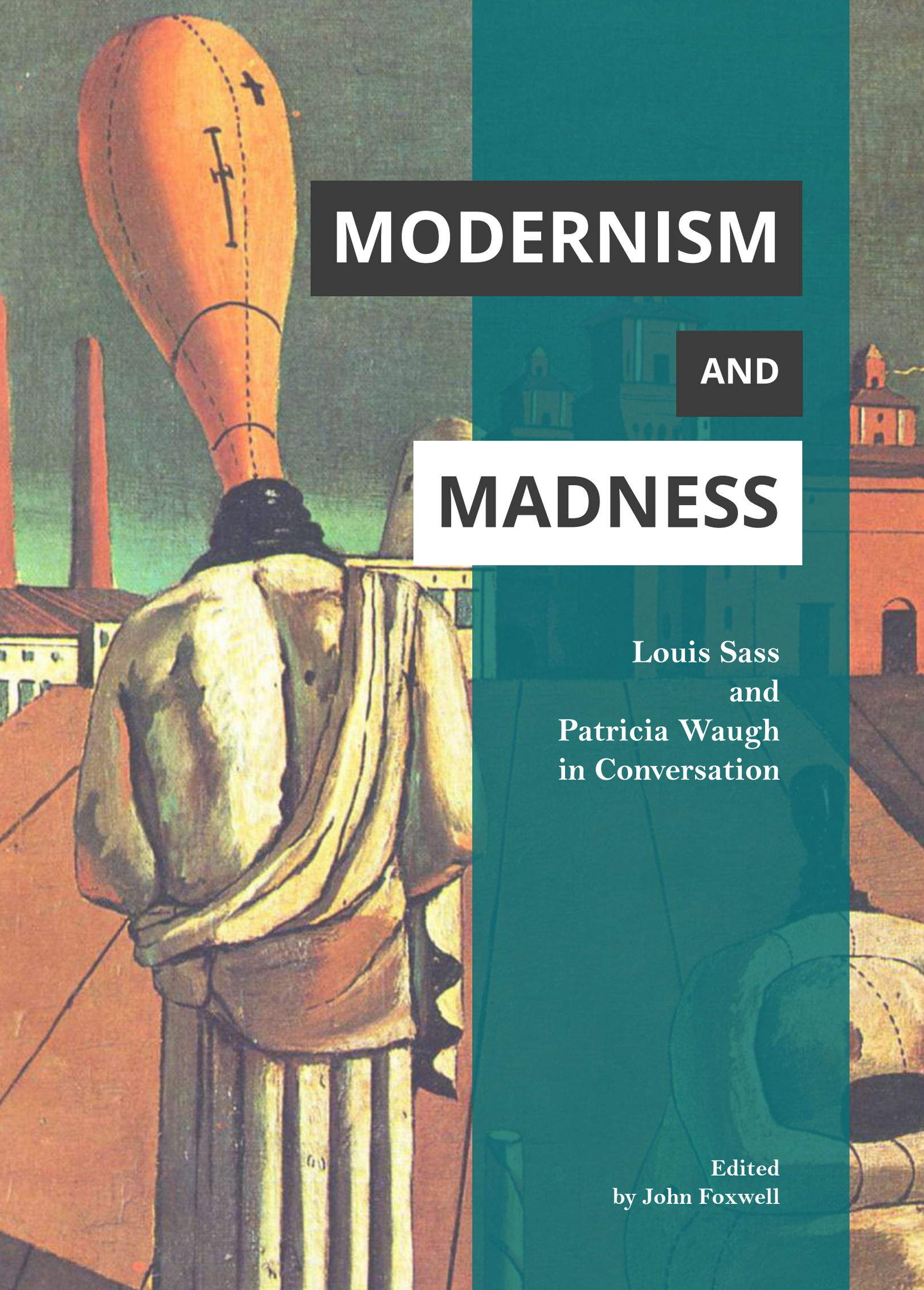

MODERNISM AND MADNESS

Louis Sass
and
Patricia Waugh
in Conversation

Edited
by John Foxwell

"Modernism and Madness: Louis Sass and Patricia Waugh in Conversation"

First published by Hearing the Voice
December 2018

Hearing the Voice
Durham University, UK

Copyright © Hearing the Voice 2018
All rights reserved

Editors: Louis Sass, Patricia Waugh and John Foxwell

www.hearingthevoice.org

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit the website or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Cover image: *The Disquieting Muses* by Giorgio de Chirico

An Introduction

Louis Sass is Professor of Clinical Psychology at Rutgers University; Patricia Waugh is a Professor in the Department of English Studies at Durham University. What follows is the edited transcript of their public conversation at the "Twenty-Five Years of Madness and Modernism" symposium, held on 11 May 2018 at Durham University. This symposium, organised by Angela Woods, celebrated both the twenty-fifth anniversary and the new edition of Sass' landmark study Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought*. The conversation was transcribed by Jo Porter and edited by John Foxwell, Louis Sass and Patricia Waugh. The event was supported by Hearing the Voice and the Institute for Medical Humanities, both funded by the Wellcome Trust.*

About the Authors

Louis Sass *is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers University (New Jersey, U.S.A.), where he is also associated with the Program in Comparative Literature and the Center for Cognitive Science. In addition to* Madness and Modernism*, he is the author of* The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind*, and of many articles on schizophrenia, phenomenological psychopathology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, modernism/postmodernism, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. Sass is a past president of the division of Psychology and the Arts and also of the division of Philosophy and Psychology of the American Psychological Association. In 2010 he received the Joseph B. Gittler Award from the American Psychological Foundation for "the most scholarly contribution to the philosophical foundations of psychological knowledge." The revised edition of* Madness and Modernism *(Oxford University Press) received the BMA: British Medical Association First Prize for the best book in psychiatry in 2018.*

Patricia Waugh *is a literary critic and Professor of English Literature at Durham University (UK), where she is also a co-Investigator on the Hearing the Voice project. She is a leading specialist in modernist and postmodernist literature, postmodernist theory and feminist theory, intellectual history, and postwar fiction and its political contexts. Waugh is notable as one of the first critics to work on metafiction and, in particular, for her influential 1984 study,* Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. She was a member of the Northern Arts Literature Panel (now North-East Arts), is a founding fellow of the English Association, and contributed to the Chief Scientific Adviser's Report to the Govenment on Science in 2015 arguing the case for the importance of the humanities to scientific development. In 2016 she was made a Fellow of the British Academy.*

METAFICTION AND HYPERREFLEXIVITY

Patricia Waugh – So I want to start with a quotation from *Madness and Modernism*. You describe the aim of the book as 'offering a complete account of schizophrenics' subjective life, modes of existence and expression through developing a comparative phenomenology'. So I thought we might start off by talking a little bit about the genesis of the book and about how, twenty-five years ago, before interdisciplinarity had become institutionalised, you began this practice of comparative phenomenology and how that really emerged out of your incredible range of reading and engagement with philosophy and the arts, but also out of your own clinical practice. And I think also the point that you make in the book is that you interpret phenomenology not simply as a descriptive term, but as constituting a kind of pathogenic model, and also as a way of bringing all these different disciplines together. So I thought maybe we could begin with you talking a little bit about some of the challenges and the greatest rewards of developing this comparative phenomenology and how you understand that term, and the kind of methodology that underpins the book.

Louis Sass – Right, OK. There are a lot of different questions there, and I guess one of them asks me to wax a little bit autobiographical… *Madness and Modernism* came out twenty-five years ago, but it was really thirty-five years ago that I started working on it seriously, and even before that I was thinking about some of the themes.

So where did the idea come from? What was the book's genesis? I was an English major as an undergraduate, and as I like to say, I never got over it. My heart really is in the humanities and philosophy, and especially literary studies – that's the perspective that comes most naturally to me, and that I suppose I respect the most, at least in the study of things human. So, in that sense, one might wonder: why did I go into the field of psychology in the first place? And the simple answer to that is that I didn't really know what I was doing when I was twenty years old, thinking about graduate school. I had taken a couple of psychology courses, and I'd stumbled somehow into a philosophy course on Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, where I was particularly impressed by Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Somehow I thought that psychologists would all be interested in Merleau-Ponty – how could they not be? – he was so fascinating! But I discovered when I got to Berkeley (where I did my doctorate in psychology) that hardly anyone in the department seemed to have heard of him. That was the beginning of my rocky road as a student of psychology and later clinical psychology, from which I dropped out several times, almost leaving the field.

So, the idea of looking at something like psychopathology from a literary, humanistic, philosophical point of view came very naturally to me, because that's the way I thought about things beforehand. As for the interest in schizophrenia in particular: that was, in the late sixties, one of the really hot topics. I mean, there was sex, drugs, rock and roll, and madness – at least in terms of the things that a lot of people were very interested in. So it was just very natural to be interested in that topic. I was also influenced by a book that was widely read in those days: *The Divided Self*, the one great work by R. D. Laing, in my opinion.

PW – Which also influenced a lot of writers, actually…

LS – And so I read that and I guess, perhaps having a few schizoid characteristics myself – at least in the broad sense of those terms (as defined by Guntrip and Fairbairn, who had influenced Laing) – I found it easy to identify with a lot of things that Laing was describing and just found it all very revelatory. I also had some experience working in a mental hospital with people with schizophrenia, and the things that I was hearing and reading about how I was supposed to understand these patients never made much sense to me – not with regard to the patients I encountered in the hospital, and especially not regarding a close friend whom I knew from high school and who'd had a schizophrenic break during the college years; well… just the idea that he was somehow either demented or quasi-demented or… or regressed to some kind of infantile or child-like state – all that was just so utterly contrary to everything that I experienced with him, so…

PW – So that's interesting; that experiential aspect to it was important…

LS – …those things came together. And then I got the idea, well wow, a lot of these things I had been studying in literature, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and other avant-garde 20th century writers, all these seemed to me to offer very close parallels to schizophrenia. Actually, that idea is in a way already present in Laing's *Divided Self*, where he draws a contrast between the characters in Shakespeare and the romantics versus the characters in Kafka, pointing out that the characters in Kafka suffer from a kind of ontological insecurity that is similar to what you find in schizophrenia.

PW –So he's making that contrast with romanticism as well…

LS – With romanticism, yes, and also with Shakespeare. But he doesn't develop it at all; it's just a passing comment in his book

In any case, a lot of these things came together for me and led me to think of the idea of writing on madness and modernism.

PW – I think I came to your work through writing a book of my own: my first book, which came out of my PhD and was published in 1984.

LS – Is that *Metafiction*?

PW – That's *Metafiction*, which is sub-titled *The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. I was really interested in this issue of formal self-reflexivity in art and literature. And in fact I began that book by lifting a quotation from the American postmodernist, John Barth, who had ended one of his fictional works with the words: 'Oh God comma I abhor self-consciousness'. And I started to feel a bit like that myself, when I got to the end of my own book and had been immersed for so long in self-reflexivity! Of course, what Barth's sentence is doing, its point, is what became familiar in the postmodern jargon as a 'performative contradiction'; but it's also a paradox of self-reference in that he spells 'comma' rather than using a comma. So it foregrounds language, even as he's denying it: it's foregrounding, autonomising language, in that way that you talk about. But I think when I came to your book, having thought about this in a formal sense in relation to literature and paradoxes of self-reference in philosophy – those of Russell and the analytic tradition – to me it was your lynchpin concept of hyperreflexivity that better performed this job, with regard to the literary as well as the experiential. And it seemed to me, when afterwards I became interested in phenomenology, it answered to what Jaspers saw as his inability to find the central factor in schizophrenia, despite all this work he'd done on *Wahnstimmung* and perceptual change and shifts in experience as he tried to describe schizophrenia. So, this important and central concept of hyperreflexivity: how did that emerge as a concept as you tried to bring these different discourses together?

Obviously it's a term that, since the first publication of the book, has been interpreted in different ways.

LS – Right.

PW – And I think often misinterpreted as well.

LS – Right.

PW – So if you could say a little bit about the centrality of that term, its genesis and then its legacy…

LS – Well maybe I should start with the last thing you said, which is the misunderstanding of the term, and then go back to where it came from. Some people have assumed that the term 'hyperreflexivity' refers only to a reflective, introspective, intellectual, and largely *volitional* kind of self-consciousness. But I meant the term to be broader in scope. Yes, it would include what might be called *reflective* hyperreflexivity, but it would also include more automatic or 'operative' kinds of hyperreflexivity. So, instead of 'operative *intentionality*', which is a phrase from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, we can speak of operative *hyperreflexivity*. That would be the kind of hyperreflexivity that, so to speak, just *happens* to you. It is primarily experienced in a passive and automatic manner, as a popping out, you might say, of sensations that you would not normally notice in a focal way – like the sensations in your shoulder, say, as you move your arm, which then emerge into focal awareness, for who knows what reason, maybe having to do with some neurobiological abnormalities often. But anyway, they begin to pop out into consciousness and to call attention to themselves. And that can lead to a kind of defensive hyperreflexivity of a more reflective type. It can lead to it almost immediately, as a matter of fact, and probably often does. But it can also lead to it in a more long-term sense, later in life, perhaps especially in the stage of what Piaget called 'formal operations', which is defined by a capacity to think about thinking – since it's then that other, more intellectual forms of hyperreflexivity come into play. This isn't the whole story, but my view is that schizophrenia does involve a combination of these two different kinds of events occurring. Of course, this is an over-simplification, almost cartoonish in fact. Probably there is no very sharp line between these two forms of hyperreflexivity. Nevertheless, it's a useful distinction.

But some people have understood 'hyperreflexivity' to mean only the reflective kind – as if I were saying that, somehow, schizophrenia was just an intellectual detachment and withdrawal defence, and nothing more than that. And that was really a misunderstanding of the term. By the way, most people here, I guess, are native English speakers, but one thing I've learned in my travels (especially living and teaching in Spanish- and French-speaking countries), is that it's even harder to make this distinction clear in Romance languages. In fact, in various languages you don't have the distinction that you have in English between reflective with 'ct', and reflexive with an 'x'. Even in English, these words are used in many different ways. Because, after all, the term reflexive could refer to the very automatic event that happens when the neurologist bumps your knee to check your reflexes, or, at the other extreme, it could be the reflexivity inherent in Immanuel Kant's recognition of the mind's constituting role in experience.

So we do have a potential problem here. It's a problem that is very common in phenomenology because language did not develop, alas, in order to let us be phenomenologists. We bend language to phenomenological purposes, but it developed for other reasons entirely. So, in French and Spanish for example, which I'm most familiar with, it's really hard for people to come up with the distinction between what I am calling operative versus reflective forms of hyperreflexivity. In the preface to the revised edition of *Madness and Modernism*, by the way, I have a note where I give a suggested vocabulary in French, Spanish, Italian, and German, and most of those suggestions involve locutions that are possible but not standard in those languages.

In any case, hyperreflexivity does involve, at the most basic or foundational level, this operative hyperreflexivity, which may well have genetic and neurobiological sources – as I have argued elsewhere (in our 2018 article in *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, "Varieties of self disorder").

So that's the clarification of the concept.

PW –Yes, because I think, for me, thinking about metafiction as a kind of dominant of postmodernism for example, it seemed that the kind of reflexivity that's involved in all writing of imaginative fictions engages in what I called 'the creative/descriptive paradox'. You're creating a world that you're appearing to describe through the act of describing it. So you're effectively living in a double-bookkeeping condition.

LS – Right.

PW – And mostly what happens in modernism, I think, is that language is foregrounded, so those paradoxes of self-reference gradually come to the fore. And by the time we get to something like metafiction and postmodernism, it has almost become operant. So metafictional writers are constantly laying bare the device, even more perhaps than modernism…

LS – Right, I would say that reflective hyperreflexivity has been, paradoxically enough, almost automatised… But still, it would be more like the reflective kind of hyperreflexivity in metafiction because it starts out with a kind of intellectual and partially volitional awareness. But that, like anything else, can become habitual.

PW – Yes, I think so. But recently, working on Virginia Woolf, I also noticed one of the interesting things is that, in her diary, she explicitly describes the immersive quality of writing and building a fictional world in double-bookkeeping terms: how she surfaces disoriented from the slow building and emergence of a fictional world that comes out of this immersion in the 'queer region', as she calls it, that is creative writing and imagining. And when she's surfacing from this 'queer place', the world outside recedes and even seems to resist what Lily Briscoe calls 'the razor edge of balance' that keeps the perceptual world and the worlds of imagination and memory in productive tension with each other. Her fiction is also full of characters in states of absorption and dissociation who are shocked back into the perceptual world by interruptions… gunshots, bangs, backfiring cars, and so on. Woolf knew that writing, like madness, was for her both 'soothing' (as in lulling or trance-like), and precarious, disturbing any normally operant sense of the perceptual world as ontologically dominant. I mean that the fictional world, often driven by memory, has become so powerful that inner sensing has overwhelmed her sense of pre-reflective embodiment in time and space. And I think you also find this idea in novels like Beckett's *Watt*, for example, where the frame shifts and you don't know whether the protagonist is intentionally involved in an act of recollection, whether he's perceiving something in the real storyworld, or whether it's in his imagination. And Woolf describes that process very, very powerfully and in detail across her fictional and non-fictional writing. So I think there's a kind of basis in the experience of writing and creating imaginary worlds that comes close to

this experience, the double-bookkeeping experience, that is powerfully reflected in modernism and then formally reflected in the operationalisation of the hyperreflective in metafiction.

LS – Right.

PW – But I'm glad you pulled out that distinction, because I think it's a really important one, isn't it, in terms of understanding your concept?

LS – Maybe it's more important in the psychiatric context than in the cultural literary one. That's why, even though I do indeed make this distinction in *Madness and Modernism*, I wasn't perhaps as clear or as emphatic about it as I should have been – at least in the first edition. In the revised edition, especially in the new preface, I do try to make this clearer. The distinction is important in the psychiatric context, for instance, if you're trying to develop a pathogenetic model capable of generating plausible scientific hypotheses about how schizophrenia might develop. Because they're quite different really: something that sort of happens to the person, and something that's more of a reaction, one of the sequelae, in medical terminology, of a more originary phenomenon. If you want to think about what the neurobiological correlates would be, for instance, then you do need this distinction, it's very important.

In the first edition of *Madness and Modernism*, I wasn't yet so concerned with this issue. What I really wanted to show there was that, contrary to what people usually say about schizophrenia – that it's a demented, regressive or Dionysian condition – it actually involves these self-conscious or hyperreflexive processes and experiences. Whether the processes were operative or reflective, whether primary or secondary, wasn't the main thing I was concerned with in *Madness and Modernism*. It did become very important afterwards, because a lot of what I've done in the last couple of decades has involved pathogenetic modelling and so on.

You also asked where the idea of hyperreflexivity came from – and I think for me, some of the things I was reading, some of the things that you were writing about… You know, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire*…

PW – Oh that's very…

LS – …which is a very reflexive work.

PW – Yes, it certainly is.

LS – And I think that for most of us who are intellectually oriented (perhaps I can speak collectively for many of the people in this room), the fascination of the reflexive is almost irresistible. Maybe not to the same extent in the natural sciences… But if you're studying the human, and if you're an intellectual in the twentieth or twenty-first century, how can you not be interested in the meta? After all, it gives you the feeling: 'Now I'm understanding, really understanding, what was only taken-for-granted before' – and of course that always feels like you're getting to something that's more profound. But it can also be dangerously seductive, can lead you down unfortunate pathways. For me, a good example of that would be a fair bit of the writing of Jacques Derrida – who, brilliant as he can be on certain issues, is just so irritatingly reflexive, endlessly glorying in the same meta-moves.

PW – Yes, I mean Fredric Jameson calls it 'the pathology of auto-referentiality'. But actually the mention of Derrida takes me on to what I wanted to ask you about next.

I think when your book came out it was an interesting moment in literary and cultural studies, and the humanities in general. It was the year of the infamous 'Sokal Hoax'… I don't know if you know about the Sokal Hoax…?

LS – Well, they got an article accepted in *Textual Studies* or something…? Was it *Social Text*? Yes, I remember that.

PW – *Social Text*. It was a hoax article that was taken seriously, and it was basically a parody of postmodern theorising. But it was also at the end of the high point of so-called 'Theory' and the love affair with Derrida. And after that hoax event and the responses to it, cultural intellectuals started questioning, 'Is it the end of Theory? Where do we go next, etc.?' Well of course one of the directions we've gone, in literary studies, has been back to phenomenology, though recast somewhat via post-classical narratology and the latest wave of cognitive science. I mean, a long time after you wrote your book, literary studies – somewhat belatedly – rediscovered phenomenology as part of the affective turn, picking up 4E Cognition, emotion, embodiment, embeddedness, enactivism, the body, the extended mind. It's a new paradigm of which Ian Hacking has been somewhat dismissive: he refers to it as a mode of inverted Cartesianism. So according to him, we've gone from being all mind to being all body, and somehow we still have yet to join them up satisfactorily in our thinking about mind-body. The dominant paradigm in literary studies at the moment encompasses this affective, experiential turn even as it extends to cultural ecologies, postcolonialisms, posthumanisms and the like. So phenomenology has made a powerful return in the shape of these various Neo-phenomenologies. And also even in terms of postmodernism… David Foster-Wallace famously renounced postmodernism in the 1990s, saying how we've now had too much irony, we've had too much hyperreflexivity, and this provided the cue for what's now referred to as the 'new sincerity'. We've now got the Memoir Novel, and we're back to confessional culture (albeit of a new kind), confessional art, life writing, the revival of the tacit and the idea of scepticism as corrosive to belief, intimacy, faith. For example, in *New Literary History*, one of the leading journals in the field of literary and cultural studies, there's been an intellectual debate going on around the concept of post-critique: that instead of being locked into postmodern linguistic scepticism and anti-foundationalism, we have to recover art as wonder, immersion, feeling, embodiment. So we're in this different moment, I think, from the moment when the first edition of your book appeared, that we might recognise as the post-postmodern.

But what I'm interested in is how most of those theorists who we tend to associate with the high Theory, the textualism, of the eighties and nineties – Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, many others – actually came out of phenomenology, and either disavowed or turned against what they saw as its limits and blindnesses, though I think sometimes they have misrepresented it. So Derrida, for instance, talks about the metaphysics of presence, launches an assault on voice, and substitutes writing for voice by assuming that voice is the source of our illusory sense of full and unified presence to ourselves. Whereas in fact, you know, on the 'Hearing the Voice' project, what we've been looking at is how inner speech – first discussed by pragmatists such as James, Dewey, Peirce, and Mead, and psychologists such as Vygotsky – is mostly dialogic and plural, entangled with the voices of others and what Mead calls the 'generalised Other', and is never straightforwardly private or a source of secure self-presence.

So I suppose what I'm asking is – because you look at many of those thinkers in *Madness and Modernism* – why do you think there was that desire to disavow phenomenology at

that point? Or to suggest there was this new revolutionary moment, sometimes called 'the linguistic turn' or 'the textualist turn'? We're now recovering phenomenology, so I think in literary studies this will be the moment when we really catch up with and recognise the force of the insights of your book and what it's saying, because we're now at last – somewhat paradoxically – caught up with what you were doing!

LS – Oh, well that would be wonderful.

PW – Even though I've been teaching it for twenty-five years…

LS – I would be delighted if that were to happen. I would love to have more of a presence in literary and cultural studies.

First of all, I agree with a lot of things you've just said. In fact, I've recently written a brief article on Foucault and Lacan, and a longer one on Lacan, arguing that if you really understand these writers, contrary to what they themselves said, the phenomenological tradition is absolutely crucial in their work. If you read the various histories of recent French thought, they all talk about the 'grande coupure': the great cut or gap that supposedly occurred between the period of existential phenomenology and the advent of structuralism (with structuralism almost immediately turning into post-structuralism). Often they say that Foucault's book *Les mots et les choses* (translated as *The Order of Thing*s) was the crucial text marking this transition. But if you read *Les mots et les choses*, it turns out to be very Heideggerian…

PW – It is, very much so.

LS – It's so obviously Heideggerian. The 'B' word, 'Being', you know, is all over the place throughout the book; it's particularly obvious in the preface, where Foucault signals that he is doing what Heidegger said one should do, which is to understand the different modes of Being (which might as well be written with a capital 'B'), that are experienced in different periods of history. For instance, he writes that he wants to study 'the pure experience of order and of its modes of being'. So the idea that that's non-phenomenological… I mean, last I heard Heidegger was part of the phenomenological tradition!

And then consider Lacan as well – what he's talking about regarding the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Well, these can best be understood as something like Heideggerian modes of Being. The great contribution of Lacan, in my opinion – and in this he goes well beyond Heidegger – is that he shows how a single individual can actually experience three different modes of Being, and how the modes interact in all sorts of ways. The idea that this was a rejection of phenomenology…! Was it just Parisian politics? Was it all a product of the anxiety of influence in Paris at the time?

PW – Well yes, it could be…

LS – And then for the Parisians, bless their souls – because I'm a great Francophile, but I'm also sometimes critical of them, as they are of each other, of course – the trendiness in French intellectual thought can be pretty incredible. The Americans of the time were so intimidated by the brilliance, I think, of the French – and they were indeed brilliant – that nobody dared to question these proclamations, emanating from Lacan and Foucault and Derrida, that phenomenology was dead, phenomenology was naïve, and all that…

PW – And I think it's related to the so-called linguistic turn that was happening in a number of intellectual traditions. I mean the kind of emergent social constructionism of the sixties, foregrounding mediation and the materiality of the text and of language.

LS – But if you look at Foucault and Lacan, that's not a sufficient explanation, I think… because, for example, how much of Foucault is really about language? Not that much, actually.

PW – No, not the concept of discourse even.

LS – And Lacan… I mean, there's the Symbolic, yes.

PW – Yes.

LS – And people who were obsessed with the linguistic turn put great emphasis on that; but Lacan also postulates the Real and the Imaginary, the whole of point of which is that they're not linguistic – and they're just as central, just as important to take into account. So it may be that, on some vague grounds, people accepted that the 'discovery' of language meant that you had to reject phenomenology, but I don't think it was ever a very cogent thought on their part. Also, I have always thought, 'How could you not be interested in phenomenology? Are you seriously telling me you're willing to reject the whole project of trying to imagine what human experience is like – in its essence and in its varieties?' OK, maybe you don't like Husserl or maybe you don't like Sartre, but the general project of understanding and trying to describe the nature of human subjective life, difficult as it is – that's phenomenology in the broadest sense. The very idea that this should be rejected, or could even be rejected, even if one wanted to – that has always seemed implausible to me.

PW – Yes.

LS – So I think I'm quite happy to have been interested in a lot of fields, but also marginal to them. I do think there's a great advantage to not being at the centre. Staying on the margins of things, whether that would be literary studies, clinical psychology, or philosophy: it helps you from taking too seriously all that you're supposed to think.

CREATIVITY, SURREALISM, AND MODERNISM

PW – Another aspect of that, I think, is that at the moment of the emergence of the paradigm of Theory in literary studies there also continued an ongoing love affair with psychoanalysis. In a sense literary studies became the home of psychoanalysis.

LS – Right, absolutely.

PW – Certainly it was unceremoniously booted out of psychology! But I think that again, in some ways – certainly reading Freud, reading Melanie Klein – the way in which she describes the depressive position and the paranoid schizoid position – you very often encounter models of regression.

LS – Yes.

PW – So they perpetuate the kind of Dionysian model. And I think partly for me, I've always seen it as the influence of Nietzsche on Freud, and that concept of the Dionysian, and Freud's disinclination to really engage with psychosis. And then you had that same influence on various prominent publications that came out in the mid-century. There was a very influential essay by Edmund Wilson in 1949 called *The Wound and The Bow*, which perpetuated this notion of the heroic nature of the artist who, wounded, writes out of the unconscious, driven by desire, with the gift of the bow as compensation for the wound.

Of course, there's a very different tradition of psychology, which again is rooted more in phenomenology – I mean Minkowski, Jaspers, etc… But I think the dominant resistance to biological psychiatry, if you like, became psychoanalysis rather than phenomenological psychology, which seemed to disappear at this time…

LS – It's coming back, it's coming back!

PW – …in the Anglo-American tradition, because a lot of the texts hadn't (and still haven't) been translated. A lot of them are in German; important writings by key figures such as Binswanger, for example.

So one question was why, why did that happen? I don't know enough about the history of psychiatry to know that.

I think, secondly, the Dionysian model of madness, which largely draws on a kind of primitivist understanding, and a particular reading of Freud and Klein and even some later object relations theories, has continued to be incredibly popular. And I wonder what the cultural pay-off for that is? Is it that we want to think of artists this way, because then, like the fool in Shakespeare, they can both be listened to because they give us wisdom, but can also be dismissed and marginalised? Why should that model be so seductive, certainly in popular culture? I mean, even undergraduates still produce essays on psychoanalysis, reproducing that kind of model.

LS – Right, right.

PW – So I'm interested in how you see the perpetuation of that model? Or maybe it's disappearing finally?

LS – Well, as you know, I don't agree with that model of creativity or that model of schizophrenia. Let me say something about the regression theory as a model of creativity…

PW – Freud's essay on creative writers, for example.

LS – It may be that the classic text for people within psychoanalysis is Ernst Kris, with his notion of 'regression in the service of the ego'. That's the definition of creativity offered by Kris, who was an important psychoanalytic writer of the ego-psychology school. My own view is that the whole idea that there is this thing, 'Creativity', that's the first big mistake – to assume there must be something that all different forms of creativity share at the psychological level. As if at some important level of analysis – other than being interesting – Lord Byron and Ludwig Wittgenstein must have something deeply in common.

Actually, once you think about it, it seems much more likely that there are forms of creativity that are utterly different from each other, calling on quite different psychological orientations and capacities. It's not that I'm completely against the idea that something like regression in the service of the ego plays an important role in certain forms of creativity – Wordsworth and some of the romantics, for example…

PW – Emotion recollected in tranquillity?

LS – Well yes, but also the glorification of childhood…

PW – And the egotistical sublime…

LS – …in the romantic tradition. And I think that there's some truth to that: there are indeed ways in which recovering not just our childhood memories but something of our childhood modalities of experience, before they're conventionalised and all of that, is very important for some kinds of creativity.

PW – A kind of loosening of ego boundaries…

LS – You could call it that if you want, yes.

So it's not that that's wrong, it's just that to extend that to all forms of creativity, including modernism, where I think actually… Well, even here too much generalizing is surely a mistake, but roughly speaking, the creativity typical of modernism is far more bound up with forms of alienation and what I have called hyperreflexivity.

PW – Yes, I think that's really important, because if you take something like Kay Jamison's book *Touched with Fire*, that Freudian model is again perpetuated by associating creativity with the manic-depressive…

LS – That's completely the romantic view, yes… and Jamison's main chapter was on Lord Byron, by the way…

PW – It's a completely romantic view. So I think yours is an important counterbalance to that.

LS – It's interesting that Kay Jamison also, in addition to giving a romanticist view of creativity, is something of a champion of manic depression, from which she herself suffers. And she's very dismissive of the idea that the schizophrenia spectrum could have anything to do with creativity.

But if you look at modernism, and many forms of what's called postmodernism, it's much more the schizoid, schizotypal modes of consciousness or styles of experience that are associated with creativity. I mean, think of Ludwig Wittgenstein, probably the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century (certainly one of the two or three): almost his entire creativity is based on a capacity to feel alien from that which other people, mainly other philosophers, take for granted. So, as he himself said, he could listen to the conversation of philosophers as if he were listening to Martians, and could see how absurd it could sound, at least when viewed from a certain distant standpoint.

PW – And he's right, he's so right!

LS – I'm a Wittgensteinian myself, so I tend to agree with that! But whether or not you agree, whatever it was Wittgenstein was doing, it was certainly not based on anything like regression in the service of the ego. It was certainly not based on getting back in touch with childhood consciousness. I think you could say the same of Magritte or de Chirico, obviously of Duchamp, also of Eliot's *Wasteland* or the novels of Robbe-Grillet.

PW – Absolutely.

LS – Wittgenstein's philosophical talent and vision were based on an ability to contemplate from afar, to stare at something that everyone else just inhabited, and thereby find it weird and worthy of quite a different kind of analysis. Surrealism is quite similar – even though, admittedly, a few of the surrealists would sometimes associate what they were doing with childhood. But that, I think, was because some of the surrealists were sometimes also adopting this post-romantic ideology of creativity, which is still the dominant one in Western culture, and which actually misled them – some of them anyway – about the nature of their own creative process.

PW – I think there are at least two kinds of surrealism as well, aren't there? There's a dark surrealism and there's a regression-to-childhood or 'primitive states' kind of surrealism.

LS – Who would be examples of the regression-to-childhood kind of surrealism? To me, it's all pretty alienated… 'To live in the world as if in a vast museum of strangeness', as Giorgio de Chirico puts it.

PW –So de Chirico's definitely dark surrealism. No, I'm thinking of maybe something like their exploration of the everyday and the idea of the objets trouvés, you know, that you can wander around the streets and suddenly alight on this object that's kind of almost been waiting for you, and seeing it in some kind of particular light…

LS – Yeah, but to me that's an example of a much more alienated orientation, like this thing [picks up pen] normally I would just not pay attention to, except insofar as I could write with it… but now: wow, I mean it's this oblong shape and all of that…

PW – So it's calling you?

LS – …it's based on the loss of the normal affordances, and that's based on alienation from your normal projects or concerns, and from the common-sense meanings those projects usually invoke. For me, surrealism and Wittgenstein have a great deal in common. There are a lot of surrealist passages in Wittgenstein, by the way, if you read him that way. There's one passage in the *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein offers a thought experiment about what it would be like if we perceived something like pain patches on leaves, akin somehow to patches of colour. Under these conditions, he wrote, we would 'speak of pain patches on the leaf of a particular plant just as at present we speak of red patches'. Those passages have very little in common with Wordsworth or Lord Byron.

PW – Yes, I definitely agree with you. Can we come on now perhaps to thinking about different modernisms? There's a term in circulation in literary studies at the moment, which is 'Ordinary Modernism'. But I want to propose a modernism that we might think of as 'Semi-Ordinary Modernism'. I mean, the modernism you're looking at in your book is a modernism of irony, autonomisation of language, dehumanisation. You talk about Ortega y Gasset, unworlding, derealisation… this kind of ironical flouting, adversarial quality that seems almost antic, parades paradoxes of self-reference, loves mise en abymes, etc., which are some of the formal aspects of the kind of modernism that you're looking at in Kafka, Mallarmé, Jarry, Artaud, and others. But if we think about this notion of there being an Ordinary Modernism – for instance, Virginia Woolf famously says in an essay in 1925 that she sets out to examine 'an ordinary mind on an ordinary day', and Bloom in *Ulysses* comically muses 'Never know whose thoughts you're chewing' – there's an interest in the more integrative processes that are involved in the subject's embedding and embodiment in the world, as well as an interest in the experience of their loss. It's what would now be seen as a kind of enactivist version of mind. But what strikes me is that even though there is that sense of an ordinary mind on an ordinary day, in most modernist texts it's still pervaded by anxiety, and I think particularly social anxiety. So a lot of modernist writing seems preoccupied with exile, outsiderdom, refugee status, marginality, the ordinary isolation that comes from not feeling part of the group. When I was trying to think of examples of this, I thought of how many modernist novels are about parties where someone's excluded. It's an experience we've probably all had, you know – you're feeling terrible and you don't really want to be at this party, you don't know anyone – so you drink too much or disappear! But examples might also include Prufrock, looking in on the upper-class women coming and going, talking of Michelangelo, and so painfully aware he's not really part of it; or Gabriel Conway in 'The Dead', accused of being a 'West Briton' by Miss Ivors and so touching the ice-cold pane of the window because he feels excluded from the conversations about Irish nationalism. Then there's the fantastic account in Katherine Mansfield's 'The Garden Party', about an upper middle-class girl who's told to take a basket of provisions from the party to a house of impoverished working-class employees on her family estate who are mourning a recent death – she arrives and she feels suddenly, horribly and completely inappropriate in this place of poverty and squalor. The whole shift in mood is the centre of the story but operates by juxtaposition and displacement, never spelled out or made explicit. And of course I also think of Proust, who's absolutely brilliant not only on social anxiety but also social embarrassment, who has all these characters who are trying and vying desperately to belong to what they see as desirable social groups. And often, as with Joyce's Leopold Bloom, they're Jewish.

So I was interested to discuss with you whether one might think of Ordinary or Semi-Ordinary Modernism as manifesting what the *DSM* would now call 'social anxiety' – especially if we consider the way in which social anxiety's been written about by phenomenologists like Matthew Ratcliffe, as disturbing the structures of anticipation, the sense of trust in the world. Should we see the kind of modernism you write about – which is linked to schizophrenia – as on a continuum with the modernism that is evidently dealing with social anxiety as another mode of self-consciousness as alienation? And if so, should we be thinking of conditions now being diagnosed as or around social anxiety as being on a continuum with conditions such as schizophrenia? I suppose, in aesthetic terms, I'm thinking particularly of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, which was published in 1907, where in a sense Ordinary Modernism is accessible through ordinary empathy – whereas the schizophrenic form of experience that you're talking about, along with the kind of modernism you look at, is very often only accessible through modes of abstraction. Could you say a bit about how you see the relation between those? I mean, do you think my notion of connecting ordinary modernism to social anxiety, and putting these on a continuum with schizophrenia and more extreme or abstract kinds of modernism, is completely wrong from your interdisciplinary perspective?

LS – No, I don't think so – and of course, I'd agree there are different kinds of modernism.

So, one issue concerns whether you're talking about works of modernism that are trying to evoke a more spontaneous lived world, like Virginia Woolf – or, by contrast, a lot of Beckett. You could say that the difference just lies in the kind of person they're talking about: Mrs Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse* is very different from, say, Beckett's character Murphy, and here the key difference for me would be that Murphy is already himself alienated and hyperreflexive, whereas Mrs Ramsay represents a more spontaneous, less hyperreflexive way of living. The brilliance of Virginia Woolf, a writer I particularly revere, is that she's able to describe a lived world without that lived world itself necessarily coming to seem alienated. That's a very high achievement of phenomenology, because there's always the danger that the phenomenologist, in taking as an object something that isn't normally an object, namely a lived world, will describe that object as if it were alienated, as if it were already the object of a kind of phenomenological gaze. What I'm referring here would be a variant of what William James called 'the psychologist's fallacy'. There's always that danger in phenomenology, and I think, at least in key texts like *To the Lighthouse* or *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf manages to avoid that and give the feeling of capturing something very close to the lived world of a person who's not fundamentally alienated – at least not in this sense, anyway.

PW – Well I think it's very fragile in Woolf. I mean, obviously in *Mrs Dalloway* there's a split between Clarissa and Septimus, a kind of ego/alter ego, which relates to what Woolf said about wanting to place 'sanity and insanity side by side' so that they appear as a continuum, different in degree rather than in kind. But even in *To The Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay, who's a version of Woolf's mother who died when she was 13, appears in the novel as a kind of ghost, haunting the text and knowing it, somehow knowing she has crossed over. I mean, in the act of composition, for Woolf, she's a figure of memory as well as imagination, a character who, from the start, is both living and already dead. So Woolf writes into that text – or rather, into the genesis of that text – a sense of looking back on the dead.

LS – Right, but insofar as she inhabits the consciousness of Mrs Ramsay, she doesn't inhabit a consciousness that she portrays as being itself fundamentally alienated.

PW – No, although it's an uneasy consciousness.

LS – Yes, very true. But obviously, when Beckett is describing Murphy, what he's intending to do is to describe a consciousness that is fundamentally alienated. So some of this has to do with what kind of character interests you.

But this moves to another part of your question: is this relevant to the understanding of schizophrenia? Recently we published an article in *Schizophrenia Bulletin* – Sass et al., 'Varieties of Self-Disorder in Schizophrenia: A Bio-Pheno-Social Model of Schizophrenia' – in which we discuss both 'primary factors' and 'secondary factors' that seem to contribute to the gestalt that is schizophrenia. The secondary factors largely involve things like response to trauma, which we and many people studying schizophrenia have become very aware of in the last couple of decades. I'm referring to forms of dissociation, especially depersonalisation and derealisation, which are phenomena that may have a lot in common with social anxiety.

PW – Yes.

LS – In fact, Luis Madeira, a Portuguese psychiatrist, did a study recently – I was involved with it as well – which looked at the degree of schizophrenia-like self-disorder in people with panic disorder, a condition that involves prominent dissociative defences of depersonalisation and derealisation, and so would have something in common with social anxiety. It turns out that, in panic disorder, you find a great many (though not all) of the features that are described in the EASE (the Examination of Anomalous Self Experiences), which is an interview format developed by Josef Parnas et al. that's basically an operationalisation of the notion of ipseity-disorder or self-disturbance in schizophrenia that Parnas and I developed in our 2003 article.

So I think it's important to recognise the ways in which aspects of the psychopathology of schizophrenia – if I can use that word without anybody getting upset by the supposedly negative sound of it – have a lot in common with much more normal reactions to things like social anxiety and trauma and cultural dislocation. I think that's absolutely relevant. Schizophrenia should be seen as a complex mixture of more primary factors – perhaps having to do with neurobiological disturbances pertaining to how different sense modalities intersect with one other – combined with more 'secondary' reactions to trauma and, perhaps, various forms of social anxiety. We should not be surprised to find some affinities with schizophrenia well outside the schizophrenia spectrum…

PW – Through the disassociation mechanism…

LS – Yes, because everything in the realm of psychopathology is fluid – the boundaries are always vague, and there are no sharp lines anywhere. Nevertheless, some relatively robust patterns do emerge and need to be noticed – and one of these is called 'schizophrenia'.

THE POLITICS OF MADNESS

PW – I've just got a couple of other areas that I was really keen to get your views on. One might be called the 'politics' of madness; and first off I wanted to ask a little bit about gender. I mean, one of the things that's noticeable in your book is that most of the writers and artists you look at are male, and of course schizophrenia is a diagnosis that's more often given to men than women. But I was thinking about the chapter where you talk about the modern 'doublet', you know, Foucault's term…

LS – The empirico-transcendental doublet, yes.

PW – …and thinking how a lot of characterisation of both female characters and women writers talking about their practices seems to accord with the empirico side of that, the sense of objectification, but not very often with the transcendental side. And I was thinking about the relationships between the work of someone like Woolf, say, and Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the objectification of women that she borrows from Sartre and from Hegel, the dualism of immanence and transcendence. So, de Beauvoir suggests that in a society of unequal power relations, where the male more easily occupies the transcendental position, that of the defining gaze, women are more often conceptualised and experienced as gazed upon and therefore objectified. And Woolf writes a lot about this kind of internalisation of an objectified gaze that locates women in the ontic, in immanence, outside of the transcendental. She's got this great passage actually in *A Room of One's Own*, where she says that women need to talk about men because, you know, men look in the mirror and see their faces, and what they don't see is the spot the size of a shilling at the back of their head… and we need the woman to gaze on the male's head to tell them exactly what that spot looks like!

But I'm just thinking how that was also a discourse reiterated by Du Bois on race, for example, who talks about it as 'double consciousness'. If you're in an unequal relation of power – which de Beauvoir says won't change till we have reciprocity – and your experience of the world is therefore much more likely to be one of being objectified, are you not then unlikely to experience what you see as this paradox of solipsism, where the person with schizophrenia will one minute experience themselves in an abject and objectified and passivized sense and the next as master of the gaze and creator of worlds?

LS – So what you're saying in a way is: could it be that the fact that women are subjected to an unfortunate power-driven objectification might make them less susceptible to at least this aspect of schizophrenia?

PW – Well yes, certainly I think the sense of occupying a consciousness that is bringing the world into existence, the kind of delusions of grandeur that Canetti uses to talk about Schreber… In my reading of modernism, I'm far less aware of women representing their experience in these terms.

LS – Well, it is interesting that studies now show that schizophrenia is more severe in males than in females, also that it's perhaps a bit more common, and begins earlier in life, which is a serious matter since it disrupts various aspects of normal development. Of course, there are women with schizophrenia as well.

PW – Yes, of course, and there are women artists and writers who write in the mode of modernism that you're looking at. But there are fewer of them it seems to me…?

LS – Well, the objectification of the empirico-transcendental doublet that Foucault was talking about is not the objectification of oneself from the point of view of another. It's not Simone de Beauvoir's 'Male Gaze' objectifying the woman. It's the experience of mind or subjectivity itself as becoming somehow object-like, because, in a Kantian sense, it has paradoxically taken itself as its own object – from within, so to speak. The Foucauldian empirico-transcendental doublet is a largely internal matter – such as when people with schizophrenia shift between feeling like they're God, the constituting centre of the universe, and that they're like a machine because they're aware of their own thought processes as if they were watching them from afar. And indeed they may, so to speak, stare at these processes to the point that they begin to seem object-like and lose their sense of being spontaneous or vital.

In fact, you could argue that one thing that happens with people who develop schizophrenia is that they lose a sense of existing from an external point of view. I was thinking about what John Russell, writing on the paintings of Francis Bacon, said about imagining what it would be like to experience yourself if you'd been locked in a room with no mirrors, all by yourself, for years. There would be no Other to objectify you, and ultimately not even the experience of an other, either in a benign or a dominating, power-driven sense. So you would lose the sense that Lacan speaks of in relation to the Imaginary and the mirror-stage, your sense of existing in public space, existing from an external point of view. At that point, your body might no longer feel that it had coherence, since it would consist only of floating images and sensations that have become the objects of your attention.

PW – Which I think you wrote about in the *Paradoxes of Delusion*…

LS – Yes, I do write about that… There you have this phenomenon where you can see how the objectification that is so often criticised in feminist discourse – rightly so, in that context – is also a crucial source of sanity, of the feeling that you do exist in a social world as an object with the potential to be seen. That source of grounding can get lost in schizophrenia, in the extremes of the solipsism of the empirico-transcendental doublet.

PW – Although women often write about it as being rendered invisible. That experience of being reduced to a kind of object in that way.

LS – Well, in another sense, yes.

P**W – Or even Sartre says, 'woman is a hole' somewhere, in *Being and Nothingness*.**

LS – I forget what he means when he says that…

PW – It's just unfortunate, if you're a woman and you read it… you don't want to be called a hole, do you? Obviously I've remembered that bit of the text better than you!

LS – Well the misogyny in Sartre is pretty extreme, there's no question about that – as in the famous passages where he writes about 'the Viscous', analyses the phenomenon of slime and viscosity. It also happens to be an incredibly brilliant analysis, not of femininity but of aspects of existence, that he unfortunately associates with that.

PW – Yes, maybe it's why de Beauvoir had to write *The Second Sex*!

LS – But I think it's good you made that last point, reminding us… because I didn't mean to be saying anything remotely to the effect that women should be happy that they're being objectified because they're saved from schizophrenia! That would be absurd. Because, of course, it's also true that if you feel that you're objectified to the point where you are reduced to your body, to your presence-to-others as a body, then you cannot develop the sense of having an ego that is the positive – albeit paradoxical and illusory – effect of the mirror stage, at least according to Lacan's theory.

PW – No, and it's not a lived body, it's not your body either.

LS – It's not your body, right, so something's being objectified that's got nothing to do with me. So it cannot help me that that body is being seen as an integral whole because the body in question, though it may be actually mine, feels like it has got little to do with me.

PW – It's what John Berger writes about in *Ways of Seeing*, that the internalisation of a sense of one's body as viewed from a different perspective is a disempowering kind of experience.

LS – OK, true enough. But Lacan reminds us that to some extent sanity depends on feeling that you are inside a body that also exists from another point of view.

PW – Yes, so you need both.

LS – Hopefully not a merely objectifying point of view, but a point of view that involves recognition.

PW – Well isn't that what reciprocity is, when de Beauvoir's talking about it: that you have a sense of being looked at, and you have a sense of inhabiting something that is looking at?

LS – And being able to look back, yes.

PW – I think we're agreed on that point!

LS – Yes, I think so; but it's good to go into the convolutions of the issue.

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM

PW – So there's no answer to this one, but it's an interesting question… I was thinking about *Hamlet*, thinking about the beginning of modernity – thinking about schizophrenia as related to the experience of modernity. So at least with regard to the notion of schizophrenia as a dominant in artistic modernism, the roots of much of this kind of art actually go back to the early modern period, to the seventeenth century. I mean, you have Hamlet famously proclaiming, 'O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams', which might almost be interpreted as a statement of double book-keeping. And *Hamlet* also includes, for the first time, the use of soliloquy as the externalisation of the processes of thinking; he's constantly reflecting, acutely self-conscious. He's accused of antic madness, – and there's the whole question of whether he's really mad – but either way, his experience is entirely dislocated. There's also the play within a play, a prime example of mise en abyme.

Around the same time, almost the same year, Cervantes publishes *Don Quixote*, a novel about a fictional knight who's entirely deluded, and who reads about himself in the book that he appears in! And this kind of infinite regress leading to ontological collapse is there in much of the art of this period – in Baroque painting, for instance, you have this kind of obsession with replicating the act of painting within the frame of the actual painting. So again there's a kind of infinite regress, an experience that produces a sense of ontological insecurity, of the collapse of secure foundations. And, of course, there's the beginning of what Heidegger calls 'The Age of the World Picture' with Cartesian philosophy.

So all of these things seem to be ingredients already there, if you like, back at the beginning of the seventeenth century, at the beginning of the modern period. And for writers like Schiller and Borges, Cervantes was their favourite author, since he seemed to be articulating something about the unique experience of living in the modern world. But despite its prominence in a lot of the visual art and literature of the period, it doesn't appear to emerge as a cultural dominant until the twentieth century. So I was thinking about the conditions that allow it to emerge as a cultural dominant. One could speculate in all kinds of ways: is it to do with secularisation, is it to do with the fact that there isn't a religious foundation to the idea of an ultimate frame to things, an ultimate ontological frame? Is it that we have lost that sense of the tacit, of comfortable embeddedness, that communitarians try to recover in our own time? Because to me, coming at this from a literary and aesthetic perspective, all those formal ingredients that you point out in artistic and literary modernism are actually already there in the seventeenth century. And in fact, Eliot used his famous phrase, 'dissociation of sensibility' in discussing the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, though actually it may have been a phrase he borrowed from Pierre Janet, who he probably encountered in Harvard in around 1911. Janet was there at that time, invited by William James, and he was talking and lecturing on and about dissociation. Eliot uses this idea not long afterwards as the defining quality of modernity – for him, it's this splitting of thought and feeling which has its roots, he argues, in the seventeenth century. Then on the basis of this historical argument, he produces a 'fall myth' of modernity: the idea that we've fallen from the wholeness of the tacit and the embodied and embedded into this kind of split and

fragmented condition. So the seventeenth century is crucial for a literary thinker like Eliot. Of course, so is the loss of community, so he reinvigorates the idea of tradition, and then, soon after his conversion in 1927, the importance of religion to culture and human flourishing.

I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts about that, really? Because you could read modernism as a reaction against romanticism, but it's more complex than that. And I think a lot of modernism's formal devices, seen as radically new, actually have a long history in art and literature. Before modernism, they're perhaps most apparent in the seventeenth century, which also sees the rise of sceptical philosophy, of Cartesian pre-emptive doubt, of modern rationalism. So I just wondered if you had any thoughts to add about that?

LS – I don't take any strong position on that. I deal with a lot of these questions in the epilogue to *Madness and Modernism*, where I lay out some of the ways in which one could explain the development of hyperreflexivity. You could have an internalist account – call it Hegelian – where thesis leads to antithesis and synthesis, and you get a proliferation of meta-levels. I think there's some truth to that, actually. If you look at the history of philosophy, ranging from the early modern philosophies and Descartes and then up to Kant and the German idealists that come after that, you will find a lot of Hegelian meta-moves that respond or reply to a prior move. How much of what occurs in philosophy is relevant to how people actually live their lives… that remains a question, of course. It may at least provide a set of metaphors for some developments that may have happened on a broader psychological level. Also, of course, there are all sorts of non-internalist accounts, having to do with changes at the level of economic structures and relationships and with the development of individualism and things of that nature. But I don't think anybody really can answer the question you pose.

PW – I don't think they can, but it's interesting…

LS – But one thing you could say, as I suggest in my book, is that many experts on modernism, even though they don't use the word 'hyperreflexivity', do see what began to develop in the very late 1800s as being dominated by something like alienation and hyperreflexivity.

Of course, with everything you can find some earlier traces, but not at the same level of intensity. Back at the time of Shakespeare you still have, even for Shakespeare himself, a basic, grounding belief in the religious universe. You haven't yet gone from the closed world to the infinite universe, as Alexandre Koyré puts it – you're still in the closed world. When you get to the Enlightenment, of course, there is much more questioning of religious belief, but there remains an absolute belief in the world of space, objects, and time, as a world existing independently of us. There is even an idolatry around that, an idolatry of objectivism, as Owen Barfield points out in his book *Saving the Appearances*. It's only after Kant that you get the idea that wow, even the stuff that seems to us most objective, the world of objects and space and causality, is actually the creation of our minds, a product of the automatic operating of our own categories of understanding and forms of intuition. At least within philosophy, that's a big change. Now reality itself is not out there in some absolute, physicalistic way, as it was for many in the Enlightenment; it's also not put there by God and imbued with spiritual meaning. It's what we create. And that, at least within the realm of ideas, represents a very major shift. So I would see a lot of what happens in literary and artistic modernism as registering, a bit belatedly, the impact of Kant.

PW – Yes, I think that's true.

LS – In fiction, for instance, it seems to have taken a hundred years after Kant for writers, at least on a broad scale, to really begin to conceive of themselves as creating worlds.

PW – Yes, I'm a great believer in non-linear models of emergence because I think the emergence of behaviours are over-determined. It seems to me that one thing that happens significantly in the twentieth century is the development and widespread use of technologies that disturb our relation to space and time. So a telephone, you know, brings something distant into a very intimate relation to us, and I think it's not surprising that so many delusions revolve around machines of this kind (Tausk with his famous 'influencing machine' was on to this). And David Harvey, in his book on postmodernity, talks about postmodernity as a compression of space and time by these technologies. I mean, now we have the internet and virtual worlds and gaming and they all disturb those relationships.

LS – Also you have modern physics – relativity and quantum mechanics – which basically in a way proves that Kant was right. What advanced twentieth-century physics proves is, after all, that the everyday world of space and time, the Newtonian world that we take for granted, is itself actually not ultimate reality – but only a reality that exists, in a certain sense, 'for us'. So in this way the Kantian message in philosophy is reinforced in the most prestigious of all the sciences. Together with that you have a massive production of works of art by great artists like Faulkner and Virginia Woolf and others, who are each of them aspiring to create a different universe, and in a way that is different from nineteenth-century novelists. Nineteenth-century novelists wanted to write about maybe a different topic, a different sort of social class, a different kind of psychology, but when you consider Hemingway, Woolf, or Faulkner, you're talking about people whose aspiration is to be more like a kind of God who creates a universe that almost has a whole different structure. All of that is part of this development.

About

Modernism and Madness: Louis Sass and Patricia Waugh in Conversation is an edited transcript of the public conversation that took place between Louis Sass and Patricia Waugh at the "Twenty-Five Years of Madness and Modernism" symposium, held on 11 May 2018 at Durham University. This symposium, organised by Angela Woods, celebrated both the twenty-fifth anniversary and the new edition of Sass' landmark study *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought*. The conversation was transcribed by Jo Porter and edited by John Foxwell, Louis Sass and Patricia Waugh. The event was supported by Hearing the Voice and the Institute for Medical Humanities, both funded by the Wellcome Trust.