all artists there are exchanges of ideas and in fact, there is no way to prove her influence. It is important to acknowledge that her work, even though decorative or craft is similar to what was made later by Klee, who visited the Delaunays' apartment April 12, 1912, "sur les conseils de Kandinsky." See Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 116. Although Klee makes no mention of the visit and did not correspond with the Delaunays, he then

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translated Robert Delaunay's "On Light" into German and published in "Der Sturm," February 1913. See Cohen, *The New Art of Color*, 81.

<sup>10</sup> She does not use the word "collaboration" regarding the bookcovers but recalls that Cendrars became part of their life from that day on and the bookcover prompted the collaboration on "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian." *Nous Irons*, 54-55. Possibly, because of her longing for affiliation which might have been connected to identity questions relating to her Jewish background, she preferred collaborations especially during 1913 and for the rest of her life.

<sup>11</sup> "Quant au relieures pour Mme Delaunay, comme mon livre n'est pas pret, je lui envoie les épreuves, le manuscrit et un exemplaire de *Pâques* pour ma femme. Undated letter from Cendrars to Robert Delaunay from the collection of letters of the 1913 period in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>12</sup> Sidoti.

<sup>13</sup> Suzanne Massie, in *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 407, discusses lengths of train trips to Russia from Western Europe.

<sup>14</sup> Including black and white lithographs. In Marcadé, 8, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Madsen writes that Terk and Smirnov met Goncharova and Larionov at Diaghilev's exhibition of Russian paintings in Paris in 1906, 67. This is the only reference to a meeting of the two Russian women. They knew each other later in their careers, but it seems likely that they met much earlier, possibly at the Herbstsalon in 1913. There is some debate over whether Goncharova came to Paris in 1906; she probably came only in 1914.

<sup>16</sup> In the biography of her father, *Blaise Cendrars* (Paris: Balland, 1984, reprint 1992), and in a conversation in July 1992. "D'où vient que Blaise se trouve soudain en possession d'une inaccoutumée somme d'argent? Aux Delaunay, il annonce que c'est sa part de l'héritage d'une vieille tante. Heureuse coincidence avec le retour de Féla après une année de travail en Amérique," 265.

<sup>17</sup> In several letters and cards in the Delaunay file Cendrars asks for money since he doesn't have a sous. From May 22, 1914 and undated cards.

<sup>18</sup> "Ci-joint les VI previches pages de mon nouveau poème comme je vous ai promis. Qu'en disez vous?" Cendrars' French is not always correct, his first language apparently was Swiss-German, and his handwriting is difficult to read. Cendrars spoke and wrote colloquial French or slang.

<sup>19</sup> French quotations in Sidoti, 15-16, and from Cendrars in *Secrets inédits* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1969), 318-320.

<sup>20</sup> Miriam Cendrars published, in *Secrets inédits*, that, "Une lettre du '4 avril 1913' de Paris, à Monsieur Suter, dans laquelle on peut lire: 'Et dans quinze jours je publierai un nouveau poème dans le genre de 'Pâques' sur papier de diverse couleurs, illustré Delaunay.'" Quoted in Sidoti, *La Prose-Poem*, 12 and in Blaise Cendrars, *Secrets inédits*, 352.

<sup>21</sup> Cendrars, 353, and included in Sidoti's study, 12.

<sup>22</sup> In letters and cards at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>23</sup> Until the production of "Prose-Poem" was completed, Cendrars always addressed Delaunay-Terk as "Madame."

<sup>24</sup> "Le pochoir est en plein travail. La première feuille est bientôt prête. Il en a encore pour 15 jours. Je vous laisse . . . [impossible to read] pu faire le pochoir du texte--plus transparente--Comme on avait dit. Je passerais demain chez vous après déjeuner. Note dated November 1913.

<sup>25</sup> Sidoti, undated postcard, 20. Also in the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale. "Crété n'a rien fait! Il est à la chasse. Il n'est pas rentré depuis jeudi. Je lui ai laissé toutes les instructions nécessaires: 1. de vous envoyer le bulletin de souscription 2. de vous envoyer la bande coloré 3. une dernière épreuve pour établir les couleurs du texte. J'espère que vous avez déjà tout en main. Si vous rapportez tout cela jeudi, on pourra enfin tirer."

<sup>26</sup> In an announcement of the publication of the book-poem in *Der Sturm*, November 1913, no.184-5, 127. "La Prose du Transsibérien" est donc bien un poème, puisque c'est l'oeuvre d'un libertin. Mettons que c'est son amour, sa passion, son vice, sa grandeur, son vomissement. C'est une partie de lui-meme. Son Eve. La coté qu'il s'est arrachée. Une oeuvre mortelle, blessée d'amour, enceinte."

Mme Delaunay a fait un si beau livre de couleurs, que mon poème est plus trempé de lumière que ma vie. Voilà ce qui me rend heureux. Puis encore, que ce livre sit deux mètres de long! Et encore, que l'édition atteigne la hauteur de la Tour Eiffel. " Reprinted in Sidoti, 7.

<sup>27</sup> The chronological evolution of *La Prose*, according to Sidoti, p. 26, and Cendrars is: 1. fin 1912-début 1913, gestation d'un poème; 2. février 1913, pierre angulaire de la création de la *Prose du Transsibérien*, par Blaise Cendrars; 3. fin février-début mars, le poème serait composé; 4. fin mars-début avril, l'illustration par Sonia Delaunay serait également exécutée; 5. avril,

lancement par "souscription"; 6. octobre, la toile de Sonia Delaunay (à savoir, la maquette qui servira à l'impression, le coté gauche du futur livre) est exposée au Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon à Berlin; 7. novembre, les auteurs disposent des premiers exemplaires du livre. Interesting to note that Delaunay-Terk is called "author" also, re "les auteurs."

<sup>28</sup> At Herwarth Walden's Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon where Delaunay-Terk and Robert Delaunay exhibited their work that fall.

<sup>29</sup> In *Die Aktion*, October 4, 1913, from Sidoti, p. 46 and also in Delaunay-Terk's files. Rubiner discusses Cendrars' poem and calls Cendrars "my friend," but does not mention Delaunay-Terk's collaboration with Cendrars.

<sup>30</sup> Prices were given: the parchment with black kid cover were 500.00 francs; those on Japon Imperial with black kid cover sold for 100.00 francs; those on simili-Japon, with parchment cover cost 50.00 francs. Sidoti, 32. Also in *Secrets inédits*, 353.

<sup>31</sup> See Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 104. Information about Cendrars from an interview with Miriam Cendrars, September, 1992.

<sup>32</sup> Printed in "Gazette des Lettres" in *Paris Midi*, Tuesday, October 7, 1913, reprinted in "Echos" of *Action Quotidienne*, Thursday, October 9, 1913.

<sup>33</sup> Sidoti, *La Prose*, 50. Jean L'Escritoire was the pseudonym of André Billy.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 51. "Billy présente comme un objet bizarre, compliqué et à la valeur suspecte, est visiblement empreinte de méfiance et de moquerie. Il n'a encore ni lu, ni pu voir le poème tableau."

<sup>35</sup> Each book-poem was encased in a stiff folder with Simultaneous motif and, at least the deluxe, were presented in a small box, also covered with painted Simultaneous motifs. From examining "Prose-Poem of the Transiberian" in the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Collection of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

<sup>36</sup> In *Paris Midi*, Saturday 11 October 1913. Clippings of this are in Delaunay-Terk's files. Reprinted in French in Sidoti, 53.

<sup>37</sup> "A certain signes, nous estimons pouvoir avancer que la *Prose du Transsibérien* soit quelque chose à la manière orphiste," *ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>38</sup> In Delaunay-Terk's files and in Sidoti, 67.

<sup>39</sup> In Delaunay-Terk's files and in Sidoti, 69. "Impossible de l'emporter en voyage, à moins de le faire loger dans le fourgon aux aux bagages . . .

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Cependant, il peut rendre de grands services à la compagnie . . . c'est une vraie villa portative."

<sup>40</sup> Calling Delaunay-Terk a synchronist, instead of simultanist, showing the confusion and interchange of the two movements. Synchronism, a painting style developed by Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Morgan Russell for their first exhibition at the Bernheim-jeune gallery in Paris, October-November 1913 has often been confused with the Delaunays' Simultaneism. See Spate, 51. Allard, nevertheless, gives Delaunay-Terk her best mention so far. In her files and in Sidoti, 73.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> In Sidoti, 73.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> In the Delaunay archive and in Sidoti, 77. But there are hints of figures, seated on the fast moving train, in "La Prose." It is not totally abstract.

<sup>45</sup> From Delaunay-Terk's "Album de Presse" 1911-1914 in the Bibliothèque Nationale. *The New York World*, Press Publishing Co. (Special cable dispatch to The World.), no page number.

<sup>46</sup> Under the byline of Georges Delaine in *Gil Blas* under "Nouvelles littéraires" and then "Les Lettres et les Arts." Reprinted in Sidoti, 80.

<sup>47</sup> In *Der Sturm*, no. 186-7, p. 136, and in nos. 188 through 197. In Delaunay-Terk's files in photocopies as well as reprinted in Sidoti, 101.

<sup>48</sup> Sidoti, 104, "Quelle magnifique ville que St. Petersburg! Je rêve de votre venue, vous et Robert." Smirnov and Georges Yakulov were among the group who spent part of the spring and summer with the Delaunays at Louveciennes, 1913. Delaunay-Terk had already made Simultaneous posters for him to take back to Russia, maybe even in 1912.

<sup>49</sup> Smirnov apparently was not aware of the arguments between Cendrars, Delaunay-Terk, and Barzun over who wrote the first Simultaneous book.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, translated from Russian into French.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 107-8.

<sup>52</sup> Bénédict Livchits, *L'archer à un oeil et demi* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1972), 200. Reprinted Sidoti, 112.

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<sup>53</sup> Used to describe everyone else regardless of their occupations. In the chapter on "Petersburg, Poetry and the Cabaret: 1910-1914" in Roberta Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova--Poet and Prophet* (New York: Picador USA, 1994), 63.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, 68.

<sup>55</sup> The conference was held December 23, 1913, which is by the old Russian calendar but the date by the universal calendar was January 4, 1914. For this reason the dates are often confused, at times reported as 1913 and other times 1914. From Sidoti, 112.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, card to Delaunay-Terk from Smirnov, 112.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-114.

<sup>60</sup> Entitled, "Une Série D'Exposés sur les Dernières Tendances de L'Art." No critic is listed. Again Delaunay-Terk is not mentioned. *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>61</sup> Madsen, 126, refers to Delaunay-Terk's aunt by marriage, Maria Oskarovna Terk, who mentioned the talk by Smirnov two months earlier. This statement was supposedly made in September 1913 at the opening of the Herbstsalon.

<sup>62</sup> Published in the posthumous *Secrets inédits*, Miriam Cendrars and reprinted in Sidoti, 75.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 95 and 109-111.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* and in Delaunay-Terk's files.

<sup>65</sup> From Spate, *Orphism*, 21, 43. Spate discusses the Puteaux Circle and Unanimism. Barzun published *La Terrestre tragédie* and Romain, *La Vie unanime*, however, the structure of the poem was not simultaneous.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Barzun's Dramatism was a literary movement. He was part of the Abbaye de Créteil, that Spate calls an experiment in communal living from 1906 to 1908, where he knew Romain, Delaunay (who visited there), and others.

<sup>68</sup> From "Simultanisme-Librettisme" column, no. 25, 322-5, in Sidoti, 133-137.

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<sup>69</sup> It is likely that Barzun used the term before Robert Delaunay, but as theory rather than art.

<sup>70</sup> Discussed by Bernier and Schneider-Maunoury, 132-33, "Apollinaire déclarait que Delaunay avait emprunté le mot simultanément au vocabulaire des Futuristes." The argument continued and broke off their friendship. Apollinaire knew very well Robert Delaunay's animosity toward the Futurists, so was deliberately provoking him.

<sup>71</sup> "Il était hier accroché au mur, à Montjoie! . . . La première chose à faire fut donc de demander une chaise pour Mme Lucy Wilhelm qui avait accepté de lire près du plafond; peu à peu elle se baissa: aux dernières strophes elle était assise et penchée." Signed "Les Treize", in Sidoti, 125.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 111.

## SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK'S SIGNS: THE POSTER-POEMS

*I believe that [Cendrars] exercised an enormous influence on the taste of the new epoch and that he presented the need to move, to discover countries, new ways.*

Delaunay-Terk<sup>1</sup>

Beginning in 1913 Sonia Delaunay-Terk created small posters, and numerous studies for posters, which she named *affiches-poèmes*<sup>2</sup> or poster-poems, probably from their relationship to advertising posters and in connection with her collaboration with Blaise Cendrars. On August 30, 1913 Cendrars had mailed a postcard to “Mme Sonia Delaunay à Louveciennes”—with a minuscule sticker advertising the coming “Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon” on its graphic side—containing the exuberant message:

ZENITH: Record!

*Noon strikes*

on its solar anvil

rays of light.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty-three poster-poems are in the department at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Several are in private collections: three *Zenith*

studies are in the Tamar Cohen collection in New York, one *Chocolat* is in the Kay Hillman collection, and art galleries exhibit poster-poems from time to time. There is no record of how many studies exist; perhaps over thirty and as many as forty.

Whether there had been any previous discussion of the use of advertising and art or whether Delaunay-Terk and Cendrars planned to investigate commercial words as art remains a mystery. She attributed the inspiration for her three-year experimentation with advertising signifiers to this postcard and called Cendrars her collaborator.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, besides the postcard, his significance as colleague, friend, poet, and even muse, combined with her need for affiliation as a Russian Jew, gave rise to the idea of further collaboration with these works.

Surely she and Cendrars discussed them together. A few references speculate that the "Zenith" posters were created as actual advertisements for the Zenith Watch Company; however, there is no evidence to substantiate such claims. As a supposition only, since Cendrars wrote his "Zenith" poem to Delaunay-Terk on an advertisement for the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon, this might imply that they were

interested in advertising and had talked about working together. But there is nothing in the files, except the postcard, to substantiate the idea.

When she discussed these works in the seventies, Delaunay treated the subject ambiguously, which might have contributed to the idea of an actual advertising project. Collaboration was important to her, and especially that with Cendrars, whom she thought to be the greatest poet of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

The posters were never sold or offered for sale, which places them in a puzzling position as to their purpose: commercial posters or easel paintings? Communication with Cendrars dominated the years 1913-1914 but he never again mentioned commercial words; from that time on he mainly discussed his principal venture with Delaunay-Terk, the *Simultaneous* book.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, this witty *Zenith* poem names an era for Delaunay-Terk: her *Zenith* years. The year 1913 was the height of her early career and could be called her true *Zenith*.<sup>7</sup> She was making art for the large upcoming exhibition in Berlin; she was living in a veritable community of artists in their summer rental house at Louveciennes; she and Robert

danced at the Bal Bullier in their extravagant costumes and she painted one of her strongest paintings to capture the essence of it; she and Cendrars created their "first Simultaneous book." Therefore it is understandable that the poster-poems themselves are often overlooked and misunderstood.

They are, however, an art form significant in the development of modern art and help to establish the importance of Delaunay-Terk's contributions more firmly as an involved participant in art of the early twentieth century, when she began using the decorative arts to further her theories in painting.

French art historian, Daniel Abadie, in a catalogue for an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 1990-1991, writes that the years 1913-1914 were precisely those during which Sonia begins "for the first time to multiply her projects—posters for Smirnov's conference . . . the prospectus for 'The Prose of the Transiberian,' the publicity announcements for . . . Zenith, Printemps, a white sale, a revue cover for 'Zones,' and logos for stationary."<sup>8</sup> Ségolène Le Men, writing about posters at the Universal Exhibition of 1889, compares one of Delaunay-

Terk's posters for "The Prose" with an *Arlequin afficheur*, or *Journal-affiches*, from 1830, stressing the "modernity" of the latter (Pl. 1).<sup>9</sup> The format of Delaunay-Terk's poster is similar and while there is no evidence that she saw those posters, the well-known harlequin motif formed splotches of color that Le Men calls "pre-simultaneist."

Commercial words used in her posters include: Dubonnet, Zenith, Pirelli, Exposition de Blanc, Chocolat, Liquour, and Printemps, in a variety of formats and colors. Braque and Picasso had begun using fragments of words in art as early as 1909; by 1912 commercial words held prominent places in their collages.<sup>10</sup> Like Braque's and Picasso's, Delaunay-Terk's words came directly from street signs or from magazines published during the period.

These small works are evidence of an arresting creativity in which single commercial words were transformed into art. At the same time they signal the appropriation of a single word as a major subject in both painting and collage. While other artists, such as Toulouse-Lautrec and commercial artists, emphasized single words in their works, they combined the words with images. Commercial illustrators often created

narrative images to convince consumers to buy a product. And Cubist paintings and collages, which incorporated words, did so from another sensibility.<sup>11</sup> Delaunay-Terk most often used no images, just the image of the word.

The poster-poems had their genesis in Delaunay-Terk's ardent interest in poetry—which had opportunity to flourish because of the Delaunays' friendship with the era's most interesting poets—and in her fascination with the street life of Paris. Advertising was modern: its boldness; the directness of its impact by comparison with easel painting; its partially verbal character with a multi-layered suggestiveness of words, which could add new dimensions of meaning to the pictorial art; the combination of two different media—language and color—and the possibilities of simultaneous effects; and its omnipresence on the streets.

Her intense work with Cendrars in 1913 on “The Prose of the Transiberian” had been supported by advertising posters exhibited in France, Germany, and Russia during 1913 and 1914. She further developed her ideas of advertising in her large painting, *Electric Prisms* (1914) by placing a facsimile of the advertisement for “The Prose,” in the

lower left-hand corner, expressing her response to the new electric street lights on the Boulevard St. Michel, and at the same time supporting and promoting her interest in street-life and street advertisements.

For Sonia and Robert Delaunay and their close friends the city became a metaphor for modernity. Cendrars and Apollinaire were among the first poets to capture the excitement of the city at the beginning of the new century, using a new linguistic style of straight forward words with little punctuation, a departure from tradition: Cendrars with "Easter in New York," Apollinaire with "Zone." The Delaunays were especially intrigued with the new electric lights and their effect on color, with the spectacle of crowds in motion, and with machines. Influenced by their good friend, the Douanier Rousseau and other artists of the period, Robert Delaunay had painted the newer elements of Paris such as the Eiffel Tower. And while Delaunay-Terk's involvement with motion (dance especially) produced one of her most powerful paintings, *Bal Bullier* (1913), it was the signs and posters on the buildings and kiosks of Paris, as well as her inspiration from Cendrars, which fueled her imagination

and led her to experimentation with popular culture as art—the poster-poems.

Apollinaire expressed sentiments about posters in his poem, "Zone" in 1913:

You read the handbills the catalogues  
the posters which  
sing loudly  
That's poetry this morning and for prose  
there are newspapers<sup>12</sup>

Part of the appeal of the poster was that, unlike easel painting, it was not limited in its audience; it had the evocative power of a public icon, or even like contemporary graffiti, in the streets where it could be seen by everyone. Kiosks and walls of buildings were often covered with words advertising various products (Pl. 2). Billboards had become part of the French landscape by 1912 (Pl. 3).<sup>13</sup>

After the French rescinded a law in 1881 that prohibited the affixing of posters without the express permission of the owner,<sup>14</sup> there was a proliferation of posters on walls, kiosks, and fences throughout cities and villages. Problems with litter from handbills caused the passage of other

laws regarding trash in the streets, however, the real target was the distribution of advertising prospectus.<sup>15</sup> In *Trois Cents Ans de Publicité en France*, Michel Martin writes that improved lithographic methods, typesetting, and photo-engraving augmented the rapid production of posters as documented in the photographs of Eugène Atget and other turn-of-the-century photographers (Pl. 4). Posters served an important function in Parisian life, during the “fin de siècle” and the early years of the twentieth-century, as public announcements, political propaganda, and commercial signifiers, simply produced by printers providing information. Most of them, however, adapted a traditional style to fulfill their purpose of advertising a particular product or service with or without illustrations. Some were clever, witty, designed by talented artists of the day—Jules Cheret began making art posters and by 1893 exhibited his *Loie Fuller* for the Folies-Bergère. (Pl. 5).

The first exhibition of beautiful and highly collectible posters in an art gallery in Paris was at Galerie Vivienne in 1884.<sup>16</sup> Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec became one of the most popular poster artists and with his poster of the popular cabaret owner *Aristide Bruant* (Pl. 6), he

elevated the poster to so-called high art by taking it out of its advertising context and exhibiting it like a painting. Through great interest in the Art Nouveau poster and Japanese prints in late nineteenth century France, Toulouse-Lautrec's posters, as well as those of other popular artists at this time, began to be seen as art. Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard also created posters with calligraphic lettering in a highly decorative style. Henry van de Velde designed posters with an abstracted composition related to Art Nouveau using stylized lettering as part of the pictorial composition (1907; Pl. 7). However, in these posters, words were still subordinated to image and were the type posters familiar to the avant-garde when Sonia Terk first arrived in Paris. By 1911, posters by Jean Cocteau for Diaghilev's Russian Ballet (Pl. 8), used only images and no words.

Though commercial brand names were the device upon which the poster-poem concept was achieved, they were never actually used to promote or advertise a product. Delaunay-Terk mentioned in an interview that she and Cendrars planned to market them but never did so and their plans for them are not clear. Possibly no commercial contact

was made because Delaunay-Terk had a good income until 1917—when her St. Petersburg property was confiscated during the Russian Revolution—and because Sonia and Robert Delaunay spent World War I in Spain and Portugal. In an article by Michel Ragon in 1962 for which Delaunay-Terk was interviewed, she is quoted as saying, "The commercial side [at that time] was far from us."<sup>17</sup>

Like Picasso and Braque, she chose words for the poster-poems because of their current appeal, associative possibilities, and for the actual shape of the word and letters. Delaunay-Terk preferred letters with arcs, circles, and angles, as in the letter "Z," with which she experimented over and over. Her circles became faces, suns, stars, eggs, and street lights. She delighted in the use of irregularly shaped handcrafted letters and often left smudges of paint on the paper or canvas. In some works letters dropped from the picture plane; in one a word was obviously misspelled— "Pinelli" (Pirelli)—and in another, the name of one color, "Blanc," was used to imply other colors by painting each letter a different color or even the entire word black, subverting the message.

Picasso and Braque had already incorporated words and fragments of words in their paintings and collages as early as 1909 though the Cubists' use of words differed from Delaunay-Terk's. In their experiments with words they usually selected only part of a word to suggest other words, just as they chose part of an object to evoke the remainder of that object. An example would be JOU in Picasso's *Collage with Chair Caning*: "Jou" might imply "jouer," "journal," 'jour', or other words. In *Posters in a Landscape* (1912), Picasso did use whole commercial words . . . "Kub," "Pernod Fils," and "Leon"; and in a collage of the same year, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, (Pl. 9) he placed a newspaper advertisement featuring the word "Suze," as part of the work to signify the aperitif. But these words, as words in other Cubist paintings, were significant in creating a tension between illusion and reality and in establishing a picture plane; whereas the premise of the poster poems was: the word is the image . . . the word is not in the painting, it is the painting: *Dubonnet, Blanc, and Chocolat*. When an image is apparent in some of the posters, it is not an image in the traditional sense but an image to express the word, such as in *Zenith* and

*Pirelli*. In using words in this manner, Delaunay-Terk asserted the identity, the validity, the equality, and the simultaneity of both word and image.<sup>18</sup>

One of the artist's earliest series of poster-poems is *Dubonnet* (1913-1914; Pl. 10), the name of a popular French aperitif which appeared frequently in magazine advertisements and on signs and posters throughout the city. These advertisements usually consisted of the word "Dubonnet," (Pl. 11) either alone or pictured with a bottle of the aperitif. However, in her use of the word "Dubonnet," Delaunay-Terk was not attempting to sell the product, she was celebrating the city streets with the advertising signs, bright colors reflected in lights, and what she considered "modernity." Both Cendrars and Apollinaire were writing about cities and modern life; Robert Delaunay was painting the Eiffel Tower and city scenes. How best could she contribute to this praise of the city? By appropriating ordinary signs off the streets as well as from daily newspapers, and magazines. It is true that Picasso, Braque, and Robert Delaunay had already used these city signs in their work to express the modern city or life and she is indebted to them:

Picasso and Braque, began in their early Cubist paintings and continued with collages with words from advertisements and newspapers; Robert Delaunay used advertising logos in his large painting, *Cardiff Team* (1912-13; Pl. 12). However, their use of words complemented the picture or were even visual puns; her words were the picture in most of her poster-poems.

In analyzing these studies, it seems obvious that Delaunay-Terk explored and played with words and meanings.<sup>19</sup> For example, within the word “Dubonnet” are several other words: the French “bon” or “bonne” connotes good”; “bonne” also translates as “maid”; “du bon” as “some good.”<sup>20</sup> Such word play used to evoke associations with other words offered Delaunay-Terk another avenue of experimentation with ideas of Simultaneism, in which juxtaposed colors and shapes imply the whole spectrum of colors and myriad shapes.

A striking version of the “Dubonnet” group is a paper collage with irregularly shaped letters on craft colored paper – red, blue, yellow, and black shapes form arcs and circles to spell the word (Pl. 13). In another rendering, an oil painting, the same forms take on a sharper, more target-

like appearance—primary colors (which Delaunay-Terk preferred and which are easily seen on the street) mixed with black, white, and green evolve into letters with the focus on “bonne” or “good,” a striking simultaneous use of color, form, and word (Pl. 14). A third “Dubonnet” poster-poem, now in the Australian National Museum, features concentric circles with the letters “N” altered to resemble letters of the Russian alphabet while an “O” dropped from the picture plane cooperates with other circular shapes to join word and image (illus. 14).

Delaunay-Terk introduced several breakthroughs in the “Dubonnet” series: letters are used as structural experiments and are treated as abstract forms; word and image have equal force; forms for the word “Dubonnet” represent an exercise in Simultaneism itself; patterns of the cut papers (in the collage) imply a universe of shapes as well as the whole color spectrum beyond the picture plane.

In contrast, the “Pirelli” studies display a complexity only hinted at in the “Dubonnet” poster-poems. Several gouaches and pastels were made of the word, “Pirelli,” the name of a well known tire manufacturer. Tires had already become a major focus of advertising in France. Since

the advent of “Bibendum” as the principal character in Michelin advertising in 1898, as well as the *Guide Rouge* (begun in 1900) and the *Guide Verte* (from 1908), great attention was given in magazine and newspaper advertising to Michelin tires.<sup>21</sup> Advertisements, particularly in *L'Illustration*<sup>22</sup> (Pl.15) show a puffy, overstuffed, cushiony Bibendum, who might also be interpreted as a bundled-up driver of contemporary automobiles, in the same magazine from which Delaunay-Terk apparently appropriated images and ideas from popular culture.<sup>23</sup> Since she was looking at magazines, street signs, and any other advertising during this period, it seems that by choosing Pirelli she was, first of all, choosing a modern object connected with a machine of which she and Robert Delaunay were inordinately fond,<sup>24</sup> and then deciding to compete with the leading tire manufacturer by producing her own poster. But at the same time she was intentionally subverting the ideas of advertising by disrupting the sign, by misspelling it, and making it an art form instead of an acceptable commercial signifier.

Advertising proliferated in journals and magazines, especially in *La Publicité* (established in 1903), but was considered untruthful and in bad

taste or even “bluffs and lies”<sup>25</sup> and contrary to middle class values. In the catalogue for the “High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, co-curator Adam Gopnik writes that Fernand Léger “celebrated billboards because they promised a ‘society of spectacles’ as an overwhelming open alternative to the mean repressions of bourgeois society.”<sup>26</sup> Delaunay-Terk’s use of logos was still another way for her to break with bourgeois attitudes by appropriating logos from popular culture which was not common in French art circles at that time.

Unfortunately, as was mentioned in the Introduction above, although the High-Low exhibition offered the perfect venue for Delaunay-Terk’s poster-poems, and while many of the logos were those she had used by 1913 from popular culture, she was not mentioned in the exhibition or the catalogue. Part of the problem was the nature of the exhibition itself. Heralded as a possible challenge to the Museum of Modern Art’s canonical tradition of “individual creator, a solitary (white) male who transforms gutsy engagements with tradition and craft into occasions for unprecedented aesthetic invention,”<sup>27</sup> critic after critic

echoed the museum's frustrating portrayal of imagery from popular culture only as appropriations for "high art." Jack Flam writes of the disappointing, "surprisingly bland, even timid, show."<sup>28</sup> He further explains these weaknesses as simply demonstrations of how "low" art is appropriated in "high" art "without regard to the dynamics behind the use of such sources"<sup>29</sup> or how they have changed over time. Flam also points to the "short shrift [given] to the nature and relative value of popular imagery per se."<sup>30</sup> Popular imagery's purpose in the exhibition served only to point to its contribution to "high" art. Thomas McEvilley asserts that "when high art began to bow to and borrow from the low, there was an implication that cracks were beginning to appear in the class structure."<sup>31</sup> He adds that the curators seem to think that "it is enough to dazzle the public eye by showing masterpieces, without making any contribution to analytical thought about their social function and meaning."<sup>32</sup>

This criticism points to Delaunay-Terk's problems of fitting into the agenda of the curators and of not being included in the most appropriate exhibition for her poster-poems. First, her work is not yet part of the

canon of great modern masters; second, she simply made posters of the words, she did not appropriate bits of them into some other image; and third, these works are not well known.<sup>33</sup> Although they were not included in the exhibition proper, several of the advertising logos she used in her experiments were plastered on the kiosk at the exhibition's entrance. The dismissal of her work in the "high-low" dialectic only reinforces the problems she faced.

The poster-poems express still another sensibility. In at least two of the works, the "R's" become "N's." Could this be poetic license or a display of a sense of humor? Perhaps she was avoiding a literal link with "Pirelli" advertisements. It was also a use of her native Russian alphabet—substituting a *Cyrillic* "I," which resembles a backwards "N" (Pl. 16), for the "I" of the French. Delaunay-Terk also played with the oversized "P," using the upper oval as a frame for the "neu," which when joined with the "P" spells "pneu" or "tire"; while in the lower part of the "P" are the letters "irelli"—and, as mentioned, in two posters, an "N" replaces the "I," becoming "inelli" or even more curious "iielli." The "P" in the *Cyrillic* is a Latin "R" replacing the lost "R." But still, such word-image is a

Simultaneous combination: the circles remind us of tires or of a bicycle, the word, of the advertised product, whereas the colors communicate movement suggesting color wheels (Pl.17).

After receiving the postcard from Cendrars while at Louveciennes in August, 1913,<sup>34</sup> Delaunay-Terk began her work on the poster-poem *Zenith*. With the exuberant message, "Record! Noon strikes its solar anvil with rays of light, Zenith!" she began the *Zenith* poster-poems during 1913-1914. *Zenith*, the name of a Swiss watch company becomes a metaphor of the clock, included in several of the *Zenith* series, works as a visual sign especially of the concept of time as movement.

In one *Zenith* work, the tone is darker than Delaunay-Terk's usual choice of bright colors: a muted-green noonday sun, in the center of the painting, vibrates rays of words, with circles, diagonals, and rectangles arranged diagonally (Pl.18). Several other "Zenith" posters, with electric orange backgrounds, employ concentric circles to denote the sun (Pl.19).

And, in yet another study, the sun is replaced by a clock with both hands pointing to twelve noon; arcs of concentric circles surround the clock, with

a rectangular collage in horizontal and vertical patterns forming the poster's background (Pl. 20). Overlapping disks in Robert Delaunay's paintings signify the sun, moon, or other heavenly bodies. therefore, by incorporating the sun in her collages and paintings of "Zenith," Delaunay-Terk also pays tribute to her collaboration with her husband.

Throughout the "Zenith" series, the artist created dynamic interaction between the letters "Z" and "E," employing exaggerated diagonals of "Z's" and "E's." Sketches in the collection of Jean-Louis Delaunay show her preoccupation with these letters (Pl. 21). The power of the sun, the power of the circle, of light, of color, the power of the artist—all are simultaneously implied in the "Zenith" series.<sup>35</sup>

Following the "Zenith" works, Delaunay-Terk, rather than selecting another word denoting a specific product, took a familiar generic reference, "chocolat," from its usual setting—street signs and chocolate wrappers.<sup>36</sup> She amuses us with the movement she gave the letters of *chocolat*.—each leans against the other as they seem to spill out of an exaggerated "C" which dominates the poster compositions. One gouache is splashed with green, yellow, and orange letters tumbling from

a concentric circle “C,” with the first “O” a black center for the circle, and the “L” and “T” also shaped from a brush of black pigment (Pl. 22, 23). A few studies reveal a particular brand of chocolate, Bensedorf, but most use only the generic French *chocolat* (Pl. 24).

The *Blanc* or *Exposition de Blanc* poster-poems of 1914, are some of the most “pop” of the posters as a whole. Although there were actual *blanc* advertisements in newspapers for bed and table linens, i.e., white sales, no mention of a specific sale appears in Delaunay-Terk's writings, so it is assumed that the poster-poems refer to a hypothetical *Exposition de Blanc* or refer to another of the many street signs posted in the city or myriad magazine and newspaper ads with the words, *blanc* or *exposition de blanc* (Pl. 24). While many of the artist's experiments with color and light seem to conclude that the purest of all color and light is white,<sup>37</sup> conversely, in the “Blanc” series she translated *blanc* (white) into colored letters (Pl. 25). Her implied intention seems to be to change, by the use of different colors, the image of the word *blanc* (Pl. 26).

*Printemps* and *Liquour* are two other word-images explored in the poster-poem format. In selecting *Printemps* for a study, Delaunay-Terk

might have been trying to convey the literal meaning of the word, “Spring”; or in keeping with the commercial overtones of some of the other works, she might have been referencing the French department store, Printemps, founded in 1865, whose advertisements appeared regularly in journals and magazines at that time and actually, along with Bon Marché and Grands Magazins de Louvre, sent out colored catalogues.<sup>38</sup> Printemps department store still advertises with catalogues as well as city and Metro maps of Paris. The name *Printemps*, while not so common as *Dubonnet*, is still seen more readily than *Zenith* or *Pirelli*. Since Delaunay-Terk spoke English, in addition to Russian, French, and German, and some posters divide the word into two parts: “Print - temps,” she could have been alluding to the idea of, “Print the times!” (Pl. 27).

These, as well as the *Printemps* and the *Exposition de Blanc* are generally small studies.<sup>39</sup> Delaunay-Terk played with double entendre in the “Liqueur” poster-poems, making the letters bend and swerve (Pl. 28).

The angular placement of the letters, which float on the composition's light ground, communicates meaning—the word “Liquour” actually

portrayed as a tipsy, joyous celebration of modern life. The *Liquour* studies seem to portray the artist as poet.

Delaunay-Terk achieved her intended goals with the poster-poem studies –she structured modern poems from single words and used them to further her concepts of Simultaneism, in essence, devising a new poetic form—the simulated poster. As a body of work, the poster-poems underscore her acknowledgment of the profound influence the poster format exerted on early modern art. They are visually significant in their abstract use of color and shape. These works are philosophically significant in their incorporation of the word to express, as do forms and images, the movement and quality of modern life—popular culture in art—at the beginning of this century. Through them, along with the aforementioned projects of these zenith years of her early career, Delaunay-Terk’s place in twentieth-century art should be secured.

<sup>1</sup> “Je crois que [Cendrars] a exercé une influence énorme sur le goût de l’époque actuelle et qu’il a senti le besoin de bouger, de découvrir des pays, des mœurs nouvelles.” Delaunay-Terk in *Nous Irons*, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Poetic message on a postcard from Cendrars who sent a poem with the commercial logo, “Zenith” to Delaunay-Terk, referring to a Swiss watch company. Preserved in the Cendrars’ file box of the Delaunay collection in the Manuscript Room of the Bibliothèque Nationale, dated 30.8.13 and written on a postcard advertising the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* at the Der Sturm gallery from 20 September to 1 November 1913. The correspondence from Cendrars to Delaunay-Terk is at times pragmatic and at times poetic and moving

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. “Zénith: Record! Midi bat sur son enclume lumière.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Delaunay-Terk liked the idea of collaboration and often referred to her work with Cendrars as such as well as with Robert Delaunay.

<sup>5</sup> In a tribute to Cendrars after his death (1962), in Cohen, *The New Art of Color*, 198.

<sup>6</sup> He gives directions on how to use a linoleum block to reproduce the bookcovers, as well as the name and address of the company, Noestle et Convert, 11 rue Magasine. n.d.

<sup>7</sup> This “Zenith” designation is my interpretation, not Delaunay-Terk’s. It seems appropriate, however, since the year 1913 was a year of remarkable exploration after a time of relative low production.

<sup>8</sup> Abadie, “Sonia Delaunay, à la Lettre” in *Art & Publicité*, 344, catalogue for the Centre Pompidou, October 31, 1990 - February 25, 1991. “pour la première fois, multiplier les projets—affiches pour la conférence de Smirnoff, . . . the prospectus for ‘The Prose of the Transsibérien,’ annonces publicitaires pour Michelin, Zénith, Printemps, Exposition de blanc, couverture de revue pour Zones, en-têtes de papier à lettres.”

<sup>9</sup> In “L’art de l’affiche à l’Exposition Universelle de 1889”, *Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Summer 1991, 64-71.

<sup>10</sup> Including “Kub,” “Pernod Fils,” and “Leon.” Braque’s and Picasso’s work will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Near the beginning of his first modern poem, "Zone" published in a collection, *Alcools*, (Paris: 1913, reprint, edition Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965), 39.

Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut Voilà la  
poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux Il y a les livraisons à 25  
centimes pleines d'aventures policières Portraits des grands hommes et mille titres  
divers.

Apollinaire's and Cendrars' scholars debate modernity in each of their works; the Delaunay's view was that Apollinaire was stunned when he heard Cendrars read "Easter in New York" which contains no punctuation. Shortly after, Apollinaire published *Alcools*, which included "Zone", from which this excerpt is taken. Both poets are considered among the great modernists of the early years of the century.

<sup>13</sup> Weiss, 63, from *Le Monde Illustré*. Interestingly enough many of the billboards were of single words or simply logos.

<sup>14</sup> On July 29, 1881, the French rescinded a law that prohibited the affixing of posters to walls and property without the express consent of the owner. The history of the poster in France is discussed by Michel Martin in *Trois Cents Ans de Publicité en France* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1992), 112.

<sup>15</sup> Weiss, 62. Weiss also discusses that the Chambre des Deputés failed to pass a tax on prospectus, therefore the anti-litter law was another way to attack this nuisance.

<sup>16</sup> Artists also were collecting posters and prints as well as the public.

<sup>17</sup> In *Arts, Lettres, Spectacles, Musique*, April 25-May 1, 1962.

<sup>18</sup> This differs from Braque and Picasso in that their works were not centered solely on the word as in an advertising sign. Delaunay-Terk's did that; they are not about some other idea; they are about words..

<sup>19</sup> The study of language as linguistic, phonetic, morphological, and expressive media to artists and scholars was an important subject in 1913. In Russian, in 1894, Polish scholar Count Badouin de Courtenay published and later taught his theory of 'fonema'. In Paris Frederick de Saussure taught on the "phoneme", the smallest element of speech which distinguished a word or word element from another from 1881 to 1891. He also gave lectures in Geneva from 1906 to 1911, although they were not published until after his death in 1916. However, Paul Klee, who visited the Delaunays in 1912, participated in a group called "Sema," the sign, in Munich in

1911. All of this is to say that there was great interest in the idea of "phoneme" at this time and it is quite likely that Delaunay-Terk knew of it. See R.H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1967), 204 and Frederick deSaussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966), xi-xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Adolphe Mouron Cassandre, later a leading poster artist in France, developed the "Dubonnet" idea along these lines in 1934 with his "Dubo, Dubon, Dubonnet."

<sup>21</sup> In the French countryside at intersections directions signs mentioned "Gift of Michelin." Postcards were given out with clever advertising:

Ces Cochons sont transportés sur pneus... Ces veaux sont transportés sur pneus... Ce panier de salade roule sur pneus... Elle aussi (la pompe à vidange), on la transporté sur pneus... Parisiens! Un scandale! Réclamez l'égalité de traitement. A. Jemain, *Michelin, un siècle de secrets* (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1982), 111. reprinted in Martin, 187.

<sup>22</sup> "Between 1900 and 1914 the 'petit théâtre' Michelin colonised the advertising pages of deluxe magazines." Bibendum was the name of the Michelin man. *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>23</sup> Although there is no evidence in the newspaper or magazine clippings in the many Delaunay files that she read *L'illustration*, it is clear that she did; the names and notices from this magazine are those of the most significant in her work. It was one of the most popular magazines before the Great War and even after. Delaunay-Terk collected clippings, but often without listing the source: Small newspaper clippings, receipts, notes of expenditures, bits and pieces. After her death Monique Schneider-Maunoury gathered materials and donated them to the Center of Documentation at the Pompidou Center. Most of the clippings are from newspapers. Delaunay-Terk read *World of Art*, *Gil Blas*, and several others.

<sup>24</sup> "La voiture c'était la modernité," Delaunay-Terk in *Nous Irons*, 65. Robert Delaunay bought one high-speed car after the other. Sonia Delaunay designed clothing to wear in the cars for the two of them and later, when she worked commercially, designed the colored patterns (and clothing to wear) for a Citroen B12 in 1925 and a Matra B 530 in 1967. In her files at the Centre de Documentation at the Centre Pompidou a letter from Kingston Forbes at Buick, General Motors, who had visited her in Paris, owned a book of her designs, in replies to her offer to design patterns for cars dated February 11, 1927, at the height of her commercial endeavors; he felt her designs were too advanced for the mass market. In a letter dated March 1927, she agrees with him but offers to design for him should he ever need a special series.

<sup>25</sup> "Le public de chez nous s'est longtemps écarté ses pages d'annonces et des affiches. Tout ce qui était réclame était pour lui bluff et mensonge." *La Publicité*, April 1921, 143. Also commenting on the same period of time in the same publicity journal, "Le Français n'aime pas la publicité et n'aime pas en faire et il n'aime pas en subir les suggestions et les influences," June 1931, 419.

<sup>26</sup> From the catalogue, *High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*, co-curators, Kirk Varnadoe and Adam Gropnik, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, October 7, 1990-January 15, 1991), 290-93. The original comments are from Léger's "Le Spectacle: Lumière, couleur, image, mobile, objet-spectacle," (1928) in *Fonctions de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions Gonthier, 1965), 134-35.

<sup>27</sup> David Deitcher in "A Fine Disregard," *Voice*, October 16, 1990, 99.

<sup>28</sup> "The Gallery: 'High and Low' at MOMA," in *The Wall Street Journal*, October 24, 1990, A10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Editorial in *Contemporanea*, January, 1991, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Although at least one of them is included in exhibitions in New York and several are shown in most books and catalogues about Delaunay-Terk.

<sup>34</sup> At the same time Delaunay-Terk was creating her Simultaneous dresses, bookbindings, and a large box for the Der Sturm Herbstsalon in Berlin, which opened in September 1913.

<sup>35</sup> These metaphors seem appropriate since her images for the "Z" use the sun or large clocks. The letter "z" forms a dramatic line. El Lissitzky wrote to Delaunay-Terk, later in 1921, asking about her work. She created a bookcover for him, using the dramatic "Z."

<sup>36</sup> Although she referred to Bensedorf chocolates (apparent in files in the Bibliothèque Nationale). Many advertisements appeared in magazines and newspapers during this period using only the word "CHOCOLAT" or sometimes "CHOCOLAT-MENIER," another brand.

<sup>37</sup> Artists often express this idea. "Physical mixture of a color with its complementary color yields the sum total of the colors, or white . . ." by Johannes Itten in *The Elements of Color*, trans. Ernst Van Hagen, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970), 20.

<sup>38</sup> Martin, 104-106.

<sup>39</sup> Twenty-three of these are in the Département des estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in the Sonia Delaunay Special Collection. Also several of them are in private collections: Three *Zenith* studies are in the Tamar Cohen collection in New York. Rachel Adler Gallery exhibits poster-poems from time to time. A *Chocolat* is in the Kay Hillman collection. There is no precise record of how many studies exist; over thirty and as many as forty.

**CONCLUSION**

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## CONCLUSION

When will the time come when the freedom of women will reign?  
... In theory I am, of course, absolutely in favor of the freedom of women. We need to unite femininity with work and intellectual life.<sup>1</sup>

The determination with which Sonia Terk expressed her fervent ideas of uniting femininity with work and intellectual life when she was only nineteen years old, is the same determination that carried her to Paris when she was barely out of her teens. And just one year after her first visit to Paris in 1905, she was painting portraits that still seem vibrant today, with their vivid colors and flattened, yet aggressively dynamic, patterning.

Recently translated letters from Alexander Smirnov to Terk, between 1905 and 1910, shed light on the difficulties she faced in remaining in Paris. In numerous accounts Terk simply states that she moved to Paris by 1905. But letters show that until 1908 Terk spent at least six months of the year in St. Petersburg and Finland; she was also in Karlsruhe for several months in 1906 and then at her family's vacation home in Finland. There is no mention of the political

uprisings in Finland or Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg, nor is there any mention of problems with being Jewish in Russia at that time.

Modersohn-Becker's own unsuccessful struggle to remain in Paris, a difficulty with which Terk was familiar, might have triggered the events that followed. Terk's marriage to Uhde was a desperate measure: through it she could remain in Paris and gain her dowry.<sup>2</sup> Falling madly in love with Robert Delaunay, a few months later, was not part of her plan when she made the arrangement to marry Uhde. Subsequently, her divorce from Uhde, the Terks' realization they had been deceived about him, her pregnancy, and remarriage, caused a split between Sonia and her adoptive parents that was never healed.<sup>3</sup>

Although she stopped creating her powerful easel paintings for a time after beginning her relationship with Robert Delaunay,<sup>4</sup> Delaunay-Terk used that change in direction to develop new ways of making art. These changes caused her to return to the roots of her Russian heritage<sup>5</sup> in order to redefine her goals. Whether she consciously stopped painting to avoid competition with Robert remains a mystery. But she participated in the creation of a myth—whether from a faulty memory in later years or from wanting to make sure the story was told

her way—to ensure Robert Delaunay's place in history. In doing this her own career was diminished for a time. The dynamic and impressive Delaunay so captivated her that she willingly became his collaborator and muse.<sup>6</sup> From 1909 until 1912-13 she made book covers, a toy box for their son Charles, and decorative appliqués to enliven their apartment— becoming a wife and mother—like many young married women and female artists of her generation. She supported Robert's ideas, called him the intellectual in the family (when in fact she was much better read and better educated), and later, after their income was cut off, supported the family by making decorative art and clothing, providing time for Robert to paint.

Her interest in poetry—which she demonstrated by making colorfully decorative bookcovers for Romaine, Apollinaire, Rimbaud, and others—led her to the most productive period of the pre-war years. In late 1912, when she met Blaise Cendrars and heard his “Easter in New York,” her excitement inspired her to create a bookcover for the poem. This new inspirational involvement with Cendrars—a poetic muse in effect for her—prompted Delaunay-Terk to create a large body of work resulting in the collaboration with him on “The Prose of the

Transiberian” and the poster-poems. She also painted her largest works up to that time. During the same period she participated with Robert as a dance hall partner and began wearing art on her body.

Though it is not clear whether Delaunay-Terk realized her dress was “body” art, she preferred in any case to discuss the complete experience of making art central to every encounter. Through creating clothing in a Simultaneous mode, however, she used her marginalization to advantage: she stopped simply painting portraits of women and she began to define herself in a way that allowed her to move areas of domestic life and feminine presence into more credible recognition as arts, thereby gaining stature for these forms in themselves. She treated the Bal Bullier dress, and other radical clothing she created, as a way to explore her own body in relation to simultaneous movement of the human figure within abstract forms and complimentary colors. Later, in a eulogy for Cendrars, she wrote, “Cendrars understood . . . not style or fashion . . . not great couturiers, only the bodies of women on the dress.”<sup>7</sup>

Proto-dada elements in Delaunay-Terk’s experimental clothing for the dance hall can be discussed as performance, where she

collaborated with her own body at the Bal Bullier. But the poster-poems, in particular, might be linked with the Italian Futurists' proto-dada ideas as discussed by Marianne W. Martin in *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915*. Martin describes the early precursors of Dada as: "‘lyrical intoxication’ communicated by three or four colours of ink and twenty different type faces were suggested, to be augmented by ‘free expressive orthography . . . freely deforming, remodeling the word by cutting or lengthening them . . . enlarging or diminishing the number of vowels and consonants.’"<sup>8</sup> Delaunay-Terk's playful experimentation using paper cutouts, dropping letters, creating backwards *Ns* and unreadable Russian letters, misspelling words, deliberately subverting the objective of advertising, all in the brightest psychedelic colors,<sup>9</sup> points to a proto-dada element in her poster-poems.

Despite being marginalized in her marriage to a better known artist husband, and at times even in her alliance with Cendrars, ultimately Delaunay-Terk has now begun to gain recognition as a collaborative artist in many media. Near the end of the twentieth century her work can finally be seen to an advantage—encompassing

ideas from the whole century—instead of as a great modernist who worked only at the beginning of the era.

Seeds of this pluralistic attitude were sown during the dynamic zenith of Delaunay-Terk's early career, 1906-1914, and continued throughout her long life. But this creativity has been minimized because of her connection to craft and because she did not limit herself to the modernist high art of painting. With feminist scholarship and the greater acceptance of the concept of visual culture in the contemporary art world that has come about during the past twenty years, Sonia Delaunay-Terk's ideas and work can be better reassessed. Her work in different media, her participation in Simultaneous experiments with Robert Delaunay, her collaborations with artists and poets, her making fashions that moved in simultaneous colors, and her working both in decorative arts and easel paintings, can only be appreciated and understood by the more inclusive attitude which the current contemporary outlook permits. Delaunay-Terk was indeed a visionary artist, anticipating the eclectic visual milieu of the late twentieth century. The unifying of "her work and intellectual life"<sup>10</sup> combine to make her work increasingly fresh and vital today.

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<sup>1</sup> From her journal, 27 June 1904. Trans. by Martin Daughtry. Later in her life Delaunay-Terk denied any interest in feminism. Near the end of her life she acknowledged that her promotion of Robert's career over her own had undermined her career—although she also said that an artist's desire for fame is an American characteristic. Obviously she forgot her earlier struggle for fame. In Cindy Sherman, *Art Talk*.

<sup>2</sup> To marry to gain a dowry might seem callous, but shows Terk's determination. A woman artist would have had little chance to succeed without an income.

<sup>3</sup> Letters to Terk from Smirnov relate these problems. They are quoted in "Transformations." Anna Terk died in 1911 and Delaunay-Terk did not go to Russia, but by that time she had a small baby. Neither did she go when Henri Terk died in 1917, but that is more understandable in the light of political events.

<sup>4</sup> During most of 1910 Terk was ill with scarlet fever and then with her pregnancy.

<sup>5</sup> Although she was born in Ukraine, it was part of Greater Russia at that time.

<sup>6</sup> She was also pregnant and had a baby in January 1911.

<sup>7</sup> In *Blaise Cendrars vous parle*, 64. Padgett and Bochner are scholars who write on Cendrars' poetry.

<sup>8</sup> Marianne W. Martin, 135.

<sup>9</sup> In 1992, looking at poster-poems in the print collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Sherry Buckberrough and I discussed the colors in the works as being vibrant and fresh like psychedelic colors from the seventies.

<sup>10</sup> See fn. 1.

## APPENDIX I: Letters to Sonia Terk from Smirnov, 1906-1907

These unpublished letters establish Sonia Terk's whereabouts from January 1906 to December 1907. Much of the correspondence is undated. The listed dates, however, are accurate showing that Terk was not living in Paris regularly during 1906 and 1907. In fact, she still lived in Karlsruhe during part of 1906, contrary to her assertion that she moved to Paris from Karlsruhe in 1905.

Terk also spent several months in Russia in 1908 and only later that year did she remain in Paris. (No correspondence listed to support this.) Terk married Wilhelm Uhde in December 1908.

ST refers to Sonia Terk; AS, to Alexei Smirnov

1. January 18, 1906 - AS writing from 6, rue Toullier, Paris
2. January 26, 1906 - AS (Paris) to ST in Karlsruhe
3. February 7, 1906 - AS (Paris)
4. February 24, 1906 - AS (Paris)
5. March 8, 1906 - AS (Paris) to ST in Karlsruhe - (opium)
6. March 11, 1906 - AS (Paris) ST in Germany
7. March 23 (10 in old dating), 1906 - AS to ST in Karlsruhe still
8. n.d. - AS checking on art schools for ST
9. April 7, 1906 - AS (Paris)
10. April 15, 1906 - AS reading French novels
11. April 20, 1906 - AS (Paris) to ST in Germany
12. May 2-3, 1906 - AS (Paris)
13. May 9, 1906 - AS (Paris)
14. May 15 (2 in old dating), 1906 - AS to ST in Germany -  
"tomorrow I'll write a letter to Anna Sergeevna, whom I  
know you'll soon see," implying that ST would be returning  
to Russia
15. May 20, 1906 - AS
16. June 20, 1906 - AS (Paris; Bal Bullier or Tabarin) to ST in  
Finland at family vacation *dacha*
17. June 27 (14, old date), 1906 - AS (Paris) to ST in Finland
18. July 15, 1906 - AS (Paris; back from London telling her  
about the art he saw there) to ST in Finland

19. July 27, 1906 - AS (Bretagne) to ST in Finland
20. August 10, 1906 - AS (Bretagne) to ST
21. August 25 (12 old date), 1906 - AS (Bretagne) to ST in Finland
22. September 8, 1906 - AS (Bretagne)
23. September 28, 1906 - AS (Paris) to ST in Finland or St.  
Petersburg - AS asks where is she
24. November 24, 1906 - to ST in Paris - 64, bd. Port Royal
25. January 27, 1907 - AS (Paris) to ST
26. February 27, 1907 - to ST in Paris
27. March 14, 1907 - AS to ST in Paris
28. March 24, 1907 - AS to ST in Paris
29. March 28, 1907 - AS to ST
30. June 17, 1907 - AS to ST in Heidelberg
31. June 20, 1907 - AS to ST
32. June 25, 1907 - AS to ST (not in Paris)
33. June 29, 1907 - AS to ST in Finland
34. July 19, 1907 - AS (Pouldu) to ST (not in France)
35. August 8, 1907 - AS (Pouldu) to ST in Finland
36. September 6, 1907 - AS (Pouldu) to ST in Finland
37. September 18, 1907 - AS (Tours) to ST in Finland
38. October 1, 1907 - AS (Paris) to ST, 12 ruelle Basque, St.  
Petersburg
39. November 10, 1907 - AS (St. Petersburg) to ST in Paris
40. November 19, 1907 - AS to ST in Paris
41. November 24, 1907 - to ST in Paris
42. November 24 - to ST in Paris
43. December 2, 1907 - AS (Paris) to ST in Paris - 123, bd.  
Montparnasse

#### Letters from 1910 - to Sonia Uhde-Terk from Alexei Smirnov

1. January 22, 1910 - discussing his surprise at the divorce
2. January 24, 1910 - about ST calling her problems "gossip"
3. January 30, 1910 - about her aunt
4. February 25, 1910 - sending book on geometry; asking about  
her painting
5. July 2, 1910 - still discussing the need to be clear with her aunt

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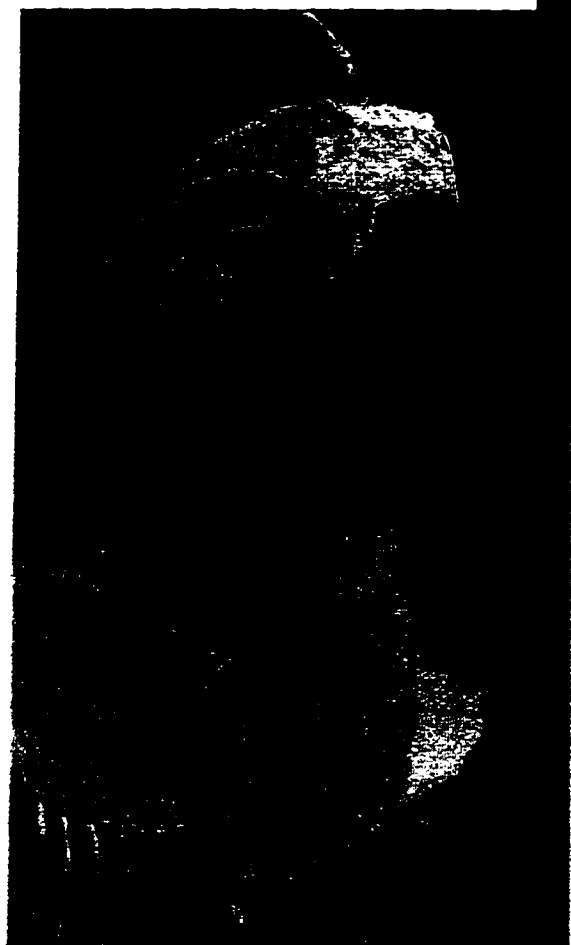
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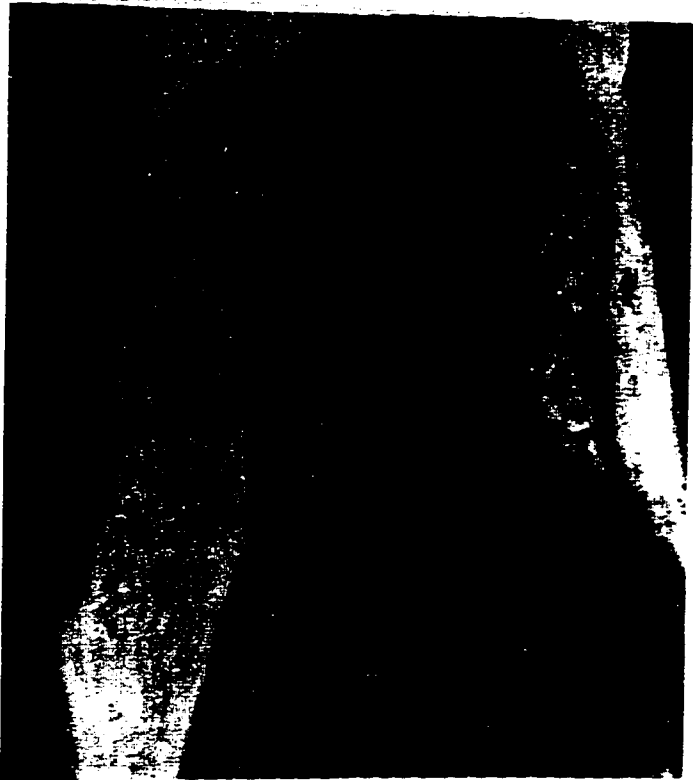
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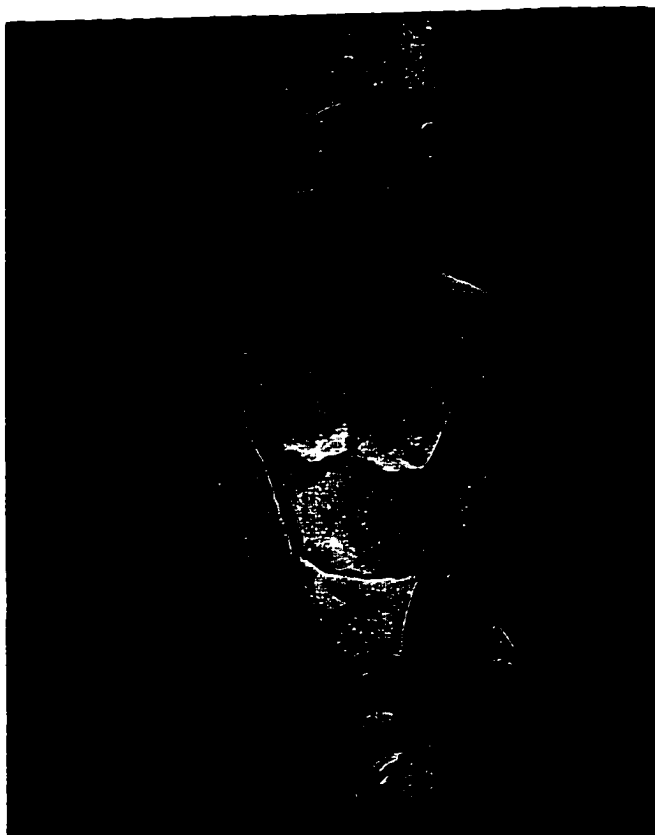
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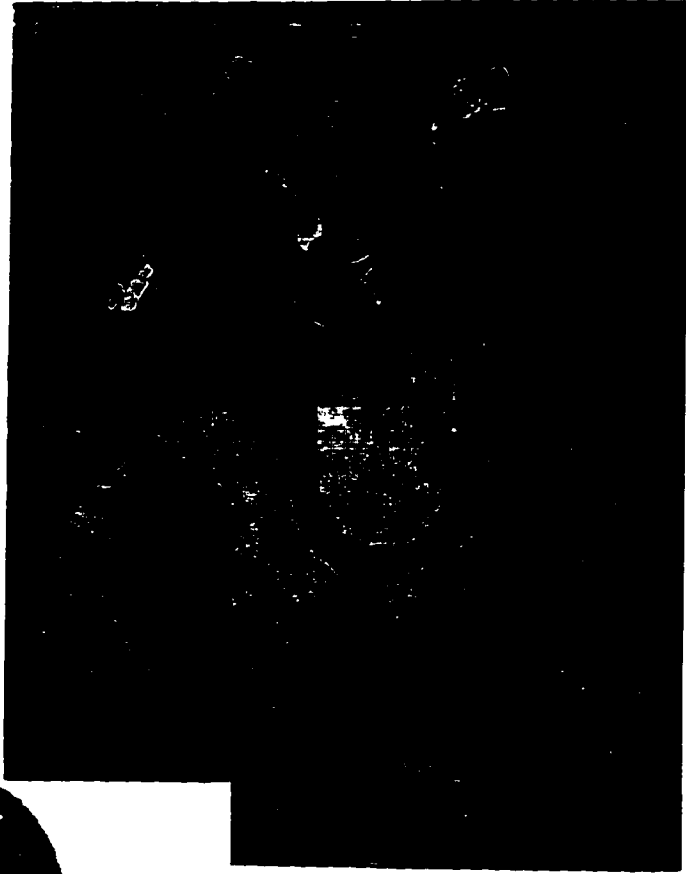
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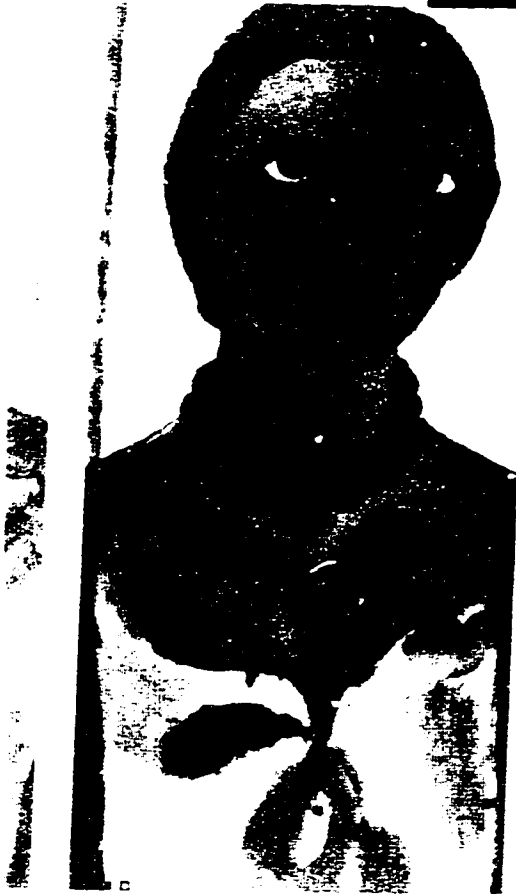
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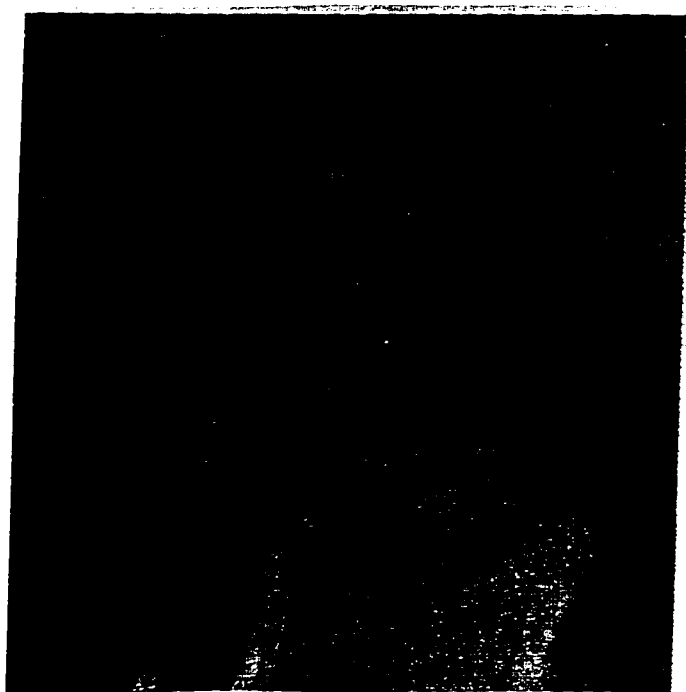
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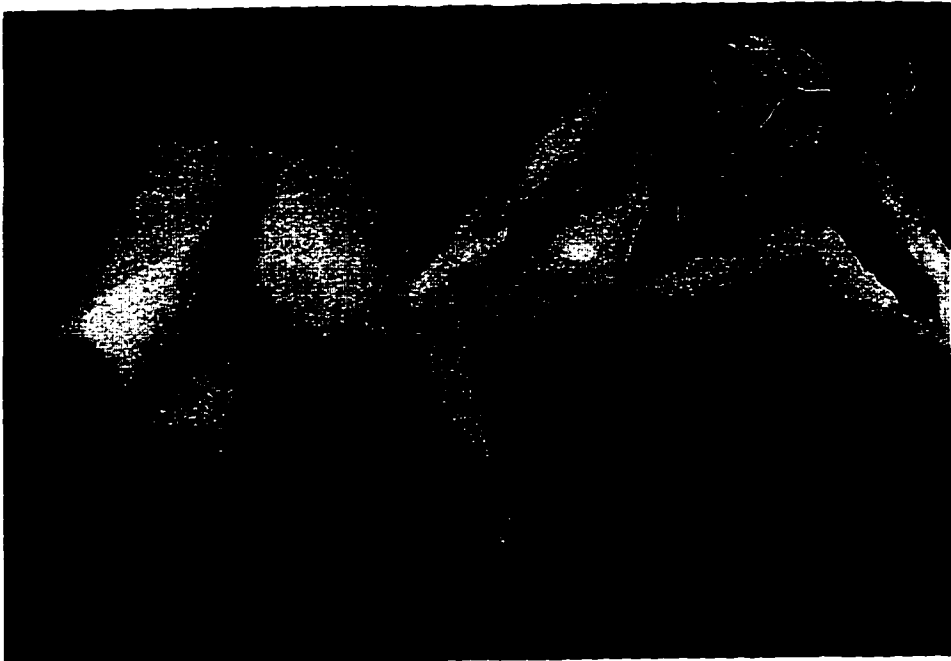
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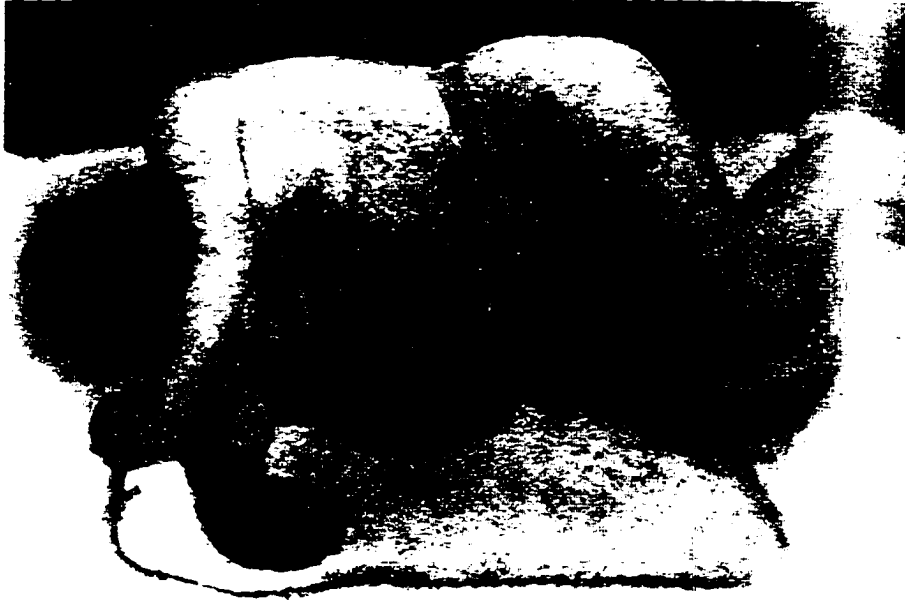


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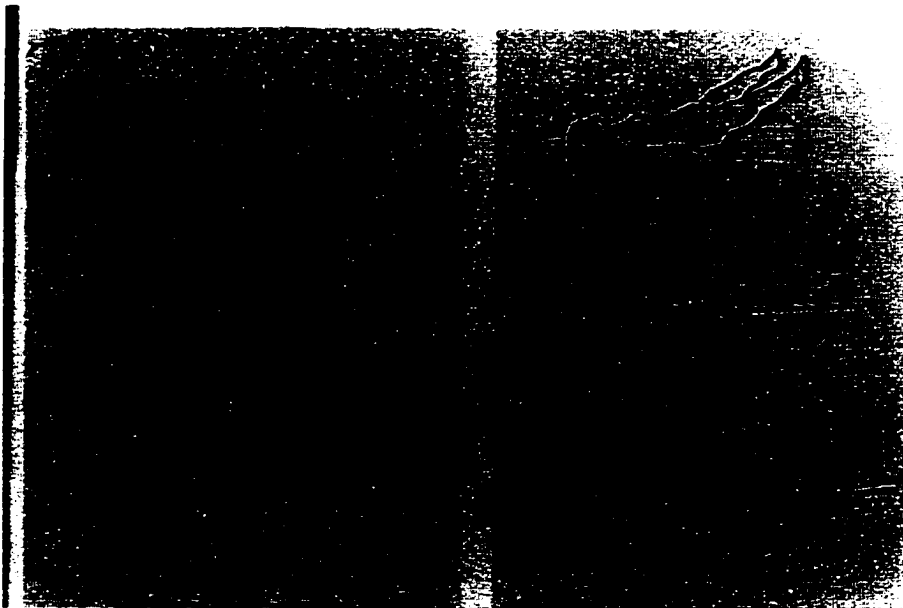


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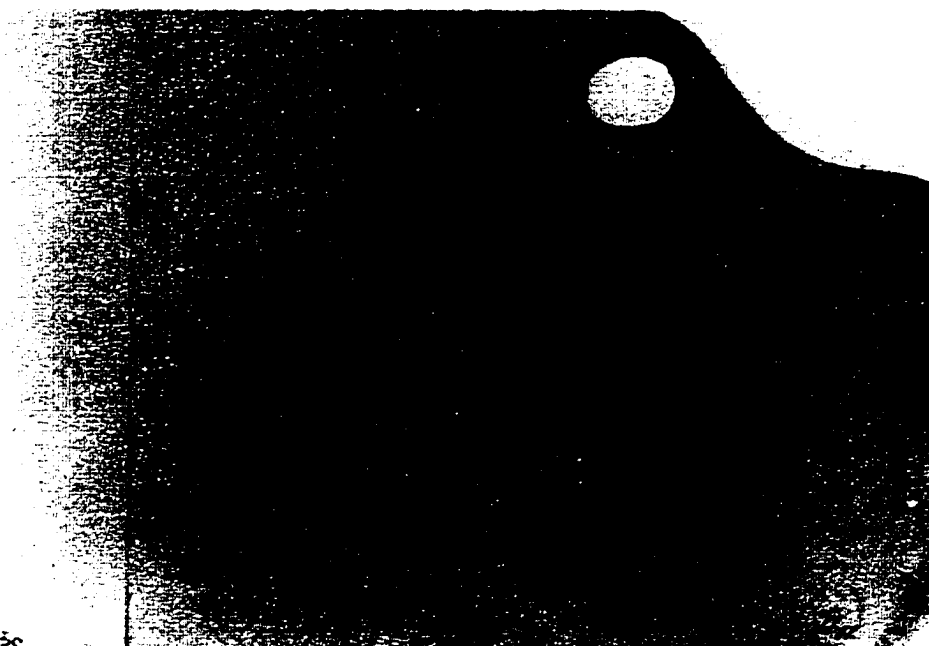
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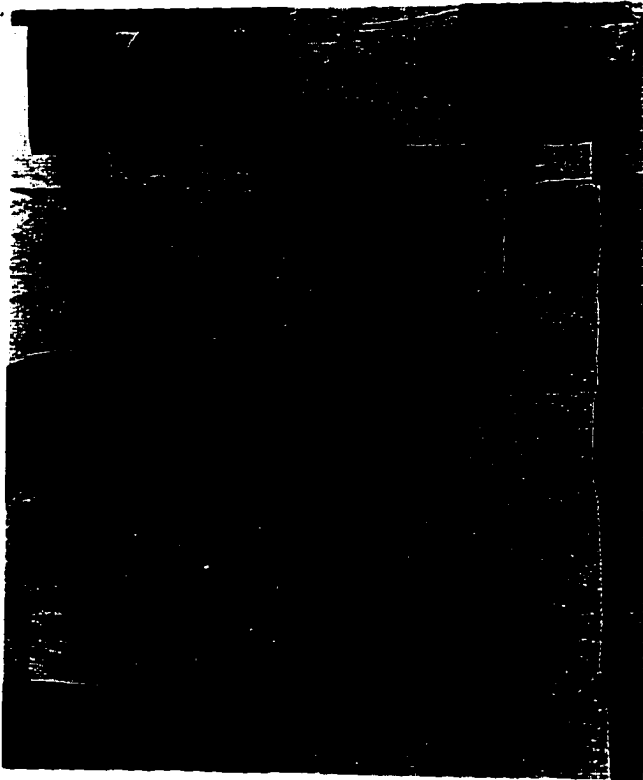
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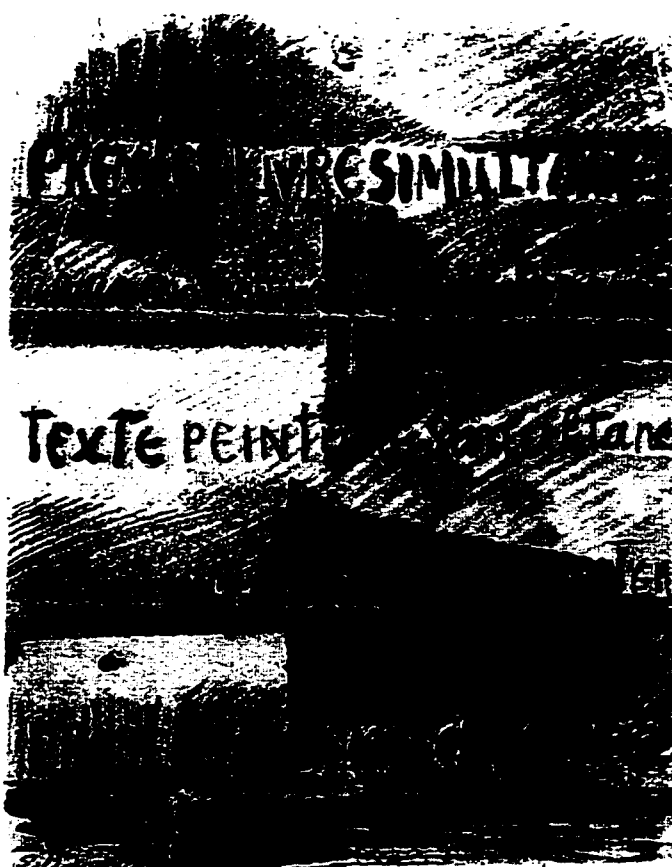
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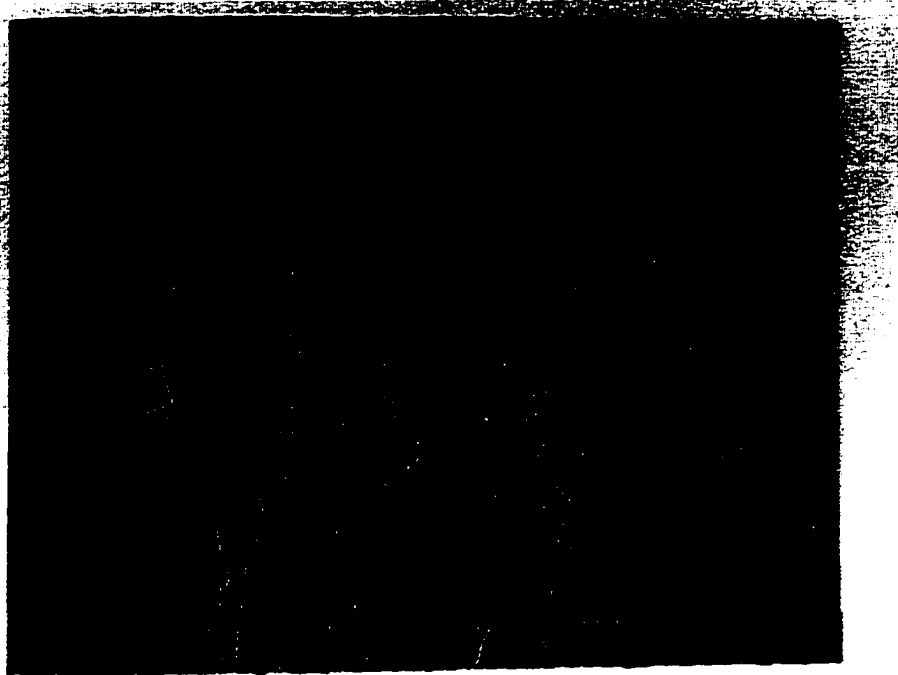
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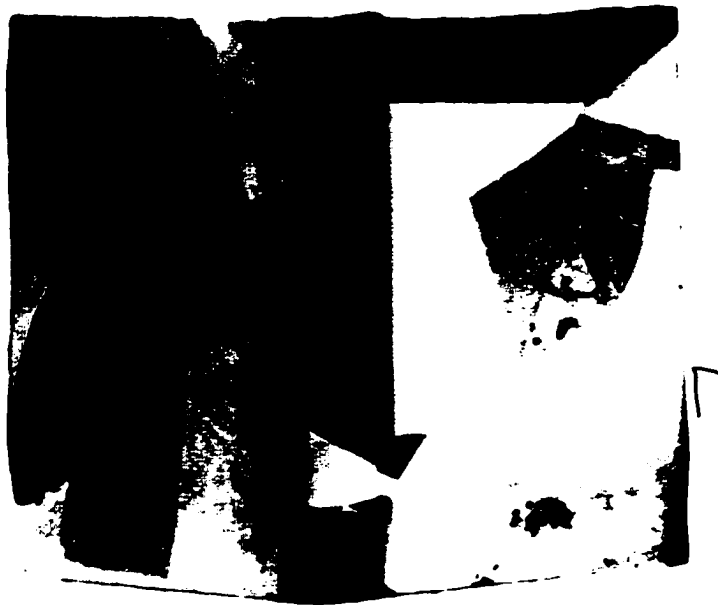
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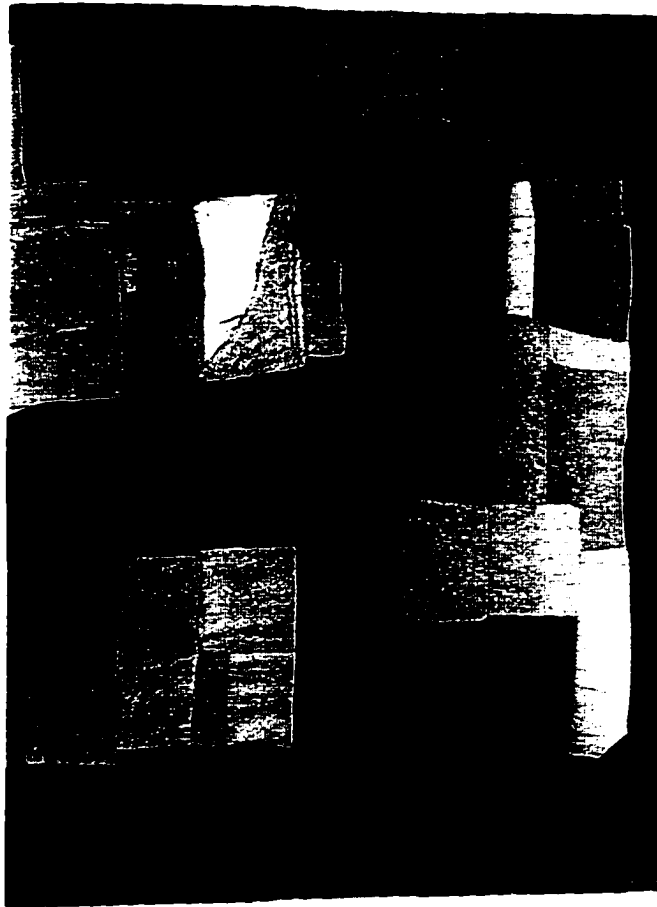
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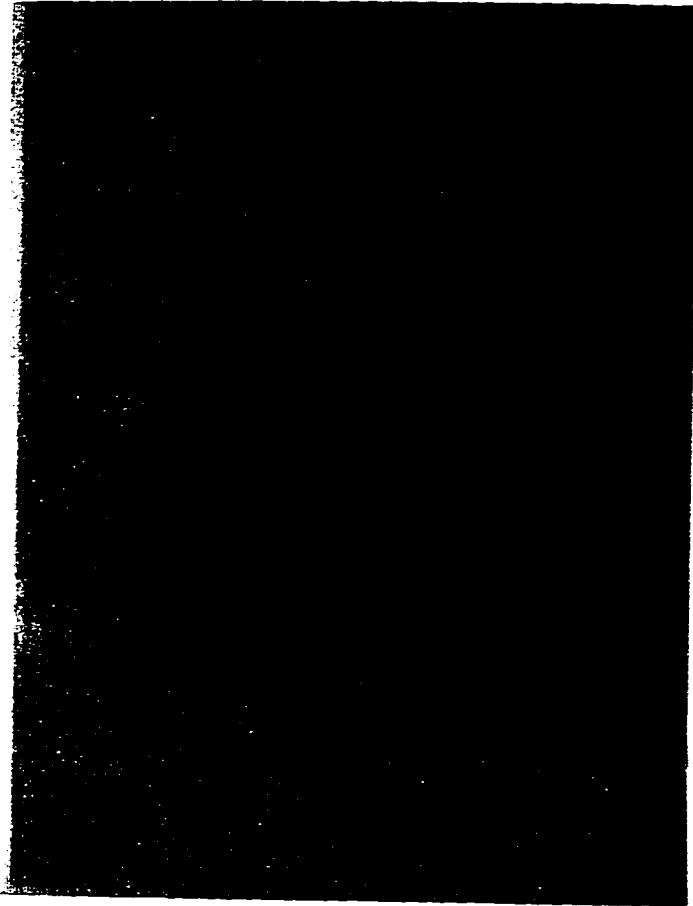
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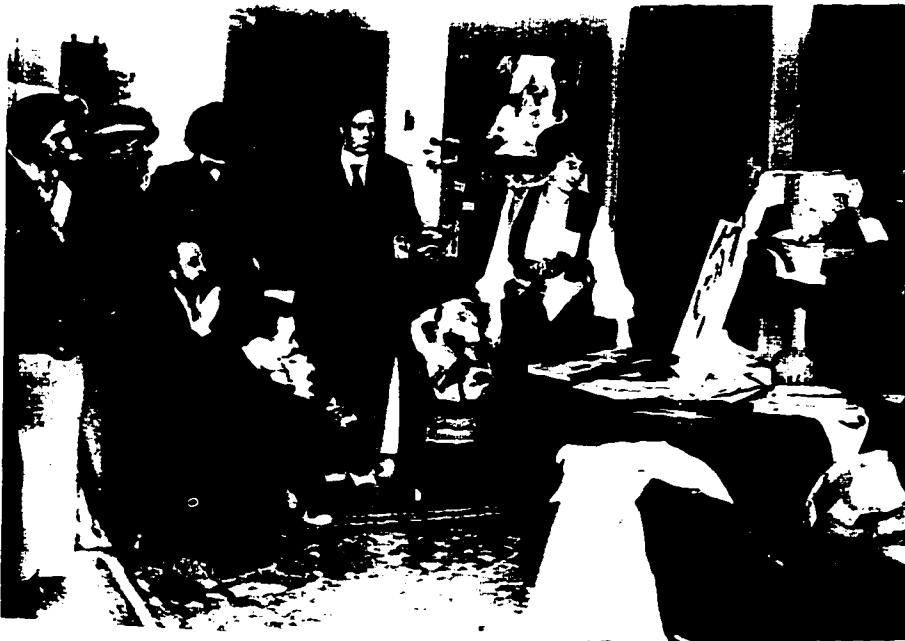
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# CATALOGUE

## S. Delaunay-Terk

9.

Robe 1913 et voilette en couleurs  
simultané 1912.



Sur la robe Elle a un corps —  
 Le corps de la femme est aussi bosselé que mon  
 côté —  
 Glorieuse et la l'incarnez avec esprit  
 Les couturiers font un sot métier —  
 Autant que la piréologie —  
 Mes yeux sont des linceux qui peinent la sensuelle  
 des femmes

— : —  
 Tout ce qui fait bouge avance dans la profondeur  
 Les étoiles creusent le ciel —  
 Les couleurs destabilisent par contraste.  
 —Sur la robe Elle a un corps —

— c —  
 Sous les bass des bruyères Mère humides et  
 piéfilles quand les yeux se déversent dans le  
 dos avec les otoplastes glauques —

Le ventre en disque qui bouge  
 Et la double coque des Seins qui passe sous le pont des arc en ciel  
 Ventre  
 Disques  
 Soleil

Et les cris perpétuels des couleurs tombent sur les cœurs.  
 Épée de St Michel. Il y a des mains qui se tendent.  
 Il y a dans la trace la bile tous les yeux toutes les lanternes tous les habits du bal Buller  
 Et sur la banche la signature du poète



BLAISE CENDRARS.

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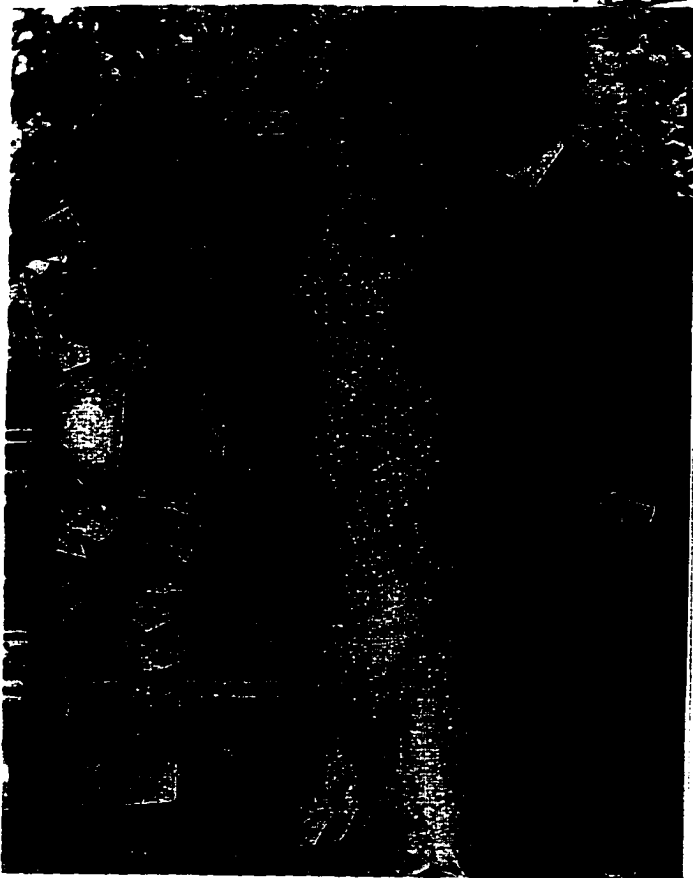


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# LE THEATRE



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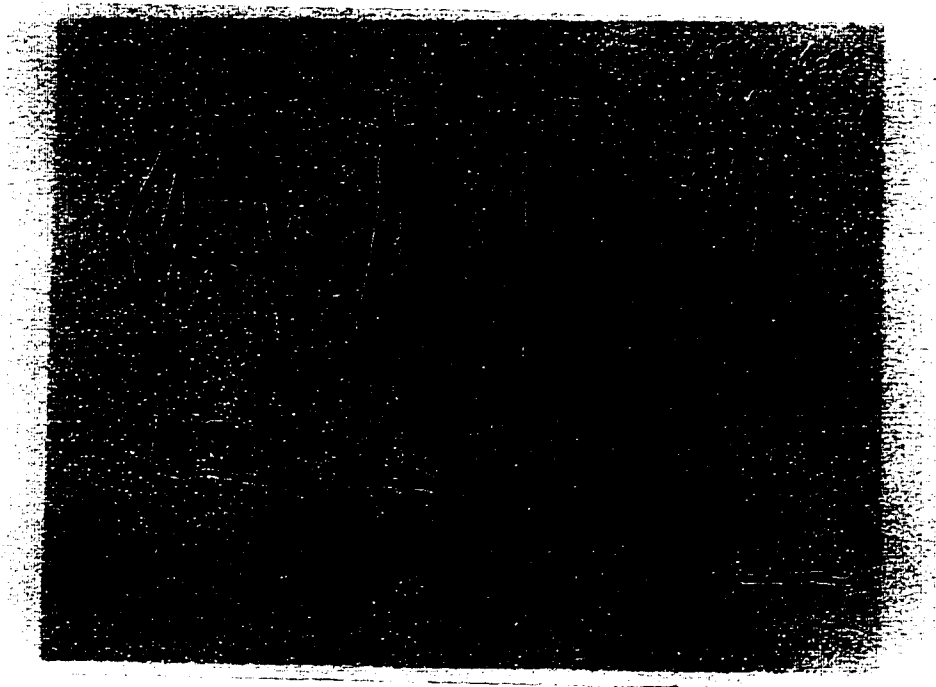
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Plates - Dress

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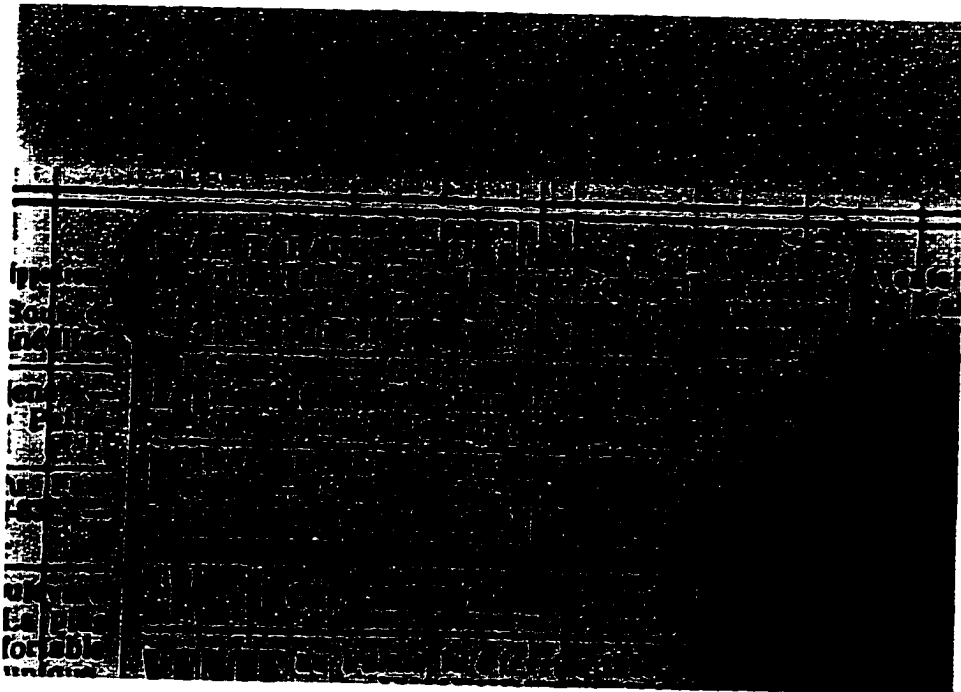
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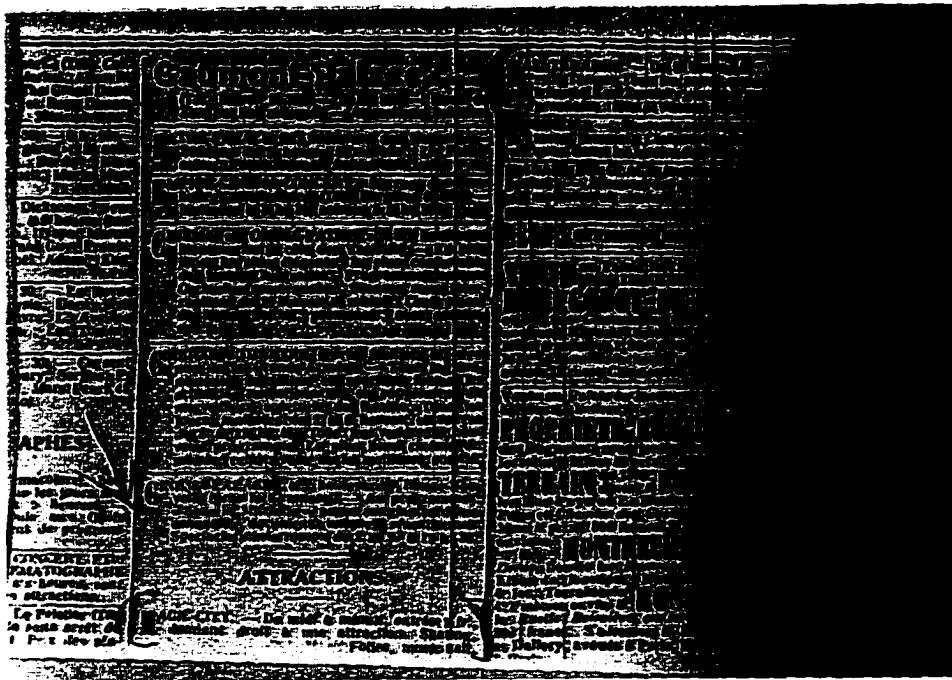
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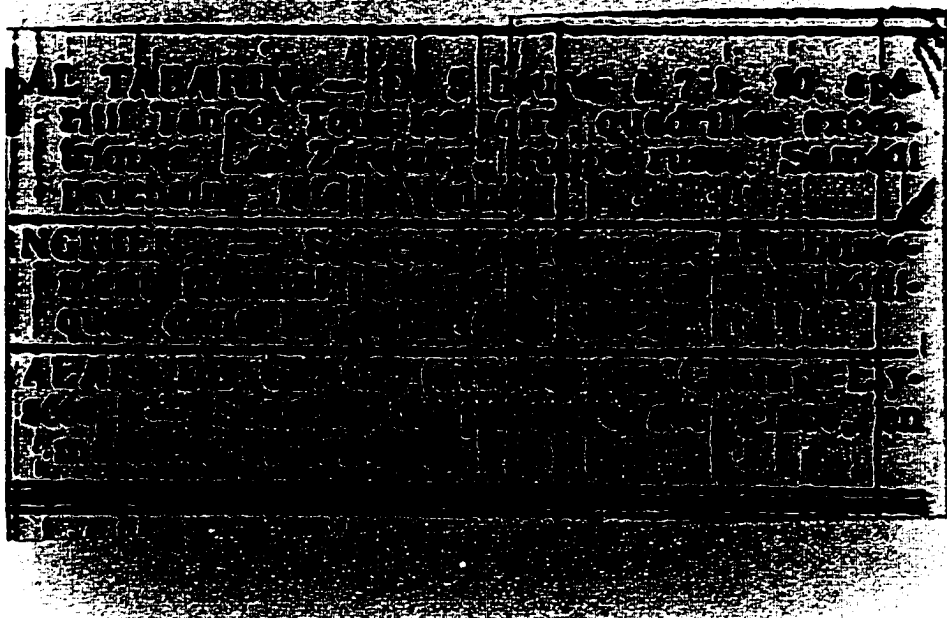
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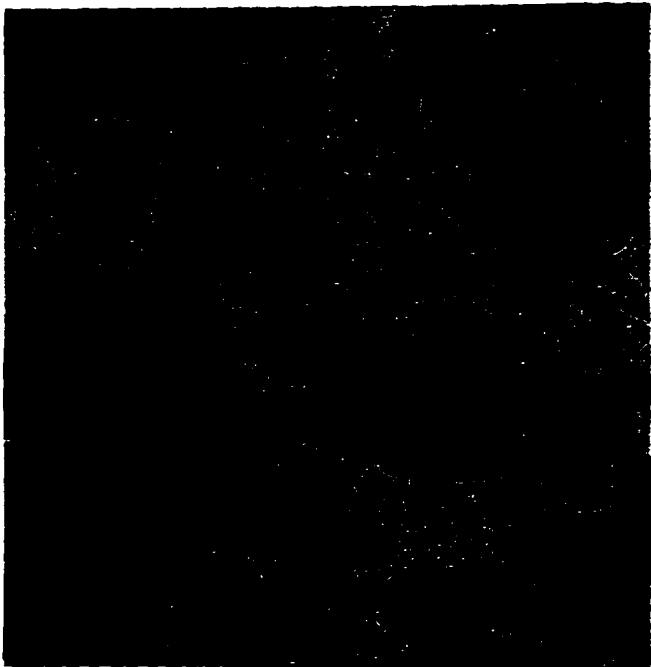
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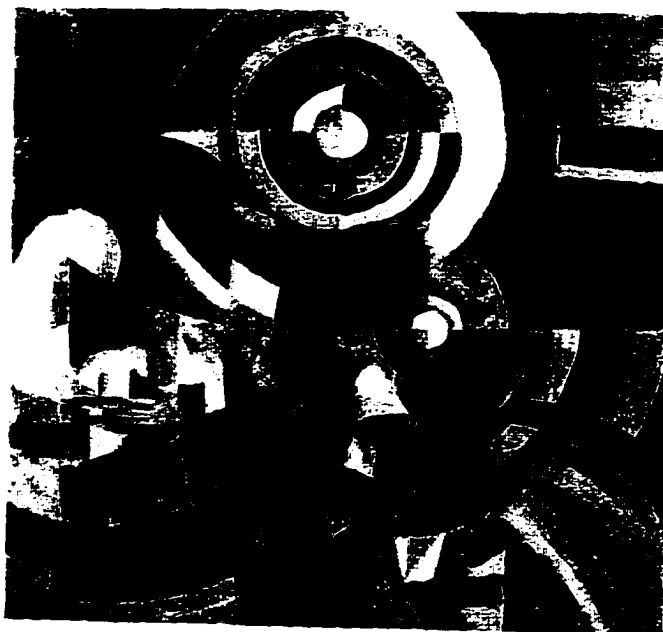
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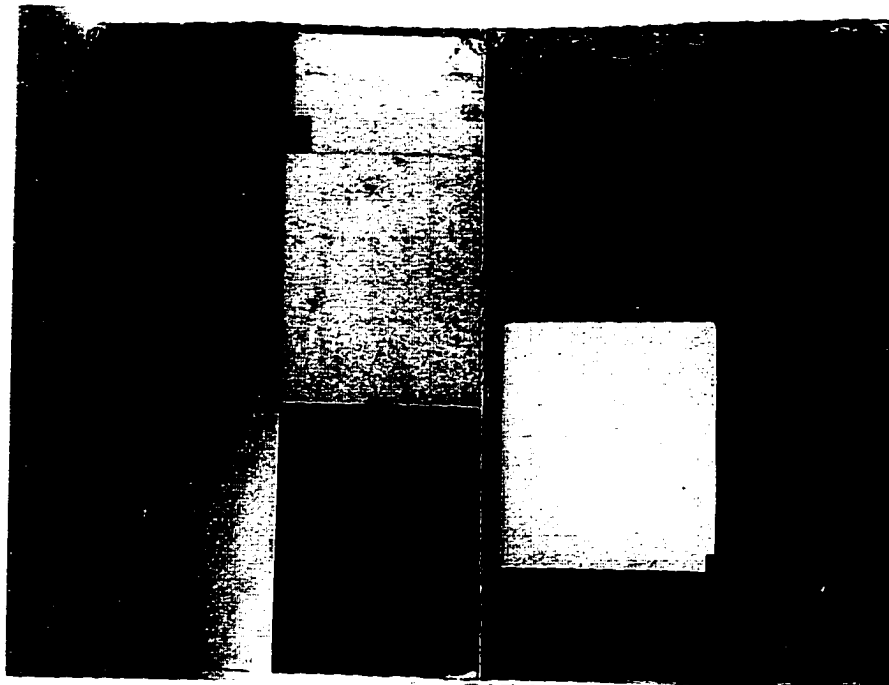


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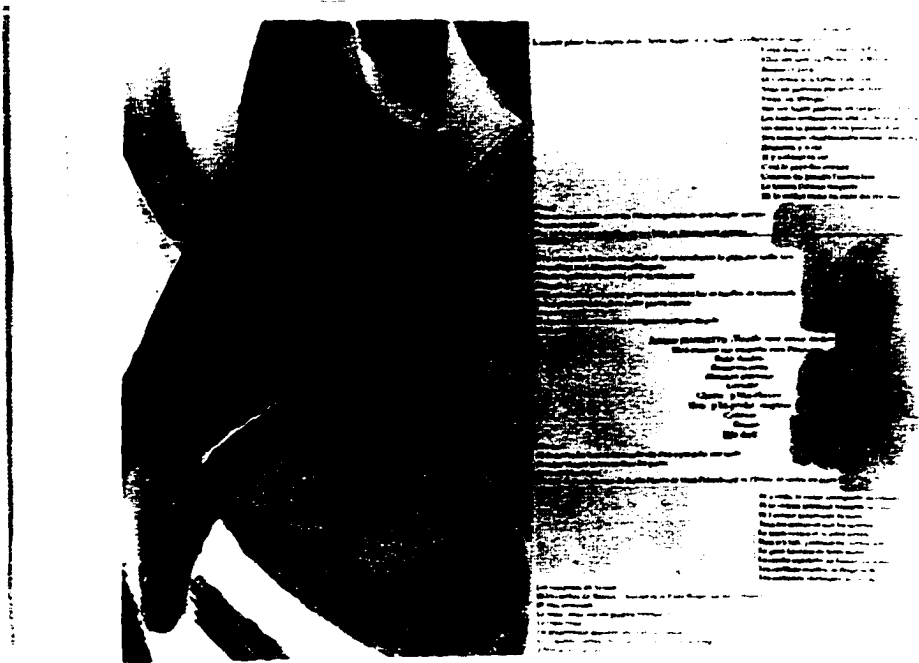




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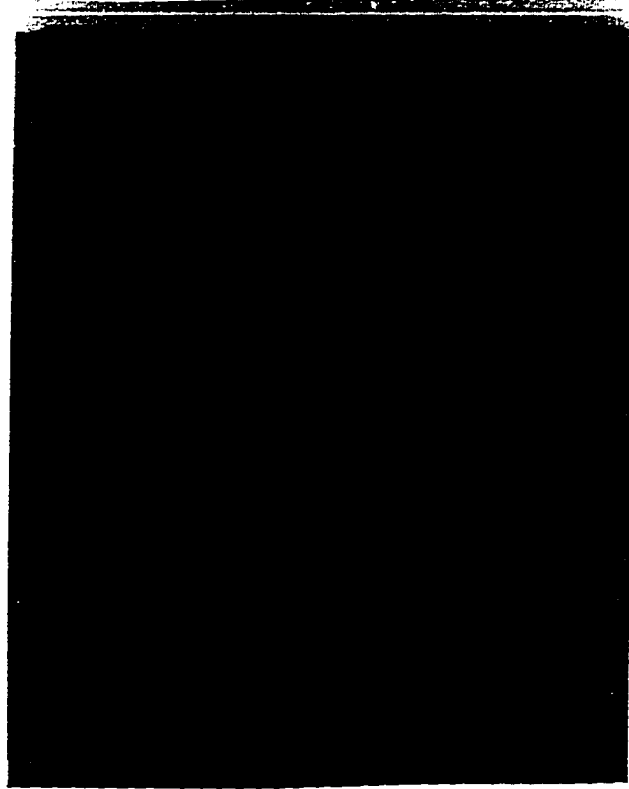


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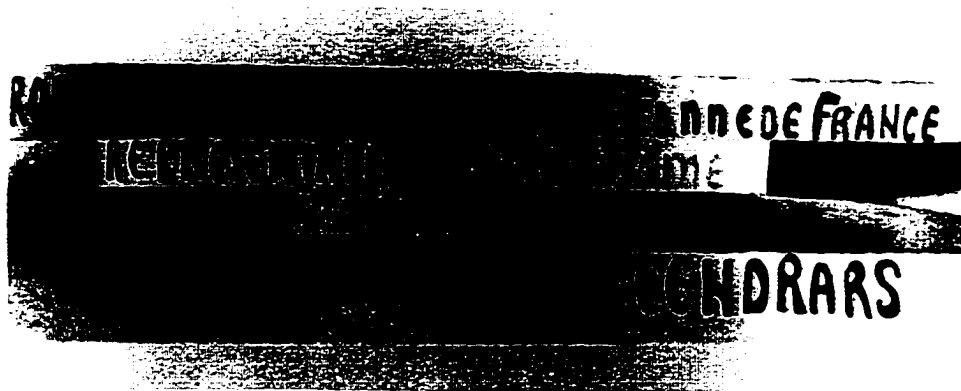




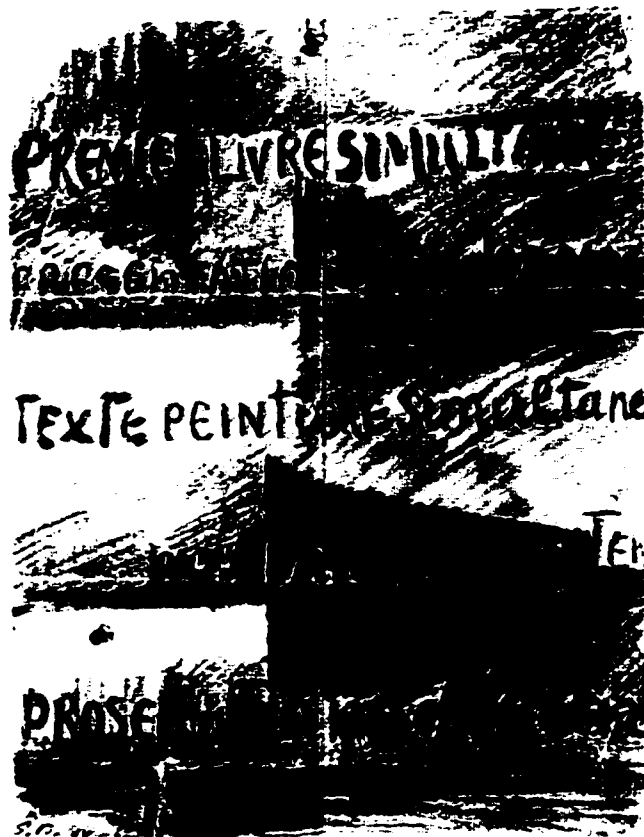
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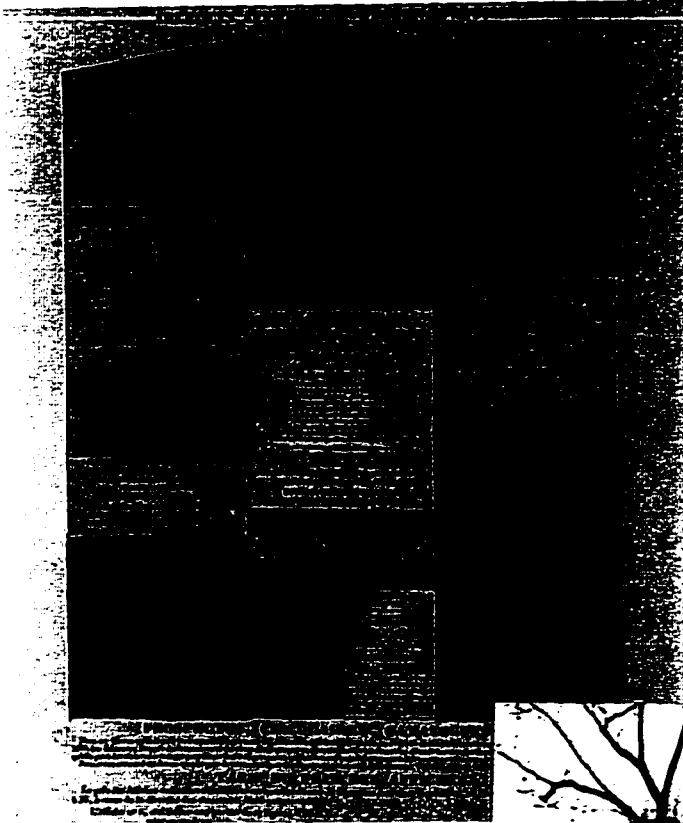
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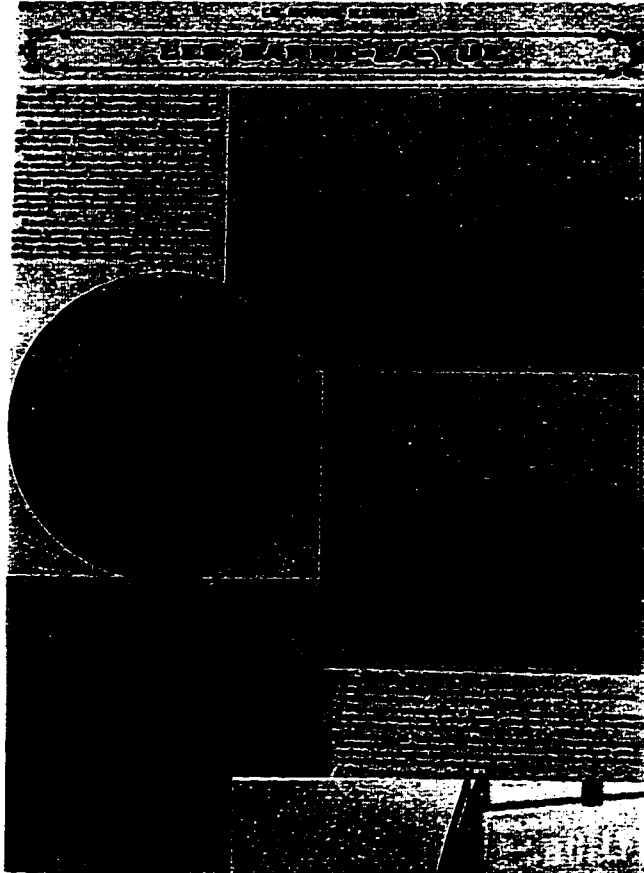
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40. Billboards. *Le Monde illustré*

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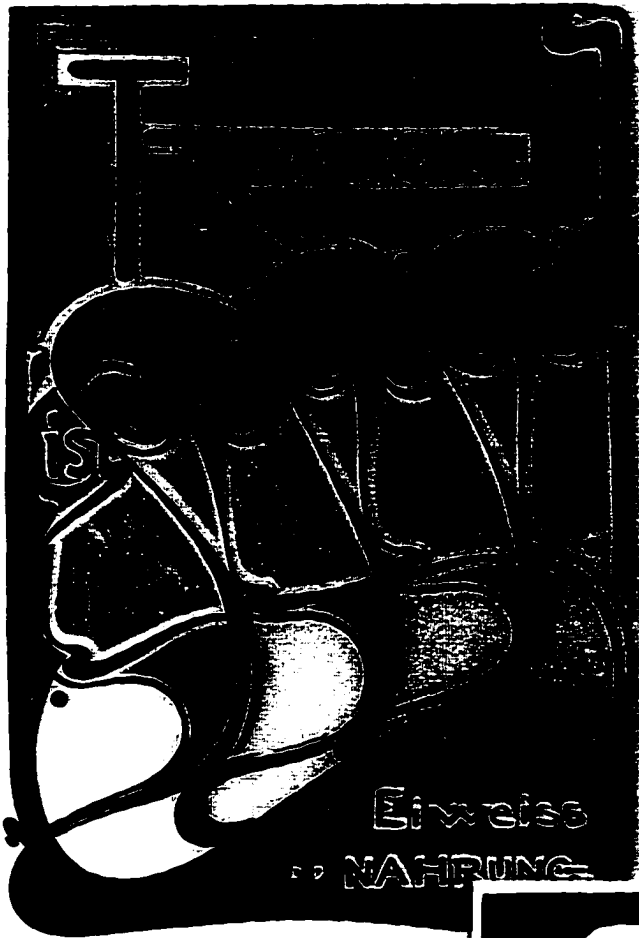
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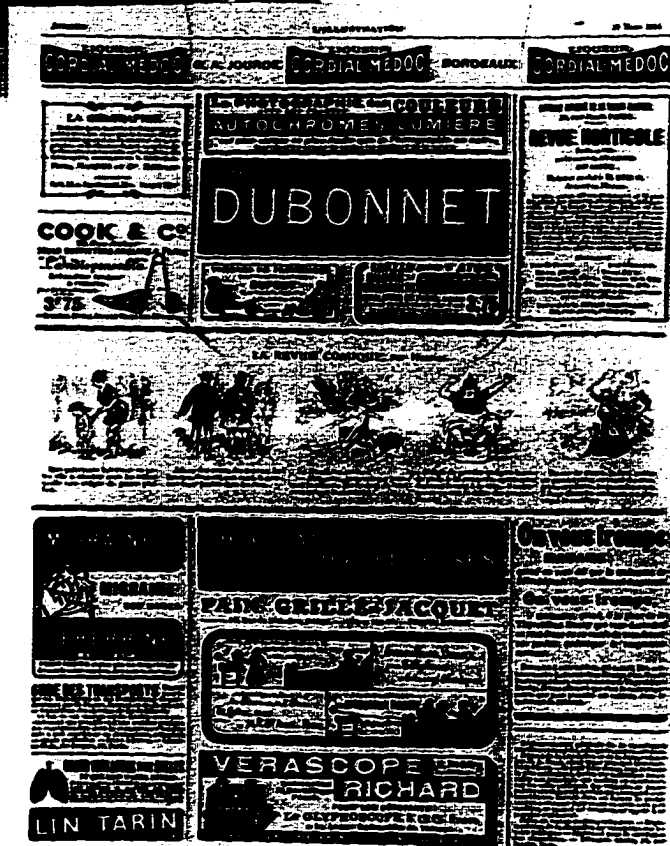
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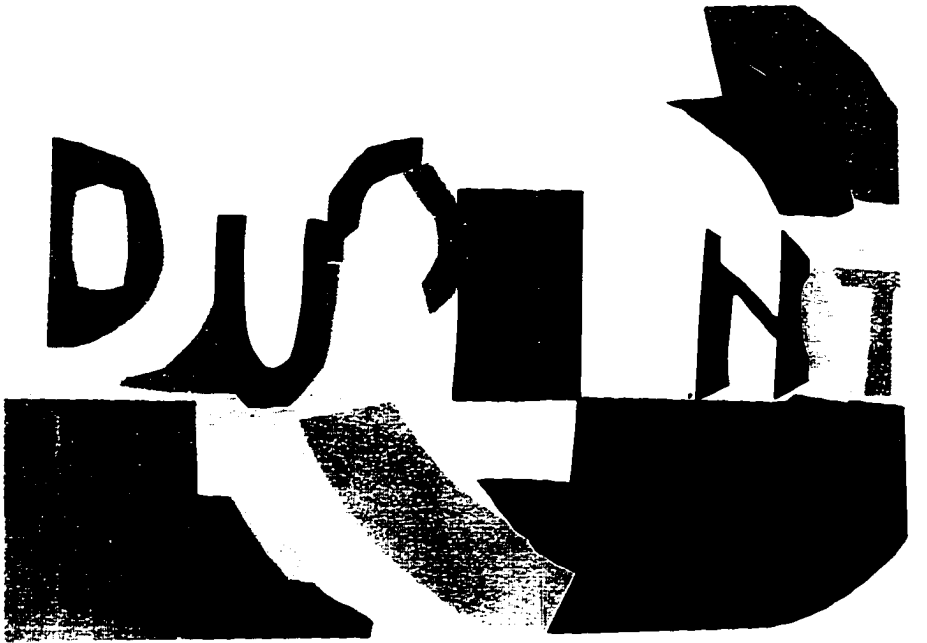
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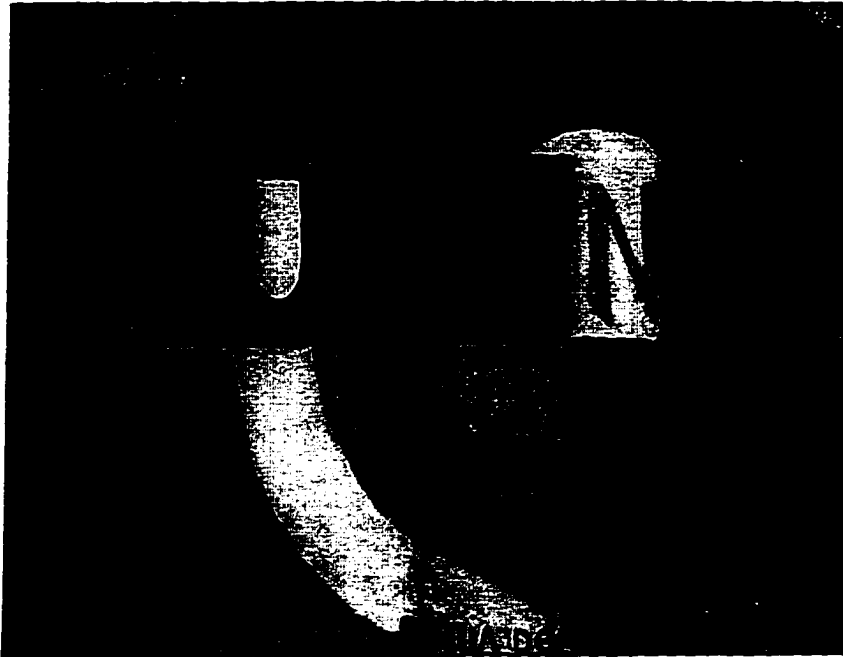
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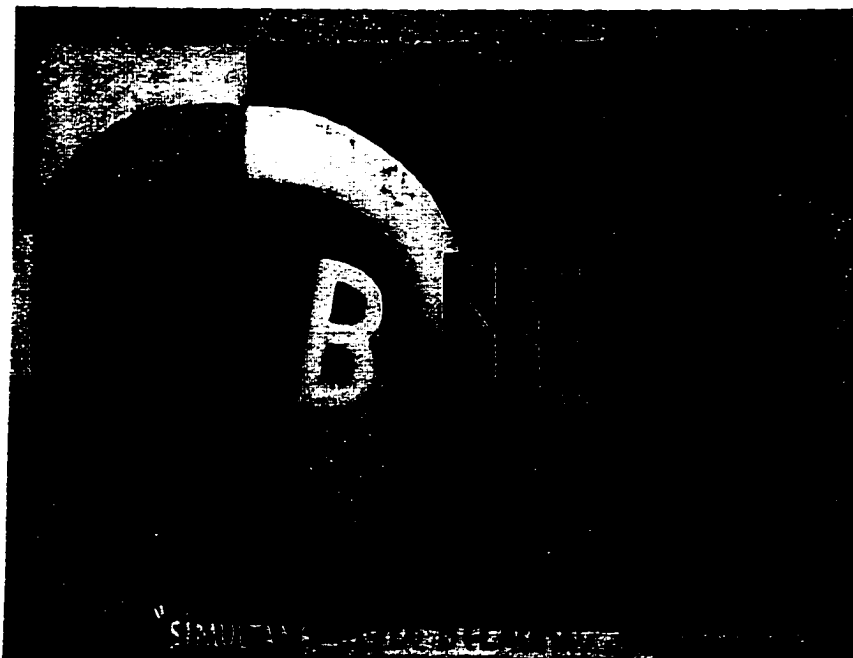
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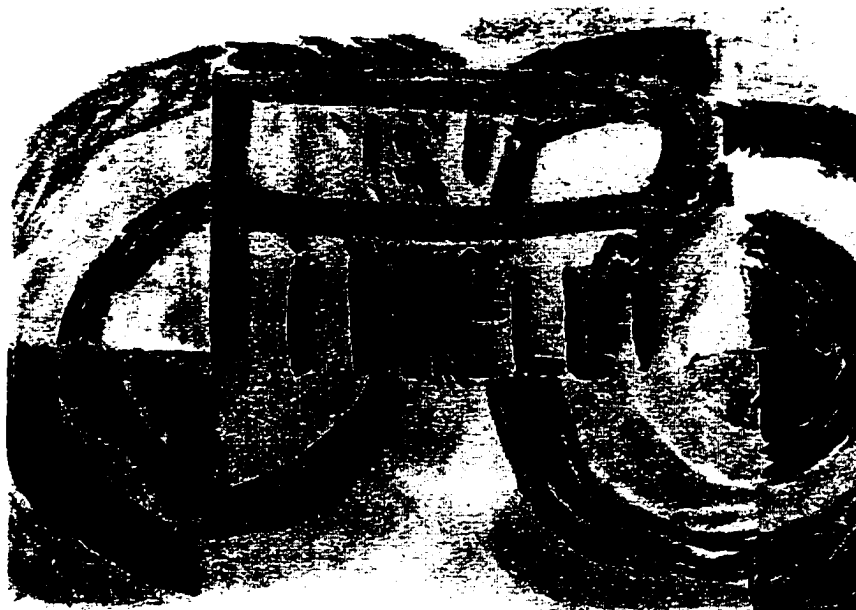
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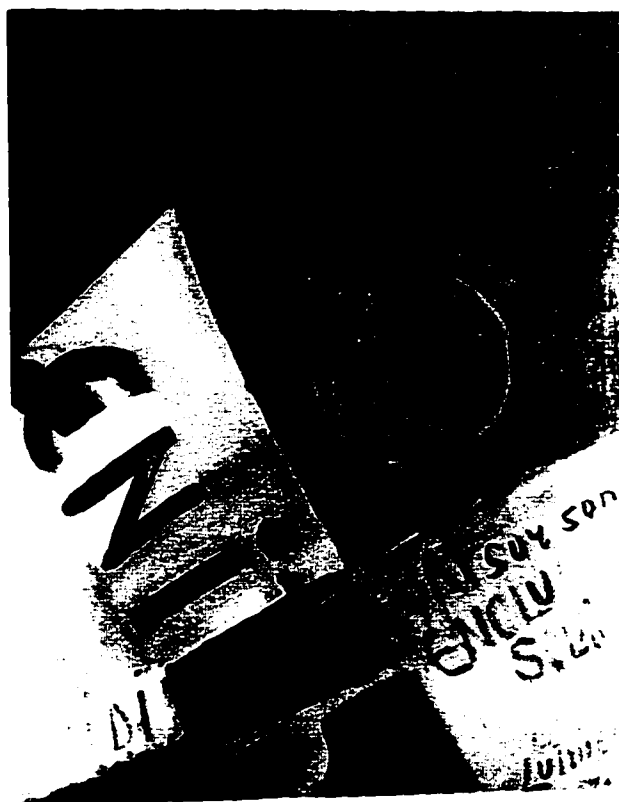
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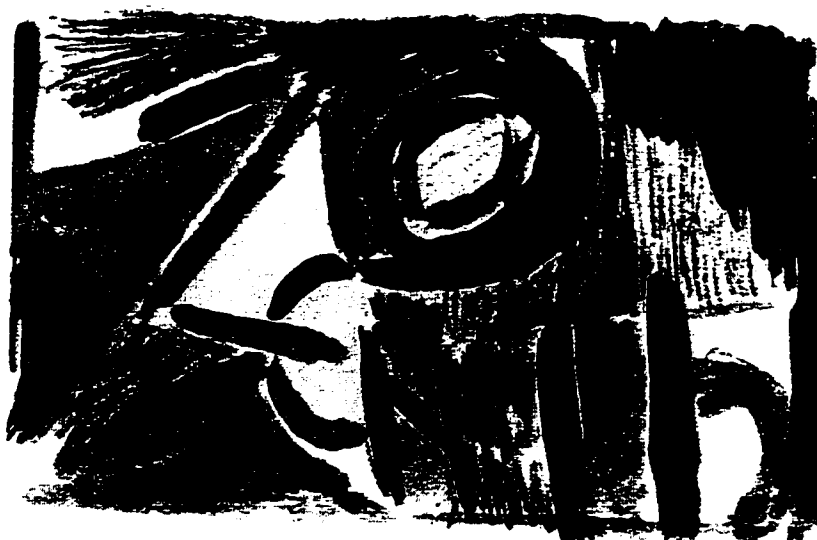
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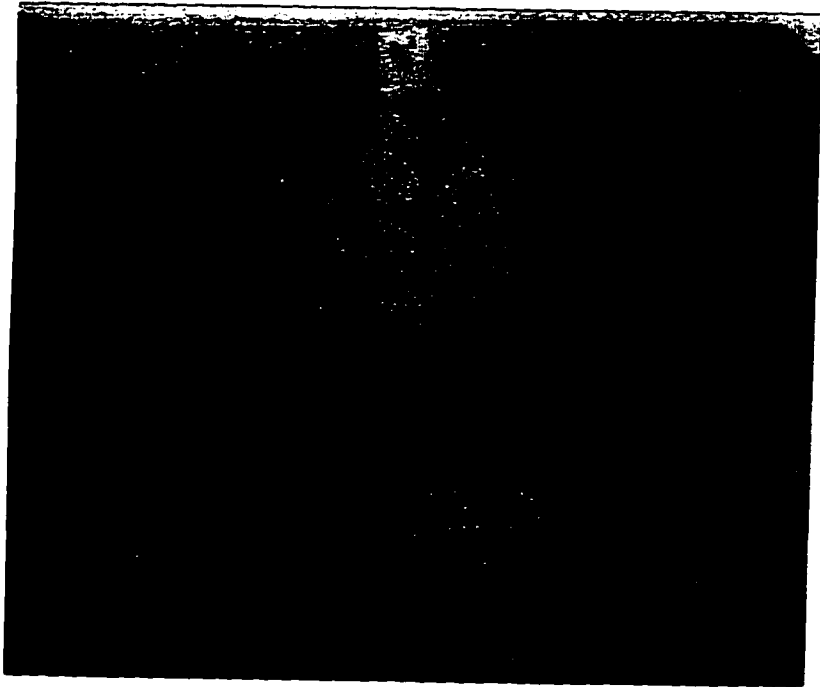
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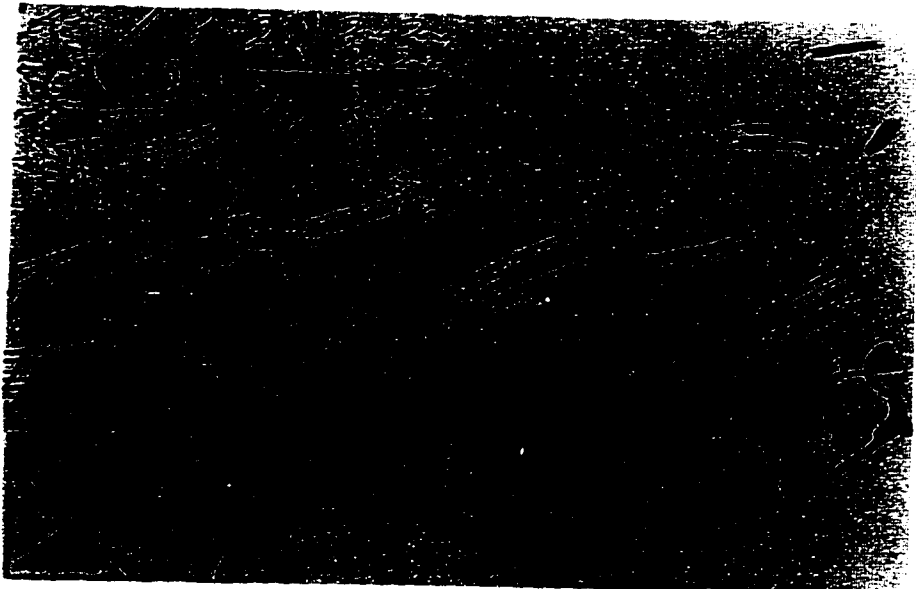
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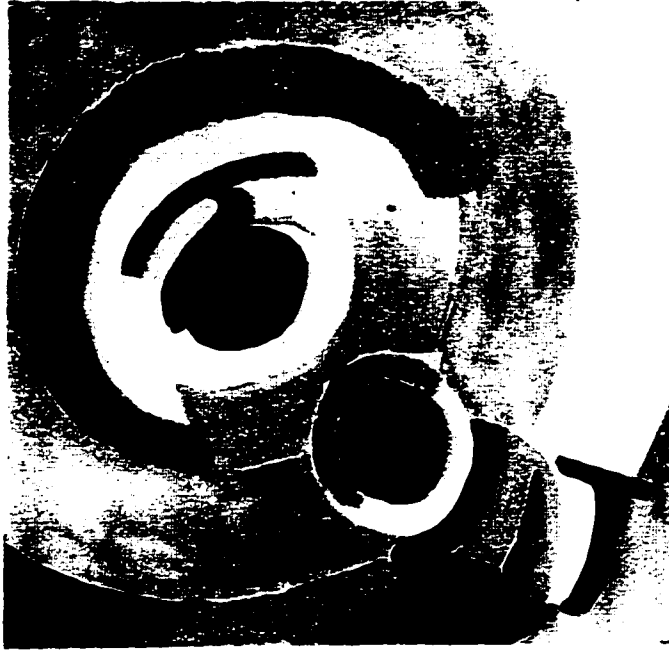
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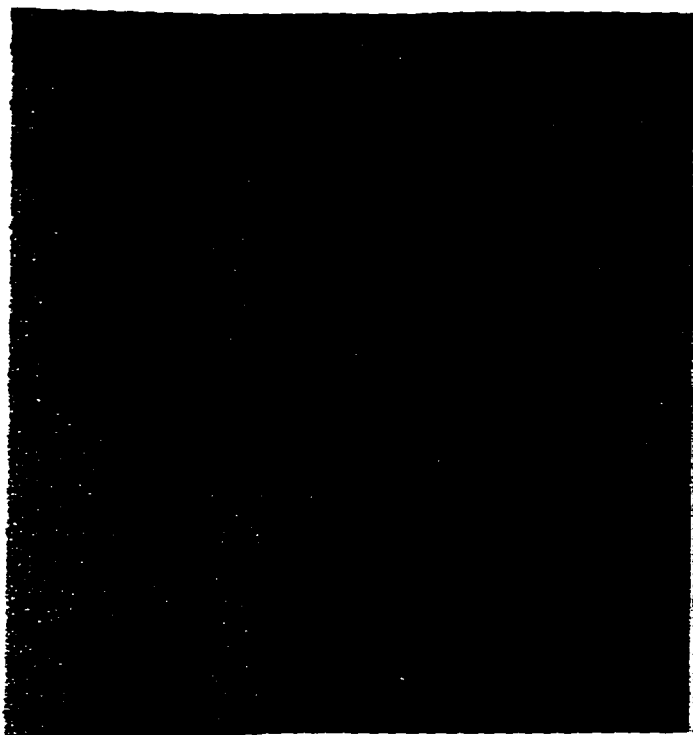
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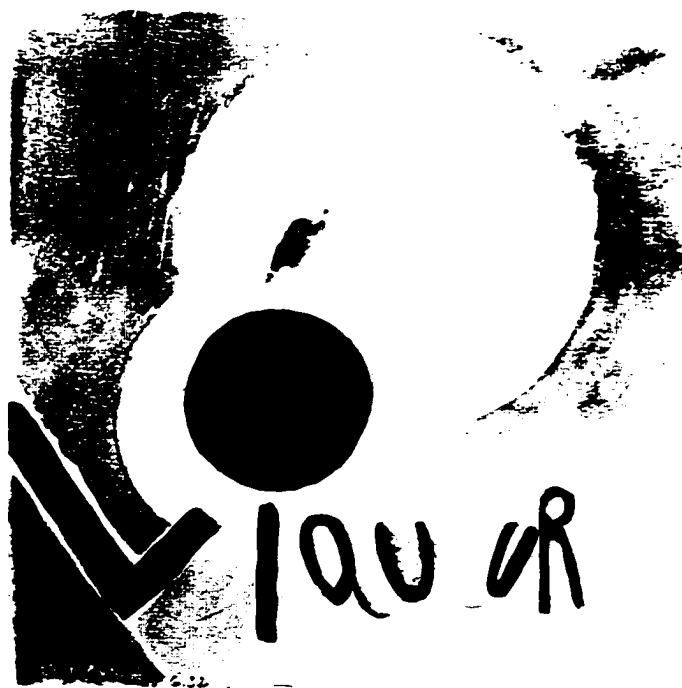


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*Gene Kellum*

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*Gene Kellum*

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