Corporeal Modernisms

Ingrid Galtung

Corporeal Modernisms

The Living Body in Early Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Narrative

Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor (PhD)

University of Agder
Faculty of Humanities and Education
2022

Doctoral dissertations at the University of Agder 353
ISSN: 1504-9272
ISBN: 978-82-8427-062-3

Print: 07 Media
Kristiansand, Norway

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been achievable without the help and support of a number of individuals and institutions. I would first like to thank the University of Agder and the Department of Foreign Languages and Translation for the three-year grant that initially financed this project. I am also indebted to the Norwegian doctoral school in the humanities, Text, Image, Sound, Space (TBLR), whose engaging and inspiring courses have provided an invaluable academic forum. I also want to thank Professor Toril Moi and the Center for Philosophy, Arts, and Literature at Duke University for welcoming me as a visiting scholar during spring and summer 2016. Many others have helped me along the way. In particular, I am grateful to Professor Zeljka Svrljuga, without whose initial academic guidance and encouragement the conception of this study would not have been possible. I also wish to thank Professor Thomas Ferraro for constructive and productive comments on an early draft of chapter two and for introducing me to Willa Cather's "Coming, Aphrodite!" I owe a special thanks to Professor Jakob Lothe, whose careful reading and diligent feedback on a draft of this thesis helped sharpen its focus and bring it into its present shape. Most of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my two supervisors, without whose unwavering support and encouragement this project would not have materialized. My sincere thanks to Professor Stephen Dougherty for his efficient readership, intellectual verve, and patient guidance throughout the writing process. I am equally indebted to Professor Janne Stigen Drangsholt, whose attentive ear, academic enthusiasm, and fresh perspectives I could not have done without.

Thanks should also go to Agder University Library for their excellent research support. In particular, I must thank Lone Bak, Åse Vikse, and the rest of the Circulation Services team, who have helped me with countless interlibrary loans, as well as former subject librarian Birgitte Kleivset. I am also grateful to Hilde Moore, Gunhild Kvåle, Adrian Førde Andersson, Irene Garnes Hareide, Sivert Skålvoll Urstad, Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås and Anne Marit Foss – friends and PhD colleagues who have made the arduous experience of thesis writing not only bearable, but enjoyable. A special thanks goes to Frida Forsgren for her warm friendship and her shared interest in interdisciplinary modernism. Thanks also to Kathrine Helland, whose creative yoga and cardio strength classes have

catered to both body and mind throughout the thesis period. Last but not least, my sincere gratitude goes to my family. I am always indebted to my parents, who remain a constant source of help and encouragement. Finally, my deepest thanks to Anders for his unfailing love and stubborn faith in me, and to little Gabriel, whose smile makes everything right.

Summary in Norwegian

Corporeal Modernisms utforsker det levende forholdet mellom angloamerikansk litterær modernisme og menneskekroppen slik den ble forstått, erfart, og konseptualisert i første del av det 20. århundre. Mens modernismen tradisjonelt har blitt oppfattet som en bølge av ulike kunstneriske responser på opplevelsen av modernitet, eller som en mangefasettert søken etter mening i en verden som synes kaotisk og fragmentert, formuleres denne avhandlingen ut fra innsikten i at det nettopp er gjennom kroppen at vi først og fremst organiserer vår erfaring av konsepter som helhet og symmetri, eller utforsker samspillet mellom fri bevegelse og bundethet. Interesse for og bevissthet om kroppens grunnleggende meningsdannende og -bærende potensial kommer til syne i en kroppskultur som skal komme til å prege første halvdel av 1900-tallet. Gjennom nærlesninger av fire sentrale – men marginaliserte – tekster, Gertrude Steins «Orta, Or One Dancing» (1912), H.D.s *Hermione* (1981 [1926-27]), Mina Loys *Insel* (1991 [1940-tallet]), og Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) utforsker avhandlingen hvordan forfattere inspireres av og formulerer den mangefasetterte samtidskroppen. På denne måten undersøker avhandlingen den levende kroppens rolle i utviklingen av modernismens litterære estetikk. Kapittel 1 tar for seg Steins portrett av danseren Isadora Duncan og nærleser forfatterens verbale fremstilling av kroppslig bevegelse, samt forholdet mellom de to uttrykksformene litteratur og moderne dans. Kapittel 2 ser nærmere på H.D.s fascinasjon for den antikke kroppen, og undersøker særlig hvordan balansen mellom styrke og fleksibilitet fungerer som inspirasjonskilde for hennes radikale poetikk. Kapittel 3 utforsker hvordan Loy bruker den irregulære, syke kroppen som utgangspunkt for kritisk analyse av surrealismens grensesprengende estetikk. Kapittel 4 setter søkelyset på den motebevisste kroppen, og utforsker hvordan skjønnhetsindustriens avtrykk på den materielle kroppen påvirker ulike narrative nivå hos Rhys. Avhandlingen bidrar slik til eksisterende modernismeforskning på tre sammenflettede måter: Ved å gjennomføre lesninger med utgangspunkt i den tekstinterne samtidskroppen blir forutsetningen forholdet mellom kontekst og tekst, samt tekstens iboende forhold mellom innhold og form, og teksten leses således på dens egne premisser. Med andre ord anvender avhandlingen en lesemåte som fremhever enkeltverkets – og periodens – egenart, samtidig som analysen av fire vidt ulike tekster fungerer til å understreke

mangfoldet av estetiske uttrykk som faller inn under paraplybegrepet modernisme. Samtidig inviterer det gjennomgående fokuset på kroppen til sammenlignende lesninger. Ved å granske tekstene med utgangspunkt i samtidskroppen fremhever avhandlingen paralleller, kontraster, og forbindelseslinjer både mellom de konkrete ulike modernistiske verkene og -ismer som de har sitt utgangspunkt i. Mens modernismen som helhet ofte fremstilles som kompleks og uhåndgripelig, bidrar nettopp kroppens håndgripelighet som en motvekt til abstrakte teoretiseringer av moderniteten. Avhandlingen presenterer videre nylesninger av fire ikke-kanoniske tekster, hvis distinkte individuelle formspråk bidrar til å utvide eksisterende forståelser av og samtaler om det modernistiske landskapet.

Contents

1 Introduction

> In spite of the labour and the difficulty it is this that draws us back and back to the Greeks; the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there. ... [I]t is the language that has us most in bondage; the desire for that which perpetually lures us back. ... Every ounce of fat has been pared off, leaving the flesh firm. Then, spare and bare as it is, no language can move more quickly, dancing, shaking, all alive, but controlled. ... [I]t is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age.
>
> (Virginia Woolf, "On Not Knowing Greek," 1925, 40; 51; 54)

> To-day's loveliest women are ZONOPLASTIC
> Not a new word – it comes from the Greek. *Zono* means "the line from breast to hips." *Plastic* means "rhythmically shaped." To achieve this Zonoplastic line of fashion you must smooth away that roll of flesh round the diaphragm, control the 'tummy' curve, narrow the hips, and flatten the *derrière*. Zonoplastic means, too, that this control must be rhythmic and not rigid – allowing you all the freedom of the nude figure. Only Charnaux gives you this Zonoplastic line, because Charnaux has perforated "bands of force" scientifically distributed to fashion the figure. … The perforations also act like a massage, toning up the body and making superfluous flesh disappear.
>
> (Advertisement for Charnaux corsets, *The Tatler*, March 4, 1936, xxix)

Corporeal Modernisms focuses on the intertwining of literary modernism and the ways in which the body was experienced, thought about, and conceptualized during the first half of the 20th century. As the site through which we first organize our awareness of notions such as wholeness and health, rhythm and symmetry, or the interplay of free movement and constraint, the body exists as our original mode of being; the seat of our primordial stories. In a time marked by social, political, and economic upheaval, the material body became a key locus through which the experience of rapid change was negotiated, and a state

of integrity attempted reclaimed and refined. While modernism has often been defined in terms of "an active search for meaning," and a response to the "disorder and fragmentation caused by the modern materialist world" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 97), the field of modernist studies have yet to fully elucidate the vital role that the human body plays in engendering its new aesthetic forms. This is something that *Corporeal Modernisms* seeks to rectify. In this study, I address a variety of significant ways in which modernists seek out, rely on, and attempt to activate the knowledge of the living body, making it both an essential vehicle and a marked destination in their literary quests for meaning.

The first step in exploring the complex relations between the human body and modernist aesthetics is to clarify the entwined notions of "modernism" and "modernity." Broad and viewed by different academic disciplines in different ways, the latter term is most commonly used to denote historical events and world-spanning processes which, since the start of the 16th century, have contributed to speeding up the pace of human life. Over the span of five centuries, discoveries within the natural sciences have changed our understanding of the universe and our place within it, and also led to rapid technological advancements that coalesced and contributed to various other processes of change: Bouts of rapid urban growth, the mass uprootings of people from their ancestral environments, new means of transportation and communication, the strengthening of and competition between nation states, an increasingly globalized, capitalist market place, and struggles for power between rulers and oppressed. In his seminal work *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982), Marshall Berman describes these processes as "the maelstrom of modern life" (16), a welter of developmental forces that keep the individual in a "state of perpetual becoming" (16). This study follows Berman in seeing "modernity" as referring to the social *experience* of ongoing change, rather than the social processes of modernization which bring this experience about. "To be modern," Berman argues in his oft-cited opening passage,

> is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. … it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. (15)

The experience of modernity, as it is understood here, is characterized by a certain doubleness, encompassing simultaneously the feeling of abundant possibility and an irrevocable loss of tradition and stability. Moreover, those caught up in this conflicting experience often believe themselves to be the first, and perhaps also the only ones to live through it, a feeling which, as Berman puts it, "has engendered numerous nostalgic myths of pre-modern Paradise Lost" (15). A heightened awareness of the uprooting experience of modernity is at the forefront of individual and collective consciousness during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the period in which the contours of our own modern world truly start to take shape. During this time of unprecedented industrialization, urbanization, and differentiation, the diverse and loosely defined artistic movement of modernism develops in self-conscious response to the experience of navigating an increasingly complex reality. Traditional definitions of modernism often describe its relationship to modernization and modernity in antagonistic terms, regarding the artist as "a seer who would attempt to create what the culture could no longer produce … symbol and meaning" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 98), or modernism itself, in the words of James Knapp, as "a kind of soul trapped in the gross body of modern industrial society" (qtd. in Armstrong, *Modernism* 1). Highlighting instead its interdependence with the materialist world, Berman describes modernism as an abundant variety of "visions and ideas," which seek to "make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own" (16). Drawing on this definition, the present study understands modernism as a series of artistic attempts to bring forth and critically utilize the transformative powers that shape the artist's material surroundings and herself as a physical being. It is through the body that we are present in time and space, and it is inevitably through our physical senses that we actively experience and feel the impact of the maelstrom of modern life. In turn, the artistic practices of modernism must, to a large extent, be thought of as endeavors to articulate and make sense of corporeal experience. The body thus figures as a site in which modernity and modernism come together, and this is something that this study both acknowledges and aims to unpack. In what follows, I further explain the study's aims of exploring how early 20th century experiences and understandings of the human body helped condition literary modernism's aesthetic forms in essential and formative ways.

The two quotations that open this chapter exemplify the key role that the body plays in the modern individual's practical and artistic negotiations of their existence. With their references to the ancient Greek body, both demonstrate how nostalgic myths of pre-modernity fuel and are brought to life by modern modes of self-expression. In passing remarks from her essay "On Not Knowing Greek" (1925), Virginia Woolf foregrounds an interface between the corporeality of ancient Greece and literary aesthetics. Reflecting on her fellow modernists' idealization of classical Greek culture, Woolf invokes the Greek language, whose swiftness and economy of expression she admires, in terms of the lean, muscular Greek body. Reacting to the experience of her own post-war age as "vague" and "confusing," she presents its remedy in terms of a language which can do what the "original" Greek body does. "[D]ancing, shaking, all alive, but controlled" (51), the language invokes a dynamic alternation of muscular release and contraction – vital to our staying composed while in motion.

In Woolf's essay, the experience of being held "in bondage" by the Greeks appears an elitist endeavor, exclusive to the circles of high modernism. Yet as shown by the contemporary ad for Charnaux corsets – an ad typical for its mixture of references to classical Greece and modern technological advance – the grip of the Greeks was literally felt on the body by the everyday individual of urban, interwar Europe. With roots in the Greek language, the "spare and bare" word "Zonoplastic" figures as a supporting or constraining corset for the modern woman. Denoting a commercially developed garment designed to implement a state of corporeal suppleness and integrity, the ad reveals what historian Anna Carden-Coyne describes as the era's quest for a "new materialism" ("Dissolution, Reconstruction" 202) – a desire to renew the body "through the living principles of balance and dynamism" (*Reconstructing the Body* 3). Indicating ways in which language echoes the Greek body, and also how the modern body is molded to a borrowed Greek word, the two quotations express encouragements to firm, strengthen and pare down – literary language and the human body respectively. For those making their way through the "maelstrom of modern life" (Berman 16), the key attributes are those of strength, swiftness, and flexibility – qualities we come to know first and most intimately through our corporeal existence.

The early 20th century revival of the "Paradise Lost" of the ancient Greek body had begun already in the late 19th century, as artists, doctors, and dress reformers had come to understand the Greco-Roman body as natural, or as Woolf would later put it, "original" (40). In an 1883 commentary on the effects of

Victorian dress on health, Frederick Treves, expert in anatomy, explains how in the figure of Venus di Medici

> there is a gentle sweep from shoulder to the hip, all parts are in proportion, and the actual outline of the body precisely accords with the principles of beauty. In the modern figure, there is an abrupt constriction of the waist; the shoulders and hips appear ponderous by comparison … and, so far as the anatomical eye can view it, the proportions of the body are lost. (Qtd. in Corrigan 75)

By defining the natural body through an interpretation of classicist imagery, Treves contributes to the initiation of a modernist search for meaning in corporeal terms. His observations identify the contemporary body as exhibiting a destructive imbalance of proportions, a loss of original form, which prompts the desire to reform or reshape the body. Indeed, by mourning the absence of a "gentle sweep from shoulder to the hip," Treves formulates the premise for Charnaux's modern corset, whose promise to create a "rhythmically shaped" "line from breast to hip" participates in redeeming the formal loss imposed by its Victorian predecessor. Charnaux's corset is a continuation of that developed by Parisian couturier Paul Poiret, who during the first decade of the 20th century had transformed the corset "from the S-shaping vehicle it had been to one that flattened the hips and buttocks, liberating the waist" (Winkour, qtd. in Fischer 32). Thus, the restoration of the "natural" figure involved a reorganization of the living body: while the liberated waist allowed for breath and increased movement, the modern body's size and shape were subjected to a new set of aesthetic criteria, its freedom controlled by inventions such as the modern corset's "bands of force" (Charnaux xxix). In line with Berman's observations of modernity, the modern body articulates a dialectics of loss and recovery, giving material shape to the maelstrom of "perpetual disintegration and renewal" (15).

The body's role as a site of collective cultural transformation would culminate with World War I, which killed ten million and left eight million bodies broken and disabled (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 1). During the era of post-war reconstruction, surgeons, statesmen, military personnel and artists – many classically educated within the arts and humanities – turned, as Woolf puts it, "to the Greeks." Imbued with values of "beauty, symmetry, and civilization," classicism now surfaced as an "aesthetics of healing" (Carden-

Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 4) which, as Carden-Coyne has shown, was "especially conveyed through bodies" (2). While modern warfare had fragmented bodies and minds in previously unseen and unimagined ways, living bodies now became a medium through which a sense of coherence could be restored. Above all, the reconstructed body should emanate the ability and muscularity of the bodies of ancient Greece, which "had philosophical and symbolic meanings beyond just beauty. Muscles gave physical expression to the idea of unity and wholeness, at the same time revealing the character of one's soul" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 164). Predicated upon this "natural" body created through aesthetic discourse (Corrigan 75), the developing fields of cosmetic surgery and prosthetic technology helped mend the veteran's bodily symmetry and mobility, whereas physical rehabilitation programs helped shape and define his muscles according to classicist masculinity. Moreover, a desire to be slimmer and fitter, and to dress in clothes that revealed the firm body and its implied meanings, became a defining feature of everyday life for both men and women in Europe and beyond. One of the more significant effects of the experience of war on daily life, Christopher Wilk observes, was the development of "different ways in which the body could be made healthier, or at least, could be made to appear healthier" (252). With the aim of projecting a desired state of integrity, dynamism, and balance, the material body was transformed through an active body culture, with activities ranging from boxing and weight lifting to dance, gymnastics, and Greek posing, and commoditized by a rapidly growing beauty and fashion industry, as exemplified by Charnaux's pledge of "toning up the body" (xxix). Thus, the interwar era shows an acute awareness of the material body's malleability, and the ways in which the body lends itself to the formation of individual and collective stories. This insight into early 20th century body culture is imperative for the present study, which seeks to address the central role that the body plays in modernism's articulation of modernity.

1.1 Reading the Body: Theoretical Foundations

In considering how literary modernism reflects and utilizes the nature and knowledge of the modern body, this study relies on the theory of conceptual metaphor, as outlined and developed first and foremost by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. A contrast to postmodern theory, which displaces the idea of a conceptual system grounded in a foundation, and thereby regards human

meaning as inherently temporary, unstable, and fragmentary, Lakoff and Johnson see the material body as "undergird[ing] languages and systems of meaning the world over" (Johnson, *Embodied Mind* 20). Inspired in part by Maurice Merleau Ponty's phenomenological understanding of the body as "our general means of having a world" (147), Lakoff and Johnson explain how we structure and organize our knowledge of the world by projecting patterns of sensorimotor experience into the domain of abstract understanding, so that "the 'mental' is experienced and understood in terms of the 'physical'" (Johnson, *Body in the Mind* 88).[1] When Woolf in the earlier quoted essay counters existential vagueness and confusion with a return to a "dancing, shaking" language, "all alive, but controlled" (51), the implied Greek body articulates an equilibrium of muscular force and restraint, reminding us that the idea of balance or coherence is first and foremost a corporeal experience that we project onto psychological, emotional, aesthetic, social, and political realities. "The structure of balance," explains Johnson, "is one of the key threads that holds our physical experience together as a relatively coherent and meaningful whole. And … balance, metaphorically interpreted also holds together several aspects of our understanding of the world" (*Body in the Mind* 74). This transference of corporeal balance to abstract domains is clearly seen in the postwar era's construction of an athletic, symmetrical body – an effort infused by the desire to regain a sense of health, balance, and wholeness in terms of culture or civilization. Struggling to navigate and appropriate the flux of modern life, individuals and collectives would rediscover and utilize the living body's inherent capacity for loss and retrieval of balance. Thus, as will be thoroughly discussed in this thesis, the making of the material modern body reveals an awareness of metaphorical transference and its centrifugal process; how it springs from the body and extends outwards, giving rise to the stories we tell about ourselves and our place in the world.

---

[1] The last decade has seen the emergence of the new research area of cognitive literary studies, also termed "cognitive literary science" (Burke and Troscianko 2017), or more broadly, "cognitive humanities" (Garratt 2016). Working at the intersection of literary studies and cognitive- or neuroscience, scholars from both sides of the disciplinary divide are in the process of further considering the dependence of abstract thinking on bodily features and embodied experience. Although Lakoff and Johnson's linguistic theory of conceptual metaphor, as well as narrative theories inspired by it, inform this study's readerly approach, the study will not enter into further dialogue with the highly interdisciplinary and heterogeneous field of cognitive literary studies.

The insight into how conceptual metaphors are structured through the body also underpins Daniel Punday's theory of corporeal narratology, as introduced in his book *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology* (2003). Punday's work, which is another critical cornerstone for my thesis, departs from the essential observation that literary scholars often have overlooked the semiotic and narrative capacity of the human body. I will particularly take heed of Punday's insight that although the body has figured prominently in literary and cultural theory as well as in literary criticism throughout the last few decades, it has most often been regarded as an object of narrative; something belonging to the text's "what" rather than its "how" (3). While the school of narratology has traditionally concerned itself with the text's "how," theorizing the construction and structure of narrative, Punday detects in its abstract, generalized, and often transhistorical models a "difficulty dealing with the concrete historical object of the human body" (9). Reminding the reader that narrative is "that form of discourse in which the act of telling is evident, and where we must constantly ask … both what we know and how we know it" (189), Punday's book is concerned with "the relationship between the bodies represented within a narrative, and the way the narrative itself is constructed" (8). At the core of Punday's book is the argument that narrative as such is corporeal in nature,

> not simply because it needs to use character bodies as a natural part of the stories that it tells, but also because the very ways in which we think about narrative reflect the paradoxes of the body – its ability to give rise to and resist pattern, its position in the world and outside of it, and so on. Narrative, then, always first and foremost depends on a corporeal hermeneutics – a theory of how the text can be meaningfully articulated through the body …. (Punday 15)

The theory of corporeal narratology is particularly interesting in relation to modernism, which, due to the larger culture's heightened attention to physicality, often displays a self-conscious alertness to the body's "ability to give rise to and resist pattern" (Punday 15). The early twentieth century not only endeavors to recreate the ideal Greek body, its dynamism and integrity a guarantee of a healthy interiority, it also exhibits a reciprocal relation between body conceptualization and artistic expression which is similar to that which Woolf, in

the above-quoted essay, finds to exist in Greek literature. Moreover, Punday's proposition that the literary body contributes to the making and unmaking of narrative patterns is also concretely observable in ancient fiction. Writing about the bodies of ancient Greek and Roman novels, Jason König observes alongside Woolf that "the bodies they present us with are so often equivalent in form to the texts themselves," his essay exploring how "bodily texture and narrative texture … are interwoven with each other" (127; 144). König explains how in the ancient novel, the reader is insistently confronted with a wide range of human bodies: "beautiful, chaste bodies, god-like bodies, ugly bodies, dead bodies, fragmented bodies … bodies that are hard to tell apart from one another" (127). According to Punday, the reader's access to a specific narrative depends on their ability to grasp what he terms the text's "general body"; an "overarching understanding of corporeality" (83) or "corporeal atmosphere" (82) which stands above its individual characters and mediates the relationships and confrontations between them (77). In the classical novel, the various bodies mentioned by König somehow affirm or challenge the larger culture's "general body," with its established meaning of bodily strength and integrity, which inevitably informs the text. As their potential for balanced form is realized, rejected, or thwarted, the narrated bodies function as carriers of certain stories which they dramatize, thereby serving as "metaphors and mirrors for the very experience of reading" (König 127). Responding to a similar tendency within modernism, this study explores various ways in which, as Punday puts it, "the text can be meaningfully articulated through the body" (15). Negotiating and articulating experiences of perpetual *change*, the general bodies that surface in the texts discussed in this study are inevitably bodies of transformation, each embodying and projecting, in their own idiosyncratic way, a poetics that upsets and postpones any traditional narrative resolution.

In exploring how modernist texts generate, negotiate, and are shaped by their "general bodies," the study will rely on the method of close reading, a practice which seeks to uncover the intricate connections that bring the narrative together as a meaningful whole. The study's conception of close reading draws on that of Kenneth Burke, who combined New Criticism's detailed and intrinsically focused analysis of the literary work with a concern for its material and extrinsic context. In his well-known essay "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats" (1943), Burke defines the poem as a "symbolic act of the poet who made it," thereby foregrounding its representative function rather than treating it as an

autonomous verbal object. Through the literary work, the poet is seen as articulating a motivation, such as the search for transcendence or wholeness, or the alleviation of loss or pain. In line with Berman, who sees the modernist's voice as an attempt "to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own" (16), Burke sees the poet as *acting* in and on his world – a world which may be private and subjective, or encompass a larger outside social context. In arresting "a *state of mind*, the property of an *agent*" (460), the poem becomes, according to Burke, "an act of such a nature that, in surviving as a structure or object, it enables us as readers to re-enact it" (447). Such re-enactment involves recognizing how the unchangeable whole of the poem is imbued with a specific agitation, "a mood absolutized so that it fills the entire universe of discourse," and concurrently, how progressive developments unfold within its fixity (Burke 453). In the context of this study's focus and theoretical perspectives, Burke's notion of a synthesizing, permeating *mood* resonates with Punday's conception of a "general body" – the "corporeal atmosphere" that links and implicitly orchestrates the narrative's internal processes. While Burke maintains that the words on the page should remain the reader's main object of inquiry, stating that "[o]ur primary concern is to follow the transformations of the poem itself" (451), he also acknowledges that the work's final meaning emerges from the amalgamation of its aesthetic, ontological, and cultural-historical circumstances. He therefore calls for methodological openness, arguing that in order "to understand [the poem's] full nature as a symbolic act, we should use whatever knowledge is available" (451).

As this study regards the transformations of the literary text as being contingent on those of the represented body, a re-enactment of the text's symbolic act requires the reader to have knowledge *of* as well as about the body. While the notion of intuition may seem out of place in the context of a scholarly dissertation, I regard "intuition" – defined as the experience of "immediate apprehension" (*OED*) – as integral to the study's method of close reading as re-enactment. A reader's immersion into a new fictional territory often begins with passages that provide a sense of familiarity, recognition, or understanding, and in line with the theory of corporeal hermeneutics I see textual instances that evoke bodily events as particularly effective in drawing the reader into the literary text. The body, in other words, is understood to function as a hermeneutic bridge or site of identification, which grants the reader initial access to a work's more or less familiar universe. In *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in*

Literary Narrative (2012), a study which partly draws on Punday's work, Guillemette Bolens explains how a narrative's "general body" is gradually revealed through characters' kinesic actions and interactions, accessible to the reader via their own "kinesic intelligence":

> A person's kinesic style is perceptible in her idiosyncratic movements and the singular way she negotiates social codes and physical constraints, while the kinesic style of a literary work is experienced through its narrative dynamics, which, in relation to the reader's kinesic intelligence, elicit the understanding of bodily events, shaped in language. Kinesic analysis in literature focuses on the exact means – narratological, lexical, syntactic, grammatical, rhetorical, figural, and so forth – used in a text to construct meaning by referring to bodily movement and by triggering sensorimotor perceptual simulations in the reader via linguistic and semantic codes. (28)

An appeal to the reader's kinesic intelligence presents itself in the previously quoted excerpt from Woolf, who, despite her lack of intimate knowledge of the Greek language conveys an experience of its material qualities through reference to corporeal movement. Echoing the style of the language it describes, Woolf's sentence moves "quickly, dancing, shaking, all alive, but controlled" ("On Not Knowing" 51). Its listing commas and the gerunds "shaking" and "dancing" imply a sense of unrestrained, continuous life, which is nonetheless modified or kept in check by the sentence's final "but." Shaped in language, the pleasurable experience of balanced movement is first and foremost recognizable to us through our own experience of being and having a body. Our bodies, as Ivan Crozier puts it, "maintain something of the prediscursive … When we read about pain or pleasure, it is appreciated as our own – or it remains unsympathetically unimaginable" (3). While we might not know Greek, as Woolf's essay's title suggests, we intuitively know the living, dancing body, with its muscles, motor organs, and nervous system. By calling upon our internalized kinesic intelligence, Woolf imbues the foreign context of the Greek language with a sense of the familiar, turning our "not knowing" into knowledge.

Yet, while the body may serve as a "readerly ingress to the story" (Punday 83), our tacit recognition of the represented body can also blind the reader to the differences of bodies, conditioned by time, place, and culture. Approaching the

body from the perspective of the historian, Crozier underscores that human bodies are never "purely natural entities but … the product of various context-specific interventions. Only by placing bodies in their (discursive and historical) contexts can they be understood" (3). Crozier's reminder is timely in the context of this study, which aims to reenact literary bodies' symbolic action, and the ways in which each "fills the entire universe of discourse" (K. Burke 453). A valid reenactment of a text's narrative universe inevitably requires the reader to have knowledge *about* the textual body and its situatedness, that is, the singular materialist context that the represented body is symbolic *of.* A sense of warning against the reader's inclination to overlook contextual cues and the information they offer also permeates Woolf's essay, whose enquiry into the modernist's attraction to the ancient Greeks departs from the assertion that

> it is vain and foolish to talk of knowing Greek, since in our ignorance we should be at the bottom of any class of schoolboys, since we do not know how the words sounded, or where precisely we ought to laugh, or how the actors acted, and between this foreign people and ourselves there is not only difference of race and tongue but a tremendous breach of tradition. (35)

In their longing for what Woolf terms "the permanent" and "the stable" ("On Not Knowing" 40), the modernist writer – as well as the surrounding culture – was largely attuned to a sense of unbroken continuation between personal experience and that of the ancient Greeks, rather than the Greeks' historical reality. With no direct access to the cultural and material conditions of the past, the reader cannot truly know how the Greeks used their voices, or their exact kinesic style, or what effects their movements were intended to provoke, and the symbolism of their corporeal action thereby remains largely inaccessible. Within the context of this introduction, Woolf's essay not only calls attention to her era's proclivity to favor the prediscursive and somewhat falsely familiar body in their engagement with the past, it also serves to warn the present-day reader of our own innate tendency to ground our readings in what Crozier describes as "the conception that all bodies are our own" (3).

Thus, to productively explore the relationship between corporeality and narrative demands a mode of interpretation which shares similarities with that of New Historicism. The importance of tending to the body's contextual grounding

is also stressed by Punday, who, in evaluating previous scholarly approaches to the nexus of body and literature considers studies that are New Historicist in nature to be those that best provide "a nuanced understanding of the human body as a site in which particular conflicts can be observed within discourses of the time" (9). However, while he is critical of narratology's "insistence on abstraction," he also voices reservation about the New Historicist's hesitance "to generalize its analysis of the body … beyond the particular historical moment that it studies" (9). In its aspiration to reenact the literary body's telling of the social experience of modernity, this thesis draws on the combinatory approach implied by Punday in the above. On the one hand, the study focuses on how modernism engages the human body's general capacity to generate and break with patterns – the meaning-making capacity which, according to Johnson, sustains systems of meaning across place and time (*Embodied Mind* 20). At the same time, it considers the body's contextual specificities – the ways in which the literary body is always already inscribed with meaning, its gestures, appearance, and behavior shaped by the cultural-historical forces that surround its creation in language.

1.2 Willa Cather's "Coming, Aphrodite!": An Introductory Example

In order to further introduce the productive exchange between the early 20th century body and modernism, as well as to demonstrate the close-reading approach outlined in the above, the introduction will use Willa Cather's short story "Coming, Aphrodite!" (1920) as a literary example.[2] Cather sheds light on the nexus of corporeality and modernist art by tracing the passionate relationship between Eden Bower, an aspiring singer, and Don Hedger, an avant-garde painter. Featuring two different types of artists, whose conflicting artistic views eventually draw them apart, Cather's story invites a discussion of the nature of art: Whereas Hedger detests the idea of "becoming a marketable product," devoting himself to formal innovation by "groping his way from one kind of painting into another" ("Coming, Aphrodite!" 9), Eden yearns for fame, visual glamour and commercial success. At the end of the story, Eden has succeeded in

[2] An extended version of this reading is published in *Aesthetic Apprehensions: Silence and Absence in False Familiarities* (2020), edited by Jena Habegger-Conti and Lene M. Johannessen.

her endeavor, as she triumphantly returns from her expatriate existence in Paris to New York to star as Aphrodite in the same-titled opera. Inquiring about her lover from twenty years past, she learns that Hedger has become "one of the first men among the moderns" (43).

While the story critically considers the "many kinds of success" an artist might pursue (44), it also shows Hedger's modernist aesthetics as decidedly intertwined with, and partly deriving from, Eden's popular performance of Aphrodite. The first time the two meet, Eden is "caparisoned for the bath" (13) – on her way to the common tub of their neighboring apartments "carrying various accessories for the bath" and dressed in a flowing bathrobe that "fell away from her marble arms" (12). A semantically focused reading of Eden's "marble arms" brings attention not only to the whiteness or pureness of her exposed skin, it also evokes the cool, smooth, and durable surfaces of classical Greek statues. Alongside Hedger, the reader is drawn to the comingling of past and present that Eden embodies; the way in which she seems to revive the ambiance of an ancient past. The scene as such bears resonance to the archetypal Greek scene of Aphrodite at her bath, which typically portrays the goddess naked, crouching down with her left arm attempting to cover her breasts and her head turned over her right shoulder, as if surprised by an onlooker.[3] Shortly thereafter, Hedger also adopts the role of voyeur, as he discovers a knothole in their shared wall which allows him to watch Eden undress:

> … he had never seen a woman's body so beautiful as this one, – positively glorious in action. As she swung her arms and changed from one pivot of motion to another, muscular energy seemed to flow through her from her toes to her finger-tips. The soft flush of exercise and the gold of afternoon sun played over her flesh together, enveloped her in a luminous mist which, as she turned and twisted, made now an arm, now a shoulder, now a thigh, dissolve in pure light and instantly recover its outline with the next gesture. Hedger's fingers curved as if he were holding a crayon; mentally he was doing the whole figure in a single running line, and the charcoal seemed to explode in his hand at the point where the energy of

[3] See for example the British Royal Collection's marble statue *Aphrodite or 'Crouching Venus'* (2nd century AD). Roman version of Hellenistic version from 200 BC. www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/69746/aphrodite-or-crouching-venus

> each gesture was discharged into the whirling disc of light, from a foot or shoulder, from the up-thrust chin or the lifted breasts. (14)

Critics tend to focus Cather's blunt portrayal of sexual passion and the merging of Hedger's art and physical sensation – his actions, as noted by Sharon Hamilton, being "suspiciously evocative of masturbation" (860). The erotic pleasure that imbues the scene of Hedger's imaginary drawing of Eden also adds to the theme of artistic genesis, which permeates the story. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, one of the earliest sources of the becoming of the divine order of Greek mythology, Aphrodite is said to be born from the foam that proliferates from the severed genitals of the sky-god Uranus, which have been thrown into the sea by Cronus, who acts on behalf of his mother Gaia, the Earth Mother. Rising from the chaos this creates – that is, from the liquid mixture of sperm, blood, and sea water – the figure of Aphrodite serves, as Sebastian Goth argues, to illustrate the appearance of cultural forms from a realm of formlessness: "[T]he creation myth of Aphrodite depicts the very process of aesthetic and material formation; her ideal bodily form can also be understood as a meta-figure of all figuration: as an allegory of artistic form and beauty" (18-19). Thus, while Aphrodite is most often thought of as the goddess of love and beauty, she is also "a figure of the creative, as both object and subject of creation" (Goth 19). Embodying Uranus's divinity and sexuality, as well as Gaia's natural creativity, she is the bringer of life and fecundity, qualities that also emanate from Cather's modern Aphrodite.

Indeed, it is the life of Eden's modern body which captures not only Hedger's, but also this reader's interest. Bathing in "a pool of sunlight" (14), a "golden shower pour[ing] in through the west windows" (15), and enjoying what Charnaux advertises for sale, namely "the freedom of the nude figure" (xxix), Eden is seen practicing her own personal exercise regime. Whereas women's participation in sports and exercise had been relatively uncommon prior to the war, Eden's gymnastics routine testifies to the 1927 observation of German polymath Wolfgang Graeser that "from America to Australia, from Europe to Japan" "[s]omething new had appeared. It could be called a movement, a wave, a fashion, a passion, a new feeling for life … It had no name but was called by a hundred old names and a hundred new ones … Body culture, gymnastics, dance, cult dances, the new corporeality, the new physicality, the revival of the ideals of antiquity …" (qtd. in Wilk 258). The sun that "play[s] over her flesh" seems to

awaken not only Eden's body, but also, more abstractly, the ideals of beauty and dynamism embodied by antique marble sculptures, and the figure of Aphrodite specifically. Throughout the late teens and the twenties, art, fashion, and body culture installed Venus/Aphrodite as the prime ideal that women should strive for, and "[b]eauty products were often advertised with models staring up at Venus de Milo, yearning to achieve her heights of beauty" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 245). Writing in 1923, physical culturist Ward Crompton described Venus/Aphrodite as "perennial, eternal, universal, the goddess of every age" (qtd. in Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 241). In a 1916 article in the *Baltimore Sun* titled "America Grows Big Crop of Venuses," Harrison Fisher reports on the direct impact of Venus on the material body in the US, focusing on the era's many regional and national Venus lookalike contests, in which young women competed over having the body whose measurements and traits most closely resembled those of Venus de Milo. "The American Venuses who are springing up as unexpectedly and delightfully at different points in the United States as Aphrodite sprang out of the sea are performing a great service to their age and country," Fisher explains, "It is a sign of the times, a most significant one. It points to our coming freedom from the tyranny of fashions" (22). Yet in lauding Venus as a corporeal Paradise Lost, whose "exquisite proportions" (22) break with the disproportionate body dictated by Victorian ideals, Fisher fails to acknowledge the restraints brought on by the oft-cited measurements of Venus de Milo's idealized shape, which are also restated as part of his article. While molding one's body to the template of Venus did by no means liberate the individual from the shifting demands of fashion, the New Venus was a "sign of the times," and as a sign, her renewed figure connotes modern values such as health, movement, and freedom.

A further analysis of the syntactic context of Eden's above-quoted exercise routine further draws the reader's attention to the rhythmic listing of her various body parts, and the iterative repetition of the word "now" (14), which simulates the immediacy of corporeal movement. Carefully pivoting from one movement to the next, emitting a flow of muscular energy which blends with that of the sun, Eden embodies not only "a new feeling for life" but also Woolf's Greek ideal of being "all alive, but controlled." With her "up-thrust chin" and "lifted breasts" (14) she transforms the archetypal scene of the bathing Aphrodite, she is "in action" (14) rather than crouching down: "there was nothing shy or retreating about this unclad girl, – a bold body, studying itself quite coolly

and evidently well pleased with itself, doing all this for a purpose" (16). A female version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, Eden has migrated from the Midwest to New York, where she is now fashioning her identity and career through the medium of her voice and body. Embodying beauty and symmetry – and with her slenderness and muscularity, early 20th century modernity – she seems to create herself in the image of the contemporary corporeal archetype of the New Venus. She even reveals her awareness of Hedger's knothole, which recasts her seemingly private exercise as a self-directed mock performance, and her voyeur as an intended audience to her self-creative process.

Eden's process of purposefully reaching – as announced by the story's title – for the role of the modern Aphrodite also resonates in her name. On the advice of an admiring music journalist, she has changed her name from "Edna Bowers" to "Eden Bower" – a name "he felt would be worthy of her future" (19). The name echoes the refrain of Dante Gabriel Rosetti's "Eden Bower" (1869),[4] a ballad of Lilith, who in Jewish mythology is the first wife of Adam, who fled the garden of Eden as Adam rejected her demand for equality. Cather's Eden embodies not only Lilith's independence and confidence, but also her air of originality – a sense of undivided meaning or a pure beginning which Hedger also recognizes in her movements. Through her rhythmic transition from one gesture to the next, the contours of Eden's body ceaselessly "dissolve … and instantly recover" (14), giving visual expression to the originary cycle of "perpetual disintegration and renewal" that Berman sees as defining of the experience of modernity (15), as well as what Punday describes as the shared ability of body and narrative to "give rise to and resist pattern" (15). Finally, the scene embodies two poetic meanings of the word "bower"; that of "a place closed in or overarched with branches of trees, shrubs, or other plants," and that of "a lady's private apartment; a boudoir" (*OED*). To Hedger – and to the reader who watches with him – Eden's lilac-filled apartment figures as a space of creation, a modern echoing of the garden of Eden, in which we witness the emergence of the cultural form of the New Venus. Indeed, what Hedger recognizes in Eden's performance is the way in which her movements seem to entwine the immediate "now" with those of a mythic past. Her modern figure appears to him much like "the original human being" envisioned by Woolf ("On

[4] "It was Lilith the wife of Adam: *(Eden bower's in flower.)* / Not a drop of her blood was human, / But she was made like a soft sweet woman" (1-4).

Not Knowing" 40), or the "perennial, eternal, universal … goddess" described by Crompton (qtd. in Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 241): "for him she had no geographical associations; unless with Crete, or Alexandria, or Veronese's Venice. She was the immortal conception, the perennial theme" (Cather 17). With "no desire to know the woman" (17), Hedger's interest is with the bare movement of her supple figure, preserved by his imaginatively drawing her in a "single running line" (14).

Not only does Hedger's spare, dynamic line resonate with the pared down "dancing" language that Woolf identifies with the Greeks, it also testifies to what Peter Nicholls sees as modernism's general transition from "mimetic" or "representational" to "transformative" art (13; 72). Alongside Berman, who comments on the attempts of modern individuals not only to make their way through the maelstrom of modernity, "but to make it their own" (16), Nicholls describes how the modernist would "seek to harness the transformative energies of the modern to his own project of self-renovation" turning a sense of "impasse and decline" into "a moment of decisive change" (72). In Cather's story, the modern world's "transformative energies" are unleashed by Eden's body – "the energy of each gesture … discharg[ing] into the whirling disc of light" (14). Discovering in Eden's movements an original capacity for change, Hedger retrospectively describes them as "a primitive poetry of motion" ("Coming, Eden Bower!" 10).[5] Thus, in line with the original Aphrodite, Eden, too, is "a figure of the creative, as both object and subject of creation (Goth 19). To express an experience of her renewed body, Hedger's virtual representation suggests, means to capture not the body as such, but its very power of transformative becoming – a power indispensable to the artist's own endeavor of shaping a world of perpetual flux.

1.3 Corporeal Modernisms

Defined by their capacity for change or transformation, this study's key notions of "body" and "modernism" will inevitably be approached in their plural forms, their instability and irreducibility emphasized. In their introductory chapter to

[5] The line "… he had seen a woman emerge and give herself up to the primitive poetry of motion" (10), is found in Cather's first version of the story, "Coming, Eden Bower!", published in the August 1920 issue of *Smart Set*. In "Coming, Aphrodite!" the line reads: "… he had seen a woman who emerged naked through a door, and disappeared naked" (17).

The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms (2010), Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker comment on modernism's uncompletability, describing the movement as "an overdetermined, overlapping, and multiply networked range of practices that were always caught up in a dialectical process of affirmation and negation" (10). The handbook is a testimony to the critical tradition known as "the new modernist studies," which, since around the turn of the millennium, has worked to expand a field which had previously been largely centered around European and Anglo-American modernism. Echoing Berman's much earlier claim that modern experience "cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology," thereby uniting all humankind in disunity (15), revisionist modernist studies have now opened the field's scope to include non-Western geographical areas and ethnic groups, as well as overlooked cultural practices, artefacts, and artistic media. Although the present study remains limited in its focus on only Anglo-American modernists, it shares Brooker et al.'s view of modernism as a dynamic network of artistic practices. Indeed, the purpose of this study is not to group together literary bodies on the basis of a shared thematic, an approach adopted by Maren Tova Linett in *Bodies of Modernism: Physical Disability in Transatlantic Modernist Literature* (2017), or to focus on the body as it appears in a single writer's oeuvre or work, as seen in studies such as Evi Voyiatzaki's *The Body in the Text: James Joyce's Ulysses and the Modern Greek Novel* (2002). Neither is the purpose to focus on the bodies of a specific geographical-cultural area, as done by Jay Watson in his *Reading for the Body: The Recalcitrant Materiality of Southern Fiction, 1893-1985* (2012), or to explore one specific corporeal technique through which the body impacts or interacts with literary modernism, as carried out by Susan Jones in her *Literature, Modernism, and Dance* (2013). Rather, its overarching aim is to show how different and partly overlapping ways of thinking and experiencing the modern human body play a constitutive role within different yet intertwining aesthetic variations of literary modernism. The project thereby wishes to counter what Edward Możejko defines as a dominating trend within modernist studies, a tendency – in lack of a synthetic approach – to "deal … rather with some fragments of modernism (futurism, surrealism, constructivism and so on) but not with modernism as a large movement in its own right as a certain literary system" (23). While he questions the actual possibility of synthesis, he suggests that the very endeavor of making modernism cohere – an effort which echoes

modernism's own quest for meaning – allows, perhaps, for "the opening of new, investigative venues" (Możejko 23). In line with Możejko's suggestion, this study employs the body, an integral element of most literary narratives, as a means to access and explore the shifts, tensions, and interconnections between different strands of artistic practice in a particular period of time. In other words, it attempts to arrive at a gathering understanding of the larger movement of modernism by tracing the movements of the modern body in and across texts. Through its ability to "give rise to and resist pattern" (Punday 15), the body displays a capacity for integrity as well as an inherent malleability; it adapts to existing ideals and gestures and creates new ones that are unforeseen. As an embodiment of paradox, the body as it appears in and through texts gives itself as a prolific "investigative venue," a prism through which modernism's "dialectical process of affirmation and negation" (Brooker et al. 10) can be brought to the fore.

The four literary works considered in the study, each treated in individual chapters, all explore the body as a site through which an experience of existential verisimilitude can be created, negotiated, or reclaimed. The bodies that surface in these narratives are each shaped by a specific inflection of the era's corporeal ideal, each with its own contesting claim to originality. The variety of bodily experiences that the texts engage with naturally prompt a wide range of formal and stylistic experimentation, their eclectic coming together in this study echoing modernism's own diversity. Individually, too, the works show a high level of complexity; they are formally difficult and at times self-contradictory in their motivations and purposes. Although they are written by prominent modernists, they have all remained – much due to their marked processual qualities – non-canonical, and some have received only scant critical treatment. While the central premise of this study is to introduce modernism as a mode of being, a mode of knowing, and a mode of writing in which corporeality and narrativity are deeply ingrained, the study also aspires to offer a comprehensive and more nuanced understanding of each of the four works and their contributions to modernism. To do this requires the reader's patience with, and appreciation of, their singular complexities, as will be reflected in the individual readings.

In order to bring out a detailed picture of how each text negotiates between corporeal and aesthetic notions of balance and imbalance, wholeness and fragmentation, the study will not only draw on the insights of corporeal hermeneutics, each chapter will also introduce and make use of an eclectic

selection of theoretical concepts, provided by Friedrich Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Roland Barthes, and Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, amongst others. In the context of the recent trends in modernist studies, this turn to theory may seem outmoded. The tradition now known as new modernist studies began, as Allana Lindgren and Stephen Ross explain, "by reconceiving modernism itself in terms that consciously broke with the tradition of high modernism," with scholars "repeat[ing] the classical modernist trope of the self-conscious break with tradition" (1). Much due to its conservative affinity with Western canonical modernism,[6] theory has lost the central position it once held to cultural-historical perspectives, having come to be viewed as a practice that falls short in capturing the full range and depth of modernist voices. Nevertheless, this study regards theory as useful to the ongoing understanding of modernism. This because it too originates from the maelstrom of 20th century modern life, partly originating from, sharing, and further developing modernism's inherent critical attitude – what Berman describes as its "readiness to turn on itself, to question and negate all it has said, to transform itself into a great range of harmonic or dissonant voices, and to stretch itself beyond its capacities into an endlessly wider range" (23). As modernism offers, naturally, pertinent illustrations of theoretical concepts and perspectives, a predominantly theoretical reading may easily lead to the pitfall of reducing the literary text to a series of "brilliant examples," which confines modernism to its philosophical "afterlife" (Ross 14). Yet in sensible combination with a materialist mode of analysis, theory provides contingent vocabularies through which the shifts and movements of bodies and texts can be described – the ways in which each work articulates the experience of a contemporary moment defined by change. Thus, in its approach, this study not only aims to repeat – alongside the tendency of new modernist studies – the modernist trope of a break with tradition, but also to adopt modernism's inclination to *draw* on past tradition, and to creatively use the perspectives that enable us to most fully capture the elements that make up each text's imaginary world.

[6] I here refer to the tradition of theory that dates largely from the mid-1960s to the 1990s, which, tacitly and overtly, displays an intimate and organic relationship with high modernism, with writers such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Maurice Blanchot, Franz Kafka, Antonin Artaud and Samuel Beckett appearing in and feeding into the works of figures such as Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Gilles Deleuze.

The first chapter of the study examines Gertrude Stein's "Orta or One Dancing" (1912), a literary portrait of American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927). Between 1908 and her death in 1946 Stein created over 130 literary portraits of acquaintances and fellow artists, exploring the possibility of capturing a person's essence in language. In her seminal work on the portraits, Wendy Steiner describes Stein's style of portraiture as "overturning the norms of her medium, in which a portrait can be effected, at best, through indexical-symbolical means" (12). Rejecting the task of representation in favor of that of capturing a subject's continuous transformation, the portraits appear as literary parallels to the "single running line" of Cather's Hedger, or as Stein puts it, attempts to "get this present immediacy without trying to drag in anything else" ("How Writing" 444). Stein's portraits of Ernest Hemingway, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse have received a substantial amount of scholarly attention, and critics have focused in particular on the interrelationship between Stein's style of writing and the techniques of modernist visual art (Steiner 1978, Haselstein 2003, Recker 2016, among others). By analyzing her lesser-known portrait of Duncan, the chapter explores modern dance as an additional influence on and parallel to Stein's endeavor to articulate "present immediacy" ("How Writing" 444). Taking its cue from Woolf's nostalgic yearning for the "dancing" language of a distant past, a language undergirded by the Greek body, the chapter explores the literary means by which Stein, through her evocation of Duncan's neo-classical body, creates a dancing language for the modern age.

The body that comes to the fore in chapter one embodies, as Steiner observes of Stein's own poetic practice, an overturning of aesthetic norms. Alongside contemporary dancers such as Loie Fuller and Ruth St. Denis, Duncan is regarded as one of the pioneers of modern dance, a tradition marked by its break with the syntax of classical ballet and its explorative concern with free movement. During her career, which spans the transition from late-Victorian to modernist culture, she contributed not only to the transformation of stage dance from a form of entertainment to a serious art, her dance poetics also impacted the development of the era's fashion and its active body culture. In resonance with Treves's anatomical observation of the constricted Victorian body quoted in the above, Duncan's dance springs from her rejection of the corset:

> I have before me on my desk the correct drawing of a woman's skeleton – The form of the skeleton is beautiful & its chief beauty rests in the fact

> that the ribs rest *lightly* & far separated – This gives to the form its lightness and strength. I look from this beautiful design of a woman's skeleton on my desk to the dummy forms across the way [in a dressmaker's shop] on which the girls are fitting the dresses … Then it appears to me plainly that there is no analogy of woman's form with the dummy forms across the way without the deformation of the beautiful skeleton – the displacing of the internal organs – and the decadence of at least a part of the muscles of the woman's body – (Qtd. in Daly 30–31)

Protesting the contrived corporeal ideal displayed by the dressmaker's dummy, Duncan "personified dress reform," appearing on stage barefooted or in open sandals and dressed in free-flowing Grecian draperies (Lamphier and Welch 47). By liberating the body from heavy and constricting garments she initiated a return to an underlying potential of "lightness and strength," which she recognized in the bodies of Greek art and sculpture. The retrieval of an "original" corporeality implied a regained access to nature, which the Greeks, according to classical scholarship, had nurtured an original, intimate relationship with: "Two thousand years ago a people lived here [Greece] who had perfect sympathy and comprehension of the beautiful in Nature, and this knowledge and sympathy were perfectly expressed in their own forms and movements" (Duncan, qtd. in Dils and Albright 294). Denoting the experience of flux or flow, "and thus … something mobilizing change" (Carter and Fensham 7), nature appears in Duncan's dance poetics as a prime metaphor of motion. Claiming to be "born under the star of Aphrodite, Aphrodite who was also born on the sea" (Duncan, *My Life* 2), Duncan further favored the ocean's ever-changing yet constant movement, whose rise-and-fall cadence resonates with modernity's dialectics of disintegration and renewal.

Duncan's "natural" style of dancing became immensely popular, and by the teens, "dance teachers were compelled to add it to their repertoires" (Dils and Albright 293). In her unfinished autobiography *Smile Please*, Jean Rhys explains how, as part of her education at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in London in 1909, she was encouraged to gather inspiration from the performance of "a barefoot dancer, as they called it then … [who] wore vaguely classic Greek clothes. She was, of course, imitating Isadora Duncan" (Rhys, *Smile Please* 90). Spreading like a centrifugal force throughout both American and European body cultures, Duncan's movement patterns would become familiar to far more people

than those who would actually see her perform. Thus, when Stein portrays Duncan dancing, she not only evokes the presence of a fellow artist, but provides, as the chapter will show, access to a mode of corporeal experience characteristic of the early 20th century.

The second chapter of the study continues to explore the aesthetic imprint of the classicized body through a reading of Hilda Doolittle's Künstlerroman *Hermione* (1981[1926-27]). Where chapter one's reading of Duncan's and Stein's parallel poetics is attuned to the very ability of the literary text to simulate and preserve a body's ephemeral movements and kinesic style, this chapter continues by focusing more explicitly on the ways in which bodily events are utilized to create abstract meaning through language. Like Stein, Doolittle was born in Pennsylvania, but spent most of her life and career in Europe, writing under the pen-name of H.D. Despite an abundant oeuvre which includes novels, essays, and films as well as poetry, H.D. has remained best known for her central role within the early 20th century poetic movement of Imagism, led by Ezra Pound. Inspired by T.E. Hulme's description of the modernist poet as someone who "get[s] the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind" (qtd. in Elliott and Wallace 5), Imagism's main principle was precision. Pound soon regarded H.D. the principal imagist, describing her early poems as "… *straight talk, straight as the Greek!*" (qtd. in Collecott 113). In contrast to the "crystalline" poetry lauded by her contemporary critics (Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 54). H.D.'s cycles of novels, written between the early 1920s and the 1950s and mostly published posthumously, have typically been described as "difficult, murky and opaque" (Robinson and Tryphonopoulos 127). While the poems, as Matte Robinson and Demetrios Tryphonopoulos observe, appear "more like offspring, separate, autonomous" from the life of their creator (127), H.D.'s experimental fiction intimately engages with complex personal matters, often related to her uncertainty about her sexual identity. Much of the criticism devoted to H.D.'s prose following its publication in the 1980s and 90s subsequently portrayed her as caught in between "two worlds": "poetry and fiction … public and private texts … the dominant heterosexual culture and a marginal homosexual culture" (Benstock 312). Focusing on the inherent interconnection between H.D.'s "worlds," this chapter considers *Hermione* a key companion piece to one of her earliest and perhaps best-known imagist poems, "Oread" (1914). The reading demonstrates how *Hermione* grounds the author-protagonist's emergence as a writer in a process of corporeal regeneration, and in

turn, how H.D.'s "offspring" poetry springs from the experience of a renewed, active body.

The "corporeal atmosphere" of *Hermione* is explicitly associated with the figure of Artemis, the Greek virgin goddess of the hunt and the wilderness. With a lithe and androgynous body, Artemis was said to roam the mountain forests armed with bow and arrows, accompanied by an escort of mountain nymphs, or *oreads.* H.D.'s revival of woman-centered mythologies is nothing new, her web of allusions and references to the ancient Greek world being one of the key characteristics of her writing. Diana Collecott (1999), Friedman (1990), and Cassandra Laity (1996), among others, have discussed the specific presence of Artemis in H.D.'s works, focusing in particular on the novel *Paint It To-Day* and the verse drama *Hippolytus Temporizes*. However, the way in which *Hermione* turns Artemis's slender body into a carrier of her own pared-down poetics has yet to be fully explored. Moreover, H.D.'s appropriation of Artemis's body as a means of liberation from sexual and aesthetic norms has yet to be read in light of the context of the era's body culture. Whereas Cather's Eden embodies the contemporary body ideal of the modern Venus, *Hermione*'s Artemis resonates with the second dominant female body image of the time – that of the modern Diana:[7] "Identified with rigorous exercise, athletic agility, and toned physique, she was a respectable icon of female masculinity" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 231). Traditionally, a muscular female body had been interpreted as a threat to men, but the corporeal equilibrium displayed by Diana "grounded beauty and body culture" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 231). In addition to activities such as gymnastics and weightlifting, the modern Diana also practiced archery[8] – a sport believed to "improve concentration and graceful movement" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 231). Akin to the power released by the drawing and release of a bow, *Hermione* shows "Oread" to develop from a release of energy from the modern Artemis's/Diana's athletic body. Weaving together myth, nature, and corporeality, H.D.'s novel exhibits a modern voice which both depends and reflects on its own ability to extend a mythic past into the present, and materiality into the immaterial realm of representation.

---

[7] Diana is the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Artemis.

[8] In Charnaux's ad, an image of Diana accompanies the copy, the outline of her slender figure holding a tensed bow overlaid onto that of a body in a modern corset.

The first two chapters thus explore ways in which modernist writers, in their attempts "to change the world that is changing them" (Berman 16), convey and draw on the active, balanced body's ability to give rise to new narrative and aesthetic patterns. By contrast, the third chapter considers modernist voices that also utilize the body's inherent ability to *resist* or *reject* existing representational patterns. The chapter explores Mina Loy's *Insel* (1991[1940s]), a novel whose corporeal atmosphere thoroughly opposes the classicized body and its connotations of dynamism, integrity, and equilibrium. A semi-autobiographical rendering of Loy's friendship and artistic exchange with the German surrealist painter Richard Oelze during the mid-nineteen thirties, *Insel* is perhaps the only novel written in English that engages directly with the surrealist scene of interwar Paris. Like H.D., Loy is best known as a modernist poet, and the formal innovations of her prose works, visual art, and fashion and interior designs have received considerably less attention. The relatively few critical pieces devoted to *Insel*, Loy's only published novel, differ substantially, with critical perspectives ranging from feminism (Bronstein 2000) and psychoanalysis (Gaedtke 2008), to modernist impersonality (Walter 2009, 2014), technology (Armstrong 1998), and the context of late modernism (T. Miller 1999). The diverse body of readings echo the effusive character of a novel which is perhaps best described, in the words of David Ayers, as "a loose system of ideas and images," which "frustratingly lacks specificity" (245). The present chapter reads *Insel*'s lack of specificity or unified form as reflective of its engagement with surrealism.[9] This introduction has previously detailed how Woolf describes "originality" in terms of a body or a language which is "shaking, dancing … but controlled," and how Cather's Hedger recognizes it in the body's ceaseless dissolution and recovery of form – an experience of balance or equilibrium which is also present in H.D.'s dynamic combination of "female masculinity." Often described as a way to "open the mind and free the unconscious from censorship" (Steer 35), surrealism attempts to bypass the notion of order, definition, or masculine control, thereby dissolving any sense of balance between opposing states. In his surrealist manifesto, André Breton, the movement's unofficial leader, had called for "a future transmutation of … two seemingly contradictory states, dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, of surreality, so to speak" (qtd. in Chipp et al. 414).

[9] Sarah Hayden has recently explored Loy's engagement with surrealism in her *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood* (2018).

Thus, according to surrealist thought, "originality" denotes a liberated imagination and an ever-expansive reality, a vision which resonates with Loy's own artistic concerns around the time she met Oelze: "I felt, if I were to go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all form I am familiar with, evoking a chaos from which I could draw forth incipient form…" (qtd. in C. Burke 377). Whereas Woolf articulates a search for meaning in terms of her desire to go "back and back to the Greeks," Loy expresses a wish of retreating even further "back," to a chaos which logically precedes the "permanence and stability" associated with the ancient Greek world. Indeed, the chaos that Loy longs for bears similarity to the liquid chaos from which the goddess of Aphrodite rises, her birth illustrating the manifestation of form from formlessness. Focusing on Loy's pull toward a similar super-reality that enables "incipient form," the chapter reads *Insel* as an exploration of the possibility to forget or bypass familiar form, a process which Insel, the novel's titular surrealist artist, physically embodies.

Contrary to the strong, active bodies that surface in the texts by Stein and H.D., the body of Insel is weak, vulnerable, and lacking in definition, paralleling the looseness of literary form that characterizes Loy's novel as such. With reference to artists such as Claude Cahun, Pierre Molinier, and Antonin Artaud, Michael Richardson has shown how surrealists often explored "themes of otherness … by taking their own bodies as objects of examination and transformation" (126), a process in which Loy's Insel is also engaged. Rather than the toned muscles and smooth surface that characterize the ordered, classicized body, the defining features of Insel's body are its soft tissue, bodily needs, and imbalanced shape, its plasticity and proneness to distortion challenging the idea of bodily wholeness and integrity. Imbued with the amorphous quality of the dream, Loy's surrealist body surfaces as a site of aesthetic experimentation, in which experiences of dissolution and pure generation – as opposed to the neo-classical body's process of transformative reconstruction – are materially explored. While the premise of *Insel* appears frustratingly opaque, its changeable body suggests this very opacity to be the novel's narrative destination. By tracing the impact of Insel's body on the narrative which creates it, the chapter accentuates Loy's unique encounter with surrealism, an avenue which, despite *Insel*'s portrayal of a surrealist painter, has only recently begun to receive attention.

Together, the literary voices encountered in the study's three first chapters all express self-reflective attempts to become "the subjects as well as the objects of modernization" (Berman 16), utilizing the body's capacity to "give rise to and resist pattern" (Punday 15) to shape their world and articulate their place in it. By contrast, the study's fourth chapter focuses more explicitly on literature's critical rendering of the experience of being an *object* of modernization, and the ways in which the modern body is being *patterned* by its context. The chapter is devoted to Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), a novel which engages intimately with the interwar era's commodification of the human body. Born and raised in Dominica, Rhys (1890-1979) spent her adult life in Europe, where her literary career intersected with and responded to her work as a chorus girl, live mannequin, and artist's model. While she remains best known for her fifth and final novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a postcolonial prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jayne Eyre* which revived her presumed terminated career, Rhys's four previous novels stand out in the modernist landscape due to their unique portrayal of conventional contemporary body culture. The four narratives, of which *Good Morning, Midnight* is the last, [10] all feature a troubled female protagonist who struggles to make a life in the modern metropolis of London and/or Paris. Drawing on Rhys's personal experiences of being both a commodity and a consumer of the modern beauty and fashion industry, the quartet intimately explores the body as a means of both economic and social survival for women in the interwar era. Rhys's personal and literary engagement with dress, makeup, and women's mass culture has been well explored, by Maroula Joannou (2012), Cynthia Port (2001, 2005) and Rishona Zimring (2000), among others. While these critics to some extent engage with the formal qualities of *Good Morning, Midnight*, often commenting on its modernist rendering of time, they remain largely concerned with the novel's represented body, and the ways in which the act of "dressing up" or "making up" surfaces as "a textual metaphor for a shifting, fluid notion of identity" (Joannou 465), or a way of "compensating for the passing of time and the loss of youth (Port, "'Money, for the Night" 208). Attuned to the relationship between the represented body and the literary make-up of the text that creates it, the present chapter examines the process of fashioning the body – with its implied meanings

[10] *Quartet* (1929), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939).

of invention and compensation – as not only a narrative incentive which shapes Rhys's novel but a metaphor for modernism and its "active search for meaning" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 97).

Sharply contrasting the preceding chapter's body of *Insel*, which exhibits a state of formal dissolution, the body of *Good Morning, Midnight* articulates a desire for formal control. Of the body conceptualizations mentioned thus far, it is Rhys's that resonates most closely with Charnaux's corset ad, introduced in the above, which informs the female reader that she "must smooth away that roll of flesh round the diaphragm, control the 'tummy' curve, narrow the hips, and flatten the *derrière*" (Charnaux xxix). Regardless of the reader's decision to purchase the advertised product or not, Charnaux's ideal would act upon her body by contributing to her self-evaluation and regulation. The disciplinary tone of the ad, with its commanding "you must" (Charnaux xxix) underscores how bodies of the early 20th century display traits of what Michel Foucault has termed docile bodies – bodies "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (136). In his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), he explains how in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, institutions such as schools, factories, military barracks, and health care organizations became prison-like, adopting the penitentiary's use of disciplinary surveillance as a main mode of creating and controlling individual bodies. The institutions were "intended to alleviate pain, to cure, to comfort – but … [they] all tend[ed], like the prison, to exercise a power of normalization" (308). Arguing that Foucault is blind to the disciplinary practices that produce "a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine," Sandra Lee Bartky has underscored the importance of also highlighting "the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body": The practices that "aim to produce a body of a certain size and general configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements; and those directed toward the display of this body as an ornamental surface" (132). Anticipating both Foucault and Bartky, Rhys's interwar novels show how the period's cultural, political, and commercial preoccupation with restoring and ultimately "normalizing" the body, making it appear whole and beautiful, upholds rather than redeems the individual's sense of lack and imbalance. The normalizing body template of *Good Morning, Midnight* – or in Punday's terms, its "general body" – is provided by the inanimate fashion house mannequin, earlier described by protagonist Anna Morgan of Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* as being of a "pale-gold colour, very slim and strong-

looking" (111). A modernized version of the late-Victorian "dummy forms" observed by Duncan in the dressmaker's shop, Rhys's mannequin is streamlined and reduced in complexity, echoing the austere human forms of Art Deco, which, as Eva Weber puts it, were "abstracted to such a degree that they resembled human machines or robots" (11). Whereas Loy's represented body reflects surrealism's transmutation of reality and dream, Rhys's bears traces of a reverse logic; what Carden-Coyne describes as a "totalitarian thinking about bodily integrity" in which "reality and representation merged" ("Dissolution" 208). Departing from the notion of the abstracted body, the chapter regards the experience of being subjected to representation as *Good Morning, Midnight*'s narrative driving force, examining how the reaching toward an unattainable corporeal form fashions its literary form, its characteristic ironic tone and circular structure in particular.

In the readings that follow, the modern body serves not only to demonstrate a readerly approach, or to open up modernism to canonically marginal texts, but elucidates how different modernist poetics – springing from the austere Deco-figure evoked by Rhys, from the dilapidated surrealist body of Loy, and in between, from Stein's and H.D.'s explorations of neoclassical balance – overlap, collide, and intersect. Together, the bodies that emerge in and through the four works invite us to approach modernism not merely as *a* movement, or as several parallel movements, but to experience it in terms of movement itself.

2 “I see waves rising through all things”: Isadora Duncan, Gertrude Stein, and the Cadence of Modernism

> The movement of the universe concentrating in an individual becomes what is termed the will …. The dance should simply be, then, the natural gravitation of this will of the individual, which in the end is not more nor less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe.
>
> (Isadora Duncan, “The Dance of the Future” 55)

> Dance is an absolute. It is not knowledge about something, but is knowledge itself. … It is independent of service to an idea, but is of such highly organized activity that it can produce idea.
>
> (Martha Graham, qtd. in LaMothe 59)

> All writing is nothing but putting words on the backs of rhythm. If they fall off the rhythm one’s done.
>
> (Virginia Woolf, *Letters, Vol. 4* 303)

At the turn of the century, the American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) became one of the initiators of the field of modern dance. Rejecting the techniques and costumes of formal ballet, whose highly codified movement vocabulary she saw as an expression of “degeneration, of living death” (“Dance of the Future” 56), Duncan created a style of dance based on individual, expressive movement. While the classical dancer exhibited technical virtuosity, performing narrative choreographies, Duncan envisioned a “true dance” (“Dancer and Nature” 69) in which “the form and the movement were one” (“What Dancing” 71) – a dance which channeled the gravitational rhythm of the universe, “not more nor less.” Continuing in the vein of her forerunner, choreographer and dancer Martha Graham defines modern dance as a fundamental basis of knowledge or “an absolute” – a mode of movement which facilitates the production of meaning rather than conveying set ideas. Arguing from the vantage point of writing, Woolf similarly regards literary writing as “nothing but putting words on the backs of rhythm” (*Letters, Vol. 4* 303),

singling out rhythm – "an ordered alternation of contrasting elements"[11] – as the foundation which weaves together words, sentences, and narrative threads, contributing to meaning by lending a sense of dynamic order.

As discussed in the opening chapter, this study explores ways in which the early 20th century body contributes to modernist literary forms. Focusing on the era's renewed attention to embodied aesthetic practice, it considers how writers were drawn to the body's expressivity, and their endeavors to include and creatively utilize bodily experiences in their writing. This chapter specifically studies the relationship between modernist writing and the tradition of modern dance, and the ways in which dance – an embodied, ephemeral, and silent mode of expression – confronts the writer with the particular challenge of preserving something which in its essence resists capture. If we think of modernism as a variety of attempts to articulate a world defined by impermanence, the inter-medial relationship between dance and writing demonstrates particularly well how the modernist's quest for meaning is inevitably bound up with the concurrent understanding of the impossibility of completely retaining it. Through a reading of Gertrude Stein's "Orta or One Dancing" (1912), a literary evocation of Duncan dancing, I explore Stein's capacity to verbally reenact corporeal action, as well as Duncan's distinct kinesic style. The chapter thus reads the portrait as a recording of embodied movement akin to choreographic notation, a form of writing which, as dance scholar Gabrielle Brandstetter puts it, attempts to "retain as graph that which cannot be held" (104).

In showing how Stein's writing articulates Duncan's dance, the chapter also brings attention to artistic parallels between the two modernist artists, whose oeuvres may at first seem disparate. In the essay "Portraits and Repetition" (1935), Stein explains how when working on her series of literary portraits she aimed to find out "the intensity of movement" that was inside a person, "the moving inside them that makes them them" (298). Her portraiture, as this chapter will show, breaks with the stillness and presumed clarity of the traditional portrait, its depiction of a self which is already present in the world, instead locating the person's character in the force and style of their ceaseless change. Thus, alongside the artistic voices that opened this chapter, Stein sees meaning as undergirded by a continuum of movement, an "absolute" which she, much like

[11] From the Greek *rhythmos,* derived from the word *rhein,* which means "to flow" (Crossley-Holland).

Duncan's and Graham's dancing bodies, endeavors to convey. By reading Stein's literary portraiture through the lens of modern dance, this chapter aims to offer a new and unprecedented perspective on her prose style – her own distinct way of, to borrow Woolf's turn of phrase – "putting words on the backs of rhythm" (*Letters, Vol. 4* 303).

Curiously, Stein's portrait of Duncan has previously received almost no critical attention, this despite Stein's familiarity with Duncan both privately and artistically. In Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Isadora and her multi-artist brother Raymond appear as part of their extensive cast of friends and artistic colleagues, with Raymond – an old friend of Stein's own brother Leo – renting a studio in Paris's rue de Fleurus, down the street from Stein's and Toklas's apartment (703). In her memoir, Stein also expresses her enthusiasm for the art of dance, lauding Duncan as one of the artistic "geniuses" of her time: "Dancing excites me tremendously and it is a thing I know a great deal about. I have seen three very great dancers. … The three really great dancers I have seen are the Argentina, Isadora Duncan and Nijinsky (797). A thorough understanding of Stein's dancing portrait necessarily requires insight into the dancing body that Stein saw, and a substantial first part of the chapter will therefore carefully explore Duncan's dance poetics.[12] Offering more than an intrinsic reading of Stein' portrait, the focus of this chapter is on the direct and indirect relationship between Duncan's corporeal modernist practice and Stein's avantgarde writing.

Stein's excitement with modern dance, and Duncan's distinct variety thereof, was shared by other contemporary artists who witnessed Duncan's performances. As very little footage exists of Duncan dancing, their reported experiences add to our understanding of her artistic effect on the audience. The American poet William Carlos Williams stated after having attended one of Duncan's performances that he "could see all our future before us in her dancing and I came away alive as I have rarely been to the exquisite beauty of simple perfect truth" (qtd. in Preston 150). Using a vocabulary which is absolute rather than relative, Williams's description of Duncan's dance as "simple perfect truth" gestures toward a felt experience of originality, whose fullness exists beyond the reach of descriptive language. "What is it she is saying?" mused the English

[12] The discussion will largely be based on a collection of Duncan's essays and textual fragments gathered in *The Art of the Dance*, published posthumously in 1928 and edited by Sheldon Cheney.

modernist theatre director Edward Gordon Craig after having seen Duncan dance, only to conclude that

> [n]o-one would ever be able to report truly, yet no-one present had a moment's doubt. Only this can we say – that she was telling to the air the very things we longed to hear and until she came we never dreamed we should hear; and now we heard them, and this sent us all into an unusual state of joy ... . (Qtd. in Clarke and Crisp 216)

Attempting to mediate a message that he cannot truthfully recount, the movement of Duncan's dancing body leaves Craig at a loss for words.[13] This is not due to the vagueness of its message, but rather its exactness, as "no one present had a moment's doubt." As his endeavor to name the immediate experience continues to miss its mark, Craig is left to report on the dancer's effect on the audience, its capacity to send them into an unprecedented state of elation, making them, as Williams explained it of *his* experience, "come alive."

The above statements allude to the ability of dance to say the present moment, its way of rooting the onlooker in their continuous here and now. Moreover, in line with Williams's claim that he "could see all our future before us in her dancing" (qtd. in Preston 150), Duncan also envisioned her style of dance as "the dance of the future," which had to start with a revival of "the old dance which is to become the new" ("Dancer and Nature" 68). Responding to the turbulence of her modern world, its "maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal" (Berman 15), Duncan's push toward the future carries with it a desire to revive the presumed original gestures of an unknown Greek past. Writing about literary modernism, Lecia Rosenthal describes its similar tendency to "imagine … not only that which is yet to exist but also that which may once have existed but was never acknowledged and, within the accelerated temporality of the late modern, remains irreversibly lost to history" (52). This rhythm of loss and recovery also resonates in Craig's above-quoted rendering of Duncan's dance: "she was telling to the air the very things we longed to hear and until she came we never dreamed we should hear" (qtd. in Clarke and Crisp 216). Thus, Duncan

[13] According to Christopher Innes, Duncan became a major influence on Craig's vision of a "theatre of the future," in which he called for the "abolition of the spoken word" in favor of "ACTION, SCENE, and VOICE," of which "ACTION" was directly inspired by Duncan's poetics (117).

seems to have succeeded in her endeavor to create a folded temporality, liberating and activating the onlooker by reactivating an imagined stability which is only intuitively known. Echoing Friedrich Nietzsche, the thinker who figures most prominently in her writings,[14] her dance appears "untimely" – an expression which according to Nietzsche acts "counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come" (*Untimely Meditations* 60). By unfixing thoughts, forces, and ideals from their historical chronology and remobilizing them, the untimely disrupts and opens up the present by infusing it with elements of heterogeneity. Thus, the revival of past expressions does not represent an escape from the contemporary present, but rather, as John Hughes has argued in a similar context, "a production of and engagement with it, a movement out in which the participating bodies are drawn along new vectors in experimental ways" (46). In her written dance poetics, Duncan similarly emphasizes the novelty of her untimely dance, seeking to avoid the misunderstanding of her art as a mere copying of antique gestures. While she repeatedly argues that "it is to Greece that we must turn, because all of our dancing goes back to Greece" ("Dance of the Greeks" 92), her turn to the past is never intended as a return:

> From what I have said you might conclude that my intention is to return to the dances of the Greeks, or that I think that the dance of the future will be a revival of the antique dances … No, the dance of the future will be a new movement, a consequence of the entire evolution which mankind has passed through. To return to the dances of the Greeks would be as impossible as it is unnecessary. We are not Greeks and therefore cannot dance Greek dances. ("Dance of the Future" 62)

Rejecting the concept of bare imitation, Duncan saw her dance as nurtured and inspired by the forces that had animated the corporeal attitudes of the Greeks: "[I was] putting myself in touch with the feelings that their gestures symbolized," she explained, thereby bringing "the spirit underlying them" into the movements of her contemporarily situated practice (Duncan, "Fragments and Thoughts"

[14] In her *Literature, Modernism, and Dance* (2013), Susan Jones gives a detailed account of the influence of Nietzsche on the larger field of modern dance, including prominent figures such as Duncan, Martha Graham, and Doris Humphrey.

139). Through its reactivation of the past, the present moment expands, thickens, and becomes more than itself, thereby engendering the production of a new and unforeseen mode of dance.

What Duncan intuited in the art of the Greeks was a dynamic integration of clear, defined forms and free, unrestricted movement. Alongside Woolf's previously discussed description of the Greek language as "dancing, shaking, all alive, but controlled" ("On Not Knowing" 51), Duncan found that "to the rhythm of the words of a Greek Chorus one dances easily. Just in hearing them one sees unfolding a frieze of sculptured figures in movement" ("Dance of the Greeks" 96). Duncan partly owed her discovery of the stable yet flexible Greek body to Nietzsche's dialectical theory of Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, which she referred to as "my Bible" ("Letter to the Pupils" 108), Nietzsche explores the worldview of the ancient Greeks as arising from the tension between constructive and destructive forces, as represented by the antithetical deities of Apollo and Dionysus. The "sculptor-god" and "deity of light," Apollo controls the boundaries of form, which supports the individual and protects him from collapsing into unbounded chaos (*Birth of Tragedy* 3). Emitting "philosophical calm," Apollo figures as the divine embodiment of the principle of individuation, in which he fully trusts (*Birth of Tragedy* 3). Apollonian art, Nietzsche contends, makes us "delight in individuals" and satisfies our "sense of beauty which longs for great and sublime forms; it presents us with biographical portraits, and incites us to a thoughtful comprehension of the essence of life dwelling within them" (*Birth of Tragedy* 79). Yet the shaping power of Apollo is never constant but will always submit to the deforming capacity of Dionysus, the patron of the art of music. According to Nietzsche, the Dionysian impulse is best conveyed through the analogy of drunkenness, a state which may "cause the subjective to vanish into complete self-forgetfulness," in the generative energy of spring's emergence, or in the whirling movement of the ever-expanding dancing and singing crowds of the festivities of ancient cultures (*Birth of Tragedy* 3-4). In allegorical terms, the tension between the two is one between culture and nature; between the shaping of reality into images that invite us to grasp life through thought, and the immediate experience of "glowing life" itself (*Birth of Tragedy* 4). In his accentuation of Dionysian energy, Nietzsche underscores its capacity to reaffirm the human being's relationship not only with her innermost nature, but with Nature as such, which under Apollo "has become estranged, hostile, or

subjugated" (*Birth of Tragedy* 4). Dionysus also breaks down "stubborn" boundaries between human beings, to the degree that the individual dissolves and feels not only "united, reconciled, blended with his neighbor, but as one with him" (*Birth of Tragedy* 4). From the calm and collected perspective of Apollo, the unrestrained chaos of Dionysus is inevitably considered as lowly "folk-diseases," whereas to those who are under Dionysus's spell, the Apollonian "healthy-mindedness" can only appear "anemic and ghastly" (*Birth of Tragedy* 4). Thus, Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian energies are "compelled to develop their powers in strictly mutual proportion" and should not be thought of simply in terms of one over the other (*Birth of Tragedy* 91). According to Nietzsche, the purest articulation of their tensed unity, which is the highest aim of art, is found in the Greek tragedy. Here, the self-transcending life force of Dionysus is curbed and organized through language and dramatic structure, the unrestrained whirling of dance is brought under control, and the dissolution of the tragic hero's self is countered by the audience's confrontation with that loss, through which they maintain the principle of individuation (*Birth of Tragedy* 81). In turn, the Apollonian provides the audience with a frame or lens through which they, in passing moments of insight, may sense the veiled truth of Dionysus:

> Dionysian art … wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them. We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence … We are really for a brief moment Primordial Being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear to us as a necessary thing, in view of the surplus of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. … we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are united. (*Birth of Tragedy* 60)

In the early Greek conception of the world, the forming and dissolving energies of Apollo and Dionysus were seen as concrete and finite forces, their ceaseless fluctuation aiming for no final state or destination, but "continually incit[ing] each other to new and more powerful births" (*Birth of Tragedy* 1). Countering the Christian God of morality, goodness, and wisdom, whose power remains

constant and above the worldly realm, Nietzsche imagines a participating or artistic god of playfulness and innocence, whose nature echoes Heraclitus's conception of time as "a child playing, moving counters, gathering and scattering" (qtd. in Small 168). Thus, the Greek reality to which Duncan was drawn, partly through her reading of Nietzsche, was one of changing or becoming, rather than the reality of being postulated by traditional philosophy: "If the world had a goal, it must have been reached. If there were for it some unintended final state, this also must have been reached. If … in the whole course of its becoming it possessed even for a moment this capability of 'being,' then all becoming would long since have come to an end" (*Will to Power* 546). The process of becoming, according to Nietzsche, does not unfold along a chronological trajectory toward final forms, but ceaselessly produces and modifies forms, without the coordinates of origin and destination. If modernism, as Berman suggests, is defined as the creative endeavors of modern individuals to live through a "maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal" and to make it their own (15), this study sees Duncan's corporeal evocation of an ongoing dialectics of making and unmaking as a prime example of modernist practice. In what follows, I will continue to show how Duncan transforms what she saw as the stabilizing yet dynamic cadence of the ancient Greeks into what this chapter will consider the cadence of modernism.

Importantly, Duncan did not see the rhythm that her dance revived as strictly engendered by the Greeks but as mediated by and through them. The "spirit" that undergirded the Greeks' movements was interpreted to be nature itself, which she saw as performing "the dance of the past, the dance of eternity" ("Dance of the Future" 54). Duncan thereby emphasizes Nietzsche's view of the Dionysian and Apollonian as "art-states of nature," which "burst forth from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist*" (*Birth of Tragedy* 5). A primordial "artist," nature is seen as engaging in a continuous work of creative transformation, of which the human artist's own creative practice remains an imitative, yet individual, continuation. Nature's transforming phenomena of water, trees, clouds, and animals exhibited to Duncan the perfect accord between expression and form, "[t]he movement … always in correspondence to their nature" ("Dance of the Future" 54). The natural world thus appears in her poetics as humankind's lost home, an imagined time-place where the living body still moved in harmony with the surrounding world and its innate forces ("Movement is Life" 78). The Greeks, she argued, had been the greatest students of the laws

of nature, and amongst their depicted bodies she found not one which did not affirm nature's power of fecundity, "not one which in its movement does not presuppose another movement" ("Dance of the Future" 57). The dance of the future would absorb and reveal nature's continuous becoming, a quality she found lacking in the capitalist-driven culture of the early twentieth century. "There is between all the conditions of life a continuity or flow which the dancer must respect in his art," she continued, "or else become a mannequin – outside Nature and without true beauty" ("Great Source" 102). An inanimate and complete form, the mannequin of modern dress-houses and department stores fixed the living body, providing the onlooker with a pre-formed and constricting corporeal ideal. "[H]urt and deformed by the dress of ridiculous fashions" ("Movement is Life" 79), the late-Victorian bodies of Duncan's immediate surroundings appeared, in line with the mannequin, unnatural, prevented from moving in correspondence with their given shapes and dispositions.

A similar critique of timely bodily ideals is seen in Cather's "Coming, Aphrodite!", discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis. In Cather's story, Eden's strong, modern body is mobilized through a redisposing of a classical ideal, and Hedger "thought of that body as never having been clad, or as having worn the stuffs and dyes of all the centuries but his own" ("Coming, Aphrodite!" 17). To Hedger, Eden's vitalized performance halts and expands the contemporary present through its break with the corporeal ideals of the upper-class women of Hedger's immediate surroundings, whom he regards as "artificial and, in an aesthetic sense, perverted. He saw them as enslaved by desire of merchandise and manufactured articles, effective only in making life complicated and insincere" (17). In resonance with William Carlos Williams's experience of Duncan's dance as "simple" and "true" (qtd. in Preston 150), the bodily energy of Cather's Eden is recognized by Hedger as an expression of life as such, her gestures liberating, albeit temporarily, a raw material of meaning from the dictations of contemporary culture. In contrast to the timely ideal embodied by her time's dress-house mannequins, Duncan too sought an untimely newness that would disrupt the homogeneity of the present, her dance – in line with Nietzsche – concerned with the life that existed *behind* phenomena, rather than the "mere merchandise" of consumer culture ("Dance of the Future" 62).

In the world of stage dance, the figure of the modern mannequin was, according to Duncan, paralleled by that of the classical dancer, whose body had been "deformed" and put under "false restrictions" ("Dance of the Future" 56;

55). “A form from the outside directs [its] movements,” she observed, “all freedom and spontaneity … lost in a maze of intricate artifice” (“Movement is Life” 79). Originating in the French court of the sixteenth century, classical ballet *is* a form of idealized movement, or as dance scholar Elizabeth Dempster puts it, “an overtly synthetic construct, utilizing a system of precisely coded, highly patterned abstract movement” (26). Strictly disciplined and regulated, the body of the ballet dancer is laboriously trained from young age to duplicate a long-established lexicon of steps, a process through which all signs of the “natural” and the unschooled, and of self-expression are erased (Dempster 26-27). In other words, with its closed and finite movement vocabulary classical dance is highly resistant to untimely influences. When studied through the lens of Nietzsche’s dyad of Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics, ballet leans clearly to that of the sculptor-god, embodying his power to create “great and sublime forms” (*Birth of Tragedy* 79).

Within modernist literature, the nature and effect of the disciplinary methods of formal ballet is perhaps best explored in Zelda Fitzgerald’s semi-autobiographical *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), a novel whose depiction of dance provides a fruitful contrast to Duncan’s “dance of the future.” Fitzgerald’s novel chronicles the life of Alabama Beggs, who, despite of and also due to her fortunate circumstances – a successful artist husband, a daughter, a glamorous expatriate lifestyle – struggles with a lack of self-definition, a feeling that “she … would never have every single thing about her just right at once – would never be able to attain a state of abstract preparedness” (8-9). Alabama’s felt lack of integrity culminates as she is introduced to a ballet dancer at a dinner party, a woman with “the most beautiful body,” a body “like white marble,” “a porcelain figure” (110-11). In contrast to Cather’s “Coming, Aphrodite!”, in which Eden’s marble-like arms are mobilized into fluid movement under the sun (8-9), Alabama yearns for an experience of a consummate wholeness, which she recognizes in the dancer’s cool and sculptured form. “[C]onsumed by a longing to succeed as a dancer,” and thus to achieve “that peace which she imagined went only in surety of one’s self” (128), she starts her belated ballet training at the studio of a former Russian ballerina, instigating a becoming with a fixed yet illusory end. “You will have the piano when you have learned to control your muscles,” Madame explains at the beginning of the first class, “‘[t]he only way, now that it is so late, is to think constantly of placing your feet. You must always stand with them *so*.’ Madame spread her split satin shoes horizontally. ‘And you

must stretch *so* fifty times in the evenings'" (126). By depriving Alabama of music and leaving her to sculpt her body through rigorous routines, Madame downplays the Dionysian in favor of the Apollonian, separating force from form. In turn, Alabama's affirmation of Madame's balletic codes causes her to negate the living body to the extent that she attempts to forcibly alter its shape, "fasten[ing] her feet through the bars of the iron bed and sleep[ing] with her toes glued outwards for weeks" (128).

With its demand for a reshaping of the body, the training that Alabama receives seems to deny the "glowing life" that Nietzsche associates with Dionysus, the "inwardly illumined distinctness" which in the Greek tragedy is so powerful that it permeates and becomes visible through the Apollonian dramatic structure (*Birth of Tragedy* 4; 80). In Fitzgerald's account of ballet, the living life of Alabama's body reveals itself first and foremost through its resistance to organization, its failure to adapt to the given movement regime. When she informs Madame that one of her toenails has come off due to her pointe training, Madame only reinforces the request for bodily integrity, telling her that she "must grow a harder one" (131). "The human body was very insistent," Alabama observes, and she "passionately hated her inability to discipline her own" (129). Indeed, her desire to master and overcome the body's natural inconsistencies soon leads her to think of her suffering body and her Ego as two separate entities: "She said to herself, 'My body and I,' and took herself for an awful beating: That was how it was done" (129). Thus, instead of working toward a unity of aesthetic energies, Alabama articulates an internalized split between nature and culture, body and mind, between immediate corporeal experience and reason. In Madame's studio, the body is molded to express pre-existing ideas about movement, it is not, as Graham suggests of modern dance, given to the impulsion of movement and the subsequent production of new ideas (qtd. in LaMothe 59). Focused on the imitation rather than the instigation of dance, Alabama's performance springs from a reality of being, thereby lacking the prolificacy that Duncan calls for in her poetological texts. To Duncan, the classical dancer's movements would continue to remain "sterile … because they are unnatural," "each action is an end, and no movement, pose, or rhythm is successive ("Dance of the Future" 56; 55).

Although the art of classical dance well predates Duncan's own late Victorian context, its idealized forms and pedagogy of imitation resonate with the larger cultural ethos of the late 19th century. A new industrial world "powered

by steam and run like clockwork" (Ferguson 4), the Victorian world is commonly associated with technological advances, efficiency, and progress. Underpinned by the development of the modern railway and the standardization of time, the Victorian era also added new layers of organization to human beings' lived reality. "Every one is on the alert in his own department, or he is left behind," observed the Scottish railway engineer James Walker as early as 1831, "the most active exertion being barely sufficient to enable a man to maintain his station in the world. The race of competition is universal and unceasing … Every class, and every individual … hurrying along, struggling with fortune and the times, and jostling his fellow-sufferers" (88). By the late 19th century, technical innovations and rigid social expectations had, put simply, placed severe strains on the individual, urging her to remain continuously intact and on form. "We walk angularly," Duncan observed, "[w]e strain ourselves always to hold a balance between points" ("Depth" 100). Duncan recognized the late-Victorian need for balance and integrity – the ability, as Alabama puts it, "to attain a state of abstract preparedness" (9) – to that which permeates formal ballet. Balletic movements, Duncan noted, were designed to exhibit speed and lightness, the dancers "creat[ing] the delusion that the law of gravitation does not exist for them" ("Dance of the Future" 56). The focus of the classical dancer remained on perfect equilibrium, what Brandstetter describes as their "floating on point" (122), never on the body's fall and inevitable return to the ground. In turn, Duncan saw the body's letting go of balance, its floor-bound release "between points," not as a symptom of failure or exhaustion, but as essential to the corporeal reorientation and gathering of energy which facilitate the initiation of new movement. Duncan explained the propulsive energy of her own dance as originating from the "motor" in her "soul": "Before I go out on the stage, I must place a motor in my soul … if I do not get time to put that motor in my soul, I cannot dance" (*My Life* 146). Moving beyond the Victorian metaphor of the clockwork, the "perfect cog and spoke mechanism," Duncan invokes the motor, the dominant technological innovation of the early 20th century (Salter 225). In contrast to the clockwork's assemblage of individual parts, the modern motor, as philosopher Manuel De Landa puts it, operates much like the systems of nature, which "run on an external reservoir of resources and exploit the labor performed by circulating flows of matter and energy" (qtd. in Salter 225). Whereas Fitzgerald's Alabama assembles her dancer's body one step at a time, willing her feet to move in "endless battements without music" (129), Duncan claimed that

"when that [the motor] begins to work my legs and arms and my whole body will move independently of my will" (*My Life* 146). Or as Duncan puts it in the quote that opened this chapter, the "will" of the modern dancer "in the end is no more nor less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe" ("Dance of the Future" 55). In line with her motor metaphor, Duncan's body opens up and is shaped by an external energy which she exploits and explores, a force which resonates not only with the "universal will" of Dionysus which, according to Nietzsche, exists "behind" phenomena, but also the rhythm that according to Woolf runs through and beneath the words of her literary writing.

To consider Duncan's dance in connection with Woolf's literary modernism is both tenable and productive, as it brings into relief the clear modernist traits of Duncan's dance. Duncan's rejection of what she described as classical ballet's "artificial mechanical movement" (*My Life* 61) can be read alongside Woolf's dismissal of what she, with reference to the chronological sequence of realist narrative, termed "a formal railway line of sentence" (*A Change* 135). Through her opening up of traditional narrative form, Woolf sought to bring the reader into awareness of life itself, to unveil an experience of the ceaseless flow which undergirds our everyday struggles to, as Walker puts it, "maintain our station in the world": "the stream that I am trying to convey: life itself going on" (qtd. in Warner 60). By dancing an individual "translation" of an ongoing, universal rhythm, Duncan embodied the complexity of this stream. With regard to time, her dance is neither strictly eternal nor strictly contemporary, but joins together, in an untimely fashion, the temporalities of past, present, and future. With regard to selfhood, her dance counters classical ballet's idealized forms by weaving together self and world, her body animated by an external force which in turn expands and deepens through the dancer's individual practice.

However, despite Duncan's radical reformulation of stage dance, dance writers have often been hesitant to describe her as a modernist, citing what biographer Ann Daly describes as her "romantic ideas about morality and spirituality" (209). "Duncan may have helped to negotiate the transition from late-nineteenth-century Victorianism to early-twentieth-century modernism," claims Daly, "but she never did emerge fully into the new aesthetic order" (209). There is no doubt that Duncan kept her distance from the aesthetics of fragmentation commonly associated with early 20th century modernity. While removing herself from the "servile coquetry of the ballet," she also emphasized

that her dance had "nothing to do with the sensual tilting of the Jazz rhythm," or the "convulsions of the Charleston" ("America Dancing" 47; 49). Duncan saw these timely styles of music and movement as expressing pure irregularity and brute physicality, regarding them as uncultured and "savage" ("America Dancing" 49). Neither a slave to form, nor giving into what she saw as humankind's primitive nature, Duncan's dance negotiates, alongside Nietzsche, between the Apollonian realm of "measured restraint" and the alluring threat of pure fluidity, striving for their generative integration. Her own "dance of the future" was "true," claimed Duncan, because it channeled what she observed to be the primary cadence of nature, namely the dynamic undulation of waves. In the wave's "alternate attraction and resistance of the law of gravity" ("Dancer and Nature" 69) she discovered an original dance of pulse and rest, which she describes as the very "groundplan" of the universe ("Dancer and Nature" 68): "For does not sound travel in waves, and light also? And when we come to the movements of organic nature, it would seem that all free natural movements conform to the law of wave movement: the flight of birds, for instance, or the bounding of animals" ("Dancer and Nature" 69). "I see waves rising through all things" ("Dancer and Nature" 69), Duncan concludes, considering how her own individual movements both feed into and are fed by the original rhythm of the natural world, a rhythm which, as this study will continue to show, also undergirds modernism as a whole.

Indeed, with its Apollonian ebb and Dionysian flow, Duncan's favored motif of waves captures the experience of belonging, as Daly suggests of Duncan's dance, neither to a Victorian past nor to a contemporary scenario of chaos and uncertainty. In embodying the wave, the dancer is never fully here nor there but *in movement;* ceaselessly negotiating the present's meaning she is engaged in a becoming which, in a Nietzschean sense, is "innocent" in having no predetermined end. Herein, this chapter contends, lies the modernist quality of Duncan's work. If modernism, as Brooker et.al argue, can be described as "a range of practices caught up in a dialectical process of affirmation and negation" (10), Duncan's corporeal practice articulates the dynamics of this process in a most concrete way. Even if her writing and artistic practice are tinted with what Daly describes as her "romantic grandiloquence," and her view of dance as a spiritual or even religious act counters the secularity which often imbues modern art (136; 209), the fluidity of Duncan's movement bears kinship to Woolf's literary attempt to convey an experience of "life itself going on" (qtd. in Warner

60). Indeed, the undulating movement of waves also figures frequently in the literary works of Woolf, most prominently in her novel *The Waves* (1931). Described by Woolf as her "play-poem idea" (qtd. in Fussell 275), *The Waves* is perhaps that among her works which most radically breaks with the "formal railway line" of realist narrative. In its tracing of the intertwined lives of six characters from infancy to old age, the novel uses the wave both as a symbol and a stylistic and structuring device. Through intersecting interior monologues, each of the characters reflects on the notions of selfhood and the passage of time, attempting to incorporate their experiences of their individual identity and communal unity, of human history and the cyclical continuity of nature. Echoing Heraclius's conception of time as a spiraling process of "gathering and scattering," *The Waves* ceaselessly makes and unmakes the group and its individual characters: "A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution" (*The Waves* 91-92). The seven-sided flower highlights the importance of individuality, as the emergence of each distinct perception enrichens and deepens the meaning of the flower, and of reality as such. Simultaneously, the accumulation of difference places a strain on the flower's singleness and wholeness, and the significance of its fragmentation ultimately depends on a shared experience of a deeper, underlying unity: "'Now once more,' said Louis, 'as we are about to part … the circle in our blood, broken so often, so sharply, for we are so different, closes in a ring. Something is made'" (105). The joint orientation away from the individuated self makes the group neither "slaves" nor "sheep … following a master," but "creators" of a community in need of constant remaking (Woolf, *The Waves* 106). Much like Nietzsche describes the togetherness of Dionysus as a return to "the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are united" (*Birth of Tragedy* 60) the voice of Bernhard asserts that "[w]e have proved, sitting eating, sitting talking, that we can add to the treasury of moments. … We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time" (106). As each self merges back and feels, to borrow Nietzsche's words, not only "united, reconciled, blended with his neighbor, but as one with him" (*Birth of Tragedy* 4), a sense of wholeness in difference is re-established. As in the context of Duncan's dance, the experience of a continuity of life, both within and across time, counters and protects against the timely experience of fragmentation: "We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a

world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road" (106).

Through their reliance on waves as an informing principle for both theme and technique, Duncan's and Woolf's artistic practices provide an alternative to Berman's metaphor of modernity as a "maelstrom" of "disintegration and renewal" (15). As a recurrence of change, waves seem to capture the trajectory of modernity – a social experience which has been ongoing for centuries yet continues to seem radically unprecedented to those that go through it (Berman 15-16). More specifically, waves demonstrate the complexities of the concept of repetition, which in its fullness involves the intertwined combination of two different modes of repetition. In his *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*, J. Hillis Miller, drawing on Gilles Deleuze, describes the two varieties as Platonic repetition, which is "grounded in a solid archetypal model which is untouched by the effects of repetition" (6), and Nietzschean repetition, which posits a world of "ungrounded doublings" where each thing is seen as unique and "intrinsically different from every other thing" (6). Each form of repetition, Miller observes, always and inevitably "calls up the other as its shadow companion" (16), and as this chapter's discussion of Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian aesthetics has already shown, "[y]ou cannot have one without the other, though each subverts the other" (J. H. Miller 16). One of the novels that Miller explores in his study is Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941), from which he cites the well-known exchange between Isa and Mrs. Swithin, amateur actors in the village play that makes up the novel: "'Did you feel,' [Mrs. Swithin] asked, 'what he said: we act different parts but are the same?' 'Yes,' Isa answered. 'No,' she added. It was Yes, No. Yes, yes, yes, the tide rushed out embracing. No, no, no, it contracted" (*Between the Acts* 149). Whereas Isa's "yes" declares a dissolving of assigned roles, a temporary disavowal of an organized self in favor of an all-encompassing wholeness, her conflicting "no" represents a retrieval of balance and a retreat to a defined self. The alternating "yes" and "no" figure as a condensed version of the work as a whole, whose play-within-the-novel outlines British history as recurrent movements of war, destruction, and obliteration, intertwined with countertendencies toward unity, peace, and incipient creation. The underlying cadence of waves imbues the experience of change and contradiction with a sense of dynamic order, gathering the "[o]rts, scraps, and fragments" (149) of human history into a bounding rhythm in which the play's actors and fictional audience, and by extension the novel's readers, are

implicated.[15] Within the novel, the repetitive pattern of affirmation and negation is not only tied to history, but as Miller observes, "to a tangle of related themes which branch out to include problems of origin and end, of temporality … of representation, of the nature of the mind, of the ground of the mind, of the relation of the mind's energy to nature's energy, and so on" (204). Thus, as a conceptual organizing pattern, the dynamic of waves invites us to grasp the complexities of a world we perceive as chaotic, and to find our shifting place within it.

By considering Duncan's dance poetics alongside Woolf's literary rendering of waves,[16] Graham's argument that modern dance can be thought to articulate "knowledge itself" – a primary pattern of movement which may produce "knowledge about something" (qtd. in LaMothe 59) – becomes clearer. Through her dance, Duncan attempted to express the very movement that undergirds Woolf's exploration of complex existential issues – a bodily-based "groundplan" or rhythm which may facilitate our struggling with the perceived tensions between man-made culture and the cosmic whole of nature, as well as our individual and communal modes of existence. While *The Waves* is often regarded as Woolf's most experimental and abstract novel, her writing rides, as signaled in the quote that opened this chapter, "on the backs of rhythm" (*Letters, Vol. 4* 303). And the rhythm of waves, Duncan's dance serves to show, is immediately available to us through our shared corporeal reality, which in turn is accessible through our individual kinesic intelligence. "Kinesic intelligence," according to Ellen Spolsky, refers to "our sense of the relationship of parts of the human body to the whole, and of the patterns of bodily tension and relaxation as they are related to movement" (159). It further encompasses "our sense of the muscular forces that produce bodily movement and of the effect of that movement on other parts of the body and on objects within the environment" (Spolsky 159). Through our knowledge of the balance and control of our own body, we are able to make analogies between another person's body and our

---

[15] In a similar fashion, Stein returns in her lecture "Portraits and Repetition" to the moment when she "first realize[d] the history of various civilizations, that have been on this earth, that too makes one realize repetition and at the same time the difference of insistence. Each civilization insisted in its own way before it went away" (289).

[16] For a comprehensive analysis of the impact of dance on Woolf's writing, see Jones's "The 'unheard rhythms' of Virginia Woolf" in her *Literature, Modernism, and Dance* (2013). Jones does not touch on the resonance between Woolf's poetics and that of Duncan.

own, and our understanding of a person's communication to us often relies less on their words and more on what we learn from their bodily inferences (Spolsky 157, 160). In bringing us into contact with our fellow human beings – and as professed by Duncan's dance poetics, aspects of nature in which we recognize our own movement patterns – our kinesic intelligence can be said to contain a certain Dionysian capacity. In everyday life, the body's capacity for immediate expression and knowledge rarely appears in its pure form but is enmeshed with other modalities of communication whose messages it might support or conflict with. In dance, however, although it too interacts with other modalities such as music, the body takes center stage – reminding us of and bringing into focus the knowledge transmitted and perceived by this aspect of being. Moreover, whereas ballet's highly patterned and abstract movements to a large extent remain kinesically inaccessible to a person with no formal training, primary patterns of muscular tension and relaxation are easily detectable and recognizable in Duncan's dance. Thus, her mode of dance may affect the audience in a different way, bringing them into touch with a shared experience of living life rather than offering the beautiful and sublime forms of formal ballet. In other words, it invites a corporeal experience of the making and unmaking of meaning, and perhaps even contributing the feeling that, as Stein puts it, "dancing … is a thing I know a great deal about" ("Autobiography" 797).

In terms of movement vocabulary, the "groundplan" of Duncan's dance centered on the release of the dancer's torso, which in classical ballet is to remain in a state of constant contraction, even when bending forwards or backwards (Jones 6). In contrast to Fitzgerald's Alabama, who spends her first month at Madame's studio practicing holding herself "erect in ballet position, her weight controlled over the balls of her feet … the curve of her spine drawn tight together … and mashing down the shoulders till they felt as if they were pressed flat against her hips" (128), Duncan envisioned a dance which emerged from an opening up of the corporeal center of the solar plexus: "I spent long days and nights in the studio … For hours I would stand quite still, my two hands folded between my breasts, covering the solar plexus. … I was seeking and finally discovered the central spring of all movement" ("Fragments and Thoughts" 136). In order to produce an unleashing of energy – or in Duncan's own vocabulary, ignite "the motor in [her] soul" – the modern dancer makes use of the movements engendered by the natural inhalation and exhalation of breath (Jones 6), an elemental bodily rhythm which resonates in the rising and falling of waves. The

release of breath and muscular force in turn triggers a momentary loss of control which, in Brandstetter's words, becomes "the source of a continuation of a movement, the form of which stems from the surplus of energy released by the fall" (124). In a similar fashion, Duncan envisions the dancer as pushing out of the floor, "reach[ing] her hand for the prize" ("Dancer and Nature" 67), before returning to a shared ground – "consciously seek[ing] what he has unconsciously lost" ("Movement is Life" 78). As Brandstetter suggests, it is her floor-bound release – which from the vantage point of ballet's anti-gravitational poetics *does* remain long-lost – that ensures that each individual movement, in a Nietzschean sense, "give[s] birth to others in unending sequence" ("Dance of the Future" 56). Here too, Miller's two intertwined modes of repetition make themselves known, unfolding through the body's ceaseless loss and retrieval of balance. "Although there is a sense of resolution once a movement comes about – that is, becomes sensible" dance scholar Philipa Rothfield explains, "the passing moment is redolent with possibility" (215). Rothfield imagines the modern dancer's reposed body as comprising or containing a multiplicity of possible bodies which may be realized, each "with its own formative relations of force, quality of interaction and inherent dynamic" (215). In an early choreography titled *Water Study* (1900), Duncan appears to have danced the very relationship between these possible "bodies," aspiring to express simultaneously the ongoing repetition of the ocean's ceaseless rhythm and the distinct emergence and trajectory of one individual wave: "An opposition between the legs and arms is established, as the feet follow a standard three-beat waltz rhythm that recalls the repetitive breaking of waves against the beach; the pliant arms and torso express the contrasting lyrical melody, as if tracking a single wave" (Preston 169).

Incorporating the capacity for both singular form and relaxed multiplicity, the dancer's body thus seems to dramatize the fluctuation between individuation and what Emily M. Hinnov, in relation to Woolf's *The Waves*, describes as "convergence in spite of difference" (1). "Carrying us through oscillations between fragment and wholeness," Woolf, according to Hinnov, extends to her characters and readers an invitation to "reinvigorate a wholeness of self, and … a sense of communal unity" (2). While the notions of "wholeness" and "unity" undoubtedly carry fascist connotations, the sense of "interconnective community" – as articulated by Louis and Bernhard in the above quotation – neither "absorb[s] individual desire in order to advocate worship of an ideologue ruler; nor does it depend upon mechanistic or war-mongering notions of a

regenerative collective" (Hinnov 3). Drawing on the work of sociologist Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, Hinnov describes *The Waves* as expressive of a "democratic radical" aesthetic (3), a phrase which is also suitable in relation to Duncan's dance. Indeed, one of the challenges of the Duncan technique, Duncan dancer Julia Levien explains, lies in its demand for "the many voices of the body" (qtd. in Preston 169). In addition to the works of Nietzsche, Duncan found inspiration for her corporeal multivocality in the democratic aesthetic of the poetry of Walt Whitman, claiming to be his spiritual daughter ("America Dancing" 48). In response to his "I Hear America Singing," in which the speaker hears a symphony of "varied carols" (1) with "[e]ach singing what belongs to him or her and to none else" (11), Duncan envisioned "America dancing a dance that would be the worthy expression of the song Walt heard" ("America Dancing" 47). In revealing classical ballet's calculated forms and state of perfect balance to be undesirable as well as unnatural, Duncan introduced a "groundplan" for movement in which the process of individuation and our need for inclusion into a spacious unity are as inseparable as the notions of wave and ocean. In a group of dancers, Duncan explained, "[t]he dances of no two persons should be alike" (Dance of the Future" 58), each will "develop a secret sympathy in their souls, unknown to others… even when they are dancing together, each one, while forming a part of a whole … will preserve a creative individuality" ("Beauty and Exercise" 82). Within and across lives, her dance suggests, we are caught up in and include into our internal dynamic a rhythm of emerging and merging through which we ceaselessly remake and expand ourselves and the world: a rhythm of "impulse and … after-movement; call and response, bound endlessly in one cadence" (Duncan, "Depth" 99).

Whereas Duncan's formal innovations within the art of dance dramatizes a shift from a paradigm of being to a paradigm of becoming, Stein's extensive project of literary portraiture demonstrates a similar tendency. In a lecture titled "Portraits and Repetition" (1934) she comments on the incipient process of her portrait writing, explaining how she "kept on knowing people by resemblances, that was partly memory and it bothered me" ("Portraits and Repetition" 297). Trying to empty herself of knowing a person, that is, the habit of retrieving accumulated details about what the person is or does, Stein aimed to "mak[e] … a portrait of any one is as they are existing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 293). Contrary to the Apollonian "biographical portraits" described by Nietzsche, which "incite … us to a thoughtful comprehension of the essence of life dwelling

within them" (*Birth of Tragedy* 79), Stein invites the reader to experience the "essence" of a person as it unfolds through movement over time. Much like Duncan wanted to create a dance "born out of ourselves, out of the emotions and the life of our times" ("Fragments and Thoughts" 139), rejecting the complete steps of formal ballet in favor of successive movement, Stein saw her mode of portraiture as arising from the needs and circumstances of her age: "We in this period have not lived in remembering, we have living in moving being necessarily so intense that existing is indeed something, is indeed that thing that we are doing" (297). In a time marked by rapid societal, cultural, and technological change, which also allowed for a greater freedom of fluidity of identity, the defining quality of a particular person resided, according to Stein, in their particular *style* of movement, the very way in which they navigated between interchangeable forms and ideas. Thus, to truly capture a person's "existing," Stein explains, involved capturing their "bottom nature," the ground plan that undergirded their definable yet passing thoughts and words:

> I then began again to think about the bottom nature in people, I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movements of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different. ("Gradual Making" 272)

In resonance with Duncan's "impulse and … after-movement … bound endlessly in one cadence" ("Depth 99"), Stein too pictures the skeletal plot of existence as a wavelike motion of rise and fall. This pattern is endlessly recurring, but also infinitely variated, as each manifestation, as suggested by Duncan's *Water Study*, is articulated with a new and different distribution of energy. According to Stein, the essence of any human expression was insistence, "and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis" ("Portraits and Repetition" 288). Whereas in Woolf's novel, the underlying rhythm of waves facilitates philosophical reflection and an experience of continuity across time, Stein aimed to create an immediate experience of the very movement itself,

which runs through and beyond a person's existence. The goal of this type of portrait is to simultaneously observe and describe the unfolding of a person in a present; to trace her immediate transition from one instance in time to the next. According to Stein, this type of portrait writing would serve to demonstrate that a thing that seems "very clear may easily not be clear at all," and "a thing that may be confused may be very clear" ("Portraits and Repetition" 292). In other words, the clarity of Stein's portrait does not arise from the creation or articulation of specific forms or recognizable meanings, as seen in the traditional still portrait, but accumulates from the sensual experience that it gradually generates: "I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was," she explains, "until I had not many things but one thing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 294).

The relationship between "one" and "many" is particularly prominent in the ninety-nine-stanza portrait of Duncan, which departs from the simple statement that "This one is one dancing," a formula which the text continues to say, as Stein puts it herself, "over and over again" through "infinite variations" ("Gradual Making" 272). By making the sentence dance, the portrait plays out its semantic content, thereby conveying the dancer's intensity or liveliness of movement through its own process. Stein's poetics here resonate with the observations of American philosopher John Dewey, who in his *Art as Experience* (1934) argues that "It is no linguistic accident that 'building,' 'construction,' 'work,' designate both a process and its finished product" (53), a point which also extends to the word "dance" – and modern dance in particular. In contrast to the well-established regime of formal ballet, where steps exist prior to their realization, Stein's portrait evokes and performs a dance which *is* because it is being done, a dance in which, as Dewey puts it in his account, "[w]ithout the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank" (53).

Naturally, Stein's evocation of Duncan is verb-based, spiraling forward mainly though present participles, which indicate continuity, and gerunds, non-finite verbs functioning as nouns.[17] "In being one dancing she was being one dancing," the portrait typically reads, "In dancing she was doing that thing she was doing dancing. In doing dancing she was dancing" ("One Dancing" 132).

---

[17] In her *Modern Gestures: Abraham Walkowitz Draws Isadora Duncan Dancing* (2010) Ann Cooper Albright explores the relationship between Duncan's expressive motion, Stein's gerunds, and Abraham Walkowitz's series of drawings of Duncan's dancing.

While a description of a person's "being" and "doing" would traditionally convey recognizable details about her appearance, traits, or deeds, Stein insists on Duncan's "dancing," an ongoing event that the portrait attempts neither to describe nor contain, but to align itself with through its own onward verbal drive. In line with Graham's definition of dance, Stein's dancing line appears as "an absolute" (qtd. in LaMothe 59); void of any specific meaning it leaves the reader to consider the portrayed subject in terms of her motion. Moreover, as "dancing" takes the shape of both noun and verb, any conceptual or linguistic distinction between agent and action is cancelled out, which underscores the tautological relationship between the two: The dancer never preexists her invocation through corporeal movement, and in turn, "dancing" only starts to exist at the very moment a body is engaged in it. As discussed in the above, each gestural change also alters the dancer's "being," that is, her trajectory of future movement: As the body unmakes itself through a muscular release, a range of unprecedented directions for movement – the potentiality that Rothfield describes as "possible bodies" – becomes available to the dancer. Thus in "being one dancing" Stein's portrayed subject is "one" that undergoes continuous transformation.

The changing life of Duncan's dance is also conveyed through Stein's continuous manipulation of the sentence's length, stress, and rhythm, and the recurrence of certain words and phrases:

> Even if she was one and she was one, even if she was one she was changing. She was one and was then like some one. She was one and she had then come to be like some other one. She was then one and she had come then to be like some other one. She was then one and she had come then to be like some other one. She was then one and she had come then to be like a kind of a one. (121)

Commenting on the gradational change of her sentence, Stein describes it as "the same as the idea of the cinema," with its succession of images "each … just infinitesimally different from the one before" ("How Writing" 448). In evoking a person cinematically, through a series of connected instants, the portrayed subject is at no point completely fixed, never the same as herself. Stein thereby likens her own position of writer to that of a film-camera; a recording eye which is non-situated and lacking any human inclination toward representation. Whereas Duncan describes her dance as "no more nor less than a human

translation of the gravitation of the universe" ("Dance of the Future" 55), Stein's text figures in turn as a verbal translation of Duncan's corporeal movement. Void of any form of metaphorical comparison, it does not attempt to grasp the dance by way of comparison or interpretation but mediates the very flow of the dancer's embodied movement – in real time as it were. Only by attempting to assume an impersonal position similar to that of the camera – free of intrinsic judgment or prejudice – could Stein truly capture the ongoing life of another person, allowing the portrait to have "completely its own time and … no element of remembering … [and] no element of repetition" ("Portraits and Repetition" 296). Stein's rejection of repetition may at first seem peculiar, as any reader would undoubtedly characterize her Duncan portrait as being highly repetitious. Yet by "repetition" Stein here clearly refers to the Platonic mode of repetition, which, as J.H. Miller puts it, is "grounded in a solid archetypal model," and whose validity depends on "its truth of correspondence to what it copies" (6). By contrast, the repetition by which Stein's style of portraiture is characterized is predominantly Nietzschean in nature, with each phrase and sentence being unique and inherently different from any other of the text's near-repetitions. In line with Duncan's own cadence of contracting and releasing movements, however, the portrait also underscores the coexistence of the two contradictory kinds of repetition, and the way in which each inevitably carries the other within it. "Even if she was one and she was one, even if she was one she was changing" (121), the portrait states in the above quotation, showing how the notions of change and difference are only sensible in relation to an instance of sameness, or a "one." Within the portrait, the process of "changing" refers to a temporary deconstruction of the "one," and the subsequent folding of difference back into identity – that is, the construction of a slightly different "one." "She was one," the portrait reads, "and she had then come to be like some other one" (121). As when watching a character unfold on film, instance by instance, Stein's portrait demonstrates the essence of its subject to be present only in her ongoing change.

That Duncan's fluid style of dance coalesces particularly well with a cinematic mode of conveying reality is evident not only in Stein's portrait of the dancer, it is also confirmed by the work of French modernist filmmaker Germaine Dulac. Attempting to distance her practice from traditional narrative cinema, Dulac strove to create a "visual symphony," an "integral cinema … made of rhythmic images" (158): "There is the symphony, pure music. Why wouldn't the cinema also have its own symphony?" (qtd. in T. Williams 141). In

her experimentation with "pure" film, a symphony of visual movement, Dulac considered the modern dancer the "ideal cinegraphic form": "I evoke Isadora Duncan. A dancer. No. A line bounding to harmonious rhythms … With Isadora a harmony of lines … stripped of all meanings that are too human to better elevate itself toward the abstraction of sentiments" (qtd. in T. Williams 157-58). Resonating with Woolf's break with the "formal railway line of sentence" (*A Change* 135), Dulac envisions a cinematic sequence that would resemble the bounding line of a dancing body. Although Dulac saw Duncan's dance as an "abstraction of sentiments" rather than, as Duncan saw it herself, their "groundplan" ("Dancer and Nature" 68), she too understood the dance to convey an elemental rhythm which undergirds and lends itself to meaning, rather than as carrying or moving toward specific meanings. Alongside Stein's assertion that her portrayed subject "*is* dancing" (italics mine), Dulac refers to Duncan not as "a dancer," but in terms of her ongoing action. In Duncan's ability to foreground movement as such, Dulac found inspiration for her own medium-reflexive experiment, recognizing the dancer's aim to create a mode of expression in which "form and movement were one" ("What Dancing" 71) as similar to her own.

While Stein's affinity with the cinematic is nothing new, her fascination with the material movement of dance has yet to receive sustained attention. Indeed, Stein's writing is often categorized in terms of what Tim Armstrong describes as "mechanomodernism," texts which absorb discursive technologies and "at their most extreme aim … to reconfigure the nature of literary reception" (*Modernism, Technology* 87). Yet Stein's manipulation of her artistic medium does not seem to spring primarily from a wish to usurp the technique of cinema,[18] but in resonance with Dulac's cinematic experiment, from her ability to recognize, and the subsequent wish to convey, the notion of pure (human) movement. In making a portrait of any person, Stein explains how she had to "find out how I by the thing moving excitedly inside in me can make a portrait of them" ("Portraits and Repetition" 298). The literary portrait then depends on the writer's own experience of and capacity for movement, and in turn, as Spolsky argues in the context of kinesic intelligence, the inferences we draw from the

[18] "I of course did not think of it in terms of the cinema," Stein explains of her own technique, "in fact I doubt whether at that time I had ever seen a cinema but, and I cannot repeat this too often any one is of one's period and this our period was undoubtedly the period of the cinema and its series production" ("Portraits and Repetition" 294).

analogies we make between other people's movements and our own (160). Thus, when Stein in her memoir proclaims that "[d]ancing excites me tremendously and it is a thing I know a great deal about" ("Autobiography" 797), we can infer that her knowledge in part derives from her own being as a living body. In line with Duncan's rejection of mechanical movement and her discovery of an internal "central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power" (*My Life* 61), Stein was searching for a movement that was vital and unrestricted: "if it were possible that a movement were lively enough it would exist so completely that it would not be necessary to see it moving against anything to know that it is moving. That is what we mean by life and in my way I have tried to make portraits of this thing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 290). Alongside Duncan, Stein employs the technological metaphor of the motor in order to further articulate the very movement of life: "it is necessary if you are to be really and truly alive it is necessary to be at once talking and listening, doing both things, not as if there were one thing, not as if they were two things, but doing them, well if you like, like the motor going inside and the car moving, they are part of the same thing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 290). Much like Duncan claimed to simultaneously absorb and translate the gravitational rhythm of the universe through her dance, Stein regards the relationship between "listening" and "talking" as similar to that of motor and car. In sharp contrast to what Woolf describes as "a formal railway line of sentence" (*A Change* 135), a line with a set beginning and an implied predictable destination, Stein's interest lies with the very movement of her own bounding verbal line: "As I say a motor goes inside and the car goes on, but my business my ultimate business as an artist was not with where the car goes as it goes but with the movement inside that is of the essence of its going" ("Portraits and Repetition" 305).

Stein's description of movement "that … is moving even if it is not moving against anything" ("Portraits and Repetition" 287) serves, as Jonathon Robinson Appels has observed, almost as a "definition of [the] free dancing that Duncan embodied" (167). In the only academic article devoted exclusively to Stein's Duncan portrait, Appels analyzes, and also in part reproduces, Stein's handwritten manuscript, with the aim of recovering a materialist lyricism which has been obfuscated by the typographical version. Appels understands Stein's repeating of certain words and phrases to be "mantric rather than mechanic," describing her handwriting as being "loosely rounded [with] no jumps. It does not listlessly drift, nor is it 'flung.' Stein's writing spills out, is already in motion,

and has no resting place" (168). The adjective "mantric" is suitable in this context, with its reference to the repetition of a "formula" (*OED*), which in turn refers to a procedure for achieving something, or the elements or compound of which something is made – that is, the intertwining movements of contract and release, of Platonic and Nietzschean repetition. Whereas Duncan's legs, arms and body would start to move as soon as her "motor" began to work, Stein in turn conveys, by way of her own living hand and body, an internalized observation and experience of the dancer's movement. Thus, while it is tenable to describe Stein's writing in terms of the cinematic, it is equally fruitful to, as Appels suggests, think of it as a kind of "action writing" akin to the action painting later developed by the Abstract Expressionists – "an aesthetic activity that is directed by the body in its deployment across space" (167-68).

The "action" of Stein's portrait is not only conveyed through its reliance on verbs and near-repetitions, but also through its avoidance of specific nouns and proper names. In her poetological essay "Poetry and Grammar" (1935), Stein discusses the nature of nouns and personal names, arguing that "People if you like to believe it can be made by their names. Call anybody Paul and they get to be a Paul … perhaps yes perhaps no, there is something in that, but generally speaking, things once they are named the name does not go on doing anything to them and so why write in nouns" ("Poetry and Grammar" 313). Stein's "perhaps yes perhaps no" shows her insistence on her own dialectic formula, which neither fully accepts nor completely rejects the usefulness of identity. On the one hand, her statement admits to the usefulness of nouns, which, after all, allow us to communicate effectively by contracting larger fields of perceptive complexity. On the other, nouns invite the Platonic mode of repetition, and what Stein critically refers to as "remembering." As nouns and names may inevitably obscure change, difference, and fluctuations of intensity, they often appear, to use Stein's own turn of phrase, "clear" rather than "confusing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 292). Yet as an artist and portrait writer, Stein's affinity is not primarily with the means that make the individual, but with the life that circulates through, exceeds, and continuously changes its boundaries: "I became more and more excited about how words which were the words that made whatever I looked at look like itself were not the words that had in them any quality of description" ("Portraits and Repetition" 303). Attuned to the ways in which the contours of meaning shift through movement, Stein's portrait of Duncan employs non-specific nouns and pronouns such as "one," "thing," "some," "something";

words that suggestively indicate without properly identifying the elements or person to which they refer. The portrait, as Appels suggests of Stein's handwriting, offers no resting place for the reader's mind, blocking her capacity for recognition or perception of resemblance. Instead it continues to encourage our perceptive discovery of the text's flow, its corporeally grounded "bounding" line, to borrow Dulac's turn of phrase.

In "Portraits and Repetition" Stein does, however, comment on the difficulties of writing a portrait free of description, considering her own project to be "bothering" and nearly impossible (294). When faced with a particular person, she felt that "everything in that person entered in to make that person little ways and expressions that made resembling, it was necessary for me nevertheless not to realize these things as remembering but to realize the one thing as existing" (294). This challenge clearly materializes in her portrait of Duncan, which does in fact contain elements of "remembering," as it gently sketches the contours of Duncan's biography. Although Stein is interested first and foremost in the life of the dance, that is, in tracing Duncan's "intensity of movement" ("Portraits and Repetition" 298), the portrait also conveys what in metaphorical terms may be described as the dance of life. Stein's biographical account of Duncan commences with her early childhood, and the then radical divorce of her parents shortly after her birth.[19] The presentation, however, is free of saturated terms such as "husband," "wife," "marriage," and "divorce," and emphasizes the underlying rhythm of the couple's parting:

> She was one beginning being living and there were then others who were ones doing that thing, being living. Her mother was being living and was living then with four children. The mother was one having been married to some one and she was one then not needing that thing enough not needing that thing so that the one to whom she had been married could then marry another one. (125)

[19] "All my childhood … the terrible word divorce was imprinted upon the sensitive plate of my mind," Duncan writes in her autobiography (*My Life* 8). "As I could not ask anyone for the explanation of these things I tried to reason them out for myself. Most of the novels I read ended in marriage and a blissfully happy state of which there was no more reason to write" (*My Life* 8). In novels such as George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, however, she encountered "a girl who does not marry, a child that comes unwanted, and the terrible disgrace which falls upon the poor mother," which early on prompted her to emphasize life over form (*My Life* 8-9).

In line with the successive movements of Duncan's dance, the passage expresses a wave-like unmaking and remaking of a family unit. The dismantling of the marriage frees up desire and provides a freedom of movement, allowing for a redistribution of what Stein calls "intensity." Opening up for new relationships and alternative ways of living, the divorce serves to show, in line with Duncan's own dance poetics, how one movement always "give[s] birth to others in unending sequence of still higher and greater expression" ("Dance of the Future" 56). In terms of the formula of modern dance, the parting resonates with what Brandstetter describes as the dancer's "playing with the disturbance of balance, with the loss of control … that moment in which we forget a learned movement" (124). Much like the parents' parting, the passing moment of the dancer's muscular release is not "pre-drawn," and its energy derives partly from its "still uncertain goal" (Brandstetter 124). This air of contingency is also present in Duncan's biography, of which Stein was most likely directly informed by any of the two youngest Duncan siblings – Raymond and Isadora herself. While their childhood was marked by poverty and insecure living conditions, the dissolution of their parents' marriage also offered the family freedom from traditional social, religious, and materialistic values, as recounted in Duncan's autobiography *My Life* (1-16). By emphasizing the divorce of Duncan's parents, the portrait suggests how the mother's release from her role of wife and a patriarchically organized family facilitated the becoming of her children's artistic careers.

Although she is never explicitly named or described, Duncan's mother, Mary Isadora Gray, is thus given a key role in Stein's portrait. A talented pianist and a music teacher, she encouraged her children's interest in music and dancing and allowed them to leave school at an early age (Duncan, *My Life* 6). In Stein's portrait, she is "one believing that meaning was something that could be exciting to any one" (125). In turn, although "they were quite different ones these four of them," the siblings "were in a way a kind of a one"; "any one of the four of them might then be one being dancing" (125-26). In addition to Isadora, the portrait specifically dwells on Raymond – a poet, painter, designer, weaver, dancer, actor, and playwright – who, as modern dance pioneer Jacqueline Robinson puts it, "converted thousands of dancers to the fertile stream he created both in relation to, and independent of, Isadora" (50). Stein portrays Raymond, "[t]he fourth one," as

> one asking in dancing being existing. He was one answering in dancing being existing. He was one asking. Dancing was existing. He was one answering. Dancing was existing. He was one asking and answering. He was one meaning that thing meaning that dancing had come to be existing. (126)

In tune with Isadora's own poetics, which she describes as "impulse and … after-movement; call and response, bound endlessly in one cadence" (Duncan, "Depth" 99), Stein describes Raymond's "existing" as a series of opening and closing movements. Whereas the notion of "asking" suggests an openness to the reality of the present, "answering" indicates an attempt to incorporate its newness into one's practice. Through his "asking" and "answering," he insists that to exist is to be in movement, and by erasing the distinction between dancing and existing he also blurs – alongside his sister – the boundaries between art and life. In portraying the Duncan family, Stein underscores how in resembling one another, each member resembles difference; while their movement formulas are similar and intertwined, their lived realizations are unique: "All four of them were quite different kinds of ones all four whom she was resembling. All four were in a way of a kind of a one. All four could be ones being ones needing believing that meaning is existing. All four could be ones expecting something from some such thing" (126). Playing with the reciprocal interrelationship between "one" and "many," the portrait envisions the Duncan household as an always not yet fully realized potentiality, a collective of creative "different ones" who are never completely individualized, as "dancing," as Stein puts it in the context of Raymond, "had come to be existing" (126). Thus, Stein's evocation of difference-in-unity here resonates with Woolf's image of the almost cubistically perceived flower and the adjoining image of a fluid togetherness – "the circle in our blood … which closes in a ring" (*The Waves* 105).

As shown in the above, the idea of a multiple oneness also surfaces in the mature Duncan's dance poetics, and most clearly in her idea of the dancing chorus. The "dance of the future," she explains, whether performed by an individual dancer or an ensemble, should be imagined as the dance of the chorus, as the simultaneous gesturing of many people. "[T]o give back to the dance its place as the chorus," Duncan writes, "that is the ideal. When I have danced I have tried always to be the Chorus … I have never once danced a solo" ("Dance of the Greeks" 96). She here draws on Nietzsche's view of the chorus of the

Greek tragedy as "a vision of the Dionysian throng" (*Birth of Tragedy* 25). Made up of non-professional actors from the community, the Greek chorus served to mediate between the actors on stage and the audience, adding to the complexity of the drama by providing commentary, building expectation and contributing to the drama's tone and atmosphere. Shifting the emphasis from the Apollonian to the Dionysian, Nietzsche regards the chorus not as a secondary supporting function to the action on stage, but as the drama's primary locus of wisdom. Embodying a fluid, constant flow of "glowing life" – the force from and against which forms and appearances take shape and eventually disintegrate into – the chorus invites the individual to see beyond the perishable world of culture to which they belong. In merging with the chorus, its middle ground becomes the spectator's own; in forgetting themselves they are "forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence" (*Birth of Tragedy* 60), as dramatized on stage. Or put differently, and by way of Duncan's imagery, to join the chorus is to be part of the ocean, whose eternal rhythm facilitates and contextualizes the ebb and flow of each individual wave. In the context of Duncan's dance poetics, the dancer enters into a chorus-like state through a bodily release, induced by what is described as the force of Dionysus:

> This figure is the best example I could give of an emotion taking entire possession of the body. The head is turned backward – but the movement of the head is not calculated. … If you had before you a dancer inspired with this feeling, it would be contagious. You would forget the dancer himself. You would only feel, as he feels, the chord of Dionysiac ecstasy. ("Fragments and Thoughts" 131)

In a passing moment, the Dionysian corporeal release produces a loss of balance and control. A discharge of energy softens and overflows the dancer's bodily contours to the extent that we "forget the dancer himself," creating within the dancer, the ensemble, and potentially also the audience, a "sense of community" (Preston 175). In contrast to Fitzgerald's Alabama, who sees dance as an organizing medium through which she can learn to "have every single thing about her just right at once" (8-9), the dance of the chorus moves beyond any habitual tendency toward integrity. Rather, to *be* the chorus means to experience the self as both comprising and merging with several "different ones," and to recognize the moment of release as carrying within it the potential to engender a

variety of new movements. By rendering Duncan's family as chorus-like, "a kind of a one" embodying a multitude of possible trajectories, Stein gestures not only toward their sense of egalitarian togetherness, but also the virtual complexity which is part of a person's existing. In its tracing of a body and a self that expands and extends beyond itself, the portrait performatively aligns itself with Rothfield's conception of the modern dancer as "a mobile state of affairs, a plurality of bodies that make and re-make themselves through the passage of time" (215).

By anchoring the artist in her family, Stein's portrait also cancels out any clear distinction between family life and creative practice, while simultaneously announcing the distinct becoming of the artist: "She was then one being like some and she was then one being existing, being one who was a young one and family living was being existing and she was then one completing that thing completing family living in being one being dancing" (126-27). On the one hand, Duncan completes or *concludes* family living; reaching forward and outward she leaves her home in order to commence her artistic career. Concurrently, she ceaselessly carries on and *enhances* the life of her family; the energy of her upbringing fuels the incipient movements of her dancing, and continues to underlie its ceaseless development. Thus, while Stein's Duncan articulates the spirit of her family through her dance, she is not bound by them, and her relationship to the past is depicted as one of "not forgetting" and "not remembering," as Stein puts it in another one of her literary portraits (*Two* 92).[20] In her discussion of the role of memory in Stein's cultivation of a "continuous present," Sharon J. Kirsch describes how Stein's turn-of-the-century avant-gardism entails "more than acknowledging or rejecting discursive habits of the past" (86). Kirsch specifically explores Stein's understanding of the nexus of memory, history, and the composition of narrative as it surfaces in *The Making of Americans*, a novel which opens with Stein's statement on the synergic intertwining of present and past: "The old people in a new world, the new people made out of the old, that is the story that I mean to tell, for that is what really is and what I really know" (*Making of Americans* 3). While in her portrait of Duncan, Stein focuses specifically on the unfolding of personal history, indicating how the dancer is both made out of and makes her family, Stein's vision of the "new people made out of the old" also resonates with the way in

[20] From the portrait "Two: Gertrude Stein and her brother" (1910-1912).

which Duncan related artistically to the world of the ancient Greeks, whose movements she describes as "the old dance which is to become the new" ("Dancer and Nature" 68). Clearly, neither Duncan nor Stein attempts simply to retrieve a personal or historical past but encourages its actualization in and through a contingent "now." In relation to Stein, Kirsch describes this conception of time as "kairotic," an ancient Greek understanding of time as a subjective, qualitative experience, as opposed to chronological, linear time. Consisting of events or instants of significance rather than measured units of time, kairotic time can be thought of as "a spontaneous formulation of and a barely constituted response to a new situation unfolding in the immediate present" (Poulakos, qtd. in Kirsch 76). An alert and wakeful encounter with the present involves, as Stein puts it in relation to Raymond Duncan, an "asking" about the newness of the moment, and simultaneously, an "answering" through which we attempt to grasp its nature. As we respond to this moment that affects us, we use the past as a resource, so that in articulating the "now" we are engaged in a process of remembering. In her portrait of Duncan, Stein explains how "In being dancing she was dancing, she was remembering having been dancing" (132). "Remembering" is here seen as an integral part of an active, creative, and ongoing process, an understanding that also Duncan supports in her writings:

> When I try to remember events that were so marvelous, so vibrant – like an apple orchard bursting with ripe apples – and when I put this in these words, a medium I don't understand, they seem like dead leaves, dry parched, no juice or interest left – but that is because I am not a writer. When I dance it is different. ("Fragments and Thoughts" 143)

To Duncan, true "remembering" denotes something other than the ability to recall a static memory – it is something that is actively being done. The unfolding movement of dance allows her not to reclaim the past as such, but to rediscover and channel the sense of life or intensity with which a past event was imbued. Indeed, the very continuation of modern dance, as discussed in the above, depends quite concretely on the energy released by a previous movement, and the body's present and temporary configuration always holds within it the simultaneous remembering and forgetting of former ones. Duncan also notes that language, a medium whose rules and possibilities she can only relate to in a more conventional manner, prevents her from drawing together her complex time-

consciousness in a unifying present moment. At the same time, she implicitly expresses faith in the *writer's* ability to achieve through words what she is capable of doing through dancing – an expectation which Stein's fluid mode of portraiture, brought on by her creative manipulation of grammar, can be said to fulfill.

Stein's portrait continues its wave-like movement of "not remembering" and "not forgetting" by including the passing of Duncan's mother, her "fading" and "being come to be a dead one," as well as the daughter's own maturation into "an older one" (125; 127). Stein shows Duncan's dancing as now merging with the processes of "thinking" and "believing":"… she was believing in thinking in meaning being existing, she was being one being one going to be moving in any direction …" (132). Absorbing her mother's encouragement to always be "one greeting meaning being existing" (125) – one affirming the existence of meaning and its residing in and through living, moving life – Stein's Duncan collapses the distinction between the movements of the dancing body and the abstract movement of human thought. The portrait thus activates what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as one of the most common metaphors for thinking that exist in English: "One of the major ways of getting information is by moving around in the world. This is the basis for our metaphor Thinking is Moving, which consists of the following mapping: The Mind is a Body; Thinking is Moving; Ideas are Locations …" (236). Yet as this reading has already shown, Stein's portrait does not move toward any one location, but focuses on the ability of both dancer and writer to ceaselessly create new ones. Both dancing and thinking, the portrait implies, constitute open-ended acts of dislocation which cannot but produce difference. Similarly, Duncan saw dance as a means to counter everyday human beings' reliance on conventionalized existential formulas, which relieved and prevented them from experiencing the full motility of the human body, and by extension, the inherent elasticity of mind and self:

> Having stifled and disciplined their movements in their first states of childhood, they resort to a set of habits seldom varied. So, too, their mental activities respond to set formulas, often repeated. With this repetition of physical and mental movements, they limit their expression until they become like actors who each night play the same role. ("Dancing in Relation" 122)

Through their effort to perform and maintain certain movements and roles, the late-Victorian individual and the classical dancer both seemed, according to Duncan, to repress their capacity for individual experimentation and imagination. By contrast, the modern dancer assumes the position of a recognizable "one" only in order to surpass it – her doing always triggering the reactive processes of undoing and redoing. Indeed, the engendering of difference in dance, as Rothfield explains, occurs when a dancer or choreographer ventures beyond "any kind of codification such as exists in, for example, classical ballet. In both instances, bodies need to adapt, to change, toward unfamiliar, non-habitual movements. This calls for the production of new, unfamiliar bodies – unfamiliar, that is, from the dancer's reactive point of view" (220). Through the continuous reorganization of her body, the modern dancer thus acquires first-hand knowledge of a fundamental making and unmaking of meaning, her movements, as Graham suggests, being "independent of service to an idea" (qtd. in LaMothe 59). In her writings, Duncan too saw dance as a primary facilitating venue of thought, considering her own undulating movement as mirroring not only "the waves, the winds, the movements of growing things, the flight of birds, the passing of clouds," but also "finally, the thought of man in his relation to the universe" ("Dance of the Future" 63). A movement induced by a fall from balance would inevitably, according to Duncan, "giv[e] birth to others in unending sequence of still higher and greater expression, thoughts and ideas" ("Dance of the Future" 56). Through her dancing, a means of expression as well as a mode of discovery, she thus advocated the following credo: "The highest intelligence in the freest body!" ("Dance of the Future" 63).

While Duncan sought to free the spectator from their physical and mental habits, inviting them, in line with Nietzsche, to join the dancing chorus and its "lethargic" state (*Birth of Tragedy* 23), she saw the stage designs of the traditional theatres where she performed as obstructing this process. Comfortably seated in an auditorium, the audience had been cast as passive beholders:

> I have dreamed of a more complete dance expression on the part of the audience … I had always hoped that the day would come when we could have such a temple where the public, participating in different ways with me in my dance, would arrive at a much fuller enjoyment than they ever will experience by simply sitting as spectators. ("Dancing in Relation" 123)

Instead of simply watching the dance unfold in time, Duncan wished for the audience to join her in dancing time itself. Embodying the ideal participating observer, Stein's text appears, as suggested by Appels, as a dynamic partaking in Duncan's dance, her unfolding poetic line mediating an experience of its process. The portrayed dancer, the portrait finally reveals explicitly, is "resembling some one, one who was not dancing, one who was writing" (130). The felt resemblance or unity with the dancer lays bare the writer's receptiveness to kinesic experience, which transforms the two into a chorus. As "one who is writing," Stein reenacts the dancer's wave-like motion, her incessant dialectic interchange of individuation and communal unity, of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, of Platonic and Nietzschean modes of repetition: "She was one who would be contradicting any one if she had not been one exceeding in affirming anything" (127), Stein writes through differing repetitions: "This one is not changing. This one is changing" (123); "In being one she was one completing that thing. In being one she was not completing that thing again and again" (132). This pattern of contract and release is further enhanced by the portrait's texture, where Duncan's gestural repertoire, her patterns of walking, skipping, running, jumping, and stomping surface in the portrait's changing dynamics. Some passages are composed of short, contracting sentences that insist on the dancer's balance and definition: "She was one. She was dancing. She was one. She had been one. She was one. She was being that one. She would be that one" (136). These passages alternate with longer, flowing sentences in which the portrait's "one" releases into an open, excessive "them": "She was that one and being that one and being one feeling in believing completing being existing, and being one thinking in feeling in meaning being existing and being one being of a kind of a one and being of that kind of them and they being of a kind of them …" (136). Often lacking in punctuation, these passages of discharge challenge the reader's ability to separate one phrase or movement from the one erasing and replacing it, thereby echoing Duncan's claim that "[n]o movement is true unless suggesting sequence of movements" ("Dance of the Future" 57). Evoking the experience of a body and mind in motion, such variations indicate fluctuating changes in what Stein defines as a person's "intensity of movement" ("Portraits and Repetition" 298); gradual or more drastic shifts in tempo as well as alternations between the schemas of rise and fall.

In line with Duncan's call for "a more complete dance expression on part of the audience," Stein's loosely scripted portrait further expands the chorus by

calling for the reader's participation. Its changes in textual movement are best noticed when the portrait is read out loud, as the reader's voice and breath will have to respond to the ebb and flow, inspiration and expiration choreographed by the text. While Stein's goal of portraying a person was to capture "the movements of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different" ("Gradual Making" 272), the portrait reveals how the mind's oscillating between contracting and releasing movements is first experienced corporeally; the "groundplan" of our thoughts echoing the "groundplan" of our cardiac cycle, as well as the rise-and-fall rhythms of our breath and walking feet. The reading of Stein's portrait thus emerges as a bodily-based, bodily-engaging process which prompts the reader – as Duncan encouraged the audience of her own dance – to "*breathe its life, to recreate it in one's self"* ("Dance of the Greeks" 96). More than a semantic rendering of a dancing body, the text appeals to the reader kinesically, inviting an individual yet shared experience of how the making and unmaking of meaning *feels* in the body. Or as William Carlos Williams puts it in response to Duncan's dance, we "come alive" to a "simple perfect truth" (qtd. in Preston 150) – a truth which relates to our own immediate unfolding in time. Thus, toward the end of the winding portrait, the text that may at first sight seem contrived or "confused" – as Stein suggestively indicates in her lecture – has finally become "very clear" ("Portraits and Repetition" 292). Yet the whole of its movements, each variation with its own uniqueness and degree of intensity, evades representational capture and perhaps cannot be expressed through verbal language. "No one would ever be able to report truly – or exactly – extraordinary, isn't it – yet no one present had a moment's doubt," Craig expressed after having seen Duncan dance (qtd. in Clarke and Crisp 216), a statement which this chapter also extends to the context of Stein's text. Finally, the portrait's meaning depends on, and becomes sensible through, the very process of reading, an instantaneous and embodied act which, like dancing itself, vanishes as soon as it is brought into being, having "completely its own time" and "no element of repetition" (Stein, "Portraits and Repetition" 296).

At last, both Fitzgerald's and Stein's dance texts end without reaching a point of closure. Alabama's quest to succeed as a dancer is cut short, as the rigid conventions of ballet literally infect her body: "The glue in the box of the toe shoe. It had seeped into a blister" (199). Lying immobilized in a hospital bed, Alabama drifts off to the "same delirious place," a lake where "[n]ebulous weeds swung on the current: purple stems with fat animal leaves, long tentacular stems

with no leaves at all, swishing balls of iodine and the curious chemical growths of stagnant waters … The word 'sick' effaced itself against the poisonous air" (202). As she receives the message that she will "never be able to dance again," her unwavering affinity with ballet's Platonic repetition of Apollonian forms makes her training worthless: "'Oh, my body,' she said. 'And all that work for nothing!'" (202). Alabama's dream scene of sickness and decay, where waters have no current or flow, starkly contrasts with Duncan's celebration of waves, and her inspiration to "dance the changing life of nature" ("Dance of the Future" 63). Echoing Duncan's understanding that her own "dance of the future" was "the dance of the past, the dance of eternity" ("Dance of the Future" 54), Stein's dancing portrait inevitably ends in the middle, with an affirmation of the virtual continuation of dance, text, and life: "She was dancing. She had been dancing. She would be dancing" (136).

The undulating movement brought forth by Duncan's embodied aesthetics, and in turn, by Stein's written portrait, also reverberates through much of literary modernism at large. Both within and across works, writers explicitly and implicitly negotiate between an experience of life's fluidity and a desire to shape, control, or truthfully express it, as exemplified by what Stein refers to as "many" and "one"; what Brooker, et.al in their attempt to define modernism refer to as its dialectical process of "affirmation and negation" (10), or what Woolf in *Between the Acts* portrays as a fluctuation between a "Yes" and a "No." While what distinguishes Duncan's neo-classical dance, Stein's avant-garde portraiture, and Woolf's experimental fiction respectively may at first sight seem more significant than what they have in common, their shared partaking in a similar cadence shows, as Stein puts it, how "each of us in our own way are bound to express what the world in which we are living is doing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 294). What the works share, is their responding to a world of change without, to borrow Woolf's words, "fall[ing] off the rhythm" (*Letters, Vol. 4* 303) – their attempts to mediate the stream of "perpetual disintegration and renewal" that characterizes the experience of modernity (Berman 15). Thus, in the chapters that follow, the wave's undulation may be thought of as an underlying, organizing motif – a cadence which may help synthesize the disparate texts and their bodies without annihilating their differences. While in chapter three, the surrealist body of Loy's *Insel* is explored as to a large extent embodying Woolf's Isa's unifying "Yes," chapter four shows the fashioned body of Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* as tending toward her individuating "No."

Continuing from this chapter's exploration of the corporeal-textual poetics of waves, the next and second chapter considers H.D.'s *Hermione* as a related reflection on the possibility of establishing a near direct relationship between force and form; to integrate through poetry a knowledge of an undifferentiated corporeal reality with the modality of verbal language.

3 "Born into Trees": The Interworld Poetics of H.D.'s *Hermione*

> From the roots the sap rises up into the artist, flows through him and his eyes. He is the trunk of the tree. Seized and moved by the force of the current, he directs his vision into his work. Visible on all sides, the crown of the tree unfolds in space and time. And so with the work. No-one will expect a tree to form its crown in exactly the same way as its roots. We all know that what goes on above cannot be an exact mirror image of what goes on below. … all [the artist] does in his appointed place in the tree trunk is to gather what rises from the depths and pass it on … It is not so easy to orient yourself in a whole that is made up of parts belonging to different dimensions. And nature is such a whole, just like art, its transformed reflection.
>
> (Paul Klee, *Paul Klee* 170)

you are wind in a stark tree,
you are the stark tree unbent,
you are a strung bow,
you are an arrow,
another arrow;
your feet fling their arrows,
your twin arrows,
you then pulse into one flame;
O luminous,
your feet melt into folded wing,
to mer-maid's tail"

(H.D., "The Dancer" 120-30)

Much like Duncan found inspiration for her dance in the "groundplan" of nature, H.D.'s writing is rooted in the embodied experience of natural landscapes. In the narrative poem "The Dancer" (1936), which serves as an introductory quote for this chapter, the writing poet stages an encounter with a Duncan-like dancer,[21]

[21] While it remains unclear whether H.D. ever saw Duncan dance, she had in her library a presentation edition of Duncan's autobiography *My Life* (1927), and she must, as Preston argues, have been familiar with Duncan's dancing through contemporary press coverage of her performances (194).

articulating – alongside Stein's dancing portrait – an artistic vision in which the dancer's gestures provide a material foundation for literary writing. Whereas Stein's text reflects the dancer's movements through syntax and punctuation, H.D. approximates the moving body through imagery of nature and myth. Embodying tree and wind,[22] a hunter's bow and arrows, rooted growth and water nymph, the poet evokes the muscular suspense and release of the modern dancer. Yet, whereas Duncan aimed to intuit through dance the ceaseless rhythm of nature, and Stein, in turn, the dancer's continuous, wave-like motion, H.D.'s writing is attuned to and inspired by the clash and interaction of natural forms and forces. Nature, as Paul Klee puts it in the above-quoted statement, "is made up of parts belonging to different dimensions," and its dynamic whole is not only reflected in, but also parallels, the artist's work. Much like a rooted tree grows by the nourishment of underground water, or its form is affected by the elements, the artist, according to Klee, is "seized and moved by the force of the current" – that is, by an internal, subjective, and experiential dimension which he projects into an exterior world. In portraying the dancer's twofold identity of mermaid and tree, as well as her blended habitat in which sea and land intersect, "The Dancer" shows a similar interest in the artist's multidimensional abilities. Its reference to the "strung bow" of Artemis, the Greek goddess of the woods and the wilderness, further insists on the dancer's nature as both a force of change and a changing form. Within the poem, her body encapsulates the very process of artistic creation, constituting, as will be shown in what follows, an embodied articulation of H.D.'s literary practice. Drawing on Klee's idea of an artistic *Zwischenwelt* – an in-between world in which the contraries of liquid and solid, interior and exterior act on one another – this chapter considers the essence and origin of what I will refer to as H.D.'s interworld poetics.

The hybrid landscape embodied and inhabited by the dancer appears as a leitmotif in H.D.'s writing, appearing and reappearing throughout her oeuvre. Its dynamics are perhaps most clearly expressed in the early poem "Oread" (1914),[23]

---

[22] H.D.'s "stark tree" resonates with Duncan's movement pattern "Tree Branches in the Wind," in which, as one student explained, "the feet remained still, while the body took on a swaying motion, accompanied by the rhythmic waving of the arms, and a peculiar dip and flutter of the wrists" (qtd. in Daly 82).

[23] "Oread," which was originally titled "Pines" (Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 129), was initially published in the *Egoist*'s 1914 February edition. It was also included in *Some Imagist Poets – An Anthology* (1915), which included contributions by Richard Aldington, H.D., John Gould Fletcher, F.S. Flint, D.H. Lawrence and Amy Lowell.

which has remained one of her most well-known works. Projecting a meeting of different dimensions, "Oread" shows a sea-wave breaking against pine-clad rocks, its movement clashing and interflowing with that of branches blowing in the wind:

> WHIRL up, sea–
> whirl your pointed pines,
> splash your great pines
> on our rocks,
> hurl your green over us,
> cover us with your pools of fir.

With its water-like trees and tree-like waves, the landscape lays bare its own becoming, appearing as an interworld which has not yet settled. Thereby, the poem also unsettles; by intimating a potential world it challenges the permanency of the world that is known and familiar. Reflecting and drawing on nature's transformative potential, "Oread" captures an instant of ongoing change, exhibiting the poetic clarity and precision by which her literary contemporaries came to know and admire her. Responding to an impulse to better understand her own poetic voice, H.D. wrote, from 1920 onward, fifteen novels and novellas, as well as short-fiction and narrative poetry. When he first heard of her intention to write novels, Richard Aldington, her then-husband, who, like Pound before him was eager to shape her career, writes: "Prose? No! You have so precise, so wonderful an instrument – why abandon it to fashion another, perhaps less perfect?" (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 33). While those of H.D.'s novels that were published in her lifetime would receive largely negative reviews, prose continued to function as her poetological laboratory throughout her career. Written in 1926-27, the lightly fictionalized *Hermione* reflects on the events that led up to H.D.'s permanent departure from the US in 1911, when she followed Pound, her artistic mentor and then-fiancé, to London. In particular, it revisits the circumstances and genesis of H.D.'s early poetry, which includes "Oread." *Hermione,* as Randall Stevenson writes of the modernist novel as such, "examine[s] the mirror of art itself … represent[ting] the nature and processes of representation" (169). Thus, read together, "Oread" and *Hermione* demonstrate what Klee – using a tree as an analogy of the artist – suggests in the above; that no one should "expect a tree to form its crown in exactly the same way as its

roots." Understanding *Hermione* as H.D.'s self-reflexive exploration of her own artistic beginnings, this reading inquires into "what goes on below," to borrow Klee's turn of phrase, the surface of her much-lauded poetry. Throughout this chapter, each of the two texts will be used as a lens for reading the other, an interpretative approach which, in facilitating a closer and more comprehensive reading of H.D.'s lesser-known novel also opens up to new viewpoints on her iconic poem.

Yet the endeavor to uncover the "roots" of H.D.'s artistic identity is nothing new. Following the recovery of her prose by feminist scholars in the late 1970s and 80s, which included the posthumous publication of *Hermione* in 1981, critics were keen to reveal the artist and woman concealed behind her abbreviated gender-free signature, which had been created for her by Pound (DuPlessis 6). Early critical responses to H.D.'s prose often focus on her treatment of sexual politics and the hardships of the female writer. Her forgotten prose, as Rachel DuPlessis puts it in *H.D., The Career of that Struggle* (1986), expressed "that impulse to power which reverses the object status of woman in an assumption of the powers of Otherness" (69). While feminist critics helped free H.D. from the encapsulating label of "Imagiste," their attention to her narrative works also put her, as Robert Spoo argued in 1997, "in danger of being 'prosed'" (217). With rapid speed, Spoo writes, "H.D. the poet is becoming, with equal power and dignity, H.D. the prose writer" (217). In other words, by revealing H.D.'s prose to be her authentic textual realm where the real and "Other" H.D. could be found, critics often overlooked the lines of continuity that extend through her multifaceted oeuvre. However, attempts were also made to read H.D.'s novels as the processual "mirror" of her early poems. In *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (1990), the only book-length study of H.D.'s prose, Friedman reads *Hermione* as a "narrativization" of *Sea Garden* (1916), H.D.'s first collection of poetry (131). The novel, Friedman argues, allows the reader to decode H.D.'s condensed poetic images in a reading that "opposes a maternal matrix to heterosexual passion" (131). Writing two decades later, critics such as Celena E. Kusch and Annette Debo worked to frame H.D. not only as a female writer, but as a thoroughly American writer. Seeking to accentuate H.D.'s American legacy, Kusch finds that through a "systematic analysis of the images that connect poetry and prose, the national content seems quite clear. Read together, H.D.'s American prose and *Sea Garden* poems register a cultural rejection of domesticated, feminized, and idyllized

representations of US national literary production" (57). Thus, both Friedman and Kusch detect in H.D.'s works a rejection of a "gardened" mental space; an oppositional stance toward hegemonic notions of gender, nation, and literary practice. In reading *Hermione* as the author's retrospective meditation on the development of her poetic voice, this chapter focuses more broadly on H.D.'s notion of artistic creation, which includes, without being limited to, issues of gendered or national identity. Moreover, rather than seeing the novel as rejecting or in opposition to established cultural values, I read *Hermione* as an attempt to bridge the realm of textual tradition with that of personal experience and creativity. This is seen through her engagement with forest imagery, which one the one hand, reflects a physical and intimately known local landscape, and on the other hand, has accumulated symbolic significance through a network of texts and artworks throughout time.

Narrating the discovery of H.D.'s aesthetic interworld, *Hermione* falls into the category of the Künstlerroman or artist's novel, tracing its artist-protagonist's maturation toward artistic vision. Compared with her carefully chiseled poetry, the more flexible medium of prose offered H.D. the freedom to explore issues related to how to live a full life and finding a voice capable of articulating it. Or as she puts it in a 1919 letter to Aldington, "in the novel I am working through a wood, a tangle of bushes and bracken out to a clearing where I can see again" (qtd. in Friedman *Penelope's Web* 34). By employing bodily movement through a forest as a metaphor for the journey of the mind, H.D. also points to corporeal action as the precondition for creative thought, anticipating Lakoff and Johnson' theory of conceptual metaphor, which grafts our conceptual system in our everyday actions in the world. "Metaphor," they explain, "allows conventional mental imagery from sensorimotor domains to be used for domains of subjective experience" (45). Emerging from the novel itself, this notion of structural metaphor will undergird the reading of this chapter. In her letter to Aldington as well as in *Hermione*, H.D. draws on the forested landscapes of her native Pennsylvania, creating a version of Eve Sweetser's metaphorical pattern "The Mind is a Body Moving through Space" (qtd. in Turner 43), which grounds the abstract notion of a wandering mind in a corporeal action story. In casting the novelist as a path breaker making her way through the woods, H.D. also provides the reader of *Hermione* with a way of describing the novel's formal structure and texture: Much as an uncleared patch of forest may challenge the wanderer's progress, H.D.'s prose often imposes a comparable strain on the reader. In her

1981 review of the novel, Carol Camper finds *Hermione* to be "an irritating book with many flaws. Effusive, indulgent, repetitious, rhetorically inflated, it also has a narrative that advances by fits and starts" (380). Incessantly reframing its topics from different lookout posts in a mental topography and generating throughout this process an overwhelming network of intertextual references, H.D.'s prose challenges the reader's task of creating an authoritative reading of, or finding a consistent path through, the text. "Hermione is always elsewhere," writes Camper of the novel's titular protagonist – "in Undine, Aucassin and Nicolette, in the word Aum, Greece or Egypt" (380). Rather than attempting to unpack *Hermione's* extended literary universe, this chapter focuses on the corporeal nodal point from which it emerges. In contrast to what Camper regards as Hermione's perpetual displacement, I emphasize how the insistent presence and movement of Hermione's literary body serve to open up and extend an abundant textual landscape, thereby calling attention to the creative interaction between the material and the symbolic realms.

Hermione opens with its protagonist circular movement through a wood-clad territory on the outskirts of Philadelphia, a place that evokes the pointed pines of "Oread." Having flunked geometry and recently dropped out of Bryn Mawr College, Hermione has returned to her family home and the landscape of her youth. From the onset, she is pained by feelings of homelessness, which surface in her inability to align her given names with the realities of her being:

> Her Gart went round in circles. 'I am Her', she said to herself, she repeated 'Her, Her, Her.' … She said, 'I am Hermione Gart precisely'. She said 'I am Hermione Gart', but Her Gart was not that. … Clutching out toward some definition of herself, she found that 'I am Her Gart,' didn't let her hold on. (3-4)

It is made clear that Hermione's struggle to articulate her own identity is closely tied up with her relation to place, the assertion "I am Her," invoking the one of "I am here." "To the question 'Who am I?'" Jean-Yves Lacoste argues in his *Experience and the Absolute* (2004), "it is highly unlikely we could provide a response without prior meditation on another question: 'Where am I?' … [It is] of preeminent importance that I transcendentally be either here or there, that I have an essential relation with the here or there – or, to put it more succinctly, that I be in a *place*" (7). In parallel fashion, Hermione attempts to "be in a place"

by grounding herself in the "here" of her immediate surroundings: "Pennsylvania," she thinks to herself while going "round in circles," "I was born here … I am part of Sylvania. Trees. Trees. Trees" (4-5). By referring to her native state as simply "Sylvania," Hermione draws attention to the material base of "Pennsylvania," which suggests a harmonious correspondence between landscape and name. To be part of "Sylvania," the novel implies, means belonging to a green world, whose plants and trees evoke the vegetation of a landscape with which H.D. was intimately familiar:

> She was nebulous, gazing into branches of liriodendron, into network of oak and deflowered dogwood. She looked up into larch that was now dark, its moss-flame already one colour with the deciduous oak leaves. The green that, each spring, renewed her sort of ecstasy, this year had let Her down. (3)

Hermione's reference to the curative experience of nature in spring shows kinship to one of H.D.'s childhood memories, as rendered in a 1943 letter to Amy Stanton: "How well, I know that feeling of spring, soft and cool and then melting over night, those great snowy trees. I used to be frantic as a child, I think I wrote you. One had to RUN around the town or RACE about the country to see one's favorite cherry or apple a second time" (qtd. in Debo 150). Although H.D. has traditionally not been perceived as a poet of the American experience, much of her work – as Debo and Kusch have shown – subtly calls for a literature grounded in the American land. Indeed, in the novel *Paint It Today* (1992 [1921]) H.D.'s narrator points to the human relation to nature as the original foundation of subjectivity and community, concluding that "language and tradition do not make a people, but the heat that presses on them, the cold that baffles them, the alternating lengths of night and day" (20). To belong to a place, the narrator implies, is to know its vicissitudes; to experience how fluctuations of temperature and light affect the tactile environment, and in turn, how this flux resonates in body and mind, generating corporeal vitality and "that feeling of spring" – as H.D. puts it in the above-quoted memory. In the letter to Stanton, H.D. further alludes to the generative role of nature in shaping her literary universe, making reference to "an idea latent in my own mind – that plants and trees make countries for us poets" (qtd. in Debo 127). Emphasizing the importance of the natural environment in defining and shaping her mental and

literary landscape, H.D.'s ideas again resonate with Lakoff and Johnson's theory of the embodied mind, and the argument that "our conceptual systems draw largely upon commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in" (6). While Debo sees the American landscape as a foundation that undergirds H.D.'s many allusions to textual culture (xvii), this reading of *Hermione* sees the embodied experience of landscape as underpinning the creative act as such.

Yet the experience of vitality usually brought on by the regeneration of nature in spring has this year been blocked by the societal realm of "Sylvania"; a conservative middle-class community whose demands for merit and achievement stifle Hermione's movement: "failing at the end meant fresh barriers, fresh chains, a mesh here. The degree almost gained would have been redemption…" (12). Thus, throughout its initial pages, the novel establishes a double landscape through which Hermione must progress, a territory whose material and abstract properties are in discordance. While on a concrete level, Pennsylvania evokes a lush, generous realm embodying life's regeneration, its trees denote on an abstract level the representational regimes of not only society, but also science. With cone-shaped treetops swirling in the wind, the trees now embody the very geometric formula that Hermione has failed to comprehend: "She knew, standing now frozen on the woodpath, that she would never get away from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania whirled around her in cones of concentric colour, cones … concentric … conic sections was the final test she failed in" (5). Unable to grasp the branch of mathematics concerned with the nature of lines, shapes, and surfaces, Hermione also fails to find her place within the strata of social form provided for her: The family name of Gart, the nickname "Her," coinciding with the female object pronoun, and her given name Hermione. "I am Hermione out of Shakespeare," she later explains, relating how she was named after queen Hermione of *The Winter's Tale* (193). Harking back to the Greek myth of Pygmalion, Shakespeare's Hermione is turned into a marble statue that, toward the play's close, springs back to life. The name "Hermione" thus invokes a palimpsest of closed-up bodies, whose movement, in resonance with Hermione's own, have been "frozen." As this reading will continue to show, Hermione's forest is also a literary forest, in which "the crown of [each] tree," to borrow Klee's tree-based analogy of artistic work, "unfolds in space and time" (170). Hermione's movement through the forest, in other words, is also a journey through textual and literary tradition. In order to "renew" like a tree in spring, she must negotiate her place not just in relation to the fixed forms and roles of her

social environment, but also pre-existing configurations of literature and myth in which she is entangled. Despite her kinship to the physical landscape, however, Hermione is existentially homeless, and thus she continues her aimless circling: "Her Gart went on. Her feet went on. Her feet had automatically started, so automatically she continued" (4).

By likening the realm of representation to a forest of trees, H.D. anticipates Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical notion of striated space, which inspires the present reading of *Hermione*'s interworld poetics. Impregnated with order and language, striated space is dominated by "arborescent" thought, the arrangement of reality into vertical tree-like designs (*Thousand Plateaus* 17). Fixed and grounded in a base structure, the tree organizes particular elements and individuals under abstract concepts, creating hierarchical formations in which particulars are considered inferior to, and less productive than, their superior ones. As self-contained wholes, trees block horizontal movement between elements belonging to different schemata, thereby securing stability, safety, and depth. Yet as Hermione suggests, tree structures also interrupt the creative formation of relations between subordinate elements, a mechanism which blocks her possibility of a spiritual "renewal" outside the realm of a college degree. Thus, whereas the physical tree embodies the promise of regeneration and continuous renewal, the arborescent schema incarcerates the individual, enforcing her compliance with pre-existing roles and names: "Tree walls were visible, were to be extended to know reach of universe [*sic*]. Trees, no matter how elusive, in the end, walled one in. Trees were suffocation" (7-8).

The layered meaning of trees suggests Hermione's search for place to center on a struggle to find a place in language. Having discovered that "nothing held her" – neither her name, a diploma, nor the landscape she loves – Hermione subsequently searches for "something to hold on to," attempting to anchor herself in "Sylvania" through the creation of an image:

> Her eyes peered up into the branches. The tulip tree made thick pad, separate leaves were outstanding, separate bright leaf-discs, in shadow. Her Gart peered far, adjusting so to speak, some psychic lens, to follow that bird. She lost the bird, tried to focus one leaf to hold her on to all leaves; she tried to concentrate on one frayed disc of green, pool or mirror that would refract image … She must have an image no matter how fluid, how inchoate. (4-5)

Adjusting her vision in, as she later puts it, a "precinematographic" way (60), in a manner resembling that of a microscope or photo camera, Hermione strives to generate a precise image of the surrounding trees. Her attempt echoes the poetic doctrine of Imagism, with which H.D.'s early poetry became inextricably linked and is still most commonly associated.[24] If *Hermione* is thought of in terms of a journey through a forest, as H.D. proposes in her letter to Aldington, the novel's eventual clearing is that of a poetic image – an image able to hold and articulate Hermione's own experience of the world. At this point, however, her experiment only induces the suffocating sensation of trees "grown near and near" (7), and a longing for an additional "psychic lens" that would balance her image:

> Another country called her, the only thing that would heal, that would blot out this concentric gelatinous substance that was her perception of trees grown closer. … The circles of the trees were tree-green; she wanted the inner lining of an Atlantic breaker … She wanted to see through reaches of sea-wall. (6-7)

Hermione's desire to capture the forest's essence spurs her desire for the sea, an element that in contrast to the Imagists' call for "exactness" will "blot out" the substance of trees. Her explicit longing for "an Atlantic breaker" seems to evoke H.D.'s experiences of vacationing on the coasts of Maine and New Jersey, memories she continued to reflect on later in life. "I always loved that New England coast," she reminisces in a letter to a friend (qtd. in Debo 136); in another she calls Maine "a place of mine" (qtd. in Debo 135). Moreover, the imagery of forest and sea, in "Oread" as well as in *Hermione*, resonates with the rocky shores of Maine, a rugged borderland where the Atlantic meets a pine-covered coastline. While on the one hand, Hermione's other "country" pays homage to a concrete coastal landscape, it also takes on semiotic significance, being experienced as having a healing power. In this respect, it resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of smooth space, of which the sea is the archetype

---

[24] In the preface to the anthology *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), in which "Oread" was included, the -ism's stylistic principles are described as including the ability "[t]o use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word. … To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite. … Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry" (Aldington et al. vi-vii).

(*Thousand Plateaus* 426-27). Resonating with Nietzsche's dialectical theory of Dionysian and Apollonian aesthetics, as discussed in the previous chapter, smooth space intertwines dynamically with the striated plane of organization. Open-ended, liquid, and extending horizontally, smooth space is related to tactility and affect rather than representation, its intensive movements carrying the promise of freedom and invention, as well as the threat of chaos and destruction. True thought, Deleuze and Guattari explain, emerges from the intersection of these two planes, which "exist only in mixture" (*Thousand Plateaus* 524). By contrast, Hermione is not yet able to correlate her two perceptive lenses; the first, which aims to capture the exact forms of the material world with clarity and precision, and the second, which has the potential to infuse that clear image with dynamic movement. Whereas Lacoste argues that to be in place is to "transcendentally be either here or there" (7), Hermione longs to be simultaneously *both* here and there. Yet for now, her vision through "reaches of sea-wall" disintegrates, and she remains enmeshed in the striated space of the forest: "She opened eyes that snapped wide open like metallic open-and-shut doll eyes. The eyes were glass now … She saw trees now as trees" (8). Hermione's "frozen" body and mechanical doll's eyes anticipate a narrative of subjective and artistic growth; the becoming of a poetic vision capable of joining together the dimensions of forest and sea in an interworld constellation – an existential and poetological third space which allows its titular protagonist, as H.D. puts it to Aldington, to "see again" (qtd. in Friedman *Penelope's Web* 34).

In H.D.'s poetics, the power of seeing derives from the ability to understand and access the interrelation of body and mind. *Hermione*'s literary exploration of embodied thought finds its theoretical parallel in H.D.'s pamphlet *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1982), completed in 1919, but never published in her lifetime. *Notes* constitutes H.D.'s only explicitly poetological text, enquiring into the preconditions for artistic creation. In line with Hermione's wish of merging the experiences brought on by two separate landscapes, *Notes* describes the work of art as emerging from the poet's ability to correlate her two "minds" or "lenses": "The over-mind is like a lens of an opera glass … I should say more exactly that the love-mind and the over-mind are two lenses. When these are properly adjusted, focused, they bring the world of vision into consciousness. The two work separately, perceive separately, yet make one picture" (*Notes* 23). Human beings, H.D. hereby suggests, are capable of two different modes of thought: on the one hand, pure, disembodied thought, and on the other, thought

which is nourished by corporeal immanence, or "the love-region of the body" (20). While the two forms of vision are described as separate operations, they seem to exist only in combination, with each "mind" presupposing the other:

> It is necessary to work, to strive toward the understanding of the over-mind. But once a man becomes conscious of … this pearl within his skull, this seed cast into the ground, his chief concern automatically becomes his body. Once we become concretely aware of this pearl, this seed, our centre of consciousness shifts. Our concern is with the body. Where does the body come in? What is the body? … The body seemed an elementary, unbeautiful and transitory form of life. Yet here again, I saw that the body had its use. The oyster makes the pearl in fact. So the body, with all its emotions and fears and pain in time casts off the spirit, a concentrated essence, not itself, but made, in a sense, created by itself. (50-51)

As soon as one attempts to investigate or isolate the nature of the mind, H.D. argues, one is inevitably brought back to the body. While the mind or spirit is not equal to the body, it is *of* the body, extending from perishable flesh and shaped by feeling and sensation. The great artist, according to *Notes*, knows "where the body comes in," recognizing the mind as the "concentrated essence" of the body's "elementary life." "Should we be able to think with the womb and feel with the brain?" H.D. asks, and while she leaves the question unanswered, it encapsulates her vision of the creative being. As this chapter will continue to show, H.D.'s literary writing springs from the very endeavor to speak their inseparability; to find a language which articulates simultaneously the body's desire to break out of its immanence and channel its experience, as well as the mind's inclination toward self-reflection.

H.D. further explains the becoming of the poet's "world of vision" (*Notes* 23) through the analogy of bodily conception. "[A]s it takes a man and woman to create another life," she writes in *Notes*, "so it takes these two forms of seed, one in the head and one in the body to make a new spiritual birth" (50). *Hermione* narrativizes this relationship, with Hermione's parents – Carl and Eugenia Gart – embodying the two lenses of "over-mind" and "love-mind." What *Notes* terms the "over-mind" parallels the novel's "Gart-theorem," a "scheme of mathematical-biological definition" developed and presided over by Hermione's professor father. "Gart and the formula seem in their minds to be responsible for

everything," Hermione muses, "There was an earthquake in Peru – I think it was. They thought Gart formula was answerable" (116). Disrupting and changing the surface of the earth, the earthquake constitutes a forceful release of energy – a singular event which the formula turns into another version of the same. The name of Gart, in other words, stands for the ordering of material flux into form – not only that of distant earthquakes, but also life within the Gart household: "Gart lawn made a jade triangle and the box hedge at the back merged so flatly with the forest that forest and box made one barrier; Gart, Gart barrier" (24). Rendered as a design of abstract, geometrical forms rather than a realm of vegetation, the garden resonates with Hermione's incompetence in mathematics, the failed degree which prevents her from progressing with her life. Thus, the Gart paradigm, with its "Gart barrier," illustrates Hermione's entrapment in and by a formula to which she has no access. "Your father likes the light concentrated in a corner" (79), Hermione's mother explains, knitting in the dark while Hermione helps pile and order his scientific papers: "She had catalogued the papers, printed their numbers on the slips of cardboard, small filing cabinet, her job, doing it automatically. It was easier to do these things than not to do them. She was hypnotized by these things. How long would she go on this way?" (79).

The way in which Hermione mindlessly catalogues her father's documents also resonates with how she understands the larger social system of "Pennsylvania" to be organized: "Heaven, a flat lid, was pressed (in Pennsylvania) over their heads. Heaven pressed down (like Carl Gart, like Uncle Sam pressing things down in test tubes)" (112). In the social sphere of middle-class Pennsylvania, the individual is valued for her identity – that is, for her capacity to perform and comply with the parts prescribed to her. Struggling to be "Her," Hermione finds that the roles of daughter, student, friend, lover, poet, or simply, that of woman, are indeed test tube-like; easily recognizable and narrowly defined they are neither to be mixed or tampered with. Imagined as a representational scheme that governs life in general, the Gart formula also extends to the realm of language, through which identities are maintained. Everyday language, Hermione observes, has settled into easy, habitualized patterns, with "words said over and over, over and over. They were a stock company playing in a road show, words, over and over … All very well cast for the parts, can't get out of this show … Funny show for Gart and the formula" (40). Resistant to change and incapable of articulating particular realities, conventional language – in a manner which echoes the scientific formula's

expression of the one earthquake – conceals rather than conveys Hermione's affectual experience. Language thereby restricts rather than expands her scope of action, to the extent that it feels impossible to "get out of [the] show" (40).

While Carl Gart is known by his ordering of flux and movement into scientific models, Hermione associates her domestic mother – a former amateur painter – with the realm of art. "Eugenia, with her 1880 Hellenistic beauty made a drudge for this thing" (40), she comments, noticing how her mother and her artistic aspirations have become enmeshed in the Gart formula. Resonating with her own desire to create an image of "Sylvania," Hermione has always been drawn to one her mother's old paintings, which shows "A green on green that was pine trees climbing heavenward" (194). Although Eugenia's picture, which is later described as "Victorian," fails to capture Hermione's present experience of her surroundings, she recognizes the "odd green on green that was the green on green daub of a picture by Eugenia" (147) as her mother's distinct painterly style. More than a representation of the local landscape, the painting demonstrates the possibility of artistic vision and creative action – the manner in which, as Klee puts it, "the sap rises up into the artist, flows through him and his eyes" (170). Contrasting and complementing Gart's arborescent formula, Eugenia's art gestures toward the tree's underground life – the ways in which internal energy – much like the seismic energies expounded by Gart – precedes and feeds into the realm of form, which curbs it.

In the narrative's present, however, the "old paint box [was] in the attic and brushes were stiff" (194), and in Eugenia Gart, Hermione explains, "the fibres were rooted and mossed over and not to be disrupted" (9). Yet if her mother had "pulled up her mossgrown fibres, Pennsylvania itself would ache like a jaw from which has been extracted a somewhat cumbrous molar" (9). The notion of roots and fibers is integral to the novel's extensive forest imagery, both supporting and challenging the seemingly clear and recognizable identities that Gart and Pennsylvania provide. In line with Klee's analogy of the artist, roots demonstrate that "what goes on above cannot be an exact mirror image of what goes on below" (170). Reflecting on the predicament of her younger self, the narrating Hermione sees her existential stagnation as partly stemming from an unawareness of her own "mossgrown fibres." Back then, she explains, habitualized denominators such as "Gart," "Pennsylvanian" and "American" had obscured the complex nature of her familial, regional and national identities:

> She did not know that Pennsylvania bears traces of a superimposed county-England and of a luscious beauty-loving Saxony. She could not know that the birdfoot violets she so especially cherished had far Alpine kinsfolk, that the hepaticas she called 'American' grew in still more luminous cluster at the base of the Grammont, along the ridges of the Jura, in rock shelves above Leman and the Bodensee. She could not realize that there was affinity with Siberia when long nights beat them indoors and lamps shining upon tables were the same lamps that made Lithuanians look tenderly across dark tablecloths and that made sailors in Cornwall start, listening to sea-shouts. She could not know that no race in itself is integral but that each has its fibres elsewhere. (9-10)

While she is rooted in Pennsylvania's natural and social landscapes, Hermione's subjectivity and identities result from the preceding migrations of people, and the geographies and identities that defined them. Like a flower whose seeds have spread by means of wind and water, she carries with her the traces of "elsewhere." Moreover, the material characteristics of her local surroundings generate kinships with yet other peoples and places. Similar climatic environments, Hermione suggests, may shape human beings in similar ways, creating fundamental cross-cultural resemblances of which the average individual, caught up in her local identities, remains largely unaware. Thus, to some degree, the relationship between tree and roots parallels the relationship between Stein's notions of "one" and "many," as discussed in the previous chapter. To be in place, the mature Hermione's reasoning implies, is also to be elsewhere and multiple, and to know that "America reaches round and about" (47).

While Hermione thinks of her mother in connection with the underground roots that supply trees with nourishment – or put differently, the strands of difference that once fed into her artistic vision of the forest – Eugenia is also, and more prominently so, associated with the lifegiving water that roots absorb. In one of her many references to her mother's painting, Hermione, in a fashion that both resonates and contrasts with her geometrical rendering of the orderly Gart garden, mentions "one slice in a corner that made a triangle out of another different dimension" (6), revealed later to be "[a] stream that started high up on the hill [and] ran away into the gold frame" (148). To a certain extent, the stream embodies the uninhibited life that Hermione longs for, yet in failing to

incorporate the vastness of the sea, Eugenia's picture falls short of projecting the two-dimensionality that Hermione has apprehended. "A river and white streams held nothing … nothing," she concludes, "she wanted sand under bare heels, a dog, her own, some sort of Nordic wolfhound; a dog that would race ahead of her while breakers drew up, drew back" (6). Drawn to the breaking of large waves against the shore and wanting sand rather than firm ground beneath her feet, Hermione longs for the beach – a landscape in which land and sea intersect and affect one another. Moreover, by wishing for her own wolfhound, she echoes the wood goddess Artemis, who is often depicted with one or several hunting dogs or wolves. Gesturing toward "a whole that is made up of parts belonging to different dimensions" (170) – to borrow Klee's turn of phrase – the imagined setting anticipates the notion of an artistic vision which echoes her mother's painting, yet, with its interworld quality, is her very own.

In countering her enmeshment in the Gart formula with thoughts of the sea, Hermione also defies the notion of what Nick Land, in his critique of transcendental philosophy, has termed "aquaphobia":

> Is not transcendental philosophy a fear of the sea? … A longing for the open ocean gnaws at us, as the land is gnawed by the sea. A dark fluidity at the roots of our nature rebels against the security of *terra firma*, provoking a wave of anxiety in which we are submerged, until we feel ourselves drowning, with representation draining away. (107)

Clear, transcendent forms, Land suggests, are rooted in fluidity, and thus irrevocably related to chaos – an insight the individual may anxiously attempt, but never fully succeeds, to forget. In *Hermione,* the fluidity that Land envisions is most closely associated with Eugenia. At the roots of her nature is a close yet forgotten affinity with the flux and indeterminacy of material reality, which is activated as she shares with Hermione the memory of her birth. The story is related in the middle of a raging storm, its forceful movement echoing the hurling waves of "Oread":

> Thunder reverberated across wet lawns, shook the middle forest, prolonged itself like some beast growling under deep-sea water, shook the water above their heads, broke through it and let down more water through

> a funnel. Water poured through a funnel on the roof above them, slid off gutters, made a sheet across the window. (87)

The storm, which shakes the forest, breaking and pouring through the ordered territory of Gart like a sea wave, mirrors the circumstances of the morning Hermione was born. "Your father," Eugenia reminisces, "was *afraid* (the flood the year before had cracked Bolton's bridge) that the doctor wouldn't help us" (89). Related to the life-giving event of birth, the flood also represents a potential force of destruction. Indeed, Hermione later learns that the current storm has wiped out one of her father's carefully developed experiments, his broken aquarium testifying to the interrupted progress of science, or, to borrow Land's words, to "representation draining away" (107):

> "The storm sprung a leak in the tool-house but that didn't so much matter. But the aquarium in the cellar was simply flooded out. The thunder got 'em." He said "the thunder got 'em" like a formula. She said "Got what, papa?" knowing what it was they had got. "The old five year experiment … The whole lot swam out, flooded out, the cross section and the cross hatching were simply flooded out … Now Bertie and I will begin another breeding. That took ten years, fifteen in all if you count the first experimental failures." (91-92)

While it turns order into chaos, an arborescent scheme of science into a random pool of water, the present flood also triggers in Hermione what in *Notes* is referred to as "a new spiritual birth" (50). The synthesis of the current storm and Eugenia's memory induces in mother and daughter a feeling of being under water, or inside the Atlantic breaker that Hermione previously longed for, followed by a transitory experience of re-birth: "They (Eugenia, Hermione) were flung now into profound intimacy like shipwrecked mariners after the heavy sweep of waves has numbed them past consciousness of former quarrels, in the tiny morning room … *Unless you are born of water … unless you are born of water …* they were born of water, reincarnated" (88-89).[25] The image of a

[25] The narrator echoes John 3.4-7, where Nicodemus asks Jesus: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus replies: "Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I

shipwreck articulates Eugenia and Hermione's symbolic return to the element of water, their "profound intimacy" in the "tiny morning room" paralleling the initial and irreclaimable state of indistinction between mother and child. Invoking a subsequent experience of being washed ashore, the scene opens up an in-between zone which testifies to a feeling of being neither firmly united, nor firmly separated. Challenging the test tube-like identities of Gart, the scene lays bare the relationship between an emerging subject and her material origin, underscoring the inevitable fact that we are all "born of water."

By associating the element of water with an originary state of union, H.D. also anticipates Sigmund Freud, whose work she greatly admired.[26] In response to Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), a study of the nature of religion, French novelist Romain Rolland had expressed his concern to the author about what he found lacking in Freud's account: "A feeling he would like to call the sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – 'oceanic', as it were" (qtd. in Freud 45). "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself," Freud reflects, "It is not easy to carry out scientific work on feelings" (46). In his attempt to theorize the oceanic, he came to regard it as a faint imprint of the infant's primitive experience of "being one with the universe" (53). Like the past is preserved in a historical site like Rome, "buried in the soil of the city or beneath its modern buildings," so the memory of the oceanic flux should remain buried within the mature ego (50). Freud concludes that in the organized space of the developed city, as well as in the psyche of the rational adult being, "earlier phases of development are in no sense still preserved; they have been absorbed in the later phases, for which they provided the material" (51). Exposing the Gart-like "aquaphobia" of a scientifically framed mind, Freud's comparison between the ego and the modern city regards the successful development of the subject as dependent on her ability to move away from her material origins, which remain hidden and inactive. More complex than Freud's analogy of the city's strata of archeological debris, H.D.'s analogy of the tree,

---

said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (*The Bible*: *Authorized King James Version*). In the Biblical narrative, the second birth is of the spirit, a rebirth from above; while unworthy in itself flesh is made meaningful through its submission to the logos of God. By contrast, *Hermione* anchors its own process of spiritual re-birth in the body.

[26] During the twenties, H.D. attended lectures on psychoanalysis in Berlin, and entered into analysis with Mary Chadwick and Hanns Sachs. In 1933 and 1934 she worked directly with Freud, whom she describes as "midwife to the soul," her "guardian of all 'beginnings'" (qtd. in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 17).

alongside that of Klee, envisions the dimensions of under- and overground to be intimately linked; the crown of the tree depending on the continued life of its roots.

In *Hermione*, it is the turn backwards, toward a pre-linguistic continuum of movement associated with the sea, which spurs innovation and becoming. In H.D.'s paradigm, the material realm is not simply matter molded by and into increasingly sophisticated forms, but a force that deforms and reconfigures such forms. Reminiscing on the experience of giving birth, an experience for which she lacks the adequate words, Eugenia muses: "It seems odd having a baby (I don't know why) by daylight. It was all over in a few hours … It was so funny. It was all over in a few hours. It was so odd. I had you in the morning" (89). In contrast to Gart's formula, which imposes regularity and sameness on the earth's movements, Eugenia lingers on an "odd" and unprecedented experience, which words can only approximate and never fully make present. Touching on an immediate corporeal event, she attempts, perhaps, to articulate what H.D. in *Notes* terms "womb-" or "love-vision" – thought nourished by bodily "streamers or feelers floating up toward the brain" (20). Grounded in the difference of the body, with "all its emotions and fears and pain" (*Notes* 51), Eugenia's speech also resonates with Luce Irigaray's inquiry into the relationship between desire and knowledge, as presented in *The Way of Love* (2002). Departing from the observation that Western culture and philosophy are founded on "a love of wisdom," Irigaray explores "the wisdom of love" as an alternative foundation for human society (2) – her two paradigms resonating with H.D.'s two lenses of over-mind and love-mind. Finding the former paradigm to be governed by "a priori communication," which in a Gart-like fashion "repeats the said in a new situation" (17), the communicating of love, "which wants to speak to the other, unfolds starting from this impossible to say" (23). Although the impossible, according to Irigaray, is "difficult to cut … into words" (24), its meaning "circulating in a unique word and between the words" (24), "[t]he word is also what is able to incarnate the body and the flesh that one wants to say to the other" (15). While words allow Eugenia to extend her corporeal reality beyond her own body and toward another human being, the body in turn challenges and exceeds reified symbolic code. "We live before speaking," Irigaray underscores, "our own origin is on this side of an already existing language" (85).

In resonance with Irigaray's thinking, it is Eugenia's inability to locate words that will sufficiently grasp the corporeal that makes her speech effective.

Listening to her mother's attempt to convey her past experience, Hermione concludes that her words "have more power than textbooks, than geometry, than all of Carl Gart" (89). While Gart's formula paralyzes Hermione in the position of lifeless statue, Eugenia's verbalization, which speaks rather than repeats, has the power to transgress into her frozen surface. Faintly echoing the awakening of Shakespeare's Hermione, as well as Ovid's tale of Pygmalion, in which the male sculptor's marble figure is animated by the help of Aphrodite, Hermione is brought back to life by the touch of her mother's words. With words that are "born of water," carrying a trickle of the impossible, Eugenia causes in Hermione an affective reaction, which manifests with the emission of tears: "Her eyes were a blank covered with a white surface, a statue with eyes of a statue seeing nothing … I can't see things. I'm crying" (90-91). Envisioning herself as having the blank, unseeing eyes of a Graeco-Roman statue, Hermione not only underscores the way in which her personal and artistic development is narrated through the body, but also, how her vision will come to draw on cultural expressions of ancient Greece. While the details of the eyes of classical sculptures were originally painted on, the present whiteness of the eyes points to the antiquity and dormancy of a form that Hermione will later come to revive and reconfigure. Hermione has previously longed to "see through reaches of sea-wall" (7), but now sees "nothing" through her blur of tears. While the release of emotion relieves, it also overwhelms, and the state of being drenched in tears proves as incarcerating as being walled in by arborescent schemes. "I am not home in Gart … not home out of Gart," she explains, "I am swing-swing between worlds, people, things exist in opposite dimension" (25). Finding herself between two dimensions, she yearns for a still unprecedented interworld that will traverse her inner and outer selves. "Saying ourselves cannot happen without transgressing the already learned forms" (85), writes Irigaray, and it is precisely her capacity of transgression that Hermione has yet to discover.

Hermione's discovery of her own "world of vision" (*Notes* 23), is triggered by her relationships with two lovers, the first being her friend and suitor George Lowndes, a thinly veiled representation of Ezra Pound. A flamboyant poet with European connections, George announces his return from Venice to Pennsylvania in a letter with "huge scrawled-over handwriting taking up, in one sentence, the whole of a wide square of distinguished thin sea-grey paper": "Hermione, I'm coming back to Gawd's own god-damn country" (28). Prior to his entering the scene, George's "huge" handwriting, as well as the quasi-

homonymic relation between "Lowndes" and "loudness," evoke his energetic, self-assured personality. The arrival of the letter on a particularly hot summer's day also foreshadows his ambiguous impact on Hermione:

> Hermione picked up the thin grey envelope lying in the creased summer material of her flowered dress. A tiny bow of the same material chafed at her throat. She pulled at the round opening of the same material, fanned herself vigorously with the thin wide square of foreign paper. The wind made only the slightest little flutter of the ribbon of her undergarment … (29)

Hermione's bodily heat and constricting dress implies on the one hand her suffocation; as suggested by his violation of the delicate sea-colored paper, George, like Gart, is affiliated with the domain of representation. "I want to get away to the sea" (29), Hermione concludes while fanning herself with the letter, "to get away from this thing" (28) that George's scrawled writing represents. Simultaneously, the scene anticipates the awakening of Hermione's frozen body and her potential escape from the Gart household. George, Hermione knows, "knew enough to know that this was not Her" (64), "George, to be exact, had said ruminatively on more than one occasion, 'You never manage to look decently like other people. You look like a Greek goddess or a coal scuttle'" (64). "[A]lways playing with words, juggling … like a circus rider" (111), George stands for formal creativity, which challenges the seemingly unchanging formula of Gart and Pennsylvania. With his "drastic statements" and critical stance toward "Gawd's own … country" (28) George could possibly "dynamite her world away for her" (63).

Through the character of George, H.D. also retrospectively works through her artistic relationship to Pound, as well as the European-based artistic movements with which her name and work were intimately associated. With his presumed capacity to "dynamite her world away," George evokes the Vorticist journal *BLAST*, which launched an attack on the Victorian state of mind, as well as both Victorian and competing contemporary art regimes. One of the signatories of the movement's manifesto, Pound came to regard Vorticism as the advanced stage of Imagism. Inspired by geometric forms and modern machinery, Vorticism sought to give definite form to the flux and energy of modern existence, the vortex being its model shape. In the catalogue of a 1956

retrospective exhibition, Wyndham Lewis, who had acted as the movement's catalyst and leader, emphasized Vorticism as having been "dogmatically anti-real" (qtd. in Pound, *Ezra Pound* xvii): "It was my ultimate aim to exclude from painting the everyday visual real altogether," he explained, using the color green as an example: "The colour green would not be confined, or related to what was green in nature – such as grass, leaves, etc." (qtd. in Pound, *Ezra Pound* 316). An opposing poetics was advocated by Walt Whitman, who celebrated in his writing the carnal and sensual dimension of existence, advocating a poetry that would grow directly out of the American land and experience. In the preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman argued that

> to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. … The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. (12-13)

Rather than channeling, like Whitman, the polysensual experience of trees, grass, and leaves, the Vorticist attempts to isolate, and thereby liberate, nature's defining color within and through his artistic medium. He thereby directs the onlooker toward a purified experience of "green" – an experience whose intensity the confrontation with the familiar object of a tree might have blocked, the color's sensual qualities overpowered by cognitive acts of recognition and identification.

While he had first fronted H.D.'s "Oread" as an Imagist poem, Pound later redefined it as a prime poetic example of Vorticism. In an essay titled "Vortex," he explains the Vorticist artist as "DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance … CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting" ("Vortex" 153). "[T]he Vorticist movement expressed 'the greatest efficiency'" (153), Pound proclaims, explaining their use of "the words 'greatest efficiency' in the precise sense, as they would be used in a text book of MECHANICS" (153). Admiring the precision of the man-made machine, its ability to accomplish its tasks without the disturbances of human emotion, affect, and experience, Pound explains how "[t]he Vorticist relies on this alone; on the primary pigment of his art, nothing else" (153). Pound hereby interprets "Oread"'s "whirl," "hurl,"

and “splash” as the projection of an abstract force acting on material, its movement articulating a “primary expression of any concept or emotion” (154). This reading eliminates the poem’s representational duty to the features of tree and sea, inviting the reader not to identify a specific or familiar scene, but directing him to the experience of force as such. Comparable to Lewis’s wish of articulating the greenness of green, “Oread” projects not the movement of trees, but the impact of energy on substance. In such a reading, the poem’s forest becomes simply the stuff that makes visible the impact induced by wind and wave. “It is not a question of the characterless material climate around us,” the Vorticist manifesto states, “Were that so … the vastness of American trees, would not be for us” (qtd. in Lewis 36). Thus, from the perspective of Vorticism, the words of “Oread” have ceased to be instruments of representation – the movement they generate become the poem’s subject matter. What the poem then finally articulates is the feeling of poetry as such; the very ability of words to generate sensation. In encouraging the artist to focus on “the primary pigment of his art, nothing else” (“Vortex” 153), Pound echoes T.S. Eliot’s call for an “impersonal poetry,” and his postulation that “[w]hen we consider poetry, it is as poetry we must consider it and not as another thing” (qtd. in Gregor 275).

Together, Whitman on the one hand, and Pound and Eliot on the other loosely represent two differing strands of modernism – a movement which, to borrow Daniel Albright’s words, “includes those who seek reality through copying the world of experience, and those who seek reality through the hardness, the heft of the individual artistic medium” (13). While Pound often spoke of Whitman as his poetic antithesis, considering his materialist poetics and American sentiment as crude and unrefined, he eventually came to admit Whitman’s influence on his own work. In his poem “A Pact” (1916), Pound reluctantly accepts Whitman as a progenitor of his own career, speaking as “a grown child / Who has had a pig-headed father” (3-4). Addressing the pioneer of American free verse, he states that “It was you that broke the new wood, / Now it is time for carving. / We have one sap and one root – / let there be commerce between us” (6-9). Viewed through the lens of Klee’s tree-based analogy of the artist, Pound considers his own chiseled poetry as the crown of the tree; an evolution beyond Whitman’s allegiance to the materiality of soil and body. In *Hermione* and elsewhere, H.D. moves beyond Pound’s poetic stance by fusing his concern for poetic craftsmanship with the view that poetry’s principal function is to channel experience. And as her metaphor of two-lensed opera

glasses suggests, she sees the two perspectives as being equally important and interrelated. While the movement that "Oread" projects may, as Pound suggests, figure as a "primary expression of any concept or emotion" ("Vortex" 154), it is simultaneously a mimetic representation of a local landscape. Moreover, the poem's ability to convey the onset of "any" emotion depends on its initially being an expression of living experience – both of material reality and previous literary texts.

In the company of George, Hermione returns to the forest bordering on Gart grange, and while the territory has previously been associated with reason and structural modes of thought, it now transforms into a forest of literature, where rooted trees – as demonstrated by Pound's poem to Whitman – figure as literary predecessors. In line with Sweetser's metaphorical pattern of the mind as "a body moving through space" (qtd. in Turner 43), George and Hermione's physical movement through the forest is simultaneously a spiritual and intellectual journey through cultural and literary history. While Eugenia has offered Hermione the experience of being "born of water," George now triggers a successive sensation of being "born into trees" (65). This potent phrase suggests on the one hand a return to the material realm of nature, and simultaneously, an entering into textual tradition. Listening to George's voice, "low, sursurring, (it was his word)" (64), Hermione observes that

> [h]is voice when he wasn't being too funny, wasn't showing off, was simply accompaniment to trees above her head, to herself, revitalized, born into trees … Her eyes half-closing saw George gone tawny, leaf-colour, his hair is the colour of leaves drifting down, he had drifted down from trees … For a moment George had swung back through a swing door and back and back. (64-65)

With its suspension of clear boundaries between vegetation and man, between the audible qualities of trees and George's wordplay, Hermione finally feels "part of Sylvania," revitalized by nature. Hermione's feeling of a corporeal and spiritual union with the greenery further evokes the ancient Greek belief in tree-form divinities, a common vision of gods or human souls inhabiting trees (Hersey 48). Hermione's "birth" into trees thus suggests her rebirth as a sylvan, a spirit of the woods. Or in line with Pound's nickname for H.D., a "Dryad" (Collecott 286); a Greek wood nymph who lived and died with the tree in which

she dwelled. The name "Pennsylvania" thus invokes not only a social world and a physical landscape, but also a mythological world which extends "back and back."

In contrast to Freud, who in his analogy between the ego and the modern city saw the past as "buried in the soil" or beneath modern buildings – a view that somewhat resonates in Pound's "pact" with Whitman – *Hermione* rejects the idea of individual or collective history as a series of successive stages. While Hermione has previously found herself paralyzed by the feeling that "nothing held her" and of having nothing "to hold on to" (4; 3), her progression forwards commences with a movement backwards, and the search for a "progenitor" (67). With the assistance of George, who calls her "a Greek goddess," Hermione imagines Artemis, the goddess of the hunt and wilderness, as her forerunner: "Almost, almost she heard words, almost, almost she discerned the whirr of arrows … almost, for a moment, George had made it come right, saying 'You are a Greek', saying, 'You are a goddess.' … almost she had found her mother – wood-goddess on a woodpath" (67). Pertinently, in light of *Hermione'*s bildungs-narrative, Artemis is the goddess of transitions, "presid[ing] over changes of states of being" (Budin 3). As Stephanie Lynn Budin has shown, Artemis not only marks transitions between the wilderness and the world of human culture, she also assists in the freeing of female slaves, and helps girls metamorphose into women and mothers (1; 3). While she oversees the maturation of mortal girls, Artemis herself remains perpetually young; slender, agile, and beautiful she lingers "eternally at the threshold of sexual maturity without ever quite passing over" (Budin 46-47). Embodying liminality, her figure readily lends itself to the experience of modernity, and in art, popular culture, and advertising of the interwar era, Artemis/Diana was used to characterize a certain type of modern woman, known for her physical fitness, androgynous femininity, and independence from men (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 230-31). Thus, across time and place, Artemis's youthfulness and maiden status wields power, and in the original Greek context, Budin explains, "Artemis embodies a *potential* nubility ultimately contributes to her wild, untamed nature and her role as a goddess of sylvan fertility" (47). Hermione's choice of Artemis as her progenitor thereby points forward to her awakening from the symbolic position of frozen statue, and her incipient ability to traverse the multifaceted forest which has previously walled her in.

By claiming the role of Artemis's daughter, Hermione also imaginatively blends a Hellenic past with her American present, invoking the US as a modern incarnation of ancient Greek civilization. "In Greece, the old forests are dead" (94), Hermione muses later in the novel, yet through George and Hermione they reemerge in the fertile landscapes of the New World. By invoking the extinct Greek forests as the pre-figuration of Pennsylvania's lush forests, and the spirit of the Greek wood-goddess to physically manifest in the modern American poet, Hermione initiates a forestial interworld which, in line with the Nietzschean aesthetics discussed in the previous chapter, is untimely in nature. In line with Duncan's dance poetics, Hermione's material-poetic world does not constitute an attempt to revive the reality of the ancient Greeks, but to bring, as Duncan puts it, "the spirit underlying their gestures" into a contemporarily situated practice. Moreover, as Woolf muses in her essay "On Not Knowing Greek," the modern artist's understanding of the Hellenic "spirit" is necessarily the product of poetic imagination rather than a true interpretation of a past reality:

> [A]re we … reading into Greek poetry not what they have but what we lack? Does not the whole of Greece heap itself behind every line of its literature? They admit us to a vision of the earth unravaged, the sea unpolluted, the maturity, tried but unbroken, of mankind. Every word is reinforced by a vigour which pours out of olive-tree and temple and bodies of the young … Back and back we are drawn to steep ourselves in what, perhaps, is only an image of the reality, not the reality itself … . (50).

Writing in a post-World War I context, Woolf describes how the contemporary poet, confronting the Greek text from the vantage point of a fractured and disappointing present, travels "back and back," accentuating selective aspects of the distant past which might serve as a foundation, or pre-figuration, of a reconstructed future. What the present lacks, according to Woolf, is the untainted experience of a vigorous, healthy body, and its inherent relation to nature and earth. By turning to the Greeks, we articulate an instinctive need for corporeal or embodied experience, a view which also permeates H.D.'s engagement with the classical world. Encouraging the reader to seek out the material qualities of the Greek text, she writes: "I know that we need scholars to decipher and interpret the Greek, but we also need: poets and mystics and children to re-discover this

Hellenic world, to see *through* the words" (qtd. in Collecott 106). Without negating the scholarly approach of interpretation, H.D. emphasizes the capacity of child and poet to grasp the material movement that precedes and undergirds the text – a flux which is recognizable across space and time. Thus, also in her readerly approach, H.D. draws on her notion of two entwined lenses; the over-mind, whose structural cognition depends on the dictionary, and the love-mind, whose approach to the Greeks goes through the body:

> Parse the sun in heaven, distinguish between the taste of mountain air on different levels, feel with your bare foot a rock covered with sea-weed, one covered with sand, one washed and marbled by the tide. You cannot learn Greek, only, with a dictionary. You can learn it with your hands and your feet and especially with your lungs. (qtd. in Collecott 106)

According to H.D., one cannot understand Greek without knowing the body, and in turn, our embodied experience connects us with the Greeks. This turn to the Greeks, as the introduction has shown, reverberates through the interwar culture at large, informing its active body culture and conceptualizations of the body. In times of crisis – be it a personal experience of existential entrapment, such as Hermione's, or the communal feeling of post-war uncertainty which permeates the novel's time of writing – the Greeks provide a healing presence. Our recognition that the rhythm of their breath and step is also our own, and is indelibly wired into us by nature, impresses an invaluable feeling of unbroken continuation.

Thus, by referencing texts and figures from the literary past, George provides Hermione with sounding boards for her own experiences, allowing her to negotiate and impart her existence outside the realm of Gart. "Now is this the forest of Arden?" (64) George asks, moving from Greek mythology to the enchanted forest of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. With his reference to Arden, George invokes what Northrop Frye has called Shakespeare's "green world" of romance comedy, a utopian space of change and renewal in which the rules and divisions of the "normal world" are suspended (182). In response, the frozen Hermione feels herself almost transform into the dynamic character of Rosalind, to whom the quoted line belongs:

> Almost Hermione was out of Shakespeare with George, words running through her mind … Almost this is the forest of Arden and Orlando stepping out with agile feet across leaves strewn on a narrow woodpath. Almost she was lost, stepping back and back into the pages of some familiar rhythm, *now this is the forest of Arden*. (65-66)

Parallel to the underlying rhythm of nature that H.D. discovered in the Greek text, Hermione experiences the rhythm of Rosalind's words as "familiar," and written in iambic pentameter, the line echoes the rhythm of the human heartbeat. "[W]hen we are confronted with this rhythm," writes Giles Block," "it reminds us subliminally of our humanity. The rhythm makes us feel that someone is speaking emotionally and that, on a very simple level, they mean what they say. It is the sound of sincerity" (qtd. in Banks 98). In *As You Like It*, it is of crucial importance that Rosalind's words are perceived as sincere. With her deictic "Well, this is the forest of Arden" (2.4.11), combined with a gesture toward the bare, wooden stage, she must convince her fellow travelers, and more pressingly so, the audience, that they have arrived in an imaginary woodland. Calling attention to the relationship between concrete materiality and literary world-making, Shakespeare, as Robert N. Watson puts it, "insistently tests the membrane separating the biological world from human artifice and illusion" (96). Mobilizing the forest in expressing his love for Rosalind, Orlando also demonstrates a similar capacity, carving her name into trees and hanging their branches with love poems, testing the "membrane" which separates nature from culture; tree trunks and green leaves from the spines and leaves of books: "O Rosalind! these trees shall be my books, / And in their barks my thoughts I'll character, / That every eye which in this forest looks / Shall see thy virtue witnessed everywhere…." (3.1.23-26). Letting nature facilitate his poetic production, Orlando articulates his emotions on and through trees, and in professing his love for Rosalind he also expresses his close affinity with nature.

With George however, the forest of Arden – in which trees and words reciprocally create one another – is only *almost* re-activated: "Almost in her hand, under her hand was a silver chain which almost she was about to drop about the throat of George, of Orlando" (66). In contrast to Rosalind's desire for Orlando, Hermione is left with the question of why "[she] can't *love* George Lowndes properly" (65). Their potential marriage, Hermione knows, would send her "whirling like a waterspout, swirling out of everything, whirling over fences,

out, out, out of the forest primeval" (98). A reference to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the New England poet laureate, and his epic Romantic poem "Evangeline" (1847), the "forest primeval" denotes everything George seeks to renounce; the habitualized social world of Pennsylvania, as well as 19th century verse. "*This is the forest primeval,*" he now recites, "*'the murmuring pines and the hemlocks*,' (George intoned dramatically; she knew why she didn't love him)" (65). In contrast to the "sincerity" of Rosalind and Orlando, George's lines are marked by a theatrical undertone of irony and distance. "George was made," Hermione realizes, "beautiful, constructed, made … He tricked up the George that was there all the time, in harlequin words, harlequin language" (69). George, it seems, has lost touch with his roots – that is, the entwined elements of emotional sincerity and an attachment to his material and cultural surroundings. Subsequently, he cannot entirely revive Hermione from her frozen state: "The back of marble head pressed down down into moss … wasn't affected in the slightest by recurrent, rather charming really, kisses of this George" (74). While the body serves as an indicator of Hermione's personal development, continued references to its "marble" surface underscore her emotional confinement or passivity. Although George awakens her love of literature and contributes to opening up her world, he cannot reach through to Hermione herself, his presence tainted by his need to "show … off" (65).

Insisting on Hermione's relation to the local and the material, H.D. keenly shows how her own poetics precedes and diverges from the poetic paradigms with which Pound had associated her early poetry. "[W]hy couldn't George ever let me alone to see things in my own way, to enjoy things even if they are provincial?" (133), she muses at a later point in the novel, underlining their difference in outlook. Letting Hermione embody and act out her poetic vision, H.D. has her character "brace… herself decisively against her own tree. She rubbed her shoulder blades against that small tree. Small hard tree trunk (as she rubbed her shoulders to more raw reality) swayed a little, upright swaying little tree swayed" (68). Directly touching on "raw reality," Hermione generates, like the titular oread of H.D.'s poem, the supple sway of a tree, its movement feeding into the larger flux of the forest:

> [S]tanding on the narrowest of woodpaths that twisted (she knew) a narrow trickle of earth-colour across the green and green that was the steady running of swift water, the steady sweeping and seeping and

> swirling of branches all about her … Heat seeped up, swept down, swirled about them with the green of branches that was torrid tropic water. Green torrid tropic water where no snow fell, where no hint of cold running streams from high mountains swept down, was swept into and under branches that made curious circle and half circle and whole circle … concentric circle of trees above her head (how can anyone ever draw trees?) half circle of a (she saw) beech branch arching earthward. Tree on tree on tree. (70)

The passage reads as the raw material of "Oread," its fluctuating currents of hot air causing, like a forceful sea, the "sweeping and seeping and swirling" of solid branches. While the whirling motion parallels that of Pound's vortex, movement is here firmly grounded in nature rather than the mechanics of modern machinery. Channeling the immediate perception of the effect of wind on trees, the passage orchestrates the intertwined flux of sound, form, texture, and color, which appeals to the reader's sensory reality. While a variety of repeated s-sounds stirs up the acoustic quality of rustling trees, long, run-on sentences capture the branches' sweeping movements. Increasingly circular strokes of green – with a "trickle of earth-colour" indicating Hermione's path – further invoke the experience of an evolving painting, harking back to that of Eugenia. The impression of arching branches also resonates with "The Dancer," and its poetic rendering of bodily posture and distribution of energy in terms of "wind in a stark tree" (119), which correlates natural and corporeal movement. Expressing an inter-artistic quality, the passage resonates with Daniel Albright's argument that art which is focused tightly on physical reality "promotes a friendly affiliation among the arts, a sense of their final oneness. If behind every finite work of art there lies some polysensual complex in the real world, then art should deploy all its resources in space and in time to try to grasp that ambiguous singularity" (12). Attentive to the life of the forest, Hermione similarly searches for a mode of expression that would capture the wholeness of her experience, a discovery which, as Irigaray puts it, "cannot happen without transgressing the already learned forms" (85).

If, on an abstract level, *Hermione'* s forest constitutes a realm of textual tradition, the development of Hermione's artistic voice depends on her ability to creatively transgress texts and poetic forms of the past. In this context, the novel's reference to Longfellow is particularly interesting, as it invites a

consideration of a potential intertextual relationship between "Evangeline" and "Oread" – a connection that previous critics have failed to see or acknowledge. While Hermione's experience of the forest can be read as raw material of "Oread," H.D.'s poem also echoes the prologue of "Evangeline," whose first line is referenced several times throughout the novel:

> This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
> Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
> Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
> Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.
> Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
> Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest. (11-12)

According to Hermione, Longfellow's poem is enmeshed in the arborescent schemes of "Pennsylvania," a piece of literary heritage which is to be acquired, alongside mathematical formula: "George, being funny, nasal intonation, being funny, *this is the forest primeval*, brought back hunched shoulders, little desk, hard seat of little desk and heated scrape of slate pencil across slate surface. Numbers jogged and danced and long divisions made a stop in her brain" (66). Shifting the emphasis from tradition to experience, H.D. seems to revive Longfellow's poem, freeing it from its static, scholarly context. In "Evangeline," the "murmuring" moss-grown forest and the neighboring "deep-voiced" ocean exist as distinct and separate bodies, comparable to Hermione's two dimensions, embodied by her father and mother respectively. While in "Evangeline," the animated realms of forest and sea are drawn to one another, they are curbed by the poem's regular meter, and divided by separate verse lines and a full stop, which affirm the impossibility of their union. Hermione's present encounter with the forest infuses Longfellow's prologue with movement, transforming its imagery of primeval trees, as well as its formal poetic structures, into a green, fluctuating sea. A constellated version of Hermione's run-on passage is found in H.D.'s "Oread," which, in projecting a meeting between the two dimensions, captures the very instant in which wind and wave deform and are given shape by solid matter. Thus, in resonance with the atmosphere of change and renewal which permeates Shakespeare's magical forest, *Hermione* invites a reading of H.D.'s six-line poem as a modernist recreation of Longfellow's six-line prologue. Echoing the way in which Hermione rubs her shoulder blades against the trunk of

a tree, causing its branches to sway, H.D. seems to transform rather than simply deprecate her American literary heritage.

Still, the narrator is fast to explain that Longfellow "was not their primeval Father" (67), underscoring her creative inspiration as stemming from elsewhere. In a retrospective comment on Pound's role in the incipience of H.D.'s poetic voice, she further concludes that George, "with his run of 'foreign' literature, was not progenitor to Hermione standing dazed upon a woodpath" (67). Again, it is the discovery of multifaceted literary roots that reach "back and back" which incites her awakening and provides a developing sense of being in place – that is, a being both "here" and "there." Much like Klee, who, in describing art as a two-dimensional whole, explains that "From the roots the sap rises up into the artist, flows through him and his eyes. He is the trunk of the tree" (170), Hermione declares: "I am a tree planted by the river of water. I am in the word TREE. I am TREE exactly" (73). To be a tree, in this context, involves her negotiating a relationship between her unspoken experience and the language that subdues and hems her in.[27] By contrast, George is "man on dry land" (72), displaying something akin to Land's notion of "aquaphobia" – an aversion to the fluid realm of unorganized experience (75). Observing how George is focused on keeping up his reputation as "the high-water mark of the intelligentsia of the period" (71-72), proffering what Irigaray describes as "a love of wisdom" (2), Hermione concludes that "George could never love a tree properly" (73). Aware of her own capacity to infuse form with new energy she also realizes that "Her thought was swifter than George's witty, tricky thought. … Her own thought, swifter than the thought of George, was there beyond him" (70). "You'll never, never catch me" (70), she tells George, her statement echoing the independence and untamed nature of Artemis, her primeval mother. In place of her union with George, the scene suggests a reunion of Hermione's two fractions of self, the narrator explaining how "Her caught Her to herself, swirled dynamically on flat heels and

---

[27] The experience of being "a tree" is also present elsewhere in H.D.'s oeuvre, such as in *Majic Ring* (2009 [1943-44]), which includes a fictionalized account of a trip she made to Greece in the mid-twenties. To become a tree here means to access simultaneously the intellectual world of mythological fictions and the immediate forest's material movement: "I said, 'This seems to be a tree' and I let my arms wave and twist, and what started as a joke, became simple and achieved reality. 'Why,' I said, 'Gareth, I *am* a tree.' It was not so much a dance as a moving pose, a symbol. My feet were rooted to that faded carpet, but my arms were free. I was half-free, like a Dryad, imprisoned in bark but swaying with the bending and bowing of the upper branches" (109).

was off down the trickle of earth-colour that was the path cutting earth-colour through green pellucid water" (70). In resonance with Artemis, who embodies the liminal border between nature and culture, the swirling movement of trees reverberates in Hermione's own body. In line with the Greek world, where physical appearance, as König argues, served as "a window onto the emotions and virtues … beneath it" (133), Hermione's now dynamic movement through the forest in turn reflects her swift thought, anticipating the creation of her interworld poetry.

What finally triggers Hermione's coming to writing is her introduction to Fayne Rabb, a fictionalized representation of Frances J. Gregg, whom H.D. had befriended and fallen in love with before her departure for Europe, and whom, as Robinson and Tryphonopoulos put it, "initiated H.D. into her bisexuality" (131).[28] Hermione first meets Fayne at a party of a Bryn Mawr acquaintance, where, in a room full of college graduates she is confronted with her own academic failure. Although "the people in the room were assorted, out of different boxes," Hermione observes how they are "all holding to some pattern" (55), adhering to a pre-determined formula of success: "Nellie had written brilliantly about Henry James, done a thesis, taken a degree" (59), Hermione explains of her hostess, and her sister Jessie "had had a picture exhibited somewhere in Paris," a picture now "perched upon the grand piano, perky little exhibition number guaranteed its reliability" (48). While she is aware of how her own lack of achievement has limited her scope of action, Hermione critically considers the notion of recognizable accomplishment to constitute a different kind of stagnation. In striving to be timely and relevant, Nellie's group eagerly adopts the latest European intellectual fashions, whose transplantation to an American context effaces their original meanings. Thus, in Hermione's view, the girls' accomplishments all seemed to carry the "the same trademark of nonentity" (55). Jessie's painting, lauded for its "Rive-Gauche touch," inevitably "boded inferiority," and "[s]o too would the chatter about Nellie's table … hardly have been distinguished from that of Chelsea or certain sectors of the Rive Gauche, in anything but a possibly even more over-stressed self-consciousness" (48). A discussion on George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) particularly resonates with the novel's narrative trajectory, as the quest of Meredith's Victorian heroine for an independent life bears echoes of Artemis/Diana, the

[28] *Hermione* is dedicated "To F..... for September 2nd," which was Gregg's birthday.

virginal huntress. In both the Greek and the Roman world, the goddess appears sometimes to have been worshipped at crossroads, which supports her role as a figure of liminal zones (Thorburn 69). Pertinently, it is Fayne, a faint acquaintance of Nellie's, who calls attention to Meredith's novel. Introduced by Nellie as being "fey with wildness" (53), Fayne's presence is something that Hermione "apprehended but did not grasp, a thing that whirred like a bird up, up into a forest of metallic leaves and a forest that waved like seaweed under water" (55). Evoking an under-sea forest, Hermione associates Fayne with the territory that she first visited with Eugenia, a realm of unorganized experience which is perceived as instantly meaningful, yet not abstractly representable. In retrospect, she also remembers how, during the course of their initial meeting, "[c]onversation went on in several layers" (71). On the one hand, "with the automatic click-click that had gone to so much of the outer mechanism of the thing called Her Gart" (56), Hermione repeats George's clever arguments on Meredith to the group (58). Simultaneously, the presence of "the girl with the wild eyes" continues to undergird the conversation, and privately, she considers Meredith "a garden growth from England," and a false landmark in the American literary consciousness (57). Calling for a mode of writing rooted in local and lived experience, she boldly yet quietly concludes that "the soil was ripe for a new sort of forestation" (57).

In *Hermione*, the foundation of the artist's "world of vision" thus begins with her being seen by another. Countering her initial experience that "nothing held her" (4), Hermione finds herself held by the gaze of Fayne, realizing that "the girl *was* seeing Her" (52). "Her" in this context refers to that part of Hermione that cannot be assimilated into Her Gart, the self which is concealed beneath her "outer mechanism" (56). Thus, much like H.D. encouraged her reader to approach the life of the Greeks by "see[ing] *through* the words" (qtd. in Collecott 106), Fayne sees through to Hermione's difference. Whereas Hermione's college failure derives from her inability to acquire the mathematic theory of concentricity, her meeting Fayne transforms the novel's framing motif from an abstract concept to a personal and affective experience, as is shown later in the novel:

> Her Gart saw rings and circles, the rings and circles that were the eyes of Fayne Rabb. Rings and circles made concentric curve toward a ceiling that was, as it were, the bottom of a deep pool. Her and Fayne Rabb were flung

> into a concentric intimacy, rings on rings that made a geometric circle toward a ceiling, that curved over them like ripples on a pond surface. (164)

The image of expanding rings in water now places Fayne and Hermione at a concentric power center, the pivot from which energy is released. As a pebble thrown in a forest pool will cause the water to undulate, the seismic waves of the earthquakes registered by the Gart formula similarly move in concentric circles from the epicenter of the convulsion. Similarly, the unprecedented touch of Fayne's eyes send ripples of emotion through Hermione's being. Thus, the formula which has previously constricted her movement now articulates an enabling dynamic of attraction, which transfers the ground for meaning making from H.D.'s notion of "over-mind" to the notion of "love-mind."

Fayne thereby helps to ease the claustrophobic atmosphere in which the novel is initially steeped, and which permeates Hermione's spatial, linguistic, and corporeal realities. While Hermione's social habitats are often rendered in terms of geometrical shapes such as boxes, triangles, and circles, Fayne immediately makes "the floor sink beneath her feet and the wall rise to infinity above her head" (52), expanding the boundaries that delimit her experience. The sensation of being recognized in turn sparks in Hermione a desire to make herself known, by reaching back to Fayne through language. In contrast to the a priori communication that governs Nellie's party – the kind of communication in which, as Irigaray puts it, "whoever already knows the meaning is the master" (18) – Hermione's speech now borders on breaching the confines of established meaning:

> She seemed to have answered this odd girl, word for word, click, snap and click, the exact requisite counter, the same game but involving something very different from the casual afterdinner sort of auction-whist her words meant with these others. Her words now were a gambler's heritage, heady things, they would win for her, they would lose for her. (61-62)

Identifying with a gambler, Hermione perceives language as a means of risk-taking, an attempt to convey what is impossible to say through words whose effects are yet undetermined. Thus, to be a gambler is to venture into a new and unexplored territory of in-between, where meaning is still open and unsettled:

"she had passed out in a twinkling of an eye into another forest. This forest was reality. … A whole world was open. She looked in through a wide doorway" (62). Looking through words into "reality," Hermione's other forest evokes the seaweed territory which, as Eugenia has previously shown, exists beneath and prior to existing language; an originary realm from which rebirth is made possible.

The plot of *Hermione* thus faintly follows the plot of Ovid's tale of Pygmalion, in which Aphrodite brings the statue of Galatea to life as a woman. The prototypical story of love's power to give life to an inanimate form, the myth reverberates in the awakening of Shakespeare's Hermione, whose metamorphosis in turn echoes in the name of H.D.'s protagonist. Suitably, following their initial meeting, Fayne invites Hermione to see her act in a college production of *Pygmalion*, which she attends accompanied by George. Yet which version of the play remains ambiguous, as the scene blends together different narrations of the myth. Initially, it seems as if the two are about to watch a staging of George Bernard's Shaw's 1912 romance, with George exclaiming "Oh Gawd – now *that* thing … Pygmalion in Philadelphia. Poor damn Shaw would be delighted!" (138). George mentioning of Shaw's play bears significance to the narrative as such, as the intellectual mentor-protégé relationship between Shaw's Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle resonates with that of George and Hermione. Moreover, the way in which Hermione gradually asserts her artistic independence in relation to George echoes the trajectory of Eliza, who also, coincidentally, shares a last name with H.D. The actors, however, are dressed in Greek robes and tunics, which hints at a production with a classical inflection. While George is being overbearing about "these highbrow art sort of college girls" (139), Hermione is surprised to discover Fayne in the lead role of the male sculptor: "That could be no other than Fayne Rabb because ouija-board perceptions saw Pygmalion, saw a stretch of sea coast, saw a boy in a tunic who was Fayne Rabb, who was Pygmalion" (138). Naturally, it is not primarily the tale of Pygmalion, but Fayne's androgynous presence that captures Hermione's attention. Dressed in the clothing of a Greek male, Fayne breaks with the gender expectations of the orderly Gart universe, conveying the kind of unsettled quality that is also characteristic of Artemis. Indeed, during one of their later rendezvous, Hermione imagines both herself and Fayne in terms of an awakening of classical corporeal imagery, blending Artemis's agile figure with the memory of Fayne's Pygmalion performance:

> Across the shoulders there was a strap holding arrows. Marble lifted from marble and showed a boy. "You might have been a huntress. … I don't mean country clubs – not things like that. I mean a boy standing on bare rocks and stooping to take a stone from his strapped sandal. … I mean you were so exactly right in that stage tunic. You were so exactly right as that Pygmalion." (163)

With her masculine femininity and affiliation with crossroads and liminal spheres, Artemis here seems to become emblematic of what Miranda B. Hickman describes as H.D.'s "non-normative sexual-identity-in-process," whose development throughout her life is reflected in her accompanying semi-autobiographical fictions (20). Being the goddess of transitions, Artemis helps Hermione convey her unsayable lived experience. Moreover, in visually displaying a similar notion of fluid sexuality on stage, Fayne validates Hermione's experience of feeling like a "swing-swing between worlds" (25), which makes her appear "so exactly right as that Pygmalion" (163). Indeed, whereas George's kisses have failed to awaken what Hermione refers to as her "marble self" (177), Fayne makes "[h]er cheekbones fee[l] as if they were tinted with the most hectic point of the Indian paintbrush" (62). In Fayne's presence, heat and the color of a blooming, red flower radiate from Hermione's skin, echoing the metamorphosis of the mythical statue's cold, white surface. Thus, like entangled textual roots, different interpretations of the Pygmalion myth interact in the novel to produce complex meanings. In a manner that parallels Shaw's Higgins, George, with his "affectation of familiarity with crowned (so to speak) heads" (138), initiates Hermione into the words and world of literature. Simultaneously, and perhaps more importantly, Fayne brings Hermione's private words and world to life: "Affection brought things with a click right, brought odd distorted images … into right perspective" (139).

Spurred by her relationships with Fayne and George, Hermione comes alive to an interworld of love and language. Akin to what Klee describes as "the sap [that] rises up into the artist" (170), her attraction to Fayne triggers in Hermione a desire to translate her feelings into language, and in turn, to touch Fayne through her words. In Fayne's company, Hermione often reads aloud, her language conveying a message which is experienced sensually rather than cognitively: "'Sea beat up and wind fell hesitating …' 'Go on … You read so beautifully.' 'I don't want you to think I'm reading. It's things back of me. It's

things back of me. You draw things out of me …'" (143). The movement of the wind and sea that figures semantically in Hermione's text underpins her reading as such, its rise and fall reminiscent of the cadence of Duncan's dance, as discussed in the previous chapter. It is through this underlying rhythm that Hermione approximates Fayne, a rhythm which both precedes and extends beyond the language that makes it apprehendable: "Words with Fayne in a room, in any room, became projections of things beyond one. Things beyond Her beat, beat to get through Her, to get through to Fayne" (146). Originary not only to the natural movements of waves and wind, the pulse that beats through Hermione's reading also echoes in her body; "[the] rhythm of a heart that beat and beat against the ragged edge of the potpourri-coloured old shawl" (180). Grounded in a shared, corporeal rhythm, Hermione's reading helps open up an intimate territory between herself and Fayne, as is illustrated by her recitation of Algernon C. Swinburne's "Itylus":

> There was only one thing to read to Fayne; she had read and she would re-read it ... *O sister my sister O singing swallow, the world's division divideth us* ... Her Gart spoke and read, read and spoke, her words made rhythm to the poem, the poem made rhythm suitable to her swift words. Words came from nowhere, tumbled headlong somewhere ... (179)

Whereas in Swinburne's original, the stanza's second line reads "The heart's division divideth us," Hermione's adapted version suggests that the movements of the heart – its heartbeat as well as its metaphorical expressions of love and emotion – are capable of transgressing the divides established by the Gart formula, including the constraints of heteronormative sexuality. Much like Woolf describes writing as "nothing but putting words on the backs of rhythm" (*Letters, Vol. 4* 303), rhythm surfaces in Hermione's reading as a creative force, serving as a foundation for the words through which it manifests. Contrary to the dedication to clear form that permeates the novel's social and intellectual environments, Hermione is finally able to articulate the elementary energy which underpins their making and potential unmaking – a discovery triggered by her desire to transgress the boundaries of her everyday self through the expression of love.

In line with H.D.'s poetological theory of the love-mind and the over-mind – the two lenses that together "bring the world of vision into consciousness" (*Notes* 23) – the experience of love also triggers Hermione's

coming to writing. Throughout the novel, little is said about Hermione's private attempts at poetry, a domain she associates primarily with the clear, distinct practices of the over-mind:

> Writing was an achievement like playing the violin or singing like Tetrazzini. It had, it appeared, nothing or very little to do with the fact of cones of green set within green cones. Writing had somehow got connected up with George Lowndes who even in his advanced progress could make no dynamic statement that would assure her mind that writing had to do with the underside of a peony petal …. (71)

The notion of writing as "achievement" orders artistic expression into tree-like schema, with success depending on the ability to perform according to medium-specific standards and fashions. Not even George, the creator of his own poetic doctrines, could possibly help explain to Hermione how words may emerge out of physical trees, or from the sensation of love, a principle previously demonstrated by the poetry of Shakespeare's Orlando. When Hermione finally decides to share her poetry with George, he nonetheless recognizes her writing as an achievement, taking the difference that marks her writing to be the product of instruction: "Who helped you do this thing, Hermione?" (148), George asks, lauding her poems with the compliment "I tell you *this is writing*" (149).[29] Hermione's response to George's question is replaced by the focalization of Eugenia's "old oil painting," a picture now

> cut off by the shoulders that squared across it. At either edge of the shoulders a bit projected, oozed, so to speak, out, thick, thick green put on thick, thick green. The little boy and girl daubed in carefully showed to the right of the squared shoulders of George Lowndes. On the other side, the stream that started high up on the hill ran away into the gold frame. (148)

Form, color, and movement here "project" like the flowing images of film, "oozing" from the canvas with a liquid quality. Hermione's writing, it is thereby suggested, is rooted in her mother's art, her painterly portrayal of the novel's two

[29] George hereby echoes Pound, who, according to H.D., awarded her early poetic output with the oft-cited compliment "But Dryad… this is poetry!" (qtd. in DuPlessis 7).

main motifs: a green forest intersected by a stream of water, which runs ceaselessly into the frame. In response to George's refusal to recognize the value of Eugenia's work, Hermione explains: "I mean think of the fun she had putting that pine tree by that pine tree until way up at the top of the mountain the last pine tree is just one speck of colour. … you must see what I mean exactly. You must see how she loved it" (149). "Love doesn't make good art, Hermione" (149), George counters, thereby emphasizing the difference between their respective poetics. Although Eugenia's amateur painting falls short of any contemporary artistic standard, she has, according to Hermione's view, succeeded in translating the life of the forest into sensory form. "Writing. Love is writing" (149), Hermione silently concludes in response to George, thereby encapsulating the novel's – and its author's – poetic foundation. Springing from the painting with which Hermione is intimately familiar, as well as her own love for the landscape whose life also reverberates in her developing relationship with Fayne, the statement grounds the practice of writing in the immanence of the body and its embeddedness in nature. The contrast between Hermione's emerging poetics and the notion of writing as "achievement," thereby resembles that between the Greek philosophical concepts of *poiesis* and *praxis*; the former meaning "making" or "producing" and the latter "doing" or "acting." In his book *With Nature* (2014), which aims to reinvigorate what he describes as a forgotten relationship between the realm of nature and that of critical thinking in the arts and humanities, Warwick Mules describes poiesis as an ontological concept which identifies an all-encompassing process of formation, "a transition that carries the thing to where we can say 'it is'" (21). Because human beings are part of nature, every inflection of human production belongs to the same poiesis of becoming, as suggested by Klee's comparison of the artist and his practice to a living tree. Using a related example, Mules explains how "an artist painting a tree partakes of poiesis that is also part of the tree's becoming. Although two distinct things (*a* tree, *an* artwork), they nevertheless share, at their point of juncture, a possibility of a co-becoming other" (22). As Hermione comments on her mother's painterly composition and the "oozing" quality of its trees and river, it is the process of poiesis she is attuned to; what Mules describes as "the tree-becoming-art, or art-becoming-tree" (22).

While no further details are given about the poems that Hermione shows George, her identification of Eugenia's forest painting as a main source of inspiration brings to mind H.D.'s "Oread." In what will be this chapter's final

comment on the poem, I will show how the concept of poiesis helps describe the literary poetics that *Hermione* brings out in narrative form, and which manifests poetically in "Oread." In order to further nuance the notion of poietic becoming, I will draw on Walter Benjamin's related concept of the poetized (*das Gedichtete*), as presented in his essay "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin." Benjamin here explains how "In its general character, the poetized is the synthetic unity of the intellectual and perceptual orders" (19), a definition that resonates with H.D.'s entwined lenses of the over-mind and the love-mind. Moreover, in line with Hermione's quest for an inter-world in which the symbolically laden domains of trees and sea are brought together, Benjamin describes the poetized as being "a limit-concept" in two respects (19). Firstly, in relation to the internal configuration of the poem, the poetized "differs decisively from the form-content model by preserving within itself the fundamental aesthetic unity of form and content. Instead of separating them, it distinctively stamps in itself their immanent, necessary connection" (19). The inseparability of the perceptual and the intellectual, of content and form, is the prime characteristic of "Oread," which invites the reader to partake in the aesthetic making of its "hurling" wave. In words such as "hurl" and "whirl," phonetic and semantic qualities reinforce each other through poetic onomatopoeia, an attribute of sound pattering which, in Paul Simpson's words, "is often thought to form a bridge between 'style' and 'content'" (67). The words' /rl/ sounds demand the reader's tongue to curl up and back in the oral cavity – thus, they derive from muscular activity which mirrors that of a contracting ocean. Moreover, the /p/ and /d/ of the poem's "pointed pines," sounds which momentarily stop the flow of air, serve to support the conical shapes of trees, or of cresting waves. These shapes dissolve against "our rocks"; semantically against the titular oread's stony shoreline, and phonetically against the reader's ridge of teeth. Indeed, the plosive /p/ of the poem's "splash," followed by an /l/ sound and an open vowel, matches the non-linguistic correlate of a breaking wave, the word's initial and final /s/ sounds echoing the sibilance of splattering water. "Oread"'s set of sounds thereby heightens the poem's semantic rendering of sea and tree, diminishing, by way of the reader's immediate oral performance, the distance between wave and word. This interdependence, as Jean Wyatt has argued in a different context, provides the reader with an impression of the sea itself "coming to inhabit the word, of the sea itself speaking – and in words that do not represent, but *are* what they say" (72). Such liquid forms, Wyatt continues, may have the

effect of "drawing us back across the threshold of language, to a period before the line between signifier and signified was clearly drawn" (72). "Oread," in other words, immerses its reader in an aesthetic merging of corporeal-perceptual experience and verbal form; a poietic process of "a co-becoming other" (Mules 22). As the poem's sea solidifies by taking on the qualities of its pines, which in turn are made flexible by the force of the sea, "Oread," when read through the lens of *Hermione,* produces what Benjamin describes as a "synthetic unity of the intellectual and perceptual orders" (19)

This reading is strengthened by *Hermione*'s explicit association between these very natural domains and human faculties, which also opens up it up to the second respect in which the poetized constitutes a limit-concept. "Life, as the ultimate unity, lies at the basis of the poetized," writes Benjamin, and "the poetized emerges as the transition from the functional unity of life to that of the poem" (19-20). However, in order for the poem to become a genuine expression of life, the poet's corporeally grounded experience must be shaped through "the structuration of perception" and "the construction of an intellectual world" (20), its success depending, as discussed in the above, on the inner coherence of these elements. "The more the poet tries to convert without transformation the unity of life into a unity of art, the plainer it is that he is a bungler," Benjamin argues, explaining how the resulting poetry will be "more formless" and "less significant" (20). Within *Hermione*, Benjamin's reservation against the amateur's attempt to write life resonates with George's conclusion that "Love doesn't make good art" (149). Yet the difficulty of artistic transformation is something that Hermione is aware of and struggles with throughout the novel, its challenge echoing in her unanswered question, "how can anyone ever draw trees?" (70). However, through the narrative's incessant reworking of the motif of the sea, which encompasses the fluid movements of nature, the love of Hermione's mother, and finally, Hermione's love for Fayne, the narrative acts out what Benjamin describes as "the structuration of perception" (20). And further, through the motif of trees, which includes not only the physical landscape, but the expression of geometrical shapes, the arborescent thought of the Gart formula, and finally, the realms of myth and textual history, it narrates what Benjamin refers to as "the construction of an intellectual world" (20). While Hermione often questions the prominent position that George occupies within this world, she also acknowledges his formative influence on her coming to writing, which in turn serves as a retrospective appraisal of the role that Pound

played in enabling H.D.'s literary career. Whereas Fayne introduces Hermione to the all-encompassing experience of love, making her feel "degrees of things for which there is no measure" (59), it is George who contributes the means through which the immeasurable may be shaped and channeled into lasting form: "[A]ll her life would be spent gambling with the stark rigidity of words … and all the time George Lowndes with his own counter, had found her a way out" (75).

However, Hermione's interworld of sea and trees, love and writing, is ultimately fragile, and to remain still at its dynamic junction proves impossible. Hermione's closeness with Fayne is frowned upon by Eugenia, who thinks "the whole thing is wrong, a strain on us all" (176), as well as by George, who concludes, jokingly, that the two "ought to be burnt for witchcraft" (165), comments that serve to indicate the impossibility of their same-sex relationship within the realm of Gart. Hermione thereby reluctantly accepts George's proposal for marriage, which will offer her the chance of leaving Pennsylvania. Simultaneously, however, she knows that her relationship with George will likely prevent her from living out the hybridity that marks her personal, sexual, and artistic identities, as suggested by an exchange between the two at their engagement party:

> "You're the only female I could ever dance with." "Why female at this moment?" "You aren't are you, exactly masculine?" "Oh-oo?" "I mean are you?" Far and far-seen as at the end of a telescope, a young thing with stiff muscles of slender forearms was fastening an arrow. Somewhere else the same kind of a person, only a fraction more robust, was beating through underbush of Chersonese oak boughs. The person beating against the impassable barrier of underbrush was alone – beating; I can't desert Her. (188)

Again, the androgynous figure of Artemis, goddess of crossroads, transitions, and perpetual maidenhood, becomes expressive of "Her," which points to Hermione's complexity. The figure's stiff muscles suggest that she has just recently awakened and is starting to gain her strength, and thus she should not be given up on. Moreover, the motif of Artemis beating through the wilderness also resonates with H.D.'s bodily-based metaphor of the novel as a "working through a wood, a tangle of bushes" (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 34), which

suggests that by marrying George, Hermione will forgo her newly discovered ability to forge and negotiate her own personal and artistic paths.

The reference to Artemis also highlights how the precariousness of Hermione's newly integrated self continues to be expressed corporeally, in passages that reveal the dynamically balanced body's entwined qualities of strength and flexibility:

> Her limbs were water. The limbs of Her were water. Could she stand on water limbs? She swam (found use for limbs in water) toward the piano. The piano was a rock, a raft … Straight and strong like some girl athlete from Laconian hill slopes, straight and brave like the maiden Artemis, she felt water-knees break and water-ankles let her feel how very insecure her marble feet were. Two people. I am Her. ... George put two hands under the armpits of a statue that was falling ... (174-175)

Obstructing the novel's Pygmalion plot of an awakening statue, Hermione's decision to marry George threatens to return her to her previous state of being "two people"; splitting her experience of the life-giving realm of water from the stability provided by the external world's pre-established forms. In resonance with the mermaid figure that appears in "The Dancer," Hermione realizes that with George, "I am Undine. Or better the mermaid from Hans Andersen. Undine long ago was a mermaid, she wanted a voice or she wanted feet" (112), "Undine (or was it the Little Mermaid?) sold her sea-inheritance" (120). Known for their beautiful singing voices, undines are mythological female spirits inhabiting forest pools and oceans,[30] creatures who can gain souls only through their marital union with a man (Gallagher 382). In H.C. Andersen's fairy tale adaptation, the mermaid is willing to sacrifice her voice in exchange for legs so that she, with unbearable physical pain, can walk on land and be with her human prince. Thus, by choosing George, whom she has previously described as "man on dry land" (72), Hermione accepts the traditional divide between land and sea, thereby sacrificing the kind of interworld that surfaces from "Oread"'s merging natural domains, or in "The Dancer"'s fluid metamorphoses between the figures of mermaid and tree.

[30] From Latin: *unda*, "a wave" (*OED*).

Nevertheless, it is not "the world's division" (179) that finally obstructs Hermione's self-becoming, as her previous adaptation of "Itylus" suggests, but rather "the heart's division," as implied by Swinburne's original lines.[31] During the time that Hermione has negotiated her amorous connections with both George and Fayne, the two have in turn engaged in a romantic liaison of their own. "Understand this, Hermione," Fayne explains, "I love him. If I say I love George, it isn't this flimsy thing you call love. You loved him, if you loved him, superficially" (218), her claim of true love echoing not only Swinburne's stanza, but also Hermione's seemingly unrequited feelings for Fayne. While Hermione's two lovers have given her a reason and a mode of expression for articulating herself, the awakening of her frozen self is now reversed, with "Stars of frost … incrust[ing] on her long throat" (193). What first seems to be an ordinary winter's cold forebodes a nervous breakdown and a prolonged period of confinement to bed – the loss of love resulting not only in Hermione's loss of her mermaid's voice but also her feet.

In the end, however, Hermione's poietic connection to nature supersedes her reliance of any of her two lovers, and in line with H.D.'s childhood memories of springtime rejuvenation, her strength returns as winter starts coming to a close. Hermione's retrieval of psychological balance inevitably begins with her regaining of corporeal balance, and the successful attempt to return to her feet: "Now standing on her feet, she realized that she liked her feet" (221). Rising from the bed where she has spent the winter months, she awakens to a landscape

> spread with white on white. Everything had been erased, would be written on presently. White spread across an earth, purified for its fulfillment ... Snow wafted and fell. It was the white against white she had wanted ... it was the froth against breakers, it was the annihilation and the fulfilment ... Snow stupefied Her, cleansed Her, breathing an anesthetic. (221-22)

The whiteness of snow gives the impression of a landscape – and in turn, a mindscape – cleared of its previous divisions, a world akin to a sheet of paper ready for the poet's inscription. Moreover, the power of snow to both renew and

[31] O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow, / The heart's division divideth us. / Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree; / But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow (43-46).

obliterate echoes that of frothing breakers, with their simultaneous articulation of the processes of "annihilation" and "fulfillment." "I am glad I was ill," Hermione admits to herself, considering her "frozen" heart and "cracked, somewhat injured body" (226) preconditions for her future growth, her development echoing nature's cycle of hibernation and animation. Moving through the snowclad landscape, Hermione makes this trajectory explicit, as she grounds the practice of writing in the immediacy of her corporeal movement:

> Her feet went on making the path. Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a forest. The world had been razed, had been made clear for this thing. … Now the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayons across the winter whiteness. … She trailed feet across a space of immaculate clarity, leaving her wavering hieroglyph as upon white parchment. When Her got to the little declivity that supported the railroad, she looked back. Her track was uneven and one footprint seemed always to trail unsteadily. (223-24)

If the aim of working one's way through a novel, as H.D. suggests, is to "bracken out to a clearing" (qtd. in Friedman *Penelope's Web* 34), the scene of Hermione's trailing crayon feet represents one such moment. Imprinting her experience of life against the frozen surface of winter, Hermione's wavering trail narrates the onset of a fresh start. Although her slightly unbalanced track is a reminder of the ongoing presence of her painful breakdown, "her feet … filled with memories" (224), her forward movement unfolds as a testimony to life's continuation. "There is something so thrilling about thinking of something that might happen about someone that you never have seen" (223), she muses to herself, and in the wake of her experience of betrayal she welcomes the thought of new, formative encounters.

If modernism, as the introductory chapter has suggested, is thought of in terms of "a dialectical process of affirmation and negation" (Brooker et al. 10), H.D., as this chapter has shown, depicts this rhythm as originating in nature's rhythm of making and unmaking. As the novel comes to a close, Hermione is confronted with the imperishability of this flow, which continually undergirds her own becoming. Rife with the novel's central images of water and trees, the final pages underscore how the ceaseless interplay of force and form propels this rhythm forward. In a scene that harks back to Hermione's early self-

identification as a frozen statue, as well as the frosted throat that signals the onset of her breakdown, she now stamps with her foot at an ice-covered runnel:

> The heel made a sharp dent in the frosted ice. … No snow covered the tiny beach under the cave space opposite. There might conceivably be just the beginnings of things, common chickweed or arbutus bud under that protective mat of creepers. … As Her swayed forward, the ice dipped. She heard faint reverberation, the frail thing breaking. It never does freeze properly. There's always water running. … The ice cracked as she made tentative slipping movement. The sound it gave out suggested something beneath hammering the undersurface … She wanted to touch the narrow black strip under the bank, was sure of finding something growing. … The ice she stood on still held, did not dip further toward the tiny upward jet of running water. (224-25)

Witnessing spring's awakening, which signals "the beginnings of things" – or as Mules puts it in the context of poiesis, "a transition that carries the thing to where we can say 'it is'" (21) – Hermione is reminded of the fact that even the most self-evident forms and states are subject to change, reshaped by latent forces of life which underlie all things. Resonating with Eugenia's memory of Hermione's birth, the natural scene also repeats the theme of being "born of water" (88-89). In concluding that "It never does freeze properly. There's always water running," Hermione further links the poiesis of nature directly to that of her corporeal-spiritual rebirth, comparing the flow of water to her own, invigorating feeling of love for Fayne. As the ice cracks, she finds that "Reverberation of the break seemed to be prolonged, would be till it touched stars. … It's like a violin string. It's like Fayne exactly" (225).

Moreover, much like Hermione longs to channel her transforming experiences "into visible language" (213), the sound of water breaking through the frozen surface also echoes in the solid shapes of the neighboring trees. "Winter branches etched above her head caught reverberation of ice breaking" (225), she notes, observing how force affects and is made detectable in their old, rooted structures. While at the onset of the novel, trees suffocate and wall Hermione in, they now figure as a sheltering home: "Great branches made a tent and the outer sweep of them were held fast, frozen in a little ridge of ice-snow. Her pulled at the branches, held there like trapped hands. … The place smelt of

cones and the little underlayer of needles … felt … warm" (226). In contrast to her initial encounter with cone-shaped trees, which triggers the memory of her academic failure in conic sections, the present experience is sensual in nature, focusing on the inviting smell and warmth which hide beneath the tree's frozen surface. In line with the extended meanings of society, textual culture, and science which material trees have accumulated throughout the novel, Hermione notes how "The great tree in itself was a world" (227). While she has previously felt trapped within the novel's tree-like schemes, as demonstrated by her earlier identification as "Hermione out of Shakespeare" (193), she has, as the novel comes to a close, discovered her capacity to navigate, inhabit, and creatively transform such pre-existing narratives. In describing the tree's limbs as arm-like, she also bestows on it an almost human quality, which underscores her affinity with it, and in freeing its branches from the frozen ground, she highlights their shared capacity for regeneration and movement. Now traversing the realms of water and tree, life force and form, she stands as the embodiment of H.D.'s interworld poetics, lingering, alongside Artemis, at a crossroads which promises change and becoming.

To read *Hermione* as a corporealized narrativization of H.D.'s poetics, as I have done in this chapter, helps bring out the complexity of her artistic vision, and its resistance to categorization. By situating Hermione in-between her mother and father, Fayne and George – and, through its imagery and intertextual references demonstrating H.D.'s simultaneous affinity with the material American landscapes and the mythical landscapes of the Greek – *Hermione* exhibits the hybrid, indeterminate, and creative territory from which H.D.'s prose and poetry originate. By bringing together the immediacy of life with the consistency of pre-modern myths, she imbues the former with lasting form and invigorates the latter, creating what Benjamin describes as a poetic unity of perception and intellect (19), or as Klee puts it in his artistic analogy of the sap and the tree, "a whole that is made up of parts belonging to different dimensions" (170). Finally, in line with the understanding of modernism presented in the introductory chapter, *Hermione* surfaces as a self-conscious exploration of the transformative powers that shape the author's material world and being, or an attempt, as Berman suggests of the movement as such, not only to forge one's way through the modern world but to make it one's own (15).

The fragility of Hermione's newly found balance, acted out as she crosses the snow-covered field, is also indicative of how modernism exists as a range of

overlapping aesthetic practices. During the period of illness from which Hermione eventually recovers, her mode of being shows kinship with that of the artistic movement of surrealism, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Confined to her bed and secluded from the outer world, Hermione describes a surreality which undergirds her conventional reality, in which "things unhinged from nowhere. Nowhere was right here. Here was nowhere. Being here one was nowhere, in time and space there was no such thing as anywhere" (207-208). Having experienced her "whole world fall[ing] to pieces" (207), Hermione temporarily loses her existential coordinates of "here" and "there," conceptualized by the realms of water and trees, which in turn correspond with the dimensions of inner and outer reality. In the "nowhere" that opens up in their absence, words lose their seemingly natural attachments to signified things and contexts, and the poetic compositions that Hermione has struggled to create throughout the novel dissolve into chaos: "Everything goes on with everything. Red, orange, yellow (read over your) green, blue, indigo (Greek book in) violet. Violets. She was only violets. This is the forest of Pennsylvania. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks" (209). Associated with the passive body, and the mental states of sleep, dreams, and madness, the all-encompassing modality of disarray that Hermione now experiences is deemed undesirable by her surrounding environment. Consequently, the narrative dictates that she gets back on her feet. By contrast, surrealism disdains the balanced body and rational mind, seeking to unravel conventional knowledge structures. In the following chapter's reading of Loy's *Insel*, I consider how an analysis of the titular character's disorganized body brings out the novel's critical engagement with surrealism, and its aim to unleash humankind's vast creative potential from the confines of identity, logic, and reason.

4 “Mists of Chaos Curdling into Shape”: Mina Loy’s Surrealist Experiment

> A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that all things have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal, it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is.
>
> (Georges Bataille, qtd. in Bois and Krauss 5)

> Immutable man in his organic equilibrium detaches himself from absurd uniformity through the scandal of his dissymmetry. Symmetrical with his “useful” body; head in two and so on, pyramids of reality like geological strata but dissymmetrical with his desire the object of his realization, an object of his struggle, a glass of blood.
>
> (Jacques Hérold, “Being and its Reflections” 22-23)

> My dreams are first of all a liquor, a kind of nauseating water in which I dive and which rolls bloody micas. I cannot reach the height of certain images, I cannot settle in my continuity, either in the life of my dreams or in the life of my life. All my dreams are deadends, lacking either a castle or a town-plan. A musty collection of severed limbs.
>
> (Antonin Artaud, qtd. in Fotiade 111)

The two previous chapters have considered texts in which meaning resides in the ceaseless change between the states of balance and imbalance; in the entire flow between order and chaos. In both Stein’s “Orta or One Dancing” and H.D.’s *Hermione*, the structure and functioning of body, mind, and artistic expression exist dynamically along an axis between the two, their liveliness and dynamism depending on an indispensable symbiosis of countering forces. “[S]o basic are

these contrapuntal oppositions to the fabric of our universe," writes Anthony Stevens, "that consciousness and life itself would be inconceivable without them. Deprived of the co-ordinates – vertical and horizontal … back and forth, past and future – who could achieve orientation in space and time?" (289). Although Stein and H.D. operate within different aesthetic strands, their modernisms classifying as avant-garde and neo-classicism respectively, their texts both spring from a recognition of what Stevens describes as our foundational points of navigation. In a time characterized by "vagueness" and "confusion," to borrow Woolf's words ("On Not Knowing" 54), the co-ordinates of "many" and "one" in Stein, and the symbols of horizontal water and vertical trees in H.D., imbue the condition of being *in between* with a sense of meaning, ceaselessly engaging the individual in creative negotiations of the present. In reading Mina Loy's *Insel*, a novel which is directly involved with the artistic movement of surrealism, this chapter enters into a world in which orientational co-ordinates, and the sense of continuity which they offer, gradually disintegrate. In bringing down familiar forms and meanings, the quintessential surrealist approximates what Bataille describes as the *formless*, an unclothed reality which has no "frock coat" and which lacks, in Nietzschean terms, the Apollonian principle of individuation. To conceive of reality surrealistically, as French surrealist Antonin Artaud implies in the above quote, means to find it "lacking either a castle or a town-plan," as having no gathering center or recognizable organization. Disassociating from the notion of location, and by extension, the rational ideas of an organized mind, the surrealist insists on a world of difference. In corporeal terms, this means a rejection of the symmetrical and balanced bodies that have been discussed in this thesis thus far – bodies that, in spite of their dynamism and flexibility, retain the sense of "immutable" oneness that surrealist Jacques Hérold detects in the "useful" body of mainstream culture. If the body, as this thesis proposes, helps generate and visualize the stories we tell about ourselves and the world, the surrealist regards his body as being in a state of perpetual decomposition – as exemplified by Artaud's above-quoted self-identification as a "musty collection of severed limbs."

Within modernism generally and the context of this study specifically, surrealism figures as what Hérold describes as a "scandal of … dissymmetry," an insistent resistance to the notion of a corporeal and existential balance and equilibrium. An essential part of surrealism's coming into being was the recognition that the Enlightenment understanding of individuality – grafted in

rationalist and positivist ways of thinking – was no longer experienced in predominantly emancipatory terms, but had taken on oppressive aspects (Richardson 122). By attempting to eliminate what was recognized as irrational and degenerate elements of their own human nature, humankind had engendered a sense of conflict both within and between themselves. The primary aim of the human intelligence, surrealist thinker Pierre Mabille explained, was to find ways of submitting to corporeal impulses that were in accordance with the rules and regulations of the external world. In a 1935 study, he argues that "[w]e clothe our needs and our desires in rationalisations and pretexts. Our lucid mechanism is destined to organise the search, ingeniously to develop the means of satisfying hunger" (39). The conditions of the modern world – the violence and destruction of World War I and the feelings of estrangement and unhappiness brought on by capitalism – had, according to surrealist opinion, developed from the opposition between humankind's internal desires and the rules and judgments of the social realm. Inspired by the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, surrealism sought to expose the body's unordered events, and thereby to liberate the precarious existence and creative potential and of the unconscious. According to André Breton, the movement's unofficial leader, surrealism equaled the "dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation" (qtd. in D. Albright 268). Thus, the daring aim of surrealism was to reveal the instability of the recognizable self by entirely eliminating the organizing co-ordinates of inner and outer. Or in the words of surrealist writer Karel Teige, to "destroy … the wall separating dream and reality, subject from object, representation from real, and imaginary representation from real perception" (297). Surrealism "not only wants to translate real life by means of a painting or a poem," Teige continues, "but intends to *change it* through the realisation of a pan-human dream" (297).

Written in the late thirties but first published in 1991, Mina Loy's *Insel* represents a unique and largely overlooked exploration of surrealism's radical attempt to change reality through art. A thinly veiled *roman-à-clef*, Loy's only published novel chronicles her 1933-1936 friendship and artistic exchange with the German surrealist painter Richard Oelze. Loy met Oelze while working as the Paris art scout and selector for her son-in-law Julien Levy, whose New York gallery was later known for having "single-handedly imported French Surrealism to New York" (Solomon 55). Loy's singular line of work allowed her insight into an artistic environment which, within the context of Anglo-American

modernism, has rarely received literary treatment or detailed critical consideration. Moreover, due to her knowledge of German[32] Loy was granted access to the life and work of one of the lesser-known figures of the surrealist movement. A former student of drawing and painting at the Bauhaus, Oelze had arrived in Paris in 1933, where he became acquainted with surrealists such as Max Ernst, André Breton, and Salvador Dalí. Due to his inherent shyness, poverty, and inability to speak French, Oelze was never a part of their inner circle (C. Burke 381), and as suggested by the German name "Insel" which Loy chose for her fictionalized version of him, Oelze kept to himself.[33] "The first I heard of Insel," Loy's novel opens,

> was the story of a madman, a more or less surrealist painter, who, although he had nothing to eat, was hoping to sell a picture to buy a set of false teeth. He wanted, he said, to go to the bordel but feared to disgust a prostitute with a mouthful of roots. The first I saw of this pathetically maimed celebrity were the tiny fireworks he let off in his eyes when offered a ham sandwich. … to my workaday consciousness, he only looked like an embryonic mind locked in a dilapidated structure. (19)

In the stories that circulate about him, Insel figures as a parody of the irrational surrealist, the embodiment of Hérold's dissymmetrical body. Not only lacking teeth, he also lacks the social veneer of the symmetrical "useful" body, shamelessly revealing his bodily appetites to the world. To the "workaday consciousness" of Mrs. Jones – the novel's narrator and Loy's alter ego – the talked-of painter initially appears underwhelming, his bodily decay and neediness making him more pathetic than fascinating. However, Mrs. Jones's corporealization of Insel's mind stands out, her notion of the "embryonic" introducing a particularly appropriate and productive term for engaging with the novel's surrealist context. "Embryo," according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, refers to an organism "during the early stages of development," a

---

[32] In 1899, Loy had left her native London for Munich, where she spent two years studying painting at Der Künstlerinnen-Verein München (C. Burke 53-64).

[33] Midway through the narrative, Insel reveals that "none of the surrealists will have anything to do with me. They know only too well, if they did, I should try to borrow money" (129). "I should have thought you'd be *worth* a little money to a surrealist," the narrator replies, "[h]e might learn what superreality is about" (129).

phase which completes when "all the main organs are formed." By metaphorical extension, "embryo" refers to "a thing (material or immaterial) in its most basic or rudimentary form, showing potential to develop" (*OED*). A strictly "embryonic mind" thus suggests the presence of a being which has yet to become, in Hérold's terms, "useful" and "symmetrical" – a being whose lack of organization and orientation in space and time makes it inherently surreal. It is through the corporeally grounded aesthetics of the embryonic, an interpretative lens which is given by the text itself, that this chapter approaches *Insel*.

An embryonic quality also imbues the form and style of *Insel*, a novel which has yet to advance beyond its initial status of literary curiosity. Loy first offered *Insel* for publication in 1953, and to her great disappointment it was finally declined by New Directions editor James Laughlin in 1963. "Despite his fascination with the work," Roger L. Conover explains, Laughlin "questioned whether it was really a novel, and thought it still needed a lot of work" (15). Exposing and exploring the notion of a formless life, *Insel* not only failed to meet the demands of the post-war literary marketplace, following its 1991 publication as well as its 2014 reissuing[34] it has received only scant critical attention. With its minimal narrative movement and vagueness of intent, *Insel,* as David Ayers has noted, seems to leave the reader with the task of making sense of the fragments of its "partially formed thinking" (245). In this context, Christina Walter's two readings of the novel are particularly insightful, as they take *Insel*'s air of perpetual incompletion as the very subject of analysis. Here, *Insel* is regarded as a critique of the humanist subject, an articulation of an "impersonal aesthetic" which "resist[s] the Romantic legacy of art as an expression and affirmation of a self-possessed personality" ("Getting Impersonal" 664). While Walter refrains from detailing the movement of surrealism, this chapter reads Loy's "partially formed" novel through the lens of the poetics with which it directly engages. A consideration of surrealism, I argue in this chapter, is key to the reenactment of *Insel*'s symbolic action, that is, the ways in which the writer acts in and on her private and external worlds (K. Burke 460). In the time before she met Oelze, Loy had been going through a difficult phase of life, recovering from a failed business endeavor,[35] periods of loneliness and depression, and with more and

[34] All references to *Insel* will be to the 1991 edition.

[35] A few years before she was first introduced to Oelze, Loy's lampshade-design business, made possible with the financial backing of Peggy Guggenheim, had collapsed. Featured in magazines and exhibitions of interior decoration, Loy's Right Bank shop was a great success,

more of her fellow ex-patriates leaving the once vibrant artistic milieu of Paris – the feeling that an era was coming to its close (C. Burke 365–69). Backed by the encouragement of Levy, she started a series of paintings in which she aspired to "go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all form I am familiar with, evok[e] a chaos from which I could draw forth incipient form" (qtd. in C. Burke 377). In Oelze, whose fictionalized representative has a "dilapidated" shape and an "embryonic mind," Loy found someone who shared a similar artistic vision. Departing from Insel's "embryonic" presence, the following reading explores how *Insel* – through an inter-medial relationship with Oelze's surrealist poetics – critically considers surrealism's capability to unleash the latent life of forms, and in turn, the existential and creative possibilities and limitations of a world without dialectical coordination.

Loy's fascination with the notion of incipient form as well as with Oelze's art manifests already in the novel's opening pages, in which Mrs. Jones has just acquired an Insel painting on behalf of the American art dealer Aaron, a fictionalized representation of Levy. The picture resembles Oelze's *Die Erwartung* (1935-1936), which Loy brought with her to Levy's gallery as she left Europe permanently for the US in 1936: [36]

> That evening I began a letter to a friend: "Aaron's latest surrealist is absolutely divine. He has painted a picture that's not so very hot in any particular detail – a gigantic back of a commonplace woman looking at the sky. It's here to be shipped with the consignment I am sending to Aaron, and I swear whenever I'm in the room with it I catch myself staring at that sky waiting, oblivious of time, for whatever is about to appear in it. Most eerie! The man himself is just like that. He did not say anything in particular, but you felt you were in the room with an invisible will-o'-the-wisp, and that any moment it might light up." (20-21)

---

yet her expansion of the business became its downfall. Her original ideas were presumably copied and sold by her workshop staff, and versions of her designs became available for sale by other vendors (Burstein 189).

[36] Oelze's *Die Erwartung* is today part of MoMa's permanent collection: www.moma.org/collection/works/78518

In Oelze's painting, which remains his most well-known work, a group of conventionally dressed men and women, wearing the hats and coats of the interwar bourgeois, have been displaced to an ominous landscape where they stand staring at an empty sky. In the foreground of the painting, the half-turned profile of a woman standing apart from the rest, her gaze searching in a slightly different direction, resembles Mrs. Jones's "commonplace woman." In line with "will-o'-the-wisp" quality that Mrs. Jones observes in Insel and his painting, art historian Hanns Theodor Flemming describes *Die Erwartung* as being "pregnant with a mysterious, uncanny tension. No gesture, no outward event gives rise to this tension: it derives purely and simply from a magic of the void, which seizes the beholder by the throat" (204). By portraying the group with their backs toward the viewer, Oelze makes the viewer a part of their crowd, and through Loy's nondescript alter ego of "Mrs. Jones," the narrator also inserts herself into the position of the "commonplace woman" of Insel's painting. It is the state of expectation induced by the empty sky – its emptiness somewhat parallel to that of a fresh canvas – that first draws Jones to Insel. The ekphrastic rendering of Oelze's painted scene also serves as a loose narrative frame for the novel, tracing Mrs. Jones's absorption in Insel's creative process. Much like Mrs. Jones is drawn into a state of anticipation – waiting for something to appear in a sky which, like Oelze's, is "pregnant with a mysterious … tension" – the reader is left to await a parallel development of the novel's titular character and plot. In light of Insel's painting, I approach *Insel* as a narrative exploration of Loy's desire to "forget all form I am familiar with" (qtd. in C. Burke 377) – that is, to discover a carte blanche of cultural creation – as well as her subsequent hope that "incipient form" (qtd. in C. Burke 377) will rise from its creatively potent void.

Drawn to Insel's eerie painting, Mrs. Jones, as an excuse to spend more time in his proximity, offers to write the surrealist's biography. Echoing Bataille's definition of philosophy as "giving a frock coat to what is" (qtd. in Bois and Krauss 5). Mrs. Jones tells Insel that "The artist's vindication does not lie in 'what happens' to him, but in what shape he comes out" (31). She thereby asserts her belief in the value of a constituted self – a self which is nonetheless an artistic creation. While Insel is surprisingly eager to share the events of his life, his image becomes less clear to Mrs. Jones the more he reveals. He first outlines his life as a string of discontinued relationships to women who had eventually grown "tired of supporting a waster" (24), a succession of "unfortunate separations, throwing him back upon the desert base from which he was ever

setting out anew" (25). The failed relationships not only testify to his dependency for shelter and care, they also testify to what Artaud describes as an overall inability to "settle in [one's] continuity" (qtd. in Fotiade 111). Commenting on Insel's overall lack of grounding in the world, his fate of "ever setting out anew," Mrs. Jones explains how "he … seemed sometimes to have difficulty in locating things. Once during coffee he drifted off to the lavabo and on his return took a seat some tables away from the one at which he had left me" (33). Insel's day-to-day physical disorientation also echoes in his self-narration, which "flitted about from one end of his life to the other" (33). Relating how, like Oelze, he was originally trained as a lithographer, Insel boasts that his "technique was so remarkable I got raked in by a gang of crooks. We practically bought up Berlin before we were caught, and I was only in jail nine months" (28). Moving from his half-told story of counterfeiting, he turns to his service as a soldier in World War I, laughing at the absurd fate of walking in circles in a meaningless war: "They sent me to war," he told us wryly, voicing that unconvincing complaint against their perpetual situation in the ridiculous made by people who, pleasing to laugh at themselves, one suspects of aiding destiny in detaining them there, "in two left-foot boots, and … the one would follow the other" (30). In surrealist fashion, his stories ridicule any belief in the stability of the world's foundations, questioning the notions of originality, rationality, and intentionality. As Insel reveals Franz Kafka to be his favorite author, Mrs. Jones jokingly accuses the master counterfeiter of having gleaned his very view of life from Kafka's absurd narrative logic. "You atrocious fake," she tells Insel, "you have no life to write – you're *acting* Kafka!" (35). Oblivious to the concept of a coherent persona, Insel comprises a non-continuous mass of lived and fictional fragments, which erupt seemingly at random in the presence of a listener. In contrast to Stein's Duncan biography, in which contrasting elements are ordered by an underlying rhythm, Insel appears the embodiment of pure difference. Confronted with a story that proliferates endlessly and without any unifying principle, Mrs. Jones soon admits: "I began to think it improbable I should ever find a basis for this biography. He was so at variance with himself" (33-34).

Experiencing what Artaud describes as an inability to "reach the height of certain images" (qtd. in Fotiade 111), Mrs. Jones, along with the reader of *Insel*, faces the risk of attributing meaning where there is none. Determined to provide Insel's story with a sense of origin and development, she introduces Insel's father, a blacksmith and a maker of keys, as a potential key figure in his

biography: “you’ve *inherited* the keys your father made. You’ll see the whole of your life will turn on a key. Some people are accompanied throughout their career by a fixation of their destiny – yours is a key” (27). Yet as Insel’s story, much like those of Kafka, lacks any one point of entry, the key fails to take on symbolic significance and evaporates from the narrative as soon as it has been introduced. Finally, Mrs. Jones can only conclude that “his very personality [was] taking the form of a question mark” (41). While her plan of writing a biography initially appears as a structuring device for the novel as such, she announces only fifteen pages into the narrative that “[a]t last the biography aborted” (34). Instead of moving toward the notion of self and identity, the narrative detaches itself from it – the aborted biography opening up to an inverse movement into Insel’s “embryonic” existence.

To help elucidate how Insel figures as an exploration of Loy’s ambition to “forget … all form I am familiar with” (qtd. in C. Burke 377) I will draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual pair of “non-organic” and “organic.” In an early chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* titled “The Geology of Mortals” the two voice their understanding of the nature of the Earth through the persona of Professor Challenger. Explaining how the Earth is organized through two opposing processes, he first describes it as a body “permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (45). Embodying pure process or an original energy, the Earth is described as a “body without organs” (*Thousand Plateaus* 45). This concept was originally extracted from the surrealist works of Artaud, whose description of his own body as “a musty collection of severed limbs” opened this chapter. In the radio play *To have done with the judgment of god,* Artaud describes the “body without organs” as the notion of life prior to form: “When you have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and restored him to his true liberty. Then you will teach him how to dance wrong side out … and this wrong side will be his real place” (Artaud, qtd. in Cull 64). With their separate yet interlocking functions, organs demand that the subject takes action; fulfilling desires originating in corporeal needs or lacks. Thus, to have organs is to be subjected to organization, or as Artaud puts it, to automatization. Yet the body and organs that Artaud mentions cannot be taken literally, as an actual and complete loss of organs would inevitably result in a loss of life. A highly elusive concept, the body without organs is perhaps best understood when envisioned as an egg or

embryo, "before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 169-70). Defined by "dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinetic movements" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 170), the egg contains the material that will direct rather than determine the organism's development; its final form remaining unfixed and open to change. The potentiality of the egg or embryo thereby exists adjacently to the organism that it eventually develops into. Thus, it does not strictly lack organs, its organs have simply yet to be organized (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 34). Or as Deleuze puts it, this body is "a whole non-organic life … completely living, and yet non-organic" (*Francis Bacon* 45). The body without organs, in other words, should not be mistaken for a conventional, actual body, as it only exists virtually as "[a] body without an image" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 8). In turn, Loy's Insel does not represent a fictional parallel to the body without organs but is a body whose highly unstable image threatens to dissolve into the potentiality associated with organlessness.

Insel thus reads as an anti-biography, whose unraveling title character is portrayed first and foremost through his unstable corporeality. Mrs. Jones's account of her friendship with Insel is rife with references to his "dilapidated" physical appearance, which is further introduced as follows: "Tall, his torso concave, he was so emaciated that from his waist down he looked like a stork on one leg. His queer ashen face seemed veritably patched with the bruises of some physical defeat that had left him pretty repulsive" (22). Whereas the ideal bourgeoise body functions as a visual and sensual testimony to an intact and balanced self, displaying neither lack nor excess, Insel's body is presented as being inherently dissymmetrical. Hollowed out due to poverty, he is described as being so tall and thin that he appears to have only one leg. His lack of bodily equilibrium is further shown by his sickly, ashen skin, which testifies to the many ways in which the body's internal life may uncontrollably manifest on the body's surface, challenging its borders from within. Mrs. Jones also notes how "[t]he notch at the spring of the nose was further back than the drop of the upper lip. These angles of his pasty face were over-acute and out of plumb. A kink near the ear suggested the wire-hung jaw of a ventriloquist's dummy. In profile, this nitwit … seemed to have been carved for a joke out of moldy wood" (69). Much like a joke or a caricature, Insel's corporeality reveals something that normally remains hidden or concealed – a biological softness or malleability which seems

to threaten the idea of the integrated self. Indeed, having neither the strength nor bodily carriage to stabilize himself into a respectable form, Insel's body exists in a state of permanent imbalance. In relation to Punday's argument that our ways of thinking about narrative reflects the body's ability "to give rise to and resist pattern" (15), Insel's repulsive, unstable body also embodies and strengthens the novel's resistance to traditional narrative form. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, Punday explains how in the classical plot of metamorphosis or the modern plot of personal growth, the unruly or resisting body may function as a device that organizes and postpones the narrative's resolution. The plot of bodily transformation, Punday contends, citing Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* as examples, "depends on creating a narrative device that retards that development and pushed the character through a detour that delays narrative closure" (96-97). In Loy's surrealist plot, however, the resistant body not only delays, but permanently defers any temporal development of a character toward identity. As he devours his food during one of their meetings, Mrs. Jones notes how "In … haste to answer a question, he shifted the part of a hard roll sandwich he was eating, out of the way, horrifyingly developing a Dalí-like protuberance of elongated flesh with his flaccid facial tissue" (30). With his flabby skin and protruding cheek, Insel disrupts and momentarily deforms the familiar contours and symmetry of the human face, revealing its latent elasticity. "[Y]our face is naked," Mrs. Jones remarks about his appearance (53) referring to his lack of self-containment and inability to, to borrow Mabille's words, "clothe [his] needs and … desires" (39). "For those whose flesh is their rags," she adds, "it is not pitiable to undress" (97). More concretely, Insel also comments on his limited selection of actual clothing, which includes only one suit which "only on account of the dirt in it … still holds together" (44). Mrs. Jones also later comments on his "drained Gothic feet," one of which, due to an unfitted shoe, has "[a] strange bruise" which "shone with the eerie azure of a neon light" (142). In a strictly material as well as an existential sense, such details hint at Insel's "discomforting friable surface" (71); his inherent lack of a respectable and protective boundary against the outer world. While his body is described as being in a state of constant change, its processes remain detached from the implied general body image of intactness from which it deviates, thus reducing the plot-driving tension between the two to a minimum. Moreover, by likening Insel's open face to the dream-like, perpetually metamorphosing shapes of Dalí's paintings, as Mrs. Jones does in the above, his body appears as an

explicit carrier of surrealist poetics, an embodiment of the movement's resistance to any form of organic closure.

The very act of eating is also crucial to the understanding of Insel's corporeality, as it calls attention to his lack of teeth – a literal lack of organs which marks his body with a sense of uselessness. In his theory of the grotesque body, Bakhtin regards eating as one of the key manifestations of the human body's open and unfinished nature: "the body transgresses here its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart … Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself" (281). Whereas Bakhtin emphasizes the "biting … chewing mouth" with which man tears into the world, Insel can eat only soft food, and preferably boneless pieces of meat; "Fleisch ohne Knochen" (49). As he struggles with his dinner roll in the above-quoted scene, Mrs. Jones's gaze is drawn to the softness of his face and the unpleasant feature of his "flaccid facial tissue" rather than the workings of a strong jaw. Thus, the unfinished nature of Insel's body does not primarily depend on his opening up to the world, but on the inherent openness of a body which is in itself incomplete. A set of teeth would not only allow Insel to indulge in food, it would also, according to Insel, improve his appearance to the extent that he would be granted access to the brothel. The lack of intactness and usefulness symbolized by his "mouthful of roots" thus blocks his participation in the organized world of exchange and consumption, and as his German name reveals, Insel is an island. Left in his own sphere of hunger and desire, akin, perhaps, to what Artaud describes as the "nauseating water" of his life and dreams (qtd. in Fotiade 111), Insel cannot contract his being into a sense of oneness. Commenting on society's demand for the self-regulating subject, Deleuze and Guattari write: "You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – otherwise you're just depraved. You will be a signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you're just a deviant" (*Thousand Plateaus* 176-77). Unable to navigate his surroundings, and in turn, translate his resisting body to the world, the character of Insel unfolds as a surrealist microcosmos in which the relationship between inner and outer remains perpetually thwarted. A "skeletal symbol of an ultimate starvation" (29-30) he appears to Mrs. Jones as being nothing but "organically surreal" (129).

Instead of working to transform his body into a stable image, Insel's life continues to unfold primarily within a private and non-organic sphere of difference. His figure not only challenges the stability of the ideal, bourgeoise

body – in surrealist fashion it also undergoes biological growth and mutation, seemingly violating the laws of human anatomy. In observing Insel's hands, Mrs. Jones describes them as

> narrow, and pallid like his face, with a hard, square ossification towards the base of the back, and then so tapering as if compressed in driving an instrument against some great resistance … But out of this atavistic base his fingers grew into the new sensibility of a younger generation, in his case excessive; his fingers clung together like a kind of pulpoid antennae … fingers almost alarmingly fresh and pink for extremities of that bloodless carcass … their fresh tips huddled together in collective … there was something unpleasantly embryonic about them. I had never seen anything that gave this impression of the cruel difficulty of coming apart since, in my babyhood, I had watched the freak in Bamum's circus unjoin the ominous limpness of the legs of his undeveloped twin. (140-41)

As with his "mouthful of roots," Insel's organic and useful fingers seem to have been worn down, yet half-shaped "embryonic" fingers are now sprouting in their place. Fragile and entangled they have yet to undergo a proper birth or organization, the extension and individualization of their "fresh tips" being only vaguely intimated. Due to his detachment from the world of symmetry and form, Insel's access to life's original potentiality remains continuous and effortless – the forever "fresh and pink" fingers of his painter's hands resonating with Loy's own vision of "incipient form."

Interestingly, Loy's evocation of Insel's "embryonic" existence crosses paths with Mabille's contemporary surrealist-oriented theory of how human beings, and in turn, their thoughts and artistic expressions, come into being. A surrealist and a trained physician, Mabille uses the process of embryonic development to explain how the workings of the mind echo those of the body:

> From that moment on, a construction begins, which goes beyond the human framework to reconnect with the vast natural elaborations. The structures will be furnished by the animal species and the threads stretched across geological periods … These impulses, which are affirmed, differentiated or sought out over time, mingle here and link up as they dissipate. In the space of a few weeks the egg crystallizes the gradual

> progress of adaption over millions of years. But it very quickly attains its proper species and begins to resemble what it will be. [A]s soon as the embryo has a material existence, from its very first moment it is subject to its own life. … At birth … [d]efense and adaption to the surroundings impose a personality on it which will be established by more or less deforming the initial hereditary impulse … It must adapt, for itself and contingent on the environment, its person which is already a conglomerate of all previous adaptions. (32-33)

Mabille here describes how the boundless potentiality of life as such contracts into one single human being through ceaseless environmentally dependent adaptions. As a being is born and reaches its final stage of development, that of forming an individual personality, its "initial hereditary impulse" is irrevocably deformed. Although he continues to exist as a "conglomerate" of past human beings, species, and life domains, unconsciously drawing and depending on their manifestations, he remains unaware of his kinship with previous and co-existing life forms and varieties. While Insel, to borrow Mabille's words, is "subject to [his] own life," he has yet to curb and fully clothe his life with the protective layer of a personality. His "dilapidated" shape signals a return to, or an inability to adapt beyond, what Mabille describes as an embryonic state of indeterminacy. A still open continuation of a vast beginning,[37] Insel appears as a vessel for the chaos Loy intuited as existing beneath familiar forms, a productive energy that would enable the artist to "begin a universe all over again" (qtd. in C. Burke 377).

In line with surrealism's aim to destroy the boundaries between representation and the real, Insel's paintings appear in turn as natural extensions of his fresh fingertips. "He had no need to portray," Mrs. Jones observes, "[h]is pictures grew, out of him, seeding through the inter-atomic spaces in his digital substance to urge tenacious roots into a plane surface" (103). Commenting on one of Insel's works, she notes how "Its various forms, at once embryonic and precocious, being half-evolved and of degenerate purpose, were overgrown with

---

[37] Alongside Mabille, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "the embryo does not testify to an absolute form preestablished in a closed milieu; rather, the phylogenesis of populations has at its disposal, in an open milieu, an entire range of relative forms to choose from, none of which is preestablished" (*Thousand Plateaus* 54).

a hair that never grow anywhere else – it was so fine" (41). Described as both incipient and mature, the amorphous shapes of Insel's art resonate with the gradual structuring of life force described by Mabille, the mingling, linking up and dissipation of various species and varieties. In their incomplete state, the painting's forms gesture forward and backward to what they have been or may become, yet as halfway creatures they remain "unpleasant" and useless to the organized world. The very process of realizing their existence is therefore "degenerate," which also, as will be touched upon later, resonates with Insel's art as being Enartete Kunst.

With regard to motif, Insel's picture echoes ekphrastically that of a series of paintings that Oelze worked on from the early 1930s onward: an empty natural scene, sometimes vaguely resembling the landscapes of German Romanticism, inhabited by tangles of half-shaped creatures which are part geological formation, part animal, part vegetation, part shellfish and part human being. Relating to natural processes without expressing them directly, Oelze's paintings can be described as biomorphic, a style of abstraction associated first and foremost with the artistic production of the interwar era, and the emergence of surrealism in particular. Indeed, Oelze's paintings – along with Insel's "embryonic" works – exhibit what art historian Isabel Wünsche describes as late surrealism's "tendency towards 'formlessness' in art – an *informe* that emphasizes the wild, unstructured, and ugly features of nature" (9). The notion of *informe*, which stems from the writings of Bataille quoted at this chapter's beginning, is worth pausing at, as it might serve to crystallize the type of shapelessness with which Loy's novel engages. In Bataille's writings, the *informe* designates material elements that are base and heterogeneous, as exemplified by spittle, which "through its inconsistency, its indefinite contours, the relative imprecision of its color, and its humidity," is "the very symbol of the formless, of the unverifiable, of the non-hierarchized" (qtd. in Bois and Krauss 17). In this context, the notion of formlessness refers to materials which remain absolutely unassimilable, and which, like a glob of spit, resist "[m]etaphor, figure, theme, morphology, meaning – everything that resembles something, everything that is gathered into the unity of a concept" (Bois and Krauss 79). However, as Wünsche notes of biomorphic art as such, Oelze's/Insel's art only *tends* toward formlessness. In Loy's novel, Insel's body and the creativity which extends from it are related to embryonic development and the reverse biological process of decomposition, which suggests a poetics of *open form* rather than

complete formlessness. Describing Oelze's post-WWII production, Flemming comments on a similar formal openness:

> Now, over and over again, he will paint rock formations, figure groups, interpenetrating each other in anthropomorphic landscapes. His dispersed, somnambulistic figures and medusa-like, proliferating vegetations are bathed in pallid, brown-gold, sea-green, grey or sweetish-pink tinted shades …. From their darkly simmering or light bubbling forms ghost-like heads emerge, breasts, or eyes which stare at the beholder with thousand-fold enigmatic orbs. (204-205)

These observations also resonate with paintings that Oelze must have been working on during the time in which *Insel* was written and is set, such as *Baumlandschaft* (ca. 1935) and *Gefärlicher Wunsch* (1936).[38] As Flemming observes, Oelze's paintings are imbued with the qualities of a dream, thoroughly erasing the borders between wake and sleep, exterior and interior reality. In resemblance with Insel's embryonic hands, their intertwisted shapes blur the distinction between individual living things as well as human and non-human life forms, insisting on the impossibility of any kind of oneness. A conglomerate of amorphous shapes and body parts – including, in *Gefärlicher Wunsch*, a pair of narrow, pallid hands – they appear as an extended and dynamic version of Artaud's "musty collection of severed limbs" – a visual rendering of a thoroughly organ-less realm of life. Indeed, in Oelze's and Insel's paintings, the non-organic is not merely experienced as "otherness caught in a matter of expression" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 177), it represents an entire world of otherness and variation, in which only a fading impression of a familiar landscape remains.

While they *do* echo traditional landscape scenes, Oelze and Insel's paintings appear more like mappings of a corporealized mind, their coiling, half-formed creatures and "proliferating vegetations" reflecting the endless pathways of the unconscious. According to Mabille, the workings of the human unconscious depended on a boundless intellectual reservoir which, like the "vast

---

[38] *Baumlandschaft*: www.wikiart.org/en/richard-oelze/baumlandschaft-1935
Gefärlicher Wunsch: www.sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/de/werk/gefaehrlicher-wunsch

natural elaborations" which precede the birth of an individual, reverberates in all individuals. On the one hand, Mabille *does* recognize the human unconscious as existing of a personal strand – a "passionate core" consisting of "play and balance of hormones" which the conscious would either realize or not realize in accordance with the person's environment (33). On the other hand, he theorized a shared "unconscious of forgetting," an impersonal mass of human experience and knowledge "in which all the cultures, all the studies, all the reasoning of minds and will, all the social revolts and struggles undertaken are brought together in a formless vessel in which the elements are digested, rot and mingle as they disintegrate" (34). In contrast to Freud's regard of the unconscious as a repository of repressed individual memories, Mabille's unconscious is "born from social life, [its] humus belong[ing] to societies" (35). Thus, it has more in common with Carl Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, an unconscious which contains "the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" (158). In resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs, Mabille envisioned the shared unconscious as a library without titles – "a library in which the books are blended together and in which the titles have been rubbed away" (34). While he saw this non-organic library as being available within every person, only those who were able to aid its escape by lowering the threshold of consciousness would be able to truly perceive it (35). According to Mabille, the library's content would erupt most often through the pens and brushes of poets and artists, an argument with which he intended to demystify the artistic processes of surrealists. Artistic expressions, he argues, are "[i]slands which emerge from the ocean of forgetting and not strange creations of curiously organised beings" (35). The idea of newly emerged islands, which also resonates with the name of "Insel," suggests the unveiling of previously unchartered elements, which like Insel's half-evolved creatures strain our preformed maps of reality. Emphasizing such art works to be the automatic dictation of unconscious content rather than purposive creations, Mabille further adds: "When we speak of emergence, we are still the victim of appearances. It would be better to speak of flowering, an impulse of activity on a dormant foundation" (37). Again, the affinity between surrealist thought and Loy's artistic ambition comes to the fore, with Mabille's "ocean of forgetting" evoking her intention to "go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all form I am familiar with, evok[e] a chaos from which I could draw forth incipient form" (qtd. in C. Burke 377). Much like Mabille's ocean, the chaos that Loy longs for

and fictionalizes through Insel is appealing in that it holds the potential for an infinite variety of different kinds of artistic forms.

However, *Insel* does not merely romanticize, but also problematizes surrealism's forgetting of form and the humanist self, its perpetual lingering in a realm of formal indeterminacy. The inevitable danger of a complete disavowal of self-presence materializes in Insel's large-scale painting *Die Irma*, which Mrs. Jones intends to buy on behalf of her American gallerist. Visualizing a half shaped or half deteriorating human figure, appears as Insel's self-portrait – the antithesis of Mrs. Jones's envisioned biography:

> "Die Irma," he repeated lovingly to introduce her to me, and the magnetic bond uniting her painted body to his emaciated stature – as if she were of an ectoplasm proceeding from him – was so apparent one felt as if one were surprising an insane liaison at almost too intimate a moment … To her livid brow, rounded like a half-moon, clung a peculiarly clammy algaeic or fungoid substitute for hair. Beneath it a transparent mask of horizontal shadow was penetrated by the eyes of an hypnosis; flat disks of smoked mirror, having the selfsame semblance of looking into and out of oneself as her creator. (131)

Intimately related to Insel, the androgynous Irma is likened to ectoplasmic substance, which in late nineteenth – early twentieth century spiritualism was believed to emanate from the bodies of physical mediums. A white, vaporous or gelatinous mass, the ectoplasm was capable of transforming into anthropomorphous shapes such as faces and hands (Blom 168). Thus, as with Insel's other paintings, the figure of Irma appears as the physical and spiritual extension of his dilapidated body, again insisting on blurring the boundaries of art and reality. As Walter and other critics have also noted, Insel's painting also ekphrastically renders Oelze's *Frieda* (1936), which depicts a misshapen figure with part male, part female features, placed against an empty background.[39] Oelze's Frieda is clothed in a tissue-like fabric, its texture resembling that of soil and vegetation, and her dissymmetrical, overly flexible fingers bear resemblance to Insel's embryonic hands. Irma's arms Mrs. Jones similarly notes,

[39] Oelze's *Frieda* is today part of MoMa's permanent collection: www.moma.org/collection/works/33906

> as if nailed to her hips like crossed swords, jutted out from her body which seemed to be composed of rippling lava that here and there hardened into indentations like holly leaves growing from her sternum – her male hands that hardly made a pair, for the one had the bones of the back marked all of equal length and the other, one finger too long with an unmodeled edge which curved like paper against the background. (132)

Tightly wrapped around her body, the biological fabric envelops Irma's extremities like a madman's straitjacket, or the sheath of an insect, giving the impression that they have yet to unjoin from the body and gain their functionality, or alternatively, that she is being mossed over and appropriated by the uncontrollable growth of algae or fungi. Faced with Oelze's painting or Loy's ekphrastic reproduction, the perceiver remains mesmerized by the question as to whether Irma is undergoing a process of becoming, or a process of degeneration. Either way, her figure remains lodged within a realm in which the borders between human life and the natural world are permeable and in flux. Covered in what resembles the "carpeted chaos" of Insel's/Oelze's biomorphic scenes, her severely unorganized yet still recognizable human form seems to have been taken over by the power of the dream or the unconscious, her corporeal immobility suggesting an absence of self-determination.

With her male hands, yet female name and feminine figure, Irma/Frieda also challenges the principle of organization by blurring the distinction between genders. Some critics have seen Insel's intimate desire for Irma's deformed body as Loy's critique of the tendency of male surrealists to regard women as fetishized objects of fear or desire. "Mrs. Jones's visit to Insel's studio," writes Susan Rosenbaum, "exemplifies Loy's critical framing of Surrealism's depictions of women" (27). Emphasizing Mrs. Jones's comparison of Insel to the nearby Eiffel Tower, its "skeleton phallus … rear[ing] in the distance as slim as himself" (Loy 132), Rosenbaum concludes that "Mrs. Jones objects to Insel's use of the female form as a thinly veiled medium for his own narcissistic preoccupations" (27). Similarly, Hilda Bronstein argues that "Insel's treatment of *die Irma* parodies the treatment of women in the work of male Surrealists, as sexual fetishes in the service of the creativity of the male." Without doubt, Mrs. Jones portrayal of her derelict surrealist challenges and also partly reverses the stereotypes of surrealism's gender politics. In Loy's novel, it is the male surrealist who serves as the narrative object of the more socially and financially

adept female artist. Despite their evolving friendship and shared artistic affinities, Mrs. Jones coolly flaunts and also ridicules Insel's unconcealed sexist, and at times also racist, attitudes toward women, the prostitutes he longs to frequent in particular.[40] Throughout the novel, Insel's character remains perpetually unresolved in its complexity, and he is never entirely likable or unlikable. In the context of Irma, his obsession could be interpreted not only as a narcissistic interest in a self, or an objectification of the female body, as suggested by Bronstein and Rosenbaum respectively, but also as Insel's attempt to approach the sense of variation or difference that resides within himself. "Contrary to our outrunning holding-up-the-mirror-self-consciousness," Mrs. Jones observes, Insel's was "constantly turning its back on the world and tiptoe with expectancy, peeping inquisitively into his own mischievous eyes" (130-31). In this respect, Insel's/Oelze's painting resonates with the projects of other surrealists who took their own bodies as objects of exploration. Claude Cahun, born Lucy Schwob, fashioned an androgynous personality for herself, first by taking on a male name, and later through her written and photographic work, which she used to explore different aspects of a multifarious self. Painter and photographer Pierre Moliener went even further, recording a personal mythology in which he became, as Michael Richardson puts it, "his own 'other', transforming himself not so much into an androgynous character as into someone who was simultaneously male and female, but also simultaneously himself and not himself, able to desire and make love with a being that was external and internal to himself" (126). A similar reference to lovemaking is made by Insel, who playfully reveals to Mrs. Jones that "*Die Irma ist nass*" – "*die Irma* is wet" (133). Irma's wetness alludes to Insel's intimate and "loving" relation to his female alter ego, who is both himself and not himself. Simultaneously, Insel refers to the perpetual wetness of paint, and his own inherent inability to complete the artistic process of self-exploration and -negation that Irma represents. By displaying a commingling of nature and humankind, female and male, Irma is gesturing toward the non-organic "conglomerate" of evolutionary adaptations and variations which,

[40] "'The only thing wrong with those negresses was your beating one of them up!' Mrs. Jones confronts Insel, who "denied this vehemently. … 'Colored people are not –,' he began, looking very Simon Legree. 'But Insel in your relationship she is entitled –' 'I only slept with her three times –' 'If she had slept with you *half a time* I consider she has a right to everything you possess.' 'It's like this – I am sitting at the Dôme – she comes along –' 'She dropped on you,' I corrected – It was fun teasing him. Like tickling a dazed gnome with a spider's silk" (89-90).

according to Mabille, fuels and underlies the protective surface personality of any human being.

Finally, *die Irma* also questions how far the boundaries of an open body and self can be pushed before they dissolve under the strain of difference. In returning Insel's inward-turned gaze, Irma's "great thin uninscribed coins" are "tilted at such an angle as to give a dimly illuminated reflection of an inner and outer darkness" (132). Projecting no trace of a persona, her eyes expose nothing but the darkness or shapelessness of her interior space. While Insel has turned Irma's body into what Mabille terms a "dormant foundation" (37) on which differences flower and intersect, the ceaseless deforming that she seems to be undergoing puts her in danger of becoming what from a Deleuzian perspective is an *empty* body without organs. This type of body renounces its organs and organization too quickly, it "disarrays itself too much, so that it closes in on itself, unable to transmit its intensities differently" (Grosz 171). While it is crisscrossed with a chaos of difference, the body has emptied itself of the ability to direct its energy into connections with the outside world, as suggested by Irma's absolutely restrained and immobilized figure. Warning against the hazard of complete self-eradication, Deleuze and Guattari write: "You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn … and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality" (*Thousand Plateaus* 178). However, as neither Irma nor Insel has any sense of self to contain, their contours remain precariously soft and unstable, their physical bodies existing on the verge of collapse:

> Beside the picture I noticed that the gutter of his upper lip was interrupted by a seam, a fine thread of flesh running from the base of the nose to his mouth that accentuated the compression of his lips in their continual retention of the one remaining tooth which, so thin as to be atavistic in an adult, was like a stump forgotten in a croquet ground, left over from the Game of Life. An incipience or reparation of harelip? And Irma? In this very same spot she puffed to a swollen convergence. "But Insel," I asked, "her upper lip is about to burst with some inavowable disease. You have formed her of pus. Her body has already melted." "Exactly," he answered with mysterious satisfaction. (132-33)

Whereas Insel's body seems to be held together by means of a thin surgical scar that threatens to unravel like a seam, Irma's is gradually decomposing, owing to an internal infection. A true anti-self-portrait, she visualizes the possibility of the organism's final dissolving into a pool of pus, a base, formless matter which carries no more meaning than the spittle or squashed earthworm with which Bataille illustrates the notion of formlessness. Indeed, her "already melted" body suggests her becoming what Alex Callinicos, in the context of the Deleuzian empty body, describes as "a chaos so perfect, so pure, so complete that in it all differences, all articulations are effaced" (95). With her thoroughly unfurnished body, Irma thus gestures toward a potentially extreme and utterly non-productive outcome of surrealism's aim of lending one's person, as Mabille describes it, to the flowering of difference (35).

However, while Irma's dissolving of self-presence seems meaningless in and of itself, Insel's poetics of decomposition *does* appear meaningful when put in relief against the novel's socio-political context. In her reading of Cahun's surrealist anti-autobiography *Disavowals,* Jennifer L. Shaw explains how Cahun's work "is never merely about unraveling and negation" (7) but a response to the forces which are at play in the writer's contemporary reality: "When Cahun appears to explore or call into question her own subjectivity, it is often for the purpose of commenting upon wide-ranging social, political, psychological or aesthetic issues" (7). As a previous soldier and an avant-garde artist, Insel's dilapidation and passivity represent an uncompromising protest against the consequences of the imperatives of capitalism and war on human lives. As suggested by his worn-down teeth and hardened knuckles, "as if compressed in driving an instrument against some great resistance" (141), Insel is unable to take on his role in the modern world's capitalist cycle of exchange, thus remaining, as Mrs. Jones puts it, "economically nude" (23). Impatiently awaiting the completion of die Irma, Mrs. Jones tells Insel: "Pull yourself together … you've got to finish this for the museum. For you it's work or death. Can't you figure it out? … When you have money and can eat you paint a picture so as to have more money" (134). Yet as expressed by his unorganized body, Insel ultimately lacks and resists the ability to pull himself together. His paintings, as demonstrated by the unfinished Irma, remain extensions of his shapeless life rather than a stabilizing means of existence. While Mrs. Jones herself has reluctantly adapted to the increasing commercialization of art, participating both as a painter and through her role as an art scout, Insel is prone

to choose death rather than securing his survival through commissioned work. Mrs. Jones describes Insel as a "primordial soft-machine"

> without the protective overall of the daily job in which his fellows wend their way to some extent unbattered by this sphere of activity. For them, the atrocious jaws of the gigantic organism will open at fixed intervals and spit at them rations sufficient to sustain their coalescence with the screeching, booming, crashing dynamism of the universal "works." For the *révolté*, for one incapable of taking it as it is, this metal forest of coin bearing machinery will partially revert to the condition of nature preserved in him, and show patches of moss as if he had projected there some of the verdure rooted in him. Oases of leisure, succorable, soft if ragged lining to the cage of practical mankind … (23-24)

In line with Deleuze's use of the term, Mrs. Jones describes the external world as a "gigantic organism"; its members functioning as fully formed organs who keep the social "machinery" in operation. Mrs. Jones likens "work" as such to the manual worker's "overall," a protective garment which shields the body from dirt and wear. While the overall secures and organizes the life of the human being, it also inhibits his free movement; in securing his survival through preordained work he is never fully alive. Within Mrs. Jones's envisioned "organism," free action is available only to the *révolté,* the person who rejects the "protective overall" assigned to him, and who, like Insel, finds himself "economically nude" (23). Embodying the qualities of Artaud's body without organs, a being with the "wrong side out" (qtd. in Cull 64), Insel is described as the organism's ragged "lining," capable of partially reverting the external "metal forest" back to "the condition of nature preserved in him" (24). Resonating with the "hereditary impulse" which operates parallel to and underneath Mabille's notion of personality (33), as well as the non-organic force which in Deleuze and Guattari exists within and in opposition to organic form, Mrs. Jones sees Insel's "condition of nature" – imagined in terms of the useless, horizontal growth of moss – as a reminder of the ever-present availability of unorganized life.

Mrs. Jones's admiration for the underlying potentiality of Insel's poetics is particularly understandable when viewed through the lens of the era's pressing demand for national identity. Throughout the course of the novel, Mrs. Jones prepares to leave Europe for New York, where her daughter and son-in-law await

her arrival. The reason for her leaving is never explicitly addressed, but like the departure of Loy, who was half-Jewish,[41] that of Mrs. Jones seems permanent and inevitable. The impoverished Insel, however, has nowhere to go: "Actually, he was in a fix – for, in the 'event' of being a German, here he was an enemy, whereas if he could return to Germany, there he was a *Kultur Bolshewik*" (60). Insel's half-evolved forms and decomposed landscapes clearly make him an enemy of Nazi Germany's clear-cut universe, yet in Paris, the capital of international modernist culture, he is now all too German. While surrealism at large was an anti-nationalist movement, as encapsulated by their slogan "France no longer exists" (qtd. in Richardson 123), Insel remains a "congenital surrealist" (63) – his half-shaped existence upheld by the presence of national identities and borders to which he cannot adapt. While the novel foregrounds Insel's artistic vision and practice and rarely elaborates on its mid- to late 1930s Paris setting, the air raid sirens that accompany Insel and Mrs. Jones's café visits suggest that a new war is under way: "'Do you hear?" asked Insel, 'it's been going on for quite a while – in an aerial invasion people would sit on at their café tables just as we have done. Air raids,' he shuddered, sinking into himself" (60). The reference to an aerial invasion also casts Insel's painting of "a commonplace woman looking at the sky … for whatever is about to appear in it" (20-21) in a new light. In Oelze's *Die Erwartung*, the properly dressed women and men *do* look as if they have just been called abruptly from their café tables and into an unfamiliar, ominous landscape, perhaps by an air raid siren.[42] The painting, as Flemming suggests, can be viewed "as a metaphor of the situation at that time, when murderers had seized the helm of power" (204). With the threat of war looming on the horizon, Loy's own hope in the artist's ability to create "incipient form," to imagine and make visible the possibility of a new or alternative universe, resonates more deeply.

Contrary to Mrs. Jones's attempts to help Insel by organizing his existence, it is Insel who in the end impacts on Mrs. Jones's sense of reality, his

---

[41] The only explicit Jewish presence in the novel is that of man seated at a neighboring café table with "the sharp mask of a Jew worn to a rudder with centuries of steering through hostile masses" (80-81).

[42] Oelze based the figure group of *Die Erwartung* on a photograph showing a crowd of people waiting for American pilot Charles A. Lindbergh to land at the Le Bourget Field in Paris on May 21, 1927, completing the first solo non-stop transcontinental flight (Damsch-Wiehager 87-88).

resistance to form resonating particularly in his ability to distort her sense of linear, progressive time. Instead of tracing the progression of Mrs. Jones's intended biography, *Insel* gradually regresses inwards, creating pockets of narrative stasis in which the sense of forward narrative movement dissolves almost entirely. In other words, our expectation of a recognizable final form, or a narrative resolution, remains thwarted. Insel "would look forward with one eagerly," Mrs. Jones notes, but "always at a certain point he reverted – turned his blind back on the forward direction" (76). Her observation of "that prolongation of time … so often experienced in the company of Insel" (173), his discovery of "a slow time that must result in eternity" (84), is repeated like a refrain throughout the novel. Having lent her apartment to Insel over a vacation, Mrs. Jones notes that "When I returned the place was different – in the smoothed out air there was a suspicion of a collapse in time" (44). "Time that evening lightly came to rest," she observes at a later occasion, "an unburdened nomad let its three faces linger; the future and the past were with me at present: the whole of time – there was no more pursuing it, losing it regretting it" (61). While Insel owns "a sordid silver watch on a worn leather strap," the watch is broken and "won't go" (72). A personal time-telling device fastened to the body, the watch, as D.S. Landes puts it, would constantly remind the modern individual of "time used, time spent, time wasted, time lost," the object being both "prod and key to personal achievement and productivity" (qtd. in Whitrow 112). Insel's broken watch and resistance to the commodification and individualization of time echo a surrealist painting with which Loy was intimately familiar, Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931).[43] Portraying a collection of limp watches laid out in a barren landscape, Dalí's painting shows what Mrs. Jones describes as a "smoothing out of time." In 1931, when Dalí was still largely unknown outside surrealist circles, Levy discovered and bought the "The Limp Watches" directly from his studio (C. Burke 377). Awaiting its transportation to New York, where it would become one of the center pieces of the Levy Gallery's 1932 Surrealist Exhibition, the painting was temporarily placed in Loy's Paris apartment (C. Burke 377), where Oelze's *Die Erwartung* – whose ekphrastic representation makes Mrs. Jones "oblivious of time" (21) – would hang a few years later. Familiar with Dalí's painting, Loy recognized a similar sentiment in Oelze. Much

[43] Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* is today part of MoMa's permanent collection: www.moma.org/collection/works/79018

like Insel dilapidated body and misshapen hands reject the everyday world of work, the soft watches negate the dividing of reality into absolute and universal units of minutes, hours, and days. Commenting on the painting, Cathrin Klingsöhr-Leroy notes how "it is not the forward movement of the watch hands but the melting of the watches themselves that shows that time is slipping away" (38). Resonating with Einstein's theory of space-time, the limp watches hint at the relativity and complexity of time, their plasticity signaling a loss of existential stability. One of the watches is covered in ants, and another has attracted a blowfly, suggesting that their metal surfaces, much like the melting body of Insel's Irma, are decomposing like rotting flesh.

The novel's retreat from the organized world and the concurrent slowing down of narrative movement culminates with Insel's near complete bodily collapse mid-way through the novel. As she prepares to leave her Paris apartment for a weekend in Saint-Cloud, Mrs. Jones is interrupted by the arrival of a starved Insel, who breaks down at her doorstep: "[H]is body no longer showed much sign of life … His face having lost its bruised appearance was set in the tidy waxen consistency that makes corpses look like sudden dolls" (99). As Deleuze writes of the dying man in Charles Dickens's *On our Mutual Friend*, Insel has been reduced to "a life playing with death": "The life of an individual has given way to an impersonal and yet singular life … A *homo tantum* with whom everyone sympathizes, and who attains a kind of beatitude … *a life of* pure *immanence*, neutral, beyond good and evil" (qtd. in Smith 191). Denoting a life which has come to exist beyond the notions of subjecthood and consciousness, Deleuze's *homo tantum* is both intensely present and intensely absent, a paradox which also marks Mrs. Jones's experience of Insel. Her studio now seems "emptier for his being there," yet "further off it was filled to a weird expansion with emanations drifting away from Insel asleep. They crowded the air, minute horizontal icicles, with a tingling of frozen fire. In the room at the end of the corridor their force of vitalized nothingness was pushing back the walls" (102). Unable to keep his body in an upright position, he has lost any remaining trace of organization or integrity, and "[i]n him the intangible and tangible components of a human being had come apart" (102). No longer associated with or immanent to a person, his life is purified to the extent of having become a "vitalized nothingness," akin, perhaps, to the "hereditary impulse" which Mabille sees as existing beneath and prior to any being's birth and adaption to their surroundings (33).

With Insel's physical collapse, Mrs. Jones postpones her travels and houses him in her own apartment and studio, her workspace transforming into a womb-like, secluded sphere in which the passivized painter, likened to a "foetal monster … in repose," is being fed and cared for (101). A white-washed room filled with his drifting emanations, the space also resonates with Insel's own "embryonic mind," which Mrs. Jones throughout the novel envisions in terms of an "aquarium":

> Always in his vicinity one had the impression of living in or rather of being surrounded by an arid aquarium – filled with, not water, but a dim transparency: the procreational chaotic vapor in which all things may begin to grow. Either he had a peculiar power of projecting his visualizations or some leak in his psyche enabled you to tap the half formulated concepts that drifted through his mind: glaucous shades dissolved and deepened into the unreal tides of an ocean without waves. Where in the bottom of slumber an immobile oncome of elementals formed of a submarine snow, and some aflicker, like drowned diamonds blew out their rudimentary bellies – almost protruded foetal arms over all an aimless baton of inaudible orchestra … (61-62)

With its "procreational vapor," Insel's mind serves as a repository of potentiality, its drifting, half-formulated concepts testifying to its embryonic quality. Denoting a realm outside of form and narrative time, his interior realm is likened to an "unreal … ocean without waves," an ocean which not only lacks the basic cadence of contract and release, but also liquid water's organization of water molecules. Materializing surrealism's vision of a borderless reality, Mrs. Jones experiences Insel's vaporous interiority and her exterior studio space as fusing into one: "Here, where dawn and noon and midnight were all so dim and Insel lay sensitive to clarity as a creature of the deep sea; the closely shuttered studio with its row of glass doors was a real replica of the irreal 'aquarium'" (109).[44] Whereas Mrs. Jones's studio is originally a place of work, where she strives to translate real life by way of paint and canvas, the space now brings to life an all-

[44] In his discussion of Oelze's art, Flemming compares some of Oelze's motifs to an "aquarium": "Sometimes they form chimerical shapes or configurations which move like fantastic fishes or interlacing water-plants in a darkling aquarium, lightly wafted to and fro by invisible currents" (205).

encompassing experience of artistic possibility, a virtual realm of rudimentary form which precedes any individual creative act.

By spatializing Insel's "embryonic mind," *Insel* clearly explores the possibility of materializing Loy's own artistic desire to "go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all forms I am familiar with" (qtd. in C. Burke 377). Loy's ambition also pertains to her alter ego Mrs. Jones, who throughout the course of the narrative agonizes over her own artistic failure, her "last exhibition" "cancelled the moment the dealer set eyes on [it]" (37). The judgments of an increasingly professionalized and commercialized art world have induced a creative impasse, which has left her with the mere "memory of having had the power to create whatever I pleased" (106). This inevitably increases her susceptibility to the influence of Insel's non-organic sphere, in which art dealers, exhibitions – and quite radically, even the physical objects of paintings – have lost their appropriate functions. Within the now closed-off space of her studio, incipient creation is no longer grounded in artistic activity, but starts with the reposed body. From his corpse-like state, Insel extends to Mrs. Jones "a strictly lateral invitation to wholly exist in a region imposing a supine inhabitance. A region whose architecture, being parallel to Paradise, is only visible to a horizontal gaze. Should one stand up to it, it must disappear" (110). In encouraging a forgetting of formal mastery and the upright "architecture" of the human species, Insel's Edenic sphere, as represented by Mrs. Jones, resonates with the notion of horizontality that Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois describe in relation to Bataille's *informe*:

> … man is proud of being erect (and of having thus emerged from the animal state ...), but this pride is founded on a repression. Vertical, man has no other biological sense than to stare at the sun and thus burn his eyes or to contemplate his feet in the mud: his present architecture, by means of which his horizontal gaze traverses a vertical visual field, is a travesty. (26)

Having advanced to his vertical position, the human being has lost touch with his originary material base, which he now finds to be literally below him. Striving to stay balanced and intact, he forgets, rejects, and fends off intrusion from the non-organic horizontal plane, a realm of unbounded growth. In contrast, Insel gestures toward the dynamics of his own artistic process by pointing to the

mildew growing on the wooden boards of the studio floor beneath his bed. "[O]ut of the planes of polished oak … [emerged] … the creeping organic development of a microscopic undergrowth such as carpeted chaos in his work, almost as closely cramped as the creamy convolutions of a brain. Foliage of mildew it spread – and spread" (100). Loy's alliterative hard-sounding c's insist on the sense of continuous, yet confined movement of a growth destined to spread infinitely, but primarily within damp, sheltered spaces. By indirectly likening his creativity to the appearance of mildew, Mrs. Jones highlights its interior and horizontal foundation, and thus by extension, Insel's own isolation from the surrounding environment with its demand for the erect, unitary subject.

Insel's fascination with the mildewed wooden floor not only resonates with Mabille's description of the surrealist artwork as an instance of "flowering, an impulse of activity on a dormant foundation" (37), but also with Oelze's painterly technique. Oelze developed his land- and mindscapes through a semi-automatic technique akin to frottage, an artistic process in which a piece of paper is placed on a hard, uneven surface, such as a wooden floorboard, and rubbed with a soft pencil until a pattern of accidental shapes and shades appear. Through the artist's subsequent enhancement of certain features, these structures, outlined by chance, would by way of the artist's imagination continue to expand into chimerical shapes and unforeseen worlds. By lowering the canvas from the vertical to the horizontal plane, Oelze "delegate[d] a part of the work process to matter itself," as Krauss and Bois argue in the different context of Jackson Pollock (28). Disallowing our synthesizing capacity, the patternless patterns of wooden matter intrude on and open up habitual patterns of thought, prompting the artist's as well as the perceiver's mind to wander. When faced with an Oelze painting such as *Gefärlicher Wunsch,* our gaze automatically travels horizontally, tracing the growth of half-evolved, open forms in a landscape which, to borrow Artaud's turn of phrase, lacks the organizing principle of a "castle" or a "town plan" (qtd. in Fotiade 111). Sharply contrasting the erect, conceptual trees of Hermione's forest, Oelze's/Insel's paintings develop horizontally – or seen through the lens of Deleuzian theory, rhizomatically:[45] "Thought is not

[45] Extending horizontally and continuously, the rhizome is used by Deleuze and Guattari to designate the kind of growth which, like Insel – who seems "never having left any land – never to arrive at any shore" (62) – has no beginning or end but is always in the middle: "The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and … and … and …' This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be.' Where are you

arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted and ramified matter," Deleuze and Guattari write, "Many people have a tree growing in their heads, but the brain itself is much more a grass than a tree" (*Thousand Plateaus* 17). Much like the proliferating fingers of Insel's painter's hands, the rhizomatic growth of grass shoots new roots and sprouts when nourished, and without attending to any particular logic. To Insel however – whose painted forms are overgrown with a fine hair "that never grew anywhere else" (41) – mildew, rather than a sturdy, outdoor growth like grass, is the preferred natural metaphor for the rootless activity that his art conveys. Thus, as Wünsche notes of the biomorphic tendency within surrealism, Insel does not simply abstract shapes and patterns from nature, but "create[s] new forms that present[s] the creative process *itself* as a natural activity" (2).

When viewed from the perspective of form, the horizontal proliferation of natural growths such as moss or mildew is considered lowly and meaningless; in Insel's region however, their openness and potential to develop are recognized as Edenic qualities. While Mrs. Jones describes Insel' mind as characterized by perpetual *Entwicklung* (146), which translates from German into "expansion," "growth," or "development," it is also imbued with a sense of embryonic stasis, a resistance toward development into an exterior world of useful and significant forms.[46] Importantly, the lowering of the body to a horizontal plane also invites sleep and dream, and the free flowering of the decomposed materials of the unconscious. The plane of horizontality thus resonates not only with the biological, but also the vast mental territories which, according to Mabille, exist prior yet parallel to our lived reality of personality and consciousness. Yet as soon as one attempts to formulate or "stand up to" the horizontal sphere, its fullness will inevitably, as Mrs. Jones suggests, disappear. Echoing the interlacing shapes of Oelze's/Insel's paintings, Mrs. Jones describes how Insel's sphere demands a non-organic form of communication, in which spoken words are worn down to minimal interpsychic flows: "The bit of my skull encaving the fragile area flew off me, crashed onto his and stuck there" (66), Mrs. Jones states

---

going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions" (*Thousand Plateaus* 27).

[46] Resonating with the concept of the rhizome, Mrs. Jones describes the word *Entwicklung* as "so much Insel's word; its sound seemed … onomatopoeic of his intellectual graph. For my alien ear it had a turn of the ridiculous as though a vast process had got twisted in a knot of tiny twigs, haply to unravel and root, and branch against the heavens" (146).

at one point, later explaining how they "had no longer need for larynxes to converse. Insel *thought at me*. More precisely, vaguely conceived before me" (106). Her experience of the redundancy of speech organs suggests not only a lowering of individual consciousness, but an opening up of individual bodies into adjoined bodies without organs, through which incipient conceptions pass and circulate. Echoing Mrs. Jones's characterization of Insel's poetics, their shared thoughts appear as "[m]ists of chaos curdling into shape" (37). Yet in contrast to Nietzsche's Dionysian state, in which the joining together of human beings "not as individuals, but as the *one* living being" (*Birth of Tragedy* 60) is always countered by the power of Apollonian individuality, the notion of definite shape here remains perpetually postponed.

A return to a horizontally oriented reality also inevitably constitutes, as Krauss and Bois suggest in the above, a return to "the animal state" from which human beings have emerged (26). In Deleuzian theory, the concept of becoming-animal refers to the repudiation of an anthropocentric world view in favor of an involution toward the great variety of different yet interrelated species, or what Mabille describes as the "vast natural elaborations" which exist "beyond the human framework" (32). "To become animal," the two write in their discussion of Kafka's animal stories, "is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone" (*Kafka* 13). In traditional stories of metamorphosis, such as Bakhtin's and Punday's example of *The Golden Ass*, the plot transpires in the very moment when the lowly animal body and the general human body "are imagined and related to each other" (Punday 99). The unruly body is here experienced as meaningful because it drives the plot toward a moment in which difference is eradicated through a moment of rebirth, or a final evolution toward an ideal form. In relation to Kafka's metamorphoses on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "[t]here is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory" (*Kafka* 35). In this context, as opposed to that of metaphor, the transfer from one form to another never completes. The traces of difference, which in the process of metaphor are subdued and replaced by similarity, remain visible – as is evident in Oelze's biomorphic paintings. In other words, the process of becoming-animal represents an ongoing movement toward difference and a crossing of thresholds, as also seen in Insel and Mrs. Jones's inter-psychic communication. Attempting to

further adapt to the horizontalization which has taken hold of her artist's studio, Mrs. Jones further describes her undoing of her own self through her "becoming crustacean": "Somehow, unable to dissolve into mist, and thus too dense to enter a mirage, the nearest I could conform to the arid aquatic was in becoming crustacean" (110). Mrs. Jones describes a becoming which is oriented backwards, to a group of species whose origin precedes that of human beings by millions of years. Her imaginary release into the great continuum of life forms and varieties is further played out by her wrapping her body in a large white blanket:

> Because I found the place somewhat chilly when sunless – I had thrown a great white blanket over my thin dress. … Fairly inflexible – it curved around me loosely, encaving me – its stiff corner trailing off like a sail. I sat on the edge of the couch at the feet of that rigid flotsam – in a huge white shell. (109)

Lodged in a dimly lit room and enveloped by an inflexible casing, Mrs. Jones evokes the intertwined creatures of Oelze's paintings – the figure groups which, as Flemming puts it of his post-war production, "appear to have turned to rocks, coral or walls, only variegated by the pale light that flickers over them" (205). The shell also echoes a previous scene from the novel, in which Mrs. Jones feels herself becoming one of the half-shapes in one of Insel's "scarcely whispered pictures":

> Out of a torso of white ash arose iron rags as puffs of curling smoke, blocks of shadow crushed together in the outline of a giant. … I crouched alongside encumbered with an enormous shell white as plaster which, having but partly taken shape, trailed to an end in a sail of mist. (66)

As some critics have previously noted, Mrs. Jones's "huge white shell" brings to mind Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1486), in which the goddess Venus/Aphrodite emerges from the ocean on a large seashell. According to Walter, "Insel's take on Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*" demonstrates "Insel's conversion of [Mrs. Jones] from fellow painter and writer to art image" ("Getting Impersonal" 679). This reading casts Mrs. Jones's "becoming crustacean" in a purely negative light, implying a plot in which Insel reductively contains Mrs. Jones through artistic representation, remaking her in an image of subordination.

However, in Mrs. Jones's live installation of the painting referenced in the above, Mrs. Jones does not explicitly associate with the female form of Venus, but that of a half-shaped and non-human shell. Much like Deleuze and Guattari argue of Kafka's animal forms, her crustacean affinity does not seem to contain any symbolic meaning. Alongside elements such as the key to which Mrs. Jones futilely attempts to assign meaning as she works on Insel's biography, her own "enormous shell" remains an element of difference. If Botticelli's image at all *does* echo in Insel's works and in Loy's novel[47] one might see it as an element erupting from what Mabille describes as the spineless library of the unconscious, a reservoir of "transformed and digested" materials which "continues its slow work by means of its passage through people's minds, gathering together, crystallising and neutralising itself …" (34-35). From this perspective, Mrs. Jones shell-like appearance might be read as staging a dilapidated or embryonic version of Botticelli's painting – an open, half-recognizable variation of its iconic form. Thus, in contrast to Walter's reading, I regard Mrs. Jones's more or less willed partaking in Insel's aesthetic universe as a venturing into the vast workings of a shared unconscious, which, like any Insel painting, defies the bounded art image.

In this respect, it makes more sense to compare Mrs. Jones's entering into the world of Insel's paintings by "becoming crustacean" with Dalí's large-scale installation *Dream of Venus* (1939) than Botticelli's original *The Birth of Venus*. When he was approached by Levy, Loy's son-in-law, about designing a Surrealist pavilion for the New York's World Fair in 1939, Dalí replied that "the theme for this year will be water, WATER" (qtd. in Levy 211). In resonance with Mrs. Jones's "enormous shell," the exterior of Dalí's pavilion was made of white plaster, evoking the oceanic crust of the deep-sea, and bearing resemblance to the motifs of Oelze's/Insel's paintings. "Always," Mrs. Jones notes of Insel, "there was something of the depths of the sea about him and his work, also of eventual evolution as in the drawing I was looking at where to a rock of lava a pale subaqueous weed clung in the process of becoming a small limp hand" (140). Similarly, Dalí's pavilion had an irregular, lava-like surface, characterized by protuberances that resemble both human limbs and oceanic creatures. The

[47] Although Botticelli's painting is never explicitly mentioned, Mrs. Jones describes Insel as having "the air of being amorous of anything or everything in general … [an] astral Venus flowed in his veins" (91).

visitors would enter the underwater-themed pavilion through a gigantic pair of women's legs, where they purchased tickets from a boot shaped like the head of a deep-sea fish. Overlooking the entrance was a large cut-out of Botticelli's Venus figure. Dalí's reworking of the iconic painting is interesting, particularly if we approach the figure of Aphrodite/Venus as "a meta-figure of all figuration" (Goth 18-19), as discussed in this study's opening chapter. Whereas Botticelli's painting depicts the birth of her ideal bodily shape from water and into the exterior world, Dalí's installation instigates a reverse birth into an the procreational mixture of seawater, sperm, and blood from which Aphrodite, according to Greek mythology, emerged. Inside the pavilion, visitors would encounter a nude Venus, sleeping on an elaborately decorated bed surrounded by surrealist imagery and installations (Venturi 278). In large adjacent aquariums, semi-clothed dancers, some with crustacean features, staged underwater performances, the inhabitants of erotically tinted dreamscapes (Venturi 278). Simulating a reality that favors horizontality rather than verticality, liquidity over recognizable form, dream over wakefulness, and the body over the rational mind, the *Dream of Venus* might be understood as an allegory of surrealist creation. In evoking the liquid chaos that precedes Aphrodite's originary form, Dalí's large-scale work also resonates with Mabille's surrealist notion of the "ocean of forgetting": "There is nothing on the surface of the globe which was not once underground (water, earth, fire). There is nothing in the intelligence which did not once digest and circulate in the depths" (35). While *Insel* makes no mention of Dalí's installation, a work with which Loy was most likely familiar, the *Dream of Venus* bears some similarity with the scenes from Mrs. Jones and Insel's studio-aquarium, which serve as the novel's anticlimactic mid-point. Whereas Dalí's *Dream* can be said to dramatize the vast semiotic potentiality which underlies and emanates from Botticelli's articulated image, the "pro-creational vapor" and half-shapes that fill Mrs. Jones's studio constitute the raw-material of any possible painting, the stuff from which "all things may begin to grow" (Loy 61).

Passively challenging an outer world of identity and organization, a world which in the war-ridden years to come would confine, expel, and destroy human lives, Insel's horizontal reality inevitably takes on a utopian quality. "Life without world, how starkly lovely, stripped of despair," Mrs. Jones remarks about her insight into Insel's world, "my unconscious, with an inkling of what perfection was like after sharing to some degree in his increate Eden, squirmed

with envy" (74). In lowering the threshold between self and other, inner and outer, Insel has revealed to Mrs. Jones an impossible perfection – an Edenic world of unbounded life which unfolds parallel and counter to the everyday world of form. Yet the aquarium remains "increate," existing as a virtual realm which cannot as a whole be realized in actual reality. Moreover, within Insel's sphere, the notion of open form ceaselessly threatens to topple over into formlessness, and its realization, if possible, would not only prove non-productive but also, as foreboded by the disintegrating Irma, outright dangerous. As Mrs. Jones returns to her routines upon Insel's recovery, the erasure of self which Insel's presence has encouraged is increasingly experienced as life-threatening rather than enabling. Following one of her meetings with Insel, Mrs. Jones explains how her own body,

> which had hitherto made upon itself the impression of a compact mass, springing a multiplicity of rifts, changed to a fractional covering I can only compare to the spines of a porcupine; or rather vibrant streamers on which my density in plastic undulation was being carried away – perhaps into infinity. A greater dynamism than my own rushed in to fill the interstices. Looking down at myself I could *see* my sensation. The life-force blasting me apart instead of holding me together. It set up a harrowing excitement in my brain. An atomic despair – so awful – my confines broke down. I lost contour. (150)

While the intact body signals the stability of the self, being "a compact mass" with clear boundaries, a powerful life force now liberates itself from the form which has confined it. Mrs. Jones's literal description of bodily deorganization reads as a predecessor to the Deleuze's concept of the body without organs, a body which is "completely living, and yet nonorganic" (*Francis Bacon* 45). Mrs. Jones's explains how the action of life force upon her body is not only internally sensed, the sensation becomes explicitly visible, rippling through her flesh and nerve and violently causing "a multiplicity of rifts" in the her previously stable surface. "[S]ensation," Deleuze similarly notes, "when it acquires a body through the organism, takes on an excessive and spasmodic appearance, exceeding the bounds of organic activity. It is immediately conveyed in the flesh through the nervous wave or vital emotion" (*Francis Bacon* 45). In the case of Mrs. Jones however, the difference of sensation exceeds the bounds of her body to a liminal

point of disintegration, the "blasting … apart" of bodily contour (150) triggering a fear of a loss of being: "I put up a pretty good fight against this incredible dematerialization – it took me hours to weave myself together – but at last, exhausted yet once more intact, I fell upon my bed and slept. Next morning my face looked 'destroyed' like Insel's. Although I was all of a piece, my very bones were weak" (151). Increasingly, it becomes clear that the dilapidated bodies associated with Insel's increate reality tend toward an empty body without organs, a body which too easily has let go of its organization, and through which non-organic life is allowed to pass violently and without resistance:

> [T]he BwO is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged towards catastrophe. Staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse … (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 178).

Through her present attempt to "weave" herself back into "one piece," Mrs. Jones clearly avoids an obliterating "catastrophe," choosing the organization and subjectivity demanded by the external world. However, at an earlier point in the novel, she *does* play with the thought of fully embracing Insel's shapelessness through the complete "loss of contour" offered by death: "If Insel committed suicide – I could share in that, too. My envy at once supplanted by a flowering peace – filling with fragrance – space" (74). Thus, from the vantage point of the actual world, Insel's "horizontal" existence must finally be viewed in terms of death and destruction rather than liberation. Much like Deleuze and Guattari remind their reader that "smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory" (*Thousand Plateaus* 551), Insel's Edenic realm offers in itself no productive alternative to the organized world. Yet the limitless possibilities of Insel's aquarium sphere nonetheless importantly reveal the actual world as having the potential to be otherwise. Finally, the liberating quality of Insel's Eden would depend on the artist's capacity to connect with the external world's forms and surfaces – the ability to transform the potentiality of an inner reality into viable possibilities. Thus, the "forgetting" of familiar form that Loy longed for

inevitably demands what Stein in her poetics of portraiture described as a counter-process of "remembering," as discussed in chapter one of this study (*Two* 92). Whereas Stein's avant-garde notion of "not remembering" entails a rejection of the known world and its traditions, a process which sharpens our alertness to the present and the creative energy that gives rise to novel forms, the process of "not forgetting" *returns* us to the world, and the sense of integrity offered by its often rigid, yet stabilizing structures. In tracing a disavowal of an organized self and the subsequent need to retrieve it, also *Insel* articulates a need for the kind of existential and aesthetic dynamic balance that appears in various forms throughout this thesis – the dialectics aptly embodied by the wave-like flow and ebb of Woolf's Isa's "Yes" and "No."

Thus, in contrast to Insel, whose reality is likened to "an ocean without waves" (61), Mrs. Jones's weaving her body back together testifies to the novel's swinging back into the world of form and narrative movement. Repeatedly, visual reminders of conventional time serve to stabilize Mrs. Jones's existence, thereby saving her narrative from "blasting … apart," as Mrs. Jones reports of her own experience of bodily dematerialization (150): "In my veritable seances with Insel the clock alone retrieved me from nonentity – thrusting its real face into mine as reminder of the temporal" (95). Without the linear time of the clock, Mrs. Jones implies, her narrative would lose its hold, continuing to proliferate endlessly in accordance with the increate branching of Insel's *Entwicklung*:

> Through a break in the cool white blot of its branches – I perceived the café clock. On that uncompromising dial all things converged to normal. I was a tout for a friend's art gallery, feeding a cagey genius in the hope of production. Insel's melodious ravings, an irritating whine …. (74)

With its "real face" and "uncompromising dial," a sharp contrast to the melting watches of Dalí, the café clock converts Insel's shapeless surrealism back to the normal world of work. From the perspective of outer reality, Insel's inherent denial of worldly responsibilities is again experienced as "an irritating whine" rather than a potential origin of change, and gradually it dawns on Mrs. Jones that he will never translate his pure *Entwicklung* into actual development. Perpetually trapped within his "embryonic" body-mind, he "seemed ever to be seeking a reduction of focus through which to penetrate into the real world" (56). Or Mrs. Jones puts it of her own experience of inhabiting Insel's sphere, "[t]he

antennae of the contact with the world in some way crippled for their function seemed – like the umbilical cord in abnormal birth – to be wound round my brain in a fearful constriction, implacable as iron barriers" (154-55). Contrary to the dynamically balanced and healthy bodies of Stein's and H.D.'s respective portrait and novel, Insel appears as a paradigmatic example of what Ian Buchanan, adopting a Deleuzian perspective, terms the "unhealthy" body. Whereas healthy bodies are able to form "relations which ensure an open future, which is to say, those which promote the formation of new compounds … those relations which lead to the decomposition of old compounds and are not accompanied by the elaboration of new ones are considered unhealthy" (82). An embodiment of decomposing form, Insel cannot recycle its potential by forming new relations with the outside world. Thus, Insel remains an island, or as Mrs. Jones has suggested early on, "the skeletal symbol of an ultimate starvation" (29-30).

With its reluctant yet increasing skepticism toward the value of Insel's "increate Eden," the last half of *Insel* echoes the contemporary leftist criticism of surrealism at large. While surrealism aimed to unravel the naturalized discourses of a capitalist world by uncovering its rich, underlying reality, it never attempted to translate the potential of a collective unconscious into an initiative for social or political transformation. Henry Lefebvre observed that surrealism's "purely verbal metamorphosis, anamorphosis or anaphorization of the relationship between 'subjects' (people) and things (the realm of everyday life) overloaded meaning – and changed nothing" (qtd. in T. Miller 36). In a 1937 piece published in *Left Review*, A.L. Lloyd claims that "Surrealism is not revolutionary, because its lyricism is socially irresponsible. It does not lead fantasy into any action of real social significance. Surrealism is a particularly subtle form of fake revolution" (qtd. in Gasiorek 513). In a conversation with the art patron Mlle Alpha – most likely a fictional representation of Peggy Guggenheim – Mrs. Jones similarly contemplates Insel's sublime aesthetics yet lack of artistic initiative: "He *shows* me what he is going to do. Sometimes I feel he has found a short cut to consummation in defiance of the concrete. That he is filling the galleries of the increate. He seemed so worth helping I've only just begun to notice he *never* paints" (125). While Insel has shared with Mrs. Jones his ability to – as Loy herself privately yearns – "to go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all form [one is] familiar with" he cannot show her how to "draw forth incipient form" (Loy, qtd. in C. Burke 377):

> Insel was trying to disentangle before me *the thousand directions*. He had shown them to me previously, in answer to my asking him why he did not work although I had left him materials in my studio. "So often at dusk I come here to stare at that white canvas," he had told me dreamingly. "I see all the worlds I could paint upon it. But *um Himmels Willen*! Which one? I can create everything. Then what thing? A thousand directions are open to me, to take whichever I decide – I cannot decide."
>
> I had long ago worn down in contemplation of that multiplicity of direction. How *far* my mind had traveled; never to come to the *beginning* of any route. Surely, for Insel it should have been different – starting with the spectral spermatozoa that seeped from his brain through his gardening hands. (174-75)

While Insel inhabits the power to travel back to an Edenic "beginning," an "everything" containing a multiplicity of possible worlds, this very insight prevents him from reaching for the work materials provided for him. Insel's "gardening hands," whose fingers have yet to fully unjoin, are unable to "disentangle" the branches of his *Entwicklung*. They remain "embryonic" rather than the fully extended organs of an individual, and thus by default, Insel "cannot decide." As a "congenital surrealist" (63) he cannot accept what Teige describes as "the wall separating dream and reality, subject from object, representation from real," the very wall which encourages the artist to "translate real life by means of a painting or a poem" (297). Due to his inability to initiate artistic work, his visions exist only as a potentiality, lodged in a virtual sphere which precedes their materialization on the canvas. Echoing the "commonplace woman" of his own painting, who stands "looking at the sky" (20), Insel is now left "to stare at that white canvas," waiting for something to emerge from his "everything."

By using Insel's version of Oelze's ominous *Die Erwartung* as a structuring motif, Loy's novel expresses a hope that surrealism is capable of opening up new perspectives in a time of social and political uncertainty. The air of expectation ignited by Mrs. Jones's "staring at that sky waiting … for whatever is about to appear in it" (21), bears similarity with Mabille's faith in the productivity of the unconscious in times of upheaval: "This enormous work carried out in the darkness reappears in dreams, thoughts and decisions, especially at the moment of important periods and social upheavals; it is the great

common capital, the reserve of peoples and individuals. Revolution and war, like fever, activate it more effectively" (35). At the novel's close, the "enormous work" of Insel's creativity finally *does* materialize, as a real-life version of the empty sky of his painting lights up. Above their heads on the ceiling of the café in which Mrs. Jones and Insel are seated, Insel projects an enormous map showing his "thousand directions":

> The glare in Capoulards Café grew dim. Insel's brain floated up from his head, unraveled, projected its convolutions. They straightened in endless lines across a limitless canvas, a map of imminent direction. On the whole of space were only a few signboards on which grew hands, alive and beckoning. … Indefinable lines of cerebral nerve marked on the map of inertia, unrealizable journeys. (175)

On a virtual painter's canvas, or version of *die Erwartung*'s empty sky, the limitless pathways of Insel's mind are made visible. Only a few of its "convolutions" straighten into signboards with hands, mirroring fingerpost signs pointing the traveler in the directions of concrete destinations. Yet the journeys they point out are indeterminate and remain "unrealizable": "Along one route, *die Irma* dissolved into a puddle of serum, to be absorbed by the all-pervasive whiteness. To travel there was difficult; that volatile fungoid lichen outcrept one as one picked one's way, grew tall until one must turn back" (175-76). Lacking the co-ordinates of the organized world, the map provided by Insel's "embryonic mind" can only be "imminent." While it *does* bring Mrs. Jones's and the reader's attention to the vast possibilities of the blank canvas, the reappearance of the dissolving Irma underscores what the novel, above all, discovers; that is, the danger of renouncing one's organization in favor of access to the fullness of potentiality. Finally, Insel cannot, neither in purely artistic nor in socio-political terms, provide Mrs. Jones with a way forward: "Because it was only a brain that had been spilled, the blank of orientation faded – the thousand directions withdrew, leaving us at a destination. Nothingness" (176). As Insel's increate map fades out, Mrs. Jones realizes that she has been waiting in vain; no "incipient form" will appear in the sky of his canvas: "that commonplace back of a woman watching for signs on his painted firmament turned in anonymous patience to this chart of unarrival. The curtain of the sky came down and she was not there –" (176). By imaginatively erasing the "commonplace woman" from

Insel's painting, Mrs. Jones foreshadows her own impending journey to New York, the only concrete destination now available to her.

In his book *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the World Wars* (1999) Tyrus Miller reads Loy's *Insel* as "an emblem of the end of an artistic epoch" (6). Indeed, with its final destination of "nothingness," the novel echoes Miller's description of the Anglo-American late modernist text; a work that reflects on the dwindling opportunities of the traditional arts to intervene directly in political-economic life (35), and which, in line with the eerie sky of Oelze's *die Erwartung,* displays "a closure of the horizon of the future … permeated with a foreboding of decline and fall" (T. Miller 13). However, by arguing that Mrs. Jones's "ill-fated adventures with an ineffectual German painter suggest the baneful short-circuiting of the once energizing connection of modernist literature and the visual arts" (6), Miller somewhat downplays the original outcome of Loy's friendship with Oelze. Only by approaching *Insel* through the tenets of surrealism, as this reading has done, does it become clear how Loy manages to recreate the atmosphere and experience of Oelze's paintings. Indeed, it is through her artistic evocation of Oelze's life and work that Loy is able to highlight the modernist's increasing lack of agency in continental Europe in the mid-nineteen-thirties. At the same time, her aesthetic-fictional portrait of the artist articulates and insists on the strange beauty of Oelze's embryonic poetics. In its attempt to understand and convey the work of the lesser-known surrealist, Loy's novel ventures into a peripheral and, within the context of Anglo-American literary modernism, previously uncharted territory, thereby expanding rather than short-circuiting our understanding of modernism, and of modernist interart relations. The stylistic features of Oelze's biomorphic paintings echo in *Insel*'s minimal plot and looseness of form, testifying to a productive artistic exchange between the two. Indeed, Flemming's description of Oelze's paintings as "still and yet strangely alive" (207) also applies to *Insel*, whose mediation of the artist's shapeless realm confronts the reader with the unconventional beauty of decomposing and embryonic forms. In contrast to H.D.'s Hermione's orientation upward, to the "heavy trees above her" (4), Loy explores oft-neglected horizontally oriented land- and mindscapes, as exemplified by Mrs. Jones's image of a decaying log: "Once at dark in the Maine woods, I had stumbled on a rotten log. The scabs of foetid bark flew off revealing a solid cellulose jewel. It glowed in the tremendous tepidity of phosphorescence from a store of moonlight similar to condensed sun in living vegetables" (97).

Unconventional yet precise, poetic images such as that of a "cellulose jewel" encourage a horizontal gaze, bringing the reader's attention downward and inward to the generative potentiality of what, from the perspective of form, is considered useless and repulsive – the very stuff that Insel, "the half-rotten looking man of flesh" (56), embodies.

Yet as Mrs. Jones prepares to leave Insel at the very end of the novel, a certain distance has come between the two artists, their relationship having reached an impasse. In the company of Insel, Mrs. Jones has experienced the impossible perfection of "life without world" (74), and she therefore cannot reject him. Simultaneously, she knows his "Edenic region of unreasoning bliss" (69) to be uninhabitable and outright destructive, which prevents her from fully endorsing his poetics. Expressing both admiration for and disappointment in surrealism's erasure of the distinction between inner and outer reality, the novel finally appears, in the novel's own vocabulary, "embryonic." Mrs. Jones's return to the world of form and organization is a necessity rather than a victory, and the novel thereby ends on an indeterminate and somewhat unsatisfying note: "So all I said was 'Good-bye,'" relates Mrs. Jones, "'Good-bye,' smiled Insel, his bittersweet stare both dazed and stoic, '*Danke für alles* – Thanks for everything'" (178). Whereas Miller reads the closing "good-bye" as signaling the end of modernism, it can, however, also be viewed in a less ominous light. By casting her narrator in her own position of an art scout, Loy's novel shows how in the 1930s, European modernist art, and surrealism in particular, was being imported to the US. Insel, Mrs. Jones's initial introduction makes clear, is "Aaron's *latest* surrealist" (20, emphasis added), which testifies to surrealism's growing appeal in the New York art world at the time. While in an increasingly politically troubled Europe, surrealism's retreat from naturalized forms connoted social irresponsibility; in the US it generated, and would continue to productively influence, contemporary discourses on art. In her study of the key exhibitions of surrealism in the US in 1936, 1968 and 1985, Sandra Zalman argues that the movement, "framed and re-framed for American audiences … acted as a platform to challenge traditional ideas of modern art, through its role as a conceptual program that participated in contemporary life – from political events to consumer culture" (2). While Mrs. Jones's departure may symbolically suggest "the end of an artistic epoch," the novel also documents – as promised by Insel's fingers, which grow into "the new sensibility of a younger generation" (141) – the ceaseless transformation and continuation of modernism.

Although *Insel* foregrounds its title character's soft and increate reality, the novel also offers occasional glimpses of the external world that Insel resists – a world in which traditional artistic expressions are being usurped, commercialized, and democratized by competing aesthetic domains such as film, design, and fashion. As Mrs. Jones tells Insel that "[t]he artist's vindication does not lie in 'what happens to him' but in what shape he comes out" (31), she gestures toward a reality that increasingly favors aestheticized form and appearance over "*Being* in itself," which according to Insel should be "sufficient for us all" (140). Within the novel, the skill of self-curation is most effectively demonstrated by the peripheral yet powerful character of Mlle Alpha, whose keen eye for the constant newness of modernist visual form is directly expressed by her corporeal image. Commenting on Mlle Alpha's voguish appearance, Mrs. Jones describes how she

> [i]n her slacks of rust colored linen – her coppery hair, blown into a fresh sunburn, … appeared to have just sailed in from a lagoon. Her eyes like coals, continent, of their fire, were round as the eyes of the wooden negresses supporting the violet draperies of her day-bed. Her lacquered toenails played at hide-and-seek among the meshes of her sandals. Her whole body was impudent with a slightly crass adolescence… . (124)

The embodiment of the youthful-looking, modern woman, Loy's Guggenheim figure wears the nautically inspired high-waisted, wide-legged slacks of the 1930s, appearing as if she has just "sailed in from a lagoon." With her rust and copper colors, she has the sun-kissed look made fashionable by Coco Chanel,[48] and her toenails display the then fairly recent invention of nail varnish, which was first developed from car paint.[49] Moreover, Mlle. Alpha's fiery eyes match those of her decorative "wooden negresses"; figures that invoke the African sculptures collected by modernist artists and patrons, their influence manifesting

[48] Although the belief in the therapeutic power of sunlight permeated interwar body culture, Chanel has been credited for bringing the tanned look to the French capital and making it fashionable. In the 1930s she introduced the product "Liquid Tan for the Summer" as well as tanning powder, to the French fashion world (Wilk 253-54).

[49] Modern nail polish was created in the late 1920s, when the French makeup artist Michelle Ménard was inspired to use car enamel paint, also an invention of the 1920s, as nail varnish (Spivack).

in the paintings of artists such as Picasso and Matisse, and even more visibly so, in furniture designs of the Art Deco movement. All in all, her appearance gestures toward the interplay between aesthetics, technology, commerce, and self-invention during the interwar era, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Moving from the undoing of bodily, aesthetic, and narrative form, as articulated by Insel's dilapidated figure, the following reading of Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* explores the literary imprint of the fashioned, spectacularized body here showcased by Mlle Alpha – a body which affirms the necessity of form, and whose forward movement is prompted by the perpetual desire to attain a surface which is ever-perfectible.

5 “This Way – This Way to the Exhibition”: Jean Rhys and the Narrative Logic of Fashion

> There was a black velvet dress in a shop-window, with the skirt slit up so that you could see the light stocking. A girl could look lovely in that, like a doll or a flower. Another dress, with fur round the neck, reminded me of the one that Laurie had worn … The clothes of most of the women who passed were like caricatures of the clothes in the shop-windows, but when they stopped to look you saw that their eyes were fixed on the future. “If I could buy this, then of course I’d be quite different.”
>
> (Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* 111)

> Fashion is stripped of content but not of meaning. A kind of machine for maintaining meaning without ever fixing it, it is forever a disappointed meaning, but it is nevertheless a meaning.
>
> (Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* 288)

Whereas Loy’s Mrs. Jones says her “good bye” to Paris in around 1936, the narrator of Rhys’s *Good Morning, Midnight* arrives in Paris from London in the fall of 1937. Lonely, middle-aged and without a proper home or income, Rhys’s narrator-protagonist Sasha Jansen is in the process of recovering from a suicide attempt, having been “[s]aved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it. Except of course, that there always remains something …” (*Good Morning, Midnight* 10). The narrative is ignited by the proposal of a distant friend that she gets back on her feet by borrowing money for a vacation in Paris, the city where she spent her youth. “I had just come in from my little health-stroll round Mecklenburgh Square,” Sasha explains, “I had looked at this, I had looked at that … and at a shop-window full of artificial limbs. I came in to somebody who said: ‘I can’t bear to see you looking like this … Why don’t you go back to Paris for a bit? … You could get yourself some new clothes – you certainly need them” (10). In encouraging Sasha to purchase new clothes, the acquaintance imbues Sasha’s and the novel’s narrative with the logic of fashion. What Sasha *needs*, the comment most likely implies, are not new garments in and of

themselves, but the meanings attached to them – which include, if one takes Loy's contemporary character of Mlle Alpha as a point of reference, those of youth, vigor, and radiance. In contrast to Mlle. Alpha, however, who appears as if she has just "sailed in from a lagoon" (Loy 124), Sasha has been "fished up" from a dirty city river. To her, shopping alleviates a need of attaining a strong surface, a socially accepted veneer that would either erase or cover up the unbalancing "something" which has remained with her after her emergence from the dark water. Introduced alongside "a shop-window full of artificial limbs" (10), a reference to the prosthetics industry that developed in response to the injured bodies of World War I soldiers, fashion surfaces in Rhys's novel as a means of fortifying or making a fragmented self whole – or in the previous chapter's Deleuzian terms, *organic*. Covering the ten days that make up her Paris stay, the novel traces what Sasha refers to as her "transformation act" (53); a make-over designed to eradicate any traces of damage and replace difference with a semblance of normality and stability. Yet as this reading will show, the meaning Sasha transforms toward ultimately remains, as Roland Barthes puts it in his study of the cultural power of fashion, "forever a disappointed meaning." Barthes's notion of fashion as a meaning-maintaining machine is a fruitful lens through which to explore Rhys's interwar fiction, as aptly shown by the remarks of protagonist Anna of *Voyage in the Dark* – in many respects a younger avatar of Sasha. In the quotation that opens this chapter, Anna is drawn to London shop windows that are, to borrow Barthes words, "stripped of content but not of meaning" (288); they refrain from fixing the signifier "Fashion" to any specific garment-signified. While the women that pass her in the street already look "like caricatures of the clothes in the shop-windows" Anna observes how their "eyes were fixed on the future" (*Voyage* 111) which testifies to Barthes's claim that with fashion it is "the meaning that sells" (xii). Whereas the previous chapter considered the perpetual transformation of a surrealist body that resists taking shape, the present chapter focuses on the forward-oriented quest of the fashioned body to conform to a perpetually elusive surface. In tracing Sasha's "transformation act" I demonstrate how *Good Morning, Midnight* both critically explores and draws on the logic and poetics of modern fashion, which is inevitably a poetics of "disappointed meaning" (Barthes 288).

Sasha's need for transformative change is evident already in the novel's opening passage, which describes her initial arrival in her Paris hotel room:

> ‘Quite like old times,’ the room says. ‘Yes? No?’ There are two beds, a big one for madame and a smaller one on the opposite side for monsieur… It is a large room, the smell of cheap hotels faint, almost imperceptible. The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse. (9)

The personification of the room testifies to its intimately familiar ambiance, its smell and interior instantly invoking impressions of the many cheap hotels Sasha has stayed in before. Sasha’s life is soon revealed to be that of a cosmopolitan drifter, her present travels bringing to life memories of past stays in Brussels, Amsterdam, Budapest, Vienna, Paris, Antibes, and London. “I have… no pride, no name, no face, no country,” she mourns later on, “I don’t belong anywhere” (38). While all of the characters discussed in this thesis remain in movement – finding themselves, to use Berman’s words, in a state of “perpetual becoming” (16) – it is Rhys’s Sasha who most thoroughly embodies the modernist themes of homelessness and rootlessness. Within the context of modernism, Rosenthal explains, the word “home” widely points to notions of “totality, tradition, ground; … [a] stable or meaningful relation to location and space of dwelling… earth, nature, ancestral abode” (49-50). With no such sense or ownership of a home to fall back upon, Sasha’s dwelling has remained that of the rented hotel room – a home away from home. Forever temporary, unfixed, and interchangeable, Sasha’s room echoes the mass-produced clothes she is dressed in, which gestures to a connection between fashion and homelessness which is at the crux of this reading. Loosely structured in terms of a sartorial-corporeal transformation act, a rationalization of Sasha’s lack of rootedness, the novel not only comments on the workings and power of the modern fashion system, it also portrays the flipside of the opportunities offered by modernity. Through Sasha’s extended shopping trip, the seemingly liberatory trajectories of mobility and hybridity – endorsed and celebrated in various ways by the texts discussed earlier in this study – are also shown as capable of inducing a modern experience of perpetual exile.

While the hotel’s symbolic location in an impasse speaks to Sasha’s thwarted agency, her lack of a feeling of integrity and safety associated with the notion of home is further underscored by the design of her room. Sasha’s attention immediately goes to the room’s two beds, of which the narrower is designated the male lodger and the more spacious one his female companion.

The generous size of the woman's bed suggests this to be the site of sexual activity, which the man can pursue from the smaller bed, his place of sleep and rest. By calling attention to the two beds, Sasha hints at previous experiences of being intruded upon, or at least the lack of female agency which is built into the setup of the generic hotel room. In consecutive passages, the cheap hotel is also revealed as an unsafe space for the solitary female lodger, who is often regarded as easy prey to rape or prostitution. Throughout her stay, Sasha repeatedly expresses anxiety about the oppressive presence of the man who occupies the room next to hers:

> [T]here is a knock on the door…. He stands there smiling his silly smile. I stare at him. … At last I manage; 'Well, what is it?' What do you want? 'Nothing,' he says, 'nothing.' 'Oh, go away.' He doesn't answer or move. He stands in the door-way, smiling. (Now then, you and I understand each other, don't we? Let's stop pretending.) I put my hand on his chest, push him backwards and bang the door. It's quite easy. It's like pushing a paper man, a ghost, something that doesn't exist. And there I am in this dim room with the bed for madame and the bed for monsieur and the narrow street outside (what they call an impasse), thinking of that white dressing-gown, like a priest's robes. Frightened as hell. A nightmare feeling… (30-31) [50]

As suggested by the hotel's symbolic location in an impasse, the room appears as a potential trap from which no apparent escape or progress is possible, a scenario which also resonates with Sasha's present mental state. "One could no doubt analyze the opening paragraph of most novels," Peter Brooks argues in his

---

[50] The modern hotel was undoubtedly an unhomely place to single women. In Norwegian writer Cora Sandel's Paris novel *Alberta and Freedom* (1931), a passage similar to Sasha's depiction of the "ghost"-man is found: "She remembered an evening last year, heavy, suffocating… Carelessly she had thrown the door wide open and stood on a chair, naked under the kimono, with her head out of the skylight… Then her heart gave a jump as she realized that she was not alone. She looked down, and there the man stood, fat, bearded, in shirt and trousers, his chest bare, and dark with animal hair. In the sick, thundery twilight he looked unreal, especially as he did not speak, only stared at her. Alberta did not speak either. Dumb and tense she climbed down off her chair, and drove him out backwards in mutual silence… He did not shut it. As silently as he had come, he disappeared again, in slippers or his stockinged feet. A lock that turned quietly out in the darkness was the only indication that he had actually been there." (67–68)

Reading for the Plot (1984), "and emerge in each case with the image of a desire taking on shape, beginning to seek its objects, beginning to develop a textual energetics," which demands that "movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun" (38). This is particularly evident in Rhys's novel, where the opening question "Quite like old times?" demands the proceeding plot to provide an answer in the form of a "Yes" or a "No." Further describing the reader's textual desire for both narrative expansion and a meaningful closure, Brooks explains how "we start with an inactive, 'collapsed' metaphor and work through to a reactivated, transactive one, a metaphor with its difference restored through metonymic process" (27). Likewise, Rhys's opening passages play with our readerly desire for the suggestion of "No," which implies change in the form of Sasha's emancipation from the impasse of the rented room. The anticipated narrative development is loosely organized through Sasha's "transformation act," which promises to redeem her lack of wholeness in corporeal terms.

Throughout the novel, however, a series of shorter embedded narratives – which both echo and foreshadow the overall structure of the novel – insist on the difficulty of restoring any meaningful sense of "home" or "ground." These sequences testify to what Tyrus Miller in an Anglo-American context describes as late modernism's reflection of an escalating "derealization" of subjective and objective reality – a sense of its "progressive replacement with simulacra and spectacles" (44). Writing about the modernisms of Wyndham Lewis, Samuel Beckett and Djuna Barnes, Miller identifies a feeling of insecurity, in which "[t]he outer world – of crowded streets, of department stores, of movie houses, of political rallies – had taken on fantastic, aestheticized shapes once found only in dreams, paintings, or fiction" (45). In turn, the inner life has increasingly "appropriated the object-world in which people lived and moved, now taking the shape of a city street, later of a shop window, then perhaps of a cinema or a fascist parade" (45). Early on in Rhys's novel, Sasha reveals how her inner reality is furnished by a contemporary "society of the spectacle" (T. Miller 44), which surfaces in her nightly dreams:

> I am in the passage of a tube station in London. Many people are in front of me; many people are behind me. Everywhere there are placards printed in red letters: This Way to the Exhibition, This Way to the Exhibition. But I don't want the way to the exhibition – I want the way out. There are passages to the right and passages to the left, but no exit sign… I touch the

> shoulder of the man walking in front of me. I say: 'I want the way out.' But he points to the placards and his hand is made of steel… The steel finger points along a long stone passage. This Way – This Way – This Way to the Exhibition. … (12)

The stone passage of Sasha's dreamscape lacks clear points of departure and termination, reproducing the feeling of impasse, an indeterminate space with no apparent "exit sign." The physical passage – which later on in the novel will also take the shape of a corridor, a passageway or a city street – alludes throughout the novel to a state of the homeless in-between, the metonymic movement which connects Brooks's "collapsed" and "reactivated" metaphors. Although there are "passages to the right and passages to the left," Sasha finds herself moving along the one specific passage as part of an anonymous crowd of people, progressing toward the elusive "Exhibition." Contrasting her daytime commitment to blend in with her environment, Sasha's dreamscape experience of the moving mass now frightens, and she "want[s] the way out." Yet as she touches the shoulder of a stranger in need for directions, he ushers her down the selfsame passage with his steel-finger. Embodying the threshold between the human and inhuman, the steel-handed man demonstrates what Tyrus Miller identifies as late modernism's "blurring of sharp boundaries between subject and object" (45). The steel hand lacks the human hand's ability of touch, perhaps the most immediate and powerful of the human senses. "Touch is regarded as a contact sense, writes Elizabeth Grosz, "it provides contiguous access to an abiding object… [Touch] has many sense receptors, including the body's entire surface, but the hand is probably the most refined and sensitive" (98-99). The replacement of human touch with coldness and hardness leaves the onlooker with an uncanny sensation, "an experience of disorientation, where the world in which we live suddenly seems strange, alienating or threatening" (Collins and Jervis 1). In "Das Unheimliche" (1919), Freud described the "unhomely" or the "uncanny" as a species of the familiar; while *heimlich* denotes security, protection, familiarity and intimacy, the enclosed home also conceals within it that which should remain a secret, but which inevitably comes to light, producing a feeling of "homeliness uprooted" (Royle 1). In Sasha's dream, the inner world of the mind is appropriated by a familiar urban environment, which in turn is defamiliarized by the automata-like people who inhabit it. At a later point in the novel, she also describes her experience of external reality as if being "plunged in a dream, when

all the faces are masks and only the trees are alive and you can almost see the strings that are pulling the puppets" (75). This commingling of familiar and unfamiliar and of wake and dream brings about a crisis of the proper and the "natural" – "touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature': one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world" (Royle 1). As Maria Walsh notes, Freud's early 20th century investigation of the objects and experiences that produce uncanny sensations occurred at a time when technology was imposing on the individual's integrity and security: "Photography and cinema were reproducing life, as it were, and encroaching industrialization and mechanical warfare were further aligning man to the machine" (21). From this uncanny landscape of the modern, Sasha realizes that there is no "way out," no way but to the inevitable destination of the "Exhibition."

The word "exhibition" resonates throughout *Good Morning, Midnight*, broadly alluding to the aestheticization of modern life, the transformation of the extra-aesthetic spheres of mass politics, labor, warfare, and everyday lifestyles into visual spectacles. More specifically, however, references in the novel suggest that the red-lettered placards of Sasha's dream advertise the Paris International Exposition of 1937, which opened in May and closed in November that year. Sasha travels to Paris in October 1937, and upon her arrival, the city and its hotels are crowded with international tourists who have come to see the "Exhibition" (30).[51] Like the preceding 20th century world fairs, the 1937 exposition offered its visitors a fantastic "dream city" within the city, a "scale model of the consumer revolution," incarnating "a conjunction between imaginative desires and material ones, between dreams and commerce" (R. Williams 64-65). While human beings had traditionally projected their desires for a richer, more satisfying life into the spheres of art and religion, their dreams were now increasingly exploited by business, making consumer goods and imagined lifestyles "the focal points of desire" (R. Williams 66). Passing off reveries as reality, the international exhibition presented the spectator with seemingly attainable dream versions of self and home, dreams that would soon

[51] Christina Britzolakis's "'This way to the exhibition': genealogies of urban spectacle in Jean Rhys's interwar fiction" (2007) and Linda Camarasana's "Exhibitions and Repetitions: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and the World of Paris, 1937" (2009) give in-depth discussions of Rhys's literary engagement with urban spaces and spectacles.

be available in widow displays and department stores beyond the exhibition grounds.

While the world fairs were carried out in the name of peace and progress, encouraging its visitors to leave behind any social, economic and political tensions as they entered the exhibition, the 1937 exhibition to a large extent turned into a showroom for Germany's National Socialism. Politically and emotionally worn out by the disasters of World War I, France had gradually been seduced by the fascist program of the Third Reich, which was considered a lesser threat to France than that of communism (Fiss 1). The organizers of the exposition thereby granted Germany's pavilion the fair's central exhibition space, directly facing the Soviet pavilion on the Champs de Mars. Inside the German pavilion, the most costly and successful part of the exhibition, the audience was presented with an alluring dream-world where iconography, artworks, technological displays and an elaborate cinema program advertised a highly aestheticized vision of German national identity, highlighting the virtues of peace, hospitality, beauty, and nature (Fiss 94). When viewed from the Champs de Mars, the two monolithic structures of Germany and the Soviet Union framed the Column of Peace, built on the Place du Trocadéro in the name of "pacifism, international solidarity and world peace" (qtd. in Fiss 58). With its delusive promise of the world's restoration and continuity, the make-believe world of the exhibition figures as an ungrounded repetition: Rather than a representation of reality, the exhibition sells a meaning without a properly definable content, to which reality is encouraged to conform.[52] The exhibition's simulation of the exterior world thus serves to demonstrate a distortion of imaginary and real which complicates a return to an authentic "home" – a distortion which permeates both the content and form of *Good Morning, Midnight*.

[52] In J. Hillis Miller's terminology, the exhibition can be viewed as an "ungrounded doubling," a simulacra which arises from "differential interrelations among elements which are all on the same plane," lacking "ground in some paradigm or archetype" (6). This form of repetition contrasts the traditional, grounded imitation, where the "validity of the mimetic copy is established by its truth of correspondence to what it copies" (6). There is something "ghostly" about the effects of the ungrounded repetition, Hillis Miller argues, "[i]t seems that X repeats Y, but in fact it does not, or at least not in the firmly anchored way of the first sort of repetition" (6).

Sasha's personal lack of anchorage is further underscored by the final sequence of her dream, in which a man who claims the role of her father suddenly appears, only to be murdered:

> Now a little man, bearded, with a snub nose, dressed in a long white night-shirt, is talking earnestly to me. 'I am your father,' he says. 'Remember that I am your father.' But blood is streaming from a wound in his forehead. 'Murder,' he shouts, 'murder, murder.' Helplessly I watch the blood streaming. At last my voice tears itself loose from my chest. I too shout: 'Murder, murder, help, help,' and the sound fills the room. I wake up and a man in the street outside is singing the waltz from *Les Saltimbanques*. 'C'est l'amour qui flotte dans l'air à ronde,' he sings. (12-13)

Although Sasha offers her dream no interpretative comment, the enigmatic father-figure can be read as the embodiment of lost familiarity, of the "pride," "name," "face," and "country" of which Sasha finds herself bereft. His death not only underlines her fundamental loss of roots and protection, it also dramatizes a collapsed version of the plot of *Les Saltimbanques* (1899), which tells of a foundling's reunification with her long-lost loving father.[53] The murder of the father in Sasha's dream, combined with the song from the outside street asserting that "love is in the air all around," create an uncanny dissonance of impressions which insists on Sasha's lack of belonging. From the vantage point of her rented room, a threat of forceful intrusion rather than a promise of love is in the air, as the dreamt presence of the earnest father, "dressed in a long white night-shirt," is replaced by that of the uncanny next-door stranger, who "is parading about as

---

[53] In Robert Ignatius Letellier's *Operetta: A Sourcebook, Les Saltimbanques* is listed as a Belle Epoque *opéra-comique* written by Maurice Oddoneau. *Les Saltimbanques* tells the tale of Suzanne, a foundling who is taken in by the abusive Malicorne, the director of a travelling circus. When pursued by a group of soldiers, she is rescued by André, a young officer, and the two fall in love. However, due to her lack of a proper background Suzanne regards herself unworthy of André's attention. Accompanied by three friends, Suzanne eventually runs away from home. The group forms a small circus troop and is asked to perform at the Castle of the Count des Étiquettes – André's uncle. During their performance, Suzanne sings a song she has learned as a child, a song the Count has composed and only performed in private. Thus, Suzanne is the Count's long-lost daughter, and her noble line of descent allows her to marry André (353-54). Progressing from circus to castle, from abuse to love, and from homelessness to home, the plot fulfils the audience's desire for a proper ending.

usual in his white dressing-gown. Hanging around. He is like the ghost of the landing. I am always running into him" (13). By guarding the hotel passage the man thwarts progress; his insistent presence mocking the possibility of a meaningful closure.

The image of an endless or blocked passage – in spatial, temporal, or psychological form – continues to reverberate throughout the novel, loosely foreshadowing and repeating the overall structure of the text. The process of representation within representation, Gregory Minissale explains, often points to the "*mis en abyme* of consciousness that produces it," producing effects such as "regress, vertigo, alienation," and even "aporia" (49-50).[54] In Sasha's case, the felt and narrated experience of circularity arises from her troubled relationship with her past. As she leaves her hotel in order to pursue her "transformation act" she tells herself that "[t]he thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance – no gaps … no 'Here this happened, here that happened'" (14). Yet despite her intention to keep the "old times" at bay, her present sense impressions of Paris – the stumbling upon a particular café or a familiar street corner – break up the intended linearity of her stay by bringing the past forward into her present awareness. Sasha refers to the often involuntary re-experiencing of past events as her "film-mind" (147), which again testifies to what Miller describes as the appropriation of inner life by a spectacularized external reality. By envisioning her own mind in terms of a cinema, Sasha also points to the novel's narrative mode; the continuous present. Because film depends on the sense-domain of vision, time always pushes forward; any moment or image is experienced as a unit occurring after the image that is previously registered. In other words, cinema has no proper tense system; it cannot visually transfer back into the story's own past (Shail 95). Cinema thereby invented the flashback, often considered to be one of its most important contributions to literary modernism: "flashbacks were innovated in cinema … *because* cinema is only capable of using the present tense – they signal a shift into a character's memory as it is retrieved in the present, not a shift into a past tense" (Shail 101). The present

[54] The original Greek form of "aporia" is *aporos*, which denotes "without passage." "*Poros* in Greek means both resource and passage or path," explains Stathis Gourgouris (138). *Aporos,* he continues, "mean[s] the opposite in both aspects … deprived of ways and means, not merely in terms of resources but also in terms of direction" (138).

unfolding of Sasha's past lacks interpretative comments that create narrative order and significance, which hints at a certain inability to assimilate or overcome the past. The novel thus reads as an unedited, potentially infinite film,[55] in which past and present intersect almost seamlessly. Frequently, references to the visuality of fashion serve as a means for both narrator and reader to navigate in time: "Was it in 1923 or 1924 that we lived round the corner, in the Rue Victor-Cousin, and Enno bought me that Cossack cap and the imitation astrakhan coat? … Was it in 1926 or 1927?"[56] (11). At another point in the narrative, the memory of a different coat triggers and marks the resurfacing of a past experience in the narrative "now": "Walking to the music of *LÁrlésienne*, remembering the coat I wore then – a black-and-white check with big pockets. We have just passed the hotel I lived in …" (72). As the narrative later returns to the present proper, the temporal transition is again prompted by the coat's design: "Walking to the music of *LÁrlésienne*. … I feel for the pockets of the check coat, and I am surprised when I touch the fur of the one I am wearing. … Pull yourself together, dearie. This is late October, 1937, and that old coat had its last outing a long time ago" (76). By way of flashbacks to and through fashion, Sasha's current transformation act is put into perspective, and shown to both contain and continue the many transformation acts of her past.

Loosely interweaving reality and dream, past and present, Sasha's first day-time excursion into the streets of Paris seems to resume where her previous nightmare was interrupted, with her arrival at an everyday version of the "Exhibition." Sasha now imaginatively sees her former self exiting an underground passage, and entering the dress-house where she was once employed as a receptionist:

---

[55] An avid cinema-goer, Sasha also compares the lack of true transformation in her own life to the plot of a film she watches during her Paris stay. The film's central character is "a good young man" who after a series of obstacles manages to rescue his employer from a scheming mistress, thereby earning the right to marry his daughter (89-90). The desired ending however, remains deferred: "He is waiting on the bank of a large pond, with a ring that he is going to offer her ready in his waistcoat pocket. He takes it out to make sure that he has it. Mad with happiness, he strides up and down the shores of the pond, gesticulating… The ring flies from his hand into the middle of the pond… He has to get the ring back; he must get it back. Exactly the sort of thing that happens to me. I laugh till tears come into my eyes. However, the film shows no sign of stopping, so I get up and go out. (90)

[56] Astrakhan coats and cloaks were fashionable during the late 1920s. "It was then that I started calling myself Sasha. I thought it might change my luck," Sasha adds, having paired a suitably Russia-sounding name with her imitation lambskin-coat and Cossack cap (11).

> I used to work in a shop just off this street. I can see myself coming out of the Métro station at the Rond-Point every morning at half-past eight, walking along the Avenue Marigny, turning to the left and then to the right, putting my coat and hat into the cloak-room, going along a passage and starting in with: 'Good morning, madame. Has madame a vendeuse?' (15-16)

The physical passage within Sasha's workplace figures as a textual passage into a sequence of past-in-present, which introduces the workings of the fashion system. Within the enclosed dream-world of the fashion house – "a large white-and-gold room with a dark-polished floor, imitation Louis Quinze chairs, painted screens" – Sasha assists the female customers with their "transformation acts," which are carried out according to the corporeal templates exhibited by the store: "elongated dolls, beautifully dressed, with charming and malicious oval faces" (16). With their oval faces and elongated limbs, the dress-house dolls are copies of the Art-Deco mannequin, designed by André Vigneau in 1925 and exhibited to massive acclaim at the Paris Exhibition of Decorative Arts that year. Although some Victorian display dolls had been given hyper-realistic features, most mannequins prior to the twenties were headless, limbless wax-figures. In contrast, the Deco mannequin was molded in solid material and fitted with arms, legs and heads, duplicating the dimensions of "real" women (Conor 106). Yet Art Deco simplified and de-familiarized the natural female body, reconfiguring it as artful sculpture. "Sometimes all naturalisation is cast aside," a contemporary critic noted, "sometimes face and hands are reduced to a decorative hieroglyphic traced in space" (qtd. in Gronberg 101). Another lauded the mannequins' "richness, their sumptuous skin [le luxe de leur épiderme], their pared-down contours" (qtd. in Gronberg 102). Between the 1920s and 1940s, the term "mannequin" referred both to inanimate display dolls and real women who worked as models in boutiques and department stores, yet it soon became clear that live models lacked the display dummy's simplified contours and smooth, ageless surface, appearing "ungainly" in comparison (Conor 109). With stylized skin and an elongated, streamlined figure, the inanimate mannequin was designed to be "a sculpture in the service of fashion" (Janneau, qtd. in Gronberg 101), allowed to "mean only what it sold" (Winokur, qtd. in Fischer 32).

A fabrication rather than a representation of the human body, the Deco mannequin inevitably affected its material model, installing a new perception of

femininity and the ideal female body shape. Whereas the foregoing Art Nouveau-movement had romanticized woman by associating her with nature and crude physicality, or in a more psychoanalytic strain, cast her as dangerous, deviant, and degenerate, Deco re-fashioned woman through abstraction and restraint (Fischer 29). On the one hand, Deco liberated the modern woman, increasing her mobility by "shearing" the female figure away from its "previous accreted meanings – mother, womanhood, domestic angel" (Winokur, qtd. in Fischer 32). Simultaneously, it imposed a body ideal of extreme slimness and symmetry, creating a direct link between modernity and weight-loss (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 248). Expected to rid herself of her Victorian past, with its "burden of fleshy curves," the modern woman was to be "slenderized and straightened, reduced in hip and breast size" (Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body* 248). Moreover, Deco also "sheared" away human complexity by de-naturalizing the mannequin's expressive body parts of face and hands, and by fitting her with a skull which under natural circumstances would be too narrow to contain a brain. In a manner which intertwines with the early 20th century's blurring of lines between man and machine, modern women were being aligned to the abstracted, inanimate mannequin. Confined to her receptionist's post, where her job is to "smil[e] a small, discreet smile [and] say 'Good afternoon, madame' …. 'Certainly, madame' … 'Good afternoon, madame'" (16), Sasha ironically envisions the mannequin as the perfect woman and employee: "I would feel as if I were drugged, sitting there, watching those damned dolls, thinking what a success they would have made of their lives if they had been women. Satin skin, silk hair, velvet eyes, sawdust heart – all complete" (16).

In light of Punday's corporeal narratology, the "all complete" inanimate mannequin also appears as *Good Morning, Midnight*'s "general" body. "[C]haracter bodies," argues Punday, are "used to stage the interaction between different types of corporeality, and … in the process a 'general' body overarch[es] the story" (85). Within Rhys's novel, the mannequin not only directs the sartorial-corporeal transformations of Sasha and other women, it also stands as a more general embodiment of the narrative's increasingly cold and spectacularized universe. The figure's features surface in some of the peripheral characters that Sasha encounters, such as that of a woman whose "red hair is arranged so carefully over her tiny skull. Her voice … hard and clear … tinny, meaningless" (43-44). Characterized by her seeming lack of human depth and vitality, the woman demonstrates a way of being in the world that Sasha both

fears and admires. Indeed, what Sasha desires is not merely the mannequin's perfected aestheticized surface, but also her being *only* surface. Following her emergence from the river, she has settled into an existence as "a bit of an automaton … – dry, cold and sane" (10). Yet her control falters already during her first night in Paris, as she starts crying in front of a fellow tourist in a restaurant: "'I understand,' she said, … Sometimes I'm just as unhappy as you are. But that's not to say that I let everybody see it'" (10). In the dress-house sequence, Sasha's inability to contain her inner state surfaces as she anxiously awaits the visit of Mr. Blank, the store's English proprietor. "Isn't there something you can do so that nobody looks at you or sees you?" she asks herself, "Of course, you must make your mind vacant, neutral, then your face also becomes vacant, neutral – you are invisible" (17). Yet, as Mr. Blank inquires about her professional qualities, Sasha is overcome with self-beratement, which causes her intended mannequin-like neutrality to collapse: "My hands are shaking, my heart is thumping, my hands are cold" (22). Unable to appropriate the mannequin's indifferent "sawdust heart" she also, according to Mr. Blank's critical eyes, fails to live up to its standard for youth and beauty. As she informs Mr. Blank of her previous employment as a *mannequin vivant*, his response registers her lack of visual constancy: "'You worked as a mannequin?' Down and up his eyes go, up and down. 'How long ago was this?' he says" (18).[57] When compared to the template of the inanimate mannequin, Sasha's human body remains inherently unruly; revealing too much of her inner self and having a too natural a surface.

The disciplining effect of Deco's abstracted corporeal ideal on contemporary women is further demonstrated with the arrival of two dress-house customers – an ageing Englishwomen and her daughter:

> 'Can you show me some of these pretty things?' the old lady says. 'I want something to wear in my hair in the evening.' She takes off her hat and she is perfectly bald on top – a white, bald skull with a fringe of grey hair. The daughter stays in the background. She is past shame, detached, grim. (19)

[57] Rhys's short story "Mannequin" (1927) givers further insight into the experience of being a live mannequin in a Parisian fashion house.

Shamelessly displaying signs of ageing, the mother represents the antithesis to the eternally young, silky-haired mannequin. In her survey of French women's magazines of the 1920s and 30s, Mary Lynn Stewart finds that in comparison with the society magazines of the Belle Epoque, few interwar pieces openly addressed women older than forty (205). The articles that did, generally treated ageing with discomfort, and titles such as "When Youth Leaves," "For Women Who Are No Longer Young," and "Women who are no longer twenty years old" recommended all signs of an ageing body to be covered up by means of appropriate dress and cosmetics (Stewart 205-206). Oblivious to the rules of contemporary beauty culture, Sasha's customer adorns rather than disguises her body: "The old lady complacently tries things on her bald head… She points to various things and says: 'Show me that – show me that.' A sturdy old lady with gay, bold eyes… A green feather waves over her bald head. She is calm and completely unconcerned" (20). The daughter, however, reacts with shame, her judgment reflecting her own implication in the beauty and fashion system. Faced with her daughter's comment that she has made "a perfect fool" of herself, Sasha finds the mother's eyes "still undaunted but something about her mouth and chin collapsing" (20).

The way in which modern beauty and fashion culture rejects and replaces the natural body with one of aestheticized perfection is also inevitably at the heart of its commercial operation. While the dress-house reveals to Sasha her shortcomings, it also offers for sale a means of self-mastery, in the form of a "black dress with wide sleeves embroidered in vivid colours – red, green, blue, purple"[58] (25) – a dress she has not yet been able to buy. Faced with Mr. Blank's judgment and the realization that he has truly *seen* her flaws (14), Sasha longs for the dress "madly, furiously," knowing that "if [she] could get it everything would be different" (28). With its implied meanings of coolness and elegance, the dress would have served as her protective armor against humiliation: "I have tried it on; I have seen myself in it … If I had been wearing it I should never have stammered or been stupid" (25). Sasha's desire for self-completion through fashion also replicates the dynamics of contemporary "make-over" and "before-and-after" advertising. Drawing on Elaine Scarry's argument that injured soldiers of war "remember forward" to a "better world" in which everything will be

[58] Simple and elegant day-dresses, often with bell sleeves and embroidered collars, skirts, or panels, and designed to elongate the body, were fashionable during the early 1920s.

restored, a totality which both justifies and is made possible by bodily fragmentation,[59] Armstrong identifies a similar mechanism in interwar commodity capitalism: "Indeed, it is fragmentation and the promise of a restored integrity, like that in war, which renders the commoditization of the body possible" (*Modernism, Technology* 98). This mechanism is particularly well illustrated by Anna of Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*:

> About clothes, it's awful. Everything makes you want pretty clothes like hell... 'Beautifully dressed woman.' ... As if it isn't enough that you want to be beautiful, that you want to have pretty clothes, that you want it like hell... But no, it's jaw, jaw, and sneer, sneer all the time. And the shop-windows sneering and smiling in your face. And then you look at the skirt of your costume, all crumpled at the back. And your hideous underclothes. You look at your hideous underclothes and you think, 'All right, I'll do anything for good clothes.' (22)

Standing in front of the display-window, Anna is faced with a double image – the specular reflection of her own body overlaid onto commodity culture's template of the modern woman. The windows make her aware of her own visibility and faulty image, while simultaneously encouraging her transformation by way of the exhibited garments. The two images resemble the "before" and "after" of advertising, with Anna's specular self-image of "before" having been invalidated by the "after"-image she is now remembering forward to. Likewise, Sasha remains trapped in-between her own two discrepant images, and willing to do "anything" to make them cohere.

In Sasha's dress-house narrative, the experience of being trapped within the logic of the "Exhibition" is also concretely and spatially rendered. The sense of incompleteness brought on by Mr. Blank's presence culminates as Sasha is asked to deliver a note to the cashier, *la caisse* – a simple task made utterly meaningless by his English pronunciation, "kise" (22). Panic-stricken, Sasha nonetheless makes her way through a web of corridors behind the store, wanting to restore her reputation as the good employee:

---

[59] See Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985).

> [P]assages that don't lead anywhere, steps going up and steps going down… I turn to the right, walk along another passage, down a flight of stairs… I try another passage. It ends in a lavatory… I turn the corner, find myself back in the original passage and collide with a strange young man. He gives me a nasty look… After this it becomes a nightmare. I walk up stairs, past doors, along passages – all different, all exactly alike. There is something very urgent that I must do. But I don't meet a soul and all the doors are shut. (22-23)

The experience of being in passage, but with no clear point of arrival, is described as "a nightmare," which relates back to the uncanny dreamscape of the Underground, with its "passages to the left and passages to the right, but no exit sign" (12). As in the corridors of the dream and her hotel, Sasha runs into a male figure, "a strange young man" who gives her "a nasty look." These narrative episodes, as Sasha notes of the physical dress-house passages, are "all different, all exactly alike," a statement which also reverberates in the overall construction of the novel. Unable to find the "kise," Sasha inevitably circles back to the starting point of Mr. Blank's office, the imperfect cog in his operation: "'Extraordinary,' he says … God knows I'm used to fools, but this complete imbecility. … 'Just a hopeless, helpless little fool, aren't you?' he says. … On the surface, yes. Underneath? No, I don't think so. 'Well aren't you?' 'Yes, yes, yes, yes. Oh, yes'" (24). Sasha's "yes" gives a tentative answer to the novel's opening question, confirming an atmosphere of non-arrival.

Rhys's insistence on Sasha's blocked passage also reflects in the novel's tone, which is often colored by a mood of irritation and resentment. While Sasha finds herself too uncertain to protest against Mr. Blank, or whichever figure of authority is encompassed by his name, she is also too strong to blindly accept his contemptuous treatment of her. Sasha's private, unruly self, which continues to exist, as she puts it, "underneath" her constructed surface, is dominated by what Sianne Ngai has termed "ugly feelings" – petty, non-cathartic emotions resulting from social powerlessness and restricted agency. Observing that literary scholars have traditionally focused on grand emotions such as fear, sublimity, anger, and love, or potentially morally dignified feelings such as sympathy or melancholia, Ngai turns her attention to works that display minor emotions such as envy, anxiety, paranoia, irritation, boredom, and passivity. Often considered unacceptable by society, these emotions do not offer therapeutic solutions to the

situations they arise from, and as Sasha's irritated unvoiced "No" suggests in the above, neither are they able to trigger unambiguous social action or transformation. Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* (2005), which takes Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" as its master plot, thus reads as a counter study to Brooks's *Reading for the Plot*, highlighting the capacity of literary narratives to diagnose rather than resolve situations, "and situations marked by blocked or thwarted action in particular" (27). The diagnostic power of negative affects, Ngai explains, is closely related to the rhetorical attitude of irony: "For the morally degraded and seemingly unjustifiable status of these feelings tends to produce an unpleasurable feeling *about* the feeling that significantly parallels the doubleness on which irony, as an evaluative stance hinging on a relationship between the said and the unsaid, fundamentally depends" (Ngai 10). In a similar vein, the feeling tone of Rhys's novel is dominated by Sasha's meta-responses to the ugly feelings elicited by her lack of agency and progress, which produces an ironic, evaluative distance to the situation at hand. In confirming Mr. Blank's suggestion that she is "a hopeless, helpless little fool" (24), Sasha has by no means adopted the role of the mindless mannequin, but is someone who remains acutely aware of her own ritualized social behavior. "My usual conversation," she later confirms, "goes like this: 'I believe it's going to be a fine day today – yes, I hope it is – yes – yes – yes –'" (135). Before leaving the dress-house, Sasha, in an inner monologue, lashes out at Mr. Blank in a way which sharply contrasts with her compliant "yes":

> Well, let's argue this out, Mr. Blank. You, who represent Society, have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month. That's my market value, for I am an inefficient member of Society, slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray… Let's say that you have this mystical right to cut my legs off. But the right to ridicule me afterwards because I am a cripple – no, that I think you haven't got. And that's the right you hold most dearly, isn't it. You must be able to despise the people you exploit. … (25-26)

Sasha's critique of the exploitative workings of "Society" here resonates with that of Loy's Mrs. Jones, who describes how "the atrocious jaws of the gigantic organism will open at fixed intervals and spit at them rations sufficient to sustain their coalescence with the screeching, booming, crashing dynamism of the

universal 'works'" (*Insel* 23-24). Moreover, through her use of corporeal imagery, by which her lack of agency and self-sufficiency is likened to a crippled body, Sasha associates the dehumanizing effects of capitalism with those of war. Throughout the narrative, which opens with juxtaposed references to fashion and artificial limbs, Sasha repeatedly calls attention to ways in which societies' drives for profit and power cause the fragmentation of human bodies, both materially and cognitively. Sasha's critique, however, remains largely private and unvoiced. "Alleluia!" she immediately continues in response to her above-quoted outburst, "Did I say all this? Of course I didn't. I didn't even think it" (26). In line with Ngai's theorization of ugly feelings, Sasha's emotional meta-response "reinforce[s] the negativity of the original emotion" (Ngai 10), it loathes, criticizes and expresses embarrassment about her initial passive compliance, while simultaneously underscoring the apparent impossibility of transforming her "yes" to a "no."

The dress-house's unmaking and making of its female customers continues to repeat itself in the novel's temporal present, with Sasha as a compliant yet self-critical participant. As the hotel receptionist inspects her passport upon her arrival in Paris, he gives her hat "a gloomy, disapproving look," to which Sasha admits that it "shouts 'Anglaise', my hat. And my dress extinguishes me. And then this damn old fur coat slung on top of everything else – the last idiocy" (14). A sartorial kind of passport, Sasha's outfit connotes the wrong kind of meaning, and she subsequently intends to become more French. Her present desire to blend in with the Parisian scene echoes her initial arrival in the city years earlier, which first introduced her to the ideal of the fashionable *Parisienne*:

> A girl came into the café and sat down at the next table. She was wearing a grey suit, the skirt short and tight and the blouse very fresh and clean. And a cocky black hat like a Scots soldier's glengarry. Her handbag was lying on the table near her – patent leather to match her shoes. (Handbag…. What a lot of things I've got to get! Would a suit like that be a good thing to get? No, I think I had better get. …) And she walked so straight and quick on her high-heeled shoes. Tap, tap, tap, her heels…. (103)

With an outfit that reveals and enhances her body, the woman's look is alluringly feminine, yet her hat, which invokes that of a soldier, contributes a touch of masculinity, and thus agency, and her mastery of high heels adds to her air of sophistication and self-assertion. Demonstrating to Sasha a relationship between fashion and integrity, the woman fuels the make-over that extends well into the novel's present. However, the end goal of Sasha's transformation is now further away than ever before, much due to her ageing body. Her disconcerting lack of youth is confirmed as she overhears a café patron describe her as *la vieille* (35). "Me? Impossible," she responds silently (35), her disappointment echoing that of the old English dress-house customer, whose predicament is now her own. "Never mind," she tells herself, "I have some money now. I may be able to do something about it" (14). By shopping for the intertwined meanings of French flair and youthfulness, Sasha sets out to become *fashionable*, which, according to Elizabeth Wilson, "is both to stand out and to merge with the crowd, to lay claim to the exclusive and to follow the herd" (6).

Sasha's consecutive movement through Paris is metonymic in nature, following her quest to obtain the different items that make the fashionable look. In portraying the modern female shopper, Rhys dwells on the difficulties of having to align one's body with the seemingly attainable designs and ideals displayed by the "all complete" mannequins. To a certain extent, the consumer's subjection to external and pre-conceived standards echoes that of the classical dancer, as discussed in chapter one. Whereas Fitzgerald's Alabama struggles to overcome her resisting natural body, molding it to the finite movement vocabulary of ballet – what Duncan termed its "maze of intricate artifice" ("Movement is Life" 79) – Sasha comments on the vulnerability inflicted on modern women by the unfixed surfaces of the "Exhibition." What the two characters have in common, is an irrevocable almost masochistic allegiance to abstracted forms dictated by outside forces. In looking into the window of a Parisian hat shop, Sasha is confronted with her own unassertive role in the fashion system as she observes a sartorial makeover which, however discouraging, parallels and foreshadows her own:

> There is a customer inside. Her hair, half-dyed, half-grey, is very disheveled. As I watch she puts on a hat, makes a face at herself in the glass, and takes it off very quickly. She tries another – then another. Her

> expression is terrible – hungry, despairing, hopeful, quite crazy. At any moment you expect her to start laughing the laugh of the mad. (57-58)

The customer's desire for a new look has tipped over into escalating desperation, as the choice of multiple variations of the fashionable hat – offered by a saleswoman "with a calm, mocking expression" (58) – perpetually defers her a specular image of "after." The transaction both prompts and sustains the customer's loss of self-composure, her grimacing face a testimony to her limbo of incompletion. In an earlier episode, Sasha also comments on the embarrassment of being seen in such a condition: "A girl is making-up at an open window immediately opposite. The street is so narrow that we are face to face, so to speak. … She averts her eyes, her expression hardens. I realize that if I watch her making-up she will retaliate by staring at me when I do the same" (30). To openly observe someone in the process of compensating their lacks is to inflict torment on that person, and Sasha also describes the current scene between saleswoman and customer "like watching the devil with a damned soul" (58). As she proceeds to buy her own hat in a different milliner's shops, the salesgirl confirms that "The hats now are very difficult, very difficult. All my clients say that the hats now are very difficult to wear" (58). After having spent hours in the shop's "cruel, crude light" attempting to customize herself to the present style, she reluctantly purchases a hat which "must be worn forward and very much on one side" (59).[60] As she leaves, the salesgirl repeats that "All the hats now are very difficult. All my clients are complaining" (59-60), as if to remind Sasha that the fashionable hat, however "difficult," is nonetheless always the right hat. What the customer buys, after all, is not the hat in and of itself, but its signified meaning of *chic,* which testifies to Barthes's claim that it is "not the object but the name that creates desire" (xii).

Sasha's relationship with fashion further serves to demonstrate the indeterminable quality of the modern makeover: As soon as the perfect hat has been secured, another lack will make itself known, as implied by Sasha's observation of the hat-shop customer's disheveled, half-dyed hair. Throughout the first part of her Paris stay, Sasha daydreams about her own visit to the hair salon, her as-of-yet unrealized perfected look serving as a life preserver in

[60] Sasha here refers to a hat in the French beret style, which in the early to mid-1930s replaced the popular 1920s cloche hat.

difficult situations. By remembering forward to a state of restored integrity, she is able to endure the fragmenting intrusions of her past, as well as her present-day concerns about ageing:

> I try to decide what colour I shall have my hair dyed, and hang on to that thought as you hang onto something when you are drowning. Shall I have it red? Shall I have it black? Now, black – that would be startling. Shall I have it blond cendré? But blond cendré, madame, is the most difficult of colours. It is very, very rarely, madame, that hair can be successfully dyed blond cendré. It's even harder on the hair than dyeing it platinum blonde. First it must be bleached, that is to say, its own colour must be taken out of it – and then it must be dyed, that is to say, another colour must be imposed on it. (Educated hair. … And then, what?) (44)

While Sasha's internal dialogue with a make-believe hairdresser serves as a diversion to keep her afloat, it also reveals an ambivalent desire for and a critique of the effects of hair dye chemicals. The verb "impose" suggests an obtrusion of the natural; Sasha's own color must be completely "taken out" in order to be replaced by "the most difficult," age-defying color of ash-blonde. Although the procedure is complicated and "hard" on the hair, the desired result *is* realistically attainable. As Sasha finally realizes her visit to the salon and sits waiting for the dye to do its work, she continues to reflect on this process while reading the "answers to correspondents"-sections in women's magazines:

> You will never get thin that way – never. Life is not so easy. Life mademoiselle, is difficult. At your age it will be very difficult to get thin... But there is hope (turn to page 5), and yet more hope (turn to page 9). ... I am in the middle of a long article by a lady who has had her breasts lifted when he takes the dryer off my head. (52-53)

The magazine columns encourage women not only to cover up flaws and weaknesses by means of fashionable clothing but recommend the natural body to be altered through invasive techniques such as dieting and plastic surgery. The columnists underscore these processes to be "difficult," and one might add, almost impossible, if judging by the template of the Deco mannequin. However, the magazines simultaneously offer "hope," adopting the rhetoric of modern

advertising, in which the body is turned into a war-zone "characterized by threats, deficiencies and deferrals ... a zone of deficits in terms of attributes ... with matching remedies" (Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology* 98). In Sasha's own case, the hairdresser – whom she describes as "the complete artist" (48) – eventually manages to impose "a very good blonde cendré" on her graying hair, deeming the operation "[a] success" (53).

Yet Sasha's above-quoted parenthetical question "And then, what?" (44) begs an answer. Although the new hair *looks* perfect, its attached meanings of youth and vigor go unanchored – its synthetic color failing to bring to life what it signifies. Within Sasha's narrative, the only character who truly owns the quality of youth is her past acquaintance Paulette, a friend of her now former husband:

> She is a gay, saucy wench, a great friend of Enno's. I admire and try to copy her and am jealous of her. She reads us extracts from letters written to her by a lover in the provinces… "'Your breasts fulfil the promise of your eyes.' He's original, isn't he? And the two thousand francs I asked you for – where are they, vieux con?" … In the romantic tradition, Paulette. Long, yellow hair, soft, brown eyes, a bowl of violets in her room. When she looks at herself in the glass, naked, she's as proud as Lucifer. (112-13)

With her "yellow hair," "soft, brown eyes" and a body in which she takes pride, Paulette embodies rather than imitates vitality. Possessing and playfully capitalizing on her corporeality, she is associated with life, laughter and spontaneity, and through her self-conscious attempt to copy Paulette, Sasha dispossesses herself of these very qualities. "I've never been really young," she admits, "I've never played…" (130). As a continuation of her lifelong imitation of youth, Sasha's present-day ash-blonde look remains, to use Barthes's words, "forever a disappointed meaning" (288). Literally unattached to roots and to lived reality, its remedy is inevitably short-lived: "I had expected to think about this damned hair of mine without any let-up for days. (Is it all right? Is it not all right?) But before the taxi has got back to Montparnasse I have forgotten all about it" (53).

Sasha's transformation act thus shows the signs of an addiction, with each completion bringing her back into a state of lack. "As soon as I sober up I start

again," she explains about her own excessive drinking (37),[61] a mechanism which to a large extent also describes her spending on fashion and beauty items. The attempt to maintain meaning through consumption resonates with Sasha's memory of having worked as a guide for the American Express, escorting a "very rich and very sad" English mother and daughter through Paris (27). "Neither can imagine what it is like to be happy or even to be gay," Sasha observes, and while the two are "strict teetotalers" they alleviate their sadness by way of shopping:

> We go to the French-English dress-shops and we go to the French-French dress-shops. … Now she wants to be taken to the exhibition of Loie Fuller materials, and she wants to be taken to the place where they sell that German camera which can't be got anywhere else outside Germany, and she wants to be taken to a place where she can buy a hat which will épater everybody she knows and yet be easy to wear … (27)

Criss-crossing the city in search of pre-determined objects and experiences, Sasha finds herself "[s]tanding in the middle of the Place de l'Opéra, losing my head and not knowing the way to the Rue de la Paix. North, south, east, west – they have no meaning for me. …" (26). The city streets become a labyrinth resembling that of Mr. Blank's dress-house, and although Sasha manages to locate "everything, except perhaps the hat" (27), the items fail to add up to any final feeling of contentment, which leaves her with a meager tip and no future commissions. In contrast to the perpetual movement of Stein's Duncan portrait, where a tension between notions of departure and return makes movement meaningful, that of Rhys's novel unfolds through characters' fixation on meanings that are inherently unfixed, and as unreachable as a mirage. The mother and daughter's addiction to consumer goods and their disappointing meanings serves to crystallize Sasha's own, adding to the novel's aporic refrain that "the passages will never lead anywhere" (28).

Thus, what Sasha's thwarted progress diagnoses is a world in which meaning travels on the surface – a spectacular and ultimately disappointing world which, to borrow Brooks's words, unfolds as "something close to pure

[61] In her article "'As Soon as I Sober Up I Start Again': Alcohol and the Will in Jean Rhys's Pre-War Novels" (2006), Jane Nardin discusses Rhys's literary treatment of alcohol addiction.

metonymy without metaphoric arrest" (192). Yet while the novel insists on Sasha's return to the same – "Always the same hotel … Always the same stairs, always the same room," it also foregrounds her persisting longing for "roots" that are "well struck in" (28). In mourning her lack of "roots," Sasha refers not only to identifying features such as a birth name or an ancestral location, but also in a wider sense of the notion of "home," to a meaningful relation to the natural world. In rare passages interspersed throughout the novel, Sasha manages, however fleetingly, to form a meaningful relation to the surrounding world by focusing her attention on the difference of nature. In one such episode, a defeated Sasha temporarily suspends her strict program by straying into the Luxembourg Gardens: "Now I can see nothing but the slender, straight trunks of trees. They look young, these trees. This is a gentle place … It isn't sad here, it isn't even melancholy" (46). The mere presence of trees is enough to lift her mood; strong and slender they seem to rejoin the meaning of youthfulness to its natural and material origin. In another moment of more severe emotional trauma, the rooted tree helps Sasha stabilize her existence, keeping her from getting lost in painful thoughts: "Not to think. Only to watch the branches of that tree and the pattern they make standing out against a cold sky" (116). And in a previously quoted passage, she explains her waking life as being "plunged in a dream, when all the faces are masks and only the trees are alive" (75) – the growing tree serving as a last reminder of an authentic, original reality. Through its few yet impactful references to living nature, the novel voices a concern about the social reality's escalating loss of depth, a tendency Sasha, by grounding her emotional reality in references to living trees, attempts to arrest.

Sasha's attention to the materiality of nature also impacts the tone of her language, her few descriptions of natural movement characterized by a sober, almost lyrical tone. Sasha's poetic inclination is particularly prominent in a passage in which she remembers her first hotel room in Paris, one she shared with her husband Enno. Her imaginative framing of a bunch of tulips in a vase imbues the rented room, as well as her troubled marriage, with a rare feeling of rest:

> The curtains are thin, and when they are drawn the light comes through softly… There is a wind, and the flowers on the window-sill, and their shadows on the curtains, are waving. Like swans dipping their beaks in water. Like the incalculable raising its head, uselessly and wildly, for one

> moment before it sinks down, beaten, into the darkness. Like skulls on long, thin necks. Plunging wildly when the wind blows, to the end of the curtain, which is their nothingness. Distorting themselves as they plunge. The musty smell, the bugs, the loneliness, this room, which is part of the street outside – this is all I want from life. (109)

Sasha likens the flowers to a group of swans, a complex symbol in Western art. According to Greek mythic beliefs, the swan sings a last celestial song before it dies and, in Sasha's words, "sinks down… into the darkness." The fable made it the attribute of Apollo, the god of poetry and music, and a pair of swans is also seen drawing the chariot of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love. In the lingering image, the interaction of sun and wind creates in the cut flowers, whose natural beauty will soon expire, a visual swan song. Blown by the wind, they raise their heads into the sunlight, and next, are beaten down into the shadows, their movement engaging the opposites of lightness and darkness, life and death. The open window, which serves to connect the room with the street, contributes to an experience of coherence rather than the feeling of impasse usually associated with Sasha's room. Sharply contrasting her perpetual quest for fulfillment, she finds the moment to contain "all I want from life."

Sasha's ability to strike root in what is perceived as an original reality culminates with her pregnancy, an event which surfaces in several memory fragments scattered throughout the novel. Although the pregnancy is unplanned and unwanted, the expected baby grounds Sasha's body in the dynamic cycle of nature, which suspends the novel's sterile, metonymic repetition:

> Now snow is falling. There is the reflection of snow in the room. The light makes everything seem strange. The mound of my stomach is hidden under the bedclothes. So calm I feel, watching myself in the glass opposite. My hair hangs down on my shoulders. It is curly again and the corners of my mouth turn up. (114)

Interestingly, this is the only occasion on which Sasha directly refers to and is accepting of her natural looks. Feeling "so calm," she no longer regards her specular image as a war-zone of deficiencies and lacks, despite the encouragement of contemporary body culture that she should do so. In her study of French interwar women's magazines, Stewart finds that the topics of

pregnancy and maternity were mostly treated with silence, mirroring bourgeois women's resistance to be defined first and foremost by motherhood (44). The few magazines that *did* breach the topic recommended "dresses that do not draw attention," often with vertical stripes or pleats to disguise the belly, and with no "ornamentation encircling the bust or the hips, which tends to enlarge the silhouette" (Stewart 45). Expressing no concern about the effects of potentially constricting garments on the well-being of the fetus, the fashion writer's focus remained on the visual appearance of the mother's figure (Stewart 45). Thus, women's magazines projected a woman who, in line with the inanimate mannequin, existed outside of the realm of natural reproduction. In sharp contrast, Sasha now figures as the Deco-mannequin's antithesis; her non-ironic smile cancelling out its "malicious face," her loose, curly hair now resembling that of Paulette rather than the mannequin's "silk hair," and her swelling belly ultimately rejecting its ideal of an elongated, constant figure. Combined with the softness and natural light of the outside snow, the scene challenges and temporarily breaks up the austere corporeal atmosphere of the "Exhibition."

However, extending the novel's motif of impasse, Sasha's grounding in the realm of nature remains short-lived. Echoing the death of the father-figure in Sasha's nightmare, the embodiment, perhaps, of her lack or loss of kinship and belonging, the illness and eventual passing of the newborn baby cancels out the promise of a new beginning. A reluctant mother, Sasha soon comes to "like taking him in [her] arms and looking at him," his "lovely forehead, incredibly white, the eyebrows drawn very faintly in gold dust…" (51). Yet the baby is too pale and quiet, and after a few weeks, "there he is, lying with a ticket tied round his wrist because he died in a hospital" (52). Once again, the austere atmosphere of the external world invades Sasha's fragile sense of home; the possibility of a genuine human connection irrevocably halted by the baby "[l]ying so cold and still" (116). The sense of softness and vitality associated with Sasha's maternal state is also further revoked by the midwife's cosmetic remedy to her post-partum body: "'Now I am going to arrange that you will be just like what you were before. There will be no trace, no mark, nothing.'… She swathes me up in very tight, very uncomfortable bandages. Intricately she rolls them and ties them" (51). The most urgent issue at hand, according to the midwife, is the immediate restoration of Sasha's bodily surface; a process analogous to the post-war reconstruction of the injured soldier's body. Thus, what the midwife finally assists is not the birth of new life, but the re-birth of Sasha's socially valued

body: “And five weeks afterwards there I am, with not one line, not one wrinkle, not one crease” (52). “But my heart,” she later adds, “heavy as lead, heavy as a stone” (116). On the one hand, Sasha’s sadness exposes the shallowness of the corporeal transformation act, its failure to truly make her, on an existential level, “be just like [she was] before” (51). Further, her heavy heart serves to underline the prevailing boundary between subject and object; the midwife’s imposing of the mannequin’s creaseless surface failing to bring about its “sawdust heart.”

Although *Good Morning, Midnight* is by no means an artist’s novel, having a narrator-protagonist who consumes rather than creates, it does reflect explicitly on the role of traditional art within its own hyper-aesthetized world. While there seems to be no official “way out” from the expansive reality of the “Exhibition,” Sasha, through a fleeting acquaintance, is unexpectedly invited to visit to the studio of Serge, a Jewish painter. Sharply contrasting the artistic practices of the midwife and hairdresser, which center on the covering up of physical and emotional inconsistencies and signs of lived life, Serge’s art shows a clear critical tendency in exposing these very qualities. Within the novel, Serge’s small studio represents a counter-exhibition to the official political and capitalist exhibitions, and through the eyes of Sasha, his works come to shed critical light on the identity politics of the exterior world. The walls of Serge’s large, empty room are covered with African masks, which Serge claims are “straight from the Congo”: “I made them. This one isn’t bad” (76). While his comment expresses fascination with the idea of the perfect copy, his artistic ideas surpass those of mainstream society. To the sound of Martinique music on the gramophone, Serge “holds the mask over his face and dances. ‘To make you laugh,’ he says. He dances very well. His thin, nervous body looks strange, surmounted by the hideous mask” (77). Serge’s hybrid dance performs for Sasha the game she is involved in by wearing her imitation Cossack cap or French hat, borrowing cultural signifiers as they are needed. While throughout the novel, Sasha is fearful about a reality in which “all the faces are masks” (75), Serge reveals such masks to be assumed and arbitrary, each hiding a nervous body. With its eclectic mixing of ethnic and cultural markers, the dance of Serge, a Russian Jew in Paris, further resonates with Sasha’s own lack of a home and a father figure. By extension, it also challenges the set-up of the 1937 Exhibition, which, as Jess Issacharoff observes, “segregate[d] otherness in its strict delineations of national monuments to imperial power” (118). While the national pavilions too remain fabricated and largely arbitrary representations of identity,

they seem, with their massive grandeur, fixed and unchallengeable. Sharply contrasting the Exhibition's dream world of separate pavilions, Serge's "thin, nervous body" embodies otherness; his performance exhibiting the motley identities of those who have "no pride, no name, no face, no country," those who "don't belong anywhere" (38).

Whereas Serge's dance invites the onlooker to dwell on non-identical identities, his painterly output exposes bodies that are marginalized by the novel's general body culture. As Serge's friend Delmar attempts to arrange for Sasha a spontaneous exhibition of Serge's canvases, the paintings "refuse" to be displayed according to the logic of the commoditized exhibition: "There are a lot of empty frames stacked up against the wall. Delmar arranges them round the room and puts the canvases one by one into them. The canvases resist. They curl up; they don't want to go into the frames. He pushes and prods them so that they go in and stay in, in some sort of fashion" (82). Not only do the pictures, as Issacharoff notes, "resist their transformation from creation to commodity" (117); Serge's painterly motifs also break with commodity culture's restrictive framing of the human body. The paintings portray street-sauntering prostitutes and irregular bodies exhibited in the circus, those whose existence depends on the commodification of their bodies: "The misshapen dwarfs juggle with huge coloured balloons, the four-breasted woman is exhibited, the old prostitute waits hopelessly outside the urinoir, the young one under the bec de gaz…" (84). These are bodies that do not belong to the daylight, opposites to the elongated, hard, and inanimate bodies promoted by the dress-house.[62] "It is astonishing how vivid they [the paintings] are in this dim light," Sasha muses, "Now the room expands and the iron band round my heart loosens. The miracle has happened. I am happy" (83). By articulating the identities and bodies that the Exhibition invalidates, Serge's art shows Sasha that a reconfiguration of reality *is* possible, which serves to cancel out her experience of impasse. The loosening of the "iron band" around Sasha's heart also impacts the quality of her language, effectively removing its layer of ugly feelings. When compared to her regular social

[62] Rhys's title is taken from the same-titled poem by Emily Dickinson, of which the two first stanzas serve as the novel's prologue: "Good morning, Midnight! / I'm coming home, / Day got tired of me –/ How could I of him? / Sunshine was a sweet place, / I liked to stay – / But Morn didn't want me – now – /So good night, Day!" Echoing Dickinson's speaker, who announces her expulsion from the male gendered realm of the sunlit Day, the notion of night takes on several overlapping meanings throughout the course of Rhys's novel.

dialogue, in which "[e]very word … has chains round its ankles" (88), as well as her inner monologue, which ironically reinforces her feeling of entrapment, her language – as in her reflections on nature – now takes on a sober, honest tone. Surrounded by Serge's artworks, Sasha goes off into "a vague dream" which, fronted by the hopeful word "perhaps," envisions a room which resembles a home:

> Perhaps one day I'll live again round the corner in a room as empty as this. Nothing in it but a bed and a looking-glass. Getting the stove lit at about two in the afternoon – the cold and the stove fighting each other. Lying near the stove in complete peace… and outside Paris. And the dreams that you have, alone in an empty room, waiting for the door that will open, the thing that is bound to happen… (83)

In contrast to Sasha's rented room, which induces a "nightmare feeling," the room of the daydream is one of "complete peace." Importantly, it is also a room with only one bed, which suggests an atmosphere of safety and self-sufficiency. Yet, the "door that will open, the thing that is bound to happen" also resonates with Sasha's earlier encounter with the ghost-like man who attempted to enter her room: "I put my hand on his chest, push him backwards and bang the door" (31). In imbuing the door with the ambivalence of a new beginning *and* a continuation of the past – of "no" and "yes" – Sasha's vision resonates with Gaston Bachelard's observations about the relationship between doors and dreams:

> [H]ow many daydreams we should have to analyze under the simple heading of Doors! For the door is an entire cosmos of the Half-open. In fact, it is one of its primal images, the very origin of a daydream that accumulates desires and temptations… The door schematizes two strong possibilities, which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open. But then come the hours of greater imagining sensibility. … [W]hen so many doors are closed, there is one that is just barely ajar. We have only to give it a very slight push! The hinges have been well oiled. And our fate becomes visible. (222-23)

While Sasha's door has previously been padlocked and her heart clasped with "an iron band," the studio holds the promise of a home rooted in human togetherness. Contrary to Sasha's nightly dream, in which a steel-handed man ushered her along toward the Exhibition, Serge's unofficial exhibition is curated by the human hand: "When he shakes my hand like that and says 'Amis' I feel very happy…" (84). Upon leaving the studio, Sasha admits that "I'd forgotten what it was like, the touch of the human hand" (84). The sense of contact that Serge's touch invites is also felt in his paintings, which demonstrates to Sasha the difference between commodities and art. Because the art works are grounded in lived human experience, Serge's exhibition holds an expressive quality, managing not just to satisfy Sasha's wish of merging with the fashionable same, but to validate her experience of difference, as well as its wider resonance in the surrounding world. In contrast to the short-lived remedies of her transformation act, whose meanings collapse almost as soon as they have been acquired, Sasha finds herself walking back to her hotel with an awareness that "the pictures walk along with me" (84). Wrapped up in the newfound experience of a shared humanity, Sasha reports a fragile sense of true transformation, a feeling of being home in the world: "Now I am not thinking of the past at all. I am well in the present" (84).

Outside the limited space of Serge's studio however, the critical tendency of art loses its force. Back in her hotel room, Sasha surveys a painting she has bought, depicting "an old Jew with a red nose, playing the banjo" (83): "I unroll the picture and the man standing in the gutter, playing his banjo, stares at me. He is gentle, humble, resigned, mocking, a little mad. He stares at me. He is double-headed, double-faced. He is singing 'It has been', singing 'It will be'. Double-headed and with four arms" (91). Whereas inside Serge's studio the paintings accentuated and legitimized the non-identical, Sasha's picture now insists on the portrayed figure's eternal homelessness. Having two faces and four arms, the Jew resembles the other subjects of Serge's paintings, who either appear in pairs, or whose physical features surface in twos or fours. Serge's artworks thus invoke the figure of Janus, the two-headed Roman god whose Latin name, *ianua,* means "door" (Jenks 773). With his two faces, one looking forward and one backwards "just as a door faces two ways," Janus protected entrances, doorways, gateways and passages (Jenks 770). While Janus originally watched over the threshold of the house, keeping evil from entering the home, he later emerged as the guardian of the beginnings and endings of temporal cycles (Jenks 770). "It has been, it will

be," Sasha imagines the man in the gutter to sing, thereby pointing to a future which holds another circular repetition of the past.

Thus, the daydream's "door that will open" now seems bound to open onto the homelessness that has always been, affirming Sasha's lack of arrival:

> I stare back at him and think about being hungry, being cold, being hurt, being ridiculed… This damned room – it's saturated with the past. … It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in. Now the whole thing moves in an ordered, undulating procession past my eyes. Rooms, streets, streets, rooms. … (91)

The "complete peace" postulated by the daydream is thereby cancelled out; the vision of "home" collapsing into an endless string of metonymy, a reel of memories projecting from Sasha's "film-mind." Re-experiencing fragments of her interwar years – comprising the optimistic arrival in Paris together with her husband, a perpetual array of impermanent dwellings, clothes, jobs, and acquaintances whom she "never quite know[s]" (111), the death of her newborn son, and a failing marriage – Sasha can only confirm that they cannot be bound into a proper story. The recounted episodes are marked by ellipsis, lacking satisfying connections and narrative progression, and leading nowhere but to her present-day room in the impasse:

> Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name. You press the button and the door opens. This is the Hotel-Without-a-Name in the Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces. … Always the same stairs, always the same room. The room says: 'Quite like old times. Yes? … No? … Yes.' (120)

In confining Sasha to the "Yes" of her home-away-from home, Rhys's novel displays a poetics of homelessness which resonates with a larger chorus of modernist texts. While Rhys's engagement with the home motif has rarely been compared to that of other modernists, *Good Morning, Midnight*'s underlying logic of modern homelessness is, for example, comparable to that found in the works of Franz Kafka. Writing about modernist homelessness in Kafka's *The Castle*, Sanja Bahun finds the protagonist's search for a home-place to be "doubly foreclosed" (149): "All K.'s attempts to found (or reclaim) a home in the

village – ranging from his endeavor to find a permanent abode to his setting up of a nuclear family with Frieda – are doomed to failure. It is a lesson K. has to learn: there is no return to an archaic family/*Heimat* for a modern individual" (Bahun 149). As Sasha's Paris stay enters its final stage, a corporeally based manifestation of the dynamic of double foreclosure permeates the text. While a genuine return to the notions of originality, nature, and ground has proved to be impossible, Sasha remains trapped between the irretrievable "before" and perpetually deferred "after" of her transformation act: "Now, money, for the night is coming. Money for my hair, money for my teeth, money for shoes that won't deform my feet (it's not so easy now to walk around in cheap shoes with very high heels), money for good clothes, money, money. The night is coming" (120). The notion of "night" here alludes both to the onset of old age and the consolidation of the inhospitable world that condemns it – as well as more concretely, to Sasha's final night in Paris. In any case, the onward continuation of her corporeal transformation is the only coping strategy available – a process which, as the above quote points out, not only shapes, but also gradually deforms the body by molding it to mass-produced fashion articles. Now an ageing, caricatured copy of the emblematic *Parisienne*, whose fashion flair and assertive high-heeled walk she has long admired (103), Sasha is left to march on into the night, with no arrival in sight. Moreover, her forward movement – that is, her struggle to maintain meaning through transformation – is fueled by and dependent on money. And money, the novel continues to imply, is generated through the commodification of the body, by way of practices such as work, prostitution, and military service. Confronted with the many ways in which her quest for corporeal and existential integrity is kept in check by outside forces, offering no "way out," Sasha is left to indulge in consumption, in whichever way her funds allow her to continue:

> Tomorrow I'll go to the Galeries Lafayette, choose a dress, go along to the Printemps, buy gloves, buy scent, buy lipstick, by things costing fcs. 6.25 and fcs. 19.50, buy anything cheap. Just the sensation of spending that's the point. I'll look at bracelets studded with artificial jewels, red, green and blue, necklaces of imitation pearls, cigarette-cases, jeweled tortoises. … And when I have had a couple of drinks I shan't know whether it's yesterday, today or tomorrow. (121)

Whereas Sasha has previously been shopping for the *meanings* of objects, their promises of restorative effects giving her something to "hang on to" (44), her desire has now shifted to the immediate "sensation of spending." Thus, the items in themselves have become completely interchangeable, as highlighted by her endless listing of cheap imitation jewelry. Aware that her corporeal-sartorial transformation will continue to fail to compensate for her lack of home, the instant gratification offered by the Exhibition's mass-produced surfaces is now reduced to be a mere palliative for her pain.

Sasha's transformation act not only fails to produce the desired sense of contentment, ironically, it also triggers her final defeat. Her last night in Paris commences with "[a] loud knock" on her door, and while she expects her intrusive neighbor, she is relieved at the arrival of René, a gigolo who has previously mistaken her for a potential customer (125). During her first encounter with René, who is clearly "exhibiting himself, his own person," Sasha is confronted with the only real effect of her makeover: "Of course, I've got it. Oh Lord, is that what I look like? Do I really look like a wealthy dame trotting round Montparnasse in the hope of –? After all the trouble I've gone to, is that what I look like? I suppose I do" (61). Faced with the reality of dressing up in meanings that do not correspond to her rootless existence, Sasha decides to exercise the power that comes with her outfit: "you pretend to sympathize; then, just at the moment when they are not expecting it, you say: 'Go to hell'" (61). Sasha's script is based on her own experiences of having to rely on men's approval of her appearance to secure a job, money, or food – as demonstrated by her relationship with Mr. Blank, or a scene from a bar in which a man "has his hands on [her] knee under the table" (74), yet flees as she reveals that she has had "hardly anything to eat for three weeks" (75). As she observes René's showing off, Sasha admits that "I have done this so often myself that it is amusing to watch someone else do it" (61-62). Thus, René's invitation for a night out adds a final endgame to her narrative, a welcome diversion to let the last evening in Paris pass, and perhaps, to "get some of [her] own back" (61).

Yet in offering his company and love for sale, René inevitably appears as another potential remedy for Sasha's lack. While she intends to stay indifferent, to keep "[a] little pride, a little dignity at the end" (128), she cannot but be taken in by his youth and beauty, the way in which he seems "so natural, so gay," making her "also feel natural and happy, just as if I were young – but really young" (130). However, their easy "jabbering" and "giggling" in a restaurant

remains another disappointed meaning – their relationship underpinned by René's expectation of a transaction rather than a true attraction: "He takes my hand in his and looks at my ring, his eyes narrowing. 'No good,' I say. 'Only worth about fifty francs'" (127). Wanting to escape their pretense of a human relationship, with its confusing blend of surface and depth, Sasha announces her wish to see the Exhibition at night, thus fulfilling the narrative promise of her uncanny nightmare. Going in "by the Trocadéro entrance" she describes the dreamlike fairgrounds as "Cold, empty, beautiful – this is what I imagined," "[t]his is what I wanted – the cold fountains, the cold, rainbow lights on the water," "[t]he lights shimmering on the water, the leaping fountains, cold and beautiful. …" (137). The quality of cold beauty has previously experienced as frightful and alienating, yet Sasha now welcomes it as the Exhibition's most attractive feature. In place of the earlier image of the rooted tree, the artificial waters, lights, and surfaces now help soothe rather than ground her emotional distress – serving as a means of retaining a cool indifference.

Interestingly, the Exhibition seems to have an opposite effect on René, who, to an even greater extent than Sasha, has "no pride, no name, no face, no country" (38). Pretending to be French-Canadian, yet seeming more South American, René has no papers or passport. "What should I do at the Exhibition?" he asks (136). Shivering in the cold, he comments on the only building that is given explicit attention, the exposition's Peace Pavilion: "'How mesquin!' 'It's vulgar, that Star of Peace'" (137). In light of its 1937 socio-political context, the pavilion's crowning star, meant to inspire enthusiasm for world peace, indeed seems empty of content, and to René, who claims to have fought in the Moroccan Division of the Foreign Legion, it appears "vulgar." As if to imbue his own person and the shared evening with an element of depth, René later reveals to Sasha what the Exhibition, in a wide sense of the word, fails to acknowledge – the wounded human body:

> 'Look,' he says, still speaking in a whisper. He throws his head up. There is a long scar, going across his throat. Now I understand what it means – from ear to ear. A long, thick, white scar. It's strange that I haven't noticed it before. He says: 'That is one. There are other ones. I have been wounded.' It isn't boastful, the way he says it, nor complaining. It's puzzled, puzzled in an impersonal way, as if he is asking me – me, of all people – why, why, why? (145-46)

René's alleged "why?" seems to expose the meaninglessness of war and human commodification, voicing a question to which neither Sasha nor the novel can provide an answer. Moreover, by exhibiting his wounds, René opens up the possibility of a shared ground between himself and Sasha, whose emotional scars she tells him "it took years" to form (146). With his apparent offering of a genuine togetherness, René's company serves to escalate the novel's final tension between "Yes" and "No." "Why shouldn't we believe each other?" he asks, "Why shouldn't we believe each other just for tonight?" (146). His claim of wanting to "lie close to you and feel your arms around me" (144) brings into relief the novel's dichotomy between coldness and warmth, artificiality and authenticity – either offering love as a commodity or voicing a sincere request for an embrace. While Sasha is afraid of being "Quite alone," with "No voice, no touch, no hand" (145), she remains even more fearful of being hurt, ironically reflecting that "If I thought you'd kill me, I'd come away with you right now and no questions asked" (144). Not daring to believe in René's claim of authenticity she can only return to her room in the impasse, feeling "not sad, not happy" (147).

Yet the evening continues rather than terminates, offering Sasha yet another narrative loop which both defers and anticipates the novel's final conclusion of either a "Yes" or "No." Unexpectedly, René is waiting for Sasha in the hotel passage, having managed to arrive just before her. While his presence might simply testify to his persistence in business, Sasha's response reveals what her cynicism hides – her lasting longing for human closeness:

> I take a step forward and put my arms round him. I have my arms round him and I begin to laugh, because I am so happy. I stand there hugging him, so terribly happy. Now everything is in my arms on this dark landing – love, youth, spring, happiness, everything I thought I had lost. I was a fool, wasn't I? to think all that was finished for me. How could it be finished? (148)

In a narrative where "[t]he passages… never lead anywhere" (28), the arrival of a lover seems out of key, a parody of a new beginning or meaningful narrative closure. Indeed, as soon as the two enter Sasha's room, the novel changes its course from "No" to "Yes": "Now the room springs out at me, laughing, triumphant" (149). Surprised at Sasha's change of mind, René is quick to write off Sasha's previous hesitation as her "playing a comedy," thereby announcing

his victory: “I knew you really wanted me to come up – yes. That was easy to see” (150). While Sasha is vexed at René’s confusing her unvoiced hope for love with a mere expectation of his services, René is in turn unable to understand the reason as to why he is being asked to leave. Finally, their evening ends with their physical struggle for power on the small bed, and eventually, what appears as near rape, with Sasha “feel[ing] his hard knee between [her] knees” (153). While she escapes the situation by offering René the rest of her money, she hears “a high, clear, cold voice” – a voice which is hers, yet not hers (153) – retaliating by ridiculing René’s wounds: “Other people’s wounds – how funny they are! I shall laugh every time I think about you. …” (154). Yet Sasha’s true self, “[t]he same one who laughed on the landing, kissed him and was happy,” is terrified to see René leave: “I keep my arm over my eyes because I don’t want to see him take the money; I don’t want to see him go. … He might say something. He might say good night, or goodbye, or good luck or something. The door shuts” (154).

With René’s silent departure, the “midnight” announced in the novel’s title also materializes with full force. Mourning the loss of the human hand, even one that is violent, Sasha, while attempting to drink herself into oblivion, concludes that “Venus is dead; Apollo is dead; even Jesus is dead” (156). In announcing the death of these figures, Sasha gestures to a world void of love, art, and religion; realms of sense-making grounded in human emotion and experience. Both extending from and adding to the theme of homelessness, Sasha envisions the world as a modern wasteland, which she depicts in corporeal terms:

> All that is left in the world is an enormous machine, made of white steel. It has innumerable flexible arms, made of steel. Long, thin arms. At the end of each arm is an eye, the eyelashes stiff with mascara. When I look more closely I see that only some of the arms have these eyes – others have lights. The arms that carry the eyes and the arms that carry the lights are all extraordinarily flexible and very beautiful. But the grey sky, which is the background, terrifies me. … And the arms wave to an accompaniment of music and of song. … (156)

The dystopian vision of the world as machine combines elements which at previous points in the novel have been related to its increasingly derealized world: the cool whiteness of the Exhibition’s pavilions and its beautiful lighting, the steel-hand of the automaton-like man encountered in the nightmare passage,

and the thin, elongated limbs and made-up faces of the fashion industry's mannequins. An uncanny echo of the 1920s flapper girl, or the French equivalent of *la Garçonne,* Sasha's dancing machine testifies not only to a loss of home, nature, and ground, it also accommodates, as Bahun argues in the context of Kafka, "a critique of our desire to dissolve in totalizing collectivity" (150). Indeed, rather than emanating the freedom and excitement associated with the figure of the modern woman, the movements of the humanoid machine are fueled and choreographed by external agents. Rather than dancing, she is being danced; her performance testifying to the hegemonic power of the novel's capitalist and spectacularized reality, presided over by Mr. Blank and his likes. While Sasha has previously taken comfort in the impression of flowers waving in the wind (109), or the green branches of a tree "standing out against the cold sky" (116), mechanical arms now wave against the background of a gray sky which "terrifies." Much like Oelze's 1936 *Die Erwartung*, in which a group of people stand looking in expectation at an empty gray sky, the novel's escalating atmosphere of "midnight" seems to forebode an interregnum of darkness.

In response, Sasha makes one last, futile effort to reclaim a sense of ground. Although René has left her bruised, her "mouth swollen … still bleeding where he bit it" (155), he has also left her money untouched, which Sasha takes as a warm gesture. She subsequently restages her previous daydream of the "door that will open" (83), mentally willing René to come back:

> Come back, come back, come back. … He hesitates. He stops. I have him. 'Listen. You hear me now, don't you? It's quite early – not twelve yet. The door will still be open. All you've got to do is to walk upstairs… I see him, very clearly, in my head. I daren't let him go for a moment. Come back, come back, come back. … He mustn't have to knock, I think. He must be able to walk straight in. I get up and try to put the key on the outside of the door. I drop it. I leave the door a little open. (158)

The hotel entrance remains unlocked until twelve, and in a fairytale-like manner Sasha's faith may be changed before midnight, the moment which, according to the novel's title, serves as a textual termination-point. The door to Sasha's room is thereby left ajar, as she awaits the arrival of her fellow human being. "She has gone. I am alone" (157), Sasha observes; "she" referring to the cold, sarcastic voice with which she normally shields herself against situations of

powerlessness. As she takes off all of her clothes – the social surface acquired through her transformation act – Sasha is finally able to conclude: "Now I am simple and not afraid; now I am myself" (158). Yet the novel's ending continues to hinge on the half-open door, which, to borrow Bachelard's words, has "the sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*, which decides everything" (211). And in a cruel fashion, it is not the wished-for lover, but the elusive neighboring stranger in white who enters the room:

> Now the door is moving, the door is opening wide. I put my arm over my eyes. He comes in. He shuts the door after him… I don't need to look. I know. I think: 'Is it the blue dressing-gown, or the white one? That's very important. I must find that out – it's very important. I take my arm away from my eyes. It is the white dressing-gown. He stands there, looking down at me. Not sure of himself, his mean eyes flickering. He doesn't say anything. Thank God, he doesn't say anything. I look straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time. … Then I put my arms round him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: 'Yes – yes – yes. …' (158-59)

Offering no dénouement, neither a state of "complete peace" nor a "way out" out the impasse, the final passage ends with what appears to be Sasha's self-destructive surrender to the detested stranger in white. While his repeated presence throughout Sasha's stay seems to insist on his meaning, his final appearance seems simply to extend and confirm the novel's atmosphere of disharmony. To some degree, he appears as an uncanny parallel figure to the dying father in Sasha's nightmare, who is also known by his white night clothes (13). Taking advantage of Sasha's open door, he is the flesh-and-blood embodiment of her ultimate lack of familiarity, her acceptance of his midnight intrusion of her room suggesting her "coming home" to homelessness. However, in the substantial body of criticism devoted to the novel, the interpretations of the stranger's appearance and Sasha's triple "yes" are almost as diverse as they are many. Elaine Savory, for example, sees Sasha's "yes" as her "giv[ing] herself up most chillingly to a death-in-life, to a *zombi* state" (131), while Jessica Gildersleeve reads the man in white as "the symbol of death" (242). In a continuing vein, Tone Selboe understands Sasha's yeses as an embrace of true

death, seeing her trip to Paris as her last journey – a voyage in the dark (145).[63] In a more positive reading, Arnold E. Davidson interprets Sasha's "despis[ing] another poor devil of a human being for the last time" as a new beginning, which allows her to "now define, for herself, what her love – or whatever it is – is" (363). In a reading which largely challenges the above in bringing attention to the novel's continuous present – its inherent lack of both true endings and beginnings – Linett finds Sasha's yeses to "indicate most meaningfully a helpless acceptance of the repetition of trauma" (458).

What most critics of the novel agree on, however, is that Sasha's repeated yeses seem to echo those elicited by Molly Bloom in the closing chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses.* This chapter comprises one long stream-of-consciousness monologue in which Molly reaffirms her commitment to her husband Leopold through the narrative's opening "yes" and the ecstatic embrace of its closing passage: "and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts and perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said Yes I will Yes" (682). Few readings, however, go beyond a mere mentioning of Rhys's parallel ending, although the diverging characteristics of Molly and Sasha help to shed light on the logic behind Sasha's "yes," as well as the cyclical structure of *Good Morning, Midnight*. Commenting on the structure of the final section of *Ulysses*, Joyce explained that the episode "begins and ends with the female word *yes*" (qtd. in Downes 155). In a different context, Joyce further elucidates how Molly's final words were to express "acquiescence, self-abandon, relaxation, the end of all resistance" (qtd. in Boone 170). However, Molly's "female" assent is not a passive "yes" to the inferior position of the big bed, but to her own body – a "yes" which sharply contrasts Sasha's compliant "yes" to Mr. Blank.

Yet, also Molly is firmly embedded in modern commodity culture and its demand for a youthful, spectacularized female body: "Ive no clothes at all," Molly complains, "the brown costume and the skirt and jacket and the one at the cleaners whats that for any woman… the men wont look at you and women try to walk on you because they know you've no man then with all the things getting

[63] The indirect quoteation from Selboe is translated from the Norwegian: "Gjensynet med Paris er et gjensyn med den hun var, og en avskjed fra den hun er – en *voyage in the dark*, en siste reise. Sasha reiser tilbake til Paris for å dø (145).

dearer every day for the 4 years more I have of life up to 35" (653). However, while Sasha remains trapped within her prescribed transformation act, Molly creatively exploits the gender-political discourses that entrap her. Molly's consumption of clothing and accessories, Mark Osteen observes, "is never a passive acquiescence to male images of women but has quite specific erotic and economic aims: to retake control of her body and relationships by directing her own erotic scenarios" (432). Molly tailors her garments to fit her performance, exhibiting and staging her body in ways that provide her with the power of gentle exploitation: "I don't want to soak it all out of him like other women do I could often have written out a fine cheque for myself and written his name on it" (680). In Rhys's novel, these qualities echo in the "gay, saucy" Paulette whom Sasha tries to copy (112), a character who, as Osteen argues of Molly, manages to balance and synthesize "the fluid, infinite, generous (female) economy of the gift and the linear, limited, mercenary (male) economy of profit and power" (424). Moreover, while Molly masters her social body in ways that Sasha cannot, she is also able to abandon her social self and give in to her natural body. Although her monologue recounts her relationship with Leopold, her narrative is interlaced with the memories of past lovers, infatuations and desires: "I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with," Molly muses as she daydreams about her affair with Boylan which took place earlier in the day, "somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I feel all fire inside me" (656). Thus, Molly's final "Yes I will" does not merely constitute a renewed vow or submission to her husband, marriage, or any one single lover; the unpunctuated textual flow enveloped by her initial and final "yes" reads as a weave of love and life-force as such, an affirmation of a Dionysian "fire inside." Figuring as an intensified version of the life-affirming "yes" of Woolf's Isa, Molly's "yes" testifies to her grounding in nature, and in turn, her being at home in the world.

By contrast, Sasha's final, non-cathartic "yes" powerfully affirms her lack of home. The novel's seemingly enigmatic ending has circled back to its opening question, confirming that everything is "Quite like old times" (9). This circularity, which previous readings have largely failed to explicitly address, shows how the novel's metonymic movement fails to work through to a final "metaphor with its difference restored" (Brooks 27). As the text terminates, Sasha has not been able to reclaim or return to any notion of home, neither in terms of a name, place, or human community, nor in terms of a sense of belonging rooted in nature or body. The "yes" also further confirms the sustained

failure of Sasha's transformation act, her inability to become, as prompted by the aestheticized ideal of the mannequin, "all complete." Thus, in one respect, the novel ends on a note of defeat, underscoring Sasha's entrapment within the spectacularized and commodified external world. As the reader parts with Sasha, she is still bound by the indissoluble logic of the modern Exhibition, with its offerings of meanings that seem concrete and attainable, yet forever disappointing in their lack of stable contents. Whether self-inflicted death awaits beyond the textual ending of Sasha's final "yes," offering her a "way out," one can only speculate. It is also doubtful, yet unlikely, that Sasha will be able to give in to a "*zombi* state" or "death-in-life" proposed by Savory (131). While she longs to be "an automaton – dry, cold and sane" (10), the novel insists on her repeated failure to carry this transformation through. Indeed, to the very end Sasha is characterized by her human depth – her imperishable faith in, and hope for, the sense of grounding offered by the sincere touch of a human hand. The unsuccessful make-over that makes up *Good Morning, Midnight* resonates with Rhys's own confession to a publisher that "being soft hurt too much," and concurrently she "intended to grow hard" (qtd. in Pizzichini 286-87). "If you grow hard you will not be able to write," the publisher replied, "You will lose your touch on the piano" (qtd. in Pizzichini 287). Much like the paintings of Serge's exhibition, with their resistance to frames and ability to loosen "the iron band round [Sasha's] heart" (83), Sasha's inherent emotionality and failure at self-completion is also the novel's victory; a testament to and a call for the survival of humanity in a world of steel hands and sawdust hearts. Representing neither a "yes" to death, nor a "yes" to a new beginning – as suggested by previous readings – Sasha's final "yes" confirms an experience of being painfully alive in a world which is increasingly growing cold. Her "yes," in other words, is somewhat similar to the "No" of Woolf's Isa, which hints at the feeling of dispersion and isolation brought on by having to "act different parts" (*Between the Acts* 149). While to Isa, this experience fluctuates with, and stands out against the background of that of a shared togetherness, Sasha has no such refuge of permanence to return to.

Finally, to read *Good Morning, Midnight* through the lens of its transforming fashioned body, as I have done in this chapter, allows one to discover how Rhys captures the larger Zeitgeist of late 1930s Europe; the novel's primary motif of impasse gesturing toward the cultural and political "midnight"

that would soon follow, and warning against the modern world's commodification of human bodies and beings.

6 Conclusion

> The body, one may say, has become the last shelter and sanctuary of continuity and duration … It's becoming safety's last line of trenches, trenches which are exposed to constant enemy bombardment, or the last oasis among wind-swept moving sands.
>
> (Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 2000, 183-84)

> If [the body] is a mode of individuation, it is also a common condition. What makes us inimitably ourselves is stuff we share with countless billions of others. … That we can become unique persons is an aspect of our shared animality.
>
> (Terry Eagleton, *Materialism*, 2016, 23)

In his seminal work *Liquid Modernity*, which describes fluid conditions of social institutions and individuality in highly developed societies of the post-1960s era, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman underscores the central role of the body in our contemporary narration of human experience. Despite its inevitable mortality and transitoriness, the body, according to Bauman, is now "perhaps the longest-living entity around" (*Liquid Modernity* 183), at least when compared to the impermanence of the navigational points and frames of reference by which we organize our lives (*Liquid Modernity*182). In the context of liquid modernity, categories such as family, class, work-life, lifestyles, and gender have become increasingly fluid, allowing a person to flow from one social position to another on the basis of desire rather than tradition or need, and utility rather than necessity. Free to engage in and ceaselessly construct our identities through self-chosen networks rather than inherited tradition we subscribe to a nomadic existence, which, following Bauman's theorization at the turn of the century, has amplified due to our ever-increasing immersion in digital culture. By continuously altering how we interact and connect with others, technologies such as smartphones and social media also fragment and re-distribute the power to make and break with cultural and political paradigms. At the same time, Bauman argues, we remain burdened by our dispossession of the experience of continuity,

which he formulates as "the hope that 'we will meet again tomorrow'" (*Liquid Modernity* 183). Thus, while the concept of postmodernity generally signals a marked break with modernity, Bauman's contesting concept of liquid modernity not only highlights the escalating fluidity of identity and community; it also signals a continuation of modernity's dual preoccupation with both ongoing change *and* order. In a liquid society, where our existential ground resembles that of a shapeshifting desert, the material body, according to Bauman, has become the only enduring entity that we are sure to possess, a "last oasis" or "sanctuary" (*Liquid Modernity* 184; 183) which offers us a sense of certainty and control.

In recognizing "the body's new primacy" (*Liquid Modernity* 184) to our contemporary experience of modernity, Bauman does not consider how the body's centrality stretches back to turn of the 20th century. Here, his focus differs from that of the present study, which has shown how, under the rapidly changing conditions of modern life in the century's first decades, humankind's individual and collective attention was brought back to the body – our original locus for experiencing and navigating the world. It is through our body that the concept of balance is first experienced, and, faced with a world described in terms of a "perpetual maelstrom of disintegration and renewal," as Berman puts it of twentieth century modernity (15), or of the "wind-swept moving sands" of Bauman's late, liquid modernity, our primary corporeal struggle to correlate weight and force continues to echo in our dialectical quests for both permanence and change. In regarding the body as a primary site of modern experience, this thesis has considered it as an element which binds early twentieth century modernism together. While its four chapters by no means make a claim to comprise a representative selection of modern bodies, nor of the plethora of artistic movements that are grouped together under the umbrella term of modernism, they together urge the reader to take heed of the centrality of the body as a meta-figure of modernist creation. Exploring and drawing on the body's inherent existence on placing itself on the threshold between nature and culture – the latter including, in this context, modalities such as expressive performance, poetry, visual imagery, design, and technology – each of the primary texts of this study narrates a modernist quest for meaning. In tracing these quests, I have demonstrated how the text-internal body, shaped by contextual socio-historical forces, invites a mode of reading that is attentively attuned to the inseparable connection between a work's culturally specific content and its literary form, including aspects such as language, narrative

structure, imagery, and tone. Moreover, by studying four distinct modernist texts, the study has shown how literary conceptions of corporeality serve as a productive lens for comparative reading. While the body, as Terry Eagleton underscores in the quotation that introduces this conclusion, is a fundamental "mode of individuation" (23), the medium by which we make our unique way through the fluctuating landscape of modernity, it is also – essentially – our "common condition" (Eagleton 23). To each of us, across contexts and cultures, the body inevitably remains a source of individual agency, yet it also exposes us to "uncontrollable influences" which make us "incapable of complete self-mastery" (Eagleton 21). The living body, in other words, is the one thing that remains instinctively recognizable, grounding us in and providing us with a sense of familiarity, while simultaneously it is perpetually renewed, changed by its every action in and reaction to the world. In turn, as this study has demonstrated, the literary bodies in the works studied here invite the reader to trace tendencies and counter tendencies across various aesthetic paradigms. The study's relevance thus goes beyond its readings of the four non-canonical texts in accentuating the body as a focusing prism through which the continuum of 20th and 21st century modernity, extending across what Bauman defines as its solid and liquid manifestations, may continue to be explored.

In order to show how the aesthetics investigated in this thesis resonate beyond their moments of composition and into our own time, I will draw on Bauman's terminology of solidity and liquidity in summing up and synthesizing the assemblage of modernisms considered throughout the study's four chapters. Chapter one focused on the capacity of verbal art to assimilate and convey the immediate activity of a human body. Exploring Stein's reenactment of modern dance – a corporeal artform whose enunciation of meaning disappears with its very appearance – the chapter called attention to her seldomly discussed identification with Duncan, highlighting their shared artistic interest in articulating an ongoing modern "now." The chapter shows how Stein, by playfully intertwining nouns and verbs, echoes the dancer's dissolution of the division between corporeal materiality and expressive meaning. In turn, by tracing the unfolding action of a dancing "one" Stein captures the insoluble dialectic between permanence and change – or in Bauman's terms – solidity and liquidity – by which modernism continues to be defined. In this respect, chapter one also served to introduce the wavelike ground pattern that underlies and strings together the readings of the three consecutive chapters.

Chapter two continued to consider how in early 20th century modernism, the power to act in and on a contemporary present and become, as Berman describes it, a subject of modernization (16), partly depends on the ability of the modern individual to activate the past. While in Stein's portrait, tradition is indirectly present, surfacing through the Greek gestures that inspired Duncan's movements, chapter two shows how H.D.'s novel directly thematizes modernism's preoccupation with the reactualization of past forms and narratives. Responding to the experience of change, which known and contemporary forms of expression fail to aptly articulate, classical bodies here take on a utopian quality, conveying through seemingly stable forms a sense of ongoing life which is felt to be recognizable. In imaginatively reviving classical bodies, H.D. highlights the human body's dual existence as both a material and a meaningful entity. Artistically, she locates moments of significance in the dynamic fusion of unorganized bodily experience and verbal forms and traditions. The chapter, in other words, highlighted *Hermione* as a literary exploration of how tradition helps solidify and give shape to modern experience, and in turn, how corporeally based experience serves to liquify and revise known forms of expression. It thus described H.D.'s modernism as an aesthetics in which words' materiality and meaning coagulate and are brought out through the act of reading, which echoes the way in which the body's given materiality remains inseparable from its expressive action. Moreover, unfolding as a narrative quest for meaning which is grounded in the body as well as in tradition, H.D.'s modernism reflects to a large extent what Bauman characterizes as "solid" or "hard" modernity.

Chapter three demonstrates how Loy, in her only published novel, considers the possibility of turning away from the notion of solidity existentially and artistically by instigating a reverse birth from form into a prediscursive realm of unbounded life. Focusing on Loy's corporeal trope of the embryonic, the chapter traced her critical exploration of surrealism's rejection of conventional thought's reliance on tradition and inherited forms, as well as the body's capacity of individuation and self-control. In portraying a world which is almost entirely fluid, presided over by Insel's notoriously incoherent person and laying bare the myriad of possibilities that precedes any individual self and any work of art, the novel creates something akin to a pure and unrealized version of Bauman's liquid mode of reality, in which infinite change is the only permanent feature. Cast against an exterior fictional world of hard modernity, in which fascism and nationalism are on the rise, Insel's embryonic sphere appears Edenic. The novel

nonetheless turns away from its liquid potentiality, underscoring our inevitable need – in corporeal as well as existential and artistic terms – for formation, solidity, and control. To make one's way through modernity, Loy finally concludes, involves a search for foothold, acquired through the attempt to synthesize and formulate the experience of change in spite of the artist's awareness of the impossibility of its perfection. While Loy's novel has since its publication been consigned to the periphery of the modernist landscape, this chapter, by considering her use of imagery related to the developmental trajectory of the human body, has shown how *Insel* foregrounds and insists on the indelible nature of modernism's dialectical balance of chaos and order.

Of the four texts treated in this thesis, Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* most clearly expresses and responds to the liquid reality that Bauman associates with late modernity at the turn of the 21st century. While Bauman likens identity-formation in the age of solid modernity to a pilgrim's search for meaning – a metaphor which largely harmonizes with the modernist quests considered in the study's first three chapters – he sees this process in the age of liquid modernity as resembling the activity of a tourist ("Pilgrim to Tourist" 19-23; 29). In reading Rhys's novel, chapter four traced the journey of a literal tourist rather than an artist, whose travels reflects an existential search for a "home." Alongside Rhys's Sasha, Bauman's quintessential tourist travels in the search of new, aesthetically structured experiences "to excite, please and amuse" ("Pilgrim to Tourist" 30). While in practical terms, the tourist may have a home from which she departs and returns to, she is driven by a desire to be not just "in" but "of" the places she seeks out. Yet, as the allure of an experience wears off, a new one is inevitably sought out, and the individual encounter, as Bauman explains it using a corporeal metaphor, will never "stick to the skin" ("Pilgrim to Tourist" 29). Thus, instead of a past-oriented search for a lost stability, the cure for the tourist's homesickness is perpetually located in the future, which gradually, according to Bauman, strips the notion of "home" of its material properties (29).

Analyzing the movements of Rhys's Sasha, for whom geographical locations are forever exchangeable and social experiences and acquaintances fleeting and ephemeral, chapter four introduced a modernism which to a large extent reflects a liquid modernity similar to our own. By concluding that "Venus is dead; Apollo is dead; even Jesus is dead" (*Good Morning, Midnight* 156), Sasha confirms the fading relevance of solidity and tradition in a world in which, as Bauman puts it, "reference frames, orientation points, classifications and

evaluations" are becoming increasingly volatile, and continuously "put … on and tak[en] off display windows and shop shelves" (*Liquid Modernity* 182-83). Focusing on how the experience of modernity is negotiated through the fashioned body, the chapter demonstrated how the body continues to play a dual role. On the one hand, it facilitates our incompletable process of becoming ourselves, allowing Sasha to take on and off outfits and identity masks that never, to borrow Bauman's words, "stick to the skin" ("Pilgrim to Tourist" 29). On the other hand, the novel's body figures, as Eagleton puts it, as humankind's "common condition" (23) – a given site of continuity and fragility which undergirds and outlasts our consecutive attempts at self-fashioning. Indeed, while the novel remains future-oriented, reflecting Sasha's compulsive commitment to the new, it simultaneously expresses a melancholy pull toward the "home" represented by our shared, embodied existence, which is formulated through Sasha's yearning for "the touch of the human hand" (84). Thus, alongside the restless movements of the tourist, the pilgrim's quest for a deeper meaning persists also in Rhys's novel, the chapter showing how the relationship between these two dialectical modes of existence plays out and becomes visible to the reader through the fictional body.

While the wave-like fluctuation between fluidity and solidity endures throughout the various aesthetic expressions explored in this study, it also continues beyond the modernist period proper and into our contemporary time. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has served to crystallize our dual experience of both change and continuity, making the human body a nexus of opposing forces. On the one hand, the rapid spread of the virus across the globe directs our attention to the modern world's ever-increasing interconnectivity, a testimony to the liquid modernity of which we are part. Simultaneously, the virus confronts us with our precarious material existence, which, as Eagleton puts it, leaves us forever "exposed and unprotected, subject to numerous uncontrollable influences" (21). Without doubt, the current threat to the human body constitutes a threat to our sense of continuity and stability, amplifying what Bauman sees as liquid modernity's already obsessive concern with defending the body against its inevitable mortality (184). In liquid times, he argues, "the body orifices (the points of entry) and the body surfaces (the places of contact)" have become "the primary foci of terror and anxiety" (*Liquid Modernity* 184) – fears that materialize in Rhys's representation of Sasha's postpartum body, and which the pandemic has recently turned into reality. From our efforts to protect the

vulnerable body now spirals a whirlwind of change, affecting domains such as politics, labor, education, trade, culture, mobility, and economy. Thus, to some extent, our current experience of the world – marked by the near collapse or transformation of known social institutions as well as rapid scientific and societal innovation – echoes that of the modernist era. Moreover, much like the early 20th century's loss of existential solidity, as well as the confrontation with the fragility of the war-ridden body, spurred a renewed interest in bodily experience, the current context returns our focus to our material existence. Consigned to an everyday reality of face masks, disinfection, social distancing, and vaccinations we are constantly made to consider our bodies' breath, touch, and movement, as well as the potential consequences of our basic corporeal actions. "If this pandemic is teaching us anything," dance critic Gia Kourlas writes in an article for the *New York Times*, "it is that we need to return to our bodies." When now navigating our once familiar environments, argues Kourlas, "a new alertness is in order, one that demands a deep connection to the position and movement of the body – or proprioception … [the] sensory information [that] will help you remain upright." Subjected to a new everyday choreography, we are again confronted with our material presence in space and time, as well as our negotiation of gravity, experiences which this thesis, alongside Kourlas, has considered a basis of creativity. How our bodies' present-day movements make their imprint in the world of literature remains to be seen. Nevertheless, our current return to the body may help further open up the readerly approach considered in this thesis – one through which the experiences of modernity, extending backward and forward in time, and the aesthetics thereof, may continue to be (re-)discovered and explored.

References

Albright, Ann Cooper. *Modern Gestures: Abraham Walkowitz Draws Isadora Duncan Dancing*. Wesleyan UP, 2010.

Albright, Daniel. *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts*. U of Chicago P, 2000.

Aldington, Richard, et al. *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology*. The Riverside Press, 1915.

Appels, Jonathon Robinson. "Two Women Dancing." *Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1998, pp. 167-75. *Project Muse,* doi: 10.1353/yale.1998.0001.

Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism: A Cultural History*. Polity, 2005.

---. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study*. Cambridge UP, 1998.

Ayers, David. "Mina Loy's *Insel* and its Contexts." *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, edited by Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson, Salt Publishing, 2010, pp. 221-47.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, 1994.

Bahun, Sanja. *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning*. Oxford UP, 2013.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. 1984. Translated by Helene Iswolsky, Indiana UP, 2009.

Banks, Fiona. *Creative Shakespeare: The Globe Education Guide to Practical Shakespeare*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Barthes, Roland. *The Fashion System.* Translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, Vintage Publishing, 2010.

Bartky, Sandra Lee. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, edited by Katie Conboy, et al., Columbia UP, 1997, pp. 129-54.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity." *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, SAGE Publications, 2011, pp. 18-36.

---. *Liquid Modernity*. Polity Press, 2000.

Benjamin, Walter. "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin." *Selected Writings: Vol. 1: 1913-1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard

UP, 1996, pp. 18-36.
Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. Virago Press, 1987.
Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New ed., Verso, 2010.
The Bible: Authorized King James Version. Edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford UP, 2008.
Blom, Jan Dirk. *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. Springer, 2009.
Bois, Yve-Alain, and Rosalind E. Krauss. *Formless: A User's Guide*. Zone Books, 1997.
Bolens, Guillemette. *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2012.
Boone, Joseph Allen. *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism*. U of Chicago P, 1998.
"bower, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, October 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/22215. Accessed 1 Oct. 2021.
Brandstetter, Gabriele. "Choreography as Cenotaph: The Memory of Movement." *ReMembering the Body*, edited by Gabriele Brandstetter, et al., Hatje Cantz, 2000, pp. 102-35.
Britzolakis, Christina. "'This way to the exhibition': genealogies of urban spectacle in Jean Rhys's interwar fiction." *Textual Practice,* vol. 21, no 3, 2007, pp. 457-482. *Taylor & Francis*, doi: 10.1080/09502360701529085
Bronstein, Hilda. "Mina Loy's Insel as Caustic Critique of the Surrealist Paradox." *How2*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2000, www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v1_4_2000/current/readings/bronstein.html. Accessed 18 Nov. 2017.
Brooker, Peter, et al. "Introduction." *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, edited by Peter Brooker, et al., Oxford UP, 2010, pp. 1-16.
Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. 1984. Harvard UP, 1992.
Buchanan, Ian. "The Problem of the Body in Deleuze and Guattari, Or, What Can a Body Do?" *Body & Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1997, pp. 73-91. *Sage Journals,* doi: 10.1177/1357034X97003003004.
Budin, Stephanie Lynn. *Artemis*. Routledge, 2015.
Burke, Carolyn. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996.
Burke, Kenneth. "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats." *A Grammar of Motives*,

U of California P, 1969, pp. 447-64.
Burke, Michael, and Emily T. Troscianko. *Cognitive Literary Science: Dialogues Between Literature and Cognition*. Oxford UP, 2017.
Burstein, Jessica. *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art*. Pennsylvania State UP, 2012.
Callinicos, Alex. *Is There a Future for Marxism?* Humanities Press, 1982.
Camarasana, Linda. "Exhibitions and Repetitions: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and the World of Paris, 1937." *At Home and Abroad in the Empire: British Women Write the 1930s*, edited by Robin Hackett, et al., U of Delaware P, 2009, pp. 51-70.
Camper, Carol. "The Autobiography of a Future Poet from Pennsylvania." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1982, pp. 377-80. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III,* doi: 10.2307/1208162.
Carden-Coyne, Ana. "Dissolution, Reconstruction, and Reaction in Visual Art 1920 to the Present." *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Modern Age*, edited by Ivan Crozier, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, pp. 201-20.
---. *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War*. Oxford UP, 2009.
Carter, Alexandra, and Rachel Fensham. *Dancing Naturally: Nature, Neo-Classicism and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Dance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
Cather, Willa. "Coming, Aphrodite!" *Coming, Aphrodite! And Other Stories*, Penguin Classics, 1999, pp. 5-44.
---. "Coming, Eden Bower!" *Smart Set*, vol. 62, no. 4, 1920, pp. 3-25.
Charnaux. "Today's loveliest women are ZONOPLASTIC." *The Tatler*, 4 Mar. 1936, p. xxix.
Chipp, Herschel Browning, et al. *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*. U of California P, 1968.
Clarke, Mary, and Clement Crisp. *The History of Dance*. Orbis, 1981.
Collecott, Diana. *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism, 1910-1950*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
Collins, Jo, and John Jervis. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
Conor, Liz. *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*. Indiana UP, 2004.
Conover, Roger L. "Foreword." *Insel*, edited by Elizabeth Arnold, Black Sparrow Press, 1991, pp. 9-18.

Corrigan, Peter. *The Dressed Society: Clothing, the Body and Some Meanings of the World*. Sage Publications, 2008.

Crossley-Holland, Peter. "Rhythm." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 31 Aug. 2017. www.britannica.com/art/rhythm-music. Accessed 19 Jan. 2019.

Crozier, Ivan. "Bodies in History - The Task of the Historian." *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Modern Age*, edited by Ivan Crozier, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, pp. 1-22.

Cull, Laura. *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Daly, Ann. *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*. Wesleyan UP, 2002.

Damsch-Wiehager, Renate. *Richard Oelze: Ein Alter Meister Der Moderne*. Bucher, 1989.

Davidson, Arnold E. "The Dark Is Light Enough: Affirmation from Despair in Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1983, pp. 349-64. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III*, doi: 10.2307/1208082.

Debo, Annette. *The American H.D.* U of Iowa P, 2012.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Translated by Daniel W. Smith, Continuum, 2003.

---. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. U of Minnesota P, 1986.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, et al., Continuum, 2004.

---. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, Continuum, 2004.

---. *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, Verso, 1994.

Dempster, Elizabeth. "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances." *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, edited by Jacqueline Shea Murphy and Ellen W. Goellner, Rutgers UP, 1995, pp. 21-38.

Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. Berkley Publishing Group, 2005.

Dils, Ann, and Ann Cooper Albright. *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Wesleyan UP, 2001.

Downes, Gareth Joseph. "'Indifferent *Weib*': Giordano Bruno and the Heretical Mode of Vision in 'Penelope'." *Joyce, "Penelope" and the Body*, edited by Richard Brown, Brill, 2006, pp. 145-156.

Duncan, Isadora. "A Letter to the Pupils." *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon

Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 107-08.
---. “Beauty and Exercise.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 80-83.
---. “The Dance of the Future.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 54-63.
---. “The Dance of the Greeks.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 92-96.
---. “The Dancer and Nature.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 66-70.
---. “Dancing in Relation to Religion and Love.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 121-27.
---. “Depth.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 99-100.
---. “Fragments and Thoughts.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 128-44.
---. “The Great Source.” *The Art of the Dance,* edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 101-104.
---. “I See America Dancing.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 47-50.
---. “Movement is Life.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 77-79.
---. *My Life*. Liveright, 2013.
---. “What Dancing Should Be.” *The Art of the Dance*, edited by Sheldon Cheney, Theatre Arts Books, 1977, pp. 71-73.
DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. *H.D.: The Career of That Struggle*. Harvester, 1986.
Eagleton, Terry. *Materialism*. Yale UP, 2016.
Elliott, Bridget, and Jo-Ann Wallace. *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)Positionings*. Routledge, 1994.
“embryo, n. and adj.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2017, www.oed.com/view/Entry/61058. Accessed 25 September 2017.
Ferguson, Trish. *Victorian Time: Technologies, Standardizations, Catastrophes*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
Fischer, Lucy. *Designing Women: Cinema, Art Deco, and the Female Form*. Columbia UP, 2003.
Fisher, Harrison. “America Grows Big Crop of Venuses.” *Baltimore Sun*, 3 Dec. 1916, p. 22.

Fiss, Karen. *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, The Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France*. U of Chicago P, 2009.

Fitzgerald, Zelda. *Save Me the Waltz*. Vintage, 2001.

Flemming, Hanns Theodor. "Richard Oelze. A German Surrealist." *Studio International*, vol. 169, no. 865, 1965, pp. 204-07.

Fotiade, Ramona. "Pictures of the Mind: Artaud and Fondane's Silent Cinema." *Surrealism: Surrealist Visuality*, edited by Silvano Levy, Keele UP, 1996, pp. 109-124.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed., Vintage, 1995.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Edited by Todd Dufresne. Translated by Gregory C. Richter, Broadview Press, 2015.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction*. Cambridge UP, 1990.

---. *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* Indiana UP, 1981.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. 1957. Penguin Books, 1990.

Fussell, B.H. "Woolf's Peculiar Comic World: *Between the Acts.*" *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Ralph Freedman, U of California P, 1980, pp. 263-284.

Gaedtke, Andrew. "From Transmissions of Madness to Machines of Writing: Mina Loy's 'Insel' as Clinical Fantasy." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, pp. 143-62. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences V,* www.jstor.org/stable/25511796.

Gallagher, David. *Metamorphosis: Transformations of the Body and the Influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses on Germanic Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Brill, 2009.

Galtung, Ingrid. "'The immortal conception, the perennial theme': Reading the modern body in Willa Cather's "Coming, Aphrodite!" *Aesthetic Apprehensions: Silence and Absence in False Familiarities*, edited by Jena Habegger-Conti and Lene M. Johannessen, Lexington Books, 2020, pp. 31-46.

Garratt, Peter, editor. *The Cognitive Humanities: Embodied Mind in Literature and Culture.* Palgrave, 2016.

Gasiorek, Andrzej. *A History of Modernist Literature*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Gildersleeve, Jessica. "Muddy Death: Fate, Femininity, and Mourning in Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight." *Rites of Passage in Postcolonial*

Women's Writing, edited by Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo and Gina Wisker, Rodopi, 2010, pp. 227-44.

Goth, Sebastian. "Venus Anadyomene: The Birth of Art." *Venus as Muse: From Lucretius to Michel Serres*, edited by Günter Blamberger, et al., Brill, 2015, pp. 15-40.

Gourgouris, Stathis. *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era*. Stanford UP, 2003.

Gregor, Ian. "Eliot and Matthew Arnold." *Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium*, edited by Graham Martin, Macmillan, 1970, pp. 267-78.

Gronberg, Tag. *Designs on Modernity: Exhibiting the City in 1920s Paris*. Manchester UP, 1998.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Allen & Unwin, 1994.

Hamilton, Sharon. "Breaking the Lock: Willa Cather's Manifesto for Sexual Equality in 'Coming, Aphrodite!'" *Women's Studies*, vol. 42, no. 8, 2013, pp. 857-85. *Taylor & Francis,* doi:10.1080/00497878.2013.830875.

Haselstein, Ulla. "Gertrude Stein's Portraits of Matisse and Picasso." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2003, pp. 723-43. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III,* doi: 10.1353/nlh.2004.0006.

Hayden, Sarah. *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood*. U of New Mexico P, 2018.

H.D. "The Dancer." *The Poet & the Dancer*, Five Trees Press, 1975, pp. 10-28.

---. *HERmione*. Revised ed., New Directions, 2000.

---. *Majic Ring*. Edited by Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, UP of Florida, 2013.

---. *Notes on Thought and Vision & the Wise Sappho*. City Lights Books, 1982.

---. "Oread." *Collected Poems*. 1925. Liveright, 1940, p. 81.

---. *Paint It Today*. NYU Press, 1992.

Hérold, Jacques. "Being and its Reflections." *The Surrealism Reader: An Anthology of Ideas*, edited by Dawn Ades, et al., U of Chicago P, 2015, pp. 22-23.

Hersey, George. *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present*. U of Chicago P, 2008.

Hickman, Miranda B. "'Uncanonically Seated': H.D. and Literary Canons." *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.*, edited by Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina Mackay, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 9-22.

Hinnov, Emily M. "'Each Is Part of the Whole: We Act Different Parts; but Are

the Same': From Fragment to Choran Community in the Late Work of Virginia Woolf." *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 13, 2007, pp. 1-23. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/24907088.

Hughes, John. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Innes, Cristopher. *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre.* Routledge, 1998.

"intuition, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/98794. Accessed 24 Sept. 2020.

Irigaray, Luce. *The Way of Love*. Translated by Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček, Continuum, 2002.

Issacharoff, Jess. "'No Pride, No Name, No Face, No Country': Jewishness and National Identity in Good Morning, Midnight." *Rhys Matters: New Critical Perspectives*, edited by Mary Wilson and Kerry L. Johnson, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 111-29.

Jenks, Kathleen. "Janus." *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*, edited by C. Scott Littleton, Marshall Cavendish, 2005, pp. 770-74.

Joannou, Maroula. "'All Right, I'll do anything for good clothes': Jean Rhys and Fashion." *Women*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2012, pp. 463-89. *Taylor & Francis*, doi: 10.1080/09574042.2012.739849.

Johnson, Mark. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. U of Chicago P, 2013.

---. *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding*. U of Chicago P, 2017.

Jones, Susan. *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*. Oxford UP, 2013.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Wordsworth Editions, 2010.

Jung, C. G. *The Collected Works: Volume 8: The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. Edited by Sir Herbert Read, et al. Translated by R.F.C. Hull, 2nd ed., Routledge, 1991.

Kirsch, Sharon. *Gertrude Stein and the Reinvention of Rhetoric*. U of Alabama P, 2014.

Klee, Paul. *Paul Klee*. Parkstone Press International, 2013.

Klingsöhr-Leroy, Cathrin. *Surrealism*. Taschen, 2004.

König, Jason. "Body and Text." *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, edited by Tim Whitmarsh, Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 127-44.

Kourlas, Gia. "How We Use Our Bodies to Navigate a Pandemic." *The New York Times*, 31 Mar. 2020.

www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/arts/dance/choreographing-the-street-coronavirus.html. Accessed 2 Apr. 2020.

Kusch, Celena E. "H.D.'s American Sea Garden: Drowning the Idyll Threat to Ufthe biS Modernism." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2010, pp. 47-70. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III*, doi: 10.1215/0041462X-2010-2002.

Lacoste, Jean-Yves. *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*. Translated by Mark Raftery-Skehan, Fordham UP, 2004.

Laity, Cassandra. *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence*. Cambridge UP, 1996.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books, 1999.

LaMothe, Kimerer L. *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*. Columbia UP, 2015.

Lamphier, Peg A., and Rosanne Welch. *Women in American History: A Social, Political, and Cultural Encyclopedia and Document Collection*. ABC-CLIO, 2017.

Land, Nick. *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism: An Essay in Atheistic Religion.* Routledge, 1992.

Letellier, Robert Ignatius. *Operetta: A Sourcebook, Volume I*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Levy, Julien. *Memoir of an Art Gallery*. Putnam, 1977.

Lewis, Wyndham, editor. *Blast 1*. Revised ed., Gingko Press, 2009.

Lindgren, Allana, and Stephen Ross. "Introduction." *The Modernist World*, edited by Allana Lindgren and Stephen Ross, Routledge, 2015, pp. 1-14.

Linett, Maren Tova. *Bodies of Modernism: Physical Disability in Transatlantic Modernist Literature*. U of Michigan P, 2016.

---. "'New Words, New Everything': Fragmentation and Trauma in Jean Rhys." *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2005, pp. 437-66. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III*, www.jstor.org/stable/20058781.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Evangeline*. New York: F. A. Stokes, 1894.

Loy, Mina. *Insel*. Edited by Elizabeth Arnold. Black Sparrow Press, 1991.

---. *Insel*. Edited by Elizabeth Arnold. Melville House Publishing, 2014.

Mabille, Pierre. "Preface in Praise of Popular Prejudices." *The Surrealism Reader: An Anthology of Ideas*, edited by Dawn Ades, et al., U of Chicago P, 2015,

pp. 32-40.
"mantra, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/113726. Accessed 1 November 2021.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2020.
Miller, J. Hillis. *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*. Basil Blackwell, 1982.
Miller, Tyrus. *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars*. U of California P, 1999.
Minissale, Gregory. *Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives*. Rodopi, 2009.
Możejko, Edward. "Tracing the Modernist Paradigm: Terminologies of Modernism." *Modernism, Volume 1*, edited by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, John Benjamins, 2007, pp. 11-33.
Mules, Warwick. *With Nature: Nature Philosophy as Poetics through Schelling, Heidegger, Benjamin and Nancy*. Intellect Books, 2014.
Nardin, Jane. "'As Soon as I Sober Up I Start Again': Alcohol and the Will in Jean Rhys's Pre-War Novels." *Papers on Language & Literature*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2006, pp. 46-72. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=19887507&site=ehost-live.
Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard UP, 2005.
Nicholls, Peter. *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*. Macmillan, 1995.
Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Translated by Clifton P. Fadiman, Dover Publications, 1995.
---. *Untimely Meditations*. Edited by Daniel Breazeale. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale, 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 1997.
---. *The Will to Power*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. Translated by Walter Arnold Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, 1968.
Osteen, Mark. *The Economy of Ulysses: Making Both Ends Meet*. Syracuse UP, 1995.
Pizzichini, Lillian. *The Blue Hour: A Portrait of Jean Rhys*. Bloomsbury, 2009.
Port, Cynthia. "'Money, for the Night Is Coming:' Gendered Economies of Ageing in the Novels of Jean Rhys and James Joyce." *Metaphors of Economy,* edited by Nicole Bracker and Stefan Herbrechter, Rodopi, 2005, pp. 147-158.

---. "'Money, for the Night Is Coming': Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, Jan. 2001, pp. 204-17. *Taylor & Francis,* doi: 10.1080/095740400110060247.

Pound, Ezra. "A Pact." *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems*, edited by Christine Froula, New Directions, 1983, p. 47.

---. *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*. Edited by Harriet Zinnes, New Directions, 1980.

---. "Vortex." *Blast 1*, edited by Wyndham Lewis, Revised ed., Gingko Press, 2009, pp. 153-55.

Preston, Carrie J. *Modernism's Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Punday, Daniel. *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Recker, Laurel. "Pitting 'Matisse' Against 'Picasso': Gertrude Stein's Companion Portraits." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 72, no. 4, 2016, pp. 27-52. *Project Muse,* doi: 10.1353/arq.2016.0019.

Rhys, Jean. *Good Morning, Midnight*. Penguin Classics, 2000.

---. "Mannequin." *The Collected Short Stories*. Norton, 1987, pp. 20-26.

---. *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography*, edited by Diana Athill, Penguin Classics, 2016.

---. *Voyage in the Dark*. Penguin Classics, 2000.

Richardson, Michael. "Otherness and Self-Identity." *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, edited by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, Routledge, 2016, pp. 120-30.

Robinson, Jacqueline. *Modern Dance in France (1920-1970): An Adventure*. Translated by Catherine Dale, Routledge, 2019.

Robinson, Matte, and Demetrios Tryphonopoulos. "HERmione and Other Prose." *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.*, edited by Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina Mackay, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 127-42.

Rosenbaum, Susan. "Brides Stripped Bare: Surrealism, the *Large Glass,* and U.S. Women's Imaginary Museums." *Dada/Surrealism*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-35, doi: 10.17077/0084-9537.1328.

Rosenthal, Lecia. *Mourning Modernism: Literature, Catastrophe, and the Politics of Consolation*. Fordham UP, 2011.

Ross, Stephen. "Introduction: The Missing Link." *Modernism and Theory: A*

Critical Debate, edited by Stephen Ross, Routledge, 2009, pp. 1-18.
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. "Eden Bower." *Poems and Translations: 1850-1870; Together with the Prose Story: Hand and Soul*. Oxford UP, 1919, pp. 18-22.
Rothfield, Philipa. "Dance and the Passing Moment: Deleuze's Nietzsche." *Deleuze and the Body*, edited by Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes, Edinburgh UP, 2011, pp. 203-223.
Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester UP, 2003.
Salter, Chris. *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*. MIT Press, 2010.
Sandel, Cora. *Alberta and Freedom*. Translated by Elizabeth Rokkan, Ohio UP, 1984.
Savory, Elaine. *Jean Rhys*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* Oxford UP, 1985.
Selboe, Tone. *Litterære Vaganter: Byens betydning hos seks kvinnelige forfattere*. Pax, 2003.
Shail, Andrew. *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism*. Routledge, 2012.
Shakespeare, William. *As You like It*. Edited by Cedric Watts, Wordsworth Editions, 2013.
Shaw, Jennifer L. *Reading Claude Cahun's Disavowals*. Routledge, 2016.
Simpson, Paul. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. Routledge, 2004.
Small, Robin. *Time and Becoming in Nietzsche's Thought*. Continuum, 2010.
Smith, Daniel. *Essays on Deleuze*. Edinburgh UP, 2012.
Solomon, Deborah. *Utopia Parkway: The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
Spivack, Emily. "The History of the Flapper, Part 2: Makeup Makes a Bold Entrance." *Smithsonian*, www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-history-of-the-flapper-part-2-makeup-makes-a-bold-entrance-13098323/. Accessed 13 Feb. 2019.
Spolsky, Ellen. "Elaborated Knowledge: Reading Kinesis in Pictures." *Poetics Today*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1996, pp. 157-80. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/1773354.
Spoo, Robert. "H.D. Prosed: The Future of an Imagist Poet." *The Future of Modernism*, edited by Hugh Witemeyer, U of Michigan P, 1997, pp. 201-22.

Steer, Linda. *Appropriated Photographs in French Surrealist Periodicals, 1924-1939*. Routledge, 2017.

Stein, Gertrude. "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas." *Stein: Writings 1903-1932*, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman, Library of America, 1998, pp. 653-913.

---. "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans." *Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman, Library of America, 1998, pp. 270-86.

---. "How Writing Is Written." *The Gertrude Stein Reader: The Great American Pioneer of Avant-Garde Letters*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz, Cooper Square Press, 2002, pp. 438-49.

---. *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1995.

---. "Orta or One Dancing." *A Stein Reader*, edited by Ulla E. Dydo, Northwestern UP, 1993, pp. 120-36.

---. "Poetry and Grammar." *Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman, Library of America, 1998, pp. 313-36.

---. "Portraits and Repetition." *Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman, Library of America, 1998, pp. 287-312.

---. *Two: Gertrude Stein and Her Brother: And Other Early Portraits, 1908-12*. Books for Libraries Press, 1969.

Steiner, Wendy. *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein*. Yale UP, 1978.

Stevens, Anthony. *Archetype Revisited: An Updated Natural History of the Self*. Routledge, 2015.

Stevenson, R. W. *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2014.

Stewart, Mary Lynn. *Dressing Modern Frenchwomen: Marketing Haute Couture, 1919-1939*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2008.

Swinburne, Algernon Charles. "Itylus." *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, edited by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne Rundle, Broadview Press, 1999, pp. 452-53.

Teige, Karel. "On Surrealist Semiology." *The Surrealism Reader: An Anthology of Ideas*, edited by Dawn Ades, et al., U of Chicago P, 2015, pp. 296-300.

Thorburn, John E. *The Facts on File Companion to Classical Drama*. Infobase Publishing, 2005.

Turner, Mark. *The Literary Mind*. Oxford UP, 1996.

"undine, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/212392. Accessed 28 September 2021.

Venturi, Riccardo. "Into the abyss. On Salvador Dalí's *Dream of Venus*." *Botticelli Past and Present*, edited by Ana Debenedetti and Caroline Elam, UCL Press, 2019, pp. 266-289.

Voyiatzaki, Evi. *The Body in the Text: James Joyce's Ulysses and the Modern Greek Novel*. Lexington Books, 2002.

Walker, James. *Report to the Directors of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway: On the Comparative Merits of Locomotive and Fixed Engines, as a Moving Power*. Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831.

Walsh, Maria. *Art and Psychoanalysis*. I. B. Tauris, 2013.

Walter, Christina. "Getting Impersonal: Mina Loy's Body Politics from 'Feminist Manifesto' to *Insel*." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2009, pp. 663-92. *Project Muse,* doi: 10.1353/mfs.0.1635.

---. *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2014.

Warner, Eric. *Virginia Woolf: The Waves*. Cambridge UP, 1987.

Watson, Jay. *Reading for the Body: The Recalcitrant Materiality of Southern Fiction, 1893-1985*. U of Georgia P, 2012.

Watson, Robert N. *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2006.

Weber, Eva. *Art Deco in America*. Exeter Books, 1985.

Whitman, Walt. "I Hear America Singing." *Selected Poems*. Dover Publications, 1991, p. 1.

---. *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass*. 1959. Edited by Malcolm Cowley, Penguin, 1986.

Whitrow, G. J. *Time in History: Views of Time from Prehistory to the Present Day*. Oxford UP, 1989.

Wilk, Christopher. "The Healthy Body Culture." *Modernism: Designing a New World: 1914-1939*, edited by Christopher Wilk, V&A, 2006, pp. 249-96.

Williams, Rosalind H. *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. U of California P, 1982.

Williams, Tami. *Germaine Dulac: A Cinema of Sensations*. U of Illinois P, 2014.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. Revised ed., I.B. Tauris, 2003.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3,*

1923-1928, edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. Hogarth Press, 1977.

---. *Between the Acts*. Penguin, 1953.

---. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*: *Vol. 4; 1929*-31, edited by Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

---. "On Not Knowing Greek." *The Common Reader: First Series,* Read Books, 2013, pp. 35-54.

---. *The Waves*. Harcourt, 2006.

Wünsche, Isabel. "Life into Art: Nature Philosophy, the Life Sciences, and Abstract Art." *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory*, edited by Paul Crowther and Isabel Wünsche, Routledge, 2012, pp. 9-29.

Wyatt, Jean. *Reconstructing Desire: The Role of the Unconscious in Women's Reading and Writing*. UNC Press Books, 1990.

Zalman, Sandra. *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture: Dissident Modernism.* Routledge, 2018.

Zimring, Rishona. "The Make-up of Jean Rhys's Fiction." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2000, pp. 212-34. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences III*, doi: 10.2307/1346080.