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Although it is Zukofsky's work of the 1930s that has attracted most critical attention, at least recently, there remain a number of substantial works of that period that have been all but entirely overlooked, specifically *The Writing of Guillaume Apollinaire*, *Thanks to the Dictionary* and *Arise, Arise*. These works, in three distinct genres, represent his more overtly avant-garde influenced writing of the period and ought to be taken into consideration in any balanced perspective of Zukofsky's pre-war ambitions. Finished in mid-1936, *Arise, Arise* was composed during the same period he was working on "A"-8, and along with "A"-10 they represent Zukofsky's most overtly political writing. However, we know almost nothing about the circumstances of this play: what prompted Zukofsky to compose it or his hopes for its performance.<sup>1</sup> But of course drama always figures prominently whenever current political circumstances demand a more directly engaged literature, and Zukofsky had a long-standing interest in the performing arts. One of the few details he gives in his brief autobiographical notes added to *Autobiography* (1970) is to mention attending performances as a boy during the heyday of the Yiddish Theater District in New York, which was next door to where he grew up on the Lower East Side. As a Columbia undergraduate, he published a symbolist style playlet.<sup>2</sup> In "A"-12 Zukofsky catalogs a number of never realized dramatic and performance works from the 1930s, ruefully suggesting he might have pursued them if given "the slightest encouragement" (252). Of course late in life he would return to drama in his own manner by producing a complete rendition of Plautus' *Rudens* for "A"-21, and we should not overlook that "A"-24 is a dramatization of his body of writing, in which Celia used *Arise, Arise* as the central motivating and organizing text. More fundamentally, it is not an exaggeration to say that Zukofsky's primary concern throughout his writing is the dramatization of the text, the dynamicism of words as bodies in movement.<sup>3</sup> The early exemplar is "A"-7, with which Zukofsky chose to represent himself in the "Objectivists" issue of *Poetry*, a poem that sets sawhorses dancing in a set of sonnets whose traditional formal solemnity and restraint is rhythmically exploded.

*Arise, Arise* is initially baffling and at times absurdist, even though it generally avoids the high-jinxes and outrageousness typically associated with avant-garde drama. Undoubtedly one reason the play has not attracted much attention is this apparent taboo against dramatics, so characteristic of Zukofsky's work generally, those very elements which typically hold the audience's attention. This adheres to Zukofsky's "Objectivist" principle of sincerity and its avoidance of cheap tricks, instead attempting to present a distinct aesthetic object, a construction of words,

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<sup>1</sup> The play was given a reading performance by Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop in 1947 but was not published until its appearance in the journal *Kulchur* 6 (1962) and then in book form in 1973. It was given nine performances in August 1965 at the Cinématique Theatre, NYC, directed by Jerry Benjamin. Apparently Andy Warhol attended the opening (letter dated 9 Aug. 1965 to Paul Zukofsky).

<sup>2</sup> "Earth Counts a Day," *The Morningside* 10.1 (Nov. 1921).

<sup>3</sup> On this issue, see the essay "Paper" by Roger Kaigh, aka Zukofsky's friend Irving Kaplan, which Zukofsky quotes approvingly in "American Poetry 1920-1930" (*Prep.* 147). The complete essay, which Zukofsky unsuccessfully attempted to have published, can be found with the title "The Written Record" in Basil Bunting, *Three Essays*, ed. Richard Caddel (Durham, UK: Basil Bunting Poetry Centre, 1994): 8-19.

movement and music that is not to be reduced to plot and characters. In 1950 Zukofsky submitted the play to a Japanese journal with a cover letter proposing a brief foreword:

I conceive of *Arise, Arise* as an action which is at the same time a poem—a poem perhaps best defined by the integral  $\int^{\text{music}} / \text{word}$ —and, as such, realized only in a dance of human bodies that having weighted in their minds some valid ideas of the West can form them as movement on several parallel levels of art. Such craft the East, for example, has achieved in the Classic Chinese theatre and the Noh.<sup>4</sup>

Admittedly, Zukofsky is addressing a possible Japanese audience; however, his interest in East Asian drama was long-standing, which I have discussed elsewhere (see Z-notes commentary on the LZ-Corman correspondence). Suffice to say here that Zukofsky's insistence that the actors should be dancers, the ubiquitous presence of music and singing, the pervasive incorporation of quoted materials all foreground the artifice and adamantly reject realism's illusionism. Zukofsky preferred a visceral and affective drama in which the audience is not to be distracted by the "argument" of a plot or the psychological complexes of characters—the preoccupation with discrete individuals of the bourgeois theater. When some years later Zukofsky reads Shakespeare, character psychology and plot are de-emphasized, pushed back into the affective verbal texture (there is a reason why he pays so much attention to *Pericles*)—the eyes of the audience or reader are moved by the presentation, whereas the mind would insist on projecting the illusion of meanings beyond the presentation.

Consequently, aside from the recurrence of a modest cast of characters—all given generic designations: Son, Mother, Girl, Doctor, Attendants and so forth—it is almost impossible to give a useful summary of the play's dramatic action.<sup>5</sup> The play enacts a revolution, although no political action is enacted; rather, the work attempts to envision and perform the feel of utopia, the revolution realized or at least phenomenologically anticipated. In a play that deliberately subverts narrative dramatic development, the only progression in the play is from a situation replete with various conventionalized tensions and social differences giving rise to expectations of melodramatic development that go nowhere, to the concluding scene of marriage and dance, a conventional comedic ending. Zukofsky is not interested in explaining how the characters or the world they exist in gets from here to there; in the course of the play a revolution happens, but the usual cataclysmic public actions that we think of as defining a revolution take place off-stage, if at all. The only indication of such an event is glimpsing mention of general strikes, which as Lenin emphasized established the preconditions for revolution proper. Revolution here simply designates the decisive gap or break that marks the difference between the set of conventionally defined relations in place through the majority of the play and the utopian reconfiguration of these relationships in the concluding scenes, which can only be "explained" in social terms, even though there is no plot logic to argue how this comes about. This is to say that Zukofsky scrupulously avoids the tendentiousness typical of political theater for an affective dramatization of what politics aspires to realize. As revolutionary theater, Zukofsky attempts to move the viewer from what is familiar to what is possible. Precisely because such conclusions are consciously utopian, projected into a time that can only with danger be programmatically defined beforehand, its overt conventionality in marriage and

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<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 18 May 1950 to Isaku Hirai, editor of *Shigaku* (HRC 5.15).

<sup>5</sup> At one point the Son's name is mentioned as Duven Anew (6), although no one ever addresses him as such, but this marks him as the central consciousness.

dance functions as a reflexive reminder that this is not a diagram or representation of what the future society should look like. The play performs what the future society might feel like based on the possibilities present in the past and present, which is why this is such a spectral play full of the dead.

There is a notable shift in the texture of the play between the two acts, which marks the movement to a more overtly social and political framework. As mentioned, the first act involves various personal relations giving rise to expectations of typical melodramatic scenarios which never develop. The second act opens by making the larger social and political context explicit: there is the Aunt playing the role of the big bad factory owner ranting against her striking workers, who are supported by her niece (the Girl), and there follows a certain amount of discussion about class loyalty. Again, this scenario evaporates with this scene, and when the Aunt reappears later she is no longer playing this antagonistic role. However, this scene functions to cast the whole play and its characters into this larger social context. The one link with the preceding act is the death of Attendant D—we hear a "muffled shot" off-stage, and Attendant R enters to report quite vaguely that his co-worker has been killed. When later in Act Two Attendant D comes back to life, simply as if he is waking up, he tells us that he has been at the great general strike by miners centered at Valenciennes, France during the summer of 1936 as Zukofsky worked on his play (48). But more pervasive is that the dialogue of Act Two becomes markedly more bizarre and unpredictable, the action even more disconnected—characters speak but not necessarily to each other. A major contributor to this effect is the greater quantity of quoted materials in the later act, as if history, repressed social memory, is coming to the surface. I will take a closer look at this quoted material in a moment.

The generic designations of the characters, which identify them according to their social positioning, automatically generate a full set of social relationships and hierarchies—across class, gender, generations and ethnicity—which in turn create predictable conflicts and their implied narratives. The early scenes of the play offer various hints and beginnings of such stereotypical dramatic developments: the Son confronting the cold bureaucracy of the hospital, the dying Mother, the suggestion of a romance between the Doctor and Nurse, the Aunt as capitalist in conflict with her strike-supporting niece, and so on. Yet none of these possibilities is developed, as if the play assumes we already know all those predictable scenarios so that they only need to be gestured at to imply a whole repertoire of hum-drum social conflicts and predictable outcomes. Whereas the hierarchical relations between characters appears strictly conventional early in the play, by the end they have become magically transformed into an egalitarian community, where even the most abrasive of characters, the capitalist Aunt, as well as the racial and class outsiders, the African-American Attendants, are readily absorbed into the communal dance.

Given the lack of motivation for this transformation, it is appropriate that the entire play, except briefly at the very beginning, takes place in a space marked off by a second inner "dream curtain," which is raised and lowered between each scene while the main curtain remains up. Thus the drama is set in a realm where the real as is becomes wobbly and where transformational possibilities are released. While Zukofsky was well aware of Surrealism and especially the proto-Surrealism of Apollinaire, whose *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (as well as Jarry's *Ubi Roi*) he admired, he was suspicious of their more doctrinaire and Freudian rationalizations, as he would be throughout his life about psychology as an interpretive model.<sup>6</sup> While he

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<sup>6</sup> During the period he was working on *The Writing of Guillaume Apollinaire* (1931-1932), Zukofsky was reading a fair amount of Surrealism as indicated in the

often enough used dream materials in his writing, he tends to deflect their significance into a social dimension—the unconscious is the infinite outside. In *Arise, Arise* this is evident as the typed character roles and relations become progressively unsettled and finally reconfigured. Above all, the tensions produced by the social unconscious and the release of alternative possibilities centers on the relationship between the living and the dead. Succinctly stated, the process of feeling the possible future as Zukofsky imagines it is one of bringing the dead alive into the present, which is the primary sense of the play's title as indicated by the first lines of John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 7" ("At the round earth's imagined corners") with which the play opens. The play will translate Donne's vision of the dead rising at the Last Judgment into secular and socialist terms—the other reference of the play's title is *The Internationale*—and concludes quite literally with the dead arising and dancing with the living. Or, more to the point, the dead are only dead to the degree that the living see them as such, whereas Zukofsky imagines the redeemed society as a process of seeing the dead alive in the present. In its simplest sense, by destabilizing the realistic verisimilitude, the play creates a sense of unpredictability and possibility, allowing what would normally be repressed in the name of the real that is. Such has always been the venerable function of dramatic ghosts.

As mentioned, the play opens briefly in front of the dream curtain, although no one appears and only the voices of the Son and Mother are over-heard off-stage. However, a situation is quickly sketched in which a daughter-sister has recently died, so that the Son's reading of Donne's sonnet is an effort to respond to the Mother's incomplete mourning. This intimate and personal situation, which has loosely biographical origins, is then projected out into a social context in the rest of the play: the dream or dramatic space is presented as social, wherein also must lie the resolution of what initially appears a purely personal problem. The sense of loss is overcome by a recognition that the dead remain alive in the present. In the course of the play, several characters are resurrected: the Mother and Attendant D both die and then reappear at the end. An even more ghostly presence is the daughter-sister who does not literally reappear, although at one moment she seems to manifest within the Girl (33-34), but whose character metamorphosizes several times in the play. In the concluding marriage-dance, which ostensibly celebrates the wedding of the Doctor and the Nurse, the Father declares: "Everybody happy and taken care of? Is there no one gliding from footrest to footrest at my daughter's wedding? No jail nearby? No troops mustered? Then congratulate me. It's high time I have lived to see it" (50-51). In another play, this would be the speech of a doddering old man or simply a drunk, but here clearly not: the wedding is also his daughter's, mentioned by the Son as taking place while he was young (51), as well as signifying its socially symbolic sense of a transformed society no longer requiring the state apparatuses of repression.

In terms of Marx's labor theory of value, labor itself is an animating activity, not only a humanizing of inert matter but reciprocally of the laborers as well realizing themselves in and through the transformation of the made object. This in turn implies the need to see labor, the presence of the dead, embodied everywhere and our common inheritance, not least in our social identities. This is the primary thematic strand of "A"-8, as well as of the first half of "A"-9—the former quotes Marx in terms of "living labor" that "Must rouse [things] from their 'death-like' sleep" ("A" 62). At one point in *Arise, Arise* the Son, paraphrasing Marx on money as the universal equivalent, asks: "Did you work today? Did I? Our work is congealed in

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footnotes.

money, which grinds out the nightworker's shift until he touches at least a crumb" (43). Money, as emblematic of abstraction generally, "congeals" labor, reducing it to an abstract measure that blinds us to our own contribution to and inheritance from social reproduction, and in so doing reducing labor-power vis-à-vis the laborer to a death-like state that is clandestinely siphoned off by the capitalist. The dead, so to speak, exist everywhere in everything around us, and the "dead" are not simply those who have slipped their mortal coil, but those masses entrapped in a deadening cycle of existence under wage labor—the opening line of *The Internationale*, "Arise ye damned of the earth," is echoed several times in the play. At various moments in the play, the dead are mentioned as living in those in the present or else the desire that they do so. The emblematic instance concerns the death and resurrection of Attendant D, apparently killed in strike violence. Standing over his grave and accompanied by the music of the final chorus of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, in which the Apostles mourn at Christ's tomb, Attendant R speaks a reworking of the libretto: "On your grave we raise our rag / Red with the staunch blood of your chest— / Rest you safely, safely rest" (35).<sup>7</sup> Attendant R's initial refers to this red rag with which he appears throughout the play and which might remind us of a famous scene in Chaplin's *Modern Times*.<sup>8</sup> A little later in the same scene he attaches his rag to a stake he sticks into the garden while he sings again to the music of Bach's final chorus: "Dead in your grave but alive in us / In the strength you had, in your strength we have—" (39-40). So Bach's *Passion* is entwined with *The Internationale*, which is overtly echoed a half page later when Attendant R greets the Doctor and Nurse, "Arise damned of earth." These latter characters were indeed among the damned at the outset of the play but have now awoken—the Doctor will be paraphrasing *The Communist Manifesto* in a moment. Somewhat later, the supposedly buried Attendant D suddenly "wakes up," greeting his colleague: "What's up, Rag, in whose memory am I?" (47).

The two African-American Attendants are mainly seen busy doing stereotypical janitor and maintenance work and obviously enough they represent the labor class in the play. As such they are the most pragmatic characters in contrast to a somewhat neurotic bunch of professional and middle class characters, as well as connected to a larger outside world, specifically of labor's broader struggles, which as mentioned extend to the general strike at Valenciennes. Consequently it is appropriate that one of the Attendants takes on a plainly Christ-like role, both as social sacrifice and as a type of redeemer, whose reawakening manifests the recognition of labor and the abolition of hierarchies. The two Attendants often speak "in antiphon," which might suggest an identity that transcends the isolated self. Again we need to imagine the dramatic effect of these black characters who initially appear in perfectly stereotypical subordinate roles that, without any grand acts of assertion, progressively move to the center of the play. If the final wedding and dance is the image of a redeemed society, this takes place only with the resurrection of Attendant D and the incorporation of the Attendants as equal participants, and thus

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<sup>7</sup> The complementary lines from the translation of Bach's libretto are: "Around thy tomb here sit we weeping, / Hearts turned to thee, O Saviour blest: / Rest thee softly, softly rest" (in part quoted at "A"-2.8.16-18).

<sup>8</sup> Zukofsky mentions Charlie Chaplin's "red flag" (its color is a projection) at the beginning of his essay on *Modern Times*, which should be read as a companion piece to *Arise, Arise* given its emphasis on the performative over the argumentative in Chaplin's art (*Prep+* 57-64). For discussion of this essay, see Z-Notes commentary on Zukofsky in the late 1930s.

we have Zukofsky's dramatized version of the promise implied by Donne's vision of the Last Judgment.

A significant aspect of the play that contributes to its ghostly feel is the incorporation throughout of numerous, quasi-hidden quotations. In some cases these quotations are overtly presented as such, for example the opening lines of Donne's "Holy Sonnet 7," or familiar enough to be readily identifiable, such as the Father spouting the opening line of the *Communist Manifesto*. However, most remain more or less buried and yet half-consciously detectable as incongruous shifts of register or tone that deliberately break the naturalness of the dialogue. Yet the distribution of quotations frequently has little apparent relation to the particular characters speaking them, and in some cases, a single block of quotation is "spoken" by several different characters supposedly carrying on a dialogue. At one point, for example, the Son and Girl alternatively speak narrative excerpts from the 13th century chante-fable "Aucassins and Nicolette," taken from Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, although Zukofsky uses this text to draw out a social critique that does not concern Adams (34-36). A list of the more important sources includes: Donne's "Holy Sonnet 7" (most of the sonnet is scattered in bits and pieces throughout the rest of the play), as well as various other medieval and Renaissance lyrics, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, the libretto of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, *The Internationale*, *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, Henry Adams' *Education* and *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, various historical documents describing New York in the Dutch period, newspapers, translations from Apollinaire and even a few instances of Zukofsky's own poems (to which could be added in passing, Firdosi's *Shahnamah*, Charles Lamb, Homer, a camping manual and whatever else has yet to be identified).<sup>9</sup> The most obvious significance of this layering in of quoted materials has already been indicated, since it creates a spectral quality within the text itself and its performance. While we may find it of real interest to identify these various and sometimes rather odd sources, conventional interpretations of quotations as establishing lines of authorization are not Zukofsky's concern. What is the construction of a text or performance that resonates and echoes its own textuality: that it is an artifact made out of inherited materials. Obviously, if we hear this textual echoing, this further undermines the illusionism of character psychology, which we have already seen is of little interest to Zukofsky. If we learn to see and hear beyond such habitual realism, then what the text performs is an awakening of all the "dead" voices, human labor, the cultural increment that lies buried within language and any other social materials. The recognition of specific dead voices is of little importance, since obviously there are no originators in this process of cultural reproduction, which echoes back and through history and the social totality. Rather than think of Zukofsky as eccentrically fitting in all manner of quotations into his play, it would be better to think of him shaping the play out of and around various reading materials that interested him, and indeed this generally is how Zukofsky worked throughout his career. Much later in life, he liked to speak of his works as "found objects."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For specific identification of quoted sources and their original contexts, see the Z-site annotations. The sources dealing with early New York history almost certainly came from Zukofsky's work with the WPA. A number of the details worked into *Arise, Arise* are from descriptions of colonial gardens, which was one of Zukofsky's research projects; there is a vignette of himself pursuing such research in "A"-8.96-97.

<sup>10</sup> Although it is the case that almost all Zukofsky's work is in one way or another significantly worked out of quoted materials, we might mention here, at the other

As indicated, there is a notable range of textual materials quoted, from high literature to folk songs and tales, from historical documents to contemporary newspapers, and of course liberal sprinklings of Marx. Similarly the musical accompaniments vary from William Byrd, Bach and Mozart to folk songs and the popular style of *The Internationale* itself.<sup>11</sup> Again, this textual and musical variety would imply an impulse toward textual democratization, the breaking down of the social hierarchies inherent in them, or the potential bubbling up of all texts into the present. The historical documents from early New York history notably depict on the one hand the depredations of colonialism—a woman gleefully kicking an Indian head around like a football (21)—and on the other the abundant promise of the New World, essentially marketing materials to entice immigrant settlers. These latter are overtly literary and pastoral, evoking echos of the Garden of Eden, which in the present can only be read ironically, a promise betrayed and exploited, like that famous first glimpse of the New World by Dutch sailors at the end of *The Great Gatsby*. And yet that sense of promise or utopian impulse remains, as it does in Donne's sonnet or *The Internationale*, and as political art, the play's task it to awaken the feel of that possibility.

Particularly given the often reiterated view that Zukofsky's post-political, post-Marxist phase is marked by a turn to and retreat into the family, it is necessary to point out the centrality of the family in this play and elsewhere in the work prior to World War II, from at least "Poem beginning 'The'" on. I would suggest that what I have called the feel of utopia that concludes the play is understood as based on a sense of family, that is, that sense of belonging, support and inheritance we most strongly identify with the family in its positive aspect. This has nothing to do with the specific social structure designated "family"—Zukofsky in fact incorporates a quotation straight out of *Capital* on the historical relativity of specific family structures (32). Nor is this a mere idealization of family, since the play presents a variety of ordinary, predictable familial tensions and conflicts. Rather it is a matter of finding some experiential basis of sufficient commonality to draw on in order to imagine and project a plausible sense of the communal, and Zukofsky repeatedly calls on the images of family and childhood for this purpose, as he will continue to do throughout his life. Family in this sense is not so much a matter of blood relations as a minimal social unit within and out of which develop our most basic sense and possibilities of sociability, as well as the tensions that limit that sociability.

## II

The opening scene, oddly detached from the rest of the play, functions as a prologue and is worth a closer look. As mentioned, the initial few minutes of the

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end of his career, "A"-22 & -23, whose main bodies chronologically line up quoted materials covering 6000 years which are reworked such that most cannot be identified and are largely shorn of their historical markers. Although this procedure could be seen as erasing the quotations as such, more to the point is that any quotation is a quotation is a quotation... and the effect is of an ungrounded echo-chamber—that is, nothing but quotations.

<sup>11</sup> For the 1965 production of *Arise, Arise*, Zukofsky suggested additional musical selections, which particularly tend to highlight certain quotations, e.g. when the Son is speaking a poem by Apollinaire, the suggested music is Fauré or Debussy (14), or Persian music when there is a reference to Firdowsi (22), or Provencal music when the Son and Girl are mouthing "Aucassins and Nicolette" (34-36). This later document can be found as an appendix to the Z-site annotations of *Arise, Arise*.

drama are the only segment that takes place in front rather than behind the dream curtain, which suggests this brief initial exchange between the voices of the Mother and Son represent the actual or waking present out of which the rest of the play is extrapolated in dream time. However, the first scene as a whole continues without a break with the lifting of the dream curtain, and we find the two speakers in an indistinct rural scene walking along a road (clearly not where the initial exchange takes place), which soon leads to a house where, pausing before the door, they overhear the Father speaking to his young grandson. The topical continuity between these moments, both in and out of the dream context, is the death of the daughter-sister, so presumably the Son is attempting to console the Mother by reading Donne, just as the Father consoles the grandson on the death of his mother with a folkloric belief that the dead are not really dead, simply silent whenever the living approach. We might like to think of these as the hushed voices of quotations bubbling up from their graves throughout the play, the intertextuality of any text or speech. The Father also says that the Son often dreams of his Mother and that "he knows she is dead in the dream and she knows but does not mention it" for fear he will wake up (3-4). We appear to have something of Zhuangzi famous paradox, who dreamed he was a butterfly and on awaking wondered whether he wasn't a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. Is, then, the opening exchange the dream of the Son, in which case the dead sister-daughter marks his repression of the Mother's death? Or, is the Father speaking off-stage parallel with the opening exchange between the Son and Mother, which suggests a crossing over between the actual and dream realms. Again, it is the blurring of or the dialogue across this demarcation between dreaming and the actual, the dead and the living, its spectral quality, that is central to this play and its political intent. The question of whether the Mother is or is not dead is never definitively answered within the play where sometimes she definitely is and sometimes very much alive. This opening scene's layered manner, presented as three distinct vignettes, and its concern with the dead that in some sense are still alive suggests that it quasi-imagistically encapsulates the entire play, or at least lays out its essential elements.

In the opening exchange the Mother responds to the Son's reading of Donne as if she is not paying attention or does not comprehend, but instead reminiscences about her arrival in Canada. This talking past each other is characteristic of much of the play's dialogue. When the Son asks if she has been paying attention, she simply continues with memories of being a servant and the dangers of her journey to the New World. Zukofsky here succinctly sketches a typical American immigrant scenario with the Son assimilated and enjoying the benefits of education, which creates a decisive gap between the generations, not only educational but experiential. The Son expresses himself through a poem from the new culture with its grand eschatological vision while the Mother speaks in terms of actual anecdotes out of her own experience.<sup>12</sup> We might be reminded here of Benjamin's well-known distinction between storytelling and "literature," symptomatic of the loss and reification of experience. This gap where the characters are bound by familial affection yet living in distinct mental worlds is at the heart of "Poem beginning 'The,'" which is largely addressed to the poet's mother and attempts to explain why he must abandon the language and worldview of his parents in order to embrace a more cosmopolitan or simply "American" perspective, all the while knowing that his mother cannot understand what he is telling her—"Now I kiss you who could never sing Bach, never read Shakespeare" (*CSP* 17). In the somewhat jumbled mix of observations on her

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<sup>12</sup> There is no hint anywhere in the play that any of the characters are Jewish.



arrival in Canada, the Mother recounts that a sailor with a basket of apples "offered" her some and her response was to give him a slap, to which the Son remarks: "You weren't bright, mother"—a typical example of Zukofsky's low-key humor. Presumably the Mother interprets the sailor's offer of sale or perhaps even of generosity as taking liberties, according to the code of the Old World. There is of course the added irony that this offer of the apple could be taken as the temptation of the devil, the lures of the New World which the son will embrace.

In speaking of her experiences as a servant, the Mother recounts an incident where her employers test her honesty, and she is not only proud to have proven her virtue but also that she felt she was treated as part of the family. She is blind to class structure and its inequalities, taking it as simply the natural order of things, but the Son obviously can see this more critically. Yet this is not simply an example of the benighted, not too bright lower classes because the Mother does feel she belongs and is "at home" in her world; that is, she has a sense of sociability which the Son loses to a large degree as the cost of his new knowledge and assertion of his individuality and independence. This then sets up the problem the play attempts to address: to imagine a classless society made up of these very distinct world-views and modes of experience, without engineering the eradication of those differences. "A"-8 includes a quotation from Marx on "equal right," insisting that:

This, Marx dissociated:

*Equal right* . . . presupposed inequality,

Different people are *not* equal one to another."

But to make the exploitation by one man of many impossible!

When the opposition between brain and manual work will have disappeared,

When labor will have ceased to be a mere means of supporting life, (45-46)

This lays out neatly enough a central problem to which *Arise, Arise* attempts to respond. Within the American context of "A"-8 Zukofsky is addressing a primary fear and assumption about socialism, and by raising the issue of "equal right" he evokes arguably the key issue or rallying cry of America's own revolution, whose promise, the poem argues, remains unfulfilled. As already suggested, the answer proposed by *Arise, Arise* is based on the model of family affection (of parent and child), which can cut across the complexes of divisions created by social structures. Turning this into more than a merely subjective problem involves remembering the dead, seeing them alive in the present. The exemplar of the dead who bonds the living is the recently deceased daughter, but the Father as well as Donne's poem speak in terms of the entire community of the dead arising.

Another odd detail of the opening exchange is that when the Son remarks that the Mother has not been listening, she responds by quoting a couple phrases from Donne's poem, which rather stretches the verisimilitude of this situation, although she seems to quote these phrases in a quasi-unconscious manner. In effect, the Mother turns the sonnet back on the Son, implying not only that she "knows" the poem but critiques his assumption of superior knowledge, which replicates a version of the class hierarchy which he supposedly rejects. Significantly, the Mother does not continue from where the Son left off but quotes from the first line of the sonnet's second half or sestet, which makes a very abrupt turn away from the grand vision of the Last Judgment to the immediate and personal, the poet's recognition he is not yet ready for the end but still needs to earn grace in human time. Again, this neatly replicates the gap between the personal and the communal, the central tension or dialectic inscribed in Donne's sonnet, which the play attempts to address. In other words, the play has a task, the dramatic presentation of a different temporality where a radical reordering of social relations becomes at least imaginable or sensed, rather

than merely mandated or arbitrarily projected. The vision of the Last Judgment in the octet of Donne's sonnet is readily enough assimilated to a Marxist vision of the end of history, when all class hierarchies will be dissolved and the injustices of history will be redeemed. At one point the Son, speaking of his dead sister, remarks, "Dead, the young remain young in mind," to which Attendant D responds that this happens every first of May, and Attendant R then antiphonally replies with a famous quote from Marx attempting to express a dialectical vision of history as well as a glimpse of this end of history: "That there comes a time when twenty years are but one day and when may come days which are like twenty years—to be precise each first of May" (15).<sup>13</sup> The Attendants thus gives voice to labor's dreams of a radical reconfiguration of experience and particularly of labor itself, and May first is when this dream is acted out, just as it is in this play. One might argue that the realization, however faint, of this new sense of time in current circumstances is only possible aesthetically, and drama is one obvious space where this might happen under present conditions.

10 Oct. 2013

15 Oct. 2022 revised with addition

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<sup>13</sup> This quotation (excluding Zukofsky's addition following the dash) also appears in "Thanks to the Dictionary" (*CF* 279/285). The quotation is from a letter to Engels, although Zukofsky's source is Lenin's "The Teachings of Karl Marx."