The Tempest and the Savages: Franz Marc, Hugo Ball, and a Decisive Moment in Dada-Expressionist Theater

With a Special Appearance by August Macke

Jean Marie Carey

Introduction

This article discusses Franz Marc’s 1914 essay “Das abstrakte Theater”¹ (Fig. 01), and the events surrounding an “Expressionist” production of Shakespeare’s Der Sturm planned by Marc and Hugo Ball the same year. Marc’s position in this detour from painting and writing can be understood in terms of his embrace of “die ‘Wilden’” – “the ‘Savages’” – an idea Marc introduces in 1912’s Blaue Reiter Almanac – as a metaphorical aspiration and as a state of being for both artists and the public as patrons of the arts and citizens of modernity. I also bring recognition to August Macke’s background in theatrical theory and design in terms of how this influenced Marc, particularly in analysis of the artists’ collaboration on Macke’s contribution to the Blaue Reiter Almanac, the essay “Die Masken,” and how this relates to the Der Sturm project.² I propose a way of understanding how Marc’s beliefs in the paradoxically beneficial power of destruction dovetailed with Ball’s theology. In the context of this background information I give close reading of paintings Marc made of the Caliban and Miranda characters from Der Sturm. I also correct inaccuracies in the record regarding the chronologies of this encounter between these protagonists of
Dada and Expressionism, and in our understanding of Marc’s text itself. Viewing this data in holistic manner allows new interpretations of influences and collaborations amid the historical avant-garde.

**Fig.01**: Franz Marc, Fragmentary First Page of „Das abstrakte Theater,” 1914. Das Archiv für Bildende Kunst im Germanischen Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, Germany.
Marc, who was adept at “playing” himself, certainly recognized the cathartic possibilities of subversive performance, having launched the dynamic interaction between Wassily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. In fact the second, unrealized edition of the Blaue Reiter Almanac was to have been more fully dedicated to the performing arts. Marc believed live, intermedial performance was capable of reconciling and perpetuating the Blaue Reiter’s disruptive intentions, which had goals of practical as well as spiritual benefits.

Marc had always been agreeable to cross-medium projects as experiments rather than philosophical Gesamtkunstwerk and throughout his career produced toys, furniture, glass paintings, costumes for Fasching, and his own clothes and shoes. In fact Marc’s first “public” work was neither writing nor painting but a weaving pattern he had designed with Annette von Eckardt, published as a booklet in 1908.

In June 1914 Marc wrote “Das abstrakte Theater,” an essay seemingly about how the need for new rituals of performance meshed with the goals of die Neue Malerei. Marc’s raw text is riddled with violent imagery, but the essay’s analytical maneuver is its reminder that revolutionary praxis is not available only to the dispossessed, but to the artistic class and its patrons. Thus the conservative tendencies of capitalist diversions – such as the theater – could lead to unexpectedly radical results, particularly when those tendencies are disrupted, an activity which in and of itself benefits the disempowered. However, like much of Marc’s prose, “Das abstrakte Theater,” while lyrical, is also confusing and thin on how exactly his plan might move to fruition. Therefore I compare the essay to Marc’s “Die ’Wilden’ Deutschlands” which is similar in theme, has a connection to the Shakespeare play, and was well-edited for its inclusion in Der Blaue Reiter Almanac (as was Macke’s “Die Masken”).

A Note on the Telephone and Communications

Of course we are aware of something that, in the spring of 1914 as Ball and Marc made plans for Der Sturm, is mercifully unknown to our protagonists: that the soon-to-begin war will culminate in a tragedy beyond the farthest reaches of the Shakespearean. Marc and Macke will soon die. Given the monumentality of events, it seems obvious to draw the conclusion, as have other scholars, that it was the war that interrupted plans for Der Sturm, and that for the same reason scant documentation exists of the planning sessions between Marc and Ball. However the outbreak of the war was not the cause either of the cancellation of the play nor for the dearth of data. Though not the main point of my article, this fact is nonetheless very important to note as it suggests the historiography of Expressionism is still being discovered.

As a preliminary, though, I want to point out a fact considered little in the literature about Marc: In April 1914, the painter moved from the very modest and primitive studio he had for four years rented in the rural Oberbayern village of Sindelsdorf to nearby Ried. As a Dorf, Ried was no less provincial, but there Marc owned a small parcel of land upon which was built a relatively new house offering electric lights, an
indoor bathroom with running hot water, a full kitchen – and a telephone. Concurrent with the move to Ried there is precipitous drop in Marc’s archived correspondence, which does not resume until Marc’s deployment in the Bayerischen Füßartillerie-Regiment in the fall. I propose that the reason for this lapse is the communication-loving Marc’s fascination with the new device. In fact Marc was delighted that modern technology enabled him to continue to live and work outside München’s urban center while maintaining constant contact with his network of friends and associates.\textsuperscript{11}

\section*{Background}

Despite being busy with the move, early 1914 found Marc restless. He was just beginning to earn money from his painting, but the Blaue Reiter was on hiatus, the graphic works and paintings from the exhibitions on satellite tours in Germany and abroad. The partnership between himself and Kandinsky was dormant if not officially dissolved, though the men remained in contact. Marc continued, in fact, to represent the Blaue Reiter as a cohesive unit.\textsuperscript{12}

At the same time, while painting his late masterworks, Marc wrote articles and essays championing modern art in particular and progressive politics more broadly for Herwarth Walden’s (coincidentally-named) Der Sturm journal. Marc knew Ball from the periphery of the Blaue Reiter’s activities but reconnected with him through Walden, with whom Ball was organizing an exhibition of paintings to be shown in the lobby of the Münchner Kammerspiele where Ball was employed.\textsuperscript{13}

In the spring of 1914 Ball invited Marc to help organize a production of Shakespeare’s Der Sturm, also involving the Düsseldorf Kammerspiele, initially commissioning Marc as a set designer.\textsuperscript{14} Marc made something of a counter-offer; a vision for the collaborative production that was grandiose, wide-ranging, international, and communitarian.

\section*{Marc, Ball and What Happened}

The need for a revamped “realist theater” was occasionally voiced by politically-minded cultural critics of the day who were supporters of the avant-gardes, such as Adolf Behne.\textsuperscript{15} Marc too called with increasing ardor for more aggressive action on raising the profile of modern artists.\textsuperscript{16} However Marc, who considered himself something a creative writer, was simultaneously interested in the dissolving of direct language into complicated metaphor, underscoring that the literal word, and thus the preordained function of the script – even one written by Shakespeare – had lost its central role.\textsuperscript{17} In general terms, the München theater of the avant-gardes was not initially based in the nonlinear vein in which Dada would soon become associated, but was much closer to the idea of “retheatricalization” associated with the models that arose from Symbolism.\textsuperscript{18} Both men were compelled by the writings of the
symbolist poet Stephan Mallarmé, Ball being interested in Mallarmé’s typographical experiments whereas Marc was drawn to Mallarmé’s metaphors and allegories. Mallarmé dreamed that a poetics dedicated to the void would provide the secular foundation for new forms of sociality and public ritual. Though coming from the opposite theological concern as a radical Roman Catholic, Ball concurred with Mallarmé’s insight that the “death of God” would imply the word’s lack of divinity, but conceived this condition as the result of a historical process of profanation at the hands of techno-rationalist society’s “modern necrophilia”: “The word has been abandoned; it used to dwell among us. The word has become commodity … and has lost all dignity.”

Marc saw his role not only as creator of redemptive images but as destroyer. Marc conceives of, and in many cases performs, acts of destruction as the necessary, cleansing groundwork for the world – not just the arts community, but all of civilization – to come. Thus Ball detected in Marc a compatible tendency that he accepted as spiritually motivated.

Marc’s and Ball’s dealings seem mostly to have to taken place via in-person meetings in Munich cafés and perhaps at the Kammerspiele on the Maximilianstraße, so the curious Marc could look around. Ball, who since 1912 had been a sort of Handsdampf in allen Gassen for the theater, was already experimenting with the political-minded nihilism expressed as performance that would become his short-lived contribution to Dada. The concept of “new theater” espoused by Ball and Marc had little to do with the prevailing Wagnerian paradigm nor the general European veneration of Shakespeare. So it is significant that Ball thought to reimagine a “classic” work by a revered playwright who was moreover not even German. The invention of this hybrid, and the new form suggested by Ball, the updated classic, which seems familiar to us now was at the time quite novel, the result of an interaction between a new expressive need and the creation of a popular new genre.

The letter we have from Marc dated 8 April 1914 to Ball finds the native Bavarian laying out the set of ethical and physical conditions under which he would contribute to the production. These demands were extravagant, including a musical score commissioned especially for the production and a full orchestra to perform this music. Marc was serious in this ambition, as the very next day, 9 April 1914, he wrote an urgent note to Kandinsky, requesting contact information for Arnold Schönberg, in order to propose to the composer the idea of penning the score for the play.

Marc’s production would challenge audiences with bizarre scenery items, outrageous costumes, and dissonant soundscapes. Thinking even more broadly, Marc sought the collaboration of kindred spirits interested in “etwas produktive Neues versucht warden [trying something new and productive],” a rupture with the convention of the passive audience observing the removed performers. Marc envisioned the sensory extravaganza featuring rotating matinee performances of Der
Sturm, Kandinsky’s *Die gelbe Klang*, and the 18th Century Japanese samurai epic *Chūshingura*.

This radical plan was, predictably, thwarted by the Düsseldorf theater community’s established directors, who threatened to withdraw financial support for the project. Marc had already told Ball that in terms of “halben Sache mitzuwerken” he had “nicht die geringste Lust,” and, ensnared by his own braggadocio, he backed down, and out, of the production. Ultimately, a traditional performance with characters in Elizabethan costumes and a conventional set directed by Gustav Lindemann of the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus with music by Anton Beer Walbrunn and costumes designed by Franz Naager began an eight-week engagement at the Münchner Künstlertheater in the Ausstellungspark on the Isar in mid-June 1914.

But Marc was not ready to drop the subject. On 9 July 1914, he wrote to his brother Paul, a Byzantine scholar at Ludwig Maxmilians-Universität with much experience helping his hotheaded younger sibling: “…erkundige Dich doch bitte, ob am Mittwoch oder Donnerstag Der Sturm im Künstlertheater gegeben wird, und wenn ja, könntest uns 2 nach Möglichkeit billige Plätze verschaffen […please find out if The Tempest will be performed on Wednesday or Thursday and if so, if two cheap seats are available]?”

That summer saw Ball put the finishing touches on his own original play, *Der Henker von Brescia: Drei Akte der Not und Ekstase*, and he also began making contributions to *Die Aktion*, which resembled in format the later Dada journals.

**Macke as Mercutio**

I give this detailed account of Macke’s *bona fides* to demonstrate the depth of the influence he was likely able to assert upon Marc’s thinking and to show that the protagonists of Expressionism readily mixed painting with pursuits in the performing arts. Though *Der Sturm* was Marc’s first active attempt to “put on a show,” he had given much thought and discussion to the idea of the theater, as he held dear someone who *did* know a lot about the subject – August Macke, who, as a precocious 19-year-old, had a few years previously been stage designer in residence for the very theater in Düsseldorf solicited by Ball to collaborate on *Der Sturm*.

Marc met Macke at the beginning of 1910, and the bon vivant from Bonn quickly turned Marc’s head toward the artist collectives outside Munich and Berlin and the increasing integration of the performing, decorative, and applied arts into the world of “high” art. Marc admired and was also somewhat amazed by Macke’s prolific youthful achievements. The men developed “*eine erotisch-platonische FreundschaftsLiebe*” that expressed itself in furious introjection into each another’s lives and work, so there can be no doubt that Marc was greatly interested in Macke’s forays into the theater. Macke was also very well-acquainted with the work of Shakespeare.
From 1906, Macke occasionally attended drawing and painting classes with his private instructor – Lovis Corinth – as well as classes at the Kunstkademie Düsseldorf. He befriended the writer Wilhelm Schmidtbonn, who then was dramatic director at the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus. Schmidtbonn introduced the 19-year-old Macke to the circle around Louise Dumont and Gustav Lindemann, the theater’s assistant-directors. Macke was commissioned to create stage and costume designs for their productions, notably for Macbeth, and was also a regular theatergoer. In early 1907 Macke received an offer to work on a permanent basis as stage designer at the Schauspielhaus, but, still unsure of his professional direction, declined. By November he had also left the Düsseldorf Academy for good.

![Fig.02: August Macke, Russisches Ballet (I), 1912. (Oil painting, 103 x 81 cm.) Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany.](image)

Meanwhile, Macke began exploring an essentially theatrical issue that resurfaces in the Blaue Reiter Almanac. As Ursula Heiderich has painstakingly documented, Macke’s dialectical interest in the issue of “the mask” began in 1907 with his discovery of two essays by Oscar Wilde: “The Decay of Lying” and “The Truth of Masks.” In a 1907 letter to Elisabeth Erdmann, shortly before their marriage, Macke cites Wilde with the sentence: “In point of fact, what is interesting about people is the mask that each one of them wears, not the reality that lies behind the mask.” He adds: “The mask is the writing; the language of Shakespeare is art.”

In 1911, since his previous creative work had given many indications of his interest in the subject, it is no surprise that it was Macke who Marc believed could support the theoretical and programmatic regime of the Blaue Reiter Almanac in making the complex associations between primitivism, identity, theatricality, and modernist art. Macke’s essay “Die Masken” (in fact very broadly) examines these issues. (Fig.02)
Marc, who had sped through the three essays he contributed to the Almanac, had to help Macke complete “Die Masken,” and even got publisher Reinhard Piper to hold off the printing of the first run of the Almanac so Macke’s essay could be slipped in at the last second. Thus Marc was very familiar with its contents. In “Die Masken” Macke equates forms with masks, and refers to form as a “mystery” in the sense of an “expression of mysterious powers.” In this he again voices Marc’s central interest, for form here has the status of an expression of the inner: “Man expresses his life in forms. Every art form is an expression of his inner life.” Essential to Macke’s reasoning is that all art is a form of theater and thus all artworks are to be understood as masks, insofar as something – the artist’s inner life – intrinsically lies concealed behind them, the externalization of which occurs in forms. The mask reveals what is normally hidden, and presents in an exaggerated form the inner turned outward. In Macke’s words: “Ungraspable ideas express themselves in graspable forms.” While Marc tended to play off the inner as the spiritual against the outer as banal, Macke noted a reciprocal identity: “The outside of the art form is its inside.”

In an elaboration on these binaries, just as Macke referenced motifs from the theater to animate the watercolor paintings made on his famous trip to Tunisia in April 1914, Marc was inspired to take a break from painting to try his hand with the theater itself.

“Das abstrakte Theater” / “Die Wilden Deutschlands”

Once it was clear Marc’s vision for Der Sturm had been quashed, Marc expressed his frustration over this disappointment, and offered as well some more general thoughts on the challenges to gaining acceptance for advanced art. Thus “Das abstrakte Theater,” written while the production at the Künstlertheater was in progress, was penned not in advance as the theoretical underpinnings of his imagined project but in response to its demise. Marc continued tinkering with the essay “nicht mehr aus der Feder,” as he confessed to Macke on 10 June 1914 - the day after he would have attended the performance – but in terms of developing it further, “im Stelle, ich kann’s nicht lassen.” In fact this mournful statement makes exactly that clear: “Wir wissen, daß unser Beginnen hier wie in der Malerei für die Allgemeinheit verfrüht ist, daß die Stunde des modernen Theaters noch nicht erfüllt ist. [We know that our foundations here, as in painting, are premature for the general public, that the hour of modern theater is not yet upon us.]” The essay does contain some ideas that give us insight both into Marc’s ideas about how “the new art” might evolve beyond painting, and about how he connected ideas from his earlier chapter from the Blaue Reiter Almanac, “Die ‘Wilden’ Deutschlands,” to both the “Das abstrakte Theater” and his visualizations of characters from Der Sturm.

Marc was a speedy writer who often produced first (and only) drafts and then published them directly with minimal editorial intervention – even when he had exacting professional editors/publishers such as Bruno and Paul Cassirer, Herwarth Walden, or Reinhard Piper. Marc’s prose sometimes begins with conventional
theses, but his writings often depart from a linear structure, and informed more by obscure references and asides and made-up words, and end up sounding less than sensible.\textsuperscript{45} The essay is divided into two portions, and deals explicitly with the theater mostly in the first. So as he had done in the past,\textsuperscript{46} Marc rants against the prevailing societal conditions rather than proposing many practical solutions for how a change in these conditions might actually come about.

“Das abstrakte Theater” is a manifesto-style piece that most closely resembles “Die ‘Wilden’ Deutschlands [The ‘Savages’ of Germany]” which had been published, edited by Kandinsky, in the \textit{Blaue Reiter} Almanac. “Die ‘Wilden’ Deutschlands” is also thematically connected with both the content of \textit{Der Sturm} and the characters Marc was drawn to in the play. Marc’s adopts the aggressive language and divisive stance of the Modernist manifesto. In his brief survey of modernist groups of German painters – Die Brücke, the Neue Secession in Berlin, and the NKVM – who “brachten … neues, gefährliches Leben in das Land [brought … new, dangerous life to the country],” Marc conceives these “Wilden” “in des großen Kampfes … gegen eine alte, organisierte Macht [in a huge battle against and old and organized force]” – a battle the savages will win because “ihre neuen Gedanken; sie töten besser als Stahl und brechen, was für unzerbrechlich galt [their new thoughts kill better than steel and break what was considered unbreakable].” Eschewing detachment, Marc identifies himself clearly as one of the “savages” (“streiten wir [we fight]”) who welcome other fighters in solidarity: “Vor der trotzigen Freiheit dieser Bewegung… wir ›Münchener‹ nur mit tausend Freuden begrüßen … Wir reichen ihnen, unbekannt, im Dunkeln unsere Hand [In the face of the defiant freedom of this movement … we greet ‘Müncheners’ with a thousand joyful greetings … We extend to them, unknown, our hand in the dark].”

The essays also both contain edgy, short, single-sentence invectives. Thus, in combative language, divisive stances, confident assertions and partly in their forms, “Die ‘Wilden’ Deutschlands” and “Das abstrakte Theater” are very similar both to the other types of manifestos proliferating at the time – particularly those of the Futurists with whom both Marc and Ball were familiar – and with Ball’s Dada manifesto which emerges in 1916.\textsuperscript{47}

“Das abstrakte Theater” rejects the existing “nature” of theater or rather looks to destroy it, namely to show the powerful laws that prevail in reality and intrude into even an ostensibly “pretend” experience.\textsuperscript{48} As before, Marc places the responsibility for this rupture with die “Wilden” of the future:

The depression of our theater corresponds to the artistic depression of our time. But as some of the young innovators of today’s art emerge, their restlessness will finally find a place on the stage. The theater that we will have in a few decades is still a mystery to us all, because these crucial works have not yet been created.\textsuperscript{49}
Marc makes his explicit his wish to use theater as a rebuke to these doldrums “die Gewohnheit der Langeweile Lügen strafen ….” In fact he cites this “Langeweile” several times in this passage as a central ill to be addressed. (Keeping in mind that this is a “first draft,” Marc probably would have changed his vocabulary to a different word, perhaps “Selbstzufriedenheit.”)

It wouldn’t be Marc without an obscure reference, and we get that in this long sentence:

Even the technical triumphs of this strange age are not positive values; they negate the past; they are incomparable in their great eagerness to clean up, to “enlighten” and arrange; the true scholars such as Jules Fabre and the great chemical analysts know this, a fact which the masses are not permitted to learn for the sake of “faith” and “propaganda.”

Marc is actually referring not to Jules Fabre d’Envieu, who had been a theologian at the Sorbonne in the middle of the 19th Century, but to the so-called poet of science, Jean Henri Fabre, of volume of whose writings Marc had in his library, to which he made many annotations and notes in the margins.

**The Caliban and Miranda Paintings**

In his imaginings for the production of *Der Sturm*, two characters from the play, Caliban, the hybrid creature of a dark enchantment, and Miranda, the ostensibly passive daughter of the main protagonist, Prospero, particularly caught Marc’s attention. I see this as an extension of identification with the “die ‘Wilden’” that was ingrained in Marc’s belief system, but which he had also adopted as persona.
Interestingly, as with the essay “Das abstrakte Theater,” Marc’s drawings of Caliban and Miranda were not, as has been reported, preliminary sketches for costumes for an interrupted production. Though perhaps he held out hope for a reincarnation of the project, Marc already knew that the immediate plan had fallen through. So what, then, do these images, created in July 1914 and so unusual in Marc’s œuvre, represent?52
I believe these anomalous figures were important to Marc personally. They are hardly “sketches” in the anticipatory sense of the word. Rather each tempera-on-paper leaf is a bit larger than conventional “sketchbook” size, 39.5 by 40 centimeters, with carefully washed and hatched backgrounds, Miranda’s of pale citron and Caliban’s shades of pale violet, rose, and ochre. The figures themselves have similarities and discontinuities, and in them, Marc toys with conventional representations of the characters and with his own feelings and ideas about modernity, sex, and “die ‘Wilden.’”

In Marc’s conception, rejecting the Shakespearean convention, it is Caliban who is fully dressed, in a harlequin’s leggings reminiscent of the generic representation of “Elizabethan” theatrical garb of purple and red with a pattern of circles from thigh to calf. The circular forms fall, in movement, from Caliban’s aggressive stride and are picked up in his torso as a sort of flanged coat (concealing a tail?). Triangles and circles dominate the composition. Marc carefully articulates Caliban’s hand and fingers, even showing us the lines in Caliban’s palm as the figure both confronts onlookers and repels impedence. The landscape Caliban traverses is an indeterminate outdoor space as likely to be the hills around Ried as the unnamed Mediterranean island where the play takes place.

Caliban’s face recalls “Die Masken,” playing with the idea of the mask as raised by Macke. Is Caliban is wearing a mask, or startling “tribal” make up – or neither? Could Caliban’s “real” face be more shocking to us in its naked state than a theatrical costume could ever be? In fact Marc marks Caliban with certain “Wilden” features – eyes rimmed with crimson, pupils as horizontal slits, like a goat’s, and a scruffy yellow beard, also like a goat’s or satyr’s. Caliban’s mouth is an “O” of agitation, a black pit, and another tuft of hair perches between his eyes in the inverted triangle of Caliban’s face, curiously, in opposition to Kandinsky’s principle of ascending triangles.

At the top vertices of the strongly diagonal composition, Caliban raises his left arm and crooks his elbow so that his long-fingered hand rakes a forelock of striking, silky black, ruffling his own hair, in a gesture self-comfort. In the many photographs of Marc from this time the artist, too, has a pronounced cowlick very similar to Caliban’s. So Caliban animates Marc’s idea of the “savage,” but he covers his nakedness with clothing. Marc, the prelapsarian, actually thought this was congruent not with civilization but the uptight bourgeois he was fighting against. Yet the rendering of the distressed Caliban is not without compassion.
Marc’s Miranda is also graphically innovative and psychologically fraught. Miranda picks up and echoes the vibrant, triangular forms from the figure of Caliban. Here Marc gives us not a hesitant teen but a modern young woman in vigorous movement, with a dark bob and twirling skirt. Firstly, the painting – and to reiterate, these are paintings, so, given Marc’s slow working style, painstakingly and thoughtfully executed – echoes the strong reliance on diagonals and juxtaposition of
circles and triangles as seen in the Caliban motif. The same chartreuse and yellow land forms swell in the left of the panel.

One of Shakespeare’s weaker female characters, described in the play by her father, Prospero, as the “Eve of an enchanted Paradise,” Marc recreates Miranda as powerful, personable, and contemporary. One of the factors that does not figure into Marc’s pantheistische desires is an Eden without an Eve. In fact Marc was fascinated with the idea of a Paradies where humans and animals lived harmoniously together, without the conventional monotheistic god (Fig.05).57

Marc’s Miranda-as-Eve is made in the figure of the woman most beloved to him, Annette von Eckardt, who in Marc’s many drawings is shown with (in contrast to the elaborate Biedermaier braids and buns of the day worn by many women in Munich, including his wife) with her short dark hair swept back from her face in a simple bob – a version of the “flapper” haircut that would not become broadly popular until after the war. This modern Miranda is more of a vision from the future of Louise Brooks and Coco Chanel, with her short, ruched aquamarine skirt, tanned skin, tiny waist and small breasts. Looking out at us, she swings her arms in an echo of Caliban’s, vigorously but also in a state of less agitation, as she strides purposefully out of the frame, into the future. She is shown walking away from the confining angles, literally comfortable in her bare skin, ready to assume the role of an assertive Eve in a modern paradise.

But Marc’s painting has a washed undertone that suggest perhaps Miranda’s independence is not easily won. Miranda’s face is half superimposed over the face of another, itself another dual-visaged figure, one half in chalk white, the other, facing away, in coffee-stain brown surging outside its own outline. A third figure Marc – whose use of the outline as a metaphor for the distinctions between the inner and outer worlds is one of his outstanding trademarks – juts out of the lower center panel, picking up the shimmer of Miranda’s skirt...a reflection, or an apparition? The figures have no explicit correlation to any of the other characters in Der Sturm, and can perhaps be read as a manifestation of Miranda’s animus.

Conclusion

Just past the centennial of the death of Marc and the birth of Dada’s incarnation in Zurich and Berlin, we should also allow ourselves to indulge in a moment of wondering “what if…” the Der Sturm project had come to fruition. It is more than doubtful that it would have lived up to the radical nature of the ideas originally formulated by Marc and Ball (and by extension, Macke), and which Ball never attempted to put into practice in an immediate form again.

The historical legacies of Marc and Ball have neatly diverged, with each accorded a secure and separate place in the established narratives of European intellectual life. But the scholarly silence on the Ball-Marc encounter has the benefit of allowing us to
recover this episode in the manner outlined by Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real*, which, although indebted in retrospect to a somewhat dated postmodern dependence on psychoanalytic theory, proposes nonetheless practical approaches for how the historical avant-gardes may be seen as more fully resolved and, yet, somehow “alive.”

In these episodes of recovery and “deferred action” from the historiography of the historical avant-garde are reminders to us as researchers and scholars of how much there is that we still do not know about events that occurred only a century ago. Imagine how much we have still to learn.

Further, the theater remains an intrinsically conservative art form, and now, more than ever, the questions of identity, concealment, and performativity posed by Macke’s “Die Masken” and the role of “die ‘Wilden’” in auguring changes in popular entertainment that reverberate in the “real” world are crucially relevant. Finally, taking greater note of the role of the relationship of Marc and Macke in the story of Expressionism does make the connection to Shakespeare Marc attempted, as we see Marc and Macke as the amusing but also oblivious and doomed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern just as much as we can view Marc as the troubled Hamlet, probing questions of destiny and the meaning of existence. Macke – who provides so much mirth, whose early death
marks the turn to tragedy, and whose visions and wit threaten to overshadow the main characters – is, I have always thought, a particularly poignant Mercutio.

Notes

1 Published four years after Marc’s death, “Das abstrakte Theater,” first appeared in 1920 in a collection of Marc’s writing called Briefe, Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen (Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1920), prepared from Marc’s handwritten notes with the assistance of his widow, Maria Marc. For the purposes of this paper I refer to the version published in Franz Marc: Schriften, (Köln: DuMont, 1978) S. 186), which was more fully deciphered by Marc’s intrepid biographer, Klaus Lankheit. The fragmentary document itself is today housed in the Marc Nachlass at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nürnberg.


3 Maria Stavrinaki makes a case that Marc was mentally unbalanced to the point of being delusional for much of his life, and so detached from reality during his military service in Verdun that his writings must be interpreted essentially as the unreliable narration of someone undergoing a psychotic break. Though I disagree, I support Stavrinaki’s general argument that Marc experienced dissociative psychological states, and that this tendency manifested itself through the performance of a number of “roles,” from aspiring celibate priest to Breton peasant to Bavarian farmer to Parisian dandy, and, of course, sophisticated but rebellious artist. See: Franz Marc, Maria Stavrinaki, and Thomas de Kayser. Écrits et correspondances. Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 2006; and Maria Stavrinaki, “Messianic Pains: The Apocalyptic Temporality in Avant-Garde Art, Politics, and War,” Modernism/Modernity 18, no. 2 (2011).

4 Franz Marc, August Macke: Briefwechsel. (Köln: DuMont, 1964), 38-42.

5 For a thorough account of the history of the Almanac, see Jessica Horsley, almanach des ’Blauen Reiters’ als Gesamtkunstwerk: eine interdisziplinäre Untersuchung (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006). A first exhibition took place at München’s Galerie Thannhauser (19 December 1911-1 January 1912), then toured other cities. A second exhibition of graphics was shown at the Kunsthandling Goltz in München (12 February-18 Marc 1912) and then at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Köln (May-June 1912). In addition to contributions from August Macke and others about the theater, the second edition was to include poems by Gottfried Benn as well as photographs and essays about the proliferation of photography as an artistic concern, plus reproductions of advertising leaflets and posters. There were plans from 1913 onward to publish chapters of the Bible illustrated by Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin, and Marc. According to Hugo Ball, a book on theater with contributions from Kandinsky, Marc, Klee, Kokoschka, Kubin and himself was envisaged in 1914; Hugo Ball, Die Flucht aus der Zeit (München/Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1927), pp. 12-15.


10 “Ich habe jetzt ein Telefon!” [Postcard from Marc to Walden], from the Franz Marc/Der Sturm Nachlass, Deutsches Archiv für Bildende Kunst im Germanischen Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.

11 Though a typical Romantic utopian in some ways, Marc is far from a Luddite, and is enthusiastic about advances in the sciences: “Unser modernes Leben und Denken ist so durch und durch futuristisch vom Telefon bis zu den X-Strahlen … Das mediumistische Durchdringen einer Materie können wir durch die X-Strahlen gewissermaßen experimentell ausführen, das Schweben, d.h. das Aufheben des spezifischen Gewichtes, durch magnetische Experimente belegen. Ist nicht unser Telegraphenapparat eine Mechanisierung der berühmten Klopftöne? Oder die drahtlose Telegraphie ein Exempel der Telepatie? Die Grammophonplatte scheint experimentell zu beweisen, daß die Verstorbenen noch zu uns reden können [Our modern lifestyle is so thoroughly futuristic from the phone to X-rays … The mediumistic permeation of a matter through X-rays can, so to speak, be carried out experimentally; also the elimination of specific gravity, as evidenced by magnetic experiments. Is not our telegraph apparatus a mechanization of the ‘spirit knocking?’ Or the wireless telegraph an example of telepathy? The gramophone record seems to prove that the deceased can still speak to us],” ›Zur Kritik der Vergangenheit‹, (1914); Franz Marc: <em>, pp. 141-142.

12 In a letter dated 17 September 1913 from Lyonel Feininger to Alfred Kubin, Feininger marvels over Marc’s having signed all of the invitations to participate in the group exhibitions not with his own name but as “Der Blaue Reiter” Klaus Lankheit, Franz Marc: sein Leben u. seine Kunst. (Köln: DuMont, 1976), p. 110. Regarding Marc’s personal feelings, though, in a letter to Maria Marc: “Es ist vorbei mit dem Blauen Reiter [It’s finished with the Blaue Reiter…]” Franz Marc: Briefe, Schriften, Aufzeichnungen. (Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1989), pp. 112-113.


17 Marc must have understood that particularly with a production of a Shakespeare play the dialogue would continue to have important currency. <em>Franz Marc – the Complete Works: Volumes 1-3</em>, (London: Philip Wilson, 2004-2011). “Volume 1: The Oil Paintings” contains Lenbachhaus curator Isabelle Jansen’s useful overview of Marc’s personal library and his interest in the Symbolist poets, noting Marc had annotated several volumes of Mallarmé’s work.

18 The Bavarian capital tended to welcome less verbal and more visual variants of modern theater. The cross-pollination of theater and the applied arts was to be found in the most adventurous form of informal theater – for example Die Elfscharfrichter Münchner Kabaret – which appropriated the genres of popular theatrics (vaudeville and music halls). Such was the commodification of popular theatrics that, in 1914, the Marionettentheater and the Schwabinger Schattenspiele Theater were established as successful private theaters in München. See Peter Jelavich, “Die Elfscharfrichter: The Political and Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Cabaret in Wilhelmine Germany,” in <em>Turn of the Century: German Literature and Art 1890–1914</em>, Gerald Chapple and Hans H. Schulte (eds.), Bonn, 1981, p. 512, quoting from the supplement to the Scharfrichters’, “Zeichnungserklärungen bei Gründung des Kabaretts” (1910).
In fact, inspired by Mallarmé, Marc had written his own Symbolist poem: “ein rosafarbner Regen viel / auf grüne Wiesen. / die Luft war wie grünes Glas. / das Mädchen [sah auf’s] blickte in’s Wasser; das Wasser war klar [rein] wie Kristall; da weinte das Mädchen. / die Bäume zeigten ihre Ringe; die Tiere ihre Adern [a heavy pink-tinted rain / on green meadows. / the air was like green glass. / the girl [looked at] looked into the water; the water was clear [pure] like crystal; the girl wept. / the trees showed their rings; the animals their veins.” Printed in: Klaus Lankheit, Franz Marc, p. 124.

Mallarmé sought an incantory language divorced from all referential function, which Ball pursued in his experimental poems. See two accounts of this history: Jed Rasula, “Make It New,” Modernism/Modernity 17, no. 4 (2010) and Lewer’s, “Hugo Ball, Iconoclasm and the Origins of Dada in Zurich.” Ball’s later poetry experiment “Karawane” (1916) refers to Mallarmé’s poem Un Coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard (1897); Ball, Flucht aus der Zeit, p. 26. Wortkunst was also championed by Herwarth Walden in poets such as August Stramm, where rules of grammar and ordinary word usage was often sacrificed in favor of a more “abstract” use of words. The emotional quality of Marc’s writing was referenced by Walden in comparing the Sachlichkeit prose of Alfred Döblin, who wrote articles in Der Sturm through 1912, to the visual arts.

“…Wir leben in der Zeit eines ungeheuren Umschwunges aller Dinge, aller Ideen. … Ideen schwirren in der Luft wie Geschosse im Gefecht. Wir haben keine Zeit, die Knöpfe an unserer Uniform zu putzen [We live in the time of a tremendous reversal of all things, of all ideas. … Ideas are whizzing through the air like missiles. We do not have time to polish the buttons on our uniforms],” Franz Marc, “Zur Sache,” Der Sturm, 3 1912/13, Nr. 115/116, June 1912, p. 79.


One of the most successful interpretive modernizations of this type would have to wait until 1996’s Romeo + Juliet directed by Baz Luhrmann, which incorporates pop music, a color-saturated contemporary urban setting, and modern dress in much the way Marc seems to have envisioned. The Julie Taymor-directed version of The Tempest (2010) featured Helen Mirren as a formidable “Prospera” but did little to enhance the characterization of Miranda, played as an ingénue by Felicity Jones.

Franz Marc, Briefe, p. 95.

“For an account of preparations for the production, see “Hugo Ball: Das Münchner Künstlertheater,” Phoibus, 1 (1914): pp. 73-74.

Franz Marc, Briefe, p. 95.

30 Gollek, *Brenpunkt Der Moderne*, 43.

31 Ball, *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 56.

32 Marc and Macke often argued about artistic matters in their recorded correspondence, but since they spent a great deal of time together traveling, in each other’s homes, in cafés and just “walking and talking,” (as well as, as I point out, probably on the phone during 1914) it is virtually certain they talked about the theater at length as well. For an account of the commercial aspect of Macke’s theatrical enterprise, see: “August Macke’s Shoppers: Commodity Aesthetics, Modernist Autonomy and the Inexhaustible Will of Kitsch” by Sherwin Simmons in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, (2000). For a contextualization of Macke’s place in German Modernism see: Ursula Heiderich and Erich Franz. *August Macke Und Die Frühe Moderne in Europa*. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2001).

33 Macke was also a personal childhood friend of Wilhelm Worringer, the brother of Emmy Worringer, who led the Köln-based cabaret-salon the “Gereonsklub.” He owned a copy of Worringer’s theoretical dissertation *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* of 1907 and mentioned it to Marc on 19 July 1911. Marc, Macke: *Briefwechsel*, p. 60.

34 Ironically it was the departure of Schmidtbonn for Berlin that resulted in the promotion of the more traditional and conservative Lindemann, who then tangled with Marc and Ball over *Der Sturm*.

35 In April of 1907 Macke was offered another theatrical commission, this time to create murals and designs for the proscenium and walls of the performance space and stage area of the Hotel zur Sonne resort in Kandern. Though he had been one of the most sought-after set designers in Düsseldorf, these designs proved too distractingly bold and Macke’s work was removed before the public ever saw it. *August Macke and Franz Marc: An Artist Friendship*, ed. Volker Adolphs, et al. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje-Cantz, 2014), p. 253.
