

**VOGUE AND EPHEMERA:
THE LITTLE MAGAZINES OF THE 1890S**



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Dear Readers,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share this preliminary work on circulation and the ephemeral bibelots with you. What you have is a little bit from a number of different sections of this current work in progress, which is for now being called *The Art of Circulation*. I'm sorry for cobbling together what may feel like disparate parts, but I wanted to share with you both the theoretical scaffolding for this project and the bibelots themselves. I'll be grateful for your input.

Please note that the paper refers to an extensive visual archive. In order to make the file small enough for electronic distribution, I have not included images here, but I will bring a slideshow with me. If you can't wait, I've put up some slides at kodakgallery.com—information about how to see them there will be forthcoming (if not, email me). Looking forward to speaking with you,

Brad

1. Black Cats (Aesthetic Frisson)

In 1895, after running a series of covers over the previous months featuring women in various styles of butterfly hats, *Vogue* featured a cover of a woman wearing a rather startled-looking black cat on her head. It is, even today, something of a curious image, this one of a woman wearing her cat — its tale rigidly erect, its eyes like white saucers — out in public. *Vogue*, then beginning its third year of publication, ran the image over the title, in French, LE CHAT NOIR, a reference to the then famous Parisian cabaret. In Paris, the image's resonance would have been both aesthetic and gendered. The cabaret was home to the French symbolist poets and the sexual punning associated with an international array of post-impressionist artists including the likes of Toulouse-Lautrec, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Jules Cheret, Pierre Bonnard and, by association, Alphonse Mucha and Aubrey Beardsley. The cabaret published a seminal little magazine, simply called *Le Chat Noir* (1882-1895), and the story has been told that a male bohemian could earn himself a slap in the face by asking for it by name of female vendors with dark hair. *Avez-vous le chat noir?*¹

Vogue was clearly after the effect of that slap. Especially in its early years, *Vogue* was more than just a magazine of fashion for fashion-elites. Although it was that, it also published editorials against marriage and religion, and for adultery and women having careers. The poster artists Will Bradley and Louis J. Rhead decorated it with stunning graphics. And Kate Chopin found in it a natural outlet for her stylistically daring short short-stories — post-regionalist, one or two-page affairs like “The Kiss” and “The Story

¹Dennis Cate quotes Wilette for this story: “Since the print run of the journal was only eleven hundred copies, *Le Chat noir* was not available at all newsstands, and asking, ‘Madame, do you have *Le Chat Noir* [a black pussy]?’ often earned you a slap when the dealer was a brunette.” See “The Spirit of Montmartre,” in eds. Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor, and the Avant-Garde, 1875-1905* (New Brunswick: Jane Voorheis Zimmerli Art Museum, 1996) 1-94, 37.

of an Hour,” which mobilized sexual taboos in the name of delightful aestheticist pleasures. These were the nasty little Chopin stories that, unlike the local color tales, were never collected during her lifetime.² As such, the cover is there to make a point about the nexus of sex, art, and fashion – a point not only about the status of the American girl when she moves her body into public display for potential bachelors, but also about the magazine’s own provocation in putting it up for sale at newstands. Shortly thereafter, *Vogue* followed up with an Easter number in which a young woman wore a bunny hat,

² Chopin was something of a staff fiction writer for *Vogue* during its early years. Founded in December of 1892, the journal featured the first of her sketches, “A Visit to Avoyelles,” in its January 14, 1893 issue. In an 1894 review of its first full year of existence, the magazine placed a photograph of Chopin at top and center of a page showing all those involved in its publication. Below is a table with Chopin’s *Vogue* publications. All of the stories are now in Chopin, *Complete Novels and Stories* (NY: Library of America, 2002).

TITLE	COMPOSED	VOGUE Vol.	VOGUE DATE	COLLECTION*
A Visit to Avoyelles	1892 8 1	Vogue 1	1893 Ja 14	BF
Desiree's Baby	1892 11 24	Vogue 1	1893 Ja 14	BF
Caline	1892 12 2	Vogue 1	1893 May 20	NA
A Lady of Bayou St. John	1893 6 17-18	Vogue 2	1893 S 21	BF
Ripe Figs	1892 2 26	Vogue 2	1893 Au 19	NA
Dr. Chevalier's Lie	1891 9 12	Vogue 2	1893 O 5	none
La Belle Zoraide	1893 9 21	Vogue 3	1894 Ja 4	BF
A Respectable Woman	1894 1 20	Vogue 3	1894 F 15	NA
The Dream (Story) of an Hour	1894 April 19	Vogue 4	1894 D 6	VV
Her Letters	1894 11 29	Vogue 5	1895 A 11	VV
The Kiss	1894 9 19	Vogue 5	1895 Ja 17	VV
The Unexpected	1895 7 18	Vogue 6	1895 S 18	VV
Two Summers and Two Souls	1895 7 14	Vogue 6	1895 Aug 7	VV
The Recovery	1896 2 ?	Vogue 7	1896 May 21	VV
The Blind Man	1896 July ?	Vogue 9	1897 May 13	VV
A Pair of Silk Stockings	1896 4	Vogue 10	1897 S 16	none
Suzette	1897 2 ?	Vogue 10	1897 10 21	VV
An Egyptian Cigarette	1897 4 ?	Vogue 15	1900 4 19	VV
The White Eagle	1900 5 9	Vogue 16	1900 7 12	VV

*BF = *Bayou Folk* (1894)

NA = *A Night in Acadie* (1897)

VV = *A Vocation and a Voice* (This was planned during Chopin’s lifetime but not published; an approximation of the volume is now available in Penguin)

which was, again, not only weird but laced with a sexual message, for the model places her hands across her mouth in a fur muff, as if her speech were hidden or restrained by the public display of her punning sex.

Curious as these images are, the story I would tell about Chopin's *Vogue* is not so much about their meaning as about how that meaning is made. Of interest, here, is a question about the deictic nature of the black cat: what happens when *Vogue* points us to Paris? And how does the cover with the bunny hat and muff hit those relays? For there is little in the image of the black cat itself, in its own semantic richness *qua* black cat, that could suggest any of the meanings I have just attributed to it. If it means to be provocative — by linking fashion to sex, art to commodities, public to private, courtship to consumption... and all of these to itself as a magazine pushing them all — it does so by pointing to Montmartre, by indexing Le Chat Noir cabaret. And it does so not by merely conjuring all the associations one might have about that notorious meeting place, but, in marking the incongruity of the cabaret's cat on the head of a *Vogue* model, by drawing out our imaginative attention to the spaces between them. *Vogue*'s black cat is a reiteration of the very same black cat made famous by the cabaret. It is one many of you may have seen on a poster for sale outside university student centers every fall, the one by Steinlen with a black cat on a red pedestal, announcing in bold red letters on rusty golden background, "Prochainement, Tourné du Chat Noir de Rodolph Salis" (Salis being the owner of the cabaret). *Vogue*'s slap only comes when we recognize that the black cat's appearance on its cover is ever so out of place — a proto-dadaist index of that more notorious one in the shadows of the red-light of Paris.

This paper is broadly about the emergence of a certain kind of artistic-bohemian-periodical public in the 1890s in which this peculiar mode of discourse is abundant. More

specifically, it is about a public particularly animated by objects that seem to circulate beyond their initial theater of address, like this black cat. What we get with *Vogue*'s black cat is an example of the rapid expansion of a public, one characterized by a certain mode of attention to its own expansion that we might think of under the rubric of "circulation with gaps." By this, I mean the rise to consciousness — as pleasure or pain, surprise or disbelief — of circulation as itself embedded in objects that pop up on us unawares, again and again, in different contexts, and in ways that appear, somehow, to escape the regimes regulating our everyday commerce with objects. It is, of course, a well-noted feature of print circulation that it often outpaces the social structure from which it is produced, and this is precisely what happens in this instance. Print culture and social cultures do not map onto each other, and this fact, crucially in the minds of many fin-de-siecle artists and social scientists, rose to the order of a public-defining aesthetic modality, where black cats began to circulate everywhere and all at once.³ This paper addresses the mechanics behind the volatile acceleration and deceleration in the circulation of both the objects and the talk about them.

And so, when we see *Vogue*'s black cat, we may well think not only of the Steinlen poster at the student center, but also of T. S. Eliot's project with practical cats, which was a turn on Steinlen's turn upon Salis. Then again, there is Andrew Lloyd Weber's version in *Cats*, which, of course, was a turn on T. S. Eliot's. Or, we may be more historically minded, and think of Poe's short story, "The Black Cat" (1843), which certainly fits the description and may well have been the start of it all. Remember how, at the end of that one, the mania-inducing black cat finishes by miauling hideously from

³ For more on this historical point about "circulating culture," see my own *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005). For an overview of print circulation and publics, see especially Michael Warner, "Publics and Counter Publics," *Public Culture* 14:1 (2002), 49-90.

behind a brick wall, where it sits perched — on the head — of the dead wife’s “corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore.”⁴ The story was glorified in France by Baudelaire’s translation in 1857, and Baudelaire’s own poems on cats in *Les Fleurs du Mal* take up the theme. There are three cat poems there, like the one in which the narrator’s hand becomes drunk with pleasure from caressing a superb cat’s electric corpse and elastic back, encouraging him to dream of a woman, cold, deep, and with a subtle air of dangerous perfume swimming over her dark body.⁵ Was this the black cat in Salis’s mind when he started the cabaret? Was it the one on the cover of *Vogue*? Or perhaps it was the black cat crouched at the foot of the divan in Manet’s *Olympia*, from 1863 — the one that replaces the little, white dog in Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*, from 1548, thus shifting the meaning from canine fidelity to feline promiscuity, an effect probably heightened by indexing race as well.

The gaps are those between iterations of black cats like these — gaps that are, in effect, merely our own projections of geographical and temporal spaces between each

⁴ Edgar Allen Poe, “The Black Cat,” *The Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 390-401, 401.

⁵ From *Les Fleurs Du Mal*, “Le Chat”:

Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon coeur amoureux;
Retiens les griffes de ta patte,
Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,
Mêlés de métal et d’agate.

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
Et qu ma main s’enivre du plaisir
De palper ton corps électrique,

Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,
Comme le tien, aimable bête
Profond et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard,

Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,
Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum
Nagent autour de son corps brun.

iteration, as well as what we might call the metacultural space between the material object and our accumulated knowledge about it.⁶ Such projections were integral to an astounding acceleration in the circulation of black cats at the fin de siècle. *Vogue's* iteration was only one instance of many more, the back-story of which opens up on the scene of one of the first aesthetic vogues of twentieth-century modernism — a vogue international in scope and lasting less than a decade — for little magazines known as “chapbooks” and “ephemeral bibelots.” Forerunners of the more well-known little magazines of the 1910s and 1920s, ephemeral bibelots were published in most of the cosmopolitan centers of Europe — Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna — as well as throughout North and South America and, if my preliminary research is correct, throughout much of Asia. Over two-hundred of them appeared throughout the United States, alone, carrying titles that read like self-fulfilling prophecies of their ephemeral appearance in literary and art history, like *Chips* (1895-1896), *The Echo* (1895-1897), *The Fad* (1896-1897), *Impressions* (1900-1903), *Jabs* (1901-1903), *A Little Spasm* (1901), *Moods* (1895-1896), *The Pebble* (1900-1901), *The Shadow* (1896), *Snap Shots* (1901), and *Whims* (1896).⁷ Most of the little magazines featured stunning post-impressionist graphic arts, avant-garde short stories and prose poems, and acerbic commentary on topics ranging from aesthetic fashions to politics and social mores. It is a vogue that played itself out over the briefest of periods, from roughly 1895 to 1903. And as such, what I want to address here is not simply how circulation defined this vogue's aesthetics, but how the vogue itself moved.

⁶ I borrow the term “metaculture” from the anthropologist Greg Urban, whose explanation of cultural acceleration will be central to the discussion that follows. See *Metaculture: How Culture Moves Through the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). It is, presumably, in this space that “objects” become “things” in Bill Brown's formulation.

⁷ Frederick Winthrop Faxon compiled a list of them, which he published in 1905 as *Modern Chap-Books and Their Imitators* (Boston). This bibliography has now been published on the website of The Modernist Journals Project (MJP): <http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/index.xml>. My own bibliography, containing close to a hundred additional titles, has been added to the general database listing on the MJP website.

By the early 1890s, black cats were circulating with gaps back and forth across the Atlantic. They were particular favorites in the little magazines. There was, for starters, a relatively long-lived journal called *The Black Cat* (1895-1922), which exclusively published short stories — a genre often thought of in terms of artistic commoditization, ephemerality, and internationalism. A bibelot called *The Bauble* (1895-1897), at least, thought this one like Salis's when giving the American magazine's name in French, "that literary cat-o'-nine tales, *Le Chat Noir*, which hails from bilious, be-spectacled Boston."⁸ In another little magazine, *The Lotus* (1895-1897), Wilbur Macey Stone chronicled the appearance of cats on fifteen, or so, advertising posters. These included not only Steinlen's cats, but one by Bird for *Poster-Lore* (1896) showing "a very much startled cat with her back up and looking altogether as though she wished she hadn't come," several by Penfield including one where a cat "sits erect on the brilliant red sofa jealously eyeing her mistress, whose attention is wholly absorbed by her 'Harper's'," one by Powers for the little magazine *M'lle New York* (1895-1899) of "a scrawny creature that I am sure is a 'low-down' cat and lives in Hester Street," and from Outcault for the New York *World* (a daily newspaper) of a "nightmare of a cat... [with] eyes as large as the proverbial saucer, and a tail that would make a feather boa feel insignificant."⁹

An 1896 painting from the American-born, Paris trained artist, Cecilia Beaux, *Sita and Sarita*, featured very much this same cat on the shoulder of her dark-haired sitter. Materials from Salis's cabaret, and especially from his seminal little magazine, *Le Chat Noir*, shows the cat appearing repeatedly in unexpected places. It turns up in Japanese lanterns inside the cabaret, on a zinc cutout hanging over the piano player inside the hall,

⁸ *The Bauble* 1:4 (December 1895), 12.

⁹ Wilbur Macey Stone, "The Poster and the Cat," *Lotus* 2 (1896) 53-54.

and, most tellingly, on the heads of artists' models as they join a solemn march down Montmartre hill. In an illustrated edition of Poe's stories published in Chicago in 1894-5, Beardsley gave us, again, the cat on a woman's head. At least one art historian has pointed to the connection between this one and images of cats by Japanese artists, like Ando Hiroshige, that would have been circulating through Paris in the little magazine *Le Japon Artistique* (itself published simultaneously in French, English and German — it ran from 1888-1891).¹⁰ An art poster from the 1890s, *Le Chat Domestique et Son Caractère*, readily accessible today with a Google Image search, shows the black cat in a dozen emotional states — the one from the *Vogue* cover, with tale straight up, being clearly an example of “*la franchise*,” frankness... Frenchness.

The point, here, concerns how to understand the aesthetic frisson that I overhear in Stone's account, have felt myself over the last nine months while tracking down these cats, and sense being shared by a cohort of peers in the academy working on comparable instances of circulation — and it is a frisson, a tingling pleasure of association, produced not so much from the black cats as from an acceleration of interest built up around their circulation beyond what we might take to be their primary theater of address.¹¹ It is a frisson tied to what we might think of as metacultural talk about the circulation of images

¹⁰ Siegfried Whichmann, *Japansimse: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Harmony Books, 1981).

¹¹ So, for example, Natalie Davis pieces out the circulation of al-Hassan al-Wazzan, also known as Leo Africanus, in the high courts of “the West,” and Kwame Anthony Appiah maps out Alexander's travels in “the East”; Arjun Appadurai reports on the popularity of American rock and roll classics in the Philippines, while James Clifford registers his own cultural epiphany in hotel lobbies; and Philip Deloria discovers Indians in “unexpected places” in a way similar to that of Brian Edwards tripping across Shrek in Tehran. See Natalie Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997); Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. of Kansas Press, 2004); Brian Edwards, “Watching Shrek in Tehran: American Culture in Middle Eastern Circulation” Public Lecture, The Center for Cultural Analysis, Rutgers University, October 23, 2006.

of black cats. And in this sense, their meaning would not come from the semantic richness of the images, themselves, however intriguing they might be visually, but from recognizing the gaps between the material images and the cultural buzz about them (especially about from where they came).¹² The aesthetic frisson of the black cat on the cover of *Vogue* registers as even more than what I have already suggested when we recognize that it was not merely an indexical reference to the sexuality of the cabaret scene in Montmartre, but also to Baudelaire imagining femininity and fashion as the centerpiece of modernity, and to a Poe lifted from his American context and resettled there once again after a French sojourn.

Many different kinds of things circulate here: the material image of particular cats as they move about on posters and the pages of magazines; the idea of the cat, that itself circulates immaterially, the sets of associations linked to the cat; and the sets of associations linked to the genres in which they appear. Circulation is, in each case, both material and immaterial, the circulation of objects, but also the circulation of ideas and associations linked to them. To the extent that they rise to consciousness as circulated things, they do so by way of evoking the gaps, the imagined space and time between iterations of the object.

¹² In a sense, what I am suggesting are the affinities between theories of “things” and theories of “circulation.” We could say that the aesthetic frisson comes when cats cease being mere objects and become things; but then we might want to add that, in a fin de siècle context, cats register as the particular things they are because, on a metacultural level, circulation was a thing as well. For help on thinking through objects and things, see Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), and especially “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001) 1-16.

I would also note that the gaps I am delineating here are similar to the “pleasures of the text” located by Roland Barthes in the text’s “breaks,” “gapes,” “tears,” “intermittences” and “tmesis.” But it is also more historically grounded in cultural practice, which is to say not merely in texts but in the diffusion of texts at particular places and times. See Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, Hill and Wang, 1975), 6, 9, 10, 11.

My framing of this problem has been shaped by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition,” *Public Culture* 15:3 (2007), 385-397. This essay means to follow their suggestion to foreground the “cultures of circulation and tranfiguration within which... texts, events and practices become palpable and recognizable as such” (386).

Black cats and little magazines might seem rather innocuous examples with which to take up a discussion of circulation given the kind of ideological urgency visible in more problematic scenes from the same period. This is, after all, the age of the World's Fairs, where African, Asian and Native American people and property were circulated as displays of racial and nationalist supremacy; the age of lynching, and with it images of torture and mutilation circulated as mass spectacle on picture postcards; and the age of empire, where the movement of naval fleets around the globe signaled in the most material kind of way the manner in which circulation was determined by regimes of power. As such, black cats and bibelots seem significantly less fraught, less immediately implicated, in the conflicted production of post-colonial identities, the appropriation or assimilation of cultural property, racial and ethnic border crossing and dispute, concerns over authenticity and cultural performance, diaspora, migration, or globalization. But that, after all, is probably the point. For what I want to suggest, even if I cannot develop the point in full here, are some aspects of circulation that are generalizable when circulation, itself, rises to consciousness — when, as is so often the case now in academic work attending to the movement of people or objects in unexpected places, circulation itself becomes “a thing.” And of particular interest, here, is just this notion of objects that have moved out of place — beyond their publics, outside their theater of address. It is an awareness, in short, of the gaps between where things are and where one expects them to be that initiates gasps of pleasure or pain, frissons of aesthete delight or howls of outrage. Meaning is produced from those gaps, where what is often indexed is circulation itself.¹³

¹³ There are many ways to read the rise of interest in circulation over the last decade. For my own part, I think of it largely as an attempt to get beyond the conceptual limitations of culture outlined most forcefully by the postmodern critique of anthropology. As suggested from the time of Clifford and Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986), these limits start once the concept is committed to paper. As a form of writing, the critique began in the 1970s, writing on culture was not an objective report of what was found in the field, but rather

2. Vogue and Ephemera

There are other ways to tell this story. For example, instead of tracking the circulation of black cats, I could just as easily set them up as part of a more general aesthetic trend that ran counter to late nineteenth-century realism and naturalism — the aestheticism and internationalism of the black cats registering against the bovine hyper-masculinity and nationalism characteristic of the other movement. Or, only somewhat less familiarly, I might have described them as parody. In France at the time, the aesthetic frisson they evoked was given the name “*fumisme*,” an extreme parody with references so many times removed that they were often imperceptible to the uninitiated. *Le Chat Noir*, the seminal little magazine published out of the cabaret of the same name, might be said to have set this form in motion, using it to elucidate a somewhat prurient attitude toward modernity that came to define the content of the entire class of little magazines. As Georges Fragerolle wrote then, *fumisme* had the goal of “cutting open the smug sky under

an act of textual interpretation, a partial rendering implicated in ideology, and an exercise of power. As the 80s become the 90s, it was not just writing that rendered culture suspect. It was the way that culture seemed unable to account for the circulation of people or things across its conceptual borders, no matter how hybrid or porous such borders are imagined to be. These borders have always coincided too neatly with those of race; and as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has neatly phrased it, carrying the critique on into the new millennium, culture often seems to be an anti-race concept “on the essentialist track with a racist bent.” See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Adieu, Culture: A New Duty Arises,” in *Anthropology Beyond Culture*, eds. Richard G. Fox and Barbara King (New York: Berg, 2002), 37-60, 42. The problem only gets worse with the issues made visible by postcolonial theory and attention to globalization, wherein writing begins to seem like the least of the culture concept’s limitations.

Attention to circulation, which moves across borders, seems like a reasonable response; and already in the 1990s, some of culture’s most visible critics had begun to imagine a kind of solution to the predicament by elaborating such notions as “traveling cultures,” “cosmopolitanism,” and “flow.” Circulation has since developed into one of the more important keywords in a number of different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, gaining prominence for defining not so much a field (i.e. labor studies, cultural studies) as a process considered central to the long history of modernity. It is key to explorations of diaspora and globalization; to concepts of cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity; to notions of the Anglophone world as a disciplinary substructure in literature; to attempts to chart the geography of the novel and of art; and to the return of comparative approaches in a variety of disciplines. In American literary studies, a great deal of effort is now being given to a hemispheric and transnational reappraisal of the idea of the nation, which draws attention to such topics as the historical relations between North, Central and South America; the linguistic and cultural borderlands that resulted from the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican-American War; and slavery and segregation as aspects of an imperialist political economy.

which we live.”¹⁴ Some examples are immediately recognizable as precursors to Dada, perhaps the most surprising of which being a photo-relief by Eugène Bataille (Sapeck), *Mona Lisa with a Pipe*, published in a French bibelot called *Le Rire* in 1887. A full thirty-two years before Marcel Duchamp gave her a mustache in *L.H.O.O.Q.* (“elle a chaud au cul”), Sapeck had ringed her image in the halo of cabaret smoke.¹⁵ Both images work a similar parody, calling into question ideals of art and gender, beauty and timelessness, by repeating this iconic image with telling differences. According to the art critic Daniel Grojnowski, *fumisme* bequeathed to modernism its “sneer and renunciation of the ideal”: “The *fumiste* avoids discussions of ideas, he does not set up a specific target, he adopts a posture of withdrawal that makes all distinctions hazy, and he internalizes Universal Stupidity by postulating the illusory nature of values and of the Beautiful, whence his denial of the established order and of official hierarchies.”¹⁶

But keeping in mind that *fumisme*, like the repeated iterations of black cats, was a vogue — not just a prevailing fashion but a wave, with a rapid acceleration of iterations — it seems essential to bring in some way of accounting for the significance of circulation to its production. Generally speaking, parody insists upon incongruity that is often visual or thematic, the change between Mona Lisa smiling and Mona Lisa smoking a pipe. But with Sapeck’s image on the pages of a magazine directly associated with the cabaret scene in Paris, this incongruity has everything to do with a kind of parody that indexes the gaps between particular geographical and temporal sites. As such, *Vogue*’s image makes sense not just because a woman is wearing a cat in place of her hat, but because the cat she is wearing is actually the one made famous at Salis’ cabaret in Montmartre. The title,

¹⁴ Georges Fragerolle, “coupe[r] le ciel de prud’homie sous lequel nous vivons,” quoted in Cate, *The Spirit of Montmartre* 23.

¹⁵ A point made prominently by Cate in *The Spirit of Montmartre*.

¹⁶ Grojnowski, “Hydropathes and Company,” in Cate and Shaw, eds., *The Spirit of Montmartre*, 104.

appearing under the image, “LE CHAT NOIR,” functions as a deictic, not a symbol. It points to Paris and, figuratively, to the space between these different iterations of the black cat. Indeed, in this sense it becomes significant that the image of the cat is conspicuously the same no matter where it shows up, for what changes is less its parodic content than the manner in which it indexes other cats from other places and times. Our frisson is the register of the gap between any particular image of the cat and our aggregate metacultural knowledge of the cat in other places at other times.

So I am telling the story in this way in order to keep circulation at the center of how we think about black cats and little magazines. And for the purposes of this paper, I am interested in attending to a particular aspect of their circulation — namely their vogue, which implies the rapid acceleration and deceleration of interest in them. How, in short, are we to understand the volatile expansion of this aesthetic bohemian public, its move beyond the theater of address in Montmartre? And how, moreover, are we to understand its extraordinarily rapid decline? How can we model the swell and dissipation of this wave?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most fully developed recent accounts of this kind of expansion, or vogue, have come from social scientists and mathematicians looking to model diffusion in the contexts of such things as infectious disease, internet fads, cascade failures, and buzz marketing.¹⁷ And what I take to be the key finding from this work is

¹⁷ As I have noted elsewhere, up to the 1920s, it was philologists, folklorists and anthropologists who seem to have been at the cutting edge of the study of diffusion. See, especially, “Where Was Boas During the Renaissance in Harlem? Diffusion, Race, and the Culture Paradigm in the History of Anthropology,” *Central Sites, Peripheral Visions: Cultural and Institutional Crossings in the History of Anthropology*, ser. History of Anthropology, vol. 11., ed. Richard Handler (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2006) 69-98. I will be drawing extensively on Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life* (New York: Plume, 2002). For another popular account, see Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (2000). More to the point academically, though, is Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (2005).

that the kind of diffusion involved in an aesthetic vogue would not have happened in what we might think of as a diffuse way. As Albert-László Barabási has explained in describing what he has called “the new science of networks,” diffusion is not a randomly structured event that can be understood with a scalar model, in which things diffuse at an even and constant rate, but rather needs to be thought through non-scalar models. Central to his thinking on the subject are mathematical “power laws” — a function in which a dependent variable is effected exponentially. He ends up with a model of diffusion looking like maps of airline flight schedules, where the exponential component concentrates around hubs at which the vast majority of connections between disparate points are made. Referring to this model as a “scale-free network,” Barabási argues that diffusion accelerates when cultural elements pass through hubs, which have an exponentially larger number of nodal associations with other parts of the world than is usual. In this sense, interest in black cats could have gone along at a generally forgettable clip for quite a long time; but then, when they were taken up at a hub as central to fin de siècle culture as Le Chat Noir cabaret, interest in the black cat could have shot up exponentially. Conversely, deceleration would involve not the gradual slowing of interest in whatever elements were circulating, but rather the deactivation of decisive hubs in the network.¹⁸

Crucially, this is not a scalar model, not an account of diffusion in which elements pass evenly through an amorphous public sphere in which everyone would, in time, get to know the black cat. It is, instead, like a public defined by the circuits along which texts circulate. This is neither like ink dropped into a jar of water, nor warm air moving into cold; it is not sap running through a tree. Rather, diffusion in non-scalar models happens

¹⁸ Barabási’s example is AIDS. Because the spread of AIDS follows a hub and spoke model, he argues that the only way to limit the acceleration of its spread is by treating infected individuals having inordinately high numbers of sexual partners. To stop the increase, one needs to knock out the hubs.

in fits and starts along circuits over-determined by the exponential connections to be found at the hubs. Some items never get picked up at hubs, while others that do pass through hubs saturate the network in very short order. It all depends on which pathways are followed. And this implies a further clarification: that different circulation networks have different cultural topologies. Networks are themselves cultural constructions, and hubs only emerge as such from within particular cultural matrices. Diffusion is not indifferent, but directed.

With this in mind, we might do well to stop speaking of the circulation of elements across or between different cultures, and speak instead of “cultures of circulation” — this in order to attend to the regimes directing diffusion between disparate sites.¹⁹ Or, we could go even further and follow the anthropologist Greg Urban’s lead in simply thinking of culture *as* circulation: neither a structural system (Levi-Strauss), nor a semiotic web of meaning (Geertz), nor an imaginary (Appadurai), culture in this sense would be defined as “whatever is socially learned, socially transmitted.”²⁰ In many respects a very old definition of culture, as resonant of Matthew Arnold as anything else, Urban’s formulation changes the analytic frame away from one of describing delimited cultural structures out there in particular places, to understanding culture as a phenomenon in the world with “a trajectory into the future” (36). As he puts it, instead of asking, “What is the culture of A,” this reformulation would highlight instead “What gets from A to B? How does it make that journey? Are some things better suited to make the journey than others? Do some travel more quickly than others? Are some more long lived?” (2).

¹⁹ See Benjamin Lee and Ed LiPuma, “Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity,” *Public Culture* 14:1 (2002) 191-213.

²⁰ Urban, *Metaculture*, 2.

If culture is what gets transmitted — not just across space but also over time — then one avoids the problem of trying to figure how cultural elements move “out of,” “across” or “into” new semiotic or structural fields. The issue of describing the complexity of social units by means of concepts like hybridity and cosmopolitanism becomes moot, as well, because the point is not to provide a better conceptual lexicon for the things we used to call cultures, but rather to understand the pathways along which culture moves through the world, and also how it is carried on in time, even from day to day. Culture, as such, is not a structure or semiotic code out of which people think, but rather the very stuff of their thought, or at least that part of it that links with others and for themselves, in space and over time. In its attention to circulation, it might almost sound like “a public” — except that in Urban’s formulation culture is singular, whereas publics are not. Culture is the stuff that moves, not the imaginary it moves through. It is the black cat and all the associations embedded in it, not the territory of the black cat’s travels.

For the problem at hand in this essay, the advantage of Urban’s reformulation is that culture becomes as much a temporal as a spatial process — it not only gets passed from one place to another, but gets passed along from moment to moment. We need this sense of the temporal component of culture to work out the circulation of a vogue like that for the bibelots. The temporal move allows us to think of culture not as a static entity, but as a process of expansion and contraction over time. Urban suggests that much culture is inertial, moving along at a constant rate because not acted upon by a disrupting force. This inertial culture corresponds to the classic object of ethnography, traditional communities and enduring folk tradition. But vogues work differently. They are accelerative, in the sense that expanding a public in the way of our black cats requires the rapid addition of energy into the system. To move beyond a theater of address means cutting new links,

forging new connections and hubs, reshaping the topology of the network. It involves shifts in energy implicating not inertia but acceleration. And similarly, the characteristic of the vogue's end, its ephemerality, requires a similar application of force. Vogues do not just fizzle out; something has to happen to make them stop moving. Vogues have beginnings and ends. They are temporal phenomena, correlating an expansion in space with a contraction in the time of retransmission.

3. **Blurring, *The Lark***

Urban may be going further than we need with the analogies to physics, though finding a way to keep the temporality of circulation in mind seems central to accounting for the peculiar, definitive trait of the little magazines: their ephemerality. This built-in ephemerality takes the bibelots outside the rubrics we normally deploy to make sense of magazines, which is to say, outside discussions of circulation numbers and longevity. Their treatment in Frank Luther Mott's account of American magazines seems indicative, in this respect, in that his volumes do not have a formula for thinking about the bibelots on their own terms. In a chapter on the little magazines, Mott placed *The Bibelot* (1895-1915) and *The Philistine* (1895-1915) alongside *The Chap Book* in importance largely because of their staying power. However, figuring importance in this way misses the point. As Frederick Winthrop Faxon had already noted in 1903, the little magazines not only cultivated the aura of ephemerality that surrounded them, but really were programmatically ephemeral. Of over three hundred chapbooks from this period that I have documented, less than a dozen lasted more than five years. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that they have not fared well in various histories on the subject. In the seminal work on modernist little magazines, Hoffman, Ulrich, and Allen's *The Little Magazines*

(1947), the bibelots of the 1890s garnered only a scant paragraph, the gist of which was that they “were not very inspiring.” Nor have they attracted attention in more recent accounts.²¹

The bibelots played heavily on the idea of their own flitting obsolescence. The tone is set in *The Lark* (1895-1897), a bibelot published out of San Francisco by Gelett Burgess, who is probably best known for a whimsical manual encouraging polite manners of little boys and girls, *Goops and How to Be Them* (1900).²² *The Lark* ran for exactly two years, publishing twenty-four issues and a farewell extra, titled the *Epilark*. It was designed, from the beginning, as a short-lived undertaking. Bruce Porter’s “invitation” for the first number makes the point that the magazine imagined its own personality to be inconstant and moody, likely to shift whenever the spirit called:

With no more serious intention than to be gay—to sing a song, to tell a story;—and when this is no longer to our liking,—when the spring calls, or the road invites,—then this little house of pleasure will close its doors; and if you have cared for our singing, and would have more of it, then you must follow us a-field.²³

²¹ Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), 7. They do not play a significant role in Nancy Glazener *Reading for Realism: the History of a U.S. Institution* (Duke, 1997); Richard Ohman, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1998); or Mark Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

²² Burgess (1866-1951) was also an illustrator; and he garners some attention for an article written for the *Architectural Record* in 1910 that was one among many introducing the “wild men of Paris” — Picasso, Matisse, and Braque — to American audiences.

²³ Porter, “Hark! Hark! The Lark at Heaven’s Gate Sings!,” *The Lark*, No. 1., May 1895. Like many of the ephemeral bibelots, pages in *The Lark* were unnumbered.

For entirely arbitrary reasons, the magazine did just that. A short note in no. 24 announced, “With this Number, the Second Book of *The Lark* is completed, and the further issuance of *The Lark* is suspended. There will, however, be published an *Epilark, or Memoir*, containing certain phases of the intimate history of *The Lark*, with reflections thereon.” It went on to say that “unexpired subscriptions” would be filled with issues of *The Chap Book* (1894-1898), which today is the best-known American bibelot, probably second only to *The Yellow Book* (1894-1897). But what they did not know was that *The Chap Book* would, itself, cease publication less than a year later.

So while we are talking about an aesthetic vogue attached to circulation, it is important to keep in mind that the ephemeral bibelots and more popular magazines diffused through networks having dissimilar topologies. They constituted overlapping but discontinuous publics. Unlike the major magazines, ephemeral bibelots were not attached to publishing houses. In France, they came in the first instance out of cabarets. The seminal little magazine was *Le Chat Noir*, and it was specifically attached to the artistic and carnivalesque activities of the cabaret. In the U.S., they were allied to printing presses and were usually the work of an individual editor or a group of collaborators. Their subscriptions never reached anywhere near the levels of the big monthlies. At a time when the 10-cent magazines were reaching circulations well over 100,000, the most famous of the little magazines, *The Chap Book*, never reached more than 20,000 — and it was quite exceptional in this regard.²⁴ Most seem to have been below 5000. They took some advertising, but unlike the major magazines did not come to be driven by it. They were not commercial ventures, but, for the most part, were venues for a very particular kind of

²⁴ The numbers are from Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Vol. IV: 1885-1905* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), 388.

aesthetic sensibility and expression. And they went almost completely unnoticed by the more censorious, large-distribution magazines. The only mention of the little magazines in the big monthlies that I have found was from Henry B. Fuller, who had a few lines on *The Chap Book* in an article for *The Atlantic Monthly*, “The Upward Movement in Chicago.” In a stilted prose not generally encountered in the bibelots, he wrote that “having lately enlarged itself and subdued the intensity of a yellow tone reflected from London,” the “quaint” magazine responded “to Chicago’s long and earnest prayer, – that for a magazine.”²⁵ It would not appear that *The Chap Book* would have known what to do with such prayers, had it heard them.

The little magazines ran counter to mainstream literary movements in almost all respects. Whereas they cultivated the frisson of gaps, realist and naturalist writing — from the *Comedie Humaine* to *Nana*, from *The Scarlet Letter* to *Sister Carrie* — was dominated by narratives evocative of rich social fabrics and social scientific schemata for understanding the continuity of human interaction. Whereas the bibelots were international and chic, realism and naturalism was national and given over to more serious ethical concerns. Whereas the bibelots’ aestheticism was coded feminine, naturalism was aggressively masculine. William Dean Howells offers a prescient description of the divide in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889), a novel which intertwines the fortunes of a little magazine with the struggle between workers and capital. Described by a variety of characters as “chic,” the novel’s imaginary bibelot, *Every Other Week*, clusters the aesthetic impulses of urban modernity, from the graphic arts focus of its bohemian illustrator, Beaton, to the flâneurie of its wayward, rather hopelessly normative editor,

²⁵*Atlantic Monthly* 80 (1897) 534-547, 545.

Basil March.²⁶ But while the novel seems to delight in these aestheticist pleasures, it does not stay there. The ethical purpose of the novel reasserts itself with a confrontation between monopoly and proletariat protest, ending in a deadly riot with the police at a streetcar strike. And its own self-seriousness — both stylistically, in terms of the cohesion of its character development and plotting, and also historically, in terms of its publication in the socially progressive *Harper's Weekly* — identify the novel's register as other than that of the bibelots.²⁷

In contrast, one might think of the career of a young poet whom Howells imagined as an acolyte, Stuart Merrill, who flew from under the dean's wings to Mallarmé's circle of symbolist poets clustered around the Parisian cabarets. Best known in English for his translation of the French symbolists, *Pastels in Prose* (1891) — which included examples of decadence, symbolism, and Japonisme from authors like Charles Baudelaire, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Judith Gautier and Stéphane Mallarmé — Merrill offers a real-life version of the Beaton character. Not taken up by American scholars because he wrote in French, Merrill was also not taken up by French scholars because he was American. It is in Merrill's sensibility that we can locate the bibelots.

To understand their vogue, however, it is important to go beyond this simple delineation of their distinction from the mainstream literary movements and account for their rate of diffusion and limited saturation of the market. Models of scale-free networks can be useful in this respect. Even in general terms, this model is particularly useful for thinking through the circulation of magazines and other print-sources, which are not distributed through amorphous spaces but along heavily regulated pathways established

²⁶ For an extended discussion of *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, see my article "Howellsian Chic: The Local Color of Cosmopolitanism," *ELH* 71 (2004) 775-812. On *Harper's Weekly*, see Glazener, *Reading for Realism*.

²⁷ On the point of the political orientation of *Harper's Weekly*, see Nancy Glazener's *Reading for Realism*.

by such things as publishing houses, subscription and postage rates, intellectual property issues, and the metacultural buzz associated with things like prestige and authorial reputation. But the model is even more telling when trying to describe a vogue, and especially the deceleration of the vogue. The model predicts that cultural transmission accelerates when it hits a hub and is transmitted to an exponentially large number of new nodes, and decelerates when the hubs become inactive or inoperative. If true, then one could easily imagine the effect of the programmed obsolescence of the bibelot movement's key hubs, journals like *Le Chat Noir*, *The Lark*, *The Chap Book*, and *The Yellow Book*. The vogue's deceleration may have been influenced by waning interest, or by a sense that the bibelots' literary or artistic value just did not stack up. But it would not have depended upon it. If hubs like *The Lark* programmed their own demise, which in the case of the bibelots seems to have happened sometime between 1897 and 1901, a non-scalar model would predict that the deceleration of the vogue would be just as dramatic as it was.

As for saturation, what seems most interesting is that the bibelots integrated the network into their aesthetic way of being through an elaborate citational practice, which reshaped the idea of their public in an odd way. They literally coined the term “blurb” — or, rather, Burgess did shortly after the bibelot vogue when a fictitious “Melinda Blurb” was invented to provide cover copy for his book, *Are You a Bromide?* (1906).²⁸ But the blurb was very much central to the magazines, becoming in them something of a genre unto itself. At least one of the bibelots, *The Bauble* (1895-1897), was made up of little else than blurbs. And in *The Lark*, the list emerged as an elaborate opportunity for fumiste self-mockery. At the back of no. 13, it ran the list of blurbs under the banner “A

²⁸ See Gelett Burgess, *Burgess Unabridged: A Dictionary of Words You Have Always Needed* (1914).

TRANSCONTINENTAL CRITICISM. THE GEOGRAPHY OF APPRECIATION.” By

no. 5, it was already roasting itself in a pun-rich French:

C’EST un assez modeste Créature que THE LARK; elle ne se melle pas de *Personnalités*; étant un Oiseau *matineux*, elle s’occupe du *Ver*. Elle ne pousse cependant pas *l’Insouciance* jusqu’à ne pas écouter les Notes louangeuses des *Cages* d’en-bas habitées par les Autres. THE LARK n’est pas *ingrate*, et elle remercie le CRITIC* des Renseignements sur sa *Circulation*; le BOSTON JOURNAL† qui la trouve *un peu sauvage*; le CHAP BOOK‡ qui l’appelle *intime*; le NEW YORK TIMES** qui voit en elle une Menace à la *Modernité chicagienne*, et le NEW YORK TRIBUNE †† gentil Savant de la LARKEOLOGIE, qui la nomme L’OIE, sans doute à cause de ses *Oeufs d’Or*.

* “—One bookseller tells me that he has sold 100 copies.” (!)

† In an editorial comment, remarkable only for its length and the fact that it calls *The Lark* an “ornithological specimen,” and its opening article an “epilogue.”

‡ “It is an assertion of the right of the artist to be wayward, and indulge in innocent drollery. Its friends will be appreciative, but there will not be many of them.”

** “Incredibly, even impossibly, 1895; written by *les jeunes*, and delightfully young they are.”

†† “One more hysterical magazine—from a realm remote from the moorings of intelligence.”

[my translation: She’s quite a modest creature, THE LARK; she doesn’t mess herself up with Personalities; being a morning bird, she takes care of the worm (with a pun on “verse”). Nonetheless, she doesn’t push her nonchalance to the point of not listening to the Notes of praise from the Cages below inhabited by Others. THE LARK is not ungrateful, and she thanks the CRITIC for the information about her circulation; the BOSTON JOURNAL, which found her a bit savage; the CHAP BOOK, which named her “intime”; the NEW YORK TIMES, which saw in her a menace to the modernity of Chicago; and the NEW YORK TRIBUNE, gentle scholar of larkeology, which named her THE GOOSE, without a doubt because of her golden eggs.]

That the citation is written in French indexes a “Chatnoirville” precedent that we might be tempted to hear in the bibelot’s very name — black cats with double-entendres, birds with double-entendres. *The Lark* was, of course, a joke. And if she were also a morning bird,

her counter might have been the nightingale, which already at that time was associated with the countercurrents of Japonisme. A few years later, for example, Onoto Watanna (Winnifred Eaton) would publish her acclaimed first novel, *A Japanese Nightingale* (1901). Similarly, its geographical imaginary, “*les Notes louangeuses des Cages d’en-bas habitées par les Autres*,” could be a reiteration of Montmartre geography as established by Salis. It is recognizable from innumerable cartoons and sketches in *Le Chat Noir*, which pictured Montmartre as a country unto itself, high up on a hill, from which emissaries were sent out to explore foreign lands, like Paris, in the hopes of reporting back on the strange “Others” living there. As *The Lark* went on, its list of citations grew exponentially. By the end, it covered several pages, becoming one of the bibelot’s most attractive and humorous features.

But the point is that while the blurb suggests a closed circuit of insiders getting the jokes, its effect was in reality the exact opposite. The blurb invites us into a public we have not entered, links us to texts we have not read, confronts us with the likelihood of jokes we will not get. As Michael Warner has explained, reflexivity is a necessary component of the creation of a public, which requires the supposition of a pre-existing and responding discourse.²⁹ However, the public presupposed by the bibelots is one in which discourse is almost always imagined as being one step beyond its own circuit of reflexivity. *The Lark* seems to have addressed itself to a tight network of readers who would have been able to mind the gaps, and my own experience reading it has been that the only way to get it is to read through every page of every number for the cumulative effect of the cross-references to itself and other bibelots. But in fact, the real frisson of the journal comes from the impression it gives that we will never catch it all. *The Lark*

²⁹ Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” see especially 62-68.

advertises itself as the epitome of all we will ever not know, of all the nodes to which we will never link. Its long list of blurbs advertises the idea of its readers' inadequacy to the aesthete ethereality of its own public.

Here is some of what can be known. *The Lark* was one of the most *fumiste* of the American little magazines. Issued as a protest of the mainstream literary journals, its preferred mode was an offbeat, spry wit that took the shape of aphorisms, quatrains and nonsense rhymes. In the first number, under the title "Primitive Art," it reproduced drawings by children (perhaps Burgess's own, though they are anonymous), along with what would become Burgess's best-known piece of writing, "The Purple Cow," a four-line nonsense poem: "I never saw a purple cow,/I never hope to see one;/But I can tell you, anyhow,/I'd rather see than be one!" A few numbers later, there appeared a story billed as the "very, very peculiar and most idyllic history of The Chewing-Gum Man." Even as the magazine promoted its involvement with the publication of another little magazine, *Le Petit Journal des Refusées* (designed to publish only writing rejected by other sources), it made fun of the effort. "It will be the *smallest* and most *extraordinary* magazine in existence," the notice read. "It will be printed on *Black* paper with *Yellow* ink. The margins will be very, very wide, the cover almost impossible." There was an ongoing run of puns on *The Lark's* name, including a publishing venture advertised as *L'Arkitecture Moderne*, featuring such extraordinary illustrations as "L'Ark de Triomphe!" (with Larks). They then followed up the self-belittlement by reproducing a line of criticism from the *Boston Evening Journal* to the effect that "THE LARK has so far preserved its mental balance, perched between the sublime and the ridiculous, but 'les Jeunes,' as they have been named by the New York Times, have taken a fearful risk in publishing 'L'Arkitecture Moderne'." In no. 12, a comical prose poem was published that,

in its incoherent word play, reminds one of Gertrude Stein's method in *Tender Buttons* (1914). Titled "A Lexicographer's Romance," it begins "An autumnal sun, hanging in abdicative attitude behind the atramental abysses of the wood, peered through the appertions of the adustive foliage, casting amplified anfractuuous penumbric anamorphoses of the arbuscles in the Park, like anagogical asomatous apparitions." And then it continues for several more paragraphs in the same vein.

By the second year, there came to be a number of running jokes that brought to light both the serial nature of its enterprise, and the community of insiders presumably getting it. The most developed of these sequences was a series of short stories by Burgess featuring the romantic adventures of a young woman named Vivette, in which he satirized the vogue in which his own magazine was playing an increasingly visible part. One of Vivette's enthusiasms was for little magazines, though the humor in her attraction is almost entirely an insider's game. In the story "An Imaginative Monthly," Vivette and her fiancé decide to start their own bibelot, to be called *Phyllida, or The Milkmaid*. The story develops one of the only extant descriptions, albeit a fictional one, of how the vogue for the magazines actually worked, and in so doing draws attention once again to citational practices:

Once embarked, *The Milkmaid* became the talk of the hour. Its subtle vagaries and high flown humour rendered it discussable, and it achieved a sort of dinner-party prestige that kept it afloat in the gossip of the drawing-room and verandah. Its admirers developed a cult; the few that appreciated its finesse became its ardent promoters, and exploited its wit among the secondary intellects, who in turn, paraphrased the critiques at retail, and

bragged and traded upon their perception. From these, its vogue spread to the commonplace types, who, hearing of its brilliance, wondered in hesitant undertones.

The Milkmaid's success seems quite clearly to depend on the acceleration possible with a hub and spokes model, but the topology of the network is also telling. The cult-like following of its admirers seems only natural, for in order to understand the “vagaries” of its “high flown humour,” one would necessarily have to be deeply enmeshed in its frame of reference. But then, part of the frisson comes in realizing just how much passes over your head. Citations come, it would seem, out of context but with the assurance that the context is out there, somewhere, if only you could establish the links. It is this experience that I mean to suggest when saying that circulation seems to be embedded in the object of the magazine itself, rising to the level of a thing when we read it. The magazine elicits this sense of circulation by evoking that which is always beyond the theater of its own address. It is as if the magazine were little more than a register of the gaps.

4. Pointing to the Edge of the Public: Japonisme, Butterflies

Going back to *Vogue's* cover, we find traces of another image that might have had an even larger diffusion in the 1890s than that of black cats: butterflies. The image appeared on a *Vogue* cover for the first time in August or 1894, with an image of a woman wearing a massive, vaguely butterfly-shaped hat, and posing in summery décolletage. The fabric of her scarf and costuming runs Klimt-like into the shades of summer foliage, butterflies flitting in foreground and behind her. Framed in a design by the poster artist Will Bradley, it carried the caption “A Summer Butterfly.” A few months later, for a

December number, another butterfly cover featured a medusa-like young woman, arms stretched behind her head like wings and hair streaming upward like hellfire, a swarm of young (and old) bachelor butterflies being roasted by her charms. And in January of 1895, a cover titled “An Evolution” featured a young, strikingly corseted woman in a black dress with large, wing-like shoulder puffs wearing a modest butterfly hat. The joke came from an inset on the bottom right showing a disastrously shapeless, baggy mess of overcoat and fur, with the caption “This is the grub that makes the butterfly.” Presumably, it was cold and slushy outside the theater, and inside the world was metamorphosed. And so, the stage for the black cat had been set by the butterfly, just as the black cat set it for the Easter number showing a woman wearing a bunny hat.

Like the black cat, butterflies were everywhere in aesthetic arts materials from the 1890s. I want to use them here to specifically add Japonisme into this discussion of the bibelot network, and in so doing begin to frame out an answer to the question of *what* travels with black cats and butterflies when they reshape the network in this accelerative way. As we begin to tease out the particular topology of the bibelot network, what becomes clear are the different kinds of things diffuse along its circuits. These include, of course, the physical issues of the magazines, as well as the pictures of cats and butterflies on their pages. But it also includes genres (prose poems, pen and ink cartoons, woodblocks); themes (black cats and butterflies); associations (the cabaret scene in Paris, sexuality and consumption, Japonisme); a *fumiste* sense of humor; an aestheticist reaction against realism and naturalism; and a metacultural buzz. The network opens itself to the circulation both of material and immaterial things, of physical objects and the culture lodged for a time in them. And it also circulates people.

One of the more significant literary pieces published in *The Lark* was contributed by Yone Noguchi in *The Lark*, no. 15. Noguchi had arrived in San Francisco in 1893, at the age of eighteen, having been pushed to explore the ‘sacred land of liberty’ by Japanese proponents of modernization during the Meiji era.³⁰ After two years of holding menial positions — delivery boy, house servant — Noguchi came into contact with the poet Joaquin Miller, living then in the hills outside Oakland, who inspired him to pursue poetry. He also met Burgess, who introduced his poetry in *The Lark* and went on to edit and write the introduction to Noguchi’s first collection, *Seen and Unseen: Or, Monologues of a Homeless Snail* (1897). Publishing the first poems under the title “The Night Reveries of an Exile,” Burgess situated Noguchi among such *japoniserie* as that of crickets on a hill: “I would have you think of him as I know him, alone on the heights, in his cabin,—“even yellow-jackets abandoned,”—listening to the “tireless songs of the crickets on the lean, gray-haired hill, in the sober-faced evening.”³¹

Noguchi contributed prose poems of the kind that Merrill had made familiar in *Pastels in Prose* (1890). Here is his first one, in which *The Lark* is reframed as a “crazy, one-inch butterfly (dethroned angel)”:

THE KNOWN-UNKNOWN-BOTTOMED GOSSAMER WAVES
OF THE FIELD ARE COLOURED BY THE TRAVELLING SHADOWS
OF THE LONELY, ORPHANED, MEADOW LARK:
AT SHADELESS NOON, SUNFUL-EYED, – THE CRAZY,
ONE-INCH BUTTERFLY (DETHRONED ANGEL?) ROAMS ABOUT,
HER EMOIDIED SHADOW ON THE SECRET-CHATTERING HAY-
TOPS, IN THE SABRE-LIGHT.

³⁰ Shusuke Kamei, “Yone Noguchi, an English Poet in Japan: An Essay,” in *Collected Poems*, by Yone Noguchi, ed. Usaburo Toyama (Tokyo: Yone Noguchi Society, 1965). Kamei is quoted by Edward Marx, “A Different Mode of Speech’: Yone Noguchi in Meiji America,” *Re/collecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History*, eds Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2002) 288-306, 292.

³¹ Crickets, too, are a lot like butterflies, and in another section of this project I plan to read Howells’s famous treatise on realism, “The Ideal Grasshopper,” against the aestheticists’ deployment of Japonisme.

THE UNIVERSE, TOO, HAS SOMEWHERE ITS SHADOW; –
 BUT WHAT ABOUT MY SONGS?
 AN THERE BE NO SHADOW, NO ECHOING TO THE END, –
 MY BROKEN-THROATED FLUTE WILL NEVER AGAIN BE MADE
 WHOLE!

Despite Yoguchi's *fumiste* punning, *The Lark* treats his poetry differently from other items by not explicitly framing it as something absurd. As we saw with the citation of critical remarks about the magazine generally, Burgess ran blurbs for Noguchi's poems in an advertisement for *Seen & Unseen* at back of no. 20. One of them quotes *The New York Tribune* suggesting that Noguchi's poetry was "like Stephen Crane, with all the affectation removed." The editor of the *Chap Book* regrets "that the pleasant opportunity I thought to have of first printing his writings is denied me." And *The Critic*, using language that should now be familiar in terms of aesthetic frisson, asserts, "They have a poetic quality which need not be understood to be enjoyed." This way of thinking suggests that it was not the semantic richness of Noguchi's lines that interested the critics, but the lines' ability to index a broad range of other associations — associations beyond any conceivable theater of address.

These references to Noguchi's place at once beyond and in a world of American letters including Stephen Crane — an aestheticist Crane, a Crane of *The Black Riders* and *War is Kind* — reminds us again of the variety of things traveling along the same pathways as the bibelots. Sticking with the literary significance for a moment, the association of Noguchi and Crane opens up a field for comparative work on the writing of other internationalist figures from the period. For example, there is Lafcadio Hearn, who translated 800 year-old Japanese folklore to great acclaim in Paris, New York and, when it was retranslated into Japanese, Tokyo; Merrill and Francis Vielé-Griffin, Americans

important to the French symbolist movement; and Tokai Sanshi and Kafu Nagai, whose important collections of short stories, written in Japanese, reverse the Western exoticization of the Japanese female body by featuring “strange encounters with beautiful women” (the title of a collection by Sanshi), the beautiful women being American. That is, once we recover hubs like *The Lark*, it becomes quite possible to trace out a network of diffusion — lines connecting genres, images, sensibilities, and people alike — that was lost when Burgess decided to shut his hub down after only twenty-four numbers.

We can track the network in all its richness with the butterfly. Remember, the butterfly, explicitly indexed to Japan, had been the emblematic signature of the American painter James Whistler. It was central to the Japonisme of Pierre Loti’s novel of fin de siècle decadence, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), which was taken up in Puchini’s opera *Madame Butterfly* (1904). It made frequent appearances on the cover of *The Yellow Book*. It was the title of one of the more risqué novels published in the U.S. in the 1890s, John Lane Allen’s *Butterflies*, which first appeared as a serial in *Cosmopolitan* (1886-1925, not a bibelot) between December 1895 and March 1896. Not incidentally, when a toned-down version of this story appeared in book form — it dealt with the sexual coming of age of two youngsters on a farm in Kentucky — it was re-titled *A Summer in Acady*, from which Chopin took the title of her second collection of stories, *A Night in Acadie* (1897). The butterfly also reached to what we might take as minor instances, as in book decoration for an 1890s fine arts edition of George Washington Cable’s regional sketches, *Old Creole Days*, on a poster by John Sloan for the little magazine *Moods*, and in an illustration for a reprint of Poe’s poem, “Ulalume,” in *The Quartier Latin* (1896-1899), a little magazine published simultaneously in Paris, London and New York by American expatriates living in Paris.

Given its ubiquity, I would like to settle in on two instances to try to get at what might have been circulating with its image, one from *Vogue* and another from the most astounding bibelot I have seen to date, *Le Petit Journal des Refusées*. In July 1893, accompanying a short play called “A Maiden Metamorphosis,” *Vogue* carried an image of a Japanese girl in a kimono peering into an inset illustration of a young Western woman wearing “a new hat” — which just so happens to be a butterfly hat. The image makes very clear that the butterfly on the hat is the same as the butterfly-shaped bow, or obei, worn by the girl. The play, a clear precursor to novels like Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* (1905), offers a cynical portrayal of the connections between courtship and commerce. Told in five parts, it follows a young woman from her first act, “The Ingénue,” in which at age eighteen she chokes back the genuine shock of her first proposal from Jolly George Van Piper, a Harvard Junior, handsome, “intensely susceptible,” to her last, “The Dénouement,” in which at age thirty-two she accepts a proposal from the same man, who now has a German Ph. D. and an inheritance worth thirty thousand a year.³²

In this context, the Japanese girl’s obei is shorn of its purity, the bow and the butterfly both commodities — or, rather, commodity fetishes — tied up in a woman’s exchange of herself in an internationalist marriage market. But we should not confuse what gets circulated here, for it is not only the japoniste image of the butterfly, but also the sets of associations it indexed for a well-informed reader. The young woman in the play follows the accelerative and decelerative trajectory of vogues as she passes through the geographic hubs of modernity. And like her, the image of the obei indexes numerous gaps meant to jog our attention: geographical distance (Japan/New York); temporal distance

³² In between, she rejects one proposal and botches another three. These include one worth up to four millions, arrested when she spilled a drink into the millionaire’s lap, and another with a British aristocrat, cut short after she sent a pair of opera glasses tumbling “over the velvet box-rail... drop, bang!” Anonymous, “A Maiden Metamorphosis,” *Vogue* 2:5 (July 1893), 55-61.

(ancient past/hyper-modern); aestheticist simplicity (the butterfly) and decadence (Loti's use of it in *Madame Chrysanthème*, where a Parisian man lacking stimulation decides to travel to Japan to take "a wife" for a few months, only to come back to Paris and take another). In short, it is not so much the semantic richness of the image of the obei that generates frisson, here, but the rather it is the process by which the obei indexes the very network along which it circulates. To push this idea as far as possible, we might even want to consider describing what gets carried in this particular version of the butterfly as the metacultural expression of the network, itself.

By way of conclusion, we might consider how the butterfly registered in the most *fumiste* and avant-garde of America's 1890s bibelots, *Le Petit Journal des Refusées*. Despite having been repeatedly announced and promoted in *The Lark*, *Le Petit Journal des Refusées* published just one issue, in the summer of 1896. Redolent of the Parisian counterculture's art exhibitions outside the official salons, the bibelot seemed to be after the kind of emptying of idealism from art suggested by Sapeck's *Mona Lisa Smoking a Pipe*, as well as the awkward and nonsensical effect brought to mind when objects that seem to come out of nowhere can actually be recognized, at several levels of remove, as having been elsewhere first. It carries on in the early pages with numerous pictures of both cats and cows, which index "le chat noir" and also Burgess's "purple cow" from *The Lark* (in which magazine, you will recall, the idea for *Le Petit Journal des Refusées* had first been floated). A comical short story of less than 300 words, "What Smith Tried to Believe (Refused by St. Nicholas, Bibelot, New Review, Polynesian Monitor and San Francisco Climax)" is accompanied by primitivist and, perhaps even proto-dadaist images: what appear to be African masks and Corinthian columns wearing glasses.

The bibelot was only twelve pages long, only a wisp of a thing, and it was oddly shaped. At first, the shape seems random, which goes along with the odd thickness and feel of the paper. It was printed on random strips of old wallpaper on which a faint satiny pattern can still be detected. But when you open it, you see that the bibelot was actually shaped like a butterfly, its spine the body and its pages the wings. As I read it, the idea might have been to register the bibelot, itself, as a fetish object — part and parcel with the Japanese obei in *Vogue*. But the point would be to suggest that the aesthetic modality here depended on an idea about circulation that was entirely different from the period's prevailing, realist and idealist aesthetic modes. *Le Petit Journal des Refusées* insists that we recognize its aesthetic in terms of circulatory frisson, not in the prevailing terms of representation and truth as established by Howells and other major critics. It points us to the edges of its public, and, indeed, just beyond — that pointing being definitive of its aesthetic modality.

I include here, in full, the one piece from the journal that does, on occasion, get reproduced: an acrostic in the citational mode so familiar in the bibelots. We might think of it as a blueprint, a diagram mapping out the vogue for the little magazines by way of an elaborate, scale-free network.

A is for Art of the age-end variety;
We Decadants simply can't get a satiety.

B is for Beardsley, the idol supreme,
Whose drawings are not half so bad as they seem.

C is for Chap-Book, the pater familias
Of magazines started by many a silly ass.

D is for Darn it—it's awfully shocking
Your Dekel-edge Hosiery, Mistress Stocking

E is for Editor; what does it mean?
Everyone now runs his own magazine.

F is for Freak: see the great exposition
Of freak magazines—5 and 10 cents admission

G is for Goup; I would much rather be
A nice Purple Cow than a G-O-U-P.

H is for Humbug attempts to be Horrid!
(See Mlle. New York, she's decidedly torrid.)

I am an Idiot, awful result
Of reading the rot of the Yellow Book cult.

J is for JENSON the TYPE of the day,
Some people can't read any other, they say.

K is for Kimaball, assistant of Stone;
I wonder how he will get on all alone.

L is for Lark and the fellows who planned it
Say even they cannot but half understand it!

M is for Magazines recklessly recent
I know of but one that is anyways decent

N stands for Nothing; I wish it had stood for
A little bit more than the Fly-Leaf was good for

O's for Oblivion—ultimate fate
Of most of the magazines published of late

P is for Poster; the best one, by far,
Is the one that was made for our own P.J.R. (Price 4 bits.)

Q is for Quarrel; Harte, Hubbard and Taber
To run the Philistine, each other belabor

R is for Rubbish; are you looking for some?
Just open the Bauble and put down your thumb.

S is for Stevie Crane, infant precocious,
Who has written some lines that are simply ferocious.

U is for Useless and far beneath notice;
But I don't want to say all of that of the Lotus.

V is for Versification and Verse;
We thought Chips was bad, but the Olio's worse.

W's for Woman, whom editors humor:
In the new field of letters, perennial bloomer.

X is for Something Unknown—let us say
How in the world do these magazines pay?

Y is for Young, and I marveled to learn
That fifty's the average age of les Jeunes.

Z is for Zounds! What unspeakable deco-
Rativeness Bradley has furnished for Echo.

The ephemeral bibelots of the 1890s were antecedents, if discontinuous ones, of the more well-known modernist little magazines from the 1910s. In the last edition of *The Lark*, its editor Gelett Burgess published an insightful essay on the craze for the little magazines, which he concluded with the line, “Little enough good has come of it that one can see at present, but the sedition is broached, and the next rebellion may have more blood to spill.” Between 1897, when he wrote these lines, and 1907, when *The New Age* appeared, and 1914, when others like *BLAST* start to come out, little magazines continue to be published. But the wave of accelerated interest from 1895 to 1903, defined by this aesthetics of circulation with gaps, decelerated exponentially. It is well worth thinking about the extent to which a magazine like *BLAST* reactivated the ephemeral bibelots' same network. Sometimes, it sounds like the editors of *BLAST* had the earlier vogue in mind as an antithesis to their own, while at other times the bibelots of the 1890s sound like its direct antecedents. In its “Manifesto,” opening Volume 1, Number 1, *BLAST* “cursed” the fin de siècle's aestheticism, generally. But at the same time, it “blessed” the stand of the communards of 1870 that led to the artistic hedonism of Montmartre. And it blessed,

explicitly, the “STAYING POWER... [of the] cat.” I would presume that it is the same cat as before, and in so doing return our attention to the gaps.

WHILE THE 1890S IS LARGELY ASSOCIATED with the "magazine revolution" and the birth of the mass-market magazine, Burgess's comments point to the existence of the contemporaneous efflorescence of a more experimental and amateurish form of print that he calls the fadazine. His portrait of the prolific nature of the movement, one in which he, himself, participated, is hardly exaggerated. Although accounts as to numbers vary, ranging from nearly three hundred titles identified in bibliographies of the period by F. W. Faxon to the over eleven hundred claimed by Elbert Hubbard, a major