An Examination of British Modernist Literary Patronage

Kristína Melišová
Masaryk University

Abstract. Part of a larger ongoing dissertation project, this article presents an application of patronage studies' methodology, namely Helleke van den Braber's (2021) model of post-romantic patronage, to selected British modernist patrons—Lady Ottoline Morrell and Lady Sibyl Colefax and the writers that they supported. It examines all the elements of van den Braber's model—the patron, the artist, the artwork and the public—as they interacted in relationships of patronage in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Thanks to the critical perspective offered by sociologists of art, especially Howard Becker and Pierre Bourdieu, who are among the central theoretical voices consulted in this article, it illustrates how modernist writers entered a complex exchange of capitals in order to escape the demands of the mainstream literary market. Besides commenting on the role of commodification in the modernist literary market, this article contributes to understanding of the conditions under which literary works are written, their value is influenced and notions of authorship and creative agency are problematised when a patron is involved.

Keywords: patronage, modernism, art worlds, field of cultural production, Ottoline Morrell, Sibyl Colefax.

1. Introduction

The argument of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (2014), first published in 1929, is generally accepted and the work is hailed as the pinnacle of the author's non-fiction, although the implications that it carries are almost never thought out in their most straightforward and material form. Due the perceived "ideological contradiction between art and money" (Wexler 1997, xii, 16), it might feel counterintuitive and somewhat "blasphemous" to consider the question of finances when studying the authors of the high modernist works. Many share the attitude of D. H. Lawrence, who, echoing Woolf's (2014, 112) proposed "five hundred a year" has written: "This money business disgusts me. I wish I had two hundred a year, and could send everybody to the devil" (Lawrence 1956, 354). With Hogarth Press at her disposal as a means to disseminate her work and the work of a few selected others (Lee 1997, 352, 440), as well as income from journalism (556-562), Woolf could afford what Lawrence desired. The path that he and other modernist writers less fortunate than Woolf had to navigate to create their work, however, offers an interesting insight into the dynamics of modernist cultural production.

The few studies of economic aspects of modernist work interested in these dynamics manage to map the relationship of "cultural [...] and economic modernity" (Comentale 2004, 6) and even correct simplifications about the modernists' relationship to publishing culture (Wexler 1997) but tend to disregard the role that personal patronage played in this period either altogether or view it only along the lines of material support. Alternatively, other studies favour a quantitative approach and thus fail to capture the intricacies of

interpersonal relationships governing patronage (Crozier 2022). An application of a methodology deeply rooted in patronage studies to the modernist creative milieu allows us to look for the real, often non-monetary, costs of production and to appreciate Lawrence Rainey's (1998, 3) claim that in its opposition to mass culture, modernist writers do not resist commodification but ratcreate "commodity of a special sort."

A primary argument for the inclusion of patronage in consideration of literature can be found in Howard Becker's seminal work *Art Worlds* (1982). As a sociologist of art, he shines light on the context in which artworks are created and the influence of the factors involved. Becker's main thesis emphasises that, far from a work of individual genius, artworks of any kind are dependent on a network of people contributing to their final form—the manufacturers of the materials used, patrons, sellers, critics, scholars and so on. Each factor—material as well as social—shapes the final outcome (1-2). Such an argument follows the postmodern turn of appreciating the Other, as well as questioning the myth of the romantic genius. More importantly for this debate, it raises questions about the pre-eminence of modernist individual creativity since it is a reminder of the involvement of various other people in the production of magna opera such as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is the latter work which Lawrence Rainey (1998, 7) takes as an example in his own study of modernist (non)commodification:

> If *Ulysses*, as is often said, is the archetypal narrative of modernism, it may not be an accident that its two male protagonists spend their day not in aimless wandering about the city of Dublin, as is often reported, but in a tireless search for patrons and patronage [...].

In theory, the technological developments that transformed the literary field and publishing at the end of the nineteenth century and brought about the "modern times" should democratise the field of production and establish a literary meritocracy in which everyone talented enough and working hard, no matter from what background, could find a publisher and earn a living this way. As Rainey (1998, 1) discovered, among those sharing this sentiment was also Charles Dickens:

> "Literature has turned happily from individual patrons, sometimes munificent, often sordid, always few, and has found there at once its highest purpose, its natural range of action and its best reward." "The people," Dickens concluded triumphantly, "have set Literature free." And in return for that gift of liberty, he opined, "Literature cannot be too faithful to the people."

If such a release did come, it certainly was not in a way that would be wholly satisfactory. As it is the case with the market in capitalist societies (Connor 1996, 13-27), profit-driven decision making took over and forced the publishers to seek more works to satiate the demand at the price of lower quality. Naturally, profits ensued, but not every artist was willing to subscribe to such policy. The particularities of this period are described in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, whose importance for this article and patronage studies in general has already been echoed in the terminology of the previous lines.

It is precisely Bourdieu's (1993, 48-50) *The Field of Cultural Production* which proves to be a central text in understanding the more practical side of modernism:

> [...] writers are [...] condemned to have an ambivalent attitude towards sales and their audience. They tend to be torn between the internal demands of the field of production, which regard commercial successes as suspect and push them towards a heretical break with the established norms of production and consumption, and the expectations of their vast audience.

Considering that reputation is the true currency of modernism, not money (Jaffe 2010), it is understandable why modernist artists identified individual patrons as the "lesser evil" which prevented their works from vulgarisation and, seemingly, from commodification which would stem from having to go through the mainstream publishing process. That a different cost would have to be paid became apparent only once the relationship was underway.

It is important to understand that the nature of patronage is different from the way it is traditionally described and understood in the works of Kent and Simons (1987), Sinclair (1990) and Brown (1993), to name a few. The renaissance figure of a mighty individual patron, or the Parisian *salonniére* of the eighteenth century are associated with a practice that would not stand to scrutiny in the eyes of the avant-garde artists. Understanding the role that reputation and appearances played in these circles, modern, post-romantic patrons have attempted to obscure the business-like nature of patronage, which was apparent in its more traditional, commission-based forms of support (van den Braber 2017, 46-47).

These modern post-romantic patrons had to adopt disinterested airs which would match the attitude of the artists they sought to help. Feigning solidarity and benevolence to an extent that they often convinced themselves of their impartiality, the patrons often offered their support with seemingly no strings attached—the only way to attract avant-garde cultural creators wary of losing their independence (van den Braber 2017, 46-47). Since formalising these relationships on paper would be too much like signing yet another publishing contract, the exact conditions of these relationships were rarely discussed. Thus, the real transactional nature inherent in patronage remained hidden, only to become apparent later, resulting in disenchanted remarks on both sides or various feats of rebellion in literary form, as will be described later.

The emergence of various forms of institutional support after the Second World War (to add to the already existing Royal Literary Fund), for example, Council for the Encouragement of the Music and the Arts, led originally by Lord Macmillan and, more notably for this article, by John Maynard Keynes after him, partially created new opportunities for those creators unwilling to follow the mainstream path (Sinclair 1990, 122).[1] Although individual patronage never disappeared wholly, it is precisely at the period in which this article is interested

[1] It needs to be pointed out that this situation applies specifically to Britain. In France, the second notable hub of European patronage, similar structures were operating in forms of Academies since the seventeenth century and have, as was the case, for example, with impressionist painters, developed into yet another thing to rile against (Garber 2008, 122).

(roughly 1900-1945) when the power plays included in it render it so controversial in terms of its participants and so interesting in terms of its outcomes.

It is apparent from the description of patronage provided thus far that it is a complex and dynamic interplay of various factors and motivations. Any attempt to analyse relationships of patronage and their influence must face the facts that it is a charged environment, full of subjectiveness, misunderstandings and high-strung emotions. In an attempt to navigate this field, Helleke van den Braber developed a methodology which so far seems to be unparalleled when it comes to mapping out individual elements of patronage. The following paragraphs will explain the model shown in Figure 1 and elucidate its parts with examples from the British literary modernist milieu.

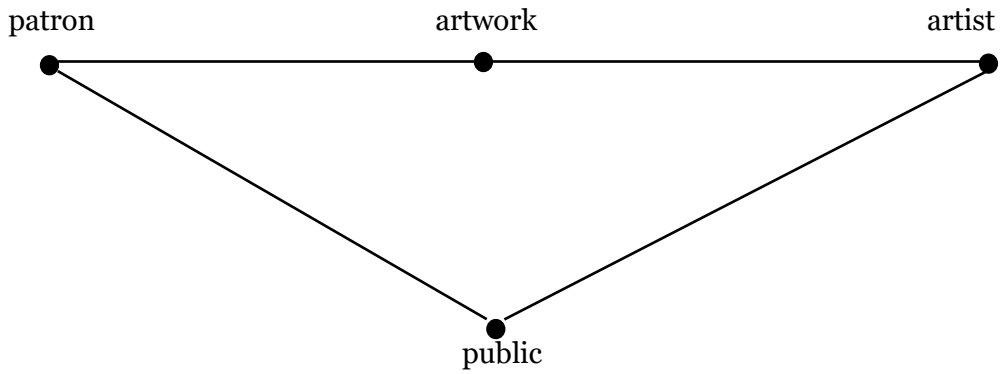

Figure 1. Model of patronage dynamics (van den Braber 2021, 27).

2. The patron

If a patron is understood as any figure using their wealth and influence to support artists in their work, their list, even cut down to reflect the period in question, might turn out to be quite extensive. If, however, reputation is taken as the measure based on which the most important patrons of the period are singled out, the list becomes much more manageable. The biggest names would include Lady Emerald Cunard, an heiress of a shipping empire, and Ettie Grenfell, Baroness Desborough. Although both lived well into the middle of the century and were active during the period in question, their interests rarely overlapped with those of modernist circles. Instead, their salons presented a much more traditional mix of fashionable artists and influential politicians—quite resembling the eighteenth-century Parisian sets (Masters 1982).

Despite being less respected in the eyes of the previously mentioned women and their coteries (Masters 1982, 163), the more relevant patrons in terms of this article's focus on modernist writers are Lady Ottoline Morrell and Lady Sibyl Colefax, who attracted more alternative crowds. Both had quite the reputation—Morrell as an eccentric (Lee 1997, 274) and Colefax as a name-dropping socialite (467-469). In accordance with modernist values, it was perhaps that, rather than the patrons' inconsequential wealth (as they often did not, in fact, have the means to do patronage as much as they did), which drew modernist artists to them. Their

partially overlapping sets of friends and beneficiaries were writers such as T. S. Eliot, Max Beerbohm, David Cecil, Harold Nicolson, Desmond MacCarthy and Aldous Huxley.

The means by which they operated changed over the years. Lady Morrell started her career with Thursday meetings at her 44 Bedford Square house which, partly because of their proximity and partly because of the people attending them, were sometimes viewed as rivalling the weekly meetings of the Bloomsbury Group:

> There was no doubt that her parties offered a dazzling contrast to the play-readings held at Clive and Vanessa Bell's [...] and the buns-and-cocoa evenings over which [...] Virginia Stephen was shyly presiding in Fitzroy Square (Seymour 1993, 75).

They were noted for a unique mix of less and more established artists, politicians and aristocrats brought together with often only Morrell in common (Morrell 1963, 155). Having always dreamed of a more utopian project, Morrell had eventually moved on to Garsington in 1915 (Seymour 1993, 223), where she established a refuge for beneficiaries seeking to escape the demands of London and every-day life, as well as conscientious objectors needing employment. Amazing in its ambition, with people like Bertrand Russell, Siegfried Sassoon, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, Mark Gertler and Dora Carrington meeting there (to only name a few not yet mentioned), it is a grand modernist project in its own rights. The near destitution brought about by this support and other unforeseen circumstances forced Morrell and her husband to sell the manor and resettle to London, where, disenchanted with the life of patronage, she chose to hold weekly meetings only with her few remaining friends, Virginia Woolf among them (Seymour 1993, 350-356).

Sibyl Colefax started her patronage soon after the acquisition of a country house, Old Bockhurst, in 1912, where she organised parties which lasted from Friday to Monday with a mixed set of artists attending. Away from Old Bockhurst, she notably organised a poetry reading with Huxley and Eliot presenting their works to a "large and expensive" audience (McLeod 1991, 47). As with Morrell, the pinnacle of Colefax's patronage came only with the acquisition of a more suitable space—Argyll House—which was the meeting place for Sibyl and her beneficiaries until her husband's death. Again, the destitution that came with later years meant that she was forced to move her entertainment to Dorchester Hotel, where she organised paid dinners, so called Ordinaries, which were the last attempt at keeping the meetings going and found a surprising role of preserving high social spirits in the war-torn London (McLeod 1991, 168).

The support offered by patrons of this period was far from merely financial. In accordance with the attempts to hide patronage, material gifts—from sentimental keepsakes such as embroidery, to valuable jewels—were often offered by patrons rather than lump sums of money (Seymour 1993, 274-275). Even more popular was immaterial support. One of the goals of organising parties and salon meetings was giving a chance to artists to network and to find a commission (van den Braber 2017, 50). If they failed on their own, various opportunities and sinecures could be directed their way. Furthermore, the basic needs of the artists were satiated by offers of food and lodgings, especially in the case of events taking

place outside of London, such as at Garsington and Old Bockhurst. The role of patrons also often overlapped with that of mentors, reading manuscripts, providing care and attention and offering various notes, although for that their authority in the given field needed to be recognised by the artists and, if found wanting, their advice was seldom followed (Lawrence 1956, 313; McLeod 1991, 108). This all is largely omitted in the studies of the financial aspects of modernism, yet it provided the writers time to focus on their work and accelerated various background processes surrounding writing, all at an unrecognised cost to the patrons.

It can be noticed that the patrons mentioned here are all women. Although some male examples can be found overseas, such as Carl Van Vechten and John Quinn, this is an occupation primarily practised by women.[2] The reasons for this are quite pragmatic—in times of stricter societal rules related to women, it was one of the few ways in which they could exercise some power and put their wealth to use (van den Braber 2016, 61-62). Unable to do so openly, they could become background players, be it in cultural or political fields. This has greatly influenced the way patronage is perceived—the lines between a patron, a muse, a mother and a lover were often blurred, further complicating the relationship of patronage. The lack of respect shown—by the artists, the public, other patrons, as well as the authors of today—which is reflected in the commonly used term "lion-hunter,"[3] also stemmed from this. As a result, then, the term has infected the discourse and finds itself used, even in sympathetic accounts of patrons, without awareness of the baggage that it carries.[4]

What needs to be understood, however, is the agency which these women had and the way in which they used their position as a currency in their social spheres. Another crucial text of patronage studies, Vera Zolberg's (1982, 15-16) "New Art, New Patrons" attempts to categorise early twentieth-century patrons and understand their motivation. She characterises four types of collectors (patrons): those born into a "high status group," having traditional tastes (Conservatives); those born into lower status groups seeking to "legitimise their own prestige aspirations" (Epigones); those well-born society individuals "estranged from its values" (Eccentrics); and, finally, lower-status individuals not using collecting to solidify their prestigious position (Rebels). Although any attempt to place the aforementioned patrons on a specific spot in Zolberg's model shows that it is partially reductive, it is useful in recognising that patronage can be viewed as means of either changing or solidifying one's reputation.

Despite describing it as a spiritual mission (Seymour 1993, 98), Morrell (1963, 89-90) clearly used patronage as a way of escaping the suffocating aristocratic background into which she felt she did not belong. To make up for the money she herself often lacked, she mediated, for example, the commissioning of many

[2] Masters (1982, 5) also hails Philip Sassoon, although his gatherings seem to be purely social.

[3] A derogatory term used to refer to female patrons playing on them collecting the celebrities—lions—and forcing them to perform "tricks" to the assembled audience. Colefax's house was even called "Lions Corner House" (Masters 1982, 151).

[4] See for example Lord Cecil's (1976) introduction to *Lady Ottoline's Album* or Claire Tomalin's (1987) biography of Katherine Mansfield.

paintings by her brother, Lord Bentinck (Seymour 1993, 106). This way, she used her aristocratic background to the advantage of her beneficiaries while also trying to distance herself from its limitations.

If Woolf's usually very keen eye is to be believed, for Colefax, patronage was a way of shaping one's life as best as possible with what was offered:

> [Sibyl] had to trim and hedge; and admit that parties are a stimulus to the imagination; and that her chief pleasure is to tell herself stories, to make up a life, a picture, as she bustles and flits [...]" (cited in McLeod 1991, 7).

As a lady through marriage only, Colefax had no towering aristocratic background to escape from, neither was she discriminating enough in the selection of her acquaintances to be viewed as a "Rebel" in Zolberg's term. Perhaps she merely wished to build a world of her own with herself at its centre as many of her modernist friends were bound to do (Jaffe 2010). Morrell (1922, 55-56) was of a different opinion though:

> [Sibyl] never would do anything for [sic] struggling literary man – unless he was in the limelight. Her talk is painful to my ears – soft soap – which smothers and irritates one's skin – and makes one puck all over. It consists simply of the tossing up and down of the coloured balls of fashionable names [...] What she gets out of it all, I don't know. I suppose a certain feeling of warmth and delight in being in the swim. I think a sensual pleasure – she "lives" with [sic] Society of eminent men – as a harlot lives with a man. Certainly she is richer in snobbishness than anyone else I have ever met – a snob genius.

The way in which Morrell, for example, used her background to her advantage shows how one of the ways that one's social capital, the connections one has, can be made use of. It follows Bourdieu's theory of capitals at the disposal of actors in the field of cultural production, as described in his "The Forms of Capital." Most of the time, patrons are exchanging their economic capital, that is the money, which the artists do not have, for cultural capital, which the patrons seek. Cultural capital can be understood either as objectified or embodied. Objectified cultural capital is relatively straightforward and connects especially to traditional forms of patronage—it is the outcome, the artwork. Embodied cultural capital, the knowledge and education, the genius of the artist supported, is much more ungraspable and in a way also attractive (Bourdieu 1986, 17-21). It is one of the reasons why patrons not only support their beneficiaries financially but choose to be surrounded by them as well. Another motivation for this is that it helps them establish their desired position in the world. Unknowingly then, the artists themselves were a modernist commodity as well, trading in on their prowess and reputation to be shielded from the demands of the mainstream literary marketplace.

3. The artist

Trying to decide who comes first, whether the artist or the patron, as Zolberg (1982, 1) has mentioned at the beginning of her essay on patrons comes too close to a premise of a joke or an exercise on, quite ironically, Hegelian lord-bondsman dialectics (Hegel 1977, 111-119), both of which would be unproductive at this point. The fact is that patronage was still a relatively common practice at that

period, with the artists coming across often a number of patrons in the course of their lives. The following will be an overview of selected modernist writers who had, at some point, had dealings with the aforementioned patrons and who illustrate a variety of forms patronage can take.

Virginia Woolf's situation has already been mentioned—her position at the Hogarth Press and as a contributor to *Times Literary Supplement* (Lee 1997, 215) allowed her relative freedom in publishing her own works and writings of those around her. Despite all of this, she was in some cases more than familiar with the patrons in question. Her position is predominantly that of a commentator since she was frequently approached by the patrons but did not have to rely on their benevolence. Of Morrell she wrote:

> I am told that she is deserted and despised, and claws you like a famished tigress to go to Garsington, where no one will now stay, save the Cos [conscientious objectors] who have to (cited in Seymour 1993, 287).

Free in her scathing comments on paper, Woolf (1978, 108) nonetheless felt the need to moderate her behaviour towards Morrell in real life:

> Indulging in those labyrinthine antics which is called being intimate with Ottoline: I succumb, I lie, I flatter, I accept flattery, I stretch and sleek, and all the time she is watchful and vengeful and mendacious and unhappy and ready to break every rib in my body if it were worth her while.

Not in need of financial patronage, though unable to resist the humbug that seemed to surround Morrell, Woolf never cut her off altogether. The two have only managed to become friends in their old age though, when neither had the strength to play social games anymore and Morrell quit patronage (Seymour 1993, 391-398).

Woolf's relationship with Colefax was quite similar—for the longest time Woolf resisted invitations and, when she finally went, loathed the functions. Describing Colefax as pretentious and shallow, she nonetheless tries to understand why eventually some sort of tentative friendship blossomed between them in her Memoir Club essay "Am I a Snob?":

> "I've been thinking of all the people I've met there", I said. "Arnold Bennett. George Moore. Max Beerbohm…" She smiled. I saw that I had given her pleasure. "That's what I've wanted—that the people I like should meet the people I like. That's what I tried to do—" "And that's what you've done," I said, warming up. I felt very grateful to her, although in fact I had never much enjoyed meeting other writers, still she had kept open house; she had worked very hard; it had been a great achievement in its way. I tried to tell her so" (Woolf 1985, 219).

Despite having titled her "Colebox" and pronounced that she "collected all the intellectuals around her as a parrot picks up beads" (cited in McLeod 1991, 83), Woolf was eventually able to assume a more conciliatory tone.

An example of a steadily deteriorating, yet strangely respectful case of patronage is that of Siegfried Sassoon and Morrell. Approached by Morrell via a celebratory letter on his poem that she had read (Morrell, 1917a), they circled each other until a point where Robbie Ross brought Sassoon over and finally introduced the two. Ross urged Sassoon to: "be very nice to Lady Ottoline as she could be of the greatest help to me [Sassoon] when my poems were published"

(Sassoon 1947, 11) so from the beginning the terms of the relationship were quite clear, at least for the poet. What followed was the mutual infatuation, most probably platonic, gifts and admiration on Morrell's side and gratitude at point even reflected in a dedication of a handwritten and decorated volume of poems given by Sassoon to Morrell (Seymour 1993, 273n). Morrell's support again took the form of lodgings, material gifts, as well as various introductions and a successful attempt to entice Woolf to review Sassoon's poetry (Morrell 1917b, 208). It comes as no surprise, however, that the relationship between artists and patrons changes over time, often proportionately to the tide of the artist's fortune—the war poet has been a great example of this. In her journal, Morrell (1918, 36) described the relationship thus:

> I have lavished so much upon him, thoughts, imagination, lots of letters – besides books and needlework – all expressing very great intensity of beauty. I have not the vaguest notion it has entered into him or affected him – anymore than a cup of coffee would please or affect me in my real life. It has been casting my pearls before a wild stag.

Similar disenchantment came with D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley. Both spent considerable time with Morrell in Garsington—Lawrence in a cottage he built on the property (Seymour 1993, 225) and Huxley exempt from service as a farmhand (235). Both were supported by Morrell financially, through gifts, lodgings, food and, most crucially, through the shared network of people staying at the manor. Finally, both chose to capitalise on this experience in their works. Lawrence, after falling out with Morrell over his wife Frieda, decided to subscribe to more traditional publishing schemes and lived in destitution for some time, as described in his letters from the period roughly corresponding to the Great War (1956). His hopes were put into the release of his new book *Women in Love* (1920), which cruelly caricatures Morrell as Hermione Roddice. Despite trying to renounce the connection later, Lawrence hoped that she would not hear of the novel, nor ask to see the manuscript, understanding well that it would not please her (Seymour 1993, 278). Morrell (1918, 78) described him along similar lines as she did Sassoon:

> I have seen Lawrence to whom we had given so much – deride, distort – and characterise me venomously, obscenely – making me publicly into a pornographic image of his own mind. I have seen the young who owed me so much turn and with their feeble spite – say all manner of ill of me.

It needs to be remembered that, years earlier, it was Lawrence who called for Morrell to form a nucleus of a new community which "shall start a new life among us [...] we will bring the church and the house and the shop together," also claiming that "[y]ou must be president, you must preside over our meetings. Garsington must be the retreat where we come together and knit ourselves together" (cited in Seymour 1993, 215-216). It seems that Lawrence never stopped looking for something along these lines, be it in his idea of Rananim or in the Taos Art Colony in New Mexico under the wings of yet another patron, Mabel Dodge Luhan (Kinkead-Weekes 2011, 187-197, 674-721).

Huxley's inspiration with his patron went further and he published as many as three novels reflecting Morrell and Garsington—*Crome Yellow* (1921), *Those*

Barren Leaves (1925) and *Point Counter Point* (1928). Here, Morrell is portrayed as usual: an ageing, wretched aristocrat using money to draw people closer to her. Whether depicted as Priscila Wimbush in *Crome Yellow,* Lilian Aldwinkle in *Those Barren Leaves*, or Mrs Bidlake in *Point Counter Point*, she always lacks depth and any attempts at describing her more closely are usually those focusing on her appearance. Instead of an attempt at deeper understanding of one's friend and benefactor, they merely work as a jeering satire on Morrell's dominance and generosity. The root of the discord was again ascribed to a wife which Huxley even met at Garsington, though it was never felt as bitterly as the results of Lawrence's work (Seymour 1993, 323).

Finally, an instance where the artist has decided to take things into their own hands in support of another one needs to be mentioned—Ezra Pound and his Bel Esprit scheme. Believing that "it is a crime against literature to let [Eliot] waste eight hours vitality per diem in that bank" (in Goldstein 2017, 110), Pound tried to find an effective way of raising money which would allow his fellow expatriate T. S. Eliot to focus on writing.[5] Quite famously working in his office job in 1922 while creating one of the most significant poetic works of the century, Eliot refused any means of financial support offered by Morrell who tried to establish an "Eliot Fellowship Fund" with Woolf (Darroch 2017, 348; Goldstein 2017, 109). A frequent visitor of Morrell, he was willing to accept help only when it came to personal assistance with his unstable first wife Vivien (Seymour 1993, 388-389). Pound tried to raise awareness of the issue by publishing an article in *The New Age* "Credit and the Fine Arts," where he claims that

> democracy has signally failed to provide for its best writers; aristocratic patronage exists neither in noun nor in adjective. The function of an aristocracy is selection; illiterate motorowners are incapable of that function (Pound 1922, 284).

This refusal to rely on the support and tastes of the general public, as mentioned before, reflects also Lawrence's own scorn: "I can't write stories to make money, because I don't want to. Curse the idiotic editor and the more idiotic people who shall read, shall I pander to their maudlin taste? They bore me" (1956, 340). Pound's (1922, 284) proposed solution was supposed to be, quite famously, the Bel Esprit scheme:

> "Bel Esprit" proposes simply to *release more energy for invention and design*; the practical way is to release those artists or writers who have definitely proved that they have something in them, and are capable of its expression. What we want is not more books, but a better quality of book; and the modus is (1) to find the man; (2) to guarantee him food and leisure, by a co-operation of subscribers (individuals or groups) pledging themselves to give per year, for life or for as long as the artist needs it.

Accidentally, Eliot was to be its first recipient. What Pound did not realise was that such a publication of Eliot's mental and financial struggle—that year was, for Eliot, both extremely difficult and successful—could be viewed as vulgar by the readers and was rejected both by Eliot and by their patron, John Quinn (Goldstein

[5] As Delany (2002) shows, Eliot's financial situation was far from bleak.

2017, 111-112).[6] Dissatisfied with the support that could be achieved in democracy, Pound eventually tried his luck under Mussolini's fascistic regime (Rainey 1998, 107-145). It seemed that as far as modern patronage went, there would not be any new solutions any time soon and the individual patrons would continue reigning strong.

4. The artwork

Without a doubt the artwork itself is the key element of patronage which not only motivates the relationship but is also at the centre of the scholarly interest. The artwork can be understood in a number of ways. Most traditionally, it is a single piece of work, conceived in advance, for the completion of which funds are needed—in some cases for the materials, in case of writers to survive until it is finished. In this instance, patronage can be provided by means of finances, lodging and food or, nearing the publication of the work, by providing advice and finding means of publishing the outcome. An interesting example of the latter type of support is one of the case studies provided by Rainey—Joyce's publication of *Ulysses*. The reason why such a book could be published without relatively any major compromises from the author is the patronage support offered by Sylvia Beach and Harriet Weaver, both of whom, together with Quinn, played the role of a patron in Joyce's career. They not only made sure that the book would be published in its huge form, but also found buyers for a number of limited-edition copies even before the book itself came out, presenting a fine example of a successful relationship of patronage (Rainey 1998, 42-77).

More often than not, however, in the attempt to informalise the relationship, the outcome of patronage is not specified in advance and the artist is supported purely for art's sake, with the hope that inspiration shall come and both the artist and the patron will bear its fruit. In a way, as Quinn noted, it is akin to an investment:

> I can't come back too STRONGLY to the point that I do NOT consider this Eliot subsidy a pension. I am puke sick of the idea of pensions, taking care of old crocks. For me my £10 a year on Eliot is an investment [...] I put this money into him as I would put it into a shoe factory if I wanted shoes. Better simile, into a shipping company, of say small pearl-fishing ships, some scheme where there was a great deal of risk but a chance of infinite profit (cited in Rainey 1998, 74).

Such an approach, where a specific outcome is not expected, also corresponds with the avant-garde understanding of the field of cultural production—only those creating "inferior" mainstream works can be expected to produce on command to fulfil the public demand.

No matter whether the works' conception is swift and straightforward or not, Becker's (1982) thesis of art worlds needs to be kept in mind—the relationship of patronage will find a way to imprint itself into the final product. One way was already introduced with *Ulysses*—the length of the book, as well as its contents, had to be kept in check much less knowing that it would not have to conform to

[6] Quinn served as a legal advisor and did not financially support Eliot—hence the perceived need for Bel Esprit (Goldstein 2017, 183).

the traditional demands. Moreover, there were sufficient finances to print luxurious editions for the most select bibliophiles, thus ensuring that Joyce's name would resonate among them. Again, a special kind of commodity was produced to fit the limited market.

Attempts of patrons to influence the contents of the works created under their patronage are indirect and rare in this period, since they are attempting to appeal benevolent and trustful when it comes to the people they chose to support. Quite an interesting phenomenon, however, ties itself to modernist patronage—*roman à clef*. Patrons often find their way into the works of their beneficiaries quite unwittingly and unlike the traditional celebratory dedications presented at the beginning of Restoration plays, their portrayals tend to be very acerbic. Lawrence's and Huxley's depictions of Morrell that have already been mentioned constitute only a fragment of this practice. Among other examples of the depiction of Morrell are, as identified by Seymour, Gilbert Cannan's *Pugs and Peacocks* (1921) and *Mendel* (1916), John Cramb's *Cuthbert Learmont* (1910), Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield* (1934), Constance Malleson's *The Coming Back* (1933), Osbert Sitwell's *Triple Fugue* (1924) and Walter Turner's *Aesthetes* (1927) (1993, 431-432). Sitwell has also quite famously caricatured Sibyl Colefax in his poem "Rat Week" for her involvement in the abdication scandal of 1936 (McLeod 1991, 149-150). She can also be found in T. S. Eliot's play *The Cocktail Party* as Julia (McLeod 1991, 122). The reason for this is going to become clearer once the next element of van den Braber's (2021) model, namely "the public," is explained, but it is already apparent how the reliance on real-life figures challenges the modernist claim to originality and imaginative superiority. Focusing on this is Sean Latham's (2009, 132) *Art of Scandal* where he comments on *romans à clef* thus:

> After all, rather than professional productions staked on a romantic claim to creativity, they are instead deliberate bids for social and economic capital. Their authors sell out Morrell, turning on her with painful regularity to declare their independence from the world of cultural values she is made to represent while simultaneously capitalizing on the market for gossip about England's wealthy, aristocratic families.

At this stage of patronage then, the insight into the patrons' private lives not only signals to the public one's past proximity to the patron, heroically rejected as a sign of independence, but becomes yet another currency in the modernist market, often traded in at the point where the patronage is no longer viewed as otherwise productive. The cost of the patron's privacy or the damage to the relationship turns out to be too little not to be paid to advance in one's career.

5. The public

As it turns out, it is precisely matters of recognition and reputation that create the most friction in patronage and among its participants. Therefore, the public completes the system and connects to the patron and the artist on another level.

However much the patron and the artist might be trying to obscure the relationship of patronage, it will become apparent at some stage—observed and judged by the public. If this element is understood as a general public of the

period, it can be easily discounted as it did not particularly come into question in relation to avant-garde groups such as the modernists—it discovered them only once they were legitimised and entered the mainstream (or the canon).

The public should, in this case, be understood as friends, acquaintances and other people moving in and out of the modernist cliques. Where the general public could be easily dismissed as unable to understand "artistic genius" and their decision, people from similar circles have to be, at least partially, taken into consideration by the artists, as they constitute a part of the reputation-making apparatus.[7]

The fact that patronage therefore plays out under scrutiny of the ingroup greatly influences the behaviour of the patron and the artist, with the exchange taking on a performative character. As was mentioned before, patronage can be explained along the lines of Bourdieu's capitals. Where the economic and social (partially) belong to the sphere of the patron and the cultural to the sphere of the artist, the fourth, symbolic capital, can only exist and accumulate with the public present to observe it and is almost analogous to van den Braber's (2021, 21) "narrative capital" which allows for the construction of narrative around one's artistic/philanthropic practice and is most closely tied with the reputation-building process.

The affirmation/change of the patron's position in the world would not happen if they merely owned an artwork or supported an artist. It is only when the works are seen, in their home or in the museum, or they are known in association with the artist, that some of their spirit and status can reflect on them. Even though with writers there are no artworks to exhibit, there are other ways of signalling their relationship. One, the dedication of books, has already been mentioned. Second, they keep the writers around by inviting them to their salons, parties or homes. Declining or ignoring the invitation might lead to the loss of favour or, in case of some patrons, to a relentless stream of further invitations. Another way, unkindly looked at by the artists, even got its name from one of the patrons—colefaxismus. It is the practice of casual name-dropping of people one knows or supports (Masters 1982, 154). Known are also shows of public support, for example when Morrell stepped in to save Lawrence's paintings and books from being burned (Seymour 1993, 363).

Such an association might be flattering and sought by the artists initially since the interest of the "mighty," in the end, reflects positively on them in the early stages of their career. However, as they become able to establish their position by their own work, they tend to look unfavourably at this.

At this point, the concept of 'consecrative power' needs to be explained. Again, Bourdieu (1996, 148) proves to be the most appropriate commentator:

[7] The line of thinking of art worlds however requires other forms of public to be considered as well. The evaluation of the subjects and the patronage does not end with the public of the period, general or ingroup. Scholars, critics and new audiences continue to perceive and reevaluate these relationships a long time after all the subjects are dead. Just as the work itself is "never finished" so the reputation of the subjects is never settled and the once-sought-after consecration can be viewed negatively later on (for example, an association with Pound).

> Economic capital cannot guarantee the specific profits offered by the field – and by the same token the "economic" profits that they will often bring in time – unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital. The only legitimate accumulation, for the author as for the critic, for the art dealer as for the publisher or theatre director, consists in making a name for oneself, a name that is known and recognized, the capital of consecration – implying a power to consecrate objects (this is the effect of a signature or trademark) or people (by publication, exhibition, etc.), and hence of giving them value, and of making profits from this operation.

Patrons, themselves only building their positions, do not hold such a consecrative power as the artists already recognised in the field do—Morrell and Colefax definitely did not. It is, therefore, much more desirable for the young artists to be associated with the consecrated artists than with patrons.

Since relationships of patronage were meant to be merely a compromise to save avant-garde writers from having to subscribe to traditional publishing machinery, they are often readily discarded when no longer needed. Association that was once desired is shunned and it is again in the hands of the public to recognise this—the shift in the relationship needs to be signalled again. As a result, artists use strategies such as the publication of *romans à clef* mentioned previously[8] or public shows of disloyalty to free themselves of the unwritten "contract." Rather than petering out or being officially concluded, many relationships of patronage then go up in flames, with the patrons feeling slighted and the artists refusing to acknowledge the patrons' contribution. Still, the prospect of accruing symbolic or narrative capital is what keeps the participants (especially patrons) entering such relationships time and again, ultimately influencing the way patrons are perceived within their respective milieus.

6. The conclusion

The main advantage of patronage studies' perspective in critical approach to modernism lies in the fact that it already provides a methodology capable of dealing with the intricacies of the modernist field of production. Viewing patronage as comprising of a series of intertwined elements not only allows for a greater consideration of everyone's motivations but also explains why reputation plays such a major role in avant-garde groups. Works interested in the economic aspects of modernism not taking advantage of the insights that patronage studies offer, cannot fully appreciate the role patrons played in the period and the indirect influence they had over the final outcomes, as well as the questions of value, originality and authorship that patronage raises.

Recognising that modernist exchanges extend beyond money, Wexler argues that by rejecting mainstream publishing, modernist writers "paid dearly by losing the feedback editors, reviewers, and readers normally provided" (1997, 20), yet she writes off private patrons as merely contributing to the problem by not being able to provide expert feedback either (13). Patronage studies' perspective shows how patrons recompense the artists, however involuntarily, for their temporary loss of autonomy with information from their private lives which can be used to

[8] Described in detail in Latham (2009) and Melišová (2022).

signal one's presence in the right circles, or, ironically, traded in for better sales. Moreover, the time free from worry and adequate space for the artists to create in comes at a cost to the patrons, which they willingly pay for the establishment of their desired "position of honor in the living pantheon of modernism" (Delany 2002, 159). That instead of such achievement they were often relegated into the background is due to the fact that in the end, the artists' cultural capital held more power in modernism than the patrons' economic or social ones.

Ultimately, all the capitals are exchanged in the attempt to accumulate the crucial modernist currency—symbolic or narrative capital. Just as the patrons surround themselves with artists to defy, uphold or change their position in the world, while creating networking opportunities and space for creative freedom, the artists' desire to escape the clutches of the mainstream literary marketplace motivates them to act in a way which would attract likeminded individuals or prospective patrons—thus Rainey's modernist commodity of a special sort might not just be the work, but the modernist lives themselves.

References

BECKER, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: U of California P.

BROWN, Cedric. 1993. *Patronage, Politics and Literary Traditions in England 1558-1658*. Detroit: Wayne State UP.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson, 241-258. Westport: Greenwood.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. 1996. *The Rules of Art*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

CECIL, David. 1976. Introduction to *Lady Ottoline's Album*, edited by Carolyn Gold Heilbrun, 3-14. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

COMENTALE, Edward P. 2004. *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

CONNOR, Steven. 1996. *The English Novel in History, 1950-1995*. London: Routledge.

CROZIER, Walter R. 2022. "Motivations for Patronage: Early Modernist Literature as a Case Study." *European Journal of Language and Culture Studies* 1 (6): 41-51.

DARROCH, Sandra. 2017. *Garsington Revisited: The Legend of Lady Ottoline Morrell Brought Up-to-date*. New Barnet, UK: John Libbey.

DELANY, Paul. 2002. *Literature, Money and the Market: From Trollope to Amis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

GARBER, Marjorie. 2008. *Patronizing the Arts*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

GOLDSTEIN, Bill. 2017. *The World Broke in Two*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

HEGEL, Georg. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

HUXLEY, Aldous. 2004. *Crome Yellow*. London: Vintage.

HUXLEY, Aldous. 1955. *Point Counter Point*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

HUXLEY, Aldous. 1947. *Those Barren Leaves*. London: The Albatross.

JAFFE, Aaron. 2010. "Publication, Patronage, Censorship: Literary Production and the Fortunes of Modernist Value." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, edited by Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker, 315-334. Oxford: Oxford UP.

KENT, Francis William and Patricia Simons. 1987. *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

KINKEAD-WEEKES, Mark. 2011. *D. H. Lawrence. Triumph to Exile*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
LATHAM, Sean. 2009. *The Art of Scandal: Modernism, Libel Law, and the Roman à Clef*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
LAWRENCE, D. H. 1956. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Aldous Huxley. London: William Heinemann.
LAWRENCE, D. H. 2007. *Women in Love*. New York: Bantam Classic.
LEE, Hermione. 1997. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Vintage.
MASTERS, Brian. 1982. *Great Hostesses*. London: Constable.
MCLEOD, Kirsty. 1991. *A Passion for Friendship: Sibyl Colefax & Her Circle*. London: Michael Joseph.
MELIŠOVÁ. Kristína. 2022. "Modernist Lionhunting: An Exploration of Patronage in the Cultural Imaginary." *Polish Journal of English Studies* 8 (2): 101-116.
MORRELL, Ottoline. 1917a. *Journal for June 1913 – March 1917*. From The British Library, *Lady Ottoline Morrell Papers*.
MORRELL, Ottoline. 1917b. *Letters to Lytton Strachey 1917-1931*. Transcript. From The British Library, *Lady Ottoline Morrell Papers*.
MORRELL, Ottoline. 1918. *Journal for September 1918 – October 1919*. Transcript. From The British Library, *Lady Ottoline Morrell Papers*.
MORRELL, Ottoline. 1922. *Journal for September 1922 – September 1924*. Transcript. From The British Library, *Lady Ottoline Morrell Papers*.
MORRELL, Ottoline. 1963. *Ottoline: The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell*, edited by Robert Gathorne-Hardy. London: Faber and Faber.
POUND, Ezra. 1922. "Credit and the Fine Arts." *The New Age* 30 (22): 284-285.
RAINEY, Lawrence. 1998. *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites & Public Culture*. New Haven: Yale UP.
SASSOON, Siegfried. 1947. *Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920*. London: Albatross.
SEYMOUR, Miranda. 1993. *Ottoline Morrell: Life on the Grand Scale*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.
SINCLAIR, Andrew. 1990. *The Need to Give: The Patron and the Arts*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.
TOMALIN, Claire. 1987. *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life*. London: Penguin.
VAN DEN BRABER, Helleke. 2016. "De Nieuwe Gids and Its Informal Patronage System." *Journal of European Periodical Studies* 1 (1): 53-69.
VAN DEN BRABER, Helleke. 2017. "Reciprocal Interactions and Complex Negotiations: Three Nineteenth-Century Models of Patronage." *European Journal of English Studies* 21 (1): 393-407.
VAN DEN BRABER, Helleke. 2021. *From Maker to Patron and Back: On Gift Exchange in the Arts*. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
WEXLER, Joyce P. 1997. *Who Paid for Modernism? Art, Money, and the Fiction of Conrad, Joyce and Lawrence*. Fayetteville: The U of Arkansas P.
WOOLF, Virginia. 1978. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume Four, 1929-1931*, edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. San Diego: Harcourt Brace.
WOOLF, Virginia. 1985. "Am I a Snob?" In *Moments of Being*, edited by Jeanne Schulkind. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
WOOLF, Virginia. 2014. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. London: Collins.
ZOLBERG, Vera. 1982. "New Art, New Patrons: Coincidence or Causality in the Twentieth Century Avant-Garde." Hammond, IN: Purdue University.